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Rapid Assessment of Data Collection Structures in the Field of Migration, in Latin America and the Caribbean

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this document is to perform an assessment of the situation in which the production of data on migrations in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is in, as well as in each of the four sub-regions and the countries that make these up, that is: 1. Mercosur, Chile and Venezuela; 2. Andean; 3. Central America, Mexico, Panama and Belize; 4. The Caribbean (both English speaking and non-English speaking countries).[1] The report presents a general descriptive analysis of LAC and an analysis of each one of the previously detailed sub-regions. Specifically, it attempts to describe the legal and political framework in which the statistics on international migration are generated, as well as the bodies that are responsible for producing these statistics, their main organizational method and the production of data on this subject, the indicators which are produced and published, and the criteria that are applied and disclosed for evaluating the quality of the statistical information produced.

Appearance and development of the different regional and sub-regional systems of information on international migration: SOPEMI, IMILA, SIMICA, SIEMCA and SIEMMES

The last decades of the twentieth century and the first years of the twenty-first century have witnessed the progress in the design and beginning of different information systems on international migrations, both regional and sub-regional, both in the European Union (EU) and in LAC. These systems refer to a group of people, data and mechanisms (activities and

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[1] For the purposes of this study, the following countries are included in each one of the mentioned sub-regions: **1. Mercosur, Chile and Venezuela**: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, in addition to Chile and Venezuela; **2. Andean**: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; **3. Central America, Mexico, Panama and Belize**: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama; **4. The Caribbean** includes the following countries: Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic (non-English speaking countries), as well as Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago (English speaking countries).

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procedures) that function solely to support decision-making and formulate public policies on this subject. In general, these systems are created based on a combination of different sources of quantitative data (records, censuses and household surveys) and qualitative data (legislation and regulation, the analysis of documents and interviews of focus groups, among others). Therefore, the effects of these initiatives are promising.

The systematization of the international migration information systems implemented starting in 1970 demonstrates their gradual and growing proliferation, specifically in the first decades of the twenty-first century. In effect, around 1970 there were two systems of implementation. On one hand, there is the "Continuous Reporting System on Migration" (SOPEMI) created by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the EU and, on the other hand, there is the Project on the "Investigation of International Migration in Latin America" (IMILA) created for LAC by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC).

In LAC, near the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the variety of possibilities became diversified and included the regional and sub-regional data collection experiences. Included in the former is the "Information System on International Migration for the Countries of the Andean Community" (SIMICA), in force between 1996 and 1998, and the "Statistical Information System on Migration in Central America" (SIEMCA), which became the "Statistical Information System on Migration in Mesoamerica" (SIEMMES) in 2005. In addition, the recent implementation of the "Continuous Reporting System on International Migration in the Americas" (SICREMI), the methodological model of which is based on SOPEMI created by the OECD for the EU around 40 years ago, is considered among the regional projects.

Absence of a regional assessment of the national structures for collecting data on international migration and the relevance of the current rapid assessment

The LAC region still requires an assessment of the national structures for collecting data on international migrations. The objective of the assessment would be to analyse the kind of statistical information from the countries in the region regarding this subject. In this way, these systems can be appropriately provided with information and it may be assessed whether the national information compiled by the different bodies meets the current quality requirements as regards coverage, relevance, thoroughness, accuracy, their similarity, coherence, opportuneness, timeliness, accessibility and the dissemination of metadata.

The rapid assessment included herein would then try to fill this gap, specifically as concerns the production of quantitative data on international migration in LAC

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Appearance and development of a regional and sub-regional integration process of a political, commercial and financial nature in LAC: Mercosur, CAN, Central America, CARICOM, OECS, ACP and CSM

The legal and political framework of regional and sub-regional representation in LAC is characterized by the consolidation of democratic institutions recovered in recent decades and the deepening of an integration process started around the end of the twentieth century. This is demonstrated through sub-regional approximations of countries for purposes that seem to refer more and more to political, commercial and financial integration. Examples of this would be the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), the experience of Central America (extended to Belize and Panama), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the current African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP).

Relevance of the regional consultative process of the CSM

Likewise, and based on the awareness of the countries in the region of the need for consensus and harmonization of their migration policies, the States are also assisting in the execution of regional consultative processes within the framework of the South American Conference on Migration (CSM), the Technical Secretariat of which is in charge of the IOM.

Coexistence of very different national legal frameworks on international migration

Among the different countries that make up the LAC region, the different legal and political frameworks on international migration reveal a wide margin of variability which shows the different national contexts. On the one hand, after the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is detected that migration laws are being updated, specifically in some of the traditional receiving countries of immigration in the region (for example, Argentina) or those countries with a strong emigration impact (for example, Uruguay) that include instances of integration of the immigrants in the country of destination.

On the other hand, although progress on the review of migration legislation has been perceived in some Central American and Caribbean countries, these still do not have the characteristics observed in the first group of countries. The existence of migration laws that

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date back approximately five years and that may need to be reviewed in the current national context has been detected, specifically in Central American and Caribbean countries.

Clear division of functions among the bodies in the region responsible for producing information on international migration in each country

In general, the LAC region presents a clear division of tasks between the entities involved in producing information on international migration.

National/General Departments of Migration-Ministries of Labour-Ministries of Foreign Affairs

These would be the principal organizational method responsible for compiling information. In general, these are national bodies, known as the National or General Departments of Migration, responsible for gathering data at migration control points (records of international entries and exits of people) and also for providing residence permits, for example. In the same way, different ministries, such as those of Labour and Employment, are generally responsible for recording information regarding work permits of foreigners in the country. In the case of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, their activities would consist of issuing the required documentation and would include, in some cases, compiling information on the citizens of the country who are abroad.

