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INTRODUCTION

The context of the policy issues

The significant level of labor migration from Kyrgyzstan to Russia is explained by a strong gap in the standard of living and high unemployment in Kyrgyzstan as well as tensions resulting from lack of available land for its population. In 2011, there were 212,400 thousand registered unemployed². In 2012, some 700 thousand Kyrgyzstanis were living outside the Kyrgyz Republic, primarily in Russia and Kazakhstan³. A significant portion of the Kyrgyz natives living in Russia does not have the necessary papers to make their work legal. The Kyrgyz Government is promoting employment of its citizens outside the territory of the Republic; a special body – the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Youth - was created in 2013 to support these efforts.

According to the experts interviewed, labor migration from Kyrgyzstan can be estimated at 25% of the nation's workforce.⁴ In terms of migrant remittances as percentage of GDP, Kyrgyzstan is ranked third in the world. According to the World Bank, in 2011, the list was headed by Tajikistan (47% of GDP), followed by Liberia (31%), and then Kyrgyzstan (29%).⁵

Definition of the policy issues

The non-systematic policy of assistance to labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan in Russia needs to be changed. Despite the significant amount of labor migration from Kyrgyzstan to Russia, support and assistance to migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan is very limited. For example, when looking for work, labor migrants make little use of related specialized services (private employment agencies or employment services)⁶. In this context, non- state

Statement of intent

Goal: Determine the best strategy for assisting labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan in Russia

Tasks:

1. Identify the most successful methods and strategies for assisting Kyrgyz labor migrants in Russia and actors who are actively implementing such assistance.
2. Assess differences in provision of assistance in Russia by region, and differences in urban and rural areas.

Sampling scope: Nine interviews

Language: Russian.

Selection of respondents:

For *expert interviews*, experts were selected from various organizations and associations providing assistance to labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan in Russia.

Experts sampling covered (for the full list of experts see Annex 3):

- Official representatives of Kyrgyzstan in Russia;
- Migrant organizations in three regions;
- NGOs;
- Migrants' service hot lines;
- Kyrgyz diaspora organizations.
- Labor migrants' trade unions.

The document's roadmap

The introduction discusses the context of policy issues, a definition of policy issues, a statement of intent, the aims and objectives of the research and the research methodology and limitations.

The problem description section examines the role of actors supporting labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan. Prospects for setting up international integration centers, the specifics of work in rural areas and the main directions for the formation of Kyrgyzstan's programs of assistance to its labor migrants in Russia are all described.

The policy options considered relate to the activities of the most important actors relevant to migrants from Kyrgyzstan (the Government of the Russian Federation, the Government of Kyrgyzstan, NGOs, Russian trade unions, migrants' trade unions, informal communities of Kyrgyzstanis, the Kyrgyz diaspora, international and humanitarian organizations, religious organizations, Russian businesses and medical establishments providing services to migrants.)

Assistance policy is linked to the migration policies of Russia and Kyrgyzstan and to the formation of NGO and diaspora networks that use the experience of international organizations in their own coordination. Which practices of assistance to labor migrants have been already worked out and who can best assist migrant workers and how the mechanism of interaction within the Kyrgyz labor migrants' assistance system can be set up on the part of different actors are discussed.

The conclusions and recommendations section gives specific proposals for including all stakeholders in the labor migration support system and for their interaction therein.

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

The role of actors in assisting labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan

Trade unions of migrants and Russian trade unions

The study showed that existing trade unions in Russia play a varied role in the protection of the rights of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan. Trade unions that cater to labor migrants are either helpful or neutral, while regular Russian trade unions are hostile. The Labor Migrants' Trade Union⁷ in Moscow acts as an intermediary organization that provides quality services to migrants, providing information and consulting while using, just like non-governmental organizations, grant funding for its operations. Its activities are not limited to intermediary services only: they publish a "News of Labor Migration" newspaper, try to inform migrants and their leaders about the latest legislative developments and related news and even conduct awareness campaigns for migrants on train routes.

There is a separate organization under the Migrants' Trade Union which is engaged in commercial activity, but it also conducts work similar to that of NGOs: providing seminars and meetings on legal advice - all having, according to the experts, a 'strong

regions because the government officials in the regions are more conservative and the creation of any trade union there is very complicated, especially the creation of a migrants' trade union.

