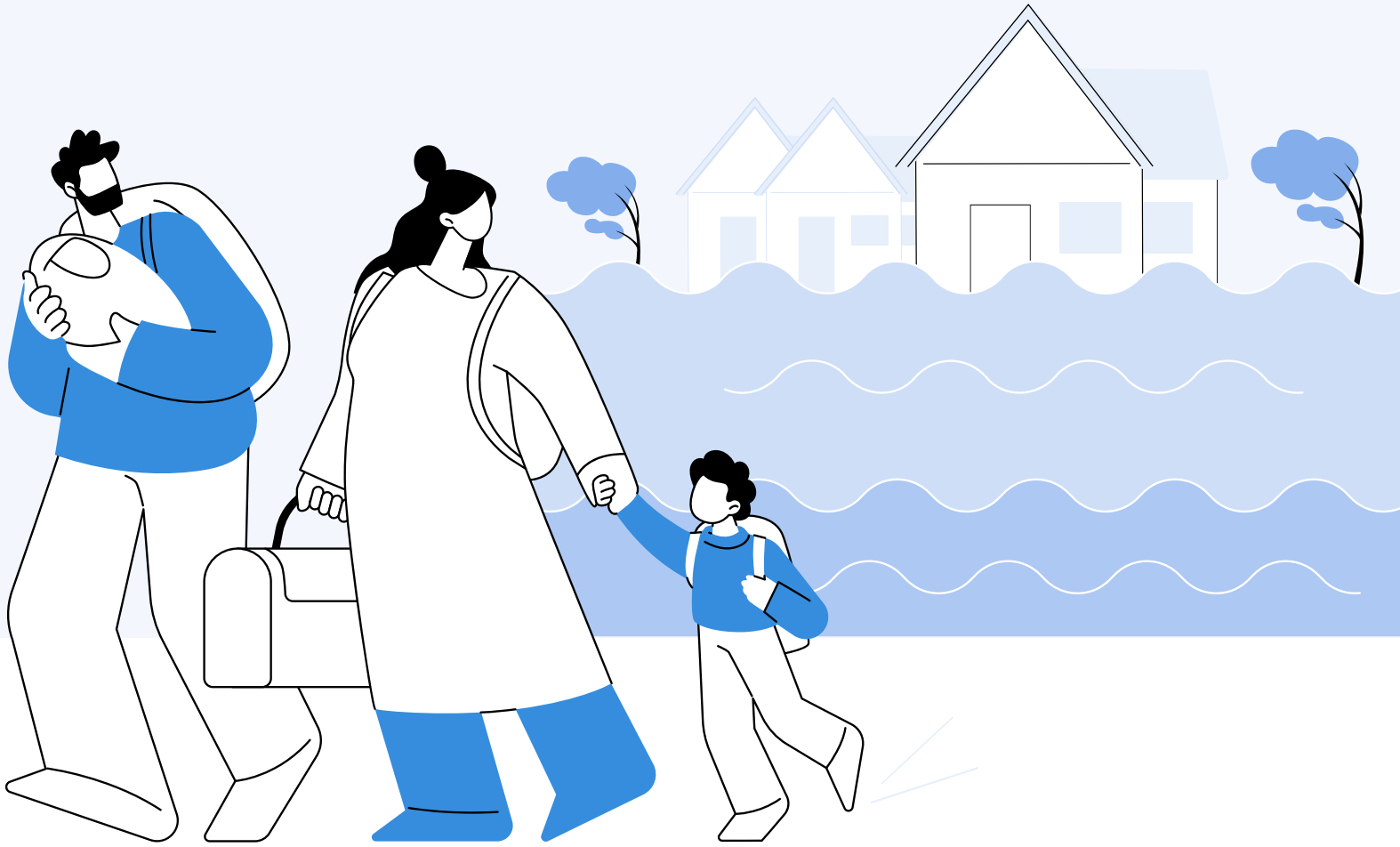
Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2022

IOM Asia–Pacific Regional Data Hub



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IOM Asia–Pacific Regional Data Hub

RDH
IOM Regional Data Hub
Asia and the Pacific

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Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADFM	Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration
ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AMPAA	Afghan Medical Professionals Association of America
BPS	Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistics Indonesia)
BP2MI	Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board
BMET	Bureau of manpower, Employment and Training (Bangladesh)
BE&OE	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (Pakistan)
CDR	Call Detail Records
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
DSID	Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement
ECR	Emigration Check Required
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EGRISS	Expert Group on Refugees, Internally Displaced People and Statelessness Statistics
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDI	IOM Global Data Institute
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMRF	International Migration Review Forum
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MGI	Migration Governance Indicator
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
MMP	Missing Migrants Project
MOM	Ministry of Manpower (Singapore)
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
MiGOF	Migration Governance Framework
MoLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (Nepal)

NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDD	Platfom on Disaster Displacement
PIC	Pacific Island Countries
PLS	Pacific Labour Scheme
PALM	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
ROI	Refugee Opportunity Index
RRI	Refugee Response Index
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SMI	Solutions and Mobility Index
SWP	Seasonal Worker Programme
SOGIE	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression
TD&B	Travel Document and Bearer
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protect Act
UNU	United Nations University
UHRI	Universal Human Rights Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster and Risk Reduction
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD	United States dollars
VoTs	Victims of trafficking
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

Terminology

Asia–Pacific / Asia and the Pacific	In this document, the referral of countries within the Asia–Pacific region follows IOM's definition and includes the following countries: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Viet Nam and Vanuatu.
Asylum seeker	"A person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his or her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In case of a negative decision, the person must leave the country and may be expelled, as may any non-national in an irregular or unlawful situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds."[1]
East Asia	The East Asia subregion under IOM definition includes China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea.
Forced migration	Forced migration is "a migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion, or coercion."[1] The definition includes a note that clarifies that, "(w)hile not an international legal concept, this term has been used to describe the movements of refugees, displaced persons (including those displaced by disasters or development projects), and, in some instances, victims of trafficking. At the international level, the use of this term is debated because of the widespread recognition that a continuum of agency exists rather than a voluntary/forced dichotomy and that it might undermine the existing legal international protection regime."[1]
International migrant	"Any person who is outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national, or, in the case of a stateless person, his or her State of birth or habitual residence. The term includes migrants who intend to move permanently or temporarily, and those who move in a regular or documented manner as well as migrants in irregular situations."[1]
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	"Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."[1]
Irregular migration	"Movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination."[1]
Labour migrant / migrant worker	"A person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national."[1]
Migrant smuggling	"The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident."[1]
Migrant stock	Migrant stock refers to, for statistical purposes, "the total number of international migrants present in a given country at a particular point in time who have ever changed their country of usual residence."[2]
Non-refoulement	The principle of non-refoulement refers to the "prohibition for States to extradite, deport, expel or otherwise return a person to a country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened, or where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would risk being subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, or would be in danger of being subjected to enforced disappearance, or of suffering another irreparable harm."[1]

Refugee	"A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (Art. 1(A)(2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1 A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol)."[1]
Remittances	"Personal monetary transfers, cross border or within the same country, made by migrants to individuals or communities with whom the migrant has links."[1]
South Asia	The South Asia subregion under IOM definition includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
South-East Asia	The South-East Asia subregion under IOM definition includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.
South-West Asia	The South-West Asia subregion under IOM definition includes Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.
The Pacific	The Pacific subregion under IOM definition includes Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
Trafficking in persons / human trafficking	Trafficking in persons refers to "(t)he recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation."[1]

[1] Glossary on Migration. International Organization for Migration (2019).

[2] Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses. UNSD (2017, p.9).

IOM staff carried out a distribution of relief items to flood-affected people in Sindh and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan. © IOM 2022/ Usman GHANI

Foreword

Sarah Lou Ysmael Arriola

Regional Director,
IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Home to nearly half of the global population, the Asia–Pacific region holds remarkable significance due to its dynamic and complex population movements. The latest estimates on international migration show that by mid-2020, a staggering 83 million individuals from the Asia–Pacific region moved outside their countries of origin. This figure represents 30 per cent of the international migration stock worldwide, emphasizing the crucial role of migration in the region.

After the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries in the region witnessed a gradual reopening of their borders, allowing for partial to full resumption of international mobility by the end of 2022. However, although countries in Asia and the Pacific are transitioning into the recovery phase of the pandemic, migrants still face long-lasting challenges caused by the pandemic, which have compounded pre-existing vulnerabilities and created new risks.

These risks include the alarming rise of online scamming for the purpose of trafficking and forced labour in South-East Asian countries. Moreover, migrant workers – particularly those lacking regular status – continue to be disproportionately exposed to unfair pay, extensive working hours, forced labour and other forms of exploitation. Ongoing conflict and persecution in some parts of Asia–Pacific region has fuelled ongoing displacements, while climate-induced disasters further displaced millions in countries like Bangladesh, China, Pakistan and the Philippines.

Despite these challenges, migration remains crucial in Asia and the Pacific. The convergences of crises in the region have placed greater emphasis on the need to strengthen partnerships, reinforce strategies to address specific concerns and actively utilize existing frameworks that safeguard migrant rights. These actions may provide sustained solutions in response to the complex interplay of conflict, climate impacts and ongoing socioeconomic disparities among migrant communities in the region. Accurate, accessible and disaggregated migration data is therefore necessary to understand the complex migratory patterns in the region.

As we approach the midpoint of the Decade of Action, it is imperative we improve the disaggregation by migratory status, sex, gender and age to inform policymakers and allow them to create evidence-based policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and meet the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

The Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2022 highlights the main migration trends of several types of migration – labour migration, irregular flows, conflict- and disaster-induced movements and returns. The report presents important stories of migrants' vulnerabilities in 2022, but also highlights the resilience of migrants and their contributions to societies across the region. In addition, the report explores the implications of technology and innovation for migration and sustainable development. As in previous editions, the Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report builds the foundation for identifying regional data availability and gaps on several migration dimensions.

I look forward to exploring the insightful and diverse content of this report, and I encourage policymakers, practitioners and researchers, as well as fellow humanitarian and peace-building partners, to do the same. Understanding the complex nature of migration and the lives of those on the move is key for the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies that will facilitate safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, and to leave no one behind.

IOM staff conducting regular consultations with community leaders to collect information on community needs and population size in Herat province of Afghanistan. © IOM 2021/ Muse MOHAMMED

Foreword

Koko Warner

Director,
IOM Global Data Institute

Climate change is expected to increase migration and displacement, underscoring the crucial need for a comprehensive national data ecosystem to address this challenge. The Asia–Pacific region is under the influence of extreme weather events linked to climate change, leading to increased migration decisions, particularly along established migration pathways. The link between climate change and displacement is clear, with millions of individuals worldwide forced to flee their homes annually, predominantly due to disaster-induced displacement. In 2022, in the Asia–Pacific region alone, weather-related hazards have led to a staggering number of internal displacements, making it the most affected region globally. The escalating frequency and intensity of these hazards exacerbate humanitarian crises and entail significant economic losses. To effectively respond to the implications of climate change, strengthening the role of data-based reports is crucial, such as through this Migration Data Report. Evidence-based reporting enables us to identify trends, anticipate challenges and devise targeted solutions that address the diverse needs of migrants and host communities alike while also facilitating the monitoring of progress, the evaluation of intervention impact and identification of areas that require additional attention and investment.

Timely, reliable and comparable data empowers policymakers, practitioners and advocates to protect migrants' rights and well-being by developing evidence-based policies. Data-driven decision-making facilitates international and regional dialogue and enhances the visibility of migration issues in development agendas. Data plays a pivotal role towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Migration to drive progress, foster accountability and ensure that countries remain at the forefront of inclusive and sustainable development and migration governance.

However, more action is needed to translate SDG data frameworks into results by improving the quality of migration data and linking the relevance of such data to these objectives. Considering the limited availability of migration-relevant data in this area, IOM's Global Data Institute strives to promote efforts to improve data collection, analysis and disaggregation by migratory status, sex and age. All these are crucial factors to ensure that all migrants are accounted for data-informed policies and interventions that address their specific needs and contributions across the globe. By enhancing our analysis and building State capacity to collect, report and analyse data on disaster displacement, we can better identify communities at greater risk and collaborate with national and local governments to prepare and plan for future disaster events. Improved understanding of human mobility, facilitated by initiatives such as IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix and the utilization of alternative data sources such as big data will play a crucial role in comprehending the influence of a changing climate on migration decision-making in Asia and the Pacific.

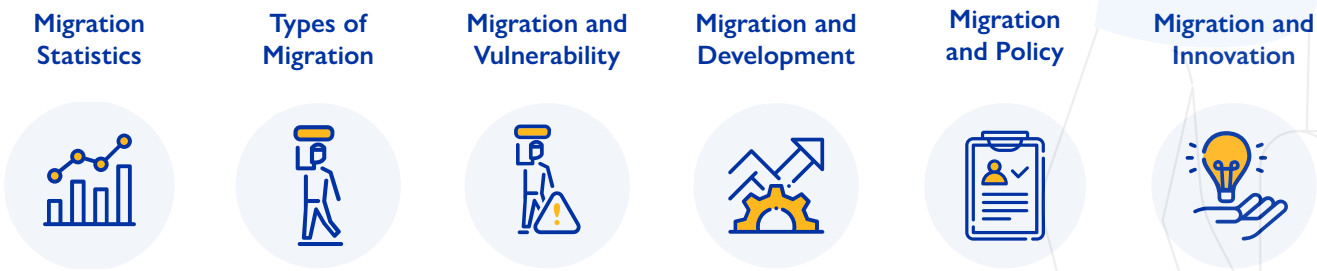
The Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2022 stands as a testament to our commitment to data-driven decision-making and to the indispensable role that consolidated data play in strengthening our understanding of migration trends. Under the Regional Data Hub (RDH), the Migration Data Report also provides an overview of disaster-induced displacement trends in the Asia–Pacific region and explores global and regional agendas on climate change and displacement, highlighting the collaboration between governments and the international community in preventing and reducing the risks and effects of disasters and displacement. Additionally, the Report serves as a critical tool in providing insights into the interlinkages between various types and aspects of migration as well as specific challenges faced by migrants. Recognizing the significant importance of migration data and collaborating with governments will enable us to effectively manage migration while respecting the dignity and human rights of individuals on the move in Asia and the Pacific. We hope this report will foster fruitful discussions, informed action and transformative change in this endeavour.

Executive summary

While the COVID-19 pandemic may no longer be the primary driver behind migration dynamics in 2022, its repercussions have left lasting indirect consequences, persistently influencing migration patterns within and across the Asia–Pacific region. Amid this changing context, 2022 also saw renewed commitments to addressing new challenges that arise during the transition to post-pandemic conditions.

In line with monitoring the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the objectives set in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI), this third edition of the Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report aims to consolidate the latest evidence on the migration landscape in the region for 2022. In addition to reviewing the consolidated efforts that are being made toward achieving these global agendas, the report highlights major gaps and potential pathways to strengthening migration data and governance in Asia and the Pacific. The Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2022 is structured around the six thematic pillars of IOM Asia–Pacific Regional Data Hub. Considering the existing data gaps, the available information allowed the development of this yearly study on the migration landscape in the region, resulting in key findings covering multiple core migration themes.

Figure 1. RDH Thematic Pillars



Migration Statistics

Population Prospect: The Role of International Migration

Migration will likely remain an influential factor in the region's demographic outlook over the next century – not only in terms of the share of population change attributable to net international migration but also in relation to the size, composition and patterns of international and internal migrations – especially under demographic transitions marked by population ageing in many parts of the world.

4.4 billion

Total population projected for Asia and the Pacific by the end of 2022 (DESA, 2022)

50%

of the world population

The latest round of global population estimates and projections released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs suggest that, by the end of 2022, the projected total population in the Asia–Pacific region is 4.4 billion, which makes up around half of the world population. In this region, the total population is projected to continue to grow, albeit at a decreasing rate, until 2052. Four out of the 10 countries in the world projected to be most affected by population decline by 2050 are expected to come from the region, namely, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, and four of the 10 countries with the largest increases in population are also from the region, namely, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Bangladesh.

4/10

countries most affected by population decline worldwide by 2050 are from this region

4/10

countries with the largest population increase worldwide by 2050 are from this region

At the regional level, population change is simultaneously driven by natural change (the balance of births over deaths) and net migration (the balance of immigration over emigration) in opposite directions until the end of 2050 – with a significant yet slowing natural increase, and a steady surplus of emigration over immigration. This is especially prominent among countries with young populations such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Pacific Island countries.

-1.24 million

Net migration projected for Asia and the Pacific during 2020–2030

- Projected population decline in high-income economies partially offset by net migration surplus

Underneath this overarching trend lie the diversities across countries in the region. Over the next few decades, immigration can contribute to partially offset high levels of natural decrease and hence population decline in major high-income economies in the region, especially in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, and to counteract low natural increase, as mainly seen in Australia and New Zealand.

Migration Statistics and Global Frameworks

The average progress in SDGs may disproportionately exclude some groups with distinct demographic or socioeconomic characteristics such as migrants and refugees. Despite many important interlinkages between migration and sustainable development, global and regional data availability for migration-relevant SDG indicators is low, meaning migrants remain largely invisible in official SDG data. Out of 24 SDG indicators recommended for disaggregation by migratory status, some internationally comparable data exist for six indicators related to education and labour across Asia and the Pacific, but the number of countries with such data is low.

6/24

SDG indicators with data disaggregated by migratory status in few Asia–Pacific countries (IOM, 2022)

Types of Migration

Labour Migration

Regional overview: Trend analysis of main origins and destinations

The findings reveal a trend of recovery of both the outflow and inflow of labour migration from and to Asia and the Pacific, as well as some emerging paths as the pandemic's impacts began to subside.

- Country-level analysis of main origins and destinations in the region reveals that the outflow of workers abroad, especially from South Asian countries, has exhibited robust recovery in 2022 – with Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal surpassing pre-pandemic levels, if not reaching record highs. The inflow and stock of migrant workers in some main destination countries in the region showed partial to full resumption in 2022.

The outflow of workers abroad has exhibited robust recovery in 2022

- These observed trends correspond to various factors including the prevailing conditions in the origin and destination countries. Some destination-specific factors observed point to the volume of economic opportunities, labour demand for economic recovery and growth, as well as shifting demographic structures. The outflow of migrant workers was in some cases prompted by an increasingly challenging domestic economic environment in origin countries amid various shocks.

Conflict-Induced Displacements

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on the horizon, it is important to acknowledge current displacement dynamics. Insights and key figures presented for 2022 can help frame how to protect and assist people in situations of displacement as well as discuss approaches to preventing further displacement and ways to reduce the effects that ensue from mass displacement in countries facing complex crises.

103 million

People displaced worldwide as of mid-2022 (UNHCR, 2022)

In Asia and the Pacific

4.7 million

refugees as of mid-2022 (UNHCR, 2022)

796,000

asylum-seekers as of mid-2022 (UNHCR, 2022)

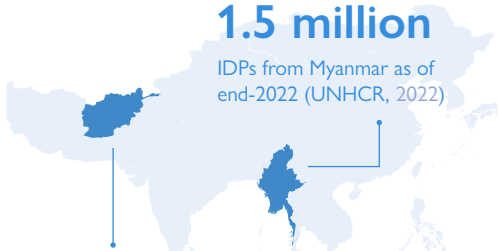
7.3 million

IDPs as of end-2022 (IDMC, 2023)

Concurrently to general findings globally and in other regions, the majority of displaced persons in Asia and the pacific (89%) flee to a neighbouring low- to lower-middle income countries unable to shoulder the responsibility of supporting migrant needs due to scarce resources.

Most conflict-induced displacement in the region was concentrated in Afghanistan and Myanmar. The latter two along with China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan composed 91 per cent of the total stock of refugees and asylum-seekers as of mid-2022.

Stock of IDPS from complex crises:



1.5 million

IDPs from Myanmar as of end-2022 (UNHCR, 2022)

5.9 million

IDPs from Afghanistan of mid-2022 (IOM, 2022)

Although recent displacement flows across international borders for the year are less than those of 2021 due to factors including safety and security constraints, further increases caused by the upscaling of the Afghanistan and Myanmar crises can be expected.

Other populations of concern (UNHCR, 2022):

1.8 million

host communities affected by complex crises

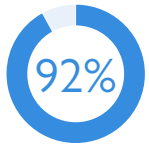
1.5 million

Rohingyas identified globally

309,000

people in need of protection

Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Iran were among the largest countries of asylum in the region, accounting for close to two-thirds of (60%) all refugees and asylum-seekers hosted in the Asia–Pacific region while also were among the largest countries of asylum worldwide (top 10).



of internal displacements in Afghanistan were were driven by troop withdrawals in August of 2021

Between mid-December 2021 to April 2022, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan accrued by 151,766 individuals, 92 per cent (or 139,725) of which were driven by troop withdrawals in August of 2021. Likewise, in Myanmar, the vast majority of internal displacements (80% or 567,000) were recorded between January to June of 2022.

Environmental and Climate Migration: A Focus on Disaster-Induced Displacements

In Asia and the Pacific, disasters induced 22.5 million internal displacements in 2022 – 70 per cent of all disaster-related displacements worldwide.

22.5 million
internal disaster-induced displacements in Asia and the Pacific (IDMC, 2023)

8.2 million
displacements in Pakistan by the end of 2022

In Pakistan, over 8 million people were displaced due to the unprecedented flooding that covered 33 per cent of the country's surface area. Meanwhile, China recorded over 2.3 million displacements in two separate events and is on track to reach record levels of displacements. Moreover, in Afghanistan two earthquakes in 2022 displaced 96,000 individuals, the second deadliest on record in the last 20 years.

5.4 million
displacements in the Philippines by the end of 2022

In October 2022, more than 3 million displacements in the Philippines were recorded after the Tropical Cyclone Paeng made landfall.

Return Migration

IOM-assisted return

In 2022, IOM assisted a total of 6,225 migrants from 26 Asia–Pacific countries or areas to return to their countries of origin. The top five countries of origin in Asia and the Pacific region for IOM-assisted returns were Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Mongolia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

6,225
IOM-assisted returnees

84% male adults
16% female adults

571
in vulnerable situations

The majority of IOM-assisted returnees (84%) were male adults and 16 per cent were female adults. However, at the origin country level, the proportion of female assisted returnees was comparably high in the Philippines (54%) and Mongolia (52%).

In addition to general cases of IOM-assisted voluntary returns in 2022, 571 cases were related to returning migrants in vulnerable situations, including migrants with health-related needs (88%), victims of human trafficking (11%) and unaccompanied or separated children (1%). Male returnees constituted the largest assisted group of health-related needs and victims of trafficking (68%).

Other cases of return and reintegration

In 2022, 100,270 third-country nationals from around the world, who were found to be in an irregular status in European Union countries, returned following an order to leave – 13,465 cases corresponded to nationals from 22 Asia–Pacific countries. The majority of nationals from the region who returned following an order to leave were originally from India (21%), Pakistan (20%), Bangladesh (9%), China (8%) and Afghanistan (8%) – a similar trend as seen in 2020 and 2021.

Amid the security crisis in Afghanistan, neighbouring countries carried out deportations of Afghan refugees and migrants throughout 2022. The reintegration process posed persistent complex challenges, encompassing obstacles in accessing crucial services such as education and health care, as well as limited economic opportunities that impeded their capacity to rebuild their lives and provide for their families.

Assessments conducted in 2022 amongst migrants from Myanmar (573) and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (524) returning from Thailand revealed that:

- One third of surveyed migrants from Myanmar who returned from Thailand experienced exploitative practices at work and high levels of debt, and had no savings to cover basic needs upon return.
- Of those migrants who returned to Lao People's Democratic Republic, not including short-time visitors, only a small share had a job lined up.

13,465
nationals of Asia–Pacific countries returned following an order to leave from 29 European Union countries (EUROSTAT, 2023)

Irregular Migration

Irregular migration is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon, with forms of irregularities intersecting migrants' entry, stay and work-related status in a country.

- IOM data on travel document falsification in airports and land border crossing points in several countries in the Asia–Pacific region detected a relative decrease in the share of genuine documentation from 90 per cent in 2021 to 74 per cent in 2022. Conversely, the share of fraudulent documentation increased from 8 per cent in 2021 to 16 per cent in 2022, while the share of imposter cases grew from 2 per cent in 2021 to 9 per cent in 2022.

90% → 74%
a decrease of genuine documentation from 2021 to 2022

- Irregular migrants do not always benefit from public benefits and health services, and cases of human smuggling and detention or arrest have persisted in Asia and the Pacific in 2022. Moreover, migrant smuggling often becomes the only option for people in Afghanistan or Myanmar to leave the country, creating a lucrative and under-policed market.

Migration and Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities Related to Migration and Forced Displacement

While the pandemic's impacts remain tangible for vulnerable groups in the Asia–Pacific region, for example limiting their access to asylum, humanitarian assistance, services and livelihoods, other factors and aspects of vulnerabilities have come to the public's attention in 2022, such as migrant workers' rights. Specifically, migrant workers from Asia–Pacific countries have denounced unfair and unlawful recruitment and working conditions in Qatar and other popular destinations, where there is often a lack of written working contracts, unlawful working periods, earnings below minimum wage and dangerous working conditions. Migrant workers are also more prone to human smuggling and trafficking, discrimination, racism and xenophobia compared to non-migrant workers.

- Migrant workers with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) in South-East Asia have reported facing several challenges, such as discrimination, harassment, fear for safety and employment possibilities, in their country of origin, transit and destination.
- Migrant workers continue to experience problems in housing and health matters, with many living in poor housing conditions, and some still unable to access COVID-19 vaccines.
- In Myanmar, 2022 recorded an increase of 10.71 million people in need (from 3.69 million in 2021 to 14.4 million in 2022), whose physical and mental well-being were heavily affected throughout the year. In Afghanistan, the number of people in need increased by 6 million (from 18.4 million in 2021 to 24.4 million in 2022). IDPs, refugees and returnees are particularly vulnerable to the situation in the country, and still lack food security and cash.
- Some scoring mechanisms such as the Refugee Opportunity Index and the Refugee Response Index point out national policy shortcomings, encourage policy reforms that benefit refugees, compare refugee policies across countries and measure progress toward economic integration and inclusive growth for refugees.

Migrant Deaths and Disappearances

In the call of SDG indicator 10.7.3 to measure the "number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination", the Missing Migrants Project is dedicated to informing this gap; no governmental entity currently collects such data although it is a necessity in providing lifesaving assistance.

As of January 2023, the IOM Missing Migrants Project reported 5,886 migrant deaths and disappearances for 2022 worldwide. Reported deaths and disappearances in Asia–Pacific countries amounted to 1,000 individuals or around 17 per cent of the global figures, representing a 3-percentage point increase from the previous year.

5,886
migrant deaths and disappearances worldwide

1,123
migrant deaths and disappearances from Asia and the Pacific

1,000
asylum-seekers as of mid-2022

727
isolated incidents in the Asia–Pacific region

In 2022, 727 reported migration incidents that led to the death or disappearance of migrants took place in the Asia–Pacific region. Over half of the locations (487) at which the incidents took place, and routes taken, remain unknown while the rest, all 240 incidents (or 33%) took place on South Asian routes from Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran (235), or from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Türkiye (5). Most deaths and disappearance incidents in Asia and the Pacific reportedly occurred in Afghanistan (480) and in the Islamic Republic of Iran (212).

Migrant deaths and missing persons primarily concerned migrants from Afghanistan, who compose 69 per cent of the regional deaths and 80 per cent of victims in the subregion.

727
reported migration incidents that led to the death or disappearance of migrants took place in the Asia–Pacific region

487
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240
incidents took place on South Asian routes from Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran or Türkiye

69%

of death victims in the region were from Afghanistan

The deaths of 688 Afghans attempting to leave their country of origin were recorded, including 480 deaths at Afghanistan's external borders and another 204 in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Many of these deaths occurred due to vehicle accidents (247) or to sickness and lack of access to health care (228).

At least 53 people from Indonesia died during migration to Malaysia in 2022, with the likelihood of several invisible shipwrecks having occurred, and another 192 Asians were recorded to have died during migration on routes across Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas.

In 2022, one in two global deaths (62%) was caused by drowning. However, the number of hazardous deaths in 2022 reached unprecedented heights, composing 31 per cent of deaths and 35 per cent of incidents for the region.

1/2

In 2022, one in two global deaths (62%) was caused by drowning

Trafficking in Persons

Out of 36 Asia–Pacific countries, territories or areas that were assessed by the United States Department of State against government efforts in counter-trafficking, four countries, territories or areas ranked under Tier 1, indicating full compliance with Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPA)'s minimum standards. Twenty-four countries, territories or areas ranked under Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch list, indicating that governments do not fully meet the TVPA minimum standards but are making significant efforts to comply with those standards.

4/36

of countries, territories or areas in Asia and the Pacific with available data are in full compliance with Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPA)'s minimum standards (US Department of State, 2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the tourism industry in South-East Asia, leading to the closure of registered gambling businesses in special economic zones. Some turned to illegal online gambling and scam investment operations to generate income. It is estimated that thousands of victims, mainly from the Mekong region, are reportedly held against their will and forced to work in sophisticated cyber scams:

- Based on data collected through IOM operations in 2022, online scamming centres operating in the subregion transport workforce from all over the world, including Europe, West Africa and South America.
- Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao People's Democratic Republic have transitioned from being countries of origin of victims of trafficking to becoming countries of destination, with Thailand as the leading transit country.
- From the total of IOM's caseload of assisted victims of trafficking in 2022, 36 per cent – around 300 victims – was related to exploitation in online scamming in centres based in South-East Asia.

36%

of IOM-assisted victims of trafficking were related to exploitation in online scamming centres in South-East Asia (IOM, 2023)

- The top five countries of origin were Viet Nam, Indonesia, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic and India (in descending order), and the top five countries of destination correspond to Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Malaysia (in descending order).

The top five countries of origin:

The top five countries of destination:

Source: IOM, 2023.

Note: These maps are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Migration and Development

Remittances

With an estimated 626 billion United States dollars (USD) of remittances expected to flow to low- and middle-income countries worldwide in 2022, if leveraged optimally, remittances can most effectively finance sustainable development and improve livelihoods of migrants' families and communities back home. It is supported by evidence that remittances contribute to several SDGs, including but not limited to poverty reduction (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), financial inclusion and inclusive growth (SDG 8) and, through utility bill payments, access to water and sanitation (SDG 6) and energy (SDG 7).

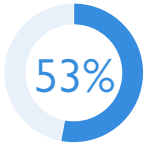
310.7 billion

USD remittance inflows to Asia and the Pacific (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2022)

Remittance inflows

According to the World Bank/KNOMAD estimates (November 2022), the Asia–Pacific region received remittance inflows of USD 310.74 billion, comprising 39 per cent of the world total. The 2022 figure represented a 2.1 per cent increase in remittance inflows to the Asia–Pacific region from the previous year, compared to a 1.7 per cent increase worldwide, despite the global economic slowdown.

Remittance inflows in Asia and the Pacific (USD billions)



of corridors involving Asia–Pacific countries as the destinations with remittance costs of below 5 per cent (World Bank, 2022)

Within the Asia–Pacific region, South Asia (43%), followed by South-East Asia (26%) and East Asia (21%), recorded the largest volume of remittance inflows. Compared to 2021, South Asia and South-East Asia registered growth in remittance inflows in 2022, while other subregions showed a downward turn, especially the Pacific and South-West Asia.

The largest recipients of remittances in the Asia–Pacific region in 2022 were expected to be India, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal and the Republic of Korea (in descending order). Notably, remittance inflows to India were anticipated to grow by 11 per cent to USD 100 billion, making the country the first ever to reach this threshold.

- The top 10 recipients of remittances as a share of gross domestic national proudct in the Asia–Pacific region were expected to be Tonga, Samoa, Nepal, Marshall Islands, the Philippines, Fiji, Pakistan, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Kiribati (in descending order).
- The analysis records diverging trends observed in the use of formal channels across corridors in the region, which sheds light on some key drivers that can steer the outlook of remittance flows, including domestic conditions in origin countries and facilitation of using formal channels such as improving accessibility, cost and speed of transfer.

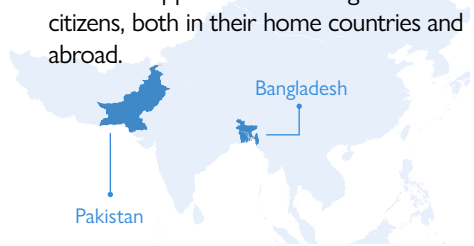
Remittance costs

The Asia–Pacific region has shown progress in reducing remittance costs. Out of 141 corridors for which data are available concerning Asia–Pacific countries as the destinations, 53 per cent of the corridors have average costs of less than 5 per cent. South and South-West Asia recorded the lowest average cost in all regions globally as of the third quarter of 2022, meeting the commitment under SDG Target 10.c to eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent by 2030. Moreover, East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific saw continued reduction since the third quarter of 2018 – from 7.25 per cent to 5.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2022. Despite progress, remittance costs across many corridors in the region remain above 10 per cent.

Diasporas

Diasporas are crucial vectors of change and support both in the countries of origin and destination. While remittances play a central role, diasporas also contribute to other areas of development, such as health and climate action.

- The Pakistani and Bangladeshi diasporas are among the largest diaspora communities in the world, and vastly contribute to their country of origin's development. In particular, they have contributed to disaster response and recovery crises caused by floods and earthquakes, raising awareness on climate change. Similarly, several medical diasporas from Asia and the Pacific offer medical support and training to other citizens, both in their home countries and abroad.



Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Migration and Policy

Policy and Governance: Migrant Rights

The international legal framework on human rights applies to everyone within a State's jurisdiction, including migrants and their families. Migrant rights are not separate from the rights of others, regardless of their status. Migrant access to rights can be measured by evaluating the rights granted to them both in principal and in practice.

Migrant rights in principle

Migrant rights by virtue of migrants' humanity are explicitly set in the core international human rights treaties and their optional protocols.

All countries in Asia and the Pacific have consented to be legally bound to at least two human rights treaties and their option protocols

All countries in Asia and the Pacific have consented to be legally bound to at least two human rights treaties and their option protocols.

Mongolia occupies the first place with 17 ratified treaties and associated optional protocols, followed by New Zealand with 15 and Australia, Maldives, the Philippines and Sri Lanka with 14 ratified treaties each.

While all core human rights treaties recognized migrant rights, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families directly oversees migration, particularly labour migration. Only six countries have ratified the Convention in Asia and the Pacific region, with Fiji being the latest one to become a State party in 2019.

Migrant rights in practice

Between 2006 and 2022, over 1,120 observations and recommendations on the implementation of migrant rights – resulting from the dialogue between State parties from the Asia–Pacific region and Human Rights Treaty Bodies – have been made public.

1,120
observations and recommendations on the implementation of migrant rights have been made public

130
in the Philippines

125
in Sri Lanka

At the country level, the Philippines (130) and Sri Lanka (125) had the largest number of published observations and recommendations on the implementation of migrant rights the Asia–Pacific region between 2006 and 2022, followed by Australia, the Republic of Korea, China, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, New Zealand and Thailand.

In 2022, 58 observations and recommendations were published by 10 Asia–Pacific countries, of which 40 per cent were on the implementation of migrant rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Having a higher number of published observations and recommendations does not necessarily signify a higher level of rights implementation, but it allows us to understand the degree of compromise between human rights committees and State parties in implementing and granting rights to migrants.

The MGI can be a valuable methodology to inform countries' implementation of each of the 23 Global Compact for Migration commitments

Migration Governance Indicators, Global Compact for Migration and Migrant Rights

The MGI can be a valuable methodology to inform countries' implementation of each of the 23 Global Compact for Migration commitments. Based on an MGI assessment conducted among 84 countries (or MGI countries), findings on countries from the Asia–Pacific region showed the existence of governance structures and measures to protect the rights of migrants:

Objective 1

Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies: Policymakers need timely, reliable, accessible and comparable data on international migration to manage migration effectively and protect the rights of migrants.

- Almost one third of Asia–Pacific countries (32%) participating in the assessment regularly collect and publish migration data disaggregated by sex outside the census. Additionally, the national census includes a module on migration in 60 per cent of these countries.

Objective 11

Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner: States are urged to comply with their international obligations at borders and along migratory routes and to safeguard human rights, counteracting the erosion of humane and rights-based border management systems and deterrence-based approaches.

- Almost 60 per cent of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region have a dedicated

body tasked with integrated border control and security. Moreover, 53 per cent of countries provided regular and specific training on migration to their border staff.

Objective 15

Provide access to basic services for migrants: Well-managed migration, equal rights for migrants in accessing health care and social services, and responsive systems geared to meet migrants' health needs within established policies produce positive health and migration outcomes:

- In almost one third (31%) of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region, migrants have equal access as nationals to all health services, regardless of their migration status, while equal access in 32 per cent of the Asia–Pacific countries is contingent on the migrant's legal status. Also, migrants are guaranteed equal access as nationals to educational services, regardless of their migration status, in 37 per cent of countries.

Objective 23

Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration: States are urged to cooperate through State-led and other regional, subregional and cross-regional processes and platforms to expand and diversify rights-based pathways for regular migration.

- As a result of their participation in regional consultative processes or interregional consultative forums, almost all MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region have Memorandums of Understanding on migration, and 89 per cent participated in bilateral migration negotiations. Moreover, 47 per cent of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region are part of regional agreements promoting labour mobility.

31%

of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region, migrants have equal access as nationals to all health services, regardless of their migration status

47%

of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region are part of regional agreements promoting labour mobility

Migration and Innovation

Amid this data revolution, mending the missing link between migrants and sustainable development through the lens of digital innovations can help navigate the opportunities and pitfalls for migrants on the move, support international actors in providing more efficient assistance, and provide tools to government authorities on migration management in forging pathways toward the SDGs and the Global Compact for Migration.

Innovative Data Sources and Methods for Migration Statistics: Government Initiatives

In Asia and the Pacific, while the utilization of big data mostly remains at an experimental phase, some National Statistical Offices are integrating alternative data sources and data collection methods into the production of official migration statistics.

- The use of mobile phone data for migration- and mobility-related statistics has been seen for example in Indonesia, China, Republic of Korea, Mongolia and New Zealand – such application specifically in the context of disaster and crisis response was seen in countries such as Australia, Bangladesh and the Republic of Korea. Other types of data sources such as sales tax data and geospatial data have also been explored.
- The pandemic necessitated and fostered the adoption of new data collection methods often facilitated by digital technology, against the backdrop of wider international efforts to modernize the census processes and national statistical systems.

Innovation for Migration and Development

Artificial Intelligence for fair and ethical private recruitment presents key benefits such as doing away with or cutting down on high recruitment costs, which should no longer be borne by migrants, and has proven it can be an instrument for development and poverty reduction.

- A growing portfolio of initiatives following European trends are emerging mostly in the domains of employment and agricultural security throughout the region, though Indonesia has the most of such initiatives.

Key innovative techniques:

- use of mobile phone data for migration- and mobility-related statistics
- adoption of new data collection methods often facilitated by digital technology
- artificial Intelligence for fair and ethical private recruitment

After a fire destroyed the primary health centre in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, IOM established an emergency health post to provide medical assistance to the affected population.

Introduction

Human mobility dynamics in the Asia–Pacific region[3] are evolving in a complex environment in which a sustainable development perspective is increasingly needed. In 2022, after five consecutive COVID-19 epidemiological waves in the region, conditions for authorized border entry inter- and intra-region have gradually become more relaxed and cross-border migration is resuming, with the most recent border reopening of China in the first quarter of 2023 (Figure 2).

In this transition into a post-pandemic world, the long-term effects of this prolonged standstill, and the deep implications for populations whose livelihoods have largely depended on migration and human mobility within and across these spaces, are still to be seen. New challenges at a national level arise, particularly regarding economic recovery. Following the political changes in Myanmar in February 2021 and in Afghanistan in August 2021, this report reflects on the impacts these contexts have had in altering mobility flows and its landscape while also taking stock of the global community's response to these humanitarian crises.

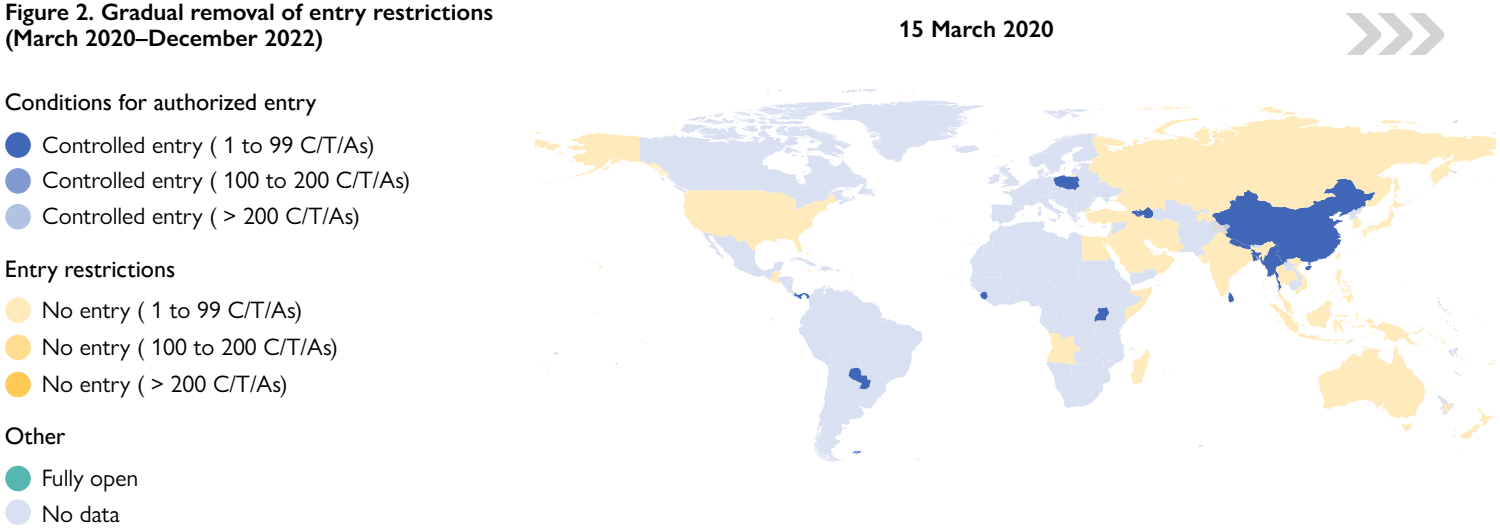
The Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2022 summarizes the existing publicly available information[4] on migration in the region which, in addition to limitations on resources, has been hampered by reduced capacities and resources due to the pandemic's impact. As such, data gaps still abound in the bodies of work that monitor migration movements. Limited disaggregated data based on common metrics continue to limit contextual disparities between migrant populations and their development outcomes that are central to improving response mechanisms through strengthening cooperation, as well as promote inefficiencies in serving affected population in need of assistance. Yet, amid these challenges, which are highlighted in each section, it has also been a time for renewed thinking, innovation and seeding transformational change.

Facilitating the orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and

[3] Analysis follows IOM definition of Asia–Pacific region encompassing 40 countries as specified in the Terminology unless otherwise specified.

[4] The review period of this report closes on 25 May 2023 – and hence also the last date of update to all data presented in the report.

Figure 2. Gradual removal of entry restrictions (March 2020–December 2022)

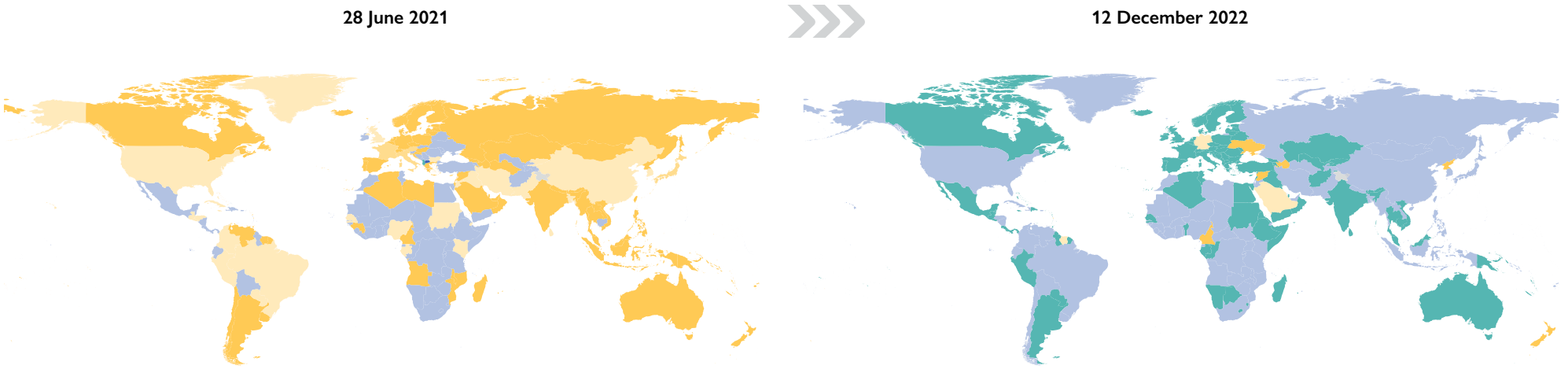


Source: DTM (COVID-19) Global Mobility Restrictions Overview: March 2020–January 2023. IOM (2023).

Note: These maps are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

well-managed migration policies are advocated by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.7 (see Annex I), the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (see Annex II) and the Migration Governance Indicators (MGIs) (see Annex III). Both instruments call on the international community to strengthen capacity-building efforts in this direction, and thus guide the analysis and insights presented in this report. With special attention to SDG Target 17.18, in supporting international efforts to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity and migratory status, and Objective 1 of the Global Compact for Migration – towards the collection and utilization of accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies, the report analyses and discusses ongoing migration dynamics and governmental approaches, and reviews consolidated efforts that are being made toward achieving this goal against relevant indicators.

A notable feature of this edition is the contribution of migration experts who share invaluable insights into various key migration topics. Finally, the report provides recommendations to international organizations and governments to expand the much-needed evidence base on migration trends in the region. This report is structured around the Thematic Pillars of IOM Asia–Pacific Regional Data Hub (Figure 1). Section 1 examines the role of international migration in the demographic outlook in the region and more broadly key issues and challenges associated with migration statistics from the lens of sustainable development. Section 2 investigates how various types of migration trends in the region have evolved in the last year including labour migration, conflict and disaster related displacements, return migration and irregular migration. Section 3 samples the multifaceted protection risk and vulnerabilities that various migrant population groups face daily and is centred around how migrant rights are either being underserved, preserved, promoted or constrained. Section 4 explores the central contributions of migrants and diasporas looking at remittances and other areas such as health and climate change awareness, in offering and forging pathways for strengthened initiatives. Section 5 assesses the implementation of migrant rights, both in theory and practice, at the governmental level in coordination with Human Rights Treaty Bodies. It also examines the presence and effectiveness of governance structures in the Asia–Pacific region that safeguard human rights in the context of migration. Finally, Section 6 discusses how data innovations are revolutionizing migration research and policy by offering new information sources and insights and supporting governmental and humanitarian programmes.



Source: DTM (COVID-19) Global Mobility Restrictions Overview: March 2020–January 2023. IOM (2023).

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How to navigate this report

Throughout the report, three background colors are used for different purposes:

Full-page figures and maps

Key highlights and expert contributions

Snapshots

Additionally, two colors are used to highlight text with different indicators:

References to SDG, MGI or Global Compact for Migration are underlined in yellow.

Texts with external link to the source or link to another section in the report are coloured in blue.

Frameworks in this report:

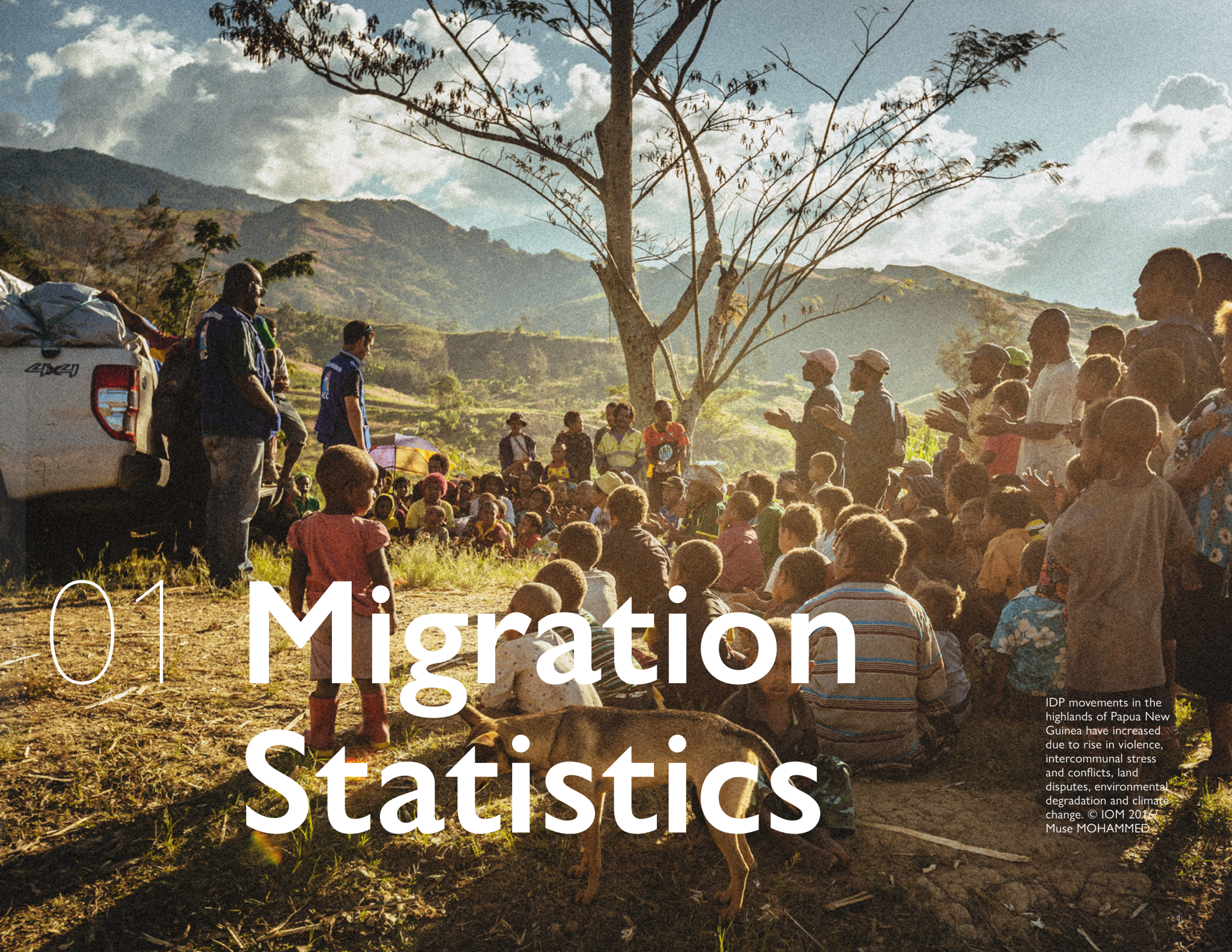
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Global Compact FOR Migration

MGI

Migration Governance Indicators

01 Migration Statistics



IDP movements in the highlands of Papua New Guinea have increased due to rise in violence, intercommunal stress and conflicts, land disputes, environmental degradation and climate change. © IOM 2016/ Muse MOHAMMED

1. Migration Statistics

In this chapter

SDG Target

Global Compact for Migration Objective

MGI Domain

Whole-of-government approach

Partnerships

The Third International Forum on Migration Statistics (IFMS), jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), took place in Santiago, Chile from 24 to 26 January 2023, with a particular emphasis on strengthening migration data for the follow-up and review of global agreements.

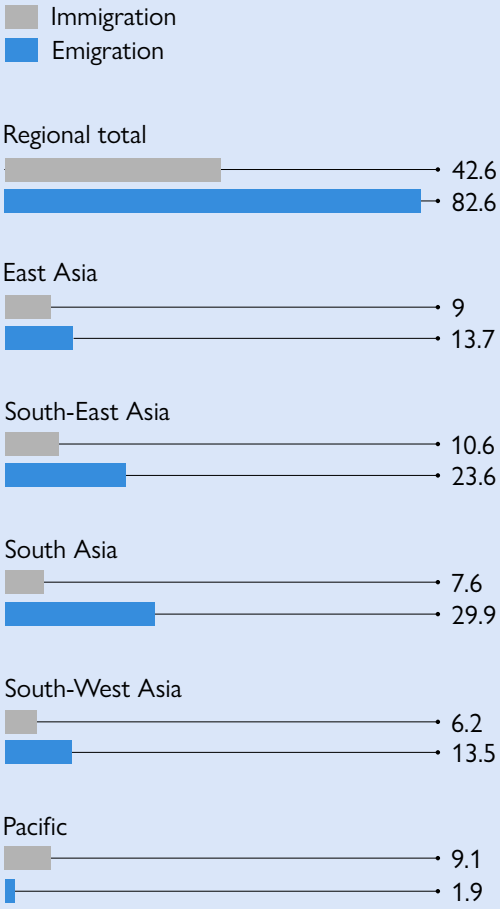
The importance of high-quality migration statistics, including data disaggregation by migratory status among other key demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, is embedded in SDG Target 17.18, as well as the Global Compact for Migration Objectives 1 and 3. Migration statistics are a fundamental element of population statistics, with extensive implications for national development plans and progress – as demographic change was highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General as one of the five megatrends that are influencing the progress of The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2021). In recent years, as the Progress Declaration of International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) 2022 highlighted, several migration data and knowledge centres and observatories were established, and bilateral and regional exchanges and initiatives on migration data have been promoted. Facilitated by these initiatives and efforts, there is a growing recognition among policymakers, researchers and practitioners alike of the need for better migration statistics to formulate evidence-based migration policies and inform public discourse.

Drawing on the latest available data, this chapter will consider the key issues and challenges associated with migration statistics in Asia and the Pacific from the lens of sustainable development. The first section explores the role of international migration in population dynamics in the region. The second section focuses on migration statistics and global frameworks, particularly the status quo of SDG data with disaggregation by migratory status in the region. This chapter also features thematic highlights contributed by Petra Nahmias, Chief of the Population and Social Statistics Section of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), bringing valuable insights into the international recommendations on statistics related to migration in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Total Number of Migrants to and from Asia and the Pacific

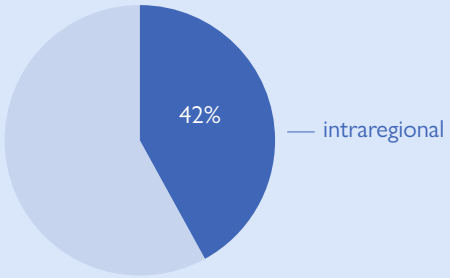
DESA's latest international migration stock data providing estimates up to mid-2020 were analysed and presented in the IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2020. Though the scale of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on regional demography is not fully reflected in this version, the data show that international migration is an important element of population dynamics in Asia and the Pacific. By mid-2020, the total number of emigrants from Asia and the Pacific, marked by a prominent share of intraregional migration, was nearly double the number of immigrants (Figure 3). An estimated 83 million people from the region were living outside their countries of birth, with South Asia and South-East Asia as the main subregions of origin.

Figure 3. Total number of migrants to and from Asia and the Pacific by subregion as of mid-2020 (millions)



In total, emigrants from the region made up 30 per cent of global international migrant stock. Furthermore, 42.6 million migrants from around the world were hosted in the region, accounting for 15 per cent of the international migrant stock globally. Within the region, South-East Asia, the Pacific and East Asia were the main destination subregions of international migrants. A notable feature of the migration landscape in Asia and the Pacific is the scale of intraregional migration, as 42 per cent (that is, 34.9 million) of emigrants from this region had moved to another Asia–Pacific country.

Intraregional migration of emigrants from Asia and the Pacific



Source: Author's calculation based on International Migrant Stock. DESA (2020) (accessed 8 February 2023).

1.1 Population Prospect: The Role of International Migration

The latest round of global population estimates and projections released by DESA (2022a) suggest that the world's population could grow to 8.5 billion in 2030, further increase to 9.7 billion people in 2050 and peak at around 10.4 billion people in the 2080s.[5] By the end of 2022, the projected total population in the Asia–Pacific region is 4.4 billion, which makes up around half of the world population.

In this region, the total population is projected to continue to grow, albeit at a decreasing rate, until 2052 (Figure 4). That is, from an annual population growth of 23.6 million in 2022 to only 2.1 million in 2050, reaching 4.8 billion people in total population. However, the region might face population decline over the second half of the century, bringing the region's population down to 4.2 billion by 2100 – a reduction of approximately 14 per cent from the peak during the 2050s. Four out of the 10 countries in the world to be most affected by population decline by 2050 are from the region, namely, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, and four of the 10 countries with the largest increases in population are also from the region, namely, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Bangladesh (Boston Consulting Group and IOM, 2022).[6]

[5] According to the medium fertility scenario, as explained in DESA (2022b).

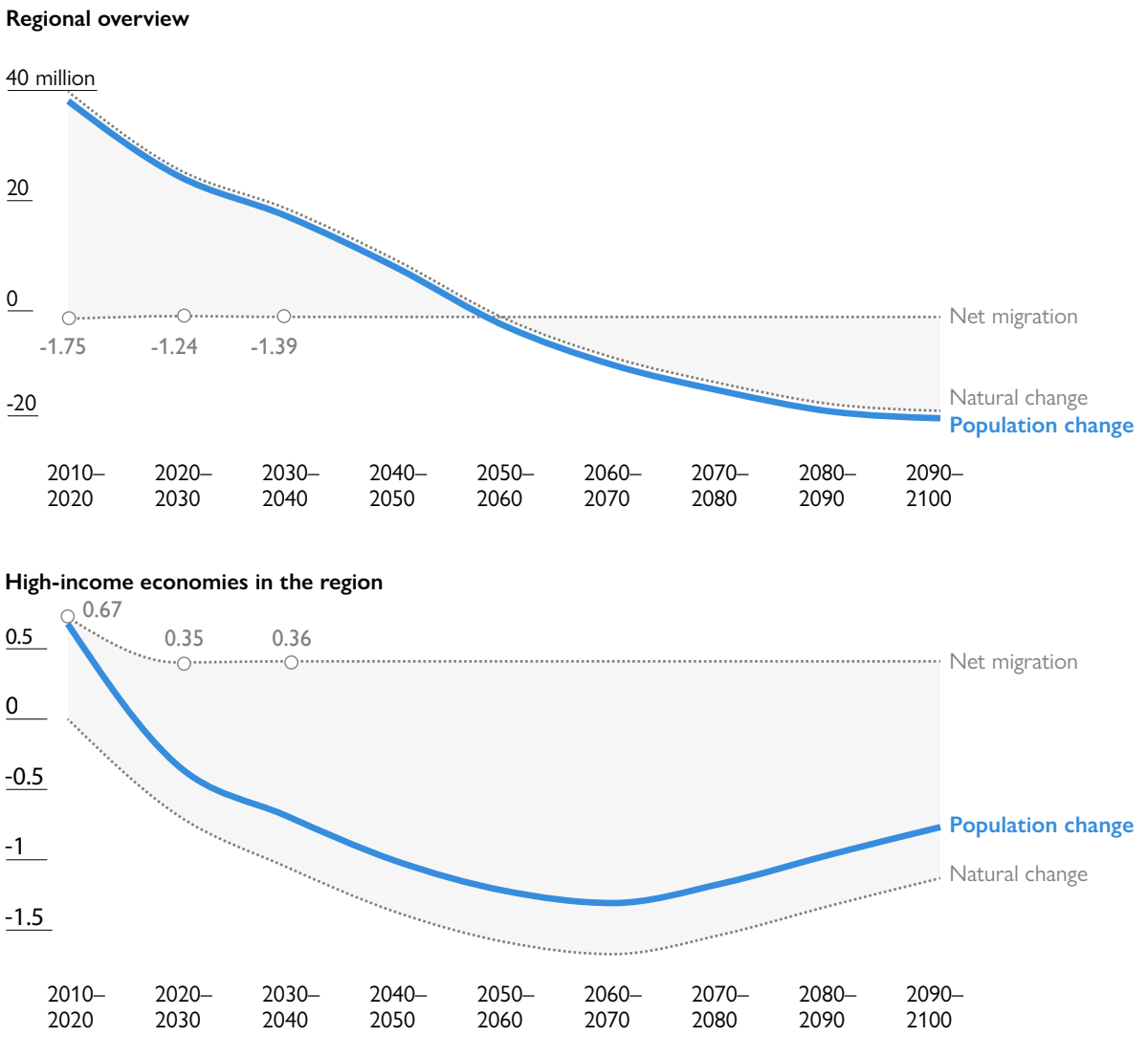
[6] DESA's projected population decline between 1 January 2022 and 1 January 2051: China (-119.4 million), Japan (-20.8 million), the Republic of Korea (-6.3 million), Thailand (-4 million). Projected population increase in the same period: India (+260.2 million), Pakistan (+136.4 million), the Philippines (+43.8 million) and Bangladesh (+33.9 million). Rounded up to 1 decimal point.

The projection of population change is driven by two principal factors: natural change and net migration (DESA, 2022b). Natural change refers to the balance of births over deaths, whereas net migration refers to the balance of immigration over emigration, which shows the net effect of international migration on the size and composition of the population in both the countries of origin and destination.[7] While the 2019 version of such net migration projections was analysed in the IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021 (IOM, 2022a), one of the critical adjustments of the 2022 revision, besides methodological enhancements, is consideration of the impacts of recent crises including the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly affected all four components of population change; however, DESA has made it clear that the magnitude of the pandemic's impact on international migration is difficult to ascertain due to data limitations (DESA, 2022c, p.21). With the assumption that net migration halved during 2020 and 2021 (ibid., p.22), a much more conservative approach than in the previous version was taken, by keeping the short-to-long-term projections almost stagnant ever since. Despite the uncertainty, the latest projections reflect some extent of disruptive impacts on international migration, the true and full scale of which may be confirmed as more evidence becomes available.

At the regional level, population change is simultaneously driven by natural change and net migration in opposite directions until the end of 2050 – with a significant yet

[5] In countries where the number of immigrants equals the number of emigrants, net migration amounts to zero even if immigration and emigration levels for that country are significant (ibid.).

Figure 4. Contributions to total population change of the balance of births over deaths and of immigration over emigration in Asia and the Pacific, from 2010–2100 (millions)



Source: Author's calculation based on World Population Prospects 2022. DESA (2022a) (accessed 8 February 2023).
Note: Nine high-income economies in the region in World Bank's definition: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), China, Japan, Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR), China, Nauru, Republic of Korea, Singapore and the Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China.

slowing natural increase, and a steady surplus of emigration over immigration (Figure 4). Underneath this overarching trend lie the diversities across countries in the region. For high-income economies in Asia and the Pacific, immigration has been the main driver of population growth between 2010 and 2019. This trend is expected to persist over the next few decades, although since 2020, population decline occurred for the first time and net migration gains halved. This also implies that, over the next few decades, immigration will contribute to partially offset high levels of natural decrease and hence population decline in major high-income economies in the region, especially in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, and will counteract low natural increase, as mainly seen in Australia and New Zealand. For example, by the end of 2050, net migration is projected to contribute as much as 85 per cent of population growth in Australia[8] – which also explains the positive net migration projections over the next few decades in the Pacific despite other Pacific countries being net emigration countries (Figure 5). Other subregions are expected to continue experiencing negative net migration with more emigrants than immigrants received over the next few decades, especially prominent among countries in the region with young populations such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Pacific countries.

As for the two Asian giants, China showed population decline for the first time in six decades, and India is expected take over from China as the world's most populous country in April 2023.[9] According to the latest data reported by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the total population fell by around 850,000 people to 1.41 billion in 2022[10] as mortality outnumbered fertility (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2023). This demographic turnover shows some convergence to the trajectory of most high-income countries. Rooted in declining fertility and extended life expectancy, the scale of demographic change is forecasted to make China, following the Republic of Korea, Japan and Singapore, amongst the oldest countries in the region by the end of 2050, with the median age ranging between 51 and 57 years, compared to the median age worldwide at 36 years in 2050. For India, population increase is projected to peak during the 2060s, with a declining rate of natural increase projected to turn negative in the same period. A closer look at the data reveals that population growth rate has been slowing down for decades, as confirmed by the latest report from the National Statistical Office of India (2022), with further projection that the proportion of working-age population (15–59 years) would decrease for the first time from 65.1 per cent in 2031 to 64.9 per cent in 2036, along with an increasing proportion of population aged 60 years and above. What is similar between these two countries is that both are net emigration countries, with a projected annual net outflow of migrants by about half a million for India and nearly one third of a million for China over the next decades – which makes India and China countries with the first and third largest projected annual net outflow of migrants in the region by 2050.[11] The sizeable net outflow of migrants will continue to contribute to a declining rate of population increase if not to population decrease in the countries as well as in the region, though to a lesser extent than natural change.

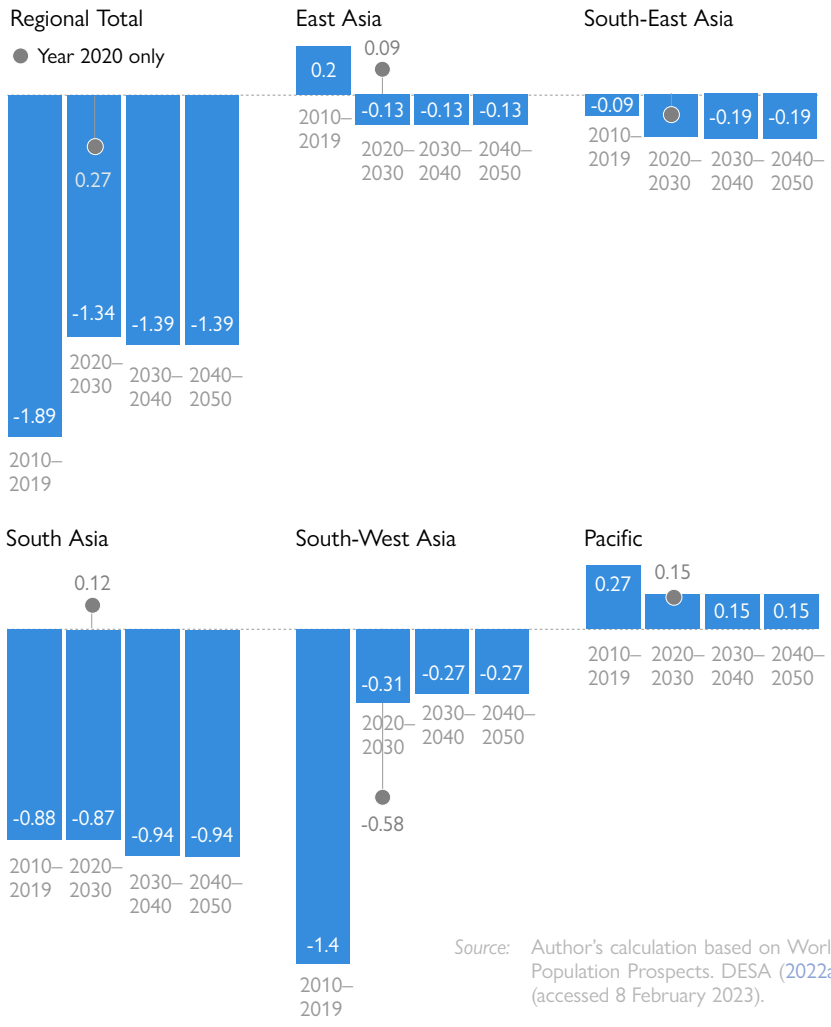
[8] Projected population change is an increase of 164,291 – including net migration at 139,991 and natural increase at 24,301.

[9] DESA, "India to overtake China as world's most populous country in April 2023, United Nations projects", 24 April 2023.

[10] Excluding residents of Hong Kong SAR, China, Macao SAR, China, the Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China and foreigners living in the 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities.

[11] Bangladesh is projected as the country with the second largest net outflow of migrants in the region.

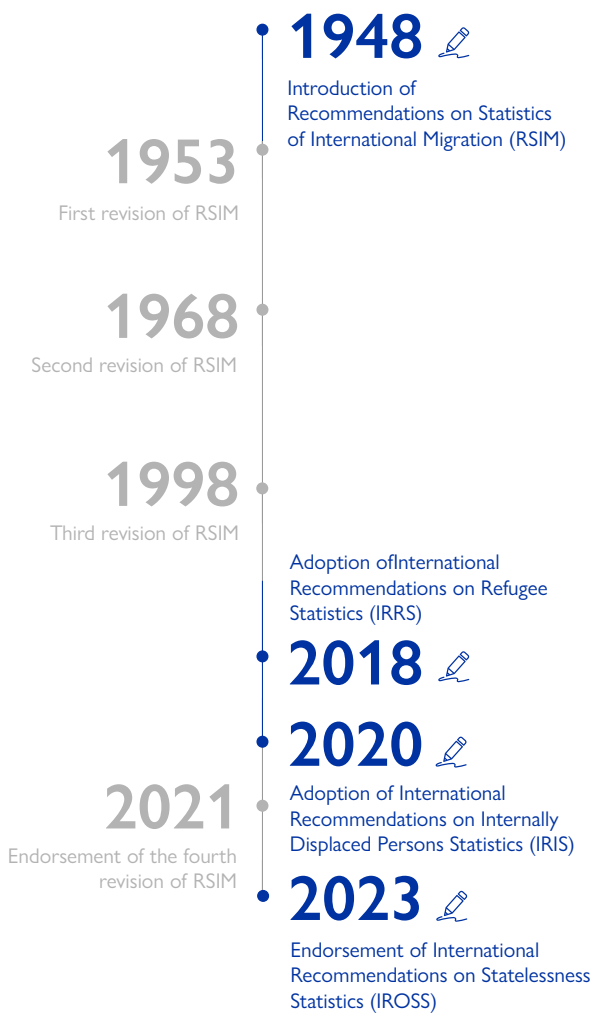
Figure 5. Projected net migration in Asia and the Pacific by subregion (million individuals) (2010–2050)



Source: Author's calculation based on World Population Prospects. DESA (2022a) (accessed 8 February 2023).

1.2 Migration Statistics and Global Frameworks

Figure 6. Historical development of key international recommendations on migration statistics



Source: Author's illustration.
Note: More information about the evolution of RSIM can be seen in Kraler and Reichel (2022). Information about the international recommendations on refugee, internally displaced persons and statelessness statistics can be found on the website of Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS).

Expert Contribution: Recommendations on Official Statistics Related to Migration

Authored by: **Petra Nahmias**

Chief of Population and Social Statistics Section, ESCAP

Official statistics fill an important role in providing evidence related to migration. In an often politically charged environment, official statistics can provide an objective and transparent picture of migration patterns and are a trusted source of information, usually high quality. Official statistics can thus often be used to hold governments accountable for their migration policies and practices.

However, challenges exist in ensuring that official statistics on migration meet the policy needs. These include issues around data quality where official statistics have certain standards around completeness, accuracy and reliability, which migration data often does not reach. In some cases, data may be held by different line ministries with barriers to data sharing such as lack of interoperability and data privacy concerns impacting upon data availability. And, although there are usually safeguards, official statistics can be subject to political pressures or biases. Further, lack of harmonization prevents international comparability. This is especially important for international migration given the involvement of different receiving, transit and origin countries.

To address these issues, recent work has developed recommendations and guidelines on official statistics related to migration. Two key initiatives are the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics and the Expert Group of Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics.

The Expert Group on Migration Statistics is made up of experts in the field of migration statistics from various organizations and ministries. The group met in June 2017 to discuss data needs and methodology related to statistics on international migration. The United Nations Statistical Commission recommended that the Expert Group work to improve statistics on international migration by revising the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration and assessing data gaps and national needs for capacity development.

The Commission also requested the Expert Group to ensure proper coordination among international initiatives and programmes to produce high-quality and fit-for-purpose statistics on international migration. To that end, a revised conceptual framework and definitions for international migration and mobility, was developed by a task force of the Expert Group through a collaborative approach that included global consultations, an in-depth meeting and several rounds of feedback. The revised conceptual framework and accompanying definitions were discussed and endorsed by the Statistical Commission it its 52nd session.

Other work of the group includes: developing guidance on a set of core and additional topics and indicators needed to address key policy issues that are relevant for international migration and to allow for effective monitoring and evaluation based on the revised conceptual framework; producing technical materials to integrate data on the macrolevel to improve estimates of international migration and the processes needed for successful microdata integration, particularly for countries without access to population registers; developing recommendations for improving the quality and availability of statistics on international migration and temporary mobility to help national statistical systems produce comparable data across countries and compiling best practices and recommendations for countries producing or planning to produce such statistics; and facilitating the development of a Global Programme on Migration Statistics which will strengthen the systems of collecting, managing, compiling and using migration statistics in a holistic manner.

> *Official statistics fill an important role in providing evidence related to migration.*

A separate but connected initiative is the work of the Expert Group on Refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS). This group was established by the Statistical Commission in 2016 to provide guidance on the development of international standards for collecting, compiling and analysing data on refugees, internally displaced people, and stateless peoples. The group also seeks to promote the use of these standards by national and international organizations, governments, and other stakeholders involved in the management of forced displacement and statelessness.

EGRISS has developed and published the International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics and the International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics to help countries and international organizations to harmonize and improve the quality of official statistics on refugees and IDPs. EGRISS is now focused on rolling out and supporting the implementation of these recommendations during its third phase, 2020–2024. To that end, EGRISS has established three technical subgroups to work on promotion and dissemination of the recommendations, capacity-building and knowledge sharing and refinement of the Compilers' Manual.

Furthermore, to enhance the quality and accessibility of statistics on stateless populations, EGRISS collaborated with 21 national statistical offices and several regional and international organizations to establish uniform standards and definitions. The resulting International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics were approved by the Statistical Commission in 2021. The adoption of these recommendations paves the way for their implementation in different countries and supporting national statistical offices in integrating the statistical standards and definitions into their surveys, censuses and administrative data, including civil registration and vital statistics systems.

