

The Africa Migration Data Network

Concept Note

I. Context and justification

Producing reliable migration statistics is necessary for the implementation and monitoring of migration and development initiatives. Despite the progress made on migration statistics in Africa over the past decades, there are persistent gaps in the quantity and quality of the data collected by national and international actors; data may often not be disaggregated by basis characteristics such as sex and age; the data may well be collected but not properly and effectively analysed or disseminated; data sharing within and between countries may be limited. Issues of capacity and limited human or financial resources, lack of harmonization of common migration concepts and definitions, insufficient integration of different data sources and limited systematic collection, management, analysis and disaggregation continue to be some of the common challenges faced by many countries in Africa and beyond.

In order to enhance States' capacity to effectively and sustainably improve migration governance, there is a need to strengthen the collection, management, analysis and dissemination of migration data that will inform policy formulation and implementation. This aspiration is well reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular migration (GCM), which underscores the need for strengthening 'the global evidence base on international migration, by improving and investing in the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, reliable, comparable data....'¹ The need to strengthen migration data collection, exchange and analysis is also in line with the main African Union (AU) initiatives, including Agenda 2063 and the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) Plan of Action (2018 – 2030), which identify migration data and statistics as a key pillar in improving migration governance in the continent.

Keeping the above in view, a strong collaborative effort needs to be established among all relevant institutions working on migration data at the continental level. In January 2020, IOM, the African Union and Statistics Sweden, in collaboration with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), organized a workshop at the margins of the International Forum on Migration Statistics (IFMS) on "Strengthening Migration Data Capacities in Africa: Supporting the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa." Around 80 participants from AU Member States, international organizations and civil society shared information about existing data practices and capacity-building initiatives in Africa. They also agreed on the need to establish a network composed of migration data focal points across African Union Member States and Regional Economic Commissions to enhance coordination on migration data initiatives on the continent.

In this context, we propose to forge and foster a partnership at the continental level through the establishment of the Africa Migration Data Network (AMDN). The AMDN would be a network of migration focal points in National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and key migration-relevant ministries in

¹ Global Compact for Migration, Objective 1, Paragraph 17.

each country in Africa. Its steering committee would include representatives of the AU Pan-African Institute for Statistics (StatAfric), IOM, Statistics Sweden, and the OECD. This note provides a conceptual framework for the proposed network including its objectives, key activities, expected outcomes, and membership.

II. Objectives and key activities

The overall objectives of the AMDN are to promote a continental exchange of good practices on migration data issues, facilitate coordination and collaboration among members of the network in the implementation of migration data-related initiatives, and improve their effectiveness through dissemination and outreach.

The network particularly seeks to: (i) provide an opportunity to better identify and respond to capacity-building needs; (ii) promote the sharing of data across Africa and (iii) contribute to efforts to harmonize migration concepts, definitions and data methods, contributing to the comparability of data across countries and to improving the evidence base on migration in the continent

In terms of key activities, the network would produce a bi-annual flagship report providing an overview of migration in Africa, based on national migration statistics. The AMDN will also organize an annual meeting of all members at the StatAfric premises in Tunis, which in the first instance will be a virtual meeting. The network also plans to organize a series of thematic webinars on different migration-relevant subjects, such as data on remittances in Africa and other topics. The dates of these thematic webinars will be decided upon in the beginning of 2021 and shared with all stakeholders.

III. Expected outcomes

- Strengthened collaboration and communication between migration data stakeholders at the regional and continental levels.
- Strengthened collaboration with other regional networks working on migration and data.
- Enhanced sharing of migration data across Africa.
- Increased practical guidance on data capacity-building methodologies and sharing of good practices available between countries and relevant actors, including through the harmonization of migration concepts and definitions.
- Improved capacity of national data stakeholders to more effectively collect, manage, analyse and disseminate migration data to inform policy.

IV. Membership

Members of the AMDN would include:

- Representatives from NSOs in each country in Africa. This would help identify the challenges that the network members are facing on the ground and assist in articulating problems correctly, as well as what solutions may work in the African context.
- Representatives from key migration-relevant ministries in Africa. This would contribute to improving the use of administrative data sources for migration statistics, as well as promoting dialogue with migration policymakers in the various countries.

The AMDN would be managed by a steering group made of representatives from the AU, IOM, Statistics Sweden and OECD, which would meet quarterly.

- AU StatAfric would ensure that the data are leveraged for policymaking at the AU level and in AU Member States.
- Statistics Sweden would provide support with technical capacity and knowledge-sharing.
- IOM GMDAC would provide technical support and coordinate the ADMN meetings and outputs. In the first instance, IOM GMDAC will help to establish and support the network by placing a staff member - at StatAfric- for the first three months of 2021. The staff member will assist in developing the AMDN and coordinating its meetings and outputs.
- OECD, would share knowledge drawing on their experience in managing similar networks in other regions, contribute analytical capacities and share the data collected on African migrants in OECD countries with the African Migration Data Network.