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Statistical data collection on migration in Georgia

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Introduction

The national recording system for international migration in Georgia is essentially unregulated. This is due both to the complexity of migration registration and by the grave situation in the country at the time of statistics reform in Georgia.

Unfortunately, in the post-Soviet years, with economic collapse and political chaos statistical registration in the country was disrupted and even if social and economic recovery started only recently there, statistics were not relevant to the contemporary situation. As to migration flows, the strict registration of people's movement was still in effect in the first years of the post-Soviet period. Statistical services received tags from so-called "registration sheets." Migrants could not change their place of residence without applying to the passport service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Liberalization of people's movement given the absence of a population register made the process of registration unmanageable.

Today, few changes have been implemented to improve the data collection system. The legal basis of official statistics is extremely weak. The current law on statistics is a copy of other countries' laws. It is imperfect and does not provide the necessary information, not allowing that information to be obtained or processed properly. The abolition of statistical services in administrative regions in order to "economize" on staff and to reduce expenses on statistics substantially worsened the obtaining of primary statistical information being Georgia characterized by sharp regional differences. It is unfortunate that current statistical service is more oriented to the demands of consumers outside the country. The statistics reflecting the situation inside the country does not come close to the demands of scientists. Linkages between the Department of Statistics of Georgia and academic circles are very weak.

Against a background of general reforms, the reforms made in the system of statistics are ineffective. Its personnel are few and frequently poorly motivated. It is obvious that the statistical service is in need of legal, organizational and structural reform with functional expansion and better human resources.

Flow data sources

At present, the recording of international migration from and to Georgia is based on the registration of persons **border crossing statistics** and it is released only in the form of a migration balance. The technology of initial registration is as follows: a copy of the passport of the person crossing the border is made at a border check point, and then a copy is sent to the analytical center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs where it is counted only in the context of the number of persons and their citizenship. Then, subsequently, this information is submitted to the National Services of Statistics. Other possible information on sex, age, place of birth is not processed.

It should also be noted that the flow of migration statistics result from the universally known method of fixing the fact of border crossing, when one person crosses a border several times during a year. Many persons go abroad illegally evading border control altogether.

Moreover, in **1989-2002**, the annual volume of international migration was determined by the **population balance** between the noted years in consideration of natural increase in population. In this period the intensity of migration by years varied dramatically. It was estimated and specified by the *ad hoc* group of experts using various methods (essentially on the basis of a sample survey). This is the way that the data on emigration and immigration of all the years until 2004 were obtained. As we have noted above, since 2004, external migration is recorded only by records from border check points.

Stock data sources

The main source for estimating the international immigration stock is the 2002 **population census**. Here, a specially designed registration sheet was employed which consisted of 15 questions about emigrants. These questions were as follows: 1. kinship with the chief person in the household; 2. sex; 3. date of birth; 4. place of birth (country, city, village); 5. nationality; 6. native language (other languages); 7. citizenship (present); 8. religion; 9. level of education; 10. marital status; 11. when did he/she go?; 12. where did he/she go?, where does he/she live at present?; 13. reason for leaving the country; 14. does he/she receive material assistance from his/her family? or does his/her family receives material assistance from him/her?; 15. is he/she going to return?. As to emigration stock, Census allows to record Georgian migrants left for abroad having household member left behind. Thus, the number of emigrants is underestimated, because in the post-Soviet period the emigration of whole families was frequent, particularly among ethnic minorities. There were also many cases when family members withheld the fact that family members had emigrated for various reasons. Thus, it can be said decisively that population census did not encompass all emigrants and released data are inadequate.

Additional data sources

In order to identify the tendencies of population migration in Georgia and to specify or determine its many indicators, important *ad hoc* surveys have been carried out, some of them by the central statistical services. Among them, a survey conducted by the **TACIS program** should be singled out. This survey provided rich data obtained through the interview of 3,646 persons who went abroad or arrived in Georgia via Georgian airports, railway and international bus terminals: 2,107 persons went abroad, 1,539 persons arrived in Georgia. Through the survey the reasons for departure and arrival, the main recipient countries of migrants, goals, sex and age structure, the level of education, marital status, professional activity, citizenship and other similar points were covered.

