

CHAPTER

16

**United Nations
Department of Economic
and Social Affairs
Population Division**



United Nations

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division

The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)¹ of the UN Secretariat provides guidance and support to the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), including its Commission on Population and Development (CPD), on issues related to population, migration and development. Specifically, it is tasked with producing globally harmonized estimates on population dynamics, including migration; undertaking technical studies on population and migration levels, trends and dynamics; monitoring population and migration policies; and conducting research and integrating population and migration issues into the United Nations development agenda.

1. Migration and development activities since the 2006 High-level Dialogue

The Division coordinates the work on international migration and development, which includes: (a) servicing the UN General Assembly and ECOSOC; (b) strengthening the evidence base; (c) enhancing inter-agency coordination; and (d) developing capacities.

Servicing the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) of the UN General Assembly biennially considers the sub-item “international migration and development,” under the agenda item “globalization and interdependence.” The Population Division of UN DESA services the intergovernmental process with regard to that sub-item by preparing reports of the Secretary General, servicing intergovernmental negotiations and organizing events.² Consequently, the Division has been the focal point for preparing the reports of the Secretary General on international migration and development for the sixty-third (2008), sixty-fifth (2010) and sixty-seventh (2011) sessions of the General Assembly. These reports review the role of the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders in implementing General Assembly resolutions on international migration and development. The Secretary General’s report for the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, for instance, provided a basis for the consideration of possible follow-up options to the 2006 High-level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development.

¹ The Population Division of UN DESA was established in 1946 to service the Population Commission. The Division prepares data estimates and projections on matters such as total population, fertility, mortality, migration and urbanization which serve as references for the UN system, governments, academics, the media and corporate users throughout the world. The Division is the substantive secretariat of what is now called the “Commission on Population and Development” and, therefore, monitors the implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and its follow-up commitments. It produces selected indicators related to the reproductive health targets of the Millennium Development Goals and services the deliberations of the General Assembly in the area of international migration and development.

² For more information, visit www.un.org/esa/population/migration/ga/index.html.

The report for the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly reviewed trends in international migration in light of the effects of recent financial and economic crises. The report for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly focused on, among other topics, the organizational details of the 2013 HLD, including possible themes.

The Division provides substantive support for the preparation and organization of high-level plenary meetings on international migration and development hosted by the General Assembly. Specifically, the Division supported the President of the General Assembly in convening the first HLD on International Migration and Development in September 2006 and the informal thematic debate on international migration and development organized in May 2011. Currently, the Division is actively engaged in the preparations for the second HLD, which will take place on 3 and 4 October 2013.

The Division services annual meetings of the CPD, one of the functional commissions of ECOSOC. Since 2006, three sessions of the CPD have focused on the theme of migration: the thirty-ninth session focused on “International migration and development”; the forty-first session, on “Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development”; and the forty-sixth session, held on 22–26 April 2013, on “New trends in migration: demographic aspects.”³ The forty-seventh session of the CPD in 2014, which will focus on the assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), is expected to address the issue of international migration in relation to Chapters IX and X of that programme of action.

Strengthening the evidence base

The Division is responsible for providing the international community with up-to-date and objective information on population and development. In relation to international migration, the Division estimates the global number of international migrants, accounting for key demographic variables, at regular intervals, monitors the levels, trends and policies of international migration, and analyses the relationship between international migration and development.

Since 2006 the Division has made considerable strides in strengthening the evidence base on international migration. For instance, as part of its monitoring activities, the Division developed the United Nations Global Migration Database – a comprehensive collection of empirical data on the number of international migrants by country of birth and citizenship, sex and age, as enumerated by population censuses, population registers, nationally representative surveys and other official statistical sources.⁴ The database contains millions of records from close to 200 countries or areas for the

³ Visit www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd_archives.htm for more information on these sessions.

⁴ The database was developed in collaboration with the Statistics Division of UN DESA, the World Bank and the University of Sussex, and with financial support from UNICEF and the Special Unit for South–South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme.

1990 census round and 160 for the 2000 census round, covering 78 and 89 per cent, respectively, of all international migrants worldwide.⁵ Over 4,400 users have subscribed to the database.

The Division prepares estimates of the global number of international migrants at regular intervals. In 2009 the Division released the data set entitled “Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision,” which contains a complete set of estimates for 230 countries or areas for the period 1960–2010.

In 2011 the Division issued estimates of the number of international migrants by age and sex for the first time, and published this data set as “Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Age and Sex.” The data set contains estimates of the number of international migrants by age and sex for 196 countries or areas with 100,000 inhabitants or more for the years 1990, 2000 and 2010, as of mid-2010.

In 2012 the Division prepared the first Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin data set, which estimates the number of international migrants by country of birth (or citizenship), country of destination and sex for 230 countries or areas of the world for the years 1990, 2000 and 2010.

