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### INVITED SESSION 4: DATA FOR DIVERSE AREAS; THE GEOGRAPHIC DIMENSION IN DATA

NEED FOR DATA THAT IGNORE BOUNDARIES: MIGRATION AND  
TRANSIENT POPULATION MOVEMENTS

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**INTRODUCTION**

This paper presents the case for the need for spatial mobility data that ignore boundaries, national and international. It also reviews strategies to achieve these objectives.

In this connection, it is pertinent to note that intense spatial mobility has been a feature of African populations over the years. The movements have taken a number of forms, including, invasion, pastoralism, nomadism, pilgrimage and movements for trading purposes. Broadly, the major migration patterns of recent years consist of the following. Regarding internal migration, its four major patterns are, inter rural and urban, along with, urban-to-rural and rural-to-urban. Rural-urban migration involves labour migration to rural, agricultural estates, wage and mining sectors. Rural-urban migration entails spontaneous movements to urban areas from rural areas for mainly employment and schooling. Urban migrations pertain to two main types of movements, return migration of retired persons along with unsuccessful urban migrants; while urban-urban migrations consist of the movements for employment and schooling. Among these four categories of movements, inter rural and rural-to-urban migrations have been found to be the most popular in African countries. Another prominent type of movements in recent are displacement, that is, mobility involving persons who because of factors such as wars, civil unrest, drought, desertification, famine, etc., are forced to reside outside their usual places of residence, but are unable or unwilling to move outside their country.

With respect to international migration, in Sub-Saharan Africa, intra-continental labour movements are essentially towards urban centres, more developed agricultural, mining and industrial regions. The large scale migration of refugees is another important

movement in recent. In North Africa, a contemporary international migration flow is the emigration to Western Europe especially from the three Magreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), and more recently, to the oil-endowed countries of the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf and Libya. Migration to the latter set of countries is usually for specified periods of stay, after which migrants are expected to return home.

International and especially internal migrations have featured in the concerns about population issues of African countries. With respect to internal migration, most of the governments in the region have expressed dissatisfaction with the current patterns of spatial population distribution in their countries, especially with regard to the contribution of urban migration towards the growth of primate cities. Relative to international migration, surveys conducted by the United Nations indicate that a majority of African countries are satisfied with their current patterns of immigration and emigration. However, a sizeable and growing number consider their high rates of immigration and emigration, including the influx of refugees, among their prime population problems

#### **ON THE DEFINITION OF MIGRATION**

The existence of diverse concepts of mobility bedevils effort aimed at the identification and measurement of different types of movements, in particular those that ignore boundaries.

Migration is a subset of the movements subsumed under the concept of spatial mobility. Spatial mobility embraces all types of territorial movements irrespective of their temporal and spatial nature. (For a typology of these various movements see table 1). The two major dimensions of spatial mobility are: space and time. Of particular concern to this paper are the spatial criteria.

Spatial mobility involves movements from areas of origin to areas of destination. Thus, two spatial concepts are implied: "area", and "physical distance". The areas of origin/destination have usually been delimited in censuses and surveys to coincide

with administrative subdivisions of countries. Others advocate for specially designed migration reference areas, based, e.g., on economic, environmental and climatic criteria.

A related issue is that intercountry comparisons of international migration rates and patterns are compromised by the utilization in African countries of migration areas with bewildering sizes, varying from the lowest to the highest administrative regions. In Sierra Leone, for example, for the 1963, 1974, and 1985 population censuses, the reference spatial units for the migration questions were the 148 chiefdoms, the smallest administrative subdivisions of the country. But in Ghana for the 1960 population census they were the seven major administrative units (Masser and Gould, 1975).

The temporal aspects of the definition of migration centre around the length of stay continuously in the destination or absence from the origin. For some authors migration must involve a sustained or permanent relocation in the place of destination. But others have also argued that the time period required for a person to qualify as migrant should be flexible and determined for each individual case, taking into account the purpose of the data collection.

The use of physical distance as a criteria for migration is not without problems for two reasons. Firstly, the information on spatial movements are not usually presented in forms that can be easily converted to distance spanned. More intractable is that if even this information is available, the processing and tabulation of the data would be formidable and probably not worth the effort and time.

#### **THE NEED FOR MOBILITY DATA THAT DO NOT PAY ATTENTION TO BOUNDARIES**

At the outset, it is pertinent to briefly state the uses of spatial mobility data in African countries as these uses are also germane to mobility data that ignore boundaries. These include, provision of information on the patterns, trends, causes and consequences of the movements as well as the characteristics of the

movers, needed for national and regional socio-economic development planning, programming and decision-making. The data is also required for the preparation of national and subnational population estimates and projections.

In this connection, it should also be stressed that data based on administrative/political boundaries alongside those based on specially designated spatial units have roles to play in African countries' socio-economic development strategies. In this context, the argument for the need of migration data that ignore boundaries has been succinctly stated as follows:

From an analytical and policy perspective the ideal would involve defining areas by reference to specific variables of analytical interest, or by the characteristics of areas. Areas may be similar or distinguishable on the basis of economic criteria... may not be easily distinguishable on the basis of demographic, cultural or political criteria. (Standing, 1984:36).

