ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

ESCWA TRAINING KIT:
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS:
MEETING THE INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

09-0514

Acknowledgements

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[1] Publications include:

Singleton, A. (2009) "Moving Europe: EU research on migration and policy needs". European Commission DG Research Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities Research Policy Series. Brussels. European Commission.

Poulain, M., Perrin, N. and Singleton, A, (Eds) (2006) "Towards Harmonised European Statistics on International Migration". Louvain-la-Neuve: UCL Presses Universitaires de Louvain.

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CONTENTS

THE AIM OF THIS KIT

This training kit was prepared to support the activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the countries of the Arab region in their efforts to meet United Nations international recommendations and to improve the quality, reliability and international comparability of international migration statistics.

The kit aims to provide the information necessary to develop and improve statistical systems for migration statistics with regard to the quality, coverage, collection and use of migration data. Where possible, it identifies some of the common pitfalls to avoid in this field and provides, in the annex, model tables developed by the United Nations for the collection of comparable migration data. It also aims to encourage the use of hitherto under-exploited administrative sources of migration data, in addition to censuses and surveys.

The kit draws on information gathered during the ESCWA Regional Workshop on International Migration Statistics (Cairo, 29 June - 3 July 2009) and the results of a survey of data sources in the participating countries; it also includes the recommendations drawn up following the Euro-Mediterranean Statistical Cooperation (MEDSTAT) workshop, which ran concurrently with the ESCWA workshop. It builds on the considerable experience of the United Nations and the European Union (EU), including the MEDSTAT programmes on migration statistics, gathered over more than two decades in improving migration statistics.

HOW TO USE THIS TRAINING KIT

The training kit is designed to guide you through some key elements of working with international migration data. It is set out in consecutive sections, named "steps", which may also be used individually. Each section explains one aspect of working with the data and includes an exercise for you to carry out.

The exercises are designed to test your understanding of the topic and to help clarify some common dilemmas and challenges of working with migration data. Their aim is to assist you in developing a clear understanding of the data.

These exercises use sample profiles of individuals, families or groups. You may wish to construct your own versions of these to test out the data, as in example (g). You might find it useful to work in pairs or small groups so you can discuss and compare your answers to the questions.

**STEP 1: CONCEPTS RELATED TO MEASUREMENT
OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

The collection of comparable international statistics on international migration in different countries requires, at the minimum, the use of common concepts and definitions. The first step is to identify and define the core concepts used in international migration statistics. This is often difficult to achieve as different institutions may use different concepts and definitions and/or different data collection and compilation methods and systems, even within the same country. A first step to creating a working statistical framework in this field, therefore, involves reaching an agreement on key concepts. The second step is to identify the data definitions used at national level which conform to the international recommendations.

The 1998 United Nations *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration Revision 1*, sets out the key concepts related to the measurement of international migration, as understood by migration experts, as recommended by the United Nations (and as incorporated into European Union legislation). These definitions are deemed to be achievable, and they provide the best basis for collecting reliable and internationally comparable migration statistics.

In summary, the key underlying concepts in the data are:

International migrant: Any person who changes his or her country of usual residence.

Citizenship The particular legal bond between an individual and his or her country (State), acquired by birth or naturalization, whether by declaration, choice, marriage or other means according to national legislation.

Country of birth: The country of residence (in its current borders, if the information is available) of the mother at the time of the birth or, in default, the country (in its current borders, if the information is available) in which the birth took place.

Usual residence: The place at which a person normally spends the daily period of rest, regardless of temporary absences for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage or, in default, the place of legal or registered residence.

Immigration: The action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a country for a period that is, or is expected to be, at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another country.

Emigration: The action by which a person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of a country, ceases to have his or her usual residence in that country for a period that is, or is expected to be, at least 12 months.

Box 1

This section sets out the main concepts which underpin the definitions used in the international recommendations. You will find that definitions used at national level do not always correspond to the wording above. Your challenge is to identify the sources of data which can provide internationally comparable statistics.

