



# A NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS

CENTRAL ASIA AND RUSSIA

2009

## FOREWORD

During the last decade alongside with increase of labor migration level in Central Asian countries a distinct tendency of assessment of the labor migration as economic activity that favorably influences on the economic growth and poverty reduction is observed. Under conditions of the increasing unemployment and stiff competition at the labor market for many able bodied citizens of poor countries of Central Asia labor migration is the only opportunity to provide means of subsistence for their families. Nevertheless, the labor migration entails certain risks related to legal, social and economic vulnerability of labor migrations, especially those interested in informal sector of the economy. Employment and migration are often closely interlinked and include large-scale movements of labor force within the region, from the poorer countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to the richer countries, such as Russia and Kazakhstan. Informal sector of the economy represented predominantly by women has become an important strand of the economy. Although this sector ensures income of millions of people it is subject to various forms of exploitation and human rights violations.

Considering labor migration from women rights perspective pursuant to international standards and obligations of the governments we have included the issue of rights of women migrant workers among priority areas of the program activity under the UNIFEM Strategic Plan the CIS countries for 2008-2011. Obviously development of specific programs in this area required study

of social and economic factors of women labor migration with a special focus on needs, motivation, opportunities and difficulties faced by various groups of labor migrants. Such assessment of problems experienced by women migrant workers, their needs and expectations was carried out by the expert groups in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia in December 2008 – March 2009.

This publication is a generalized report of the research studies in five countries, tracing both regional, i.e. related to Central Asia and Russia, and more specific tendencies in position of women migrant workers endemic for a specific country. The most valuable part of this publication for international organizations and national state authorities are recommendations developed by participants of the international conference held by UNIFEM and EurAsEC in May 2009 based on discussions of these surveys' results.

We hope that this publication will help us in drawing attention of the state authorities, international and inter-governmental bodies dealing with labor migration issues to specific needs and position of women migrant workers so that policy and economic measures in labor migration management both at national and inter-state levels are undertaken with consideration of rights of women migrant works pursuant to the international standards and obligations on women rights protection and contribute to attainment of genuine gender equality in our countries.

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## Introduction

Globalization has turned migration into an integral part of human development. It opens up national borders and removes many obstacles, thus facilitating the free movement of people, knowledge, goods and services. One of the many effects of globalization is the emergence of an international, or global, labour market within which people can move from one country to another in search of better employment opportunities or in an attempt to alleviate adverse effects of demographic and environmental changes and poverty, by taking their expertise and knowledge to places where it is needed. According to numerous studies (the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2008<sup>1</sup>) international migration is not a temporary or passing phenomenon; it is likely to persist and involve significant numbers of people in the years to come.

Just like any other social phenomenon, migration is multifaceted. On the one hand, migration can help improve personal and professional capacities and expand rights and opportunities for both male and female migrants (UNDP 2009<sup>2</sup>) by opening more avenues for higher income, by helping people rise above the line of extreme poverty and by enriching human and social capital which will eventually benefit human development as a whole. On the other hand, however, migration can fuel negative processes; it makes migrants specifically vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation. Migration can have a negative effect on women's lives in particular because they are more vulnerable to such crimes as human trafficking and enslavement.

Migrants from the CIS region have recently joined international migration flow – only after the collapse of the Soviet Union new independent states have changed internal migration into international. Over a very short period of time, the CIS region has come to account for one third of the migration in the developing world. According to

an assessment by the World Bank of the scale of migration (2006) in different countries, Russia is in second place after the USA and Kazakhstan is in ninth place globally. At present the CIS region already has a developed migration system and about 80% of migrants move inside the region. According to various studies, over the last decade approximately 20% of the whole population of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and 7% of the population of Uzbekistan have been involved in labour migration. Migration has encouraged the creation of a regional labour market. The fact that the majority of the population from Central Asian countries speak the Russian language (at least at a basic level) and there are developed migration networks has had a positive effect on migration growth.

Labour migration has traditionally been seen as 'a man's business'. To date, this stereotype still exists, but at the end of the last century analysts reported that globalization was causing the feminization of labour migration both at international and regional level. According to various studies women now comprise up to 40 to 50% of the total number of migrant workers globally. For more and more women, migration is a personal choice and the decision to migrate is theirs and they are not forced by their husbands or other members of their families. Even though in the region the notion of labour migration is still associated with physically hard "men's work", as is reflected in the still common Russian word for migrants, *gastarbaiter*, increasingly more women have become active participants in migration processes. They go abroad in search of earnings independently, often in spite of patriarchal traditions and customs. More and more women from the countries of Central Asia are becoming the main bread-winners in their families, even though these are countries where strong conservative religious stereotypes of the role of women in society limit their opportunities to make decisions about migration.

1 IOM, World Migration 2008. Managing Labour Mobility in the Evolving Global Economy. Geneva: IOM, 2008. Pp. 1-10.

2 UNDP Human Development Report 2009. See: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2009/>

The various aspects of CIS migration processes, particularly the challenges related to the needs and legal protection of women migrant workers have not been efficiently assessed. The following issues still need to be focused on:

- What are the current and potential trends in female labour migration in both countries of origin and destination of the CIS?
- How do women reach a decision to become migrant workers?
- What are the specific needs, opportunities and challenges that female migrant workers face prior to, during and upon completion of the migration process?
- What social and economic factors impact on women's labour migration and their needs and opportunities?
- Does migration contribute to empowerment of women and enhancement of their social and human capital?
- What is the role of cultural and religious factors in migration processes?
- What steps need to be taken in order to agree on legislation and mechanisms of regulating migration processes in order to better protect women migrants workers' rights in both the countries of origin and destination?

To answer these and other questions, in 2008-2009 UNIFEM commissioned a study aimed at assessing the rights of women migrant workers in two groups of CIS countries: countries of origin (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and countries of destination (Kazakhstan and Russia<sup>3</sup>).

The present report aims to present an assessment of women migrant workers' lives in both the countries of origin and destination of the CIS region. The assessment also aims to study the challenges related to women experience in the migration processes, plus the social and economic factors of women's migration and develop a set of recommendations for improving migrant's lives. Areas of specific focus are the needs, motivation, opportunities and challenges which women experience before going abroad, during their labour migration and after returning back home.

Over the last decade, new processes and changes taking place in transition economies have had an impact on the development of human and social capacities in Central Asia. Some positive developments, such as the gradual and progressive evolution of private entrepreneurship, the removal or easing of many restrictions on the people's movements, the reinforcing of regional and bilateral migration cooperation, the development of training initiatives for women and opportunities to self-organize through various NGOs should be recognized and acknowledged. For some sectors of the population, these changes have opened up new opportunities and possibilities, but at the same time many other groups were not prepared for adapting to new conditions and lost their jobs and therefore their financial and social security.

The situation has been worsened by such negative aspects as polarization and an increase in social inequalities in general, and gender inequalities in particular; greater inequalities in access to education, social and healthcare services; a rise in chronic poverty and extreme poverty, especially amongst single women and women with many children; a deterioration in living standards among many groups, particularly in rural areas. Against this background, many people have chosen labour migration as the only available survival strategy.

The 2008-2009 global economic crisis has led to some negative trends in the development of migration. Firstly, the introduction of migration-related administrative restrictions and barriers in the countries of destination limits access to national labour markets and forces migrant workers to leave the countries of destination and go back home. Force methods for migration regulation are prevailing; corruption together with violations of authorities are accelerating. Secondly, the reduction of official opportunities for labour migration stimulates illegal employment in the countries of destination. Thirdly, during periods of economic crisis the level of intolerance and anti-migration sentiment grows in the countries of destination.

At the same time, during periods of economic crisis, "push" factors in the countries of origin become stronger, increasing the motivation for migration. Women view their opportunities in the internal labour market as unsatisfactory and more and more women see labour migration as the only one opportunity to provide decent standards of living for themselves and their families. However,

3 It is understood that some women labour migrants from countries of origin in the CIS do leave for other countries in the world (i.e. non-CIS); however, for the purposes of this report, the team focuses only on the two groups of countries described.

during periods of economic crisis and after crisis periods, the risks related to labour migration increase due to narrowing of opportunities for official migration and the growth of illegal channels for employment. It should be noted that under such conditions, migration presents a major risk in terms of uncertain outcomes and returns on invested personal effort, time and capital. The risk affects not only those who opt for migration but all members of their families, particularly children.

Theoretical research and international experience indicate certain common global and regional trends in migration processes as well as in the policies of governments and regional and international organizations cooperating in migration-related activity fields<sup>4</sup>. Many other developing countries went through similar stages in the development of migration processes several decades before the countries of Central Asia and their experience demonstrates that there is a range of crucial instruments and mechanisms that can be applied to reduce the risks and alleviate the situation; for example, education and occupational training, assistance from state-run and private recruitment agencies, NGOs etc. However, there is not much attention being paid to the development of such opportunities in the region at present. The state governments have realized the positive effect of remittances on the economy and have provided official channels for sending them; however, providing legal protection for migrant workers is not yet seen as a priority.

*'I would like to see focus on the challenges arising in Kyrgyzstan in relation to labour migration. The impact of migration processes on the country has not been evaluated. There is major concern over the outflow of educated people, e.g. doctors, teachers, engineers and skilled workers. But no one is dealing with this issue. Everybody speaks only about the money generated by migrant workers that flows into the country.'*

***A migration expert's view, Country Report, Kyrgyzstan***

The results of international studies show that migration is not a gender neutral phenomenon: men

and women have different behavioural patterns and they face different risks and problems and have different opportunities (Global Migration Group, 2008). Women migrant workers have specific needs which demand urgent attention. Due to gender segregation in the labour market, women migrant workers occupy the most informal and insecure niches. One of the important problems in the region is the negative social mobility of women with higher education, who have to take unqualified jobs in the countries of destination. It should also be noted that women migrant workers from the Central Asian region are coming from countries with strong Islamic and patriarchal traditions and going to a different socio-cultural environment, thus the issues of adaptation, tolerance and preserving cultural identity are important.

In the context of modern Central Asia, the situation is further aggravated by the lack of empirical data that would have enabled the evidence-based discussion of challenges faced by women migrant workers. Available statistical data on labour migration is limited and covers only a small part of real migration flows. (The World Bank, 2006). Moreover, women migrant workers as a rule are considerably underrepresented in statistical data or migration surveys as they are often employed on informal base without official contracts in households or small private businesses. In order to understand the needs of women migrant workers and correctly assess if their rights are protected, various analytical instruments should be used in addition to official statistical data.

In the framework of the UNIFEM project, research was conducted by groups of experts in Kyrgyzstan (the Expert Consulting Agency), Tajikistan (the Panorama Public Fund), Uzbekistan (the TAHLIL Centre for Social Research), Kazakhstan (the Centre for Study of Public Opinion Agency) and Russia (the federal state educational institution, the Russian Civil Service Academy of the President of the Russian Federation). Research was carried out during the period December 2008 to March 2009 with the aim of filling the gaps in existing knowledge about problems connected with women's labour migration. The results of the research were used in the preparation of the present regional report.

4 For example: Chanda, Rupa. Low-Skilled Workers and Bilateral, Regional, and Unilateral Initiatives. Lessons for the GATS Mode 4 Negotiations and other Agreements. Geneva: UNDP, 2008.



## Summary

This survey organized by UNIFEM is aimed at identification of the existing problems, needs and level of legal protection of women migrant workers from

three Central Asian Republics, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan prior to, during and upon completion of their labor migration in Kazakhstan or Russia.

### I. Factors and Motivation behind Women's Labour Migration

**The socio-economic preconditions** for women's migration are determined by the economic situation in the countries of origin and the increasing feminization of poverty. The growing gap in economic development between with the origin countries – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – on one side, and the destination countries – Russia and Kazakhstan – on the other, and the relative simplicity of crossing borders, are the main factors influencing labour migration in the region.

Recent changes in the labour market have become important factors influencing and causing labour migration. There has been a reduction of employment in the state sector and an increase of employment in the private sector. Employers in the private sector often prefer to hire temporary labour on an informal basis. In addition there have been structural changes in the labour market such as an increase in employment in service sectors and a decrease in manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Another factor is an imbalance in labour distribution, as some countries experience a labour surplus, while others experience labour shortages. In labour surplus countries, the unemployment rate can reach a very high level. Many individuals who decide to migrate to escape such unemployment face a further challenge, however, as their qualifications and skills often do not match the demands of the labour market in the destination countries. Many migrants, on reaching the destination countries, are also negatively affected by low professional mobility, their inability to quickly adapt to the new working conditions, numerous administrative and bureaucratic barriers and by the absence of employment services and inexpensive accommodation.

Over the last decade in the countries of Central Asia, there have been significant changes in the social and economic status of women, as the Soviet-era concept of gender equality was abandoned in favour of patriarchal views and stereotypes of women's

role as wives, mothers and housewives. Many countries in the region have witnessed a rise in early marriages, which prevent women from gaining appropriate education and qualifications and thus reduce their competitiveness in the labour market. In the sharp contrast to the Soviet era, women have become underrepresented in government agencies and in managerial positions.

Demographic factors have also contributed to the rise in levels of migration between countries in the region. The rapidly growing populations in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan face a lack employment opportunities, whereas in Russia and Kazakhstan the population is aging and some sectors of the economy are experiencing labour shortages; thus, the combination of demographic and economic imbalances in the CIS region creates an environment in which large groups of people are ready to migrate in order to improve their lives and in so doing they take part in the formation of a regional labour market.

The economic difficulties and low wages in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan put great pressure on families, as it is very difficult to live on the earnings of a sole male breadwinner. In order to survive, families have to rely on dual incomes and working women become important contributors to their family budget. However, the sectors in which women were traditionally employed in the region, such as textile manufacture, clothes manufacture and others, have considerably reduced their workforce due to the economic crisis and an inability to compete with cheap imported goods. The origin countries have not only struggled to create new jobs for their young labour force, but also to keep the existing jobs in rural areas and in areas with labour surpluses. Large groups of younger women, who belong to the baby-boom generation of the 1970s to 1980s, have entered the labour market competing for a dwindling number of jobs with women of



previous generations. At the same time, all women have to compete with men in sectors such as retail trade and catering in which, previously, most men were not interested in being employed. All these developments contribute to the formation of 'push factors' forcing many women to search for jobs in foreign countries and, thus, to consider migration.

In this difficult environment and under the pressure of recent negative social changes, many women choose labour migration as a survival and adaptation strategy. The majority of migrant workers believe that migration is not a free and independent decision of individuals, since it is a decision made under pressure from the many negative 'push factors'. It is the extreme pressure of economic and social factors that has 'forced' migrant workers to migrate. According to our survey, this is how 54% of the respondents who worked in Russia see their own situation.

**The motivation behind the labour migration** of women is similar to that of men; women mainly migrate for economic reasons. Almost two thirds of the interviewed women migrant workers from the Central Asian republics stated that they went to Russia to earn money. In the process of making the decision to migrate, both women and men migrant workers take into account many factors, such as employment opportunities, remuneration, the opportunities for

acquiring legal residency status in the destination countries (legalisation), the availability of support from relatives or friends, their language competence, security issues, the cost of travelling and others. The choice of destination country often depends not only on economic factors, but also on social factors and informal networks such as relatives, friends or acquaintances in that country. Informal migrants' networks often make up for the lack of official services for migrant workers. The decision to migrate is also influenced by the success stories of relatives and friends, who tell of favourable working conditions and the generally good economic situation in the destination countries. The results of in-depth interviews show that women see labour migration as a means of earning money to solve their social, housing and family problems and also to provide a good education and a stable future for their children. Women respondents mentioned that, although the primary reason for their labour migration was economic, other reasons were also important to them. One of these reasons is gaining residency or citizenship in the destination country (Russia or Kazakhstan). Having permanent residency or citizenship makes it easier to find a job in the destination country. Among other reasons for labour migration, the respondents mentioned the desire to sort out their personal issues, for example to find a spouse in the destination country or to reunite with family.

## II. Patterns of migration: looking beyond stereotypes

As the Summary shows, women who make the decision to go abroad in search of new opportunities face many problems and they need effective support. This support should include the provision of various essential services in their country of origin and in their home community.

The main needs of women preparing for labour migration are as follows:

- The need for access to information and consultation services on potential employment opportunities.
- The need for access to legal services concerning both migration and labour legislation; also, the need for access to information services and consultation on various general questions concerning labour migration.
- The need for access to financial resources, including access to microcredit and banking services.
- The need for access to services providing secure employment and accommodation in the destination country.

- The need for education and professional training and retraining.
- The need for assistance in returning home after the completion of the labour migration cycle (about 60% of women respondents from Tajikistan expressed a need for such services).

International studies of the trends in labour market development indicate that education and professional qualifications are key factors that increase the competitive abilities of migrant workers in the labour market; however, our assessment shows that despite the fact that a high percentage of women migrant workers from the Central Asian countries have higher education or secondary vocational training, the majority of these women migrant workers are employed in low-skilled jobs in the destination countries. Very few women respondents were employed in jobs related to their qualifications. The findings of the assessment suggest that the qualifications women receive in their home country often do not match the demands of the labour market in the destination country.

Unfortunately, women who take jobs unrelated to their qualifications begin to lose the skills they gained while studying for their profession, and thus never fulfil their professional potential. It could be argued that this illustrates both a brain drain and a brain waste.

Several distinct **models of women's labour migration** from the Central Asian countries to Russia and Kazakhstan were identified during the assessment. The models vary according to women's roles during the migration process.

The most widespread model is that in which women migrant workers go abroad as economically independent individuals. The second most widespread model for women is to become a part of larger economic unit by joining their husbands, sons or other family members who go abroad as migrant workers.

Migration patterns also differ according to the length of the migration period. The study indicates that women migrant workers generally stay longer in the destination country than men. The experts have identified the following patterns of labour migration: permanent migration; cyclic or regular (long-term and seasonal) migration, and migration for specific purposes. The most common pattern among women migrant workers is regular or cyclic migration, when women stay for a long period of time in the destination country (more than 8 months) and return for a few months to the country of origin. The most problematic migration pattern is seasonal and short-term labour migration. Seasonal migration can last from three to eight, and even nine, months in the destination countries (Russia and Kazakhstan), depending on the region; therefore, this kind of migration is quite similar to the cyclic pattern. Regardless of the particular pattern, however, migration is undertaken either as a survival strategy or as a strategy for economic advancement. Often labour migration is a family strategy. Women migrant workers have been making regular trips to Russia or Kazakhstan and back home for many years.

The assessment shows that **institutional support for migration processes** exists at four levels: state institutions; private institutions dealing with migration issues; informal institutions; and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Existing **state institutions** that provide official recruiting services for migrant workers do not attract large numbers of migrants; however, the

experts noted some improvement and growth in such services. Among the Central Asian republics, the most developed infrastructure for supporting labour migration exists in Kyrgyzstan.

**Private institutions or intermediaries** dealing with migration issues play an important role in the processes of labour migration due to the following reasons:

- First, they can react quicker to changes in the labour market;
- Second, being officially registered enterprises, they are bound to provide reliable information; and
- Third, they can work with both individual clients and groups of clients.

It should be noted that the respondents reported having high awareness of private intermediaries in the countries of origin.

**Informal institutions** include the informal migration networks and diaspora communities. The assessment indicates that informal migration networks are growing and becoming stronger and most migrant workers find employment through them. The official channels and services for organising migration cannot compete with the informal ones (accessed through relatives and friends) or with the shadow channels (shadow intermediaries). Migrant workers use informal institutions at every stage of their migration: for obtaining information, finding employment, securing rights' protection, borrowing money, arranging travel, finding accommodation, sending remittances, accessing medical services and many other activities.

In using informal channels for migration, the danger is that migrant workers are often vulnerable to fraud and exploitation. Women employed through such channels are often more vulnerable than those who find employment through official channels. Due to the fact that women are mainly engaged in the informal sector of the labour market, where employers are owners of private small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in such spheres as domestic service, entertainment, agriculture, etc., they often work for employers who are not interested in legalising the migrant status of their employees.

The role of **non-governmental organisations** in providing assistance for migrant workers is increasing in response to the underdevelopment

of the official infrastructure of labour migration. NGOs can assist in solving a variety of issues which migrant workers have to deal with, including

information, employment opportunities, human rights' protection, accommodation, remittances, access to medical services, etc.

### III. Problems and opportunities in labour migration processes

*The legal status of migrant workers in the destination countries.* The interviewed migrants generally say that the most difficult time abroad is the first days and weeks in the destination country. All migrants face the issue of legalisation of their residency status, which includes registration at their address of residence and obtaining a work permit. Even though people can travel within the CIS region without visas, this helps only in crossing the borders and only partly simplifies the legalisation of residency status in the destination country. Because of the various administrative and bureaucratic barriers, many legal migrants become illegal migrant workers. According to the assessment conducted in Russia, only half of all women migrants have legal status.

The large scale of unregulated labour migration in the region is a serious problem. It increases the vulnerability of migrant workers to abuse. Such people become illegal, or undocumented, migrant workers, not because they choose to, but because the numerous administrative and other barriers they face create insurmountable obstacles to legalising their labour status.

The authorities in the destination countries are trying to combat illegal immigration. For example, the government of the Russian Federation has decided to liberalise its migration legislation by simplifying the procedures for legalisation and this step has allowed the proportion of legal labour migration to double. Although in 2007-2008 the proportion of legal migrant workers was still only about 30%-35%, that is a significant increase from the 10% in the early 2000s. In Kazakhstan in 2006, the government conducted a large-scale migration amnesty aimed at legalising illegal migrant workers from other CIS countries; however, the remaining administrative and other obstacles in the country did not allow any considerable reduction in illegal labour migration.

In theory, the documentation process is the same for all migrant workers, regardless of gender or employment sector; however, our study shows that more women than men work as illegal migrant workers in the destination countries. One of the reasons is probably that women are mainly engaged in informal sectors (housekeepers, babysitters, etc.) or in the entertainment and

services sectors. According to official statistical data, in Russia the proportion of registered women migrants in the legal (documented) migrant labour force is only 15%.

There are many obstacles to the legalizing of the employment status of migrants, including the fact that many employers operate in the shadow economy, and try to reduce their expenditure on labour and maximise their profit by paying less to migrant workers and exploiting them. Unfortunately, migrant workers often have poor knowledge about legislation, although this situation is improving slowly.

*Women migrant workers' status in the labour market.* Women migrant workers are mainly engaged in sectors providing various services (public and private) and in retail trade. In Russia, about 20% of all migrant workers are employed in trade and 5% in the service sector, and the majority of these are women.

In the labour markets of Russia and Kazakhstan, women migrant workers occupy the most low-prestige and low-paid jobs, with often unfavourable working conditions. Migrant workers are generally, hired for jobs which are not attractive to the local population. Nearly all categories of women migrant workers have low-skilled or unskilled jobs and this often leads to the loss of their qualifications.

The majority of migrants find jobs through informal channels. Some migrants approach recruiting agencies or intermediaries. The authorities in Russia have started applying innovative technologies of organised employment in order to fill vacancies in the labour market.

*Informal employment.* The assessment results indicate that the majority of women migrants work illegally. In Russia, even among legally working migrants (i.e. those with a work permit) almost half of them are employed in the shadow sector. Only a quarter of women respondents who work in Russia signed wage receipts. This means that the other migrant workers are paid from employers' unregistered income. In Kazakhstan, the proportion of migrants working in the informal sector is also high. Often, their signed contracts are not legally valid. Thus, some

of the respondents engaged in the agricultural sector in Southern Kazakhstan reported that their contracts detailed only the percentage of the division of the future harvest which they would receive.

The majority of legal women migrant workers are engaged in education, medical services and housing and community services. The smallest proportion of legal women migrant workers are engaged in domestic work, retailing and the entertainment sector.

The high level of competition among migrant workers and their willingness to take any kind of work also means that they often end up in illegal employment in the country of destination. The low legal awareness of migrants contributes to the fact that many of them trust verbal agreements more than signed papers. A lot of private employers prefer hiring illegal migrant workers, because then the employers do not have any responsibilities or obligations: they do not pay any social benefits and they can fire illegal migrant workers at any time.

Illegal migrant workers also often become the victims of fraud by intermediaries and employers who have no other interest but to have access to a cheap labour force.

The majority of migrant workers experience difficult working environments with long hours and dangerous working conditions. The experts believe that the issues of occupational safety and health protection of migrant workers are rarely discussed. The employers often claim that it is the migrant workers' desire to earn more and their fear of losing their jobs which leads to their heavy workload without rest (no days off, no breaks for lunch and rest, no holidays, etc.).

Many women migrant workers who are engaged in the agricultural sector take their children with them to the destination country and even young children work with their parents to help them finish the work on time.

The assessment in Tajikistan revealed that, in the destination countries, every third woman worked out in the open in unfavourable and unsanitary conditions and every fourth woman reported a lack of elementary sanitation at their work place.

According to the assessment, there is a difference between the remuneration for men and that for women migrant workers. The monthly earnings of men migrant workers are, on average, 10%

higher than those of women. In Russia, women migrant workers earned, on average, about \$500 per month at the end of 2008. The level of women migrant workers' remuneration in Kazakhstan is a bit lower compared to in Russia.

*Access to social benefits.* Very few migrant workers have access to social benefits in the countries of destination. In Russia only 15% of employers stated that they provided a package of social benefits to migrant workers. The assessment results from Kyrgyzstan show that only 6% of the respondents and 3.2% of members of their families (5% among women respondents) were able to obtain free medical services. When staying for a long time in the country of origin, the majority of migrant workers prefer self-treatment. Women engaged in the retail trade and service sectors are expected by their employers to make a profit every day and cannot allow themselves time off for sickness. In the case of women engaged in the agricultural sector, the profit of an employer depends on the healthy condition of workers and their ability to work, which makes the employer more responsive to the health-related problems of migrant workers. The experts suggest that the introduction of medical insurance for migrant workers in the destination countries would provide them with better access to medical services.

