

Migration and development in Central Asia



IOM is committed to the principle that “humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society”. Within this framework, IOM has a large role to play in supporting the efforts of states to manage labour migration, in particular short-term movements and circular migration.

In Central Asia, IOM has a well-established presence and a proactive approach toward emerging migration issues. It has demonstrated good relationships with stakeholders at all levels, from policy makers to national governments to civil society to the private sector. In addition, it has proven ability to generate necessary expertise in a timely manner. These strengths enable IOM to run a complex, multi-faceted programme to address labour migration challenges on all levels.

Labour migration is becoming a widespread response by many families and individuals to the challenges of poverty in Central Asia. Unemployment and poverty are perceived as push factors for labour migration. The majority of labour migrants consider their movement to be temporary and declare that they were forced to migrate because their income was insufficient to feed their families. In most cases remittances sent by migrant workers are the only way to ensure livelihood for many families left in countries of origin.

Labour migrants contribute to growing economies of two key receiving countries of the region: Kazakhstan and Russia. Migrants fill labour shortages in sectors of economy which do not attract the local population. Often, this migration occurs in an irregular fashion, due to the complexity of legal procedures for foreign workers and intricate process for issuing work permits in the region.

IOM’s programmatic approach to

migration and development in Central Asia is driven by the following key priorities:

- To promote socio-economic developments of migrants, their families, their host communities and their sending communities;
- To promote inter-state dialogue and harmonization of policies between labour receiving and sending countries;
- To assist governments and society in recognizing and understanding the contributions of labour migrants;
- To work with governments to regularize labour migration flows;
- To promote and protect rights of labour migrants;
- To mainstream migration into the development agenda at local, national and regional levels;
- To assist labour migration throughout migration cycle;
- IOMs intervention on migration and development is built on the following components:
- Support to insti-

tutional, policy and legislative developments;

- Capacity building to manage labour migration processes;
- Information-counseling services and other assistance to migrants and their families.



KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan has become a popular destination for Central Asian migrants due to its geographical location and stable economic situation. The flow of migrants, however, is irregular as opposed to cyclical or constant.

Kazakhstani Migration Authorities recognize the benefits of regularized flows of labour migrants and are revisiting their legal framework for migration. IOM supports the Kazakh Government in this process and also provides direct assistance to migrants.

Support to institutional, policy and legislative developments

IOM provides both policy and capacity building assistance to authorities in Kazakhstan. IOM is a member of ministerial legislation working group and working group on migration legislation in the Parliament.

Also, together with its state partners IOM organizes a variety of fora to discuss migration legislation development

IOM provides assistance in estimating the demand for foreign labour. It also provides expert advice on revision of migration legislation and rules for bringing foreign labour.

Capacity building to manage labour migration processes

Together with Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Interior, IOM conducts training and coordination meetings at local level to upgrade professional skills of local level migration officials and streamline inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

IOM also develops training manuals for relevant authorities, and thematic training sessions for NGOs working in the field of migration.



Information-counseling services and other assistance to migrants and their families

IOM provides a variety of information counseling services and other assistance to migrants and their families. Together with network of NGO partners IOM runs Migrants Support Centres in five cities of Kazakhstan: Almaty, Astana, Shymkent, Aktobe and Petropavlovsk.

In addition, IOM provides a wide range of services to labour migrants including legal aid, ad hoc material help, facilitates access to medical assistance, social services and provided return assistance on case by case basis.

Finally, IOM has conducted information campaigns which include production and dissemination of info material on labour migration opportunities in Kazakhstan

According to various sources, estimated number of Kyrgyz migrants working abroad is 500 000 and 800 000 in any given year. Remittances sent by Kyrgyz migrant workers make up 25-30 % of GDP of the Kyrgyz Republic. Kyrgyz authorities are well aware of labour migration processes and of the link between migration, development and social affairs. IOM assists the Kyrgyz Government in protecting Kyrgyz labour migrants throughout the migration cycle. IOM is also working with the Kyrgyz Government to develop a modern system of labour migration management.



Support to institutional, policy and legislative developments

IOM has a long-standing role in promoting international standards in managing labour migration. Since labour migration is driven primarily by the laws of supply and demand in international labour markets, IOM applies a socio-economic approach to efficiently manage this phenomenon.

IOM promotes understanding of labour migration and appreciation of the contribution of migrants through its Migration and Development programmes in Kyrgyzstan. It advocates for labour migrants to be considered an integral part of the National Employment Policy. Also, IOM promotes a single vision among sending and receiving countries: providing decent labour for citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic both in domestic and foreign labour markets.

The “Managing Employment Abroad” Programme has three stages:

- *Pre-Employment Stage*
- *Employment Stage*
- *Post-Employment Stage*

Each of these stages require establishment of appropriate infrastructure and policy interventions to ensure orderly migration and protection/promotion rights and interests of migrant-workers throughout the entire migration cycle.



