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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

United Nations Network on Migration
Working Better Together

Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2024

International Migrants Day in Asia and the Pacific 2024

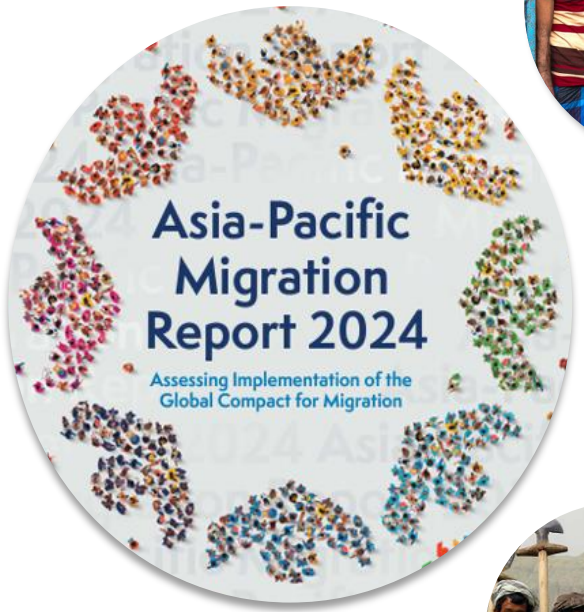
Sabine Henning, Ph.D., Chief, Sustainable Demographic Transition Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP
with input from the Regional UN Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific

16 December 2024, 2:00-4:30 pm, BKK time
CR-3, UN Conference Centre
Bangkok, Thailand















Purpose: Evidence base for the Second Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) in 2025

Objective: Asia-Pacific UN system-wide assessment of the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration – 23 objectives, 10 interdependent guiding principles – across all ESCAP subregions, ESCAP members and associate members

Structure:

(a) Overview of migration in Asia and the Pacific
(b) Ensuring that migration is voluntary, safe, orderly and regular
(c) Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance
(d) Supporting migrants' protection, integration and contribution to development
(e) Improving value-driven and evidence-based policymaking and public debate and enhancing cooperation on migration
(f) Conclusions and recommendations

Time frame: 2020-2024 (taking stock since the *Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020*)

Contributors: 13 UN entities in Asia and the Pacific + review by experts, including non-government stakeholders

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Main message



"People are migrating to build a more **secure future for themselves, their families and communities**. They are motivated by **hopes** to support families, find **opportunities** and make a better **future**, and often driven by, among others, **poverty**, **unsustainable development**, **discrimination**, **inequalities**, **conflicts**, **climate change**, **environmental degradation** and **disasters**.

Migration brings **demographic, social and economic benefits** for countries of origin, transit and destination. It can reduce inequalities and build connections within and between communities and countries if it takes place in a safe, orderly and regular manner. However, migrants and their families are frequently **left behind in terms of development processes**; they may also be targeted for various **human rights violations**. This undermines the benefits of migration. When it takes place in a **well-informed, planned and consensual manner**, with full respect and protection of human rights, **migration can bring benefits to all**."

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Context of international migration in Asia and the Pacific

Vast geographic region, extensive coastlines, **58 per cent of global population**, **40 per cent of the world's international migrant population,** differences in **social and economic development**

Sustainable development megatrends:
demographic shifts, particularly population ageing; urbanization; climate change; the growth of digital technologies; inequalities

COVID-19

53 ESCAP member States and 9 associated member States

Intersecting crisis:
climate change, environmental degradation, disasters, food insecurity, poverty, inequalities, economic crises and conflicts.

Some facts and figures:

- In 2020, almost 67 million international migrants in Asia-Pacific region
- Almost 109 million migrants from the region were living outside their countries of birth
- Most migration is intraregional: about 47 million migrants from the region moved to other countries/areas within the region (71 per cent of migrants in the region came from within the region)



Ensuring that migration is voluntary, safe, orderly and regular

GCM objectives:
2, 5, 6, 12 and 18

Main findings

- **International migration is driven by multiple, often intersecting, factors:**
  - Work remains the main driver; climate change, environmental degradation, disasters, human rights violations, conflict, educational aspirations and family formation/reunification are other, often intersecting drivers
- **New global and regional initiatives such as:**
  - The Asia-Pacific Action Plan 2021–2024 for Implementation of the Sendai Framework
  - Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility
  - 2024 Vientiane Declaration on Skills Mobility, Recognition and Development for Migrant Workers (ASEAN)
  - 2023 International Labour Conference Resolution Concerning a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All
  - 112 ILC Resolution on Decent Work and the CARE Economy (2024)
- **Expansion of regular pathways + fair, decent and ethical recruitment:**
  - India + EU; NCA; Pacific; GCC
  - At least 26 new MOUs and bilateral labour agreements have been signed in Asia and the Pacific (but not all are active)
  - ASEAN guidelines and good practices
    - Partnerships with trade unions and CSOs

