REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE PRODUCTION OF MIGRATION STATISTICS IN AFRICA

The African Union Commission- AUSTAT - STATAFRIC

In partnership with

Statistics Sweden

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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE COLLECTION OF MIGRATIONS STATISTICS IN AFRICA

I.   Introduction

The implementation of standardized approaches to collect, process and utilize statistics in Africa including migration-relevant data across the African continent is one of the priorities of the African Union Commission (AUC). Statistics is an essential basis for planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects / programs on the continent.

With improved migration statistics, the African continent has the capacity to monitor and implement the New Migration Policy Framework for Africa and the AU / ILO / IOM / ECA Joint Program for Labor Migration in Africa (JLMP). Moreover, the availability of migration data has long term impact in the development of informed evidence based policies and assist in making better decisions amongst government agencies and other stakeholders.

In 2017, the AUC produced the first edition of the Labour Migration Statistics in Africa and the report showed that there is lack of capacities at country and regional level to produce, collect and disseminate timely and quality data on Labour migration in Africa. The second edition which will soon be published shows some progress but more need to be done to improve the availability of migration data disaggregated in all sectors, occupations and economic activities.

With the improved processes, strategies and prospects in place assisting member states to produce migration data from various sources, the COVID 19 pandemic, may slowdown the production of migration statistics in Africa from these sources. To this end, the African Union has undertaken a study to assess the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the production of migration statistics in Africa.

II.   Methodology for the study

In early April 2020, the African Union Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC) sent a questionnaire to the National Statistical Offices of the 55 Member States of the African Union to collect data on the impact of COVID-19 on the production of migration statistics. Forty-seven (47) African countries replied to the questionnaires, this represented a response rate of 85.45%. The summary of the findings from the survey are presented below.

III.   Key findings

III.1 Main migration statistics topics covered by African countries

Over 87% of African countries collect data on labor migration. This is because Labor migration remains a priority at national, regional and continental level with the adoption of the AU/ILO/IOM /ECA Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration (JLMP) by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in 2015. Over 68% of African countries collect data on remittances in the production of migration statistics. Further, the findings indicated that 55.3% of African countries produce statistics on refugees, while asylum seekers (55.3%), the diaspora (53.2%) and internally displaced persons (IDPSs) (51.1%) as part of the production of migration statistics. Less than 50% of African countries produce statistics on migrants in transit, circular migration, human trafficking and smuggling of migrants and stateless persons.
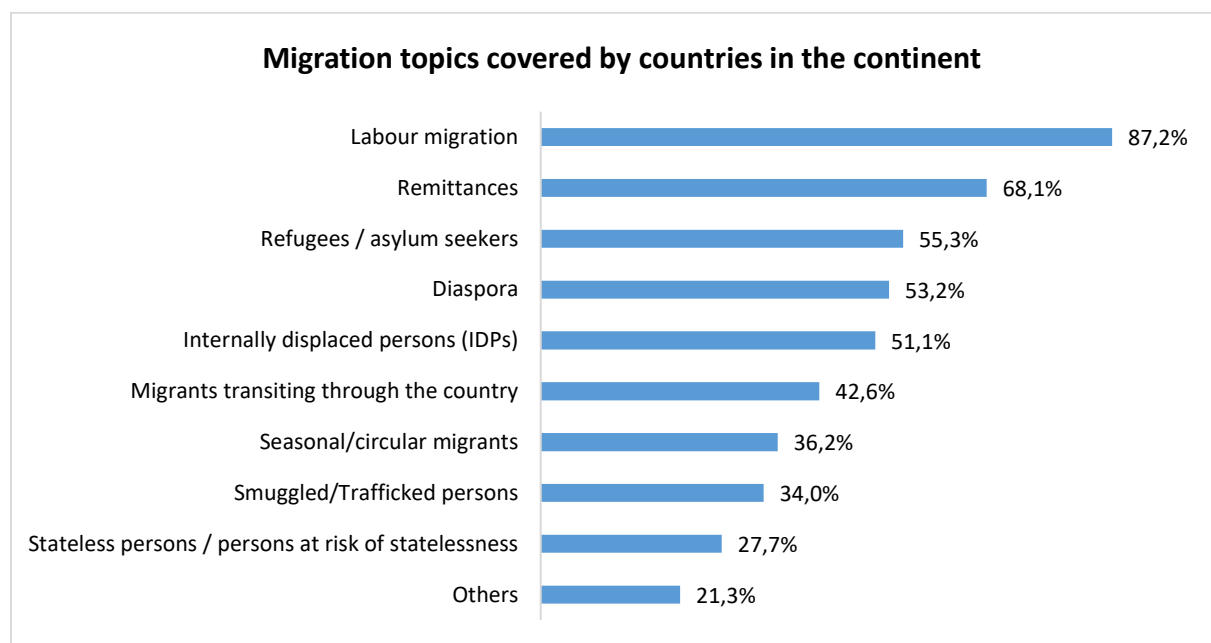
Migration topics covered by countries in the continent