Pitfalls to be aware of

- **Migration data count either "stocks" or "flows" of migrants. Do not mix together "stock" and "flow" data.**

- **Remember that immigration and emigration "flows" are not the same as the number of international migrants in a country or the number of emigrants who have left the country.**

Exercise 1

Identify the national definitions used in your country's data collection for each of the following concepts or categories using either example (a) or (b) shown underneath the list:

- **International migrant;**
- **Citizenship;**
- **Country of birth;**
- **Usual residence;**
- **Immigration;**
- **Emigration.**

(a)   An 18-year-old single woman seeking full-time education, no dependents.

(b)   A family group comprised of father, mother, two children; one born in the home country, one born in the host country. The father has permission to work in the country.

STEP 2: KNOWING WHAT IS NEEDED

2.1. A SUMMARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The relevant international recommendations which address the need for countries to collect data using common concepts and definitions are set out in the following documents:

(a)   The 1998 United Nations *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_58rev1E.pdf.

(b)   The 2008 United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_19rev2E.pdf.

(c)   The main recommendations are also reinforced in the 2009 report of the Center for Global Development (CGD), *Migrants Count: Five Steps Toward Better Migration Data*. www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1422146.

Tables in the annex have been developed to illustrate how these recommendations can be met in collecting migration data.

2.2. CORE CATEGORIES OF IMPORTANCE FOR THE ARAB COUNTRIES

The following subpopulations (data categories) with international migration background are important for Arab countries.

(a)   Foreigners born abroad who have immigrated into the country and are usual residents of the country (immigrant stock);

(b)   Foreigners born in the country and usually resident in the country (persons who have probably not experienced international migration);

(c)   Nationals born in the country, who have emigrated and usually live abroad (emigrant stock);

(d)   Nationals who have emigrated and thereafter immigrated and are usually resident in the country (returning nationals);

(e)   Nationals born abroad who have immigrated and are usually resident in the country (may be a limited number of persons).

Box 2

The definitions contained in the United Nations recommendations are important because they are designed to underpin the development of internationally comparable data collections on international migration.

The categories outlined as subpopulations are important because they enable us to understand how migrant backgrounds can be subdivided in ways that are meaningful to their legal and social status.
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Source: Michel Poulain, paper presented at the ESCWA Regional Workshop on International Migration Statistics (Cairo, 29 June - 3 July 2009).

Pitfalls to be aware of

- **The same migrants may be recorded in more than one data source for any time period. This means that adding the data together from different sources might result in double-counting.**

- **Adding together data from different sources, on different groups, can result not only in double-counting, but also in missing individuals who have not been counted in any of the sources.**

Exercise 2

Identify the main national sources of data for each of the five categories listed in 2.2 above, using one member of the profile group (c) below to define each set of statistics. Which definition is used by each source?

(c)   Family group comprised of father, mother, two children; one born in home country, one born in host country.

**STEP 3: IDENTIFYING THE SOURCES OF MIGRATION DATA:
CREATING AN INVENTORY OF SOURCES**

It is important to create an inventory of data sources to ensure that all possible sources have been identified and that an overview exists of their data coverage. The inventory should include the following information:

(a) Type of data (flow, stock, labour, asylum, etc.);

(b) Data source (work permits, census form, entry card, etc.);

(c) Responsible authorities (ministry, department and contact details):

    (i) Authority responsible for collecting data;
    (ii) Authority responsible for processing data;
    (iii) Authority responsible for reporting and dissemination of statistics.

(d) Variables collected (citizenship, country of birth, age groups, sex, etc.);

(e) Periodicity (monthly, quarterly, annual, etc.):

    (i) Periodicity of data collection;
    (ii) Periodicity of reporting.

