**2nd Regional Review of the Implementation
of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)
in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Region**

8-10 October 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Background Note
Thematic Round Table 4: Data, evidence-based policies, and international Cooperation

Co-leads: IOM and UNECA

I. Guiding Questions

1. What are the immediate information and data needs across all the stages of migration including the pre-departure, migration journey, return, resettlement, reintegration and remigration stages, in different countries, subregions and sectors?

2. What are the major issues facing African countries for which insufficient data is available, such as remittance flows, smuggling and trafficking in persons, pension portability and migrants' access to health and social assistance programmes?

3. How can stakeholders effectively use high-quality, reliable data to inform planning programmes and initiatives on migration in Africa?

4. How can we strengthen the formulation of evidence-based policies and programmes to combat discrimination against migrants?

5. How can we use data to highlight migrants' contributions to the development of both countries of origin and destination?

6. How can we bolster the capacity of governments, academic institutions and civil society stakeholders to counter entrenched stereotypes and prejudice against migrants?

II. Introduction

We cannot manage what we cannot measure. Hence, the GCM emphasizes the use of migration data and statistics to inform policymaking and facilitate the implementation of programmes, projects and activities impacting migrants. The GCM also highlights the importance of disseminating accurate information to counter discrimination and promote open discussions on migration.

However, the lack of harmonized migration data definitions and statistics poses a fundamental obstacle to effective policymaking and regional cooperation. Varying methodologies across the continent impede accurate comparisons and obscure trends, underscoring the urgent need for standardized data collection and reporting mechanisms.

This note addresses issues such as access to basic services, access to information on services and migrant rights and protection from harm, with an emphasis on disaggregation and enhanced collection and use of administrative statistics. It also articulates the need for international cooperation by focusing on the role of the GCM, the importance of collaboration among countries, organizations, and stakeholders and seeking strategies to address vulnerabilities and discrimination faced by migrants throughout their journey -- from origin through transit to destination.

III. Overview of Progress

To improve evidence-based policymaking and enhance cooperation on migration, several institutions have been established to improve migration data availability and quality and intra-Africa cooperation in migration governance. These include the African Union Institute for Statistics (StatAfric)[1] in 2013, the African Migration Observatory (AMO) [2] in 2018, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Migration (ACSRM)[3] in 2021 and the commencement of trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area in 2021.

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[1] Based in Tunis. Its strategic vision is to be the Centre of Reference for the production of quality statistics on Africa.
[2] Based in Rabat. It is a Specialized Technical Office of the African Union, created to improve the overall migration governance in Africa.
[3] Based in Bamako. It is an African Union specialized technical agency devoted to strengthening research, studies, and analysis of all aspects of Africa's Migration; and to contribute to well-evidence and well-informed policies and interventions on Migration in the African continent.

Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.

This GCM objective emphasizes improving international comparability of migration statistics, building national capacities for data management, and supporting collaboration between stakeholders. It aims to document migration patterns, assess the contributions of migrants, and integrate migration-related topics into national censuses and surveys, while upholding privacy rights.

Key commitments under this objective include developing comprehensive strategies to improve migration data at all levels, ensuring data is disaggregated by relevant characteristics, and fostering research to guide evidence-based policymaking. Improved data, including data disaggregated by age, sex, ethnicity and disability, and deeper data analysis will not only facilitate the achievement of GCM objective 1 but also inform cross-cutting themes such as remittance flows, remittance costs, the economic contribution of remittances, the portability of entitlements and earned benefits, smuggling and trafficking in persons, and migrants' long-term return and reintegration needs. Better data will also help highlight emerging issues, such as the nexus between migration and international public health emergencies and the role of new technologies and innovations in reducing remittance costs.

However, challenges persist in formulating effective migration policies, including the inability of many national statistical offices to collect and process migration data regularly. Additionally, information about migration comes from diverse data sources, each with its strengths and limitations, producing different migration statistics. This situation requires strengthening the data analysis and reporting capacity of the statistics offices of the continent's Regional Economic Communities.

In 2022, several SADC states reported[4] improvements in generating reliable and comprehensive migration data. IGAD and EAC member states, within the framework of their respective RECs, are also working to harmonize and improve the production and use of migration data and statistics, including producing regular regional migration statistics reports and developing regional guidelines on the harmonization of migration statistics. Key data sources include administrative data (such as immigration flow data), regular surveys and censuses, with migration questions or modules integrated into data collection tools. Some member states have also completed national Migration Profiles with support from IOM. Migration Governance Indicators[5] assessments have also been used by some states to generate strategic information.

Another achievement under this objective is the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund[6] (Migration MPTF) Joint Programme in Nigeria. This intervention aims to strengthen migration governance through the promotion of fact-based and data-driven migration policy and planning. It focuses on (i) strengthening capacities for

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[4] SADC - GCM Regional Review - Final Outcomes Document.pdf (un.org)
[5] The MGI is a tool based on policy inputs, which offers insights on policy levers that countries can use to develop their migration governance.
[6] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/mptf

research, data collection, analysis and dissemination; (ii) reviewing the National Migration Policy in light of recent migration trends; and (iii) developing a national GCM implementation plan.

Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration.

There is a need for better national and regional coordination to create efficient systems to collect, verify and disseminate information to migrants in a timely manner at all stages of their journeys. One example of a strategy to adopt is one proposed by IGAD (2012)[7], which highlights the development of a systematized registration mechanism at embassies or consulates in countries of destination to account for the number and profiles of nationals living abroad, thus preparing them to provide the necessary assistance.