Topic	Percentage
Labour migration	87,2%
Remittances	68,1%
Refugees / asylum seekers	55,3%
Diaspora	53,2%
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	51,1%
Migrants transiting through the country	42,6%
Seasonal/circular migrants	36,2%
Smuggled/Trafficked persons	34,0%
Stateless persons / persons at risk of statelessness	27,7%
Others	21,3%

Figure 1: Migration topics covered by countries

III.2 Periodicity of producing Migration Statistics

Over 76% of African countries produce migration statistics on an annual basis with 28% of producing migration statistics quarterly basis and 13% produce migration statistics on a monthly basis. This is shown in the figure 2 below:

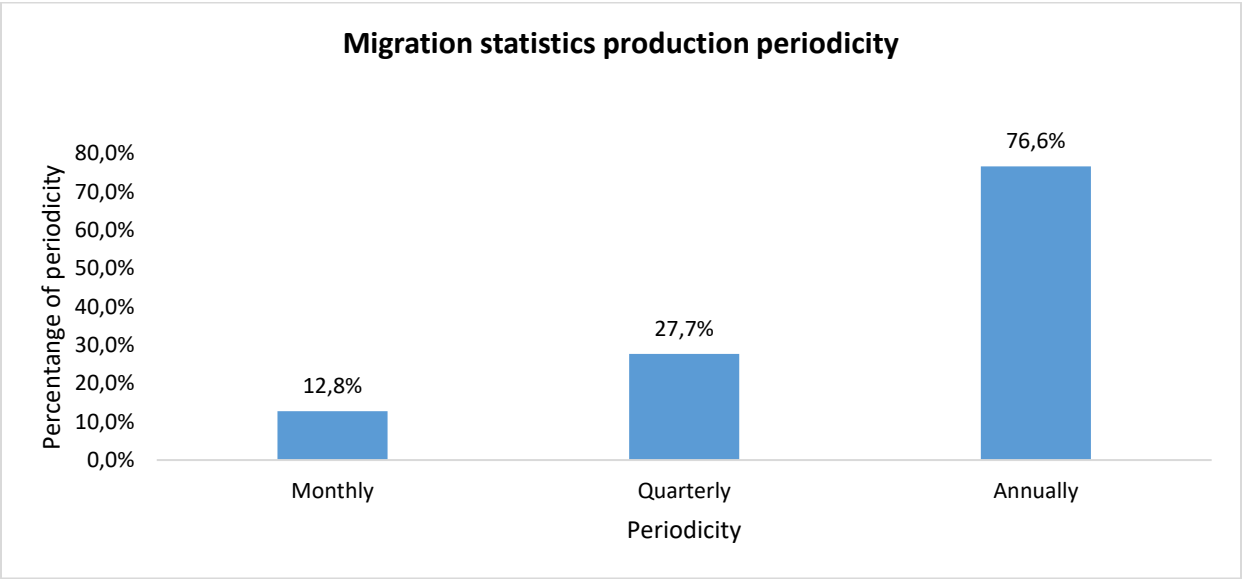**Migration statistics production periodicity**

Figure 1: Migration statistics production periodicity within African countries

However, given the current circumstances of the COVID 19 pandemic, the periodicity of producing migration statistics will be affected more especially the data that is produced on monthly and quar terly basis. On the other hand, collection of data may be delayed in some countries due to the mea sures and restrictions put in place with many governments allowing their employees to work remo tely.