Capacity building to manage labour migration processes

IOM works with government organizations to build capacity in the area of labour migration. Extensive work has been done in Kyrgyzstan with regard to government capacity. IOM's interventions consist of research, infrastructure assistance and advocacy.

In its Migration and Development programme, IOM has conducted labour market research. This research helps IOM, government partners and other partner organizations gain a better understanding of the areas of migrant employment as well as the factors that encourage migration.

IOM has assisted the government in establishing infrastructure to man-

age employment abroad and establishing labour attaché institutions.

Finally, with regard to advocacy, IOM has worked with the government to create favourable business conditions for private recruitment agencies. It has also encouraged development of dispute settlement institutions in both sending and receiving countries.

Information counseling services and other assistance to migrants and their families

One of the main pre-conditions of IOM's migration and development program is a customer service approach. IOM has adopted the principle of standardization of employment services, and it promotes this approach in the Kyrgyz Republic.

IOM has worked to increase aware-

ness of migration and of migrant rights in both Kyrgyzstan and receiving countries. Information campaigns have been an essential tool in protecting the rights of migrant workers. Through NGO partners, IOM conducts television, radio and print campaigns to inform migrants of their rights and assist them in claiming these rights when necessary. IOM also works to protect and promote the rights of labour migrants through representational services.

Direct assistance is another area of IOM intervention and assistance. IOM develops and conducts pre-employment and pre-departure activities for labour migrants. It also provides assistance to migrant workers while they are in country.

Finally, IOM provides re-integration services to returned migrants.

Tajikistan has experienced a significant outflow of labour migrants. These migrants find employment primarily in Russia, and also in Kazakhstan. It is estimated, that according to various sources, between 800 00 – 1000 000 labour migrants from Tajikistan work abroad. Every year, migrants send approximately \$2 – 2,5 billion US dollars in remittances to Tajikistan. Remittances constitute 30-50 % of Tajik GDP.



The majority of Tajik labour migrants work in harsh conditions, and many do not have proper documentation. Lack of documentation exposes Tajik migrant-workers to exploitation and abuse. This vulnerability is exacerbated by lack of knowledge among the migrant population of human rights and legal processes.

The phenomenon of migration has both social and economic repercussions for Tajikistan. Socially, labour migration can be an issue for split families and women-headed households. Economically, while labour migrants send significant amounts

back to their sending country, this money is almost entirely spent on consumption, and therefore may not be put to optimal use.

In implementing its activities, IOM actively cooperates with government agencies, NGOs, local communities, diaspora organizations and private sector.

Support to institutional, policy and legislative developments

IOM works with the government and legislative authorities to support migration and development policies. It is an observer of the Inter-Ministerial Commission on

Migration and active member of the Legislation Working Group in Tajikistan. In addition, IOM has provided Expert advice and facilitation of drafting of the National Strategy for External Labour Migration and labour migration legislation.

In addition, IOM provides practical assistance to Tajikistan's migration authorities. IOM has assisted the Tajik Migration Service with upgrade and harmonization of migration database, which in turn has permitted better understanding of migration dynamics. IOM has also strengthened the institutional capacity of the State Migration Agency.

In terms of research, IOM has conducted series of research on different aspects of migration and development in order to better understand the phenomenon of labour migration and craft effective thematic interventions.

Capacity building to manage labour migration processes

IOM provides training to migration officials at a variety of different levels about labour migration. This training can range from sessions about the contributions of labour migrants to society to practical hands-on training about how to manage situations commonly faced by labour migrants.

In Tajikistan, IOM co-operates with private employment agencies to address the issue of labour migration. In particular, IOM provides assistance in upgrading the technical capacity of the agencies, and the professional skills of agency employees as well as the migrants themselves.

IOM provides technical support to offices of migration services and vocational training institutions. This form of capacity building both helps migrants engage in regular, documented migration, thus giving them access to more services, and helps upgrade their skills and capacity.

And finally, IOM provides training to migration officials at all levels on management of labour migration.

Information-counseling services and other assistance to migrants and their families

Since 2004 IOM has been providing information and counseling services to labour migrants and their families through seven Information Centres for Labour Migrants established throughout the country. Migrants receive consultations via phone, in person or during mobile consultations.

IOM and its NGO partners conducts regular information campaign and outreach work, developing and disseminating info material on differ-

ent aspects of labour migration. IOM provides several types of training and services to migrants. Pre-departure orientation and language courses are provided, as well as training on entrepreneurship.

In the area of remittances, IOM has programmes to: provide privileged credits to labour migrant households who receive remittances; conduct "Family Budget Planning" training campaigns; establish Migrant Household Initiative Group; implement social infrastructure projects using by migrants remittances and donor funds. The social infrastructure projects include: road rehabilitation, school repair, roofing buildings and building clean water-reservoirs.

Awareness-raising is another significant part of IOM's activities.

IOM has established a referral mechanism to provide referral services to abandoned wives of labour migrants. Also, IOM has programs to raise awareness of legal rights of women, abandoned wives of labour migrants.