Russian trade unions tend to act as opponents of labor migration, arguing that migrants are not in fact needed and trying to work through inter-ministerial commissions to reduce the numbers of external migrants. Such trade unions are difficult to consider as partners in protecting labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan - migrants do not join such trade unions, the trade unions have not established good relationships with migrants and their employers, and it is difficult for the trade unions to attract migrants as clients while charging fees in the form of union contributions. Perhaps this is the reason for their position as de facto opponents of cooperation with migrants.

Kyrgyz diaspora organizations

The Kyrgyz diaspora in all regions of Russia is a sporadic rather than systemic support system. This was well illustrated in late 2012 by the Congress of the Kyrgyz diaspora which was unable to rally the diaspora itself¹¹.

There are many registered Kyrgyz diaspora organizations and they take a number of different forms such as public organizations, national and cultural associations and foundations. In the opinion of the experts we surveyed, much of their activity is in intermediary and commercial activities. While it is difficult for Russian intermediary commercial entities or Russian NGOs to gain the trust of migrants, it is easy for the diaspora organizations to do so. They speak with migrants in their own language, which makes it easier for them to transform a potential client into an actual customer. If such diaspora organizations deal with the social problems of migrants and defend their rights, then they achieve success, protecting the labor migrants from unscrupulous employers, helping them to break out of labor slavery and return to their own country, etc. But, unfortunately, many of these organizations, even those registered as NGOs, provide intermediary services that exploit and make money off the migrants. According to the experts, migrants are more likely to place their trust in representatives of these organizations because they speak their native language, who then can take advantage of them, involving them in black market legalization schemes. The experts said that many members of the diaspora are interested in promoting paid commercial assistance to migrants, through entities that have emerged under the diaspora.

The diaspora organizations that attempt to provide free social services for migrants can only work when they have funding, such as grant support. When funding has been exhausted, such work comes to naught, their activity slows down, and other organizations trying to occupy the niche of the main representative of the Kyrgyz diaspora in the region quickly push the former activists aside. In the struggle for leadership and customers within the diaspora itself, those who have made the best contacts with the Consulate of Kyrgyzstan and the Russian power structures have the advantage and this interferes with the solidarity of the diaspora.

Due to the fact that the diaspora has establisha

address the issue of wage payment, compensations, and preparation of certificates

Source: Photo from the personal archive of D.V. Poletaev

Migrant communities and organizations: informal networks of migrants and local residents

Informal communities of migrants from Kyrgyzstan in Russia in fact assume the job of providing informational support and assistance to help labor migrants adapt to their new residence.

Social migrant networks or the informal communication of migrants with one another can be considered an informational resource. Through word of mouth people disseminate information on best practices for survival and on assistance providers that may be available in the region as well as the type, availability and quality of such assistance. Interviewed experts from NGOs and hotlines noted that their clients have found them, as a rule, through informal migrant networks rather than from advertising leaflets. It is information about actual available assistance that gets spread the quickest.

When migrants cannot find a solution within their diaspora, or they are unsatisfied, they turn to NGOs. With every migrant who has received some sort of help from NGOs, the circle of information expands. A social network can work both from Kyrgyzstan and from migrants from other countries. For example, a migrant calls home, talks about his problems, his relatives turn to local NGOs or, more often of course, to their acquaintances, and eventually give him a lead to an NGO in Russia. It is impossible, for example, to find a highly paying job, but it is possible to find a job as such. That's how the social network operates.

The websites V kontakte, Odnoklassniki and Facebook are used as a rule by people who regularly have free time and have access to the Internet. According to the interviewed experts, such people are currently rare among labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan.

It is interesting to note a new initiative in the social networking market: in Russia, there is a new social network for migrants called "They expect you here" with the slogan "They expect here anyone who comes to or lives in Russia for work, study, development or communication" (the address of the site is <http://www.tutjdut.com>). Once registered, people can access the following services through the website's menu: "People", "Advertisements", "Activities", "Work", "Actions", "Favorites" and "Success Stories". The project is still under development and it is unclear how well it will fare but we can say that it is innovative and could be a great success.

