



Virtual National Policy Conference on Migration and Urbanisation in South Africa

South Africa | 26—30 July 2021

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background and justification

Migration and urbanisation have been described as major issues on the economic, political and social landscape worldwide. Migration has emerged as a dominant theme in the global political discourse, international relations; and it has become an urgent concern for governance, policy-making and administration at all levels of governance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a profound impact worldwide. The pandemic reached South Africa later than most of the world, but despite the delay, it has still had a wide-reaching impact on all South Africans. Migration and migrants at large were affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic. During a pandemic, livelihoods are affected and income-generating activities are reduced. The COVID-19 pandemic further revealed the urgent need for data in the socio-economic, demographic spheres of migrants.

South Africa has long been both a sending and receiving country as well as a country of transit of migrants and the impacts of migration cannot be ignored. Since the adoption of the Programme of Action at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), international discussions about migration and sustainable development have been on the agenda of many countries. The ICPD Programme of Action specifically emphasised the objective of eliminating discriminatory practices against all migrants, especially women, children and the elderly.



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In 2015, Cabinet also approved the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Population Policy, to coordinate the implementation of the Policy, and Cabinet decided that Migration and Urbanisation will be one of the Population Policy priorities in the current term of Government.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Population Policy proposed the following initiatives:

- Assessment of the state of knowledge of migration in SA;
- Conference on migration and urbanisation leading to a national migration observatory and the forum;
- Capacity building of municipalities to integrate migration data into their respective IDPs.
- Recommendations on how to address persistent apartheid settlement patterns.

This initiative was addressed by the IMC on Basic Services.

2. Addressing the proposed initiatives

The study on the assessment of the state of knowledge on migration in South Africa found that there is substantial literature on migration in South Africa, however, the data is uncoordinated and is not easily accessible to intended migration data users. Due to its cross cutting multi-disciplinary nature, literature is dispersed and available across the spectrum and consequently, data users are accessing only those sources within their sector furthermore, it was clear from the study that little was known about how much ordinary South African know about migration and urbanisation. To start mitigating the gaps identified in the state of knowledge report, a platform of engagement between data producers and data users was established through a series of roundtable discussions.



The purpose of the roundtables were to highlight contemporary issues to be discussed in the conference. Certainly, the roundtables discussions mirrored the issues important to the Global Compact for Migration. The table below shows the themes and topics that were discussed at the five roundtables.

Theme of the Roundtable	Topics discussed
1st Roundtable Theme: Challenges of producing migration statistics in South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges in collecting migration data in South Africa (Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town) • Challenges in collecting migration data presented by: Chief Director: Demographic Analysis: Stats SA. Director: Integrative Analysis: Population Stats SA. Regional Protection Co-ordinator: Mixed Migration, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Migration Health Research Officer: International Organization for Migration.
2nd Roundtable theme: Experiences of Migration Data Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Data: Interprovincial and international Migration • Experiences of Migration Data Users: A perspective from City of Tshwane • Experiences of Migration Data Users: A perspective from Gauteng office of the Premier • Experiences of Migration Data Users: A perspective from • Mpumalanga Population Unit
3rd Roundtable theme: Reflections on migration: Leaving no one behind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDG's and environment • Addressing vulnerabilities associated with migration • Migration and human rights • Managing migration and urbanisation • Trends in migration and remittances
4th Roundtable theme: Continuation of roundtable three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Migration Dynamics in South Africa: Evidence from Different Data Sources • Addressing vulnerabilities associated with Migration • Internal Migration Trends in South Africa between 1996 and 2011 • Environmental Migration: in context of sustainable development



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of White Paper on International Migration • Spaces of vulnerability and areas prone to natural disaster and crisis in six SADC countries
<p>IPC 2017 Side Meeting: Migration and Urbanisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community survey 2016 results • Establishment of a Migration Forum in South Africa • Migration trends and measurement in Africa • Internal Migration Dynamics in South Africa: Evidence from Different Data Sources

Reflecting on the five roundtable discussions, it was clear that:

- Migration remains an important socio-political issue that needs continued attention from researchers, policy makers and implementers, as well as all citizens. This requires strong collaborative efforts among all sectors.
- Migration remains inadequately integrated into development frameworks at all levels of governance because availability, accessibility and utilization of migration data is often a concern.
- A major gap is the absence of broad-based participation in migration policy and practice, particularly of social partners and civil society. What is needed is the promotion of integrated, multi-disciplinary approaches in managing migration.
- Official migration data is fragmented and do not generally capture most of the types of flows. Due to the nature of undocumented or irregular migrants it is difficult to be sure that they have all been captured because they are afraid of consequences related to their status. Hence the difficulty in capturing certain migration flows. The fact that undocumented migrants cant be captured doesn't make official data co-ordinated. The very nature of undocumented data makes it hard to capture in even the best of circumstances. Official data can at best be described as fragmented in terms of various departments not being able to collect data that reflects different groups of mobile persons
- Although remittances send back home have attracted attention of scholars at international level, studies on the impact of remittances in South Africa are limited.



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- While migration studies tend to focus on fixed times and places, it emerged from the presentations and discussions that tracking migration process and including a point of transit is important.
- Acknowledging the importance of using both quantitative and qualitative research methods will assist in understanding certain issues presented in migration research. The issue of triangulation and acknowledging the use of other verified migration data sources was also seen as critical.
- Paying attention to safety and ethical considerations when using other verified data sources cannot be compromised.
- Movement of children cannot be ignored by policy makers, implementers and researchers. Countries need to respond to the challenges faced by children who migrate, particularly on their own.
- Various and new methods of data collection need to be explored, and modules developed within the context of migration in the country.
- The need for balanced analysis, support and advocacy that highlights rights - based approaches to migration is crucial at all levels.

3. The proposed conference

In this context, it is proposed that the National Policy Conference on Migration and Urbanisation in South Africa be convened on 26–30 July 2021, virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Convening the conference will allow Government officials, migration researchers at national and international levels, policy makers, United Nations Agencies working on migration, Non –Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other relevant stakeholders to share their experiences and best practices towards addressing key migration challenges in the country.



The aim of the conference is to engage a range of users and producers of migration data and migration scholars to showcase, consolidate knowledge and build capacity around migration and urbanisation in South Africa. The conference will bring to light gaps in knowledge and data needs for the purpose of informing policy.

The migration conference will comprise of **five themes**, namely,

- (i) **Data and methods**, which will discuss migration definitions and measurements, methods for analysing migration data, and how to access information using different data sources;
- (ii) **Internal migration and urbanisation**, which will focus on spatial settlement patterns, the impact of internal migration on areas of destination and origin, and making urban areas sustainable, safe and habitable;
- (iii) **International migration**, which will focus on migration patterns and trends into South Africa from the international, region and neighbouring countries, return migration and integration of families, refugees and asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors;
- (iv) **Substantive issues**, which will focus on migration related to health, gender, education, service delivery, climate change and poverty and sustainable development;
- (v) **Policy issues**, which will focus on planning for migration management and governance concerning service delivery, International legal frameworks related to migration and explicit discussions on the African Position on migration and sustainable development.

N.B Papers on the impact of COVID-19 on migrants and migrations are highly encouraged.



3.1. The outcome and deliverables

It is envisioned that the National Policy Conference on Migration and Urbanisation ensure “an integrated approach to planning, through increased understanding and scope of data about migration and urbanisation”. It is also anticipated that the discussions at the conference bring more emphasis on the value of the disaggregated 24 key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators by migrant status, the opportunities of ancillary data sources for different types of migrants and on the importance and role of the Urbanisation and Migration Forum.

The deliverables of the conference will be:

- i. The establishment of a National Forum on Migration which aims to be the nexus for data producers, researchers and analysts, policy makers and academics across the migration and urbanisation sector;
- ii. Development of modalities to establish a migration knowledge and information node that will coordinate migration information and make it accessible to data users and other planners and implementers at all levels of government;
- iii. Identification of knowledge and policy gaps in development and migration programmes and develop strategies to address them;
- iv. Consolidated capacity building of government officials responsible for migration and urbanisation;
- v. Production of a comprehensive Migration and Urbanisation Policy Report.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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