In 2013 the Division expects to revise its estimates of the global migrant stock by age, sex and origin for 230 countries or areas, taking advantage of the new data that have become available from the 2010 global round of population censuses.

Since 2006 the Division has produced two editions of the data set “International Migration Flows to and from Selected Countries.” The 2008 revision of the data set was released in 2009, while the most recent version, – the 2010 revision – was published in 2011. The 2010 revision contains annual data on immigration flows and, where available, emigration and net flows, by country of origin and destination for 43 destination countries, considerably more than in the 2005 revision, which contained data on international migration flows for only 15 countries.

In addition to publishing new data on migrant stocks and migration flows, the Division estimates and projects net migration for 230 countries or areas of the world. Those estimates and projections were issued as part of the 2008 and 2010 revisions of World Population Prospects.

The Division also produced two updates to the World Population Policies database: the 2007 revision, issued in 2008, and the 2009 revision, published in 2010.

⁵ The 2010 census round is still ongoing.

Enhancing inter-agency coordination

In accordance with UN General Assembly resolutions 56/203 and 58/208, the Division continues to convene annual coordination meetings on international migration. Since the 2006 HLD, the Division has hosted six such meetings, the latest of which – the eleventh coordination meeting – was held in February 2013 and focused on preparations for the 2013 HLD.

Following the establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), the scope of the coordination meetings was broadened to include an intergovernmental segment that features presentations by the outgoing and incoming GFMD Chairs-in-Office. The meeting also features a coordination segment which identifies gaps and synergies between migration activities within the UN system and between the UN system and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, including IOM. Further, an expert segment allows for the presentation of recent research findings.

Over the past few years, participation in the coordination meeting has greatly increased; nearly 180 participants attended the eleventh coordination meeting in 2013, compared to 80 participants in 2006. Participation has also become more inclusive. In addition to representatives of agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, experts, representatives of UN Member States and non-governmental organizations are also welcomed.

UN DESA is committed to inter-agency cooperation on migration. It chaired the Global Migration Group (GMG) during the second half of 2007, organizing one meeting of Principals and two meetings at the working level. During its chairmanship, a website was created to archive GMG materials.

The Division actively supports the GMG by participating in working-level meetings and, through senior staff in UN DESA, in meetings at the Principals' level. The Division has contributed to the substantive work programme of the GMG by preparing joint statements, contributing to the report *International Migration and Human Rights: Challenges and Opportunities on the Threshold of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, drafting a chapter in the forthcoming report *Migration and Youth: Harnessing Opportunities for Development*, among others.

The Division co-chairs with IOM the GMG Working Group on Data and Research, which aims to coordinate the activities of GMG agencies on data and research issues, as well as the GMG inputs to the GFMD ad hoc Working Group on Policy Coherence, Data and Research. Under the auspices of the GMG working group, the Division, with support from UNICEF, produced a common set of indicators for Migration Profiles.

Developing capacities

Since 2006, the Division has strengthened its efforts to support capacity-building and training activities in international migration. For instance, between 2009 and 2012, the Division contributed to a project aimed at strengthening national capacities to maximize the development benefits and minimize the negative impact of international migration, coordinated by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Under the project, the Division participated in five meetings, contributed to the development of the UN Economic Commission for Europe toolkit entitled “Statistics on International Migration – A Practical Guide,” as well as to the development of a common template to identify migration research centres and information systems. The Division developed a toolkit on international migration, which provides an overview of basic definitions, concepts and data sources in the field of international migration.

The Division actively participates in training and capacity-building activities at the international, regional and country levels. It has made presentations in migration and development seminars, organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and delivered training courses as part of the Labour Migration Academy, organized by the ILO Training Centre in Turin, Italy.

At the regional level, the Division has participated in a number of intergovernmental and technical meetings, among others, in Colombia, Georgia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, Mauritius, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Spain, Turkey and Thailand. In these meetings, the Division’s contributions often focused on strengthening the capacities of countries to collect and exchange migration information and to develop and implement evidence-based migration policies. The Division continues to familiarize workshop participants with the report *Migrants Count: Five Steps toward Better Migration Data*, published by the Center for Global Development.

2. Support provided to the Global Forum on Migration and Development

The Population Division of UN DESA has collaborated with the GFMD since its inception in 2007. Representatives of the Division have participated in each of the global meetings of the Forum and have actively contributed to the preparatory, as well as follow-up, activities for those meetings. For instance, the Division facilitated a “Market place” during the first meeting of the Global Forum, where Member States and international organizations could discuss requests for migration training, advice and capacity-building. In 2012, during the Global Forum meeting in Mauritius, the Division made a presentation on South–South migration.