*Accommodation in the country of destination.* This is one of the most problematic issues for all migrants, especially for women who go abroad with their children. Often rent costs consume half of their earnings. Placement of children in educational institutions is another difficult issue. Often women have to find unofficial ways of placing their children in a school or a kindergarten.

*Violation of human and labour rights of migrants.* Women experience violation of their rights and exploitation more often than men and such cases often go unreported due to the illegal character of women's employment and their dependence on their employers. According to the assessment conducted in Russia, 15 women out of 100 reported that they experienced forced labour: they were forced to work without payment, their employers withheld their documents or they were subjected to blackmail, threats and violence. There are cases of human trafficking of women migrant workers. Unfortunately, women often do not realise that they are victims of crime; they attribute such cases to 'the difficulties of a migrant's life'.

The legislation regarding migrant workers' rights is underdeveloped and the existing regulations are not being applied effectively. There are so many cases of violation of the human rights of migrants that there is an urgent necessity to develop effective mechanisms



for their protection and restoration. Illegal migrant workers do not have any means for their protection at all.

The majority of migrant workers do not know about any organisations which they can approach for protection of their rights. In fact there are few such organisations in existence, and those which are are generally not in favour with the authorities of the destination countries.

Cases of violation of migrant workers' rights by the representatives of law enforcement agencies are widespread. This includes corruption and extortion of money. The governments have to take responsibility for such malpractice, reduce racial profiling on the streets and create mechanisms for protection of migrant workers' rights which include feedback mechanisms and means for restoration of rights.

Dishonest intermediaries also contribute to criminalisation within illegal migration. A large number of such intermediaries work in Central Asia, recruiting migrants for work. Some of them take advantage of the lack of information and official channels for employment abroad. Others work for criminal businesses, promising women work as waitresses or dancers, but then forcing them into prostitution.

Illegal women migrant workers often become victims of criminal organisations. Lack of regulation of some aspects of migration at the legislative level allows cor-

ruption and criminality to flourish. We believe that an increase in official employment-related services for migrant workers would help to reduce criminal activity.

*Integration and social adaptation of women migrant workers.* Many women migrant workers face serious challenges in the process of cultural and social adaptation in the destination countries. One of the reasons is poor knowledge of the Russian language. About 10%-15% of women who work in Russia stated that they had language-related problems in everyday life or in communication with their employers and one third found it difficult to fill out official documents. The problem of integration is especially serious for women from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Unfriendly or hostile attitudes from the local population cause serious problems for migrant workers. Anti-migrant sentiments are increasingly propagated by the mass media and there are few examples showing the real role of labour migration in the economy and the society of the destination countries. Tolerance is very much needed, especially at the community level. At present migrant workers are not involved in the social life of local communities, even though they make significant contributions to improving the living environment of those communities by cleaning yards and streets and working in shops, restaurants and laundries. Both destination countries, Russia and Kazakhstan, could apply the vast experience of other developed countries of working with migrant workers in local communities.

#### IV. The impact of migration on the families of migrant workers

Labour migration is often a family strategy. This strategy has already helped and still helps millions of families to survive. The present assessment examines two patterns of female labour migration: when women migrant workers go abroad to earn money independently and their families stay in their home country, and when women follow their husbands, sons or other members of their family. In either of these situations, the social consequences of labour migration affect not only the women migrant workers but also the members of their families.

*Remittances.* The majority of migrant workers send money they earn back to their own country to support their families. On average, they send from \$100 up to \$500 at a time, sometimes even more. Migrant workers who work in Russia mainly use official channels for sending remittances, i.e. banks. The majority of those who work in Kazakhstan prefer carrying cash back home.

Migrant workers spend the money they earn mainly for improving the living conditions of their families:

for buying food, clothes and domestic appliances, for renovation and refurbishment of their houses and so on. Very few migrant workers manage to save money or invest it in establishing a business or in educating their children. Only 8% of women respondents from Uzbekistan (mostly working in Russia) invested their incomes in the education of their children.

*Family left behind in the country of origin.* One of the negative side effects of labour migration is a long-term absence from home, which can cause the worsening of relations between spouses and even lead to divorce. The absence of one or both parents also has a negative impact on relations with children. Despite the improvement of their living conditions, the children do not get enough attention from their parents. Women migrant workers are aware of and frustrated by these negative consequences and worry about them.

Due to existing cultural traditions and stereotypes in Central Asia, husbands and fathers of women

migrant workers face social, psychological and cultural pressure in the absence of their wives or daughters. Some husbands react by getting divorced or starting a new family.

Another negative aspect of female labour migration is the interruption of the traditional reproduction process, when women postpone or even give up the decision to have children.

*Family accompanying migrants to the destination countries.* Usually this is not a priority issue for government, researchers or non-governmental

organisations and the issue is rarely discussed. Usually the families of migrant workers are not visible in the society of destination countries. Due to the absence of clear legalisation procedures for family members of migrant workers and the existence of significant administrative barriers, family members of migrant workers often do not have legal status and try to keep a low profile. Migrants who come accompanied by their families experience far greater financial and everyday problems than those who leave their families in their home countries. Thus, special measures in social and migration policy are required to address these issues.



## Chapter 1. Leaving to Survive – the Factors and Motivation behind Women's Labour Migration

### 1.1. Social and Economic Drivers behind Female Migration

Socio-economic transformations in the Central Asia–Russia region have significant effects on the migration-related intentions of people and how they fulfill them. The status of males and females, as well as their roles within households and the community are affected by socio-economic changes. It is often the case that the territorial mobility of people both within and outside a country serves as a way for them to respond to the challenges and opportunities generated by socio-economic transformations. In this section we examine how changes in the economy, standards of living, employment, and demographic, social and cultural development of the countries of the region affect the development of motivation to migrate, in particular among women.

#### 1.1.1 *The economic situation in general: income and standards of living*

Since independence, the former Soviet republics, including those of the Central Asia-Russia region,<sup>5</sup> have been proactively transforming all aspects of public life; however, differences in starting positions and available resources as well as political agendas among the various republics have resulted in different speeds of transformation and, consequently, an escalation in the inequalities between the countries of the region. First and foremost, this has resulted in tremendous differences in wages, economic opportunities, living standards, access to basic services such as education and healthcare, economic freedom and freedom of movement. The differing development rates in these neighbouring countries, coupled with the relative ease of crossing over the borders, has been a powerful force driving people to migrate to the better-off countries for a variety of purposes.

The most intensive flows of migrants – those that are on a mass scale region-wide – are the flows of migrant workers who leave their home countries in search of improved earnings. This is economic migration driven by economic reasons. We will briefly discuss the socio-economic context that encourages such migration.

The first stage of post-socialist development in the countries of the region (until the end of the 1990s) was characterised by extreme processes which threw the population into shock: economic recession, hyper inflation, unemployment, a steep decline in gross output and the collapse of living standards. A large proportion of the population (almost 70%) in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan lived in poverty, and the countries of the region were ranked amongst the poorest in the world.<sup>6</sup>

The second stage of development (1999-2008) was marked by significant positive shifts in the economy, community and the state. There were emerging signs of macroeconomic stabilization, inflation and price surges were brought under control, local currency exchange rates were stabilized, domestic and foreign trade was revived, the share of the private sector increased both in terms of overall output and the labour market.

The global financial crisis of 2008-2009 brought on a slump in manufacture, a fall in production, a slow-down in the construction sector and a decrease in demand in the services sector, all of which have led to a growth in unemployment. The consequences of the crisis have had a negative effect on various strata of society, including migrants.

The positive processes of change have suffered setbacks which have been accompanied by increased inequalities, both within countries

5 Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – hereafter referred to as the countries of the region.

6 UNDP. Central Asia Human Development Report. Bringing down Barriers: Regional Cooperation in Human Development and Human Security. Bratislava, 2005, P.50.

and among them. This deepening of inequalities has become a systematic problem: it is not only observed in the current income gaps, levels of unemployment, etc., but will also have a knock-on effect causing a lagging behind in future due to reductions in the volume of investments and the introduction of innovative technologies.

All countries in the CIS region have experienced the GDP per capita growth over the last decade in (Table 1)<sup>7</sup>. According to the World Bank, in Russia and Kazakhstan the GDP per capita has reached \$10,845 and \$7,857 respectively, whereas in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, growth of GDP per capita has generally been weaker, rising to \$1,927,\$1,356 and \$ 2,063 respectively.

Despite some positive changes, the countries of Central Asia still face acute challenges related to poverty, unemployment and lack of sustainable means of subsistence for many groups of the population, and in particular women. The average wages are very low (Table 2); pensions and access to quality education and healthcare services are all inadequate. The situation is worsening due to the slow rate of growth of wages and social benefits in the countries of the region.

The continuing feminization of poverty and persistence of gender inequalities are manifested in gender-based wage gaps, low female employment and high involvement of women in informal sectors of the economy with low level of social protection, job security and earnings. In many sectors, women receive wages that are about 20-30 per cent lower compared to men's wages in the same sectors<sup>8</sup>.

The women who suffer most are from rural and remote areas. According to data from the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, in 2007, 41,7% of the rural population lived below the poverty line ( 53% in Jalalabad province and 47% in Osh province), whereas among the urban population that rate was 23,2%. The situation is similar in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Difficult economic climates motivate both men and women to migrate. Although, according to global research, the poorest sectors of populations are characterized by low migration mobility, the present level of development of migration networks allows even to the poorest people from small villages the opportunity to participate in labour migration, through having access to necessary information and the support from the networks of their compatriots.

	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kyrgyzstan	1.9 27	2.711	2.750	1.620	1.751	1.935	1.927
Tajikistan	0.943	1.152	1.170	0.980	1.106	1.202	1.356
Uzbekistan	2.376	2.441	2.460	1.670	1.744	1.869	2.063
Kazakhstan	3.037	5.871	6.500	5.870	6.671	7.440	7.857
Russia	4.531	8.377	7.100	8.230	9.230	9.902	10.845

Source: UNDP Human Development Reports.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008*
Kyrgyzstan	25.7	39	35	43	52	63	81	137
Tajikistan	8.5	9	11	14	20	26	35	63
Uzbekistan	...	39	39	41	52	...	...	...
Kazakhstan	101	117.9	132	154	208	256	323	485
Russia	79	111	139	179	234	305	391	718

Source: The Commonwealth of Independent States in 2006. Moscow, CIS Stat, 2007. p. 134.

\*- 2008 data available at <http://eng.24.kg/cis/2008/07/31/5732.html>. (Estimate as of 04.02.2009)

7 UNDP. Human Development Report, 2007/2008. Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World. New York 2008. Pp. 229-329.

8 The trend is shown by multiple studies implemented in the CIS. For example, UNDP. Poverty in Kazakhstan: Causes and Ways to Overcome. Almaty 2004. Pp. 66-69.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Kyrgyzstan	...	...	12.5	9.9	8.5	8.1	8.3
Tajikistan					7.4	7.4	7.4
Uzbekistan	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,2
Kazakhstan	12.8	10.4	9.3	8.8	8.4	8.1	7.8
Russia	9.8	8.8	8.6	7.8	7.9	7.5	7.2

Source: Laborsta ILO database (<http://laborsta.ilo.org/>) Vestnik Profsojuzov, 15.06.2007, On Employment of Population in CIS in 2006 available at: [http://www.ilo.ru/press/docs/employment/Vestnik\\_profsojuzov.pdf](http://www.ilo.ru/press/docs/employment/Vestnik_profsojuzov.pdf).

CIA World Factbook. Labour Market in CIS. Statistics Compendium. CIS Interstate Statistical Committee. Moscow 2008. p. 73.  
\*registered unemployment according to placement service.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Kyrgyzstan	53.6	53.8	54.1	53.8	54.0	52.7	51.6
Tajikistan	52.7	52.8	55.1	54.2	56.5	54.5	54.3
Uzbekistan	61.9	59.2	...	...	61.3	58.5	...
Kazakhstan		54.7	58.8	61.0	62.8	64.4	68.4
Russia	68.9	68.0	68.5	67.5	66.3	65.5	65.0

Источник: Рынок труда в странах СНГ. Статистический сборник. Межгосударственный статистический комитет стран СНГ. Москва, 2008, с. 83.

### 1.1.2. Structural Changes in the Labour Market: Women and Unemployment

Drastic changes in the labour market are among the crucial factors affecting the movement of the population. There are two groups of factors that have a specific impact on labour market development. On the one hand there are the structural changes in the economies of the countries in the region related to the abandonment of the command-based economy, the implementation of market-oriented reforms, privatization and reinforcement of the private sector. On the other hand there is the opening up of national markets to international competition, globalization and international trade, flow of investment and capital. The current development of labour markets in the countries of the region is typified by the following trends:

- **High unemployment and, specifically, hidden unemployment** when many people give up proactively seeking employment because the work available does not provide subsistence-level income.
- **Quality imbalance in the labour market** which is manifested in the gap between the demand of companies and enterprises and the competence of the workforce due to the non-

alignment of training syllabuses with the rapidly changing requirements of the labour market.

- **Low mobility and adaptation capacity of some population groups**, related to multiple administrative and regulatory barriers, poor development and high costs in the housing market and lack of employment and labour movement services.

In three countries of Central Asia – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - the rapid growth of the working-age population and the high rate of labour release in the industrial and, in particular, the agricultural sectors has led to overpopulation in rural areas and a severe lack of jobs, specifically among the youth and women. The seasonality of employment in the agricultural sector is a driving force behind the growth of seasonal unemployment.

According to official data, unemployment in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is at an average of 7 to 8 per cent among the working-age population<sup>9</sup>. However, according to independent Western agencies, the actual figure is several times higher and comprises around 15 to 20 per cent and, in some districts and provinces, even up to 25 to 30% of the working-age population<sup>10</sup>.

9 ibid.

10 Estimate of the ADB that includes the hidden unemployment. ADB. Women in the Republic of Uzbekistan. ADB 2001. pp. 43-44.

Registered unemployment among women is higher than among men in the majority of the CIS countries (Table 4). The difference is less in the figures for overall unemployment, when employment in informal sector and self-employment are taken into account; however, they do not disappear all together.<sup>11</sup>

Quite opposite trends can be found in most areas of Russia and Kazakhstan, where labour shortage is a problem in both industrial sectors and the rapidly growing services sector. The bulk of the employment vacancies is created in industrially developed areas, large industrial centers and the capitals.

The absence of work, which can provide even a minimal level of subsistence for a family and often the absence of any work, motivates people to go abroad in search of a living. This process is also stimulated by the creation of several factors of inequality in the development of the countries of the region. One of such factors is an emergence of labour surplus and labour shortage countries in the region, and regions that develop faster attracting more investments and therefore have higher income per capita and attract migrant workers.

### **1.1.3. Transformation of the Social and Cultural Landscape**

International experts (UNFPA, 2008) are in agreement that the key factors defining the social status and economic opportunities of women are cultural standards and the social environment<sup>12</sup>. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet social and cultural policies were abandoned, along with their associated stringent governmental regulation of gender equality and national policies to support women in the social, economic and political areas.

During the last decade Central Asian communities have witnessed the return of patriarchal, tradition-based and family-dominated stereotypes and views on the social position of women. These views reflect the standards of pre-industrial society that are often claimed to be the ones that comply with national and religious practices.

According to these standards, women should not seek professional development or a career and should rather focus on being good housewives and bringing up children, etc.

This resurgence of patriarchal relations has led to a lower representation of women in governmental structures in the post-soviet period, and in managerial positions in businesses as well as in local and national legislature.

The primacy of the family and the dominant status of men are at the core of these traditions and therefore, from the traditional point of view, it is the duty of a young woman to marry as early as possible, to give birth to children and bring them up, and to consider any interest in career and professional growth as being secondary to family duties. Public opinion in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan favours early marriage<sup>13</sup> and encourage women to have many children<sup>14</sup>. According to the World Bank, the average age of first marriage is 20.6 in Uzbekistan, 21.2 in Tajikistan and 21.9 in Kyrgyzstan; as a comparison, the same indicator in Sweden is 32.3<sup>15</sup>. There are over two children per woman in Uzbekistan, and over three in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It is often the case that young women who marry at an early age have to give up any chance of gaining professional education, competence development and career growth. All this, in its turn, undermines the status of women in the labour market and limits their competitiveness, driving them towards the low-paid jobs. When the earnings of one member of the household (the man) are not enough to provide for a big family, women have no other choice but to take any job to earn a living.

Although, in general, maintaining traditional family values is positive in itself as it helps create an environment that is supportive of making and sustaining a family, there is another side of the story and that is that public opinion and patriarchal institutions can significantly limit the economic opportunities of women, hamper their social mobility and inhibit measures to counter domestic violence.

Patriarchal traditions also have their impact on attitudes towards women, encouraging a negative view of any signs of women's autonomy and their

11 UNDP. Central Asia Human Development Report. Bringing down Barriers: Regional Cooperation in Human Development and Human Security. Bratislava, 2005.

12 UNFPA. World Population in 2008. Culture, Gender and Human Rights: Reaching Common Ground. New York, 2008.

13 Asian Development Bank. Women in the Republic of Uzbekistan. ADB, 2001, p. 34.

14 The issue has many other dimensions from healthcare to socio-economic ones.

15 Data of the World Bank for 2004. According to unofficial statistics the average age at first marriage in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is much younger.

ambitions to fulfill their potential, including the independent migration of women, irrespective of the purpose.

These trends are further exacerbated by reduction or poor implementation of national social programs geared to supporting and protecting women and children which is reflected in inadequate allocation of allowances for pregnant women and women with children, disease prevention programs and health education, to name a few. Poor legal culture and law enforcement can also be added to this list.

Although cultural and religious traditions can be an obstacle to women's labour migration, the poor economic climate and the absence of working opportunities in their home countries are strong enough stimuli to drive many women to migrate; furthermore, young women in particular see labour migration as not only an economic necessity, but also as a chance to break the influence of nationalistic traditions and obtain some freedom and independence.

#### **1.1.4. Demographic Trends and Migration**

Demographic developments in recent decades has exacerbated inequalities and caused the rise of unemployment, negatively affecting the socio-economic situation. The population of Central Asian countries is very young due to the birth rate boom between the 1960s and 80s. About 31 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's population, 39.4 per cent of Tajikistan's and 33.2 per cent of Uzbekistan's are under 15 (UNDP, 2005). At present the average age in Kyrgyzstan is 21.9, in Tajikistan, 21.9 and in Uzbekistan, 24.7. As a comparison, the average age of the population in Russia is 38.4. Demographic estimates suggest that in Central Asia, the next 10-20 years would witness the peak of youth entering the labour market, when large numbers of young people will reach working age and begin to seek employment.

Given the current rate of growth in the numbers of the population of working age versus the rate of creation of employment opportunities, the governments of Central Asian countries will face a major challenge in ensuring adequate employment for everyone. At the same time, however, Russia and, to some extent Kazakhstan, face a lack of labour force in rapidly developing sectors of the economy such as construction and services and need extra workforce. This need will continue to grow, despite some temporary slowing due to the economic crisis.

Thus, the countries of Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan, will continue to face challenges related

to demographic growth and the migration flow will remain high in the nearest future.

Although, by and large, the countries of the region have succeeded in addressing the consequences of the 1990s economic depression, many social and economic challenges still remain high on the agenda. Labour migration stands as one of the ways to address social and economic challenges. Although labour migration is a relatively recent phenomenon for the region, it has grown rapidly into one of the key survival strategies and means of improvement of economic status of families. Its development has been spurred by a relatively simple border crossing regime, advanced transport infrastructure, informal migrants' networks, the countries sharing a common historical background and the existence of a common language.

## **1.2. Factors Underpinning Female Labour Migration**

### **1.2.1. Push Factors – Migration Supply**

In the current economic context of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, women have to work and often agree to any working conditions, including those of full time or part-time employment. Low average wages mean that it is often impossible for families to survive with only one income; therefore, the earnings of working women make a substantial contribution to the family budget, and in many cases are the only source of income for families, particularly in households with female heads or in families where men are jobless or incapacitated.

However, many women in Central Asia have limited opportunities to start up their own businesses as a sustainable alternative in case they lose jobs in the public sector.

Women face a range of challenges in the labour market. First and foremost, these are related to the **ongoing structural changes in the economy** of the countries, caused by internal and external factors. Some sectors of the economy that traditionally employed women have either closed down or suffered downscaling. The textile and garments industries are examples, as is the local production of consumer goods which struggles against cheap imports.

**Non-flexibility of the labour market** also contributes to the multiple challenges encountered by women. Creation of new jobs by means of diversification of production and the introduction



of new technologies and investment are limited by lack of direct foreign investment and administrative red-tape and other obstacles. It should be noted, that in all three origin countries examined in this report, there are serious problems related to the creation of new jobs and the preservation of existing employment in remote areas with surplus of labour, especially in the areas with agriculture-based local economies.

Many groups of the population, including women, whose income in the 1990s was below the poverty line, survived through small-scale retail trade and small and medium size entrepreneurial activities in the production of goods and services. Suitcase traders (chelnoki), characteristic of that time, made their small incomes through non-organized trade and tax evasion as well as non-payment of customs duties. The suitcase trade helped millions of families survive through hard times. Women were very active in this business<sup>16</sup>; however, the early 2000s witnessed the shrinkage of the trade, the flows of suitcase traders decreased drastically and were gradually replaced by labour migration and wholesale business.

*Women get into a migration mindset, driven by the urge to provide for their families: they are ready to go to any lengths for the sake of their families, even to go to a foreign place without making any prior arrangements with a receiving party.'*

**Expert's view, Country Report, Kyrgyzstan**

Thus, limited economic opportunities in the countries of origin push women to labour migration.

**Demographic Pressure in the Labour Market.** Due to the demographic boom of the 1960-1980s period new large groups of young women began entering the labour market recently and began competing with older generations over available jobs. At the same time, women also have to compete with men in sectors such as retailing and catering, in which men had no interest in the past. In some cases, women competing with men are subject to certain discrimination in employment.

**Social factors** are also crucial push factors for women labour-migrants. They can be

categorized as a specific group of challenges in the three countries under review. One of the key challenges is social insecurity of the population at large and of women specifically. Analysts explain it as stemming from a lack of financial resources, the termination or curtailing of many social programs, in particular in the fields of healthcare, maternity protection and social services for families and support for families with many children.

All of the above mentioned negative factors act as external factors increasing motivation to migrate.

**Labour Migration – A Survival Strategy.** Labour migration is becoming a widespread means of responding to the adverse human and social costs of development processes. It is also one of the most popular survival strategies in Central Asia, however, this form of migration represents a major risk in terms of uncertain outcomes and returns on invested personal effort, time and capital. The risk affects not only those who opt for migration but all members of their families, particularly children.

Despite the fact that this migration is economic and might therefore be assumed to be based on the participants' free choice, it is, in reality, driven by push factors so powerful that migrants often perceive their migration as forced. This fact was indicated by 54 per cent of respondents from Central Asia working in Russia.

According to the research conducted in Uzbekistan, over 75% of female respondents who went to work in Russia mentioned that their families were poor prior to migration (the income was enough to provide for basic things) or very poor (the income was not enough to cover food); 82 per cent of respondents have dependent minor children or elderly members of the family (according to the female respondents their average dependency load is 2.5 dependents). Facing the pressure of poverty and the need to earn something to ensure the survival of their families, migrants often agree to work under enslaving conditions. This gives rise to the phenomenon of 'agreed exploitation' which is well known from studies on trafficking in human beings and coerced labour.<sup>17</sup>

There are no accurate figures in terms of the overall number of women labour-migrants and

16 Z. Khotkina.

17 Preventing and combating human trafficking in the Russian Federation. Final Report on the Prevention of Human Trafficking in the Russian Federation, EU project implemented by the IOM in the Russian Federation. IOM-ILO-EU, 2008; Ye. Turyukanova. Coerced Labour in Modern Russia: Non-regulated Migration and Human Trafficking. ILO, Geneva, 2006.



the proportion of women compared to men. The recording of women labour-migrants in Central Asia, just like in any other region of the world, is challenging due to a number of factors, including statistical irregularities, the specific nature of some kinds of employment and the scope of application in the labour market. According to expert estimates, the rate of female migration and the proportion of women in the overall migration flow varies from country to country. Thus according to expert estimates in Uzbekistan women migrant workers account for about 15 per cent of the total number of migrants, although estimates suggest that the true figure could be anywhere between 11 per cent and 18 per cent. Women migrant workers from Tajikistan total approximately 12 -15 per cent of the overall number of migrants from that country, although expert estimates put the number from 10 to 17 per cent. The proportion of women migrant workers in Kyrgyzstan is around 25-30 per cent, though, again, experts provide different estimates, ranging from 20 per cent to 40 per cent.

### **1.2.2. Pull Factors – Migration Demand**

Without labour demand in the countries of destination there would be no developments in labour migration. All the experts share the opinion that the national economies of Russia and Kazakhstan cannot develop effectively without attracting foreign labour. Migrant workers from ex-soviet countries are preferred over migrants from non-CIS countries and therefore there is more demand for them in the countries of destination.

**Employment niches for migrants.** At present, the labour markets of the countries of destination depend to an extent on attracting foreign labour. According to global research, the highest demand in such labour markets is in sectors of economy demanding highly qualified professionals or in the sectors employing unqualified workers. In the present report we do not consider the former, or 'elite' migration, and we focus only on migration of people with general qualifications, because they comprise the majority of migrant workers.