III.3 Main data sources for producing migration statistics

Population and Housing Censuses remain the main sources of data for producing migration statistics in Africa. About ninety-eight percent (98%) of African countries use population and housing censuses to produce migration data. On the other hand, surveys are also essential sources of producing migration statistics data at the country level. It was evident from the findings that, ninety-two percent (92%) of African countries use surveys as data sources for migration statistics. Administrative sources also contribute greatly in the production of migration statistics in Africa. Although administrative sources are generally less expensive, only seventy-nine percent (79%) of African countries use administrative sources to produce migration statistics while thirty-six percent (36%) of African countries use data sources other than population and housing censuses, surveys and administrative sources for the production of migration statistics.
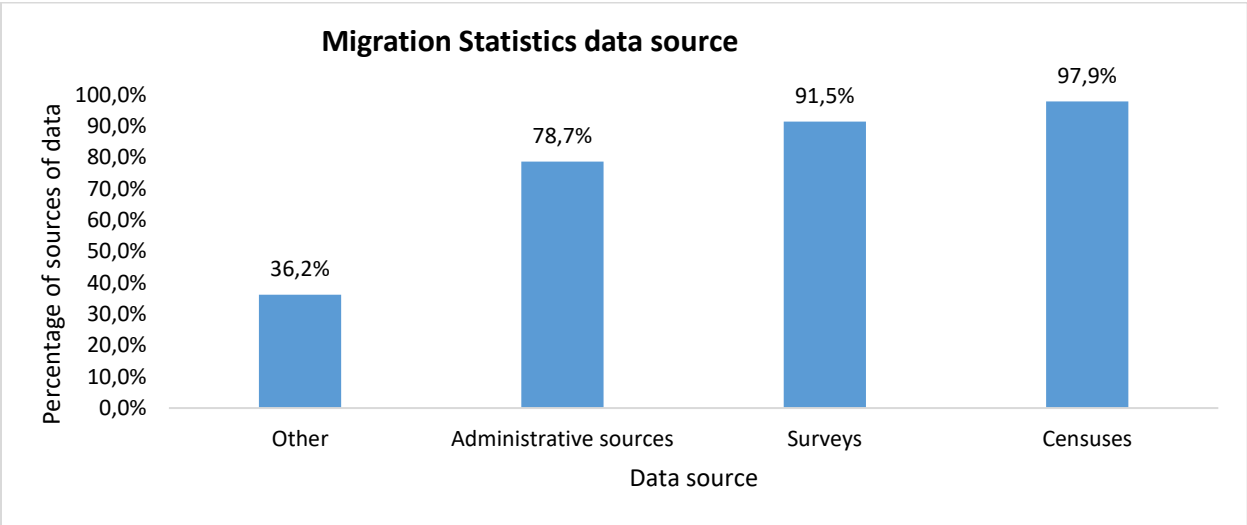
Figure 2: Migration Statistics data sources utilized by African Countries

Many countries have put in various measures and restrictions on movements so as to compact the spread of the virus. These measures will impart greatly on these data sources. The periodicity of updating the information might be delayed while other essential services where this information is captured, the employees have been advised to telework thus leading to some inefficiencies or delayed collection of data from different agencies and entities involved in the gathering this information.

III.4 Data sources affected by the coronavirus pandemic

It is evident that data sources used for producing migration data in African will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The surveys with migration modules or questions in eighty-seven percent (87%) of African countries will be affected by the current health crisis. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the countries think that the administrative sources that provide information to produce migration statistics will be affected. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of African countries think that the COVID 19 pandemic will have a negative impact on implementation of population and housing censuses.