Of all Internet services, migrants most often use Skype and email as these greatly reduce the cost of communication with their relatives in Kyrgyzstan. Migrants also often use the Internet to watch movies or read news about their home country. As a rule, the longer a migrant lives in Russia, the more proficient an Internet user he becomes, whereas newly arrived migrants often need assistance. Therefore if we consider the Internet as a channel of communication for labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan, we should bear in mind that the access will be mainly for those commt

In a noteworthy project, Tajik organizations are working with labor migrants through establishing ongoing communication with compatriots from one village to create a village network. In this initiative, the organization helps to select a knowledgeable member of such a network as a liaison for the legal center Migration and Law . He can then be a resource for the community and the NGO which can distribute useful information through this "senior" in the network.

Tajikistan's experience can be useful for informal networks of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan who

would be helpful for migrant workers to have a special line of credit available for short-term low-interest loans, which could be repaid in affordable installments, to cover tickets and other costs associated with travel.

International Organizations

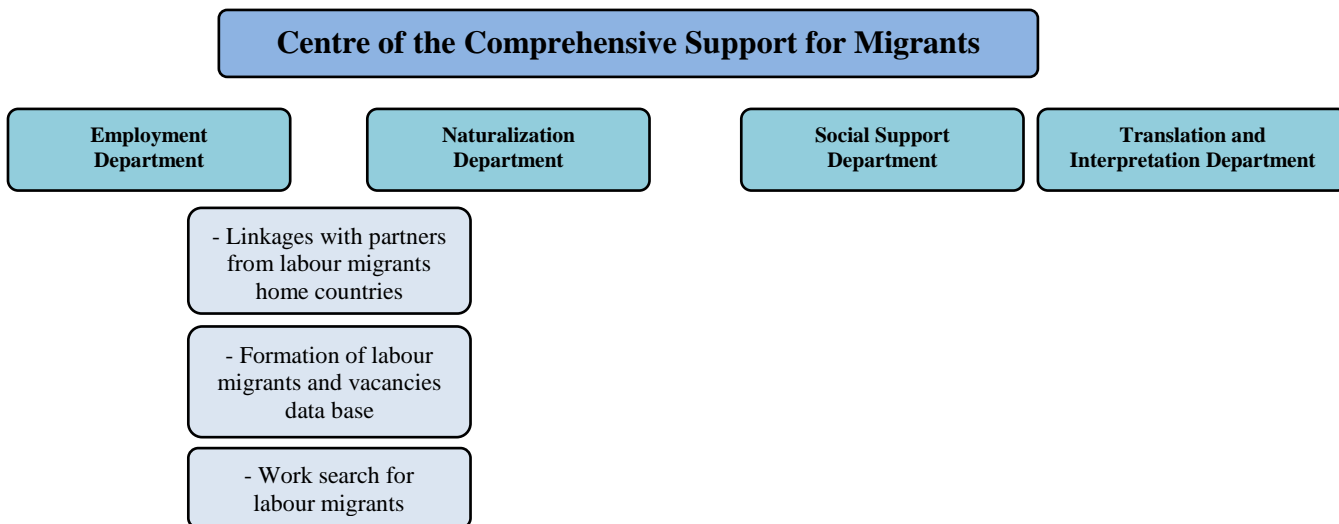
Informing and advising, initiating discussions in the society and the academic community about the

The Integration Center Migration and Law is the only 24-hour hotline in Moscow that provides help in five languages (Russian, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek and Moldavian), operates on weekends and holidays and does not cause huge appointment queues which make it hard for the migrants to get advice or assistance. Through the years, their staff has developed the ability to quickly solve many problems over the phone (consultation with consular service, registration of certificates of return, certificates of partner agreement with the Embassy, etc.) and only complex cases require an additional personal appointment. Despite the fact that this hotline is focused on work in Moscow, when needed it helps migrants from other regions and includes other NGOs from the regions in solving these problems.

The Center signs agreements of cooperation with other organizations only when they provide a 'partnership' discount for redirected migrants. But there are not too many commercial organizations around working with migrants who are open to such a "rigid partnership".

The best example of effective cooperation has been their "rigid partnership" with the All Russian Memorial Network of Migration and Justice that employs lawyers to help migrants. Of mutual interest to the

Fig. 2. Organizational scheme of the work of the Center providing complex support for migrants.



Ural House provides space in a comfortable dormitory, equipped with appliances, furniture, and utensils for temporarily housing migrants.