Employment niches for migrants appear as a result of the process of segregation in the labour market. Foreign labourers often occupy the niches offering the most difficult, dirty, non prestigious and low-paid jobs. Often it is illegal employment. On top of ethnic segregation there is also gender segregation in the labour market. Men migrant workers are mainly engaged in construction sites, road building sites, industrial

enterprises or other difficult and dirty jobs. Women migrant workers are mostly engaged in trade and services sectors, including domestic service in private households, the entertainment sector, the hotel business and others. Women migrate more often to the big cities, in which the infrastructure of trade and service sectors are more developed and, therefore, the standards of living are higher. A lot of women migrant workers are, however, also engaged in the agricultural sector and on construction sites.

Those niches in the labour market in the countries of destination which have been occupied by foreign labourers for many years will continue to attract migrant workers in the future. Women's labour migration started developing later than men's and is at present on a smaller scale in comparison with men's labour migration; however, the analysts share the opinion that in future women's labour migration will develop rapidly and the number of women migrant workers will grow.

**Labour deficit.** Demographic reduction in the countries of destination and in particular, in Russia, is one other pull factor of labour migration. In Russia the reduction of the population size from 2010 to 2018 is estimated to be more than 1 million people per year, so labour is becoming a scarce resource in the biggest country of destination.

**The shadow economy and demand for cheap informal labour.** While developed countries estimate their shadow economy at 5-10 per cent of GDP, according to the estimates of the CIS countries, this indicator can reach 40 – 60 per cent in specific sectors. To find the root cause, one needs to look as far back as the early 1990s with their the poorly developed economic and particularly antimonopoly laws, inadequate market leverages, adverse investment and business climate, etc. Inflation, disruption of economic ties and a solvency crisis all contributed to the development of the shadow economy. Tax evasion was a regular thing: as the government offered no safeguards to businessmen, they saw no reasons to pay taxes. Development of the shadow economy during the reforms was fuelled by poverty, the absence of a middle class, limited formal economic opportunities and law-related nihilism which had been nurtured during the totalitarian regime.

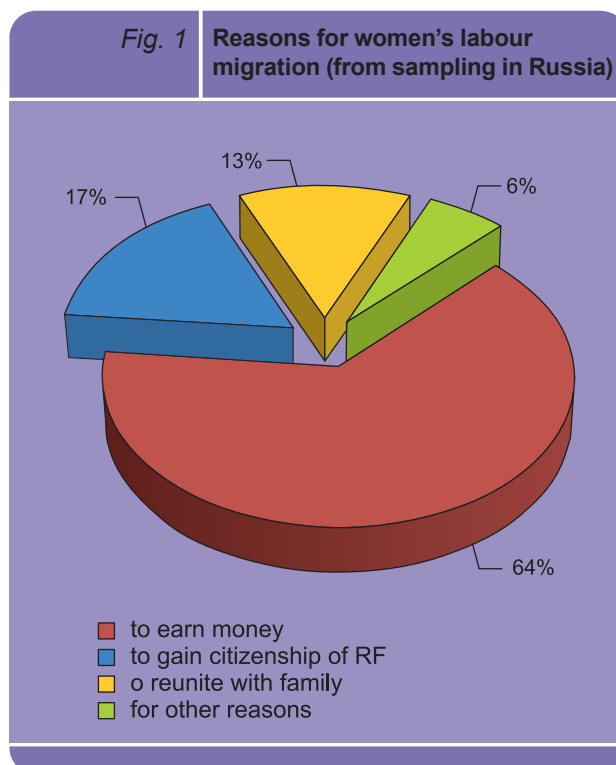
At present, the unofficial and shadow economy is like a powerful pump, extracting from donor countries unqualified migrant workers who accept any kind of employment, without social packages, pension cover or any guaranties for implementation of their labour rights.

### 1.3. Motivation and expectations of women migrant workers

The results of this assessment show that the reasons and motivation for women's labour migration reflect the traditional view that labour migration is a strategy of economic behaviour for survival and for the achievement of decent living standards for the families of migrants. Women's motivation for labour migration is, therefore, much the same as men's; it is mainly for economic reasons. Almost two thirds of the interviewed women migrant workers from the countries of Central Asia stated that they came to Russia "to earn money" (Fig. 1).

Economic reasons for migration affect the behavioural patterns of both women and men migrant workers when they reach the country of destination. On the one hand, they try to adapt to the conditions of the labour market and the social life in the foreign country, while on the other hand, they face some limitations in comparison with the local population. Migrants usually travel to a foreign country for a short time. Their reasons are different, but some women cannot leave their families for long periods, or they have to take their families with them to the foreign country; some migrants are limited by the officially permitted time of staying in the country of destination. These limitations affect the working conditions of migrant workers; they accept any jobs, as they do not wish to waste time looking for better employment, or they are reluctant to leave a job with unfavourable working conditions. In this sense, the official limitation on the time permitted for staying in the country of destination increases the vulnerability of migrant workers and counters the positive effects of migration.

In the process of making a decision to start labour migration, both women and men migrant workers take into account many factors, such as employment opportunities, remuneration, the opportunities for legalisation, the availability of support (relatives, friends), their command of the language of the country of destination, security issues, departure expenditures and others. The choice of the country of destination often depends not on economic factors, but mainly on social factors such as having relatives, friends or acquaintances in a particular country. According to the assessment conducted in Russia, almost a quarter of the interviewed migrants stated that they came to Russia because their relatives or friends live and work there. Informal migrants' networks often make up for the lack of official services for migrant workers. Even if a woman goes abroad without her husband, she is often accompanied



by her acquaintances or she has some friends in the country of destination. More than 60% of the interviewed migrants stated that their compatriots usually travelled with their families or friends.

Central Asian women often find it difficult to make the decision to go abroad to earn money. Many women reported that their families were against their decision to become migrant workers. According to the survey in Tajikistan, very few women make a decision to become a migrant worker independently. Women who live with the families of their husbands, in which there are several generations of the family, often lack the confidence to make such a decision independently and their decisions are, to a significant extent, influenced by their relatives. Women from such families rarely become independent migrant workers and instead go abroad in search of earning with their husbands; however, even this is not a common situation. Out of everyone in the focus groups in Tajikistan, only two respondents reported that their mother-in-laws felt that a husband and wife should be together and therefore supported them in their decision to join their husbands abroad.

The above described situation, when a woman cannot make an independent decision to become a migrant worker, is the example of the existing stereotype that a woman can accompany her husband, father or other relative in labour migration, but she cannot become an independent migrant worker. The research shows that, although

such situations are common and the pattern when women just accompany their relatives in labour migration is widespread, there are more and more women from Tajikistan who decide to become independent migrant workers.

The fact is that problems connected with lack of money are so serious that women try to see beyond their fears and uncertainty and look positively at the prospect of labour migration. Often, the stories of people returning from abroad after labour migration, about the work environment and the whole situation in those countries, and the amount of money they managed to earn, stimulate the decision of others to go to the same countries as migrant workers. After hearing somebody else's success story, women try to get some money either by borrowing or using family savings, or buying and reselling goods, and travel abroad in search of a living, being aware that their life as a migrant worker will not be easy, and that they will probably have to experience both the positive and negative sides of the labour migration process.

The results of in-depth interviews show that women see labour migration as a means of earning money for living and also for solving their social, housing, reproductive and family problems. Labour migration facilitates social mobility, and is therefore a means for improving one's social status; thus, many migrant workers from Uzbekistan see migration as a necessary means for providing their children with wedding celebrations of what they consider a socially acceptable standard. It should be borne in mind that wedding celebrations and other big family events are considered to be very important social events, and people often spend a lot of money on their organization. The cost can sometimes be as much as two or three times their annual income in their country of origin.

*"My daughter went to Kazakhstan because she needs money; she has to marry off her son and build a house. She has a plot of land, but no money to build a house on it. She wants her son to have a proper wedding, so people will not notice that he does not have a father. If she could have worked here and saved enough money, she wouldn't have gone. Here, at home, she went to mardikor-bazaar to work almost every day and she brought money every day, but it was not enough to save."*

***A woman migrant worker's mother,  
country report, Uzbekistan***

The analyses of in-depth interviews with women in Kyrgyzstan show the same economic reasons for labour migration. It is mostly economic reasons that determine labour migration and women choose to go off in search of a living mainly to provide education abroad for their children, to support their families and achieve a certain standard of living, or just to escape the misery of abject poverty.

The reasons for growing migratory activity amongst the population of Tajikistan are rather common. Both women and men go abroad to improve the financial situation of their families, to earn enough money to buy or build a house, to pay for their children's education, or to organise a wedding or other family celebration. A specific characteristic of women from Tajikistan is that they go abroad first because they want to follow their family members, or for some women, because they want to find their husbands who went as migrant workers and stopped communicating, and then they find a job in the country of destination and become migrant workers themselves. The comparative analysis of women's reasons for labour migration from Tajikistan to different countries of destination showed that 75.7 per cent of women migrant workers to Russia were planning to work, compared to only 56.3 per cent of women who migrated to Kazakhstan for the same reason; whereas 37.5% of the women respondents who went to Kazakhstan did so to join their husbands.

Although the primary reason reported for labour migration is usually economic, women respondents also mentioned other reasons. One of them is changing their country of residence and gaining citizenship in the country of destination (Russia or Kazakhstan). 17% of women labour migrants who work in Russia, reported their intention to settle in that country. According to research conducted in Russia, about one third out of all migrant workers want to stay in the country permanently. This estimate is supported by other research carried out in Russia<sup>18</sup>; however, the results of assessments conducted in the countries of origin show that only a small proportion of women respondents view Russia or Kazakhstan as the countries of their future permanent residence. The research indicates that the majority of women migrants who are planning to obtain a permit for permanent living, residency or citizenship in the country of destination are doing so because it makes it easier to get registered and find a job in that country. The women actually willing to move to the countries of destination for permanent living are mostly those who live in big cities and have higher education

18 Data from the Centre of Migration Research (Moscow)

and they are usually members of ethnic groups other than Uzbek.

One of the main factors behind women's labour migration is the desire to resolve personal issues, including a marriage in the country of destination. Women who succeeded in this or women who came to join their husbands who are already migrant workers in the country of destination name the reason behind their migration as "reunion with family". It should be noted that the regulations

dealing with issues of family reunification are not properly developed in the legislation of the countries of destination in the region, and because of that the members of the families of migrant workers are often unprotected in the destination country; it is difficult for them to obtain legal status and to gain a work permit, and thus they depend on the relative they came to join. Women who came to join their husbands and who then want to work in the country of destination as migrant workers themselves often experience such problems.

## Chapter 2. Patterns of migration: looking beyond stereotypes

### 2.1. Patterns of women's labour migration from the countries of Central Asia

Women's labour migration differs from men's in the greater variety of migration patterns. The assessment identified several patterns in women's labour migration from the origin countries of Central Asia to Russia and Kazakhstan. They vary according to the women's roles during the process of migration.

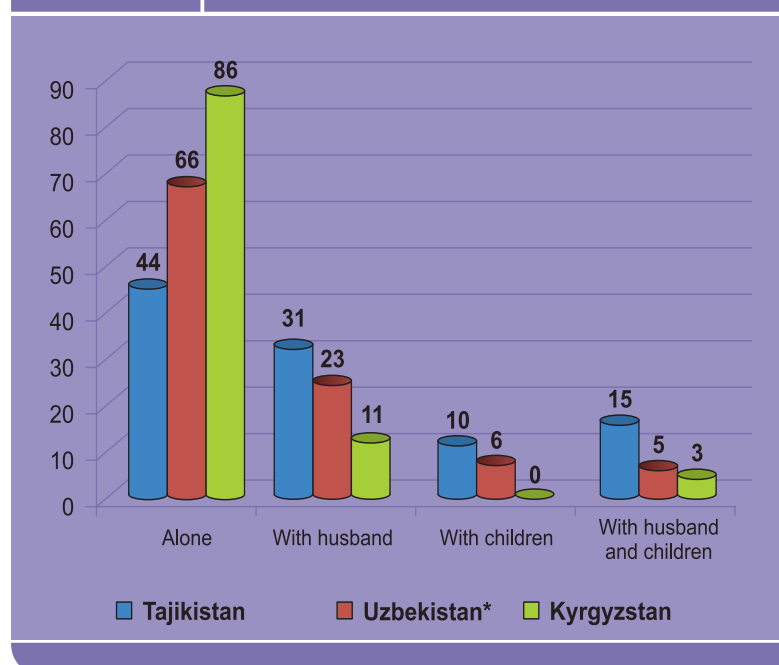
**The most widespread pattern** is when women migrant workers go abroad to earn money independently. In this case, the women themselves (sometimes with support from their family) make the decision about migration and identify their main purposes; they themselves organise their travelling and the procedures of official legalisation in the countries of destinations and they are the breadwinners in their families. Some of them remain abroad independent, while

some of them bring members of their families (their husbands, children, or parents) to the countries of destination. Often, women go abroad for earnings first and later their husbands and children follow them.

The behaviour of women migrant workers in this pattern differs, depending on their family composition and on which members of their family accompany them abroad and which stay at home. The analysis of the collected data shows that the pattern when a woman goes abroad as a migrant worker independently is more widespread in Kyrgyzstan (86% of all women migrant workers from that country). The pattern is less common in Tajikistan, from where only 44% of women migrant workers go abroad independently. Of the three Central Asian countries of origin, Tajikistan is the country with the largest number of women going abroad in search of a living accompanied by their husbands, children or their entire family (Fig 3.2). The experts note, however, that the number of women embarking on labour migration independently is increasing from year to year. In the country report in the present assessment, it is mentioned that, taking into consideration the Central Asian mentality and the prevailing gender stereotypes, these independent women migrant workers should be praised for their courage.

The pattern of women migrant workers taking their children to the countries of destination is also popular. One quarter of all respondents from Tajikistan reported that they took their children on their last trip abroad. 11% of women migrant workers from Uzbekistan took their children to the countries of destination, whereas in Kyrgyzstan, only 3% of women were accompanied by their children on their labour migration.

Figure 2. Pattern of women's labour migration according to family composition, in percentages



\* data on Uzbekistan related only to migration to Russia



Migrants who take their children abroad with them require special programmes aimed at provision of decent living conditions, access to healthcare services and access to educational institutions.

**Another widespread pattern** is when women follow their husbands, sons or other members of their family who go abroad as migrant workers. In this pattern women depend economically on their relatives. They do not earn money and mostly support their husbands, who are the main migrant workers, by ensuring they have adequate living conditions.

It should be noted that these patterns are not fixed; women migrants sometimes change from one pattern to the other, or fall in between. Some women help their migrant worker husbands to do their jobs, even though they themselves are not paid; some women do domestic services in place of paying rent for the accommodation, etc. Those women are, of course, not independent bread-winners; however, they do contribute to their families' well-being.

Migration patterns also differ according to the length of the migration period. The research results show that women migrant workers generally stay longer in their country of destination than men. Most likely this is due to the fact that women are mainly engaged in sectors which are not seasonal, compared to men migrant workers who are mainly engaged in the construction and agricultural sectors. Another factor behind women's staying longer in the country of destination compared to men is that women, more often than men, bring their family to the country of destination and thus they are less "attached" to their home country.

The researchers identify the following patterns of labour migration: **permanent, cyclic or regular (long-term and seasonal) and migration for specific purposes**. Much research shows that labour migration which was planned as temporary does not always remain temporary. According to research conducted in Russia, almost 30% of migrant workers stay in the country of destination almost permanently, going back home only on holiday. These migrants are usually well integrated into the receiving society, work legally (in a permanent or long-term job) and have good accommodation; many of them have either a permit for temporary living or a residency permit, and many of them live with their families in the countries of destination. The main problems which such migrant workers experience are connected either with the

process of obtaining residency or citizenship, or the relocation of their families.

The most common pattern among women migrant workers is **regular or cyclic migration**, when women stay for a long period of time in the country of destination (more than 8 months) and a short period in their home country (from 1 up to 4 months). Such migrants usually come back home only for their holidays. Although they, like migrant workers from the first group, live and work in Russia for long periods of time, they do not consider themselves to be permanent residents of the country of destination. Such migrants usually experience a more varied set of problems, related to the issues of legalisation of their migrant status, securing legal long-term employment, finding affordable accommodation, getting community support and communicating with members of their families.

The most problematic migration pattern is seasonal and short-term labour migration. Seasonal migration can last from three up to eight, and even nine, months in the countries of destination (Russia and Kazakhstan), depending on the region. In practice, therefore, this kind of migration is in some ways similar to the cyclic scenario. Migrants who go to a destination for just one season, even if this is part of a regular migration scenario, are generally less able to adapt; they usually have poor command of the language of the country of destination and very often they are illegal migrant workers. These migrant workers are the most vulnerable; they are under pressure to earn as much money as possible in a short period of time, which is not an easy thing to do.

The results of the survey in the countries of destination show that the majority of the migrant worker respondents spent a long time abroad in 2007. Women migrant workers from Tajikistan spent about 9 months in Russia and 8 months in Kazakhstan on average. More than 75% of women migrant workers worked in Russia for more than half a year. A large portion of migrant workers worked abroad during 2007 and 2008: 29% worked in Russia and 38% worked in Kazakhstan. Only 5% of the respondents worked in Russia for less than 3 months. Women migrant workers from Uzbekistan worked in Russia for an average of 6-8 months and in Kazakhstan for an average of 5 months. Almost 14% of respondents who returned home after labour migration reported that they had spent about a year in Russia. The results of the survey conducted in Kyrgyzstan show that the largest proportion of women migrant workers (35%) had worked abroad for 10-12 months. The above data show that the most widespread labour



migration pattern for women is cyclic with a long cycle period (around one year).

Women migrant workers who go to Russia usually spend longer periods of time there in comparison with women migrant workers who go to Kazakhstan. This could be due to the fact that the distance to Russia is longer and cost of the trip is higher. A reduction of migration periods recorded in Russia in 2008 was a consequence of a toughening of the policies on receiving migrant workers (reductions in quotas and the issuing of short term work permits, for example) in the countries of destination, as a response to the global crisis. During such a difficult time, many migrant workers who lose their jobs, both those who return home and those who stayed in the countries of destination, need protection and support.

It should be noted, that only women from the countries of origin of Central Asia who already returned to their home countries after labour migration were interviewed for the assessment. Those women migrant workers who are still abroad were not included in the present analysis.

Regardless of the particular migration scenario, the phenomenon is either **a survival strategy or a strategy for economic advancement**. Often labour migration is a family strategy. Women migrant workers have been making regular trips to Russia or Kazakhstan and back home for many years. Almost every woman has her personal schedule of trips to the country of destination and back home.

*Women migrant workers who are engaged in agricultural work usually come with their families (their husbands, children or close relatives) for a season of planting and harvesting a particular crop (from March to November) and after one or two years, they start working regularly with a particular employer.*

*Other spheres of employment provide women migrants with opportunities to be more mobile because they do not depend on seasons (work in the services sector, domestic help or trade sector).*

**Country Report for Kazakhstan**

## 2.2. Socio-demographic profile of women migrant workers

Assessments conducted in the countries of Central Asia and Russia portray women going

abroad to earn money as very active migrant workers. The proportion of such migrants among those going to Russia is larger (34%), compared to those who work in Kazakhstan (25%). Almost every third women migrant worker is single (unmarried, divorced or widowed). The average age of an independent woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan is 35 and from Tajikistan, 36. The average age of those who go abroad with their families is a little lower.

A specific characteristic of female migration in the region is that women migrant workers are generally of young and middle age. The experts who conducted the assessment in Kazakhstan noted that, due to tradition of respecting older people, in the big families consisting of members of several generations, it is usually the middle aged people who go abroad to earn money to support both their young children and their elderly relatives.

*“The main trend in labour migration, according to research, is that the average age of migrants is decreasing. The growth of labour migration has reached its peak and may even now be in decline. Everybody who wanted to become a migrant worker has already done it. The number of new migrants annually generally consists of young people coming of an age when they can become migrants and is not enough to cause the overall numbers of migration to rise”*

**Migration expert, Country Report, Kyrgyzstan**

The majority of migrant workers are from rural areas, but in comparison to men migrant workers, there are more urban residents amongst women migrant workers, especially amongst the women who go abroad independently. In Tajikistan, the proportion of women from cities who go abroad independently is higher (about 50%) than that of women migrant workers from rural areas (38%), and the proportion of women migrant workers from cities among all independent women migrant workers is 66%. The proportion of women from rural areas who go to Kazakhstan is higher than those who go to Russia. The majority of migrant workers from the countries of Central Asia are from the nominate ethnic groups.

The level of education of women migrant workers from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is higher compared to the level of education of men migrant workers from those countries. The level of education of women migrant workers from these two countries is also higher than that of women migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan.

As can be seen from the table, the proportion of women from Uzbekistan with secondary vocational and higher professional education is about 50%, from Tajikistan about 45% and from Kyrgyzstan only 39%. The other women migrant workers either obtain professional skills on-the-job or do unqualified jobs.

Generally women with higher qualifications prefer going to Russia than to Kazakhstan. This may be connected to financial considerations. Due to the high cost of travelling and accommodation, only women with a comparatively high level of education and from well-off families can afford to go to Russia as migrant workers. The results of the assessment in Uzbekistan show that new women migrant workers who go to Russia for the first time differ in their ages, but all have higher education. Amongst new migrant workers who go to Kazakhstan for the first time, however, the proportion of young people from rural areas who have low levels of education is increasing. In Uzbekistan, secondary vocational education (when students have to study at college for 3 years after finishing basic secondary school) is compulsory; therefore, the proportion of migrant workers with secondary vocational education from Uzbekistan can be expected to gradually increase.

About two thirds of women respondents are married (Fig. 3). Married women go abroad with their husbands either as migrant workers

themselves, or accompany their husbands who are migrant workers.

The results of the assessment show that amongst women migrant workers who go abroad independently there is a large proportion of single women (more than 60% in Tajikistan and 34% in all the countries of origin).

The respondents have comparatively big families with, on average, more than 5 or 6 members. The majority of respondents have young children. On average, women migrant workers have 2 children under sixteen. The majority of respondents reported that they were not the only breadwinners in their families; however, they had to support either their children or other members of their families financially. Half of women respondents from Uzbekistan reported that they had to support 2-3 people and 16% had 4-7 dependents. In Kyrgyzstan, 27% of all women migrant worker respondents are breadwinners in their families. According to the Tajik researchers, only 10% of women migrant workers do not have any dependents. All the others are responsible for supporting their children and elderly family members and that is the main reason they have to leave their home country and face the uncertainty of going abroad in search of earnings. The average number of dependents for a woman migrant worker from Central Asia is just over two.

Table 5 Educational level of women migrant workers (%)

	Uzbekistan*	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
No education	0,2	3,3	1
Basic secondary education	9,1	6,1	3
Complete secondary education	40,8	46,3	57
Secondary vocational education	36,5	25,0	22
Higher education	13,4	19,3	17

\* Only migrants who work in Russia

Table 6 Accompanying family members of women migrant workers from Tajikistan (%)

Accompanying family members	Marital status of women migrants					Total
	Single	Marriage officially registered	Marriage not officially registered	Divorced or separated	Widow	
No one	26,1	36,8	2,0	21,7	13,4	100,0
Husband	-	90,2	9,8	-	0	100,0
Children	1,5	39,7	1,5	27,9	29,4	100,0
Husband and children	0	90,4	5,8	1,9	1,9	100,0
Relatives	72,7	9,1	0	18,2	0	100,0
Total	12,6	61,2	4,6	12,7	8,9	100,0

It is clear that many women prefer to undertake labour migration accompanied by family members and go abroad either with their husbands or with the whole family. The pattern of family migration is more widespread in Tajikistan, where 46% of all the respondents went abroad with either just their husbands, or with both their husbands and children, in Uzbekistan the figure is 28% and in Kyrgyzstan, 14% (Fig.3). As can be seen from the next table, the proportion of women migrant workers who go with their children is higher for those who go to Russia than for those who go to Kazakhstan. This may be caused by the longer history of labour migration to Russia and, as a result, more stable social networks allowing migrant workers to bring their family members with them.

Family migration seems to be the most preferred scenario. The assessment conducted in Kazakhstan shows that women migrant workers hold the opinion that it is better for married women to go abroad with their husbands, especially if they work in the agricultural sector: first, because they can earn more money and hard work requires men's help, and second, because it makes it easier for the women to endure the difficulties of labour migration.

*Women who are here with their husbands are in a better position, because nobody hassles them, but single women often receive unwanted attention from men.*

***A woman migrant worker, working in the service sector in Astana, Kazakhstan***

An analysis of typical cases of family migration to work in the agricultural sector in Southern Kazakhstan is presented in the Annexes.

### 2.3. Migration Infrastructure: the Roles of Official, Private and Non-official Institutions in Supporting Labour Migration

According to the research, the ongoing institutional support of migration is rendered at four levels: governmental institutions (agencies and ministries such as the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Agency for Migration (Kyrgyzstan), the Bureau for Employment Abroad (Uzbekistan), the Federal Migration Agency (Russia), private institutions (private recruitment agencies, private employment agencies etc); casual and shadow organisations (informal networks, individual recruiters and intermediaries, etc.) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs and diaspora networks).

According to the assessment data, the most widespread strategy of finding employment as a migrant worker in Russia and Kazakhstan

Figure 3 Marital status of women migrant workers (%)

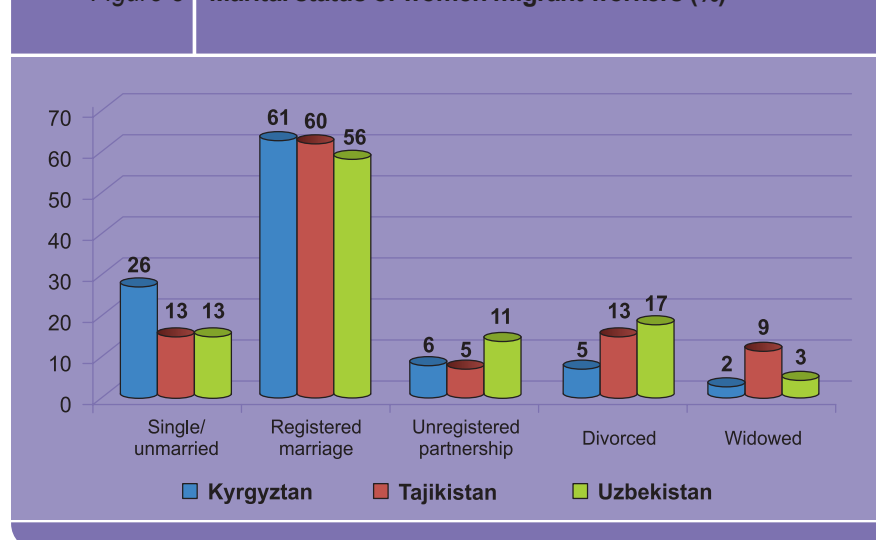


Table 7 Accompanying family members of men and women migrant workers from Uzbekistan (%), with destinations given

	Migration to Russia		Migration to Kazakhstan	
	women	men	women	men
Independently	66,1	94,3	74,7	89,6
With a spouse	23,2	5,1	12,3	8,8
With children	5,5	0,6	10	0,8
With a spouse and children	5,2	0	3,1	0,8
With children younger than 18	5,5	0	8,1	1,6

is looking for a job via casual channels such as through relatives and acquaintances; the second most popular way is via non-official channels such as through private and shadow intermediaries; the third way is through advertisements in mass media and private recruitment agencies (PRA), and the most unpopular way of employment amongst migrant workers is through state employment agencies. One other popular way is through existing connections, when migrant workers work for the same employer several times.

As the research conducted in the framework of UNIFEM project in Russia shows, more than 50% of women migrant workers find their jobs with the help of relatives and friends, or independently, which means they find their jobs through non-official channels, and about 20% use the services of private intermediaries. This data is supported by other researches as well (Table 8).

The abovementioned data shows that the most widespread means of organising migration processes is through non-official and shadow channels and that leads to illegal migration and numerous cases of violation of migrant workers' rights.

The following description of the state's official institutions will assist in further analysing the infrastructure of migration.

### 2.3.1. Governmental Institutions

Official state employment services available to migrants are very limited, and their role is noticeable in only a few migration pathways. According to the assessment, a very small proportion of migrant workers use them. Only 8% of migrant workers from Tajikistan who go to Kazakhstan found their employment through state migration services.

In Uzbekistan, where private intermediaries are forbidden to work in the migration sphere, the largest proportion of migrant workers uses official employment agencies. Of all women respondents from Uzbekistan who work in Russia, 35% reported that they knew about the state employment agencies for migrant workers and 24% knew about private recruitment agencies. In Kazakhstan, the percentage is lower - 12% and 10% respectively. In-depth interviews show that women migrant workers from cities and with higher educa-

tion, the representatives of minority ethnic groups and those women who have gone abroad to earn money several times had more knowledge about state and private recruitment agencies for migrant workers. According to the interviewed women, the efficiency of such agencies is not very high: only 3% of the respondents from Uzbekistan who went to Russia and 2% of those who went to Kazakhstan reported that the state recruitment agencies had helped them to find their employment. The private recruitment agencies had helped 3.2% of women respondents who went to work in Russia and 3.1% of those who were employed in Kazakhstan.

The state employment services for migrant workers mainly comprise the state recruitment agencies; however, this system, which was formed back in soviet times, is aimed at recruitment and re-training of local unemployed citizens and is not adapted for providing services to migrant workers. The vacancies offered by the state employment agencies are often unsuitable for migrant workers (the jobs require long-term commitment, permanent residency in the country, etc).

Some countries of the region, however, have already declared in a number of documents a commitment to involving state agencies in the organisation of labour migration, so services in this area should be developing in the future. It is necessary to make changes in the charters and the procedures of state recruitment agencies and create special departments for working with migrant workers, selecting appropriate vacancies (with accommodation provided, temporary employment, etc.); to train staff of recruitment agencies in order to eliminate corruption and xenophobia towards migrant workers and to provide professional re-training for migrant workers in accordance with the labour demands in the countries of destination.

State agencies will play a more active role in the regulation of labour migration only when the

	Men	Women
With the help of relatives/acquaintances	50	46
With the help of state employment agencies	3	5
With a help of private employment agencies	4	5
Advertisements in newspapers and in public places	12	11
Through intermediaries	8	7
Found work without any help	17	13
Through internet	1	3
Other	2	4

Source: studies by the Centre of migration research, Moscow, 2008



measures described above are undertaken and the state agencies themselves (e.g., recruitment agencies, labour inspectorates, ombudsmen, and others) actively participate in resolving the problems facing migrant workers and their employers.

There have already been some steps taken in this direction in Russia and Kazakhstan. In Russia, the state database of vacancies, which contains around a million vacancies and is updated regularly, was created by Rostrud. Some of the vacancies in this database are available to migrant workers; however, migrant workers need to be informed about these opportunities and the ways of obtaining access to this data base if it is to be of use to them.

Among the countries of Central Asia, the most developed infrastructure for supporting labour migration is in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz consuls in various regions of Russia (Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk and in some other cities) have adopted the role of labour attaches and are dealing with the problems facing migrant workers from their country. This positive practice should be encouraged and replicated.

The activities of state institutions could also be improved through cooperation between employment agencies in the origin and destination countries.

### 2.3.2. Private Migration Institutions

There are a number of reasons why women labour migrants need more efficient private employment services and the market economy allows a significant **role for the private employment sector**.

- Firstly, private recruitment agencies respond in a more rapid and flexible way to changes in the supply and demand of the labour market.
- Secondly, being registered businesses, they are required to provide reliable information as a minimum. This makes such companies significantly different from individual non-registered recruiters who can disappear any minute.
- Thirdly, private recruitment agencies can work with both individuals and groups of clients. Theoretically, when there is lack of information flow, such services can form an effective bridge between employers and job-seekers.

Table 8 shows that only 5% of migrant workers found their employment through private recruitment agencies; however, the researchers report that the trend is towards growth in the provision of such services.

Private recruitment agencies operate both in the countries of origin and in the countries of destination, except for the case of Uzbekistan, where the employment sphere is monopolized by the state. The most developed infrastructure of labour migration is in Russia; however, there is a lack of legislation regulating the activities of the private recruitment agencies there. Private recruitment agencies in Kyrgyzstan operate at a very good professional level. Women from Kyrgyzstan searching for employment in the agricultural sector in Almaty province of Kazakhstan frequently use private recruiting agencies in Kyrgyzstan. This approach, according to women migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan, often leads to a long period of employment with the same employer and thus, to the relative security of their labour migration to a foreign country.

*“We sign a contract through the agency back home and we also sign a contract with a local agency when we come here. We work on a 50:50 basis. So, if we earn, for example, 100.000 Tenge, we have to give our host 50.000 Tenge, but we keep the remaining 50.000. The agency takes a tax from the host, and that’s why we and give her half of the earnings from our work. She pays the tax and we do not need to pay anything ourselves. Our travel costs are also shared by her. When we want to come here, she pays for the travel, and then she brings us here. Travel costs 15.000 Tenge per person, 50 per cent of which we reimburse from our earnings, and 50 per cent is covered by her, i.e. 7.500 by her and 7.500 by us.”*

*“The first time we came to Chilik in 2004, we found a job through a recruiting agency in the city of Osh. We did not have any intermediaries; they just gave us an address of the recruiting agency in Chilik and everything was free of charge. When we came to the recruiting agency in Chilik in Kazakhstan, they helped us draw up a labour contract and we signed it. In that contract the working conditions, living conditions and how much we would be paid were stated. We do not pay for accommodation and the employer gave us some money to buy food and medicines. When we get paid in November the employer will withdraw the money he gave us from our payment. We paid our travelling expenses ourselves; we had enough money.”*

**Women migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan, working in the agricultural sector, Almaty province, Kazakhstan**



Apart from payment for employment-related assistance (which, according to international standards, cannot be charged to the employee), women migrant workers often have to pay for other services. According to the poll in Uzbekistan, 53 % of women who went to Russia paid a fee for assistance with registration; 35% for obtaining a work permit; 15% for travel-related assistance and 22 % for being employed. Women who went to Kazakhstan also had to pay additional fees on top of the official ones: 32% paid for registration-related assistance; 14% for obtaining a work permit; 16% for travel-related assistance and 16% paid to get employed. In Tajikistan, a significant proportion of respondents who were employed through intermediaries had to reimburse the travel expenses (38.2%) and had to pay to get employed (27.1%). More than half of women respondents had to pay intermediaries for obtaining their registration in the country of destination.

### 2.3.3. Non-official institutions involved in labour migration processes

Currently, according to the research data, following a decade of large-scale labour migration, **casual migrants' networks** have become the preferred option for a large majority of migrants. Official channels and services for migration assistance cannot yet compete with casual networks of relatives and friends. The majority of migrant workers obtain necessary information, their employment and assistance with the protection of their rights' through non-official channels. Generally, such channels derive their efficiency from being built on the cooperation of people who are close to each other. From migrants who used such networks, thirty per cent of women who worked in Russia, for example, had accurate information about their future jobs and almost same number of women had a general idea of where they were going (Figure 4).

The information from such non-official sources can, however, be quite limited. Less than twenty per cent of those who worked in Russia were familiar with the Russian employment laws prior to their arrival and less than a third knew of organizations that could offer assistance in cases of rights infringement or in dire emergency.

The majority of migrant workers use non-official organisations as they believe them to be more reliable. 32% of women migrant workers from Uzbekistan who work in Russia thought that it was easier to find a job through non-official channels and 16% did not see any difference between official and non-official channels for obtaining employment. The situation concerning women migrant workers

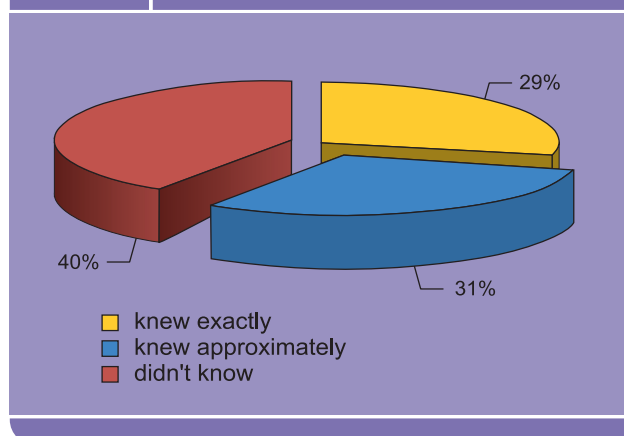
from Uzbekistan going to Kazakhstan is slightly more complicated: the largest proportion, at 38%, believe non-official channels to be the easiest way for finding employment, 35% rated official and non-official channels equally and just 27% thought that it was easier to find employment through official channels.

In addition to the non-official channels, which are the most popular among migrant workers, **shadow channels** (through shadow intermediaries) are also utilized in organization of labour migration. The main difference between these and the other non-official channels is that the shadow channels often operate in violation of the legislation. In the countries of Central Asia there are many private intermediaries who recruit migrant workers either in mardikor bazaars (where employment is offered) or through casual networks.

*“...we have a recruiter who is also our foreman. He visits Kazakhstan well in advance to check working conditions and accommodation. Then he comes back home and if we are happy with all the conditions we go there. No one forces us to do that. We do not pay a fee for his services as intermediary; that is paid by the employer here in Kazakhstan. Our foreman provides for our safety. He does his best to ensure everything is fine as he really cares about his reputation and image. He also encourages us to do a good job. We work as a team here when we gather the cotton and all these people are our neighbors from Uzbekistan. Just like me, they also found out about their employment terms from their foreman, and they chose to come here. The work has been okay so far and I think we'll come here again. I know nothing about migration laws, but we fully trust the foreman – our recruiter. He takes our passports and makes all the arrangements at the customs and brings us over the border safe and sound. He keeps his word; we never have any problems crossing the border. Then he gives back our passports when we are in Kazakhstan. Once I arrive here at my place of work, the employer immediately gets me registered and issued with a temporary residence certificate. We don't need to know anything about the employment rules in Kazakhstan. When we come here, we start seeking work, and everybody finds it. The Uzbek cuisine café can be a good source of income. People are hired as cooks, or the younger people work as waiters.”*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working in the agriculture sector in Southern Kazakhstan**

Figure 4 Awareness of female migrants about their future employment in Russia



The high level of knowledge about **private recruiters and intermediaries** amongst women migrant workers should be noted. Among women migrant workers interviewed in Uzbekistan, 43% of those who went to Russia and about 40% of those who went to Kazakhstan were aware of the services offered by private recruiters and intermediaries. It should also be noted that the level of knowledge about the services of private recruiters and intermediaries is higher than that about official employment services. Only 35% of migrant workers going to Russia and 12% of migrant workers going to Kazakhstan said they had knowledge about these.

The situation in Kyrgyzstan is different. Among women respondents from Kyrgyzstan who went to Russia, 32% were aware of the services of private recruiters and intermediaries in their country and almost the same number of women were aware about services of private recruiters and intermediaries in the country of destination. 34% knew about private recruitment agencies in Russia. Among women respondents from Kyrgyzstan who went to Kazakhstan, 44% were aware of services of private recruiters and intermediaries in their country and 34% were aware of the same in the country of destination. 21% of the respondents knew about private recruitment agencies.

There is a high correlation between using private recruiters in the countries of origin and obtaining employment abroad. Among women from Uzbekistan, 15% had approached private intermediaries and 14% had found their employment through them. The proportion of women migrants who went to Kazakhstan and were recruited through intermediaries is higher (due to the very limited availability of official services): 28% of the respondents tried to

find their employment through intermediaries; however, their effectiveness in these cases is lower and only 18% were successful.

Migrants use non-official and shadow channels not only for information but also for other social transactions: to borrow money, to arrange relocation, for meeting and greeting, to find initial temporary accommodation (a bed and food, etc.), to look for a job, to search for more permanent accommodation, to send money back home and for accessing healthcare, to name a few. The most common challenge in leaving the home country is the lack of money for traveling to the host country, and paying for food and accommodation at the beginning. As official crediting mechanisms for migrants are very poor and bank services are hardly available for them, they borrow mainly from relatives or friends, or an employer which can often lead to quite tight situations.

*'I was not able to borrow any money at all [for the trip], from my neighbors'*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working in Russia**

Intermediaries in Russia and Kazakhstan often offer migrants assistance in obtaining work permits, registration and legalization. Official registration at the Migration Police of Kazakhstan costs about USD 7, while intermediaries charge USD 40 - 80 for the service.

A large proportion of women respondents from Kyrgyzstan (41 %) reported that they found their primary jobs through relatives or friends in the destination countries and 33% of women found their jobs through relatives and friends in their home country. Only 4.5% of respondents found jobs through individuals or intermediaries in their home country, and 6% were employed through intermediaries in the destination countries. The employment rate through governmental services is very low (only 1%), however, a fairly high proportion (10.5%) of job-seekers found employment through the mass media.

In choosing non-official channels for solving various problems, migrant workers often face deception and exploitation. The absence of effective mechanisms for the protection of migrant's rights reduces their motivation to seek legalization of their status, especially when an employer does not demand it. A lot of women migrant workers are engaged in casual and shadow sectors of the economy (domestic

services, the entertainment sector, agriculture, etc), and the employers in those sectors prefer them to work illegally, so they can make more profit.

The assessment results show that the official labour migration support infrastructure is underdeveloped, especially in the fields relating to providing access to information and to provision of various services supporting migrants and members of their families in obtaining legalization, employment, protection of their rights, accommodation, security, healthcare, etc. Non-official and shadow support for migrant workers flourish due to the absence or insufficiency of the official channels. The shadow channels can only be excluded from the labour migration market through development of the official infrastructure of support for migrant workers.

#### 2.3.4. NGOs

When the state- and private-run infrastructure, which is supposed to support the labour migrants, is underdeveloped, then the role of the not-for-profit sector (NGOs, etc.) working with different categories of migrant workers becomes more prominent. Such organisations help by providing access to information and by providing various services to support migrants and members of their families in obtaining legalization, employment, protection of their rights, accommodation, security and healthcare, etc.

Although trade unions, diasporas and other non-governmental organisations provide information and other types of support to migrant workers, it is our opinion that they should focus on the protection of migrant workers' rights. This is a sphere in which the needs of migrant workers are great but in which activity is still very limited. There are, however, some practices which show positive steps toward protection of migrant workers' rights: non-governmental organisations such as Civil Assistance and the Tajikistan Fund in Moscow have some experience in protection of the rights of both legal and illegal migrant workers. Some NGOs have helped migrant workers to get paid for their work or to have their papers returned, but the number of such examples is very small in comparison with the number of cases of violation of migrants' rights.

As stated above, the role of non-governmental organisations in providing assistance for migrant workers is increasing due to the underdevelopment of the official infrastructure

of labour migration and NGOs can assist in solving various problems which migrant workers experience, including provision of information, employment opportunities, rights' protection, accommodation, remittance, access to medical services, etc.

*“The problem is that very few people are aware of such NGOs and the governmental agencies dealing specifically with these issues”.*

**Country report, Kyrgyzstan**

Opinion polls show that, unfortunately, non-official networks and channels – based on kin, regional and ethnical – are not yet organized and institutionalized to the required extent. This is despite the fact that these channels are the most efficient and relied upon by many women labour migrants. Ensuring the proper operations of NGOs, various ethnic communities and ethnic and cultural centers will be more fruitful for host countries, while the countries of origin will benefit from the dissemination of information about such operations via varied channels, including the media.

One more gap in migration infrastructure in all the countries of the region should be mentioned: this is the absence of self-organization of migrant workers at the level of local communities. Many migrant workers live in the countries of destination for a long time, going back home only on holiday; however' a lot of them are excluded from the social life of the local society. In order to eliminate marginalization and social exclusion of migrant workers some measures to support migrants' self-organization should be taken. UNIFEM could include such support in the list of their activities.

#### 2.4. Needs of women migrant workers at the preparation stage of labour migration

As the assessment shows, the migration process involves multiple risks. Difficulties arise even at the stage of preparation for migration. Women who have made the decision to go abroad in search of a living face many problems and they need a whole set of effective assistance measures. It should be noted that many women migrants in Central Asia are in need of various migration-related services in their countries of origin and close to their places of residence, including in small towns and remote villages.

The main needs of women preparing for labour migration are the following:

**Access to legal services on migration and labour legislation** As the assessment results show, non-official provision for women migrant workers is still erratic and unorganised and the information available is often unreliable and distorted because it is obtained from acquaintances, neighbours and even strangers: therefore, the creation of official information services for migrants is important. Among women respondents from Uzbekistan, 63% of those who go to Russia stated that they need consultations on migration legislation and 56% need consultations on labour legislation; among those who go to Kazakhstan the figures are 53.3% and 47% respectively. Among the interviewed women migrant workers from Tajikistan, 76% stated they needed information support. 77% of women respondents from Kyrgyzstan reported they needed access to legal services for protection of their labour rights.

In addition to informational services, both men and women migrant workers need access to personalised legal consultation services on migration and labour legislation suited to their individual cases. Access to such services is especially important when migrants are already working in the country of destination and find themselves facing problems or become involved in conflict situations. In order to provide such services in addition to information-sharing (information campaigns, information telephone service and others) a pool of migration law specialists should be set up in a similar fashion to the American system.

**Access to information and consultations on potential employment opportunities and recruiting services.** The majority of migrant workers from the Central Asian countries are aware of the basic legal procedures for official stay as migrant workers in Russia and Kazakhstan; however, there is not much information available on employment and housing opportunities in these countries of destination. The majority of migrant workers do not have access to such information in their countries of origin and due to the lack of such information, many experience a lot of problems in the countries of destination when they first arrive. Among all women respondents from Uzbekistan, 71% of those who plan to go to Russia and 67% of those who plan to go to Kazakhstan stated that they need labour migration employment services in Uzbekistan. 80% of women respondents from

Tajikistan mentioned the need for services on employment abroad and 74% stated the need for information services and consultations on labour legislation in the countries of destination. Among interviewed women from Kyrgyzstan, going to Kazakhstan or Russia, 78% mentioned the need for recruiting services. Such high percentages show that the existing means and methods of informing potential migrant workers are ineffective and in need of improvement.

In order to improve the existing services of informing potential migrant workers, an effective system of collecting information on vacancies in the countries of destinations should be set up and special departments, dealing with migrants, should be created in state and private employment agencies; however at present, due to the fact that the largest part of the labour market in the countries of destination is in the shadow sectors, many employers prefer employing migrants unofficially and therefore do not officially register vacancies.

**Access to information services and consultations on various general questions concerning labour migration** 67% of women respondents who go to Russia and 60% of those who go to Kazakhstan reported that they need these kinds of services. 64% of women migrant workers from Tajikistan and 76% women from Kyrgyzstan stated that they need information services on different issues of labour migration.

**Access to finance and credit.** The assessment data shows that many migrants, even if it is not their first trip abroad, do not have enough money for travelling and covering initial expenses in the country of destination and have to borrow against future earnings in order to cover these expenditures. Many women respondents mentioned problems with borrowing money and paying it back. Several years ago, JCB Russlavbank in Russia started a project called Travellers credit, especially for migrant workers<sup>19</sup>. The idea of the project was that migrants could take credit in their country of origin and pay it back through the contact remittance and payment system in Russia. This project is not very popular, however, among migrant workers and works successfully only in Tajikistan, in cooperation with the local Agroinvestbank. Migrants find the terms of this credit program disadvantageous and they often lack sufficient knowledge to fully understand the credit terms. There are no other known special programmes aimed at providing credit to migrant workers in the region.

19 [www.russlavbank.com/prcenter/massmediadetail/172.html](http://www.russlavbank.com/prcenter/massmediadetail/172.html)



Generally, migrant workers are poorly aware of banking services. The majority of them do not have deposit or credit card accounts with banks, or any other means of managing their money. Just recently, a system began operating allowing remittance without opening a bank account and migrant workers have started using it on a larger scale and more often. The large-scale introduction of financial services for migrants, therefore, is possible only if the new financial instruments offer significant advantages to migrants in comparison with the currently existing services. More migrant workers have come to appreciate the benefits of sending remittances through official banking channels lately, but the improvement of banking services for migrant workers would be an advantage for them: for example, by making available cheap credit programmes for relocation and initial expenditure, especially for migrant workers who go abroad with their families. Also, access to the kind of service where a migrant worker could open a card bank account in the country of destination, and the members of their family could withdraw money from this account in the country of origin could become an alternative to the remittances system.

It is also important to develop financial services providing more opportunities for migrant workers to use their earnings more effectively, for example, to save, or to invest in their children's education.

**Access to services providing secure accommodation in the country of destination.**

Many interviewed migrants noted that the most difficult time abroad is the first days and weeks in the country of destination. The majority of migrants try to arrange their employment and housing through their friends or relatives in the country of destination before they go there. They expect that their friends or relatives would meet them, provide accommodation for a few days, and help them to find a job and accommodation to rent. Some migrants have preliminary accommodation and employment arrangements. However, some migrant workers go without any previous arrangements or their plans fall through and they find themselves on the street with all their belongings and nowhere to go. They seek lodging for few nights in train stations, markets, etc. After several such nights they have such an appearance that it makes even more difficult to find a job. This situation has a much worse effect on women.

That is why accommodation for the first few days or weeks is so important for migrant

workers, especially women. Currently, they do not have many opportunities to find such initial accommodation. There are centres for temporary accommodation for migrant workers in only a few towns in Russia and there is not much information available about them. There is an urgent need for such centres, and they must be affordable and should also provide services for migrant workers relating to legalisation, employment and housing. Such centres could be established either by state agencies or by private enterprises in cooperation with state agencies. Such centres should also have separate rooms for women with children.

Women migrant workers who come with their children find it even more difficult to find accommodation (not only initial accommodation) compared to women who come independently. Employers in the service sectors, in which women are mainly engaged, more rarely provide housing to migrant workers compared to the building sector.

**Education, professional training and retraining needs of women migrant workers.**

Good command of a language of the country of destination, as well as good levels of the vocational qualifications which are in demand in the labour market, make it easier to find a good job in the country of destination and even allows migrants to apply for higher level jobs with higher payment.

Among women respondents from Uzbekistan, 33% of those who go to Russia and 28% of those who go to Kazakhstan stated a need for vocational education courses. 48% of women respondents from Kyrgyzstan and more than 50 % of women respondents from Tajikistan also expressed a need for vocational retraining.

25% of women respondents from Uzbekistan who go to Russia and 28% of those who go to Kazakhstan reported a need for language courses (Russian and Kazakh languages respectively). Among women respondents from Kyrgyzstan, 46% expressed a need for language courses and 55% of women respondents from Tajikistan stated a need for language courses (Russian and Kazakh languages).

The percentage of migrant workers who need vocational and educational (language) training services is higher in Tajikistan compared to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which suggests that migrant workers from Tajikistan have more problems in integrating into local communities in



the countries of destination.

The findings of international research into trends in the development of the labour market (World Bank, 2002), show that education and professional qualifications are key factors in increasing the competitive abilities of migrant workers in the labour market<sup>20</sup>. In this sense, women migrant workers from countries of origin in Central Asia have the advantage compared to women migrant workers from many other developing countries. Almost 100% of women in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan finished secondary school<sup>21</sup>. A worrying fact is, however, that the number of women in Central Asia who do not have access to education due lack of money is increasing.

*“I finished school with good marks and I dreamed of entering an institute and getting a diploma. But at that time there were a lot of very religious people in our kishlak (village). My father listened to them and did not allow me to continue my education. So, I am uneducated now. I cannot find any job now because I don’t have higher education. I knit children’s socks and sometimes sell them in the market”*

***A woman in Tajikistan, from a case study of families left in the countries of origin without support***

Services and assistance for returning home after labour migration. 60% of women respondents from Tajikistan expressed the need for services and help in returning home after labour migration. This need is particularly acute amongst women whose

families accompany them abroad as in this case the cost of repatriation is much higher. They also need assistance in reintegration and employment after coming back home.

Psychological support. A lot of women migrant workers experience psychological problems during the preparation stage to their labour migration. The main problem is uncertainty and fear of the unknown.

*“I borrowed money for that trip. I did not know what would happen”.*

***Country report, Russia***

*“At first we borrowed some money from my mum. We told her that we would pay her back as soon we earned something. At the beginning of my labour migration I felt confused, I was afraid, I missed my home and my children. I had complicated feelings. When I feel down, I think about my children.”*

***Country report, Kazakhstan***

Among other socio-psychological problems, women migrant workers reported that they missed their homes and their children and relatives, they were worried about their belongings and sometimes even feared for their lives. Some women experience additional problems because members of their families do not support their decision to migrate. According to the research conducted in Russia, 15% of women respondents reported being in such a situation.

20 Betcherman, Gordon. An Overview of Labour Markets World-Wide: Key Trends and Major Policy Issues. World Bank, 2002

21 United Nations Statistics Division. Millennium Development Goals Database. “Literacy rates of 15-24 years old, women, percentage”.

## Chapter 3. Problems and opportunities in the labour migration process

### 3.1. Status of women migrant workers in the countries of destination

All migrants face the issue of legalisation of their status. Even though migrants from the CIS countries can travel within the region without visas, this makes it easier only to cross the borders and partially simplifies the legalisation of staying in the country of destination. The legalisation of labour status, however, still requires a lot of serious effort.

The problems related to the issues of legalisation of labour status, as well the number of illegal migrant workers, are strongly linked to the level of difficulty of the legalisation procedure as well as on the existence of administrative and other obstacles in the process of gaining legal status. This situation can be illustrated by practices of recent years. Before 2007, both countries, Russia and Kazakhstan, had similar legislation in the field of labour migration. On January 15, 2007, due to the pressure of demographic problems and a reduction in the able-bodied population, the Russian government adopted new, more liberal legislation in the field of labour migration which simplified the procedures of registration of migrant workers (providing opportunities for sending arrival notification by mail, for registration at the juridical address of the employer and other measures), and simplified the procedure of obtaining a work permit (according to the new regulations, the work permit is given not to the employer but to the migrant worker within 10 days, which provides opportunities for migrant workers to work for any employer, and the latter has only to notify the migration agency that they have hired a foreign employee). These liberal innovations allowed a doubling of the legal proportion of labour migration.

Kazakhstan, in its turn, conducted a migration amnesty, aimed at legalisation of illegal migrant workers from CIS countries, in the period from 1 August until 31 December 2006. The migration amnesty was aimed at people who legally stayed in the country but worked without work permits.

In the process of the amnesty, undocumented migrant workers, who worked for employers who did not obtain work permits for them from the authorities, were given the opportunity to register their status as migrant workers and continue their work legally for a period up to 3 years. The new regulations, however, did not provide any more opportunities for new migrant workers to have free access to the national labour market. They only provided opportunities for the legalisation of migrant status for those who were already working in Kazakhstan.

Taking into account that the regulations on legalisation are the same for all migrant workers regardless of gender or sphere of employment, one can assume that there should be no difference in the legalisation of men's and women's migrant status. Under-representation of women in the official statistics, however, shows that more women than men work as illegal migrant workers in the countries of destination. Official migration channels are narrower for women than men. One of the reasons could be the fact that women are mainly engaged in unofficial sectors of the labour market, where employers are owners of small and medium private enterprises in the services sector of the economy. Such employers are not interested in the legalisation of the migrant status of their employees because they either do not want or can't afford to spend money on the official procedures of employee registration. In Russia, the economic climate for small business has been so difficult in recent years that legalisation of even a few employees has been a problem for many employers.

In contrast to men, who are hired as a working team (for example, in construction and on building sites), women are mainly employed individually. They are more dependent on their employers and it is more difficult for women to demand their rights in such situations. The cases of exploitation and violation of the rights of individually employed women are more hidden compared to those employed collectively. Women migrant workers, especially those engaged in private households

as housemaids or babysitters, work in close contact with the employer, do not have any labour contracts and are thus at the mercy of their employers. The same situation can be observed in private unregistered small enterprises, where an employer hires only one or two workers. Human rights agencies and researchers have identified numerous cases of violation of women migrant workers' rights, including forced labour and enslavement.

In Russia, the authorities responsible for regulating the process of migration inflow have tried repeatedly to solve the problem of legalisation of migrants employed by individuals, but none of the new measures have been effective. A draft law introducing licenses for work which migrant workers hired by individuals have to buy (according to the previous law, employers had to buy them) was submitted for consideration to the government in 2009. The majority of experts do not believe this measure will be very effective, but they hope that it might help improve the regulation and management of labour migration to some extent. In this regard, it is important to provide regulation which will both represent the interests of tax agencies as well as protect the rights of workers against violation.

The results of the assessment conducted in Russia suggest that 80% of women migrant workers are officially registered with migration agencies and more than half of them have work permits. Similar findings were also reported by other country research teams; however, this data may be inaccurate due to the fact the most casual and shady aspects of employment of migrant workers are hidden from both official statistics and sociologists.

The assessment results show that there is a relationship between the level of education of women migrant workers and the proportion of officially registered migrants. The proportion of migrant workers with official status (those who have registration and work permits) is also likely to depend on the level of support they get from their national community and organisations which help migrant workers through the procedures of legalisation. For example, the Russian researchers state that the proportion of legal migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan is higher in comparison to other Central Asian Republics, due to the better developed system of assistance for migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan. This system includes state officials from Kyrgyzstan specifically assigned to labour migration issues and a number of diaspora organisations as well as human rights NGOs founded by Kyrgyz citizens, and deals with

the issues of migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan in several regions in Russia. Migrant workers from Tajikistan have fewer national organisations they can approach for support in Russia and there are no national Uzbek organisations in Russia which migrant workers from Uzbekistan can approach for assistance, though they can apply to Russian and other human rights NGOs.

The shady activities of employers attempting to reduce expenditure on their labour force and gain additional profit by paying less to migrant workers and exploiting them is not the only obstacle to legalisation. Another obstacle is the low awareness of migrant workers regarding legislation and the procedures of legalisation, although, this situation is gradually improving. Over 40% of women respondents who work in Russia said that they are aware of legislation on labour migration of that country and more than half of those were women migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan. Experts in Kazakhstan note that women migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, who are engaged in trade in the big cities of Kazakhstan, are more aware of migration and labour legislation of the country than women from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan who are engaged in the agricultural and service sectors in Kazakhstan. The latter mainly rely on their recruiters or employers. When they have any problems with their work in Kazakhstan, they try to sort them out by bribing customs officers at the border, representatives of law enforcement bodies and other relevant agencies, who generally take a softer approach to women than to men.

## 3.2. Labour activities of Women Migrants

### 3.2.1. Spheres of employment

In the labour markets of Russia and Kazakhstan, women migrant workers occupy the least prestigious and low-paid jobs, often with unfavourable working conditions. They are mainly engaged in sectors providing different services (both public and private) and retail trade. In fact, the percentage of migrant workers employed in trade sector in Russia is less than 20%, and in the service sector it is about 5%; yet among women migrant workers these two sectors are prevailing as the top choice of employment.

*"I am employed as a cook in a cafe. I get up at 7 in the morning, work from 8 a.m till 6 p.m. I have my lunch at my workplace between 10 a.m and 2 p.m., when I have time. I practically do not*

*have weekends - I came here to work. Men do not usually work in the kitchen; there are only some porters”.*

**A woman migrant worker from Tajikistan, working in Russia**

*“I am a nurse - a caregiver for elderly people. I get up at 7 o'clock in the morning and start working at 8 a.m. I have my lunch in my employer's house. They provide me with meals. I finish at 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays are my days off. Men do not do this kind of work”.*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working in Russia**

*“I work as a yard cleaner. I earn \$160 per month. I get up at 6 or 7 a.m. My working day starts at 8 a.m. and I work 8 hours a day. I have two days off - Saturday and Sunday. Some men have more difficult jobs with the same pay”.*

**A woman migrant worker from Tajikistan, working in Russia**

Generally migrant workers are hired for jobs which are not attractive to the local population; thus they fill the gaps in the labour market. Women migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan mostly have low-skilled or unskilled jobs. 60% of the interviewed women were employed in the construction sector, 8.1 % in private households, 7.4% in trade and 6.8% in the catering sector. 38% of women-respondents from Uzbekistan found jobs in the non-manufacturing sector in Russia and 23% in Kazakhstan. Among those women migrant workers from Tajikistan who went to Russia and Kazakhstan, the majority had unskilled jobs irrespective of their education and qualifications. Approximately 18% of those worked as vendors in markets and kiosks; 17% worked as cooks and confectioners; 16% were hired as waitresses and dishwashers; 11 % worked as cleaners and launderers, and 11% were sorting and packing goods. Only 1% of the interviewed women were able to find highly skilled jobs (as managers, administrators and others) and only about 3% were hired to do jobs which require special professional skills (tailoring, shoe-making and others).

The authorities in Russia started a process of organised recruitment of foreign labour in order to fill important vacancies in the labour market. For example, two years ago a special governor's programme was introduced in Penza province of Russia with the aim of attracting migrant workers

to the medical sector, which suffers from a deficit of high-skilled specialists.

*“I am a physician in a district hospital. I work as a contractor. I get up at 5 a.m. and start working at 8 a.m. I have a contract and I work in shifts. In the morning I visit patients at their homes and in the afternoon I take appointments and have medical duties in the hospital. My lunch time is from 12.00 till 13.00. My husband and I do shopping together and I cook. I have two days off - Saturday and Sunday. I like my work very much”.*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working in Russia**

All preparation and departure logistics, recruiting, housing, provision of work permits and registration for specialists from other countries as well as members of their families, is funded from the regional budget.

### **3.2.2. Unofficial and casual employment of women migrant workers**

Pressure from taxation and administrative and bureaucratic obstacles are one of the reasons for many small and medium businesses to move to the shadow sector of the economy. Some experts estimate that 30%-40% of all small business enterprises in Russia are in this category<sup>22</sup>. The owners of such private enterprises often hire migrant workers without making a labour contract with them, without providing official labour record books, or paying any social benefits. This category is often completely comprised of migrants.

Very often it is considered that migrants and illegal migration stimulate the growth of the shadow economy and are among its major root causes: however, in reality, it is the shadow sector, with its demands for a cheap labour force that leads to illegal migration and illegal working activities in the countries of destination. Only improvement of the economic situation and the legislation in the countries of destination can bring about a reduction in illegal migration. Whereas the local population generally refuses to work as illegal employees due to the absence of social benefits, migrant workers accept any jobs and any working conditions. Although such work can't be considered as reliable, it does, however, allow flexibility in the labour market without imposing any conditions or obligations on either employees or employers.

Often, migrants from the countries of Central Asia come to Russia and Kazakhstan legally at first; it is only later that a lot of them become illegal migrant

22 <http://www.kommentator.ru/tmru/2004/ec13008.html>



workers. According to the data of the Federal migration agency of RF, almost half of legal migrants have at some time also worked illegally,<sup>23</sup> despite the new migration law which allows migrants to be more independent of their employers.

The assessment results show that in Kazakhstan the majority of women migrants work as illegal migrant workers. Only citizens of Kyrgyzstan sign labour contracts with their employers through recruiting agencies in their native towns before coming to Almaty region to work in the agricultural sector.

In the rural areas of Southern Kazakhstan region, migrant workers sign a labour contract stating only the conditions of work, but the fact of their employment is not registered, and the employers' obligations are not stated in such contracts. The respondents reported that some of those contracts recorded only the percentage of division of the future harvest: 50% to the employers and 50% to the employees. This means the employment is casual, since there is no mention of conditions of hire or obligations borne by the employer. Such employment usually takes place through intermediaries or recruiters, who are responsible for providing all the working and payment conditions, but usually only discuss them verbally with migrant workers and do not sign any contracts.

Women engaged in the service sector, domestic services and the sex industry discuss verbally with their employers due to the specific characteristics of their work. The high level of competition among migrant workers and the need to earn money urgently to support their families forces migrants to accept any kind of work. When they are hired, the most important issue is salary: even it is not guaranteed. Distrust of the law and a tradition of trusting to informal agreements rather than official documents play a significant role in the process. A lot of private employers prefer hiring illegal migrant workers, because in this case they do not have any responsibilities or obligations; they do not pay any social benefits and they can fire illegal migrant workers any time.

*"The employer discussed everything with me verbally. I have not heard from any migrant worker I know that somebody signed a labour contract. My employer does not take my rights seriously. She has only one answer: you don't like it - go home".*

**An employee in the trade sector, Almaty, Kazakhstan**

*"I haven't heard of any people who work here signing any contracts. They all agreed verbally."*

**An employee in the service sector, Almaty, Kazakhstan**

*"I work under verbal agreement. I pay rent for my working place and pay tax myself. I found this job without an intermediary, through a verbal agreement. If I had to make a contract and sign it, I would do it. I do not have a shop in the market. I can't afford to rent one, so I rent just a working space."*

**An employee in the trade sector, Shymkent, Kazakhstan**

*"We did not discuss anything with the employer, our team leader did this. We do what he tells us to do. We try to work hard. All the agreements are made verbally".*

**A member of a working team employed in agriculture, Southern Kazakhstan**

*"I work as a baby-sitter. I was hired on a verbal agreement."*

**An employee in the domestic help sector, Astana, Kazakhstan**

*"The Madam takes the passport away from every girl who works for her. I lost my passport, and then I had to pay money to get a new one."*

**A sex industry worker, Almaty, Kazakhstan**

The data presented in table 9 below shows results from the assessment of labour migration in Russia conducted by the Research Centre on Migration in 2008. According to the data, women migrant workers are more often engaged on a casual basis than men.

From the assessment data it is seen that although 40% of women respondents had a signed labour contract, only a quarter of them sign on receipt of wages. It means that signed contracts are not always properly drawn up and some employers cheat and exploit migrant workers.

According to the respondents in Tajikistan, 26.4% did not obtain legal status. The reasons for this fall into

23 An employer in Russia after hiring a labour migrant from visa-free countries of the CIS must send a notification of employing a labour migrant to the migration agency. In 2007-2008, the migration agency received such notifications only for half of the amount of given working permits.



several categories: 1) difficulties in obtaining legal status because of complexity of the procedure (53.3%); 2) a conscious decision not to seek legal status due to the short duration of stay, the desire to earn a higher salary and pessimism about the benefits of being legal (37.2%); 3) the low level of awareness of migrants (24%); 4) a lack of initiative among women (16.2%); 5) a lack of necessary documents and registration (14.4%), and 6) legal status is not required (6.6%).

The largest proportion of legal women migrant workers are engaged in education, medical services and housing and communal services. The smallest proportion are engaged in domestic help services, retailing and the entertainment sector.

The assessment results also show that fewer women with higher levels of education are engaged in the shadow sector compared to women with no education.

Migrant workers are, in fact, only partially responsible for being involved in unofficial or casual employment. Migrant workers often become victims of the unlawful activities of intermediaries and employers due to their lack of awareness about labour legislation in the country of destination. But more often, due to various reasons, employers are the ones who refuse to make an official labour contract, rather than migrants. The employer acts for economic reasons and cannot be considered the only one guilty for the creation of shadow employment; however, in acting to gain competitive advantage and side-step antimonopoly legislation, the employer contributes to the demand for cheap, casual migrant labour. Only the advancement of economic relations can significantly improve the current situation.

Despite their high levels of education, the majority of women migrant workers from Central Asia are employed in jobs which do not require qualifications in the countries of destination. The assessment data shows, that despite the fact that almost half of women who went from Uzbekistan to Russia to earn money have vocational education, only 22% of them were employed in jobs related to their quali-

cations. In Kazakhstan only 12% of 38% of women respondents with vocational education were employed in jobs related to their qualifications. Among women interviewed in Kyrgyzstan, only 13% had jobs related to their qualifications. The majority of women migrant workers reported that they were employed in jobs which did not require their qualifications at all. This fact was stated by 54% of the interviewed women migrant workers from Uzbekistan who work in Russia and by 70% of those who work in Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, 37% of women migrant workers are engaged in the agricultural sector. The majority of women are happy to get any job; the most important thing is to get paid.

The findings of the assessment show that qualifications which women gain in their home countries do not match the demands of the labour market in the countries of destination. One of the saddest facts is that women who take jobs unrelated to their qualifications begin to lose the skills they gained while studying for their profession and never fulfil their professional potential. Some might consider this a waste of their talents.

*“Our women work mainly in the textile industry. Here in Andijan and Margilan there are a lot of women with experience of working in textile factories, but they have been working with old machinery, which is no longer used in Russian factories. Our women do not have the experience of working with modern equipment; their knowledge is outdated. Two years ago selection for employment in textile factories in Ivanovo took place in Uzbekistan. The selection committee was made up of representatives from those factories. Of 50 women who got through the preliminary stage, only 4 were able to pass the final test. After that, the management of the textile complex in Ivanovo rejected the idea of employing women from Uzbekistan. The qualifications of our women do not match their demands; the businesses in Russia require up-to-date specialists”.*

**Representative of the Temporary Employment Abroad Agency, Uzbekistan**

**Table 9 Comparison of the number of men and women officially employed in Russia, in percentages**

	Men	Women
Those who signed a labour contract with the employer	64	42
Those who sign on receipt of wages	41	26
Those whose employer demanded a work permit before hiring them*	51	39

\* According to Russia legislation, from the 15 of January 2007 a migrant workers has to obtain a work permit independently and can work for any employer, who must check whether a migrant worker has such a work permit before hiring them.

### 3.2.3. Working conditions

Working conditions of women migrant workers depend on the sphere of their employment. Interviewees reported that women migrant workers usually work longer hours than local women. Only 20% of employers in Russia stated that they provide a 40-hour working week for migrant workers; 32% mentioned 50-hour working weeks and 10% stated 60-hour working weeks for the migrant workers who work for them. Migrant workers report that the reality of the situation is even worse.

*"I work in a cafe from 6.00 till 22.00, as a cook. I do not have lunch breaks. I do not have days off. My job is difficult and I don't like it."*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working in Russia**

*"I work as shop-assistant. I work 12 hours a day with no days off. I feel tired all the time. I can only cook occasionally when I have time. I don't like my job, but I don't have a choice."*

**A woman migrant worker from Tajikistan, working in Russia**

Women respondents who work in the services and trade sectors reported that their working hours depend on the schedule of the business they work for, but usually they start working at 8.00-10.00 and finish at 19.00-23.00. Women engaged in the building sector reported that they finish working after completion of a set task and often have to work through the night.

Agricultural activities depend on weather conditions and are seasonal (planting, watering, weeding, harvesting and so on) and that is why women have to work long hours, sometimes they start at 4 to 6 in the morning and work till 10 or 12 at night. The schedule of women engaged in domestic help services (nurses, baby-sitters, home cooks, cleaners) depends on their employers' routine. There is also another activity sphere with a completely unregulated schedule which engages women migrant workers – the sex industry.

According to the researchers' opinion, nobody raises the issues of labour protection of migrant workers. The employers want the work done at low expense and migrant workers attitude is "the most important thing is to do the job and get paid". Many women migrant workers who are engaged in the agricultural sector bring their children with them to the country of destination, and even young children work with them to help their parents to finish

the work on time. The desire to earn more and the fear of losing a job mean migrant workers do not think about having a rest (days off, breaks for lunch and rest, or holidays). Usually employers provide meals during the working day, so women migrant workers say, "there is nothing to complain about". Such situations suggest that migrant workers, who are forced into unfavourable working and living conditions, do not think about protection of their human and labour rights and, what is even more worrying, they do not think that they are entitled to protection of their rights. One of the reasons is often that they have endured even worse conditions in the country of their origin.

According to the research findings conducted in Tajikistan women had to work in conditions different from what they heard before leaving their home countries. It depended mostly on activity field. Women engaged in baby-sitting or household work had good conditions which they were satisfied with. Women who worked in markets, shops or factories, on the other hand, experienced bad conditions, although they got the same salary.

*"I get up at half-past six and start working at eight. I prepare the canteen for opening. Usually it opens at nine. I was the dishes, peel potatoes and do other work which needs to be done. During lunch time I collect orders and deliver food to those who ordered it. Then I wash dishes again. In the evening I clean the canteen. After seven, I go home."*

**A woman migrant worker working in the services sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

*"When we work in the field, we get up at three or four in the morning and go to bed at between ten and midnight. Usually we start working at five, but when we collect tobacco leaves, we start at four. It is a difficult job. We have breaks for lunch from twelve till one. Usually we finish working at ten, but when we sew the tobacco leaves into bundles, it usually takes about three hours, so add three hours more to the length of our working day. Our working place is safe; nothing bad can happen here, as our employers keep their eyes on things. We don't have separate hygiene rooms. We know about labour protection norms, but we have to work to earn money - sometimes even the young children help us to sew the tobacco leaves together. The job is difficult and it is often cold. We can take a day off if we want to, but usually we work seven days a week.*

*When our employer brought us to her house from the agency, she took our passports. She*

keeps them. We have registration cards, so we do not need to keep our passports, and what if we lose them? It is not safe to keep our passports in the field where we work and live. You see our living conditions - just a tent, no locks, and when all of us work in the field, anybody could come and steal our documents, so it is safer when our employer keeps them in her house. Of course, if we need our passports, the employer will give them to us, but so far we have not needed them. We trust her - it is better that she keeps our passports. Once, the police came to our tent to check our documents and we showed our registration cards, then took the police to our employer and she showed them our passports and the policemen left. Everything ended well. Three families of migrants work here. We work legally, we have all signed labour contracts. If we work hard, the tobacco will be good quality. It should be weeded properly and weeding is a hard job. You can earn good money only if you work hard. If you are lazy, you will earn only enough money for food and there will not be enough money for taking back home."

**A woman migrant worker working in the agricultural sector in Almaty province, Kazakhstan**

"I get up at five or five-thirty every day. After breakfast we take our aprons and go to a field. If the field is far, the employer takes us by lorry. We collect cotton. The employer brings our lunch to the field. We have a break for lunch from one till two, so we eat and can talk to each other. We have a good time here. We collect cotton till sunset. We do not have days off, as we came here to earn as much money as we can."

**A woman migrant worker working in the agricultural sector in the Southern Kazakhstan province**

"I usually get up early, about six o'clock in the morning, quickly get ready and run to work. I do not have time for breakfast because I need to get to the wholesale market early to buy flowers for selling. After that, we prepare the flowers: clean them, trim the stems and put the flowers into bunches. By the time we finish doing this, it's already lunch time. Usually I have my lunch in the nearest canteen. I work till eleven at night because I want to earn more money."

**A woman migrant worker working in the trade sector in Shymkent, Kazakhstan**

"I have to be at work from nine in the morning till midnight. When we come to work in the morning we clean the place, put the tables and chairs in order, put spices on the tables. Then we collect orders and deliver food, come back, deliver food, come back - this is our working day. We finish around midnight. We have a day off either once a week or once a fortnight; it depends on how many waitresses we have. So we take turns each for days off."

**A woman migrant worker working in the service sector in the Southern Kazakhstan province**

The assessment's results show that majority large proportion of women migrant workers face difficult working conditions in the countries of destination. Every third respondent worked in the open air without protection from the elements. Every fourth woman reported the absence of sanitary facilities at the place of work. Moreover, 14 % of women respondents had to do dangerous work without safety protection.

#### 3.2.4. Remuneration

According to the assessment, remuneration for men and women migrant workers differs. The proportion of low-paid women migrant workers is higher than the proportion of low-paid men; for example, 21% of the interviewed employers reported that women migrant workers hired by them get paid on average \$100-\$150 and 26% stated their employees' remuneration was \$180-\$400.

The level of remuneration of women migrant workers depends on the sphere of their employment. The highest level of payment in Russia is in the sphere of domestic help (\$400-\$500) and in the trade sector (\$300-\$700), the lowest in housing and communal services (about \$300 per month) and the agricultural sector, in which the highest remuneration is \$200. Legal women migrant workers engaged in the education and medical sectors are paid on average \$500-\$600. Every fourth employer in Russia stated that they provide meals for their women migrant workers.

In Kazakhstan, the level of women migrant workers' remuneration is a bit lower compared to Russia and is on average \$700-\$900 for women engaged in the construction sector and \$200-\$300 per month in the trade, service and domestic help sectors. Women engaged in the agricultural sector are usually paid at the end of the season. A family can earn from \$1000 up to \$3000. This kind of work depends on variations in climate conditions and may be lower; however, in the best seasons



(when yields are high), migrants' earnings may be much higher. Usually, all women are paid in cash. Their employers do not pay taxes or pension contributions for them. Sometimes private employers deduct the amount they lent their employers for medicines or food from the final payment.

*"We are paid cash. We do not sign wage receipts. At the end of the season when the tobacco is sold, the employer receives 50% and we divide the other 50% between us; however, the employer deducts money for food and medicine from our share before we receive it. The amount of the deductions is based on the records kept by the employer. I can earn from \$4 up to \$15 per day (according to the employer's records). At the end of last season my family was paid \$3000."*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the agricultural sector in Almaty province, Kazakhstan**

*"On average, I earn 30 thousand tenge per month, sometimes 35 thousand. I came to earn and save money for my wedding, so I can have everything for my wedding that I am supposed to have according Uzbek tradition."*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the service sector in Shymkent, Kazakhstan**

*"I used to work as a shuttle retailer; I was transporting goods for sale myself, but now that business is in crisis: there are too many goods for sale in the market. So I am hired by a private employer now. I sell women's clothes. I get paid 1000 tenge per day plus 300 tenge for every garment sold. On average I can earn up to 2500 tenge per day. My husband is an unskilled labourer; he can earn 1500-2000 tenge per day."*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the trade sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

*"How much I earn depends only on me. On average, I earn 4-6 thousand tenge per day. I think I earn good money. I save money and take it back home."*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the trade sector in Shymkent, Kazakhstan**

*"I rely on this job. I am a house painter. They pay me 500 tenge per 1 square metre. On average I can earn from 70 000 up to 90 000 tenge."*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the construction sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

*"My job is not difficult. I am a baby-sitter. I earn 45 000 tenge per month. I don't think my salary is high; I have to pay accommodation rent and buy some clothes. But I have managed to save some money. I buy dollars in Kazakhstan and take them back home."*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the domestic help services in Astana, Kazakhstan**

*"It used to be 1000 tenge per 1 hour. Now it is 4000 tenge. For the whole night they pay 8000-10000 tenge. This is standard. I earn up to 100,000 tenge per month."*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the sex industry in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

### 3.2.5. Access to Welfare, Education and Medical Services

Travelling to work abroad alone or accompanied by families, women migrant workers face the problems of searching for housing and arranging their new life. Relatively few migrants are helped by their employers; for instance, only 15% of the employers in Russia said that they provide social package to their migrant workers. 23% of the respondents said that their employers did provide them with free meals or food products; 8% of the respondents received housing, and 6% of the respondents use medical services at the expense of their employer (Figure 5).

**Access to Medical Services.** According to the results of the survey carried out in Russia, most women migrant workers do not visit hospitals or polyclinics; they prefer self-treatment. In over half of the cases, if they do visit a doctor, women have to pay themselves for the visit and treatment. A similar situation was observed by the researchers in Kazakhstan. According to the results of the survey in Kyrgyzstan only 6.2% of migrants and 3.2% members of their families received a full range of free medical services. Only 5.1% of those were women.

Migrants working in trade and services spheres usually cannot afford to get sick as their employer expects them to make a profit every day. In this kind of situation the employer is usually prepared to take on another employee to replace the sick person and someone can usually be found immediately. Exceptions are emergency situations, such as giving birth, serious trauma, etc. According to the female respondents, those who gave birth in Kazakhstan were provided with free medical services. After the birth, newborn children were registered and consultations with a pediatrician were free of charge, and included receiving a supply of baby food. The

situation among women migrants working in the field is somewhat different: the employer depends on labour migrants working efficiently and so has a stake in their health status. The employer, therefore, takes the initiative in arranging access to medical services as soon as a migrant worker is hired.

Women working as domestic workers usually live with the families of their employers; therefore, their access to medical services fully depends on the employers being interested in maintaining a favorable sanitary and epidemiological situation in the house.

The extent to which migrants depend on their employers in accessing medical services can be seen in the following statements:

*Once I got seriously sick. When I told my master about this and asked her to give me a couple of days off, she would not allow it. She said: "If you do not like it, leave". I had to continue working with severe flu. I did not have any other way out... there was no other job to go to.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the trade sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

*I gave birth to my child in the public unit of the maternity house. The doctor helped me for free, although we repaid their kindness later.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the trade sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

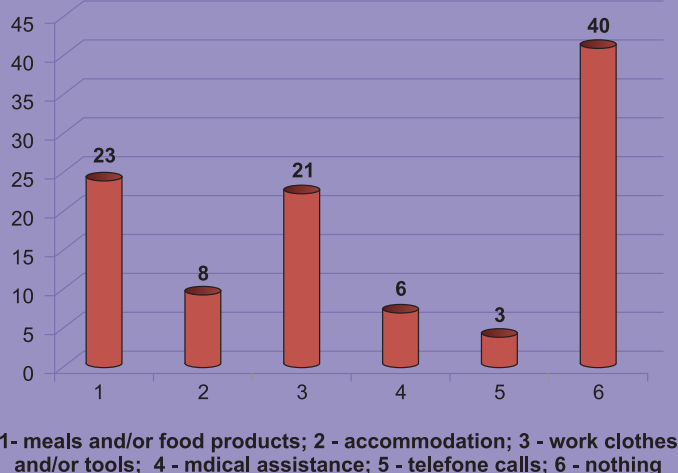
*I gave birth to two children here. I never paid for birth delivery. Today if my kids are sick, I take them to the polyclinic. The visit to the doctor is free of charge. The doctor prescribes and gives us medicine and food for free. Our district doctor understands our situation well.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in domestic services in Almaty, Kazakhstan.**

*If we get sick we go to our employer's house, as we live in the field during the summer. So we approach our employer and she gives us all the necessary medicine and pills. If we are seriously sick, she takes us to the hospital, where we get injections or other medicine. She takes care of us.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in agriculture, Almaty region, Kazakhstan.**

**Figure 5** Provision by employer in addition to wages for women working in Russia, (figures in percentages).



Experts in Russia have begun to assess the possibility of implementing a medical insurance system for ensuring the access of migrants to medical services. The system has not yet been applied in practice and many issues have not yet been fully explored. For instance, it is unclear whether such insurance should be mandatory. If the medical insurance is mandatory, there is a risk that such requirement will further complicate the procedure of obtaining legal status, which, in its turn, might result in an increase of illegal migration. If the medical insurance is voluntary, then it will only be possible to persuade migrants to purchase an insurance policy if the efficiency of such a mechanism is proved in practice.

**Housing** is one of the problematic issues, not only for women, but for all migrants, especially those traveling with families and particularly those with children. Often accommodation costs are almost half of the average monthly wage of women migrants. The majority of migrants either share the rent for a house with several people and share the house with other migrants (37% in Russia) or rent apartments and houses for one family (30%). More rarely they rent beds (15%). In some cases the employer provides or pays for accommodation for their workers (dormitories, trailers, apartments, etc.) or migrants live in the same place where they work (10% - mainly in the services, housing and communal services spheres).

The type of accommodation migrants occupy depends on the regional market. For instance, in Moscow region, due to high prices for housing and high rent costs, the number of migrants who rent separate accommodation is lower than in



other regions and renting of beds in dormitories for migrants and living at the working place are more widespread practices. Auxiliary premises and the cellars of residential houses, for instance, are altered for accommodating migrants working in communal and housing services, which is in the majority cases is illegal.

Almost 60% of women from Central Asian countries working in Russia (primarily from Tajikistan) say that living conditions in Russia are better than in their home countries. This is mainly explained by the fact that at home they could use electricity for only a certain period of time a day. Sometimes they had no electricity for several days. There also may have been no piped water supply or sewage system.

A similar situation is found in Kazakhstan. In rural areas, women working in the fields live together with their families in the houses provided by the employers for free. As a rule, conditions in such houses (with electricity, water, a water heater or a sauna, a sewage system, etc.) provide for the migrants' needs. In urban areas, the migrants who work in the trade and services spheres (including construction services) rent equipped houses (rental fees vary from 150 US dollars per room up to 700 US dollars for a two-bedroom apartment). Those migrants who are engaged in domestic services live with the family of the employer in their house. There are also women who have to rent houses without any facilities, for which they pay about 40 US dollars per person, or live at their work place.

*We live in a trailer that was provided by our employer for free. There are two rooms in the trailer. Six of us are living in one room and we cook in the second room. There is electricity in the trailer, the water is outside, we heat water on the stove, and there is no sewage system. We take showers in the village bath-house.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in agriculture in Almaty region, Kazakhstan.**

*We live in a private house. We were given three rooms: one for the men and another for the women. It is warm in the house - we have gas, water, electricity and a TV set. We do not pay for the utilities. There are 11 women and 9 men living in the house.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in agriculture in Southern Kazakhstan region**

*I live in well-equipped residential building. We rent a two-bedroom apartment for 80 000. We use one room and another family lives in the second room. My daughter with her husband also rent an apartment. We have hot and cold water, electricity and sewerage. We also have a mobile phone. We call home using international phone cards.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the trade sector in Astana, Kazakhstan.**

*I live with the other girls in a hut on a private site. There are no utilities in the hut. It is just four walls and a stove. All other conveniences are outside. We pay 5000 tenge per person. We do have a TV set in the hut.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the services sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan.**

**Food.** The survey revealed that women migrants try to save money on food; for instance, workers in the trade sector and in housing and communal services do not often eat meat, fish or fruit. They mainly eat vegetables, pasta, bread, eggs and, rarely, milk products.

*I eat all the kinds of food necessary for health, but the cheapest ones.*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working as a street cleaner in Russia**

*I eat macaroni, vegetables and bread. I do not eat meat.*

**A woman migrant worker from Tajikistan, working in the agricultural sphere in Russia**

*We eat mainly light food. Pasta is our favorite. You can just boil it and that's it. It has not affected our figures yet! We try to buy milk products as often we can. We almost never eat meat, though sometimes we have chicken legs. Sometimes we also buy fruits and vegetables.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the services sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

*I rarely have lunch. I eat different pasta meals - mainly in the evening. I often buy milk products but rarely fruit and vegetables.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in the services sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

The food eaten by women engaged in other areas of employment is much better. Those who are working in agriculture and provide domestic services regularly eat poultry, fish, vegetables, fruit and milk products.

*I cook by myself. I eat meat, tomatoes, apples, milk, potatoes and bread. We eat meat every day, fish more rarely. We eat fruit and vegetables every day, including tomatoes, apples and grapes, and we drink milk and kefir. We buy milk from our employer: she has a cow and the milk is quite good. In Kazakhstan we eat much better than at home; here our diet is more varied because we have a job.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in agriculture in Almaty region, Kazakhstan.**

*We eat well - meat, vegetables, and fruit. If we want something else, we tell our foreman and he buys it for us. He never takes money for that. Our employer says that if we eat well, we will work better.*

**A woman migrant worker, working in agriculture in Southern Kazakhstan region**

In addition to the above, another important issue for women migrants is having the possibility to maintain contacts with close relatives and friends who stayed at home. Given current levels of communication technology, this is not generally an issue for migrant workers. Almost all migrants have access to mobile communication (via their personal or “collective” mobile phones) or they call home using their employer’s phone and then, upon completion of the agricultural work, the cost of phone calls is deducted from their wages. Virtually all migrants have access to mass media through radio or TV. Sources of paper-based information (such as newspapers, books, etc.) are not very popular among migrants due to the language barrier and their workload.

Despite the fact that many migrants have better living conditions in the country of destination than in their native countries, they cannot avoid some of the difficulties of migrant life. These are aggravated by many circumstances, including hostile migration policies in countries of destination, difficulties in obtaining legal status, ill treatment by the local population, lack of rights protection, etc.

*The visible satisfaction with living conditions in Kazakhstan is quite justifiable as women migrants have previously been living in misery in their home countries: the very situation that*

*pushed them to search for work in another country; however, the difficulties of the migrant’s life and the need to earn money in a foreign country legitimately impinge on this satisfaction. On top of this, women are often engaged in labour local habitants would not consider, or is in high demand; therefore when working in such areas of employment women migrants generally do not impact on the indicators of the national labour market.*

**Country Report, Kazakhstan**

Once the migrant solves the problems in obtaining legal status and finding accommodation and employment, social needs become more urgent. Over 15% of the respondents in Russia cite difficulties in accessing social services as one of the main problems faced by migrants. The services sought are mainly medical services, education and child-care. These are especially important in cases when a woman migrates with her family and children. In these cases the family accompanies them for a long period of time and they need access to medical services for children and adults, kindergartens or schools, child development organizations, etc.

Women migrant workers who take their children of various ages to the country of destination have to seek unofficial routes to enrolling their children in educational institutions (kindergartens, schools and colleges). Usually they succeed but they have to pay bribes to do it. Another problem is caused by the language barrier as their children often do not understand the language of instruction (Russian or Kazakh).

Labour migration of a woman or a family seriously hinders the reproductive patterns of the family, resulting in an increase in postponement in child bearing and refusal to bear children. Only a few families decide to have a child in the country of destination; however, some do and as a rule, their life becomes even more difficult due to the lack of regulation concerning access to medical services and kindergartens.

Even if there is access to services per se (for instance, Russian schools accept the children of migrants), such services typically depend on migrants being registered at a specific address. Migrants who fail to register (for instance, when the landlord does not want to register the tenants) are deprived of access to social services. A high proportion of migrants, therefore, have to use paid medical and education services, which are quite expensive as they are designed for middle-class and richer groups among the population of the country of destination.

### 3.2.6. Issues of Security of Women Migrant Workers

The UNIFEM survey, like many other surveys, demonstrates that migrants' rights are widely violated. In the survey in Russia, 15 women out of 100 respondents claimed that they had been subject to forced labour: they had been forced to work without payment, their documents had been taken away, and they had been subject to blackmail, threats and violence.

Although migrants' rights are often violated, open conflicts between the migrants and the employers are rare. According to the survey, such problems have mostly been observed among workers engaged in the trade and services areas; however, in general the range of economic opportunities for migrant workers is very limited, therefore they do not demand their rights, they depend on their employer and they are not interested in any interruption to their work, all of which usually lead to situations where any conflicts are more hidden in nature. The situation is aggravated by the fact that the majority of respondents (70%) do not know where they can appeal for protection of their rights.

The three major problems encountered by the migrants during the initial period of their stay in the country of destination were reported to be frequent document checks by the police, extortion of bribes by representatives of the law enforcement bodies and an unfriendly attitude from the local population toward the migrants. 35% of the respondents during their work in Russia faced problems with law enforcement bodies (police and immigration service). Female workers engaged in trade, housing and communal services and agriculture had such conflicts most often. Women migrant workers have described the difficulties they faced as follows:

*"Checks, demands to pay a bribe, threats of deportation from Russia."*

**A woman migrant worker from Tajikistan, working in the trade sector in Russia**

*"Police checks, no temporary residence registration."*

**A woman migrant worker from Tajikistan, working in the agricultural sector**

*"Bad treatment from my employer."*

**A woman migrant worker from Tajikistan, working in the trade sector**

*"I was cheated: they never paid for my work."*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working as a cook**

As a rule, women migrant workers feel secure when going for work to Russia or Kazakhstan, yet 10% of them still feel at risk and have the feeling of danger. Many migrants say that it is not secure in their home countries either. Although the survey noted cases of violation of women migrants rights, often the women involved have no information about the existence of organizations engaged in the protection of their rights. During the pre-departure interview they are only told that they can turn to their respective embassy or countrymen.

The survey conducted in Tajikistan showed that it is quite difficult to adequately assess the number of women who suffered from violence. This can be explained, on one hand, by the fact that respondents were not always truthful about the types of violence they suffered, and, on the other, by the fact that many types of violence are not actually perceived by the women as constituting violence. Additionally, according to the analysis of the respondents' answers, women most often suffer from psychological violence, followed by economic and then physical cases of violence. The survey shows that about 30% of the respondents were subject to various forms of psychological violence at work; 10% experienced economic violence and 21% were subject to physical violence. The fact that about 19% of the respondents could not freely quit their jobs if they wished to do is evidence, albeit indirect, that women migrant workers suffer from various forms of violence at work.

Working at their jobs in Russia and Kazakhstan, which are in most cases illegal, women migrant workers regularly encounter the representatives of law enforcement bodies and the migration police and migrants are not a priority for other executive bodies responsible for controlling the observance of the labour and other rights of workers.

*I know that the documents should be arranged during 5 days. I am obliged to get temporary residence registration; however, it says in the migration form that I have no right to work. If one wants to arrange all the documents without any problems, you have to pay 5000 to 10000 tenge to intermediaries. Of course, you can officially pay 800 tenge to the cashier in the office, but then it is such a hassle. There are lots of barriers. In the end, you have to give a bribe.*

*The police come to do an inspection on average twice a month. They are usually dressed in*



civilian clothes; they take you aside; they are very rude and exert psychological pressure, shouting and threatening you even if you have all the documents. Those who haven't are pressured. In short, the police look for any pretext to extort money. Many migrants do not speak Russian, thus cannot answer them and the police officers take advantage of this. They never sympathize with us when we say that we are giving them the last money we have, that our mothers are sick and our families are starving. They only say that they can arrest us for one month and then deport us from the country for good and that we should think of something which will make them let us go.

I understand that everyone wants to live a good life. We also want it. Yet it turns out that we have no right to such a life. We are working and working hard and then have to give away everything we have earned in half an hour. We have tried to turn to the state administration but they do not want to help; they usually take the same position as the police officers. Our employer also does not want to hear about these problems.

We can cross the border if our documents are valid. Once my documents had expired and I was detained at the Kazakh customs point. I was sitting in the bus together with the customs officers, then one of the officers told me that I could either pay 10000 tenge to them or 20000 tenge officially. It was of course more convenient for me to pay the smaller amount to them immediately, because if I had gone out of the bus to check whether the official fine was really 20000 tenge, they would never have let me back into the bus. This is the scheme of voluntary bribes that we have.

The police do not always treat us good. Once, my friend and I were trying to send money home at the bus station. People wearing civilian clothes approached us, showed us their documents and then demanded that we present our documents. Then they started asking us various questions such as what we were doing at the bus station, what we came for, etc. Then they told us that we had to pay a fine of 12000 tenge otherwise they would take us to the detention center, where they would beat us up.

**A woman migrant worker, working in domestic service in Almaty, Kazakhstan.**

I am working here illegally. Of course documents are usually checked; however, I am not registered here. I have only my Kyrgyz passport but I have not had any problems so far. After work, I immediately return home and I do not usually hang around in the city. When I go home with money I do not have any problems at the border

as the amount I am taking is not large. I've had no problems with the migration police either. My employer has never hired anyone officially. All the people working for her are hired the same way as I was, through friends.

**A woman migrant worker, working in domestic service in Shymkent, Kazakhstan.**

In both Russia and Kazakhstan, the process of migrants obtaining legal status often involves corruption (see the box below). According to the respondents, a "voluntary scheme of bribing" has been adopted in relations between migrants and representatives of law enforcement bodies. Under such conditions men suffer more than women, except for women engaged in the sex industry. Men are more often taken to the detention center, justifiably or not; they are more often subject to physical violence. Such situations are more characteristic of urban areas, i.e. cities such as Almaty, Astana and Shymkent. These cities have been identified as the main points of occurrence during the survey. In rural areas, women migrant workers engaged in agricultural work jointly with their families are wards of their employers (the owners of agricultural lands), therefore, all issues related to the stay of such migrants in Kazakhstan are dealt with by them.

The survey conducted in Kyrgyzstan showed that 35.5% of the total number of respondents had had to pay fines during their last visit to Russia or Kazakhstan, whereas 64.5% of respondents had avoided such sanctions. Only 4.2% always pay the fines "officially", 1.8% pay fines "often officially" and 12.7% of the respondents pay fines always "non-officially". The remaining respondents did not answer this question, or had difficulties in answering.

#### **Corruption in the field of migration**

"Only a few people in Kazakhstan are aware of the Law on Migration. I know that I have to register within five business days, and get temporary residence registration. I also know that it is desirable to avoid delays to avoid problems with the police. The police needs only a reason: as we say "if you give them your finger, they will take your hand". The police check all migrants all the time, with cause and without it. When I first arrived I decided that I would follow the law, i.e. I would register and get my migration paper. But I failed to do that and was delayed by one day, but it was not my fault. However no one listened to me. They said "You either solve the problem or we will take

you away". Then I ended up in the detention center till my relatives came to get me out. I still had to pay a bribe to prevent postponement of the hearing for the next day. In the end I was the one who was blamed. I felt really bad. I felt like a criminal. I never approached the Consular Service for help because I did not think they would be able to change the situation. I tried to talk to the senior person in the detention center, but his behavior was rude and insulting. It was useless - a waste of time and nerves. I had to cope with this by myself, silently. I also had to pay 5000 tenge. They say I was lucky to pay only this amount of money. Usually whoever ends up there has to pay 20 000 tenge. So now I give bribes when arranging the documents, as it is cheaper. To speed the receipt of documents I pay from 3000 to 5000 tenge, it depends on the situation. Sometimes even if all the documents are fine, they will still find something to pick a hole in. They usually demand a specific amount, somewhere between 500 to 5000 tenge".

**A woman migrant worker, working in service sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

We are usually inspected. Representatives of sanitary-epidemiological stations usually inspect us. Our canteen is a good feeding trough for them. But our employer usually talks to them. Thank God, I never deal with it. I only go for a medical check-up once in 6 months to get a sanitary book. I usually pay 3000 tenge to receive it. Whenever I cross the border, I am usually fully checked. It is good when the documents are in order. If they have expired, one has to pay money. I do not know about such payments when crossing the Kazakh border as I have never paid; however, whenever I leave Uzbekistan, in any case I have to pay 1000 tenge as they have their own system.

**A woman migrant worker, working in service sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

I do not know the law perfectly, but I do know that I have to get registered and receive temporary residence registration. We usually violate the law ourselves. It is allowed to stay here for three months, whereas we stay here for one year. Of course, we have to pay money and make deals. We have learned how to do that. It is easier to cross the border when you are accompanied by children -, then the border and customs officers do not pick on you. It is not beneficial for us to observe the rules. Travel expenses have increased; therefore, it is easier to pay to the customs officer. I have paid different amounts

of money, but the maximum I paid was 5000 tenge. My husband used to work in Russia. The situation is more difficult there. We are not considered to be people there. In Kazakhstan people are more tolerant and well-disposed. Many different nations are living here and all of them live together friendly and peacefully. The Kazakh land and Kazakhstani people have big and kind hearts.

**A woman migrant worker, working in domestic sector in Almaty, Kazakhstan**

I do know the requirements of the migration laws. Upon our arrival we registered for one month and then renewed the registration for a term of three months. Although we have registered we are still checked every day by various officials. The sanitary and epidemiological inspection takes place, whereas the fire inspection does not. The district police officer checks us several times a day, and some other policemen also check us. They do not let us live in peace. We pay to each of them a minimum of 3000 tenge. They say that we should not work. My husband is not working as a salesperson - he only helps me. I sell the goods because it is more difficult for men to engage in such type of activity: they are often taken away to the detention centers, fined and deported. When we hear that documents are being checked in the market, usually all Kyrgyz males are hiding. The police do not arrest women, they only impose fines on us, that is why it is more difficult for men to work in the markets. I do not know where to go if my rights are violated. I do not think I would file a complaint with the police as nobody would listen to us. We do not need more problems. I have never turned for help to our embassy.

**A woman migrant worker, working in the trade sector in Astana, Kazakhstan**

One of the negative components of migration in CIS countries is its criminalization, which includes, inter alia, trafficking of women. The phenomenon of criminalization is a result of many factors, including uneven development in the labour market at national, regional and international level and inconsistency in the regulation of migration processes and the processes of obtaining legal status for migrants in countries of destination. Moreover not only people with secondary and vocational education, but also those with higher education have become victims of criminal groups.

Criminalization can take place at virtually all stages of the migration process; however, it often



manifests at the initial stages in the countries of origin, when the criminal elements exploit three factors that make women vulnerable to deception and illegal actions. First, is an insufficient information supply, caused by a lack of and distortion of information for women, especially for those who have decided to migrate for the first time. Not only do many women migrant workers lack information; they also do not know where they can obtain it, check it or verify it. Second, is a lack of social capital (personal connections and professional communication skills). Women who have insufficient social and professional connections have to rely on strangers for help and believe their stories about how easy it is to find lucrative, highly paid work. Third, criminal elements take advantage of the fact that women migrants often do not have sufficient financial capital. Their savings and current wages in many cases do not fully cover their travel expenses, costs of arranging documents, accommodation during the search for work or for the job search itself. Such women fall into the trap of taking credit for their migration with exorbitant interest rates and other forms of “assistance”.

Often women migrant workers become victims of criminal organisations. Without legal permits and documents, they become vulnerable to the influence of those organisations. The majority of migrant workers do not know of any official organisations which they can safely approach for protection of their rights. Also, due to a lack of awareness of the laws of the country of destination, there are wide spread cases of violation of the rights of women migrant workers by the representatives of law enforcement agencies, which includes corruption and money extortion. 12% of women respondents from Tajikistan reported being victims of different crimes, such as theft, robbery, hooliganism, extortion and blackmail. Not many of these cases are even registered or investigated by the police and even fewer are taken to court.

One of the most dangerous aspects of the criminalization of migration is human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation of women in dangerous or overtly criminal sectors such as sexual exploitation, forced work with no payment or work in conditions harmful to health.