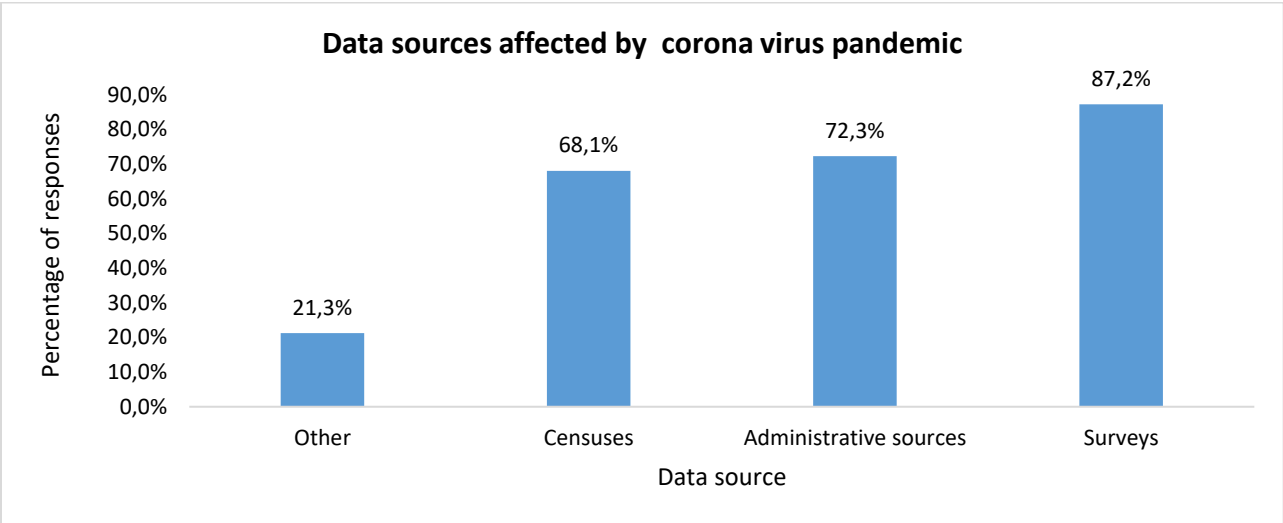**Data sources affected by corona virus pandemic**

Figure 3: Distribution of data sources affected by corona virus pandemic

Primary data sources like population and housing censuses and surveys will be adversely affected. This is because the common methodologies and approaches of collecting migration data using these sources may not be suitable during this pandemic due to travel restrictions, lockdowns and closure of government offices with minimal services carried out through teleworking. In addition, common approaches for collecting this information through surveys may not be applicable thus implying that new measures, strategies and approaches must be put in place to counter this effect. Administrative sources contribute greatly towards the production of migration statistics in Africa. However, with the current scenario and circumstances, the regular update, collection and collation of this information from different sources, agencies and other stakeholders will be challenging to meet the already set standards and guidelines. On the other hand, some of the countries that had planned to hold censuses over the year have already postponed this exercise while others are looking at the prospect of postponing this exercise too. This uncertainty implies that migration data that was to be collected through censuses may not be available as planned.