The Division provides technical and substantive assistance and feedback to the annual chairs of the GFMD, including by participating in the meetings of the Friends of the Forum. UN DESA senior and technical staff have participated in high-level meetings, expert meetings, seminars and workshops, organized within the framework of the Global Forum. For instance, in 2010 the Division participated in meetings of the GFMD ad hoc working group on data, research and coherence, held in Finland and Austria. In 2011 the Division participated in GFMD workshops, held in Batumi, Chisinau, Marseille and New York, focusing, inter alia, on monitoring, evaluation and mainstreaming migration into development planning. In 2012 staff of the Division participated in two preparatory meetings organized by the Chair-in-Office in Mauritius, one on brainstorming (January) and one on harnessing diaspora resources for development in Africa (May).

Furthermore, the Division administers a grant from the MacArthur Foundation to support the work of Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for International Migration and Development. Since 2006, the SRSG has acted as the main link between the State-led GFMD and the United Nations.

3. Identified good practices

Strengthening coordination

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/208, the Population Division of UN DESA not only continues to carry out its annual coordination meetings, but has also greatly expanded the scope of, and participation in, those meetings. Since 2007, the incoming and outgoing Chairs-in-Office of the GFMD have made presentations at the coordination meetings. The fact that the SRSG and a broad spectrum of representatives from civil society participated in the eleventh coordination meeting further illustrates the growing importance of such meetings in fostering communication, collaboration and coherence on issues related to international migration and development among the entities of the UN system, other relevant international and regional organizations and civil society. Contributions from participants to the annual coordination meetings are valuable inputs for reports of the Secretary General.

Producing estimates and disseminating data

Since 2006 the Division has sought to disseminate the information it produces in a more timely and user-friendly manner through CD-ROMs, online databases and other mediums. The Division developed a number of web-based interactive databases which can be accessed free of charge. Those databases include estimates of international migrant stocks by age, sex and origin; data on international migration flows, estimates; and projections on net migration, as well as information on international migration policies.

Publishing analytical reports

The Division has stepped up its efforts to disseminate its analytical reports and other comprehensive studies on international migration free of charge through its website, www.unmigration.org. Among the publications available online are: the *International Migration Report 2009: A Global Assessment*; technical papers, such as *Data and analysis: Partnering to better understand and address the human development implications of migration* and *International Migration in a Globalizing World: The Role of Youth*.

Disseminating wall charts and fact sheets

The Division has sought to reach a broader audience through wall charts and fact sheets. The Division published two recent wall charts: *International Migration 2009* and *The Age and Sex of Migrants 2011*. The Division also published several fact sheets, including on the migration of health workers,⁶ on the age of international migrants⁷ and on South–South migration.⁸ These fact sheets are prepared in direct response to recent policy developments. The fact sheet on health workers, for instance, was drafted in response to the adoption by the World Health Assembly of the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. All publications can be accessed through the migration website of the Division.⁹

Promoting coherence

Since 2006 the Division has made concrete efforts to strengthen its collaboration with other entities of the UN system, as well as with other relevant international or regional organizations. In 2010 and 2012, the Division sent out a questionnaire to all members of the GMG, with the purpose of gathering information on their follow-up activities to the recommendations and outcomes stemming from the various meetings of the GFMD. This information has been used in the preparation of the biennial reports of the Secretary General on international migration and development.

Collaborating on joint initiatives

The Division has strengthened its collaboration with various entities of the GMG with the purpose of improving the evidence base on international migration and development. The Division collaborated with the Statistics Division of UN DESA, the World Bank and the University of Sussex to develop the Global Migration Database, with financial support from UNICEF and the Special Unit for South–South Cooperation

⁶ UN Population Facts No. 2010/2/E/Rev: Health Workers, International Migration and Development.

⁷ UN Population Facts No. 2010/6: International Migrants by Age.

⁸ UN Population Facts No. 2012/3: Migrants by origin and destination: The role of South–South migration.

⁹ UN DESA Population Division website: www.unmigration.org.

of the UN Development Programme. The database, which can be accessed free-of-charge, has served as the foundation for the preparation of estimates of international migrants by age and the quantification of South–South movements.

4. Challenges identified in carrying out UN DESA’s migration work

One of the main challenges the Division encounters in preparing global estimates of international migration is the lack of availability of empirical data on international migrant stocks and migration flows. Despite the heightened policy attention for migration, a number of countries still do not comply with the UN recommendation to collect information on the country of birth, country of citizenship and year of arrival of international migrants in their population censuses, the most widely used source of globally comparable data on international migration. According to the Statistics Division of UN DESA, 228 countries or areas have conducted or will conduct a population census during the 2010 round of population censuses, an increase of 21 countries over the previous round. Yet early indications suggest that the reporting of the core migration indicators has not improved since the 2000 round of censuses.

Other challenges include the long delays in data dissemination and the lack of detailed tabulations. Micro-data from the population census, a useful analytical tool for furthering the study of the developmental impacts of international migration, are available for only a limited number of countries.

Serious challenges also exist with regard to the availability of migration statistics from administrative sources and registers. The number of countries that systematically register changes in the country of residence of foreigners, and in particular citizens, is limited. Information on the admission or departure of international migrants by reason for their migration – a critical variable in understanding global migration patterns – is even scarcer, as few countries publish statistics on type of visa or permit granted. There is also a lack of coordination between the various national institutions generating international migration data.

In order to analyse the linkages between international migration and development, household surveys are essential. However, funding for migration surveys is very limited. National statistical offices and the donor community should support the conduct of periodic migration surveys. Without additional support for migration surveys, or migration modules as part of generic household surveys, evidence-based policies on migration and development will remain elusive. Integrating migration into the post-2015 UN development agenda and monitoring the implementation of concrete measures to address migration challenges and enhance migration benefits would not be possible without a solid foundation of data collection and analysis.

The Division considers improving the evidence base on international migration, including its linkages with development, as a key issue that should be addressed as part of the 2013 HLD. Of particular priority is the strengthening of statistical capacity at the national level to collect, process, disseminate and analyse international migration data for evidence-based migration policies.

5. Gaps evident within the migration and development sphere

One of the main gaps in the migration and development sphere is the lack of an effective institutional mechanism to coordinate inter-agency responses to the challenges and opportunities of international migration. The GMG, which was created prior to the first HLD and the establishment of the GFMD, has undoubtedly contributed to promoting dialogue between the various entities in the UN system and other international organizations engaged in international migration. Yet the current governance structure of the GMG is not conducive to meaningful partnerships, especially on longer-term projects. Further, the lack of dedicated funding implies that GMG members have to rely on their own resources. This can be particularly challenging in light of their different capacities, expertise and mandates. Without a concrete mandate from Member States, coherent inter-agency cooperation, including in support of the activities of the GFMD, will remain a challenge.

So far, the GMG has provided only limited support to the GFMD because it lacks a clear request from the GFMD to do so more systematically. As a result, many of the activities undertaken by the GMG to support the Global Forum have been ad hoc in nature and have often lacked coordination. This situation has been noted with concern by the SRSG, who has proposed the creation of a small, permanent GMG secretariat to strengthen inter-agency coherence and provide a link to the GFMD. Several Member States have also voiced the need for a more coherent, inter-agency response and support mechanism on migration.

The GMG, as it currently stands, is an informal consultative mechanism of entities, designed to coordinate activities on international migration at the Headquarters level. For the GMG to work effectively on migration at the field level, it needs systemic linkages with existing UN coordination mechanisms. Thus, the involvement of mechanisms such as the UN Development Group is essential for migration to be fully integrated into national development planning and system-wide efforts to “deliver-as-one.”

A small support unit focused on coordinating activities of the GMG would go a long way towards furthering the coherence and effectiveness of the Group. It would help ensure a coherent system-wide response to future United Nations priorities, including the post-2015 development agenda. A small support unit would also allow the GFMD to access GMG resources more efficiently and effectively, by coordinating and facilitating

the transfer of inputs from the GMG entities to the GFMD. The support unit could also enable the GMG to coalesce at the field level, including by implementing GFMD outcomes. The support unit would allow for a pooling of resources from interested GMG members, enhancing their buy-in in inter-agency collaboration.

6. Recommendations for the 2013 High-level Dialogue

Recommendations in relation to the GMG include the following:

- (a) Establish a small, permanent GMG support unit to coordinate joint activities, support the GMG Chair and lend support to the GFMD;
- (b) Revisit the terms of reference of the GMG to reflect the new realities since 2006 and improve effectiveness and coherence post-2013;
- (c) Revisit the GMG's membership to ensure: (i) system-wide representation and buy-in and (ii) greater linkages with civil society;
- (d) Create a trust fund to support the GMG support unit and carry out GMG activities;
- (e) Include the GMG Chair in meetings of the GFMD Steering Committee;
- (f) Document GMG achievements through an annual report;
- (g) Increase the visibility of the GMG by maintaining a website;
- (h) Improve coherence on international migration at the field level.

Recommendations in relation to the 2013 HLD include the following:

- (a) Strengthen the evidence base on international migration and development by, among others, urgently disseminating migration data from the 2010 census round, improving access to migration data from administrative records and conducting migration surveys in countries that lack adequate migration information;
- (b) Establish a trust fund to improve the migration evidence base;
- (c) Revisit the recommendations put forward by the Global Commission on International Migration;
- (d) Formulate a set of key messages that will be used by the UN system in the run-up to the 2013 HLD;

- (e) Develop a global information campaign highlighting the contributions of migrants to the development of countries of destination and origin;
- (f) Organize a treaty signature event similar to the one held in conjunction with the 2006 HLD.