One way for the generation of migration data that do not recognize boundaries is by using the concepts, civil divisions and migration-defining areas for the collection, classification and tabulation of migration statistics. Classification done by the civil divisions could satisfy the need for data pertaining to movements over a variety of boundaries, e.g., major as well as minor civil divisions, cities, towns, villages, provinces and districts. The utility of data so classified is obvious, given the uses of administrative units as the spatial reference for the formulation, monitoring and implementation of socio-economic planning, programmes and policies in all African countries.

To also satisfy the needs for data for certain aspects of planning, programmes and policies for which the pertinent spatial units may not be administrative units, data collection, tabulation and analyses could be done based on ecological, climatic, socio-economic and other specified zones of relevance in the particular situation.

That African boundaries straddle language and ethnic groups, since they were arbitrarily demarcated during the colonial period,

is one other major justification for the production of migration data that do not respect national boundaries. This is because with political independence, African governments legalized their inherited boundaries and instituted rules and regulations governing the movements of aliens into their countries, where in many cases during the colonial period and before, free movements were previously allowed. Despite these measures, the control of movements of such traditional migrants- e.g., border inhabitants and nomadic populations- who make frequent visits, sometimes on a daily basis over what were once common ethnic/linguistic areas and grazing lands- has proved difficult:

Many types of mobility in the continuum from rural or urban and from traditional to modern involve the crossing of international boundaries but without reference to them since they either existed from a time before the boundaries were agreed and/or demarcated, or because even after demarcation no control over movement has existed or, for that matter, is possible. (Gould and Prothero, 1975: 40)

The strongest case for migration data that do not respect internal and especially international boundaries is the recent resurgence in regional integration in the continent. Among the provisions of Treaties and Protocols of African integration organizations are those related to the free movements of individuals in member States, i.e., movements that ignore boundaries. For example, the ECOWAS treaty contains a Protocol on free movements of persons, which is being implemented in phases. Similarly, one of the Protocols of the planned African Economic Union pertains to the free movements of persons, rights of residence and establishment.

The rationale for the inclusion of these protocols on free movements of persons is that, "migration fosters the development objectives of integration through the promotion of manpower mobility and various components associated with it including capital, technology and technical transfer." (Onwuka, 1990).

To monitor progress that is being made and problems that are being encountered in the implementation of these protocols as well

as foster activities on the integration process there is need for inter-state migration data on the numbers and characteristics of immigrants and emigrants of the member countries, patterns and trends of movements between member States and between sub-regions and economic unions.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present analysis has underscored the need for the collection, processing and tabulation of data on various migrant and transient populations that ignore boundaries, which information could supplement conventional migration data that use national and international administrative and/or political units as spatial references.

A strategy to improve the collection, processing and tabulation of such data should ideally be implemented within an overall programme to develop migration statistics in general. Elements of such programme should endeavour to fulfil the undermentioned objectives:

- the collection of information that will facilitate identification of major categories of immigrants and emigrants, including migrants and transient population groups that ignore boundaries using e.g., those listed in the typology in table 1;
- the collection of information on the characteristics of these immigrants and emigrants;
- the collection, coding, tabulation and publication of information on countries of origin of international migrants for as many, especially African, countries as possible in population censuses; and
- improvement and utilization of all the main data collection systems for the generation of data on migration.

As well, such a strategy should attempt to surmount the difficulties for identification and measurement of the undermentioned migrants and transient populations that ignore

boundaries, who are more likely to be missed in traditional data collection systems such as border collection systems: e.g., nomads, refugees, circular and seasonal migrants, displaced populations and border international migrants.

The problems with nomadic and refugee populations is briefly described, in order to provide an understanding of the task of identification and measurement of these set of movers (Makannah, 1988). Nomads are continuously on the move, in search of water and grazing land for their herds, and tend to by-pass frontier control points. With reference to refugees, the most intractable problem with their identification and measurement is an acceptable definition of this group, as differences exist among refugee aid agencies, the host and origin countries about criteria for persons to qualify as refugees. The second problem is the uncertainty surrounding the actual or intended periods of stay and the direction of movements of a number.

Therefore, for the identification and enumeration of these and other migrant and transient populations survey statisticians have to institute a number of innovative measures, encompassing the employment of at least two data collection systems, alongside with experimentation with active enumeration methods like tracing techniques.

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**Table 1: A typology of mobility status categories**

**1. Transient**

- Nomads
- Gathers
- Wanderers
- Migratory labourers

**2. Sojourners**

- Circular migrants
- Seasonal migrants
- Compensatory migrants
- Life-cycle stage migrants

**3. Transfers**

**4. Long-term migrants**

- Working-life migrants
  - First-time movers, multiple movers
- Lifetime migrants
  - First-time movers, multiple movers
- Return-migrants
- Step-migrants
- Other long-term migrants

**5. Non-migrants**

- Committed residents
- Undecided residents
- Potential migrants

Source: Standing, 1984