The objectives of both these groups are highly relevant for countries in the region, many of which have significant international migration flows, levels of displacement and statelessness. The future impacts of climate change are expected to increase the level of migration and displacement, which means that having a robust national data ecosystem is all the more critical to rise to this challenge with the recommendations forming an integral part of this process of strengthening national statistical capacity. The strength of these groups lies in the broad ranging partnerships so please do engage with these efforts where relevant. The work is also continuing with further developments expected to respond to the ever changing political and data landscape.

1.2.1 Migration, SDGs and data disaggregation

Data are pivotal to tracking countries' progress to achieving the SDGs. The availability of SDG data in Asia and the Pacific has substantially improved since 2017 (ESCAP, 2022, p.60), which has contributed to a better understanding of how countries fare and progress in an increasing number of indicators of sustainable development. However, inequalities might underlie the reported national average figures. Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022 highlights that inequality exists in key opportunities and in the experience of barriers, and that average progress disproportionately excludes some groups with distinct demographic or socioeconomic characteristics such as migrants and refugees (ibid., p.27).

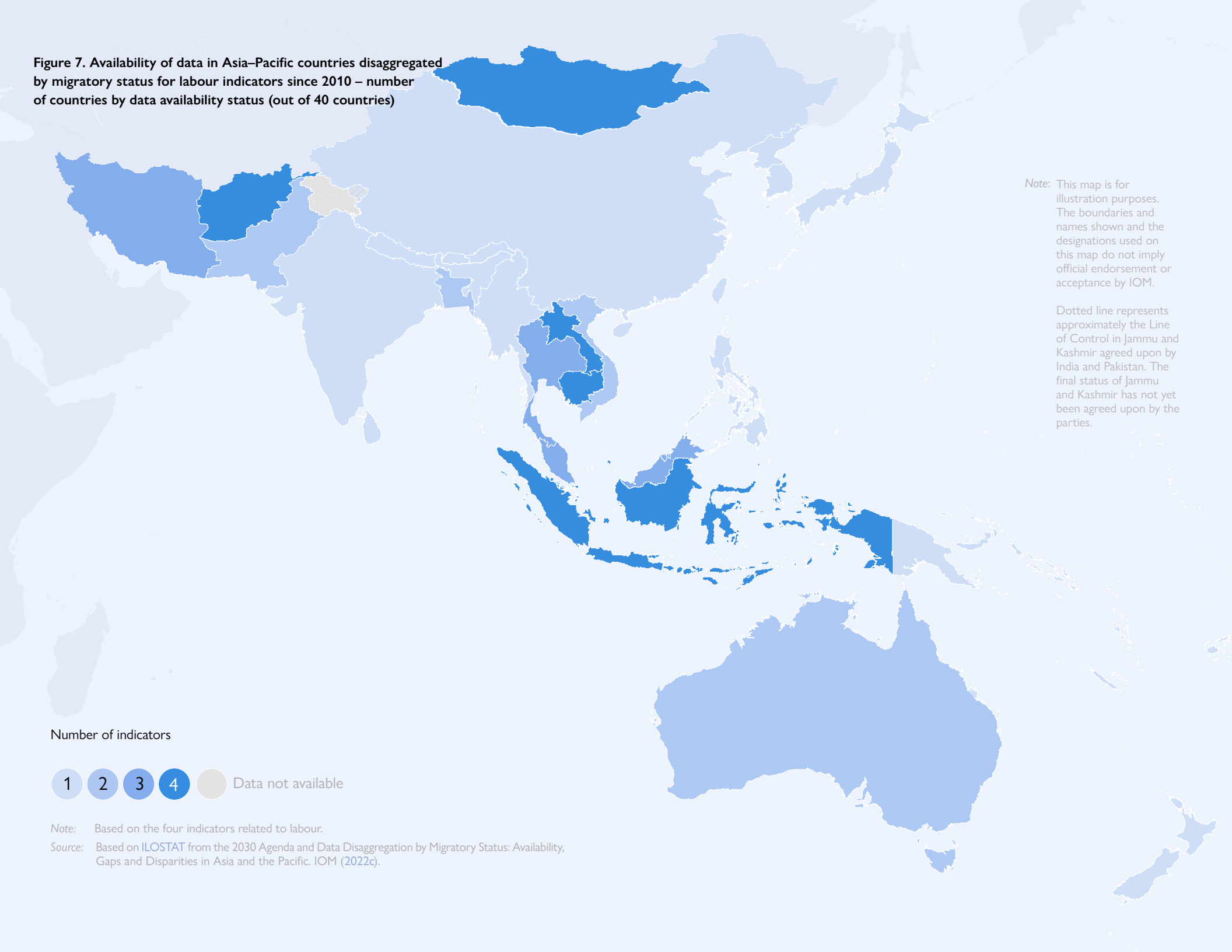
Numerous important interlinkages between migration and the SDGs exist. Despite often higher likelihoods of experiencing vulnerabilities related to poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, poor health outcomes, poor living conditions, gender-specific risks and dangers during migration, fatal occupational injuries, and discrimination and xenophobia, migrants are key agents of sustainable development, making vital contributions to the countries of origin as well as destination, such as by supporting economic development, poverty reduction and the health system among others (IOM, 2022b). Despite many important interlinkages between migration and the SDGs, global-level data availability for migration-relevant SDG indicators is low, and migrants are usually invisible in official SDG data (ibid.), limiting our understanding of whether migrants are being left behind or not.

To ensure data disaggregation by migratory status, challenges related to data availability need to be tackled. A recent study identifies that significant data gaps exist in Asia and the Pacific, as data for monitoring the SDGs are limited and data disaggregated by migratory status to monitor the SDGs are largely missing (IOM, 2022c). Out of 24 SDG indicators recommended for disaggregation by migratory status by the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics, some internationally comparable data exist for six indicators across the region, but the number of countries with such data is still low. Data disaggregated by migratory status are more widely available for labour indicators (Figure 7) – disaggregated data on earnings and unemployment have been respectively reported for 18 and 15 out of 40 Asia–Pacific countries since 2010, but data for the other four indicators are available for far fewer countries. For example, data on education indicators (Figure 8) are primarily available for high-income Asia–Pacific countries and countries in the South-East Asia subregion; as for labour indicators, data on youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) are more widely available for but still missing for most countries, and only one country (Pakistan) in the region has reported any data on adult literacy or occupational injuries for migrants since 2015.

While more sources of data are available at the national level, harmonization of national data in terms of methodologies and definitions for international comparison and alignment with specific SDG indicators are necessary (ibid.). Other challenges also hinder the disaggregation of SDG data by migratory status, such as the lack of questions needed to identify migrants even though relevant data are collected, the small number of migrants captured by surveys, and the lack of dissemination or analysis of disaggregated data in most countries in the region (ibid.). Despite challenges, an increased focus on improving data availability and use will be crucial to ensuring that SDG commitments to leave no one behind translate into action for migrants as we move towards 2030 and beyond.

In the high-income economies of the region like the Republic of Korea, immigration is seen as a key factor in offsetting population decline in the coming years. © IOM 2017/ Muse MOHAMMED

Figure 7. Availability of data in Asia–Pacific countries disaggregated by migratory status for labour indicators since 2010 – number of countries by data availability status (out of 40 countries)



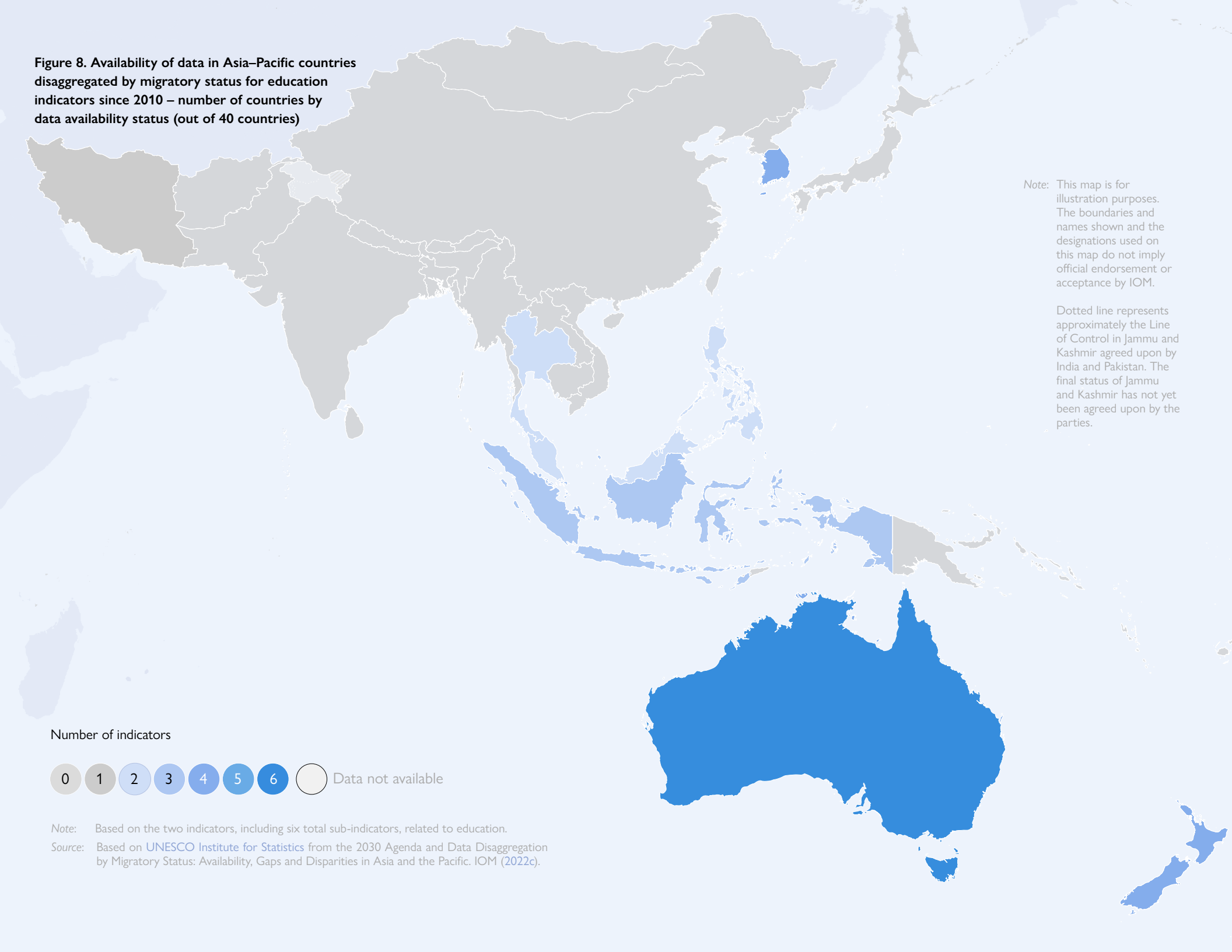
Note: This map is for illustration purposes. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Note: Based on the four indicators related to labour.

Source: Based on ILOSTAT from the 2030 Agenda and Data Disaggregation by Migratory Status: Availability, Gaps and Disparities in Asia and the Pacific. IOM (2022c).

Figure 8. Availability of data in Asia–Pacific countries disaggregated by migratory status for education indicators since 2010 – number of countries by data availability status (out of 40 countries)



Note: This map is for illustration purposes. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Note: Based on the two indicators, including six total sub-indicators, related to education.

Source: Based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics from the 2030 Agenda and Data Disaggregation by Migratory Status: Availability, Gaps and Disparities in Asia and the Pacific. IOM (2022c).

1.3 Discussion

Migration will likely remain an influential factor in the region's demographic outlook over the next century – not only in terms of the share of population change attributable to net international migration but also in relation to the size, composition and patterns of international and internal migrations – especially under demographic transitions marked by population ageing in many parts of the world. Moreover, a sizeable but largely uncounted migrant population with irregular status must be considered on top of existing official statistics and projections.

Migration will likely remain an influential factor in the region's demographic outlook over the next century.

While the pandemic's short- to long-term impacts on international migration will be revisited in the coming years, there is no denial that projecting international migration trends is difficult given the highly dynamic nature of migration. The medium fertility scenario presented in Section 1.1 can be interpreted as the most likely future trend among various projections, with an implicit assumption that the pace and patterns of change in fertility and mortality will be similar in the future to what they have been in the past 70 years (DESA, 2022c, p.33). Hence, the projection only depicts what role international migration might play in population change if trends continue unabated. Many factors could feed into this dynamic, notably the extent to which countries can harness the potentials of migration for sustainable development, especially in the face of challenges arising from shifting demographics, such as labour and skill shortages, fiscal sustainability of pension systems, and strain on health-care systems. From a macroeconomic lens, recent estimates suggest that the global economic output of migration could grow to around 20 trillion United States dollars (USD) a year by 2050 if migration were to close as little as 20 per cent of the projected talent gaps (Boston Consulting Group and IOM, 2022, p.10–11). The actual value is likely much higher because this conservative assumption does not capture migrants' full economic impacts as consumers, entrepreneurs and innovators, nor the economic contributions of second-generation migrants (ibid.). Developing evidence-based migration policies could generate important opportunities to leverage this potential, which highlights the need to establish a solid evidence base through improved migration data collection, including increasing the collection and analysis of SDG data with disaggregation by migratory status. The Progress Declaration of IMRF 2022 recognized that gaps in migration data collection and analysis persist, and stated that some of these challenges relate to outdated, incompatible or inadequate sources and systems for high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable data collection and disaggregation by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, limited digital capacity and exacerbated challenges in data collection due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Internationally coordinated efforts, including the ongoing revision of the RMIS and the exploration of innovative data sources (see Section 6), are crucial to tackling each of these challenges. Equally indispensable is that all countries, whether experiencing net inflows or outflows of migrants, should take steps to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration, which is vital to developing more sustainable and legal migration pathways.

In addition to the diverse drivers of migration, recent research calls for attention to immobility divide – as migration is taking place mostly between wealthy countries in recent years, with migration pathways narrowing for people in less developed countries (McAuliffe et al., 2021). If involuntary immobility persists in times of crises such as conflict, disaster and climate change, the consequences will go beyond migration and mobility, affecting the vulnerability of migrants as well as the immobile – those who need and want but lack the means to move.

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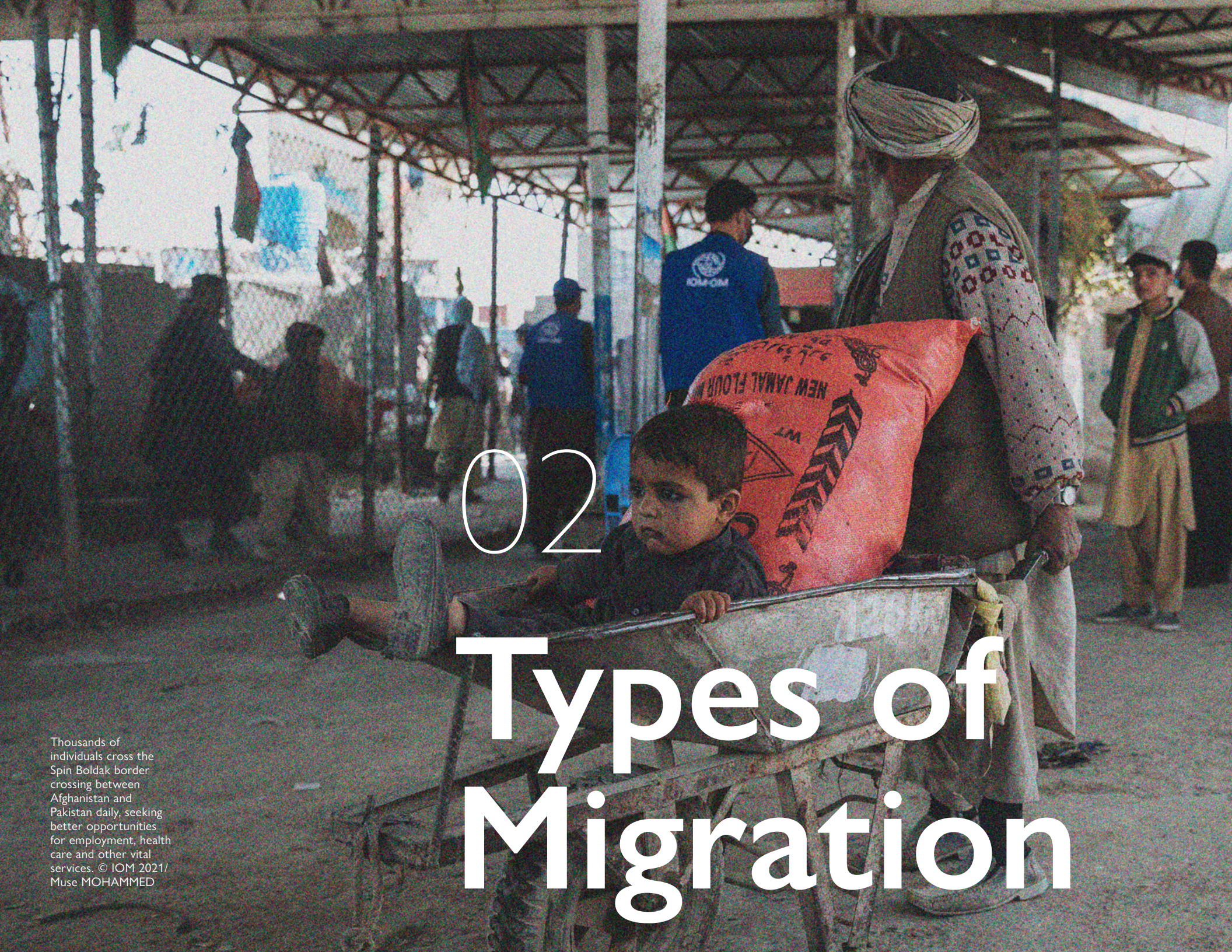
* All hyperlinks were active at the time of writing this report.

Over a quarter million undocumented migrants originating from the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar have arrived in Bangladesh since 1991. © IOM 2016/Amanda NERO



02

Types of Migration

Thousands of individuals cross the Spin Boldak border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan daily, seeking better opportunities for employment, health care and other vital services. © IOM 2021/ Muse MOHAMMED

2. Types of Migration

In this chapter

SDG Target

Global Compact for Migration Objective

MGI Domain

The mobility dimensions of crises

Safe, orderly and regular migration

2.1 Labour Migration

The IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2020 and that of 2021 highlighted the unprecedented and disruptive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on key labour migration corridors in the Asia–Pacific region. The region hosts 24 million, or 14.2 per cent, of international migrant workers from around the world in 2019, according to the latest available estimates from the International Labour Organization (ILO) (ILO, 2021a; IOM, 2022a).[12] As there are no further updates, regional data for 2022 on labour migration to and from the region are not available as of the end of this review period.

To address this gap, this section presents a trend analysis of labour migration up to 2022 by using country-level data from the main origins and destinations in the region for which data are available. The analysis considers a range of factors including but not exclusive to COVID-19 – the direct impact of which is subsiding, although it still affects affecting Asia–Pacific countries to a larger extent than the rest of the world (see Section 3.1). Additionally, this chapter presents a country snapshot focusing on preliminary evidence of the Sri Lanka crisis' impacts on labour mobility. Notably, this section also features thematic highlights contributed by Geertrui Lanneau, Senior Regional Thematic Specialist on Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion at IOM's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, providing informative perspectives on key issues of labour mobility in Asia and the Pacific in 2022.

It should be noted that the definition of migrant worker in presented data might not be consistent across countries. According to the ILO (2018), international migrant workers are defined, for statistical purposes, as all international migrants of working age present in the country of measurement who are either usual residents or not usual residents – based on the rationale to measure the current labour attachment of international migrants in a country, irrespective of the initial purpose of migration, and of others who are not usual residents of the country but have current labour attachment in the country of measurement. However, differences exist in the definition of migrant worker used in related statistics reported across countries. The analysis in this section relies on publicly accessible data, and the definitions underlying the data for each country are specified. While international comparability may not be fully feasible, the analysis aims to shed light on labour migration to and from the Asia–Pacific region in 2022 vis-à-vis pandemic and pre-pandemic trends.

2.1.1 Regional overview: Trend analysis of main origins and destinations

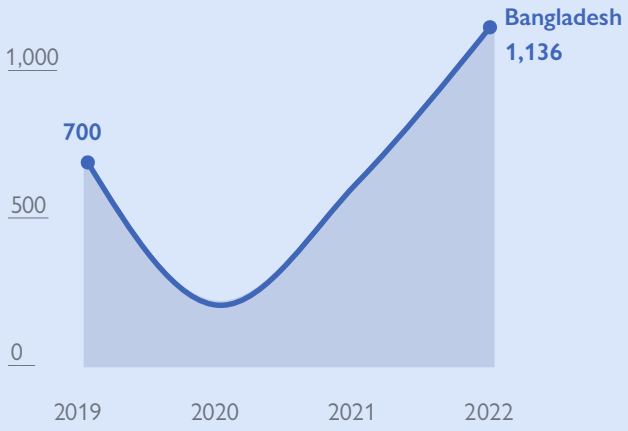
Country-level analysis of main origins and destinations in the region reveals that the outflow of workers abroad, especially from South Asian countries, has exhibited robust recovery in 2022 (Figure 9). However, the inflow and stock of migrant workers generally showed modest resumption from the pandemic slump, though still below the pre-pandemic level (Figure 10). These observed trends correspond to various factors, including the prevailing conditions in origin and destination countries.

[12] Note that the ILO definition of Asia and the Pacific varies from the IOM definition – by additionally including French Polynesia, Guam and New Caledonia in the ILO Pacific, and excluding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Federated States of Micronesia and Nauru from ILO's regional definition.

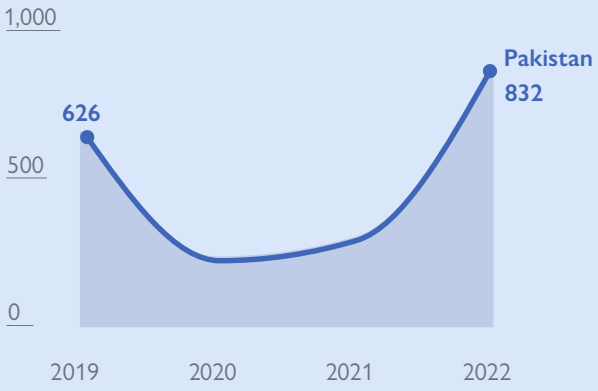
Asia and the Pacific as the Origin: Strong recovery seen in the outflow of migrant workers from main origin countries

Figure 9. Outflow of nationals from Asia–Pacific countries for employment abroad (in thousands)

Outflow of Bangladeshi workers abroad

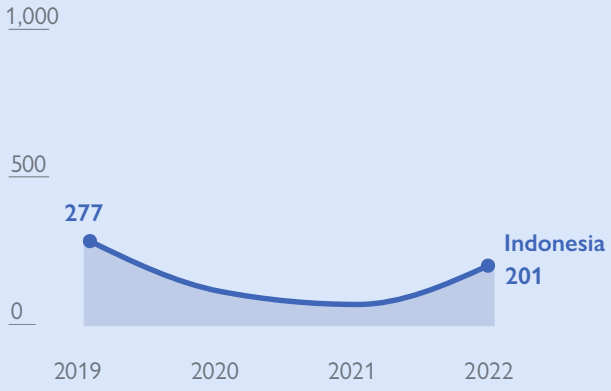


Pakistani workers registered for employment abroad

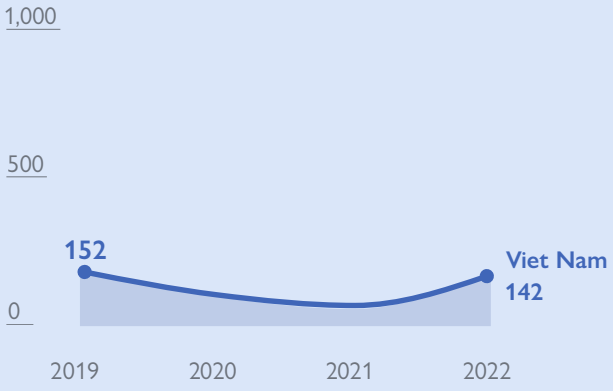


Indian workers with emigration clearances

Placement of Indonesian workers abroad



Outflow of Vietnamese workers abroad



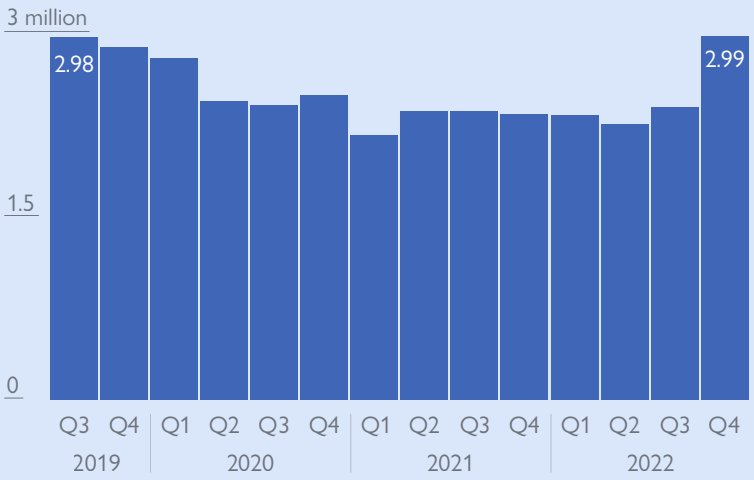
Nepalese workers with overseas employment approval (new and renewed)

Note: Data for these figures were compiled from Government sources specified in the following analysis.

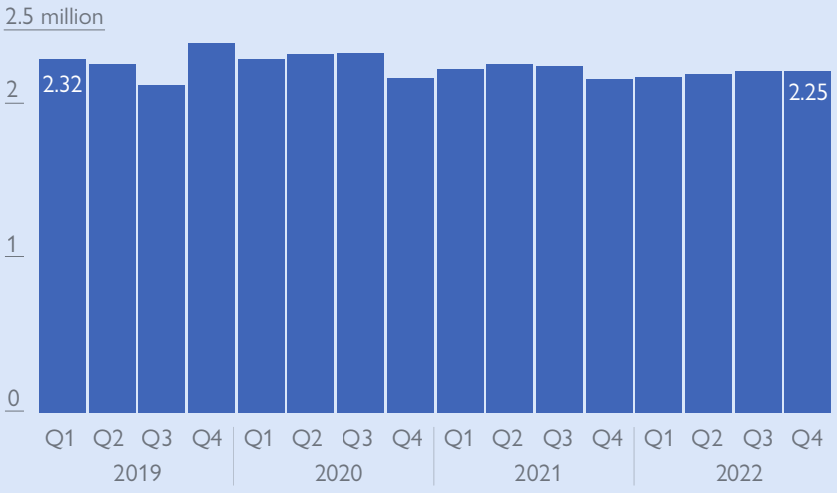
Asia and the Pacific as the Destination: Modest recovery in the inflow and stock of migrant workers in most major destination countries

Figure 10. Stock and inflow of migrant workers in main destinations in Asia and the Pacific

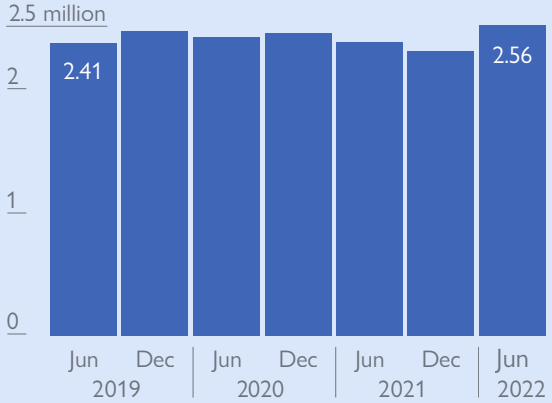
Stock of migrant workers in Thailand



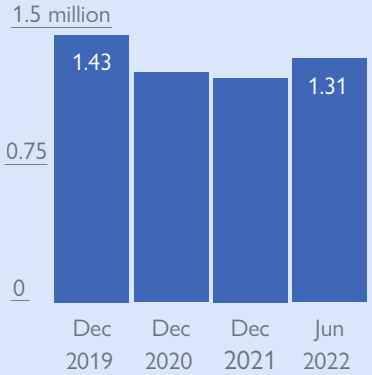
Non-citizens in the labour force in Malaysia



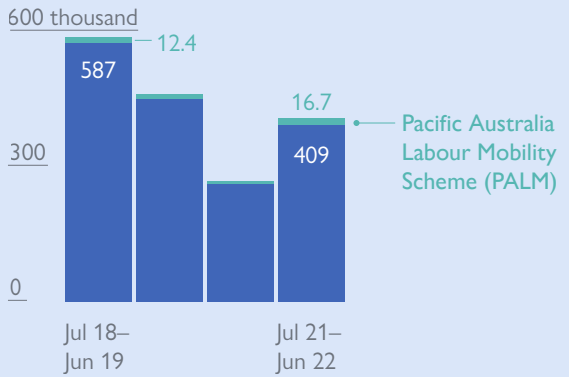
Working-age registered foreign residents in Japan



Stock of migrant workers in Singapore



Approval of permanent and temporary work related visas in Australia



Note: Data for these figures were compiled from Government sources specified in the following analysis.

2.1.1.1 Asia and the Pacific as the origin

According to IOM (2021a), India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Viet Nam and Nepal were among the top 10 countries of origin of international migrants in the Asia–Pacific region as of mid-2020 (in descending order). Analysis of available national data presented demonstrates that the outflow of migrant workers[13] from these countries rebounded quickly in 2022, with Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal surpassing pre-pandemic levels, if not reaching record highs. According to data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) of Bangladesh (2023), the outflow of migrant workers in 2022 was the highest since 1976, the first year for which data are available. For Pakistan, only 2015 and 2016 recorded higher levels since the first record in 1971, according to data from the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment of Pakistan (BE&OE) (2023). As for Nepal, the 2021–2022[14] numbers nearly matched the record numbers of 2012–2013 and 2013–2014, according to data from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) (2022).

Outmigration to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – represents major labour migration corridors for workers from South and South-West Asia. Although South-East Asian countries, particularly Malaysia, are also conventional destinations for migrant workers from South Asia, the recorded outflows to these countries are not as significant as those to GCC countries. In Nepal, as much as 87 per cent of approved labour permits were for GCC countries, with another 6 per cent for Malaysia in 2022 (ibid.). In Bangladesh, the outflow of migrant workers to GCC countries accounted for about 83 per cent of total outflow in 2022, with Saudi Arabia (54%), Oman (16%), and the United Arab Emirates (9%) being the most popular destinations, while Singapore and Malaysia collectively received another 10 per cent of outflow (BMET, 2023). Pakistan had the highest share in this regard, as GCC countries accounted for almost 96 per cent of total outflow, while Malaysia, despite being the sixth most popular destination following Saudi Arabia (62%), the United Arab Emirates (15%), Oman (10%), Qatar (7%) and Bahrain (2%), received less than 1 per cent (6,000) of the total outflow in 2022 (BE&OE, 2023).

> *The 2022 FIFA World Cup hosted by Qatar was a distinct trigger of demands for workers, especially South Asian men, in mainly construction and hospitality sectors.*

The observed growth of outflow, on the one hand, has been likely catalysed by the volume of economic opportunities and labour demand in destination countries upon border reopening. The 2022 FIFA World Cup hosted by Qatar was a distinct trigger of demands for workers, especially South Asian men, in mainly the construction and hospitality sectors. While the demand for migrant workers has been ongoing since 2010 after the country was awarded the hosting rights, the recorded number of outgoing Bangladeshi and Pakistani workers to Qatar approximately tripled from the pre-pandemic level in 2019 to 2022, spiking from 50,292 to 179,612 for Bangladesh (BMET, 2023) and from 19,371 to 57,999 for Pakistan (BE&OE, 2023). Nepalese workers to Qatar also increased from 161,215 during 2018–2019 to 184,926 during 2021–2022 (MoLESS, 2022). In a broader context, economic growth in GCC countries has remained strong despite a relatively pessimistic global outlook. In 2022, as global economic growth was projected to decelerate sharply from 5.9 per cent in 2021 to 2.9 per cent in 2022, growth in GCC countries more than doubled that at 6.1 per cent (World Bank, 2023). As oil-exporting economies, GCC countries experienced a rapid expansion in exports and production and were able to maintain consumer inflation well below the global average in 2022, thanks to fixed exchange rates and fuel subsidies (ibid.). Moreover, the increasing drive to nationalize employment opportunities in GCC countries has led to higher labour force participation of local women, which in turn might heighten the demand for migrant domestic workers (IOM, 2022b). For example, the absolute number of Nepali female migrant workers granted new labour approvals almost quadrupled (from 8,594 to 33,062) and its relative share more than doubled (from 3.9% to 9.5%), in the period from 2008–2009 to 2021–2022; although labour migration is still a male-dominated

[13] Note that, as indicated in the corresponding figure and analysis, some data sources specifically refer to approval or self-registration data, which might not be directly comparable to outflow or deployment data which reflects actual outmigration. It also has to be noted that outflow or deployment data might reflect only part of the total outflow of migrant workers – documented under specific schemes or formal channels.

[14] Note that reported data refer to financial year starting from mid-July in the current year and ending in mid-July in the preceding year.

A migrant from Myanmar working in fishing boats in Southern Thailand. © IOM 2006/Thierry FALISE

phenomenon (MoLESS, 2020, 2022). While such an increase was not observed from the sex-disaggregated official figures for Bangladesh or Pakistan, this emerging trend in demand might counteract with traditional social norms and long-standing gendered exit policy in most South and South-West Asian countries (Joseph et al., 2022). In addition to GCC countries, other emerging destination countries are identified, such as European Union countries, especially Eastern European countries, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Japan and Republic of Korea (IOM, 2021b, 2022c; MoLESS, 2022).

On the other hand, the outflow of migrant workers, as well-established, integral livelihood and coping strategies in South Asia, might have been partially prompted by an increasingly challenging domestic economic environment amid various shocks and the possibility to remigrate among those who had returned at the height of the pandemic. Remittances are a primary source of income for many households and a lucrative business for recruitment agencies in most South Asian countries (ILO, 2021b, 2020). Indeed, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are among the top 10 recipients of remittances worldwide (IOM, 2021a). Nepal's economy is heavily reliant on remittances, with remittance inflows accounting for as much as 22 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2023). During the pandemic, South Asia experienced the deepest dip in economic growth among all subregions in Asia and the Pacific in 2020 (ILO, 2022a), with renewed lows due to new waves related to the SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus which causes COVID-19, Delta variant in the second quarter of

22%

of Nepal's GDP in 2022 came from remittance inflows.

2021. This decrease was compounded by the unprecedented volume of COVID-19 induced return of migrants and the inability of aspiring migrants to join overseas employment, which created enormous pressure on the domestic labour market. Many returnees in Nepal aspired to remigrate – with over half of the Nepalese returnees surveyed[15] reporting a plan to remigrate, mainly attributed to a lack of employment opportunities (57%) and poverty (28%) (Government of Nepal, 2020). As vaccination and the resumption of travel in destination countries helped more migrants who returned during the pandemic resume work (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2022), departures of migrant workers surged rapidly. Besides the pandemic, other shocks have wreaked havoc in South Asia in 2022. For example, flooding in Pakistan seriously damaged agricultural production, which accounts for 23 per cent of GDP and 37 per cent of employment, by disrupting the current and upcoming planting seasons, pushing between 5.8 million and nine million people into poverty – and political uncertainty further complicated the economic outlook of Pakistan (World Bank, 2023, p.84). The economic and political crisis in Sri Lanka will be discussed in the country snapshot below.

It should be noted that the actual figures of migrant worker outflow could be significantly higher, especially for Nepal and India. Besides the fact that undocumented migrants travelling via irregular channels are not counted in any of these official figures, the reported number for Nepal excludes Nepalese migrant workers travelling to India due to open border policy between the two countries. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, India has the largest presence of Nepali migrants in the world (around 1 million) in 2020 (Government of Nepal, 2020). India's exports and overall economic activity recovering more strongly than the rest of the world (World Bank, 2022), might justify the prediction of sustained labour mobility from Nepal to India, at the very least. As for India, while country-level analysis shows that the number of Indian workers who obtained emigration clearances in 2022 was converging to the level in 2019, the figures serve as a limited reflection of the total volume of outflow. Currently, e-Migrate, a portal through which recruitment of Emigration Check Required (ECR) passport holders going to ECR countries[16] is regulated by the Ministry of External Affairs, is one of the main sources of emigration data collection in India. However, e-Migrate registration was required for only 18 ECR countries. A recent survey also found that the prevalence of registration might not be high, as only 12 per cent among 337 aspiring international migrants surveyed reported having registered on the portal, mainly due to concerns over

[15] The sample consists of 1,999 migrant workers who returned to Nepal after the onset of pandemic in the Government's special repatriation flights or over land from India in 2020.

[16] As of 2022, the portal is open for registration for non-ECR passport holders (IOM, 2022d).

visa denial, privacy and a lack of awareness (IOM, 2022d).

Similarly, positive signs of recovery were observed in the cases of Indonesia and Viet Nam. According to the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board (BP2MI) (2023), the placement of Indonesian migrant workers in 2022 has resumed to over 70 per cent of the 2019 level, which was attributed to border reopening in the destination countries. Most of such movements took place within the region, with the most popular destinations being Hong Kong SAR, China (30%), the Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China (27%), Malaysia (22%), the Republic of Korea (6%), Singapore (3%) and Japan (3%) (ibid.). For Viet Nam, the recorded outflow of migrant workers exceeded the goal of 90,000 set by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and was just below the 2019 level.[17] Japan, the Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea were the top destinations (in descending order) (ILO, 2022b). The growth of outflow, according to the Ministry, was due to a surge of demand for workers in industrial zones, factories and construction sites in general, and specifically in agriculture in these East Asian destinations – a trend closely tied with population ageing in these countries and territories (ibid.).

The growth of outflow was attributed to a surge of demand for workers in industrial zones, factories and construction sites in general, and specifically in agriculture in these East Asian destinations.

[17] Nhan Dan (People) Newspaper, "More than 142,000 workers work abroad under contract in 2022", 7 January 2023.

[18] 1 USD = 310.4042 Sri Lankan Rupees on 17 May 2023, according to indicative exchange rate reported by Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Country Snapshot: Sri Lanka's crisis and its gendered impacts on labour migration

In 2022, Sri Lanka plunged into an unprecedented economic crisis, with a severe forex crunch due to the rapid depletion of usable foreign reserves. With the Government declaring a default of its external debt in April 2022, the hyper-inflation especially of food and fuel prices pushed up the poverty rate by at least three times, with many more sitting just on the brink (Deyshappriya, 2023).

In light of the grave economic crisis, intertwined with political instability, IOM (2022b) conducted a rapid assessment to examine their combined impacts on migration. According to the Institute for Health Policy's 2021 Sri Lankan Opinion Tracker Survey, 27 per cent of Sri Lankans would like to emigrate if they had a chance, with the prediction that the numbers would grow once the COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed. Given the increased economic turmoil, it was expected that the number of Sri Lankans opting to emigrate would be further on the rise. The Government has also been actively promoting contractual labour migration with a target of 300,000 migrant workers to be employed for 2022. As of 1 June 2022, documented departures recorded by the Bureau of Foreign Employment of Sri Lanka reached 130,511.

The gendered implications for labour migration and related vulnerabilities warrant attention. One of the measures the Government has taken to increase foreign employment included revisiting the Family Background Report policy, which restricted women from migrating for employment abroad. The economic plight shared by many households pressured women, particularly female-householders, to consider international migration as a solution – this observation has been confirmed by several key informants working at the grassroot level during the interviews. Unfortunately, this motive has been exploited by unscrupulous recruitment agencies, since profit margins accrued by the recruiters for deploying women migrants for domestic work especially in GCC countries are highly attractive. This gave rise to a new form of marketing strategy to lure aspirant women domestic workers by paying them lump sum pre-departure financial incentives in the range of 100,000–300,000 Sri Lanka rupees,[18] which in turn hold them onto a bondage to migrate. As observed by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Forced Labour in November 2022, subagents of private recruitment agencies, often closely networked with microfinance companies, specifically targeted indebted women.

Within the first three months of 2022, 20,308 Sri Lankan women registered with the Bureau of Foreign Employment had emigrated as domestic workers – which was almost 70 per cent of total departures in 2021 and one third of total departures in 2019. This figure could be higher given the

Sri Lanka

considerable number of unregistered migrant workers. Increasing incidents of irregular migration from Sri Lanka were reported, which might be associated with amplified risks. Some attempts occurred via sea routes, and others using temporary visitor visa to enter the UAE, then smuggled or trafficked across borders to Oman and other countries. One of the urgent needs highlighted in the report is the collection of disaggregated data and research on the purpose of emigration, in order to better understand and address the root causes, challenges and protection needs of unregistered migrant workers.

> *Within the first three months of 2022, 20,308 Sri Lankan women registered with the Bureau of Foreign Employment had emigrated as domestic workers – almost 70 per cent of total departures in 2021 and one third of total departures in 2019.*

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Source: Rapid Assessment on The Current Crises in Sri Lanka and The Impacts on International and Internal Migration of The Country. IOM (2022b).

2.1.1.2 Asia and the Pacific as the destination

Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan and Singapore (in descending order) were among the top 10 countries of destination of international migrants in the Asia–Pacific region as of mid-2020 (IOM, 2021a). Analysis of available yearly and mid-year national data presented shows that the inflow and stock of migrant workers in these countries[19] showed partial to full resumption in 2022. Policy changes including the relaxation of COVID-19 related mobility restrictions and the demand for migrant workers for economic recovery were some of the main common factors.

The inflow of migrant workers[20] to Australia during 2021–2022[21] has grown by 51 per cent from the previous period marked by a record decline, resuming to almost 70 per cent of the pre-pandemic level during 2018–2019 (Department of Home Affairs of Australia, 2022). The increase was seen consistently across permanent and temporary work-related visas. This upward trend is closely tied to policy changes. The first major change is that Australia's international border closure due to the pandemic, progressively introduced from February 2020 and discontinued in 2022. The last two months of 2021 saw its first steps in gradual reopening to fully vaccinated Australian citizens and permanent residents, followed by exempting certain fully vaccinated visa holders from applying for a travel exemption when entering the country (OECD, 2022a). In February 2022, Australia implemented the third step in reopening to all remaining fully vaccinated visa holders, mainly tourists (ibid.). The final stage of reopening occurred in July 2022 as the remaining border restrictions were lifted (ibid.). In addition, the existing seasonal and temporary labour migration schemes for Pacific workers, namely, the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), have been consolidated under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme[22] since April 2022. With the aim to help fill labour gaps outside Australia's major cities and in agriculture nationally, the PALM scheme allows eligible Australian businesses to recruit workers from nine Pacific Island countries[23] and Timor-Leste for seasonal jobs for up to nine months or for longer-term roles for between one and four years in unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled positions (Government of Australia, n.d.). The PALM scheme is seen to have enhanced flexibility for employers (Howes, 2022) and official statistics showed that the total number of PALM workers in Australia has risen from slightly over 24,400 by May 2022 to over 35,100 by December 2022 – an increase of 44 per cent in just seven months (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, 2023).

Gradual resumption was also seen in the total number of migrant workers in the immigration hubs in South-East Asia, with reliance on migrant labour for economic recovery particularly in certain sectors. By December 2022, the number of documented migrant workers in Thailand had increased by 37 per cent to almost three million migrant workers from the lowest point recorded in March 2021 (Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2021, 2022, 2023) when Thailand was hit hard by lockdowns. That figure also exceeds the same period in 2019. The majority of migrant workers in Thailand come from Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao People's

19 Differences across data sources are observed in the definition of migrant workers in the observed destination countries, as indicated in the corresponding figure and analysis. Some cross-country variations concern the definition of "migrant" (i.e. whether the definition is based on country of birth or country of citizenship), and some concern the definition of "worker" (i.e. some based on labour force participation status and others, such as Thailand, Australia and Singapore, based on certain work related visa categories, visa approval or work permit approval for migrant workers.

20 Figures include permanent visas granted for skill stream and temporary visas granted for temporary resident for skilled employment, other employment and working holiday categories.

21 Note that the time span of available data refers to financial year from July in the current year to June in the preceding year.

22 Data presented in the analysis on visa approval for PALM scheme refer to those granted for SWP and PLS prior to 2021–2022, and those granted for SWP, PLS and PALM during 2021–2022.

23 Including Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Democratic Republic, as reported by the Department of Employment of Thailand.[24] The incremental easing of restrictions on cross-border movements went full-fledged in 2022, which not only facilitated the inflow of migrant workers but also supported economic growth including tourism recovery. According to the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the country needs at least 500,000 foreign workers, especially in the construction industry, agriculture, fishing, and tourism.[25]

In Malaysia, the number of foreign citizens in the labour force saw a 93 per cent resumption in the fourth quarter of 2022 from the same period in 2019, reaching 2.25 million migrant workers in total (Department of Statistics of Malaysia, 2023). Further information is available about migrant workers holding Temporary Work Visit Passes specifically, totaling 1.46 million migrant workers as of December 2022. Most of these temporary migrant workers, mainly from Bangladesh, Indonesia and Nepal, were employed in the manufacturing sector (37%), followed by the construction sector (22%) and services (15%), according to the Ministry of Home Affairs of Malaysia.[26] This rebound may be in part driven by the easing of mobility restrictions and border reopening in April 2022, and robust economic growth in 2022 – 7.3 per cent in December 2022 and as high as 14.2 per cent in Q3 2022, compared to the regional average growth rate at 4.2 per cent by December 2022 – as the economy continued to normalize and the service sector reinvigorate (ADB, 2022). As many as 20,000 Malaysian companies, half in the agricultural sector, have requested foreign workers.[27]

In Singapore, the total number of migrant workers[28] was 1.31 million as of June 2022, according to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) (2022) – that is, 92 per cent of the December 2019 figure. As travel restrictions were lifted in April 2022, total employment grew by an unprecedented 231,700 in 2022 (MOM, 2023). The employment growth of foreign populations was particularly strong; they were mainly employed in construction and manufacturing, sectors which are typically more reliant on foreign labour (MOM, 2022).

The number of working-age registered foreign residents[29] in Japan has picked up from 2.35 million in December 2021 to 2.56 million in June 2022, as reported by the Statistics Bureau of Japan (2023). This represents a new high in the number of migrant workers in Japan, indicating a growth rate of 50 per cent from 1.71 million in December 2012. Notably, this growth trend, in line with the gradual increase of foreign population in Japan over the past decades, is distinct from those observed in other countries that have a long history of immigration. The top countries of origin for migrant workers in Japan include China (25%), Viet Nam (18%), the Republic of Korea (11%) and the Philippines (10%). While the incremental lifting of COVID-19 related border control measures from March 2022 has played a role, several other factors have contributed to this trend – including severe labour shortages, which is closely tied to Japan's shifting demographics (see the discussion in Section 1). Industries such as nursing care, farming, fishing and construction face dire labour shortages, particularly in rural areas.[30] The Japanese Government has stepped up its efforts to attract migrant workers in the past couple of years, such as introducing the Specified Skilled Workers (SSW) programme in 2019, which enables international migrant workers to work in 14 industry fields – the SSW was amended to merge three manufacturing fields in 2021. Between 2021 and 2022, these statuses of residence were amended and expanded. As of May 2022, Japan has signed Memoranda of Cooperation with 14 countries (OECD, 2022b), establishing a framework for information partnerships related to the deployment and human rights protection of workers under the SSW visa. Findings of a recent study by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and JP Mirai show that Japan needs 6.7 million by 2040 in order to achieve its GDP growth targets.[31]

Overall, at the regional level, despite continued recovery, the macroeconomic context might serve as one of the conditioning factors of the full resumption of labour demand and, by extension, the inflow of migrant workers in 2022 and beyond. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2022) suggested that the outlook in developing Asia and the Pacific[32] is weighed down by global gloom, as three main factors continued to hamper recovery: recurrent lockdowns in China, the Russian Federation–Ukraine crisis, and slowing global growth. According to ILO (2022a), labour market recovery in the region lagged behind global levels.[33] Despite job growth in 2021 and 2022 recovering from the 3.1 per cent drop in employment in 2020 and at 2 per cent above the 2019 level by 2022, there remain numerous signs that the region's labour market has yet to get back on its pre-crisis track. While the aggregate hours of work, unemployment numbers and number of persons outside the labour force were not yet back to the 2019 levels, the gradual decline in the number of persons in informal and vulnerable employment at the regional level through 2019 was reversed during the crisis (ibid.).

24 PIME AsiaNews, "Labour shortages threaten economic recovery in Malaysia and Thailand", 14 July 2022.
25 Ibid.
26 Malaysia World News, "The highest number of foreign workers in Malaysia are from Bangladesh – Minister Saifuddin", 6 January 2023.
27 PIME AsiaNews, "Labour shortages threaten economic recovery in Malaysia and Thailand", 14 July 2022.
28 The figure includes total foreign workforce under work passes, namely, Employment Pass, S Pass, work permit and other work passes.
29 The definition of working age in Japan is between 15 and 64 years of age. Foreign residents are defined by country of nationality.
30 The Japan Times, "Japan's foreign workers face a new post-COVID landscape", 5 September 2022.
31 JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development, "Toward an Inclusive Society Where Diverse People, Regardless of Their Nationality, Can Thrive Together: Research Outcomes Discussed at a Symposium on Foreign Worker Acceptance", 10 June 2022.
32 The estimates were provided for 46 developing members of ADB, mainly differing from the IOM definition by adding eight countries from Caucasus and Central Asia and excluding Australia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan and New Zealand.
33 Note that the analysis was based on the ILO definition of Asia and the Pacific (ILO, 2022a, p.71).

At the regional level, despite continued recovery, the macroeconomic context might serve as one of the conditioning factors of the full resumption of labour demand and, by extension, the inflow of migrant workers in 2022 and beyond. Despite job growth in 2021 and 2022 recovering from the 3.1 per cent drop in employment in 2020 and at 2 per cent above the 2019 level by 2022, there remain numerous signs that the region's labour market has yet to get back on its pre-crisis track.

Expert Contribution: Labour Migration in Asia and the Pacific

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The Asia–Pacific region has long been a major hub for labour migration, as both origin and destination countries for migrant workers. Several factors drive labour migration dynamics in the region. These factors include demographic shifts such as aging population and changes in human capital, income differentials and lack of domestic employment opportunities, economic transformation and infrastructure development, technology in the workplace such as automation, new forms of recruitment and work, as well as the climate change impacts.

If well governed, labour migration can be a powerful engine of sustainable development. Its positive outcomes are demonstrated through remittances, skills and knowledge transfer, and fulfilment of labour market needs, among others. However, to seize these opportunities, addressing the risks and challenges faced by migrant workers at all stages of their migration journeys is important.

During the recruitment phase, migrant workers are often misinformed or deceived regarding the nature and conditions of their employment. Unfair and unethical recruitment can also be discriminatory, with profiles from specific ethnic, gender, age groups could be excluded from accessing gainful employment opportunities abroad. High migration costs and exorbitant recruitment fees make migrant workers vulnerable to debt bondage, exploitation or forced labour. Migrants also encounter numerous barriers in accessing effective grievance and remedy mechanisms to address rights violations. These mechanisms are often non-existent, inaccessible or ineffective, leaving migrant workers with limited options to seek justice. Language barriers, geographic isolation and fear of retaliation are among the factors that hinder migrants from reporting exploitation.

To address these challenges, greater collaboration is needed between the private sector, governments and civil society organizations, as well as stronger regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms. Guided by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, IOM has produced several resources to support various actors with practical tools and guidance, such as the Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers, the Fair and Ethical Recruitment Due Diligence Toolkit, and the Handbook for Governments on Ethical Recruitment and Migrant Worker Protection. Ultimately, it is a shared responsibility of governments and businesses to protect and respect the human and labour rights of migrant workers.

Resources
IOM information sheet: Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion in Asia and the Pacific.
Spotlight on Labour Migration in Asia: A Factor Analysis Study.

If well governed, labour migration can be a powerful engine of sustainable development.

2.1.2 Discussion

The findings presented in this section reveal a trend of recovery of both the outflow and inflow of labour migration from and to the region, as well as some emerging paths as the COVID-19 pandemic began to subside. Although the pandemic is no longer the ultimate disruptor, its long-lasting impacts remain and other factors such as global headwinds (see Section 2.1.1.2) and changing population structures in some countries (see Section 2.1.1.2 and Section 1.1) are taking increasingly prominent roles. The analysis also observes the role of country-specific factors – some related to origin-specific crises, challenges and risks. Others were destination-specific factors that feed into the demand for migrant workers, whether temporary or permanent, depending on the country's context.

Of particular note is the increasing interconnectedness between labour mobility and climate migration. Human mobility in response to changing environmental conditions is not unusual in many Pacific Island communities. However, evidence is increasing that climate change has become a factor in migration decisions among Pacific workers, although migrants may not explicitly articulate such reason – given that climate mobility is likely to follow established migration pathways (IPCC, 2022; ILO and IOM, 2022). With extreme weather events becoming more common across the region and the globe under the effect of climate change, data and research are key tools to understand this nexus to improve resilience and adaptation to climate change in both potential origin and destination countries. This urge is embedded in the broader quest for timely, accurate data at all stages of migration, as emphasized in Objective 3 of the Global Compact for Migration. Promoting consistency and comparability in definition and reporting of labour migration data across countries is another area that requires significant efforts.

As shown in this section, demand for labour migration is increasing – both from destination countries' need to attract and retain migrant workers for economic recovery and growth, and origin countries' reliance on developmental gains from the deployment of workers abroad – such as remittances. Furthermore, recruitment agencies serve a facilitating or catalysing role in the deployment process. These contexts highlight the urgent need for better migrant worker rights protection regardless of their documentation status, skill level or gender. According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants following an official visit to Bangladesh, skilled migration schemes channeled through government-to-government initiatives was observed in some cases to yield more beneficial results for migrants due to more robust regulation and oversight than others (United Nations Bangladesh, 2023). The lower-skilled migrants are often at risk of being in vulnerable situations, including exploitation, as they are often poor, lack education and access to information that can help inform their decisions and enhance their migration experiences. The unique gendered implications and risks of recent labour migration trends, as observed in the case of Sri Lanka, indicate the need for governments to create a facilitating mechanism to help women migrants use formal channels for labour migration to minimize exploitation.

Concerted efforts of States, the private sector and other stakeholders, including international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and trade unions, are fundamental to enabling and supporting migrant worker protection. The Global Compact for Migration and Sustainable Development Goals both highlight the need for an integrated migration policy embedded in rights-based and whole-of-government approach, including the elimination of excessive fees, deceptive and exploitative recruitment practices, and risky and hazardous working conditions, as well as the regularization of irregular and precarious immigration status, to pave the way for safe, orderly and regular migration and sustainable development.

> *Data and research are key tools to understand this nexus to improve resilience and adaptation to climate change in both potential origin and destination countries.*

Migrant workers from the Philippines – one of the main origin countries of international migrants in the region – complete their records at the Philippines' Overseas Employment Administration. © IOM 2008/Angelo JACINTO

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Rohingya refugee settlement in Balukhali, Bangladesh. © IOM 2018/ Olivia HEADON

2.2 Conflict-Induced Displacement

The IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report of 2020 and that of 2021 laid the foundational concepts around displacement in contextualizing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) mid-year data for the region during COVID-19 and provided evidence from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and its Resettlement Movement and Management (RMM) Division. Likewise, this year's chapter aims to provide updated statistical information for the Asia–Pacific region in support of the existing literature regarding conflict-driven displacement. It recounts and summarizes displacement dynamics, builds upon acquired knowledge, and addresses "structural factors and multilateral efforts" (Objective 2 of the Global Compact for Migration) that are needed to address complex humanitarian crises. To aid in the field of international migration data and navigate the increasingly complex landscape of displacement, the first section establishes the parameters used to report on global and regional trends. The following sections give an overview of this year's descriptive statistics, addressing international and internal conflict-induced displacement in terms of stock and recent flow figures for each according to data availability, before considering mixed flows. The discussion briefly reassesses developments and action points that can be expected from upcoming agendas.

Snapshot: Data Considerations

Definitions: Displacement refers to "the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their home or habitual place of residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters" and covers both internal and cross-border movement (IOM, 2019). This includes intracommunal or intercommunal violence, and situations of insecurity that arise from persecution based on ethnic (or tribal) lines. This definition draws upon the 1949 Geneva Convention relating to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflict, and the Rome statute of the International Criminal court (enforced respectively in 1950, 1978 and 2002). Additionally, displacement covered in this chapter considers the definition given under international humanitarian law and takes on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Principle 6) in addressing the need to protect populations and their entitlements. While the former confers displacement a legal dimension, the Guiding Principles are only authoritative thanks to their endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly and provide tools for States' to respond to internal displacement (ibid.). On refugees specifically, see 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol.

Scope: Displacement, by definition, may include and be driven by environmental considerations where evacuation is necessary. Despite displacement being heavily focused on situations of violence with long-standing conflicts and political instability in Myanmar and Afghanistan, disaster events, like natural disasters, equally factor into the instability of a country, pose an active threat to people's lives and livelihoods, and further the predicament of those already displaced. Climate change, conflict and political insecurity are three aggravating circumstances. Displacement contexts and flows are thus attached to mixed forms of threats and often incorporate and reflect multiple drivers of migration. The population of concern is thereby composed of different migration types, profiles and vulnerabilities. This intersectionality encompasses a mixed migration approach. However, a growing awareness by the international community of the pertinence of disaster-induced displacement in a changing global landscape, superseding even other forms of displacement in Asia and the Pacific (IOM, 2021, p.79) has set forth new and differential challenges, which has warranted its own category for study. For this purpose, disaster-induced displacement is addressed separately to this chapter (see Section 2.3) and is included in total figures unless specified otherwise. However, disaster-induced displacement is only briefly and narrowly touched upon in this section, and only adjunctly to conflict-driven displacement. The former exacerbates the situation of those already displaced and poses as a major impediment to their return.

Data collection categorizations: As indicated, a displaced population may represent different types of population groups. They can be categorized in several ways, depending upon whether these are internal or cross-border displacements, and by virtue of how their status (or lack of) is recognized in the host country and/ or by a supranational entity, like UNHCR. Of the internal type, displaced populations are solely identified as an internally displaced person (IDP) and use the same definition as the one provided above. For international displacement they may be considered irregular migrants when they are not (or prior to being) established as a refugee or as an asylum-seeker. Though this type of data is often lacking, accounting for irregular migration is crucial in keeping updated comprehensive records of displacement figures and is usually a proxy to measure vulnerabilities of populations and returns. Although this chapter does not refer to returns (see Section 2.4), irregular migrants are surveyed to estimate the net flow of displaced population (in-flow and out-flow) and to avoid double-counting of figures. Doing so enables for the 'average amount of time in displacement' to be made known and helps determine the (1) propensity to, (2) type and (3) changing needs of the displaced as time goes on. Finally, returns can also be used to assess progress in terms of safety and security in countries of return.

UNHCR-specific categorizations: While IOM considers internally and internationally displaced persons regardless of their status, UNHCR's statistics on populations are dictated according to its mandated role and responsibility to assist and protect certain groups, with particular attention to their standards and criteria of eligibility (that is, the "Refugee status determination") (UNHCR, 1979). With additional concern over comparability of figures the UNHCR has incorporated other metrics ("population statistics") to offer more comprehensive figures on the overall displacement context. Therefore, in addition to refugees and asylum-seekers, UNHCR collects data on refugee-like situations, IDPs, people in IDP-like situations, stateless persons, host communities, other groups or people of concern to UNHCR. A summary of these categorizations can be found on the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) portal or directly via the UNHCR's Methodology page. On stock and IDP figures reported on conflict-driven displacement, UNHCR compiles these figures from 2021 year-end data reported in 'Global Trends report' and by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) but precludes those reported for disaster-displacement. For more information on their statistical database, see UNHCR data content.

Methodological framework: Displaced populations are accounted for in IOM's DTM database and UNHCR database until they reach a durable solution. Durable solutions refer to a perceived or factual stable situation in which persons "no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement" either upon return in their place of origin, in the

area of IDP resettlement or in the host country (IASC, 2010, p.1). Data collection of this type is usually conducted by the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) through one of its methodological components (notably household surveys) or in combination with population censuses, administrative records and beneficiary registers (IOM, 2023). Alternatively, to cap the ever-expanding number of IDPs on record, the UNHCR database keeps a 10-year log, after which the population of concern are considered to have reached a durable solution (UNHCR, 2022a, p.13). In this way, these delimitations and working definitions frame the long-standing issue in the humanitarian field of 'when does displacement end'.

> *Displacement refers to "the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their home or habitual place of residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters".*

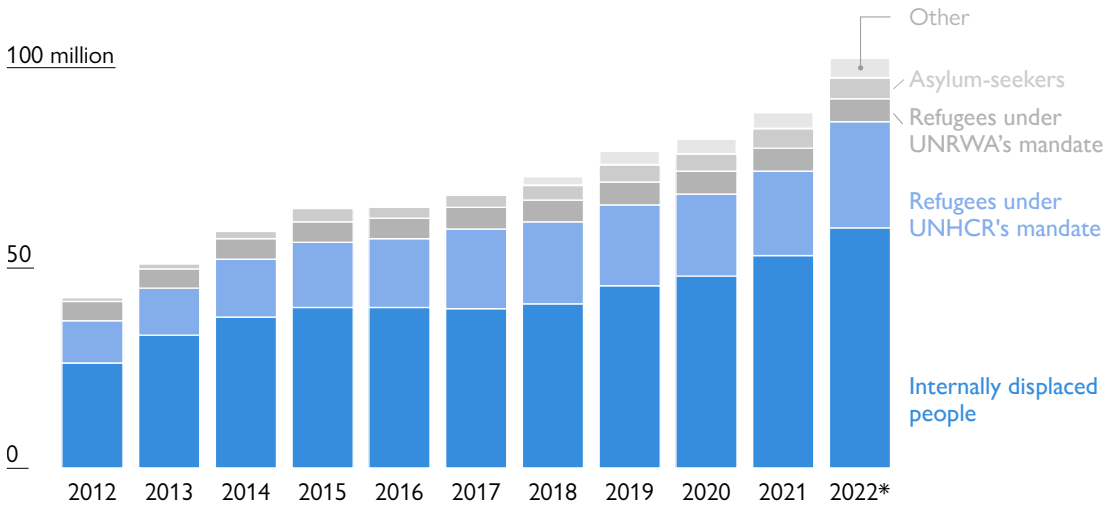
2.2.1 A global overview

Measuring displacement has a long contentious history with issues notably around inclusivity of figures, which are still highly contested today. However, grappling with the extent of humanitarian crises driven by conflict, disasters and displacement provides a first step in taking stock of the breadth of issues that underpin the displacement landscape, where absolute or consolidated figures on displaced populations are either unavailable, blurred, limited or incomplete. Additionally, such measuring helps guide operational solutions at the nexus of peace, security, and development to support displaced populations in need. Conflict-driven displacement has wide-ranging ramifications that have worsened in the last decade. While global peacefulness had declined in this timeframe (or by 70% in the last 15 years), the number of conflict-induced displaced persons relative to the global population more than doubled from 1:167 to 1:77 in the same period (IOM, 2021; WEF, 2023). By mid-2022, over 100 million people were currently displaced within and across borders (UNHCR, 2022a). Of this stock, 4.73 million refugees and 796,000 asylum-seekers were from the Asia and the Pacific (UNHCR, 2022b). In addition, by end-2022, close to 7.3 million IDPs were recorded in the region (IDMC, 2023).

over 100 million

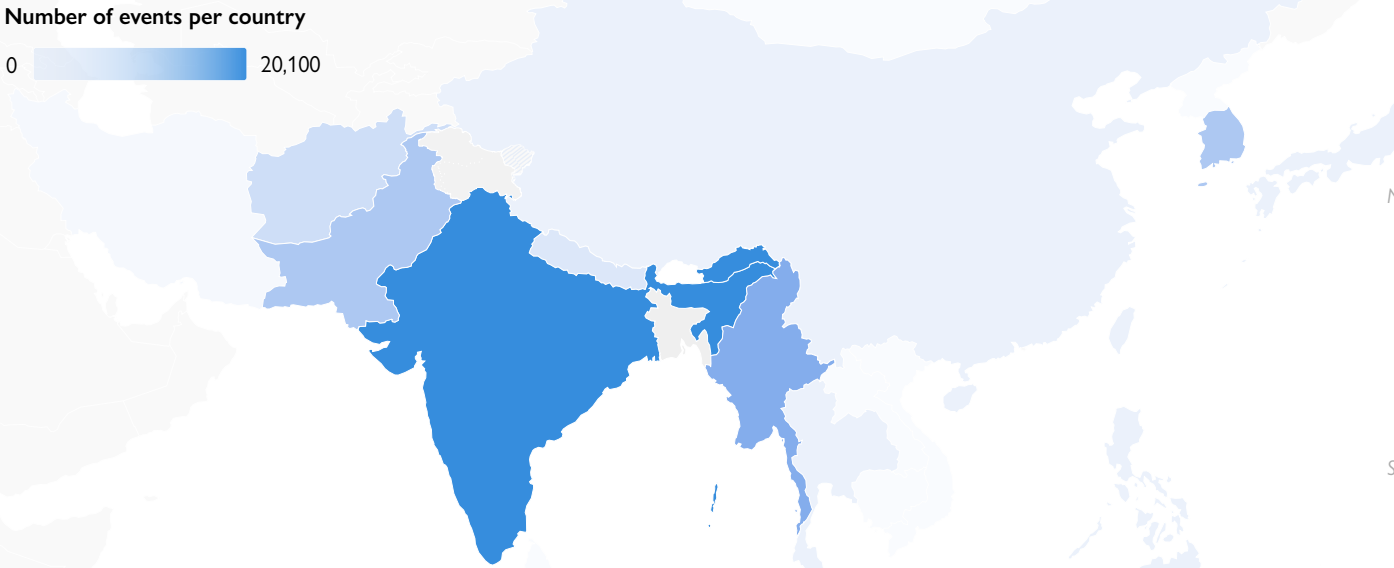
people currently displaced

Figure 11. Global displacements from 2012 to 2022



Source: Mid-year report. UNHCR (2022a).

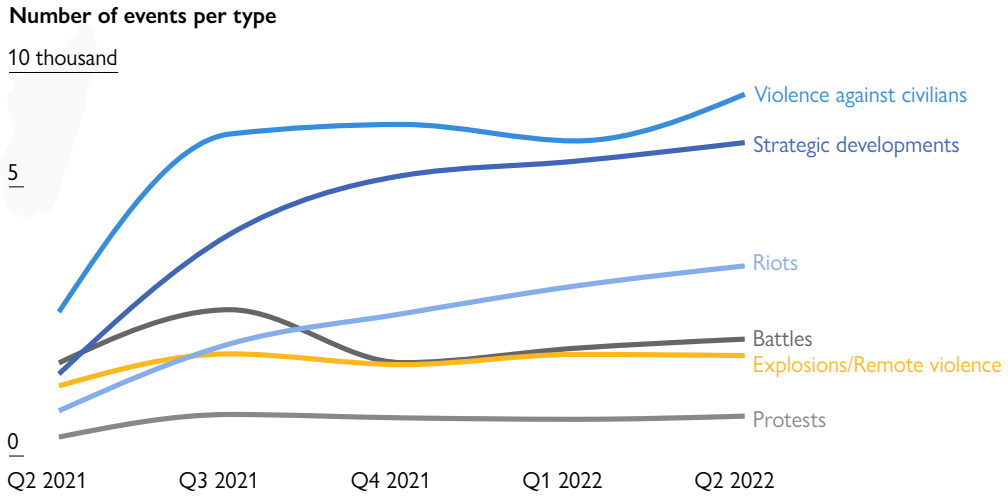
Figure 12. Evolution of events in Asia and the Pacific (mid-2021 to mid-2022)



Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Dashboard. ACLED (2022).



In respect to humanitarian needs in Asia and the Pacific that arise from conflict-driven displacement account for over a quarter (27%) of the global figure. Amid these 76 million people, more than half can be attributed to and captured by just two countries and their relevant populations. Characterized by complex crises that are economic, political and conflict based, Afghanistan and Myanmar face extreme or severe access constraints to aid. About 28 million people in or from Afghanistan and 17 million people from Myanmar (made up of IDPs, internal migrants, international migrants and host communities) are estimated to live in a state of precarity (ACAPS, 2022; IOM, 2022a; OCHA, 2022a). An additional 1.8 million people in host communities are affected by these displacements in Asia–Pacific countries and about 309,000 people in need of protection are also identified (UNHCR, 2022a). Additionally, across these categories are 1.5 million Rohingyas (OCHA, 2022a).

According to UNHCR data (2022a) not only are refugees and other people in need of international protection on a global scale usually (69%) fleeing to a neighbouring country but the majority of these (74%) are in low- to lower-middle income countries unable to shoulder the responsibility of supporting migrant needs due to scarce resources, which also holds true in Asia and the Pacific (Figure 13). For refugees and asylum-seekers, leaving countries of origin also means leaving food crises behind, yet nearly a quarter are hosted in least developed countries (OCHA, 2022a). At this rate, two thirds of the world's poorest people are predicted to live in societies that are highly insecure, conflict-ridden, or violent by 2030, affecting internally and internationally displaced persons as well as host populations (IOM, 2021, p.173).

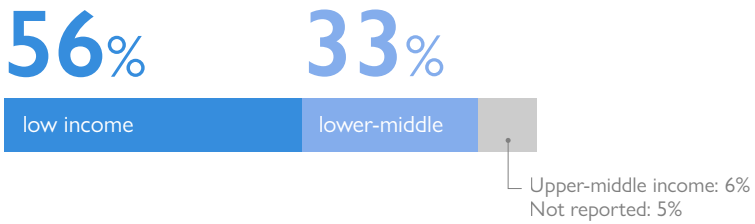
2.2.2 A region of asylum: Forced international displacement focused

The stock of refugees and asylum-seekers in Asia and the Pacific is estimated to be 5.53 million where four fifths are registered either by groups from Afghanistan (3.1 million) or from Myanmar (1.3 million) (UNHCR, 2022b). These two countries figure among the top countries having produced the most refugees worldwide alongside the Syrian Arab Republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ukraine and South Sudan (UNHCR, 2022a). Overall, the total figure is slightly lower than that of 2021 at 5.6 million at year-end, partially due to reduced cross-border movements that have dragged on from the last quarter of 2021. Reduced international flows can result from a number of factors such as environmental or political conditions and internal mobility dynamics, that are better understood in the sections below. Nevertheless, full-year figures for 2022 are expected to increase with new displacement flows recorded across international borders in the second half of the year (UNHCR, 2022c; IOM, 2022b).

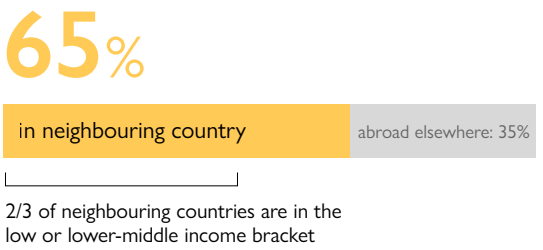
In the lapse of one year, Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers grew by almost 136,000 (from 2.9 million to 3.1 million), with refugees amounting close to 128,000 (95%) of this figure, while asylum-seekers grew by almost 8,000 (from 778,000 to 795,000). In comparison, Myanmar grew

Figure 13. Characteristics of countries hosting displaced persons from Asia and the Pacific as of mid-2022

Refugees and asylum-seekers of Asia and the Pacific hosted in low and middle-income countries



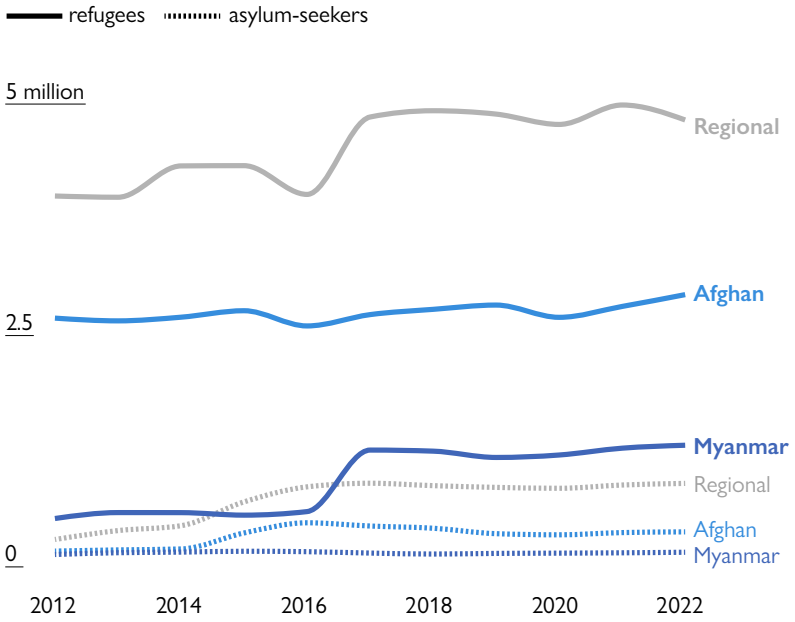
Refugees and asylum-seekers from Asia and the Pacific hosted in neighbouring countries



Source: Author's illustration based on data from the Refugee Data Finder. UNHCR (2022b) and World Bank (2022) (accessed 11 April 2023).

Note: Neighbouring countries refer to countries that share a common border with the top 5 countries of displacement, which are Afghanistan, Myanmar, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, accounting for 91 per cent of the total stock of refugees and asylum-seekers. The list of neighbouring countries for the five above-mentioned countries, include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

Figure 14. Refugees and asylum-seekers from Asia–Pacific countries (2012–2022)



Source: Author's illustration based on data from the Refugee Data Finder. UNHCR (2022b) (accessed 11 April 2023).

from 1.1 million to 1.2 million refugees, and over 943,000 stateless Rohingya refugees amid the 34 congested camps in Bangladesh as of October 2022 (OCHA, n.d.a). Between refugees and asylum-seekers, foced international displacement to neighbouring countries accounted for over one million (UNHCR, 2022c).

