Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020

Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration

The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) serves as the United Nations' regional hub, promoting cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. The largest regional intergovernmental platform with 53 member States and 9 associate members, ESCAP has emerged as a strong regional think-tank offering countries sound analytical products that shed insight into the evolving economic, social and environmental dynamics of the region. The Commission's strategic focus is to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which it does by reinforcing and deepening regional cooperation and integration to advance connectivity, financial cooperation and market integration. The research and analysis undertaken by ESCAP, coupled with its policy advisory services, capacity building and technical assistance to governments aims to support countries' sustainable and inclusive development ambitions.

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Disclaimer

☐ Marcel Crozet/ILO.
Visa applicant wishing to go abroad at a migrant center, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Members of the Regional United Nations Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific

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International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Bank

Acknowledgements

Foreword

Countries in Asia and the Pacific have been places of origin, destination and transit for migrants and their families for centuries. Today, the number of international migrants, to, from and within the region, is at an all-time high. Motivated by new opportunities, enabled by innovative connections and technologies, driven by conflicts, emerging threats and the effects of unsustainable development, and responding to demand from abroad, large numbers of people of all ages and genders move to, from, within and beyond the region.

The complexity, linkages and impacts of this multidimensional reality are profound, creating opportunities and challenging actors within and outside the region. Every day, migrants reshape societies of origin, destination and transit, contribute to economic growth, innovation and sustainable development, and make the region more prosperous and liveable. However, the most positive impacts of migration are only possible when migration is safe, orderly and regular, and, above all, when the human rights of all migrants and their families are protected.

On 10 December 2018, United Nations Members States adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration at an intergovernmental conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, followed by the formal endorsement by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018. The Global Compact for Migration is a historic achievement: it is the first intergovernmentally-adopted framework for cooperation addressing all aspects of migration governance in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

The Global Compact for Migration rests on the core purposes and principles of the United Nations, including its Charter, international human rights law, international labour law and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among others. Its cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles are: people-centeredness; international cooperation; national sovereignty; rule of law and due process; sustainable development; human rights; gender-responsiveness; child-sensitivity; whole-of-government approach; and whole-of-society approach.

To help ensure the success of the Global Compact for Migration, a mechanism exists for international follow-up and reviews of progress, including at local, national, regional and global levels. These reviews will take place in the framework of the United Nations, using a State-led approach, but also involving all relevant stakeholders.

At the regional level, member States invited relevant subregional, regional and cross-regional processes, platforms and organizations, including the United Nations Regional Commissions, to carry out reviews of implementation of the Global Compact for Migration within their respective regions, beginning in 2020. These reviews will feed into the International Migration Review Forums, at the global level, scheduled to take place every four years and beginning in 2022.

In Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is being organized by ESCAP and the Regional United Nations Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific, using the ESCAP platform. The Regional Review will take place in Bangkok and virtually from 10 to 12 March 2021.

In preparation for the first regional review, ESCAP and the Regional United Nations Network have authored the Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020, which takes stock of implementation of the Global Compact for Migration in ESCAP member States. In accordance with the indicative clustering of the Global Compact for Migration objectives set out in General Assembly resolution 73/326 on the organization of round tables for the International Migration Review Forums, and recognizing the cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles of the Global Compact for Migration, the main chapters focus on: (1) migration levels and trends in Asia and the Pacific; (2) ensuring that migration is voluntary, regular, safe and orderly; (3) protecting migrants through rights-based border governance and border management measures; (4) supporting migrants' protection, integration and contribution to development; and (5) strengthening evidence-based policymaking, public debate and cooperation for safe, orderly and regular migration. A separate chapter is devoted to the devastating short- and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants and their families, as the

world nears the end of the first year of the pandemic, with a special focus on health-related, migration, economic and social impacts. The report concludes with a series of recommendations on the way forward towards a comprehensive approach to safe, orderly and regular migration in the Asia-Pacific region.

The analyses in the report are based on the latest publicly available evidence on international migration in Asia and the Pacific, desk research by members of the Regional United Nations Network, and information provided by country offices of Network members. The good practices described here were collected from States, international organizations and relevant stakeholders working in the region. While they address elements of the Global Compact for Migration, they have not been independently verified and are neither exhaustive nor always geographically balanced. The report authors also benefitted from knowledge, analysis and recommendations gathered at an expert group meeting on the draft report held at ESCAP on 29 and 30 July 2020.

COVID-19 has and will continue to have especially dire effects on people and communities on the move. At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted migrants' contributions to communities around the globe, including socioeconomic contributions. The Global Compact for Migration provides a blueprint for international cooperation on migration. Safe, orderly and regular migration can reduce the vulnerability of migrants and societies to the negative impacts of COVID-19 and future pandemics, and help in recovery and building back better, stronger, more inclusive and resilient communities that protect human rights, stimulate strong socioeconomic recovery and growth, and accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Greater regional and subregional cooperation on migration can contribute to a more effective COVID-19 response, and to maximizing the benefits of migration for all.

The conclusions and recommendations of this report are intended for consideration by ESCAP member States and associate members, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a collaborative and comprehensive response to the call for action of the Global Compact for Migration.

In this spirit, we sincerely hope that the *Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020* will contribute to wider discussion and understanding of migration and development, to national policy formulation, and to greater regional cooperation in making migration safe, orderly and regular in Asia and the Pacific and beyond, now and in the future.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Nenette Motus

Coordinator, Asia Pacific UN Network
on Migration, and Regional Director,
IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Executive summary

International migration is a defining and expanding global reality. Its levels, complexity and impacts have increased over time. Migrants have been recognized as key accelerators of sustainable development, yet they face challenges in countries of origin, destination and transit. Migrants and their families everywhere face risks to their safety, dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their migratory status.

Recognizing these facts, and determined to improve

coordination and cooperation on migration, which is critical to address the challenges and opportunities of migration now and in the future.

The years 2020 and 2021 mark the first time that regional commissions, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 73/195 and 73/326, and in collaboration with regional partners, are reviewing the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration within their respective regions. These regional reviews will contribute to the work of the International Migration Review Forums, the first of which will take place in 2022. ESCAP and the Regional

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