Fig. 3 Dormitory of Ural House



Photo: presented by Public Organization Ural House

Fig. 4, 5, 6 New 23 room dormitory, constructed by Ural House in 2012, for the temporary placement of labor migrants.





Photo: presented by Public Organization Ural House

It is understandable that the countries of origin and the foundations that represent migrants are interested in ensuring the maximum number of legalized migrants. But it is also important to keep in mind both the interests of migrants themselves and the interest of the receiving country. Only then can long-term cooperation between the two countries, humane treatment of migrants by all intermediaries and compliance with their labor and human rights be ensured. It is important to note that any activity with whatever resource provided can either turn into an opportunity for economic exploitation of or become an instrument of long-term and effective assistance to labor migrants.

To avoid the former, it is better to plan future work on the basis of current successful activists and programs, helping them expand their activities and developing work plans using their standards; applying their best practices in dealing with migrant issues.

According to the interviewed experts, pursuing NGO's human rights cases against unscrupulous employers will make some of these employers change their approach and stop taking advantage of migrants. Thus, embarking on long-term cooperation with human rights NGOs is advised. In addition, such work through NGOs and other effective intermediaries provides legal support to employers for improving their knowledge of the law and the legality of their practices, allowing complex situations to be resolved without violations of the law.

The situation is weak when employers turn to intermediary organizations with requests for the recruitment of a dozen of workers for example; this clearly should be the function of a labor exchange or an organized recruitment mechanism. Usually in good-faith intermediary organizations this situation is resolved through the establishment of an information service, but it would be even better if this issue were resolved by creating a special body such as a labor exchange, since this will raise the issue to the level of the Ministry of Labor and Employment. As soon as another such situation appears, it can be quite effectively addressed through the availability of an appropriate service network such as the labor exchange.

So in the short term it is necessary to develop a bona fide intermediaries' employment assistance function, transfer employment quotas to them and provide support in establishing relationships with employers. This type of systematic work will begin when the project work starts to be carried out through formal agreements, and when human rights NGOs become part of a system that has a labor exchange functioning as one of its components. In this way, a well-tested model can then function as a semi-commercial or commercial structure and be institutionalized by the state.

The idea of a labor exchange for migrants that simplifies the access of migrants to employment and helps protect their labor rights through a transparent recruitment system has been periodically discussed within the Russian migration community, however it has a record of failed implementation attempts. This failure is due to the low profits such an exchange would generate when efficiently performing its direct functions, as well as due to the lack of a humanitarian approach to migrants on the part of Government agencies. Many public organizations are dealing with employment issues on a small-scale, whereas the

Specifics of work in rural regions

There is a need for special aid programs to help the labor migrants working in agriculture. But at present not so many Kyrgyzstani people are involved in agricultural work. The Kyrgyzstani people are either working on large robust farms, which are few nowadays, or they are working in private businesses and farms that try to economize on each item, including the salaries, even though the demand for workers is high at those farms and private businesses. Therefore, these jobs are not very attractive to migrants, except maybe for migrants from China, but this business is quite specific.

The Ural House has experience working in the field of agriculture- recruiting rural business specialists, veterinarians, milkmaids and tractor drivers on demand. The salaries are not high, since even the locals are paid only 10.7 thousand rubles per month (U.S. \$230-330). However, it is still more money than can be earned at home. On one of the farms Kyrgyz men worked 1.5 shifts for 15,000 rubles per month as cattlemen. In Kyrgyzstan, even though this is hard work, it is impossible to earn even 3000 rubles for the same kind of work.

Targeted assistance to migrants from Kyrgyzstan or International Integration centers with a Kyrgyz component?

If the existing problems are tackled without separating migrants by their countries of origin but rather working with them in one unified center, one can achieve a good exchange of best practices while prioritizing no particular nationality. This will help to solve issues common to all migrants, including those that do not occur often but nevertheless exist, as expertise and services will be consolidated. At the same time, these centers can help internal Russian migrants and thus eliminate criticism on the part of the more conservative part of the population wary of migrants.

It is also possible to establish a social fund to support migrant workers in Russia. Its main task would be to identify the most vulnerable groups, such as victims of human trafficking, and give them the opportunity to return to their country of origin or go to a shelter that can provide training. Such a social fund would also support sick people, women with children, etc.