Amongst other countries in Asia and the Pacific, Afghanistan and Myanmar, with China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan compose 91 per cent of the total stock of refugees and asylum-seekers making up the top five countries of displacement; and up to 98 per cent for the top 10 countries by including Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Viet Nam and Malaysia (Figure 15).

Conversely, over a quarter (28%) of asylum-seekers and refugees live in Pakistan, followed by Bangladesh (17%) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (15%), and to a lesser degree (6% or less) are in Germany, the United States of America, India, Malaysia, Türkiye, France and Australia (Figure 16). Considering over half of persons in need of international protection live in neighbouring countries, displaced population groups in host countries can be largely defined by their country of origin. In this case, the majority of Afghans are present in Pakistan (1.56 million individuals) followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran (820,714). Stateless Rohingya refugees from Myanmar can be found in Bangladesh (929,667 individuals), Malaysia (160,529) and Thailand (92,078). In fourth place, India hosts 64,380 refugees while Indonesia is estimated to have received 902 Rohingya refugees according to UNHCR June 2022 data. However, estimates should be considered conservative as many more are reported to have been stranded in the Andaman Sea (see Section 3.3).

Figure 15. Top 5 countries of origin of displaced abroad in the Asia and Pacific region as of 2022

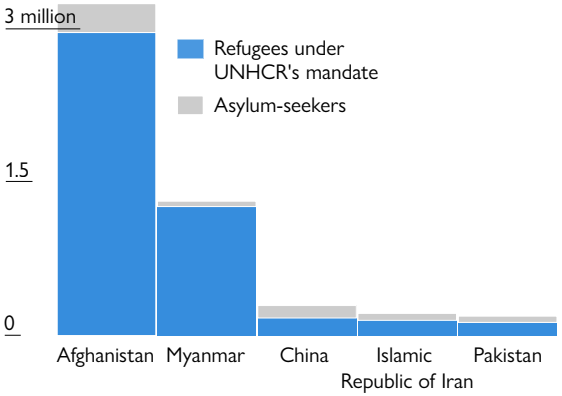
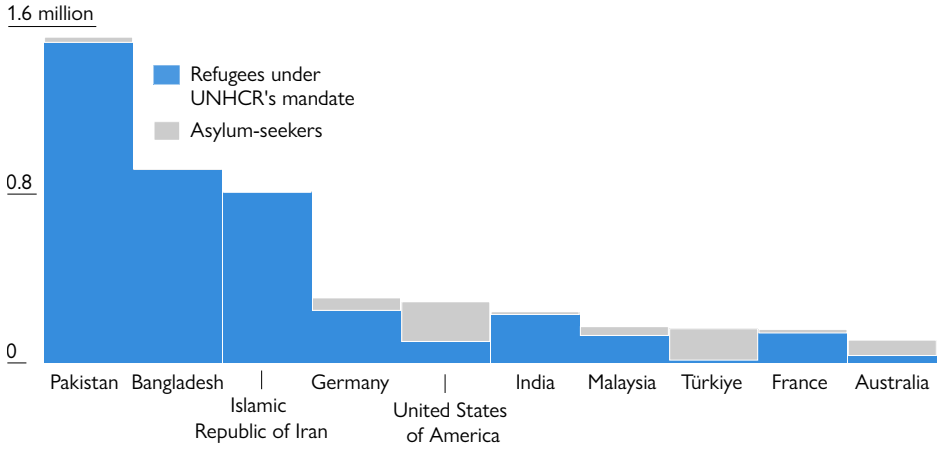
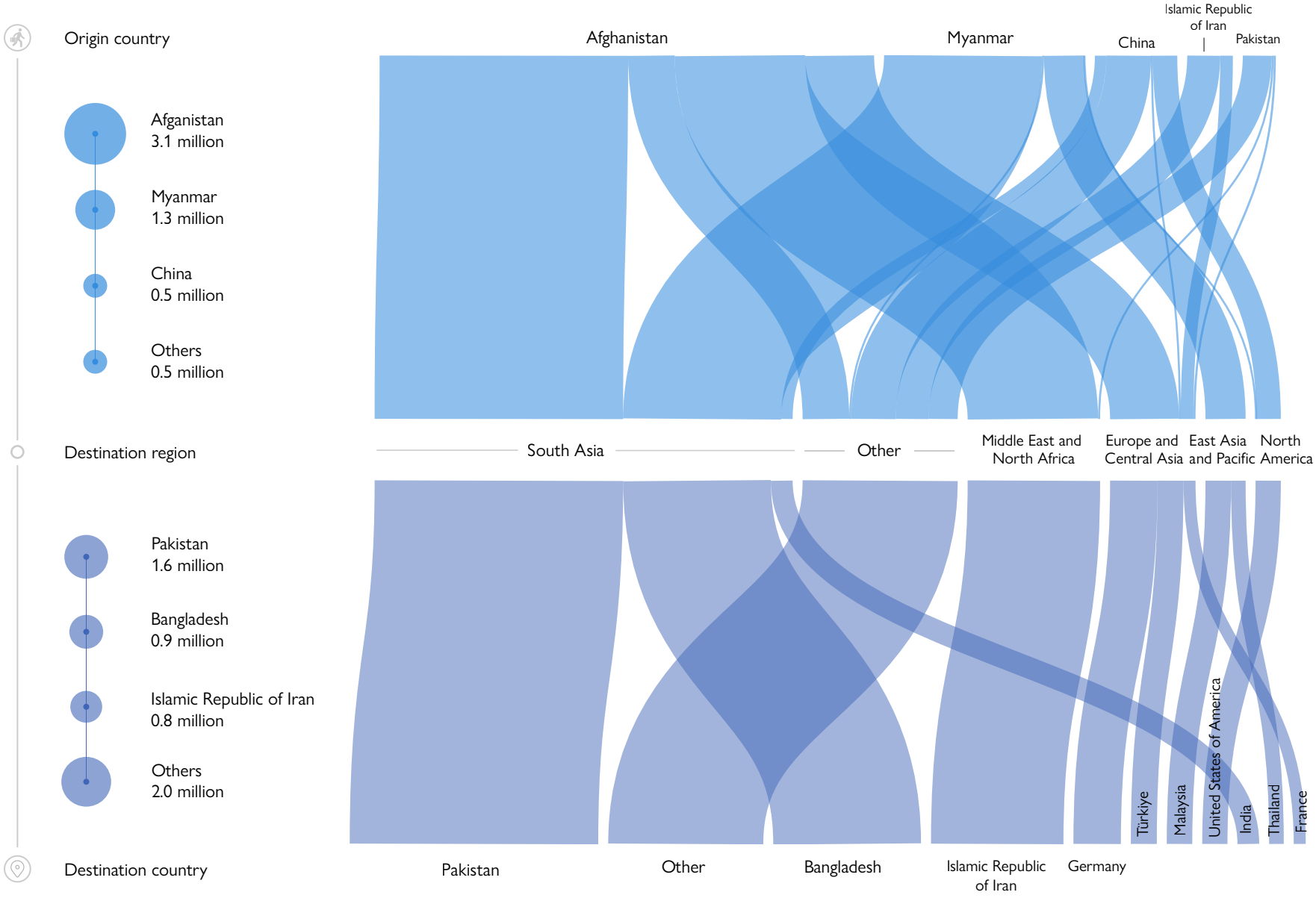


Figure 16. Top 5 countries of refuge for persons originating from the Asia and the Pacific as of 2022



Source: Author's illustration based on data from the Refugee Data Finder. UNHCR (2022b) (accessed 11 April 2023).

Figure 17. Distribution of refugees and asylum-seekers from the Asia and the Pacific by top 10 corresponding countries of refuge in 2022



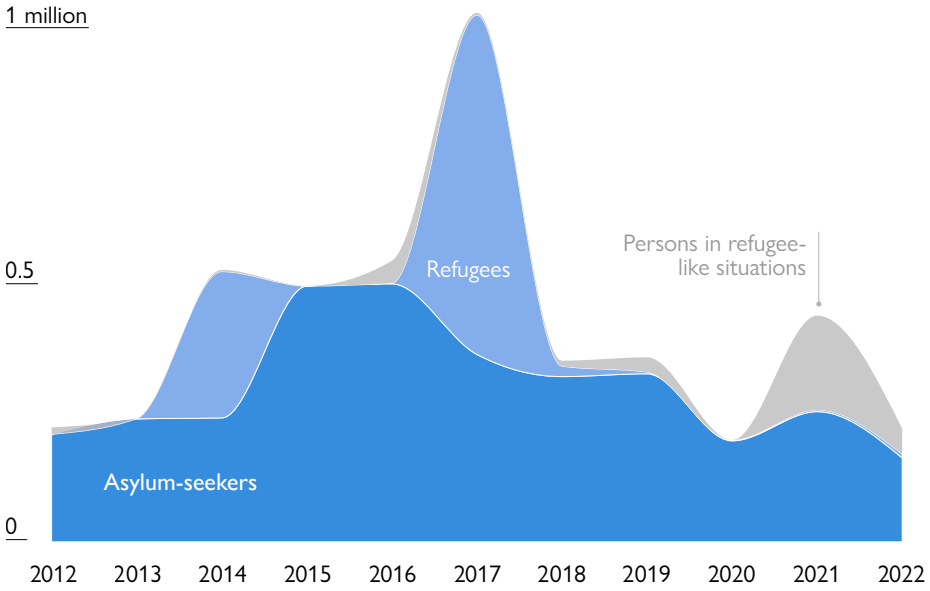
Source: Author's illustration based on data from the Refugee Data Finder. UNHCR (2022b) (accessed 11 April 2023).
Note: The figure captures 90 per cent of displaced persons in the region (or 4.9 million).

2.2.2.1 Displacement flows

In the latest round of assessments by the UNHCR on cross border flows, over 200 thousand people from Asia and the Pacific were recorded (162,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, and 49,000 people in refugee-like situations as of mid-2022). With broader consideration to populations in need, including people in refugee-like situations, and other people in need of protection, in addition to asylum-seekers and refugees, the top 10 countries of displacement are Afghanistan, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, China, Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Indonesia. The top 10 countries of asylum for Asia–Pacific populations looking for refuge are India, Pakistan, Germany, United States of America, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, Türkiye, Austria and Italy (Figure 19).

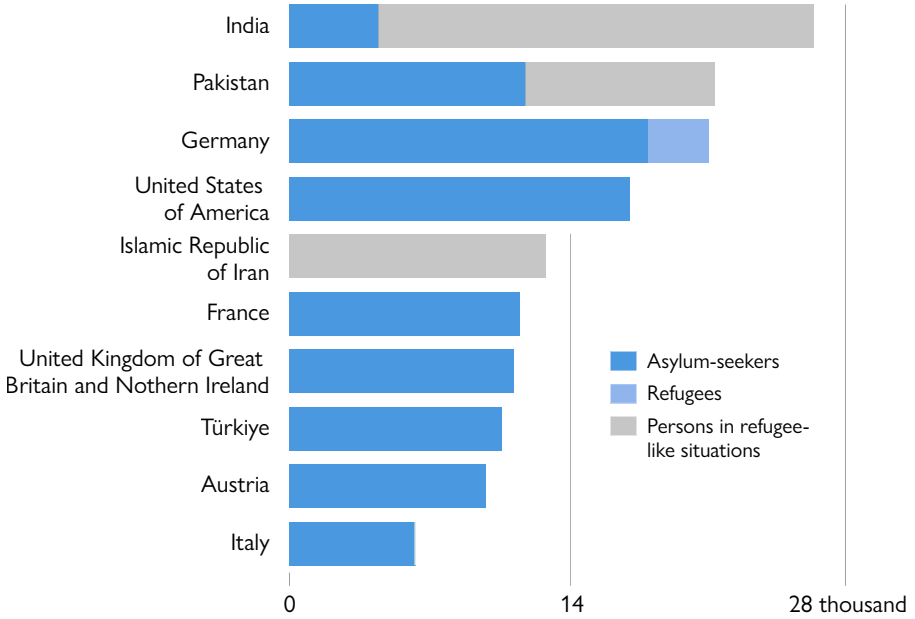
In contrast to global trends, where stock and flow figures of displaced persons have soared in the past year (mainly due to new conflicts such as the war in Ukraine, which were at the origin of new mass displacements), flows from Asia–Pacific in 2022 are lower than those from the previous year Figure 18). While this finding can be partially attributed to changes in the security situation, reservations should be held on the interpretation of improvement in conditions of return, whether voluntary or returned by governments (See Section 2.4) in the upscaling of complex crises. As reported by IOM's DTM, outflows from Afghanistan, not unlike inflows, corroborate that the monthly average of movements in the first half of 2022 is less than that of 2021 for the same period. This could be due to a combination of temporary border closures due to tensions, reduced irregular flows due to tightened surveillance at borders, especially at the Pakistan border, and shift in mobility patterns ensuing from the internal context (IOM, 2022b).

Figure 18. Regional cross-border flows from Asia–Pacific countries (2012–2022)



Source: Author's illustration based on data from the Refugee Data Finder. UNHCR (2022b) (accessed 11 April 2023).

Figure 19. Top 10 destination countries amid recent flows of displaced persons of Asia–Pacific origin (mid-2022)



Source: Author's illustration based on data from the Refugee Data Finder. UNHCR (2022b) (accessed 11 April 2023).

2.2.2.2 Asylum applications

Regarding other populations that have yet to be given formal recognition, close to 200,000 new asylum-seeker applications were submitted in the region by mid-2022. Overall, the number of applications increased by 56 per cent, or by 29,800 since 2021. For persons from Asia and the Pacific awaiting asylum application decisions, in 2022 asylum was recognized by UNHCR in a little over a quarter of cases (27% or 53,000) while 19,000 people were granted subsidiary protections. Almost all (99%) approvals originated from Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, China, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and Nepal. The remaining one per cent represented 424 applications which were issued from 15 countries, territories, or areas. These include Malaysia (79), Indonesia (64), Papua New Guinea (56), Mongolia (56), Cambodia (48), the Philippines (41), Hong Kong SAR, China (15), Republic of Korea (13), New Zealand (12), Thailand (10), Bhutan (10), Tonga (5), Samoa (5), Fiji (5) and the Solomon Islands (5).

For the majority (80%) of approvals, main countries of asylum were concentrated in just 10 countries and led by France with 7,290 approvals (14%). The United States of America, Germany, Greece, Canada, Malaysia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Italy, Türkiye and Austria also figure among those admitting the most refugees in this most recent release of decisions by mid-2022.

2.2.2.3 Refugee resettlement cases

Similar last year's statements, the widening gap between humanitarian need and assistance is on the rise (IOM, 2022c). The rising number of submissions, approvals and those that are pending travel, illustrates the growing number of people in need. Overall, a total of 22,539 resettlements were assisted or complemented by IOM in the Asia–Pacific region for the entire year of 2022; according to UNHCR (2022b) figures, this figure represented nearly half (43%) of those assisted worldwide. A significant portion (43%) were younger than 18 years and 15 per cent were children younger than five years. Pakistan makes up half of the total resettlement departure figures, followed by Malaysia, Thailand, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and Bangladesh, with the main countries of resettlement being Canada, the United States of America and Australia (Figure 20).

This trend reaffirms ground realities that countries of first asylum differ from those of resettlement as these places often do not offer or permit legal local integration (Muntarbhorn, 2020, p.7). For instance, in the aforementioned host countries with large refugee populations where resettlement was assured, many of these countries have limited durable local solutions for migrants. Significant constraints exist in policy and practice that hamper migrants' ability to work or have long-term stays in-country.

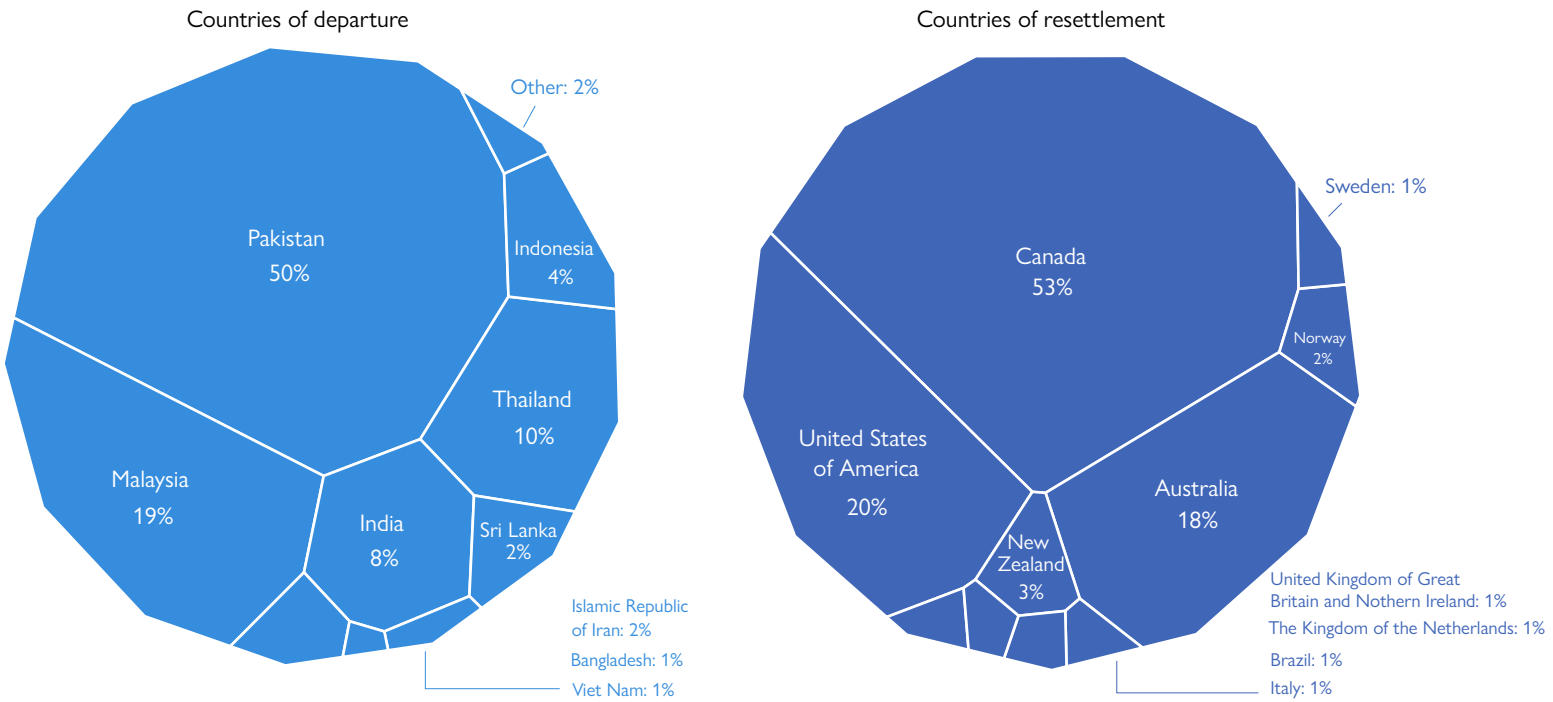
56%

increase in asylum applications

Snapshot: Country Case of Asylum Applications in 2022

Afghans lodged 80,000 group applications and 12,000 individual applications in Pakistan. In the lapse of time since August 2021, between 6,000 to 8,000 first-time asylum applications of Afghan nationals in the European Union were lodged each month on average by mid-2022 (IOM, 2022b). In October 2022, applications lodged by Afghans in 27 European Union Member States. Norway and Switzerland exceeded the previous high at 14,000, and reached 15,000 for the first time since September 2021 (UNHCR, 2022a). As for those that have been accepted, a total of 7,712 applications were granted status, an increase from the previous year, while the yearly number of applications dropped from 36,000 to 18,000. Nonetheless, per IOM's DTM assessments, despite the political transition in Afghanistan, mobility flows by sea and land to Europe have not been affected. European Union countries registered 14 per cent of Afghans among all arrivals in the region, with the highest number of first-time asylum applications of Afghan nationals being in Germany, France, Austria and Bulgaria (IOM, 2022b).

Figure 20. Top countries of departure and resettlement in 2022



Source: Author's illustration based on Resettlement and Movement Management Division (RMM) database. IOM (2022d) (accessed 4 May 2023).

Note: Other countries of origin include Myanmar, Cambodia, Nepal, Australia, China, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, the Philippines, Fiji, Japan, Singapore, Tonga, Lao People's Democratic Republic and New Zealand, Hong Kong SAR, China, the Taiwan Province of People's Republic of China. Other countries of resettlement include the Republic of Korea, Japan, Finland, Switzerland, the Philippines, Ireland, Argentina, Uruguay and Iceland.

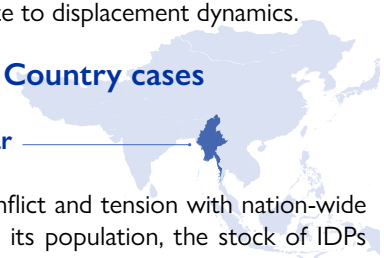
2.2.3 A region of displacement: Internal displacement focused

The stock of conflict-induced internal displacement for the entire region stood at 7.3 million as of end-2022 and represents the highest figure on record (IDMC, 2023). The vast majority of IDPs (7.05 million or 97%) are concentrated in just five countries, notably Afghanistan (60%), Myanmar (21%), India (9%), Bangladesh (6%) and the Philippines (1.4%). Other countries hosting IDPs include Papua New Guinea (91,000 IDPs), Indonesia (72,000), Thailand (41,000), Pakistan (21,000) and Solomon Islands (1,000) (ibid.).

Framed around the largest countries with conflict-induced IDPs, the following section first presents current knowledge and data on the displacement situation in both countries, while the second looks at different forms of human mobility and the undercurrents that contribute to displacement dynamics.

2.2.3.1 Country cases

Myanmar



Amid conflict and tension with nation-wide effect on its population, the stock of IDPs from Myanmar is estimated to reach over one million by mid-2022 (UNHCR, 2022a) or close to 1.5 million (1,473,000) as of December 2022 (OCHA, 2022b). Since the military takeover in February 2021, a little over 691,000 new displacements were identified as of mid-2022. Of this figure, the vast majority of displacements (80% or 567,500) were recorded between January to June of 2022 (ibid.). The current number of IDPs not only tripled since 2020 (561,000) but follows a rate of 226,000 new displacements every quarter and has seen steady increase over the years.

With many living in conflict-ridden areas that are escalating in violence or living in fear of violence promptly resuming, deaths, casualties and displaced persons are identified, predominantly in the country's southwest and northeast regions. Of the figure in mid-2022, a quarter (or 175,000) of new IDPs were in the South-east, notably in Southern Shan (20,000), Kayah (88,000), Kayin (52,000), Mon, East Bago and Tanitharyi (10,000 between the three) (CPI, 2022).

However, updated figures as of December 2022 place the North-West region as having the most IDPs (or 68% of the total figure) of which, with the volatile security situation across Chin (6% of total), Sagaing (16%) and Magway (78%) Regions, total 795,000 IDPs (OCHA, 2022c). By December 2022 figures, the South states of Rakhine and Chin had 23,500 IDPs following a resumed conflict which has since subsided

and relaxed movements – though it had originally displaced close to one million people (997,000 IDPs). In Central Rakhine specifically, about 21 per cent (or 130,000) of the total Rohingya population are displaced. In Shan state, about 70,200 IDPs have been identified, of which 8,300 IDPs currently live in camps in the north. Finally in Kachin, 13,600 new IDPs join 91,500 IDPs who had been previously displaced (ibid.).

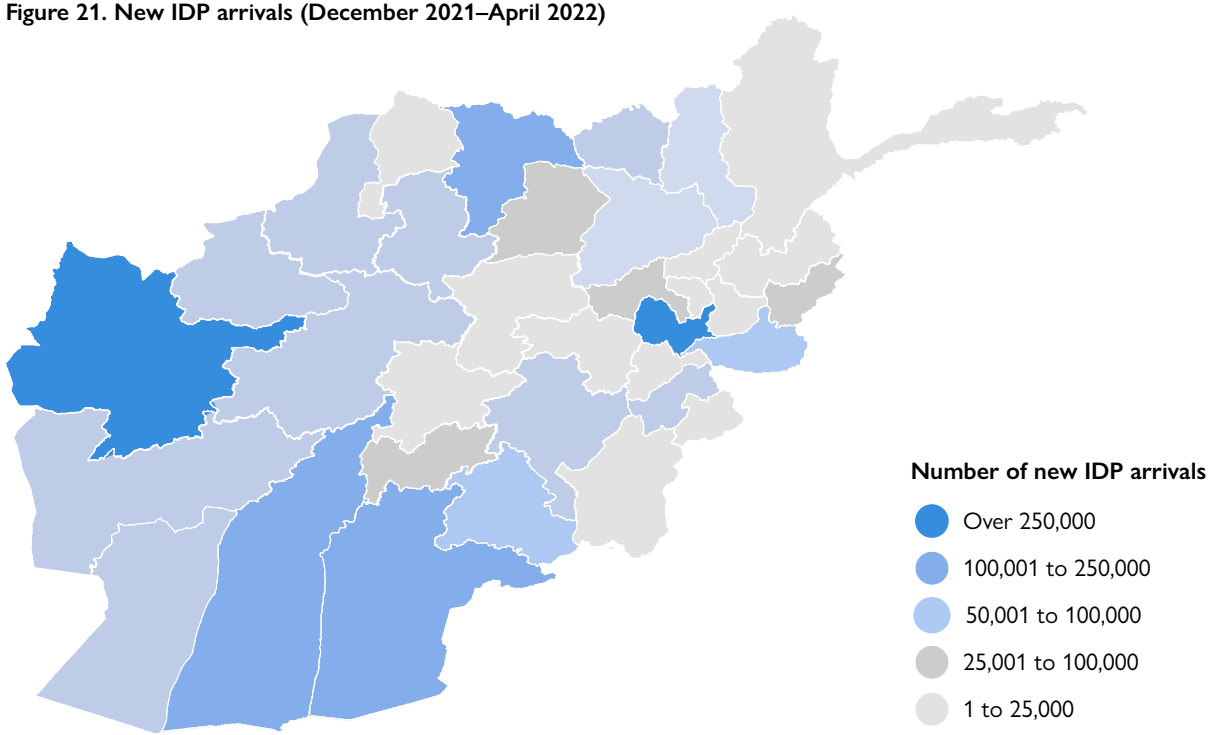
According to the the World Bank (2022), the plight of Myanmar's IDPs will heavily fluctuate based on further contractions of its economy, which has already dwindled with COVID-19, and decreased investments, all of which are expected to have long-term impacts on human capital. Concurrently, restricted movements of the civilians were observed following one or a combination of protection concerns such as indiscriminate armed clashes, extortion, forced recruitment (of minors), arbitrary detention, risk of stepping on landmines, and/or imposed community-wide restrictions. These roadblocks caused important barriers, limiting movements and passage for food, goods and access to aid services, thus increasing and deepening vulnerabilities. In this respect, the depreciation of the Myanmar Kyat, price hikes, movement restrictions and active fighting had severe repercussions on livelihoods, education and health, all factors that entrench poverty and displacement figures (UNHCR, 2022c). With no sign of abating, IDP figures are hence on track to hit the projection of 2.7 million IDPs by end-2023 (United Nations, 2022).

Afghanistan

In the most recent data collection round by IOM's DTM, as of April 2022, the stock of IDPs from Afghanistan reached four million due to conflict (IOM, 2022e) and stood close to 4.4 million by year end (IDMC, 2023). From mid-December 2021, the number of IDPs accrued by 151,766 individuals as of April 2022, 92 per cent (or 139,725) of which were driven by troop withdrawals in August of 2021 (IOM, 2022e).

In comparing displacement movements in 2021 to those of 2022, the largest share of IDPs no longer originates from Helmand but from Faryab province, likely due to shifting hotspots of conflict and tension (ACLED and APW, 2022). Considering that the majority of IDPs (62%) were displaced within their home province, 90 per cent of IDPs in Faryab were internal to the province (IOM, 2022e) This is only preceded by Uruzgan (over 95%), though in absolute numbers, IDPs fall behind the former (123,000 against 110,000 individuals). In addition to these figures, between April to September 2022, a further 32,424 individuals are reported to have been displaced (OCHA, n.d.b). The data recorded after April 2022 reveals another shift in movements and locations, though similar internal displacement patterns persist. Displacements originated mainly from Sar-e-Pul and Bamyan though surrounding provinces up to Panjsher were affected (ibid.). According to this data, over half (57%) of new displacements were children younger than 18 years while male and female adults were split equally (21% each) (ibid.). Finally, Kabul received the largest share of IDPs (346,468 individuals or 19% of all IDPs in 2021 and 2022), presumably as people were trying to flee the country (ibid.).

Figure 21. New IDP arrivals (December 2021–April 2022)



Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designation used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Source: Baseline Mobility Assessment. IOM (2022e).

Overall, IDPs on a national level represented 14 per cent of Afghanistan's total population although some locations and resources were more strained than others. The four provinces with the most IDPs were Balkh, Helmand, Herat and Nangarhar, totalling one third (34%) of its local population on average, with Herat under the most strain with close to 99,000 IDPs for a population of two million inhabitants (Figure 21). For most provinces, IDPs were displaced between 2012 and 2018, with the exception of Kandahar, which saw an increase of 53 per cent from December 2021 to April 2022 (IOM, 2022e). Kandahar currently hosts the second largest number of IDPs in informal settlements with close to 116,000 people, behind Khost with 166,800 IDPs (ibid.). This is no coincidence as many lost their homes amid the earthquake of a 6.1 magnitude that affected many households in Khost in June 2022 (IOM, 2022f).

2.2.3.2 Instances of a mixed migration

Understanding the connection between diverse mobility dynamics, or mixed migration flows is increasingly important in understanding the full picture of a country's protracted displacement context. This understanding can help shape action that curb the deterioration of complex crises and prevent further displacement from taking place. Research following the second United Nations Secretary-General High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement suggested that conflict-driven internal displacement can be better understood when connecting the dots to other mobility dynamics: internal economic migration, for example share many key determinants to internal displacement and follow the same rural–urban chains (Cantor and Apollo, 2020). Additionally internal labour migration, continue alongside conflict-driven displacement and are a reflection of other forms of pressures and drivers that intermesh and collide in the same space (ibid.). With IDPs accounting for the largest group of displaced people among any other category (UNHCR, 2022a), monitoring internal or return flows in countries of concern under this approach can enable the identification of new and emerging patterns that fuel primary or secondary displacement movements and the shifting needs of the community (IOM, 2022b).

Example 1: Internal displacement, climate change and land occupation

One of the most prominent gaps identified in the last decade is the link between population movements, environment and conflict (IOM, 2014). Outlined in the last Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021 (IOM, 2022c), displaced persons living in host communities often share scarce resources like shelter, water and sanitation facilities (WASH) and food and may face other constraints that involve land disputes as a result. Poor relations and conflict may ensue from this accrued tension between both populations (ibid.). With additional exposure to floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, individuals face increase risk to being displaced (ibid.). Historically, in Papua New Guinea tension with host communities has been reported to have erupted over land and resources (IDMC, 2014). In this country context, customary land ownership, ethnic and cultural rivalry were reported to have fueled intercommunal tensions and are triggers of displacement (IDMC, 2022). As of end 2022, there were 91,000 IDPs due to conflict (ibid.). With the escalation of violence since May 2022 as elections grew closer, intercommunal tensions and conflicts between clans with unsettled land disputes fuelled the animosity between rival groups (IOM, 2022g). As reported by the IDMC (2022), one of the many barriers in addressing drivers of violence and situations of displacement of the country, other than security vacuum and poverty, stem from the absence of country level legislation on internal displacement

Example 2: Internal displacement, return, and labour migration

Afghanistan is experiencing a convergence of crises due to poverty and disrupted livelihoods spurred on by a political transition, recent natural disasters, and a changing climate, which have resulted in unprecedented levels of displacement and return in the last two calendar years (2021–2022). Since the political shift in 2021, Afghanistan's GDP relies on its internal market that has been negatively impacted by policies on trade. This, with stricter control over girls' education, contribute to an ongoing economic collapse (UNDP, 2022). Amid this context, internal labour migrants living in Kabul are now returning to their province of origin, due to pressures from being in geographical proximity to the de facto government, and/ or because they were unable to afford life in the city through commerce. The pressure from the authorities to go back to their homes, additionally led to the return of IDPs from informal settlements in Kabul (Giffin, 2022). In total, 698,000 IDP returns took place from January to April 2022 (UNDP, 2022, p.25). In this shifting context, and where IDPs experience significantly worse poverty and labour market outcomes than other population groups, supporting conditions of return for IDPs are important to consider to enable local reintegration and protect from the vulnerabilities that ensue from unplanned return (Giffin, 2022).

Development and displacement have long been considered interconnected phenomena. Stalling or eroded development should therefore be at the heart of migration policy and management.

2.2.4 Discussion

Development and displacement have long been considered interconnected phenomena. Stalling or eroded development should therefore be at the heart of migration policy and management (IOM, 2022c). According to the *World Migration Report 2022*, as the main countries of displacement and of refuge face increasing challenges to serve the needs of its growing local and migrant population, individuals who have been displaced are likely to endure even longer periods of suffering and trauma (IOM, 2021; UNHCR, 2022a). With the awareness that protracted crises are tied to fragile contexts, assisting national, humanitarian and development actors to share the burden of displacement underpin the 2030 Agenda on Migration (IASC, 2010; IOM, 2021).

In tackling the drivers of displacement an incremental and consistent evidence-base needs to be established in relation to SDG 16 for Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, with respect to its accountability to displaced populations. Tracking the progress of SDG 16 also speaks to the foundational efforts to achieve this goal through the Global Compact for Migration under Objective 1 – easing pressures on host countries, Objective 2 – enhancing refugee self-reliance, Objective 3 – expanding access to third-country solutions and Objective 4 – supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

Under these circumstances, a multilateral approach for reinvigorated localized action by the Grand Bargain signatories starts with reforming the process built around a "shared responsibility" to lessen the needs of individuals in need of protection, while simultaneously deepening and broadening the resource base for humanitarian action (OCHA, 2022d, p.1). One example is broadening the number of countries taking in migrant population groups via the engagement of new constituencies, including development organizations, local authorities, the private sector, and civil society. Finally, while the relevant actors are best placed to coordinate and manage migration in a mid-term perspective, the support to durable solutions, such as through resettlement movements, is recognized as one pathway to optimizing livelihood opportunities for vulnerable populations stuck in desolate areas.

Refugees who have been selected to be resettled in Canada attend a series of pre-departure orientation sessions in a refugee camp in Mae Sot, Thailand.
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The Shahrak Sabz IDP settlement in Herat, Afghanistan, established in 2018 due to drought, has become home to thousands of IDPs fleeing conflict. © IOM 2021/Muse MOHAMMED

2.3 Environmental and Climate Migration: A Focus on Disaster-Induced Displacement

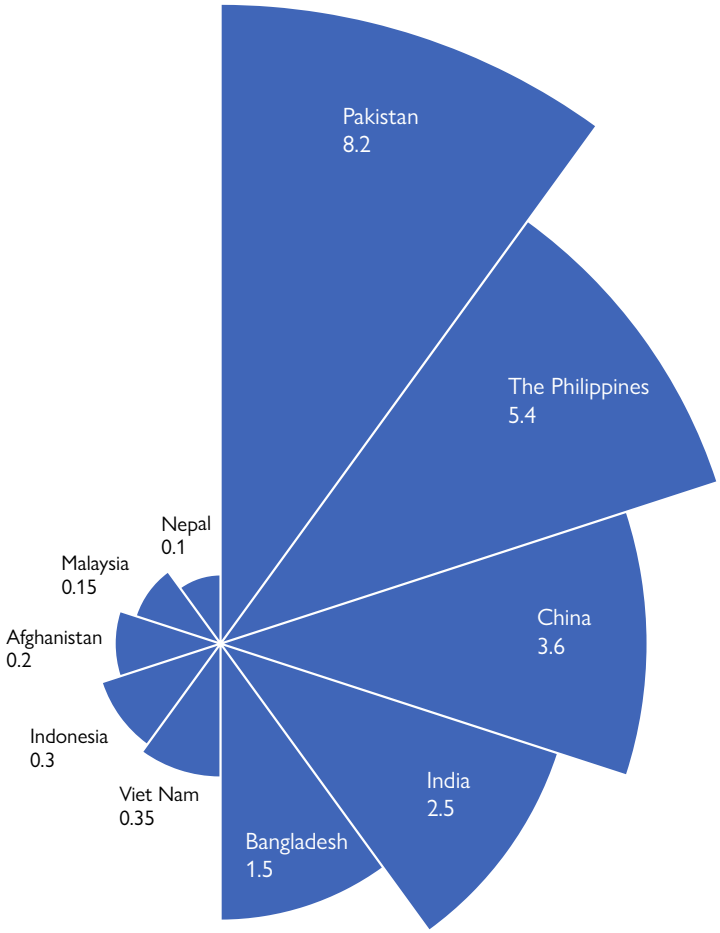
The link between climate change and displacement is unequivocal. Disaster-induced displacement has resulted in millions of people being forced to flee their homes every year globally. Over the past decade, climate-related hazards have led to the annual internal displacement of over 23 million individuals on average worldwide, with the Asia–Pacific region experiencing the most significant number of displacements. In 2022, 32.6 million internal displacements associated with disaster were recorded worldwide (IDMC, 2023a). Weather-related hazards such as storms, floods and droughts caused more than 98 per cent of all disasters, resulting in 53 per cent of the recorded internal displacements around the world (ibid.).

The adverse impacts of climate change have affected the frequency and intensity of weather-related hazards in many parts of the world, thereby exacerbating humanitarian crises and causing significant economic losses worldwide. In 2022, Pakistan experienced one of the most severe monsoon-related rainfall and flooding events in the last decade, resulting in the displacement of millions of people. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reports that climate change has nearly doubled the number of disaster events over the past two decades (WMO, 2021). As more people are exposed and become vulnerable to the impacts of such hazards, the risk of disaster displacement is expected to rise. The 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report has "high confidence" that "in the mid-to-long term, displacement will increase with the intensification of heavy precipitation and associated flooding, tropical cyclones, drought and, increasingly, sea level rise" (IPCC, 2022, p.15).

At the same time, in response to the effects of climate change on displacement, international discussions and actions have been held through regional and national frameworks. Governments, in partnership with key actors, have established specific objectives to prevent and mitigate the risks associated with disaster-induced displacement, enhance resilience and address the protection needs of those affected by such displacements (PDD, 2022).

This chapter aims to present an overview of how weather-related hazards have influenced displacement trends in the Asia–Pacific region. Through mapping of available operational data on significant disaster-induced displacement events in 2022, the section focuses primarily on sudden-onset internal displacement figures for Pakistan and the Philippines. Additionally, the chapter will examine global and regional agendas relating to climate change and displacement in 2022, providing an overview of the current state of collaboration between governments and the international community in preventing and reducing the risks and effects of disasters and displacement. This analysis is complemented by two thematic contributions on (1) Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement and (2) Data for Foresight co-authored Dr Prithvi Hirani (DTM Programme Officer), Robert Trigwell (Senior DTM Coordination Officer), Rizki Muhammad (Senior DTM Coordination Manager DOE) and Koko Warner (Director, Global Data Institute).

Figure 22. Top 10 Asia–Pacific countries with the largest number of internal displacements associated with disasters in 2022 (millions)



Source: Global Internal Displacement Database. IDMC (2023b).

2.3.1 Disaster displacement: sudden-onset disasters

The Asia–Pacific region experienced a significant number of disaster-induced displacements in 2022, reaching a total of 22.5 million internal displacements. This figure constituted 70 per cent of all disaster-induced displacements worldwide (IDMC, 2023b) making it the most affected region. Among the countries in Asia and the Pacific, Pakistan, the Philippines, China and India recorded the highest number of disaster-induced displacements, totalling 87 per cent of the total in the region (Figure 22). In addition, as seen in Table 1, countries experienced a considerable number of displacements triggered by various hazards. Seasonal floods were the most prevalent, followed by earthquakes, tropical cyclones and volcanic eruptions, affecting the Asia–Pacific region.

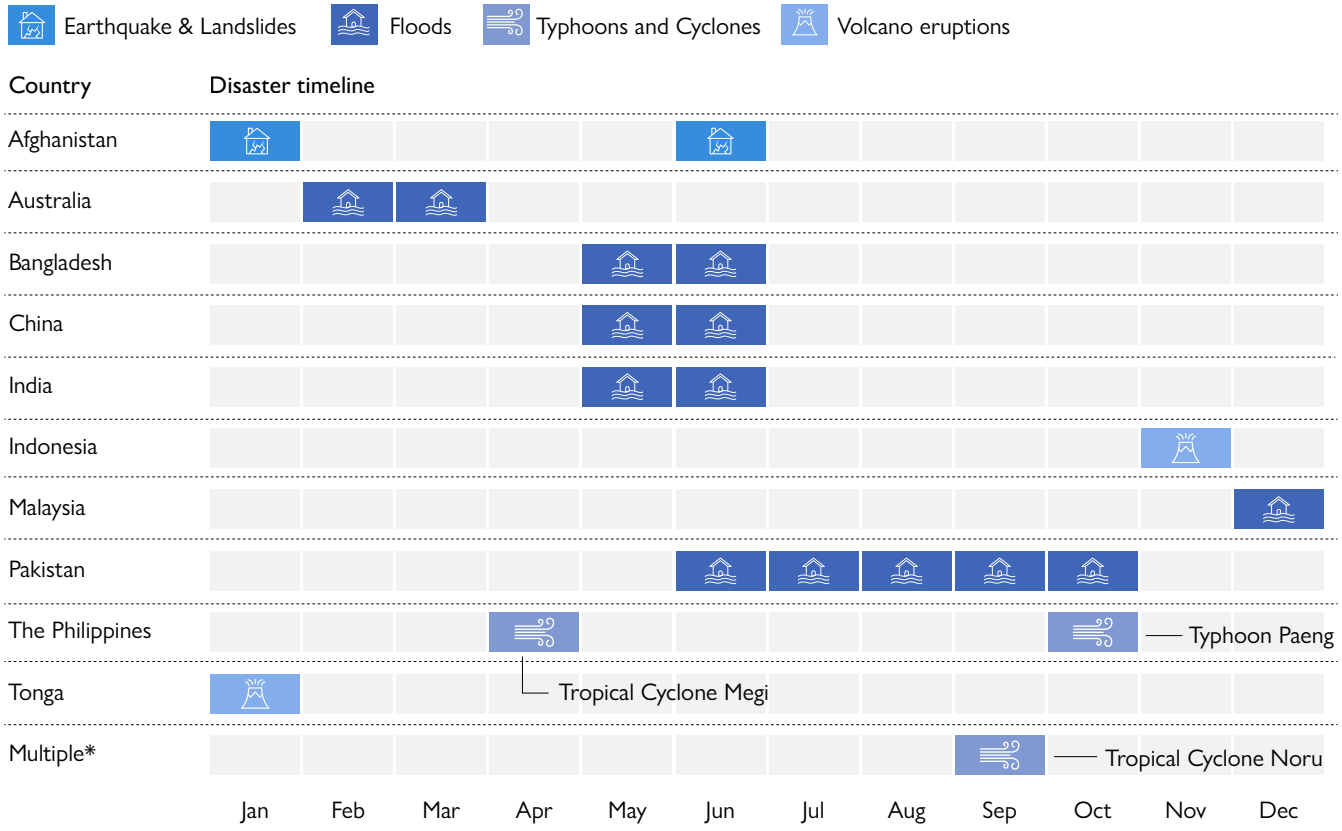
In 2022, the monsoon season brought widespread flooding that was amplified by the manifestation of La Niña weather pattern. Intense rainfall, storms and floods triggered around 145,000 displacements in the India state of Assam and 5,000 in Bangladesh in May 2022. By the end of June, around 663,000 displacements in Assam were reported and 481,000 in Sylhet and Mymensingh divisions in Bangladesh (IDMC, 2023c). China also experienced an intense rainy season and floods that triggered the displacement of 310,000 people in May and almost two million in June 2022. If the trend continues, China is highly likely to record more disaster displacements in 2022 than in previous years (NDRCC, 2022). However, among the most affected countries by monsoon-related flooding, Pakistan recorded the highest number of displacements in 2022.

Over eight million people were displaced due to the unprecedented flooding that covered 33 per cent of the country's surface area (IDMC, 2023a). Internal displacement figures in Pakistan accounted for 36 per cent of displacements in the region (IDMC, 2023b).

Moreover, as recorded in previous years, the Philippines recorded a significant number of displacements due to tropical cyclones that hit the country in 2022. It is estimated that 18 tropical cyclones entered the country, five of which made landfall (OCHA, 2023a). Most notable was Tropical Cyclone Paeng in October 2022, which triggered the displacement of over three million people (IDMC, 2023a).

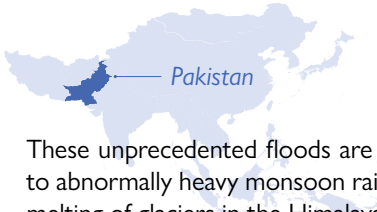
Geophysical hazards in countries such as Afghanistan, Indonesia and Tonga also forced thousands of people to flee their homes. Two earthquakes in Afghanistan gave cause for particular concern, aggravating humanitarian needs associated with the country's long-running conflict, ongoing drought and widespread food insecurity. The first one in January 2022 triggered landslides, and both hazards combined led to 21,000 displacements. Later in June 2021, the 5.9 magnitude quake was the country's deadliest in 20 years, killing nearly 1,000 people and triggering more than 75,000 displacements (IDMC, 2023c).

Table 1. Major disaster displacements events in the Asia–Pacific region in 2022



Source: DROMIC, 2022; IDMC, 2023a, 2023c.
*Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

2.3.1.1 Country cases: Pakistan and the Philippines



Based on operational data from national institutes and international organizations, the following section focuses on two countries where internal disaster-induced displacements took place at a sizeable scale in 2022, namely, Pakistan and the Philippines.

The Case of Pakistan: climate change, monsoon floods and displacement

In 2010, Pakistan faced an unprecedented flood that resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis. The United Nations referred to it as the most catastrophic disaster since its establishment in 1945,[34] prompting its largest-ever disaster appeal of over USD 2 billion (United Nations, 2010). It is worth noting that in the same year, climate-related disasters caused a record 42.2 million people to be displaced worldwide, with Pakistan accounting for 26 per cent of the total number of new disaster-related displacements (IDMC, 2023b).

Twelve years later, in 2022, the country was again affected by the devastation of unpresented rainfall and monsoon floods that submerged one third of the country's surface, affecting the lives of 33 million people – 15 per cent of the total population (ACAPS, 2022). Between June and October 2022, the floods displaced over eight million people, with about 600,000 seeking refuge in relief camps in flood-affected areas, and at least 50,000 opting to relocate permanently to Karachi (Joles, 2022; UNICEF, 2022; IDMC, 2023a).

These unprecedented floods are attributed to abnormally heavy monsoon rains and the melting of glaciers in the Himalayan foothills and arrived in the aftermath of a heatwave that caused temperatures to exceed 50°C regularly.[35] This phenomenon represents the highest temperatures recorded in South Asia in 122 years (Fruman and Huq, 2022).

The floodings significantly affected southern and central areas of the country, particularly the provinces of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Singh (ACAPS, 2022). According to the latest estimates of the Community Needs Identification (CNI) assessment conducted by IOM, as of December 2022 there were 1,591,367 temporary displaced persons in these three provinces, the majority of whom were younger than 18 years (54%). Women (76%), elderly persons (64%) and persons with disabilities (41%) were identified as the three largest groups facing additional barriers in accessing assistance (IOM, 2023). The assessment also revealed that the majority of temporarily displaced persons (80%) were unable to access health care services in their villages due to the cost of such services. Additionally, the lack of food and shelter as well as security and protection concerns, were among the needs reported by temporary displaced persons in affected villages (ibid.).

The recent floods in Pakistan are part of a growing number of climate-related disasters that have resulted in forced displacement of populations in the last decade. Rising temperatures, water scarcity and the threat of rising sea levels have led to a gradual migration from rural to urban areas as people contend with these increasingly frequent hazards (Joles, 2022). The impact of climate change has compelled individuals and families to make the challenging decision of whether to migrate to safeguard themselves from environmental risks or to seek better economic opportunities. The growing consequences of climate change are a reminder that without proper adaption plans to improve resilience to the impact of environmental degradation, it is likely that humanitarian crises will become increasingly frequent in the years ahead.

The case of the Philippines: climate change, flood hazards and displacement

Because of the topography of the country, the Philippines is highly vulnerable to sudden-onset disasters, especially of the hydrometeorological kind. With present threats of typhoons, cyclones, storm surges, tsunamis and earthquakes, the primary and direct cause of destruction, and therefore of displacement, is flooding, as a result of heavy rains brought on by storms in the form of these natural hazards, which by knock-on effect, precipitate landslides (Figure 23). The Visayas and Luzon region, and Leyte Island, are often active areas in which natural hazards make landfall. However, risk of exposure to these increasingly extreme events is also worsened by its frequency in a changing landscape. A prime example is the island of Mindanao, which had been previously known to be typhoon free, but where storm surges are becoming more commonplace due to climate change (IOM, 2022a; OCHA, 2023b). In the list of aggravating factors, land development through urbanization and logging also contribute to this trend (World Bank, n.d.).

The Philippines has recently displayed strong national capacity in disaster management, especially with regard to operations led in the months after Typhoon Rai (HCT Philippines, 2022). Disaster-induced displacements from just two tropical storms amounted to close to four million displacements at their peak and waned considerably in the subsequent months. In April 2022, an estimated of 871,000 people were displaced from Tropical Storm MEGI which hit the same regions as Rai, namely Caraga, Western Visayas and Central Visayas, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the movements between them (DROMIC, 2022).

Note: The maps on this page are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

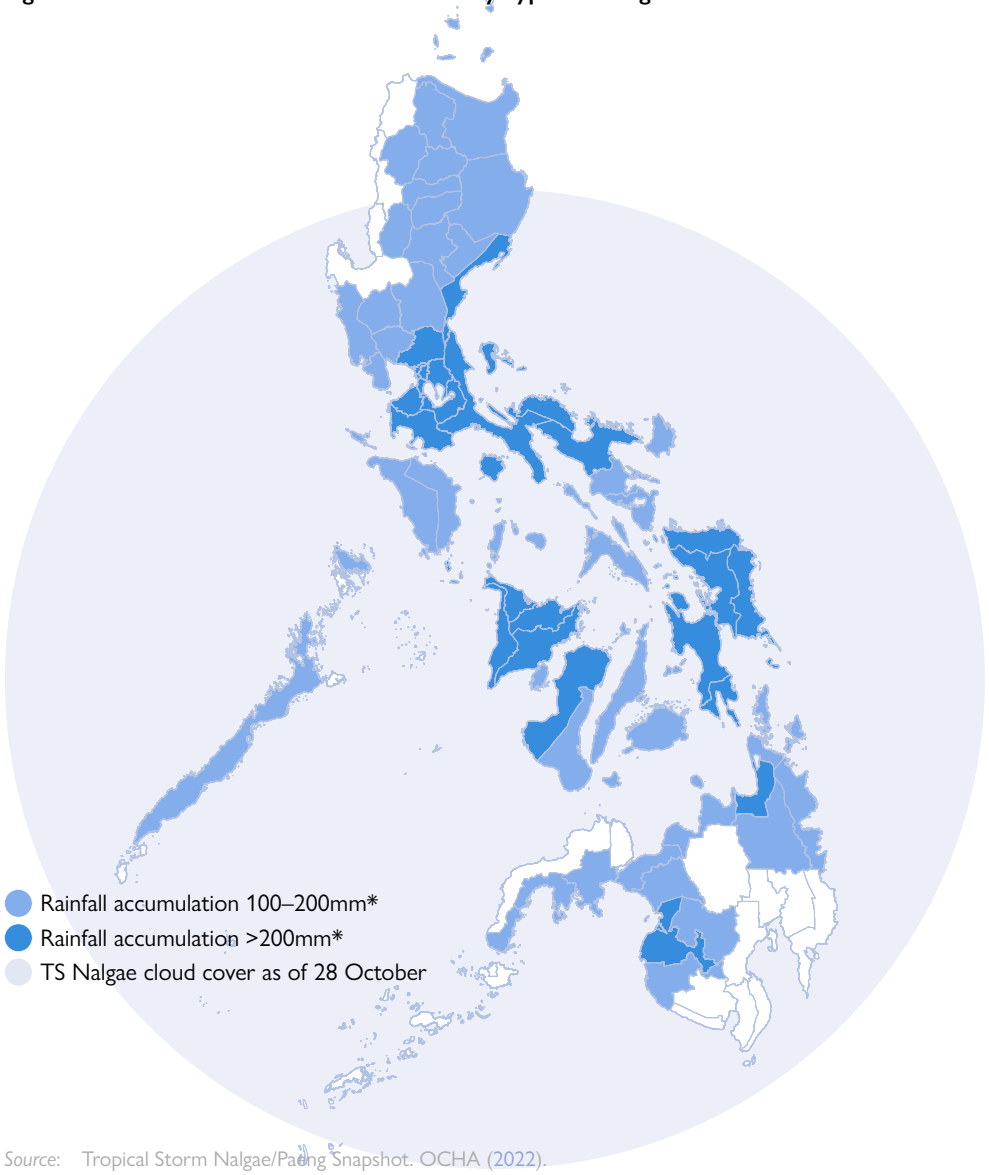
[34] Le Monde, "It is essential to see migration caused by climate disaster as a present reality", 16 September 2022.
[35] Ibid.

In the second event of the year, the Tropical Storm of Nalgae, locally known as Paeng, displaced more than three million people, the highest figure for a single event in the region (IDMC, 2023a). Most were pre-emptive evacuations led by the Government, which set up nearly 10,700 evacuation centres to host those displaced (ibid.) Following the event, barriers such as inaccessible roads, crop loss, entirely destroyed homes and challenges in accessing and delivering aid further affected livelihoods (UNHCR, 2022).

Of estimated 533,000 IDPs by the end of 2022 (IDMC, 2023b), about 105,000 remain because of hazards at the scale of that experienced in Mindanao. This figure attests to the work that needs to be done in mending this gap and in improving current warning systems that are at risk of being inadequate in a fast-moving context (UNHCR, 2022). In addition to those already identified as displaced by the tropical storms, there are 11,000 of the 43,000 individuals who were originally displaced by Shear Line, Low Pressure Area and Northeast Monsoon in December of 2022 (OCHA, 2023b). Furthermore, close to 10,000 IDPs remain following earthquakes at 6.3 and 6.6 magnitudes in 2019 affecting Davao Del Sur and Cotabato.[36] IDPs are reported to live in makeshift shelters (such as dilapidated tents), awaiting to find more permanent housing and structures, and still in need of food and temporary shelter (IOM, 2019; UNHCR, 2022).

[36] While Cotabato also faces displacements due to conflict, the number reported only figures those that are linked to the volcanic eruption.

Figure 23. Area of rainfall and affected areas by Typhoon Nalgae 2022



Source: Tropical Storm Nalgae/Paeng Snapshot. OCHA (2022).

Note: *Only general representation at the provincial level. Rainfall accumulation for some provinces can be portions only.
This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designation used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

2.3.2 A consortium of actors toward a common agenda

2.3.2.1 IOM Pacific Strategy (2022–2026)

IOM released its Pacific Strategy for 2022 to 2026, underpinning some of the most pressing issues of the 'Blue Pacific Continent' in a context where human mobility interacts with its environment, and where the impact of disasters compound and exacerbate threats of displacement and planned relocation.

Migration in the Pacific Island Countries (PIC), as a factor of environmental degradation, climate variability and disasters, is for the most part internal or largely self-contained, defined primarily by inter-island migration. However, in some instances, PICs also include several highly mobile populations[37] who travel increasingly longer distances, whether seasonally or permanently, to send remittances home when opportunities, services or resources, are unavailable locally. With half of its population younger than 23 years, and in a position to increasingly look for employment opportunities, PIC population faces shortages in skilled labour due to emigration to neighbouring countries. Remittances notably contribute to the local economy of PIC, on average representing 10 per cent of the PIC GDP – up to 70 per cent in the case of Tonga. As part of the Pacific human mobility landscape, Pacific Islanders are also heavily reliant on the tourism industry and immigration of temporary workers in the extractive and fishing industries in Asian countries. Hence, households receiving remittances, resident populations and migrant workers, reliant on the reopening of borders for cross-border migration, are triply affected by governmental regulations, high transfer costs and increased exposure to human trafficking where they are vulnerable to abuse and forced labour (IOM, 2022b).

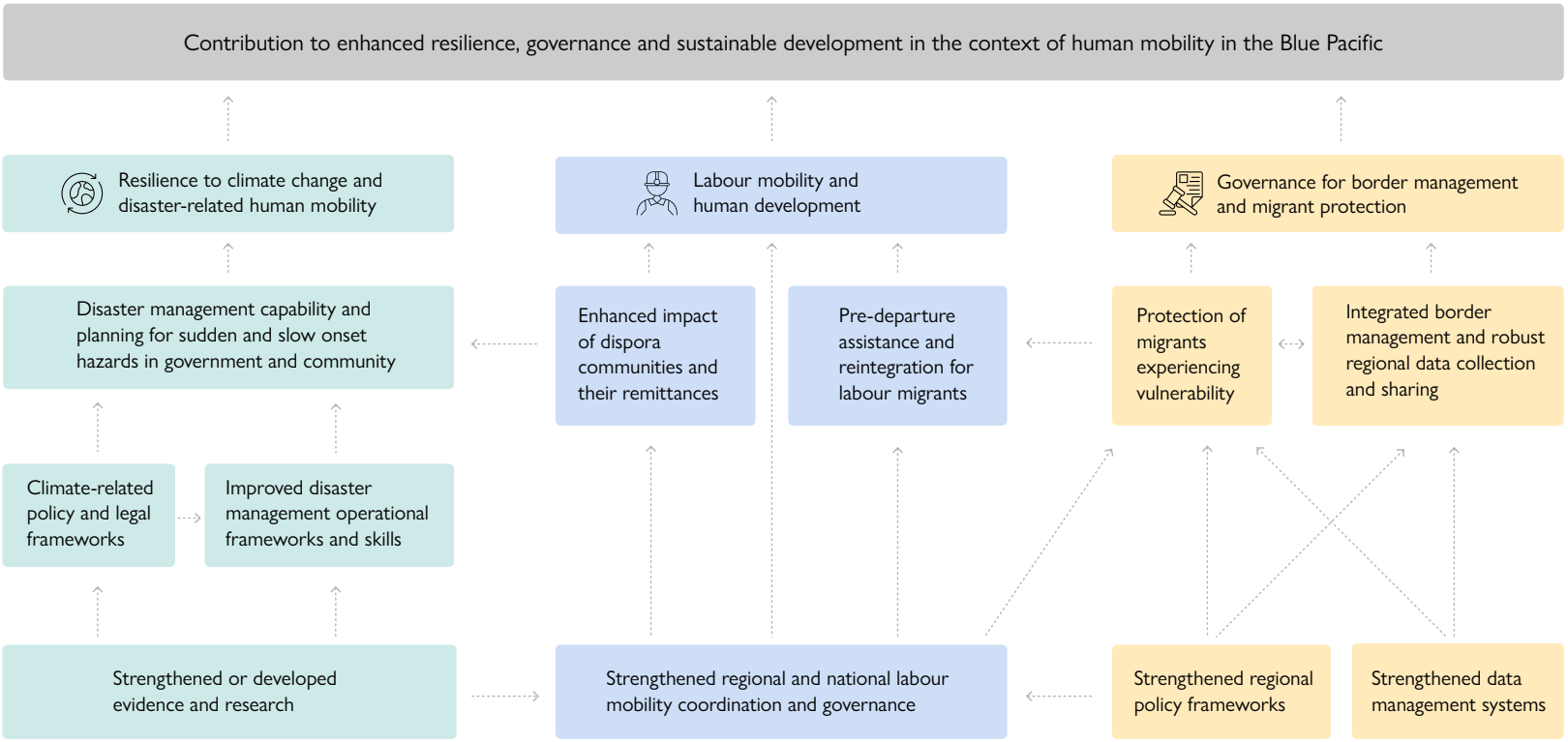
In mitigating economic and environmental risk, focusing on regulating migration in line with a human rights perspective becomes of central concern. To this end, responders and decision makers are also to provide these populations with better context-specific assistance, both in migration policy and in practice. Customary values, traditions and knowledge are to be harnessed to better deal with displacement, for example with regard to land occupation and in providing pathways in relocation planning, notably by promoting localization. In doing so, IOM suggests a participatory approach in its Pacific Strategy 2022–2026 report which entails active engagement of civil society, government actors, development partners, faith-based organizations and other stakeholders. By involving all relevant parties, locally led development and capacity-building efforts can be achieved (ibid.).

Hence, considerations for disaster risk reduction planning as laid out in the IOM 2022 Strategy, towards enhanced resilience, governance and sustainable development as the three leading pillars, involve cross-cutting themes (Figure 24). IOM's commitment to achieve these goals in accordance with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, within the same timeframe as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015–2030, is reinforced by its engagement to support long-term recovery through multiyear programming, as advanced in the IOM Asia–Pacific Strategy 2020–2024 and in its continuous search for transformative approaches at the local level. IOM is assuming a technical advisor role in addition to that of responder and is levering these gains in various matters within the Technical Working Group on Human Mobility and as the United Nations Coordinator for the Global Compact for Migration of the United Nations Network on Migration and in the United Nations Country Teams. With joint coordination with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, IOM aligned commitments to see to it that, by 2027, all lands without exception, are afforded the peace, security, resilience and freedom to live in harmony with the Blue Continent.

Customary values, traditions and knowledge are to be harnessed to better deal with displacement, for example with regard to land occupation and in providing pathways in relocation planning, notably by promoting localization.

[37] International migration is reported for Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Figure 24. IOM Pacific Strategy's Theory of Change



Source: IOM Pacific Strategy 2022–2026. IOM (2022b).

Snapshot: The Sendai Framework (2015–2030)

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 provides Member States with concrete action to protect development gains from the risk of disasters. It was the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda and works hand in hand with the 2030 Agenda agreements, including The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the New Urban Agenda, and ultimately the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Sendai Framework promotes the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in various aspects, including lives, livelihoods, health, and the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of individuals, businesses, communities and countries. The framework acknowledges that while the State bears primary responsibility for reducing disaster risk, this responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector and other relevant entities.

The Sendai Framework focuses on the adoption of measures that address the three dimensions of disaster risk (exposure to hazards, vulnerability and capacity, and hazard's characteristics) to prevent the creation of new risk, reduce existing risk and increase resilience. The framework outlines four priorities: understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance, investing in disaster reduction for resilience, and enhancing disaster preparedness.

At the global level, the Sendai Framework sets seven targets to guide actions and measure progress. These Targets include reducing disaster mortality figures; reducing number of affected populations; reducing direct disaster economic losses in relation to global GDP; reducing disaster-related damages to vital infrastructures and services; increasing national and local disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies as well as availability of early access to early warning systems and risk information; and finally, enhancing international cooperation for DRR.

> *The Sendai Framework focuses on the adoption of measures that address the three dimensions of disaster risk (exposure to hazards, vulnerability and capacity, and hazard's characteristics) to prevent the creation of new risk, reduce existing risk and increase resilience.*

Source: The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. UNDRR (2015).

2.3.2.2 Global Platform for disaster risk reduction 2022 (GP2022): Bali Agenda for Resilience

The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is a key mechanism in monitoring the progress in the Sendai Framework implementation at the global level. At the Platform, governments, the United Nations system and other stakeholders discuss and share knowledge on the latest developments and trends in reducing disaster risk, as well as to identify gaps and provide recommendations to further accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework. Since 2007, seven sessions of the Global Platform have taken place, with the latest one taking place in Bali, Indonesia in May 2022. Participants from 185 countries gathered to review efforts to protect communities from a rising number of climate hazards around the world (UNDRR, 2022). In addition, Member States were encouraged to share their progress in DRR and any best practices from the country context.[38]

After three days of discussion among all participants, the Seventh Session of the Global Platform concluded with the Bali Agenda for Resilience, a summary of seven key points calling for the transformation of risk governance, dedicated risk financing strategies and a participatory and human rights-based approach in disaster risk planning and implementation. Moreover, in light of the pandemic, the Bali Agenda also highlighted

[38] For more information see Statements by Member States (GP2022).

the need to reassess the way risk is governed and policy is designed as well as the types of institutional arrangements that need to be put in place at the global, regional and national levels.

In relation to disaster-induced displacement, the Bali Agenda for Resilience emphasizes the importance of incorporating measures to tackle disaster displacement and various forms of human mobility in a unified manner within local, national, and regional policies and strategies for DRR. The Bali Agenda highlights the need to evaluate and minimize the risk of disaster-induced displacement by addressing its root causes and adequately preparing for its negative impacts. Additionally, the inclusion and participation of displaced groups or those at risk of displacement in DRR planning and response is key to strengthen the resilience and minimize the associated risk (PDD, 2022).

The Seventh Session of the Global Platform took place at a critical time when countries were recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, while facing the growing impact of climate change. The number of people exposed to disaster risk is increasing due to the population growth in hazard-exposed areas and the growing intensity and frequency of weather events (WMO, 2021). International cooperation is fundamental to tackling the problem of unprecedented numbers of people being displaced each year by floods, storms and drought – as already seen in various countries in the Asia–Pacific region. The Bali Agenda for Resilience' final message is to take a resilience approach to all investment and decision-making, integrating DRR with the whole government and whole society.

Emergency food supplies being delivered to Taroa Island, located in the Maloelap Atoll of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, to assist some of the world's most remote communities that are experiencing severe drought.
© IOM 2013/Joe LOWRY

Expert Contribution: Data for Solutions in Asia and Beyond

Authored by: **Prithvi Hirani** (DTM Programme Officer), **Rizki Muhammad** (Senior DTM Coordination Manager DOE) and **Koko Warner** (Director, Global Data Institute), IOM

Each year, disaster displacement impacts millions of individuals in the Asia–Pacific region. Between 2010 and 2021, a study found that the region experienced disasters that displaced more than 225 million people (IDMC and ADB, 2022). The scale and frequency of disaster displacement in the region necessitate a prevention and solutions-focused approach to prepare, respond and build resilient communities.

Globally, the steady increase in the number of internally displaced persons, including growing numbers who are stuck in situations of protracted displacement, has been the focus of renewed international attention (ibid.). The report of the High-Level Panel (HLP) on Internal Displacement, released in September 2021, has contributed to recentring the international focus on IDPs and, in particular, identifying solutions to internal displacement (United Nations Secretary-General, 2021). Building on the report's findings, the Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement outlined 31 United Nations commitments to help put the change needed to better, prevent, address and resolve internal displacement into practice.

The HLP report observed that "the data landscape [on internal displacement] among international actors is often fraught with unnecessary competition and duplication" and underlined the importance of improved coordination between data actors (ibid., p.38). Indeed, the report and subsequent Action Agenda recognize that improved coordination between humanitarian and development actors on internal displacement data is instrumental for interoperability, better data use and quality, to standardize data analysis for solutions, and to establish a coordination model to tackle obstacles and challenges to data collection, analysis and use.

> *Improved coordination between humanitarian and development actors on internal displacement data is instrumental for interoperability, better data use and quality, to standardize data analysis for solutions, and to establish a coordination model to tackle obstacles and challenges to data collection, analysis and use.*

In response to Commitment 13 of the Action Agenda, a time-bound inter-agency Taskforce "Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement (DSID)" was formed in November 2021 to examine barriers and opportunities for effective use of data for solutions and address data-specific gaps.[39] DISD recommendations are aligned with the existing Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework for Durable Solutions and the International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics (IRIS) framework and propose a coordination model that identifies relevant data points that are needed across the different Solutions Pathways to discern the different phases, needs and locations of internally displaced populations.

Global Data Institute vision: Data for action

Conflict, violence, climate change and disasters are all factors influencing displacement in the Asia–Pacific region; as a result, data on multiple hazards and contextual factors is necessary to support prevention, resilience and finding durable solutions. More broadly, data is not only one of the commitments of the Action Agenda but is a crucial resource that must underpin action to other commitments and support three main objectives of durable solutions, prevention and protection (United Nations Secretary-General, 2022). In 2022, acknowledging the power of data for better decisions and stronger support to people, IOM established the Global Data Institute (GDI) to harness the power of its data for operations, making meaning of global migration patterns and informing foresight.

In the framework of the Data for Action rubric, IOM data collection through DTM and Solutions and Mobility Index (SMI) as well as analysis capacities are at the institutional forefront of supporting this endeavour. While the GDI's three pillars support the vision for data, the latter is also grounded on the recognized role of data in fulfilling global and interagency objectives. Building on IOM's strong operational footprint, data capacities across several regions and contexts, as well as leadership role in convening the data for solutions space, IOM GDI remains dedicated to implementing the DSID recommendations as well as monitoring the roll-out and impact of Action Agenda in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

Data for insight and solutions and mobility index in the Asia–Pacific

The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, along with the United Nations Resident Coordinators, United Nations Country Teams and the Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement, has identified 16 countries where solutions pathways will be developed over the next two years (until September 2024), with a view to enabling at least 10 million IDPs to take steps toward resolving their displacement. In the Asia and Pacific region, these countries include Afghanistan, the Philippines and Vanuatu, while globally they include Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, the Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

A key component for paving the way for data for solutions across displacement contexts is strengthening on-the-ground data capacities, as exemplified by the implementation of IOM's DTM and using data for anticipatory action, particularly in disaster-induced displacement. Another key element is supporting government ownership

[39] DSID Taskforce members included representation from various United Nations Agencies like the UNHCR, UNDP, Joint Data Centre (JDC), UNICEF, as well as Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), the World Bank and United Nations Development Coordination Office. The interagency group was co-chaired by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

for solutions and strengthening national statistical offices on data through technical and capacity-building. Regular, consistent and contextually tailored displacement data forms the basis for building on the data for solutions work. The SMI helps identify root causes of fragility through data, to prevent and address protracted displacement.[40] With an aim to help achieve durable solutions for vulnerable communities, the SMI helps provides data on stability, peace, development, recovery and reintegration dynamics. Currently active in 10 countries, the SMI portfolio continues to expand geographically and in scope to better identify and prevent the impacts of multiple factors such as climate, disaster and conflict on displacement, to respond and build resilience. In February 2023, IOM's DTM undertook a pilot SMI in Papua New Guinea to assess social cohesion, resilience and community stabilization across locations, and to provide consistent trend analysis. Even while not among the prioritized 16 countries, Papua New Guinea is in the list of countries prioritized by the United States of America's Global Fragility Act in 2019. The Act aims to promote stability and resilience, which are important factors to ensure durable solutions to displacement.

In the region, IOM's DTM is operational in Afghanistan, the Philippines and Vanuatu to varying extents, and SMI tools and DSID-recommended data points are being integrated, to the extent possible. Looking forward, IOM remains dedicated to work on sharpening IOM's data for solutions toolbox and SMI and to monitoring the implementation of the DSID framework in Asia and beyond.

[40] For more information on the SMI see DTM Solution and Mobility Index.

Thousands of people are displaced each year in Bangladesh due to heavy rains, storms and flooding during the monsoon season. © IOM 2009/Abir ABDULLAH

Expert Contribution: Data for Foresight within the Asia–Pacific

Authored by: **Robert Trigwell** (Senior DTM Coordination Officer), **Rizki Muhammad** (Senior DTM Coordination Manager DOE) and **Koko Warner** (Director, Global Data Institute), IOM

The drive for pro-active data capture, analysis and application

"The best way to address gaps is to change our current system from one that reacts to one that anticipates" – Sir Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator speaking on the need for a more proactive humanitarian system (2019).

This speech has now become momentous in terms of the humanitarian data landscape. Partly in reaction to this plea, the humanitarian community has been trying to use new and emerging technologies for better analysis to feed anticipatory actions (Chen, 2021). Ultimately, the advancement of data analysis and diversification of data acquisition sources will facilitate earlier, faster and potentially more effective and cost–efficient humanitarian action and resilience building when properly integrated into preparedness, early warning and anticipatory action planning efforts.

Anticipatory action and forecasting are new approaches and heavily used tools in other areas such as weather and economics. However, with the drive for the humanitarian sector to be more proactive in its planning with an evidence-based approach, the sector is exploring new tools and methods, hiring new skill profiles and exploring new partnerships.

As revealed in a recent review by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), anticipatory action pilots have shown that it is possible to use data and models to predict crisis events, but success can often be limited to disasters, climate events and disease outbreaks (Caldwell, 2022) whereas conflict events depend on too many exogenous factors to allow for predictions at a level of granularity and precision that can inform anticipatory action. Questions over incorrect forecasts have been discussed – "a no regrets approach" is often used, but in a large project-based sector when we are supporting the world's most vulnerable with an increasingly limited number of financial and staffing resources for what is now and is likely to continue to be an explosive growth in humanitarian needs, failure is often not an acceptable term. Furthermore, the political sensitivities of conflict environments often lead to analyses and results not being publicly shared for legitimate sensitivity reasons. In an area of work where sharing and learning are crucial to foster innovation and progress, this could be another reason why anticipatory action work may be more contextually appropriate for anticipating disaster events and their subsequent impact on local populations.

Why the Asia–Pacific region

In Asia and the Pacific, human mobility due to disasters caused by natural hazards is at an all-time high and is set to rise significantly in the coming decades due to climate change (IOM and FAO, 2023). The region has consistently accounted for the largest share of global disaster displacement with record heights reached over the last few years (IDMC, 2023b). Furthermore, the link with human mobility contexts remains relatively unexplored, despite the strong relationships between climate hazards, displacement and climate-induced migration. Monitoring this relationship over time is likely to influence how IOM operates in this region in the future.

