

Working Group C: DATA ON LABOUR MIGRATION
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BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Labour migration represents an enormous potential for countries at both ends of the migration spectrum. For countries of emigration, it can provide a form of development support, especially through the acquisition and transfer of skills and remittances. However, unmanaged and indiscriminate international recruitment of skilled workers can have a negative impact in countries of emigration with fragile economies and skills shortages in sectors from which workers are recruited.

Immigration can be a rich resource for a country facing labour shortages. It removes labour scarcity of receiving countries and facilitates occupational mobility. Furthermore, demographic realities, the aging of populations and decline in fertility rates in developed countries is changing the ratio between workers and retirees, which has important social and economic implications. Labor migration can help developed countries in their effort to maintain the current workforce level.

Governments at all points on the migration spectrum increasingly recognize the potential of regulatory mechanisms to manage labour mobility. These include selective recruitment policies by the countries needing labour, and marketing and overseas employment strategies by the countries supplying labour. A key player in labour migration, both in driving demand in destination countries, and through recruiting workers in countries of origin, is the private sector. Efforts to collect maintain and share data relevant to managing labour migration should include private sector partners.

In order to monitor the changes in labour migration trends and to develop, implement and evaluate labour migration policies governments are increasingly looking for data on labour migration. For receiving countries, data on flows and stocks of foreign workers are sought to better understand the dynamics of the labour market, the role of migrants in satisfying the needs and the impact on the local workforce. For sending countries, data are important for human resources development planning, either to meet the demand of their own labour markets or to expand opportunities for their nationals in the international market, as well as for protecting their nationals abroad. For emigration and immigration countries, statistics on migrant workers must be seen as an integral part of labour-force and labour market statistics. At the regional level, information systems linking data on employment, education and training and regional mobility are being developed in the framework of regional economic integration processes.

There are an increasing number of bilateral, regional and international labour agreements being negotiated between governments including with the private sector. These include agreements on recruitment practices, targetted labour needs, protection of migrant rights and others. Each of these agreements generates new demands and needs for data. One such international agreement being negotiated is within the Doha Round of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Mode 4 of the GATS deals with the liberalisation of the movement of "natural persons". A particular challenge faced by government negotiators of Mode 4 is the lack of reliable data relevant to the negotiations, including the lack of clear data distinguishing between temporary and permanent migration, and between occupations.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Understanding the magnitude of migration stocks and flows, particularly the in-flows and out-flows of migrant workers and the economic impact on the country of such flows.
- Mechanisms to enhance information collection and sharing, including with private sector partners.
- Systematic monitoring, analysis and application to policy development of the data collected.
- Recognizing the need for a long-term common data collection approach in the field of labour migration – and the role of regional processes as a possible first step;
- Inclusion of labour migration statistics in labour market information systems for possible correlation between data on foreign participation in labour markets, including labour market projections as well as impact of foreign workers on wages, working conditions and the economy.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What type of data on labour migration is available and what is needed?
2. What are the interlinkages between the data needs of countries of emigration and immigration?
3. Do the users of the data obtain the data they need from data producers? Is there dialogue between the two? How can this be established or strengthened? Do any networks currently exist?
4. Are there general labour migration indicators available in your country? Are they recognized and recognizable by producers and users?
5. What effective practices can be identified with regard to the collection, exchange and sharing of labour migration data? (use of minimum formats, electronic templates, rapid exchange of the data, etc.).
6. Is there a need for international dialogue to help build a better appreciation for and commitment to the need for enhancing and prioritizing the data collection?
7. What roles can regional and international organizations play in facilitating data collection and management on labour migration?