To work more effectively in Russia, the diaspora organizations can form a network of international centers dealing with migration and integration. All interested parties would work together to place acute

Russia wants to get quality human resources, Kyrgyz youth can be trained on the basis of special agreements both at Russian vocational schools, where there are not enough students, and in Kyrgyzstan itself, staffing its

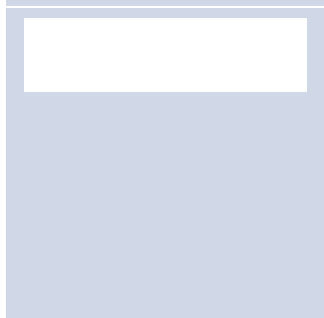
3. Change the strategy of action and the migration policy of the Russian Federation (RF) and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan (RK).

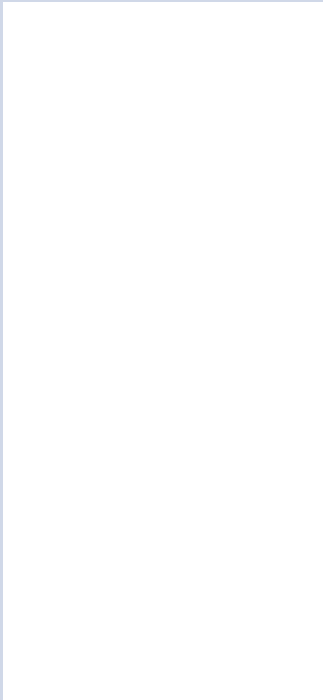
According to our research data, the problems related to labor migration in Russia cannot be solved without changing the existing policies, so the option of continuing work within the currently existing framework (1), in the author's opinion, has no prospects.

Table 1. The options for development of policies for assisting migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan in Russia

	Zero Option Leave things as they are	Transitional Option (2)	Full version (3)
Non-commercial NGOs	A small number of NGOs offering free practical assistance to migrants with limited resources for development; haphazard interaction of NGOs with each other and with other organizations. working with migrants; research activities in the		

progressive entrepreneurs, managers	that do not achieve large-scale implementation; dissociation of initiatives.	international centers for migrants' support and labor exchanges.	recruitment and cooperation with the migrants' trade unions.
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<p>The Government of the Russian Federation</p>	<p>A formal approach to the acclimation of external and internal migrants; minimum protection for the rights of labor migrants and the lack of monitoring of ongoing migration policy.</p>	<p>Grant-based competitive support to organizations that provide assistance to labor migrants; simplification of conditions for organized recruitment; facilitation of the creation of labor exchanges for migrants and the development of a low-cost housing market; combating corruption in the field of migration.</p>	<p>Integration of networks of NGOs and the diaspora to work in the field of migration; formation of models for the resolution of migration issues involving civil society; institutionalization of models of assistance for labor migrants developed by civil society organizations.</p>
<p>The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic</p>	<p>Interaction with diaspora organizations and participation in cultural activities; case-by-case response to labor migrants' problems; weak monitoring of labor migration.</p>		

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In

Assistance on the part of the government of Kyrgyzstan could start with the support of organizations that have already demonstrated their effectiveness, such as the Migration and Law Integration Center and the Ural House, as well as enhancement of the Migration and Gender network and assistance in expanding the Memorial

system. The inner circle has not yet been formed though this can be facilitated by both international organizations and NGOs. The association Zamandash already has the experience of unifying diaspora organizations, but there are no clear forms of interaction between all Kyrgyz diaspora organizations as yet, and there is an ongoing internal competition for resources and the right of regional representation. In order to create the network, monitoring needs to be undertaken to formally determine the activity and capacity (availability of an office, range of services, whether they are free of charge or what the rates are, etc.) of the most active organizations willing to enter such a network. It will be a very painful process to form an all-Russian network. It is also important to encourage and facilitate constant information exchange among research NGOs, human rights NGOs and the diaspora organizations so that the data collected by the hotlines can be processed by research NGOs. This would provide an overall Russian-wide snapshot and this insight and information could be disseminated through the network, reaching journalists and other information resources that write about migration. Precisely such a system would be realistic and efficient enough to be implemented in the medium term. This can and should be supported through the allocation of resources to create a network of