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Ensuring that migration is voluntary, safe, orderly and regular

GCM objectives:
2, 5, 6, 12 and 18

Recommendations

- Accelerate implementation of **2030 Agenda**
- Improve the **evidence and knowledge base** on the nexus between climate change, human mobility and migration, inequalities, and health
- **Mainstream migration and mobility** into age-, disability- and gender-responsive policies and action plans
- **Identify and remove barriers** to safe, orderly and regular migration
- Expand ratification of **ILO core Conventions**, migrant worker instruments, C.189 and C.190, and other relevant Conventions,
- Utilize **regional economic communities and migration corridors** to expand legal and flexible pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration at all skill levels
- Ensure **fair and ethical recruitment and decent work** for all through: regulation of recruitment, labour law implementation, access to justice, skills recognition and implementation and monitoring of bilateral labour migration instruments, partnerships with social partners, CSOs, trade unions and others
- Ensure **protection of the rights of women migrant workers**, especially migrant domestic workers and eliminate gender-based discrimination in admission and post-admission policies

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Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance

GCM objectives:
4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21

Main findings

- Work to **eliminate statelessness** in the region continues, with some notable progress, for example, in countries in North and Central Asia
- **Migrant disappearances and deaths** remain a major humanitarian and human rights challenge
- **Smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons** also remain a major challenge in the region with trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality to commit online scams and financial fraud a new and growing trend
- **Border situations** in Asia and the Pacific are very diverse, with governments working to ensure practical, flexible, secure, efficient and reliable approaches to border management
- **Immigration detention**, including of children, still occurs across the region, but notable progress towards a rights-based approach to immigration detention has also been achieved
- **Return and reintegration programmes** are often not comprehensively planned before, during and after migration to ensure shared responsibility between origin and destination countries

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Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance

GCM objectives:
4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21

Recommendations

- Facilitate access for all migrants, regardless of their status, to **civil registration** systems and do not arbitrarily deprive anyone of their **nationality, identity or travel documents**
- End **statelessness** and ensure that the human rights of stateless migrants are respected, protected and fulfilled
- **Protect the lives, dignity and safety of all migrants**, including in transit and at borders
- Increase availability of **safe, affordable and accessible regular pathways** and by means of regularization processes
- Reduce the **risk of trafficking and other exploitation of migrants**; end the **criminalization of migrant victims** and provide appropriate protection and assistance
- Ensure that all **border management agreements** and processes are **rights-based and gender- and age-responsive**
- Work to **end immigration detention, especially of children,** and considering alternatives to detentions; ensure that all migrants in detention are treated with respect and dignity and have legal support
- Ensure that all **migrant returns or deportations** fully respect and protect migrants' human rights

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Supporting migrants' protection, integration and contribution to development

GCM objectives:
14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22

Main findings

- Work to provide consular protection assistance to migrants and their families is ongoing; the **ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations** is an important commitment
- Challenges remain in ensuring migrants **access to basic services**, regardless of status, including to health care (there are lessons learned from COVID-19)
- There are many examples of **community-led initiatives to enhance the integration of migrants** across the region
- Subregional processes, such as the Colombo Process, and national initiatives have focused on **increasing financial literacy**, **formalizing the remittance transfer market** and increasing **competition of financial service providers**
- Countries are working towards **improving access to and portability of social security benefits**
- Although remittance costs continue to be high in many countries in Asia and the Pacific, some progress has been made in making their transfer **faster, safer and cheaper and in fostering financial inclusion of migrants**
- There are **localized efforts to support the implementation of the GCM and the 2030 Agenda**, such as through data collection on migrants at local levels

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Supporting migrants' protection, integration and contribution to development

GCM objectives:
14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22

Recommendations

- Improve **accessibility to consular support** for migrants, including through digital platforms that protect the privacy of migrants, and enhance cooperation between consular services and national authorities
- Provide **access to services** to migrants, regardless of status, including health care, education, housing and legal assistance
- Ensure **migrant inclusion and social cohesion**, regardless of their length of stay, type of contract, gender or other characteristics and support **local authorities and communities** in their efforts to realize social cohesion
- Support **diaspora engagement** and create enabling environments for investment and entrepreneurship
- Adopt legal and regulatory frameworks that **reduce remittance transfer costs**
- Develop and implement tailored **financial literacy programmes** for migrants and family members and create **inclusive financial ecosystems**
- Expand **social protection schemes** to cover all workers, including migrant workers, increase awareness of social security rights and ensure the **portability of social security benefits**

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Improving value-driven and evidence-based policymaking and public debate, and enhancing cooperation on migration

GCM objectives:
1, 3, 7, 17 and 23

Main findings

- **Collection, analysis and publication of data** on migration and migrants has improved, including work undertaken by government entities, UN organizations and non-government stakeholders
- **Pre-employment and pre-departure orientation programmes** for migrants have increased, often supported by non-government stakeholders, including CSOs and trade unions, with good practices providing **access to accurate and timely information to migrants** at all stages of migration
- Too often, migration legislation and policies and practices do not adequately address **discrimination** or counter negative attitudes to migrants, aggravating the vulnerable situations of migrants (in particular regarding gender, family life, children, migrants with disabilities, etc.)
- **National, subregional and regional cooperation and partnerships** on migration have improved through: UN Network on Migration, GCM champion countries series, Stakeholder Advisory Group of Regional UN Network on Migration in Asia and the Pacific, IMRF and VNR participation, RCPs, various subregional platforms, such as ASEAN, Pacific Island Forum, Eurasian Economic Union, etc.)

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Improving value-driven and evidence-based policymaking and public debate, and enhancing cooperation on migration

GCM objectives:
1, 3, 7, 17 and 23

Recommendations

- Strengthen national capacities and international partnerships to **improve data collection, analysis and dissemination** and improve **data disaggregation**, respecting the **right to privacy** of migrants and their families
- Strengthen **pre-departure and post-arrival orientation** to migrants with essential, accurate and culturally-sensitive information that is country- and sector-specific
- Protect migrants in **vulnerable situations**; end the criminalization of migration
- Avoid **family separation** and allow migrants to **reunite with family** and pursue the **best interests of the child** in all stages of migration
- Repeal or amend all laws or measures that may give rise to **discrimination against migrants**
- Combat all **advocacy of hatred, hostility or violence against migrants** through good governance and rights-based and evidence-based discourse
- Support governments and stakeholders in regional, subregional and national **cooperation and partnerships**, including at local levels in **pursuit of GCM & 2030 Agenda implementation**
- Ensure **intentional and meaningful engagement of stakeholders** at all levels

Second Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration - 2025

Dates: 4-6 February 2025

Modality: In-person, United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok

Organizers: ESCAP and the Regional UN Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific

Participation: (a) representatives of ESCAP member and associated members (at highest political levels); (b) intergovernmental organizations; UN bodies, specialized agencies and funds; (c) relevant stakeholders from Asia-Pacific (as per GA resolution 73/195, para 15j)

Mandate for GCM follow-up and review (GA resolutions 73/195, 73/326, and 76/266):

- State-led
- Whole-of-government and whole-of society approach
- Review through intergovernmental measures

Outcome: Report of the meeting

Website: Second Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Objectives of the Second Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the GCM



Take stock of progress made with regard to the 360-degree implementation of the GCM since the first Asia-Pacific GCM Regional Review;

Identify key challenges, **opportunities**, **gaps** and **emerging issues**, as well as promising practices and lessons learned;

Discuss regional priorities and potential areas for **regional cooperation** on international migration in line with the vision and guiding principles of the GCM;

Compile resource requirements, **capacity-building needs**, **policy advice**, **data gathering needs**, **technology** and **partnerships** for full GCM implementation

Facilitate the formulation of key findings and recommendations to inform the 2026 International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

Next steps toward the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the GCM

For member States, observers, intergovernmental organizations and international organizations: letters of invitation sent - registrations: letter of credentials (deadline: 3 January 2025); registration in Indico (deadline: 17 January 2025)

For non-government stakeholders: invitations, following a set of criteria, forthcoming

Call for side events: deadline: 3 January 2025

Meeting website: https://www.unescap.org/events/2025/second-asia-pacific-regional-review-implementation-global-compact-safe-orderly-and

Contact: escap-sdd@un.org

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