III.5 Countries with ongoing migration surveys / censuses

The COVID 19 pandemic will have an impact on the major operations of current data collection in progress. Seventy percent (70%) of African countries believe that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a negative impact on the major operations under way if it prolongs for a long period. This is due to the fact that some census and migration surveys had been planned before the current COVID 19 pandemic.
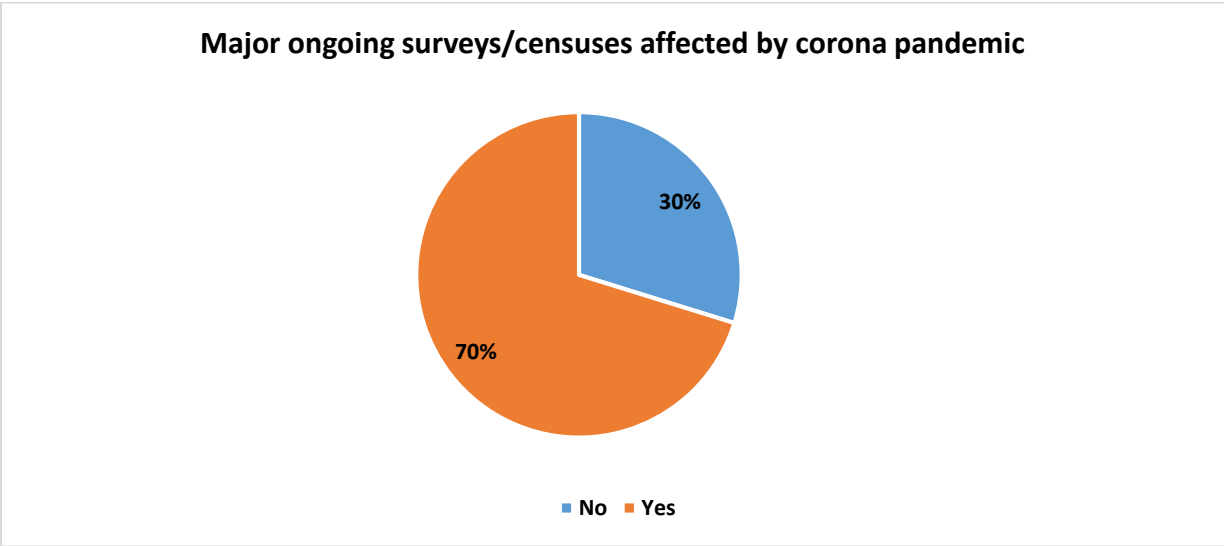
Major ongoing surveys/censuses affected by corona pandemic

30%

70%

■ No ■ Yes

Figure 4: Countries with major ongoing surveys/censuses affected by corona pandemic

III.6 Using administrative data as an alternative for the affected surveys/censuses

Only twenty-eight percent (28%) of the countries believe that administrative sources can be used a
s alternatives, for collecting data to produce migration statistics in the continent.

Use of admnistrative data as an alternative source

72,3%

27,7%

Percentage of responses

80,0%
70,0%
60,0%
50,0%
40,0%
30,0%
20,0%
10,0%
0,0%

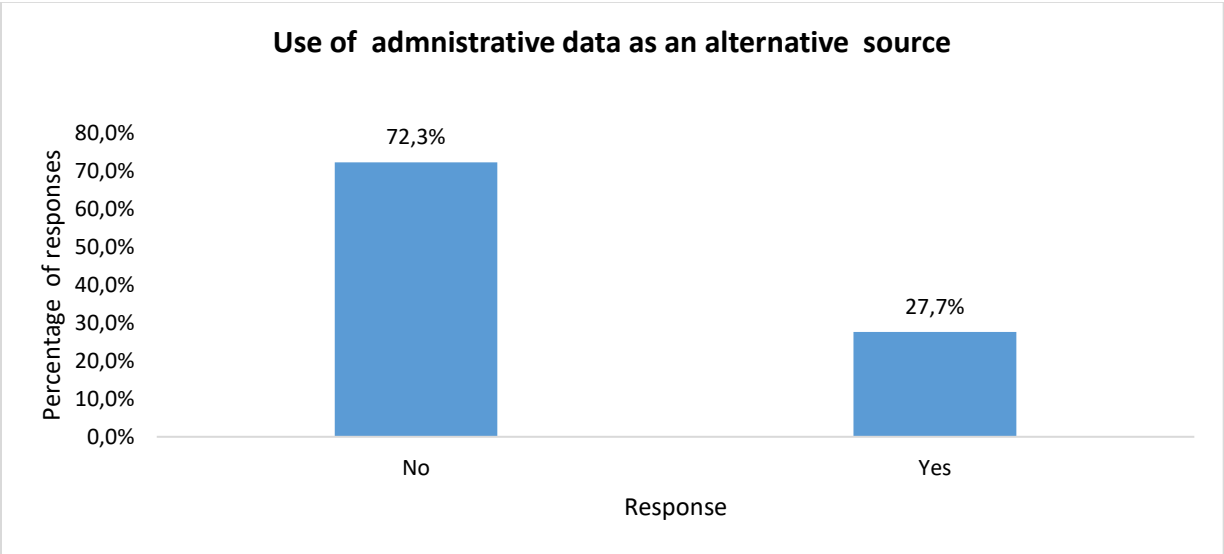No   Yes

Response

Figure 5: Proportion of countries using administrative data as an alternative source to collect migration statistics