Asia and the Pacific are on the front lines of the climate crisis with many vulnerable communities in the region living in climate change "hotspots". These communities may often lack the capacity and resources to adapt to increasingly hostile environments (IOM and FAO, 2023). Improving analyses and building state capacity to collect, report and analyse disaster displacement impacts[41] can help better identify communities that are at greatest risk, as well as support them and national and local governments in preparing and planning ahead of disaster events, and put in place resilience safety nets and new financing schemes.

Data for Foresight

Given the projected changes to the climate system and the significant impacts they will have on human life and well-being, the role that mobility forecasting and anticipatory action can have in the Asia–Pacific region can be profound and requires much greater attention and investment. Data systems need to be adapted to provide a better understanding of human mobility – past and present to create foresight for emerging national and regional migration trends as a result of climate change. Improvements include the use and application of these data within national planning processes. This improved understanding of human mobility, through IOM's DTM, and with secondary sources such as leveraging the use of Call Details Records (CDR) and big data, will provide a better understanding of the role of the changing climate on people's mobility decision-making. Horizon scanning, analysing drivers and impacts, and developing scenarios to expand and reframe the range of plausible pathways are needed to humanely manage future migration flows in line with the mandate of IOM. As the United Nations Migration Agency, IOM, in close collaboration with Member States and partners, will work to consistently improve and elevate the understanding of the relationship between human mobility and climate change and leverage its operational footprint from both a preparedness and resilience perspective to achieve system change while ensuring the structural availability and ownership of data to inform public policy and local development, in an effort to save lives and reduce avoidable losses and damages.

Data systems need to be adapted to provide a better understanding of human mobility – past and present to create foresight for emerging national and regional migration trends as a result of climate change.

2.3.3 Discussion

While this chapter primarily focusses on sudden-onset events, the risks of slow-onset processes – including droughts, desertification, sea level rise and environmental degradation (World Bank, n.d.) – are also of significant concern in the Asia–Pacific.

Rising temperatures have increased the threat of heatwaves and droughts in arid and semi-arid areas of West and South Asia, floods in monsoon regions in South, South-East and East Asia, and glacier melting in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region (IPCC, 2022). These climate patterns experienced across the region highlight the significant exposure, escalation and magnitude of risk faced by Asia and the Pacific, which are expected to intensify due to the region's vulnerability to climate change and, in some areas, conflict (DRC, 2023). It is important to note that the far-reaching and complex impacts of displacement are not solely due to geographical exposure to climate risks but are largely rooted in underlying sociopolitical and environmental vulnerabilities that transform hazards into disasters, pushing migrants and IDPs into multiple layers of vulnerability (ibid.).

Hence with communities on the move, unable to move or looking to stay, mobility patterns continue to shift in light of an evolving situation. In line with SDG Target 1.5 that aims to build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations by 2030 and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters, coordinated action on climate change that aligns with priorities outlined in various instruments and agendas aimed at reducing displacement is essential in achieving this goal.

Disaster-induced displacement, similar to internal displacement, is a key human rights, humanitarian and development concern. Its significance is rooted in the Global Compact for Migration and is recognized by the Human Rights Council, Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Agenda for Humanity and the New Urban Agenda. These agendas provide a foundation for a shared understanding of the nexus between climate change and migration. The Action Agenda 2022 underlines the need to work across development, peace, climate change adaptation and DRR communities to address internal displacement. Nevertheless, indicators measuring the progress need to be continually assessed to ensure that the 2030 targets are not missed. As discrepancies between risk information and assistance capacities widen, so will gaps in protection. Thus, enhancing and strengthening regional and national strategies, institutions and policies focused on displacement into resilience-building, and better data management, are the priorities and challenges that must be addressed in future actions.

[41] For more information see IOM-IDMC partnership: Developing Indicators on Displacement for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Enhancing and strengthening regional and national strategies, institutions and policies focused on displacement into resilience-building, and better data management, are the priorities and challenges that must be addressed in future actions.

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Children displaced from Manam Island to mainland Papua New Guinea play in the water with their active volcanic homeland in the background. © IOM 2016/ Muse MOHAMMED

2.4 Return Migration

Over the past two decades, international migration has continued to rise. The number of persons living outside their country of birth reached 281 million in 2020, up from 173 million in 2000 – an increase of 64 per cent – with the majority of migrants moving from low- and middle-income countries to high-income countries (DESA, 2020). However, those movements are not always permanent, as many return to their countries of origin for short or long periods. In other words, international migration is not only a one-way move but is also multidirectional and dynamic (IOM, 2022a, p.98). In 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for return migration, as discussed in depth in IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021 and that of 2020. First, immobility largely characterized the situation faced by migrants who wished to return to their countries of origin as containment and border restrictions paralysed global mobility. Second, the pandemic served as a major trigger of large-scale returns of migrants either directly or indirectly, because of border closures, personal and family concerns over the pandemic and job loss or unemployment, amongst other reasons. Third, for migrants who managed to return, their reintegration was complicated by the pandemic's disruption to internal mobilities and local labour markets.

In 2022, as the world entered the third year after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, most travel restrictions were removed. As a result, international mobility restarted and with it, return migration and remigration have largely resumed to a state of normality. By the end of 2022, the number of migrants who requested IOM assistance to voluntary return reached almost 70,000 globally, compared with 40,000 cases registered in 2020 (IOM, 2023a).

Four main issues remain of prime relevance, namely, the nature of return, return to fragile contexts, reintegration and data issues. First, while return migration can be broadly categorized into voluntary and forced return (IOM, 2022b), there is an increasing consensus in the literature that the boundary between voluntary and forced return has become increasingly blurry (IOM, 2022c). Despite being classified or reported as voluntary return, varying degrees of involuntariness or coercion might be involved. For example, unemployment, difficulties in obtaining legal status – including asylum in the case of refugees – and economic and political crises in countries of destination are some of the forces compelling migrants to return (ibid.). In addition, as seen in 2022, tens of thousands of migrants have been forcibly returned, in spite of grave security and political crises currently affecting their countries of origin; such is the case of the observed rise of Afghan nationals being deported from neighbouring countries. Moreover, although the topic of reintegration came into the spotlight upon the mass return at the start of the pandemic, its challenges remain relevant, and solutions are pending. Migrants might face economic difficulties upon return, worsening their already vulnerable situation, as many do not have enough means to support their families or have faced abuse and discrimination abroad (IOM, 2023b). Last but not least, our understanding of return migration has been severely limited by the availability and quality of existing data. While there is no comprehensive regional or international data covering the diverse forms of return – either voluntary or forced – a compilation of return migration data from diverse sources, as presented in this section, may help us better understand the complex nature of the return.

Guided by these conceptual, practical and data considerations, this section consists of two parts. The first part provides an overview of regional numbers and trends in returns supported by IOM, the largest global provider of assisted return and reintegration programmes, with Asia and the Pacific as the origin as well as the region of destination. The second part explores various cases of return and reintegration in the region, shedding light on the varying degrees of coercion and voluntariness across types of return by their conventional definition and featuring topics from spontaneous return to compulsory return in voluntary or enforced compliance with an obligation to return, deportations to fragile contexts and reintegration challenges in the countries of origin.

As the largest global provider of assisted return and reintegration programmes worldwide, IOM collects return data through its Migrant Management Operational System in order to provide insights into cross-border assisted voluntary return as one specific type of voluntary return.

2.4.1 IOM assisted return

As the largest global provider of assisted return and reintegration programmes worldwide, IOM collects return data through its Migrant Management Operational System in order to provide insights into cross-border assisted voluntary return as one specific type of voluntary return.[42]

However, selection bias is likely to exist among these returnees. On one hand, the programme mainly reflects return from Europe, Libya and Türkiye and the Bali Process return programme which operates within the region, making it difficult to draw lessons from the data for the other regions. On the other hand, the data only capture those stranded migrants in need of return assistance that IOM has supported. For these reasons, the data cannot be considered representative of all returnees worldwide or in the region. Nevertheless, the data could still help understand the patterns of return in the region and provide key insights regarding the profile of those returning.

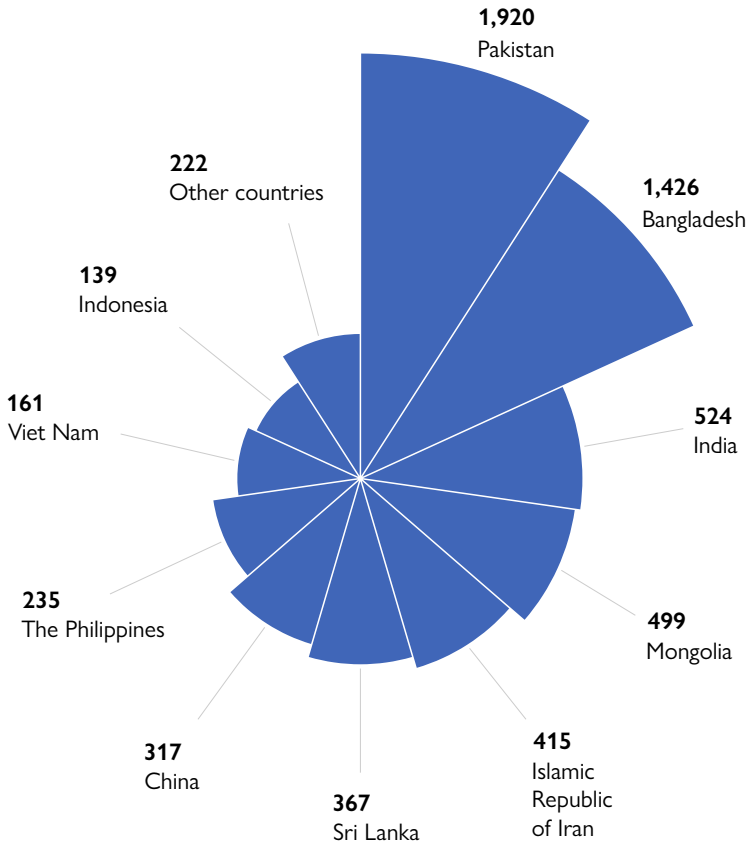
Asia and the Pacific as the origin region

In 2022, IOM assisted a total of 6,225 returnees from 26 Asia–Pacific countries or areas were assisted – a 19 per cent decrease from 2021 (IOM, 2023a). The top five countries of origin in Asia and the Pacific region for IOM-assisted returns were Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Mongolia and the Islamic Republic of Iran (Figure 25). The majority of Pakistani assisted returnees were hosted in Türkiye (51%) and Germany (30%), whereas over three quarters of Bangladeshis returned from Libya and 40 per cent of Indian returnees were previously hosted in Greece. While the majority of assisted cases were male adults, 16 per cent were female adults – a 4 per cent increase from the 2021 figures. However, at the origin country level, the proportion of female assisted returnees was comparably high in the Philippines (54%) and Mongolia (52%). Moreover, IOM assisted around 341 child returnees, of whom over half were female and almost half were from Mongolia. IOM-assisted return to Afghanistan was not possible in 2022 given the prevailing security situation in the country. Hence, no assisted cases in Afghanistan were reported, varying from the situation reported where Afghans occupied the third place in terms of main countries of origin of IOM-assisted returns in both 2020 and 2021 (IOM, 2021, 2022c).

In addition to general cases of assisted returns, 571 cases were related to returning migrants in vulnerable situations, including migrants with health-related needs (88%), victims of human trafficking (11%) and unaccompanied or separated children (1%). Male returnees constituted the largest assisted group of health-related needs and victims of trafficking (68%).

[42] Assistance is provided to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host or transit country and who decide to return to their country of origin. Such assistance includes pre-departure and post-arrival assistance, and the logistics process to return the migrant from the host country to the country of origin.

Figure 25. Main origin countries or areas in Asia and the Pacific of IOM assisted returns in 2022



Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Assisted and Reintegration Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 17 April 2023).

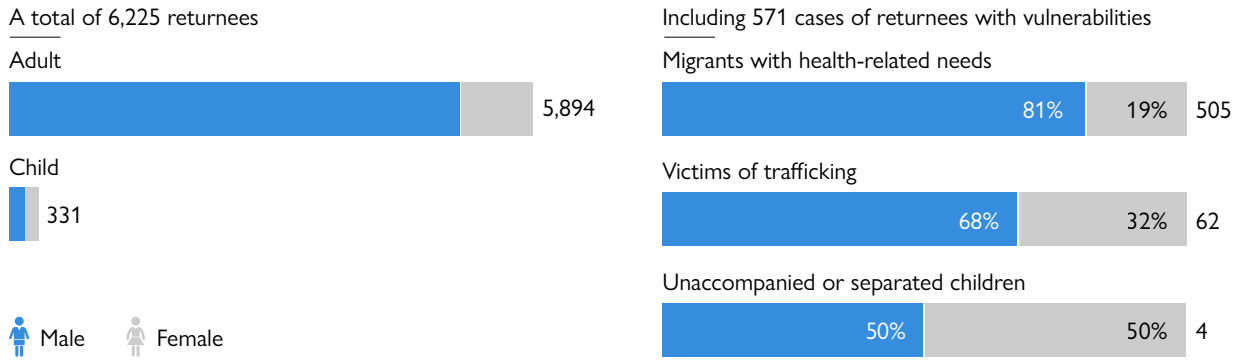
Asia and the Pacific as the destination region

In 2022, IOM assisted 525 migrants residing in 19 Asia–Pacific countries or areas to return to their countries of origin. Over three quarters of assisted returnees residing in the region were intraregional returns, meaning their countries of origin were within the Asia–Pacific region, a trend that was noted since 2018 (IOM, 2022c). Similar to 2020 and 2021, Australia was the largest destination country in the region, hosting one third of the total number of returnees in the region, who came from 26 countries worldwide (Figure 27). Viet Nam (26%) and Indonesia (13%) constituted the second and third largest destination countries of returnees, respectively. The majority of those returned from Australia came originally from Sri Lanka (32%) and New Zealand (16%); whereas all of those returnees returned from Viet Nam – 151 assisted returnees – came from Sri Lanka only. Moreover, nearly one quarter of the total of assisted returnees hosted in the region were women and 11 per cent were children.

In addition to general cases, there were 63 cases of return migrants in vulnerable situations, of which 60 per cent were related to human trafficking, 35 per cent reported to have health-related issues and 5 per cent were reported cases of unaccompanied or separated children.

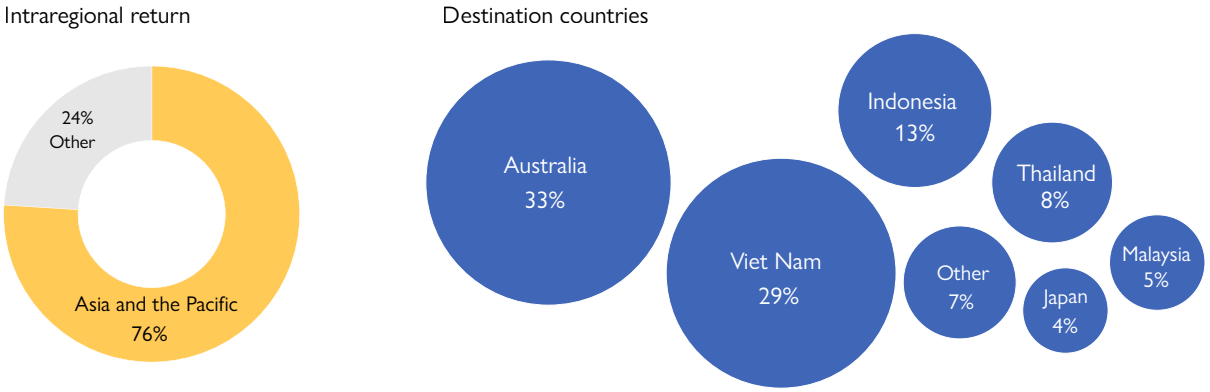
Over three-quarters of assisted returnees hosted in the region were intraregional returns.

Figure 26. IOM assisted returnees originating from Asia and the Pacific in 2022



Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Assisted Return and Reintegration Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 17 April 2023).

Figure 27. Main destination countries or areas in the Asia–Pacific region of IOM assisted returns in 2022



Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 17 April 2023).

2.4.2 Selected cases of return and reintegration

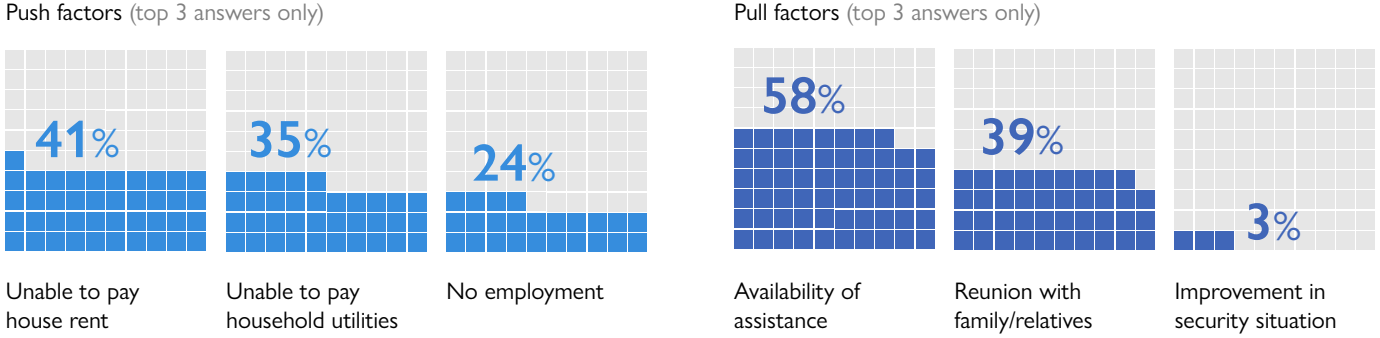
2.4.2.1 The mixed nature of spontaneous return: Undocumented Afghan returnees from Pakistan

In 2022, mobility between Pakistan and Afghanistan was affected by a variety of factors including economic, political and health-related issues. However, the security situation in both countries continued to be the main factor in determining mobility between the two nations. Cross-border violence and terrorism resulting from the ongoing political and conflict instability in Afghanistan led to frequent border closures and travel restrictions (IOM, 2023c). Despite such challenges, according to the flow monitoring exercise carried out in 2022 by IOM's DTM,[43] the number of undocumented Afghans recorded to be returning from Pakistan in 2022 increased significantly in comparison to 2021 (27,829 individuals), nearly threefold. IOM's DTM identified 74,132 undocumented Afghan returnees in two key transit border crossings – Chaman and Torkham – near entry or exit points between Pakistan and Afghanistan.[44] This increase in undocumented returnees is mostly due to the relaxation of border restrictions compared to the previous year (ibid.).

Based on face-to-face interviews conducted with heads and representatives of the households at the Torkham and Chaman border crossings – 5,860 individuals – key information on the socioeconomic profile of the undocumented Afghan returnees was collected, in addition to insights regarding the reasons for returning, both in terms of push factors (the reasons for leaving Pakistan) and pull factors (the reasons for returning to Afghanistan).[45] It was found that all returnees were employed during their time in Pakistan, the majority as daily wagers (59%), followed by skilled labour (26%) and business (13%). Regarding the reason for returning, in terms of push factors, 41 per cent of returnees reported that the inability to pay house rent was the primary reason that drove them to leave Pakistan (Figure 28). An additional 35 per cent indicated that they returned because they were unable to pay for household utilities in Pakistan. Lack of employment opportunities was also a significant factor, cited by 24 per cent of returnees. Regarding pull factors, 58 per cent of returnees reported the availability of assistance in Afghanistan as the reason for their return. In addition, 39 per cent of returnees cited reunion with family and relatives as the primary reason that encouraged them to return to Afghanistan.

While the return of Afghan natioanls may be recorded as spontaneous, challenges they face in their destination countries can act as significant push factors in their decision to return to Afghanistan. Economic difficulties, such as the inability to pay for housing or utilities, are cited as primary reasons for returning, along with lack of employment. These challenges suggest that many Afghan nationals may feel compelled to return to Afghanistan, even if the decision is technically voluntary.

Figure 28. Main reasons for returning to Afghanistan of undocumented returnees



Source: DTM Pakistan — Flow Monitoring of Undocumented Afghan Migrants: Summary Report 2022. IOM (2023c).

[43] Flow monitoring is a data collection activity that aims to collect indicative data that shows changes in movement patterns at a specific point. Flow monitoring points are selected based on their importance for movements between or within territories.

[44] Eighty-four per cent (62,082 individuals) returned through Chaman and 16 per cent (12,050 individuals), through Torkham.

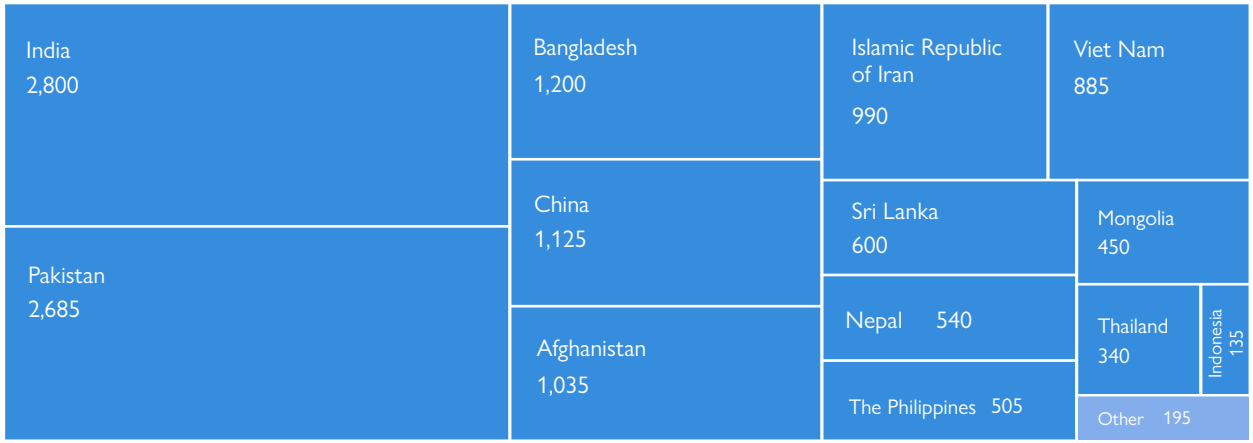
[45] Data were collected in 2022 through the IOM's DTM Flow Monitoring (FM) methodology. IOM's DTM teams collect data daily at the selected official border crossing to gather information on Afghan returnees and provide analysis through bi-weekly, quarterly and yearly reports. These surveys collect information on the number, demographic breakdown, vulnerabilities, migration intentions, reasons for migration and nationality of migrants.

2.4.2.2 Compulsory return of nationals of Asia–Pacific countries from Europe

Based on the latest estimates from EUROSTAT database, in 2022, there were 354,840 third country nationals from around the world found to have an irregular status and ordered to leave a country in Europe (EUROSTAT, 2023a) and about 100,270 returns were carried out because of such situation – a 17 per cent increase compared with 2021 (EUROSTAT, 2023b). Among those who returned following an order to leave, 13 per cent – 13,465 cases – corresponded to nationals from 22 Asia–Pacific countries.[46] As seen in Figure 29, the majority of nationals who returned followed an order to leave were originally from India (21%), Pakistan (20%), Bangladesh (9%), China (8%) and Afghanistan (8%) (in descending order) – a similar trend seen in 2020 and 2021 (IOM, 2021, 2022c). Nationals from these five countries accounted for 66 per cent of the stock of returnees from the region following an order to leave Europe. Of note, as a result of the positive changes in the processing of asylum applications for Afghans in various countries in Europe – due to the severe humanitarian situation following the de facto government takeover – the deportation of Afghan nationals in 2022 from Europe has significantly decreased by two thirds in comparison with 2021 – from 3,030 in 2021 to 1,035 in 2022. Cyprus (16%) reported the largest number of nationals from the Asia–Pacific region returned following an order to leave in 2022, followed by Sweden (13%), France (9%), Romania (8%) and Greece (8%).

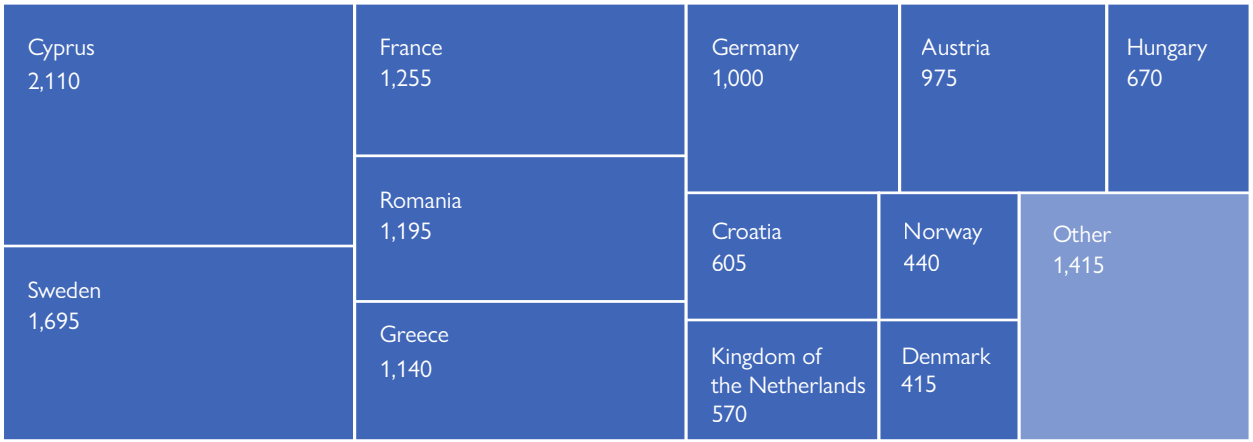
[46] Data were available for 29 out of 31 European countries.

Figure 29. Number of nationals from the Asia–Pacific region ordered to leave and returned from 29 European countries in 2022, disaggregated by country of origin



Source: Author's calculation based on dataset of third-country nationals returned following an order to leave database. EUROSTAT (2023b) (accessed 20 April 2023).

Figure 30. European countries from which nationals of Asia–Pacific countries returned following an order to leave in 2022



Source: Author's calculation based on dataset of third-country nationals returned following an order to leave database. EUROSTAT (2023b) (accessed 20 April 2023).

2.4.2.3 Deportations of Afghan nationals from neighbouring countries

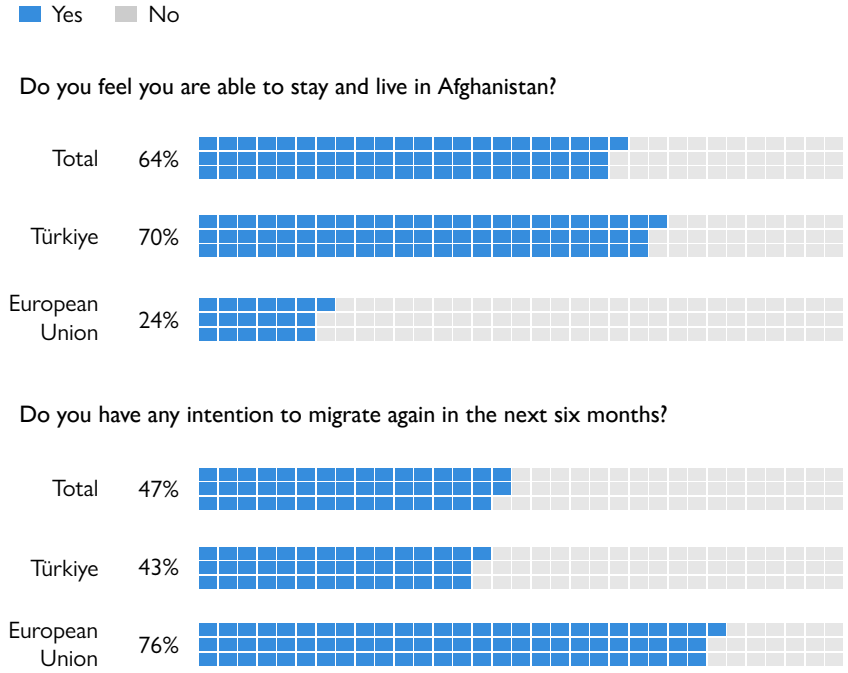
While the deportation of Afghan nationals from European countries has significantly reduced in 2022, the number of deportations from neighbouring countries continued to be significant (IOM, 2022c). In 2022, around 847,000 Afghans returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran, many of such returns were pushbacks (IOM, 2023d) and over 66,500 Afghans were deported from Türkiye in 2022 (Ministry of Interior of Türkiye, 2022). Based on accounts of forcibly returned Afghan nationals from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye, many Afghans have been intercepted at Iranian and Turkish informal border crossings. Security forces have, allegedly, either immediately transferred them to the border and pushed them back, or they have detained them before returning them (Amnesty International, 2022).

Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees continue to experience significant economic and food security challenges. Key findings of a survey conducted in 2022 by the IOM's DTM Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (DTM REMAP) among 563 returnees from Türkiye and Europe showed that most of the respondents (96%) did not have enough income to provide for their family's basic needs (IOM, 2022d).[47] All respondents indicated reducing the quantity and quality of their food intake because of its cost. In addition, 44 per cent reported being unemployed and 40 per cent indicated working for daily wages. However, daily wages are not considered a stable source of employment as most returnees are not able to work for daily wages regularly (ibid.).

Despite the ongoing security crisis in Afghanistan, neighbouring countries continue to deport Afghan refugees and migrants. This practice highlights the urgent need for sustainable and comprehensive solutions that address the root causes of forced displacement and enable the safe and dignified return of Afghan refugees to their country of origin. However, recognizing that the challenges facing Afghan refugees do not end upon their return is important. The reintegration of refugees into Afghan society is a complex and challenging process, particularly in the context of prevailing insecurity. The lack of access to basic services, such as education and health care, and limited economic opportunities are significant challenges facing returnees, making it difficult for them to rebuild their lives and support their families.

[47] Data collection took place from 3 to 19 October 2022 among Afghan migrants who had returned from Türkiye or the European Union between January 2018 and July 2021.

Figure 31. Re-migration intentions of Afghan returnees by country of destination



Source: DTM Afghanistan — RLS – Snapshot Report Round 8 (October 2022). IOM (2022d).

> *Recognizing that the challenges facing Afghan refugees do not end upon their return is important. The reintegration of refugees into Afghan society is a complex and challenging process, particularly in the context of prevailing insecurity.*

2.4.2.4 Reintegration challenges: return migration from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the scale of return migration from Thailand to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar was significant. Border closures, lockdowns and successive outbreaks of the virus in Thailand triggered large-scale return of migrant workers. Based on IOM estimates, approximately 240,000 Cambodian and 280,000 Lao migrant workers returned from Thailand up to August 2021, and about 233,000 Myanmar migrant workers returned up to July 2022 (IOM, 2023b). Return migration replaced out-migration as the dominant mobility pattern between Thailand and neighbouring countries of origin. However, while there was a surge driven by the pandemic, return migration from Thailand remains dynamic as a result of the lack of permanent employment for migrant workers, the difficulties to obtain gainful employment opportunities and legal status among irregular migrants, and the mandatory return that regular migrant workers in Thailand are required to make upon completion of a maximum of four years of work in Thailand (ibid.).

Three years after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, returning migrant workers make a vital contribution to the national and household economy remittances. Returnees are recognized in national policies as critical to building a strong labour force in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Yet challenges limit their contribution (ibid.). Migrant workers often return with the same or fewer savings than before they migrated and go back to their pre-migration occupations and levels of income. Furthermore, a significant proportion of returnees have experienced abuse at the workplace and mistreatment on the journey home. However, findings of IOM assessments and surveys conducted in 2022 amongst Cambodian, Myanmar and Lao migrants returning from Thailand revealed that such needs were more prominent among those returnees in Myanmar (ibid.).

> *Returning migrant workers make a vital contribution to the national and household economy remittances. Returnees are recognized in national policies as critical to building a strong labour force in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.*

Key findings from an assessment of Migrant Resource Centres supported by IOM in Cambodia (1,121 returnees) and Myanmar (573 returnees) in 2022 revealed that one third of Myanmar returnees experienced exploitative practices at work, high levels of debt and no savings to cover basic needs upon return. Clothing and cash for transport to get home were the priority needs of 60 per cent of returnees in transit from Thailand to Myanmar in the month of September 2022 (ibid.). In addition, almost 37 per cent of surveyed Myanmar returnees reported they had no intention of remigrating to Thailand. By comparison, most Cambodian deportees (71.2%) intend to remigrate to Thailand, with only 14.7 per cent not planning to do so. Four in 10 Cambodian respondents expected to face various challenges upon remigrating to Thailand, compared with nine in 10 Myanmar migrants (ibid.).

In relation to returning migrants from the Lao People's Democratic Republic, IOM conducted flow monitoring surveys in 2022 among 524 Lao nationals travelling to or returning from Thailand (IOM, 2022e). About one third (174 participants) consisted of returnees who reported that the most common reason for returning, besides short visits, was ending of visa or work permit for Thailand. Of those migrants who returned to Lao People's Democratic Republic, not including short-term visitors, only a small share had a job lined up in Lao People's Democratic Republic. Yet, most of the returning migrants did not expect to face any problems upon their return. The majority (84%) were open to migrating to Thailand again (ibid.).

Returnees from Pakistan walk across the border to return to Afghanistan © IOM 2023/Léo TORRETON

2.4.2 Discussion

The findings presented in this section have underscored the diverse and complex nature of return migration in the Asia–Pacific region, which encompasses a variety of migration streams, including labour migration, forced migration, and voluntary or spontaneous returns due to personal reasons. However, evidence shows that reintegration challenges still persist even when return is voluntary. Returning to a country or place where a migrant has previously lived does not guarantee a smooth reintegration process. As highlighted in this section, the reintegration of returnees is fraught with difficulties, including economic and social challenges and limited access to basic services in countries of origin.

The Global Compact for Migration recognizes return and reintegration as integral component of migration governance. Objective 21 calls for ensuring and facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission as well as sustainable reintegration. Understanding the multidimensional and multilevel nature of the reintegration process that accompanies return migration is necessary for developing and implementing successful reintegration assistance – sustainable reintegration (IOM, 2019).

The analysis of this section highlights the limitations in the availability of data on return migration, which are often fragmented across multiple sources and may be incomplete or only partially accessible to the public. For instance, the EUROSTAT database does not report several countries that implement AVRR programmes (IOM, 2022b). Moreover, many returnees may not register with authorities upon their return, thereby making it challenging to monitor their movements and identify their needs. This is particularly relevant for those who return without official documentation or support. Additionally, a significant data gap in post-return data exists, mainly due to the lack of established indicators and definitions for measuring reintegration (ibid.).

In light of these challenges, improving data collection and analysis on return and reintegration to develop evidence-based policies and interventions that ensure durable solutions for returnees is crucial. Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders should work together to enhance data sharing and harmonization, establish common indicators and develop effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to better understand the reintegration process and assess its outcomes.

> *Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re) migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity (IOM, 2019, p.11).*

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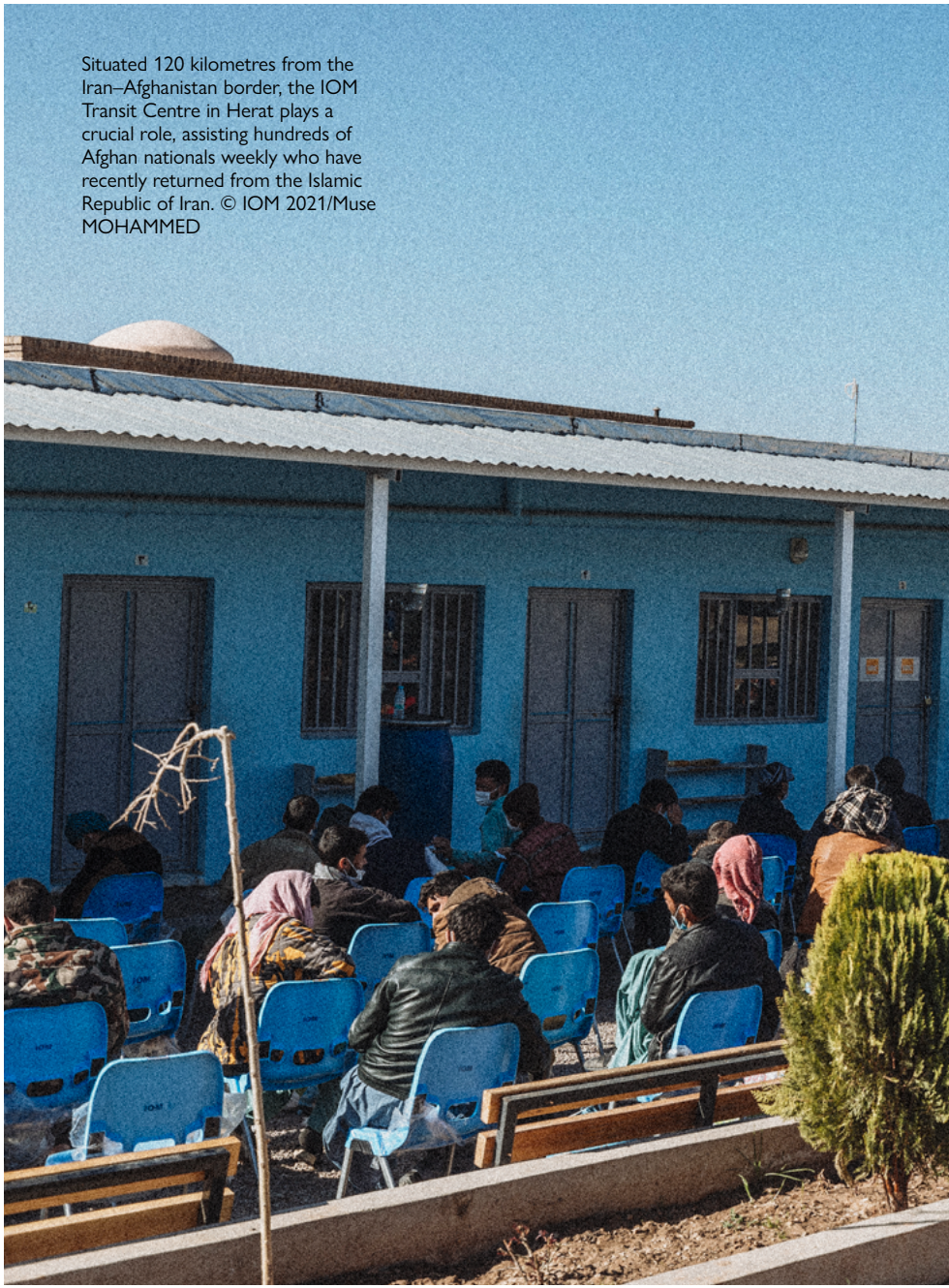
* All hyperlinks were active at the time of writing this report.



Situated 120 kilometres from the Iran–Afghanistan border, the IOM Transit Centre in Herat plays a crucial role, assisting hundreds of Afghan nationals weekly who have recently returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran. © IOM 2021/Muse MOHAMMED

2.5 Irregular Migration

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire migration cycle, with consequences on migrants' mobilities and journeys. Three years into the pandemic, COVID-19 still affects the migration field, exacerbating pre-existing delicate factors, such as migrants' vulnerabilities, working conditions and irregular status (IOM, 2022a). COVID-19 had such an effect because it not only led to restricted movements, but also added additional layers of complexity for migrants. For instance, medical documents are often still required when migrating and, if unable to obtain such documents, people may try to irregularly enter or stay in the country by using fraudulent documentation. Moreover, the pandemic has accentuated the already dire conditions in some countries, such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, and irregular migration through smuggling may be the only feasible option for some people wanting to leave the country (IOM, 2022b).

Irregular migration is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon. The status of an irregular migrant,[48] indeed, can include different people at different stages of their migration journey. For example, migrants can irregularly cross a border and then become regularized, they can regularly enter a country and then irregularly overstay, or they can start working without having a work permit (IOM, 2022c). Therefore, forms of irregularities are not clear-cut, and can intersect entry, stay and work-related status in a country (Scholten, 2022). Due to the term's fluidity and complexity, collecting accurate data is often difficult, which has serious consequences for evidence-based migration governance. This chapter outlines irregular migration aspects for which data and information are available, namely document falsification and migrant smuggling. These two aspects, which are closely intertwined, are important to investigate because they are key practices used to irregularly enter a country, allowing to better understand irregular migration and to compartmentalize the bigger phenomenon of irregular migration into more practical examples.

2.5.1 Document falsification and migrant smuggling

The IOM Verifier Travel Document and Bearer (TD&B) monitored travel document falsification in airports and land border crossing points spanning several countries in the Asia–Pacific region in 2022. The IOM Verifier TD&B has been developed by the IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific as an automated secondary inspection system for travel document inspection and identity verification. The main goal of the system is to assist border management and other relevant law enforcement agencies in detecting fraudulent travel documents and imposters,[49] and collecting disaggregated data for national and regional trends analysis (IOM, 2022d). Detecting fraud helps officials to take decisions over entry/exit and/or further referral for investigation, contributes to fraud regional trends analysis for further targeting selected documents, and unveils different modalities of irregular migration, including migrant smuggling.

Figure 32 reports the number of passports documents' checks registered by the IOM Verifier TD&B. Genuine documentation cases decreased from 90 per cent in 2021 to 74 per cent in 2022. Conversely, both fraudulent documentation and imposter cases increased in this period. Specifically, fraudulent documentation incremented from 8 per cent in 2021 to 16 per cent in 2022, while imposter cases grew from 2 per cent in 2021 to 9 per cent in 2022.

Interestingly, a recent report from IOM (2022b) found that the use of fraudulent medical documents in travel and migration during the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved. Data were collected through surveys disseminated to national immigration authorities throughout 46 point of entry workstations to most countries in Asia and the Pacific. Eighty-four survey responses – out of which 60 were from Thailand – were received from 15 countries (ibid.).[50] The most common types of fraudulent medical documents identified by survey respondents were fraudulent Certificates of Entry or quarantine documents, followed by fraudulent COVID-19 test results, and

The status of an irregular migrant, indeed, can include different people at different stages of their migration journey. For example, migrants can irregularly cross a border and then become regularized, they can regularly enter a country and then irregularly overstay, or they can start working without having a work permit.

[48] Although there is no universal definition of irregular migration, IOM defines this phenomenon as any "movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination" (IOM, 2019, p.116). Following this definition, an irregular migrant is any person who "moves or has moved across an international border and is not authorized to enter or to stay in a State pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party" (ibid., p.133).

[49] "Imposter" is defined as "a person who applies for and obtains a document by assuming a false identity, or a person who alters his physical appearance to present himself as anothe person for the purpose of using that person's document". Meanwhile, fraudulent documents are "any travel or identity document that has been falsely made or altered by anyone other than a person or agency lawfully authorized to make or issue the travel or identity document" (IOM, 2023b, p.7).

[50] The 15 countries covered include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Marshall Islands, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. The overrepresentation of Thai officials in the survey might also imply that the results are mainly driven responses from Thailand.

fraudulent vaccine documentation. Looking at the regional overview, people apprehended using fraudulent medical documents mainly came from Asia–Pacific countries, followed by African countries and Western European countries (ibid., p.10).

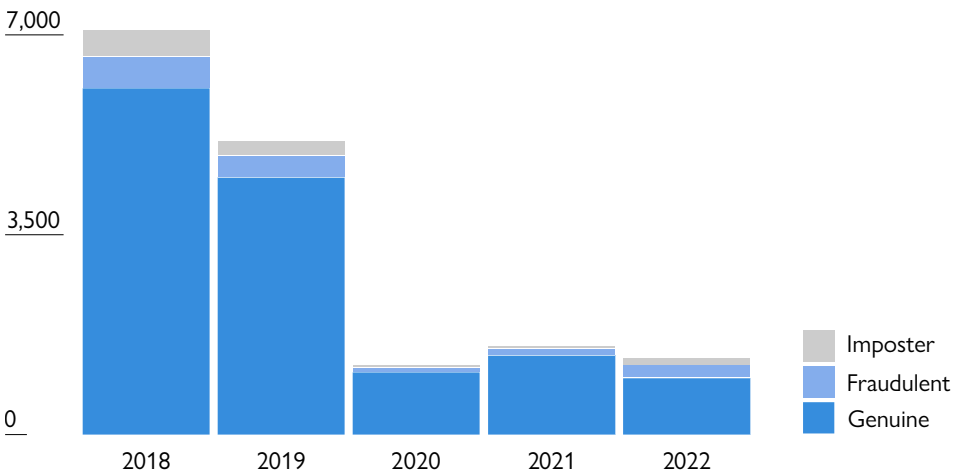
Survey respondents indicated that the individuals who reported having used fraudulent medical documents during travel or migration in Asia–Pacific countries were often simultaneously using fraudulent identity documents, such as a fraudulent passport (ibid.). In this case, an irregular migrant might be using fraudulent medical documents so that the personal details on travel documents match – namely on the passport and the medical documents. Importantly, one of the main reasons behind the use of fraudulent documents is to enable them to travel despite positive COVID-19 test results and, as a result, to facilitate irregular migration (ibid.).

Another IOM report (2023b) investigated the prevalence of travel and identity fraud documents from 2014 to 2021 in 12 countries in South and South-East Asia,[51] further stratifying the results by sex, age group and country of interception. Interestingly, males were consistently the majority of those intercepted with fraudulent travel documents between 2017 and 2021. The data show that the difference between the proportion of males and females found with fraudulent documentation was greatest in 2018, when males (69.1%) were three times more likely to be intercepted than females (27.1%) (ibid.). Moreover, while males were likely to be intercepted across all age groups, females were the majority (63.2%) of those intercepted with fraudulent documentation between the ages of 61 and 75 years (ibid.). Importantly, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the ability of countries to scan or report on fraudulent documents, as only six out of the 12 countries included in this study collected data each year, with 2020 and 2021 being the years with most missing data (ibid.). Moreover, this report sheds light on the smuggling component of document falsification. Indeed, fraudulent documents are widely used to facilitate migrant smuggling in Asia and the Pacific. The pattern of individuals using more fraudulent documents compared to imposter cases (Figure 32) could suggest that groups engaging in migrant smuggling are receptive to the fraudulent identification documents that work best to irregularly enter a country and quickly adapt to security changes (ibid.).

Alarmingly, fraudulent COVID-19 documents were reportedly being sold on the dark web, indicating organized crime group involvement, as these documents are easily accessible through various channels, including social media and the open web (IOM, 2022b). The production and sale of these documents have been profitable for both individual vendors and organized crime groups, with some medical professionals also involved. Overall, the rise in the use of fraudulent medical documents in response to COVID-19 travel restrictions and requirements has posed significant challenges for airlines, immigration authorities and other relevant entities (ibid.). Due to a lack of training, time and technology to verify fraudulent medical documents, it is likely that many thousands of individuals have been permitted to travel during the pandemic without the appropriate medical documents (ibid.). Globally and regionally, accurate data on the use of fraudulent medical documents in travel and migration are lacking. However, understanding the organized crime element of this issue is essential, as it could provide insights into the scale of the crime, global profits and implications for international travellers, airlines and immigration authorities (ibid.)

Beyond document falsification data, it is also important to illustrate some smuggling cases of migrants or forcibly displaced persons for a more comprehensive understanding of irregular migration. Three country cases are presented, namely Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Its relevance lies in the fact that, despite its irregular nature, smuggling is sometimes the only feasible way for migrants or forcibly displaced persons to leave the country.

Figure 32. Results of travel document checks from IOM Verifier TD&B



Source: Verifier TD&B Newsletter April 2023. IOM (2023a)

> *Due to a lack of training, time and technology to verify fraudulent medical documents, it is likely that many thousands of individuals have been permitted to travel during the pandemic without the appropriate medical documents.*

[51] The 12 countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines and Viet Nam.

Afghanistan

As of December 2022, 2.07 million refugees from Afghanistan registered in the Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, while 1.62 million Afghans have reached neighbouring countries from August 2021 to August 2023 (UNHCR, n.d.a). Due to the restrictions on regular migration pathways in Afghanistan – in terms of access to visa processes and passports – irregular migration and smuggling are often the only option for many wanting to leave the country. Smuggling, indeed, is often "not a cause of irregular migration, but a symptom of it, and one that largely results from insufficient opportunities to migrate regularly" (IOM, 2022e, p.10). Smuggling networks in the country have created a lucrative and underpoliced market, becoming an integral component of the Afghan economy (MMC, 2022a). Since the political transition in August 2021 in Afghanistan, smuggling services saw a spike in demand from Afghans trying to flee (ibid.), followed by a sudden increase in the smuggling services' costs (MMC, 2023a). European Union Member States' response to Afghans seeking safety and stability has been timely but inadequate and, to this day, some countries' response, such as in the Republic of Iran, Tajikistan or Turkmenistan, is inconsistent (ibid.). Thousands of Afghans still have difficulties finding a way out of the country, and those managing to migrate are often returned by governments of the destination countries (MMC, 2022b). For example, over 55,000 Afghans were returned by the government of Türkiye in 2022. Similarly, over 50,000 Afghans have been returned by the Republic of Iran only between August and September 2022 (ICMPD, 2022). Such challenges often oblige Afghan nationals to resort to the smuggling option which, already well-established through smuggling of people, drugs and money, has boomed after the de facto government takeover.[52] It is not surprising that the smuggling of undocumented migrants to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan keeps rising.[53]

The MMC conducted several studies on Afghans and their risk of detention and need for smuggling. An MMC (2023b) snapshot collected data about 3,160 Afghans across Türkiye between August 2021 and October 2022. Afghans reported several risks during the journey, with detention being the most common risk for both male and female respondents after physical violence. Figure 33 shows that the perceived risk of detention was higher for those respondents who did not use a smuggler than for those who did (78% and 52%, respectively).

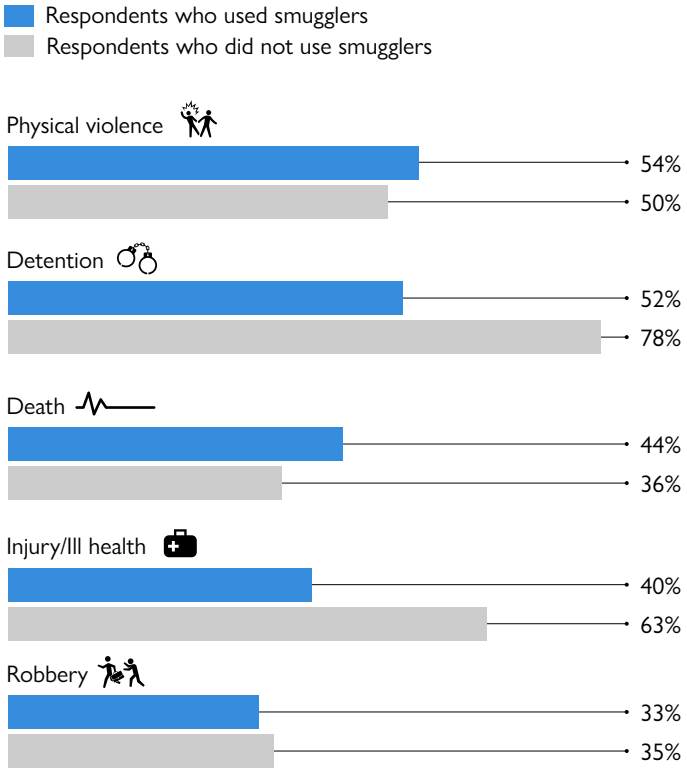
More generally, 53 per cent of respondents reported a perceived risk of detention, with younger groups feeling more at risk than elder ones (61% between the age of 18 and 25 years, and 54% between the age of 26 and 35 years) (ibid.). Most respondents (85.5%) used one or more smugglers to help them during their journey to Türkiye (ibid.).

However, another study from MMC with 436 interviewed Afghan refugees reveals that smugglers are the main perpetrators of protection violations en route (44%), followed by border guards/immigration officials (35%), military/police (34%) and criminal groups (28%) (MMC, 2021). Therefore, the smuggling figures seem to be following the same trend from last year, as outlined in the IOM's Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021. Indeed, Afghans are still in

[52] The New York Times, "The Smugglers' Paradise of Afghanistan", 8 March 2022.

[53] Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, "Escaping Afghanistan: People-Smuggling Thrives on Bribes to Taliban", 27 May 2022.

Figure 33. Five most frequently reported perceived risks among respondents



Source: Detention as a protection risk en route to Türkiye. MMC (2023b).

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

need of smuggling options to be able to leave the country, with detention being among the most cited risk en route for Afghans.

Looking at some practical examples of Afghan refugees' detention, around 1,500 Afghans were detained in Pakistan in November 2022 because they did not possess proper documentation. However, among those detained there were women, children and refugees who were in possession of the Proof of Registration (PoR) card that legalizes their stay in Pakistan (MMC, 2023a). Moreover, the Republic of Iran – which is one of the main countries of destination for Afghans – gave them the option of registering for temporary legal residency for a small fee soon after August 2021 (ibid.). In April 2022, the Republic of Iran undertook a headcount of all Afghan nationals without documentation. All those counted received a laissez-passer, preventing them from being returned to Afghanistan until October 2022, and then until January 2023. However, Afghans had to pay a fee for being able to participate in the headcount exercise (ibid.).

Myanmar

After the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar, the humanitarian situation in the country has worsened, with 1.5 million IDPs and more than 1.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers from the country as of December 2022 (UNHCR, n.d.b). Conflict and violence in the country often make smuggling the most feasible option to leave the country. An increasing number of Rohingya refugees migrating to other countries, such as Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Indonesia, live in fear of arrest and detention. Indeed, Rohingya refugees' safety has eroded and, while this pushes some to reach other destinations for safer conditions, they now face a hostile environment, with threats of detention and deportation in all these countries (MMC, 2022c).

Moreover, as seen in Section 3.2, operations from Myanmar to Malaysia and Thailand are on the rise, despite efforts from Thai authorities to address trafficking and smuggling of migrants, with Mae Sot in Tak province, Thailand as a new entry point for traffickers and smugglers (ADSP et al., 2022). Therefore, smuggling networks often allow Rohingya to leave their difficult conditions in Myanmar and find social service access and more safety in destination countries. At the same time, however, movement through these networks can make Rohingya refugees even more vulnerable to the possibility of an act of smuggling escalating to an act of trafficking, but also the risk of financial or sexual exploitation, arrest and detention, refoulement and death. Many Rohingya refugees faced several barriers when trying to move either within Myanmar or to neighbouring countries (ibid.). For instance, they were often denied the right to freely move by the de facto authorities in Myanmar, or they did not have the documentation needed to leave the country. Thus, despite its problematic nature, human smuggling has been a feasible avenue for many to seek international protection (ibid.).

A study from the MMC (2022d) reveals that 96 per cent out of 132 surveyed Rohingya refugees who fled to Indonesia used smugglers at some point during their journey. Among those, most migrants used smugglers for the entire journey to Indonesia (76%), while others used it for several part of the journey (19%) and only 1 per cent for one part of the journey (ibid.).

> *96 per cent out of 132 surveyed Rohingya refugees who fled to Indonesia used smugglers at some point during their journey.*

Of those using a smuggler during their migration journey, 65 per cent agreed that they were misled about the migration journey by the smugglers at some point during the movement. Very often, Rohingya refugees engaged smugglers even though they did not have information about the journey's route, duration or conditions (ibid.). Another study from MMC (2022e) with 1,155 Rohingya refugees in Malaysia reports that arrest and detention were considered as the biggest risks (by 80% who encountered risks or threats). Moreover, in a survey with 327 respondents, 51 of them said they had been detained, and 95 confirmed that they had some family member(s) detained at the time of the survey (ibid.). Among the 51 who reported being detained, 43 were arrested and detained when they arrived in Malaysia. The duration of detention varied from case to case, with 20 people reporting a detention of less than three months, 12 between three and six months, and 16 between six and 12 months (ibid.).

Rohingya refugees walk from the border of Myanmar to Balukhali settlement in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. © IOM 2018/Olivia HEADON

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the IOM.

These studies' results are also confirmed by news about Rohingya refugees' stories on their arrests or detentions. For example, in April 2022 more than 500 Rohingya tried to escape after being held since 2020 in a detention centre in northern Malaysia. Among these, six were killed crossing the highway, and more than 60 were still missing after a week. Alarmingly, the authorities prompted locals to track them down, initiating what has been described as a "witch hunt" (MMC, 2022c).

In March 2022, a mother of three – who was an UNHCR-registered refugee – was returned from India to Myanmar, highlighting the difficult conditions Rohingya often face in India (ibid.). In June 2022, 59 Rohingya, of which 23 women and five children, were found by authorities in Koh Dong Island after being abandoned by smugglers. They have been detained and now face criminal charges in Thailand (ibid.). As of June 2022, 470 Rohingya refugees were being indefinitely held in Thailand, without being given the possibility to seek asylum as refugees (ibid.). Moreover, in May 2022, 26 Rohingya refugees, among which 12 adults and eight minors, were arrested and brought to a detention centre in Assam, India after trying to cross the border to Bangladesh. In the same period, three other groups were arrested after entering Bangladesh (MMC, 2022f). Thus, all the information derived from reports and newspapers reveal that smuggling and detention are still a very common reality for Rohingya refugees who are unable to regularly leave the country.

Due to the dire conditions migrants face in Myanmar, in June 2022 the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Michelle Bachelet, stated that the crimes committed in Myanmar are enough to attribute the commission of crimes against humanity and war crimes (OHCHR, 2022). Peaceful demonstrators of dissent and journalists keep being arbitrarily arrested, detained, tortured and ill-treated in all places of detention.[54] Amnesty International (2022) published a report, *15 Days Felt Like 15 Years*, where through interviews with 15 individuals they tackle the torture and other ill-treatment individuals are subjected to when arrested, interrogated and detained after 1 February 2021. People interviewed claimed that soldiers generally do not wear their uniform when arresting people, and that detainees are kept blindfolded for days, deprived of food and water (ibid.).

Sri Lanka

With travel restrictions relaxing in several countries, the number of irregular migrants leaving Sri Lanka in 2022 has been on the rise. Irregular migrants mainly leave the country because of the current cost of living, by using maritime routes. This indicates that there are established and difficult to uproot groups involved in trafficking and smuggling of people (IOM, 2022f). Indeed, many Sri Lankans travel via irregular means to reach countries such as India or Australia. From May to August 2022, the Sri Lankan navy has intercepted 10 boats with 353 people.[55] Many people on boats reaching Australia are returned by the destination country and, once in Sri Lanka, they are arrested and jailed.[56] Moreover, 60 people have been arrested when they arrived in India.[57] Beyond migration within Asia, Sri Lankans are also reported to irregularly migrating by sea to North America. Nevertheless, these instances are rare, as most irregular migrants from Sri Lanka get there by land or air (Hedwards et al., 2023).

> *Irregular migrants from Sri Lanka mainly leave the country because of the current cost of living, by using maritime routes.*

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

[54] Civicus Monitor, "Myanmar Junta continues to arrest, torture activists despite global outrage around executions", 15 September 2022.
[55] The Guardian, "Exploited in a crisis: why are Sri Lankans getting on boats bound for Australia?", 25 June 2022.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Freedom Collaborative, "Migration surges in Sri Lanka amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis", 16 August 2022.

2.5.2 Discussion

Discussion on irregular migration in the region continues to be central for policies and political discourses. Irregular migrants are excluded from public benefits and health services, and cases of human smuggling and detention or arrest have persisted in Asia and the Pacific in 2022. Conflict and violence are still some of the biggest drivers of displacement and irregular migration, such as in the case of Afghanistan and Myanmar. Despite the relevance of irregular migration, data on this topic remain scarce in the Asia–Pacific region. As a result, it is unclear whether irregular migration numbers in the area have changed compared to previous years. Nevertheless, information from reports and media articles enables to observe some patterns about irregular migration in Asia and the Pacific.

> *Conflict and violence are still some of the biggest drivers of displacement and irregular migration, such as in the case of Afghanistan and Myanmar.*

First, three years into the COVID-19 outbreak, the pandemic still plays a role in the irregular migration mechanisms and strategies in the Asia–Pacific region. The request for medical documents, for example, can lead some migrants to use fraudulent medical documents for migrating, which makes them become irregular migrants. Second, smuggling has continued since the COVID-19 outbreak, and it has often been proven to be the only feasible way for some migrants to leave their country, such as in the cases of Afghanistan and Myanmar. The limitations in data availability highlighted in this chapter have consequences for policymaking to address irregular migration through evidence-based policies. At the time of writing, there are no central sources providing data on aspects of irregular migration, such as irregular entry, irregular stay or irregular labour mechanisms. The EUROSTAT (statistical office of the European Union) portal provides data on irregular migration in the European Union countries. However, only the indicators on the numbers of third-country nationals irregularly present and refused entry at the external borders, which can be disaggregated by citizenships also of the Asia–Pacific countries, are relevant in this case. The lack of official data sources prevents us from understanding irregular migration trends and patterns within the Asia and Pacific region, or to other countries that are not part of the European Union. Filling the data gap by collecting information on irregular migration in the Asia–Pacific region and establishing a collective database are crucial to help policymakers develop policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, as specified in SDG Target 10.7. Importantly, once the data are collected and obtained, data sharing and cooperation are also crucial aspects for all entities to have a coherent and all-encompassing understanding of the phenomenon in the region. Doing so is essential to allow governments, international organizations, and private and public entities to coherently coordinate to safeguarding migrants' rights.

Increasing efforts are being made towards the inclusion of irregular migration in international frameworks. The Bali Process, for example, responds to the irregular migration challenges in the region. The Bali Process celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2022 and, for this occasion, the Constructive Dialogue on Irregular Migration, Trafficking in Persons, and People Smuggling took place in Bangkok, Thailand on 7 and 8 September 2022, organized by the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. The Dialogue tackled current trends and emerging trends in irregular migration, trafficking in persons, people smuggling in the Bali process region, and the priorities that need to be set to address these issues (Bali Process, 2023).

Irregular migration is also a key component of achieving the Global Compact's overall goal of safe, orderly, and regular migration. The Global Compact aims to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration while reducing the incidence and negative effects of irregular migration through international cooperation. Objective 5 of the Global Compact commits states to enhancing the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration. This increases a global effort to achieve the Objective 9 of the Global Compact for Migration, which aims at strengthening translational response to migrants' smuggling, and the Dimension 6 of the Migration Governance Indicators for safe, orderly and regular migration.

> *The limitations in data availability highlighted in this chapter have consequences for policymaking to address irregular migration through evidence-based policies. At the time of writing, there are no central sources providing data on aspects of irregular migration, such as irregular entry, irregular stay or irregular labour mechanisms.*

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2022b *Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (Quarter 3): Asia and the Pacific*.
2022c *Mixed Migration Review 2022*.
2022d MMC Asia and the Pacific 4Mi Snapshot – December 2022. Rohingya Refugees in Indonesia: a Focus smuggling, information, and financing.
2022e MMC Asia 4Mi Snapshot – October 2022. Protection risks of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.
2022f *Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (Quarter 2): Asia and the Pacific*.
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03

Migration and Vulnerabilities

COVID-19 awareness sessions and screening being provided to thousands of returnees in need of assistance and displaced people in community centres and mosques around Heart by IOM Afghanistan's COVID-19 Rapid Response Teams (RRTs). © IOM 2021/Muse MOHAMMED

3.Migration and Vulnerabilities

In this chapter

SDG Target

Global Compact for Migration Objective

MGI Domain

Migrants' rights

Well-being of migrants

3.1 Vulnerabilities of Migrants and Forcibly Displaced Persons

Although the role of the pandemic is not as prominent as it was during its outbreak, the effects of COVID-19 are still felt unequally across different population groups (UNHCR, 2022). This chapter seeks to take a more holistic approach on migrants' vulnerabilities by looking at multiple factors and drivers, including but not exclusive to the COVID-19 pandemic. This aims at showing key events in 2022 concerning migrants and forcibly displaced persons from and in the region to cast light on broader issues. This section is divided into two parts. The first part reviews vulnerabilities related to migration more generally in 2022, focusing on three highly intertwined areas, namely migrant workers' rights, housing conditions and access to health care. The second part analyses vulnerabilities related to forced displacement in the region, with a specific focus on multisector needs of forcibly displaced persons from Myanmar and Afghanistan.

This chapter seeks to take a more holistic approach on migrants' vulnerabilities.

3.1.1 Vulnerabilities related to migration

3.1.1.1 Behind the 2022 FIFA World Cup: The long-standing migrant workers' rights issues

Migrant workers are among the most vulnerable groups; they often experience many challenges both in their origin country and in the destination country. While being a migrant worker does not automatically equal being vulnerable, some factors make migrant workers more vulnerable to abuse (IOM, 2022a). Indeed, they may be more at risk of vulnerable human trafficking, dire recruitment processes and working conditions, racism and xenophobia compared to non-migrant workers. Moreover, precarious legal status, language and cultural barriers, limited or no access to health services and other social protections, are also crucial factors that worsen migrant workers' vulnerabilities (ibid.). The social environment also plays a role with regards to their vulnerabilities, as migrant workers often leave their families and support network in their home countries, which may cause feelings of loneliness and social isolation in the destination country (ibid.). Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of complexity to migrants' vulnerabilities, with migrant workers being more prone to the pandemic's negative effects than non-migrant workers. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the risks and vulnerabilities that migrant workers face, making its effects harsher for those who were already in a vulnerable position before the pandemic. While this is the case for all migrants, migrant workers may experience the compounded effects of health, socioeconomic and protection challenges that, together with the consequences of a global pandemic, may leave them unequipped to face additional and unexpected health care costs, limited mobility and loss of jobs (ibid.).

Alarmingly, the last decade has seen widespread instances of labour exploitation and forced labour for migrants (ILO, 2022a). All over the world, millions of workers, including migrants, are affected by occupational injuries caused by workplace hazards, and the lack of safe and healthy working conditions (ILO, 2021). The compounding effect of migrants' low economic independence, their overrepresentation in dangerous sectors (such as construction, mining, domestic work, manufacturing or agriculture) and irregular work and/or status makes them vulnerable to organizations and employers to perpetuate unfair and unlawful treatment (Brian, 2021). Meanwhile, migrant workers are often exploited under threats of violence,

The last decade has seen widespread instances of labour exploitations and forced labour for migrants.

arrest, withholding of wages or confiscation of documents, obliging them to have unfair wages, excessive working hours, unsafe workplaces and working conditions (Integral Human Development, 2022).

The following section focuses on several cases of labour exploitation. After an in-depth analysis of vulnerabilities migrant workers experience in Qatar – mainly with regards to the 2022 FIFA World Cup – other cases of unfair and unlawful working conditions for migrant workers are reported. Specifically, the rest of the section focuses on migrant workers' vulnerabilities related to the countries of Thailand, Nepal and Malaysia, and on vulnerabilities for migrant workers with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) in South-East Asia. These five case studies are relevant to consider when tackling migrants' vulnerabilities not only because they allow to get a more practical understanding of the realities of migrant workers in some countries of the Asia–Pacific region, but also because they give a more complete overview of unfair working conditions for migrants in several working sectors, such as textile, construction and food industries.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup

One of the main examples of complex and delicate migrant workers' conditions is Qatar. Despite having the highest ratio of migrants to citizens in the world – migrant workers represent 94 per cent of the country's labour force (ILO, 2022a) – Qatar has been under the radar for its treatment of migrant workers since winning the bid in 2010 to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.[58]

During the FIFA World Cup 2022, indeed, the country caught public attention because of the event's negligent attitude towards migrant labour and human rights abuses. Indeed, poor living and working conditions for migrant workers and labour rights violations remain a controversial topic in the country because of its limited commitment in improving migrant workers conditions throughout time.[59]

The preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup led to a massive building programme by Qatar, with the construction of stadiums, hotels, roads and public transportation systems at the cost of USD 220 billion (Human Rights Watch, 2022a). Although Qatar approved changes to the kafala system, according to which workers had to have the permission of their employers to change occupation, workers still experience hurdles when moving to new jobs. For instance, employers can cancel workers' residence permits or file fake charges against them (ILO, 2022a).

Between November 2021 and October 2022, Human Rights Watch interviewed more than 45 migrants from Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Kenya working in Qatar. They claimed they had to pay unaffordable and illegal recruitment costs, which led to many falling into debt (Human Rights Watch, 2022b). Indeed, while according to Qatari law migrant workers should not pay recruitment fees, 54 per cent of low-wage workers appear to have paid to go to Qatar (ILO, 2022a). The number of workers' complaints to Qatar's Ministry of Labour more than doubled within a year, increasing from 11,000 in 2021 to 25,000 in 2022 (ibid.).

Hundreds of migrants have also reported facing deportation, injuries and risk of deaths in Qatar.[60] Some migrants claimed they were imprisoned without explanation. For example, Nepali migrants described dire conditions while in prison, where they shared a cell with 24 more Nepali migrant workers, were provided only with a blanket and pillow, and the mattresses on the floor on which they slept were filled with bed bugs.[61] Prisons were reported to contain around 250–300 people from different countries, such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Nepal and the Philippines.[62] Alarmingly, data reveal that between 2016 and 2021, 21 people were sentenced to death in Qatar, of which 18 were migrants from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Tunisia and unknown nationalities.[63]

58 BBC, "World Cup 2022: How has Qatar treated foreign workers?", 9 November 2022.
59 The Kathmandu Post, "Yearender 2022: More Nepalis leave for foreign jobs in 2022", 29 December 2022.
60 CNN, "Our dreams never came true. These men helped build Qatar's World Cup, now they are struggling to survive", 21 March 2023.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 The Conversation, "Qatar's death row and the invisible migrant workforce deemed unworthy of due process", 25 November 2022.

Rohingya women and children face heightened vulnerability to physical violence, trafficking in persons and exploitation during their journey.
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Selected country cases

Thailand: From TESCO's alleged labour abuse to wider issues in the garment and construction sector

In Thailand, only citizens can form and rely on labour unions, meaning that migrant workers, especially undocumented migrant workers, are more vulnerable to labour rights violations (MMC, 2022a). The country has well-established garment, textile and construction sectors, which heavily rely on migrant workers. However, such workers may face several human and labour rights during recruitment and employment (IOM, 2022b). In the textile sector, for instance, according to Thai law employers do not need to cover the same recruitment-related costs as required by international standards. This means that employed migrants may have to cover their recruitment fees, facing additional costs for which they may not be equipped. Moreover, many migrant workers who migrate regularly are not provided with written employment contracts, which may potentially lead them to fall into irregular status (ibid.). Others are given contracts in a language they do not speak, which prevents them from understanding their employment rights and duties. Very often, garment factories' workers in Thailand work close to seven days a week on average for a monthly wage of USD 216, which is below the legal minimum wage (ibid.).

In December 2022, 130 former workers of the VK Garment Factory in Mae Sot, Thailand, filed a lawsuit against the British supermarket Tesco for "unjust enrichment". Migrant workers, among which migrants from Myanmar, claimed to have worked 99 hours per week for very low pay and in dangerous conditions.[64] One worker interviewed reported that the machines had no safety switch, which caused him to lose the tip of his index finger. He also reported feeling humiliated when shouted at by his supervisors. Another worker claimed to have frequently skipped meals to meet targets and try to earn more. As a result, he got sick and had to take a month off without pay. He was subsequently dismissed and was unable to find another job for seven months.[65]

Alarmingly, women in the Thai textile industry are often paid less than men and may be obliged to take a pregnancy test during the recruitment process. If pregnant, employers may change their hiring decision, making the hiring process more uncertain and stressful for women (IOM, 2022b). Similar to the textile sector, the construction sector also reports inequalities between male and female migrant workers. With about 26 per cent of migrant workers with regular status employed in the construction sector in 2022 – of whom 36 per cent are women – this sector is often an insecure place to work for women migrant workers, as they are not paid or treated the same as their male colleagues or Thai nationals, and they experience challenges accessing public and private service provisions (ILO, 2023)

Nepal: Migrants' labour exploitation and reintegration challenges

Labour migration and foreign employment have become viable livelihood options for millions of Nepalis who are unable to find work within the country (Government of Nepal and IOM, 2022). While labour migration can be beneficial for Nepal through the remittances migrants send, securing decent labour standards and basic labour rights remains a challenge for Nepali migrant workers.[66,67]

Indeed, Nepali migrant workers face several health risks resulting from their exposure to occupational, safety and health hazards, as well as poor living and working conditions, lack of access to health services, and language and cultural barriers. More specifically, low-skilled workers employed in "dirty, dangerous and demeaning" jobs are more likely to experience health problems during or after their migration journey. This is often because they are not covered by health and social assistance in the destination country or, if with an irregular status, are afraid to seek it (MoLESS, 2022). Additionally, commonly reported complaints from migrant workers include limited freedom of movement, contract breaches, non-payment of wages and confiscation of identity documents, which prevents migrants from escaping abusive working conditions.[68] Another recruitment abuse includes charging workers large sums of money to cover recruitment fees, which should be borne by the employer. This practice often causes migrants to incur substantial debt even before starting their job

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

64 Eco Textile News, "Supply chain migrant garment workers sue Tesco", 19 December 2022.
65 The Guardian, "What do you mean, day off?", 18 December 2022.
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68 Ibid.

and, although they disburse such fees, they are not always guaranteed a job.[69]

Alarmingly, in the last 10 years, more than 10,000 Nepalis died in labour destinations. The numbers increased from 658 in 2019–2020 to 1,146 in 2020–2021, and the last fiscal year (until July 2022) reached an all-time high of 1,395 deaths (MoLESS, 2022). Among the reasons of death, heart attacks or "natural deaths" are given for Nepalis migrants in the GCC and Malaysia. These last two countries account for the larger proportion of Nepali migrant workers' deaths, with more than 100 deaths reported in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 2019–2020 and 2021–2022 (ibid.). Nevertheless, it is important to caveat that the causes of death are not always accurately assessed (ibid.).

Another important aspect of Nepali migrants is their return. In 2021–2022 450,897 Nepalis returned (ibid.). Nevertheless, their labour market reintegration remains challenging, as many have been unemployed for a long time. Moreover, hundreds of Nepali migrants return with severe injuries, anxiety and depression, with suicide attempts being identified as the major health-related vulnerability for migrant workers in the GCC (ibid.). Some find themselves in a heavy debt situation, as some asked for money in their country of origin before leaving to afford travel and recruitment costs.[70]

In the last 10 years, more than 10,000 Nepalis died in labour destinations. The numbers increased from 658 in 2019–2020 to 1,146 in 2020–2021, and the last fiscal year (until July 2022) reached an all-time high of 1,395 deaths.