National Statistics Institutes (INE)

On the other hand, a second kind of bodies are the National Statistics Institutes (INE), in some cases called Statistical "Offices" or "Departments". These institutes are responsible for the methodological-conceptual design of the national population censuses and household surveys, and are specifically dedicated to generating statistical results based on them.

Central Banks

Central banks must be mentioned separately. These banks manage and compile information which allows them to make balances of payments which include data on remittance flows.

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Little or no interrelation between the national bodies responsible for producing information on international migration

There are very few (or even non-existent) interrelations between each country's different national bodies related to the production of statistical data on international migration. In general, the task carried out by each one of the national entities is performed independently and with an evident lack of coordination. The fact that there is not a method for exchange and/or integration between the different bodies leads to an overlap of efforts and the generation of non-comparable data. Regarding the exchange between national institutions, where it exists, it is reduced to the transfer of information that has already been produced by one of the national organisms —for example, the Department of Migration— to another entity —for example, the National Statistics Office—. In reality, only in the Andean sub-region countries[2], is it possible to see that the official statistics institutions are responsible for processing and disseminating the information gathered by the migration control entities — Departments of Migration— and/or the respective central banks. In general, what has been observed in the national scope of the rest of the countries analysed is the absence of intergovernmental committees that aim to generate statistical data with, for example, the same authorized definitions and concepts.

The international criteria for producing statistical information on international migration are fundamentally based on the recommendations of the United Nations (1998) and are currently under review

The Rapid Assessment that was undertaken has allowed detecting that the criteria which make up the foundation for the production of statistics on international migration in LAC are based on the recommendations of the United Nations (1998) and are currently under review.

The Statistics Institutes, which are responsible for generating information based on censuses and household surveys in the countries in the LAC region, generally apply the recommendations of the United Nations.

The censuses are the instruments which have the most relevance in the production of statistics on international migration in the region. The task of compiling, processing and disseminating the countries' census results especially stands out, which undertaken by CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, and based on its IMILA project. This role of census information as the main provider of results on international migration statistics is observed in the majority of the countries in the region. Less dependence on the census results is detected in the countries of the Andean sub-region and the Caribbean, in which more difficulty in complying the international recommendation of undertaking censuses with a ten-year cycle has been observed. In general, the censuses allow knowing the stock of international immigrants and

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[2] Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

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their attributes. Also, censuses and household surveys are currently including questions on their respective questionnaires which, while there are certain limitations, could contribute to also studying the profile of emigrants, trying to define their attributes them and evaluate the receipt of remittances in households.

The central banks in each country are developing a programme for improving information and procedures regarding remittances. It is based on international parameters that are more in line with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

As regards administrative records, it can be stated that the implementation of international criteria for producing statistical data is practically non-existent both in the data from the records of entries and exits of people in the country, and in the records of residence and/or work permits, as well as in the records of citizens who are abroad.

Information on labour migration

The information produced on labour migration in the different countries in the region is scarce or non-existent. This is because the information that is compiled in those countries, with the exception of the CARICOM countries, is not statistically processed and is therefore impossible to disseminate.

Information on irregular migration

All of the countries have identical difficulties in measuring the phenomenon of irregular migration. This is generally measured from the results of the international entries and exits of people in the country. The problems detected in the LAC region are, among others, the lack of total coverage of border crossings, as well as deficiencies in infrastructure, and quantity and training of the personnel responsible for compiling the information. A source of data to be explored could be that provided by the records that are generated through the current migration regularization policies. Through these records, the residence permits or the granting of regularizations may be considered as proxy indicators of the "irregular" migration phenomenon.

Information on return migration

Information on return migration is obtained from the population census results. These include a series of variables required for measuring this phenomenon in their questionnaires. For example, the place of habitual residence, the place of habitual residence at an earlier date (normally five years) and the place of birth of the individual.

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Information on emigration

The indicators related to emigration are based nearly exclusively on the IMILA project (implemented by CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC). Just as the information is presented in the population census questionnaires, this allows obtaining an approximate view of inter-regional migration, however data on extra-regional migration is very scarce. In order to have more precise and detailed information about extra-regional migration, it would be necessary to incorporate some variables in the measuring instruments used by the receiving countries of this kind of immigration in the EU that would make Latin American emigrants visible.

The population censuses and household surveys have recently been responsible for measuring the attributes of the household members who are abroad, and of the receipt of remittances in households. Among the first of these were the censuses implemented in the 2000 census round by some of the countries in the Central America sub-region (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua), the Andean sub-region (Colombia and Ecuador) and the Hispanic Caribbean (the Dominican Republic). As regards household surveys, the one undertaken by Uruguay is noteworthy.

Measuring emigration based on another type of data source, for example consular records, is still in the beginning phases of development.

Receipt of remittances in the household

The inclusion in some population censuses of questions related to the receipt of remittances in the household has been detected in the censuses of the English speaking Caribbean. However, the quantification (in local currency) of money from the remittances which enter the country is generally done by the central banks of the countries in the region with the purpose of putting together their balances of payments. The results that are produced are heterogeneous and require a methodological/conceptual integration of the countries in the region.

Parameters for assessing statistical quality

Only the population censuses and household surveys use assessment parameters of a quality which fulfils international criteria. The regional statistical reality, based on censuses and household surveys, is heterogeneous in terms of coverage, relevance, quality of content, opportuneness/timeliness and accessibility of the data produced based on the different sources of information.

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Regarding the quality of information from the records generated by the central banks, a process is being developed for the improvement of the information and the procedures which, in the future, would permit improving the provision of statistical data on remittances.

Administrative records generally lack the application of statistical criteria for the production of their data. This is mainly due to the purposes of the records themselves, which are fundamentally aimed at administrative control of migration movements and/or safeguarding national security.

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