There is also a need to provide accurate information in multiple languages to ensure accessibility for all migrants in a non-discriminatory manner, independent of immigration enforcement.

The significant contributions made by civil society and national Human Rights institutions in this regard are noteworthy.

Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration.

Situations of vulnerability in the context of migration are often the result of policies and practices that fail to protect migrants' human rights, including the lack of child-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches; the exploitation and abuse of migrants in transit and host countries; and the absence of policies to combat hate crimes, violence, xenophobia, and discrimination against immigrants in Africa. Emerging issues that threaten migrants' lives must be addressed. Notably, the increasing effects of climate change and environmental degradation on migration patterns necessitate their inclusion in national and regional migration policies.

In their regional review meeting on the progress in implementing the GCM (2022), SADC member states agreed that migration itself is not a vulnerability; however, vulnerabilities may arise as a consequence of migration. Member states were therefore called to address those vulnerabilities and encouraged to regard migration as a positive contributor to development while paying attention to security considerations. States were also encouraged to develop clear standard operating procedures for identifying, supporting and referring migrants with protection-related concerns. In a similar exercise (2021), ECOWAS highlighted the need for legal protection for migrants and training on their rights to life, social services and decent work.

Barriers continue to exist that are both formal and informal and may include restrictive national laws, arrests, deportation and others related to gender, language and processing documentation. The lack of adequate evidence perpetuates harmful migration narratives, discrimination and xenophobia, and policies and practices that make migration unsafe, disorderly and irregular.

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[7] Regional-Migration-Policy-Framework1.pdf (igad.int)

In this regard, collaboration between governmental and non-governmental actors to ensure migrant protection is critical. Non-governmental actors are uniquely positioned to assist migrants at all stages of the migration journey.

Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration.

The Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination forbids states to discriminate based on race and colour, including the rights to health, housing, and education. In this regard, the Free Movement and Migration (FMM) West Africa project supports the development of standardized migration-relevant data and country-level migration profiles (either new ones or updates of existing ones) and regional migration profiles through technical assistance and capacity-building support to the ECOWAS Commission.[8]

In line with the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the Migration MPTF Joint Programme in South Africa contributed to strengthening integration, social cohesion and positive relations with host communities. The interventions enhanced the capacities of state and non-state actors to prevent and respond to violence using contextualized tools and methodologies on human rights, non-discrimination, community conflict prevention and social cohesion. Awareness campaigns, community dialogue, and social media advocacy contributed to positive narratives on migration.

Nevertheless, further efforts are required to establish standard procedures for data analysis and dissemination, which should involve the active participation of relevant stakeholders, including private sector and media actors who play a significant role in shaping public perceptions and opinion.

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[8] FMM is funded by the EU and the ECOWAS Commission and jointly implemented by IOM, ILO, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration.

International cooperation plays a pivotal role in addressing the complexities of migration, including providing essential support and protection in transit countries and promoting inclusive policies in destination countries to reduce discrimination and enhance social cohesion, as migration is not only a challenge but also a significant driver of economic, social, and societal development.

In the spirit of the GCM whole-of-society approach, engaging and empowering relevant stakeholders, including representatives from migrant and diaspora organizations, the media, civil society, trade unions, and the private sector, is key to ensuring genuine and meaningful partnerships to advance its implementation.

Achievements and promising practices under this objective include:

- In East and Horn of Africa, the government of Kenya hosted an inter-state dialogue on the implementation of the GCM including member states, RECs, and the AUC. Discussions focused on the importance of migration data, highlighting its role in informing evidence-based policies and interventions, as well as the need to integrate migration data into official statistical frameworks. Best practices in the region include prioritizing migration data, establishing data working groups, and integrating migration indicators into national surveys. This dialogue also sought to improve bilateral and regional cooperation to exchange information on the implementation of the GCM.

- To empower local communities to respond to growing migrant needs by providing information on the potential that migrants bring to their communities, the Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue[9] is serving as a platform for 20 African and European mayors to shift the dominant narrative of migration between Africa and Europe while focusing on the opportunities that connecting cultures and people can bring to cities on both continents, and the vital contribution of migrants to economies and societies.

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[9] Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue, Milan-Freetown Partnership on Fashion and Textile Industries | United Nations Network on Migration

V. Recommendations

1. Data is key: African States should ensure that migration data is integrated into national censuses. With currently available data, migration levels, trends and differentials can be measured as an initial step in policy formulation.

2. Collaboration is critical. Enhanced collaboration among African countries to harmonize migration data collection and reporting across the continent, aligning with international standards to facilitate better-informed decision-making and policy development.

3. Climate change and its impacts are now integral to migration policy. Therefore, disasters, the adverse effects of climate change, and environmental degradation should be included in national and regional migration and mobility policies.

4. Procedures to deal with climate migrants are essential. There is a need to develop and implement Standard Operational Procedures for the admission and stay of migrants in disaster situations to ensure their protection and uphold their rights in response to environmental challenges.

5. Multi-stakeholder engagement is vital to deepening understanding of migration at each stage of the migration process, from pre-departure to return and reintegration. Therefore, academic institutions, public and private research institutions and individual subject matter experts should be enlisted.