### **3.2.7. Integration of Women Migrant Workers and Attitudes of Society**

The temporary nature of labour migration exacerbates the problem of adaptation and integration of migrants. This problem is especially acute in Russia because (as was discussed earlier) the cultural distance between the incoming migrants and the

local population is continuously increasing. Many migrants, especially those oriented toward returning to their home countries for permanent residence after migration, communicate mostly with their countrymen during their stay in Russia and speak predominantly their own language; therefore, a significant proportion of migrants are poorly integrated into Russian society. A high level of xenophobia among the native population adds to the problems caused by poor knowledge of the Russian language as reasons for poor integration. The survey conducted in Russia showed that problems with integration are especially acute among the migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The attitude of the local population is an important factor of social stability in the receiving society. All public opinion polls, especially in Russia, show high levels of xenophobia and anti-migration sentiment. The majority of Russian experts in our survey gave affirmative answers to the question of whether there have been social conflicts related to the presence of labour migrants. Even if many migrants live and work in isolation, they can still be affected by a hostile attitude from the local population; the fact that migrants have practically no avenue of appeal within the society if their rights are violated is in itself an expression of hostile attitude. A hostile attitude from local society, therefore, makes migrants even more vulnerable. This has particular impact at the local level, i.e. in neighboring and district communities. About 30% of the migrants surveyed in Russia mentioned that they had had conflicts with the local population.

Hostile and disrespectful attitudes from the local population is a serious problem for migrants. Anti-migrant sentiments can be stirred up by the media, as during the economic crisis of 2008 - 2009, and there is very little information presenting the real role of migrants in the economy and life of the society. Social tolerance is required at all levels, but primarily at the level of local communities. At present, migrants rarely take part in social life, even though they make a significant contribution to local people's lifestyle and standard of living: they clean yards and work in the shops, in the housing and communal services, in restaurants, etc. Activities aimed at combating xenophobia at the grassroots level and measures on inclusion of migrants into the life of local communities are not well developed in the hosting countries of the region; however, developed countries have rich experience in such work, which could be applied in Russia and Kazakhstan.

Many migrants who do not speak the language of the hosting country well would like to attend

Russian language courses. As a rule, such migrants are poorly integrated into the hosting society; they are limited in their choice of work and prefer working together with their countrymen. 12% of migrant workers noted that while living in Russia, they mainly speak their own language. And the percentage of such migrants is growing. 10 - 15% of women migrant workers working in Russia complain that they lack the necessary Russian language skills for living in Russia and communicating with their employers. Over a third of women said that they need Russian language to complete official documents and about half of these would like to attend Russian language courses. Women migrant workers who bring their children with them to Russia usually also want their children to get a better command of Russian language. Unfortunately, there are not many opportunities for migrant workers and members of their families to study Russian language in the country of destination.

Although less than women in Russia, women migrant workers in Kazakhstan also experience problems with integration. Labour migration from

the surveyed countries to Kazakhstan has become a usual occurrence for the local population. Their calm attitude towards migrants coming for work reflects this. Moreover, there are no obvious reasons for discord (religion, language, political opinions, etc.). In other words, the attitude of both parties depends on the degree of interest and ability to communicate with each other: the parties can communicate both with each other and within their own circles. Despite the fact that the issue of discrimination (by nationality or gender) does not really exist in Kazakhstan, it is the opinion of researchers that some elements of this phenomenon could yet occur. Taking into account the current decline in the economic development of the country, it might be assumed that migrants could become the objects of a hostile attitude from the local population due to a decrease in the general demand for workforce in the national labour market. Negative stereotypes of each other that have been formed over a long period of being close neighbors (Kazakhstan with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) and constant competition in the local employment markets can also affect the situation.

## Chapter 4. The impact of migration on the families of migrant workers

Despite all difficulties in obtaining legal status and violation of the rights of the majority of migrants, labour migration is still efficient and brings significant benefits; therefore, the strategy of migration is widespread in Central Asian countries. It is typically long-term and covers a significant period of the life of the families and individuals. The majority of migrants follow the pattern of cyclic migration (they travel for work every year) or long-term migration (they stay in the hosting country for a long period of time). Families place their hopes for a decent life in either the home country or in the hosting country.

### 4.1 The impact of female labour migration on the families left behind

The labor migration of women has a significant impact not only on themselves, but also on all other members of their families: their relatives and (for married persons) their children and spouses. This issue has not been studied in detail yet; however, the social consequences of women's migration will have an increasing effect on their families.

One of the major consequences of women's labour migration is the breakdown of the social integrity of a family and the traditional system of family relations, including traditional the composition of the family. People, neighborhood communities (*makhalyas*) and families face the situation of a family with one parent for the first time when either parents or a mother are absent for a long period of time.

A major direct consequence of this is the changing of the functional system, role and mechanism of education for children. In many families the educational and instructional function of a mother remains unfilled, bringing many consequences. In this situation there is a need to develop mechanisms that would help women and their families remain in the country of origin in order to avoid the emerging problems.

Analysis of survey data from the various countries shows that the absence of one or both parents directly affects children. Despite the improvements in their material well-being, such children receive less attention from their parents. There may also be a lack of proper medical care and attention to children in families with single parent.

Women migrant workers from Tajikistan, when asked about the negative consequences of migration, placed the issue of education of their children in first place. 22% of the respondents said that they lack time for the education of their children.

Considering the context of the countries of origin in Central Asia and their existing cultural traditions, in the absence of women (spouses or daughters) males face increased social pressure and even stigma. Husbands can be under serious social, psychological and cultural pressure and often respond to such a situation by divorcing their spouses or creating new families. Even the participation of members of the family in social and political processes changes in such families. This happens because, being afraid of social stigma, the members of such families often try to make themselves less noticeable in their everyday life.

Interruption of traditional reproductive processes, when women have to postpone giving birth to children until later stages or refuse to have children altogether have also been recorded among other problems.

### 4.2. Remittances - helping families left behind

Migrants try to make savings on anything which allows them to save money. They prefer to save in US dollars. As Kazakh researchers note, a migrant may save from 100 to 500 US dollars, depending on the average wage of the woman and her family. The migrants try to send the saved money as remittances, take it home with them upon completion

of their work (usually agricultural work) or send it with close relatives. The role of banks in Russia and Kazakhstan differs in each country. In Russia, a significant proportion of migrants' savings is sent home via electronic transfer; whereas, in Kazakhstan most of the money is taken "in the pocket", and the use of banks for sending money is rare.

According to the women respondents, the saved money serves various purposes such as accommodation in the home country until the next migration for work, purchase of clothes for the women and the members of their families, education of children, the repair and construction of houses or apartments, assistance for close relatives, organizing various festivities, etc.. One unchanging purpose is the general increase of material well-being of a woman or a family in its broadest meaning.

The majority of migrants support the families they have left behind through remittances. According to the survey in Russia, over 60% of women migrant workers from Central Asia send remittances home. The rest are mostly those who stay in Russia with their families, are staying there for a longer period time and have perhaps received the status of resident (Table 10).

The majority of workers in Russia try to transfer money home electronically. Leaders in the field of remittances from Russia to Central Asian countries are *Contact and Western Union*, but systems such as *Anelik*, *Money Gram*, *Bistraya Pochta (Fast Post)* and others are also used. Depending on the level of income, the proportion of a woman's wage that is sent home is between 10% to 50%. According to the Center for Migration Studies, women migrant workers (from all CIS countries) transfer on average 215 US dollars per month, whereas men migrant workers send 260 US dollars per month.

Many respondents reported that they do not send money through banks, but rather take the cash themselves, whenever they visit their homeland or send money with their relatives, friends and acquaintances.

Surveys have repeatedly showed that the remittances of migrants play an important role in the development of origin countries, including those of Central Asia.<sup>24</sup> However, the efficiency of such transfers of wealth at micro-level (household level) depends on how they are used. According to earlier surveys, which reflect the results of the

migrants' surveys conducted under the UNIFEM project, the majority of earnings is spent for increasing the level of daily personal consumption, i.e. food, clothes, household goods etc.

Apart from a chance of purchase goods which were not affordable earlier, the researchers also note that savings allow the possibility of improving housing conditions through making repairs or even building a new house. Uzbek researchers, in particular, note that spending for the improvement of housing conditions is important for Uzbek families, as locally such expenses are perceived not only as material costs but also as investments in increasing of the social status of a family and its position in the community.

If a woman is a bread-winner for the family, that position increases her personal status both within the family and in her immediate surroundings. Labour migration as an active model of economic behavior for women leads to a decrease in the traditional division of gender roles in societies and stimulates the move to more egalitarian behavior models and patterns.

### 4.3. The impact on migrants' families in the country of destination

Considering the fact that up to 56% (figure 2) of women migrant workers stay in the country of destination together with their families (husband and/or children), it is important to consider the issue of migrants' families in the countries of destination. This is not a topic of concern of any government or non-government organisations at all. There is no legislation regarding this issue, no NGO activities and there has been no research conducted to study this issue. It is a hidden topic. Usually families of migrant workers are not visible socially in the countries of destination. Due to the absence of legislation regarding legalization of

	Men	Women
Yes, regularly	52	37
Sometimes	26	26
No	22	37

24 Migration and Remittances. Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Ali Mansoor and Bryce Quillin (eds). The World Bank. Europe and Central Asia Region, 2006



the members of the family of a migrant worker and existence of a lot of administrative barriers, members of the family of migrant workers often do not have legal status and try to hide the fact of their staying in the country of destination.

As a rule, the hosting society does not approve of family migration, which is especially characteristic of Russia. For instance, typical statements heard in Moscow concerning migrants are “It would be ok if he came here by himself, but it is not ok when he brings the family”, or “Let one migrant come and the whole kishlak [village] will come”. Reasons for these views are complex. Perhaps local citizens perceive migration as a more aggressive invasion of their territory. Perhaps migrants who are coming with their families often speak their own language among themselves and thus irritate the local population. Perhaps adults who have got used to living in a mono-cultural society feel the presence of foreign culture as a threat to their children. In any case, tolerance programs, including programs for school students and local society, should take into account the issue of migration of families with children.

The following excerpts show that migrants who arrived with their families experience much more material and everyday difficulties than those who left their families at home.

*“I have come to Russia with my son; he goes to school but we have no place for him to do his homework. We pay for all our medical services. We do not send any money home”.*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working in Russia**

*“My husband and I are working. Our children are back home; they do not speak Russian. Every month I send 50 US dollars home with my husband”.*

**A woman migrant worker from Uzbekistan, working in Russia**

*“My husband is working as a mason on a construction site; my children are graduating from the secondary school. We do not have enough money; therefore, we never transfer money home.”*

**A woman migrant worker from Kyrgyzstan, working in Russia**

As a rule, life in the hosting country with the family is more difficult than living alone; therefore, the psychological problems experienced by a split family are in this case replaced by material problems.

According to the results of the survey, a somewhat different situation is observed in Kazakhstan. Migrants do not face so many problems related to accompanying family in the country of destination. On the contrary, the respondents pointed out the benefits of family migration. According to the respondents, these relate to agricultural work. It is better if women arrive with their families because this type of work involves hard physical activity. Women coming with their husbands or close relatives for work on the cotton and tobacco fields may do the same work they do at home, i.e. taking care of their family (cooking, cleaning of temporary housing, and etc.). According to the respondents, the employers prefer hiring couples due to the existing stereotype in the society that married people act more responsibly than single people. Another factor is the security that men ensure for women - despite the fact that they encounter more problems with the authorities than women, starting from when they cross the border.

#### 4.4. Challenges and opportunities of women migrant workers at home

The social consequences of migration, especially the position and status of women migrant workers, cannot be measured using purely economic indicators. There are no doubts that a significant part of the consequences of short-term (less than one year) and long-term (over one year) migration comprises a myriad of indicators, including family relations, such as relations with children and a spouse, the dynamics of relations with neighbors and acquaintances, health and social status.

*“Migrants are people who do not like to work but rather look for easy money. We have enough workplaces and the jobs are not underpaid at all. If one is smart, there are lots of possibilities to work and we have all the conditions for this. If you want land, you can have it; if you want a loan, you can have it. Everything depends on the person them self and their desires. One should not look for easy ways of receiving money; one should work on one’s own land”.*

**Government official, Uzbekistan**

*“It is bad if a child grows up without a mother, they have a bad upbringing. Today we are seeing more divorces and it is becoming a usual phenomenon”.*

**Chairman of community group. Uzbekistan**

*“That is already the second woman from our kishlak [village], who has left for Russia in search for work. The first woman had a bad reputation. Nobody thinks well of these women, especially because they are divorced. Her mother says that the neighbors envy her, but nobody will tell the mother what they really think about her daughter. I know what people say about her, especially the neighbors. Many people think that it is shame for the family. But, her parents do not care. I personally have nothing against her. Before she went, she worked at the mardikor-bazaar: her life was always hard. Her family was always poor. Only now they see money. When I visited her mother she showed me her new clothes. I cannot afford such expensive things as they would cost almost my monthly wage. Her mother also said that she bought a set of gold earrings and rings for her daughter. I can imagine what will happen to her friends when she wears this jewelry. They will die of envy; perhaps then everybody will want to leave for Russia”.*

**Employee of Makhallya Committee.  
Uzbekistan**

In the present survey, the social consequences of migration have been split into two groups: positive and negative. Among the interviewed women from Uzbekistan, the majority (76% working in Russia and 59% working in Kazakhstan) stated that the material well-being of their families has improved. The largest proportion of respondents said they spent their money on consumer goods such as clothes and personal goods (39% working in Russia and 31% working in Kazakhstan). A large number of families improved their housing conditions (29% and 11%, respectively). However, a concern remains that a very low percentage of women cited gaining good business and professional experience among the positive factors (9% working in Russia and only 5% working in Kazakhstan). Only a small number of women saved money and managed to start their own business (3% of those who migrated from Uzbekistan to Russia and 5% of those who migrated from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan). A small percentage of women focused on giving their children education (10% and 6%, accordingly).

The survey in Uzbekistan showed that, despite significant increases in the material well-being of families of women migrants, the employment status of majority large proportion of respondents decreased. The issue concerns not only the increase of the number of unemployed among those who migrated to Russia (from 24% to 49%) due to the fact that some women are

planning to repeat their migration and thus see no sense in taking temporary employment in their home country. As a rule, women do not return to their previous place of work (the proportion of contracted workers in the state sector has decreased from 31% down to 9%; in the private sector from 14% down to 9%). The proportion of those employed in non-official workplaces remains unchanged (12% in unregistered businesses; 10% on dekhan farms; 4% engaged in temporary and one-off employment). Women migrating to Kazakhstan have less opportunity to take non-working breaks at home between labour contracts, as the money they earn while working as migrant workers does not allow them to take time off. 35% of women who regularly work in Kazakhstan work at home in Uzbekistan between contracts. The number of contracted workers is decreasing (from 21% to 11% in state organizations and from 10% to 8% in the private sector) as well as the number of those engaged in dekhan farms (from 17% to 10%); however, the number of unregistered businesspeople and temporary workers is raising (from 9% to 12% and from 15% to 20% accordingly).

The situation is similar among the interviewed women migrant workers in Tajikistan go to Russia and Kazakhstan in search of work. 76% of respondents state that improvement of material well-being is one of the positive results of labour migration; 38% improved their housing conditions. In Kyrgyzstan, the figures are 70% and 37% accordingly. A small percentage of women from Tajikistan spent earnings for improvement of their human and social capacity. Only 11% mentioned the fact that labour migration allowed them to gain business or professional experience; 5% saved money and managed to start up a business and 12% managed to give education to their children. The proportions for migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan are 16%, 3% and 13% respectively.

Thus, the effect of labour migration on strengthening of the social and human capital is not yet as high as could be hoped for. Women migrant workers spend the money they earn mainly for buying every day goods: food, clothes, and so on. But, although the majority of migrants see labour migration chiefly as a means of earning money to solve their every day housing and family problems, there is some evidence of new patterns of investing money with a view to the provision of a stable future for their families. The most common investment is spending money for improvement of living conditions and the social status of migrant workers and their families. The researchers from Uzbekistan note that such kind

of investment is important for Uzbek families because in local communities, spending on household improvements is not seen as wasting money, but is considered a means of increasing the social status of a family.

8% of women respondents from Uzbekistan (most of whom worked in Russia) invested the money they earned in the education of their children. Women migrant workers with higher education and good command of Russian language who worked in Russia see their migration also as a means of obtaining business and professional skills. Some

of them succeeded in using such skills back at home: 4% of the respondents managed to save money and invest it in establishing a business in Uzbekistan.

In general, it can be stated that specific measures aimed at stimulating savings and investment of funds earned by the migrants are required. Taking into account that as a rule these funds are not large, migrants need cheap and simple funding schemes to help them make savings for future investments in health, education, business, etc.

## Recommendations on improving the status of women migrant workers

The research conducted as part of the women migrant workers' needs assessment in Central Asia shows the acute and growing impact of migration processes on social, economical and demographic development in the countries of origin and destination. In this regard, there is an urgent need for improvement of the existing mechanisms for intergovernmental and inter-agency collaboration of state institutions and other agencies dealing with labour migration.

In this regard, UNIFEM has proposed the notion of establishing a working group of consultants under the supervision of EurAsEC to ensure coordination of relevant state bodies and international and non-governmental organizations in the area of labour migration. It could consist of representatives of legislative and executive branches, international and non-governmental organizations, leading scientists and independent experts from countries of the Eurasian region. In addition, the working group would serve as a tool to foster better coordination of relevant international and non-governmental programmes and projects as well as coordinate various activities in this field.

It is expected that the working group of consultants, established with the aim of developing collaboration in the area of enhancement of gender perspectives in labour migration processes, would focus its activities on the following areas:

- Gender sensitive policy/legislation;
- Improvement of service provision to migrant workers;
- Network collaboration and monitoring the realisation of women migrant workers' rights in the processes of labour migration.

The following recommendations were adopted for legislative and executive state bodies and international and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of increasing the efficiency of migration policies, ensuring social guarantees for migrant workers and providing comprehensive support to

migrants and members of their families during all stages of the migration process.

### Recommendations

#### 1. GENDER SENSITIVE POLICY / LEGISLATION

##### 1.1. Promote the improvement of national legislation regulating labour migration by considering generally recognized provisions relating to:

- a) simplification of procedure of obtaining legal status for migrants and their families engaged in private household services (baby-sitters, cleaners, nurses, gardeners, etc) and their employers by reviewing the quota system;
- b) creation of legal opportunities for long-term labour migration (i.e. work permits for 3-4 years) with the opportunity to obtain residency permit in the country of destination following;
- c) continuation of activities aimed at enhancement of national legislative mechanisms for preventing cases of women trafficking;
- d) increasing levels of social protection for migrant workers and members of their families.

##### 1.2 Foster drafting and finalization of international agreements (bilateral and multilateral) in the area of labour migration, stipulating implementation mechanisms and guarantees, including the following components:

- a) fostering harmonization of legal and normative acts regulating labour migration with international standards;



- b) introducing a chapter on women migrant workers' rights in periodical country reports on implementation of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- c) considering the prospect of ratification of UN and ILO Conventions on migrant workers rights by CIS countries (in particular, by Russia and Kazakhstan);
- d) fostering the development and improvement of inter-state norms and agreements in the area of labour migration which guarantee migrants simplified procedures of movement through borders, social protection and pensions, safety of women migrant workers, medical insurance and mutual recognition of qualifications, diplomas and certificates.

### 1.3 Initiate creation of a regional labour market infrastructure, including:

- a) support for the establishment of mechanisms for coordination and interaction between countries of origin and destination for optimisation of migration flows to ensure that a system of vacancy information exchange is in place (demand and supply of workforce in the countries of destination);
- b) establishing a system of working with private recruitment agencies with the aim of optimizing their activities through harmonization with legal and economic frameworks;
- c) creation of education and re-training agencies for migrant workers and members of their families (including language courses) and provision of assistance for their employment;
- d) establishing new international financial institutions covering the region, which provide migrant workers with various financial services, including credit and deposits, and creating special mechanisms to stimulate the saving of money earned by migrant workers and its investment in health, education, business, etc;
- e) creation of a monitoring system to check fulfillment of contractual obligations by employers under contract with migrant workers;

- f) permanent monitoring of the labour market, taking into account gender sensitive statistics in the field of labour migration;

## 2. IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICE PROVISION TO MIGRANT WORKERS

### 2.1. Improve the information system on migration processes through creation of a network of informational centers on migration in the countries of origin and destination, including a training system and work with mass media and information technologies. Efficient implementation of this recommendation would require:

- a) creation of an efficient system of informing migrant workers, in particular women migrant workers and members of their families, about their rights and obligations, and also about problems connected with migration and labour activities abroad, through establishment of a network of resource centres, using various channels, such as consular agencies in the countries of origin and destination, internet, mobile telephone networks and special information centers for migrant workers (governmental, non-governmental or private);
- b) development of booklets (or notes) on various issues of labour migration for women migrant workers and members of their families;
- c) creation of an effective training system for women migrant workers (in all regional working languages) related to basic economic knowledge and skills including the basics of launching a business, effective usage of earned and saved money and regulation of various conflict situations at domestic, inter-cultural, legal and work levels;
- d) ensuring the adaptation of new social technologies specially to meet migrant workers' requirements;
- e) ensuring the inclusion of women labour migration issues in educational programmes on migration for professional training and advanced training of managers in the field of migration as well as entrepreneurs and NGO staff working with migrants;
- f) development of a conceptual framework document, training programmes and ways of work-

ing with the representatives of mass media to encourage them to cover open-mindedly the positive role of migrant workers in the development of the countries of destination of the region and report on the trends of the modern labour market, and especially on the needs and activities of women migrant workers.

**2.2. Promote the creation of specialized data bases of vacancies in countries of origin, including in women-specific areas of employment, through:**

- a) development of standards and a methodology for collection of statistical information on labour migration in order to improve the qualitative characteristics of statistical data by taking into consideration gender characteristics of labour migration, such as the distribution of migrants by gender and areas of employment; the distribution of migrants by gender and countries of origin; the distribution of migrants by gender and length of stay in the country of destination and the distribution of migrants by gender and whether their families accompany them to the country of destination;
- b) provision of access for the general public to statistical data on labour migration and familiarization with best practices and experiences in statistical data exchange
- c) development of a vacancy database concept document with agreement of all interested parties, in order to coordinate and monitor the flow of migrant workers with collection of gender sensitive statistics on labour migration; the vacancy database should include a system for collection, structuring and dissemination of information;
- d) creation of a data base of existing organisations dealing with labour migration processes, such as inter-state labour exchange agencies, recruitment agencies for migrants with low or no qualifications, trade unions, monitoring and advocating organisations, consulting agencies, organisations uniting various diasporas in the socio-cultural field and others;
- e) creation of a data base of state and private educational and re-training agencies for migrant workers in the countries of origin.

**2.3. Promote integration of gender-sensitive components in the adoption and implementation of anti-crisis programmes through:**

- a) developing a regional strategy on improvement and optimization of cooperation between international organisations, regional organisations and national governments on issues of women migrant workers' rights protection in the framework of national anti-crisis programmes;
- b) developing a strategy of rapid response to global and regional emergency situations, such as financial crises and various pandemics such as swine flu and SARS, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis and other dangerous diseases;
- c) integrating into national anti-crisis stabilization programmes measures for elimination of any administrative and legal barriers to movement of migrant workers;
- d) jointly, with various funding from grants and donor organisations, creating a system of small grants for supporting NGOs and various networks which provide various kinds of support and consultation for migrant workers' rights protection, in particular protection of women's rights, and which work with the poorest women migrant workers both in the origin and destination countries;

**3. Network cooperation and monitoring of women migrant workers' rights protection in the processes of labour migration**

**3.1 Support the creation of a system of regionally integrated monitoring and stimulate the collection and exchange of information on issues of realisation of women migrant workers' rights through:**

- a) supporting the creation of a regional group for monitoring of realisation of women migrant workers' rights ( a regional analytical centre to collect information from country data bases once a year);
- b) consideration, jointly with UNIFEM and all interested parties, of the opportuni-

ties for using mass media and modern communication technology (newspapers, radio, television, mobile phone networks and internet) in order to provide information to women migrant workers through chat, formal and informal consultations and discussions (for example, with psychologists, legal professionals and other women migrant workers) and organise discussions related to various problems women experience (threats, difficult life situations, etc) and provide grants for NGOs and individual advocates working with women migrant workers.

**3.2 Support the development of cooperation between various groups working in the field of labour migration and building their institutional capacity through:**

- a) development of mechanisms for coordinating cooperation of all partners working in the sphere of labour migration and improving institutional capacity of all parties interested in dealing with the issues of women migrant workers;
- b) optimization of work with private companies, organizations and corporations in order to develop partnerships, raise funds from the private sector and develop a culture of charity and social responsibility among businessmen in order to support various programmes aimed at helping the poorest women migrant workers and the members of their families;
- c) improvement of relations between NGOs and state bodies and agencies at all levels through regular meetings with deputies of all levels, representatives of law enforcement bodies and state agencies working with women migrant workers in order to raise their awareness about labour migration processes and women migrant workers' needs, rights and expectations; optimize the use of resources for helping women migrant workers; lobby for the creation of a positive climate and extend the help of the state both directly to women migrant workers or through NGOs;
- d) fostering network development and ensuring communication of state guidelines to non-governmental organisations on the issues of labour migration at regional, national, district and local levels;
- e) coordination of activities of international organizations to study the trends in women's labour

migration, study successful international and regional experience of work with women migrant workers and new methods of solving various legal, social and economic problems experienced by women migrant workers, and develop positive climate for women migrant workers.