(f) Evaluation of the data:

    (i) How complete is the data coverage?
    (ii) Do they meet the needs of the international recommendations?
    (iii) Which groups are included and which are not included?
    (iv) An assessment of the data quality and timeliness.

(g) Availability of data:

    (i) Are the data publicly accessible?
    (ii) How can they be obtained (by request, from a website? Include the website address.)?

Box 3

- Different types of data come from different sources, usually (but not always) Government ministries or statistical offices.

- There may be more than one source of data for each category and more than one institution involved in the collection, processing and dissemination of the data.

- Different institutions collect and process their data at different times and with different frequencies.

- Data quality, coverage and timeliness are important.

Pitfalls to be aware of

- **Different data collection agencies might use different definitions for the same concept. A migrant, recorded in one source, might not meet the same criteria (for example, length of residence) as another migrant recorded in another source.**

- **Timeliness is important, so is data quality. It is important not to rush to release data at the expense of quality. It is also important not to delay the release of data because of unduly arduous checking processes, which only improve the quality of a very small number of unimportant cells in a spreadsheet.**

Exercise 3

Identify different sources of labour migration statistics.

Create an Excel file and make a record of all the information listed in Box 3 for sources of data on labour migration in your country. Note that you need to include information on both temporary and long-term migration. The sources could include work permits, labour force surveys, visas or other sources. There might be more than one source or more than one answer for each category of information. You may use the following profile (d) as an example for this exercise.

(d)   A group of five male labour migrants living in hostel accommodation: two seeking long-term work as IT programmers, three working on temporary contracts in local hotels/clubs as doormen/handymen.

STEP 4: THE KEY SOURCES: WHICH QUESTIONS TO ASK
FROM DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOURCES (CENSUSES AND SURVEYS)

The Commission on International Migration Data for Development Research and Policy of the Centre for Global Development recommends that the following three basic migration-related questions should be asked in every population census in every country: the place of birth, the country of citizenship and the place of residence either one or five years prior to the census.

An enumerated person, present or absent at census time, **will be** considered as a usual resident of the country if he or she spent most of the last 12 months in the country.

A person who spent most of the last 12 months outside the country **will not be** considered as a usual resident of the country. That would be being temporarily absent.

Three practical suggestions for identifying and characterizing nationals living abroad (emigrant stock):

(a)   Ask the place of residence of all children to all mothers;

(b)   Include a special module on emigration with questions about those who left the household during the last 12 months (answer to be given by the head of household or neighbours for emigrated households);

(c)   Rely on data produced by receiving countries in the framework of international cooperation.

A practical suggestion for identifying and characterizing returning nationals:

Ask every native-born national who has spent more than six months abroad, **the year of last return** and the country of previous residence. Such a question will be on a parallel with the one on the year of first arrival for those foreign-born and their country of previous residence.

Box 4

As recommended by the United Nations and the Centre for Global Development, the country of citizenship and the country of birth should be asked in census questionnaires. These data have to be tabulated by age and sex and, if possible, country of citizenship and native-born or foreign-born (for cross-tabulation).

Pitfalls to be aware of

- **Information supplied about persons absent from the household might not be accurate.**

- **The data from receiving countries might be of varying quality, emigrants will be missing from the figures.**

- **Information supplied from memory might not be accurate.**

Exercise 4

Check your national census form to see if it asks the three basic migration-related questions and identifies the variables which can be tabulated in the data. Example (e) below is one you may wish to use in this exercise.

If these questions are not included in the census, then work out a plan of action to make sure that they will be included in the next one.

(e)   Single female with a family of two children working as a cleaner for 15 months awaiting arrival of husband and one grown up 18-year-old son.

STEP 5: ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

Administrative records are important sources of migration data, but their data should be used with care. Often they will record "events" in an administrative process rather than the actual migration movements of individual people.

The most useful administrative sources are those for visas, work permits, residence permits, border crossing data (passports, embarkation/disembarkation cards) and population registers. Asylum data are usually based solely on data from the administrative systems involved in processing an asylum claim.

Administrative records may relate to more than one individual, which can cause some confusion for users of the data:

- There could be one record which covers five people – the head of household, plus four dependents.

- One individual might be granted three work permits in a year. Are these recorded as new permits or renewals? Are the records linked?

Box 5

The sources only record some aspects of the movements of individual people. They may be partial, and it may not be possible to link more than one record for one person. The data could include double-counting or they may miss groups, or both.

Is it possible to use administrative sources to estimate international immigration flows?

Residence permit data can provide information on some migration flows. If the first permit is for between six months and one year, this is an international immigration. If permits are issued for less than six months, then renewed so that the total duration exceeds six months, this is also an international immigration.

Is it possible to use administrative sources to estimate international emigration flows?

When residence permits are granted for a total duration of validity of at least six months and are not renewed at expiry, the non-renewal can be taken as an international emigration.

Despite these problems, administrative sources can be a useful source of migration data.

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Source: Michel Poulain, paper presented at the ESCWA Regional Workshop on International Migration Statistics (Cairo, 29 June - 3 July 2009).

Pitfalls to be aware of

- **A record of an "event" in an administrative source, such as the issuance of a work permit, is just that. It is not the same as the record of an actual migration.**

- **Applications and decisions might relate to more than one person. Beware of confusing total numbers of applications with total numbers of individuals.**

Exercise 5

Is the main source of labour migration data in your country an administrative source? Yes/no

If yes, can the records for an individual worker be linked so that you can see how many years all together are covered by the permits?

How many sources of administrative data on labour migration can you identify for your country?

List the sources and identify which could be combined to produce information on the immigration and emigration of one group, for example, contract workers employed in farming as (d) or a group made up from differing profiles as in (f) below.

(f)   Grandfather, daughter; two grandchildren living with their aunt in their home country; grandmother living in third country and wishing to join her husband.

STEP 6: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

The challenges of improving data quality at national level are also matched by the challenge of producing internationally comparable statistics. It is possible to improve the current situation by working in collaboration with colleagues in the other countries of the region, exchanging information, meeting and comparing progress and working to introduce new methods of collecting data.

Box 6

How can internationally comparable data be produced for the ESCWA region?

It is important to identify and understand:

- The wide range of potential data sources;
- The limitations of the data;
- The need to agree on a common and achievable set of definitions, the United Nations recommendations;
- The need to share and exchange data and for the information to be publicly available to users;
- The need for common standards in checking, validating, collating and processing data;
- The need for analysis of the data;
- The importance of reporting and dissemination;
- The importance of timely, clear and relevant reporting to policymakers.

Pitfalls to be aware of

- **Do not assume that everyone in different institutions and in different countries is using the same definitions, always check first.**

- **Do not simply create data archives. Concentrate on the collection and checking of data, but also on analysis and dissemination. Remember that information is only useful when it is accessible. Where possible, provide simple analyses for policymakers and make them available, with the data, on publicly accessible websites.**

Exercise 6

Identify a household survey (see (g) below) in your country which would be suitable for the inclusion of a migration module.

How often does the survey take place?

Which institution is responsible for carrying out the survey and processing the data?

How long would it take to propose the module and achieve its inclusion in the survey?

(g)   A fairly typical example of a household survey in your country with which you have become familiar.

Box 7

One example of an action which could improve data collection strategies in the ESCWA region is the development of a household migration module for a survey questionnaire.

The MEDSTAT II Programme has developed proposals for a model questionnaire for a household survey, including "core" and "non-core" questions relating to migration. If they were adopted in each ESCWA country, they could become a very useful source of comparable information on migrants in the region.