In 2008, the National Service for Statistics carried out an *ad hoc* survey of households which gave us even richer data. The goal of this survey was to study emigrating populations or populations who had returned from emigration. It was found that only 177.5 thousand families had family members abroad. A survey was carried out in seven thousand families and on family members residing abroad. Through a special questionnaire the same number of migrants who had returned to Georgia were also studied. Rich data on labour emigration was obtained which basically coincided with the results of various private research projects.

The **Civil Registration Agency** which was recently established has reliable information on migration. However, it is still in the process of formation. This agency records the changes of residence, the granting and discontinuation of citizenship, natural increase in population, marriages and divorces and so forth. The relevant bodies of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia carefully records **refugees and internally displaced persons**. Recently, there was the creation of an information database for the Georgian diaspora at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, apparatus of the State Minister on diaspora issues. It is based on the information obtained from **consulates**.

Conclusions

To conclude, the information on population migration obtained from the statistical services of Georgia is inadequate. These statistical services need fundamental transformation and financial support. Here, great importance should be attached to qualified methodical assistance and consultations with foreign research institutions, assistance that might improve the migration registration system.

Inward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Georgian Population Census Main info: Primary source; universal data collection; stock data Periodicity: roughly every 10 years: 1959, 1970, 1979, 1989, 2002	National Statistics Office of Georgia.	Population census covers the immigrant population , defined as people who arrived in Georgia from another country and who have lived in Georgia for one year or more.	Population by country of birth, country of citizenship and length of residence in Georgia	Interviewing of population filling out personal questionnaires.	(+) Reliable data source with universal coverage; (-) No information on migration history.
Current registration of refugees Main info: Primary source; stock and flow data Periodicity: Continuous (aggregated by year).	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia (MRA).	It covers refugees. According to the 'Law of Georgia on Refugees', a refugee is "a person without Georgian citizenship who entered the territory of Georgia and to whom Georgia is not the country of origin and who was forced to leave his/her country of citizenship or permanent residence owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country."	Country of citizenship.	Data collection based on official registrations.	(-) Little information.

Antward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Current records of foreign students	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.	It covers foreign students .	Country of citizenship.	Data collection based on official registrations and then passed to Geostat.	(-) Little information.
Main info: Primary source; stock and flow data					
Periodicity: Continuous (aggregated by year).					
Registration of population at the place of residence	Civil Registry Agency.	The definition 'arrivals' is used. Arrivals include people who register in a place of permanent residence, i.e. de iure population.	Arrivals by country of citizenship; acquisition of Georgian citizenship.	Data collection based on on-line registration.	(-) Little information.
Main info: Primary source; flow data					
Periodicity: Continuous (aggregated by year).					

Outward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
<p>Georgian Population Census</p> <p>Main info: Primary source; universal data collection; stock data.</p> <p>Periodicity: Roughly every 10 years: 1959, 1970, 1979, 1989, 2002.</p>	National Statistics Office of Georgia.	Population census covers the emigrant population , defined as people who left Georgia and live abroad for one year or more.	Reason of departure.	Interviewing of population filling out personal questionnaires.	(+) Reliable data source with universal coverage; (-) Little information on migration history.
<p>Current records of Georgian students leaving for abroad</p> <p>Main info: Primary source; stock and flow data</p> <p>Periodicity: Continuous (aggregated by year).</p>					
	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.	It covers Georgian students living abroad.		Data collection based on official registrations and then passed to Geostat.	(-) Little information.

Outward migration: relevant information on sources

Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Current records of remittances sent to Georgia	Central Bank of Georgia .	It covers remittances sent by Georgian emigrants living abroad to Georgia.	Total amount of remittances.	The table only provides remittances sent electronically from abroad. They are computed on the basis of statistical accounts of commercial bank.	(-) Little information.
Main info: Flow data					
Periodicity: The information is provided quarterly.					

Data accessibility: Population Census (<http://www.geostat.ge/>), Registration of population at the place of residence (<http://www.cra.gov.ge/>): available upon request; Current registration of refugees: available at <http://mra.gov.ge/main/GEO#section>; Current records of foreign students: available at <http://mra.gov.ge/main/GEO#section>; Current records of Georgian students leaving for abroad: available at <http://www.geostat.ge/>; Current records of remittances sent to Georgia (<http://www.nbg.gov.ge/>).