**3.3. Promote integration of migrant workers, in particular women migrant workers, into local communities in the countries of destination through:**

- a) Creation of working mechanisms for integration of migrant workers into the activities of local communities, social institutions and local authorities; study and dissemination of other countries' experience in this sphere;
- b) Implementation of tolerance programmes at schools and other organizations in the countries of destination with the possible involvement of representatives of national diasporas;
- c) organization of funding through small grants for conducting educational events and festivals by various diasporas aimed at integration of migrant workers into the cultural life of local communities;
- d) development of the socio-economic and cultural competence of women migrant workers in all issues related to adaptation and integration into local communities.

**3.4. Adopt a number of measures to facilitate reintegration of returning labour migrants (improving business climate, motivating migrants to use bank services, and etc.), including:**

- a) encouraging the relevant state authorities to address the issues of reintegration of returning migrants;
- b) creation of crisis centers for returning migrants in need of psychological support;
- c) contributing to coordination of efforts of all interested parties and ensuring interaction between NGOs and other organizations on reintegration of returning migrants;
- d) helping to raise efficiency of networks and associations in conducting information campaigns aimed at improving the image of women migrant workers.

\* \* \*

UNIFEM, in close cooperation with EurAsEC, plans to develop a regional inter-agency programme focusing on women migrant workers' rights in processes of labour migration in both countries of origin (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and in countries of destination (Russia and Kazakhstan).

The programme will be aimed at contributing to the efforts of governments and civil society organizations in improving the labour migration management system based on observance of human rights and gender equality principles, through:

- facilitating improvement of national **legislation** in the field of migration policy to ensure observance of labour migrants' rights, with particular emphasis on the rights of women labour migrants. Facilitating the introduction of progressive norms and provisions of international labour migration-related legislation into national laws to protect the rights of women labour migrants and members of their families. Alignment of relevant articles of the labour migration legislation with the provisions of gender responsive national development strategies and programs in the Eurasian region;
- facilitating improvement in the activities of **institutions** that regulate migration processes in origin and destination countries, particularly through increasing the effectiveness of those institutions in providing services for protection of migrant workers with particular emphasis on the specific needs of women;
- facilitating the establishment of new associations or organizations and support for existing **associations or organizations of labour migrants** in order to enhance mutual support and cooperation among labour migrants, with the aim of improving the protection of their social and economic rights (including the right to a decent life and employment in the course of labour migration) easing the process of adapting to new conditions and establishing other benefits for migrants.

When implementing the program, a holistic approach will be used to solve the issues of protection of women labour migrants' rights at all levels:

- **At the policy and legislation level**, through impacting on laws and policy regulating national and intergovernmental management of labour migration norms contributing to consideration and protection of women with migrant worker status;
- **At the institutional level**, through strengthening the capacity of migration service employees with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of services provided to labour migrants;
- **At the social level**, through facilitating the mobilization of public organizations representing labour migrants towards improved protection of women labour migrants' rights, through cooperation and dialogue with government structures.



## Annex 1. Case-study: Family migration in Kazakhstan

### Working in agriculture

The assessment provided data on the distribution by geography and fields of activity of women migrant workers in Kazakhstan. In rural areas of the Southern Kazakhstan region, women from Uzbekistan are mainly engaged in the agricultural sector (cotton and vegetable production); whereas, in Almaty region, women from Kyrgyzstan are mainly employed in the agricultural sector (tobacco and vegetable production). A lot of women migrant workers come to Kazakhstan with members of their family. Such labour migration creates conditions of psychological comfort for the participants (even if children are left at home, women come with their husbands). It also gives them an opportunity to increase the amount of money they earn.

*“There are four people in our family: my wife, me and our two sons. Our children are grown-up; the eldest son is 22 years old and my second son is 20. They have already finished school. Here all of us work together in the field”.*

In the countries of origin labour migrants receive information about Kazakhstan through various sources (compatriots, acquaintances, relatives, etc). The main purpose of their migration to Kazakhstan in search for work is an attempt to overcome poverty and help their families to increase their standard of living. Migrants from Kyrgyzstan search for work mainly through recruitment agencies and they rely on such agencies in every issue including protection of their rights. Migrant workers from Uzbekistan working on cotton fields in the South-Kazakhstan district find their employers through intermediaries or relatives and acquaintances. Given the fact that relations among people in rural areas are more “transparent” due to living in a close community, they usually do not have any particular problems with either the representatives of local authorities, or the local population. The majority of migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan work under legal contracts and their work in Kazakhstan is legally arranged by the recruitment agencies.

*“We heard about life in Kazakhstan from our compatriots. We, together with locals, work on the same site: we are building a toikhana. We never fight with local people. The police have never checked us. We have never had any problems.”*

*“The local population treats us well. They are friendly, they understand and respect us and we respect them. So we live like relatives. The local authorities treat us well. We do not have any problems. The police checked us but all our documents are in order - we have passports, temporary residence registration and work permits for Kazakhstan. The police usually check our documents and then return them to us and let us go. We have not had problems with detention. To avoid any problems migrants should come to the country of destination through the agencies.”*

Migrating to do agricultural work using recruitment agencies, Kyrgyz labour migrants usually migrate with their families. Family migration brings benefits to both the employer and the migrants. Agricultural work is labour intensive and it is more difficult for a single woman to work. Obtaining legal status for work in Kazakhstan through the agencies allows migrants to be sure their rights are protected.

*“That woman used to come on her own to work here and she had many problems. For the last two years she has been bringing her family - her husband and children work with her and she finds it easier now. Her family helps her. If a woman works on her own, she has to do men’s work and there is nobody to help. It can be very difficult. It is difficult to work in a tobacco field without a man, for example lifting tobacco is a man’s job”*

*“The whole of our family come through a recruitment agency, they provide our registration in Kazakhstan for the year. We pay 2700 tenge for the registration. It is much better to pay for the registration straight away, and then we can work for the whole year with no problems. We*

*can work till December, but usually we leave in November. We always get registered and that is why we never have any problems. We do not need a work permit. Our employer employs only families, not single migrants. He thinks it is more reliable and profitable. I come here with my wife and help her. If a woman comes abroad with her family, she will not have any problems."*

According to the respondents working in the agricultural sector, the working conditions and food which is provided by their employers are typical for rural areas of Kazakhstan and in general are satisfactory. In their home countries the majority of migrant workers from villages have similar living conditions. Food is similar or sometimes even better in Kazakhstan and they can afford to enjoy their national cuisine. The amount of money they earn in Kazakhstan also allows them to have decent food back at home until the next migration trip.

*"There is running water in the house where we currently live. When we live in a field, we have to bring water. There is electricity in this house, but no sewerage. The toilet is outside. There is no hot water inside the house, but there is a steam bath outside, which we can heat up any time we want. We consider our living conditions good. There is a TV set. We do not have a fridge and that's why we buy just enough food to cook for one day."*

*In the field house we have a shower with a big container on the roof. We fill it with cold water in the morning and it gets warm under the sun, so we have our shower in the evening when the water is warm. There is a separate kitchen in that house in the field. My wife cooks, of course. I like eating plov and we eat it three times a week. My wife also cooks manty, shorpa and lagman - actually anything we want. When we work in a field, my wife cooks our lunch and brings it to us. There are three men here and we need to eat well. If you do not eat well, how can you work hard? We eat meat every day but we rarely eat fish. We have fruit 2 or 3 times a week. Every day we have tomato and cucumber salads. We eat apples, tomatoes and cucumbers in between meals. We also have dairy products every day."*

### **Working in the trade and services sectors**

Migrant workers from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan perceive Kazakhstan as a country where they can substantially improve their standards of living. In many cases they come

to Kazakh cities (Almaty, Astana and Shymkent) following their close relatives, husband or wife. They arrive together or one of the spouses goes first and then the second joins him or her later. As strange it may sound, in many cases the wife goes first. The reason it is common for one spouse to go ahead is because there are usually many children in the families of migrant workers; therefore, one of the parents should stay with the children while another one leaves in search for work. As soon as one of the family members finds a job in Kazakhstan (usually work in the capital cities such as Almaty and Astana is in the trade and services sectors) then the second parent joins them. Because of different reasons, some migrant workers leave their children with their close relatives at home and some migrate with all members of their families. Those migrants who have relatives in Kazakhstan usually bring their children with them because it is easier for them to find accommodation.

*"I came to Kazakhstan with my wife. I have been here for almost one year. We arrived last February. My wife will be leaving for Tajikistan soon. I have three daughters - the youngest lives with my brother in Uzbekistan, the other two live in Tajikistan. Both my wife and I are working. My wife works as a cleaner and I work as a street cleaner. We work for the same condominium, not far from each other and we help each other."*

*"I have five children, two boys and three girls. All of them, as well as my mother-in-law, are here with me. We have a big and friendly family. When my wife went to Kazakhstan in search of a job in 2000, I stayed at home to take care of our kids. At that time we had only two children, a boy and a girl. I saw how difficult it was for my wife to be separated from the children and me. I would have gone with her at that time, but our children were too little. That prevented us from going to earn money together. Before our migration, we had lots of doubts and were worrying about our kids. We worried whether we would manage, what could happen, what if we failed, how we could find jobs. For three years I was putting up with such a situation. I felt really ashamed in front of my wife and my kids that being a big and healthy man I was not able to earn money and support my family. So, my wife was like a scout when she went to Kazakhstan to search for a job. The main reason we became migrant workers is that here in Uzbekistan sometimes we did not have enough money even to buy bread; that is why we had to look for a better life in a foreign country."*

*“My family is small: 2 daughters, a son, my wife and me. My son is 12 years old (he is a pupil of the 6th form); my daughters are still young. Our children study at school back at home. Their grandmother takes care of them in Tashkent. Our children came to Kazakhstan to visit us and our relatives. First they visited our relatives in Shymkent and then stayed with us in a flat we rent.”*

Urban employment puts labour migrants under conditions when they have to legalize their status of stay in the country of destination. Their rights are not always fully protected and depend on their awareness of their rights and obligations as foreign citizens. Sometimes, when facing problems with law enforcement bodies they have to solve the issue of their stay in Kazakhstan by unofficial methods.

*“We are here legally. We have been registered at the migration police, but we do not have permanent residence registration. Our registration with the migration police is valid for 3 months, and then we can re-register. We always officially pay for the registration - we do not give bribes. We have been coming here for a long time. Employees of the migration police know us and they know that we come here to work and they help us.”*

*“Here in Astana they treat us well. We have had some problems with the police before but I obtained my registration with the migration police for 3 months, which I can extend. I keep my passport with me all the time, in case I need it. I also carry my registration certificate all the time.”*

*“I think all migrants have problems with the police at some point. Our family is not an exception. The police are doing their job after all. They also need to live and support their families. The policemen check all our documents and they let you go if your documents are in order. If not, you can pay a bribe. Once I left my documents at home and was checked by the police. They stopped me, asked some questions and requested that I show them my documents. I explained the situation, but they were not satisfied. They told me that they would take me to the detention centre for vagrants. I tried to persuade them; I told them that I had five children and begged them to let me go. I promised that I would carry all my documents with me all the time. I gave them 2000 tenge - all I had with me - and they let me go.”*

The main goal of migrant workers coming to Kazakhstan is to earn money as they do not have such a possibility in their home countries. While working in cities of Kazakhstan, they can be living in various conditions, ranging from living at the working place to renting a flat. Either way, their life in Kazakhstan is better than their life in their home countries, because they can earn money which is enough not only for buying food, but also for other family needs.

*“Both my wife and I used to work in Tajikistan, but our salary was only enough for buying food”.*

*“I live where I work. I have a room in the basement of the house. My wife lives with me. We have en-suite facilities: hot and cold running water, a toilet and a bathroom. We do not have a TV set. We cook and eat at home; usually we cook our national cuisine. We often eat meat; we can buy vegetables, cheese and milk products whenever we want, so our food ration is adequate. There are no opportunities to earn money in Tajikistan. Even if you have a job, they do not pay much.”*

*“Our employer provided us with accommodation in a dormitory for small families. We have hot and cold water in the room. We usually buy food at the market or in a grocer's shop. If we have enough money we buy meat and cook beshbarmak and plov. We eat fish once a week and we eat meat every day. We also eat fruit and vegetables every day. We usually buy them at the market as they are cheaper there. We also buy clothes at the market. Here we eat better than in our home country, because back there we had neither money nor work.”*

*“Now we rent an apartment in the 11-th micro-district. Our rent is 15 000 tenge per month and we also pay for utilities. There is one bedroom in our apartment. The living conditions are good: we have hot and cold water, a toilet, a bathroom, a fridge and a TV set. Everything is fine. Whenever we come here we rent this apartment as the price is suitable. When we eat out at a market we usually have soup or a main course, some tea and bread. If we can, we usually buy fish once a week. We eat meat four times a week. We also like eating fruit and vegetables. We prefer kefir to other dairy products. We eat well here - I have no complaints.”*

## Annex 2.

### Case-study: Beruni city, Republic of Karakalpakstan (Uzbekistan)

Beruni district is located in the north-west of Uzbekistan and sits on the right bank of the river Amu-Darya. The district does not border any neighbouring states and occupies four thousand square kilometres. In comparison with other districts of Uzbekistan, the population density in this district is low: 12 people per 1 square km. The population of Beruni district is estimated at 155 thousand people. The population comprises several ethnic groups: Uzbeks are in the majority at about 64%, Kazakhs make up 21%, Karakalpaks, 6% and the remaining 9% are representatives of other ethnic groups. The economy of the region is supported by cotton growing and cotton processing.

Beruni is the district's administrative centre with a population of 55 thousand people. Beruni is one of the most ancient settlements in the region. Once, it was known by the name of Shaabaza (Sheykh-Abbas-vali). In 1957, it was renamed after Abu Rayhan al-Beruni, famous historical scientist, who was believed to have made astronomical observations in this area. The ancient capital of Khorezm, Kyat, was situated near Beruni. Like many towns in Amu Darya delta, Beruni has its own fortress remnants; one of these - Fil-qala (the Fort of Elephants) attracts a lot of tourists. In the 1970s the town was almost washed away by the river and then rebuilt. Almost all industrial enterprises of the district are concentrated in Beruni town: a plant for processing raw cotton, a dairy processing plant, a reinforced concrete plant, a brick factory, an asphalt factory, a textile factory and some other big construction and industrial enterprises. Industrial workers used to comprise the biggest part of the able-bodied population in the district, and they used to be the main customers for neighbouring large and small scale agricultural enterprises.

Today, however, the majority of those industrial enterprises are inactive, and that has caused an increase in migration rates, both for emigration and labour migration to other provinces of Uzbekistan or to neighbouring countries. City residents leave Beruni due to the absence of working opportunities, and people from neigh-

bouring villages migrate due to a narrowing of the outlets for their agricultural goods. Over the last 10-15 years, the ethnic composition of the town has changed: the percentage of the Uzbek population has increased, many Slavic families have moved to Russia and other countries, and Kazakh people have been moving to Kazakhstan under the national repatriation programme in Kazakhstan.

At present in Beruni, labour migration is one of the main ways of earning money apart from pensions and family allowances provided by the local government bodies. Long queues of people waiting for money in the numerous local remittance agencies show the scale of labour migration. The number of migrating women has been rising and the number of independent female migrants has also increased. In contrast to many other rural areas in Uzbekistan, in Beruni district labour migration of women is considered not only normal, but even prestigious; the elder family members do not disapprove and actually encourage women to participate in labour migration. One of the specific features of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm province is the large size of households (up to 12-15 people), consisting of several families, and that gives women migrant workers the opportunity to leave their children with their relatives who will take care of their children while they are abroad.

The main destinations of labour migration are Tashkent city, Kazakhstan and Russia. At the Beruni bus station you can see buses and cars leaving for different regions in Kazakhstan and Russia. Women migrant workers go to Tashkent mainly to work in big clothes markets. Ethnic Kazakh women from Beruni who go to Kazakhstan are mainly engaged in agriculture, private domestic services, as cooks, baby-sitters and cleaners. Ethnic Uzbek women are mostly engaged in trade.

*“Visiting markets in Kazakhstan, it sometimes seems that you are in Uzbekistan: the majority of vendors are Uzbeks and almost all the porters are Uzbeks.”*



The majority of women migrant workers from Uzbekistan look for employment in Kazakhstan through their acquaintances; they find that way of looking for jobs safer and more reliable than employment through official recruiters. In many cases the activity of official recruiters is criminalised and some unfair employers from Kazakhstan are in league with them.

*D, 19 years old, lost her parents when she was very young. There are six more children in her family - two of them are already married and live separately and the others still live with her grandmother. They live in an unfinished house, because they do not have enough money to complete the construction. D's elder brother works as a migrant worker in Kazakhstan; he regularly sends small amounts of money back home, which along with their grandmother's pension, makes up family income. This family can not apply for low income family allowance, because there is no one officially registered as unemployed in this household. After finishing basic schooling, D met a mediator-recruiter, who offered her his services for employment in Kazakhstan. That recruiter organised a group of 25 young people, both men and women, who had not had any labour migration experience before and he told them that they had to give him their passports in order to organise their trip to Kazakhstan. He told them that they had to sign an agreement that they would pay back any expenses incurred by him in arranging their trip and their recruitment in Kazakhstan; however, in reality, D and the other young people simply signed blank pieces of paper, being reassured by that recruiter, that he would write out all the technical details of the agreement later. After arriving in Kazakhstan, these people did not get their passports back. The men were employed to work on building sites as builders and the women were cooking, cleaning and did laundry. They were accommodated at their working places. The food which was provided was very poor, mainly just bread, tea and sometimes some macaroni. Their working day was very long: from early morning till late night. During three months of working they were not paid even once. At the end of those three months, they were told that they had at last worked off the money which they had agreed to pay back, the recruiter kept all the money he got from the employer and they were sent back home empty-handed. The young people realised that they had been cheated by the recruiter.*

*When they returned home with no money, they heard that the same recruiter had organised and sent to Kazakhstan one more group of young*

*people from the neighbouring kishlak (a small village); meanwhile, he had built a solid house for himself and bought a new car. The representatives of the local mahalla advised D to apply to the law enforcement agency. Despite such bad experience, D still plans to go abroad, either to Kazakhstan or to Russia, as a migrant worker.*

One other girl from Beruni district reported a similar bad experience:

*"Two days after our arrival in Kazakhstan the recruiter, who promised our relatives back in Uzbekistan to be with us constantly, disappeared. We found out that he had got money from our employer for every woman employed through his services, and now we had to work off that of money. We hysterically demanded a fair agreement, but with no success. We were working at the building site for about two months, cooking and cleaning. One young man managed to escape and he informed our relatives about our enslavement. Our relatives went to the police. The policemen found the recruiter, but he told them that he did not know anything about the story, so the policemen did not help us. Our good fortune saved us: our employer was arrested by the Kazakhstani police for some other crime and all of us employed by him were taken to a police station too. When the policemen found out the truth, they released us and allowed us to go back to Uzbekistan. We were lucky to come back home in one piece, even with no money."*

In contrast to other countries of origin, women migrant workers from Uzbekistan going to Kazakhstan often take their teenage children to help them when they work in trade or agricultural sector.

*"Some parents deliberately do not send their children to school. They sometimes have an informal agreement with the schools' administration and instead of sending their children to school they take them to Tashkent or Kazakhstan to help them work."*

**The chairman of a mahalla**

*"Sometimes we find out only in December that some children are not attending a school or a college. Their parents took them for labour migration in the summer period and did not bring their children back in time to attend their schools. By the time we try to sort it out, half of the teaching year has passed."*

**An adviser on women's issues of mahalla committee.**

*“There are a lot of problems with of migrant workers’ children not attending schools. Often their parents take them abroad with them, and the schoolchildren do not have the opportunity to continue their education; or relatives take care of migrants’ children, and they do not pay much attention to which college they send a child.”*

**An employee of the district educational agency**

To get employed in the agricultural sector abroad, women usually go in small teams of 4-5 people. Despite difficult living and working conditions there, women migrant workers keep going to Kazakhstan, because payment for similar agricultural work in Kazakhstan is much higher than in Uzbekistan.

*“For several years we have been employed by the same farmer in Kazakhstan. He pays 20 thousand Sum (\$ 15) for cultivation of 1 hectare of his land. Usually you get no more than 3 hectares to do because there are a lot of other people who want this work. Last summer we worked in Kazakhstan again and for two months we were paid as much money as we would earn in a whole year at home if we had permanent jobs.*

*“Farmers in Uzbekistan never fulfil their promises. Last year from the beginning we had an agreement with our employer that he would pay us in rice, but at the end of our contract he found out that rice had become more expensive, so he paid us money instead. He paid us so little, that we are embarrassed even to say the amount. As for Kazakh farm employers, there is never such kind of a problem. Even though they pay us less than they pay local workers, we are happy.*

*“If farmers in Uzbekistan paid us as much as farmers in Kazakhstan do, we would not go abroad in search of living. The farmers in Uzbekistan employing workers do not even have a payment schedule.*

*“When we are collecting cotton in Kazakhstan, local workers never compete with us, they do not fight with us to get this job. Actually Uzbek migrant workers compete with each other: migrants from Syrdarya province compete with migrants from Tashkent; migrants from Tashkent with migrants from Jizzak; or ethnic Uzbek women compete with ethnic Kazakh women migrant workers from Uzbekistan.”*

Women migrant workers who work in markets are engaged not only in selling goods, but also in cooking and selling food. Women working in markets usually try to obtain work permits because the markets are under control of law enforcement agencies.

*M is employed by a state enterprise but she also raises plants to sell. For the last four years, every spring she and her family have gone to Kazakhstan for 1-2 months to sell plants: her sons transport the plants and she and her husband sell them. Usually her husband organises all the permits and finding accommodation in Kazakhstan, so she does not experience many problems apart from a hostile attitude towards them from the local population from time to time.*

*“People in Kazakhstan are not used to bargaining like people are in Uzbekistan. When you give them the price, they either buy straight away without bargaining or sometimes start shouting, ‘Why is it so expensive!’ Often you can hear that the prices in a market are so high because of Uzbeks, and then you do not feel comfortable.”*

The majority of women who go to Russia migrate with their husbands, or join them later after their husbands have found jobs. Usually such women do not have many problems, because before leaving for abroad they know the place of work and their working conditions. Many of them obtain employment from the same employers every year for several years.

*“It’s the third year in a row I go to work for the same employer. They provide accommodation and food. They do not give my salary to me, but send it to my parents in Uzbekistan. Just before leaving they give me some money to buy presents. I like this system. Next year my husband and I plan to get jobs from the same employer.”*

*“My husband and I worked as migrant workers for a small company making work clothes. The owners of the company were Armenians. They found it easier to work with us than with locals, because we are disciplined in our work. Our employers became very friendly with us and we became almost like relatives.”*

Many independent women migrant workers have had some bad experiences during their trips. Here is the story of one of the respondents:

*“Five years ago my husband and his friends went to Moscow region as migrant workers.*

*My husband still works there and earns good money compared to here in Uzbekistan. Over the years we managed to save enough money to buy a new flat and some domestic appliances. When our children grew up, my husband and I decided that I should join him in Moscow region. He found a good job for me, and his parents supported our decision. For two years, from spring till autumn, I was going back and forward, while my parents-in-law took care of my children. Only I understand what kind of problems I experienced during those trips.*

*It is sad, but the problems start even before leaving Uzbekistan. Just at the railway station local policemen start extorting money from passengers. From the passengers' appearance they try to guess whether you are a migrant worker, and if they think you are, they take away your passport with any excuse and then demand huge money without any explanation. I think that Uzbek conductors working in those trains inform the custom officers of Kazakhstan and Russia, because the custom officers check only those compartments in which migrant workers travel. Using the excuse of looking for drugs or contraband, they take our belongings away and then extort money. After arriving in Russia we try to obtain all the legal papers: a migration card, a registration card and a work permit as soon as possible. But not all employers are interested in employing migrant workers legally, and often women migrant workers work illegally. At least I do not have a language problem because I have a degree in Russian philology, but there were a lot of cases when locals tried to cheat me and my girl friends assuming we did not know Russian language. We try not to socialise with the local population and not to be in public places unless it is absolutely necessary, because it can be dangerous. To be a migrant worker means to live a precarious existence. If we had a chance, my husband and I would gladly obtain a residence permit in Russia."*

Many respondents reported that Uzbek diasporas in Russia are not as united as, for example, the

Kazakh or Tajik diasporas. Mostly, Uzbeks unite in Russia according to the region they come from in Uzbekistan. During interviews, many women migrant workers who work in Russia said that they do not socialise with women migrant workers from other regions of Uzbekistan. Men migrant workers from Tashkent and Andijan have the worst reputation. Many migrant workers believe that they sell women from Uzbekistan to the sex industry in Russia.

Women migrant workers recruited by illegal recruiters for working in Russia incur serious risk. They go abroad either without legal permits or with false documents provided by illegal recruiters. Such criminals use a scheme called "from gate to gate": a bus driver collects women at the local bus station and takes them straight to the working place. This happens when the employer does not have any intention of employing migrants legally.

*"From the railway station we were taken by bus straight to the gate of the company where we were to work. We worked for that company, which produced plastic bags, for three months and not once we were allowed to leave the territory of that company. At the end of our contract we were placed in the bus at the gate and were taken to the railway station. On the way in the bus we were told that the driver had a false passport for each woman in case authorities would check. I do not even remember under whose name I went there, worked for three months and came back home. All the problems during the trip were sorted out by the recruiter."*

According to the representatives of local governmental bodies, the activities of law enforcement agencies aimed at stopping human trafficking have increased recently. Even migrant workers have started approaching the police in such cases and insist on opening a criminal case. Not long ago the police investigation of a recruiter, who recruited young people by cheating, caused a stir. Despite the fact that relatives of that arrested recruiter paid money back to all victims, the case was still taken to court.