PROPOSED TABLES FOR INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION BASED ON THE CORE TABLES FROM THE UNITED NATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS ON STATISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, REVISION 1

Immigrant stock by country of birth, sex and age

[**Source** (encircle one): 1 (census); 2 (register); 3 (survey); 4 (other); **Date** (dd/mm/yy: __/__/__]

Sex	Country of birth	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	...	100+	N.s.	Total
Male	- Country a								
	- Country b								
	- ...								
	- Not stated								
	Total								
Female	- Country a								
	- Country b								
	- ...								
	- Not stated								
	Total								

United Nations
Population Division/DESA

Immigrant stock by country of citizenship, sex and age

[**Source** (encircle one): 1 (census); 2 (register); 3 (survey); 4 (other); **Date** (dd/mm/yy: __/__/__]

Sex	Country of citizenship	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	...	100+	N.s.	Total
Male	- Country a								
	- Country b								
	- ...								
	- Stateless								
	- Not stated								
	Total								
Female	- Country a								
	- Country b								
	- ...								
	- Stateless								
	- Not stated								
	Total								

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Immigrant stock by country of birth, sex and year of arrival

[**Source** (encircle one): 1 (census); 2 (register); 3 (survey); 4 (other); **Date** (dd/mm/yy: __/__/__]

Sex	Country of birth	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20+	N.s.	Total
Male	- Country a							
	- Country b							
	- ...							
	- Not stated							
	Total							
Female	- Country a							
	- Country b							
	- ...							
	- Not stated							
	Total							

United Nations
Population Division/DESA

Immigrant stock by country of citizenship, sex and year of arrival

[**Source** (encircle one): 1 (census); 2 (register); 3 (survey); 4 (other); **Date** (dd/mm/yy: __/__/__]

Sex	Country of citizenship	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20+	n.s.	Total
Male	- Country a							
	- Country b							
	- ...							
	- Stateless							
	- Not stated							
	Total							
Female	- Country a							
	- Country b							
	- ...							
	- Stateless							
	- Not stated							
	Total							

United Nations
Population Division/DESA

Immigrant stock by country of birth, sex and year of arrival

[**Source** (encircle one): 1 (census); 2 (register); 3 (survey); 4 (other); **Date** (dd/mm/yy: __/__/__]

Sex	Country of birth	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20+	N.s.	Total
Male	- Country a							
	- Country b							
	- ...							
	- Not stated							
	Total							
Female	- Country a							
	- Country b							
	- ...							
	- Not stated							
	Total							

United Nations
Population Division/DESA

Immigrant stock by country of citizenship, sex and skills

[**Source** (encircle one): 1 (census); 2 (register); 3 (survey); 4 (other); **Date** (dd/mm/yy: __/__/__]

Sex	Country of citizenship	Low		Medium		High		Total	
Male	- Country a								
	- Country b								
	- ...								
	- Stateless								
	- Not stated								
	Total								
Female	- Country a								
	- Country b								
	- ...								
	- Stateless								
	- Not stated								
	Total								

United Nations
Population Division/DESA

Immigration (emigration) by country of previous (next) country of residence
[**Source** (encircle one): 1 (register); 2 (other); **Date** (dd/mm/yy: __/__/__]

Immigration				Emigration			
Country of previous residence	2007	2008	2009	Country of next residence	2007	2008	2009
- Country a				- Country a			
- Country b				- Country b			
- Country c				- Country c			
- Country d				- Country d			
- Stateless				- Stateless			
- Not stated				- Not stated			
Total				Total			

United Nations
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Immigration (emigration) by type of entry

Entry category	2005	2006	2007	Exit category	2005	2006	2007
- Employment				- Employment			
- Education and training				- Education and training			
- Family				- Family			
- Settlement				- Settlement			
- Humanitarian				- Humanitarian			
- Regularization				- Regularization			
- Not stated				- Not stated			
Total				Total			

United Nations
Population Division/DESA

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REFERENCES

1.   United Nations, *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, 1998 (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/58/Rev.1).

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3.   Centre for Global Development, *Migrants Count: Five Steps Toward Better Migration Data*, 2009.