III.7 Using estimation of data as a temporary solution to produce migration data

About fifty-four percent (54%) of African countries think that they can make estimates to fill the lack of production of migration statistics due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
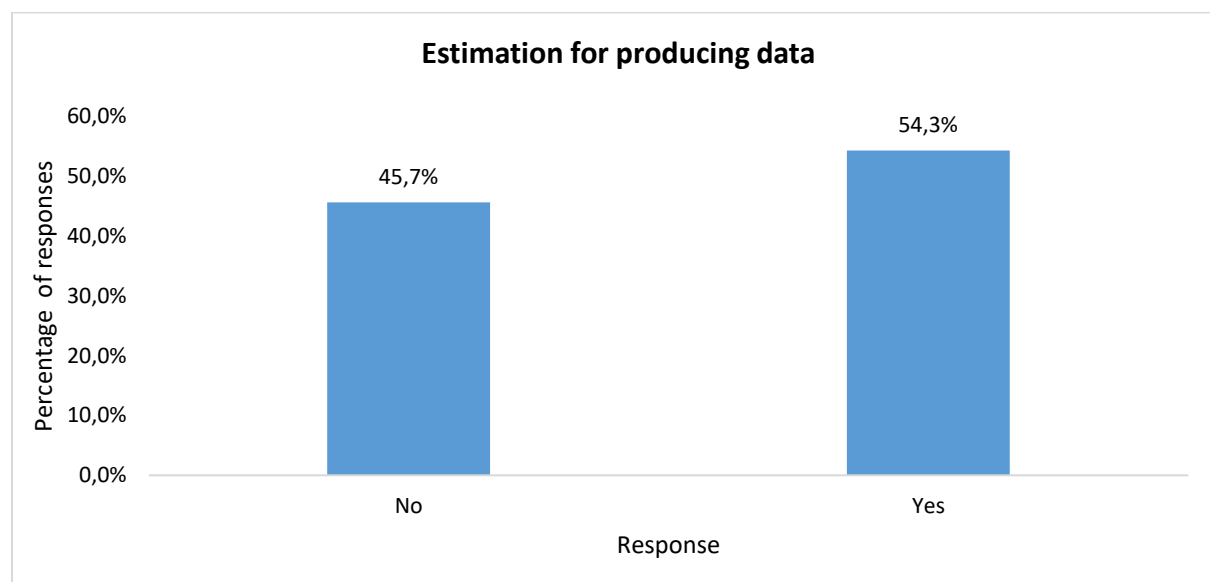

Figure 6: Responses on use of estimates to address missing migration statistics

IV.   Recommendations

In order to minimize and containing the negative impacts of this pandemic on the production of migration statistics in the continent, the following recommendations need to be implemented or adhered to:

AUC Member States:

- Explore the possibility of starting to conduct surveys by cellphone.
- Operationalize the network of actors for producing migration statistics.
- Facilitate the teleworking of all actors involved in the data production chain (provide budgets for Internet connection, computers, specific IT equipment dedicated to this work) and provide the necessary infrastructure for data security.
- Use information and communication technologies to produce statistics.
- Mobilize the necessary funds for the acquisition of adequate hardware and software to produce statistics from ICTs.
- Strengthen measures and mobilization of funds for statistical production.
- Provide migration data materials and technical tools to producers of data to allow them collect the information remotely.

