

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND  
POPULATION MIGRATIONMIGRATION  
IN THE MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS  
OF EURASIA:  
PAST AND PRESENT  
(*Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan,  
and Pakistan*)

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Pamiro-Alai, Tien Shan, Hindukush, Karakorum, and the Himalayas are not only the highest mountain systems on Earth located in the heart of Eurasia, they are also the place of residence of Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Pashtuns, Punjabis, the peoples of Badakhshan, Chitral, Gilgit, Nuristan, and Punjab, etc. Mountains occupy 93% of Tajikistan, 94% of Kyrgyzstan, 61% of Pakistan, where 25% of the country's population lives, and 60% of Afghanistan (occupied by 89% of the population).<sup>1</sup> The inaccessibility, isolation, and re-

moteness of these regions have helped to retain the ancient traditions and exclusively cultural, linguistic, and anthropological diversity of the local population. These factors and the harsh bio-climatic conditions make the mountain dwellers extremely vulnerable. Nevertheless, in recent decades the outside contemporary world has been encroaching more and more on them, and they are feeling its impact. Political upheavals, the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. and formation of new

<sup>1</sup> See: D. Nygaard, D. Jumakhonov K., Hendrickx, "Trends: Food Security and Livelihoods," in: *Strategies for*

*Development and Food Security in Mountainous Areas of Central Asia*, International Workshop, Dushanbe, 6-10 June, 2005.

states in Central Asia, the war in Afghanistan, the antiterrorist campaign, Indo-Pakistani relations, and the Kashmir problem have all had a direct influence on the residents of this part of the world. Their isolation is gradually being broken down by such globalization processes as mobility of the population, development of infrastructure, evolution of information technology, and so on. One of the most noticeable new phenomena in the life of the mountain dwellers is large-scale migration.

Leaving the mountains in search of a living, which has been an inviolable part of the activity of mountain dwellers from time immemorial, has now acquired top priority for many regions of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Its dimensions can be judged by the number of people participating in this process: 350,000-500,000 people in Kyrgyzstan, 650,000 in Tajikistan, 1,500,000-1,700,000 in Afghanistan, and 4-5 million in Pakistan. Revenue from labor migration is playing an increasingly important role in the development of these states. For example, in 2004, according to estimates, labor migration brought 500 million dollars into Tajikistan, more than 120 million dollars into Kyrgyzstan, approximately 200 million dollars into Afghanistan, and 3.5 billion dollars into Pakistan. Along with the increase in volume of labor migration, its qual-

ity, areas, types, and even the forms of economic, social, and cultural influence on the life of the mountain communities have also changed. The urgency of this problem is giving rise to discussions in which opposing views are being expressed about whether labor migration is helping or interfering with the development of these regions.

Our article is devoted to issues relating to labor emigration of mountain dwellers and its economic and social influence on the life of the mountain communities in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The article was prepared using data from the *Migrants from Badakhshan*<sup>2</sup> and *External Labor Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic* (2003)<sup>3</sup> studies, work on labor migration in Tajikistan carried out by the Sharq Center in 2002-2004, as well as a series of interviews conducted by the present author and Professor Muzaffar Olimov in March-June 2004 in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan under the IOM (International Organization for Migration) program.

<sup>2</sup> See: I. Haqnazar, *Migranty iz Badakhshana. Programma podderzhki i razvitiia obshchestv gornyykh raionov (proekt Fonda Aga-khana)*, 2004 (as manuscript).

<sup>3</sup> See: *Vneshniaia trudovaia migratsiia v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike*, IOM, 2003.

## Historical Context

Mountain dwellers have always engaged in seasonal migrations, driving cattle to seasonal pastures, and other seasonal work to make a living. Production in the mountains is much less developed than in the valleys, while the natural increment in the population is rather high. Land and food shortages and the need to look for a way to make a living have long forced the mountain dwellers to leave their homes in search of temporary earnings or to emigrate.

### Kyrgyzstan

In the past, the main form of seasonal work for the indigenous peoples was transporting cargoes on camels. Very poor Kyrgyz, who due to circumstances had lost all their cattle and were unable to

lead a nomadic way of life, were hired to cultivate land for a certain percentage of the harvest.<sup>4</sup> Seasonal work as hired hands was always a rare phenomenon for the mountain-dwelling Kyrgyz, and in Soviet times this kind of work disappeared entirely. But after the U.S.S.R. collapsed and its employment system fell apart, unemployment rose and personal incomes abruptly dropped. Between 1993 and 1994, labor migration in Kyrgyzstan began to grow (including among the mountain dwellers), which was prompted by the difference in income level in the CIS countries, and alleviation of the border conditions with China, which is leading to greater opportunities for border and transit trade. Its main trends are shuttle trade and construction. Peasants leaving in search of seasonal farm work and specialists with diplomas and qualified workers to find jobs at Russia's industrial enterprises followed a little further behind.

### Tajikistan

The main territories in the Bukhara and Kokand khanates which supplied seasonal workers were Baljuvan, Kulob, and Hissar, but particularly Karategin and the upper reaches of the Zeravshan River. For example, Russian researcher A.P. Fedchenko frequently mentioned seasonal workers from Karategin. In 1871, he met many Karategins in Ferghana and Tashkent, who worked there as seasonal workers and day laborers.<sup>5</sup> V.P. Nalivkin, who described the Ferghana Valley shortly after Kokand joined Russia, also talked about the Karategins in Ferghana.<sup>6</sup> At one time, A.A. Semenov also wrote about the Karategin seasonal workers.<sup>7</sup> N.A. Kisliakov explained their migration by "...agrarian repopulation of Karategin at the existing level of development of productive forces, the shortage and absolute lack of land among a certain percentage of its population, the overall poverty, and the surplus of manpower."<sup>8</sup> At the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, between 25% and 75% of the men<sup>9</sup> left certain settlements on the upper reaches of the Zeravshan every year in search of a living, primarily in the Ferghana Valley. The main spheres of occupation were construction, humping loads, and working at cotton-cleaning mills.<sup>10</sup>

We already mentioned above that seasonal work as a phenomenon disappeared during Soviet times. But during the civil war in Tajikistan a reverse process began, the country's mountain regions began receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees, which caused a rapid increase in population in these areas, an increase in the number of unemployed, aggravation of economic and social problems, the constant threat of starvation, and, as a result, rapid growth in foreign labor emigration. Between 1995 and 1999, its abrupt increase was observed on the upper reaches of the Zeravshan, in the Rasht (former Karategin) Valley, and in other mountainous regions of the country. But since 2000, the socioeconomic situation in the republic began to improve, personal income has been gradually rising, and the labor market is expanding, which has stabilized the migration situation.

<sup>4</sup> See: V.P. Nalivkin, "Tuzemtsy ranshe i teper," in: *Musul'manskaia Sredniata Azia. Traditsionalizm i XX vek*, Moscow, 2004, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> See: A.P. Fedchenko, "Puteshestvie v Turkestan. V. Kokandskom khanstve," in: *Izvestia Obshchestva liubiteli estestvoznaniia, antropologii i etnografii*, XI, 1875, p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> See: V.P. Nalivkin, *Kratkaia istoriia Kokandskogo khanstva*, Moscow, 2003, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> See: A.A. Semenov, *Etnograficheskie ocherki Zarafshanskikh gor, Karategina i Darvaza*, St. Petersburg, 1903, p. 67.

<sup>8</sup> N.A. Kisliakov. *Ocherki po istorii Karategina. K istorii Tadzhikistana*, Stalinabad, 1954, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> See: V.V. Dynin, "Ocherk byta gortsev verkhoviev Zerafshana," in: *Izvestiia Turkestanskogo otdeleniia Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva*, Vol. X, Iss. 1, Tashkent, 1914, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> See: S. Gubaeva, *Naselenie Ferganskoi doliny v kontse XIX- nachale XX veka*, Fan Publishers, Tashkent, 1991, pp. 60-63.

A slightly different picture was designated in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAR), where the level of labor migration is just as high as in other mountainous regions of the country, but where the situation has been alleviated to a certain extent by mass humanitarian aid to the population from the Aga Khan Foundation. But since 2000, this Foundation, the UNDP, and other international organizations have begun changing their strategy and switching to technical assistance and the implementation of development projects. The halting of large-scale humanitarian aid, withdrawal of the Russian border troops in 2004-2005, and the ensuing reduction in jobs has stimulated a further increase in labor migration from the GBAR.

### Afghanistan

In the first half of the 20th century, a large number of the country's mountain seasonal workers set out from Badakhshan, Hazarajat, Panjsher, and Nuristan in search of a living. At that time, the same types of temporary labor migration as today were widespread.

They included:

- Long annual trips to bazaars in West Badakhshan, Takhar, and Kattagan for purchases accompanied by employment on the way at temporary and casual jobs in order to earn more money to buy the needed wares.
- The migration of individuals or entire families to find seasonal work. As the sources testify, in the 1940s-1950s, landless and poor peasants also went beyond Badakhshan with their families to Kattagan and other provinces where they gathered harvests at estates and large farms, receiving 1/10 and 1/8 of what was gathered for their efforts.
- The migration of individuals or entire families to make a living between fall and spring, that is after the end of the farm season in the mountains. Migrants most often engage in hard labor (including humping loads and grazing cattle).<sup>11</sup> At the end of the 1950s, the wages a shepherd at a large cattle-breeding farm earned were different in every province. In Herat, a shepherd received between 180 and 200 Afghani a month, in Kattagan between 150 and 200, and in Badakhshan between 70 and 150.<sup>12</sup>
- Migration of men to the cities in search of work. The most popular cities are still Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.

Researchers agree that the particularly high level of migration in the mountains of Badakhshan was caused by the limited land resources and the parceling out of inherited endowments, as a result of which their size and grain production per capita gradually decreased and led to a shortage of agricultural products. According to some assessments, before the war (before 1979), agriculture in the province met only 50% of the population's demand for food. (And in the 1920s, in some high mountainous regions, for example, in the villages of the Koran and Munjan districts, there was only enough bread for ten months of the year. The situation was the same in the Shugnan District and Vakhani uezd.<sup>13</sup>) The hostilities had a negative impact on the production of food and indirectly increased labor migration. For example, an increase in it was noted in 1992 after the mujaheds came to power, and in 1996,

<sup>11</sup> See: A.D. Davydov, *Agrarny stroi Afghanistana*, Moscow, 1967, p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> See: O.R. de Baer, *Afghan Interlude*, London, 1957, pp. 130-131.

<sup>13</sup> See: *Afghanistan na perekhodnom etape*, Moscow, 2002, pp. 121-122.

when the combat action between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance led to a 40% decrease in the output of agricultural products.<sup>14</sup>

The migration of Afghan nomads was unusual. Let us take a look at it using the example of commerce in Badakhshan. The regular exchange of goods between the local peasants (nuts, fruit, wheat, rice, imported fabric, and wool) and the nomads who came from Kattagan during the summer season to Northern Badakhshan, to the region of Lake Shiva, greatly promoted the formation of trade migration among the mountain-dwelling Pashtuns. Immense growth in this and other business migration and the transformation of traditional caravan trade into contemporary commercial migration were assisted by the formation of a contraband market in the country. The transportation and sale of smuggled goods from and into Pakistan and Iran became the basic sphere of activity of many mountain-dwelling Pashtuns, who were compelled to leave the country due to war, starvation, and collapse of their former sphere of employment. On the whole, they participate in transporting goods along the main Peshawar-Karachi highway, many work in the Persian Gulf countries, primarily in the UAE (Dubai, Abu Dhabi), Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>15</sup>

Before the 1980s, there were no more than 5,000 people beyond Afghanistan who were mainly engaged in trade and other types of business, and more than 1.5 million nomad-*kuchi* who left in search of seasonal work.<sup>16</sup> Beginning in the 1980s, the country was engulfed by waves of forced migration which tossed millions of refugees beyond its borders. By the mid-1990s, some of them began to adapt to the situation that developed, look for work and find it in the countries these people had been forced to emigrate to. Since this time, we can talk about the formation of foreign labor migration from Afghanistan. In recent years, it has begun to noticeably exceed domestic migration, a clear trend has formed not only in its growth, but also in its transformation into one of the most important types of the population's activity. Correspondingly, the attitude toward it is constantly changing. Whereas earlier, Afghans frowned on taking jobs in other countries and saw this as an extremely undesirable phenomenon, peasants are now selling land to send their children to work abroad.

The highest level of labor emigration is found in the large cities (Kabul, Herat), the country's mountainous regions (Afghan Badakhshan, Panjsher, Parvon, Nuristan, and so on), border provinces (Herat, Kunar, Jalalabad, Paktica, Kandahar, and so on), and the poorest regions (Hazarajat, and so on).

### Pakistan

In the mountainous regions of the country, seasonal work also assumed the same forms as in Pakistan. The military factor was of great significance for its transformation into contemporary labor migration. The upheavals which accompanied the formation of Pakistan (1947) gave rise to flows of refugees, defined the routes of departure, gradually formed spheres of employment, and created migrant networks.

A significant factor in the development of labor migration was the demographic explosion, which led to a drastic shortage of land, stimulating in turn the departure of redundant work hands in search of a living. During the 20 years since the country gained its independence, the amount of land per family has decreased 2.1-fold.<sup>17</sup> The rapid increase in population prompted mountain dwellers to look

<sup>14</sup> See: *Afganistan*, Moscow, 2002, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with employee of *Asia Foundation*, Islamabad, May 2004.

<sup>16</sup> See: "Migration and Development," AISA Afghan Investment Support Agency [[http://www.aisa.org.af/migration\\_delawri.htm](http://www.aisa.org.af/migration_delawri.htm)].

<sup>17</sup> See: *Trudovye resursy Vostoka. Demografiko-ekonomicheskie problemy*, Moscow, 1987, pp. 102, 191.

for jobs first in the cities, and then beyond the country. This process was stimulated by the British policy aimed at attracting foreign manpower in the 1950s, which promoted the organization of a state system for the departure of Pakistanis abroad (the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, and the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation).<sup>18</sup> Labor migration began to rapidly grow during the oil boom in the Persian Gulf. (Between 1971 and 1984, it increased three-fold.<sup>19</sup>) Its level is highest from the mountainous regions of Punjab, Beluchistan, and Vaziristan.

## Evaluation of the Dimensions of Labor Migration. Directions of Departure

Due to the shortage of data, it is difficult to carry out a comparative analysis of the influence of labor migration on the development of present-day mountain communities, although this problem is attracting ever greater attention. During the past few years, several studies have been carried out in Tajikistan on this topic, but they all looked at migration on a nationwide scale.<sup>20</sup> The only special study which looks at the influence of these processes on the mountainous regions is "Migrants from Badakhshan," which was carried out within the framework of the Support and Development Programs of Mountain Communities (2004).<sup>21</sup>

Labor migration is also being actively studied in Kyrgyzstan. For example, the IOM organized the *Internal Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic* (2001) and *External Labor Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic* (2003) studies.<sup>22</sup> The numerous studies by Professor A.B. Elebaeva<sup>23</sup> and other researchers<sup>24</sup> became well known. But research of the influence of migration on the society providing the migrants (departure from the country) has still not reached the necessary level.

In recent years, regional projects for studying migration of different country compositions have begun in Central Asia. For example, in 2004, the IOM conducted a study project called *Labor Migration in the Central Asian Countries, Russian Federation, Afghanistan, and Pakistan*.<sup>25</sup> The same year, on the initiative of UNESCO, the International Migration in Central Asia Project was carried out.<sup>26</sup> But both these projects, in which the author of this article participated, did not single out the mountainous regions as a special topic of study.

In Pakistan, labor migration has long attracted the attention of researchers. Individual anthropological works have been published devoted to the movement of nationalities and tribes living in the

<sup>18</sup> See: *Emigration Ordinance, 1979 and Emigration Rules*, Updated by Nazir Ahmad Aasi, Islamabad, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Data of the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment of Pakistan.

<sup>20</sup> See: S. Olimova, I. Bosk, *Trudovaia migratsiia iz Tadjikistana*, IOM, 2003; A. Aminov, T. Bozrikova, et al., *Tadjikistan: problemy trudovoi migratsii i vozmozhnye podkhody k formirovaniu politiki*, Dushanbe, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> See: I. Haqnazar, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> See: *Vnutrenniaia migratsiia v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike*, IOM, 2001; *Vneshniaia trudovaia migratsiia v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike*, IOM, Bishkek, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> See: A. Elebaeva, "Migratsionnye protsessy i rynek truda v Kyrgyzstane," in: *Migratsiia i rynek truda v stranakh Srednei Azii*, ed. by L.P. Maksakova, Moscow, Tashkent, 2002; A. Elebaeva, "Labor Migration in Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (27), 2004.

<sup>24</sup> See: G.V. Kumskov, *Zakonomernosti i osobennosti razvitiia migratsionnykh protsessov Kyrgyzstana na sovremenom etape*, Bishkek, 2002; *Kyrgyzstan: problemy v sfere trudovoi migratsii i vozmozhnye podkhody k formirovaniu politiki*, Bishkek, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> See: *Trudovaia migratsiia v stranakh Tsentral'noi Azii, Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Afganistane i Pakistane*, Analytical Review, IOM, Almaty, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> See: *Materialy Tsentral'no-Aziatskoi konferentsii UNESCO po mezhdunarodnoi migratsii*, Almaty, May 2005.

mountains. In 2004, the IOM office in this country organized a labor migration study. But it was not aimed at defining the influence of this process on the development of the mountainous regions.

The current migration situation in Afghanistan has been studied the least, where there are the fewest statistics. Apart from the IOM studies on women and children trafficking, reports, and other information from the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, IOM, and NGOs, there are no data on migration.

What is more, the migration statistics in all the countries under review are extremely scanty. In such post-Soviet countries as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, keeping track of labor migration is made difficult due to the non-visa system with the main destination countries, Russia and Kazakhstan. So household surveys and sociological polls are the main sources of data. In Pakistan, a sufficiently complete record of foreign labor migration has been kept since 1978, but there are no data on illegal migration, which is especially widespread in the mountainous regions.

For the above reasons, it is very difficult to determine the volume of labor migration from the mountainous regions of each country. It can be estimated only approximately, making use of data supplied by the local power agencies (if they gather them), indirect indices, corresponding information from local NGOs, and the results of scientific studies.

The level of labor emigration in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan is the highest in the country, from 17% to 30% of the able-bodied population, and it is 20% in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region. More than 34% of the households in the GBAR have at least one migrant.<sup>27</sup> The main host country is the Russian Federation (this is where 97.6% of migrants looking for work go). Their numbers are much fewer in other countries: in Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates—0.8% each, in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan—0.4% each.<sup>28</sup>

According to the Migration Service Department under the Kyrgyz Republic Foreign Ministry, overall labor migration from the country exceeds 350,000 people. The highest level is observed in the mountainous Chatkal area and in the Osh Region, and the highest departure level in the Osh Region is noted in the city of Kara-Kulja and in the Uzgen District. It is high and constant in the Alai District.

The main host countries are Russia and Kazakhstan. According to the data of the Kyrgyz embassies in these countries, there are more than 200,000 Kyrgyz labor migrants in the Russian Federation, between 50,000 and 100,000 in Kazakhstan, and 20,000 in the United Arab Emirates.<sup>29</sup> According to Professor A. Elebaeva, two thirds of the labor migrants from the Osh Region go to Russia and one third to Kazakhstan.

As we noted above, the volume of labor migration from Afghanistan is very difficult to account for, since it is still impossible to clearly separate labor from forced and traditional (seasonal) migration. It is not clear who should be counted as a refugee, who as a labor migrant, and who as a nomad (*kuchi*). Nor is it clear who should be counted as a citizen of Afghanistan, and who as a stateless person or the citizen of another state. The lack or insufficient number of laws, regulatory legal acts, and official instructions when drawing up national legislation hinders the organization of record-keeping in this sphere. But according to experts, the total number of Afghan citizens who have become refugees and are engaged in labor activity beyond their country amounts to 1,500,000-1,700,000 people. In recent years, strictly labor migration has also appeared. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in 2002-2003, 25,000-27,000 people annually left Afghanistan in search of work.<sup>30</sup> The main countries receiving them are Iran and Pakistan. The most attractive cities in Iran are Tehran and Mashhad.

<sup>27</sup> See: I. Haqnazar, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> See: *Materialy oprosa migrantov*, Sharq Center, Dushanbe, March 2004 (as manuscript).

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Elebaeva, *Migratsionnye protsessy i rynek truda v Kyrgyzstane*, p. 49.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with employee of the Afghanistan Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Kabul, April 2004.

In Pakistan, a sufficiently complete record is kept of legal labor migration. According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, the total number of those leaving in search of work to all countries of the world reaches 4-5 million. But there are no separate data for the mountainous and lowland regions. Pakistanis mainly work in the Middle East countries, 45%, Western Europe, 29%, and the U.S., 23%.<sup>31</sup>

## Reasons for Migration

At present, labor migration from the mountainous regions of the countries under review is caused by the shortage of food, demographic pressure on the labor market, unemployment, and poverty. For example, according to the 2000 data, in certain regions of Afghan Badakhshan, there is not enough food for 2 to 6 months of the year.<sup>32</sup> In the GBAR in 1999, 54% of children were chronically undernourished (according to the weight-to-height ratio index). Admittedly, in 2005, the number of such children dropped to 32%.<sup>33</sup> According to the *Migrants from Badakhshan* study, the main reasons for leaving in search of work were the following: 40% of the surveyed migrants noted the insufficient supply of food for their families, 41% referred to unemployment, 17% wanted to earn money for study, to buy a house, to cover wedding expenses, and so on, and 2% hoped to open their own business.<sup>34</sup>

## Migrant Profile (Gender, Age, Qualifications, Occupation, Period of Work)

The gender structure of labor migration depends on the countries and on the altitude of the departure regions. Men make up the absolute majority of migrants from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Eighty-five percent of men and 15% of women leave Tajikistan in search of work,<sup>35</sup> and 60% and 40% leave Kyrgyzstan, respectively.<sup>36</sup> But recently, a greater number of women from the high mountainous areas are being incorporated into this process.

The data of the *Migrants from Badakhshan* study give us an idea of the age of those leaving these regions: young people between the ages of 15 and 29 make up 56.5% of the migrants from the GBAR, and 36.7% are between 30 and 45.<sup>37</sup> A similar picture developed in Afghanistan and Pakistan. There are many more middle-aged people among the Kyrgyz migrants.

At the same time, a significant difference is noted among the countries in level of education of the migrants. A high level of education is characteristic of emigrants from the mountainous regions of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. For example, 32% of those who leave in search of work from Badakhshan

<sup>31</sup> See: P. Tahir, *Diaspora's Implication for Human Resources in Pakistan*, Paper for National Seminar "Labor Migration and Socio-Economic Development", Islamabad, 23-24 September, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> See: *Afghanistan na perekhodnom etape*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>33</sup> See: D. Nygaard, D. Jumakhonov, K. Hendrickx, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> See: I. Haqnazar, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> See: S. Olimova, I. Bosk, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> See: A. Elebaeva, "Labor Migration in Kyrgyzstan."

<sup>37</sup> See: I. Haqnazar, op. cit., p. 26.



have higher education, 23% have incomplete higher and secondary special education, and 45% have secondary education. But they rarely work in their fields of specialization. They are most frequently compelled to do low-skilled work, since they do not have the required qualifications for the host countries.<sup>38</sup> Admittedly, in recent years, there has been a rapid increase in the qualification of migrants who have assimilated fields of specialization in demand in the countries where they have come to work. A similar situation is also developing among those leaving Kyrgyzstan.

The level of education among migrants from the mountainous regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan is not high. According to the 2004 data, it was equal to 41.5% in Pakistan as a whole, but in the northern high mountainous areas it was much lower. Nevertheless, qualified workers make up more than 50% of the country's labor migrants.<sup>39</sup> According to the available data, 40% of Pakistani migrants are engaged in unskilled labor in the countries of the Middle East.<sup>40</sup>

Labor migration from Afghanistan is represented mainly by people with a primary education or who are entirely illiterate (according to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, 83% of refugees fall into this category).<sup>41</sup> Only one out of a thousand migrants working in Iran has the proper qualifications.<sup>42</sup> The lack of education and low skill level are the reasons why most Afghani migrants are employed at low-paying jobs.

The spheres of employment in which labor migrants from the mountainous regions of Tajikistan specialize are construction (48%), commerce (20%), unskilled jobs (26%), and agriculture (6%).<sup>43</sup> And 75% of those who left the Osh Region of Kyrgyzstan are so-called shuttle traders, 16% work in construction, and the rest found jobs in other spheres.<sup>44</sup>

Afghans of all ethnic groups from the mountainous regions are occupied in difficult, hazardous, and low-skilled jobs, including lifting work (especially in Karachi), mainly in transportation and construction. They also work in the service sphere, commerce, at brick factories, and in chemical enterprises, in particular those manufacturing plastics and items made from them. Their salaries are 20-30% of the amount received by residents.<sup>45</sup> The percentage of day laborers in Afghan migration is high. In the summer and fall season, they are hired by rich farm owners in Iran and Pakistan, where they carry out the heaviest farm work for a miserly wage, and those who are older mainly engage in commerce and garbage collection.<sup>46</sup>

The structure of Pakistani labor migration significantly differs from the Afghan. Production workers (75%) prevail in it, including vehicle drivers, builders, etc.<sup>47</sup>

## Dependence of Migration Flow Characteristics on the Altitude of the Exodus Regions

The study showed that the type and profile of migration depends on the altitude of the exodus regions. Migration from medium-altitude areas can be singled out, certain regions of the Sogd Region

<sup>38</sup> See: I. Haqnazar, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with director of the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Islamabad, April 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Data of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation.

<sup>41</sup> See: OCM Kabul. *Operational Information Summary Report* 28/03/04.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Afghanistan Deputy Minister for Planning, Kabul, April 2004.

<sup>43</sup> See: I. Khaknazar, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>44</sup> See: A. Elebaeva, *Migratsionnye protsessy i rynek truda v Kyrgyzstane*, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with an employee of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Kabul, April 2004.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with the chief of border police of Sherkhon-Bandar, Sherkhon-Bandar, April 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Data of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation.

and Rasht Valley (Tajikistan), Osh and Batken regions (Kyrgyzstan), Parvon (Afghanistan), and Northern Punjab (Pakistan). It is characterized by the prevalence of seasonal workers, a relatively high level of qualification among the migrants, a significant percentage of shuttle traders, and relatively large money transfers.

Slightly different parameters are characteristic of migration from such high-altitude regions as the GBAR of Tajikistan, Afghan Badakhshan, several regions of Pakistan, and so on. In particular, migrants from these areas are young and thus have a lower level of qualification, while a large number are single, there is a relatively high percentage of women, a small number of those participating in commercial activity, and relatively small money transfers to relatives remaining at home.

But the most noticeable difference is in the amount of time these migrants stay in the host country, as well as in economic efficiency. Migration from the medium-altitude areas is mainly seasonal. Migrants are mainly men who leave for seasonal work (March thru November) and return home in the winter. Most of them have families and leave the household in charge of the women, adolescents, or other male relatives. During the four winter months they live at home and carry out part of the most difficult farm work. The economic efficiency of labor migration from the medium-altitude areas is higher than from the high-altitude areas due to the lower travel costs and fewer expenses during the winter season (the “dead” season for migrants). But the most important factor is keeping close ties with the family, so migrants try to send home as much of their earnings as possible.

Departure from the high mountainous areas is characterized by longer periods of stay in the host country, a weakening or loss of ties with families due to their remoteness, inaccessibility, poor communication, much higher level of so-called net emigration, and consequently smaller money transfers home.

## Influence of Migration on the Housekeeping and Economy of the Mountainous Regions. Money Transfers

Money transfers improve the situation of households in which there are migrants. The significance of labor migration income for the mountainous regions is shown by the fact that it is the main source of existence for 50%-60% of all the households in Gorny Badakhshan (Tajikistan).<sup>48</sup> The amount of hard currency transfers depends on the number of migrants, the size of their income, and their inclination to save during their stay abroad, as well as on how close their ties are with their families.

According to poll data, the most popular ways to transfer money are the following: bank transfers—54.8%, passing money on via acquaintances—33.2%, carrying out currency transactions (*Hawala*)—5.2%, taking it home themselves—24.8%, refused to answer—2.8%. What is more, many migrants return to their native land with expensive items (79% of the respondents said that they brought them for their own families and as presents for relatives).<sup>49</sup> During 2003, money transfers amounting

<sup>48</sup> See: I. Khaknazar, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>49</sup> See: S. Olimova, M. Olimov, *Mezhdunarodnaia migratsiia v postsovetском Tadzhikistane*, Analytical Report, in: *Materialy Tsentral'no-Aziatskoi konferentsii UNESCO po mezhdunarodnoi migratsii*, p. 24.

to 256 million dollars came into Tajikistan through banks alone.<sup>50</sup> In 2004, all types of income from labor migration reached 500 million dollars, which amounted to 22% of our country's GDP.<sup>51</sup>

Afghan migrants rarely transfer money through banks. The main ways for transferring it are Hawala, taking it themselves, or sending it with relatives and acquaintances. Due to the absence of official statistics, it is difficult to assess how much this money amounts to. Nevertheless, based on the data of Afghan Sarai Shazda exchange companies, it reaches 197,300,300 dollars.<sup>52</sup>

Money transfers are the second most important source of revenue in Pakistan. In the 2002-2003 fiscal year, migrants transferred 423,685,000 dollars to the country, and between June 2003 and March 2004, 2,840,450 dollars.<sup>53</sup>

Studies in Tajikistan and Pakistan showed that the increase in income of migrants' families does not prompt them to slacken off their own efforts. On the contrary, relatives who remain at home work longer and harder, and sometimes even hire people to compensate for the absence of the most able-bodied members of the family. But observations showed that labor migration is leading to a deterioration in the quality of manpower and to "depopulation of the village."

Agriculture in the mountains requires immense physical expenditures. Work which used to be done by family members who have left in search of money is most often compensated for not by introducing modern technology, but by involving and intensifying female and child labor. This prevents an upswing in agriculture and makes it harder to cultivate food crops and develop animal husbandry. What is more, the earnings of migrants have an ineffectual impact on the increase in production, in particular on the development of small and medium businesses.

But there is an indirect tie between the transfers of migrants and business development. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is carried out on the basis of the Hawala system, which is used as a way to finance wholesale-retail trade. Its mechanism is as follows: in the host country, say Iran, a labor migrant, say from Afghanistan, approaches an agent—a *dalol* or a dealer-*Hawaladar*, to whom he gives money intended for relatives back home. The *Hawaladar* approaches a merchant-*dukandar*, or banker/moneychanger (*sarrof*). The *sarrof* passes it on to a merchant. The merchant buys goods with this money, which he sends to his colleague in Afghanistan. The latter sells the goods he receives and, from the money procured, gives the family of the labor migrant the amount the latter originally handed over. Everything is recorded in writing at every stage of the transfer. In other words, the money transfer chain and simultaneous financing of the commercial activity consists of the following links: labor migrant (*korgar*)—agent (*dalol*)—dealer (*Hawaladar*)—moneychanger (*sarrof*)—wholesale merchant (*tudjor*)—retail merchant (*dukandar*)—family of the labor migrant. During the transfer, the money is circulated, finances wholesale purchases in the host country, is again converted into money (during retail sale of the imported goods in Afghanistan), and ultimately reaches the family of the labor migrant.<sup>54</sup> But this does not mean that the labor migrant waits for his money to turn over. Transfers occur instantly, but at the same time they help to finance the commercial activity of Afghan merchants, participate in currency exchange and support the Afghani exchange rate.

In this way, transfers by migrants by means of Hawala work in the same way as bank transfers. They lessen the pressure on the state's payment balance; they constitute a very significant supplement to domestic savings and reduce the foreign currency deficit; and they support the employment sphere

<sup>50</sup> In 2002, the total amount of transfers amounted to 75 million dollars. The dramatic increase in currency transfers in 2003 is explained by the fact that favorable conditions for migrants to transfer money through Tajikistan's banks did not develop until the beginning of 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with employee of the World Bank mission in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, March 2005.

<sup>52</sup> See: *Migration and Development*.

<sup>53</sup> Data of the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment of Pakistan.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with merchants and *Hawaladars* in Kabul and Kunduz, April 2004. The information on Hawala as a vital source of financing small commercial business in Afghanistan was confirmed by French researcher Alessandro Mansutti at a presentation of his book on the migration of Hazars in Kabul in April 2004.

in the country by creating jobs, since bazaars, which mostly survive on migrant transfers, promote the formation of the commercial, transportation, service sphere, and public catering infrastructure.<sup>55</sup> What is more, this way of transferring money helps to bring food into the mountainous regions by means of the increase in bazaar trade. The growth in bazaars in Afghan Badakhshan noted by researchers is in our opinion related to the formation of contemporary labor emigration using Hawala as the main channel for transferring migrants' savings. At the same time, this money is becoming the main legal source of financing for promoting economic development of the mountainous regions.

But the main problem resolved by this income is supplying food and meeting people's other basic needs. Along with this, the households of migrants are much better off than others, and are provided with durable items, in particular, expensive radio and television equipment, and transportation vehicles.<sup>56</sup> The family nature of migration in the mountains is becoming universal: almost every such family is involved in familial and communal relations. For example, in Tajikistan 3/4 of migrant households directly or indirectly help several of their relatives' households (25.8% of the surveyed migrants render this kind of help continuously, 46.3% from time to time).<sup>57</sup> In this respect, labor migration has not led to individual families (those in which migrants live) getting rich quick, and property differentiation remains almost the same. In other words, labor migration in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan should not be viewed as a means of quick prosperity for the chosen few, but as a strategy of survival for mountain communities as a whole.

### Conclusions

The influence of labor migration on the life of mountain communities is multifaceted and contradictory. Money transfers to relatives who remain at home help to boost trade and indirectly support the employment sphere. This is shown for example by the development of markets in recent years in the Afghan and Tajik parts of Badakhshan, as well as in Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, labor migration has not become a major source of savings and, consequently, of economic development. The mass exodus of young men (accompanied by the lack of modern technology in agriculture) is causing the spread and intensification of ineffectual and backbreaking female and child labor.

In the high mountainous areas, the migration of men is gradually leading to a decrease in these regions' own production of food, which is not fully compensated for by the import of food by migrants from outside due to the remoteness, inaccessibility, and high cost of delivering goods. Labor migrants from such regions prefer to invest their earnings in moving their families to medium-altitude areas or to the valleys, where life is much easier. In this way, labor migration from the high mountainous areas is triggering a collapse in mountain communities and degradation of the regions where they live.

Disputes about the impact (positive or negative) of labor migration on the life of these communities are legitimate and necessary. But whatever the case, the study results show that labor migration, which is highly efficacious under current conditions in the short and medium term, will lead in the longer term to mountain dwellers moving to the valleys and depopulation of the high mountainous regions.

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<sup>55</sup> For more details on the history of bazaars in Afghanistan, see: A.D. Davydov, *Traditsionny rynek Afganistana (vozniknovenie i modernizatsiia promotovarykh bazarov)*, Moscow, 1999.

<sup>56</sup> See: *Materialy oprosa migrantov*.

<sup>57</sup> See: S. Olimova, I. Bosk, op. cit., p. 93.