Malaysia: Debt bondages and forced labour

Malaysia is another key destination for migrant workers in Asia and the Pacific, as can be seen in Section 2.1. There, the key working sectors for migrants are construction, manufacturing, plantation and domestic work. Although Malaysia's economy is reliant on migrant workers to fill labour gaps, forced labour for migrants remains a major problem in the country's labour market (MMC, 2022a). In particular, the high recruitment costs for migrant workers going to Malaysia contributes to workers' debt and vulnerability to exploitation. For instance, cases of debt bondage, withholding of wages and deception are common vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers in the country (Hwok Aun and Pereira, 2023). In a study conducted in 2022 with 28 worker informants in Malaysia, 23 of them reported having had their passports confiscated by their employers. This practice makes migrant workers highly vulnerable to losing their immigration status or being unable to escape unjust working conditions. Migrant workers reported being often obliged to work overtime (for a total of between 12 and 16 hours a day), without any extra payment (Wahab and Hamidi, 2022). Moreover, human smuggling and trafficking in persons are also common practices in Malaysia, where the police and immigration officers apply inconsistent victim identification procedures or are slow in identifying victims. This prevents foreign victims from receiving protection services (U.S. Department of State, 2022). In February 2022, a group of former employees (mostly migrant workers from Bangladesh and Nepal) at ATA, a Malaysian electronics firm supplying to Dyson, a home appliances manufacturer, filed a lawsuit against Dyson for the abuses they had suffered, which included forced labour, 18-hour shifts and psychological and physical mistreatment (MMC, 2022a).

One practical example of the aforementioned vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers can be found in palm oil plantations. Malaysia produces 39 per cent of the world's palm oil and 44 per cent of world exports. The country's industry hires almost half a million workers, of whom 80 per cent are migrants, mainly form Nepal, Indonesia, Bangladesh and India (IOM, 2023a). These migrants are often exposed to human rights abuses and exploitation, such as forced labour practices, debt bondage, unlawful recruitment processes, withholding of identity documents, discrimination and stigma (ibid.). Moreover, the isolated locations of the plantations can cause psychological and mental health issues for migrant workers. This situation has worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated the challenges faced by migrant workers as it was difficult to maintain adequate hygiene standards in the overcrowded accommodations where they often live. Moreover, accommodations do not always have sufficient supply of water and electricity, as the company migrants work for pays for a very limited subsidy and, if workers consume more, the excess amount is deducted from their salary. Unfortunately, migrants are often unaware of such unlawful mechanisms (ibid.).

The high recruitment costs for migrant workers going to Malaysia contributes to workers' debt and vulnerability to exploitation. For instance, cases of debt bondage, withholding of wages and deception are common vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers in the country.

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

[69] iProbono, "Human Rights in Nepal: In conversation with Barun Ghimire", July 2022.

[70] Made for Minds, "Why Nepal sends so many migrant workers to the Middle East", 11 January 2022.

Snapshot: The Experiences of Migrant Workers with Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression in South-East Asia

A study conducted by ILO looks at the reality for migrant workers with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions (SOGIE) in four ASEAN countries, namely Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam at different moments of the migration journey (ILO, 2022b). The results from 147 surveys and interviews of migrant workers with diverse SOGIE highlighted several challenges across their migration journey. Different challenges were identified in the country of origin, transit and destination. In the country of origin, for instance, the challenges were often mentioned as drivers for migration. The most common driver was economic (72%), followed by escaping SOGIE-related discrimination for more freedom (41%) (ibid.). Among respondents from the Philippines to the study, for example, 44 per cent reported seeing job advertisements that excluded their SOGIE. Moreover, of those who had found a job in the Philippines, 73 per cent reported workers making jokes about their SOGIE and 30 per cent claimed being discriminated against, harassed or bullied (ibid.).

Some migrants also experienced discrimination and harassment by authorities at border crossings in transit countries when their gender identity and/or expression was not the same as in their official documents (ibid.). In destination countries, some feared that their fellow migrants or employers would discover their relationships and that, as a result, they could experience physical violence, contract termination or deportation. One third of migrant workers surveyed in this study reported violence and harassment in the country of destination by employers, authorities and fellow migrant workers (ibid.). Importantly, 32 per cent of migrant workers in this study did not always conceal their SOGIE for concerns about their personal safety and employment possibilities. Additionally, some had to pay particular attention to what they shared when talking to others and often had to change some information they did not want others to know (ibid.).

One third of migrant workers surveyed in this study reported violence and harassment in the country of destination by employers, authorities and fellow migrant workers.

Source: A very beautiful but heavy jacket: The experiences of migrant workers with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression in South-East Asia. ILO (2022b).

3.1.1.2 Housing conditions

Although assessing migrants' working conditions is crucial to tackle migrant workers' vulnerabilities, the housing aspect is an often-overlooked dimension that deserves equal attention. Indeed, decent housing is strictly linked to migrant workers' overall well-being and their human and labour rights. The lack of appropriate housing conditions became more apparent with the COVID-19 pandemic for many migrant workers (ADBI et al., 2022) and continues to be observed.

Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand rely on low-wage migrant workers, who often cannot afford decent accommodation in these high-cost countries. Indeed, renting prices have increased in these countries' major cities, making it even harder for low-skilled migrants to live there (ILO, 2022c). Many migrants are forced to live in multi-occupancy residences provided by their employers, often sharing rooms or even beds. This deprives them of their right to decent accommodation. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue, leaving many migrants unable to afford living abroad and unable to return home due to border closures (ibid.). Housing conditions in Malaysia and Thailand during the pandemic were unsanitary and overcrowded. For instance, more than 20 men were reported to be living in one bedroom without air conditioner (Yutthaworakool, 2022). In Singapore, although authorities conducted virus tests at 43 dormitories where more than 1,000 workers were living in suboptimal sanitary conditions (ibid.), 90 per cent of infections in Singapore were traced to migrant workers' dormitories in August 2020 (IOM, 2022a).

Between August and October 2022, IOM's DTM collected data investigating multisectoral conditions, needs and challenges among migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia in Thailand.[71] The data reveal that the level of accommodations' structural integrity was

[71] The sample consist of 2,318 respondents and a Multi-Sector Assessment of Needs (MSA) was implemented using a household survey in five Thai provinces where migrants are living. There are some limitations of the study. For example, biases can be found due to self-reporting of household level indicators. Moreover, biases may be introduced when asking individual-level questions, considering the survey was conducted with one representative from each household, who answered on behalf of all the household members. Lastly, seasonal variation in living standards is possible, since the survey was conducted during the monsoon season.

defined as poor or very poor by 46 per cent of respondents (IOM, 2022c). The rest of respondents defined their accommodations' structural integrity as good (48%) and very good (6%). Alarmingly, 37 per cent of households living with disabled members reported living in accommodations that are not suitable for people with disabilities (ibid.). While 68 per cent of surveyed migrants reported paying rent for their accommodation, 24 per cent were being hosted by their employer for free. A smaller portion of migrants were hosted by their employers and had the rent deducted from their salaries (5%), or hosted by other people for free (3%) (ibid.). Importantly, among those migrants not having free accommodation, 68 per cent lacked a written contract with their landlord. Almost half of the respondents (39%) decided not to answer when asked about safety concerns for their household, while others mentioned natural disasters (24%) and robbery (22%) (ibid.). Therefore, these results highlight dire housing situations for migrant workers in Asia and the Pacific, who are often denied decent housing conditions and are unable to obtain legal rights with regards to their accommodations.

3.1.1.3 Access to health care

Another crucial aspect when assessing migrants' vulnerabilities is their health. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on migrant health status and access to care services, with migrants disproportionally affected by the pandemic and experiencing exacerbated health disparities and inequities in access to vaccinations and health-care services. In pandemic situations, migrant workers are often more vulnerable, due to inadequate access to health care and services (ASEAN and IOM, 2023). The Asia–Pacific region, where some migrant workers have experienced challenges connected to the health dimension, is no exception (ibid.). For example, information on health care access may not be translated into migrants' languages, or communicated via appropriate and trusted communication channels used by migrants. Moreover, lack of inclusion in social protection mechanisms, including ability to access free COVID testing or treatment exacerbated health and economic barriers, particularly for those migrants who lost their jobs during the pandemic (ADBI et al., 2022).

IOM published a report on the perceptions, needs and challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic for migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia in Thailand, relying on IOM's DTM COVID-19 Perception Surveys, with data collected from late 2021 to August 2022 (IOM, 2022d).[72] The three most common vulnerabilities related to COVID-19 that migrants in Thailand experienced were insufficient income/wage reduction (48%), having debts (39%) and psychological stress (33%) (ibid.). Despite a considerable improvement in the number of total vaccinations for Cambodian and Myanmar migrants from 2021 to 2022 (95% versus 67%), migrants who did not want to disclose their documentation or lacked documentation had the lowest vaccination rates (75% and 80%, respectively) and the highest unvaccinated rate (16%), compared to respondents who held documentation (ibid.). Some migrants still reported challenges in getting COVID-19 vaccines, such as lack of information on where to get the vaccine (15%), language barriers (14%), about the cost (10%) or the unavailability of vaccines (10%) (IOM, 2022e). Looking at migrants' nationality, Myanmar migrants were less likely to be vaccinated and to receive a booster dose of the vaccine compared to Cambodian ones (IOM, 2022d). Thus, these data reveal that inequalities and vulnerabilities related to the COVID-19 pandemic are still very present for migrants, who are often unable to fully enjoy all the rights they should be entitled to.

Some migrants still reported challenges in getting COVID-19 vaccines, such as lack of information on where to get the vaccine (15%), language barriers (14%), about the cost (10%) or the unavailability of vaccines (10%).

[72] Data derive from individual-level survey, which was administered to 4,429 respondents in Round 1 and from 2,725 respondents in Round 2, although most of the information presented related to Round 2 of the survey. Some limitations of the study include the fact that data represents only Cambodian and Myanmar living in some specific districts at the time of the data collection, meaning that their vulnerabilities may change over time. Moreover, biases due to self-reporting may exist.

Female migrant workers from Myanmar in Thailand face unequal wages compared to male migrants and often endure hazardous working conditions. © IOM 2006/ Thierry FALISE

3.2.1 Vulnerabilities related to forced displacement

This section mostly focuses on forcibly displaced people, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and asylum-seekers, covering the multisector needs of people from Myanmar and Afghanistan. Additionally, this section presents two snapshots: first, on the burden of debt for returnees, and second, on countries' efforts towards refugees' policies.

3.1.2.1 Multi-sector needs in Myanmar and Afghanistan

Myanmar

In Myanmar, the attacks and clashes throughout 2022 severely affected people's physical and mental well-being. In particular, displacement hit record levels in 2022, with nearly 1.2 million people fleeing their home since 1 February 2021, bringing the total number of IDPs in the country to 1.5 million as of 26 December 2022 (OCHA, 2023). The INFORM Severity Index reports an increase in people in need in Myanmar from 3.69 million in 2021 to 14.4 million in 2022. The severity index[73] in the country has been defined as very high (DRMKC, n.d.). Moreover, the analysis of OCHA's 2022 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA)[74] reveals that the country's situation has pushed adolescents and young groups to take increasingly risky and unsafe migration routes, especially when there are no education or job perspectives in the country. Additionally, Rohingya refugees' migration is made more difficult due to the restrictions to freedom of movement, which has been impacted by conflict and road closures, among other reasons (OCHA, 2022).

IDPs often experience cyclical displacement – having to move multiple times – depleting their assets with time, exposing them to more risks, and forcing them to increasingly rely on humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2023). Eighty-two per cent of IDPs in the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment claimed to be located in difficult or very difficult-to-reach areas, making it harder for them to access humanitarian aid. Additionally, IDPs also find it hard to access hospitals, as they may be unable to afford treatment, or are afraid of arrest, physical violence or extorsion during the journey to reach the hospital (ibid.). One third of the surveyed IDPs reported lack of access to water sources of sufficient quality. In addition, IDPs are at a higher risk of child marriage, gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse. Due to poor living conditions, women and girls lack private spaces as wash facilities are not gender segregated in displacement sites, which often leads to distress and insecurities for women and girls (ibid.).

A study conducted by MMC between December 2021 and May 2022 with 109 Rohingya refugees in Indonesia revealed that 69 per cent transited at least one dangerous location along the journey. Physical violence was the most reported protection risk en route, followed by injury from harsh conditions, bribery/extorsion and detention (MMC, 2022b). Respondents travelling with children reported that the main risks for children along the route were physical violence (21 out of 38 respondents) and trafficking and exploitation (17 out of 38 respondents) (ibid.).

Rohingya women can be particularly vulnerable when migrating from Myanmar or Bangladesh to Malaysia. MMC conducted a study with 483 Rohingya women between March 2021 and January 2022. Eight-three per cent of surveyed women left Myanmar or Bangladesh due to violence, insecurity and conflict, while 80 per cent mentioned the lack of rights and freedom as their main drivers (MMC, 2022c). The journey to Malaysia was dangerous, with 97 per cent of surveyed women reporting at least one dangerous location along the journey. Seventy-three per cent of those reporting dangerous locations en route referred to detention as the main protection risk, followed by physical violence (62%) and sexual violence (33%) (ibid.).

Physical health in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, is not the only health-related vulnerability. Mental health should also be taken into account when assessing migrants' vulnerabilities (MMC, 2022d). An MMC study (2022e) collected data from 1,155 Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. Of these, 327 revealed that protection risks negatively impacted respondents, particularly with regards to mental health. Ninety-four per cent of respondents reported feeling anxious and depressed, and 67 per cent were afraid to freely move outside their houses (ibid.). A particularly tragic example is the August 2022 incident in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where a father threw his three children off a highway, and then jumped off himself.[75]

Trauma experienced by some refugees in their country of origin or along the journey can result in emotional distress, highlighting the importance of providing mental health services to refugees (MMC, 2022d). While UNHCR and civil society actors do provide mental health support services to refugees and asylum-seekers, an enabling environment that considers the specific circumstances faced by refugees is needed in Malaysia, including addressing transportation costs and ensuring access to childcare, to decrease the mental stress levels for refugees (ibid.).

> *In Myanmar, displacement hit record levels in 2022, with nearly 1.2 million people fleeing their home since 1 February 2021, bringing the total number of IDPs in the country to 1.5 million as of 26 December 2022.*

[73] The INFORM Severity Index provides information on global distribution of countries with crisis, providing the number of people in need, displaced people, affected and killed people.

[74] The Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) provides data on several sectorial needs – such as health, education, nutrition, livelihoods, child protection – and enables inter-sectorial analysis, ultimately revealing underlying drivers of vulnerability. The MSNA conducted for the first time in Myanmar in 2022, using both in person and remote data collection, and allowing for a multi-sectoral understanding of needs across population groups (OCHA, 2023).

[75] The Star, "Man who threw kids off MRR2 had threatened to take his life, say cops", 3 August 2022.

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Afghanistan

Since the de facto Government takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021, there have been continued instances of forced displacement, with women from ethnic minorities especially targeted. While displacement induced by conflict has remarkably declined from 723,000 in 2021 to 7,400 as of the first half of 2022, displacement due to natural disasters has taken a greater toll. Indeed, 124,000 displacements were registered in the country between January and June 2022 (MMC, 2022a). As mentioned in Section 2.2, the number of Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers grew by around 136,000 in one year (from 2.9 million to 3.1 million). Among individuals who were displaced in Afghanistan between January 2021 and April 2022, 61 per cent were displaced due to conflict, while 39 per cent due to natural disaster (IOM, 2022f). The INFORM Severity Index reports that the number of people in need increased from 18.4 million in 2021 to 24.4 million in 2022. Moreover, the severity index of the Afghan situation was given the score 1 (very high) (DRMKC, n.d.). With an extreme earthquake hitting the country in 2022, thousands lost their homes, with 25 million already living in poverty and half the population with not enough food (IOM, 2022f). Having limited resources, many IDPs are forced to choose between first necessity, such as food and medicine, or building material to repair their homes (Giffin, 2022).

In January 2022, Save the Children (2022) published a MSNA providing up-to-date data on the humanitarian situation in the country, tackling several sectoral needs, such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food security, mental health and psychological support.[76] The report highlights needs in terms of food security – particularly for IDPs, refugees and returnees – cash and other non-food items (ibid.). According to these data, IDPs had the highest need for food assistance (95.2%), followed by returnees (93.1%) and the poor (94.3%) (ibid.). Moreover, while girls have been reported to be more disadvantaged than boys with regards to educational opportunities, girls in IDP households were worse-off, with 62.7 per cent of them not attending school (ibid.). Additionally, over half of the individuals in need of a shelter were undocumented returnees (61%), followed by IDPs (39.2%) and documented returnees (38%) (ibid.).

An IOM (2022f) study conducted by IOM's DTM on communities in Afghanistan after the de facto government's takeover highlighted that 69 per cent of households could not afford basic food needs in rural, urban and peri-urban areas as of August 2022. To afford food, several households adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as buying less preferred and less expensive food (42%), borrowing money (11%), relying on humanitarian assistance for food (10%), limiting portion sizes (7%), restricting consumption among adults for children to eat (6%), skipping meals (5%), and selling land to buy food (4%) (ibid.). Only 1 per cent engage in extreme actions, such as child marriage, selling children or body organs (ibid.). Behind the inability to buy food there is often the lack of income. Indeed, 55 per cent of households in the assessed communities had no source of income (ibid.).

Poverty, debt and disrupted lives because of the conflict have led more people to migrate both internally and internationally (Giffin, 2022). Among the main displacement drivers were unemployment and poverty, cited by 63 per cent of IDPs. Even returnees often aim at remigrating: a study from March 2022 explains that 33 per cent of surveyed refugees intended to leave the country again in the following six months. This number doubled by October 2022 (ibid.).

> *Poverty, debt and disrupted lives because of the conflict have led more people to migrate both internally and internationally. Even returnees aim at re-migrating.*

Women and girls have been disproportionally affected by the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan because of gender- specific restrictions that limit their rights. Traditional and patriarchal norms, together with the lack of services in rural areas, have created layers of vulnerabilities for women and girls, as their capability to recover from shocks decreases. Since the de facto Government takeover, Afghan women have experienced a rollback of rights, such as the denial of education, restriction to movement or to the participation in the economy (Farid and de Silva de Alwis, 2023). Moreover, they have been banned from several aspects of social and political life, as they are no longer allowed to attend secondary schooling and university, and have been banned from working in NGOs and international organizations (United Nations, 2022). Women and girls in rural areas face more barriers compared to their urban counterparts, because of the lack of infrastructure and access to markets and schools (GiHA Working Group et al., 2022).

When tackling migration, gender heavily influences the migration experience for Afghans. While violence, gender-based violence and ongoing economic and political instability in the country are key drivers of migration and displacement for Afghan women and girls, migration may be feasible only for some Afghan women (IOM, 2022g). Indeed, the current situation in the country also obliges many women to immobility. Some report being afraid of crossing international borders alone, and they often have inadequate information on diaspora contributions to their family members in the country. Importantly, if migrants decide to return, vulnerabilities do not end upon return (ibid.). Migrants carry similar, different or new vulnerabilities, as it is shown in the snapshot below on the burden of debt after return (ibid.).

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

[76] The report used quantitative data combined with qualitative analysis from open-ended answers.

Snapshot: The Burden of Debt after Return

An important factor that can affect all stages of the migration cycle is debt, as it may prompt people to migrate, to return, or return to then migrate again. Importantly, debts can determine vulnerabilities and increase protection risks. Having debts has been reported to cause anxiety and depression for migrants, it may lead them into exploitative work and make it harder to escape abusive conditions. Moreover, debts can also be a significant barrier to the returnees' reintegration process in the country of origin (Samuel Hall et al., 2022). Debts, indeed, can cause greater economic challenges for indebted returnees compared to non-indebted ones, like lack of savings, difficulties finding a job, experiencing dissatisfaction with their economic lives during their reintegration process (ibid.). Interestingly, the sources of debt and the terms and conditions of the loan play an important role in the way debts influence reintegration. This is because, for example, formal sources (such as banks) may be inflexible in terms of repayment compared to informal ones, and high interest rates can lead to an endless cycle of indebtedness (ibid.). In an IOM study, over 500 returnees who faced debt and had experienced the reintegration process were surveyed. The study revealed that 72 per cent of the participants had borrowed money from a person, a community, or an institution, and 92 per cent still needed to repay all or some of that debt (ibid.). Returnees often report stress, stigma and shame because of indebtedness. Returnees with large debts, as often seen in Iraq, have no realistic prospect of paying off their debts without remigrating. Interestingly, the debt experiences are gendered. For instance, the fathers and husbands' migration can push female-headed households into debt, as they borrow money to feed their children and have a secure housing (Samuel Hall and EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, 2023).

An IOM study on migrants' experiences with debts in South-East Asia found that, due to the religious associations with indebtedness in the area, indebted returnees experience shame, gossip, threats, violence and/or discrimination from their communities (IOM, 2019). Return is a challenging migration step because, particularly in the case of forced displacement, migrants lose contact with the local labour market. As a result, returning to an already battled country with low socioeconomic prospects often means having to start from anew with little resources in their home countries. This adds an extra layer of vulnerabilities to refugees or asylum-seekers (IOM, 2023b). For example, reintegration is made difficult for Afghan returnees because the difficulty of repaying debt is coupled with the lack of economic possibilities in the country (ibid.). When return is not voluntary, and indebted asylum-seekers are returned to their home countries, remigration is a common decision among these more vulnerable groups (ibid.).

Due to the religious associations with indebtedness in the area, indebted returnees experience shame, gossip, threats, violence and/or discrimination from their communities.

Snapshot: International Efforts to Measure Refugees' Rights

While refugees' vulnerabilities are important to outline, it is also crucial to address governments' practices with regards to refugees' rights. Indicators on governmental legislation and migrants' rights further explain the complexity of addressing migrants' needs as certain safeguards are not guaranteed and even undermine efforts for long-term self-sufficiency. While this section does not focus on governments' policies on refugees, it does explain how governments are scored in acting to decrease refugees' vulnerabilities and protect their rights by reporting some examples of the Global Refugee Work Rights scores (with the de facto and de jure rights), the Refugee Opportunity Index (ROI) and the Refugee Response Index (RRI).

Although refugees' contribution to several sectors has been recently recognized, most refugees still face legal and practical barriers in the labour markets, including in their host countries (Centre for Global Development et al., 2022). Migrants' vulnerabilities and governments' actions are closely intertwined, and it is crucial to establish the link between the two. Governments' (in)actions have the potential to increase refugees' vulnerabilities, as they may lead to their inability to access work or business permits, lead to fines or arrests when living outside a camp, or lower enforcement of labour protection (ibid.). While some countries do offer refugees' work rights, they only do so in the law dimension (de jure rights), failing

to practically implement such laws (de facto rights). According to the 2022 Global Refugee Work Rights report from the Centre for Global Development (2022), while 62 per cent of refugees live in countries that have a legal framework protecting their work rights, 55 per cent (or 16 million) of refugees live in a country where their work rights are not protected in practice. Importantly, 19 per cent (or 5.5 million) of refugees live in countries that severely restrict their right to work in practice (ibid.). On the contrary, some countries do have de facto rights, but not de jure rights for refugees. Only three out of 19 countries included in this study have adequate access in practice, but not in law (ibid.). More specifically, countries are given scores from one to five[77] to assess to what extent they respect a refugee's right to work, both legally and in practice. The Asia–Pacific region scores low on both de jure and the facto scores. Indeed, four out of seven countries in East, South and South-East Asia were graded with the lowest score and two with the second-lowest score for the de jure scores (ibid.). More specifically, Malaysia scores two for both the de jure and de facto scores, while Thailand and Indonesia are given one for the de jure and two for the de facto scores. No data are available for India. These countries are important to mention considering they are among the top countries of first refuge for displaced persons from Asia and the Pacific in 2022 (see Section 2.2.2.3). In Malaysia, there were 4,335 total resettlements for displaced persons in 2022, followed by Thailand (2,297), India (1,843), Indonesia (887) and Australia (66).

> *19 per cent (or 5.5 million) of refugees live in countries that severely restrict their right to work in practice.*

In 2019, the Refugee Investment Network and the Economist Intelligence Unit jointly created the ROI to increase countries' accountability. The ROI's goals are to point out national policy shortcomings, encourage policy reforms that benefit refugees, compare refugee policies across countries and measure progress toward economic integration and inclusive growth for refugees (Economist Inteligence Unit, 2019). The ROI has been available since 2022.[78]

The RRI is another frequently used index that launched in 2022. Its main goal is to improve refugees' well-being by deepening our understanding of countries' refugee response and decreasing their vulnerabilities. The RRI categorizes country performance against a list of six pillars that cover the main aspects of the multidimensional refugee response (DARA, 2021). Shortly after its launch, the RRI was implemented by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), to begin a review of Australia's response to refugees. The RRI in the country pointed to the fact that there are improvements in Australian policies and practices (Refugee Council of Australia, 2023). Among these, the social, economic and cultural inclusion for incoming refugees, but also refugees' self-reliance, and the uphold of refugees' own civil and political rights in a multicultural country such as Australia. Nevertheless, the country has fallen short of some fundamental principles for refugees, such as their right to access asylum, or upholding legal recognition procedure (ibid.).

Therefore, these three indexes, namely the scores on the de jure and de facto rights, the ROI and the RRI, not only help to assess countries' behaviour towards refugees, but it also allows countries and governments to do a self-evaluation with regards to their refugees' policies and legislations. In other words, these scores are important because they can make countries accountable and encourage them to address migrants' vulnerabilities and ensure their protection.

77 Score "one" means refugees are prohibited from working and cannot access lawful employment. Conversely, score "five" means having fully functioning national policies on refugees' rights to work and allowing refugees to access their right to work in practice.

75 Market Links, "Investing with a "Refugee Lens": Private Capital Creates New Opportunities for Refugees", June 2022.

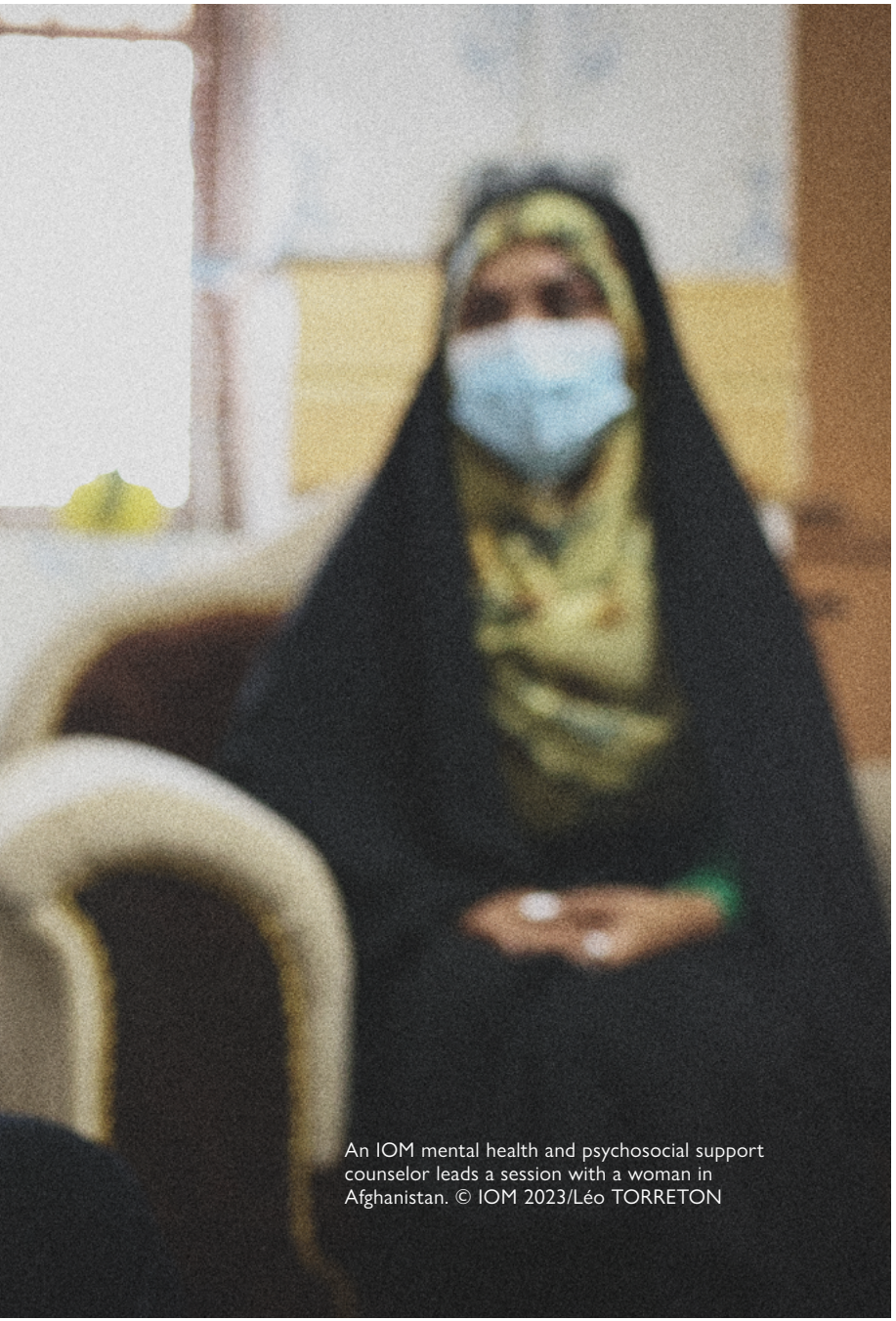
3.1.3 Discussion

Although the COVID-19 pandemic no longer plays the determinant and prominent role it did in the last two years, its consequences are still tangible in several aspects of migrants' lives. Ongoing conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar exacerbate the already dire socioeconomic conditions in the countries, making realities harder for people on the move.

To protect the human rights of vulnerable migrants, some key recommendations include the law enforcement authorities' effort and capacity to detect and profile asylum-seekers and those in need of international protection. Social protection systems are needed to foster a resilient environment for IDPs, returnees and host communities alike. Moreover, qualitative data sources can be incorporated into data collection systems to better understand vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, more efforts need to be made to disaggregate data by gender to identify differential barriers and risks faced by migrant women and men. Migrants' vulnerabilities are intertwined with several other aspects of migration, such as labour migration or migrants' health. Labour is among the most common dimensions where migrants find themselves in vulnerable positions, with low protection and a high exposure to different types of risks. It is crucial to protect migrant workers by eliminating recruitment fees and ending exploitative and hazardous working conditions.

Therefore, it is important to work towards Dimension 1 of the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) tackles migrants' rights to having equal access to basic services, employment and social protection, which migrant workers often lack. Some countries did make an effort in improving migrants' situation. Nevertheless, a more universal application of these principles is needed, encouraging governments to align with the SDGs and Global Compact for Migration. Two important goals in the vulnerabilities dimension are SDG Target 1.3 – which calls States for appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, and for achieving coverage of the poor and vulnerable (including migrants) by 2030 – and SDG Target 8, which focuses on decent work and protection of vulnerable workers. In particular, SDG Indicator 8.8 refers to the protection of labour rights including a safe and secure working environment for all workers, including migrant workers. Lastly, the Objectives 6 and 17 of the Global Compact for Migration are important, as they aim at achieving decent working conditions for migrants and eliminating all discrimination forms against migrants.

> *More efforts also need to be made to disaggregate data by gender in order to identify differential barriers and risks faced by migrant women and men.*



An IOM mental health and psychosocial support counselor leads a session with a woman in Afghanistan. © IOM 2023/Léo TORRETON

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LGBTIQ+ migrant workers in Pattaya, Thailand, share how IOM-supported skills training gave them the confidence to advance their careers. © IOM 2021/Javier VIDAL

3.2 Trafficking in Persons

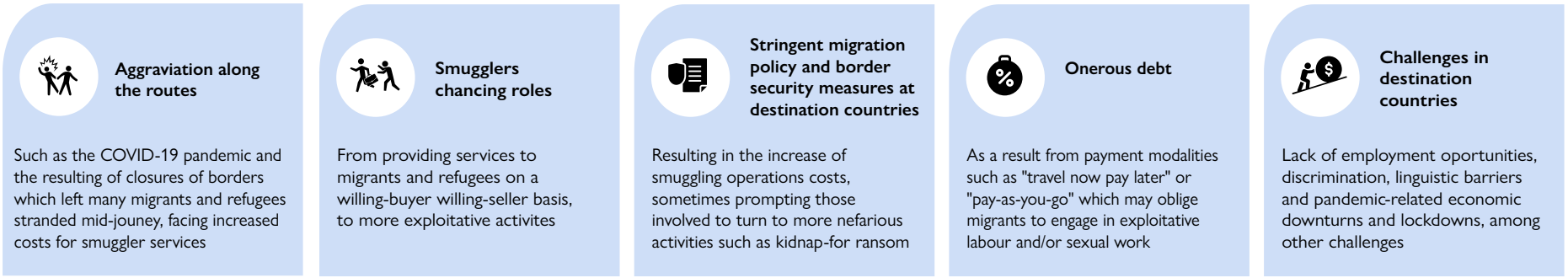
Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that entails a complex process of movements over both temporal and spatial dimensions. It involves transit on land through multiple countries and a combination of regular and irregular channels before arriving at the intended destination. However, migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations, face various challenges such as poverty, lack of legal status, language barriers, limited social networks and restricted access to information and resources, which heighten their risk of being exploited by traffickers. Trafficking in persons can occur through both regular and irregular migration channels when crossing borders. Nonetheless, the precarious circumstances and absence of legal protection that often accompany irregular migration significantly increase the risk of undocumented migrants becoming victims of trafficking. This outcome typically emerges when smuggling networks, in addition to facilitating migration, leverage the vulnerabilities of migrants to extract profit through abuse and extortion (IOM, 2019). The movement of the Rohingya population fleeing Myanmar provides recent examples in Asia and the Pacific, where over 1,920 Rohingya attempted to cross the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea between January and November 2022. Recent research conducted among refugees in Malaysia reports that most of these refugees (94%) relied on smugglers due to limited options for safer and regular migration routes (ADSP et al., 2022). Consequently, there is compelling evidence of the exploitation, extortion and abandonment of Rohingya refugees during their migration journey (ibid.).

Migrants who opt for relatively low-cost smuggling arrangements are often at risk of trafficking. Such arrangements allow those on the move either to pay as they go at different segments on their journey or to pay the total amount after arriving at the final destination, commonly known as "travel now, pay later". While these smuggling models obviate large up-front payments, they are not without risk (Hoang, 2022). These models are among the factors that contribute to migration journeys falling into situations of trafficking. Figure 34 outlines other factors that increase the risk of trafficking in the migration process.

However, the line between human trafficking and migrant smuggling can be blurred. While sometimes linked, human trafficking and migrant smuggling are two separate phenomena (MMC, 2021). On the one hand, trafficking in persons is defined as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" (United Nations General Assembly, 2000a, p.2). On the other hand, smuggling of migrants is defined as "the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident" (United Nations General Assembly, 2000b, p.2). This includes irregularly crossing international borders and internal checkpoints, as well as providing documents, transportation and accommodation (MMC, 2021).

According to The Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol, there are three main differences

Figure 34. Factors that contribute to migration-led trafficking



Source: Questions of intent: Where mixed migration and human trafficking overlap. Hoang (2022).

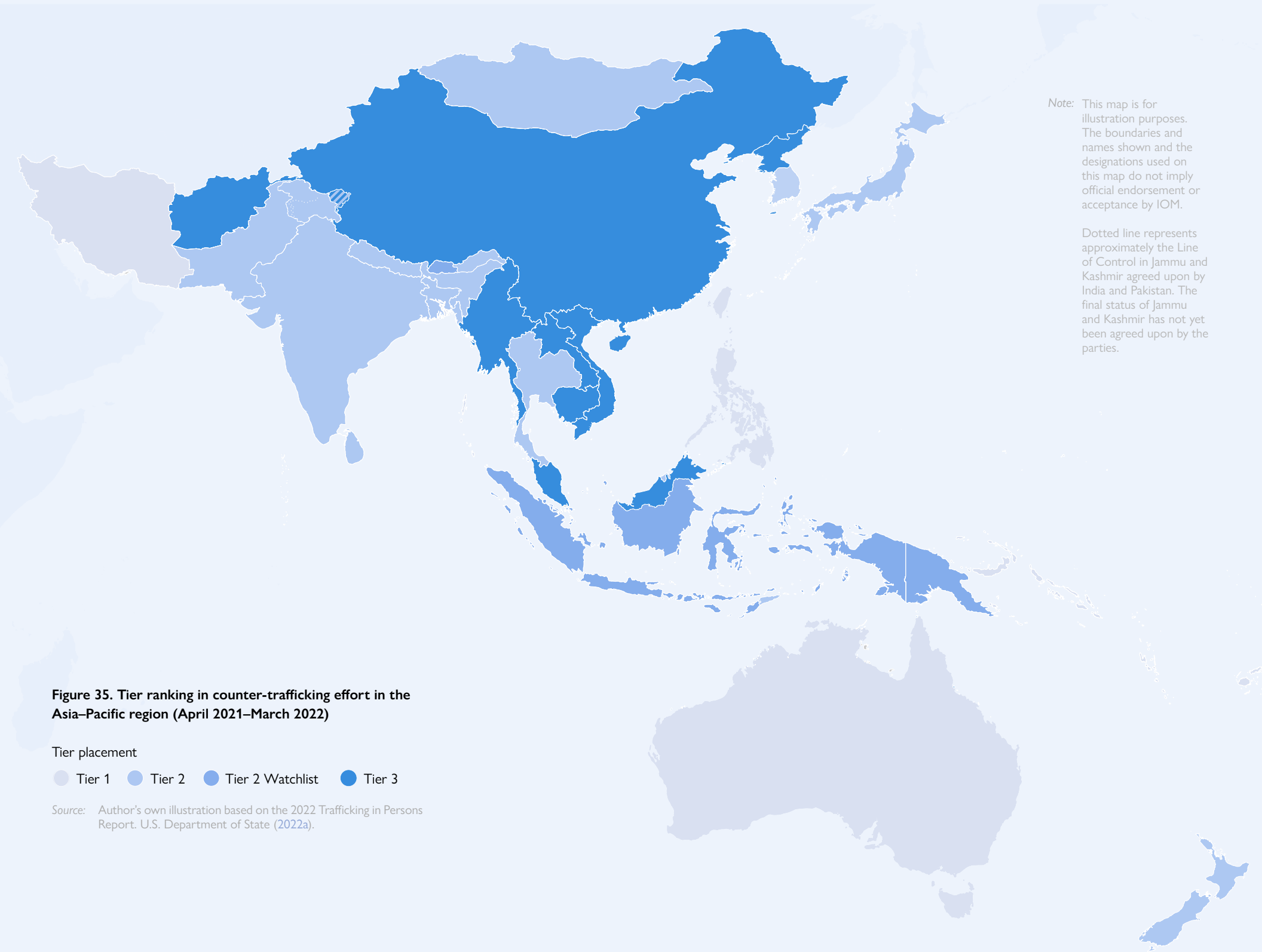


Figure 35. Tier ranking in counter-trafficking effort in the Asia–Pacific region (April 2021–March 2022)

Source: Author's own illustration based on the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report. U.S. Department of State (2022a).

between migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Smuggling involves consent, often ends at the point of destination and is transnational. However, in human trafficking, contrarily to smuggling, consent is generally absent, as deception and coercion are its defining elements. Human trafficking involves the exploitation of the victim and can occur within the country of the victim's origin (Goździak and Vogel, 2020). Additionally, it is worth noting that under international law, human trafficking is considered a crime against an individual, while the smuggling of migrants is "generally a crime" against the State, as a breach of immigration laws (IOM and ASEAN, 2015, p.3).

Notwithstanding the differences mentioned above, smuggling and trafficking are sometimes difficult to differentiate, particularly in cases of aggravated smuggling, which severely endangers or degrades the migrant (MMC, 2021). Along risky and lengthy journeys, smuggling might morph into trafficking when refugees and migrants find themselves deceived into exploitative practices (ibid., p.6).

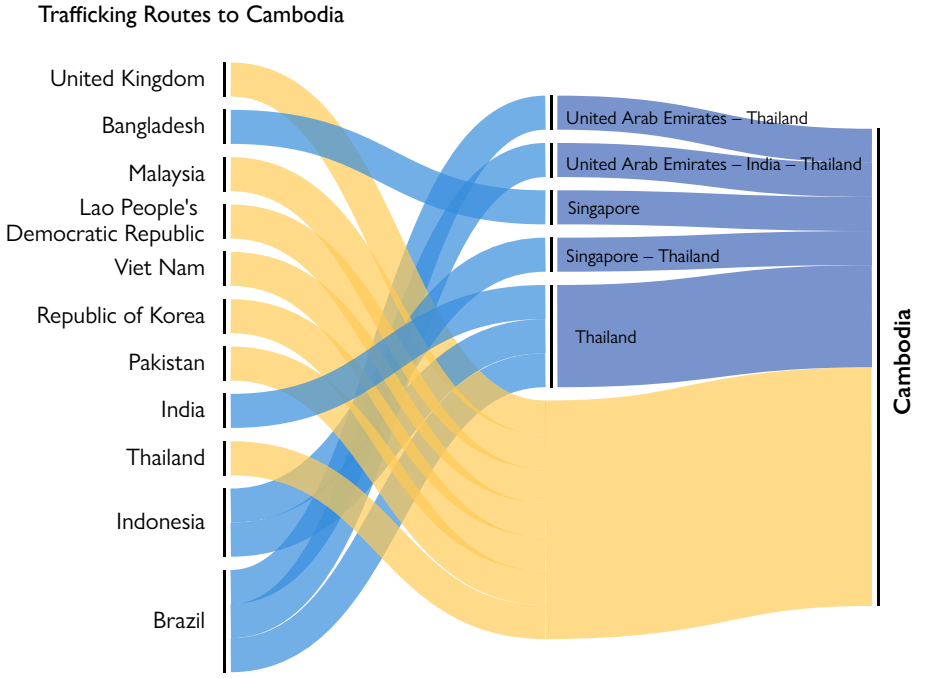
In line with the Palermo Protocol, the US State Department's three-tier system, under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPA) of 2000 and 2003, functions as a global measurement tool to assess the extent of government action on the elimination of human trafficking. Based on the latest 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report that covers government efforts undertaken from 1 April 2021 through 31 March 2022, as seen in Figure 35, only four countries and areas from Asia and the Pacific – Australia, the Philippines, Singapore and Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China – were categorized as Tier 1, meaning that governments are in full compliance with TVPA's minimum standards that relate to the prevention of, protection against and prosecution for trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2022a). Twenty-four countries, territories and areas in the Asia–Pacific region ranked under Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch, indicating that governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to comply with those standards. Finally, eight countries and areas from the region ranked under Tier 3, meaning that governments do not fully meet minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

Drawing upon IOM operations conducted in 2022, the following subsection delves into the emergence of a new trend of trafficking associated with online scamming in South-East Asia. Additionally, Peppi Kividiemi Siddiq, Senior Regional Migrant Protection Specialist at the IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, provides an expert analysis that sheds light on the deficiencies and constraints in collecting data on trafficking in persons. Lastly, the chapter delves into the valuable insights gained from the 20th anniversary of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, outlining recommendations and observations aimed at reinforcing its objectives and fostering collaboration among its members.

3.2.1 Trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality in South-East Asia

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the tourism industry in the subregion as travel restrictions led to a sharp decrease in the number is visitors. Consequently, various registered gambling businesses operating in special economic zones were compelled to close. In contrast, others sought new income streams, including illegal online gambling as well as scam investment operations (Kennedy and Southern, 2022). It is estimated that thousands of victims, mainly from the Mekong region, are reportedly held against their will and forced to work in sophisticated cyber scams (IOM, 2023a). While this scam industry seems to have first emerged in Cambodia, the same model appears to have been replicated in other countries in the subregion. Identical patterns have been reported by victims in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar (Kennedy and Southern, 2022). Although trafficking in persons is a prevalent problem in the region, this emerging trend presents some unique features strongly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the availability of new technologies for exploitation and structural weaknesses in law enforcement capacity to address trafficking in the chosen locations (IOM, 2023a).

Figure 36. Online scamming trafficking routes to Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar in 2022

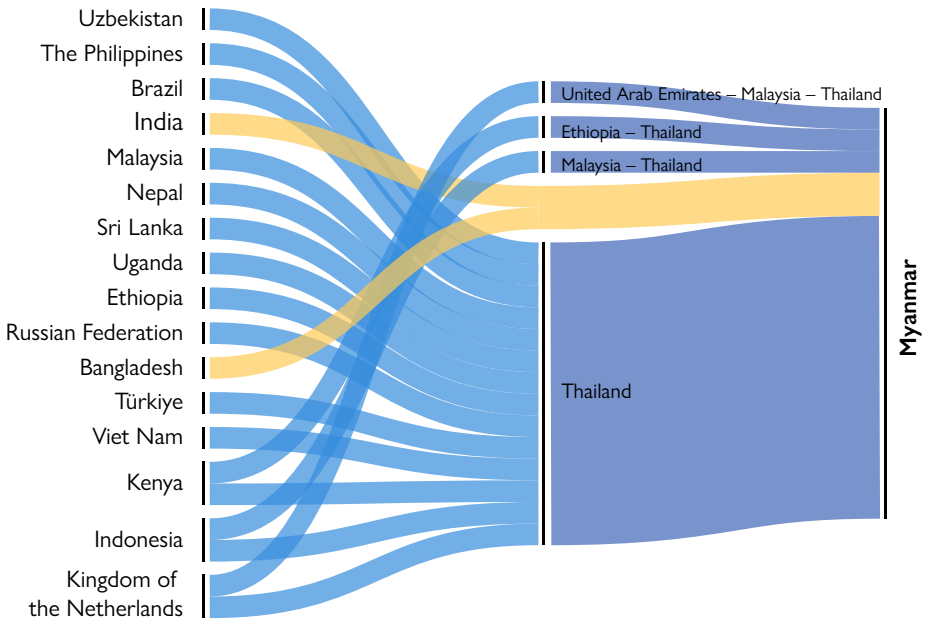


Source: IOM Situation Analysis on Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Forced Criminality in South-East Asia. IOM (2023a).

Based on data collected through IOM operations in 2022, online scamming centres operating in the subregion transport workforce from all over the world – including Europe, West Africa and South America – clearly show these routes not being the usual trafficking corridors running parallel to established migration pathways in the region, but an organized transnational crime. It is also important to highlight that based on recent findings, Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao People's Democratic Republic have transitioned from being countries of origin of victims of trafficking (VoTs) to becoming countries of destination, with Thailand as the leading transit country (ibid.).

Given the clandestine nature of these operations, the number of victims involved in this type of trafficking is difficult to determine. However, data from IOM's caseload of assisted VoTs provides a valuable window into the trafficking trends around online scamming operations in the South-East Asian subregion. As seen in Figure 37, from the total of IOM's caseload of assisted VoTs in 2022, 36 per cent – around 300 victims – is related to exploitation in online scamming in centres based in South-East Asia. The top five countries of origin are Viet Nam, Indonesia, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic and India (in descending order), and the top five countries of destination correspond to Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Malaysia (in descending order). Among the identified victims affected by these trafficking trends into forced criminality in online scamming centres, 68 per cent are men, and the majority (97%) are older than 18 years. Additionally, looking into the profiles of IOM-assisted VoTs, most victims tend to be multilingual and technology-savvy individuals with secondary and higher education. As a result of the economic recession in the wake of the COVID-19 restrictions, a cohort of middle-class workers that would have traditionally been able to find employment within their own countries were forced to work in these criminal operations (ibid.).

Trafficking Routes to Myanmar



Trafficking Routes to Lao People's Democratic Republic

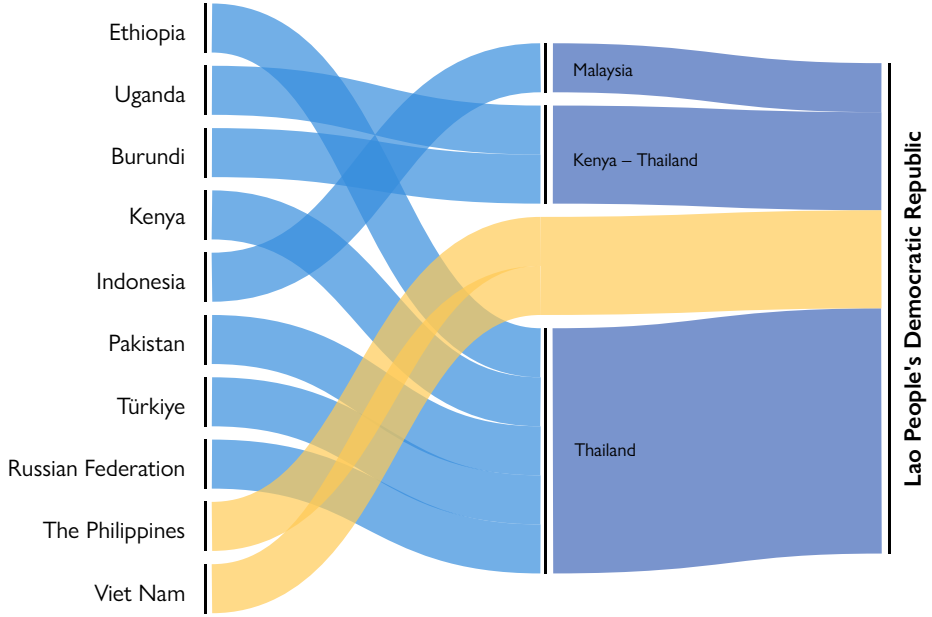
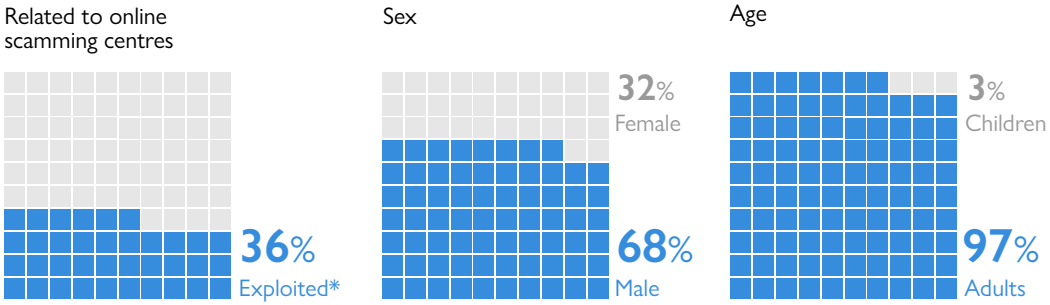


Figure 37. IOM-assisted victims of trafficking related to trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced criminality in online scamming centres in 2022



*36% of IOM's total VOT's caseload: 815 assisted victims. This figure corresponds to the total number of VoTs assisted in IOM country offices receiving direct referrals and as such, resulting as primarily affected bythese trafficking trends for forced criminality in online scamming centre.

Source: IOM Situation Analysis on Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Forced Criminality in South-East Asia. IOM (2023a).

The modus operandi of these scamming operations encompasses a combination of offences covering the full range of conduct covered by the Palermo Protocol definition of trafficking in persons (ibid.). Article 3(a) of the Palermo Protocol defines trafficking in persons as the combination of three basic elements: (1) an act (recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons), (2) a means by which the act is achieved (threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or benefits to achieve consent of a person having control over another person), and (3) a purpose (exploitation) (United Nations General Assembly, 2000a). In other words, while each of the individual elements may, alone, constitute a separate criminal offence, the trafficking-in-person crime must involve all three elements in order to constitute a trafficking offence.[79] Table 2 summarizes the identified activities involved in the act, means and purpose of exploitation in online scamming operations.

Despite the evidence given by victims of trafficking, research done by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime found that efforts to shut down online scam centres are hindered by the collusion of local authorities or by the unwillingness to enter special economic zones, or because guarded gambling complexes are perceived to be outside the jurisdiction of the host country's security area (Kennedy and Southern, 2022). Thus, clarification is required on the legal right of sovereign nations in the subregion to access, police and enforce national laws in all parts of their territory. It is crucial to reinforce existing policing guidelines to issue and enforce search warrants on sites suspected of large-scale criminal activity holding workers against their will. Finally, work in educating young people at risk of trafficking must be strengthened, especially on the social media platforms through which they are recruited. While Thailand has made efforts in this regard, this is a regional problem that takes advantage of vulnerable people (ibid.).

Note: The maps on this page are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

[79] Article 3(c) creates an exemption for instances of trafficking which involve a child victim, stating that the "means" element need not be proven under that circumstance.

It is crucial to reinforce existing policing guidelines to issue and enforce search warrants on sites suspected of large-scale criminal activity holding workers against their will. Finally, work in educating young people at risk of trafficking must be strengthened, especially on the social media platforms through which they are recruited.

Table 2. Modus operandi of online scamming operations in South-East Asia based on the Palermo Protocol definition of trafficking in persons

1 Act	2 Means	3 Exploitation purpose
Recruitment • Combination of online job offers and in-person recruitment: Online job advertisements posted on social media combined with recruitment by agents in the countries of origin. • Recruitment is mostly free.	**Fraud and deception** • Promises of good working conditions: high salary, regular bonuses, attractive or free accommodation and food, regular day off. • Fraudulent job offers in hostels, customer service, data entry, supermarkets, marketing, accounting, translation, especially based in Bangkok. • Advance payment of salary as an incentive.	**Forced labour** • Excessive working hours for little or no pay, with minimum break. • Salary deduction: if the assigned work quotas are not met or as a punishment for violating the company's regulations.
Transportation • Arranged and often paid by traffickers. • Support for the issuance of victims' travel documents, including tourist visa applications. • Journeys in small groups before being slowly split up throughout the different legs of the journey.	**Abduction** • Sometimes after surreptitious drug administration. • Can be carried out by armed individuals.	**The use in criminal activities** • Cybercrime of online scamming. • Scam centres involved in online gambling, cryptocurrency, online money lending, and romance applications.
Harbouring • Guarded compounds that operate as online scamming centers.	**Coercion** • Threats of being sent to the local militia, being sold to another company, physical punishments, or even organ removal. • Identity and/or travel document confiscation. • Abuse, violence and torture: beatings, food deprivation, heavy physical exercises, electrocutions, etc. • Captivity and confinement. • Restriction of communication: no phones allowed.	**Slavery and slavery-like practices** • Successive sales of victims between companies. • Debt bondage: victims are asked to pay money for their release and as the fee for their recruitment, food, and accommodation during their stay in the company. VoTs can sometimes have their families exorted for ransom.
Transfer and receipt • Several changes of hands in the process: recruiters hand victims over to smuggling agents to cross borders, traffickers receive victims at the border. Traffickers are then rewarded by the employers.		**Sexual exploitation**
		Organ removal

Source: Compiled from IOM Situation Analysis on Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Forced Criminality in South-East Asia. IOM (2023a).

Expert Contribution: Why Do We Still Lack Strong Trafficking Data?

Authored by: **Peppi Kividiemi Siddiq**

Senior Regional Migrant Protection Specialist, IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The world of countering human trafficking has a data problem that continues to hamper evidence-led efforts to eradicate the crime and support victims. This problem is particularly pronounced in the Asia–Pacific region, with significant gaps in data collection from traditional sources.

The global evidence base that tells us how we are collectively doing to eradicating human trafficking mainly comes from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)s, which require all actors to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour in all its forms by 2030. Progress towards those goals is measured through a set of indicators that require data collection from States. The main indicator as agreed under the SDGs and arguably the only globally agreed indicator to measure this progress on countering trafficking asks States to report on the "number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation,"[80] but some formidable challenges are preventing the information from being collected due to the special nature of the crime.

As seen again during the latest largescale trafficking trend in the Asia–Pacific region, where individuals seeking employment opportunities abroad ended up in situations of forced criminality inside online scamming centres, many of the familiar problems around data collection prevail (IOM, 2023a). Some of the key issues are:[81]

1. **Underreporting**: Victims are afraid to come forward and report their situation due to fear of retribution or lack of trust in authorities. This was particularly evident during the online scams response, where many of the victims have been deported as irregular migrants rather than assisted as potential victims of trafficking.
2. **Lack of awareness**: Many people, including front-line responders like police and immigration officials, are unaware of what human trafficking entails and do not recognize it when they see it. As a result, cases go unreported or misidentified. This unawareness was again seen during the online scams, where immigration police was mostly arresting irregular migrants and unable to screen for underlying vulnerabilities.
3. **Inconsistent definitions**: The definition of human trafficking varies from country to country, making it difficult to collect accurate data on a global or regional scale. This continues to be a particular problem in Asia–Pacific where labour trafficking is rarely given equal standing with sexual exploitation.
4. **Lack of resources**: Governments and organizations may not focus their resources to conduct thorough investigations or collect data on human trafficking.
5. **Criminal networks**: Traffickers often operate in criminal networks, making it difficult to track their activities and identify victims.
6. **Data collection methods**: Collecting data on human trafficking can be challenging due to the need for confidentiality and anonymity, making it difficult to obtain accurate information. Additionally, some victims may not speak the language of the country where they are being trafficked, making it difficult to communicate and gather information.

Migrants are regularly overlooked in national statistics and face higher barriers to accessing available services from social safety nets to police protection. Restrictive migration policies can facilitate irregular pathways to available jobs, which further limits the visibility of the migrants in the country.

Trafficking and migration corridors are also closely linked, with the drivers of migration including lack of livelihood options at home, creating vulnerability to exploitation. This connection is an additional challenge to data collection on potential victims. Migrants are regularly overlooked in national statistics and face higher barriers to accessing available services from social safety nets to police protection. Restrictive migration policies can facilitate irregular pathways to available jobs, which further limits the visibility of the migrants in the country.

Many Asia–Pacific governments do collect human trafficking data, but quality and availability vary across the region. In 2022, Thailand, a regional destination for migrants, had nearly three million regular labour migrants, mostly in lower-wage occupations and coming from neighbouring countries (Royal Thai Government, 2022a). However, the actual number of migrant workers in Thailand is likely much higher due to irregular migration channels. The Government reported to only have identified 66 foreign victims of trafficking out of a total of 543, in 2022 (Royal Thai Goverment, 2022b). This number would be slightly higher if it was also to include figures from key civil society actors, like IOM does. The organization records to have assisted 114 foreign victims of trafficking in Thailand in 2022 (IOM, 2023b). Viet Nam, which had its nationals caught up in the online scamming centres, in particular in Cambodia,

reported having identified 255 victims of trafficking. At the same time, media reports put the number of returning Vietnamese migrants from Cambodia in the thousands. Meanwhile, New Zealand did not formally identify any victims of trafficking in 2022, as the Government continues to classify and prosecute potential trafficking cases under other offences (U.S. Department of State, 2022b).

Every few years, UNODC, ILO, IOM and the Walk Free Foundation publish research to try to shine a light on the scale of the problem. These research pieces include the global indicators on Modern Slavery and the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (UNODC). The latest Global Estimates on Modern Slavery, which go beyond government data and also use NGO data, indicate that in 2021, 50 million people were living in situations of modern slavery, a 23 per cent increase from the previous estimate in 2016, with 28 million of them in forced labour and 22 million in forced marriage (ILO et al., 2022). Meanwhile, UNODC's most recent Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2023), which surveys governments for their latest figures, reported an 11 per cent decline in victims identified globally, from around 50,000 detected victims reported in 2019 to around 47,000 in 2020, driven by fewer detections from low- and medium-income countries. The discrepancy in the data is clear, in addition to practitioners agreeing that these reports face all the traditional data issues and provide us with minimum estimates, rather than an accurate representation of the situation.

Having clear evidence for new trafficking trends based on anecdotal information or localized research is more achievable, but it does not allow practitioners to discuss the prevalence or magnitude of the problem. How do we establish that there are more victims of sexual exploitation than there are of forced labour? What about the size of the trafficking flows in one established corridor versus another? We do not really know.

What can then be done to support better data collection and improved evidence base to respond to trafficking? Dedicated programmes to support the collection, harmonization and safe sharing of administrative data from governments and key front-line service providers including civil society organizations, are much welcomed and need to happen at a larger scale.

This administrative data collection needs to be further inclusive of other sources beyond the numbers of victims, such as prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators of forced labour. The United States Department's Trafficking in Persons Report looks at a wider set of criteria beyond victims identified, including the number of prosecutions and convictions, new or amended legislation, and victim protection efforts. These indicators could be added to the SDG Targets too, to allow us to measure more than prevalence per 100,000 of the population. Data is also collected from a broader set of stakeholders and beyond government agencies, including NGOs and international organizations.

However, to have baseline prevalence to measure the effectiveness of ongoing interventions, the current approach needs to be further supplemented by dedicated research, surveys and big data analysis that allow practitioners to combine financial flows linked to criminal activity to social media use on recruitment and selling of exploitative services, migration patterns and trafficking hotspots. With the combination of all these approaches, we would be closer to a space where labour exploitation and human trafficking can be discussed on par with other development challenges that can be measured, including poverty and health.

Figure 38. Data sources that may be included in national counter-trafficking numbers

Source: Author's own illustration.

[80] See SDG Indicator 16.2.2.

[81] For more information, refer to Measuring SDG Indicator 16.2.2 Trafficking in Persons (UNODC, 2020).

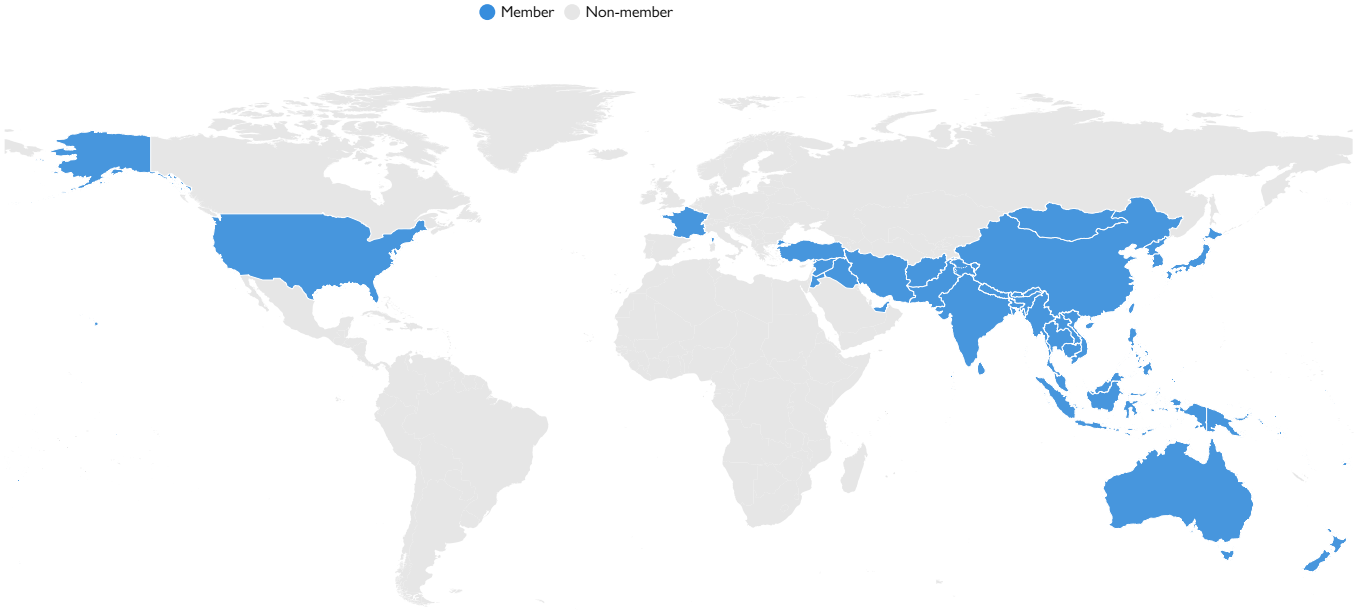
3.2.2 Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process): 20 Years of Regional Cooperation and Dialogue

The Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime was established in 2002 to facilitate policy dialogue, cooperation and information sharing in the Asia–Pacific region. Co-chaired by the ministers of Foreign Affairs of Australia and Indonesia, the Bali Process membership includes 45 Member States covering a vast area across the Asia–Pacific region, Europe and North America (Figure 39). The Bali Process also includes four Member Organizations namely, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United National Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (IOM, n.d.) .

The Bali Process brings together government officials, organizations, experts and practitioners to work around critical regional issues on trafficking, smuggling and related transnational crime. The objectives for the Bali Process are:

- The development of more effective information and intelligence sharing;
- Improved cooperation among regional law enforcement agencies to deter and combat smuggling and trafficking networks;
- Increased public awareness in order to discourage these activities and warn those susceptible;
- The enactment of national legislation to criminalize smuggling and trafficking of persons;
- Provision of appropriate protection and assistance to the victims of trafficking, particularly women and children;
- Assisting countries to adopt best practices in asylum management.

Figure 39. Bali Process Member States



Note: This map is for illustration purposes. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

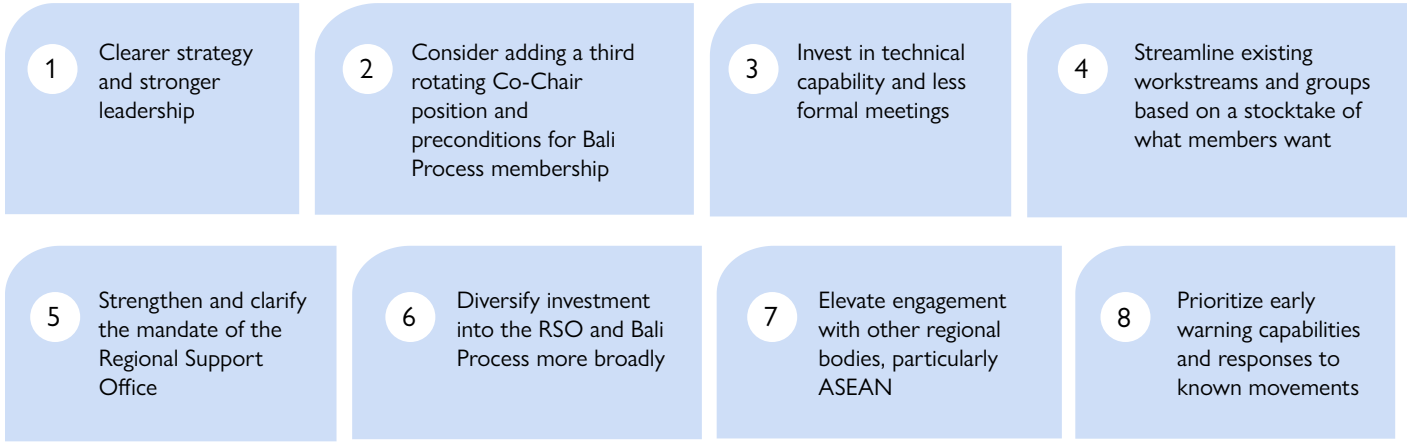
Source: Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. IOM (n.d.).

However, while the Bali Process marked its twentieth anniversary in 2022, its goals are yet to be fully materialized and operationalized (UNHCR et al., 2022). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing forced migration challenges facing the region have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and created new forms of exploitation. The persisting conflict and instability in Myanmar, coupled with dire conditions in refugee camps in Bangladesh, has led more people to undertake dangerous journeys in search of safety. UNHCR, in 2022, documented more than 3,500 Rohingya refugees attempting to cross the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea by boat – a 360 per cent increase from the number of individuals who attempted the journey in 2021 (UNHCR, 2023). This figure is the highest on record since 2015 (UNHCR, 2021). Without regular migration pathways, many will continue to rely on smugglers to reach safety either by sea or overland, opening them to the risk of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation (ADSP et al., 2022).

The twentieth anniversary of the Bali Process in 2022 represented, however, an opportunity to reflect among United Nations agencies and civil society actors.

The potential for the Bali Process to fully achieve its goals and play a more active and constructive role in the region is substantial. Members have more tools and frameworks than they did two decades ago, including the Global Compact for Migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (ADFM and CPD, 2022). To this end, United Nations agencies and civil society actors have developed concrete recommendations. In July 2022, the Secretariat of the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration (ADFM) and the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) published a report detailing eight opportunities for making the Bali Process more effective (ibid.) (Figure 40). They consider resource constraints and the challenges of COVID-19 and aim to streamline and harmonize existing programmes rather than duplicate or create additional work.

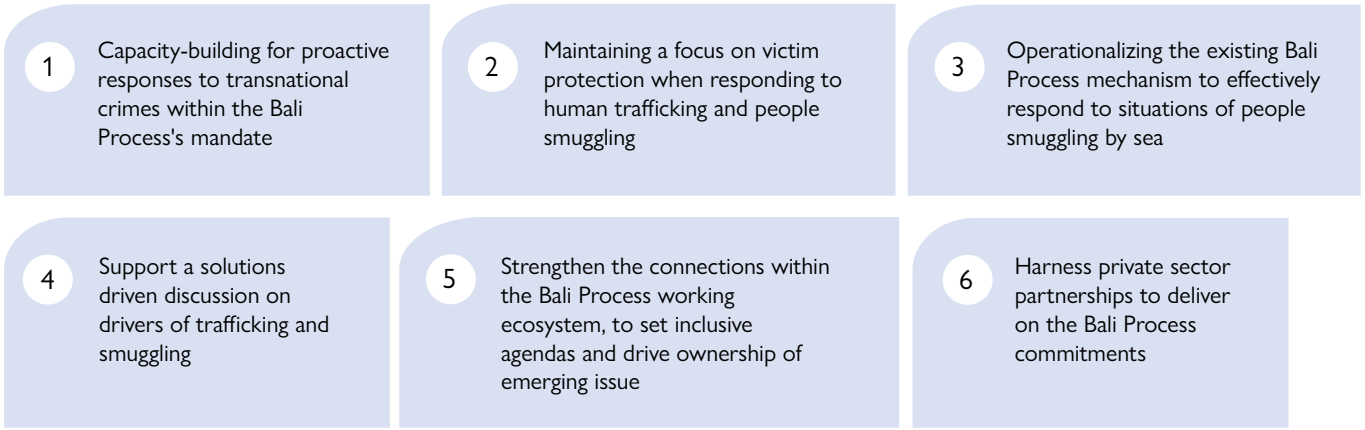
Figure 40. Eight opportunities to reform the Bali Process



Source: Opportunities to reform the Bali Process. ADFM and CPD (2022).

Additionally, in November 2022, UNHCR, IOM and UNODC released a joint paper detailing six recommendations to strengthen and enhance cooperation among members to effectively address the growing scope of transnational criminality in South-East Asia, including human trafficking, people smuggling and issues of safety of life at sea (UNHCR et al., 2022) (Figure 41). Finally, at the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Bali Process held on February 2023, members endorsed an updated 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation, designed to strengthen an agile, relevant and responsive Bali Process beyond 20 years since its establishment (IOM, 2023c). Country members reaffirmed the need for a future-focused approach to changing patterns of people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime in the Bali Process region.

Figure 41. Six recommendations to strengthen cooperation among the Bali Process Members



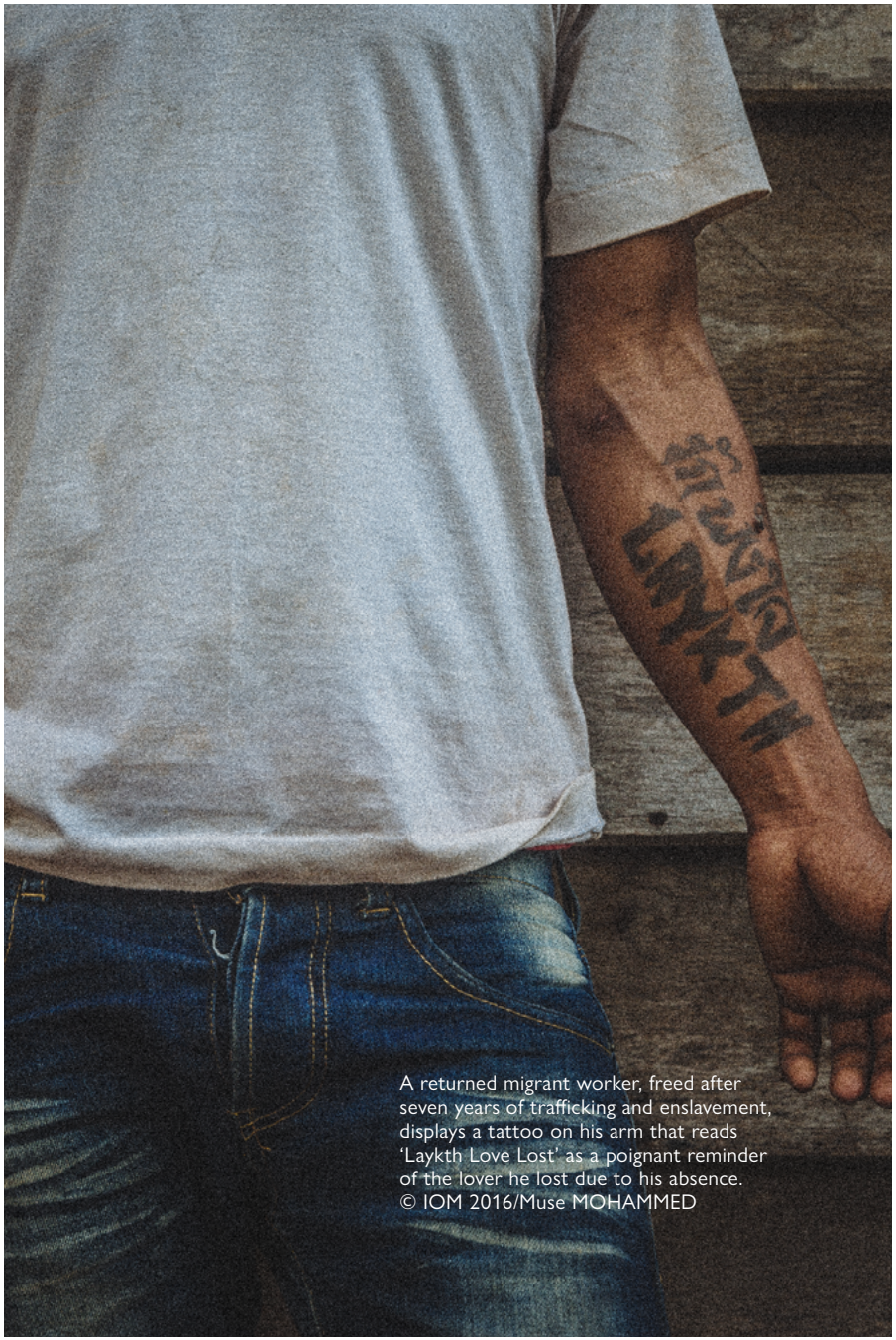
Source: Joint Paper on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Bali Process. UNHCR et al. (2022).

3.2.3 Discussion

The global community has pledged to address global challenges to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all through the SDGs. Regarding combating trafficking in persons, SDG Target 8.7 aims to eradicate modern slavery, trafficking, forced labour and the worst forms of child labour by 2030, and to end child labour by 2025. However, recent estimates showed that 50 million people were living in situations of modern slavery in 2021 of which nearly 28 million were subjected to forced labour – the majority in the Asia–Pacific region (ILO et al., 2022). In addition, in line with SDG Target 16.2 that calls for the end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, UNODC's latest report on global trafficking in persons trends showed that the number of victims detected per 100,000 population in an average on 130 countries, increased from 0.65 in 2015 to 1.13 in 2019 (UNODC, 2023). These estimates reflect that progress to fulfill global commitments and targets to combat human trafficking in all its forms is lagging behind as we approach 2030.

In the past years, compounding crises, such as armed conflict, political instability, climate change and more recently, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to unprecedented levels of unemployment and poverty as well as unsafe migration, together heightening the risk of all forms of human trafficking. As seen in 2022, new trafficking trends, in the form of online scamming centred in South-East Asia, took place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, climate-related disasters have doubled in frequency, leading to the loss of livelihoods and increasing displacement, leaving those at risk of displacement more vulnerable to exploitation along migration routes (ibid.).

In line with the Global Compact for Migration Objective 10 that aims to prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration, governments must encourage efforts to facilitate orderly, safe and regular migration pathways. Without safe migration routes, more people are likely to opt for irregular channels, increasing their exposure to human trafficking. In addition, to combat human trafficking in the context of migration, it is imperative that governments prioritize data collection and analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of this issue. Enhanced data collection can enable governments to identify areas of vulnerability, monitor trends and design targeted interventions to prevent and mitigate trafficking risks. Such data can also aid in the identification and protection of victims, the prosecution of perpetrators, and the provision of appropriate support and services for victims. As such, investing in robust data collection systems must be a key component of any comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy, particularly in the context of migration.



A returned migrant worker, freed after seven years of trafficking and enslavement, displays a tattoo on his arm that reads 'Laykth Love Lost' as a poignant reminder of the lover he lost due to his absence.
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3.3 Migrant Deaths and Disappearances

Because of the many maritime accidents that claimed hundreds of lives at a time in the last 10 years, maritime routes such as the Central Mediterranean or the Aegean Sea more recently came to be known as some of the deadliest migration corridors on record (IOM, 2015). Amid these events, headlines covering examples of minors washed ashore during the so-called "European Refugee Crisis" in 2015 accrued public scrutiny over the lives lost at sea. In turn, acknowledgement of the dangers around irregular migration gained political traction as new waves of mass migration arriving in dinghies hit the southern coasts of Europe. Nevertheless, policy advocacy remained scarce. Numerous reports have shed light on the paucity of involvement of international actors and governments alike in maintaining and strengthening Search and Rescue (SAR) missions in tandem to ongoing interceptions (UNHCR, 2015; WHO, 2022).

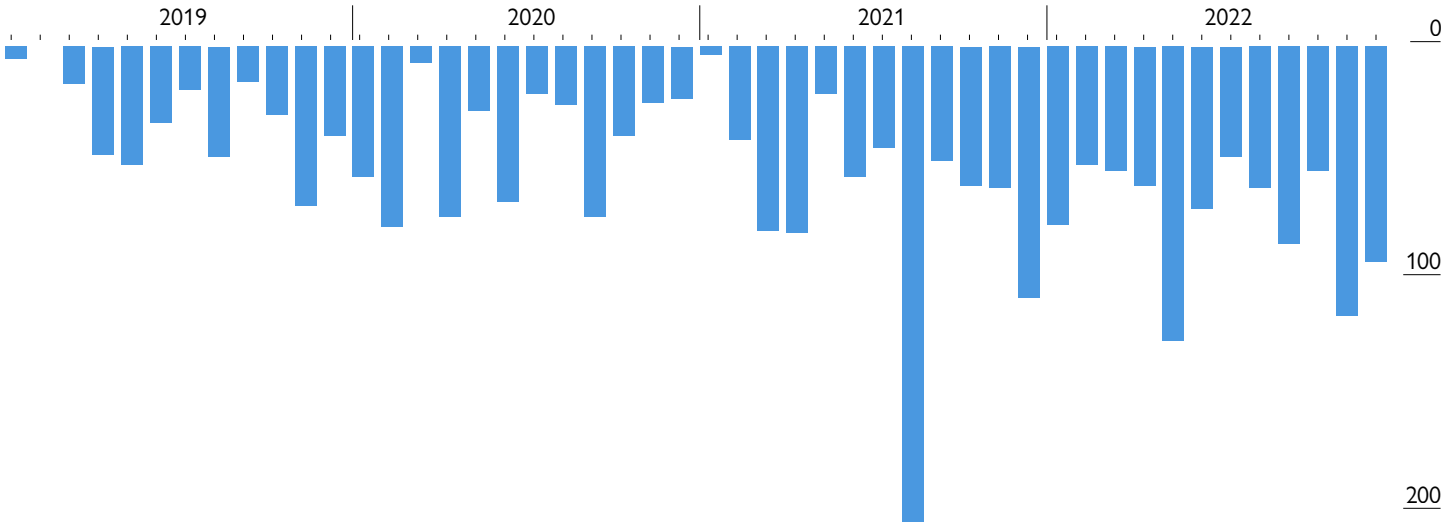
Amid this environment of growing concern, which led to the establishment of the IOM Missing Migrants Project (MMP), the MMP has, since 2014, taken stock of the number of migrant deaths and disappearances[82] by documenting those at risk of perishing while undertaking their migration journeys. Since then, over 50,000 migrants have lost their lives on route to their intended country of destination, including the 25,000 who died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea (IOM, 2021). Of what is known from the global database, the recovery of the bodies of 23,000 people composed of 7,063 males, 10,564 females and 4,972 children were confirmed. Meanwhile, an estimated 36,852 migrant bodies have yet to be recovered, mostly at sea. In Asia and the Pacific, 5,455 missing migrants were recorded since the inception of the project under which more than half (or 2,918) of the reported fatalities are attributed to drowning or 'mixed and unknown' circumstances.

These figures represent substantial undercount as deaths and disappearances may go unreported or under-reported, especially in large unpatrolled areas of transit. This is particularly relevant at sea among vessels that may have disappeared, and/or amid incidents that leave no survivors (IOM, 2022a). More recently, availability and quality of information was reduced in the last two years as data collection was hampered by COVID-19 restrictions, which have exacerbated risks for migrants (who were left with even less legal pathways for migration), whilst limiting processes for information collection (IOM, 2022b). Estimates regarding "invisible shipwrecks" should therefore be read with caution and may be heavily biased by the popularity of investigations that focus on emergency and high-profile contexts. Reported figures, including number of incidents, cannot fully convey the extent of damages or dangers that migrants face, nor entirely reflect the perilous conditions of their journeys.

With these considerations in mind, the following sections relate key regional findings and data for 2022. This section contextualizes the impact of this year's figures by exploring trends through time and place and distinguishing between place of origin and of incident. Findings offer insight into the challenges and shed light on the existing gaps.

[82] MMP data differentiates between deaths and disappearances. The former refers to individuals whose death is confirmed (i.e. mortal remains are recovered or reported by a reliable witness). The latter refers to individuals whose death is presumed to have happened, but no remains are recovered, most typically in cases of large shipwrecks when many people are lost at sea.

Figure 42. Migration deaths and disappearances in the Asia–Pacific region (2019–2022)



Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Missing Migrant Project (MMP) Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 13 February 2023).

3.3.1 Regional overview

In 2022 alone, the number of missing migrants' tallies to a total of 5,886 migrant deaths and disappearances worldwide, and 1,000 recorded within East Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia,[83] consisting of 859 deaths and 141 disappearances peaking at the beginning and end of the sailing seasons (November to April). Reported deaths and disappearances for the region have been on the rise since 2018 and continue to reach new levels in 2022.

While 2018 presented the first and only decrease in deaths since this record-keeping began, not only have deaths and disappearances reached now an all-time high in 2022 but they have also more than doubled since 2020 (with 417 deaths recorded), thus contributing to an already worrying trend (Figure 42).

Throughout 2022, 722 migration specific incidents that involved the death or disappearance of a migrant in Asia–Pacific were recorded, comprising 1,000 deaths in total. This represents a 55 per cent increase of recorded incidents compared to 2021, when 487 incidents were documented. Most incidents remain isolated cases (one or several migrants), as was the case in 2021, with an average of two deaths or missing persons per incident.

[83] Countries with data for this year include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, China, Thailand and Viet Nam. This count covers 12 out of the 40 countries that make-up IOM's definition of the Asia–Pacific region.

Snapshot: A Recap of the Deadliest Events in 2022

Mass casualty events in Asia and the Pacific are often documented on sea routes. A total of 110 incidents involving 380 deaths took place in November 2022 at the beginning of sailing season. The most recent tragedy recorded in the month of December 2022, involved 26 Rohingya from Myanmar who died due to harsh environmental conditions at sea. A similar incident was recorded just days apart with the same death toll, also involving Rohingya refugees. Groups travelling together under equivalent treacherous conditions increase the protection risk of people losing their lives on route. It has been reported that overcrowding on boats poses a particular high risk of sinking the vessel (UNDOC, 2013). The risk can be aggravated based on a set of adverse circumstances such as smuggling strategies employed, weather, timing, and disembarkation location conditions, but ultimately the migrants lost at sea are also a consequence of often inadequate or delated SAR. Without a meaningful response to improve these risk factors, deaths and disappearances in the Andaman Sea will become increasingly common (UNHCR, 2022).

The most recent tragedy recorded in the month of December 2022, involved 26 Rohingya from Myanmar who died due to harsh environmental conditions at sea. A similar incident was recorded just days apart with the same death toll, also involving Rohingya refugees.

Most at-risk locations (country of incident)

Since 2014, migrant deaths and disappearances typically are documented in countries in South-East Asia (57%), South-West Asia (42%) and to a much lesser degree, East Asia (1%). Data for 2022, however, reverse this trend, with South-East Asia comprising 30 per cent of deaths and South-West Asia 70 per cent. Cumulatively, recorded migrant deaths have been primarily located in Myanmar (1,636), the Islamic Republic of Iran (1,323), Afghanistan (688), Bangladesh (540), Malaysia (527), Thailand (384), Indonesia (185), Pakistan and Cambodia (31 each). In 2022 and among the places with most migration-related deaths, Afghanistan with 48 per cent of the total (480 deaths), followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran (21% or 212), Myanmar (11% or 115), Indonesia (9% or 91), Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia (3% each or 32, 31 and 28 respectively), Bangladesh (1% or 5) and others (1% or 7) including Pakistan, India, Viet Nam and Hong Kong SAR, China can be cited (Figure 43).

Accordingly, migrants may take on perilous journeys when using different types of transport, and combines routes by land, air and sea. Causes of death differ by subregion of incident or corresponding country of origin. Per the MMP, those originally departing from or transiting in the Mekong subregion use land migration routes mainly toward Thailand or Malaysia, or alternatively from Nepal to India, while those from Afghanistan transit either first to Pakistan or directly to the Islamic Republic of Iran and toward destinations such as Türkiye (IOM, 2023a). Additionally, data suggest that countries of the south-east such as Indonesia and Malaysia as countries of transit and destination (ibid.). MMP data from 2022 suggest that one third (240 or 33%) of incidents were found along pre-established routes known globally in South Asia.[84] These cases were documented on route from Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran (235) and from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Türkiye (5) while the remaining two thirds of incidents are categorized as "unknown routes" by MMP data.

In 2022, along the unknown routes, that is to say, those that are not identified by MMP as part one of the major pre-established routes (which consist of the two above linking Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye), 482 incidents took place with 753 deaths. Interestingly, among the deaths recorded in the Mekong region, Cambodia and China were among the main countries of departure (Figure 44). Additionally, from these reports, casualties in South-East Asia can be more clearly depicted, with respect to sea journeys.

According to several news reports, distressed and stranded in the Andaman Sea and in the Bay of Bengal are becoming increasingly common, particularly cases involving Rohingyas on the move (IOM, 2023b; UNHCR, 2021, 2022, 2023). By DRC (2023, p.10) standards, the number of Rohingyas trying to cross the Andaman Sea increased by threefold compared to 2021. Meanwhile, deaths in South-East Asia took place in intervals and see an influx in casualties according to the period of the year. For Myanmar, these were particularly high in November, December and May, and for Indonesia, in December, January and March. Hence, while assessing migrant deaths at place of origin and incident is important, further investigation is warranted regarding groups that are at heightened risk within certain periods of the year.

Since 2014, migrant deaths and disappearances typically are documented in countries in South-East Asia (57%), South-West Asia (42%) and to a much lesser degree, East Asia (1%). Data for 2022, however, reverse this trend, with South-East Asia comprising 30 per cent of deaths and South-West Asia 70 per cent.

[84] This excludes Western Asia from MMP data and therefore does not account for all secondary flows from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Türkiye who depart from countries outside the list of countries that constitute Asia and the Pacific.

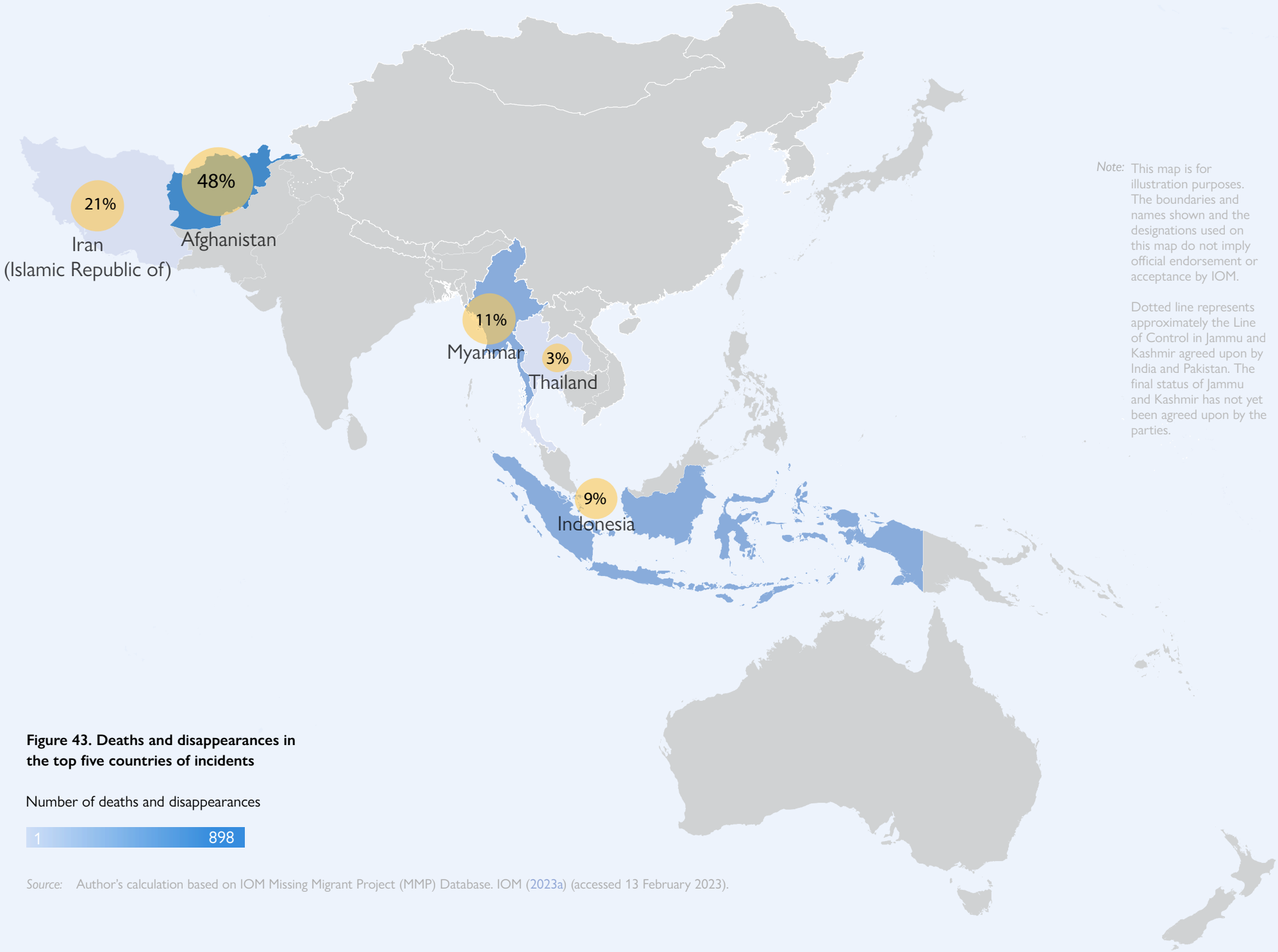


Figure 43. Deaths and disappearances in the top five countries of incidents

Number of deaths and disappearances

1 — 898

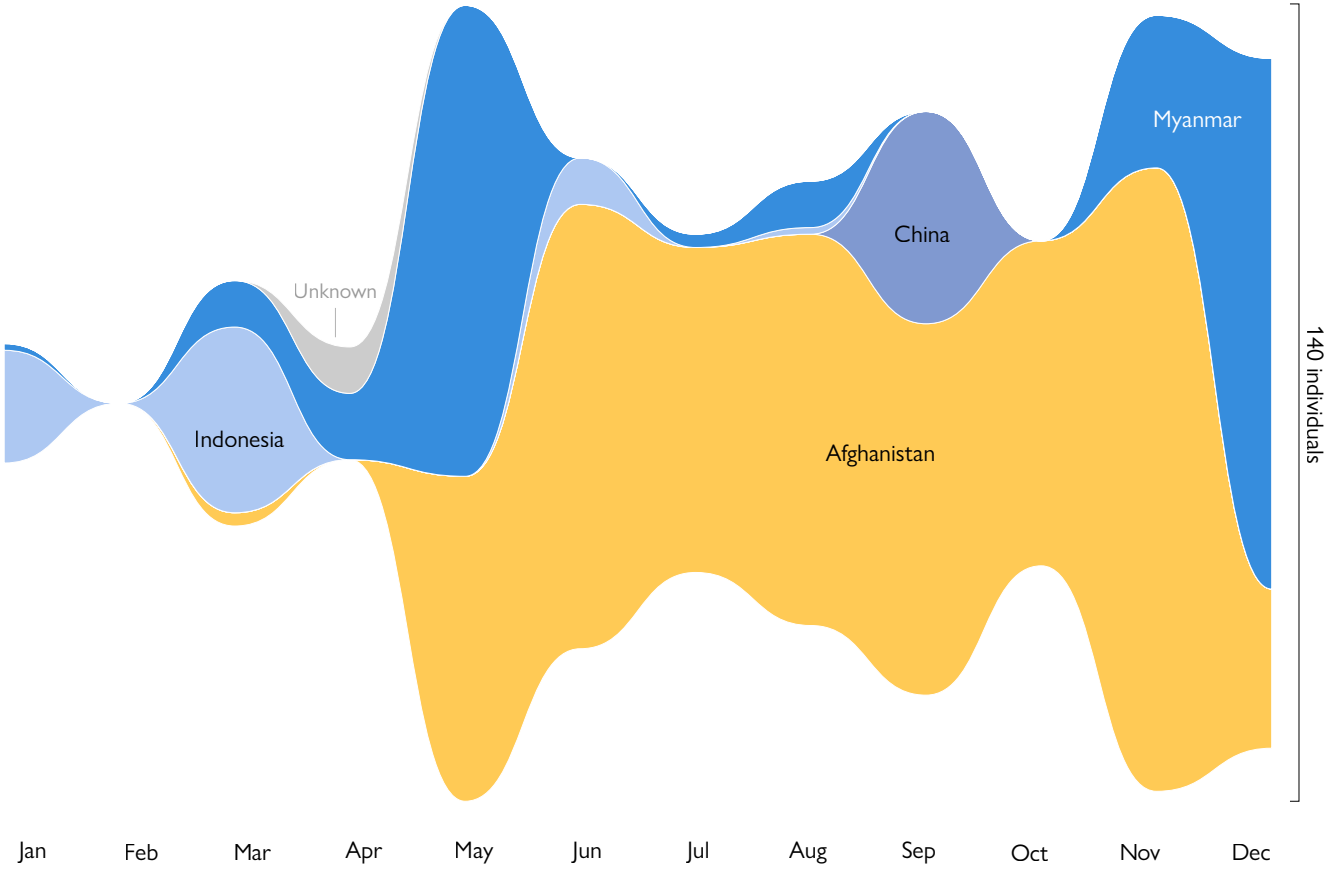
Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Missing Migrant Project (MMP) Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 13 February 2023).

Migrants most at-risk (country of origin)

Taking stock of migrant profiles in MMP can help inform protection risks that are linked to human trafficking, and aggravated human smuggling including gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse that factor into, push, ensue or occur as part of their migration journey (UNDOC, 2018). Gauging the magnitude of these dangers, and to whom these apply, with death being the most severe outcome, also means providing actionable information for life saving responses and support. MMP data indicate that 1,123 people from the Asia–Pacific region[85] have died during migration globally – 89 per cent in the region, 9 per cent (96) of whom were children. Likewise, the number of deceased migrants in the region are almost exclusively from the Asia–Pacific region, with the exception of 15 migrants from unknown countries.

The majority of these deaths (719 or 64% of deaths and disappearances) concern migrants departing from Afghanistan, 83 being children. This population represents 69 per cent of all missing migrants for Asia and the Pacific, and over three quarters (80%) of lives lost in South Asia. Ultimately, about 1,800 Afghan nationals died or went missing since 2014. By these standards, those traced back to Afghanistan compose the population group by far the most vulnerable affected by migration deaths in the Asia–Pacific region today and are consistently among the primary group seeking to flee in 2022 following the country's regime change in 2021. In second position are the 297 deaths from South-East Asia, where two thirds (201 migrants) departed from Myanmar and amongst whom at least 177 were identified as Rohingya. The second half of 2022 can account for over half of these Rohingya deaths and the other half during the month of May, in a tragedy that cost the lives of 17 Rohingyas and 50 disappearances. Since 2014, a grand total of 1,584 victims came from Myanmar and 1,359 were Rohingya-related and represented 85 per cent of total deaths from Myanmar as of November 2022 (IOM, 2022a).

Figure 44. Deaths and disappearances in the top 5 countries of incident via unknown routes

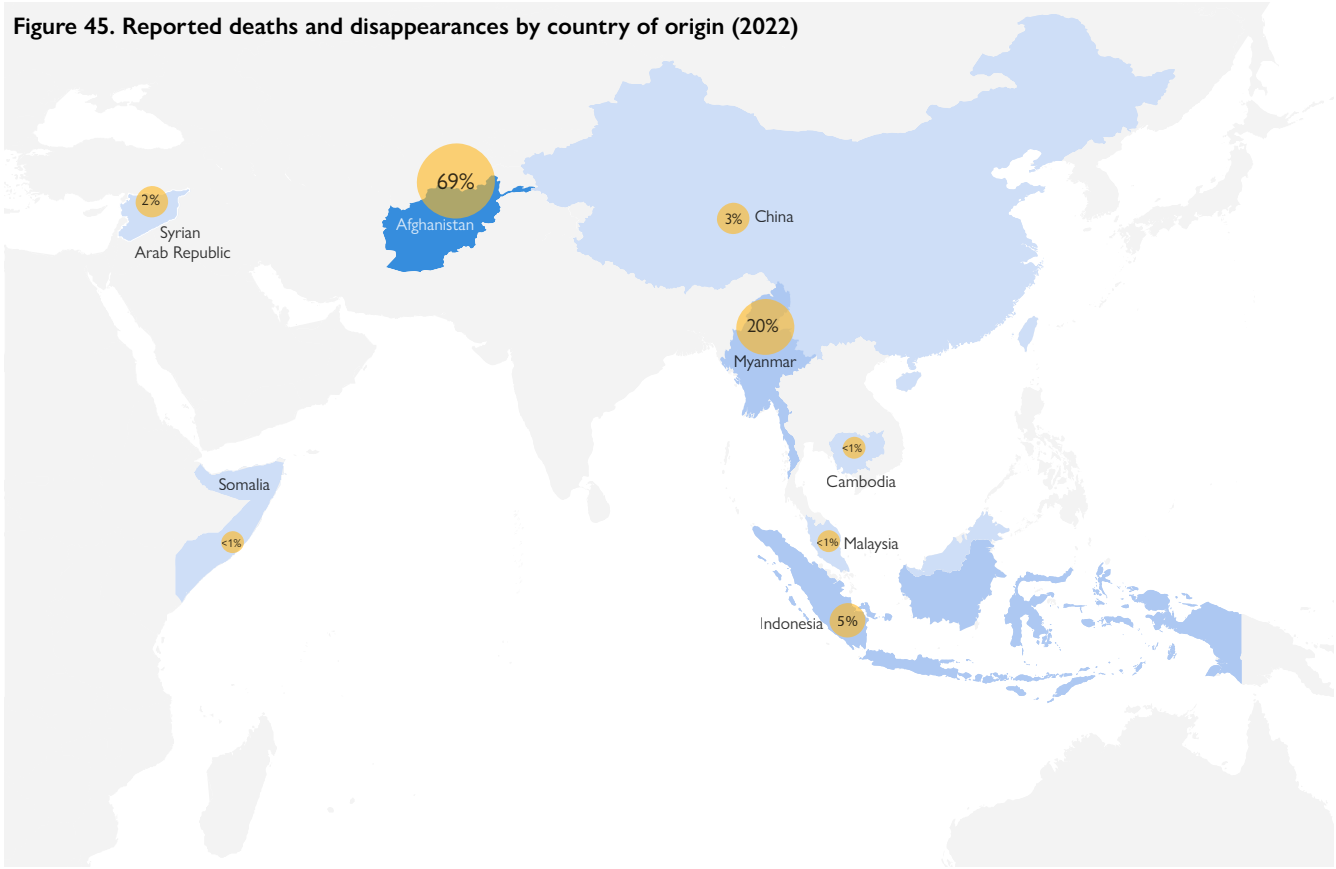


Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Missing Migrant Project (MMP) Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 13 February 2023).

[85] Countries with data for this year include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

With respect to migration trends in the last four years, between 2019 to 2022 the recorded deaths per known country of origin have positioned in descending order AAfghanistan, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Syrian Arab Republic, China, Pakistan, Cambodia, Nepal, Somalia, the Republic of Korea and Malaysia as the top countries of concern. Though Afghanistan and Myanmar carry similar sobering figures in 2022, accounting for more deaths than any other country, this year's data depart from past trends. No incidents were recorded for migrants from Ethiopia, the Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Nepal or the Syrian Arab Republic, whereas there were 53 incidents involving migrants departing from Indonesia. Overall, 134 deaths from Indonesia are recorded as far back as 2019. However, total unascertained migrant deaths over the last four years remain high at 461, though it is steadfastly declining each year in dint of the continued rigor and efforts to maintain the project.

Figure 45. Reported deaths and disappearances by country of origin (2022)



Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Missing Migrant Project (MMP) Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 13 February 2023).

Note: This map is for illustration purposes. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

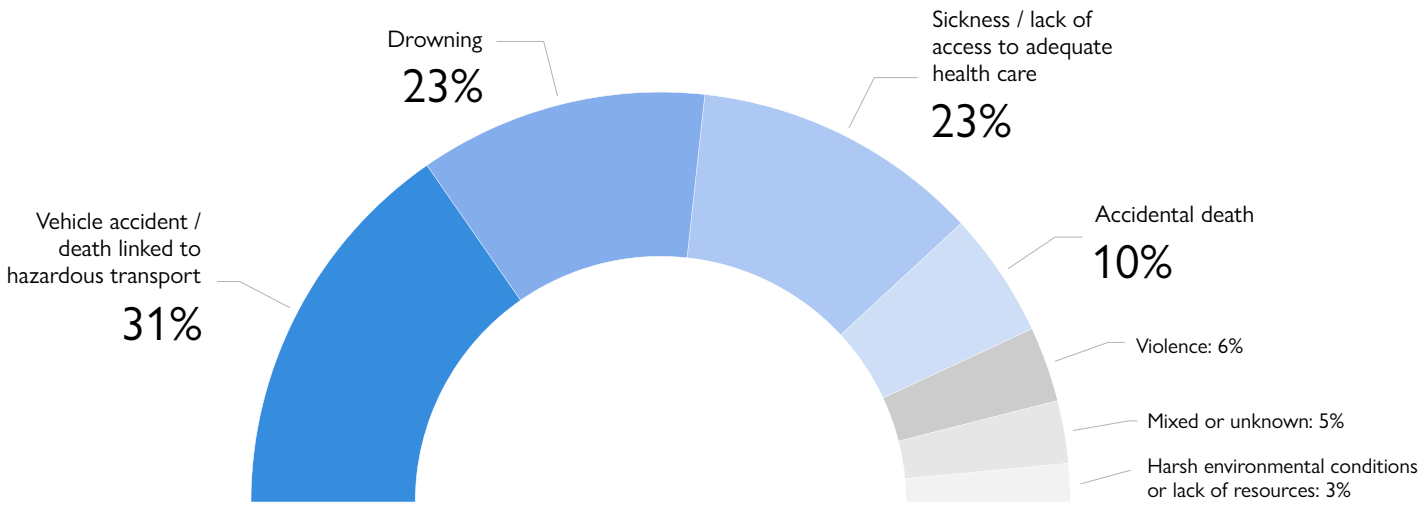
Leading cause of death

Of the 5,887 deaths recorded worldwide for 2022, incidents in the Asia–Pacific region (1,000) account for 17 per cent of the global figure or 19 per cent by accounting all deaths (1,123) departing from the region. Historically, since 2014, the leading cause of death behind these migration journeys worldwide, beside mixed or unknown reasons (30%), has been at sea, specifically by drowning (23% in the Asia and Pacific region). The third leading cause of death (18%) was typically due to vehicle-related accidents. Globally, one in two global deaths (62%) were caused by drowning. However, the trends for 2022 in Asia and the Pacific depict another as primary cause of death and suggest that vehicle or hazardous accidents were at the root of 13 per cent of global migrant deaths and 31 per cent of incidents for the region (Figure 46). The number of hazardous deaths in 2022 reached unprecedented heights with 308 associated deaths since it last peaked in 2019 at 299, and thereafter toppled the longstanding primary known cause of death, taking almost as many lives as drownings, with a total of 1,040 compared to 1,281 respectively since (IOM, 2022a; IOM, 2022b).

South Asia registers the highest number of deaths for Asia and the Pacific since 2014, with a total of 2,303 lives lost. The number of deaths due to violence was highest in South Asia. Likewise, the greatest number of hazardous deaths by road in the region was also registered in South Asia (26% of all causes, wherein the majority, with 83% of all vehicle/hazardous-related accidents, registered in South Asia). Deaths resulting from violent incidents might be connected to the implementation of stringent border control measures. Such measures often involve intense scrutiny and monitoring of borders, particularly when they are situated near regions experiencing ongoing conflicts. The 56 deaths recorded in 2022 detected at the border by security forces involve migrants that come from countries such as Afghanistan (59%) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (32%). Nevertheless, violent deaths also extend to different countries and populations outside of Asia and the Pacific, as is the case for the 11 Bangladeshis found on the Libyan coast who were killed by gunshot wounds. Meanwhile, violence leads to 8 per cent of the total deaths for this subregion, behind those linked to hazardous transport (36%), lack of adequate health care (33%) or accidental deaths (12%).

For South-East Asia, drowning constitutes the most common cause of death. Of the 702 deaths and disappearances recorded for this subregion since 2014, 313 lives were lost to drowning. From this figure, two thirds are presumed deaths and are still missing. These incidents have occurred in Myanmar (42% or comprising 87 deaths), Indonesia (32% or 65), Cambodia (31% or 15), Malaysia (10% or 21) and Thailand (1% or 2). In addition, 118 Rohingya deaths are associated with drowning and 59 Rohingya deaths are split between vehicle incidents, accidental deaths or by harsh environmental conditions at sea. The latest and rising accounts of deaths in Indonesia (91), are a prime example that though recorded deaths are split between drownings or as a consequence of harsh environmental conditions (lack of water, food or shelter), these reasons equally present the hardships and distress of seafarers and highlight the importance of urgent action needed at sea.

Figure 46. Main causes of death in the Asia–Pacific region (2022)



Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Missing Migrant Project (MMP) Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 13 February 2023).

Expert Contribution: Deaths During Migration in the Asia–Pacific Region in 2022

Authored by: **Julia Black**

Missing Migrants Project, Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), IOM.

At least 1,000 deaths during migration within the Asia–Pacific region were recorded by IOM's Missing Migrants Project (MMP) in 2022. This figure is the highest annual total of lives lost of any year since data collection began in 2014, but nonetheless is likely a large undercount of the true death toll in the region.

In 2022, the deaths of 688 Afghans attempting to leave their home country were recorded, including 480 deaths at Afghanistan's external borders and another 204 in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Many of these deaths occurred due to vehicle accidents (247) or to sickness and lack of access to health care (228). Another 53 Afghans were killed violently during their migratory journey. Of all Afghans whose deaths during migration were recorded in 2022, 527 were males,[86] 38 were females and 74 were children. However, MMP records of deaths of Afghans in Asia are heavily biased by a lack of complete data: 99 per cent of cases recorded in 2022 came from a single, non-governmental source that reports on migrant remains repatriated to Afghan families, which excludes both those who die outside of this organization's operational area as well as those who remain unidentified.

Another 200 deaths during migration in Asia were of Myanmar nationals, many of whom reportedly belonged to the Rohingya ethnic group. One-hundred-and-five of these individuals drowned during attempted crossings of the Bay of Bengal or Andaman Sea, while another 49 lost their lives due to hazardous transport – either due to vehicle accidents or suffocating to death in enclosed compartments of trucks. Due to the large number of drownings, few data on the age or gender of the Myanmar who died are available. In total, 43 males, 19 females and 9 children were identified.

At least 53 people from Indonesia died during migration to Malaysia in 2022, including at least 12 females and two males. Given the low levels of attention on the issue of migrant deaths on this route, there is a high likelihood that "invisible shipwrecks" – cases involving boats which disappear without a trace – go unrecorded on this and other sea routes across the Asia–Pacific region.

In the rest of the world, the deaths of another 192 Asians were recorded during migration on routes across Europe, the Middle East and the Americas. Notably, at least 171 people from Asia–Pacific –nations died in Europe or crossing the Mediterranean in 2022, including three females and five children. Eighty-two of the Asians who died on routes to Europe were Bangladeshi and 19 were Afghans.

While the high death toll during migration in Asia in 2022 is of grave concern, the extreme paucity of data on this topic makes a more detailed comparison across different routes or time periods challenging. Though more than 5,500 deaths during migration across Asia have been recorded since 2014, there is a near-complete lack of data from official sources at the regional, national or local level in the Asia–Pacific region. A lack of government reporting is unfortunately common worldwide; however documenting deaths during migration is particularly challenging in Asia and the Pacific, given (1) the lack of attention on this issue and (2) the large number of languages spoken across the region. This leads to an exceptionally low number of incidents recorded from media sources, as shown in Table 3. MMP data in Asia and the Pacific are derived almost exclusively from reports from non- or inter-governmental organizations (NGOs/IGOs) that are working directly with migrants, or their families left behind.d.

Better data are urgently needed to inform policy and programming to ensure migration is safe for all, whether within the Asia–Pacific region or of Asians emigrating abroad. Beyond the data, though, the 1,000 deaths recorded during migration in the region this year, not to mention the many more that likely remain undocumented, point to an urgent need for States and other stakeholders to take action to prevent further deaths, search for and identify the many missing, and support the families and communities directly impacted by these tragedies. The causes of death of Asia–Pacific nationals during migration are largely preventable, and specific, actionable recommendations on this topic, such as those issued by the United Nations Migration Network and by the ICRC, are available to all actors who wish to take action on this issue.

[86] As Missing Migrants Project records involve deceased persons, only the sex of these individuals can be determined and no data on gender is available.

Table 3. Information sources of Missing Migrants Project data in the Asia-Pacific Region (2022)

	Official sources	NGOs / IGOs	Multiple media sources	Single media source
Number of incidents	5	690	29	3
Percentage of incidents	0.4%	94.9%	4.0%	0.7%

Source: Author's calculation based on IOM Missing Migrant Project Database. IOM (2023a) (accessed 11 April 2023).

3.3.2 Discussion

A number of methodological limitations internal to MMP data are worth considering. The data, being exclusively extracted from the IOM MMP, are based on and bounded by the context in which the MMP was developed – to track deaths only during the migration journey – and include both deaths and presumed deaths, the latter based off disappearances reported primarily at sea. The MMP seeks to fill knowledge gaps and missing records that are forgotten amid migration flows and descriptive statistics. Hence, migrant deaths and vulnerabilities beyond this scope are not addressed. For instance, among other types of "missing migrants", deaths that are linked to immigration detention centres, labour exploitation or returned movements are excluded from the data. Additionally, migrants who are internally displaced or who have settled into a new country after migrating, are at both ends also not reflected in these figures. In part because of the above factors, whether no data exists or is simply not collected in a number of countries, including many in the Pacific, remains unclear at this stage without any historical data beyond the 10 years MMP has existed or any official sources producing data at a national level, MMP data does not make for exhaustive figures.

Moreover, structural constraints that are inherited externally are an additional blind spot in regard to the database kept on missing migrants: these challenges are compounded by lack of governmental buy-in, which limits much of the data verification process and comprehensiveness. Earlier this year, several new commitments by a consortium of actors from the United Nations Network on Migration were outlined in a promise to "Leave No One Behind' in the 2030 Agenda — one sign of this is that MMP data is used as indicator 10.7.3 of the SDGs. Under the Global Compact for Migration, specifically Objective 5 – to enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration, Objective 7 – Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration, and Objective 23 – for better managing migration at local, national, regional and global levels were picked out to draw attention to the lack of engagement in providing lifesaving assistance, or conversely, in actively obstructing this practice (WHO, 2022).

> *Governmental actors are in the best position to consider how to efficiently operationalize data in a way that upholds migrant dignity and rights while reducing risk and related deaths on its shores and beyond.*

In paving the way forward, governmental actors are in the best position to consider how to efficiently operationalize such data in a way that upholds migrant dignity and rights – rather than adversely affect them in the process – while reducing risk and related deaths on the shores of countries that face migrant deaths and where search and rescue is limited. Members of the United Nations Network on Migration have developed three sequential steps to better orient national and international actors in achieving the SDGs and Global Compact for Migration objectives by (1) preventing migrants from dying or going missing, (2) searching and identifying those who have died and (3) providing support and redress to the families. According to the guidance given by the United Nations Network on Migration, efforts may include assessing the impact of migration-related policies and providing a place of safety for disembarkation with appropriate care to children. Additionally, establishing communication as to the whereabouts of missing migrants, or migrants in distress, to family members was also proposed among the list of recommendations (ibid.).

Among the list of other potential initiatives or solutions drawn, data collection systems need to be developed and committed to in order to ensure that responses along the three objectives above remain evidence based. A renewed call for official or national data collection on missing migrants, with the potential of complementing existing data and expanding availability of sources, has been put forward. Doing so would lay the foundations for international data harmonization and information exchange between countries to take root and bridge many of the gaps and challenges of migration data and management.

An Afghan family mourning the tragic death of their son due to the armed conflict in Afghanistan. © IOM 2021

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2023 Protection at Sea in South East Asia – 2022 in Review. Flash update, January.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC)

2013 Combatting Transnational Organized Crime Committed at Sea. Vienna.

2018 Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants 2018. Vienna.

World Health Organization (WHO)

2022 Act now to save lives and prevent migrants from going missing. News, 7 March.

* All hyperlinks were active at the time of writing this report.

Migrant families' housing in a neighbourhood of the Philippines reflects their global tastes cultivated through years of working abroad, with remittances significantly influence housing construction at the community level. © IOM 2008/Angelo JACINTO

04

Migration and Development

4. Migration and Development

In this chapter

SDG Target

Global Compact for Migration Objective

MGI Domain

Well-being of migrants

Migrants' contribution to their destination and origin countries' development and their role in the effort to achieve the SDGs cannot be underestimated. This is the case for Asia and the Pacific, where migrants support if not sustain numerous labour markets and health systems and share ideas and cultures across borders (IOM, 2022a).

Remittances remain the most well-known and spread means for migrants to contribute to their origin country's development. Indeed, remittances consist of money or goods that migrants send to their families and friends in the countries of origin, and represent the most straightforward link between migration and development (IOM, 2021a). With an estimated USD 626 billion of remittances expected to flow to low- and middle-income countries in 2022 (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2022a), if leveraged optimally, remittances can most effectively finance sustainable development and improve livelihoods of migrants' families and communities back home. This link, however, is subject to the influence of several factors, including the channel, means and cost of remittance transfer, utilization by the recipients and economic conditions in origin and destination countries, amongst others. Timely data collection and analysis is indispensable to monitoring this aspect of the migration and development landscape.

While acknowledging the central role remittances play, migrants and diasporas also contribute to other areas of development. Diaspora groups, who are connected to their homeland and have extensive knowledge and expertise, have started engaging beyond remittances for their families into concrete development support, including but not limited to philanthropy, investments, diasporas tourism, skills and knowledge transfer, stimuls to entrepreneurship and innovation (IOM, 2022b, p.185), post-crisis recovery and humanitarian action (UNDP, 2022).

This chapter will focus on how migrants and diasporas engage in and contribute to development by reviewing the latest evidence that is available. The first section, centred on the link between remittances and development, starts with an analysis of remittance inflows to and remittance costs in Asia and the Pacific in 2022, followed by a snapshot of the developmental impacts of remittances beyond the conventional focus on aggregate data. The second section probes into other underexplored aspects of diaspora's contributions to countries in the region, specifically in the fields of disaster response, climate action and health – as an expansion from last year's focus on trade and development.

4.1 Remittances

4.1.1 Remittance inflows to Asia and the Pacific

4.1.1.1 Volume of remittance inflows

According to the World Bank/KNOMAD (2022a) estimates, the world recorded remittance flows of USD 794.06 billion in 2022. Of this figure, the Asia–Pacific region[87] received remittance inflows of USD 310.74 billion, comprising 39 per cent of the world total (Figure 48). The 2022 figure represented a 2.1 per cent increase in remittance inflows to the Asia–Pacific region from the previous year, compared to a 1.7 per cent increase worldwide, despite the global economic slowdown. From a longer-term perspective,

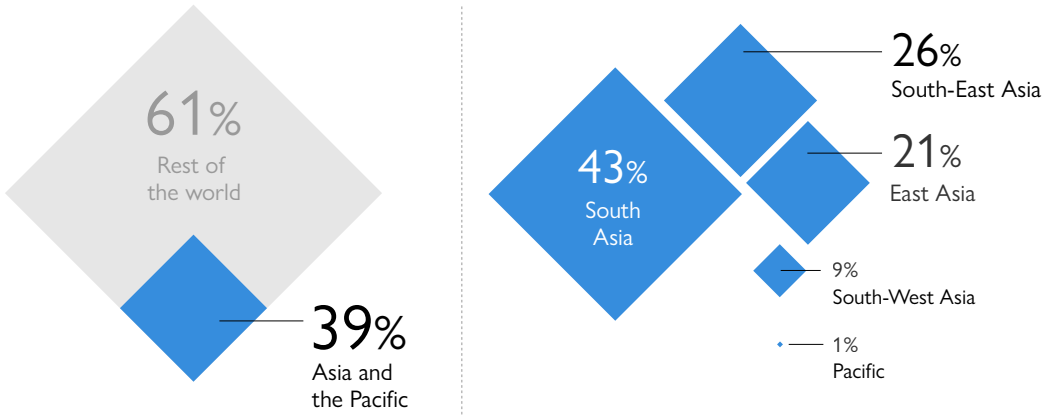
[87] Based on 34 Asia–Pacific countries, areas and territories with available data as of November 2022. Data were not available for the following Asia–Pacific countries under IOM definition: Brunei Darussalam, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Nauru, Singapore and Tuvalu.

the 2022 figure also registered a 4.3 per cent increase from the pandemic dip in 2020, and a 2.9 per cent increase from the pre-pandemic level back in 2019. This indicates not only the significance of the Asia–Pacific region as a recipient of remittances, but also sustained growth of remittances in 2022. Within the Asia–Pacific region, South Asia (43%), followed by South-East Asia (26%) and East Asia (21%), recorded the largest volume of remittance inflows (Figure 47). Compared to 2021, South Asia and South-East Asia registered growth in remittance inflows in 2022, while other subregions showed a downward turn, especially in the Pacific and South-West Asia (Figure 48). Underlying these subregional averages were differences across countries, some cases of which will be discussed in the following subsections.

As in the previous year, the largest recipients of remittances in the Asia–Pacific region in 2022 were expected to be India, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal and the Republic of Korea (in descending order) (Figure 49). Notably, remittance inflows to India were anticipated to grow by 11 per cent to USD 100 billion, making the country the first ever to reach this threshold. With the world's largest diaspora group at close to 18 million (DESA, 2020), the country saw a gradual structural shift in Indian migrants' qualifications and key destinations from predominantly low-skilled, informal jobs in the GCC countries to a dominant share of high-skilled jobs in high-income countries (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2022b). The accelerated growth was seen to have benefited from wage hikes and a strong labour market in the United States and high-income countries (ibid.). According to the Fifth Round of the Survey on Remittances for the year 2020–21 with authorized dealers banks, between 2016–2017 and 2020–2021, the proportion of remittances from the United States of America, United Kingdom and Singapore increased from 26 to 36 per cent, whereas the share from the GCC countries dropped from 54 to 28 per cent – reflecting not only the slower pace of migration but more importantly the high share of Indian workers recruited in informal sectors hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic (Reserve Bank of India, 2022). The larger presence of Indian migrants in high-income countries earning relatively high salaries may contribute to stronger resilience of their remittances, compared to those of lower-wage migrants such as many of those in GCC countries (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2022b). In addition, the favourable economic conditions in the GCC and the depreciation of the Indian rupee vis-à-vis the US dollar were considered to have benefited remittance flows to India despite heightened inflation (ibid.).

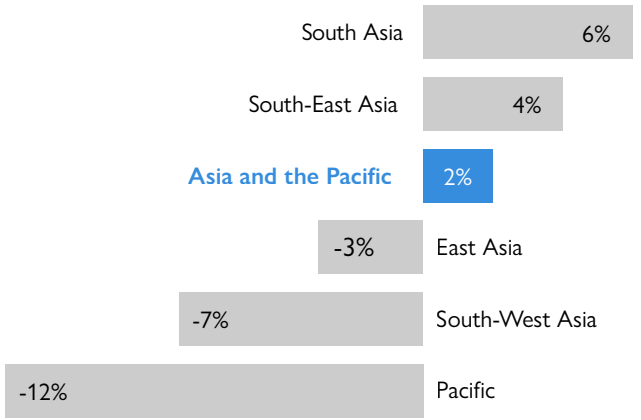
In the case of the Philippines, with potential implications to other countries as well, the sustained rise in remittance inflows was attributed to inflation that may have required

Figure 47. Remittance inflows to Asia and the Pacific by subregion (2022)



Source: Author's calculation based on Remittance Inflows Data (November 2022). World Bank/KNOMAD (2022a).

Figure 48. Percentage change in remittance inflows to Asia and the Pacific by subregion (2021–2022)



Source: Author's calculation based on Remittance Inflows Data (November 2022). World Bank/KNOMAD (2022a).

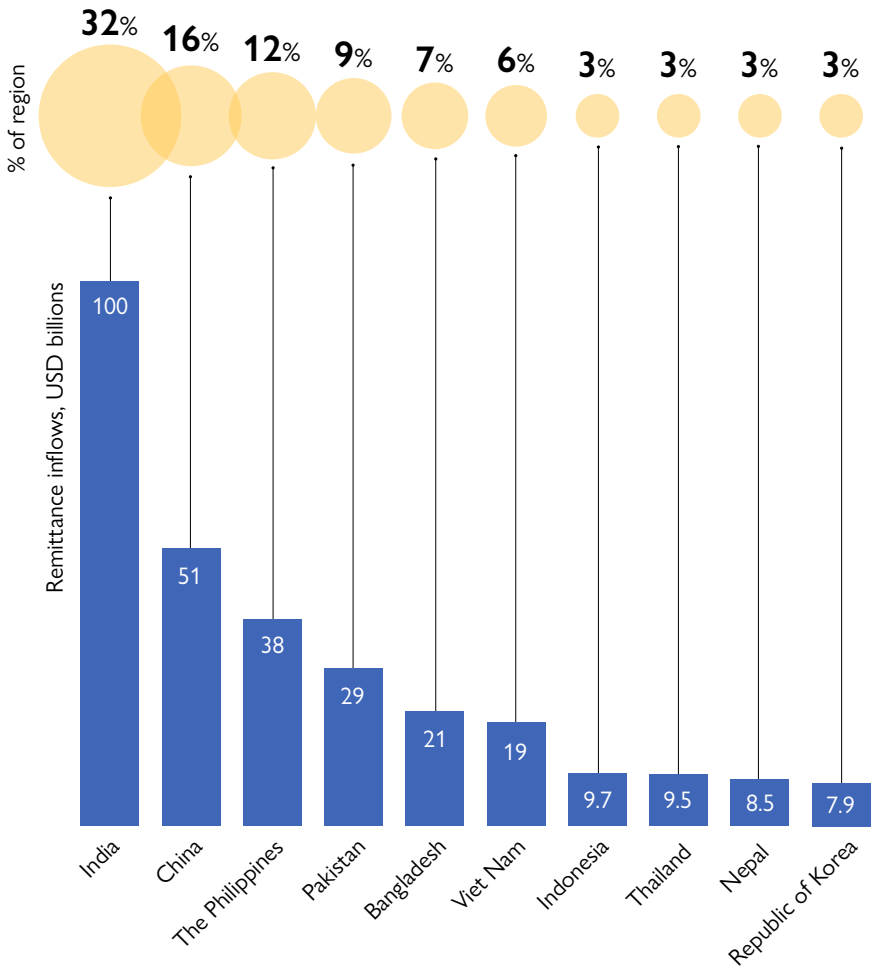
the sending of more remittances to cope with higher prices of goods and services for overseas Filipino workers and their families in the Philippines. On the other side of the coin, elevated inflation in countries of destination for migrant workers could, in the short to medium term, potentially reduce their disposable income and in turn, the amount of remittances sent to the Philippines.[88]

In addition, other perceived risks could slow down the global economic recovery prospects and remittance flows, including the possible recession in the United States, the Ukraine crisis, the economic impact of potential discovery of new and more contagious COVID-19 variants, as well as increased infection cases in China following its reopening in late 2022.[89]

[88] Philippine News Agency, "Reopening of more economies boosts OFWs remittance growth", 15 February 2023.
[89] Ibid.

As in the previous year, the largest recipients of remittances in the Asia–Pacific region in 2022 were expected to be India, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal and the Republic of Korea. Notably, remittance inflows to India were anticipated to grow by 11 per cent to USD 100 billion, making the country the first ever to reach this threshold.

Figure 49. Top 10 recipients of remittances in Asia and the Pacific (2022) (USD billions)



Source: Author's illustration based on from Remittance Inflows Data (November 2022). World Bank/KNOMAD (2022a).

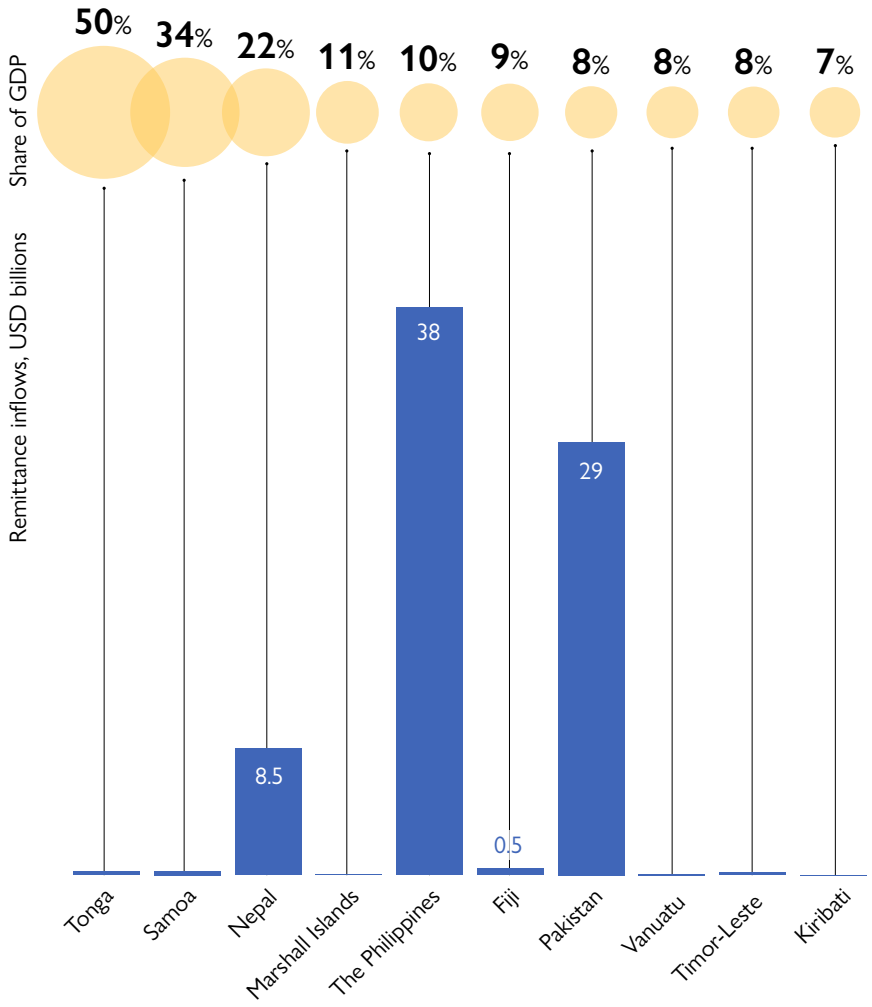
4.1.1.2 Remittances as a share of GDP

Remittances as a share of GDP is another indicator that reflects the importance of remittances for funding current account and fiscal shortfalls. In the Asia–Pacific region, Tonga, Samoa, Nepal, Marshall Islands, the Philippines, Fiji, Pakistan, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Kiribati (in descending order) were expected to rank among the top 10 recipients of remittances as a share of GDP. Tonga was not only the most remittance-dependent country in the region but also in the world in 2022, with remittances accounting for about half of the country's GDP. The dependence on remittances of Tonga and other Pacific countries among the top of this rank is closely related to their exposure to changes in tourism and vulnerability to disasters (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2022b). This list of top countries in 2022 is similar to that in the previous year, except for Timor-Leste replacing Sri Lanka's position. This relates to, on one hand, the Timor-Leste Government's increasing awareness and efforts to provide an enabling environment for mobilizing remittances for development finance with support from IOM, UNDP and the World Health Organization (WHO) (2022). On the other hand, in the context of the economic and political crises in Sri Lanka, the Central Bank reported a drop of 58 per cent in remittance inflows in the first three months of 2022, compared to the amount remitted in the corresponding period in 2021. One of the main reasons cited is the increasing resort to informal Money Transfer Operators due to the significant difference in exchange rates offered, and also the regulation imposed by the Government that all remittances are to be converted into local Rupees or deposited in foreign currency accounts within three months (IOM, 2022c). The Central Bank Governor was quoted by the media estimating that 37 per cent of transactions took place outside the formal banking system (ibid.).

This estimation appears in line with some observations of increasing preference of migrants for informal over formal channels of money transfer reported in a few countries. Besides Sri Lanka, this tendency has been seen in Pakistan and Bangladesh, where continued currency depreciation is deemed likely amid deterioration of domestic conditions in home countries (World Bank/KNOMAD, 2022b). There has also been provisional evidence from Lao People's Democratic Republic, where nearly 70 per cent of 120 returned labour migrants surveyed reported using multiple modes of remittance transfer, including informal money transfer channel (47%) or sending cash via family or friends (11%), vis-à-vis bank transfer (57%) and other official money transfer service (31%) (IOM, 2022d, p.18). The observed reemergence of informal transfer channels in certain corridors, which marks a significant reversal of the conversion to formal channels notably observed during the pandemic, might depress official remittance inflows. Opposite to these observations is the increasing use of formal channels reported in the Republic of Korea–Nepal corridor – mainly attributed to improved accessibility and speed of transfer through money transfer agencies with the proliferation in the number of remittance agencies in the Republic of Korea in recent years.[90]

[90] The Kathmandu Post, "More Nepalis in South Korea are sending remittances through formal channels", 2 May 2023.

Figure 50. Top 10 Asia–Pacific countries with the highest remittance inflows as a share of GDP (2022) (USD billions)



Source: Author's illustration based on from Remittance Inflows Data (November 2022). World Bank/KNOMAD (2022a).

4.1.2 Remittance costs

While remittances serve as economic lifelines for many households and economies worldwide, particularly in the least developed countries, the cost of remittance transactions is often expensive relative to the amounts sent by migrant workers and the income levels of receiving families. World Bank (n.d.) suggests that if the cost of sending remittances could be reduced by 5 percentage points relative to the value sent, remittance recipients in developing countries would receive over USD 16 billion more each year than they do now. For these reasons, the international community has repeatedly called for reducing the cost of remittance transactions. SDG Target 10.c explicitly calls to reduce the average cost of remittance services globally to less than 3 per cent and to enable sending remittances for a total cost of 5 per cent or less in every country-to-country corridor by 2030. Such commitments are echoed by the G20 and the Addis Ababa Plan of Action; the latter urges to address obstacles that hinder remittance flows through lowering transaction costs, providing faster, cheaper, and safer remittance transfers, increasing financial access, providing competitive and transparent market conditions and improving the collection of data.

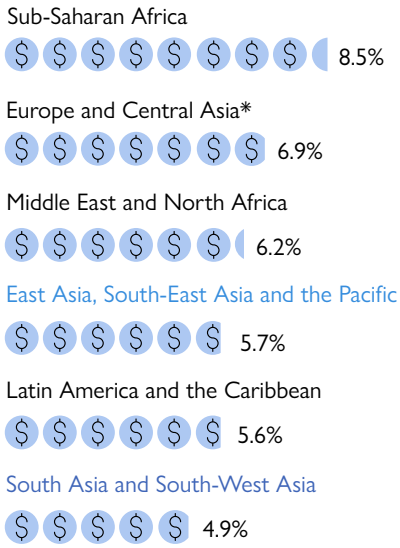
4.1.2.1 Global and regional trends

Average cost

World Bank's Remittance Prices Worldwide dataset includes data for 349 country-to-country remittance transfer corridors as of the third quarter of 2022. The global average cost for sending remittances was recorded at 6.30 per cent, representing a slight increase from 6.01 percent in Q2 2022 (World Bank, 2022a). However, the global average has remained below 7 per cent since Q1 2019, indicating a positive trend in reducing the cost of remittance transactions. The Asia–Pacific region has shown progress in reducing remittance costs, with South and South-West Asia recording the lowest average cost in all regions globally, meeting the 5 per cent commitment (Figure 51). Moreover, East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific saw continued reduction since the third quarter of 2018 – from 7.25 per cent to 5.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2022 (Figure 52). Despite progress, remittance costs across many corridors in the region remain above 10 per cent. Further efforts are required to reduce remittance costs and achieve the SDG target of reducing the average cost of remittance services globally to less than 3 per cent by 2030.

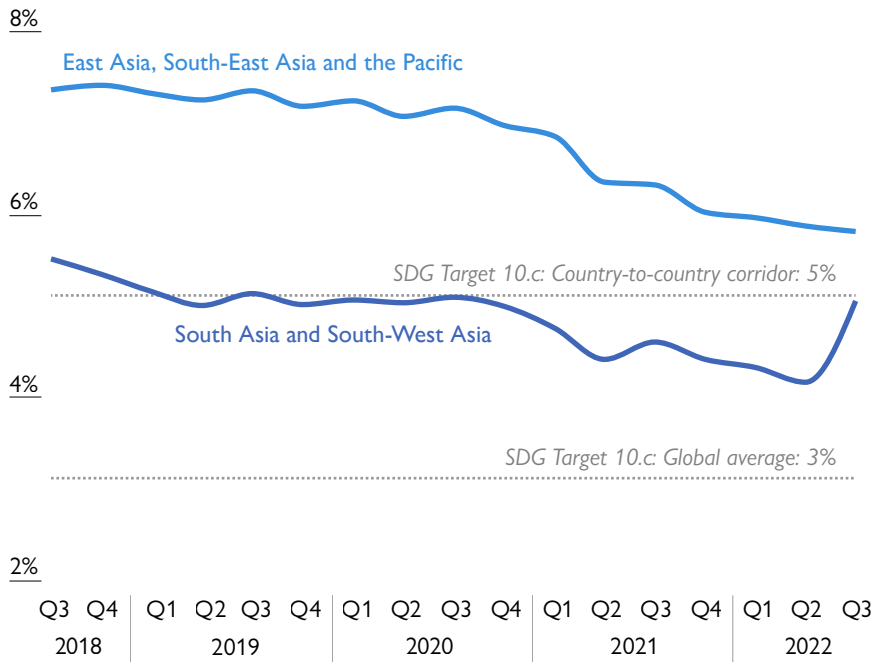
Despite progress, remittance costs across many corridors in the region remain above 10 per cent.

Figure 51. Average cost of sending USD 200 by receiving region in Q3 2022



*Except the Russian Federation

Figure 52. Average cost of sending USD 200 by receiving Asia–Pacific subregions during Q3 2018–2022



Source: Compiled from Remittance Prices Worldwide – Issue 43, September 2022. World Bank (2022a).

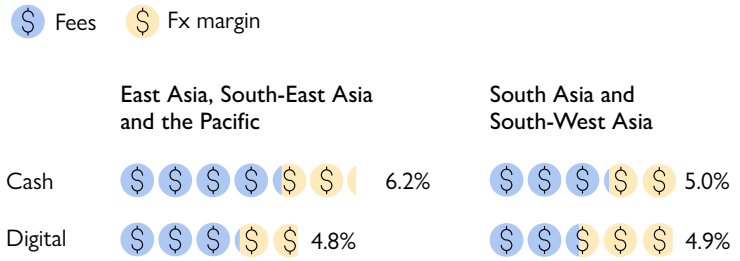
4.1.2.2 Cost breakdown by means of transfer: Cash versus digital

In line with trends reported in IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021 and 2020, the average cost of remittance transactions through digital means is consistently lower than non-digital means, globally as well as in Asia and the Pacific (IOM, 2022b, 2021b). Figure 53 confirms this fact by examining the latest data for the third quarter of 2022 and comparing the costs for remittance services in various subregions of Asia and the Pacific between digital and non-digital remittances. The results show that the average cost for digital remittances was 4.7 per cent versus 6.2 per cent for non-digital remittances in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific, whereas the divide was relatively small in South and South-West Asia as a whole. Figure 53 additionally shows the cost components by breaking down the total cost by means of transfer into two components: fee and foreign exchange margin. While it shows that fees account for a large portion of the costs for remittance services, the size of the foreign exchange margin reflects currency fluctuations.

4.1.2.3 Country-to-country remittance corridor

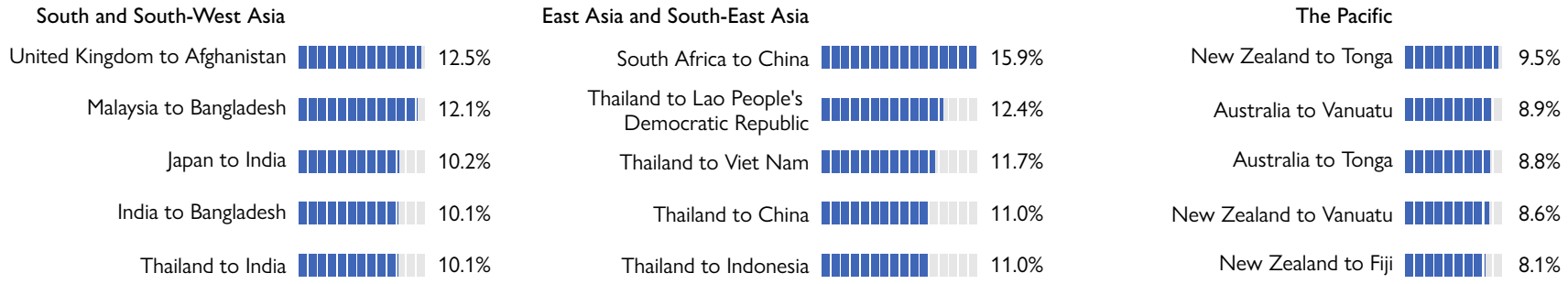
Focusing on country-to-country corridors, World Bank (2022a) reported an increase in the proportion of remittance transfer corridors with an average cost of less than 10 per cent since the first quarter of 2009, with the global average rising from 53 per cent to 81 per cent in the third quarter of 2022. A further analysis is conducted to examine progress in this regard in the Asia–Pacific region using World Bank's Remittance Prices Worldwide Dataset (2022b). Out of 141 corridors involving Asia–Pacific countries as the destination locations and for which data are available, 53 per cent of the corridors have average costs of less than 5 per cent. Figure 54 further highlights the top five most expensive corridors by Asia–Pacific subregions as the receiving end, indicating where needs are most urgent for cost reduction measures. Notably, the top five most expensive corridors across the region for which data are available in the third quarter of 2022 were, in descending order, South Africa–China (15.91%), the United Kingdom–Afghanistan (12.51%), Malaysia–Bangladesh (12.06%), Thailand–Lao People's Democratic Republic (12.39%) and Thailand–Viet Nam (11.73%). It is worth mentioning that all eight corridors where Pacific countries were the receiving end observed in the dataset had costs exceeding 5 per cent. These corridors involve Australia or New Zealand as the sending countries, and Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Tonga as the receiving countries.

Figure 53. Average cost of sending USD 200 by subregion: cash versus digital services (Q3 2022)



Source: Compiled from Remittance Prices Worldwide Quarterly – Issue 43, September 2022. World Bank (2022a).

Figure 54. Top five most expensive corridors for sending remittances to Asia and the Pacific by subregion (Q3 2022)



Source: Author's calculation based on Remittance Prices Worldwide Dataset. World Bank (2022b) (accessed 7 April 2023).
Note: Cost of sending USD 200 or equivalent.

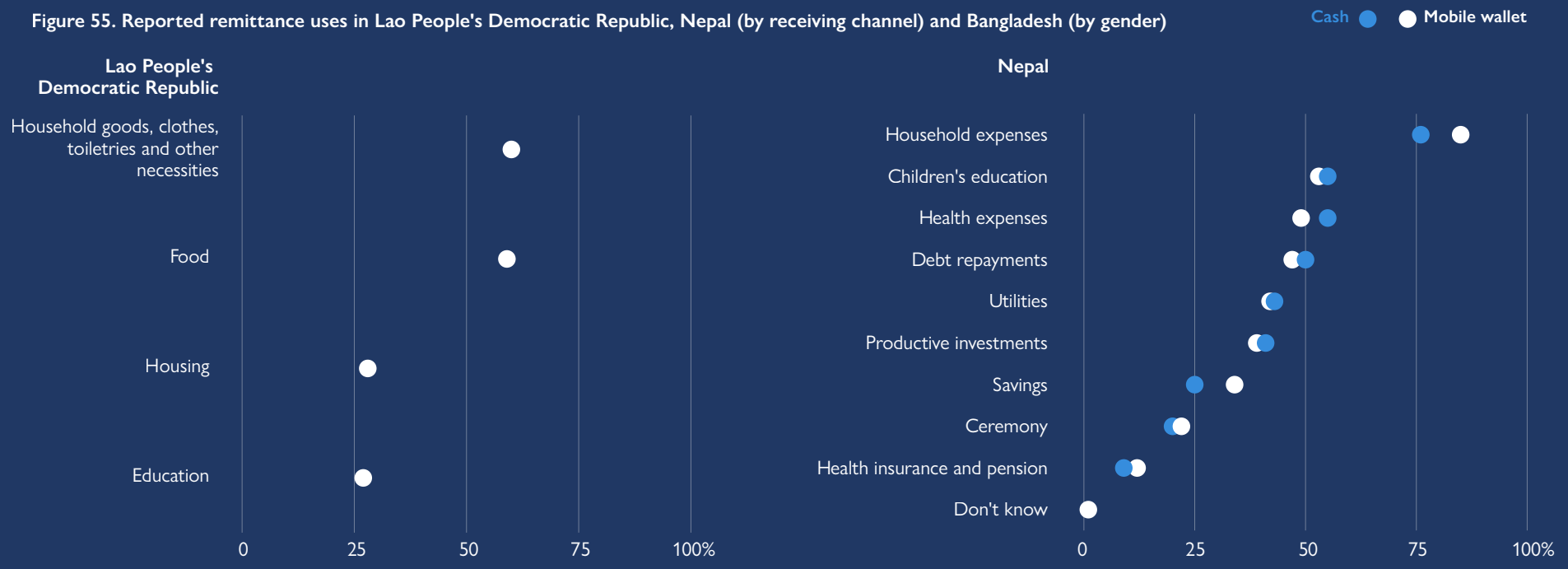
Remittances have played a crucial role in improving migrant households' financial capabilities, supporting their cost of living and access to essential necessities. © IOM 2008/Angelo JACINTO

Snapshot: Beyond the Aggregates: The Developmental Impacts of Remittances

Among the limitations of current remittance data collection, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) (n.d.) drew attention to the status quo that remittance data are mainly reported at a highly aggregated level. This limits the understanding of the key positive impacts of remittances on development outcomes, beyond the conventional focus on measuring remittance volumes (IOM, 2021c, p.39–40). According to provisional findings of national migration data mapping by IOM Asia–Pacific Regional Data Hub for 17 countries[91] n the region, few countries, such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia and the Philippines, collect more granular data on the usage and impact of remittances at the household or recipient level through Government or central bank's surveys, and if they do, most are infrequently conducted on an ad-hoc basis. This observation is echoed by the findings of a benchmarking tool developed by UNCDF since 2021 covering 20 countries globally including two Asia–Pacific countries, namely, Pakistan and the Philippines. Assessing the granularity of collected remittances data, it is found that neither of the two countries collect transaction-level data, subnational data or sex-disaggregated data – although Pakistan does collect information regarding the purpose of transfer (UNCDF, 2023a). As such, much of the more recent information about remittance uses has come from smaller-scale surveys rolled out by other parties, such as academia and international organizations – which help fill the substantial knowledge gap that exists, yet often these surveys have limited sample size and representativeness.

IOM (2022d) conducted a multiple-choice survey in Lao People's Democratic Republic and found that, among 120 returnees, the most commonly reported remittance uses by receiving families were household goods, clothes, toiletries and other necessities (60%), food (59%), housing (28%) and education (27%) (Figure 55). Drawing on 961 and 507 phone surveys with migrants and their families in Nepal and Bangladesh respectively, two recent UNCDF studies (2023b, 2023c) reveal the remittance uses by various groups in these countries. Similar to the finding in Lao People's Democratic Republic mentioned above, in both cases, most used remittances to cover regular household expenses (Figure 55). Other common uses included productive investments such as starting and improving business, children's education, health expenses, utility and energy bill payments, and financial services such as savings and credit. In the case of Nepal, while cash and mobile wallet users spend remittances for similar purposes, 34 per cent of the surveyed wallet users reported savings vis-à-vis only 25 per cent of cash users (UNCDF, 2023b). In the case of Bangladesh, a relatively higher proportion of women recipients use remittances for their children's

Figure 55. Reported remittance uses in Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal (by receiving channel) and Bangladesh (by gender)

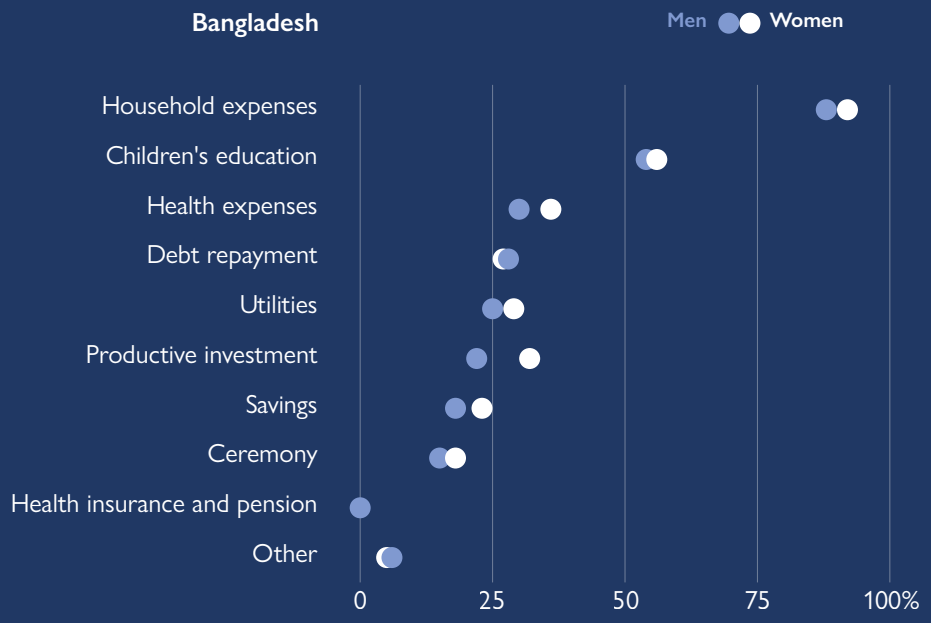


education and to pay back debts, while men tend to use their transfers to start or invest in a business – which was largely attributed to the difference in family structure (UNCDF, 2023c).

Two issues warrant attention when comparing these two cases. First, debt repayment is a more commonly reported use by remittance recipients in Nepal than in Bangladesh – as qualitative interviews with mobile wallet users and agents revealed that loans are often taken to finance intermediary job placement agencies in Nepal, which might be more prevalent than in other countries (UNCDF, 2023b). Second, women represent a smaller proportion vis-à-vis men among mobile wallet users compared to cash users. This gender difference was attributed to both demand- and supply-side constraints. On the demand side, women tend to have lower rates of bank account and mobile phone ownership than men, and lower levels of financial knowledge and literacy, despite a narrowing gap; on the supply side, services may not meet the specific needs of women customers (ibid.)

These findings indicate that remittances, perhaps especially those sent and received through digital channels, contribute to several SDGs, including poverty reduction (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), financial inclusion and inclusive growth (SDG 8) and, through utility bill payments, access to water and sanitation (SDG 6) and energy (SDG 7). The observed potentials of remittances only reinforced the needs for investing in improving data collection to better understand general and group-specific barriers to remittance transfer through digital and formal channels, and for identifying corridors with excessive costs of remittance transfer and recruitment – which are some of the observed hurdles that might depress the amount and effective use of remittances for development. Such an evidence base will enable policy makers and development partners to facilitate the leveraging of remittance flows to stimulate their use towards sustainable development initiatives.

The observed potentials of remittances only reinforced the needs for investing in improving data collection to better understand general and group-specific barriers to remittance transfer through digital and formal channels, and for identifying corridors with excessive costs of remittance transfer and recruitment



[91] Including Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, Viet Nam, Papua New Guinea and Singapore.

Source: Data for Lao People's Democratic Republic were compiled from Flow Monitoring Survey Report 2022, IOM (2022d). Data for Nepal was compiled from Expanding and Digitizing IME Pay's Women and Migrant Customer Base in Nepal: Consumer Archetypes, Research Findings, and Pilot Projects, UNCDF (2023b). Data for Bangladesh was compiled from Uncovering Customer Needs to Improve Remittance Access, Usage and Financial Resilience in Bangladesh: Insights from BRAC Bank, UNCDF (2023c).

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

4.2 Diasporas

As previously stated, remittances are not the only means through which diasporas perform as key development actors in their home countries. The term diaspora comes from the Greek verb diaspeiro, which evocates the act of spreading seeds. Throughout time, conceptualizations of diaspora changed from experiences of forced displacement following a traumatic event (such as the Jewish or Armenian diasporas), to contemporary understanding of both forced and voluntary migration, with a focus on their transnational identity (IOM, 2022e). Although there are several definitions of diaspora, some common notions include (1) dispersion and movement, (2) preservation of group identity, and (3) link with their country of origin (ibid.). In other words, diasporas "identify with a homeland, but live outside of it" (IOM, 2020).

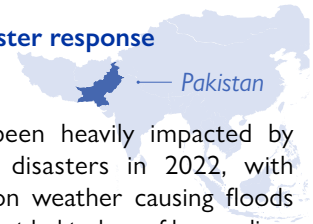
Because of the definition's fluidity, diasporas can include first-generation emigrants, but also their foreign-born children if they maintain a link – which can be cultural, linguistic, historical or affective – to their parents' home country (ibid.). Due to the complexity of the term diaspora and to the transnational nature of diaspora communities, collecting data on diasporas is challenging (ibid.). Policy and institutional frameworks on diaspora engagement are lacking in many countries of the Asia–Pacific region. A study from EUDIF (2021) on diaspora engagement in 12 Pacific countries[92] shows that none of them had an official policy or strategy for diaspora engagement in 2021. Similarly, none of the countries had diaspora communities being represented in the parliament of their country of origin, except for Fiji. Moreover, out of those 12 countries, only Samoa created an institution dedicated to diaspora issues, the Samoa Diaspora Relations Unit (ibid.). In 2022, however, IOM has supported Timor-Leste in designing the Timor-Leste National Diaspora Engagement Policy, aimed at leveraging diaspora contributions to socioeconomic development (Ministry of Finance of Timor-Leste et al., 2022), paving the way for increasing diaspora engagement in the country.

Due to the gap in policy initiatives and frameworks on diaspora in most countries in Asia and the Pacific, data on diaspora engagement in the region is lacking, which constrains a comprehensive understanding of the diaspora's involvement in countries' development. Nevertheless, this section presents recent initiatives and examples of two crucial areas where diasporas are engaging in sustainable development challenges in Asia and the Pacific, namely climate change and health.

4.2.1 Diaspora engagement in disaster response and climate action

Climate change is impacting the lives of people all around the world and represents one of the greatest global challenges. Due to the role climate change has been shown to play for migration and because of the long-lasting consequences natural disasters have on their countries of origin, mostly young diaspora communities are increasingly interested in contributing to environmental activism (Sangster, 2021). Indeed, diaspora groups are known to be key development actors in their countries of origin, and among the first to respond when natural disasters take place there. It is no chance that diaspora youths have a unique perspective on the consequences of climate change and have a set of useful skills and transnational networks helpful to raise awareness and build support across countries (ibid.). Despite these projects being novel, 2022 has seen the creation of several projects related to disaster response and climate change awareness and mitigation with Asian countries' diasporas, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh (IOM, n.d.).

Pakistan: Disaster response and recovery



Pakistan has been heavily impacted by environmental disasters in 2022, with severe monsoon weather causing floods and landslides that led to loss of human lives and infrastructure, and to the displacement of millions of people (DEMAC, 2021). Therefore, the Government of Pakistan has appealed for help from international entities and the Pakistani diaspora to help during the dire emergency in the country (Omurkulova-Ozierska, 2022). Importantly, the Pakistani diaspora is the seventh largest diaspora community in the world, with over nine million members (DEMAC, 2021). This diaspora has contributed to Pakistan's development through financial and non-financial transfers, including humanitarian assistance in the health or education fields (ibid.). Apart from the diaspora's response during the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistani communities abroad largely focused their assistance on humanitarian interventions for sudden onset crises, such as floods and earthquakes (ibid.). For example, the Pakistani diaspora in Australia mobilized resources for the communities affected by the 2022 floods, through social media and crowd-sourcing.[93] Similarly, Pakistani diasporas in the United Kingdom raised one million sterling pounds for flood relief. Donations were destined to volunteer efforts with Pakistan's Red Crescent Society, who distributed food, water and bedding in the country's most affected areas.[94]

IOM United Kingdom launched a project in collaboration with the Pakistani diaspora in the United Kingdom and IOM Pakistan. This project – set out to start in February 2023 – aims at enhancing the local NGOs and diaspora organizations to respond to the vulnerable communities' needs, through an increasing access to effective humanitarian and recovery assistance in flood-affected areas in Pakistan (IOM, 2022f). From a practical perspective, the initiative will be achieved through the Pakistani diaspora organizations' mapping, the use of IOM's DTM data to develop visual tools to inform diasporas and the organization of events to share knowledge with diasporas and identify priorities in the country. All these activities will contribute to the organization of a diaspora coordination network to establish a dialogue between institutional humanitarian actors and local actors in Pakistan (ibid.).

Note: The map on this page is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

92 The 12 countries are: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

93 Australian Broadcasting Corporation, "As Pakistani endures an unprecedented flood, the Australian diaspora swings into action", 22 September 2022

94 The guardian, "Pakistani diaspora groups and UK Charities raise up To £1m for flood relief", 30 August 2022.

Bangladesh Diasporas: Climate Action

IOM United Kingdom launched the Diaspora for Climate Action project. Designated in 2022, this project will run over 24 months, and will enable diaspora members in the United Kingdom to establish connections with a few countries of origin – among which Bangladesh – to ensure a more coordinated response to climate change for climate-vulnerable populations (IOM, n.d.). For example, in November 2022, IOM United Kingdom supported the participation of United Kingdom-based diaspora representatives in key dialogues at COP27 (ibid.). Communities in Bangladesh, indeed, have been significantly impacted by climate change and require effective resource mobilization from several stakeholders including diasporas. This framework allows the diaspora to unlock their potential in speeding up and improving the climate change mitigation and awareness (ibid.)

4.2.2 Medical diaspora

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a major burden on the health systems and health workers worldwide. As front-line workers, health-care workers have experienced increasing pressure since the virus outbreak, which has led to mental and/or physical distress and, in some instances, has made them to leave their job altogether (IOM, 2021d). As a result, many countries experienced health workforce shortages. The challenges the pandemic imposed, however, not only impact potentially burned-out health workers, but also patients, through the interruption of essential medical services. In this context, diaspora engagement to support countries' COVID-19 response has been crucial (ibid.). Policymakers have acknowledged the vital role medical diasporas, namely physicians who are part of their home country's diaspora, play in their home country's health workforce capacity and, therefore, in its overall development (Frehywot et al., 2019). The diaspora's contribution to the health sector consists not only of remittances spent on health-care needs, but also on the use of their expertise in the country through trainings, skills circulation and even virtual assistance during medical operations (Taslakian et al., 2022).

Several medical diasporas from Asia and the Pacific offer medical support both in their home countries and abroad. Among these, there are the Nepalese Doctors' Association in the United Kingdom (NDA UK), the America Nepal Medical Foundation–Nepal, the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origins (AAPI), the Bangladesh Medical Association of North America (MBANA), and the Syrian American Medical Society Foundation (SAMS). Among the most well-established medical diaspora groups, there is also the Afghan Medical Professionals Association of America (AMPAA). The AMPAA is a charitable organization that unites Afghan health-care professionals. AMPAA aims at providing medical education, medical assistance and care for all people both in the United States and in Afghanistan (AMPAA, n.d.). More specifically, AMPAA offers diverse types of services, among which telemedicine opportunities, career counselling for Afghan refugees, cultural competency training for medical providers, and public health information for refugees. In more practical terms, one of their projects consisted in preparing newly arrived Afghan medical professionals for re-entry into the medical field in the United States, while another one focused on the mental health of Afghan refugees arriving in the United States (ibid.).

Diaspora engagement to support countries' COVID-19 response has been crucial.

IOM Afghanistan's Mobile Health Teams and Rapid Response Teams provide a wide range of primary health services for mobile, displaced, hard-to-reach populations, host communities and returnees in Herat province with a focus on outbreak preparedness and response including for measles, cholera, tuberculosis, malaria and COVID-19 alongside MHPSS services. © IOM 2021

4.3 Discussion

While remarkable resilience in remittance flows to Asia and the Pacific was generally observed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (IOM, 2021b, 2022b), various downside risks, including the global economic slowdown and several national crises, add to the uncertainty during the ongoing transition towards the post-pandemic future. Furthermore, the analysis documents diverging trends in the use of formal remittance channels across the region, which sheds light on some key drivers that can steer the outlook of the use of the various remittance channels. The reported observations in certain corridors of increasing preference for informal channels might indicate a reversal of the progress made during the pandemic in transitioning to formal remittance transfer channels. In contrast, specific corridors have witnessed a surge in the adoption of formal remittance channels, demonstrating the gains that can be achieved by facilitating transfer through formal channels, such as by improving accessibility.

Such contrasting observations point to the importance of the development of support policies to mitigate the negative implications of these potential risks for remittances and eliminating existing barriers. These implications could increase the vulnerabilities of households in countries of origin dependent on this income. At the country level, risk management and efforts to keep remittances flowing is relevant. This is particularly the case for countries where external debt is high, as remittance flows are now a key consideration in the assessment of debt and financial sustainability of developing nations (World Bank/KNOMAD, n.d.). Such efforts will include continued commitments to reduce remittance cost in all corridors, such as by improving the remittance markets through an adapted legal and regulatory framework (IFAD, n.d.), in accordance with SDG Target 10.c and Objective 20 of the Global Compact for Migration in promoting faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and fostering financial inclusion of migrants. The observed group differences in digital remittances, such as by gender, also point to potential measures to facilitate access to bank accounts, financial services, free or low-cost training on financial inclusion, financial literacy and remittance transfer systems specifically targeted to the needs of migrant women (UN-WOMEN, n.d.) and other groups that lag behind. Overall, financial inclusion and literacy for remittance recipient families can increase opportunities for formal savings and investment, which can in turn build the human capital of remittance families and improve their living standards through better education, health and housing (IFAD, n.d.).

The role diasporas play in the country of origin is increasingly gaining momentum in the migration and development dimension, among others. Indeed, diasporas' knowledge of local customs and traditions, as well as their in-depth understanding of ongoing conflicts, give them a comparative advantage over NGOs and aid agencies. Although diaspora members contribute differently to countries' development, their transnational networks and ability to pull together significant financial resources enable them to collectively have positive impacts on their countries of origin. Diasporas' influence on different development areas of a region, such as economy, health and climate change awareness are crucial to contribute to SDG Target 10.7, which aims to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. Although there is increasing awareness of diasporas' contribution in Asia–Pacific countries, major gaps remain in data on the size and profile of diaspora communities as well as their contributions at the national and regional levels. Such gaps require collective efforts in data collection to contribute to a better understanding and systematization of diasporas' potential for development.

The improvement of the availability, timeliness and granularity of data collection undoubtedly go hand in hand with the ongoing international and national efforts to optimize the developmental impacts of remittances, and more broadly, diasporas and migration. In line with SDG Target 17.16, enhancing the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multistakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, is important to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries, in particular developing countries. For instance, the remittance market is increasingly fragmented, with many diverse provider types; however, UNCDF's collaboration with private companies to use the wealth of transaction data to better understand the needs of remittance senders and recipients serves as a good example of multistakeholder partnership for such purpose. Regulators and central banks have also acknowledged that the way they think about remittances data is changing, and there is a growing need for detailed insights and data driven systems (UNCDF, n.d.). The quest for more granular data drawing on multisectoral partnerships, innovative data and technology applies also in the broader context of migration and development, where many links and areas remain underexplored to provide a comprehensive understanding of the full potentials of migration and diasporas. Such improved understanding ultimately echoes with Objective 19 of the Global Compact for Migration, which calls for creating conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries.

Financial inclusion and literacy for remittance recipient families can increase opportunities for formal savings and investment, which can in turn build the human capital of remittance families and improve their living standards through better education, health and housing.

The Kutupalong refugee camp near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. © IOM 2017/Muse MOHAMMED

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The lives of Afghan women have drastically changed since August 2021 as they endure increasing restrictions on movement, education and the right to work. © IOM 2021/Paula BRONSTEIN

05 Migration and Policy

5.Migration and Policy

In this chapter

SDG Target

Global Compact for Migration Objective

MGI Domain

Safe, orderly and regular migration

5.1 Policy and Governance: Migrant Rights

According to the latest estimates, approximately 281 million migrants worldwide currently reside outside their country of birth (IOM, 2021). While migration represents an empowering experience for many, it is also a human process involving the, often vulnerable, movement of people, which includes violation of migrant rights in transit, at international borders and in countries of destination. Migrants are not inherently vulnerable but can be vulnerable to human rights violations as result of policy and practice (KNOMAD, 2015), as reflected by reported incidents of migrant rights violations discussed in Section 3.1.

The international legal framework on human rights establishes that everyone within the State's jurisdiction holds universal human rights, including migrants and their families (IPU et al., 2015). Consequently, migrant rights are not isolated from the rights of others, be their status regular or irregular. While there are limitations on some rights that migrants are entitled to in international law, such as political rights – the right to vote or stand in elections – there are no limitations on their human rights. Such rights include the right to life, the right to freedom from slavery, force or compulsory labour and torture, the right to education, health and cultural identity, and the right to be treated as persons everywhere before the law (ibid.).

Migrant access to rights may be assessed by measuring the rights granted to migrants both in principle and in practice (IOM, 2022a). On the one hand, measuring migrant rights in principle can involve examining the ratification and signature[95] of international core human rights treaties, bi- and multilateral agreements, and adoption of domestic laws to respect, protect and fulfil migrant rights. On the other hand, measuring migrant rights in practice requires verifying that migrant rights are implemented, upheld and exercised by looking into frameworks that establish qualitative and quantitative rights indicators to measure the implementation of migrant rights (ibid.).

While various means to measure migrant rights are available (ibid.), this chapter mainly focuses on specific means that provide updated data for 2022. This section first looks at migrant rights in principle by reviewing the ratification status of core international human rights treaties among Asia–Pacific countries. Second, it reviews migrant rights in practice by analysing the Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI), which sheds light on the level of engagement of Asia–Pacific countries with core human rights committees in implementing pathways for migrant rights. Additionally, the chapter examines the latest Migration Governance Indicators data in line with the Global Compact for Migration Objectives to outline available governance structures in the Asia–Pacific region that protect human rights in the context of migration. This analysis is complemented by an expert contribution from Roberto Roca Paz, Adriana Vides and Andrea Milan, team members of IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC). Their contribution delves into migration data governance by specifically focusing on SDG Indicator 10.7.2 and IOM's Migration Governance Indicators (MGI).

[95] When a State ratifies one of the international human rights treaties, it assumes a legal obligation to implement the rights recognized in that treaty.

5.1.1 In Principle: Core human rights treaties and migration

Following the crimes perpetrated during the Second World War, the international community saw the need to establish an international system of binding human rights protection, ensuring that such crime would never be repeated. As a result, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Its Articles 1 and 2 famously describe the idea of fundamental human rights to all people:

> *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. […]*

Source: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations General Assembly resolution 217A (III), 10 December 1948, Articles 1 and 2. (UNGA, 1948).

Seventy years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted, the international human rights treaty system has continued to grow with the adoption of new human rights treaty bodies. As of today, nine core international human rights treaties set the standards for protecting and promoting human rights to which States can pledge by becoming party members or State parties (OHCHR, 2012). Treaties may be complemented by optional protocols that impose additional legal obligations on States that choose to accept them. Optional protocols allow to address a specific issue in the original treaty or a new or emerging concern and add a procedure for the operation and enforcement of the treaty (ibid.). It is important to highlight that migrant rights, by virtue of migrants' humanity, are explicitly set in the core international human rights treaties and their optional protocols (Table 4).

When a country accepts a treaty through ratification, accession or succession, it assumes an accountable obligation – in principle – to implement the rights recognized in the treaty (ibid.) (see the snapshot below). Most of the treaties and their optional protocols mentioned in Table 4 have seen a substantial number of ratifications in the past years, many of them widely ratified by States. Importantly, since the core human rights are also migrant rights, as of February 2023, all States have ratified at least two of the 18 core human rights treaties, and their associated optional protocols and over 80 per cent have ratified nine or more (OHCHR, 2023a). When looking at the Asia–Pacific region, similarly to the worldwide ratification status, all countries have consented to be legally bound to at least two human rights treaties and their option protocols (Figure 56). In other words, all countries in the Asia–Pacific region recognize migrant rights through the ratification of core human rights treaties.

Snapshot: Ratification, accession or succession of a core human right treaty

Upon **ratification**, which must be preceded by signature, the State becomes legally bound to the rights recognized by treaty. Generally, there is no time limit within which a State is requested to ratify a treaty that it has signed. Once a State has ratified a treaty at the international level, it must give effect to it domestically.

Accession is the act whereby a State that has not signed a treaty expresses its consent to become a party to that treaty by depositing an "instrument of accession" with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Succession only takes place if a State, which is a party to a treaty, has undergone a major constitutional transformation which raises some doubt as to whether the original expression of consent to be bound is still valid.

Source: Fact Sheet No. 30 (Rev. 1): The United Nations Human Rights Treaty System. OHCHR (2012).

Table 4. International Core Human Rights Treaties and their associated optional protocols that grant rights to migrants by virtue of migrants' humanity

1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)

1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-OP1), 1966
- Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (ICCPR-OP2), 1989

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

- Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR-OP), 2008

1979 **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (OP CEDAW), 1999

1984 **Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)**

- Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT), 2002

1989 **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP-CRC-AC), 2000
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OP-CRC-SC), 2000
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (OP-CRC-IC), 2011

1990 **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW)**

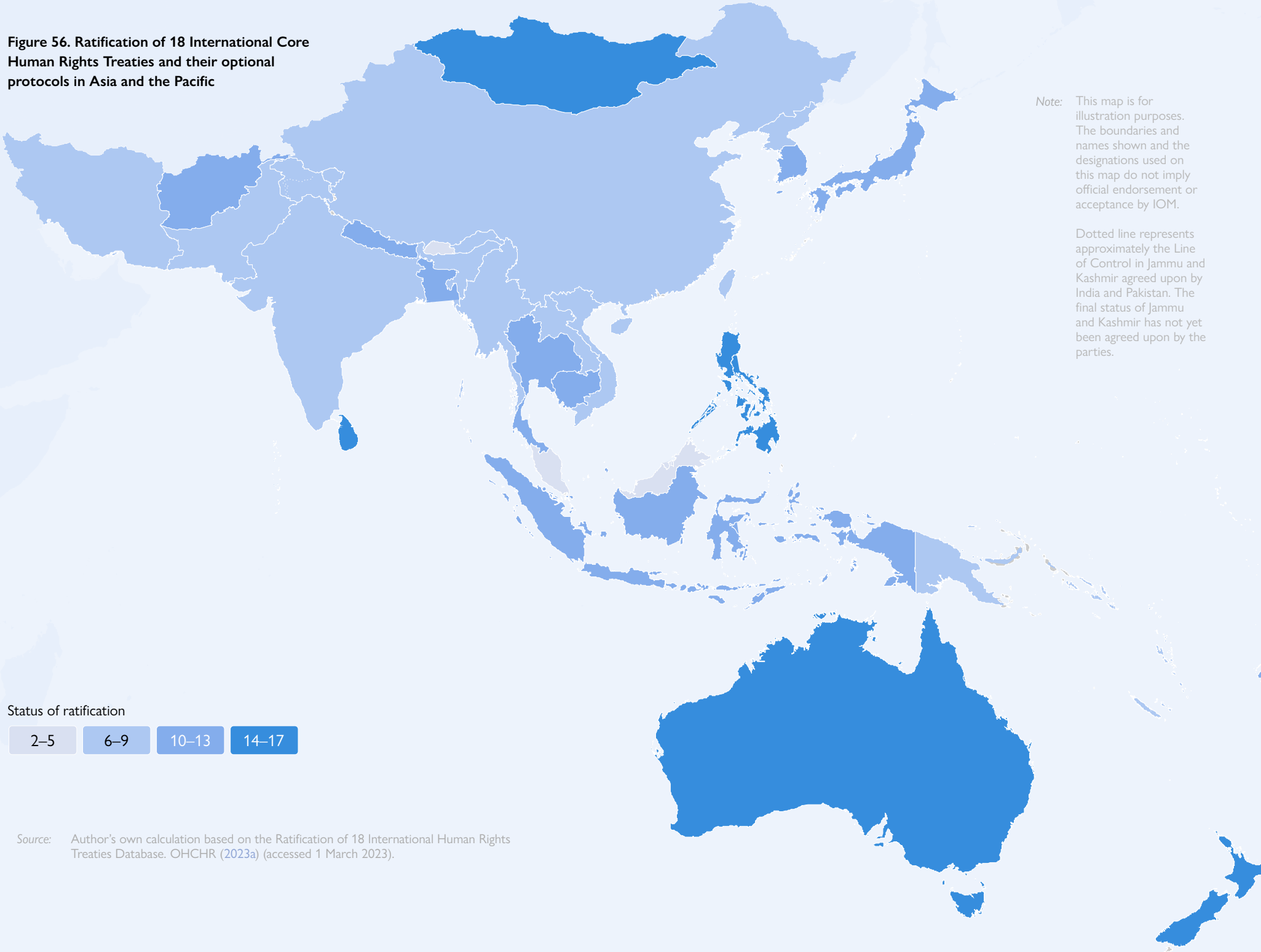
2006 **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD)**

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (OP-CRPD), 2006

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICED)

Source: Fact Sheet No. 30 (Rev. 1): The United Nations Human Rights Treaty System. OHCHR (2012).

Figure 56. Ratification of 18 International Core Human Rights Treaties and their optional protocols in Asia and the Pacific

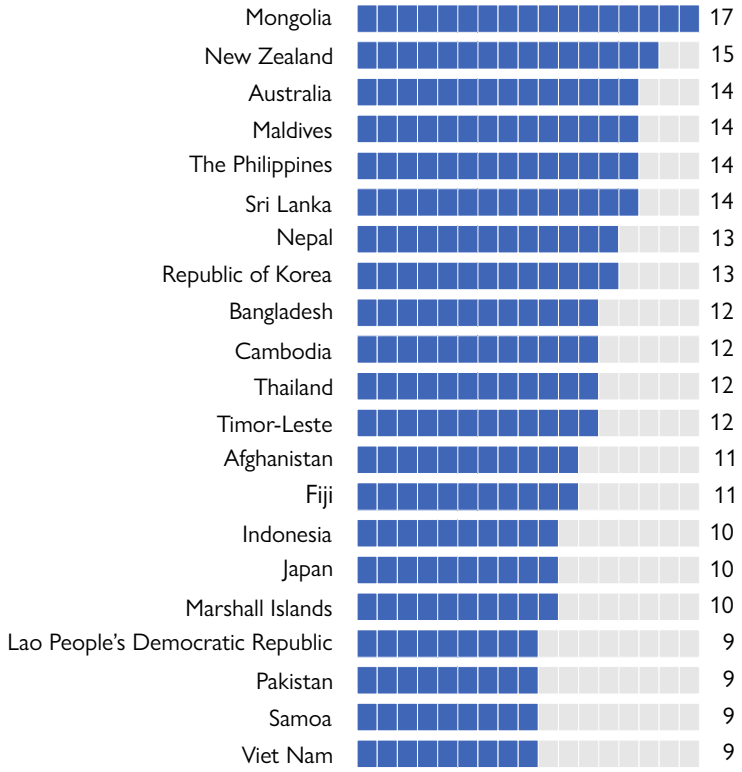


Note: This map is for illustration purposes. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

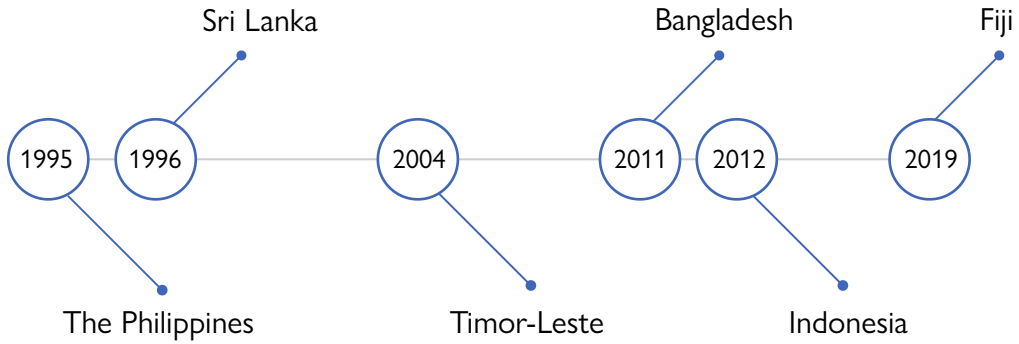
Source: Author's own calculation based on the Ratification of 18 International Human Rights Treaties Database. OHCHR (2023a) (accessed 1 March 2023).

Figure 57. Asia–Pacific countries with the highest number of ratified International Core Human Rights Treaties



Source: Author's own calculation based on the Ratification of 18 International Human Rights Treaties Database. OHCHR (2023a) (accessed 1 March 2023).

Figure 58. Ratifying Asia–Pacific countries to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families



Source: Author's own calculation based on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families Status of Ratification Database. OHCHR (2023b) (accessed 7 March 2023).

Mongolia occupies the first place with 17 ratified treaties and associated optional protocols, followed by New Zealand with 15 and Australia, the Maldives, the Philippines and Sri Lanka with 14 treaties ratified each (Figure 57). In the case of Mongolia, since the 90s, the country has experienced a smooth transition to a peaceful democracy and has pledged to almost all core human rights treaties. The country has set up institutional mechanisms to meet the commitments under international norms and standards in order to protect the rights of all populational groups (United Nations Mongolia, 2022). Although the country is not a State party of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Government of Mongolia has prioritized migration by including the protection of migrants' rights in the national development agenda and SDG achievement agenda (IOM, 2022b). Additionally, according to United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023–2027 for Mongolia, by 2027, people in urban and rural areas, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, will equally realize their full human potential and benefit from an inclusive and "more cohesive society with increased respect for and realization of gender equality and human rights, including migrant rights" (United Nations Mongolia, 2022, p.68).

While all core human rights treaties outlined in this section recognized migrant rights, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families directly oversees migration, particularly at labour migration. The Convention states that migrant workers are to be treated equally to nationals with regard to economic, social and cultural rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1990). For example, the right to freedom (Article 12), employment conditions (Article 25), social security (Article 27), access to health care (Article 28) and access to education (Article 30) are specifically mentioned as areas where equally should be guaranteed (ibid.). As of February 2023, 58 countries worldwide have become members or State parties to the Convention (OHCRH, 2023b). Only six countries have ratified the Convention in Asia and the Pacific region, with Fiji being the latest one to become a State party in 2019 (Figure 58).

5.1.2 In practice: Observations and recommendations to core human rights treaties

Complying with legal obligation to a core human rights treaty is only the first step in achieving the implementation of human rights. Recognizing rights on paper does not guarantee that such rights will be enjoyed in practice. Thus, each of the treaties mentioned in Table 4, are composed of committees of independent experts – or Treaty Bodies – who are responsible for monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties to which States have acceded. All Treaty Bodies are required to review reports submitted regularly by State parties detailing how the rights are being implemented at the national level (Lyons, 2021).[96]

Once the State party submits the initial report, a dialogue is held between the State party and the Treaty Body where implementation of human rights treaties is discussed more broadly. According to the OHCHR, the "notion of constructive dialogue reflects the fact that Treaty Bodies are not jurisdictional bodies, but were created to monitor the implementation of treaties and provided encouragement and advice to States" (OHCHR, 2012, p.28).

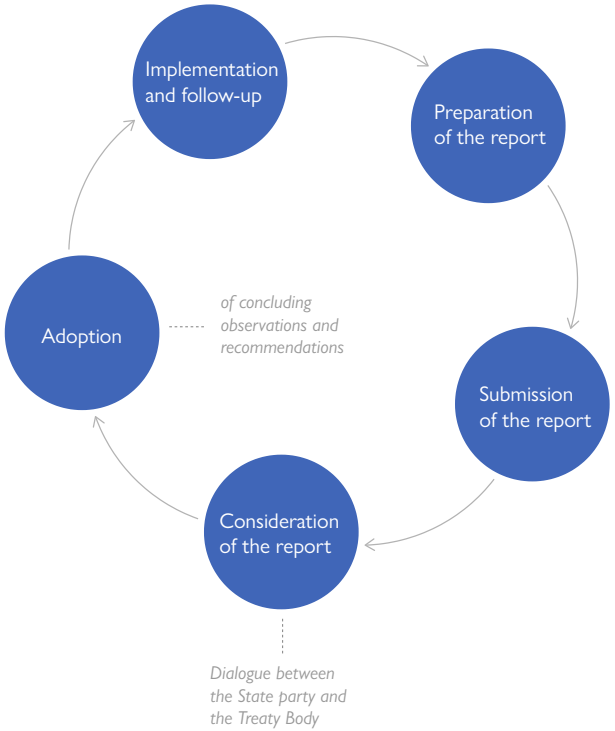
A list of concluding observations and recommendations is provided from the constructive dialogue between the State party and the Treaty Body. The concluding observations and recommendations provide practical guidance to the State party and encouragement on further steps to implement the rights stipulated in the treaty. In its concluding observations, a Treaty Body will acknowledge the positive steps taken by the State party, but also identify areas of concern that need more attention to give full effect to the treaty's provisions (ibid.). Concluding observations and recommendations resulting from the dialogue between State parties and the Treaty Body are made public at the end of the session, in which they are adopted to inform the public debate on how to move forward and achieve the implementation of rights established in each treaty (ibid.).

The adoption of concluding observations and recommendations brings the report to a close, but the process does not end there. Treaty Bodies have begun to introduce procedures to ensure effective follow-up to their concluding observations and recommendations. Treaty Bodies request States parties to submit further reports – or periodic reports – detailing the State's efforts to implement the recommendations contained in the previous concluding observations. The OHCHR acknowledges that Treaty Bodies "have no means of enforcing their recommendations. Nevertheless, most States take the reporting process seriously, and the committees have proved successful in raising concerns relating to the implementation of the treaties in many States" (ibid., p.29).

As explained in Section 5.1.1, migrant rights are explicitly set in the core international human rights treaties and their optional protocols (Table 4). Therefore, observations and recommendations adopted by Treaty Bodies and State parties for implementing core human rights also recognize the implementation of migrant rights and their monitoring.

[96] The reporting procedure represents an opportunity for States to conduct a comprehensive review of measures taken to (1) regularize domestic law and policy with the international human rights treaties; (2) monitor progress regarding the promotion of enjoyment or treaty rights; (3) identify challenges in the implementation of treaties; and (4) assess needs and aims regarding the implementation of the treaty and develop policies to achieve such rights.

Figure 59. Process of implementation of human rights standards by Treaty bodies and State parties

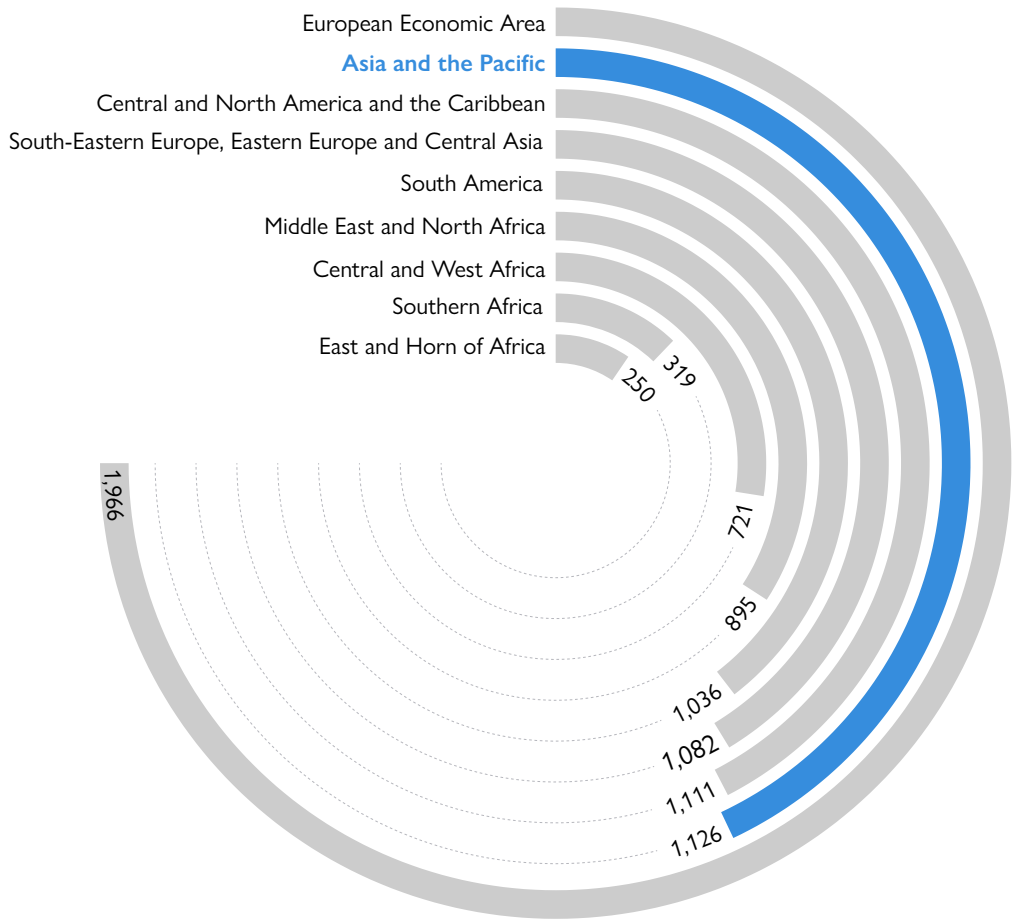


Source: Fact Sheet No. 30 (Rev. 1): The United Nations Human Rights Treaty System. OHCHR (2012).

While concluding observations and recommendations provide pathways for the achievement of migrant rights, they also indicate the level of engagement between State parties and Treaty Bodies in the implementation of such rights. As explained before, concluding observations and recommendations are the result of an all-embracing process of reporting, reviewing and dialoguing between Treaty Bodies and States, with States' initiation to review and report rights implementation at the national level as the prerequisite (O'Flaherty, 2006; Lyons, 2021). In this regard, having a higher or lower number of published observations and recommendations may not necessarily reflect a better or worse migrant rights fulfilment but the extent of State parties' engagement with human rights committees in implementing and granting rights.

The Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI) provides a complete record of country-specific observations and recommendations issued by human rights monitoring mechanisms, including Treaty Bodies.[97] The UHRI database allows disaggregation by country, treaty, human rights themes and concerned persons and groups, including migrants.[98] Based on the available data provided by the UHRI, between 2006 and 2022,[99] over 1,120 observations and recommendations on migrant rights resulting from the dialogue between State parties from the Asia–Pacific region and Treaty Bodies have made public, placing the region second with the highest number of published observations and recommendations on the implementation of migrant rights after the European Economic Area (Figure 60).

Figure 60. Number of published observations and recommendations on the implementation of migrant rights by region between 2006 and 2022



Source: Author's own calculation based on the Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI). OHCHR (n.d.) (accessed 7 March 2023).

Note: Data available for nine core human rights treaties and two optional protocols (CRC-OP-AP and CRC-OP-SC).

[97] Other human rights monitoring mechanisms include the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. For this section, only observations and recommendations issued by Treaty Bodies will be considered.

[98] Other concern groups include internally displaced persons (IDPs), non-citizens, refugees and asylum-seekers, and stateless persons. For the purpose of this analysis, only the group "migrants" was used as a concern group.

[99] Data on published observations and recommendations by Asia–Pacific State parties of core human rights treaties is available from 2006.

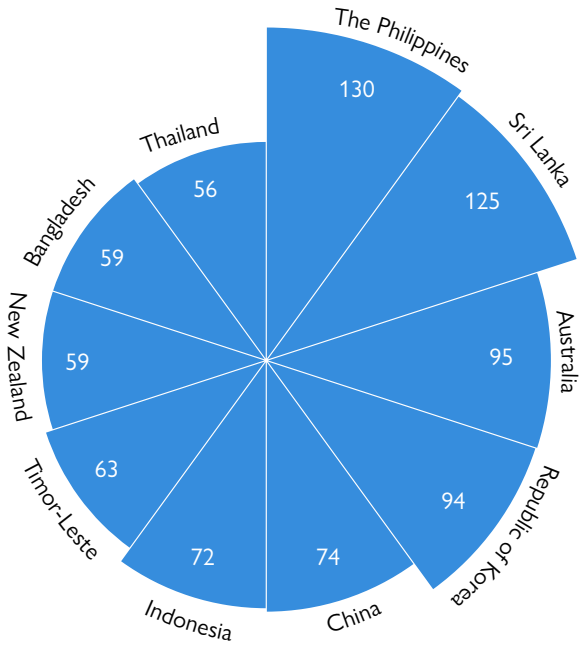
At the country level, the Philippines (130) and Sri Lanka (125) had the largest number of published observations and recommendations on the implementation of migrant rights the Asia–Pacific region between 2006 and 2022, followed by Australia, the Republic of Korea, China, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, New Zealand and Thailand (in descending order) (Figure 61). Notably, most of the observations and recommendations published by Asia–Pacific countries are directly related to implementing the provisions established in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Figure 62).

In 2022 alone, 58 observations and recommendations were published by 10 Asia–Pacific countries, of which 40 per cent were on the implementation of migrant rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Figure 63). Thailand (12) was the country with the highest number of published observations and recommendations in 2022, followed by Singapore (9), the Republic of Korea (7), Cambodia (6) and Bangladesh (6).

As mentioned before, having a higher number of published observations and recommendations does not necessarily signify a higher level of rights implementation, but it allows us to understand the degree of compromise between human rights committees and State parties in implementing and granting rights to migrants.

In the Asia–Pacific region, governments have demonstrated a noteworthy commitment to reporting and dialogue for the implementation and monitoring of core human rights of migrants. This suggests that the region has made some progress in advancing migrant rights, but further efforts are needed to ensure that all migrant workers enjoy their full range of human rights, as guaranteed by international law.

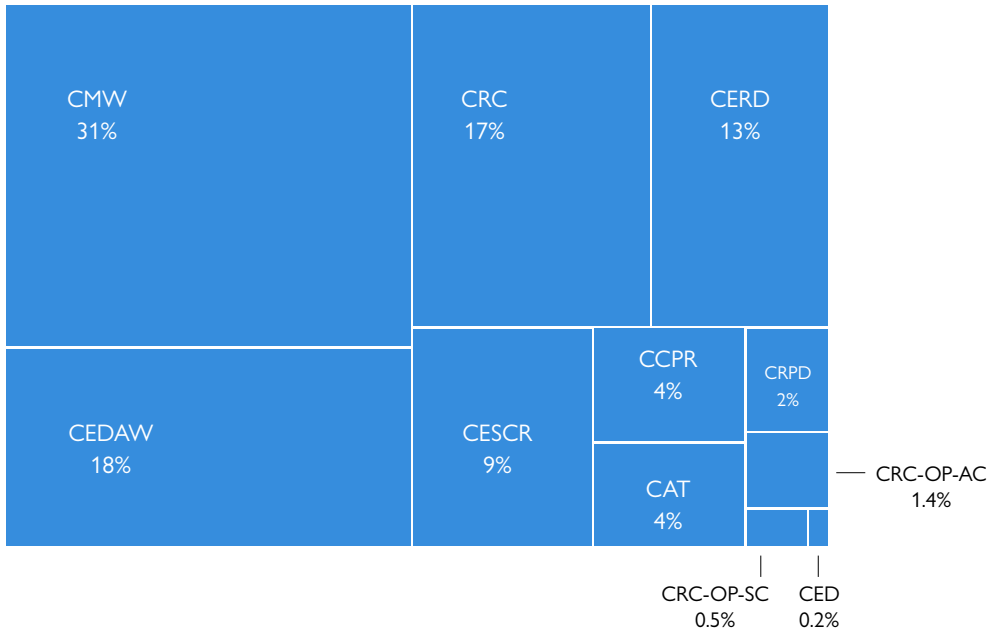
Figure 61. Top 10 Asia–Pacific countries with the largest number of published observations and recommendations on the implementation of migrant rights between 2006 and 2022



Source: Author's own calculation based on the Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI). OHCHR (n.d.) (accessed 7 March 2023).

Note: Data available for nine core human rights treaties and two optional protocols (CRC-OP-AP and CRC-OP-SC).

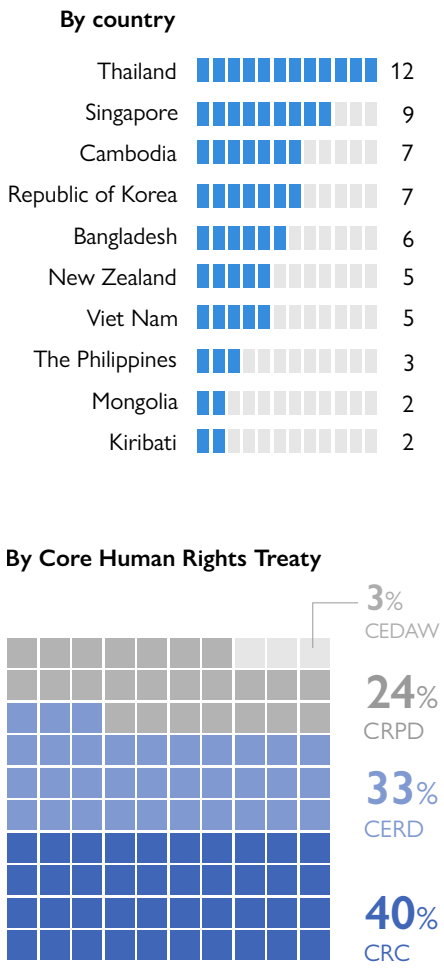
Figure 62. Percentage of published observations and recommendations by Core Human Rights Treaties between 2006 and 2022



Source: Author's own calculation based on the Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI). OHCHR (n.d.) (accessed 7 March 2023).

Note: See Table 4 for core human right treaties acronyms. Data is available for nine core human rights treaties and two optional protocols (CRC-OP-AP and CRC-OP-SC).

Figure 63. Observations and recommendations published in the Asia–Pacific region by country and Core Human Rights Treaty in 2022



Source: Author's own calculation based on the Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI). OHCHR (n.d.) (accessed 7 March 2023).
Note: See Table 4 for core human right treaties acronyms.


Returning migrant worker reading information on safe migration during IOM training. © IOM 2022

5.1.3 Migration governance indicators, Global Compact for Migration and migrant rights

The measuring of migrant rights in practice remains a challenging task (IOM, 2022a). As seen in the previous section, the number of concluding observations and recommendations adopted by Treaty Bodies and State parties only provides a partial reflection of States' involvement in the implementation of migrant rights. Nevertheless, the inclusion of migration-related issues in the SDGs, together with the establishment of the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) in 2015 and the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018, may lead to a better means of measuring the State compliance with international legal obligations in the context of migration (ibid.).

The MGI is a tool created by IOM and grounded in SDG Target 10.7 in which Member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people. The MGI process assesses migration governance at the national and local levels through a set of questions[100] divided into six domains, being migrant rights one of the domains of migration governance measured (IOM, 2019). Indicators in this domain assess the extent to which migrants have the same status as citizens regarding access to basic social services such as health, education and social security. The ratification of the main international conventions is also included within this domain (ibid.).

The Global Compact for Migration covers all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner (IOM, 2020). Similar to the MGI, the Global Compact for Migration, which has 23 objectives (see Annex II) and is based on 10 guiding principles, including human rights principles, is also consistent with SDG Target 10.7. By implementing the Global Compact for Migration, Member States ensure "effective respect for and protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, across all stages of the migration cycle" (United Nations General Assembly, 2019, p.5).

> *The MGI can be a valuable methodology to inform countries' implementation of each of the 23 Global Compact for Migration commitments, including those with a particular focus on migrant rights.*

Given that both the MGI and the Global Compact for Migration objectives are framed within SDG Target 10.7, it is possible to point out a direct correspondence between these two frameworks (IOM, 2022c). As a result, the MGI can be a valuable methodology to inform countries' implementation of each of the 23 Global Compact for Migration commitments, including those with a particular focus on migrant rights. The latest IOM Baseline Report on MGI data and the Global Compact for Migration looks at this relationship by analysing global, regional and thematic trends that emerge from national-level MGI data in relation to each of the 23 Global Compact for Migration objectives.

The data were collected between 2016 and 2021 for 84 countries (MGI countries) that voluntarily conducted an MGI assessment and for which data were readily available as of March 2022.[101] In this regard, findings on MGI countries from the Asia–Pacific region[102] showed the existence of governance structures and measures to protect the rights of migrants. Table 5 shows some of the correlations that emerged from the analysis between MGI data and the Global Compact for Migration objectives that mainly focus on protecting and implementing human rights in the context of migration.

100 The MGI methodology is updated yearly based on lessons learned from its implementation. As of May 2023, the MGI methodology consists of a total of 98 questions.

101 For more information about the MGI data collection exercise, please refer to the Methodology section outlined in the report.

102 Nineteen countries from the Asia–Pacific region participated in the MGI assessments. The definition of Asia and the Pacific used is based on the United National regional definition. It includes, in addition to IOM's definition, Bahrain, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan.

Table 5. Assessment of Asia–Pacific countries' progress towards Global Compact for Migration Objectives based on Regional MGI data

Global Compact for Migration Objective	Rationale[103]	Regional results based on MGI data
Objective 1. Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies 	Policymakers need timely, reliable, accessible, and comparable data on international migration to manage migration effectively and protect the rights of migrants. Migration data should be disaggregated (e.g. by sex) and include information on the economic impacts of migration.	Almost one third of Asia–Pacific countries (32%) participating in the assessment regularly collect and publish migration data disaggregated by sex outside the census. Additionally, the national census includes a module on migration in 60 per cent of them.
Objective 3. Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration 	Accurate and timely information and predictability are essential for facilitating regular migration and reducing vulnerabilities in the migration process, as it empowers migrants to gain access to services and enjoy their rights.	Close to three quarters (74%) of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region have communication systems in place for the population to receive information on the evolving nature of the crisis, including a way for the public to communicate their needs to governments.
Objective 4. Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation 	Fulfilling the commitments on proof of legal identity, accurate and timely information, and predictability is essential for facilitating regular migration and reducing vulnerabilities in the migration process, as it empowers migrants to exercise their human rights effectively.	Eighty-four per cent of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region collect data on their nationals living abroad, although in many cases, data are based on voluntary reporting from nationals.
Objective 6. Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work 	The pandemic underscored the crucial contributions of migrant workers, who account for most international migrants, and exploitative practices against them, highlighting the importance of protecting migrant workers and recognizing their skills.	Thirty-seven per cent of Asia–Pacific countries that participated in the MGI assessment have measures to promote the ethical recruitment of migrant workers. Also, another 44 per cent developed mechanisms to protect the rights of their nationals working abroad and 40 per cent have measures to combat labour exploitation.
Objective 7. Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration 	There is a need to analyse the risk and protective factors that contribute to the vulnerability or resilience of migrants and to develop a more nuanced understanding of the risk of violence, exploitation, abuse and rights violations.	Over half (53%) of MGI countries from the Asia–Pacific region reported having contingency plans in place to manage large-scale population movements in times of crisis. Also, almost one third (32%) of countries reported having measures to make exceptions to immigration procedures for migrants from countries in crisis.

Global Compact for Migration Objective	Rationale[103]	Regional results based on MGI data
Objective 11. Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner 	States are urged to comply with their international obligations at borders and along migratory routes and to safeguard human rights, counteracting the erosion of humane and rights-based border management systems and deterrence-based approaches.	Almost 60 per cent of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region have a dedicated body tasked with integrated border control and security. In addition, 53 per cent of Asia–Pacific countries provided regular and specific training on migration to their border staff. This training, which may cover language courses and gender and cultural aspects, is provided on an ad hoc basis in 37 per cent of countries from the region.
Objective 12. Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral 	Clear rules and procedures are equally crucial for re-establishing predictable pathways for admission, stay and work, for return and readmission and for safeguarding rights, including at borders.	Eighty-four per cent of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region have a formal system allowing the application for specific visa types prior to arrival. It is important to highlight that Asia and the Pacific is the region with the highest percentage of countries where visas can be obtained only on arrival.
Objective 15. Provide access to basic services for migrants 	Well-managed migration, equal rights for migrants in accessing health care and social services, and responsive systems geared to meet migrants' health needs within established policies produce positive health and migration outcomes.	In almost one third (31%) of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region, migrants have equal access as nationals to all health services, regardless of their migration status, while equal access in 32 per cent of the Asia–Pacific countries is contingent on the migrant's legal status. Also, migrants are guaranteed equal access as nationals to education services, regardless of their migration status, in 37 per cent of countries.
Objective 23. Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration 	States are urged to cooperate through State-led and other regional, subregional and cross-regional processes and platforms to expand and diversify rights-based pathways for regular migration.	Almost all MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region have Memorandum of Understanding on migration, and 89 per cent participated in bilateral migration negotiations. Moreover, 47 per cent of MGI countries in the Asia–Pacific region are part of regional agreements promoting labour mobility.

Source: Migration Governance Indicators Data and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: A Baseline Report. IOM (2022c).

[103] The rationale for each Global and Compact for Migration Objective outlined in this table is derived from direct quotations extracted from various reports and thematic papers cited in each bulletin of the Baseline Report. For further details, please refer to IOM, 2022c.

Expert Contribution: Migration Governance Data: A Look at SDG Indicator 10.7.2 and IOM's Migration Goverenance Indicators

Authored by: **Roberto Roca Paz** (Data Analyst), **Adriana Vives** (Associate Data Analyst) and **Andrea Milan** (Data Manager)

Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) initiative at IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre

IOM's Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) provides the methodological framework to measure both SDG Indicator 10.7.2 and IOM's Migration Governance Indicators (MGI). These complementary tools document the existence and assess the scope of national policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration, and they are organized within six policy domains that correspond to the three principles and the three objectives that comprise the MiGOF.[104]

SDG Indicator 10.7.2 shows the "proportion of countries with migration policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people". In 2022, this indicator graduated from tier 2 to tier 1 of the Interagency and Expert Group on the SDG indicators classification.[105] This upgrade represents a historic recognition of the centrality of migrants for sustainable development worldwide.

As of April 2023, data on SDG Indicator 10.7.2 are publicly available for 138 countries. Of the 40 countries included in IOM's Asia–Pacific region, SDG Indicator 10.7.2 data are available for 23 countries (DESA and IOM, 2021). Data on the indicator can be disaggregated for each of the six policy domains globally and regionally.[106] Compared to the Asia–Pacific region, a larger percentage of governments worldwide met or fully met the criteria across all domains, except for Domain 4 "Socioeconomic well-being" (Figure 64).

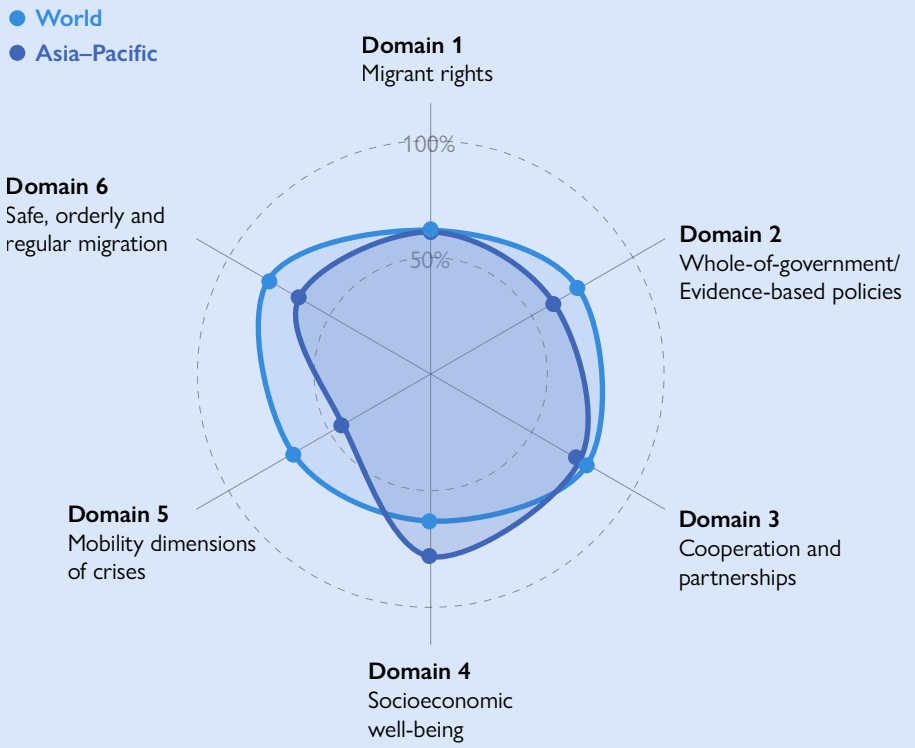
These results are based on data collected through two successive rounds of the United Nations Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development (the twelfth and thirteenth rounds of the "Inquiry") (DESA, 2019, 2021). While the co-custodians, DESA and IOM, conduct consistency checks on the responses received from countries, it should be noted that the data submitted are not subject to an external review process. This means that the responses solely represent the perspectives of the participating government entities, which may have different interpretations of the concepts and definitions used in the Inquiry (DESA, IOM and OECD, 2021). This occurs by design as, according to DESA and IOM (2019), SDG Indicator 10.7.2 is intended to be more of a synthetic measure that needs to be complemented by other more comprehensive migration monitoring mechanisms, like the MGI assessments.

[104] For more infrmation, see IOM (2016).

[105] According to the Interagency and Expert Group on the SDGs, a tier 1 classification means that the indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant. For more information see DESA, IOM and OECD (2021).

[106] The indicator consists of 30 items or subcategories, five per each of the six policy domains (DESA and IOM, 2019).

Figure 64. Proportion of governments reporting policy measures to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people by SDG 10.7.2 domain, 2021



Source: Authors' own calculation based on SDG Indicator 10.7.2. Number of countries with migration policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people: Country data. DESA and IOM (2021) (accessed 1 March 2023).

Note: "World" is based on 138 countries with available data and Asia–Pacific is based on 23 countries. Data refer to countries that meet or fully meet the criteria for indicator 10.7.2 (reported having migration policy measures for 80 per cent or more of the five items in each domain).

In 2015, IOM developed the MGI in collaboration with Economist Impact. The purpose of the initiative is to assist governments in evaluating the comprehensiveness of their migration governance structures. This is achieved by taking stock of their migration policies and identifying well-developed areas and areas with potential for further development in the governance of migration (IOM, 2022c).

As of April 2023, over 100 countries and 70 local jurisdictions worldwide have voluntarily conducted an MGI assessment. In addition to its extensive coverage at both national and local levels, the MGI stands out as a unique

source of data to inform policy development due to its comprehensive methodology and consultative process.

Like SDG Indicator 10.7.2, the MGI methodology is based on SDG Target 10.7 and is aligned with the Global Compact for Migration, as the MGI questions can be directly linked to the objectives of the Compact (IOM, 2022d). The MGI consists of 98 questions that inquire about the existence of legislation, policies, institutions and coordination mechanisms related to migration. With this holistic methodological approach, the MGI provides a nuanced understanding of a country's normative, institutional and procedural aspects of migration governance.

The MGI is a consultative process that, over twelve months, engages national and local governments in assessing how they govern migration. Data collection – a critical stage in the process – involves a desk review and interviews with local experts and government representatives to collect a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data refers to detailed justifications for the answers to each MGI question, which aim to capture local characteristics such as country-specific challenges and opportunities related to migration. The data collected are then reviewed by IOM in collaboration with participating governments over several months (IOM, 2022c). The MGI thus combines a strict quality control process to ensure data consistency and accuracy, and the ownership of the data by governments due to their involvement in every stage of the process.

Another concrete example of the value of government involvement in the MGI process is the identification of country priorities. During data collection, governments and IOM country offices are asked to identify, for each MGI domain, a set of questions that focus on migration policy areas regarded as priorities by the country. As a result, it is possible to determine "priority areas for action" in migration policy areas that have both the potential for further development and have been identified as a country priority by the Member State (IOM, 2023a). Doing so showcases the potential of the MGI to enable an analysis of migration governance data beyond the mere reporting of country-level summary statistics.

Figure 65 identifies the MGI question that represents a "priority area for action" for the largest percentage of Asia–Pacific MGI countries in each domain. The centre column lists these "priority areas for action", which are further linked to a Global Compact for Migration objective in the third column. We can see, for example, that including migration considerations into relevant climate change policies – a policy area related to Compact Objective 2 "Minimize Drivers" – is a "priority area for action" in most Asia–Pacific countries that conducted an MGI assessment.

This type of exercise can be a valuable tool for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to address migration challenges in a targeted and effective manner. By identifying "priority areas for action" and allocating resources accordingly, interventions can be evidence based and improve outcomes for migrants and host communities. Moreover, the link with relevant Global Compact objectives allows for migration policies and programmes to be aligned with a country's global commitments.

Government endorsement positions the MGI as a crucial data source for developing policies and action plans, mobilizing funds and reporting on achievements (IOM, 2022d). Moving forward, IOM and DESA are co-leading a dedicated workstream of the United Nations Network on Migration on the follow up to Paragraph 70 of the Progress Declaration adopted at the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF). The paragraph requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to propose a limited set of indicators to assist Member States in reviewing progress on the implementation of the Global Compact, along with a strategy for data disaggregation at the local, national, regional and global levels (United Nations General Assembly, 2022). The proposed indicators will be submitted for approval to the Executive Committee of the United Nations Network on Migration in late 2023 and will be included in the United Nations Secretary-General's biennial report on the Global Compact for Migration in 2024 for consideration by Member States.

Figure 65. Top "Priority Areas for Action" by MGI domain and related Global Compact objectives in Asia–Pacific countries

MGI domain	Top priority area for action	Global Compact objective
Migrant's rights	Migrants' equal access to social protection	22 Social protection
Whole-of-government approach	Disaggregated migration data	1 Data
Partnerships	Agreement on labour mobility	23 International cooperation
Well-being of migrants	Monitoring demand for immigrant workers	1 Data
Mobility dimension of crises	Including migration in climate change policies	2 Minimize drivers
Safe, orderly and regular migration	Identifying vulnerable migrants	7 Reduce vulnerabilities

Source: Author's own elaboration based on MGI data.
Note: Based on data from 13 MGI countries from Asia and the Pacific.

Snapshot: Evolution of International and Internal Mobility Restrictions in Response to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific (2020–2022)

Border management and governance

Since March 2020, as COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, the IOM's DTM Global Mobility Restrictions Overview has been documenting how international air travel restrictions and conditions for authorized entry evolved around the world, as also reported in IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021 and that of 2020. From the start of data collection to end of December 2021, 228 countries, territories or areas (99.6%) issued either an entry restriction,[107] conditions for authorized entry,[108] or both. The year 2022 marked a major turning point, as the imposition of entry restrictions has gradually decreased over time around the world, although to a lesser extent in the Asia–Pacific region. During April–December 2022, a total of 103 countries, territories or areas removed all travel measures relating to COVID-19. Since the onset of the Omicron variant, Asia and the Pacific is the region that has the third highest number of countries, territories or areas that have removed all COVID-19 related travel measures (17 countries, territories or areas), following the European Economic Area (31) and Central and North America and the Caribbean (25). During this period, entry restrictions have dropped, although Asia and the Pacific kept an overall steadier level of countries, territories or areas issuing entry conditions such as medical measures, passenger tracking systems and document changes relating to visa requirements (Figure 66).

Internal mobility and containment measures

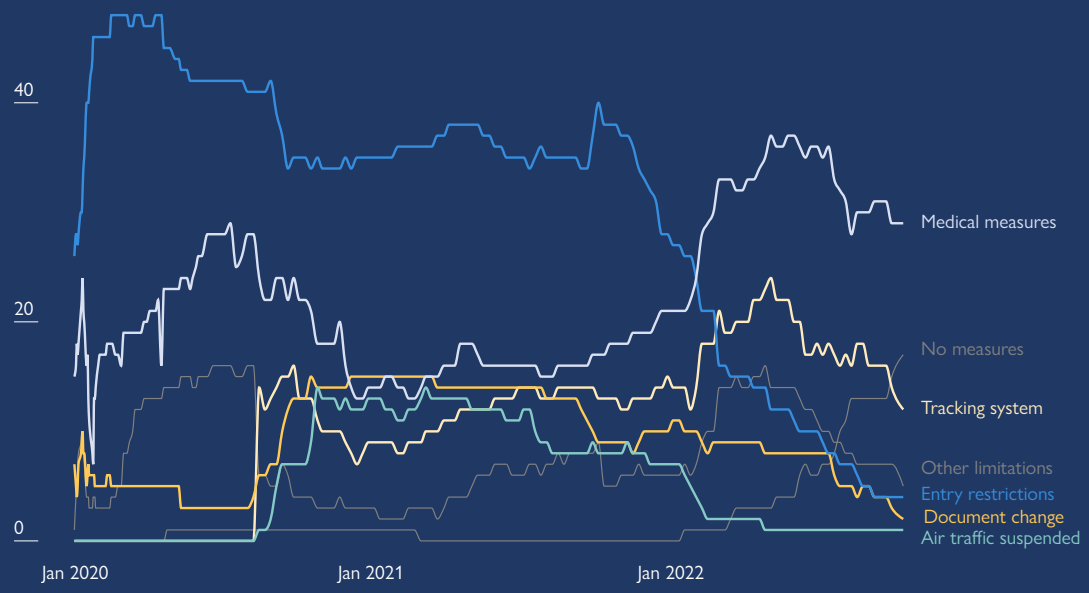
The level of stringency of the internal restrictions is measured by the Stringency Index developed by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker, recording the strictness of containment and closure policy response policies that primarily restrict people's behaviour. Also reported in IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021 and that of 2020, the stringency index measures the level of stringency on a scale between 0 to 100 with 100 representing the highest level of stringency.

Compared to the peak level at 74.7 on average on 16 April 2020 for 34 countries, territories or areas in Asia and the Pacific, the stringency index recorded a significant decline to 22 as of 1 December 2022 at 33.1. As Figure 67 clearly shows, a gradual decline was seen through the year 2022 globally and regionally, while Asia and the Pacific average remained above the global average consistently. This declining trend applies to all subregions in Asia and the Pacific, although South-West Asia (39.5) and East Asia (24) still scored higher than the regional average (19.4) as of the end of 2022. China (71.8), the Islamic Republic of Iran (53.9) and Hong Kong SAR, China (42.3) scored the highest in the stringency index across countries, territories or areas in the region for which data are available.

As most countries of the world have begun transitioning into a recovery phase, these two major data providers for international and internal mobility restrictions have announced the end of data collection by the end of 2022.

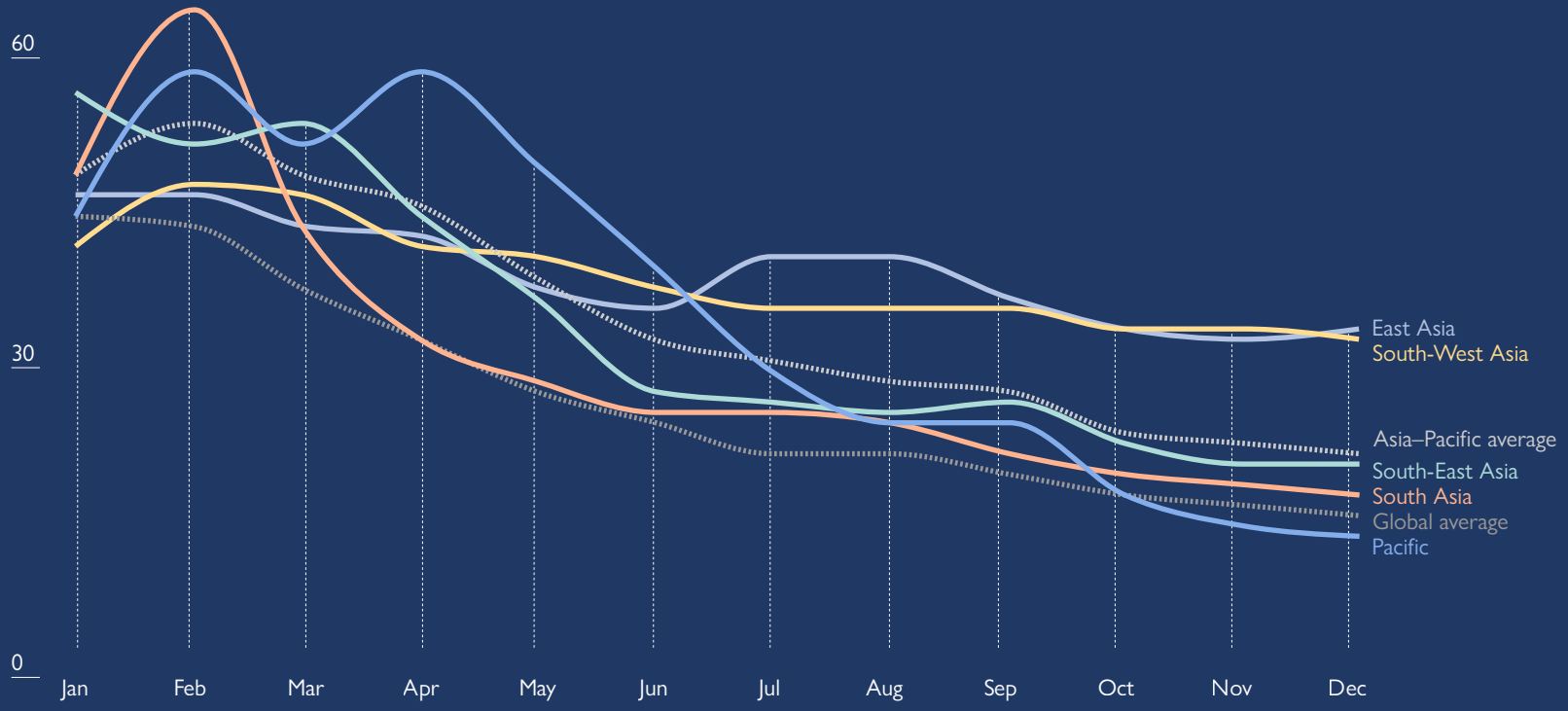
[107] Passenger bans and flight suspensions issued by countries, territories or area.
[108] Medical measures (COVID-19 tests, vaccination or COVID19 recovery certificates, visa or other documentation requirements, passenger registration and tracking systems).

Figure 66. Regional trends in issuing entry restrictions and conditions for authorized entry

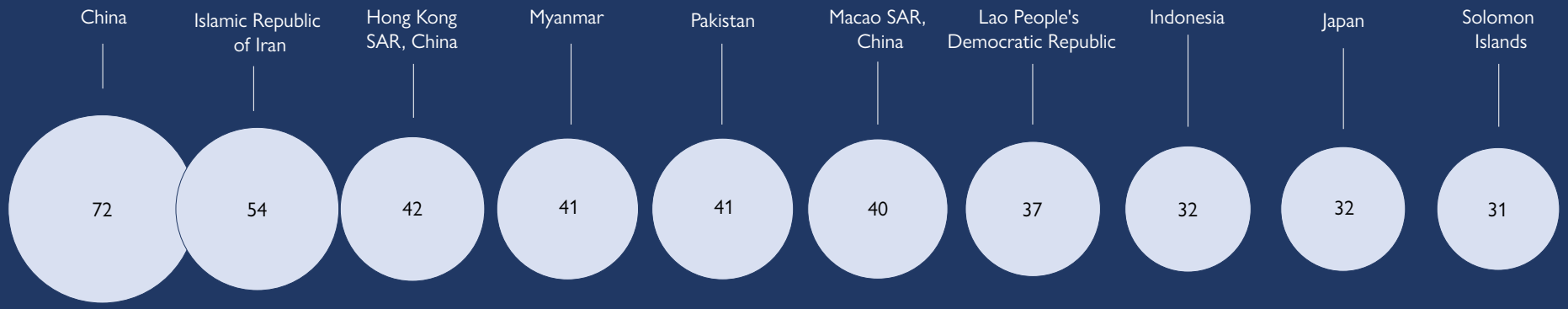


Source: DTM (COVID-19) Global Mobility Restrictions Overview: March 2020–January 2023. IOM (2023b).

Figure 67. Stringency index in 2022 (first day of each month)



Top 10 countries,areas and territories with the highest stringency index as of 1 December 2022



Source: Author's own calculation based on COVID-19 Government Reponses Tracker Database. Hale et al. (2021) (accessed 2 May 2023).

5.1.4 Discussion

The analysis of the latest data on States' ratification of international human rights instruments shows that all countries in Asia and the Pacific region recognize the principle that all persons, including migrants regardless of their status, are entitled to have their human rights respected, protected and fulfilled. While over 80 per cent of Asia–Pacific countries have ratified nine of the 18 core human rights treaties and their associated optional protocols, there are too many instances in which migrants from and in the region have been subjected to exploitation, discrimination and other human rights violations (see Section 3.1). For example, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, evidence of migrants in destination countries being exposed to forced labour and excluded from essential services showed migrants' vulnerability to rights violations (IOM, 2021). There are still challenges in advancing the migration and human rights agenda. One of the reasons may be linked to the fact that measuring the implementation of migrant rights remains difficult. First, the statistical data may not give a complete picture of migrant rights in the place where the event occurred. Second, data based on expert judgements, such as State parties' reports, often lack reliability and comparability across countries (IOM, 2022a). Finally, most official data systems do not capture the circumstances of migrants in an irregular situation, and when available, data are incomplete (IPU et al., 2015).

However, the adoption of international frameworks – such as the Global Compact for Migration objectives and the Migration Governance Indicators – in the migration governance agenda represents a step forward to close the knowledge gap when it comes to migration and human rights, as these function as a critical tool to measure countries' compliance with international obligations. The Philippines, for example, has a strong track record in pursuing the Global Compact for Migration commitments for the rights and welfare of its migrants. In December 2021, the "Department of Migrant Workers Act" was enacted. This law further strengthens the Philippines' migration governance by establishing one streamlined government agency dedicated to protecting the rights and welfare of migrants and their families, particularly migrant workers. Most importantly, it codifies the 23 objectives of the Global Compact for Migration within its policy programme (OHCHR, 2022).

Finally, highlighting the integration of migrant issues and rights in the 2030 Agenda is important. The SDGs recognize the vulnerability of migrants to exploitation and abuse through SDG Target 16.2 that aims to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children, SDG Target 8.7 – take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking – and SDG Target 5.2 that aims to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls.[109] The 2030 Agenda is unequivocally anchored in human rights and is to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the obligations of States under international law. One of the Agenda's key principles is to leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind first, including migrants.

[109] Refer to OHCHR SDG table for more information on specific human rights references.

A girl from Myanmar attends with her parents the workshop on migrant rights organized by IOM for rural migrants in Mae Sot. © IOM 2009/Claudia NATALI

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* All hyperlinks were active at the time of writing this report.

IOM Community Liaison Officer demonstrates to the audience on how to complete the Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) survey to the students during the safe migration awareness session for the vocational institute students. © IOM 2017

06

Migration and Innovation

6. Migration and Innovation

In this chapter

SDG Target

Global Compact for Migration Objective

MGI Domain

6: Safe, orderly and regular migration

The emergence of digital technologies is among the five megatrends that will shape progress towards the 2030 Agenda, as identified by the United Nations (2020). Innovation and technology hold explicit benefits for societies and economies and enormous potentials that can be leveraged to promote the agenda of the SDGs and the Global Compact for Migration, although such linkages remain vastly underexplored.

This chapter focuses on this link by bringing attention to recent initiatives and cases at various levels where innovation and technology have been and can be further mobilized for sustainable development and migrant welfare in Asia and the Pacific. Built on IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021, where the potentials of big data sources and their applications by international development actors and academia especially in disaster and humanitarian settings were discussed, the first part of this chapter examines government initiatives in mobilizing innovative data sources and methods for official migration statistics. The academia, civil society and international organizations' active engagement in this area has been relatively well documented (ESCAP, 2021a). However, there are far fewer documented examples for official migration and mobility statistics from national governments in the region, while national leadership and ownership are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and data innovation could fill many existing gaps, especially with the increasing focus on modernizing and integrating national data systems. The second part of this chapter broadens the discussion to the landscape of innovation and development, including the benefits and risks for migrants. With examples of recent initiatives in various areas of development, including humanitarian action and wider efforts that promote safe, orderly and regular migration, migrants' use of technology and associated risks are reviewed – a key issue that came into the spotlight with the increasing reports of online scamming and related human trafficking in the region in 2022.

This chapter features two pieces of expert contribution. The first article, discussing the potentials of mobile phone data for population and mobility analysis, is authored by Professor Albert Ali Salah, Full Professor of Social and Affective Computing at Utrecht University. The second article, introducing the innovation in migration digital tools to support policy and practice, is authored by Marie McAuliffe, Head of Migration Research and Publications Division and Editor of World Migration Report at IOM.

6.1 Innovative Data Sources and Methods for Migration Statistics: Government Initiatives

Governments and the statistical community are increasingly turning their attention to new data sources, as the exponential innovations in digital technology and growth of data volume opened unprecedented opportunities to address some of the critical data gaps across policy domains including human mobility and migration. This new focus is coupled with the demand for accurate, timely and disaggregated data at all stages of migration, accentuated in the calls of SDG Target 17.18 and the Global Compact for Migration Objective 1 and 3, as a basis for data-driven decision-making.

Among the events contributing to population dynamics, migration is often regarded as the most complex to quantify, especially as international flows are concerned (Beauchemin et al., 2021; Raymer, 2017; Varona et al., 2023). Population censuses are the primary source of internationally comparable information on international migration in the world (UNSD, 2007). However, conducted once every decade (or every five years in a few countries), censuses cannot capture many of the changes that occur in international migration in a timely way, with limited ability to compare changes over time and to provide detailed information, among other limitations (ibid.).[110] With rapid advancement of modern technologies and their globalized usage, the potential of innovative approaches to data collection and utilization for generating insights into population movements has gained increasing recognition, such as for identifying emerging patterns of migration and cross-border mobility, and monitoring unexpected natural events (such as pandemics and disasters) and geopolitical events (such as wars and political crises) (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2022). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic gave new impetus to the production of experimental statistics from non-traditional data sources, fostering new partnerships among public and private institutions. There are expectations from various stakeholders that big data and new data sources could complement traditional sources by bridging the gap in timeliness and granularity.

According to surveys conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (ibid.) in 2020 and 2021 covering several high-income countries (European countries, the United States, Canada and New Zealand), the practice of measuring migration through big data sources by National Statistical Offices is currently limited. In Asia and the Pacific, the situation seems comparable – while big data mostly remains at an experimental phase in Asia and the Pacific, some National Statistical Offices are integrating certain new data sources into the production of official statistics (ESCAP, 2021b). Big data has also been identified as a priority by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics (ESCAP, 2021c). The following section presents some examples where innovation in migration statistics is seen in the region in mainly two areas: the use of new data sources and innovation in data collection methods.

Innovative data sources for migration statistics

Experimentation and use of new data sources for official population and social statistics, including migration and mobility statistics, are seen across Asia and the Pacific in recent years. Mobile phone data, often also referred to as mobile positioning data, are one major type of big data sources – which can be distinguished between high resolution data, such as signaling data, and call detail records (CDR) (ESCAP, 2021a). Signaling data provide location updates of a mobile device during every cell tower transition, as well as active positioning data, where the location of the mobile phone is determined through the support of assisted GPS (ibid.). Call detail records (CDR), passively collected by mobile network operators (MNO) whenever one of their subscribers makes a call, contain information such as time, duration, source number, destination number and approximate location of communications about a telephone call or text message that passes through the device (ibid.). Mobile phone data can bring added value to mobility statistics, such as timeliness (in some cases up to near real-time), access to statistical information previously unavailable, calibration opportunities for existing data, and increased granularity (ITU, 2023). In a general context, it can be used in the production of mobility related statistics, such as migration, commuting, urbanization and tourism, as seen in Indonesia, China, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Mongolia.

Indonesia is among the most active explorers of big data sources for National Statistical Systems in the Asia–Pacific region. Since 2016, the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) has made use of location-based service (LBS) and CDR from mobile network operator in the production of various types of mobility statistics (BPS, 2020). They include tourism statistics (inbound, outbound and domestic), commuting statistics and Metropolitan Statistical Area (measuring indicators of population mobility between the central city and surrounding areas at the subdistrict level to determine Metropolitan Area in the pilot Cekungan Bandung Area) (United Nations Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, 2019). Confidence in produced statistics grew with comparable results obtained from traditional surveys, as seen in the cases of metropolitan area delineation (Figure 68), commuting statistics (BPS, 2020) as well as tourism statistics (BPS, 2018). The incremental expansion of the use of mobile phone data in mobility statistics, supported by its increased coverage, cost-effectiveness, granularity of municipal and subdistrict data, timeliness and accuracy to validate and complement traditional sources has been targeted at estimating indicators of internal migration and transnationalism (BPS, 2020, 2021). In China, the National Statistical Office worked with private companies to utilize mobile signaling data and mobile app data as an alternative to the mobile network operator's data drawing on aggregated mobile app geolocation, from mobile phones for dynamic monitoring of population migration across regions of the country as well as the urbanization trends (ESCAP, 2021a). In the Republic of Korea, the National Statistical Office has been working with telecommunication companies since 2017 to explore the use of mobile phone data to identify the patterns of population mobility, which is widely used as basic information in the design of various economic and social policies (Statistics Korea, 2021). Population Mobility Statistics, a collaboration project between the public and private sectors, is designed as experimental statistics in 2021. The project provides not only commuting statistics but also population movements (inflows and outflows) for each city, county and district across the country on a weekday, weekend and monthly basis – which was expanded to include demographic analysis for each business district in Seoul (ESCAP, 2021a). In New Zealand, mobile phone data are being explored for studying geographic population distributions of residents including

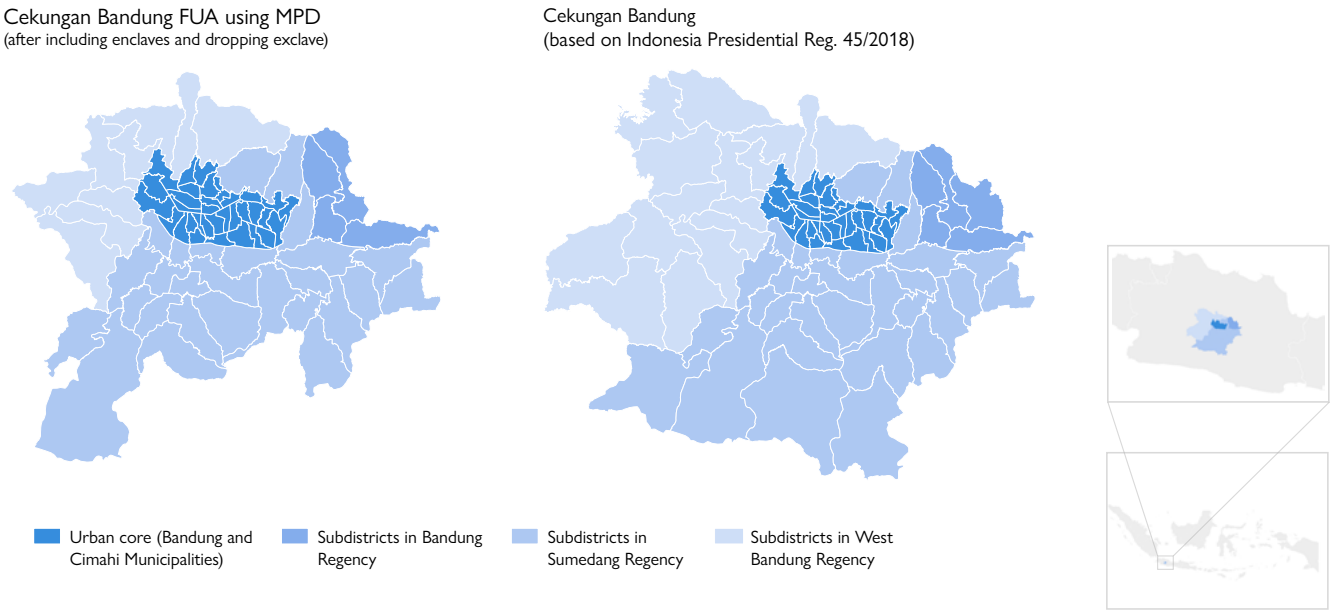
[110] An increasing number of Asia–Pacific countries are exploring the use of administrative data sources. However, censuses remain the predominant source of official population statistics – the majority of Member States of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (81%) reported having used or planning to use a traditional approach, rather than combining census with other sources or a hybrid approach, in the 2020 census round (ESCAP, 2022).

recent migrants within New Zealand, and also combined with administrative data on border-crossings to estimate the geographic distribution of international visitors within the country (UNECE, 2022). In Mongolia, the National Statistical Office, with the support of IOM and academia partners, started exploring the use of CDR for new ways of estimating population dynamics and addressing some shortcomings of census-based data collection (Utrecht University, 2022) – the details of which are discussed in the expert discussion in this section contributed by the lead researcher of this project.

In the context of disaster and crisis response, mobile phone data can also be used to obtain timely insights such as estimating the number of people displaced from the areas most directly impacted by the disaster, the areas people have been displaced to and the disruption to transportation in the affected areas. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Statistics Korea leveraged the existing partnership with telecommunication companies to generate daily population mobility statistics (Statistics Korea, 2023), whereas Bangladesh and Australia developed new data partnerships or agreements with private companies to obtain timely insights for COVID-19 response (ESCAP, 2021a). The Australian Bureau of Statistics collected geolocated data of mobile devices from providers of aggregated de-identified mobility data to understand changes to populations movements, business activity and reductions in travel (ibid.). Bangladesh's a2i team, established in collaboration with UNDP, leads data innovation efforts in the government. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the a2i team collected self-reported symptoms data (cough, fever and shortness of breath), and information about contact with someone with symptoms or COVID-19 positive from various sources.[111] The a2i team also analysed CDR from the largest mobile phone operator in Bangladesh, the access of which was facilitated by the Ministry of Telecommunications, to track the spread of the outbreak in near real-time and identify high-risk COVID-19 zones based on population density and mobility (ESCAP, 2021a; a2i, 2020).

Other data sources can and have been utilized to identify human mobility patterns. The experience of Statistics New Zealand reveals the potential of sales tax data in identifying mobility patterns – particularly after a disaster. After the Kaikoura earthquake in New Zealand in November 2016, Statistics New Zealand estimated sales increases and decreases with tax data to understand population displacement after the earthquake (Figure 69). In addition, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and academic partners, several National Statistical Offices in the region such as Viet Nam, Thailand and Papua New Guinea have been exploring the use of geospatial data for modelled population estimates, as a function of satellite imagery-based or geospatially derived covariate layers, such as distance to roads, night-time lights intensity or landcover classification (WorldPop, 2022a, 2022b; General Statistical Office of Viet Nam, 2021; UNFPA, 2020). These models offer the advantage of being relatively low cost and may provide alternative ways of deriving more recent population estimates for quality assessment to data usage to inform census planning and implementation (UNFPA, 2020).

Figure 68. Cekungan Bandung delineation based on commuting patterns from mobile positioning data and traditional survey

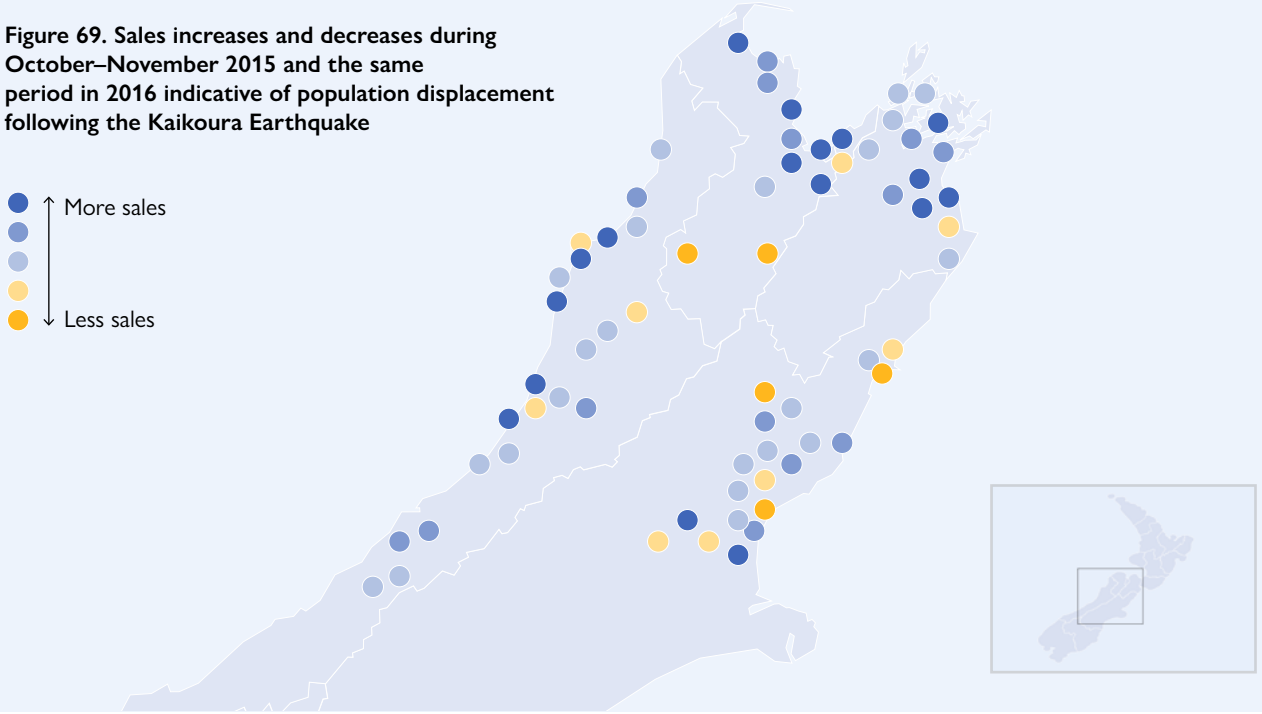


Source: Towards big data as official statistics: Case study of the use of mobile positioning data to delineate metropolitan areas in Indonesia. Noviyanti et al. (2020).

Note: This map is for illustration purposes. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

[111] Including Interactive Voice Response system of National helpline and health helpline, several internet and mobile applications and an unstructured supplementary service data based messaging system.

Figure 69. Sales increases and decreases during October–November 2015 and the same period in 2016 indicative of population displacement following the Kaikoura Earthquake



In the immdiate aftermath of the earthquake, sales were down in Kaikoura when compared with the same period in 2015. Sales were also down or flat for much of North Canterbury.

Note: These maps are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Source: Improving economic statistics with big data. Statistics New Zealand (2020).

Innovation in data collection methods

New or innovative methodologies in the collection and processing of new data sources or on their existing data are also being used by National Statistical Offices. According to United Nations Statistics Division (2022, n.d.)'s surveys on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of population and housing censuses, 15 countries in Asia and the Pacific by IOM definition reported a new round of census previously scheduled in 2020 or 2021 but most of them had been impacted by the pandemic, including Bangladesh, China, Federated States of Micronesia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Philippines. While postponing was commonly seen due to budget limitations and security issues, the pandemic also necessitated and fostered the adoption of new data collection methods often facilitated by digital technology, against the backdrop of wider international efforts to modernize the census processes and national statistical systems.

After rescheduling the main census operation twice (it was first expected to take place in January 2021), Bangladesh launched its first digital census in June 2022, attributing its success against COVID-19 to innovation and cutting-edge technology (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Bangladesh digitalized the data collection process of the Population and Housing Census 2022 by using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) method, transitioning from the Pencil and Paper Interviewing (PAPI) method of manual census in the 2011 and previous rounds. Enumeration areas were identified using satellite image processing and GIS map processing, and data collected were sent by mobile app to the CAPI server for further processing (ibid.). In the Philippines, census was originally scheduled for 2020, and thus mitigating measures were needed in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on field operations. As a result, alternative modes of data collection that could minimize face-to-face contact with the respondent were used, such as Computer-Assisted Web-based Interview (CAWI) and Paper Assisted Telephone Interviewing (PATI). The Philippine Statistics Authority (2020) anticipated that this "new normal" of data collection methods and technology that would not require face-to-face interview may be further improved and developed beyond the pandemic. Besides innovation in data collection methods, wider applications of digital technology are seen in other areas, such as the use of social media for census dissemination and outreach to promote engagement in census.

Expert Contribution: The Potentials of Mobile Phone Data for Population and Mobility Analysis

Authored by: **Professor Albert Ali Salah**

Full Professor, Social and Affective Computing, Utrecht University

Mobile phone activity is a very useful source of data for gaining insights into mobility because mobile phones are ubiquitous, and both the coverage and spatio-temporal resolution can be great. Call detail records (CDR) are records of calls and short messages, including metadata about the source and destination base stations. Extended detail records (xDR) contain data packet exchanges, which is even more granular than CDR. Both of these are collected by mobile network operators for customer management and accounting, but can be repurposed within a data collaborative to answer questions about migration and mobility (Salah et al., 2022a). The advantages of such mobile phone are its timeliness, in that it can be processed in near real-time to provide immediate insights, and its coverage. The potential drawbacks are the lack of data from children (as they cannot officially own phone lines) and other demographical biases, biases coming from the limited market share of a specific mobile operator, as well as the effects of the location aggregation, where a person's location is estimated coarsely via base tower locations.

Properly anonymized and aggregated mobile phone data allows investigating mobility, while protecting the privacy of individuals. Blondel et al. (2012) introduced the Data for Development Challenge in Côte d'Ivoire, where a large dataset of CDR records was made available to researchers with the aim of helping development and infrastructure policy after a civil war in the country. Salah et al. (2019) enriched CDR with tags indicating group membership, and initiated the Data for Refugees Challenge to address issues of over 3.5 million Syrians who came into Türkiye following the war in the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2022, a collaboration between IOM Mongolia and the National Statistical Office of Mongolia was initiated to explore aware and anonymous processing of CDR to improve infrastructure for nomadic people. Such data collaboratives can provide governments and NGOs with crucial information to inform and improve policies.

Properly anonymized and aggregated mobile phone data allows investigating mobility, while protecting the privacy of individuals.

Bureaucratic challenges abound when working with mobile phone data; a preparation period is needed where the legal basis is established firmly for enabling data exchange, as well as the technical/analytical infrastructure to quickly collect, anonymize, aggregate and analyse the data. Subsequently, in the context of a humanitarian crisis, a fast response is very difficult, but not impossible. In the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake in April 2015, a computational system was deployed within nine days for estimating population displacements via CDR (Wilson et al., 2016). While xDR has even higher temporal granularity compared to call-event based CDR, the latter can be sufficient for disaster impact assessment.

The temporal resolution of mobile data makes it ideal for analysis of urban dynamics. In Beijing, China, mobile CDR was used to estimate population density dynamically at a 30-minute resolution (Liu et al., 2022). Similarly, CDR is proposed to evaluate urban dynamics in Wuhu, China (Zhang et al., 2020) and transport modes of people in Yangon City, Myanmar (Kyaing et al., 2020). Mobile phone data have also been used to estimate important indicators that can lead to mobility, such as wealth. In Aiken et al. (2020), CDR was used in conjunction with standard survey measures to improve wealth prediction in Afghanistan. (Tai et al., 2022) uses similar data from Afghanistan to explore the relation between human mobility and violence, establishing bilateral links between the two. Steele et al. (2021) used CDR in Namibia, Nepal and Bangladesh for estimating poverty and wealth patterns, and illustrated the importance of the local context for the interpretation of such data. Other types of mobility, such as seasonal and agricultural mobility, can also be investigated with mobile data.

The processing of large-scale mobile data depends on legal conditions, such as consent, which changes from country to country, and from operator to operator. Such legal requirements must be complemented with ethical safeguards, taking into account all stages of projects and involving all local stakeholders if possible (Salah et al., 2022b). Especially when linked to policy decisions, fully data-driven indicators may be gamed, and combining them with standard approaches mitigates some of the risks. Furthermore, qualitative analysis is essential for providing a better understanding of the local context, and quantitative approaches should be used in a complementary fashion.

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6.2 Innovation for Migration and Development

6.2.1 Development initiatives

Governmental and international actors as users

As seen in initiatives that either complement or are used in lieu of census data, new data collection sources and methods have enabled for wider and more comprehensive metadata to be gathered on population groups of interest by way of public–private partnerships. Amid this modernization of data collection systems, new technological advances can also enhance Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems[112] with greater disaggregated data. Such advances would support priority delivery of development programmes and the monitoring of basic public services to vulnerable groups on a governmental and interagency level in the course of addressing ongoing or emerging global challenges (UNSD, 2021). Concrete examples of these systems' applications in this regard can be given in relation to migration and development targets in the SDGs. To this end, beyond its utility for mobility and statistical information, digital technology is also a tool that can be developed and harnessed in migration management to promote safe, orderly and regular migration, and support financial inclusion, health and social services that can be integrated in different facets of public and migrant life.

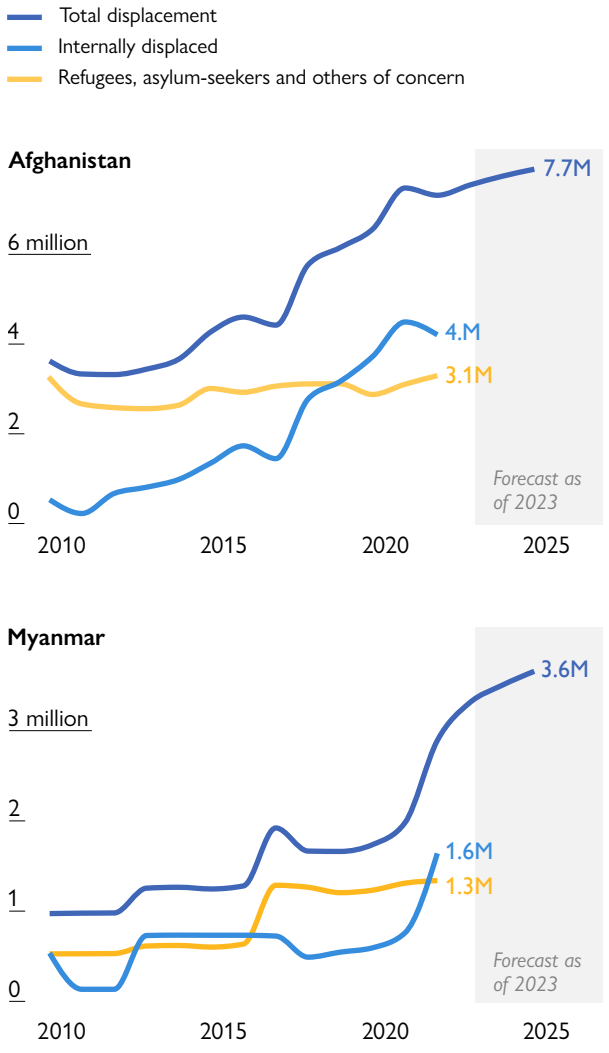
With e-solutions harnessed by many States, where electronic documents are either automated, integrated or processed via information and communication technology (ICT) platforms, the use of various technologies becomes more task-oriented, specialized and personalized. In border management, this shift can be exemplified by online application processes of e-visas or the digitalization of biometric information at immigration points. Taking a step further, big data, specifically Artificial Intelligence (AI), can be used to recognize the eligibility type of applicants and forward processing based on the parameters of the request, and to automate decision-making (for instance entry visas, asylum or resettlement applications for instance) (IOM, 2021a). As of 2014, India implemented eMigrate to digitize and ease the emigration clearance process for migrant workers. Government-to-government recruitment platforms on the other hand such as the Employment Permit System in the Republic of Korea has since 2004 regulated and facilitated the employment, placement and job matching of low-skilled foreign workers where it currently has agreements with 16 countries[113] (ILO and IOM, 2021). To this end, AI-powered chatbots as virtual assistants have additionally supported migrants to navigate pre-departure and entry processes such as quarantine or health checks amid heightened restrictions during COVID-19 (IOM, 2021a).

In addition to administrative tasks, innovations in data solutions can also alleviate supply chain and logistical issues in humanitarian disasters. More efficient and timely action of resource allocation can be achieved by connecting suppliers to first responders for forward planification, coordination and deployment of life-saving items such as medical supplies, food and water through

[112] A well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system registers all births and deaths, issues birth and death certificates, compiles and disseminates vital statistics, including cause of death information, and may also record marriages and divorces (WHO, n.d.).

[113] Countries with which the Republic of Korea signed Memoranda of understandings are Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

Figure 70. Forecasting models of Displacement in Afghanistan and Myanmar as of 2022[114]



Source: Compiled from Danish Refugee Council Foresight forecast.

[114] Figures for 2022 are not established on a global scale yet and forecasts are based on estimations by IDMC's latest available figures.

the use of blockchain technology (SAP, 2017, 2022, n.d.). In Afghanistan, Cambodia and the Philippines, Optimus procures the above-mentioned service while LOG:IE or Timely Logistics are two initiatives that operate in Nepal (WFP, 2022a).

In Emergency response, anticipatory action (for disasters) and forecasting models (in forced displacement) through machine learning are being developed and recognized at an international level. In Japan, SAP HANA and the Oita University created "EDiSON" (Earth Disaster Intelligent System Operational Network), a disaster prevention education programme by using various methods[115] to provide governments with actionable insight on earthquakes and weather-related disasters (SAP and Oita University, 2023). For advanced disaster preparedness, in Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan and Mozambique, PRISM, is a similar risk monitoring platform that as of 2020, aims to inform action, specifically disaster risk reduction, social protection and social assistance programmes for governments in low- and middle-income countries. With the use of open-source technology, data analysis can be visualized through interactive map-based dashboards made available online for a given timeline. Under the Ministry of Social Affairs, this joint project has worked toward integrating PRISM's component on climate hazards into Governments' Disaster Mitigation Information System. Likewise, the online predictive analysis created by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Foresight has updated its figures on future displacement in Afghanistan, Myanmar and West Africa, as well as on slow-onset drought-related displacement in Somalia (Figure 70). The models use a range of indicators to establish likelihood of scenario(s) with additional regard to specific events such as elections, which might spike displacement figures. As mentioned in IOM Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2021, in half of the country cases it has processed, the model's accuracy of predicted figures, on average, fit true estimates within a 10 per cent margin of error (DRC, 2023, n.d.).

Migrants as users

All the while, advanced digital solutions that respond to the pressing needs of vulnerable populations, geared toward migrant use and with the aim of procuring more self-sufficient futures, are also on the rise (Figure 71). Blockchain technology can be used, and has been piloted, on various accounts in Kenya, Ukraine, Norway and Jordan to ensure that affected populations can access humanitarian relief: personal records can be shared and assets transferred for out-of-reach populations at low-cost while providing safeguards to protect beneficiaries (Riani, n.d.).

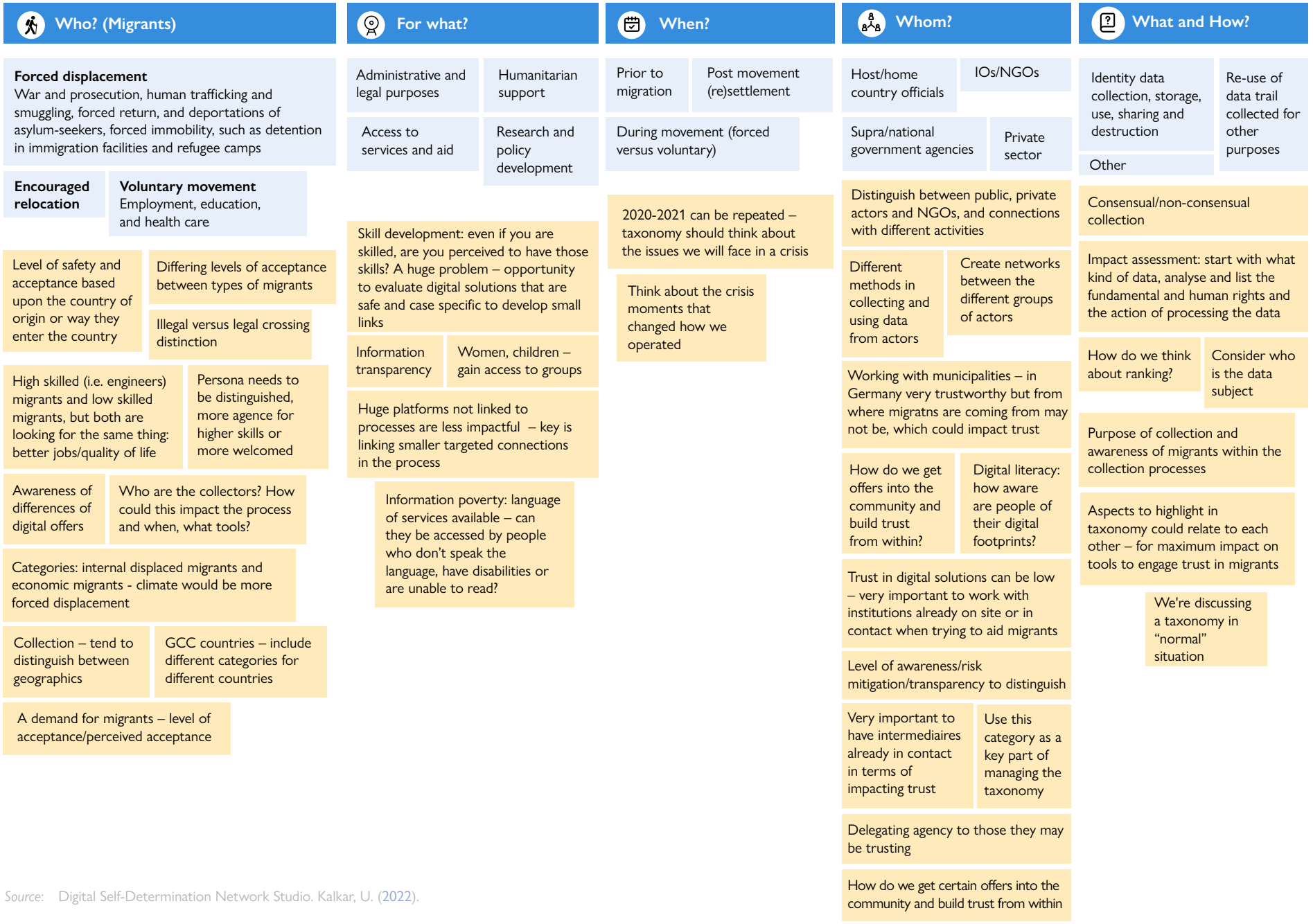
In Asia and the Pacific, with a first study conducted in Pakistan in 2017, akin to the initiative implemented in Jordan, the 'Building Blocks' project in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) has scaled up its presence to strengthen capacities in Bangladesh, particularly in Cox Bazar, so that refugees can collect cash and food assistance through e-vouchers. These redeemable coupons in the form of QR codes allocated by WFP to specific accounts to be used in a number of local shops is adapted to fit other contexts in Bangladesh, notably in Dhaka, to empower women and girls in urban slums. The technology developed is a gateway for households to meet immediate nutrition and hygiene needs (such as menstrual and reproductive health products) so that "freed-up" expenses may be redirected to invest in longer-term endeavours, such as supporting their children's education (WFP, 2022b). With eSewa in Nepal, this similar mobile wallet is used in various local shops and enable for retail payment, bill payments, phone top-ups, participation in online banking and to make cash-ins in remote communities (ILO and IOM, 2021). In Indonesia, blockchain is used in a labour perspective, to support refugees and asylum-seekers to move into the digital economy, enabling them to work remotely and receive compensation under the form of digital currencies (such as cryptocurrencies) (WFP, 2022b).

New job opportunities are also fostered through the use of AI, as is the case in the United Kingdom, which markets a new digital product leveraging social media accounts of student applicants for better job-matching. An equivalent local initiative in India called Babajob enables internal migrants to be connected to employers across the country through social media or messaging applications. While this type of initiative is more developed in European countries, they have the same potential. Nevertheless with five million jobseekers on Babajob as of 2016 (ILO and IOM, 2021), potential pitfalls such as false advertising and scams to which a wide pool of applicants could be exposed if digilent care and quality control is not taken have emerged. Hence, AI for fair and ethical private recruitment presents key benefits such as eliminating or cutting down on high recruitment costs, which should no longer be borne by migrants and that have been criticized in the Employment Permit System, and as an alternative to Facebook or LinkedIn advertising platforms that are more commonly known examples of data collaboration and integration in democratizing the recruiting process (IOM, 2021a; ILO, 2022a). In this way, from an employer's perspective, AI has the added benefit of streamlining services, shortlisting candidates and targeting its audience better amongst the hundreds of curricula vitae received (CREST, 2022).

AI for fair and ethical private recruitment presents key benefits such as eliminating or cutting down on high recruitment costs, which should no longer be borne by migrants

[115] Internet of Things is often used and is especially useful as it describes physical objects with sensors, processing ability, software and other technologies that connect and exchange data with other devices and systems over the Internet or other communications networks. In this case, machine learning and artificial intelligence were also used.

Figure 71. Digital self-determination studio sessions on taxonomy and pathways (2021–2022) ● 2021 ● 2022



Source: Digital Self-Determination Network Studio. Kalkar, U. (2022).

6.2.2 Migrants' Use of Digital Technology: Lessons Learnt from Associated Risks

Associated risks

The growing choice through new networks of information providers and other advancements made in an interconnected world have been an instrument for development and poverty reduction. As national and international actors shed their manual ways (such as going from paper records to digital archives), the digital divide between Global North and South countries is being reshaped through innovative approaches in dealing with long-standing challenges and in addressing global inequalities. Nevertheless, with the abundance of online resources and vendors now available, data collectors' intents also vary and raise issues (ILO, 2022b). This situation has set forth investigations around associated perverse effects of data solutions in creating digital walls in border security, online scamming and forced labour. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 restrictions, which added a layer of economic constraints, multilingual and educated middle-class workers previously well-positioned to find a job internally are at risk of trafficking through engaging in online platforms for employment abroad. An IOM study found on Sri Lanka found that the circulation of social media-based advertisements was encouraging women to travel to Dubai for employment only to be deceived later on, sometimes by smugglers, and with no provisions to pursue any legal action (IOM, 2022).

According to a recent ILO report, violations of migrant rights in the workforce continue to heavily impact South-East Asian countries (ILO, 2022a). The use of interoperable data by various digital platforms in this sector has many upsides and is usually sought after; however, when data is unprotected, this may exacerbate old issues (such as human bias, discrimination, opaque decision-making) or even create new ones (MMC, 2022). Insofar as migrants are concerned, the underside of labour recruitment in the digital space is flexible and risks further exposing them to fraudulent or exploitative job offers, false information or disinformation. Due to weak regulation, many are still wary and vigilant of the use of this technology's in digital product and practices adopted in regard to data ethics on protection, privacy, sharing and accountability (MMC, 2022; CREST, 2022). For instance, one of the major concerns is the leaking of personally identifiable information (PII). This can occur either due to improper consideration of the right to privacy of migrants – in some cases related to the differences in understanding the risks at stake between public and private stakeholders – or due to cybersecurity breaches that put migrants at risk (IOM, 2022). Personally identifiable data, which can include location, age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity and disability, can be dangerous when shared, leading to discrimination, violence and even trafficking or re-trafficking (ibid.).

Safeguards and lessons learnt for migrants

New data streams, such as social media advertising and outreach, can be a lure and source for abuse, a factor in the migration decision process, and a means of information for migrants' migration journey. However, data and social media platforms have also provided instances for transparency. The case of a vulnerable irregular migrant worker in Thailand was highlighted, where data-footprints or 'data crumbs' were traced to document her situation and request for help on platforms like Facebook, which have gained her greater visibility for investigation and governmental support (CREST, 2022). In two other case studies by the United Nations University (UNU), women migrants of the Democratic Republic of Korea arriving in the Republic of Korea and low-skilled workers from China isolated from the communities in which they had moved found value in ICT platforms amid their resettlement process, to situate themselves and gain agency (UNU Institute in Macau, 2017, 2019; Kang et al., 2018). Used this way, migration-tech can help newcomers find their way to communities in new environments.

> *Through these resources and platforms, migrant workers can make better informed decisions.*

From these protection concerns, new protection systems have also emerged and evolved. Since 2016, the Global Emancipation Network and the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children are using big data (with the use of SaaS[116] platforms like Artemis and Minerva) to identify human traffickers and their victims (Lucas, 2022). Additionally, grassroot initiatives have worked on providing more robust complaint mechanisms and to improve digital infrastructures in employment via blockchain. NGO- and trade-union-organized initiatives have made peer-to-peer applications possible with Golden Dreams at the Thailand-Myanmar border or with Migrant Recruitment Advisor in Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Through these resources and platforms, migrant workers can make better informed decisions based on feedback from peer experiences at the migratory corridor or assess working conditions of the would-be employer (ILO and IOM, 2021). In addition, by using smart contracts in which a predetermined set of terms and conditions are to be met, Diginex and IOM have driven positive change in the latex and garment manufacturing sector in Thailand with eMin, a blockchain initiative that allows employees to copy and store their contracts securely to verify compliance. The initiative provides e-learning material tailored to the migrants' challenges and needs in their native language. The unchangeable nature of the transacted contract protects migrant workers from succumbing to modern slavery and provides decent work standards (IOM, 2021b). With AI, Apprise and its affiliate, Apprise Audit, in Hong Kong SAR, China was developed between 2018 and 2019 to help auditors during factory visits screen and detect indicators of labour exploitation in survey form (UNU Institute in Macau, 2019). Under this initiative, organizations can assess informal working conditions from a human rights perspective, with the example of sex workers in Thailand, to monitor shifting practices and lead ground improvements to promote health and safety in work environments (ILO, 2021). To this extent, advanced data solutions at least "hold the capacity to educate migrant workers on their rights, connect them to job opportunities, and enable them to learn

[116] SaaS denotes Software as Service.

about labour recruiters and their prevailing market practices" (ILO and IOM, 2021, p.49).

Overall, AI, machine learning and blockchain use across the sector can be utilized to inform and target responses on migrant rights' violations and support empowerment in porous areas that have initially led vulnerable populations into deeper states of precarity and cycles of debt (see Section 3.1.1). Although the evidence presents mixed results, the combination and layering of different forms of data solutions to strengthen protection measures has been one way to strengthen initiatives, though providing digital literacy and guidance is necessary to ensure its potential is realized. Another way to correct AI biases and protect migrants from discrimination or other risks has been by inputting synthetic data to compensate and neutralize sensitive data (ILO, 2021). This solution was used by IOM in partnership with Microsoft to release its first public dataset on victims and perpetrators of trafficking. Additionally used in mobile data, Dalberg Data Insights have forwarded that data can be accessed without transferring customers' data as to not compromise on privacy and proprietary data (McAuliffe, 2023). While deployment of data solution practices that have soared during COVID-19 are not immune to challenges, they concurrently also provide avenues for recourse – with an intersectional lens on mobility and gender – when legal routes, or traditional access to resources, are unavailable to migrants or their communities.

Expert Contribution: Innovation in Migration Digital Tools to Support Policy and Practice

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The complexity of migration – with facts that can sometimes be difficult to explain – combined with the topic's high political salience means that it is prone to disinformation. Often linked to sensitive issues such as security, jobs and health (seen especially during COVID-19), disinformation about migrants has played a role in propagating divisions within society, while also reinforcing false narratives about migrants, making balanced policy more difficult to broker in contested environments.

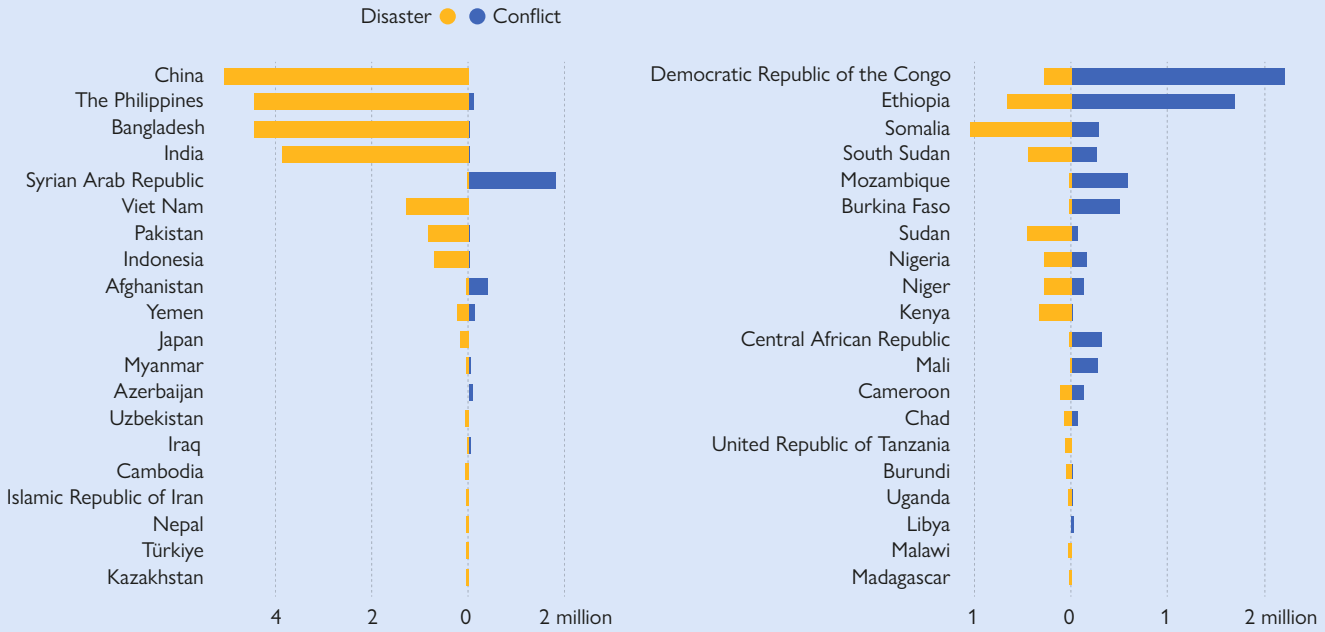
The impacts of disinformation are real and far-reaching, with sometimes devastating consequences for migrants. Such falsehoods can result in hostility and discrimination towards migrants, while also fueling xenophobia and hate speech (Cobian, 2019). Tackling disinformation is neither easy nor straightforward, but it is important – and even urgent – to find innovative ways to counter the proliferation of falsehoods and support effective migration policy. Research has shown that providing correct information in accessible formats can lessen misperceptions and reduce negative attitudes towards migrants (Culloty et al., 2021; Roth et al., 2017). Indeed, there is widespread consensus – both within policy and research spheres – that the availability of data as well as accurate and balanced information on migration are key to addressing the challenges while also harnessing the benefits that migration can bring.

Global reference reports, such as the *World Migration Report*, 2022, the flagship publication of IOM, play a key role in presenting migration data, information and analysis that is balanced and accurate. The Report collates, presents and analyses data for consumption by general, policy, technical, as well as educational audiences. To maximize its utility, the report is supplemented by a range of award-winning innovative digital tools, including interactive data visualizations that support sustainable efforts in countering disinformation on migration and migrants through design that is both engaging and appealing (McAuliffe et al., 2022).

Data visualization has become an important means of communication in a range of fields. The increasing visualization of data, including migration data, reflects the effectiveness of this form of communication. Graphics not only show aspects that models and statistics may miss, but they also foster questions "that stimulate research and suggest ideas" (Unwin, 2020). Data visualization also has several advantages, such as allowing users to identify emergent patterns and instantly show large amounts of data while boosting the understanding of both small-scale and large-scale data (Li, 2020). Others have pointed to how visualizations aid in decision-making, particularly in this day and age, when decision makers increasingly rely on data (Berinato, 2016).

Designed to further enhance both the utility and accessibility of the World Migration Report, the new interactive platform

Figure 72. Top 20 Asian and African countries by new internal displacements (disaster and conflict), 2020



Source: World Migration Report 2022 (regional chapter) using IDMC data. IOM (2021a).

Effective data design enables readers to quickly grasp key information on migration facts. Regional trends can be synthesized in a comparative way (see figures) so readers can immediately ascertain that Asia is impacted by disaster-related internal displacement while Africa is impacted more by conflict-based internal displacement. Disaster risk reduction, climate finance and adaptation will remain significant strategic issues for the Asia region for the foreseeable future.

presents a selection of key data visualizations from the report in a way that is accessible, interactive, and visually engaging for readers and users of migration data. Extending robust outputs through digital innovation expands access to evidence-based information about migration, providing the potential to support constructive policy dialogue and debates in the current "network society" (Castells, 2009).

Innovative digital tools to support access to and uptake of migration data, research and analysis

The data visualizations presented on the platform are based on the data and analysis in the World Migration Report, whose chapters are coauthored with, and peer-reviewed by some of the leading migration academics as well as IOM experts. The short narratives that accompany the visualizations support user interaction, making key facts more accessible to a wide variety of users, including policymakers, researchers, and media professionals (such as journalists, fact-checkers, and social media/community managers), as well as the general public.

The platform also features several specialized resources, including the World Migration Interactive Education Toolkit to provide key tools for use in the classroom. By using the interactive toolkit, teachers can stimulate active engagement of their students in global and local conversations about migration, including on themes such as climate change migration, demographic change and technology.

Migration will continue to be a key issue in many countries around the world for years to come. As a result, it will remain susceptible to untruths/falsehoods. Our digital age also ensures that disinformation about migrants and migration will continue to spread quickly and widely. Initiatives such as the World Migration Report Interactive Platform are fit for purpose – given current our digital environments – and will remain critical to reducing the complexity of migration and tackling disinformation by providing facts, accurate information and data in a way that is accessible and engaging to all audiences.

Innovative digital tools to support access to and uptake of migration data, research and analysis

World Migration Report Interactive Platform
World Migration Interactive Education Toolkit
World Migration Policy Toolkit
World Migration Factcheckers' Toolkit

6.3 Discussion

The implications of innovation and technology for migration and sustainable development are vast and multifaceted, central to which is the so-called data and digital technology dilemmas (Gatzweiler et al., 2023) – denoting the conflicts between new opportunities to accelerate if not transform the development agenda and associated challenges, risks and limitations. Some of the key opportunities that technology and innovation offer highlighted in this chapter are the potential to enhance the developmental impacts of migration, such as through supporting financial inclusion and access to health and social services of migrants, and providing opportunities to increase the availability, quality, granularity, timeliness and analysis of migration data to improve migration governance. However, there are several challenges in unlocking the use of big data for official migration and population statistics, as extensively discussed by Professor Albert Ali Salah in his expert contribution in this chapter. The United Nations Regional Commissions for Asia and the Pacific and Europe identified similar challenges, either associated with the nature of big data or the standards required for producing official migration or more generally population statistics, including individual privacy concerns, legal constraints and rules that limit the use of big data and new sources for statistical purposes, and access to big data and partnership model (ESCAP, 2022; UNECE, 2022). These reasons may well apply to other types of statistics and echo with wider concerns over and barriers to leveraging digital technology for migration and development. Moreover, the emergence of daunting reports of online scamming and its related new form of human trafficking in and from several Asia–Pacific countries in 2022 (see also Section 3.2) has drawn attention to the risks associated with technology that could expose migrants to harms and vulnerabilities.

One of the key questions would be how to steer the use of innovation and technology for development while minimizing its adverse impacts. It is essential to first point out that the goal of exploring the potentials of innovation and technology, obviously not without their own limitations, is not necessarily to replace but more realistically to complement and integrate traditional or existing tools where suitable, such as in the case of official migration statistics presented in this chapter.

In order to address these dilemmas in the socio-technological systems, various considerations can be made. Improving digital access and literacy is another urgent need to prevent widening of the technological and data divide within and between countries. First, the move toward greater digitalization of migration management and increased use of AI, such as for visa services, border processing and identity management, will increasingly require potential migrants to be able to engage with authorities via digital channels (McAuliffe, 2023). In view of this, there are calls for supporting migrants with digital access, especially women from developing countries (ibid.). Moreover, the expansion of digital technologies and their application in AI-supported migration systems in developed countries will further exacerbate the technological divide and add to structural disadvantage of least developed countries in migration management (ibid.). Also noteworthy is that while cost and procurement was identified as one main challenge to use of big data for official migration and population statistics in Asia and the Pacific, this is not the case in Europe (ESCAP, 2022; UNECE, 2022). Considering also other challenges including digital literacy of statisticians in handling big data, a data divide could be a potential area that warrants to be closely monitored and narrowed.

The role of global partnership, as emphasized by SDG Target 17.16, cannot be overstated. Highlighting how the pandemic has shown the critical importance of sharing health data globally, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2021) calls for a renewed focus on achieving global digital and data governance, developing global digital public goods, increasing trust and reducing uncertainty in the digital economy. A new regulatory framework would be core to this new approach that factors in both economic and non-economic dimensions, and that can work for countries at different levels of digital readiness. Furthermore, a human-centred systems approach towards sustainable data and digital technology development has been advocated as one of the ways forward, one that aims at developing and applying digital technologies for the good of humans (Gatzweiler et al., 2023). It is important that migrants and citizens are included in these global efforts in advancing the technological frontier for development – which still requires much more evidence, knowledge exchange, coordination and collaboration than are currently present.

One of the key questions would be how to steer the use of innovation and technology for development while minimizing its adverse impacts. It is essential to first point out that the goal of exploring the potentials of innovation and technology, obviously not without their own limitations, is not necessarily to replace but more realistically to complement and integrate traditional or existing tools where suitable.

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With the Prottasha project's reintegration assistance, a migrant returnee supports his family of five and leads a happy life in Bangladesh. © IOM 2021

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2022 aimed at collecting data and information on migration in the region in 2022. The report thoroughly examined and analysed the primary trends and factors influencing migration and displacement, vulnerabilities, innovation and development, among other relevant topics. The report also highlighted data limitations and policy gaps, which still hinder a wholesome understanding of the migration landscape in the region. Notably, the information gathered supports monitoring the progress towards the SDGs, the Global Compact for Migration and the MGI.

By the end of 2022, almost three years after the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, the health crisis eased, as reflected in the lifting of international and internal mobility restrictions in most countries, territories and areas in the region. While many consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are still tangible for people on the move, this report sheds light on how their interaction with emerging forces and trends will shape the migration landscape in the region's transition towards its post-pandemic future. Throughout the report, several noteworthy trends have been identified. One of the main key trends discussed in the innovation chapter is the rapid growth of big data and technological advancements in migration management and collection tools.

Moreover, with changing population structures in many countries, migration is playing a crucial role in shaping the demographic outlook, while political and economic instability in some countries have major influences on labour and mixed migration. Also, as highlighted in the report, the critical conditions in Afghanistan and Myanmar continue to significantly impact migrants and forcibly displaced individuals. Additionally, the occurrence of climate-related disasters in countries like Pakistan and the Philippines in 2022 underscores the alarming situation faced by many people in the region who are either unable or compelled to move due to climate change. It is not coincidental that by the end of 2022, Asia and the Pacific reported the highest number of displacements caused by disasters.

As has become clear in this report, every aspect of migration is interconnected with the other. For example, labour migrants can fall into irregularity when they encounter difficulties in renewing their work permits. This situation also increases their vulnerabilities and exposure to any form of trafficking and exploitation. At the same time, conflict- and disaster-induced displacement continue to force people to leave their homes and take dangerous routes, either by sea or land, in the search of safety.

Finally, the report emphasizes the significance of addressing the identified data gaps to design evidence-based policies for achieving SDG Target 10.7 that calls for a safe, orderly, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people. The Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report highlights the need to produce better, timely and accurate migration data to identify not only the challenges and vulnerabilities that migrants face but also their contributions to the social and economic development of countries of origin and destination.

Recommendations: From Data to Policy

Migration Statistics

- The Progress Declaration of International Migration Review Forum 2022 recognized that gaps in migration data collection and analysis persist to date. To achieve SDG Target 17.18 and Global Compact for Migration Objectives 1 and 3, it is important to continue strengthening the evidence base for international and internal migration and mobilities through improved data collection and use
  - Despite challenges, an increased focus on improving data availability and analysis of SDG data with disaggregation by migratory status will be crucial to ensuring that the SDG agenda to leave no one behind translate into action for migrants as we move towards 2030 and beyond.
  - Support national statistical offices in integrating international statistical standards related to migration into national data systems.

Types of Migration

Labour migration

- In the quest for timely, accurate data at all stages of migration in Objective 3 of the Global Compact for Migration, data and research are key tools to understand the dynamics of labour migration in both potential origin and destination countries, especially under the influence of a range of emerging and evolving drivers. Promoting consistency and comparability in the definition and reporting of labour migration data across countries is another area that requires important efforts.
- Concerted efforts of States, the private sector and other stakeholders, such as international and regional organizations, NGOs and trade unions, are fundamental to enabling and supporting migrant worker protection, regardless of their documentation status, skill level or gender.

Conflict-Induced Migration

- In line with SDG 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions, strengthen institutional capacity to provide and access peace processes and justice services in alignment with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus by way of collaborating with national and international partners on these three fronts.
  - Adding consistent services that measure psychosocial well-being of migrants as a first step to understand and measure perceptions, intentions, gaps and progress toward a durable solution.
- Under Global Compact for Migration Objectives 1 – easing pressures on host countries, 2 – enhancing refugee self-reliance, 3 – expanding access to third-country solutions and
- 4 – supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity, enable burden-sharing of host communities through multisectoral and interagency planning that cut across those vulnerabilities shared by both migrants and host communities in support of poverty reduction and development.
  - Support of resettlement movements to be continued in favour of optimizing livelihood opportunities for vulnerable populations stuck in desolate areas.
  - Broaden the number of countries taking in migrant population groups, via the engagement of new constituencies including development organizations, local authorities, the private sector and civil society.

Data

Policy

Environmental and Climate Migration: A Focus on Disaster-Induced Displacements

- Strengthen research among government institutions and practitioners, focusing on empirical studies and comprehensive data to identify specific dynamics of climate change-induced migration and the risk factors for increased vulnerability. Research serves as an interface to help decision makers and affected communities develop sustainable adaptation strategies.

- Improve data collection on cross-border movements due to environmental impacts to develop policy measures for protecting those who have left their countries due to environmental concerns. Additionally, improve environmental migration data on populations caught in long-term internal displacement by disaggregating data by sex and age to better understand the differential impacts of environmental migration on different migrant groups.

- In response to SDG Target 1.5, which aims to build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations by 2030 and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters, collaboration among key actors is needed to ensure accountability of displaced persons by building an evidence base for better programming through the systematic monitoring of indicators linked to durable solutions.

Return Migration

- To fulfil Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Migration that calls for ensuring and facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission as well as sustainable reintegration, it is important to address data gaps in post-return data by collecting information on the living conditions, economic situation and access to social services of returnees and their families.
- Collect disaggregated data by sex, age and other relevant factors to better understand how different groups of returning migrants experience the reintegration process.
- Enhance data collection and accessibility pertaining to voluntary and involuntary return migration to support evidence-based policy formulation and decision-making.

- Develop and implement comprehensive reintegration frameworks and policies that take into account the needs of different groups of returnees, including vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Irregular Migration

- Improve data collection on the numbers and modalities of irregular migration.
  - In particular, more attention needs to be paid to the number of people irregularly entering, residing or working in a country, and the reasons behind irregular migration. Moreover, having more data on births and deaths in the irregular migrant population would be helpful. These improvements and commitments aim to identify patterns and create evidence-based policies to protect migrants' lives.
  - Data on irregular migrants' well-being and access to health and education services are needed to monitor progress towards the SDGs.

- In line with SDG Target 10.7 for orderly, safe and regular migration and Objective 5 of the Global Compact for Migration to increase availability of pathways for regular migration, it is crucial to continue and increase efforts to include the topic of irregular migration in international and regional frameworks. For instance, better coordination between origin, transit and destination countries may not only increase regular mechanisms for migrants, but also lead to financial benefits by matching skills and economic powers and contributing to all economies. Additionally, including regularization on top of the policymaking agenda could pave the path for safer and regular migration corridors.

Data

Policy

Migration and Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities Related to Migration

- Improve data availability by combining quantitative with qualitative information, to better understand migrants' vulnerabilities.
    - Data on vulnerabilities should be disaggregated by gender to identify the different challenges experienced by migrant women and men, as well as migrants with different SOGIE, who often suffer the compounding effects of unfair working conditions, together with discrimination and harassment in countries of origin, transit and destination.
- To achieve SDG Target 1.3 – which calls on States for appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, greater consolidated efforts by national and inter-agency actors are needed to keep an updated database of vulnerable populations in need of international protection and their differential needs.
    - To fulfil SDG Target 8, which focuses on decent work and protection of vulnerable workers, it is important to protect migrant workers' rights by eliminating recruitment fees, ending exploitative practices during work and risky conditions in work settings. Moreover, more efforts should be made to regularize migrant workers who arrive in the country with an irregular migration status.

Vulnerabilities Related to Forced Displacement

- Likewise, SDG Target 1.3 to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable through nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, is sine qua non to fostering a resilient and cohesive environment for returnees, IDPs and host communities alike through social protection programming at the individual, community and structural level in alleviating economic burdens and indebtedness.
    - Where issues on reintegration are tied to housing, employment and health, providing relief policies at the place of refuge to alleviate economic pains by reducing negative coping mechanisms through systems of (housing) subsidies, or promotion of community-based cooperatives/initiatives are viable options for further investigation.

Trafficking in Persons

- While more than half of Asia–Pacific governments do not fully meet the TVPA minimum standards but are making significant efforts to comply with those standards, new trafficking trends have taken part in the region affecting thousands of migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations. In order to comply with SDG Target 8.7 that aims to eradicate modern slavery, trafficking, forced labour and the worst forms of child labour by 2030, improving data uniformity in trafficking in persons is key. Government agencies and front-line service providers should collaborate and combine their data to compare trends internally and with other governments when collaborating across borders.

- Promote dedicated research and big data analysis to enable practitioners to better understand financial flows related to criminal activities, the use of social media for recruitment and selling of exploitative services, migration patterns and trafficking hotspots.

- To effectively evaluate the application and efficacy of anti-trafficking legislation, it is crucial to collect comprehensive data on trafficking crimes, including demographic information on both perpetrators and victims, as well as the type of trafficking. Proper categorization of charges is key to identify gaps in the application of anti-trafficking laws, especially when traffickers are prosecuted under different statutes such as immigration or commercial sex-related offenses.

Migrant Deaths and Disappearances

- In the call of SDG Indicator 10.7.3 to measure the number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination, greater data disaggregation by migratory status, in addition to sex and age data, and with differentiation between countries of origin, departure, transit and intended destination could help elucidate who, where and to what extent people are being left behind.

Data

Policy

- In fulfilling Objective 5 of the Global Compact for Migration – to enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration, build a coalition and web of actors, notably at the national level, that is actively engaged and partake in data collection to improve data availability on migrant deaths and disappearances in order to ensure data quality and comprehensiveness.

- In addressing MGI 11 – Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner, and fulfilling Objective 7 of the Global Compact for Migration – Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration, and Objective 23 – for better managing migration at local, national, regional and global levels, implement services that promote and support the safe disembarkation and management of migrants on the move in addition to search and rescue missions.
    - In protecting the right of migrants to life and with human dignity, and with the inclusion of civil society members where families of the deceased can properly investigate their death whether through judicial procedures or by supporting the search process.

Migration and Development

- Despite the call of SDG Target 10.c, 47 per cent of the observed corridors involving Asia–Pacific countries as the destinations have average costs of more than 5 per cent with many corridors remaining above 10 per cent.
- Improve data collection to identify corridors with excessive costs of remittance transfer and better understand general and group-specific barriers to remittance transfer through digital and formal channels, which are some of the observed hurdles that might depress the amount and effective use of remittances for development. Such an evidence base will enable policy makers and development partners to develop support policies to eliminate existing barriers, buffer the negative implications of potential downside risks, facilitate the leveraging of remittance flows to stimulate their use towards sustainable development initiatives and promote financial inclusion.

- Increase and improve data collection on the size and profile of diaspora communities as well as their contributions at the national and regional levels to contribute to a better understanding and systematization of diasporas' potential for development. In line with Objective 19 of the Global Compact for Migration, which calls for creating conditions for diasporas to contribute to development in all countries, encourage policy and institutional frameworks for diaspora engagement, both at the national and regional levels.

Data

Migration and Policy

Policy and Governance: Migrant Rights

- Collaborative efforts should be made to collect reliable data on the respect for migrants' human rights. This can be done by:
    1. Standardizing the indicators and variables used internationally among institutions and governments to monitor migrant rights, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups.
    2. Collecting disaggregated data by migratory status and other relevant variables, such as age, sex, religion or belief, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and minority status.

- Include the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) in government monitoring and evaluation systems to enhance data coverage in the region on SDG Indicator 10.7.2 that measures the number of countries with migration policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration.

Policy

- Establish comprehensive frameworks that specifically address the protection of migrant rights. These frameworks should encompass all aspects of the migration process, including recruitment, employment, living conditions, access to services and social integration.

Migration and Innovation

- With the increasing focus on modernizing and integrating national data systems, national statistical offices should be supported in the use of big data for official migration statistics, and in tackling the barriers and challenges to putting them to better use – as accentuated in the demand for accurate, timely and disaggregated data at all stages of migration by SDG Target 17.18 and the Global Compact for Migration Objective 1 and 3.

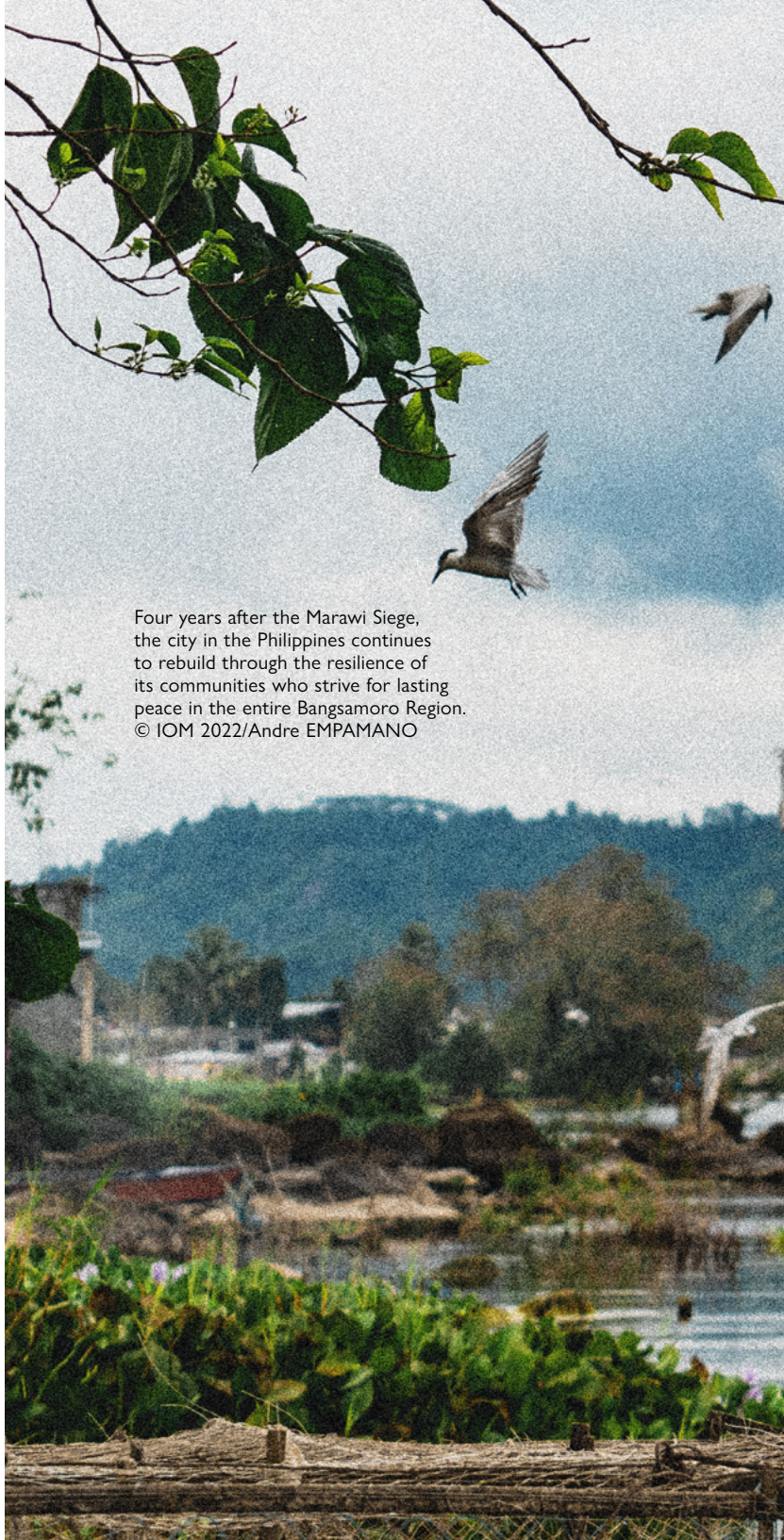
- In line with SDG 10 to reduce inequalities, improving digital access and literacy is another urgent need to prevent widening of the technological and data divide within and between countries; such improvement is also imperative to limit ensuing inequalities against certain migrant population groups (that is, select groups of countries of origin or passport holders with slow and manual administrative procedures) who are not well-versed with digital technology.

- In the call for global digital and data governance, it is important that migrants and citizens are included in these global efforts in advancing the technological frontier for development
- – which still requires much more evidence, knowledge exchange, coordination and collaboration than currently available.

- The set-up of international or specific task forces, frameworks and/or a panel of experts as a vehicle to channel and guide the above objectives will be required to safely regulate the use of digital innovations from a protection perspective to heed the rise and risks of technologies such as AI, among others.

Data

Policy



Four years after the Marawi Siege, the city in the Philippines continues to rebuild through the resilience of its communities who strive for lasting peace in the entire Bangsamoro Region.
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Annexes

Annex I: Sustainable Development Goals Indicators with Explicit Reference to Migration

Table 6: Sustainable Development Goals Indicators with explicit reference to migration

SDG Targets		SDG Indicators	
3.c	Increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries	3.c.1	Health worker density and distribution
4.b	Expand the number of scholarships available to developing countries for enrolment in higher education in developed countries and other developing countries	4.b.1	Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
8.8	Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment	8.8.1	Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status
		8.8.2	Level of national compliance of labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status
10.7	Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	10.7.1	Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of early income earned in country of destination
		10.7.2	Number of countries with migration policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people

SDG Targets		SDG Indicators	
10.7	Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	10.7.3	Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination.
		10.7.4	Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin
10.c	By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent	10.c.1	Remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted
11.5	By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations	11.5.1	Number of deaths, missing and persons affected by disaster
16.2	End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children	16.2.2	Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation
17.3	Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources	17.3.2	Volume of remittances in GDP
17.18	By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts	17.18.1	Proportion of sustainable development indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Note: For more information, see IOM Migration Data Portal thematic page.

Annex II: Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration Objectives

Table 7: Global Compact for Migration objectives

1. Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies
2. Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin
3. Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration
4. Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation
5. Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration
6. Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work
7. Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration
8. Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants
9. Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants
10. Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration
11. Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner
12. Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral
13. Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives
14. Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle
15. Provide access to basic services for migrants
16. Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion
17. Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration
18. Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences
19. Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries
20. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants
21. Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration
22. Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits
23. Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration

Source: IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre: Global Compact for Migration development process.

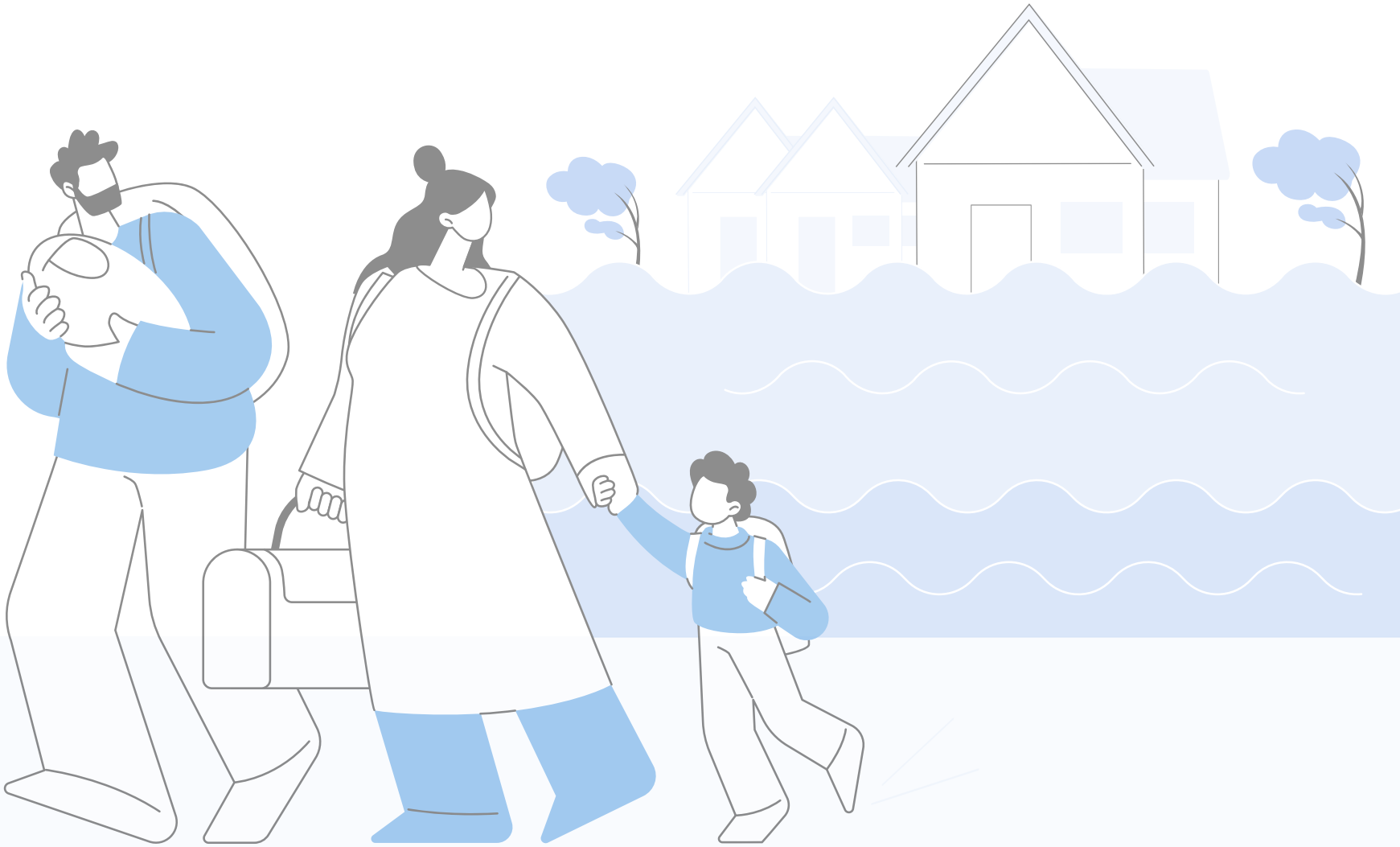
Annex III: Migration Governance Indicators

Table 8: Migration Governance Indicators

Dimensions of Migration Governance Indicators

1. Migrants' rights	Indicators in this domain assess the extent to which migrants have the same status as citizens in terms of access to basic social services such as health, education, and social security. It also describes the rights of migrants to family reunification, to work, and to residency and citizenship. The ratification of the main international conventions is also included within this domain.
2. Whole-of-government approach	Indicators in this domain assess countries' institutional, legal, and regulatory frameworks related to migration policies. Domain 2 also reviews the existence of national migration strategies that are in-line with development, as well as institutional transparency and coherence in relation to migration management. This domain also investigates the extent to which governments collect and use migration data.
3. Partnerships	This domain focuses on countries' efforts to cooperate on migration-related issues with other states and with relevant non-governmental actors, including civil society organizations and the private sector. Cooperation can lead to improvements in governance by aligning and raising standards, increasing dialogue and providing structures to overcome challenges.
4. Well-being of migrants	This domain includes indicators on countries' policies for managing the socioeconomic well-being of migrants, through aspects such as the recognition of migrants' educational and professional qualifications, provisions regulating student migration and the existence of bilateral labour agreements between countries. Indicators equally focus on policies and strategies related to diaspora engagement and migrant remittances.
5. Mobility dimensions of crises	This domain studies the type and level of preparedness of countries when they are faced with mobility dimensions of crises, linked to either disasters, the environment and/or conflict. The questions are used to identify the processes in place for nationals and non-nationals both during and after disasters, including whether humanitarian assistance is equally available to migrants as it is to citizens.
6. Safe, orderly and dignified migration	This domain analyses countries' approach to migration management in terms of border control and enforcement policies, admission criteria for migrants, preparedness and resilience in the case of significant and unexpected migration flows, as well as the fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants. It also assesses efforts and incentives to help integrate returning citizens.

Source: IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre: Migration Governance Indicators.



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