- Send questionnaire through cell phones - assuming target population own and access the gadgets.
- Continuous improvement and automation of administrative data sources.
- Use Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI) to limit face to face interviews in the near future.
- Explore the use of big data as a potential source of migration statistics.
- Develop interlinked systems for migration data and their collection across all relevant ministries, departments and the private sector.
- Reinforce of remote working tools and platform digital data exchange.
- Improve national data coverage and quality of administrative data sources through regular updates at national level.
- Embrace technology through application of ICT in the data collection and intensify on CATI – Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews using the National Household Surveys as a sample frame.

AUC

- Set up a team of migration experts responsible for developing and producing estimates for migration data at continent and regional level in coordination with RECs.
- Set up a platform of exchange and share of challenges and good practices on production of migration statistics during the COVID-19.

Annex 1: Questionnaire

COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE COLLECTION OF MIGRATIONS STATISTICS IN AFRICA

QUESTIONNAIRE

The world is currently in the CODIV-19 pandemic. This pandemic will have serious impact on the production of migration statistics in Africa. To this end, the African Union Commission aims to assess the possible impact of the pandemic on the production of migration statistics and also to collect proposals for solutions in order to contain the negative impact of this pandemic on the production of migration statistics in Africa.

For any information on this questionnaire, please contact Mr. Samson Bel-Aube Nougbodohoue (Bel-AubeN@africa-union.org) or Mr. Brian Onsase Okengo (OkengoB@africa-union.org;) with copy to Mme Leila Ben Ali (LeilaB@africa-union.org;)

I. IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENT

Country Name: ....

Name of respondent ....

Department/Division of the respondent ....

Position (i.e. job title) of the respondent: ....

Phone number of the respondent ....

E-mail address of the respondent ....

Date of completion of the questionnaire   ___ /__ / 2020

II. IMPACT ON THE COLLECTION OF MIGRATIONS STATISTICS IN AFRICA

II-1: What are the main migration topics that are covered by your migration statistics?

Topics	(1=YES) and (2=NO)
Labour migration	I__I
Seasonal/circular migrants	I__I
Refugees / asylum seekers	I__I
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	I__I
Stateless persons / persons at risk of statelessness	I__I
Migrants transiting through the country	I__I
Smuggled/Trafficked persons	I__I
Diaspora	I__I
Remittances	I__I
Others	I__I

II-2: How often are migration statistics produced for your institution?

Periodicity	(1=YES) and (2=NO)
Monthly	I__I
Quarterly	I__I
Annually	I__I

II-3: What are the main sources of data for producing migration statistics in the country?

Sources of data	(1=YES) and (2=NO)
Censuses	I__I
Surveys	I__I
Administrative sources	I__I
Other	I__I

II-4: What data sources can be affected by the coronavirus pandemic?

Sources of data	(1=YES) and (2=NO)
Censuses	I__I
Surveys	I__I
Administrative sources	I__I
Other	I__I

If other please specify:

1)	
2)	
3)	

II-5: Do you have any major ongoing migration surveys / censuses that will be affected by the coronavirus crisis?
(1=Yes   2=No)   I__I

If yes:

   a.) Please list these major data collection operations?

1)	
2)	
3)	

   b.) Is it possible to use administrative data as an alternative for the affected surveys/censuses by the pandemic?
   (1=Yes   2=No)   I__I

   c.) Can estimation of data be used as a temporary solution to produce migration data?
                        (1=Yes   2=No)   I__I

II-6: What is the estimated financial impact of Coronavirus on the production of your migration statistics? (USD)
                        I_____I

II-7: What are the possible remedies/solutions for containing the negative impacts of this pandemic on the production of migration statistics in the country?

_____

_____

<div align="center">END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE</div>

Annex 2: List of 47 countries that replied to the questionnaire

1. **West Africa, Thirteen (13) Member States:**

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

2. **East Africa, Twelve (12) Member States:**

Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

3. **Southern Africa, Ten (10) Member States:**

Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. **Central Africa, Eight (8) Member States:**

Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon and Sao Tome & Principe

5. **Northern Africa, Four (4) Member States:**

Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia