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МАРКАЗИ  
ЗАХИРАВИИ  
МУҲОҶИРОН



MIGRANT  
RESOURCE  
CENTRE



# FINAL REPORT

MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE

Needs Assessment Study on Information  
Needs of Potential Migrants and Returnees  
in Tajikistan

The project is funded by the European Union

Implemented by



IMPROVING MIGRATION  
MANAGEMENT IN THE SILK ROUTES



ICMPD

International Centre for  
Migration Policy Development



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ATCT</b>	State Institution Adult Training Centre of Tajikistan
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FwE</b>	Female with Experience
<b>FwoE</b>	Female without Experience
<b>GBAO</b>	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Centre
<b>ICMPD</b>	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
<b>ICPRMW</b>	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
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<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IO</b>	International Organisation
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>KI</b>	Key Informant
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>MoLMEP</b>	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population
<b>MRC</b>	Migrant Resource Centre
<b>MS</b>	Migration Service
<b>MtDP</b>	Mid-term Development Program of the Republic of Tajikistan 2016-2020
<b>MwE</b>	Male with Experience
<b>MwoE</b>	Male without Experience
<b>NDS 2030</b>	National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030
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<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PEA</b>	Private Employment Agency
<b>Pre-Departure Centres</b>	Centres on Consulting and Pre-Departure Training of Labour Migrants
<b>RF</b>	Russian Federation
<b>RT</b>	Republic of Tajikistan
<b>UNCMW</b>	United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers
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# GLOSSARY

## GENERAL TERMS

<b>Migrant with experience / Experienced migrant</b>	for the purposes of this study, migrant with experience / experienced migrant is a returnee who (has already worked and/or lived abroad at least once and) intends to migrate again (irrespective of being at the potential, intending or outgoing stage).
<b>Migrant without experience</b>	for the purposes of this study, a migrant without experience is a potential, intending, or outgoing migrant, who has not previously worked and/or lived abroad.
<b>Migrant worker / Labour migrant</b>	“a person who is to be engaged, is engaged, or had been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national”. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Intending migrant</b>	any person who intends to move permanently or temporarily outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Outgoing migrant</b>	for the purposes of this study, and outgoing migrant is an intending migrant in the process of leaving their country to migrate.
<b>Potential migrant</b>	for the purposes of this study, a potential migrant has the desire to migrate, but it is uncertain whether they will act or have the capacity to act upon this desire.
<b>Returning migrant / Returnee</b>	“persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short term or long term) in another country and who are intending to stay in the country for at least one year” <sup>3</sup>
<b>Youth</b>	people aged 14 to 30 years old inclusive <sup>4</sup>

## TAJIKISTAN SPECIFIC TERMS

<b>Mahalla committees [Кумитаи маҳалла]</b>	“Makhallas” are “traditional organizational structures at the community level that gather and deal with social issues.” <sup>5</sup>
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<sup>1</sup> International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant workers and Members of Their Families.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted for the purposes of this Report from the definition of “International Migrant”: International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2019), “Glossary on Migration”.

<sup>3</sup> IOM 2019.

<sup>4</sup> The Republic of Tajikistan. Law No. 52 dated 15 July, 2004, “On Youth and State Youth Policy.”

<sup>5</sup> Tajikistan Ministry of Water Resources and Reclamation (2012), “Generic Environmental Management Plan”, E4015, 5 August 2012.

## Jamoat [ҷамоат]

“Makhallas” are “traditional organizational structures at the community level that gather and deal with social issues.”<sup>5</sup>

“Mahalla Committees” are a regulated “local public association of citizens” that have legal status and are established in every village.<sup>6</sup> “Jamoat are rural, self-governing bodies [...] jamoats assist citizens to fulfil their rights to participate in the management of the activities of the State and society and unite them to solve social and economic problems on their territory. They assist tax authorities in collecting revenues on property, land and transport. They examine complaints, register them and take appropriate measures. Complaints may concern group problems – such as the use of water, land and waste – or personal disputes, such as marriage, divorce or neighbourly quarrels”.<sup>7</sup>

“Many citizens first approach the mahalla chair or his/her staff and then the jamoat and only afterwards do they turn to the police or the courts.”<sup>8</sup>

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## Hukumat [ҳукумат]

Hukumats are the district government (that sits above the Jamoat).

## RUSSIAN SPECIFIC TERMS

### Work permit (патент [patent])

Patent is a state issued document purchased by citizens from non-visa countries (e.g., Tajikistan) that allows them to work on the territory of the Russian Federation. Migrant workers pay fees on a monthly basis. The price of a patent varies across regions in the Russian Federation. A patent holder can work both for private and legal persons, according to the profession specified in the patent.

### Residence permit (регистрация [registrazia])

Registratzia is a residence permit (temporary or permanent) that requires a person to be registered at a specific address. Without a place of residence, including the permission and documents of the owner of that residence, a work permit cannot be applied for.

### Re-entry ban (запрет [zapret])

Zapret is a consequence of the Russian migration control policy. The period of the ban may last from 3 to 10 years (including an indefinite ban for contracting infectious diseases) prohibiting migrant workers the entry to the Russian Federation. It is not necessary to be deported to receive a re-entry ban.

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<sup>6</sup> Tajikistan Ministry of Water Resources and Reclamation 2012; Helvetas Tajikistan (2021), “What we do”, online, at [https://www.helvetas.org/en/tajikistan/what-we-do/how-we-work/our-projects/Asia/Tajikistan/tajikistan\\_migration](https://www.helvetas.org/en/tajikistan/what-we-do/how-we-work/our-projects/Asia/Tajikistan/tajikistan_migration); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2021), “Gender and Land Rights Database: Country Profile: Tajikistan”, online, at [http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/customary-law/traditional-authorities-and-customary-institutions/en/?country\\_iso3=TJK](http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/customary-law/traditional-authorities-and-customary-institutions/en/?country_iso3=TJK).

<sup>7</sup> FAO 2021.

<sup>8</sup> FAO 2021.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was undertaken under the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) project “Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries” and implemented by the Human Rights Centre (HRC). The main objective of the study was to understand the information needs of Tajik migrants, including how the existing government structures can utilise the available resources to reach migrants and how the newly established MRC can support migrants’ needs and the government, including through pre-departure information.

Tajikistan is one of the poorest republics in Central Asia. Remittances from migration constitute the largest input of foreign currency and is a poverty reduction strategy in the country. The majority of the population reside in rural areas, with only 27.7 percent residing in urban spaces.<sup>9</sup> Tajikistan has a young population, with 62 percent of the population being of working age (16-64 years old),<sup>10</sup> however, 55 percent of the population are not in the labour force.<sup>11</sup> Limited economic opportunity, unemployment, and poverty contribute to circular migration from Tajikistan to mainly Russia.

Labour migration from Tajikistan is significant, with around 14 percent of the Tajik labour force residing abroad. According to the statistic of the Government of Tajikistan, the percentage of female migrants in 2019 was 14.5 percent, and 13 percent in the first half of 2020.<sup>12</sup> Most of these workers are from rural areas<sup>13</sup> and over 90 percent migrate to the Russian Federation.<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to get a full picture of the other destination countries of Tajik migrants due to a variance

in available data, the small number of people migrating, and potentially irregular migration, stay and/or work. However, during the literature review, the countries that have been identified are Belarus, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Turkey, UAE, Ukraine, USA and Uzbekistan. During interviews, migrants knew of people who had also migrated to Japan and Latvia, while Key Informants (KIs) additionally identified Canada, the Czech Republic, Poland, Qatar and Romania as destination states for Tajik migrants. Finally, the State Agency for Employment Abroad had organised group employment to Bulgaria, Denmark, Norway and Sweden in addition to some of the countries mentioned above.

Those intending to migrate predominantly rely on friends and relatives (77 percent) for information about migration.<sup>15</sup> No systematic pre-departure orientation has been provided by the government of Tajikistan. Instead, pre-departure orientation has been provided on ad-hoc basis by international organizations and some NGOs through projects. While a significant portion of the Tajik population have been undertaking labour migration predominately to Russia, pre-departure orientation information suffers from being focused exclusively on migration to Russia and being inaccessible by using legalistic language and quickly becoming outdated.

In 2014, as per Tajik government decree,<sup>16</sup> four Centres on Consulting and Pre-Departure Training of Labour Migrants (Pre-Departure Centres) were established in Dushanbe, Soghd (Khujand), Khatlon (Kurgan-Tube, but now in Bokhtar) and GBAO (Khorog) provinces. The Pre-Departure Centres function under the direction of the Migration Service (MS)

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<sup>9</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2021), “Factbook: Tajikistan”, online, at <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/tajikistan/>.

<sup>10</sup> World Food Program (WFP) (2018), “Scoping Study on Social Protection and Safety Nets for Enhanced Food Security and Nutrition in Tajikistan”.

<sup>11</sup> ADB (2020), “Strengthening Support for Labour Migration in Tajikistan: Assessment and Recommendations”, December 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Statistics provided by the Government of Tajikistan (2020).

<sup>13</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2021), “Factbook: Tajikistan”, online, at <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/tajikistan/>.

<sup>14</sup> Statistics provided by the Government of Tajikistan (2020).

<sup>15</sup> Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) (2020), “Migration, living conditions and skills: Panel Study – Tajikistan, 2018”.

<sup>16</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, The Decree under №390, 4 June 2014.

of the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population (MoLMEP). The Pre-Departure Centres have so far had little impact on migrants, due to a lack of funding and resources.

Analysis of interview responses by migrants and KIs show that Tajik migrants have different information needs, depending on the group that they fall into. The main distinction is whether migrants are returnees that have previously migrated and intend to migrate again, or whether they intend to migrate but have never previously done so. Another group whose particular information needs require consideration are female migrants.

Many of the KIs stated that the information and services needed by migrants already exist. They are provided by various departments of the MoLMEP, including the State Institution Adult Training Centre of Tajikistan (ATC), the State Agency for Employment Abroad, the MS and its Pre-Departure Centres. They are, however, underutilised and under-resourced. A need to coordinate, consolidate and streamline the provision of the information and services by the various government institutions with overlapping mandates was a key KI recommendation. Another key KI recommendation was to staff the Pre-Departure Centres with experienced migrants (including female experienced migrants) in order to build trust in the information provided by the government.

Migrant responses highlighted that knowledge and information are in many ways synonymous with experience for migrants. Experience is also an essential element in the level of trust that a source providing information or services is given. Unsurprisingly, nearly all of the migrants without experience, when asked what sources they will turn to for information and assistance, answered those of their relatives who had experience migrating to Russia (preferably more than once). Based on this migrant perspective, and success of certain KI institution, a number of the KIs recommended that migrants need to be provided services (e.g., legal assistance, training or employment or business setup assistance) as a primary function, with the provision of information in the secondary role as peripheral to the services offered. Once reputation for providing good quality services has been established among migrants, it was proposed that information would be sought out by migrants themselves.

Migrants identified face-to-face interactions as the preferred method of information provision. Arguments were made that traditional methods of information dissemination, especially by the Tajik government, are not effective. These methods include providing information through television, radio, newspapers and leaflets. A key suggestion was to use the communication and social media mobile phone applications relied upon by the migrants themselves. From the interviews, Tajiks primarily use the application IMO to communicate, with WhatsApp and Viber used for connecting to people in Russia. Facebook, Instagram and YouTube were also fairly widely used, primarily for entertainment, but also for news, to seek out jobs, information on migration and, in one case, skills improvement. These communication sources need to be exploited during information provision, keeping in mind certain limitations. These include the expense and, in some places, absence of internet in Tajikistan, as well as some husbands forbidding their wives to use social media applications.

While KIs believed that migrants did not know about the documents needed, this was true for only a small number of migrants without experience. While some of the migrants in Russia relied on intermediaries to obtain their documents (especially the residence permit), many migrants considered the use of intermediaries created too high a risk of being provided with fake documents. Even when migrants knew how to apply for residence or work permits, they made an economic decision regarding them – those that travelled to work in Russia more than once, obtained a work permit during some trips but not others. Female experienced migrants earned less than the male respondents and were more likely to not have a work permit or even a residence permit, ticking the 'visitor' section of the migration card upon entry. Female spouses of migrants were often undocumented and remained shut up at home so as not to have documents checked by the police on the streets. Few of the respondents could afford health insurance, even though around a third needed medical care, male respondents for work accidents and female respondents for pregnancies and other reproductive issues.

None of the migrants without experience were able to provide an accurate cost of migration. Almost all migrants either borrowed or were planning to borrow from their family and social network, or from banks. Only two experienced migrants saved enough mon-

ey each migration cycle to finance the next trip to Russia without needing to borrow. Migrants were interested in financial assistance with the migration or return process. While KIs considered migrants obtaining specialisations as essential, only those migrants who had obtained specialisations themselves supported the need for and benefit of specialisation courses. The other migrants, who had not obtained any specialisations and worked, for instance, in general construction jobs, did not mention or consider in their interviews needing to specialise. A couple also stated that if they were to undertake specialisation courses instead of working, they would lose time and wage earning potential.

Only two migrants without experience spoke about being unemployed for a prolonged period – 1 month and 5 months. Female experienced migrants worked as cleaners, in food preparation, cooking or baking, as nannies, live in nurses, at a shop, doing seasonal work, as well as at a medical clinic. Male experienced migrants worked in the construction industry, with individuals working as a cleaner, a cook, in auto repairs, a shop, at the market and in a sweatshop. One respondent specialised as a security systems electrician and one ran a delivery business. A number of experienced migrants were in contact with their employers and returned when they were notified of a job being available. Nonetheless, migrants wanted information on how and where to find work, or assistance in finding it.

Work related vulnerability of female migrants, including the low wages, can be addressed through group employment. There is, however, a distrust of the State Agency for Employment Abroad as migrants do not appear to differentiate it from other group employment providers and Private Employment Agencies (PEAs). With regards to expanding labour migration to destinations other than Russia, KIs spoke of the structural difficulties of doing so, i.e., lack of bilateral agreements, migrant protection mechanisms, and appropriate qualifications and specialisations of migrants. Whereas the migrants themselves expressed a fear and uncertainty of migrating to countries other than Russia, primarily due to the absence of family and social networks in those countries, and thus the absence of a trusted source of experience and information regarding those countries.

Migrants did not express an interest in being provided with information on accommodation. However, accommodation presented a lot of difficulties for experienced migrants. Migrants live in overcrowded accommodation and consequently face discrimination from local landlords. The biggest problem related to accommodation is having an address that can be registered with the authorities. Many rely on intermediaries for this process, which results in being issued with fraudulent residence permits. Female migrants in particular face issues of homelessness and having to live with men in overcrowded apartments.

According to all KIs and almost all experienced migrants, knowledge of the Russian language is essential to working in Russia. A lack of Russian creates problems relating to work (being underpaid or fired), at the border, discrimination (including overpaying for bus fares and taxis) and when dealing with the police. Conversely, speaking Russian well opens up employment opportunities, builds a network of Russian acquaintances that can help in many areas of life, including finding job and accommodation. According to KIs, there is no need for complete fluency, merely enough to avoid being exploited, to understand their contract, receive instructions at work and to interact with authorities (at the border and especially with the Russian police). It also has to be enough to pass the Russian language and history test, which according to migrants is fairly easy to prepare for.

Unlike the KIs, only a few male experienced migrants identified signing contracts as an important step of labour migration. Few migrants signed contracts with their employers. However, the majority of male and a few of the female respondents reported either not being paid up to three months' worth of work (with some reporting this happening many times), being underpaid or having their pay delayed. For the men, the construction industry was the main offender in this respect. This had repercussions on the ability of some migrants to renew their documents on time, resulting in deportation and/or bans issued against them. Migrants have little power to address these problems as a result of their own irregular status, not signing a contract or not knowing where to turn for assistance. Tajik female migrants were also paid less than their male counterparts, with the highest wage of female earners (25-30,000 Russian Roubles a month) being the equivalent of the lowest male earner, who had his hours reduced as the result of

the pandemic.

Men were more likely than women to be stopped by the police. However, a few experienced migrants and KIs stated that if migrants do not know how to speak to the police or the police take a dislike to them, even if all their documents are in order, the police will find a reason to fine or detain the migrants. Others suggested that looking neat or 'Slavic' helps in having normal police interactions. Apart from the Embassy or Consulates of Tajikistan, migrants were not aware of where to turn to, either to deal with police harassment or unpaid wages. While female migrants did not state this, a few KIs suggested that women need to be informed of the risk of sexual abuse or exploitation, especially at their place of work. They also need to be informed on how to be assisted when they are suffering from domestic abuse. Finally, pregnant women experiencing discrimination in the Russian

health care system may need to know where to turn to in addressing their situation.

KIs spoke about migrants' needing to know about the laws, customs, culture and traditions of the country of destination, in particular of Russia. Most migrants expressed this interest with more practical questions. They wanted to know how to behave, what clothes to wear (culturally and for the cold) and how to use the metro. Experienced migrants spoke about needing to know how to behave in public (not drinking in public, knowing how to cross the street) and how to use public transport. This information is useful, not only to avoid racism and discrimination on the streets, but also reflects that administrative offences, such as traffic fines, can result in a ban. Even clothes are important, as they (e.g., women wearing the Tajik national dress) can be a reason to be stopped by the police more often.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION



This study was undertaken under the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) project “Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries”. The overall objective of the project is to maximise the development potential of migration and mobility within the Silk Routes region and towards major labour receiving countries as well as to establish comprehensive national responses to migration and mobility with full respect for human rights and protection of migrants.

The objectives as they relate to Tajikistan are to improve migration governance and mobility through the establishment of a responsive, efficient and sustainable Migrant Resource Centre (MRC); and to reduce vulnerabilities and challenges faced by migrants in working and living abroad by providing them with adequate, timely and reliable information and guidance on migration. Once set up, the MRC will be integrated into the existing structures of the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population (MoLMEP) and the existing Centres on Consulting and Pre-Departure Training of Labour Migrants (Pre-Departure Centres), which currently sit under the MoLMEP’s Migration Service (MS).

The main objective of the current study is to understand what are the information needs on migration of Tajik (outgoing, intending, potential and returning) migrants;<sup>17</sup> how the existing government structures can utilise the available resources to reach migrants; and how the newly established MRC can support the government and migrants’ needs, including through pre-departure information. The study was implemented in Tajikistan by the Human Rights Centre (HRC).

This Section gives a brief overview of pre-departure information needs. A methodology can be found in Section 2. Section 3 provides the background information on Tajik migration, the legal and government infrastructure available in support of Tajik citizens migrating abroad as well as the effects of Covid-19. Section 4 is an analysis of the interview responses divided by key issues identified, together with the recommendations for the MRC. The conclusion follows in Section 5.



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<sup>17</sup> See the Glossary for definitions of outgoing, intending, potential and returning migrants, as well as migrants with experience / experienced migrants and migrants without experience. For the purposes of this study, the intent is to undertake labour migration within 12 months of the interview. Due to the study being conducted during the Covid-19 border closures, none of the migrants could be considered as ‘outgoing’.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study was based on a qualitative approach. The background of this study was obtained through a desk review of literature by the HRC. The assessment of the information needs of Tajik migrants was determined by an analysis of semi structured key informant (KI) interviews, migrant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with potential and intending migrants. The interviews were conducted by the HRC. The interviews with KIs were conducted in Russian and Tajik. Migrant interviews were conducted primarily in Tajik. All interviews in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) were conducted in the dialects of the Pamiri languages, while one of the migrant interviews in Penjikent, Soghd region, was conducted in Uzbek. All interviews were then transcribed in and, where necessary, translated into Russian for analysis.

Between 21 November 2020 and 30 March 2021, interviews were conducted with 22 KIs working in various sectors that deal with migration in Tajikistan. The KIs selected included representatives of government bodies (9 interviews), international organisations (IOs) (4 interviews), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (4 interviews), the private sector (2 interviews), as well as with independent experts on migration (3 interviews). Due to Covid-19 measures and the distance of some of the KIs, many of these interviews were conducted over online platforms (e.g., Skype or Zoom). Regional representation was achieved both in the governmental and NGO sectors, with interviews taking place in the administrative centres and rural areas of Khatlon (Bokhtar and Farkhor), GBAO (Khorog and Darvoz) and Soghd (Khujand and Penjikent) regions, as well as in Dushanbe.

Between 11 February and 18 March 2021, 40 migrant interviews and 6 FGDs (of 7-9 people each) were conducted in Dushanbe (and its surrounds) and across the Khatlon, GBAO and Soghd regions. The majority of the migrants were in their 30s, with the exception, a number were in their 20s and two intending migrants

without experience – a male and a female – were 18 and 19 years old. The FGDs on the whole confirmed the responses of the interviewed migrants. They are, therefore, not allocated a separate space in the analysis, but are mentioned only when they added or elaborated on an important point.

The majority of those interviewed were intending migrants, merely waiting for the borders to open, after they were closed as part of the measures introduced to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Only a small amount could be said to be potential migrants (i.e., had the desire but not the ability to migrate). For instance, a couple of migrants wanted to migrate, but did not have the finances. One female migrant was waiting for her husband's ban to be lifted and one only intended to travel because her husband did. While a couple of migrants were only planning to migrate if they were unsuccessful in finding a job and obtaining a university placement in Tajikistan. Throughout the paper, it will be assumed that all migrants were intending (or in the case of the six migrants mentioned above, potential) migrants. The migrants will be referred to throughout as "migrants" or "intending migrants", only differentiated, where necessary, by gender and experience of migration. Thus a male respondent that has never undertaken labour migration before is referred to as, for example, a "male intending migrant without experience", whereas a woman returnee intending to migrate again will be referred to as, for example, a "female experienced migrant".<sup>18</sup>

The regions of Khatlon, GBAO and Soghd were selected due to the high number of labour migrants originating from there, especially from the rural and remote areas of the regions (71.3 percent).<sup>19</sup> Consequently, 6 interviews were conducted in the administrative centre of each region, as well as 6 interviews in a remote area of each region, with 4 interviews conducted in the capital, Dushanbe. FGDs were conducted in each administrative and remote area, with the exception of Darvoz.

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<sup>18</sup> For quotes, these will look as follows: MwoE (male without experience) and FwE (female with experience), followed by their district and province. Where two or three migrants with the same gender, experience and location were interviewed, they will also show up with the number allocated to them in the Methodological Annex, e.g., MwoE(1), Bokhtar, Khatlon.

<sup>19</sup> Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) (2020), "Migration, living conditions and skills: Panel Study – Tajikistan, 2018".





Attention was also paid to ensuring representation across regions and genders. Compared to the large difference in labour migration between the genders (according to government of Tajikistan statistics between 2018 and mid-2020, 13-14.5 percent of women left Tajikistan for labour migration),<sup>20</sup> the interviews were able to achieve near parity with regards to male and female respondents. Of the 40 interviews 22 were with male migrants (13 with experience and 9 without experience) and 18 were with female migrants (9 with experience and 9 without experience). Similarly, 3 FGDs were held with male migrants (1 with experience and 2 without experience) and 3 FGDs with female migrants (2 with experience and 1 without experience). Interviewing female migrants presented a set of problems that

had to be overcome. Many more female migrants than male refused to participate in the interviews and FGDs, necessitating higher levels of replacements. The FGDs were divided by gender due to female voices not given prominent space in mixed forms of such forums. Finally, for one female migrant, the husband insisted upon being present during the interview and was allowed to do so.

The literature review covered professional and academic literature on migration from Tajikistan, focusing on the relevant and available materials and reports on the needs of migrants in Tajikistan and gaps that a newly established MRC could fill or activities that the MRC can conduct and implement.



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<sup>20</sup> Statistics provided by the Government of Tajikistan (2020).

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## a. LIMITATIONS



Regarding the method of selection of the migrants to be interviewed, it was originally envisioned that heads of *Mahalla Committees*<sup>21</sup> and rural area representatives would be the primary source in selecting respondents for the FGDs and migrant interviews. For migrant interviews, public organizations operating and providing services for migrant workers in the study area would assist in the selection. The MS regional offices would assist in selecting respondents for the FGDs. However, in the implementation stage, migrants were, on the whole, identified by the regional MS offices. This impacts the analysis in that MS were to some extent known to the majority of the migrant respondent (even where the knowledge had come from the fact that interviews were held on MS premises). Additionally, it is possible that people who trust in government institutions are more likely to visit government offices (including the MS). Consequently, the question of the respondents' awareness of and trust in MS is not analysed further in this report.

Another limitation of the interview process is linked to the semi-structured nature of the interviews performed by different interviewers. Consequently, not all migrants were asked the full range of questions.

This limited the ability of the analysis to provide exact numbers in support of some of the points identified. Subsequently, no numbers are provided. Where a list of responses is given, it is ordered by descending order of responses, with the most common answer listed first.

While the interviewers were selected by their linguistic ability to understand the different languages and dialects of the respondents, and while the genders of the respondents were well apportioned between male and female, the interviewer-interviewee pairings were not gender sensitive. Thus, in the majority of cases, interviews with both male and female migrants of a particular area were conducted by the same interviewer (e.g., Farkhor and Darvoz by a male interviewer and Bokhtar and Khorog by a female interviewer). Even when interviews in an area were conducted by both a male and female interviewer, they were not necessarily allocated respondents of the same gender. All FGDs were conducted by female interviewers, with the exception female experienced migrants in Farkhor, who were interviewed by a male interviewer, with a female being in attendance.

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<sup>21</sup> Local public association of citizens in every village (see Glossary).

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## 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION



While Tajikistan is one of the poorest republics in Central Asia, it has gradually reduced its poverty rates. As of 2019, 26.3 percent live below the national poverty line and 4.8 percent (as of 2015) below the international poverty rate of USD 1.90.<sup>22</sup> Infant and child mortality rates are amongst the highest in the region. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the consequent civil war (1992-1997), life expectancy decreased due to poor nutrition and polluted water supplies. While school attendance in Tajikistan is mandatory for all children between the ages of 7 and 17, many children fail to attend because of economic needs. A scarcity of teachers and inadequate infrastructure undermines Tajikistan's education system.<sup>23</sup>

Tajikistan has an extensive mountainous terrain and a deficit of arable land, which exacerbates issues of accessibility and agricultural production. Additionally, according to the WFP, "Tajikistan is considered the most vulnerable country to climate change in the Europe and Central Asia region. It is particularly prone to natural di-

sasters, extreme temperatures and erratic rainfalls".<sup>24</sup> The majority of population resides in rural areas, with only 27.7 percent residing in urban spaces.<sup>25</sup> This adds to the variability of the poverty rate, which varies between regions and seasons, with Khatlon and GBAO being the poorest provinces.<sup>26</sup>

Tajikistan has a young population, with 62 percent of the population being of working age (16-64 years old).<sup>27</sup> The share of labour in the national economy of Tajikistan is steadily decreasing as a result of the growing working age population and a lack of job opportunities in Tajikistan.<sup>28</sup> According to the 2018 JICA study (see Diagram below), 55 percent of the population are not in the labour force. The majority of those who are not in the labour force (82 percent, equivalent to 45 percent of the entire population) are also not undertaking education. Only 31 percent of the population are in the labour force – with twice as many men as women participating. Almost all of those who are in the labour force are employed. However, many are underemployed.<sup>29</sup>



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<sup>22</sup> ADB (2021), "Basic Statistics"; see also ADB (2020c), "Poverty & Equity Brief: Europe & Central Asia: Tajikistan", April 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2020), "Tajikistan: Skills and Employability Enhancement Project: Initial Environmental Examination", Project number 51011-003, March 2020.

<sup>24</sup> World Food Program (WFP) (2018), "Scoping Study on Social Protection and Safety Nets for Enhanced Food Security and Nutrition in Tajikistan".

<sup>25</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2021), "Factbook: Tajikistan", online, at <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/tajikistan/>.

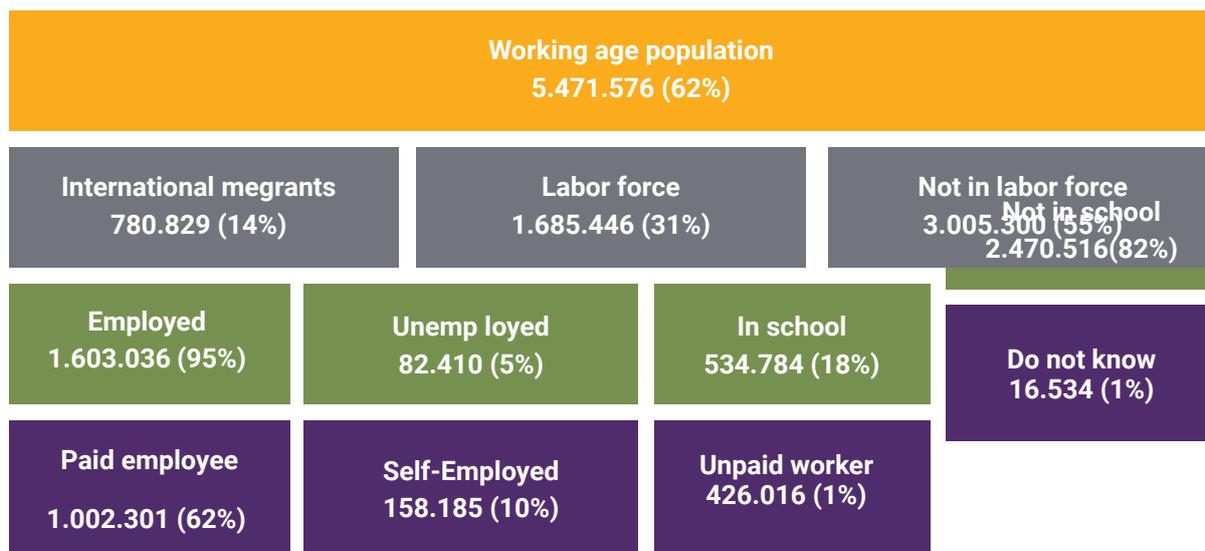
<sup>26</sup> The World Bank (2019), "Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period FY2019-2023", Report No. 135875-TJ.

<sup>27</sup> WFP 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> ADB (2020), "Strengthening Support for Labour Migration in Tajikistan: Assessment and Recommendations", December 2020.

Figure 2.1. Characteristics of the working population in Tajikistan, 2018



Source: JICA (2020), "Migration, living conditions and skills: Panel Study -Tajikistan, 2018"

Limited economic opportunity, unemployment and poverty contribute to circular migration from Tajikistan mainly to Russia. Remittances from migration constitute the largest input of foreign currency and is a poverty reduction strategy in the country.<sup>30</sup> In 2019, remittances amounted to 28 percent of the country's GDP, making Tajikistan one of the most remittance dependent countries in the world.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The World Bank 2019.

<sup>31</sup> The World Bank (2021a), "Data: Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) - Tajikistan".

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## a. MIGRATION FROM TAJIKISTAN

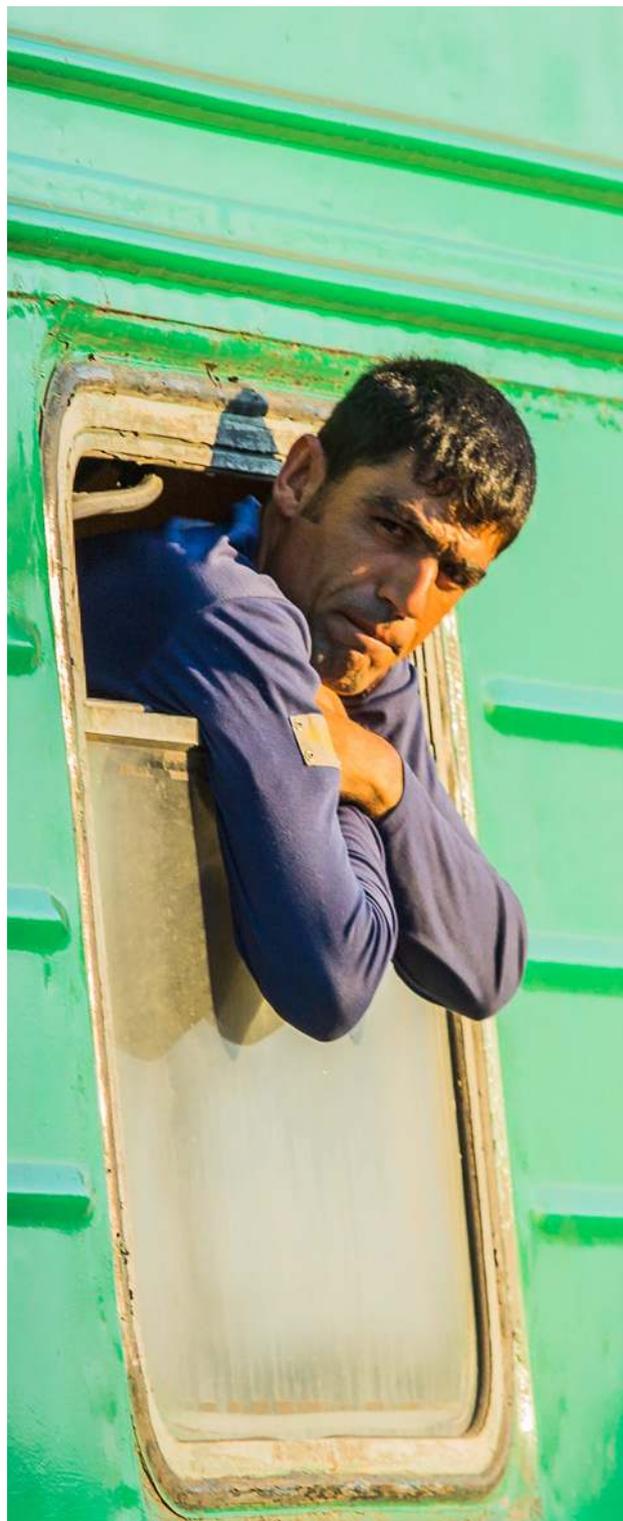
Labour migration from Tajikistan is significant, with around 14 percent of the Tajik labour force residing abroad.<sup>32</sup> Most of these workers travel to the Russian Federation (RF). Tajikistan is largely rural with 71.3 percent of those leaving the country for work coming from rural areas.<sup>33</sup>

According to the statistics of the Government of Tajikistan, the percentage of female migrants in 2019 was 14.5 percent, and 13 percent in the first half of 2020.<sup>34</sup>

According to JICA, 54.7 percent of departing migrant workers from Tajikistan did not have work prior to departure, with 9.5 percent migrating immediately after school graduation.<sup>35</sup> The lack of jobs and money to support further education of children, contributes to the migration of recent school graduates.

Those intending to migrate predominantly rely on friends and relatives (77 percent) for information about migration. Established networks, in particular in Russia, help migrant workers to search for job in the Russian labour market, with 67 percent inquiring about availability of jobs before making the decision to migrate.<sup>36</sup> According to JICA, only 0.6 percent of migrants used state agencies to inform themselves about the country of destination and job search prior to leaving for Russia, and only 0.5 percent applied Government employment service centre or other government agencies.<sup>37</sup>

In 2018, prior to the costs of international travel spiking due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the financial costs of migration amounted, on average, to 3,300 TJS (320 USD). These costs are incurred in a country with an average monthly salary of 1,455.13 TJS (141 USD). Most of the costs are associated with travel, procurement of passports and placement fees, and are often supported through debt from social networks or banks at steep rates.<sup>38</sup>



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<sup>32</sup> JICA 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Statistics provided by the Government of Tajikistan (2020).

<sup>35</sup> JICA 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

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## b. DESTINATIONS OF TAJIK MIGRANTS

There are internal institutional barriers to collecting statistics on migration. This is largely due to data collection on migration in Tajikistan being carried out through a number of channels. Data regarding migration is collected via:<sup>39</sup>

- Migration registration cards filled out at the border.<sup>40</sup>
- Border crossing statistics (electronic passport and visa scanning).
- Registration at the place of residence and deregistration of citizens.
- Labour Power Surveys.
- Specialised surveys on migration and related issues.
- Population Census (2010).
- Statistical data of state and non-state organizations assisting in employment abroad.
- Statistical data of consular services provided to workers (e.g., certificates of return).

The statistics of the MoLMEP relies on the collection of physical cards filled out by departing migrant workers from airports of Tajikistan. Observations, however, indicate the cards are not always filled out by workers, or the border guards refuse to accept them after the Migration Service was restructured in 2013 under MoLMEP.<sup>41</sup> The Tajik State Committee for National Security, which is in charge of border control, does not

provide their own statistics, which they collect electronically at exit border points.

According to MoLMEP, in 2019, 530,883 citizens left the country for work outside of Tajikistan (453,870 men and 77,013 women). Of those, 518,000 migrant workers left for the Russian Federation and 9,771 to Kazakhstan.<sup>42</sup> The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, however, recorded 1,179,423 citizens from Tajikistan entering Russia in 2019 with the intention to work. There are issues with both statistical accounts. The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs statistics tend to count “entries” into the Russian Federation as a representation of overall migration trends. This overlooks the possibility of multiple entries by a single person. This is especially relevant for Russia, as migrant workers tend to leave and re-enter the territory after visiting family or to re-set their legal stay. The visa-free regime between Russia and Tajikistan adds to these difficulties.

It is also difficult to get a full picture of the other destination countries of Tajik migrants due to a variance in available data. For instance, according to the World Bank, in 2017, about 12 percent of the labour force migrated. The residence of 80.7 percent was Russia. A further 5.1 percent resided in Ukraine, 5 percent in Germany, 2.8 percent in Kazakhstan, 0.8 percent in the USA and 5.5 percent in other countries.<sup>43</sup> However according to JICA, in 2018, 14 percent of the labour force migrated, with 98.7 percent residing in Russia. Other countries hosting Tajik migrants were Kazakhstan (0.3 percent), Turkey (0.3 percent), Kyrgyz Republic (0.2 percent), USA (0.2 percent), Uzbekistan, UAE, South Korea and Germany hosting 0.1 percent each. For additional context, according to UNICEF, in 2013,

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<sup>39</sup> Center of Human Rights and Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population (2020), “Situation Analysis in Labour Migration in the Republic of Tajikistan”; OSCE and IOM (2014), “Towards a factual migration policy”.

<sup>40</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree “On recording external migration of Tajik citizens and their returning from foreign countries”, October 31, 2009. According to para. 6, the Tajik Migration Service is instructed to provide checkpoints across the state border with migration registration cards. The collection of migration registration cards at checkpoints is assigned to the staff of the Main Directorate of the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security.

<sup>41</sup> UNDP and Eurasian Development Bank (2015), Labour Migration, Remittances, and Human Development in Central Asia: Central Asia Human Development Series.

<sup>42</sup> Statistics provided by the Government of Tajikistan (2020).

<sup>43</sup> Martin Brownbridge and Sudharshan Canagarajah (2020), “Migration and Remittances in the Former Soviet Union Countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus What Are the Long-Term Macroeconomic Consequences?”, The World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 9111.

Kazakhstan, the USA, Turkey, Belarus and Saudi Arabia were the destination countries for undergoing tertiary education, hosting a total 1,137 students between them.<sup>44</sup>

Nº	Destination	2018 (JICA)	2017 (The World Bank)	2013 (UNICEF: Tertiary Students)
1	Russia	98,7%	80,7%	-
2	Ukraine	-	5,1%	-
3	Kazakhstan	0,3%	2,8%	363
4	Turkey	0,3%	-	239
5	Kyrgyz Republic	0,2%	-	-
6	USA	0,2%	5,5%	244
7	Germany	0,1%	5%	-
8	Uzbekistan	0,1%	-	-
9	South Korea	0,1%	-	-
10	Uzbekistan	0,1%	-	-
11	Belarus	-	-	147
12	Saudi Arabia	-	-	144

The difficulty of identifying other destination states is further exacerbated by the fact that not all migration is necessarily regular. For instance, migrant workers with Russian citizenship (Tajik citizens can have dual Russian citizenship under the 1996 Agreement) travel to work; they however enter South Korea using their Russian passport as tourists,<sup>45</sup> based on a 60-day visa-free arrangement.

<sup>44</sup> UNICEF (2015), "Migration Profiles: Tajikistan".

<sup>45</sup> See Irna Hofman (2021), "Our homeland is where the money is: pragmatic citizenship in Tajikistan".

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## I. DESTINATION – RUSSIA

Prior to 2015, a quota system functioned in Russia, in which legal entities could apply to hire migrant workers. In 2015 a work permit (patent) system was introduced, a state issued document that allows citizens from visa-free countries to work on the territory of Russian Federation (see the Glossary).<sup>46</sup> A work permit holder can work both for private and legal persons, according to the profession specified in the work permit. As a result of the work permit system, migration costs significantly increased. The price of the work permit varies across regions in the Russian Federation. However, the initial cost is around 12,500 Russian Roubles (USD 175), accompanied by additional monthly fees.

There is a direct relationship between a work permit and a residency permit. Citizens of Tajikistan or Uzbekistan can extend their residency permits in Russia for the period of his/her payment of the work permit fees. However, if a migrant worker pays for a work permit on a monthly basis, he/she must also pay for their residency permit monthly. Given that the majority of migrant workers do not have the money to cover the annual fees for the work permit, the majority of workers migrant workers are forced to implement complicated bureaucratic procedures on a monthly basis. Additionally, some pay the work permit fees, but are unaware of the need to extend their residency permit.<sup>47</sup> These difficulties lead migrant workers to inadvertently lose their legal status in the Russian Federation.

Irrespective of the migrants' education level, migrants engage in unskilled work in Russia, with men working primarily in construction and women working as cleaners, cooks and/or domestic workers. The narrow spectrum of jobs is not only the result of migration networks. The Russian legislation also squeezed migrant labour out of certain occupations, for instance, those that require interactions with the Russian public, such as sales and driving. The narrowing of the labour market for migrant workers means the competition for jobs in these sectors becomes higher, with migrant workers earning around 40 percent less than citizens and women earning less than men.<sup>48</sup>



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<sup>46</sup> This excludes those citizens of countries members of the Custom Union, for instance Kyrgyzstani workers.

<sup>47</sup> Russian Federal Law of 18 July 2006 No. 109-FZ "On migration registration of foreign nationals and stateless persons in the Russian Federation".

<sup>48</sup> Gulnara Ibraeva, Anara Niyazova, Mehriqul Ablezova, Anara Moldosheva and Anastasia Danshina (2013) "Gender and migration", ICCO Cooperation.

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## C. LABOUR MIGRATION INFRASTRUCTURE

### I. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

#### International treaties



Under Article 10 of the Constitution of Tajikistan, international treaties ratified by Tajikistan are an integral part of its domestic legal system. The treaties take priority over national legislation and Tajikistan has a positive obligation to integrate them into national law. Tajikistan ratified the following migration-related treaties:

- **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICPRMW)**

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- **ILO Migration for Employment Convention (No. 97)**

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- **ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)**

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- **United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, supplemented by Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air**

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- **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Legal Migration (non-binding)**

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#### International treaties

Currently, Tajikistan has ratified bilateral agreements on labour migration or migration more broadly, which then include issues of labour migration, with Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan,<sup>49</sup> Kyrgyzstan,<sup>50</sup> the Russian Federation,<sup>51</sup> Saudi Arabia<sup>52</sup> and Qatar. While agreements on regular migration and combatting irregular migration have been signed between the governments of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) since 1994,<sup>53</sup> they have shown a greater interest in supporting circular labour migration through intergovernmental agreements and forums since 2000.<sup>54</sup>

#### National Law

The Law "On Migration" (1999) is the main act that regulates labour migration in Tajikistan.<sup>55</sup> This Law defines the foundations of migration processes covering issues of labour migration, environmental migration, repatriation of citizens and forced resettlement. This Law was developed in post-civil war circumstances when the size and character of migration was different from now. Since 2002, the Law was intensively amended to better regulate migration. However, these amendments were fragmentary and do not regulate the current issues of labour migration comprehensively.

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<sup>49</sup> Agreement between the Government of Tajikistan and the Government of Kazakhstan on employment of Tajik citizens working temporarily in Kazakhstan and of Kazakh citizens working temporarily in Tajikistan and protection of their rights (5 May 2006).

<sup>50</sup> Agreement between the Government of Tajikistan and the Government of Kyrgyzstan on employment and social protection for migrant workers (6 May 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Government of the Russian Federation on Labour Migration and the Protection of the Rights of Citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russian Federation and Citizens of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Tajikistan, (16 October 2004); Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on the Organized Recruitment of Citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Purposes of Temporary Labour Activity on the Territory of the Russian Federation (17 April 2019).

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum between the Migration Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tajikistan and the National Employment Commission of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Saudi Arabia (24 August 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Including: Agreement on cooperation in the field of labour migration and social protection for migrant workers in the CIS countries (15 April 1994); Agreement on cooperation between CIS member States in combating illegal migration (6 March 1998).

<sup>54</sup> UNDP and Eurasian Development Bank 2015; Framework policy on the gradual establishment of a common labour market and regulated labour migration in the CIS member States (15 December 2000).

<sup>55</sup> Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Law on Migration", December 11, 1999, № 882.



Tajikistan has been developing a new Law on Migration since 2010, with a draft being formulated but not adopted. In August 2019, a new Working Group was established to work on the draft law on migration. Until October 2019, the Working Group held a series of meetings and finalized the draft.<sup>56</sup> At the time of writing this report, no information on further initiatives with the draft law was made available.

### National Policies

Since 1998, Tajikistan regulates external labour migration based on policy documents. Among other issues, these policies promote two priorities – widening the access of migrant workers to information and diversification of destinations of migrants.

#### Current Policies

- Concept of the State Migration Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan (1998)<sup>57</sup>
- Concept of Labour Migration of Tajik Citizens (2001)
- Medium-term Development Program (MtDP) (2016-2020)
- National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030 (NDS 2030)

#### Historical Policies

- Program for External Labour Migration of Citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2003-2005
- Program on Labour migration for 2006-2010
- National Strategy on Labour Migration of Tajik citizens abroad for 2011-2015

Since 2015, Tajikistan does not have a separate program or strategy for external labour migration.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the main policy document defining the State approach

toward regulation of labour migration from Tajikistan is the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030 (NDS 2030).<sup>59</sup> Although it does not cover all the issues of labour migration, the NDS 2030 prioritizes the diversification of labour migration from Tajikistan. It also underlines that Tajikistan has a high dependence on labour market conditions "in one or two foreign countries"; therefore, a "gender-sensitive system of pre-departure training for migrant workers and their families" will be developed.<sup>60</sup> As indicated, such a program will include legal and information support, short-term vocational and language training based on "resource centres".<sup>61</sup>

A four-year Medium-term Development Program (MtDP) for 2016-2020 has been adopted to achieve goals set in the NDS 2030.<sup>62</sup> The MtDP envisages the following tasks in the field of diversification of external labour migration:

1. **Development and implementation of information systems for interagency collaboration within the framework of foreign labour migration management;**
2. **Improving the regulatory regime for the protection of migrant workers;**
3. **Stepping up efforts to ensure labour protection (through bilateral agreements on organized labour migration) and social security of migrant workers and members of their families (through treaties on pensions);**
4. **Creating gender-sensitive programs for pre-departure training of migrant workers and members of their families;**
5. **Development of a database of needs of Tajikistan and key destination countries;**
6. **Dissemination of information on the rights and obligations, conditions, and other requirements for migrant workers in the main destination countries.**<sup>63</sup>

<sup>56</sup> HRC (2019), "Following the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers, Tajikistan will consider a draft law on labor migration and develop a comprehensive migration policy", 18 July 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Decree on the approval of Concept of the State Migration Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan", October 8, 1998 №411.

<sup>58</sup> At the time of writing of this report, it became known that the Ministry of Labour started drafting a new National Migration Strategy for the period until 2030 and an Action Plan thereto.

<sup>59</sup> Majlisi Namoyandagon of Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree "On approval of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030" 1 December 2016, No. 636.

<sup>60</sup> NDS 2030.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Majlisi Namoyandagon of Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree "On approval of the Medium-term Development Program for 2016-2010" December 28, 2016, No. 678.

<sup>63</sup> MtDP 2016-2020.

Besides the NDS 2030, two other policy documents – the Concept of the State Migration Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan (1998)<sup>64</sup> and the Concept of Labour Migration of Tajik Citizens (2001)<sup>65</sup> still are in force and also reflect aspects of policy related to the legal protection, employment, and diversification of Tajik migrant workers. Since the documents were issued in the past decade, the priorities and tasks they set up do not fully meet contemporary needs. While the 2001 Concept considers the Russian Federation as the primary receiving country because of historical relations and knowledge of the Russian language, it indicates the need for diversification of destinations through bilateral agreements with countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Germany, Austria, Kuwait, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Canada.



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<sup>64</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, “Decree on the approval of Concept of the State Migration Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan”, 8 October 1998 №411.

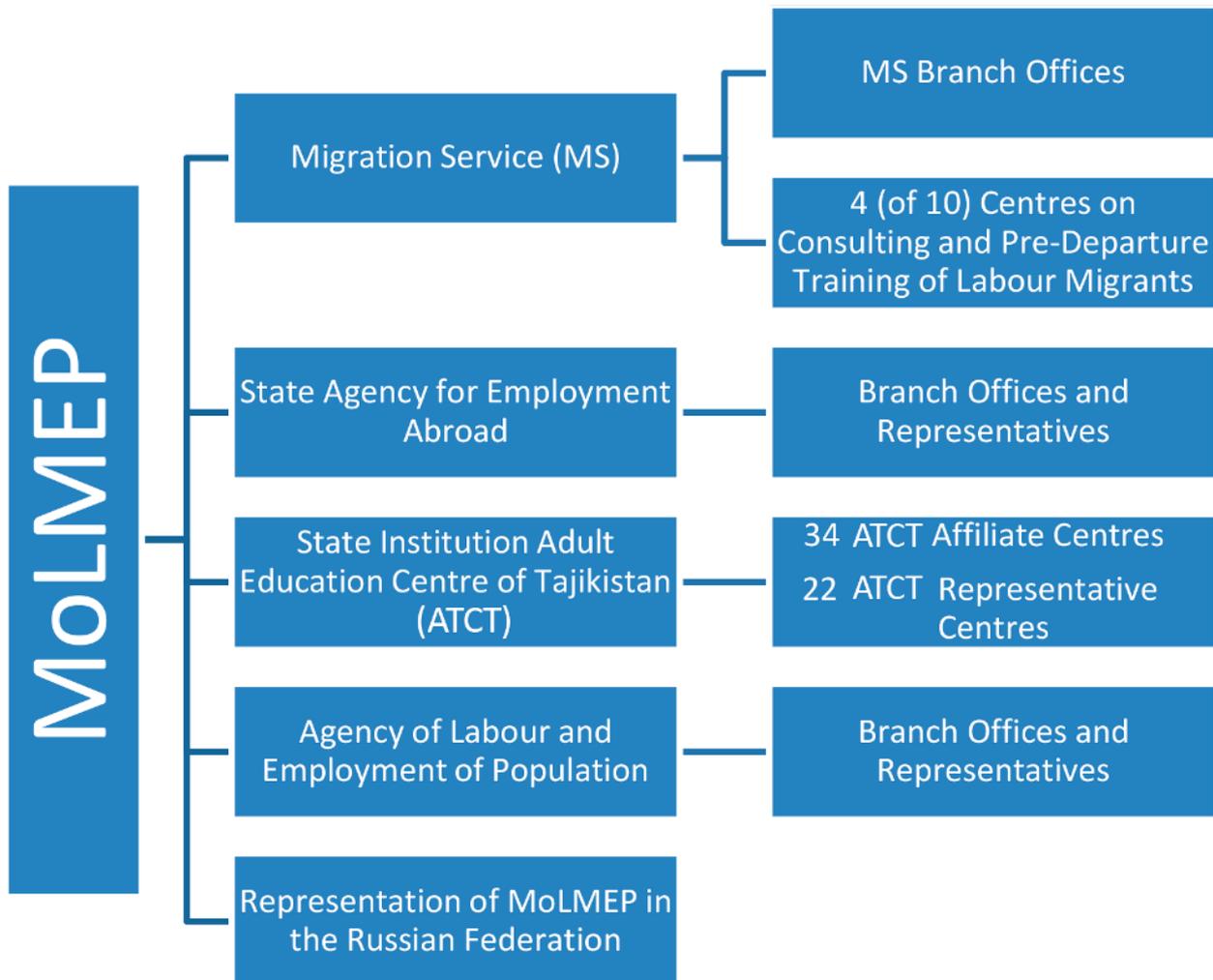
<sup>65</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, “Decree on the approval Concept of Labour Migration of Tajik Citizens” 9 June 2001 № 242.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND BODIES

In 2014, MoLMEP was authorized to regulate labour migration in Tajikistan, taking over the responsibilities of the Migration Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.<sup>66</sup> The regulation stipulates that MoLMEP is the primary responsible agency for the development and implementation of the legal framework in the field of migration (labour and environmental) and to ensure the implementation of activities in the field of employment, primary vocational education and adult education.

MoLMEP controls a number of entities. These include the Migration Service (MS), which is also in charge of the Centres on Consulting and Pre-Departure Training of Labour Migrants; the State Agency for Employment Abroad; the Representation of MoLMEP in the Russian Federation; the State Institution Adult Education Centre of Tajikistan (ATC); and the Agency of Labour and Employment of Population. The last of these is concerned with internal employment and is therefore only discussed in passing.

Figure 1. MoLMEP and its entities



<sup>66</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree on the approval of the MoLMEP Regulation, 3 March 2014 №146.

According to the UN Committee on Migrant Workers 2019 Concluding Observations, even though migration is under the purview of MoLMEP, there is a lack of coordination, which is “exacerbated by unclear and overlapping mandates between the various agencies within the Ministry, such as the State Migration Service, the pre-departure preparation centres, the Agency for Employment Abroad, the representation of the Ministry in the Russian Federation and the Agency for the Labour Market and Employment”.<sup>67</sup> The Committee also expressed concern about the capacity of MoLMEP – human, technical and financial – “to effectively carry out its work, including a lack of staff with expertise on issues relating to migration”.<sup>68</sup>



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## 1. MIGRATION SERVICE (MS)

**T**he Migration Service (MS) was created in 2014 and its Regulation establishes that this agency implements policies related to migration (internal, environmental and labour migration).<sup>69</sup> The MS is authorized to assist in the implementation of policies related to labour migration, to carry out separate control functions associated with the employment of foreign workers in the Republic of Tajikistan and citizens of Tajikistan abroad, as well as providing information support for Tajik migrant workers leaving the country.

**M**S’s assistance in the implementation of labour migration policies implies the coordination of activities of the state, international and non-state stakeholders in the country in the field of labour migration, interaction with authorized bodies of foreign countries in the field of migration and the development of cooperation with overseas compatriots and Tajik diasporas. The MS’s functions include close collaboration with relevant state bodies to organize job fairs intending to assist Tajik labour migrants for employment abroad.

**I**t provides counselling, provision of legal, social, and other types of services to labour migrants and members of their families. In close collaboration with relevant state bodies, the MS supports reintegration and rehabilitation activities of Tajik labour migrants who returned from abroad. Another of MS’s functions is to assist in protecting the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of Tajik labour migrants abroad. Finally, the MS is responsible for issuing licenses to Private Employment Agencies (PEAs) for group employment abroad.

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<sup>67</sup> UN Committee on Migrant Workers (UNCMW) (2019), “Concluding observations on the II periodic report of Tajikistan” CMW/C/TJK/CO/2.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree on the approval of the Regulation of the Migration Service under the MoLMEP 4 June 2014 №390.

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## 2. PRE-DEPARTURE CENTRES UNDER MS

The development of information centres to prepare migrant workers for departure as a priority area was a goal of the Government of Tajikistan's migration policies from 2003.<sup>70</sup> Finally, under the 2011-2015 National Strategy, in 2014, the government of Tajikistan adopted a Decree by which ten Consultation Centres for the preparation of migrant workers under the MS were to be established<sup>71</sup> in the cities of Dushanbe, Kurgan-Tube (now in Bokhtar), Kulyab, Khorog, Khujand, Vahdat, Isfara, Penjikent, Tursunzade and Rasht district. However, only four of them are currently active.<sup>72</sup> The main reason of this is the limitation of the budget and staffing resources.<sup>73</sup> The International Organization for Migration assisted in setting up (including conducting staff training) the Pre-Departure Centres under the MS in Dushanbe, Soghd (Khujand), Khatlon (Bokhtar) and GBAO (Khorog) provinces.

The main goal of the Pre-Departure Centres is to provide practical assistance to labour migrants through training and consulting courses and to provide organizational and financial support to Tajik migrant workers at two stages of labour migration.<sup>74</sup> Among its many other tasks, the Pre-Departure Centres are to provide free pre-departure training courses to intending migrants in languages (e.g., Russian and English), history, customs and culture, as well as legislation basics of destination countries. Additionally, the Centres on Consulting and Pre-Departure training of labour migrants are, in collaboration with other agencies, to assist returnees in free medical examination,

employment and certification of professional skills and vocational retraining, carrying out entrepreneurial activities, obtaining bank loans and organization of small business activities, as well as other socio-economic adaptation.

Despite the Centres' numerous tasks, its budget does not come from the State. According to the Charter, income is to be obtained from business activities and training provided to migrant workers (despite the intention of that training being free of charge). Assistance can also be received from international and foreign organizations and institutions, charitable foundations, and from any legal entities and individuals, including banks.

According to MoLMEP, in 2018, the Pre-Departure Centres provided information and consultation to only 26,318 migrant workers.<sup>75</sup> This can be partly attributable to the fact that the work of the Pre-Departure Centres is not widely known. Official websites of MoLMEP and its agencies do not contain information about the work of the Pre-Departure Centres. Nor do the Pre-Departure Centres have their own official web or social media page. While the website of the Pre-Departure Centres is a particularly clear example, the websites of all MoLMEP agencies related to migration are cumbersome to use and contain broken links. Finally, other Migrant Support Centres do exist across Tajikistan, established by various NGOs.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree "On the approval of the Program for External Labour Migration of Citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2003-2005", December 3, 2002 № 480; Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree "On the approval of Program of External Labour migration of the citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2006-2010", January 31, 2006, № 61; Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree "On the approval of National Strategy on Labour Migration of Tajik citizens abroad for 2011-2015", October 4, 2011 № 460.

<sup>71</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, The Decree under №390, 4 June 2014.

<sup>72</sup> MoLMEP Press Release (2016).

<sup>73</sup> OSAIF Tajikistan (2018), "Analysis of the socio-economic problems of returning labour migrants of the Republic of Tajikistan".

<sup>74</sup> The Charter is an Appendix to the Order of the Head of the Migration Service of the MoLMEP dated 23 April 2015 No. 27.

<sup>75</sup> MoLMEP Press Release (2018).

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Mercy Corps (2020), "Baseline study "Reintegration of Returning Migrants in Tajikistan"; see also HRC (2015), "Monitoring of the National Strategy on Labour Migration of Tajik citizens abroad for 2011-2015".



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### 3. STATE AGENCY FOR EMPLOYMENT ABROAD



In 2014, the State Agency for Employment Abroad was opened in Dushanbe under the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan. This institution was established to strengthen work in regulating the labour migration of Tajik citizens abroad. The Agency provides information services to migrant workers and mediation services for Tajik citizens who wish to work outside the republic. It has branches in GBAO, Soghd and Khatlon provinces.

During a recent press conference, the MoLMEP stated that labour migration flows from Tajikistan will be diversified into South Korea, Japan, Poland and Turkey. In the last two years, the Agency employed an insignificant number of migrants in destination other than the Russian Federation. In 2018, the Agency employed 2,000 people in Turkey and Poland; in the first quarter of 2019, more than 1,000 people applied

to the Agency for work in Poland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Belarus and Kazakhstan.<sup>77</sup> Prior to the Covid-19 border closures, the Agency planned to employ at least 1,500 Tajik migrant workers in Turkey in 2020.<sup>78</sup>

The Agency's activities are not widely publicised. The Agency has a Facebook page, which does not provide users with information about the Agency. Other useful information, such as the benefits of using official channels or success stories, is also not published. The Agency is listed on the official website of the MoLMEP, however, no details are provided. The official MS's website also does not contain information on the work of the Agency, except for the information that appears in the news section of the website. At the time the writing of this Rreport, the Agency's own official website ([khorija.tj](http://khorija.tj)) was not operational.

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<sup>77</sup> Yatim Shodmon (2019), "MoLMEP: More and more Tajiks look for work in Turkey and Poland", 10 February 2019, Radio Ozodi.

<sup>78</sup> Karayev Saifiddin (2020), "MoLMEP states: the number of labour migrants is growing", Asia Plus, 6 February 2020.

## 4. REPRESENTATION OF MOLMEP IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Representation of MoLMEP in the Russian Federation was established in 2014.<sup>79</sup> Its competence is, in close collaboration with the Tajik Embassy in Moscow and its five consular offices, to protect the rights and legitimate interests of Tajik migrant workers.<sup>80</sup>

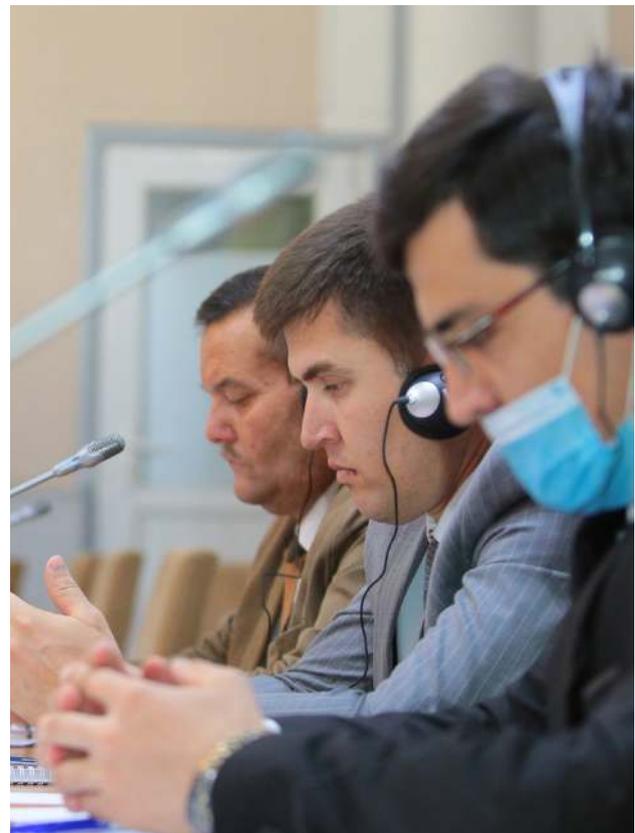
The Representation has the following functions:

- provide assistance in the implementation of international treaties of the Republic of Tajikistan in the field of migration;
- analyse the labour market in the Russian Federation;
- cooperate with authorized bodies of the Russian Federation in the field of migration; and
- assist business entities (such as PEAs) of the Republic of Tajikistan in concluding agreements with business entities and employers of the Russian Federation, as well as continuously monitor compliance with the agreements concluded between business entities of the Republic of Tajikistan and employers of the Russian Federation.
- analyse the labour market in the Russian Federation;
- cooperate with authorized bodies of the Russian Federation in the field of migration; and
- assist business entities (such as PEAs) of the Republic of Tajikistan in concluding agreements with business entities and employers of the Russian Federation, as well as continuously monitor compliance with the agreements concluded between business entities of the Republic of Tajikistan and employers of the Russian Federation.

The Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russian Federation is operationally responsible for returning deceased citizens to Tajikistan as well as supporting potential migrants with employment, protection of rights and hiring lawyers to assist with unpaid wages.

The Regulation of the Representation of MoLMEP in the Russian Federation does not have clear and designated provisions on how the Representation's functions interact with other government agencies. Both the Representation and MS have obligations written into their Regulations to protect the rights of citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan abroad. While the Representation is entrusted with the task of working with business entities (i.e., PEAs), there is no mention of their interaction with the State Agency for Employment Abroad.

The Representation covers Moscow and the Moscow region, St. Petersburg, Khabarovsk, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Krasnodar and Kazan. Despite being understaffed (15 employees), the Representation performs significant work. In 2019, the Representation was able to assist 6,441 migrant workers with employment, lodge 22 court appeals and to recover over 20.5 million Russian Roubles worth of workers' salaries.<sup>81</sup>



<sup>79</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree on the approval of the Regulation of the Representation of the MoLMEP in the Russian Federation 4 June 2014 №392.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> MoLMEP Press Releases (annual).

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## 5. STATE INSTITUTION ADULT TRAINING CENTRE OF TAJIKISTAN (ATC)

Since 2008, the State Institution Adult Training Centre of Tajikistan (ATC) has operated under MoLMEP.<sup>82</sup> Some ATC courses are in demand among migrant workers – for example, electric and gas welder courses. According to MoLMEP, in 2016, 5.7 thousand students were trained in these specialisations.<sup>83</sup> The ATC also trains specialists in the construction, agricultural, and vocational sectors, crafts, as well as provides language courses. According to MoLMEP, about half of all attendees are women. After the opening of new specialisations for women in 2018, the proportion of female attendants increased from 54 to 61.4 percent.<sup>84</sup>

The ATC works closely with the Agency of Labour and Employment of Population. Only those that are registered with the Agency as unemployed have access to the ATC services without charge.<sup>85</sup> The ATC also undertakes to provide recognition of qualifications for returnees with extensive work experience abroad but no formal qualifications.

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## 6. PEAS AND RECRUITERS

PEAs are tasked with assisting migrant workers to secure employment abroad. Research into PEAs conducted by the HRC in 2010 and 2017 identified recurring issues of weak legislative base, weak potential of PEAs, and inadequate control and monitoring over PEAs.

There is no separate legislation regulating the work of PEAs in Tajikistan. The current Law on Migration (1999) does not stipulate for the regulation of PEAs apart from its Article 8 (1), according to which all legal persons must receive a license issued by a competent institution. Accordingly, there is very little institutional framework for oversight and regulation of work of PEAs.

The 2017 HRC study of PEAs revealed that only a small part of the population uses their services. In 2016, PEAs, together with the State Agency for Employment Abroad, employed approximately one per 572,000 citizens. Moreover, there are fewer licenced PEAs. Compared to the 43 licenced PEAs in 2015, only 14 remained in 2016.<sup>86</sup>

In general, organized recruitment agencies have not secured a good reputation in the country, which overall impedes the development of this system. The reputation of PEAs is further damaged by instances of fraud and unfair employment. PEAs do not monitor working conditions and labour relations after securing contracts for migrant workers, neither at the signing of a contract between a migrant worker and an employer, nor during the period of work after employment. The activities of many employment agencies boil down to mediation between a hiring firm and/or employer and migrant workers.

US State Department Trafficking in Persons Reports (TIP) 2019 and 2020 emphasize the lack of proper control over the activities of private employment agencies in the Republic of Tajikistan.<sup>87</sup> The UN Committee on Migrant Workers Rights believes that the regulatory regime for the activities of PEAs and the existing licensing system for such agencies are inadequate and do not meet the needs of the ICPRMW. In 2019, the committee recommended that Tajikistan improve monitoring and frequent inspections of private recruitment agencies to

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<sup>82</sup> Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree on the adoption of the "Rules for organizing a system of vocational training, advanced training and retraining of unemployed citizens" 1 August 2008, No. 373.

<sup>83</sup> Human Rights Centre (HRC) and Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population (MoLMEP) (2020), "Situation Analysis in Labour Migration in the Republic of Tajikistan".

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Rules for organizing a system of vocational training, advanced training and retraining of unemployed citizens.

<sup>86</sup> MoLMEP Press Releases (2014) and (2014).

<sup>87</sup> Department of State, United States of America (2020), "Trafficking in Persons Report: 20th Edition".

prevent them from acting as intermediaries for foreign recruitment firms engaged in illegal activities.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to licenced PEAs, unlicensed recruiters (individuals or organizations) assist migrants in finding work abroad, which is prohibited by law.<sup>89</sup> A situational analysis of the HRC conducted in 2019 indicates that

recruiters publish job advertisements located in European countries, both on advertising sites and on social media. There is practically no control over this area.<sup>90</sup> Frequently, advertisements on employment abroad are published on a popular website ([www.somon.tj](http://www.somon.tj)). The link to this site is also located on the official site of the Agency of Labour and Employment of Population ([www.kor.tj](http://www.kor.tj)).



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### III. PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION IN TAJIKISTAN

A significant portion of the Tajik population have been undertaking labour migration, predominately to Russia. However, no systematic pre-departure orientation has been provided by the government of Tajikistan. This has a number of causes. Mobility to Russia occurs in the context of visa-free travel.<sup>91</sup> Often pre-departure orientation is organized on an ad-hoc basis at airports, schools, or villages, as a result of being project-based and initiated by international organizations or some NGOs (with the provision of the pre-departure orientation ending with the end of the project).<sup>92</sup>

Other issues include the manner of how pre-departure information is presented. The majority of the information is designed only with Russia as the sole country of destination for migrant workers, ignoring the potential for diversification to other destination countries. The focus of the information appears to revolve around the concerns over legality of stay and work in the Russian Federation, prioritizing the knowledge of the Russian migration legislation. As a consequence, the documents are written in legalistic language. The tone is often authoritative, not friendly, and largely reads as if written by the Russian migration authorities.

Even what might be considered useful information,

such as access to housing, the information is written in a way as to appease the anxieties of the Russian public over overcrowdings and legality, rather than be a tool for migrant workers to find housing and navigate the housing market in Russia.<sup>93</sup> Migrant workers are directed to avoid brokers and recruiters and to only use official channels. However, instructions on what those official channels are and how to use them are missing. Similarly, with instructions regarding learning the Russian language before departure,<sup>94</sup> adequate information with regards to where and how potential migrants can learn the Russian language is unclear (although courses are readily provided by the Tajik government entities).

Another issue is with the Russian Federation itself. The pre-departure information disproportionately focuses on the Russian migration legislation.<sup>95</sup> However, this focus disregards or is unable to keep up with the frequent changes to the Russian migration legislation which can render any piece of official information obsolete in a matter of months or weeks. Further, the Russian legal environment is treated as a predictable environment where the knowledge of the law will necessarily give migrants the protection of a regular, documented status. Scholarly work on the subject, however, have argued that the ambiguity

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88 UNCMW 2019.

89 Criminal Code of Tajikistan (1998), Article 259.

90 HRC and MoLMEP 2020.

91 However, most of the control over migrant workers is exerted after their arrival to the Russian Federation, often resulting in migrants being in an undocumented and irregular status.

92 For example, see Mercy Corps 2020; and Helvetas (2020), "Information Guide on Safe Labour Migration in the Russian Federation".

93 For example, Helvetas 2020; International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2011) "Know before departure".

94 Helvetas 2020.

95 For a general overview of labour migration from Tajikistan, see HRC and MoLMEP 2020.

of the application of the law (corruption in Russian migration governing institutions and police brutality) can render any official document as fake and vice-versa.<sup>96</sup> Further, it has been argued that the migration legislation in Russia is designed to produce undocumented workers for purposes of bribery and corruption.<sup>97</sup>



The decades-long absence of a systematic, comprehensive and up-to-date provision of pre-departure

orientation by the Tajik government; together with the unapproachable tone and limited lifespan of the pre-departure information through projects; exacerbated by the ever changing, convoluted and misapplied Russian legislation has contributed to an environment in which potential labour migrants generally leave for migration without the assistance of official state or non-state institutions, relying on their social networks and migrant workers in migration as the main source of information.<sup>98</sup>



<sup>96</sup> Madeleine Reeves (2013), "Clean fake: Authenticating documents and persons in migrant Moscow" *American Ethnologist*, 40(3), pp. 508-524; Rustamjon Urinboyev (2021), "Migration and Hybrid Political Regimes: Navigating the Legal Landscape in Russia", University of California Press.

<sup>97</sup> Caress Schenk (2010), "Open borders, closed minds: Russia's changing migration policies: liberalization or xenophobia?" *Demokratizatsiya*, 18(2); Caress Schenk (2018), "Why control immigration?: Strategic uses of migration management in Russia", University of Toronto Press.

<sup>98</sup> JICA 2020.

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## D. EFFECTS OF COVID-19

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the borders between Russia and Tajikistan were closed on 18 and 20 March 2020. Many Tajik migrants returned to Tajikistan in February and March 2020 prior to the border closures. Those that did not return became stuck in Russia during a three-month lockdown.<sup>99</sup> The Tajik government did start repatriation efforts at the end of May 2020, but were quickly overwhelmed. Nonetheless, around 70,000 Tajik citizens were repatriated by October.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the Russian government creating a work permit amnesty until the middle of June<sup>101</sup> and extending it until the middle of September 2020,<sup>102</sup> migrants in Russia were hit hardest financially. This is primarily due to the Russian government shutting down non-essential businesses during the lockdown, such as construction and services. First affected were women, who work primarily in the service sector and as cleaners.<sup>103</sup> However, according to one study, by June 2020, around 75 percent of migrants lost their jobs or were undertaking unpaid work (compared to 48 percent of the local population).<sup>104</sup> Only 2 percent of all migrants had enough savings to sustain them the full three months of the lockdown.<sup>105</sup>

The Tajik diaspora mobilised resources (financial

and other provision) in many cities of the Russian Federation to support those labour migrants stuck at the airports for days/weeks waiting for the flight opportunities to return home. While many organisations and private individuals assisted stranded migrants through the provision of food,<sup>106</sup> xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiment also increased. Political and public debate was rife with the arguments that unemployed Central Asian migrants will produce crime, radicalism and terrorism,<sup>107</sup> and with calls to expel all migrants from Russia.<sup>108</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic has had longer-term effects on migration to Russia. Covid-19 was added into the list of infectious diseases limiting access to the residency and/or work permits<sup>109</sup> This introduction has made an already costly process more expensive, with a Covid-19 medical certificate added to the cost of the health check-up at a not insignificant cost. Should migrants contract the virus in Russia, their documents are likely to be cancelled and only reinstated through the courts at an additional cost,<sup>110</sup> likely contributing to more migrants entering the irregular or undocumented status.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the implementation of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs

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<sup>99</sup> Ellen Boccuzzi, Elizabeth Ferris, Renzo Guinto, Philip Hirsch, and Jenna Holliday (2020), "The Impact of Covid-19 on Migrants in Asia and the Pacific: Rethinking Resilience, December 2020, USAID: Integra Government Services International.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> A decree passed in April exempted migrant workers from paying for the work permit from March 15 to June 15: The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Department for Moscow (2020), "The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Department for Moscow informs", 22 April 2020.

<sup>102</sup> The same decree also allowed migrant workers to work in Russia for the same duration without procurement of patent or other permitting documents. An update to the April decree was passed in June according to which foreign nationals can extend their registrations, visas, and residency without the need to leave the territory of the RF until 15 Sept 2020. The same update to the decree re-launched the work permit payments for migrant workers: Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, "On Amendments to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of April 18, 2020 No. 274"; On temporary measures to resolve the legal status of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Russian Federation in connection with the threat of further proliferation novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19)" 15 June 2020 No. 392.

<sup>103</sup> Ekaterina Ivashchenko (2020), "Russia's labour migrants are caught between poverty and a pandemic", 7 May 2020, OpenDemocracy.

<sup>104</sup> Evgenii Varshaver (2020), "The situation of international migrants in Russia during the Corona Virus Pandemic" In: Monitoring of Russia's Economic Outlook: Trends and challenges of socio-economic development, June 2020 No 20(122).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Moscow Bureau of Human Rights (2020), "Report on Manifestations of Racism, Xenophobia and Migration Processes in the Context of the Coronavirus Pandemic".

<sup>108</sup> Olga Vandisheva (2020), "There has been a public resurgence, that all migrants had to be kicked out of Russia", Business Online, 17 May 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Order of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation No. 581H dated 06.15.2020 "On listing COVID-19 in the list of dangerous infectious diseases prohibiting migrants from living in Russia".

<sup>110</sup> Ekaterina Ivashchenko (2020), "Recovery via the courts: In Russia a compulsory Covid-19 test has been introduced for work permits for international migrants", Fergana, 1 July 2020; Federal Law "On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation" (from 2002, amended and supplemented 24/04/2020), Article 13.3, para 24.

proposal to introduce the mobile phone application “Migrant”, which was part of the Concept of State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation for 2019-2025. The application will contain all information about the migrant’s social and legal status, biometric data, health information, “criminal history” or lack thereof, as well as a “migrant social trust rating”. Migrant workers will be obliged to have this application.<sup>111</sup>

The border closures have also had an effect on people in Tajikistan. Many, who had been planning to migrate to Russia as a result of the lack of economic opportunities in Tajikistan, were not able to do so. Seasonal migrant workers were similarly not able to migrate during the 2020 season. Remittances dropped significantly as a result of the border closures and shut down of the construction and services sectors in Russia.<sup>112</sup> This has had a further effect of increasing the poverty and vulnerabilities of families.<sup>113</sup>



<sup>111</sup> Meduza (2020), “MIA in Russian suggested to introduce an app «Migrant» which will be obligatory for all incoming migrant workers”, 29 May 2020.

<sup>112</sup> Fergana (2020), “Remittances from Russia to Tajikistan drop by 22% in the first quarter”, 16 June 2020.

<sup>113</sup> William Hutchins Seitz and Alisher Rajabov (2020), “Economic and Social Impacts of COVID-19: Update from Listening to Tajikistan”, The World Bank, 11 December 2020.

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# 4. MIGRANT INFORMATION NEEDS

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## A. INTRODUCTION

All respondents that were interviewed had previously migrated and/or intend to migrate to Russia. Unless otherwise specified, the recommendations primarily focus on the information needs of migrants whose intended destination is Russia. Migrants from Tajikistan have different information needs, depending on the category that they fall into. The main distinction is whether migrants are returnees that have previously migrated and intend to migrate again, and those that also intend to migrate but have never previously done so.

Depending on how many years they have been migrating, experienced migrants have a good understanding of the legal requirements and cultural nuances of migrating to Russia. They usually have a job and accommodation options pre-determined and some even migrate in response to concrete job offers. On the whole, experienced migrants had not in the past visited offices of MS or undertook courses at the Pre-Departure Centres, nor had they any intention of utilising the services of the MRC as they felt they already understood the laws and conditions of migration. A few, when prompted, did believe that the centre would be useful for migrants without experience, especially for those that do not have a family or social network to support them. Those KIs that differentiated between migrants with and without experience, also raised the issue that a lot of thought would need to go into what information and/or services could benefit experienced migrants. One KI stated that experienced migrants asked more complex questions regarding migrating to Russia, such as bringing their families over, acquiring citizenship, buying property and starting businesses.

Migrants without experience would benefit from the full range of information dissemination. However, they are less likely to turn to the Pre-Departure Centres or other official outlets if they have an estab-

lished social network of friends and family who are likely to guide them through the migration process, including with information, accommodation, work, and how to get their documents in order.

*“When I went, for example, I didn’t know anything. [...] Well, people here told me about it. And when I went myself, they repeated what I heard from friends, from neighbours. When you go there, you of course learn more. You work. You find out more also from locals of course”*

MwE, Bokhtar, Khatlon

While female migrants (both experienced and without experience) require all the information that is provided to male migrants, they face difficulties and risks in addition to those of their male counterparts. Female migrants can be divided into those travelling with their husbands (either to work or to stay at home and care for the children), or travelling alone for work. More research needs to be conducted with regards to female migrants that travel with their husband (and children) in order to provide both them and their husbands with practical information.

There are many gaps with regards to gender. One of the main ones identified by a key informant is that there is no research available on the life of spouses of labour migrants in Russia. In particular, those who are suffering from domestic abuse. More research is needed to understand both the plight of spouses of labour migrants abroad and where and how they can seek assistance (especially when they are in an irregular administrative status).

Female migrants that travel to work alone can be sub-



divided into those that have a friends and family network in Tajikistan and, especially in Russia, to assist them, and those that do not. The latter group is particularly vulnerable and includes experienced female migrants that have previously migrated (including with their husbands). It is necessary to identify them and provide them with not only information but also support, such as directing them towards group employment opportunities organised by the State Agen-

cy for Employment Abroad. It must be noted that men can also fall into the vulnerable group, especially if, after they have arrived in Russia, the promised assistance from family or friends is not forthcoming.

These problems, together with suggestions from migrants and KIs, have been translated into services and information needs of Tajik migrants.



## B. SERVICES OFFERED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Many of the KIs stated that the information and services needed by migrants already exist. They are provided by various departments of the MoLMEP, including the ATC, the State Agency for Employment Abroad, the Migration Service and its Pre-Departure Centres. They are, however, underutilised and under-resourced.

Migrants are not aware of the service provided or offered because they mostly rely on their family and social networks. This system has developed as a result of decades of labour migration without government support.

*"Migrants have for many years managed to migrate [...] to solve their own problems [...] even civil society organisation that have been providing services to migrants for years have a limited reach, because migrants are used to do it on their own, used to solving their own problems through their own social connections, networks, through their relatives, neighbours."*

**KI, Independent Expert**

When it comes to the Pre-Departure Centres, no KI outside of the government sector knew that they existed or what their status was. However, another reason for the lack of knowledge of government institutions by migrants has been identified by KIs as a lack of accessibility. Some migrants do not have access to the internet or television programs used for promotion of information. There is also a lack of

accessibility due to distances and costs of travel. Some migrants, such as youths and women, need to seek permission or be accompanied by a male. According to KIs, this could potentially be alleviated if MS and/or Pre-Departure Centre offices were open and accessible at times that accommodated visits or appointments by migrants that work or study during the day.

*"Migrants need information round the clock. During the day he's busy somewhere, let's say, doing some casual work, and in the evening, he's thinking about migration. But in the evening no one can help him because it's outside of business hours."*

**KI, Private Sector**

It has also been recommended that appointments for face-to-face consultations could be made online or over the phone (see Information Delivery section).

Government sector KIs expressed a wish for highly skilled and tech savvy jurists to increase the information communication technology output of the MS and Pre-Departure Centres. However, some of the KIs stated that there is a high turnover of staff due to the low public servant wages and the perception that the position is a stepping-stone to better postings. Hiring labour migrants (male and female) with experience as representatives and to staff the MS offices and Pre-Departure centres has been suggested as a way to make a dent in the general distrust of government

institutions and their services.<sup>114</sup> This is necessary because, as identified by KIs, they are undermined in a number of ways, including, for example, by staff being absent during working days and/or hours. Additionally, it has been observed that public meetings and information sessions organised for information dissemination are attended by people who are not benefited by this information (i.e., the kind of people that attend every public meeting). Also, lists of names of migrants are sometimes collected for seminars that are not held.

*“Hukumat’s often collected people [for mobile information sessions] who would not benefit from this information, because they collected in the Jamoats some women and men or went to schools and invite students. So the collection of the target audience was not effective. Need [...] to reach the correct target audience with this information.”*

**KI, Private Sector**

*“Preferably, assistance would not be: well, we’re professionals, we haven’t migrated ourselves, we will advise you how to undertake migration. [...] That is, this has to be a system in which migrants assist each other based on their own experiences. This may work. And this has to be done over the channels that migrants use themselves.”*

**KI, Private Sector**

Hiring experienced female migrants, especially in areas that see a higher rate of female migrants, could also address a number of points raised by the KIs. Namely, those women that do seek out information about migration were reported to have more questions and take the information seeking more seriously. Hiring experienced female migrants could assist to counteract some of the misconceptions about female migration held by KIs (including some female KIs), especially in the government sector. One such position is that women migrate only as part of a family or due to the loss of the breadwinner (i.e., widowed or divorced women). Irrespective of the fact that a number of women interviewed were youths (between 14

and 30 years old), with a few being single (i.e., never married).

Other perceptions expressed by KIs generally were that female migrants did not need additional information beyond the differences of their employment (to that of the men) or that they are more at risk of sexual attack or exploitation. Government sector KIs expressed other, more tenuous positions, such as, that women are the weaker sex and that women should not migrate until their children are grown up.

Lack of funding and resources have been identified by the KIs (including in the government sector) as one of the main obstacles to providing migrants with effective services and information. For instance, while the government produces some booklets, many others are produced as part of time-limited projects run by international organisations. The booklets themselves are quickly outdated, nor is there a perception among KIs that they are read (none of the migrants mentioned reading booklets).

The Pre-Departure Centres have representatives, whose task it is to follow a schedule of regional visits, or take migrants to the airport, however, they lack funds and resources to do so effectively. Nonetheless, the Pre-Departure Centres have been tasked to set up free language courses for migrants – a task that cannot be achieved as a result of the limitations of funds and resources. Interestingly, the ATC also teaches languages and, in cooperation with the Agency of Labour and Employment of Population, has a program of travelling to remote areas and villages.

*The Agency for Labour and Employment of Population has, in collaboration with development partners launched a new initiative. This initiative is the opening of mobile [travelling] courses for residents of mountainous and border districts.”*

**KI, Government Sector**

<sup>114</sup> Studies show a lack of knowledge and trust of government institutions in Tajikistan. See Helvetas 2020; Mercy Corps 2020

Extending that cooperation to the Pre-Departure Centres may be one of the tasks of the MRC as part of assisting the government in streamlining allocation of tasks and funds.

A duplication may also exist (though it is uncertain from the interviews) with some MS offices engaging in group employment. It is unclear, however, whether they pursue it as a 'representative' office of the State Agency for Employment Abroad or as a separate autonomous function. For instance, licencing and working with PEAs and Russian employers to send migrants to Russia for seasonal work. From the KI interviews, employers also visit the ATC and offer students group employment.

These kinds of activities could potentially be coordinated and consolidated. So could the various collaborations with international organisations. Finally, the government sector KIs spoke about the work of the diaspora complimenting that of the government, especially, financially and through job and accommodation assistance, or funding the return of ill or deceased citizens back to Tajikistan. As there are over 60 different diaspora groups, mapping them and their interaction with government entities may be useful. The Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russian Federation is operationally responsible for returning deceased citizens to Tajikistan as well as supporting migrants with employment, protection of rights and hiring lawyers to assist with unpaid wages.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

The Tajik government has been taking steps to assist its citizens in migrating internally and abroad. However, this work is little known, understood or trusted by the populace. Liaising with the MS, the State Agency for Employment Abroad, Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russia Federation, the ATC and the Agency of Labour and Employment of Population, together with international organisations and the Tajik diaspora, the MRC could identify the services offered by the various government agencies that offer Tajik citizens courses or financial assistance. The MRC could collate and streamline all the services that may also be useful to migrants, both in Tajikistan and in Russia, e.g., language and skills courses, financial assistance to women and vulnerable groups, assistance in protection of rights (especially in Russia). It may also be useful to collect additional services offered by international organisations, civil society, the various Tajik diaspora groups and private entities (such as lawyers and advocates). The collation and coordination assistance by the MRC could potentially assist in harnessing and efficiently utilising limited funding and resources.

The various departments of MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan have created and issued many booklets

on the topics to be discussed below. As with services, rather than creating its own content, the MRC could collect this information, ensure it is up-to-date and incorporate it in its service referrals and information dissemination. The MRC could also be a centralised contact point to keep track of, collect, collate and maintain an archive of copies of all informational material (regional and national) for migrants being provided by international organisations and civil society to the Pre-Departure Centres, MS and ATC offices.

The MRC could ensure that the collected services and information are available in one location, such as a database, to be made available online and on the MRC website or over social media platforms for migrants to access. This centralised information can also be readily disseminated as needed to all necessary government departments, including the local government bodies, such as Hukumats, Jamoats and Mahalla Committees, so that it could be made more readily available to migrants. Collecting and updating the information at a central database could ensure that there is a centralised record and an institutional memory of knowledge of this information, which can be easily accessible to allow for the eventuality of a high staff turnover at the Pre-Departure Centres.

With regards to the staff of the MS and the Pre-Departure Centres, certainly high qualifications (e.g., lawyer or economist) and tech savviness is an added bonus for staff. However, the MRC could also advocate the government to hire experienced migrants to assist potential, intending, outgoing and other experienced migrants with their information needs. In areas where female migration is also comparatively high, hiring female experienced migrants could also benefit the better provision of information to potential, intending, outgoing and experienced female migrants. For mi-

grants, it is important to have access to information outside of classical/typical working hours, as well as potentially being able to make appointments online or over the phone for face-to-face consultations.

Finally, the MRC could assist the Tajik government in identifying gaps with regards to the services and protections for Tajik migrants, such as the development of the diplomatic post of a labour attaché (see Other Destinations section).

## C. EXPERIENCE AS A TRUSTED SOURCE OF INFORMATION

### I. EXPERIENCE AS INFORMATION

The semi-structured interviews with migrants uncovered an important element of migrants' relationship with information. Specifically, knowledge and information are in many ways synonymous with experience. For instance, when migrants without experience were asked whether they knew about the process of preparing and registering their documents or the problems they may face in Russia, many stated that they did not know about this step because they have not yet migrated. Once they have undertaken the steps involved in registering their stay in Russia, they would then have this information. This is confirmed by the fact that while stating that they did not have information about what is needed or how things work, some of the migrants, when prompted by the interviewer, were able to give quite detailed information.

"I'll go this time, find everything out, go through all the procedures, and next time will know everything"

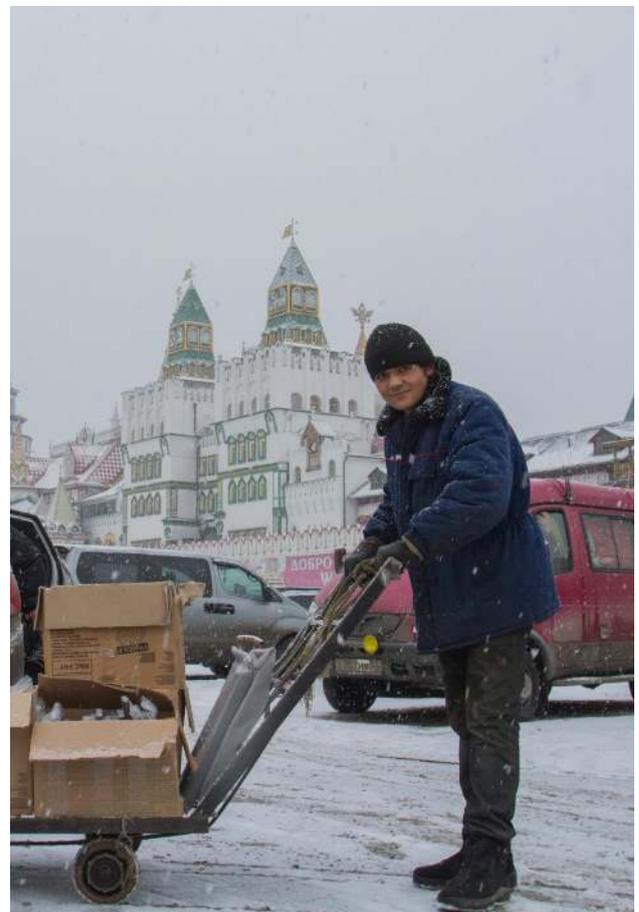
FwoE, Khujand, Soghd

"You need money mainly for airline tickets and food. But I don't know exactly how much is needed as I haven't been to Russia yet. [...] At the moment, I don't know what documents are needed to go to the hospital. I'll travel to Russia and then will ask my son and relatives how I can go to a hospital."

FwoE, Darvoz, GBAO

"If it's a new person, he looks for information. Now, I don't look. Now, I know where to go and how. I know the way. Once a person has been to Russia once or twice, he will understand everything."

MwE(1), Farkhor, Khatlon



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## II. EXPERIENCE AS TRUST

Experience is also an essential element in the level of trust afforded to a source that provides information or services. Unsurprisingly, nearly all of the migrants without experience, when asked what sources they will turn to for information and assistance, answered their relatives. When they gave a preference, migrants without experience listed members of their family and social network (friends, neighbours and classmates) as the sources of information and assistance that they trusted above any other. However, it is not merely family and social networks that were identified, but those family and social network members that had experience migrating to Russia (preferably more than once).

*"[I trust] my husband, brother, those who worked there, my father-in-law, my mother has also been there [Russia]."*

**FwoE, Penjikent, Soghd**

*"I trust those people who have already worked in Russia because they know quite a lot. They have seen it all with their own eyes."*

**MwoE, Penjikent, Soghd**

A KI took this into account when suggesting that the MS and the Pre-Departure Centres should be staffed by people who had previously migrated and understood the process and difficulties from their own experiences. Another KI suggestion was providing a space (such as social media groups) for migrants to help each other out with problems, although this option opens the possibility for the spread of misinformation.

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## III. EXPERIENCE THROUGH TRUSTED SERVICES

The level of knowledge and trust of government institutions is not assessed in this study (see Methodology section). However, other studies show a lack of that knowledge and trust among labour migrants.<sup>115</sup>

A number of KIs recommended that service provision be a primary function of the MRC, with the provision of information in the secondary role. From KI interviews, institutions (including those in the government sector) that provided services, e.g., legal assistance, training, employment or business setup assistance, job placements internally and abroad, reported high numbers of enquiries.<sup>116</sup> Information was then sought out as peripheral to the services offered. A number of KIs have given a positive reputation, rather than any overt advertisement as the reason for the high number of enquiries.

*"Well, we're known to many, and often the positive experience spread by word of mouth, the majority of people that come, have found out through their acquaintances, having had a good experience."*

**KI, Private Sector**

Nonetheless, enquiries for all sectors dropped dramatically as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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<sup>115</sup> See Helvetas 2020; Mercy Corps 2020.

<sup>116</sup> No KI provided exact numbers and the assessment of the enquiries are self-reported by the KIs and what is considered to be many people or a few is therefore highly subjective.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

The perspective that experience is a trusted source of information is confirmed both by the migrants and the KIs. The MRC may need to identify services that could be offered to migrants, including referring current and returned migrants to existing government, civil society

or private service providers. Once trust is established through effective service provision, provision of information will be assessed as reliable and migrants are more likely to seek out the Pre-Departure Centres themselves with questions and concerns.



## D. INFORMATION DELIVERY

### I. PLATFORM OF DELIVERY

With regards to platform of delivery, there is a slight discrepancy between how migrants without experience and KIs propose to disseminate information and how information is looked for and actually obtained by all migrants.

There is only one suggested platform of delivery that corresponded exactly with actual migrant behaviour. Migrants either attended MS offices in the past or intended to do so in the future, for in person, face-to-face consultations – either to seek information, as in the case of a few migrants without experience or, as in the case of experienced migrants, to check if there is a ban against their name. When asked for methods of dissemination of information by the MRC, many migrants recommended in-person face-to-face consultations.

**The migrants' response is also supported by their and the KIs' answers to the question regarding the location for the MRC. Most migrants opted for proximity to their areas to be able to attend in person. Migrants, as well as KIs, suggested that the MRC should be located in every city and district, near every Jamaat,<sup>117</sup> closer to home or at the local youth palace or library of each district. They also suggested conducting mobile information sessions/seminars in the villages. Other one-off suggestions included being located in the local MS branch or Agency of Labour and Employment of Population offices, or the Passport registration service. Some KIs also added**

**that the MRC needed to send mobile teams/representatives to disseminate its work face-to-face. A proposed alternative was to recruit representatives in the various remote areas from trusted sources. As was discussed above, this is in many ways undertaken by the various government institutions. However, their effectiveness is limited by a lack of coordination and funding.**

When it comes to other methods of information delivery, the suggested platforms for delivery do not all coincide with actual experiences of migrants. Thus, when asked what platforms a future MRC should deliver information on, migrants responded that the MRC should provide information over the internet (i.e., have a website), over the phone, over social media, via information booklets/brochures, newspapers, television and ads (no medium mentioned).

From KI interviews, booklets, flyers and brochures, together with television and radio appear to be the mainstay of the government sector for information propagation. Other KIs from the government sector stated that the information about services was available on a website and disseminated via newspapers. A guidebook had been developed with helpful information on migration as well as useful contacts. The Guidebook was disseminated to the Pre-Departure Centres as well as the local Mahalla Committees. Few KIs from other sectors differed in their methods of information dissemination,

117 See Glossary.

with some individual exceptions (see below).

Various KIs, however, mentioned that brochures were either not picked up by migrants or not read when given. No migrant spoke of obtaining information from brochures in their responses. Some KIs argued that newspapers, SMS messages and television were similarly ineffective, especially in some of the more remote regions. Only some migrants reported watching Russian and/or Tajik television (with a couple female migrants only having the time to do so in the evening around dinner) for news and information about migration (including changes of laws in Russia and updates on border closures). It must also be noted that, as per migrant responses, not all villages have access to television programs. Only a couple reported listening to the radio for information on migration. Newspapers were reported to be relied on by experienced migrants, but only in Russia in order to find work. Another issue identified by the KIs is that many of the booklets, flyers and brochures as well as the Guidebook are usually developed and provided to the different government bodies by international organisations as part of a pilot (time-limited) project. Despite this, the government sector KI responses to how the MRC should disseminate information was to print more booklets and continue to disseminate information over television, radio and the internet.

Recently, a mobile application, also developed as part of a project, was launched to help migrants in Russia with helpful contacts, laws and advice for migration.<sup>118</sup> However, it was pointed out by some KIs that information provision services designed as part of a project expire and are no longer updated when the project comes to an end. There was also a concern that migrants are unlikely to download additional applications on their phones and that it would be better to make use of the applications they do use.

Apart from primarily relying on social and family networks and face-to-face interactions, migrants used different platforms (both communication and social media applications) for different purposes (these purposes were clarified mainly by experienced migrants). The purposes included communication with friends and family, staying in touch with previous employers,

entertainment, looking for work, and looking for information about migration.

Migrants (the majority of those without experience and almost all with experience) used IMO to communicate with friends and family in Tajikistan. Only some of the KIs were able to confirm that IMO was the most commonly used application for communication. WhatsApp and Viber were more widespread in Russia (where IMO is reportedly unknown). WhatsApp and Viber, together with OK.ru (Odnoklassniki), were used by many migrants, especially those with experience in Russia, to stay in contact with Russian friends and employers when back in Tajikistan. One KI suggested that OK.ru was mostly used by older migrants.

A final set of mobile applications used by only one migrant each. These were Telegram and the Tajik mobile application Chi Gap. One respondent reported having an email account. While Telegram is a fairly widespread application, one KI clarified that it is used rarely by Tajik migrants (while being used by those from Uzbekistan), being preferred by people who are more cyber security conscious.

Only one of the KIs gave the suggestion of looking into social media groups already actively used by migrants and the Tajik diaspora. While migrants reported using Instagram, Facebook and YouTube primarily for entertainment, some reported using Facebook for following migrant groups (reporting their experience) and news. This is confirmed by a couple of KIs, who reported being active Facebook users, due to it being used by migrant groups, including diaspora groups and a group dedicated to female migrants. One KI also suggested that Facebook was used by more intellectual groups of migrants. According to migrants, Instagram was used for finding jobs and for news. YouTube was most used for the purposes of migration, including following the news and changes to Russian laws (with one respondent following a Russian lawyer explaining those laws), finding out how the Embassy of Tajikistan was working during the pandemic, finding general information about migration, and watching videos to update professional skills for work in Russia. Ads on these platforms have were found by a few migrants to be helpful, one respon-

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<sup>118</sup> The application, together with other helpful information about migration for Tajik migrants, can be at [www.infomuhojir.tj](http://www.infomuhojir.tj).

dent found out about MS from a YouTube ad, while another about signing up for group employment from an IMO ad. It is uncertain who posted these ads and whether the group employment is in Russia or in Tajikistan. One KI also saw advertising on IMO as a good way to promote services.

*"I logged into IMO and there was an ad about workers being hired for a construction project at the youth centre. That is why I came here, to confirm this information."*

**MwE(1), Khujand, Soghd**

*"Why not order an ad banner in IMO, because there are ads there right in the middle of the list of chats [...] it would be good to get ads of one's services [...] this application is used by many migrants."*

**KI, Private Sector**

One limiting factor to solely relying on communication and social media applications emerged in interviews with female experienced migrants. A woman reported that upon arrival in Russia, she had to be taught by her relatives how to use a phone. Two other women reported that they were not allowed to use any applications on their phone by their husbands. One of these women had migrated alone, prior to her marriage, and had used IMO, WhatsApp, Viber and Instagram.

While providing information over the internet was the top suggested platform for information dissemination for the MRC, internet searches (through Google or the Russian search engine, yandex.ru) were used as often by migrants as other platforms such as Instagram, Facebook or YouTube. Internet searches were usually used to answer specific questions. For instance, to identify a Russian hospital for treatment of sick children, to check a ban, to check the news, including whether the borders are open or to look for a job (usually using the website avito.ru). Many migrants, however, explicitly stated they did not trust the internet, did not use it, or checked the information they saw on there with trusted people. Others also

stated that they did not have access to the internet in their villages.

Migrants' suggestions regarding ways to improve information dissemination included allowing appointments to be made for an in-person face-to-face consultation online or over the phone (when there is no internet access). They also suggested that the MRC could provide the service of an internet café in key areas, alternatively it could be located at a local library, youth centre or internet café. One of the KIs advised that internet and phone (when there is no internet) services can be used successfully, but only after an outreach effort to remote areas to introduce the MRC and its work, combined with the building up of trust over time through the successful provision of services and word-of-mouth recommendations. Other innovative methods of propagating information used by KIs were webinars, informative videos, and a calendar with details of service providers.

Migrants and KIs agreed that the language of delivery should also be aligned with the language used in the targeted region. Thus, the information provided should be provided primarily in Tajik and, as needed, in the differing districts, in Uzbek, Pamiri and Russian languages.

*"The creation of websites, information resources in a structured format does not work [...] If it does work, then for a miniscule percent [of migrants]. What is needed is to transfer to those channels already used by the migrants themselves, and those channels that can provide information, not only in the language [of the migrant], but also in his dialect."*

**KI, Private Sector**

## II. TIMING OF DELIVERY

Another element that emerges from interviews with migrants is that information is sought and acquired only at the time it is needed and not beforehand. Few migrants without experience were waiting for the borders to open before undertaking any preparatory steps for migration. Just over half of migrants without experience were only at the stage of obtaining (or thinking about obtaining) their passport. When asked what information and documents are needed in Russia, many replied that they will find out from their relatives (or from MS as a backup option) either immediately prior to migration or when they will arrive in Russia.



*“Until I migrate, I don’t know what problems I will face. So it’s hard to say[...] it’s because I haven’t gone to Russia yet. Once I’ll go, I’ll find out.”*

**MwoE(1), Darvoz, GBAO**

Migrants with experience also recounted doing little to no preparation before their first journey. Their replies to the potential location of the MRC also reflect their actual needs. Thus, when asked where the potential MRC should be located, a number answered in Russia (or Moscow), before the interviewer clarified that the MRC was to be located in Tajikistan. This potentially highlights a need from experienced migrants to be assisted with information on the ground at the time of their need for that information. This is fur-

ther supported by some of the experienced migrants suggesting that the centre should be located at the airport and in cities such as Dushanbe, Khujand or Khorog, because that is where “everyone is leaving from”.

Similarly, KIs did not comment explicitly on the timing of the delivery of information, but made useful suggestions about the potential location of the MRC. Thus, one KI suggested setting up MRC branches or having representatives at departure points, such as airports and international train stations. Another KI suggested entering into partnership with travel agencies that sell international tickets to destination countries, to allow information dissemination at a key juncture of departure. Interestingly, some KIs from the government sector did state that they have representatives at the airport and train stations, or have booklets distributed there.

Another consideration is the decision to migrate of youths just out of school. Considering their lack of Russian or skills knowledge, this would be the juncture at which to introduce the services such as language and trade courses. Although, this is also something that is done by employment agencies between recruitment and departure, during the time visas and documents are being processed. Nonetheless, considering the interest of some of the young migrants in study abroad, this option should be added as a key juncture in the migration journey.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

Migrants mostly seek out information only at the time and place where that information is needed and not before. Taking in consideration the manner in which migrants without experience seek out information, the MRC could take a number of steps to maximise its impact in delivering this information. First and foremost, irrespective of the location of the MRC or the Pre-Departure Centres, a mobile circuit of representatives speaking the languages of the regions being visited could be coordinated between the various Ministry agencies, in order to be able to offer the full range of Ministry services, referrals, and provide other necessary information to migrants.

Physical presence, apart from providing information to migrants with limited access to the internet or other media, would help reach female (or vulnerable) migrants that may not have the resources or (husbands') permission to access distant offices or online communication platforms.

To accommodate migrants' incremental approach to information attainment, representatives could be available at key migration juncture points, potentially partnering with private and public entities to do so. Thus, MRC representatives could either visit or be located at rural schools (giving presentations on migration to students in their final year) other educational institutions (e.g., vocational training schools), the passport registration service, bank branches, travel agencies, in addition to international departure points, such as airports, bus and train stations. Using the collected, consolidated

and updated information, the MRC could propose a schedule of what information is essential at each juncture point: what should have already been done, what to consider at this juncture point and where to seek out the next set of information at the next stage of the migration process.

A solid online presence and utilisation of other media could compliment and support rather than lead the face-to-face delivery of information and services. This includes having a well-structured website, which provides both up-to-date information and the ability to make appointments with regional offices or mobile representatives. At the same time, information distributed by the representatives or at the different juncture points can contain links to social media channels run by the MRC, such as those on Facebook, Instagram and/or YouTube. These may prove more useful to migrants in Russia, where internet access is more readily available and affordable.

These MRC channels could contain links to other sources, channels or groups already providing useful information on migration, such as the mobile phone application recently rolled out by the government, and create its own additional content based on the needs of migrants. Finally, the MRC could undertake periodic research to keep track of the different platforms most utilised by migrants, keeping abreast of accessibility issues and the different media available and used in different districts and by different age groups and genders.



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## E. DOCUMENTS



According to KIs, migrants often do not know (or rely on their social networks to assist them with) the process of document preparation: which documents are needed, in which order and how they are to be filled out. Only one male migrant without experience recently out of school knew very little about obtaining documents, relying on being informed by his relatives. Others, while stating that they did not yet know the process, when prompted by the interviewer, were able to give quite detailed information, having been already informed by their family and social networks. Together with not knowing enough of the Russian language, not having proper documentation has been highlighted by migrants without experience as the main cause of problems with the Russian police.

Even though migrants without experience did not list residence and work permits as part of their future expenses and were planning to rely primarily on their relatives for advice, guidance on documentation (how, when, how much and how to renew) was identified by the majority of all migrants as the most needed kind of information and one that should be provided by the MRC.

With regards to Russia and the legalisation of their stay, KIs believe that migrants do not have the full knowledge of how, when and in what order to register their documents with the authorities, including the need to register one's spouse (and the consequences of not doing so). However, it appears that while those travelling for the first time, are not aware of the processes, experienced migrants navigate obtaining documents in a different way. A number of migrants were adamant that intermediaries should never be used – only a few of the male and none of the female migrants without experience spoke of the risks of using intermediaries, and that they are liable to provide fake documents (i.e., residence permits). However, due to the arduous bureaucracy involved in obtaining documents, about a third of experienced migrants relied on another person. A few of the male migrants relied on the foreman at their construction jobs or intermediaries to obtain work permits, with one receiving fraudulent documents.

*"In Russia, there are these guys, Tajiks, who work as intermediaries. For example, if you need to go to the Russian federal migration service, they have their own people there, with whom they come to an agreement. They meet the guys, give their price to do the work, but I don't really know, if they charge a lot or not, but we pay it. They execute our request. We never argue, go through medical, and if you are genuinely healthy, they put a stamp and issue you the document that lasts for the duration of a year. Every time we pay 40-60 thousand for the work permit."*

**MwE(2), Darvoz, GBAO**

One female experienced migrant did not obtain a work permit in 2020 and used an intermediary to pay a fine and bribe the police so as not to be deported. Another female migrant was assisted to get a residence permit by her boss, but not a work permit. Yet another female migrant was issued with a ban because her husband did not obtain either a residence or a work permit for her.

Other experienced migrants spoke about not having the money to obtain a work permit. According to one experienced migrant, in certain jobs (such as a nanny) the employer does not ask or need for the employee to obtain a work permit. One female migrant with experience spoke about only having enough money for one work permit per family, even though both spouses worked.

*"There is no money. We pay 16 thousand for accommodation, we don't want to live one on top of each other. The pay doesn't allow to pay off debts at home and to pay for the work permit. My husband had a work permit. He's a driver, it was essential for him. In one family there has to be at least one work permit."*

**FwE, Penjikent, Soghd**

Experienced migrants made other choices to circumnavigate regular migration procedures. A couple of respondents spoke about getting a ban and obtaining a new passport in their changed name. However, during one FGD, female experienced migrants discussed different irregular methods of entry. One woman reported crossing the border by car and being detained and questioned because she had a newly obtained passport. She was only allowed to cross the border after the embassy was contacted and the authenticity of her identity and passport was confirmed. During the same FGD, respondents spoke about intentionally checking the medical <sup>119</sup> or visiting box on the migration card. After declaring that they are visiting, they have to cross the border every three months and do so. One female respondent also used an intermediary to place 'stamps' in the passport to show a border crossing where none took place to save on costs.

*"When I migrated the first time, my husband was there. The next time I migrated by myself and my husband stayed here [in Tajikistan]. [...] I already knew the way, travelled by metro [from the airport]. Where we worked as live-in-nurses, the owners registered us at their place. I didn't need a work permit. During the first year, I got a work permit. Then I didn't. Every three months, a stamp was put in my passport as if I left [...] there were these intermediaries that put stamps in my passport. Sometimes it would cost 500 Somoni, sometimes 400 Somoni. Then I advised others as well [to do the same], found them clients. They even started giving me a discount, gave me a stamp for 300 or 400 Somoni."*

FGD, FwE, Farkhor, Khatlon

During that FGD, one respondent spoke about it being "in fashion" to obtain a police certificate regarding lost or stolen documents (which is necessary for the Embassy of Tajikistan) and to show that certificate to the police when stopped on the street (rather than

applying for a new passport).

Yet other experienced migrants have found efficient ways to obtain documents.

*"There are these [mobile phone] applications [...] you can pay for the work permit, taxes, and send money home, without leaving your house."*

MwE(1), Penjikent, Soghd

Another issue is health insurance, only one male migrant with experience stated that he obtained health insurance, which is necessary to obtain a work permit. A number of other migrants stated that they did not have it or could not afford it. According to one KI, as this is not checked, migrants only obtained health insurance for long enough to be granted a work permit.

About a third of experienced migrants reported needing medical treatment. Male respondents reported work injuries and appendicitis, while female respondents spoke about gynaecological problems, with one FGD having a discussion about hospital treatment and pregnancies. Female migrants reported not being taken to hospital during a cyst flare-up and having to wait a week for a doctor's appointment in a private clinic, having to beg and pay 2,000 Roubles for an ultrasound after twisting an ankle while pregnant (even while having health insurance), and not being registered at the hospital for care. Other female experienced migrants returned to Tajikistan to have children and two respondents even returned regularly to undergo fertility treatment (even though both they and their husbands were living and working in Russia).

While some female migrants leave their children in Tajikistan, other female migrants have also migrated with their children or have expressed an intention and

<sup>119</sup> Currently, when choosing a medical stay, proof is needed that the treatment was confirmed by a Russian medical institution, together with the time needed for treatment. See, e.g., National Medical Research Center for Therapy and Preventive Medicine, "Information sheet for foreign citizens wishing to enter the Russian Federation for the purpose of treatment", online, at <https://gnicpm.ru/articles/pacientam-articles/informacionnaya-pamyatka-dlya-inostrannyh-grazhdan-zhelayushih-vehat-v-rossijskuyu-federacziyu-s-czelyu-lecheniya.html#>.

a wish to know how to migrate with children. Those that have done so, spoke about needing the following documents for their children: a birth certificate, passport, and a power of attorney from the husband allowing the woman to travel with her children. They also needed information on how to register their children for a resident permit. After that, they needed information on having their children attend a kindergarten or school in Russia.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

For each country of destination, the MRC could keep track of the evolving administrative migration requirements, not only for work but also for study purposes. It could then put together an information package of the necessary forms that need to be filled out, identifying which form needs to be filled out at which stage of the migration process, as well as its costs. Concrete examples of risks associated with using intermediaries and obtaining fraudulent documents, using migrant experiences, could also be part of the information packet on necessary documents and administrative steps. These information packages could also be made available online.

Information booklets regarding the documents required for Russia have been developed by the Tajik government. The MRC could collect these booklets (together with booklets made available on other topics), ensure they reflect the latest information and potentially add them to their database of materials. Documents that migrants may need to know about are filling out (answering questions regarding) the migration card, applying and renewing the residence permit (including having an address for registration), applying and renewing the work permit, as well as maintaining health insurance.

The above information is particularly useful for migrants without experience, especially those without a family or social network. Experienced migrants already have an understanding of the system and which documents are necessary, but are often forced to make a financial choice not to acquire these documents (e.g., a work permit). Alternatively, they have used intermediaries to obtain their permits, often resulting in being presented with fake documents (especially at the residence permit stage). Experienced migrants may benefit from being presented with information with easier ways of obtaining documents, (e.g., a residence permit can be applied for by post with the confirmation received by SMS).

The MRC could also assist female and male migrants with information regarding which documents are needed to migrate with children, in Tajikistan and in Russia, including which documents are necessary to enrol them in a Russian day care centre or school. Finally, some female migrants reported wanting to migrate to Russia (with either their husbands or both of them working) to provide their children with medical care. The MRC could also collate or prepare information regarding this form of migration.

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## F. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance falls into two categories. The first is service related, namely, finding ways to subsidise certain aspects of the migration process. The second is more in line with information provision, ensuring that migrants know and understand the estimated costs of their migration, as well as more practical matters of how to open a bank account and remit money.

Only some migrants without experience identified running out of funds, going into debt and not being able to send remittances back as a risk or problem of migration. Few had their own finances to put towards the trip. Only one of the female migrants without experience had a portion of the money necessary, while two of the male migrants from the GBAO region also had the backup of selling cattle to finance their trip. All migrants without experience were planning to either borrow, or rely on someone else to fund their migration, with almost half willing to borrow from a bank.

A number of migrants with experience borrowed from their networks and from banks in two stages. The first stage was to cover the costs of leaving Tajikistan, such as the airline ticket, and the second stage in Russia, to cover the initial setup costs. A few respondents were able to pay off their debts in six months. Only two experienced male migrants, who had been migrating regularly from 2007 and 2008 and earning a good wage, saved money to finance each following migration cycle.

When asked what MRC services they would find useful, a number of the migrants asked for a form of financial assistance. The type of assistance varied in nature, however, loans or subsidies (potentially without interest) to support migrants' living costs for a short period (e.g., for a week) prior to obtaining a job or covering the cost of flights was the main request. Another request was to subsidise the cost of the work permits and yet another was to assist migrants to return to Tajikistan should their funds run out.

KIs, including in the government sector, confirm that migrants have been approaching them to help them fund their labour migration, for instance asking for loans to cover the cost of tickets to Russia. In situations of organised employment, all employers cover the costs of

travel as part of their agreement with the State Agency for Employment Abroad. However, only some employers cover the cost of travel as part of their agreement with PEAs. The various diaspora groups also assist migrants, especially to return, in the event of death or illness.



*"in many ways, in last years, there have been requests by labour migrants regarding receiving money for the migration [trip]."*

### KI, Government Sector

Another funding gap exists with regards to the cost of courses, such as the language and skills training. The KIs identify the problem as two-fold. Migrants cannot afford the courses themselves and they cannot afford the cost of travel to and from those courses (even to the administrative centres of their region). While migrants themselves expressed an unwillingness to lose time and not earn a wage to support their families while undertaking these courses.

This problem has been somewhat addressed. The ATC provides free or subsidised courses to citizens registered as unemployed. It also provides mobile courses that travel to villages and provide skills training at the request of the local leaders. While this is primarily aimed to prepare people for the internal labour market, migrants do and can be further encouraged to take advantage of these courses. The Centres on Consulting and Pre-departure training of labour migrants have also been directed to set up free language courses for migrants. A KI suggestion to improve course attendance was by incentivising migrants by offering improved bank loan rates or covering other migration costs after completion of those courses.

Some PEAs have also been reported to address the problem of funding for migrants in particular need, by negotiating with banks on their behalf. Partnership with banks would not only benefit the MRC's work



in service provision, but may also open the door to bank branches being used as a point of information dissemination for the migrants coming in to ask for loans.

Another important element of information provision needs to be an accurate account of the costs of migration. Migrants without experience were not able to accurately predict the costs associated with migration. Their estimated total costs ranged between 10 and 20 thousand Somoni, with the lowest estimate being 5-6 thousand Somoni and highest 50-60 thousand Somoni for a family with four children. No migrant without experience could give an exact breakdown of the amount of money needed. All listed at least a few of the following expenses: international passport, airline tickets, food and the cost of living, and accommodation. While acknowledging that documents (licence and registration) are important in Russia, the majority of male respondents but only a couple of female respondents (without experience) listed documents as one of the costs to prepare for. Female migrants without experience also identified studies, health insurance and cold weather clothes as costs that need to be taken into account.

This lack of understanding is reflected in the fact that only a few migrants without experience wanted to be informed about the costs of migration in general or the costs of obtaining a residence and work permit, in particular. And only a couple of experienced migrants suggested that the MRC offer courses on financial literacy, as well as information on how to get a bank account, exchange money and, especially female migrants, how to remit money. According to KIs, this information can be provided secondary to and in support of efforts to provide some level of (or information about) financial assistance for the journey for migrants.

*“They [migrants] have to take a course on financial literacy”*

**FwE(1), Khorog, GBAO**

The summary of costs reported by experienced migrants is provided below. It must be noted that respondents lived in different places and migrated at different times. Thus, the table is to be taken as a starting point to obtain more accurate information regarding the current costs at different places.

Location	Item	Cost	Migrant Notes
Tajikistan	Passport (International)	850-1,000 Somoni (USD 100)	If have a certificate stating that the family is experiencing economic hardship, the cost can be lowered to 80 Somoni.
	Ticket	Previously 2,500-3,500 Somoni, but 15,000 Somoni for a return ticket during the pandemic	Bus is the cheapest form of transport but takes between 3 and 5 days.
	Transport to city of departure / airport	E.g., 300 Somoni for taxi from Khorog to Dushanbe	
	Clothes	n/a	These can be bought in Tajikistan or Russia, depending on the season and location of travel.
	Money to leave with family for the first few months	n/a	Until begin earning and able to send back remittances.
	If borrowed from bank, money for the first couple of repayments	n/a	It is better to pay back the first few repayments on the spot (at the time of borrowing) until able to begin earning in Russia.
	Money exchanged into Roubles when arriving in Russia.	n/a	Best to know how to travel by Metro. Or how much a taxi will cost (around 1,000 Roubles).





## Russia

(For expenses listed in italics, need enough money to last for at least 3 weeks, preferably for 2 months, prior to finding work and earning a wage)

Location	Item	Cost	Migrant Notes
	Deposit for accommodation	n/a	
	Rent	4,000-5,000 Roubles (although 3,000 is possible) 15,000-30,000 Roubles for a 1 or 2 room apartment	
	Residence permit (every 3 months)	2,000-5,000 Roubles	Residence permit can be applied for by post and the confirmation (proof) received over SMS. When the costs are cheaper (e.g., 500 Roubles), they are likely prepared through intermediaries and hence strongly increase the chance that the residence permit or entrance stamps are fakes.
	Work permit (every year)	13,000-35,000 initial payment 2,300-5,200 monthly fees (with 500 Roubles and 9,000 Roubles as the minimum and maximum)	Monthly fee can be paid (in some places) at the bank.
	Health insurance policy	40,000 Roubles (duration unknown)	Without health insurance: - Hospital fee, 30,000 Roubles - Private clinic fee, 50,000 Roubles With health insurance: - Ultrasound 2,000 Roubles
	Living expenses (food, clothes, transport)	n/a	
	Remittances	n/a	Need to know how to send back remittances (some female migrants did not and relied on family members).
	Savings	n/a	For big expenses in Tajikistan (e.g., house repairs), in the event of wages being unpaid or delayed, as well as, to fund the next migration cycle to Russia.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

The MRC could work towards directing migrants towards subsidised and/or mobile courses (both language and skills training) already available in remote areas. This would address the difficulty and cost of travel. Alternatively, it could, in partnership with other government, civil society or private organisations, extend the courses to areas of need or online. Other potential partnerships for the MRC to develop could be with banks to provide favourable loans to migrants, including as a form of incentive for course completion. The MRC could also put together a catalogue and/or database of the service providers (in the government, NGO, private sectors as well as the various diaspora groups) that could assist with their various migrant funding needs. This would also include the costs of migrating to other countries for work as well as details of group employment, which covers the costs of migration.

The MRC could work with other government sectors in order to identify and assist, where possible, vulnerable migrants, especially women without husbands or other family support. They are often having to make financial decisions that include, due to the prohibitive costs, not obtaining residence and/or work permits in Russia, thereby spending periods homeless, and in a volatile position, and vulnerable to exploitation or abuse. This financial decision is not only made by women travelling alone, but also as a family. While the husband is (to some extent) fully documented, the wife often isn't and as a consequence does not leave the home in order not to be discovered by authorities.

The MRC could also provide an up-to-date breakdown of costs to migrants for their country of destination, including where necessary, different costs for different locations within the same country (e.g., Russia). This

is particularly useful for migrants without experience. The breakdown would include advice such as, leaving some money behind for the family and paying off the first few repayments of their bank loan, as well as needing money during the journey and to cover documentation, accommodation and living costs in Russia prior to acquiring a job. Male, but in particular female migrants could be informed about how to open a bank account, exchange currency and remit money without needing to rely on their family or friend networks. Female migrants could also be made aware that their earnings will be below those of the men and advised, where possible, how to mitigate this without compromising on obtaining residence and work permits. All migrants could be advised, should their wages allow, to save for the eventuality of wages being delayed or unpaid, as well as for the next migration cycle.

Considering the number of experienced migrants that sought medical care for injuries or illnesses, the MRC could provide migrants with the way the hospital system works in Russia, specifically, what should be free and what is charged when taken to hospital by ambulance and when attending a private clinic and/or public hospital. This information should be provided for when hospital cover is obtained and when it is not. Female migrants could be informed about how to navigate the hospital system as it relates to reproductive issues (i.e., pregnancies), both with and without insurance.

Finally, both male and female migrants intending to travel with children, should be informed regarding the costs (and discounts) associated with obtaining the children's documents in Tajikistan, travelling, accommodation, obtaining a residence permit and enrolling the children in day care or school.



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## G. EMPLOYMENT

Less than half of the migrants without experience identified not being able to find work as a potential risk. All but two female migrants without experience (who intended to stay at home with the children) planned to work in Russia. Almost all female migrants intending to work were promised a job by their family or social network. Only half of the male migrants without experience intended to work with their relatives. The others wanted to investigate other options, including a 'white collar' job by one of the men, with tertiary higher education as an economist. However, he was willing to work as a driver should he be unsuccessful in his preferred option.

Only two migrants without experience spoke about being unemployed for a prolonged period – one month and five months. Female experienced migrants worked as cleaners, in food preparation, cooking or baking, as nannies, live in nurses, at a shop, doing seasonal work, as well as at a medical clinic. Male experienced migrants worked in the construction industry, with individuals working as a cleaner, a cook, in auto repairs, a shop, at the market and in a sweatshop. One respondent specialised as a security systems electrician and one ran a delivery business (he did not own the truck that he used but had it insured in his name). Some respondents obtained their jobs through their family and social network, including Russian acquaintances or friends. One woman went door to door, while one man found a job in the newspaper.

A number of experienced migrants were in contact with their employers and returned when they were notified of a job being available. A KI confirmed this phenomenon among experienced seasonal workers, who calculated and gave a lot of thought to whether it was profitable to travel that year.

*"[The foreman] writes over Viber when I'm needed, for example [he] writes, there is work, come over"*

**MwE(2), Penjikent, Soghd**

*"The first question that they [the migrants] had when they came home was if there was work there [in Russia]. This was connected to 2015 or 2014, when the Russian Rouble fell sharply. It was no longer cost effective. Wages were lower [...] this worried the migrants that returned home, that were waiting for their next flight. They counted and re-counted the cost of plane tickets, the cost of a work permit etc. They counted it all and became convinced that the wages at this work doesn't justify it all."*

**KI, Independent Expert**

Nonetheless, wanting the MRC to provide information on how and where to find work, or assistance in finding it, was the second most important issue (after having documents in order) raised by migrants without experience. A number of, mostly male, experienced migrants also suggested this as a function of the MRC. According to some KIs, the MRC could provide a labour market analysis, and assist migrants either in finding a job as a service or providing information that directs them to reputable job finding services and/or databases.

Some male and one female experienced migrants gained higher paid employment over time through specialisation and knowledge of Russian. The female respondent worked as a live in nurse, but after finishing medical college worked in a medical centre. According to some KIs, female migrants did not differ from males as to their information needs, except that they perform different types of jobs. However, according to other KIs, female migrants are more interested than men in finding employment prior to departing Tajikistan.

This can be addressed through group employment. The State Agency for Employment Abroad is the primary government group employment organisation. However, migrants do not appear to differentiate it from other group employment providers and PEAs.

While some signed up or know someone that had signed up for group employment, migrants were hesitant and fearful. In addition to being uncomfortable going to countries other than Russia, where there was no family or social network, migrants did not trust em-

ployers (likely PEAs) who took a certain percentage out of their pay. They were also wary of having to stay with the same employer for the duration of the contract. A migrant and a KI spoke about knowing employers that retain the employees' passports for the duration of the contract. One of these was a sweatshop.

*"In this way [private group employment] they brought men over. Gave them work and a work permit. Anyone who wanted to work as a driver, was taught how to drive and given a licence. But for one year, their passports are not returned to them. The wages get sent straight to Tajikistan. Then after a year, they get sent home. [...] there are [also people] that work in a factory and sew sneakers. Their contract is for a year. Their passports are not returned until the end of the contract, after which they are allowed to look for other work"*

**FGD, FwE, Varzob, DRS**

One KI mentioned an unregistered recruiter hiring people for a business in Dubai. While there are PEAs that do assist migrants in job finding, only a small number are licensed. Additionally, they do not act as a recruitment agency, but as an intermediary between the employer and the individual (i.e., do not undertake to protect the rights of workers). However, even for licensed PEAs there is an absence of regulatory framework. The PEAs are, therefore, not regulated and do not protect the rights of labour migrants, including against forced labour, although the more reputable ones make the effort to engage with the employer and negotiate or mediate between the migrant and the employer. Nonetheless, according to one KI, this regulatory lacuna is currently being addressed by the government of Tajikistan.

*"There are a lot [of Tajik migrants] in Dubai by the way [...] There's this young guy, he runs an [internet] café [...] he's a local young guy. He has a business there. He collects people by himself [as an unregistered recruiter] and they work there."*

**KI, NGO Sector**

There are two other issues that relate to labour migration. Assisting migrants to set up a business in Russia

or attend higher education in any other country. The former has been recommended by KIs, especially to enable women to start businesses in Russia. A couple of the youths also discussed in an FGD wanting to operate their own businesses (e.g., a mechanic shop) in Russia.

After employment, study was the primary reason for wanting to migrate for a number of migrants without experience. Additionally, for a couple of migrants without experience, study was a secondary reason for intending to migrate. Finally, a couple of the respondents specifically stated that they needed further information on how to study in Russia and that the MRC could provide this information.

Finally, a few experienced migrants suggested that people (especially youth intending to migrate) need to become aware of how difficult the working conditions are in Russia.

*"I didn't understand the difficulty of life and work in migration. You have to work 10-12 hours a day. Sometimes you have to get an additional job to earn extra money."*

**FGD, MwE, Khorog, GBAO**

*"I found the work difficult. I left for work when it was still dark and returned late at night. I worked according to this schedule for a year. It was very hard, I thought I was losing my mind. The pay was small [...] it's difficult to work and to live the migrant life. If it's possible not to migrate, don't do it."*

**FwE(2), Khorog, GBAO**





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

The MRC could collate and keep track of reputable job search websites, as well as reputable group employers (including PEAs once the regulatory framework has been established). In addition to referring migrants to the State Agency for Employment Abroad, the MRC could work together with that Agency to assist in its wider promotion, both face-to-face and online.

The MRC could collate or put together information on how to avoid exploitation when pursuing employment via unofficial recruiters, and when in Russia, via newspaper notices, leaflet posted on the street, avito.ru, or going door-to-door. The harsh conditions of employment in Russia could also be made known through real life migrant stories.

The MRC could also research areas in which female migrants are able to earn more than they currently do (to enable them to afford a work permit and accommodation as well as living costs and sending back remittanc-

es). Where possible, vulnerable female migrants could be directed to group employment with the State Agency for Employment Abroad, as it provides them with the protection that would normally be offered by one's social network.

The MRC could provide migrants, including female migrants, with information on how to set up a business in Russia.

The MRC could also make available information packages on applying to study and scholarships at universities in Russia and other countries. MRC representatives could visit rural schools (and other educational institutions) and provide information regarding studying abroad together with information regarding labour migration. With regards to expanding these information packages to other countries, the MRC could do so either starting with countries with the largest Tajik diaspora, or as a service by individual request.

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## H. ACCOMMODATION

Only a number of migrants without experience considered not being able to find accommodation as a potential risk. As with work, the majority of migrants without experience were relying on their relatives to provide them with accommodation. A couple of male migrants without experience were interested in accommodation provided by their work. Other individuals were considering university accommodation if they were planning on studying, or relying on the Pamiri diaspora for assistance. Nonetheless, nearly half the migrants without experience wanted to have more information on accommodation.

Interestingly, only a few experienced migrants suggested that the MRC provide information on finding accommodation. Many of the migrants stayed with their relatives or found accommodation through their social network. A couple of male experienced migrants were assisted by their Russian friends, while a couple of others were provided accommodation by their employer.

One female migrant with experience also reported being accommodated at her employer's place, where she worked as a housekeeper. One male found accommodation on [www.avito.ru](http://www.avito.ru), while another warned against obtaining accommodation online as it can result in being robbed of money and documents. A number of male experienced migrants had accommodation ready for them upon return.

For other experienced migrants, accommodation presented a lot of difficulties. Accommodation in Russia is expensive, with most migrants needing to share. Some reported sharing with up to 15 people in one apartment. One woman spoke of living in an apartment with her husband with almost no other people. However, the price they were paying for such an arrangement meant that while both worked, only the husband could afford a work permit. A couple of male experienced migrants also hinted that bringing their families over would be financially burdensome due to the need to provide "fami-

ly” accommodation for them.

A couple of male migrants generally stated that accommodation caused them difficulties at first, including being kicked out in the middle of the night. Alternatively, they witnessed migrants sleeping the first few days on the streets because the person who invited them did not meet them at the airport or pick up their call on arrival. A few female migrants described some of the difficulties they faced. One of these difficulties was shared by a female migrant who described being homeless (staying around 24-hour shops) until she could earn the money to pay for shared accommodation. Even when she was offered free of charge space by one of her relatives, she had to sleep on the balcony of their apartment. After that, she slept in the room next to the garbage disposal. She was shut there at night and each morning had her door unlocked and had to leave prior to the garbage truck’s arrival. Similarly, another woman slept in the cellar of a building block that she was cleaning, until the Russian inhabitants of the building objected, and she was provided with shared accommodation. While fluency in Russian to be able to communicate with the local population reportedly helps with the search for accommodation, discrimination persisted. One woman was able to agree to rent a place, only to be turned away with her belongings at the door, once the owner saw her origin. Finally, one female respondent reported being continually terrorised by the (riot) police.

*“We would go online [to find accommodation]. But when they found out that we weren’t from Russia, they didn’t take us. One time we even came with our things, wanted to move into a one room flat, but when [they] found out that we weren’t from Russia, [they] refused us entry, and we had to return with all our things.”*

**FwE, Dushanbe**

*“The most important thing is a place to sleep. In Moscow no one provides accommodation just like that. We stayed on the streets, hung around near 24-hour shops until we could find a place to sleep. Russians don’t permit any “foreigners” to be allowed into your home. [...] in one place [my relatives] lived in an apartment and I lived on the balcony. But what’s important was that it was free. It happened sometimes that I slept near a garbage room of a building. [They] would shut me in, and in the morning, just before the garbage truck arrived, they let me out. I didn’t have the money. You need 5,000 [Roubles a month] to pay for an apartment. I lived like that nearly 1.5-2 months. Then I worked for a bit and could live in an apartment”*

**FwE, Khujand, Soghd**

One of the key problems for both male and female migrants is not just the difficulty of finding accommodation, but of finding accommodation, the address of which, can be used to obtain a residence permit, which is instrumental in obtaining a work permit. However, in addition to Russian owners of apartments not wanting Tajik migrant tenants, they also place a limit on the number of tenants that they allow. Some migrants resort to intermediaries in order to be registered at a place.<sup>120</sup> This then opens people up to being presented with fake documents, which lead to being deported or banned.

According to one of the KIs, female migrants, in particular, need to be informed about and assisted with accommodation options. According to the KI, this is because female migrant that do not engage in domestic work (or work that requires them to reside at the place of employment) end up sharing crowded, close quarters accommodation with male migrants, which often results in them doing additional unpaid domestic work in that place of accommodation. Consequently, women need to be informed about the likelihood of sharing with men and where to find accommodation (preferably with other women).

<sup>120</sup> For a brief outline to this problem, see Mikhail Loginov (2013), “Knock, knock: the return of the propiska?”.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC



For migrants intending to travel to Russia, the MRC could provide information on how and where to find accommodation, including where cheap options could be found. While accommodation in general would be useful, finding accommodation with an address that can be registered is key. This is the point at which migrants can be provided with fraudulent documents by intermediaries, and it is the first essential step towards obtaining a work permit. The MRC could also inform people about State Agency for Employment Abroad (together with instructions on how to apply) and that employers contracting with them provide accommodation as part of their employment.

The MRC could inform migrants of the difficulty in finding accommodation, especially for women or other vulnerable people. It is very important that the MRC investigates where migrants, including male migrants that

were abandoned by their acquaintances upon arrival, but especially vulnerable women who may not have any other support, can look for accommodation outside of their family and social networks. Similarly, when investigating other countries, information about how to find accommodation needs to be provided.

If possible, the MRC could provide female and vulnerable migrants (or direct them to an organisation that provides) assistance with finding accommodation. The MRC could set up an additional service of putting female migrants in contact with other female migrants to connect them and allow them to share accommodation together, rather than with men. Alternatively, an online platform could be created to allow for such connections and female migrants could then be informed about it.

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## I. LANGUAGE

According to all KIs and almost all experienced migrants, knowledge of the Russian language is essential to working in Russia. A lack of Russian creates problems relating to work (being underpaid or fired), at the border, discrimination (including overpaying for bus fares and taxis) and when dealing with the police. Conversely, speaking Russian well opens up employment opportunities, builds a network of Russian acquaintances that can help in many areas of life, including finding job and accommodation. Speaking Russian fluently has also allowed a few migrants to positively navigate interactions with the Russian police, even when, as in one case, the documents were not in order. Only about a quarter of migrants without experience understood how essential knowledge of the Russian language was.

*"I have a deportation [re-entry ban], in the last period [in Russia] I organised my documents late. In the last three years, I organise any documents. I was stopped by police, but because I speak Russian well, I was always let go."*

FGD, FwE, Farkhor, Khatlon

Few experienced migrants knew Russian well when they first travelled to Russia, and experienced many difficulties as a result. Women in particular expressed their fear when trying to interact in Russian, especially with officials at the border, usually prohibiting them from using the little Russian that they did know. According to KIs, there is no need for complete fluency, merely enough to avoid being exploited, to understand their contract, receive instructions at work and to interact with authorities (at the border and especially with the Russian police). In addition to the other problems caused by not speaking Russian, some male and female experienced migrants expressed difficulty with the Russian language and history test.

As reported by some of the experienced migrants, the Russian language test is quite easy and can be prepared for without speaking Russian well. A related test is that of Russian history and laws. The certificate obtained from passing this test used to be valid for five years.<sup>121</sup> Migrants that had limited knowledge of Russian were able to pass this test with some preparation (usually assisted by experienced migrants in their network). One man that failed the test was able to re-take it after three days. While a woman was not allowed to take the test again after failing it and remained without a work permit as a result.

According to KIs, knowledge of Russian in Tajikistan is dwindling, but remains essential for the majority of Tajik migrants that travel to Russia for work. This is particularly the case for the younger generation. All but two (a male and female) migrants without experience had some level of Russian (e.g., they self-reported to be able to understand Russian, but having difficulty speaking it fluently). When questioned further, the male respondent that did not know Russian stated that upon crossing the border, he was confident he could receive assistance from any Tajiks travelling at the same time. In Russia, he intended not to leave his accommodation, except to go to work, until he has learnt the language.

Language courses and, especially Russian language courses, were almost unanimously identified as the most beneficial service to be provided to migrants, especially to migrants without experience. Additionally, migrants asked for short courses, with three months being considered a good amount of time by some and too long by others.

It must be noted that Russian courses are already offered through both public and private institutions throughout the country, notably the ATC (Russian, Arabic, Korean) and, potentially, the Pre-Departure Cen-

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<sup>121</sup> It has recently changed to three years: Sputnik Tajikistan (2021), "Labour migrants in Russia must obey new laws".

tres (Russian, English, Arabic, Chinese, German). The ATC also dedicates 12 hours to the Russian language in every skills training course. KIs reported that when a language, for instance Arabic, was taught as part of the training for group employment, migrants engaged with the course enthusiastically. However, where a course was offered with no incentive, for instance Korean, there was little interest from migrants, who objected spending three months without earning a wage.

*“Arabic was taught for three months. If the two governments [Tajikistan and Qatar] had signed an agreement, more people would be taught Arabic. There were many volunteers [for the course] [...] when courses for Korean were made available so that citizens could migrate to Korea for work [...] however, they didn’t want to study a language for three months. They say that if we don’t work for three months, who would feed our family”*

**KI, Government Sector**



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

As an initial step, the MRC could collate the courses being run by government institutions, civil society organisations and reputable private schools. Creating and maintaining a database of courses, and disseminating that information effectively would benefit migrants. When identifying the courses, the MRC could focus, in particular, on regional presence, duration of courses (with a preference for shorter periods), subsidised or free courses and online courses. Where possible, courses could be incentivised by financial benefits, such as lower interest rates on loans or assistance with other costs of the migration service.

The MRC could direct migrants to already available free Russian language courses online (e.g., via mobile applications). The MRC could also coordinate with government institutions to help create online Russian lan-

guage courses, for example, through webinars. These could be taken to obtain a certificate. Alternatively, using real life examples of migrants’ experiences, informal style courses could prepare migrants for the test offered in Russia as part of obtaining a work permit, as well as the potential interactions with law enforcement agencies, officials at the border, as well as how to use the metro, etc. The informal courses could potentially be provided online through channels such as Facebook, Instagram and/or YouTube. Based on KI responses of interest by migrants in other countries, languages that are needed are English, Korean, Turkish, Arabic, Polish, German, Romanian and Czech among others.

Female migrants, in particular, should be targeted by these courses in order to build up confidence in speaking.

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## J. SKILLS TRAINING

No migrant without experience identified under-qualification as a risk of migration or specialisation training as a necessity for migration. This aligns with the response of one KI that referred to a survey of migrants expressing a lack of interest in undergoing skills training. A number of experienced migrants did have specialisations, which they mainly acquired during the years of working in Russia, with only one female experienced migrant utilising her specialisation (medical training) in Russia. Of the experienced migrants, only those who had a specialisation themselves, recommended for the MRC to run specialisation courses. This may partly explain the discrepancy between the lack of interest by migrants in specialisation courses and the insistence by most KIs that the lack of specialised labour was holding Tajik migrants back from better wages, rights and employment opportunities in other destination countries. Interestingly, one KI highlighted that a large portion of women (not all of whom were migrants however) attended the ATC skills courses.

There is, however, an awareness among some migrants and KIs that computer literacy, both basic and more advanced, is a knowledge gap that needs to be addressed. For the construction sector, a KI identified a gap in the knowledge of occupational health and safety that needs to be taught. Finally, information about the possibility of starting up or running a business in Russia needs to be provided to migrants.

Skills training courses are provided by both the government and NGO sectors. For instance, the ATC courses are available for people in very remote areas. These courses can be organised on a needs/request basis (e.g., one of many specialisations could be requested by

the village). These courses are free of charge for people registered as unemployed or suffering financial hardship. The same courses are available on a paid basis. The ATC also runs a skills recognition service, whereby work experience (of returned migrants) is tested and a certificate is issued. Having an official certificate of qualification assists migrants to increase their wages in Russia. However, the ATC can only confirm that someone has qualifications in a certain profession. Yet, many professions require levels of attainment, which the ATC cannot issue. Often, this denies the migrant the benefits of a wage increase as the true level of the skills they obtained through years of work is not reflected in their certificate.

The lack of interest by the migrants without experience in undergoing courses should be taken into consideration, especially as a result of cost and duration of those courses.

*“Wages are not paid during study. I have to feed my family. For young people who are 18-20 years old, this would work. But I’m 30 years old, I have three children and I have to support them.”*

**MwE(2), Khujand, Soghd**

As mentioned above, one KI suggested incentivising the completion of language and specialisation courses. Furthermore, both the State Agency for Employment Abroad and PEAs send migrants on skills and language courses only after migrants have been chosen for a position, while their documents and visas are being processed.





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

The MRC could maintain a database of organisations that run courses in each of the districts, including subsidised and/or mobile specialisation and business courses. Based on the reluctance of migrants to obtain information or undertake skills courses until this information or skill is needed, course suggestions for migrants could be paired with an offer or (family) promise of employment, thus providing courses after the migrant has some knowledge of their potential employment. Migrants with experience may most benefit from skills recognition at the correct level, skills training

and upskilling their professional qualifications. Online courses could be run through webinars or upskilling videos uploaded on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and/or YouTube could also be provided for certain professional fields (e.g., beauty or renovation).

In addition to specialisation courses, migrants may also benefit from training in computer literacy, occupational health and safety (in the construction field) and on the possibility of starting or running a business in Russia.

## K. CONTRACTS AND WAGES

Unlike the KIs, only a few male experienced migrants identified signing contracts as an important step of labour migration. The KIs listed signing a contract and understanding its terms as an important aspect of migration. It was also seen as protecting migrants from exploitation by employers (i.e., not getting paid), forced labour, as well as from the risk of unknowingly being recruited into a terrorist cell. However, one of the most commonly identified risk by migrants without experience was linked to receipt of wages (and by inference employment rights and signing of contracts). Migrants identified the problems as not receiving wages, not receiving them on time, not receiving as much as was promised, having the place of work shut down, and generally being scammed, tricked or exploited.

These risks were born out by the experiences of migrants that had worked in Russia. The majority of men reported either not being paid up to three months' worth of work (with some reporting this happening many times), being underpaid or having their pay delayed. The construction industry was the main offender in this respect. A few of the female respondents that had worked in Russia similarly reported not being paid for up to three months (including, due to the company's bankruptcy) or not paid on time. This had repercussions on the ability of some migrants to renew their documents on time, resulting in deportation and/or bans issued against them.

Migrants have little power to address these problems as a result of their own irregular status, not signing a contract or not knowing where to turn for assistance. The employ-

er of one of the male respondents threatened to call the police if he insisted on receiving his pay. One female respondent did call the police on the employer. The police then proceeded to threaten her with having her passport confiscated and being deported. One male respondent, together with nine colleagues, were not paid a month's worth of work, despite having signed a contract.

*"There was a situation, when we weren't paid for three months, we even complained to the police, that we weren't paid [...] I asked that they give us our money for three months. The police responded that they will take away our documents and will deport us. Frightened us by threatening to take away our passport. From fright, we never returned there again. Looked for [other] work."*

**FwE, Khujand, Soghd**

Apart from cutting one's losses and moving on to another job, experienced migrants mitigate the risk by changing jobs and sectors (i.e., working in a fast food chain), vetting employers through their social and family network, only working with certain groups of people, only Russians or only Tajiks, or only accepting jobs where they are paid daily (rather than monthly). According to the KIs, the Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russia Federation can recover migrants' wages, even where there was a verbal (rather than a written) contract. Interestingly, while quite a number of migrants without ex-

perience knew of the existence of the Representation, only one stated that it should protect migrant rights. None of the interviewed experienced migrants discussed turning for assistance to the Representation.

While one female migrant with experience highlighted that work opportunities for women in Russia are more readily available than in Tajikistan, the responses show that there is a discrepancy between the wages of male and female migrants in Russia. Of those that reported their earnings, male experienced migrants reported a starting wage of 35,000 Roubles per month, with one respondent, a security systems electrician by specialisation, earning 60,000 Roubles per month. One male respondent was earning 47,000 Roubles a month as a cleaner at a fast-food chain.

However, of the female experienced migrants that reported their wages, most stated that they earned between 15,000 and 35,000 Roubles per month. Alternatively, they earned 100 Roubles an hour or 600-700 Roubles a day. Consequently, the highest earning women were paid as much as the lowest earning men.

*“Guys that migrated before me said that, prior to the quarantine, it was possible to earn up to 50 thousand. After the quarantine, everyone sat at home. There weren't any clients. That's why it became 25-30 thousand. [...] They started to decrease our hours. After a while we refused to work. We were receiving wages of 25-30 thousand Roubles a month. This is very little for me. This money isn't enough, as I need to pay for a work permit, for the apartment. We couldn't even buy things, and we couldn't send any money home.”*

**MwE, Farkhor, Khatlon**

Nonetheless, female migrants were able to send back remittances and save for larger expenses such as buying, building or renovating their home, their children's education or weddings. However, this was done by sacrificing obtaining (i.e., paying for) a work permit or, in one instance, by not being able to afford accommodation for the first few months. The highest paid women (30,000-35,000 Roubles) worked as housekeepers and therefore also had accommodation and food as part of their earnings. Other men and women reported accommodation, food (meals or produce) and having documents provided and organised by their employers. However, in some instances, the cost of these 'perks' were taken out of the person's wages.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

The MRC could identify what are the key clauses in a contract that would ensure the protection of the migrants' rights and provide migrants with examples of contracts containing these clauses, so that migrants knew what a contract should look like and what terms it should contain. Contracts could be explained in clear and simple language and migrants provided with real life experiences of migrants who did or did not sign them. The MRC could also highlight that in addition to signing a contract, wages are positively influenced by knowing Russian, which allows for a Russian network of friends and acquaintances, as well as having a specialisation. Russian is also important to understand the terms of the contract and making sure to have one between parties. It is possible that under certain circumstances, particularly where the migrants are vulnerable, signing a contract is not an option. It could be possible to advise migrants how to ensure they are not exploited, such as by asking for daily rather than monthly pay-

ment.

Migrants should have recourse to legal assistance in situations where the contracts (including verbal contracts) are breached by employers (i.e., wages not paid) or where they have been exploited. The MRC could provide migrants with the phone numbers and contact details of organisations (public or private) that provide this service, especially the work of the Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russia Federation.

Finally, more needs to be done to assist female migrants in raising their wages to a level, where they are not forced to make a decision about whether to send money home or obtain a work permit or accommodation. This could mean educating them regarding the costs of migration to allow them to seek better paid employment or identifying group employment, particularly for vulnerable female migrants.

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## L. RIGHTS

Knowledge and protection of one's rights is to some degree gendered. Of the male migrants without experience, a number cited being stopped, questioned, detained, fined and/or harassed by police as either a potential problem or a problem experienced by migrants in their network. Only a few female migrants without experience mentioned being told of migrants being stopped and questioned by police. However, some elaborated that there are no problems with being stopped by police if the documents (registration and licence) are in order and the migrant can speak sufficient Russian.



*"I asked the guys, who travel to Russia many times, and they told me that if your documents are in order, there won't be any problems, they can't detain you. But if you don't have documents essential for work or you have a fake registration – there are situations when people cheat you, when they falsify documents. But if everything is good with your documents, then they [the police] just check your documents and just let you go."*

**MwoE(1), Bokhtar, Khatlon**

Conversely, a few experienced migrants stated that even if documents are in order, and the migrant does not know how to speak to the police or the police take a dislike to them, they would find a reason to fine or detain that migrant. Others suggested that looking neat or Slavic helps in having normal police interactions. Otherwise, respondents were assisted by their employer (or foreman), by paying a bribe, or by Russian friends. Only one female experienced migrant spoke about her and her husband having a very positive interaction with the police. Quite a number spoke about discrimination in police interactions, when on the streets, when dealing with unpaid wages and with regards to accommodation. One female migrant related a story of terrorisation by the riot police.

*"We lived in shared accommodation. The riot police arrived. We were very scared. They asked me: what, you came here to give birth? I asked: what, it's not allowed? They pointed their automatic rifles at me. They kicked everybody out. Guys were jumping from the second floor [to get away]. Even though everybody had work permits. They did it all for money. They really tormented the Tajiks. After a week they always came back. The janitors let them in. I was there for two years, and really suffered [...] we were seven women. We were told to collect 500 Roubles each. There was a guy, he was Uzbek, they beat him up. They shone their torches, didn't switch on the lights."*

**FGD FwE, Farkhor, Khatlon**

A different picture emerges when migrants were asked where they would turn to for help. Apart from their relatives, the majority of migrants without experience answered the Embassy (and/or Consulates) of Tajikistan in Russia. Only one knew to apply to the Tajik embassy if their passport was lost. A number of migrants stated that the embassy should protect their rights (although one argued that it does not), including against police harassment. Quite a number of migrants without experience also knew of the Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russian Federation, but not what it did, with only one stating that it should protect migrant rights.

Only one migrant with experience had turned to the Representation asking, unsuccessfully, for assistance to buy a return ticket. A number of experienced migrants either knew to turn to the Tajik Embassy and/or Consulates or had done so, either to replace an expired passport (both internal and international) or to seek assistance during the Covid pandemic to return to Tajikistan. Other respondents relied on their friends for assistance and the (Pamiri, Uzbek or Kyrgyz) diaspora.

One female migrant with experience stated in an FGD that the local Hukumat<sup>122</sup> office had a migration section and that they assisted her free of charge by contacting a lawyer, who was then able to lift her ban. However, the other women in the FGD objected, suggesting that the only reason she had been assisted so well was because she had previously worked for that office.

When asked what the MRC could do for them, a number of migrants asked for their rights to be protected, speaking generally or referring to the protection of their employment rights. One migrant without experience, in particular, suggested a list of rights defenders and their contact details to be given out to migrants.

The KIs presented a similar view. While some spoke of knowing one's rights as a means of protection against police harassment (in particular in Russia), other KIs held the position that it was not always useful. One KI pointed out that having the right documents, knowing what to show the police as well as learning from other migrants' experiences was more valuable when dealing with Russian police than being able to state that they had no right to do what they did. Another KI confirmed that sometimes even having the right documentation was not protection against police harassment (including witnessing a migrant's residence permit torn and the migrant detained).

*"Maybe show some real situations: a police officer approaches you, he asks you this, and what will you answer? I remember that when the pandemic began, there were posts from labour migrants that relayed how they were detained by a police officer, which documents were demanded and as a result of their conversation, the police just let him go. There is no point saying that police have no right [to do this] or something similar. These grandiose words are useless. Real stories are needed talking about that if a police officer approaches you, whether he has a right to do so or not, these real-world examples need to be given."*

**KI, Independent Expert**

*"There is a psychological character trait of the law enforcement, if someone has a Russian look, they don't touch you. But they seem to have an aversion when they see people from Central Asia. There are good ones. But there are those that nit-pick documents, show me this one, show me that one. When I was [in Russia], I saw a [police] car parked, and they were herding our migrants into that car. I walked up to the police officers and asked about it. The situation was this: let's say they have a residence permit, but they [the police] say, give us money [bribe], he [the migrant] says I don't have money, and the police officer tears the residence permit and there is nothing you can do about it."*

### **KI, Government Sector**

According to KIs, migrants need to know where to seek out subsidised legal assistance both in Tajikistan and in Russia, such as from the Tajik diaspora or reputable Tajik lawyers (according to one KI, most Russian lawyers undertake and charge for cases they know are unwinnable). The Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russia Federation assists migrants to recover their wages, even where there was a verbal (rather than a written) contract.

While it is important to provide information for migrants regarding protections when their documents are in order, it is even more important for migrants to know where to seek help in Russia when their documents are not in order. This is particularly so when it comes to female migrants.

While female migrants did not state this, a few KIs suggested that women be informed of the risk of sexual abuse or exploitation, especially at their place of work. Of the female respondents, about a third were either single,<sup>123</sup> divorced or widowed (although no count was taken where there was a separation/estrangement, where the husband was under a ban or where he was too sick to work). Just over half of the female migrants intended to or had at one point joined or travelled with their husbands, while only a few had not worked or did not plan to work. While none of the male experienced migrants trav-

<sup>122</sup> District government (see Glossary).

<sup>123</sup> Interestingly, no KI foresaw that single women, that is, young women that do have a roof over their heads and had not lost their breadwinner migrated.

elled (or could afford to travel) with their family, a few of the male migrants intended to bring their families over at a later stage.

According to both KI and migrants without experience, female migrants are less likely to obtain a work permit or even a residence permit (re-entering the country in reality of through fraudulent stamps on a visitor visa). According to one KI, as women who join their husbands and stay at home looking after the children do not work, the husbands either forget to or assume it is not necessary to obtain a residence or work permit for the woman. Responses of female experienced migrants (who travel alone or with their husbands and children) show that entering 'visiting' on the migration card, and not obtaining a residence or work permit was a financial decision. One female experienced migrant observed that, while both

the husband and wife worked, they could only afford one work permit and as the police are less likely to ask for it from the female migrants and her work was only 5 minutes from their accommodation, her husband was the one to get the work permit.

Apart from female migrants getting bans against them (knowingly or unknowingly), women are more likely to be imprisoned in their homes due to their irregular status and suffer from domestic abuse. While in Tajikistan they can turn to family members for assistance, in Russia they are alone with their abuser (often in an irregular situation).

Finally, pregnant women experiencing discrimination in the Russian health care system may need to know where to turn to in addressing their situation.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

There are several types of rights protections that migrants need to be informed about. The main two involve exploitation through non-payment or underpayment of wages and unfounded or appealable bans. The MRC could provide either a referral service or a list of all entities (Embassy, Consulates, Representation of the MoL-MEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russian Federation, labour lawyers, rights defenders that can assist with documents) that migrants can turn to while in Russia (and Tajikistan). This information could include how each entity can help and with which problem, this includes providing their contact details.

Female migrants may be suffering from exploitation or domestic abuse in Russia and do not have their family network (as they do in Tajikistan) to assist them. They could be informed where to turn to for help. This needs to be a service that assists women, despite them being undocumented. Additionally, pregnant women facing any problems with Russian clinics or hospitals should be able to know where to turn for assistance in order to receive care and treatment.

## M. LAWS, CUSTOMS, CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Only a number of migrants without experience wanted to know about the laws of the countries of destination. Fewer experienced migrants spoke about knowing Russian laws, although a larger number followed the news or, in one case, a lawyer on social media (YouTube) for information. The majority mainly relied on their network of friends (including Russian friends) and relatives.

*“When I lost my passport, I asked our Embassy in Russia. They told me that I need to travel to Novosibirsk, which is a 2-hour flight from Irkutsk, there they will issue me with a passport. Their appointment days were once per week. Then my Russian girlfriends advised me to put an announcement on the internet about the loss of the passport and give an address. I had remembered I had left it at the market. One man read the announcement on the internet and brought me the passport, and of course I gave him money.”*

**FwE, Dushanbe**

Similarly, with respect to customs, culture and traditions, only a number of female migrants without experience identified it taking time to adapt to a new place as a difficulty. However, when speaking about what information the MRC should provide, migrants spoke about needing to know about the country, how to behave, what clothes to wear (culturally and for the cold) and how to use the metro. Experienced migrants spoke about needing to know how to behave in public (not drinking in public, knowing how to cross the street) and how to use public transport. This information is useful, not only to avoid racism and discrimination on the streets, but also because it reflects that administrative offences, such as traffic fines, can result in a ban. Even clothes are important, as they, for example, women wearing the Tajik national dress, can be a reason to be stopped by the police more often.

*“I never got a work permit. The restaurant in which I worked was close to where I lived, I could walk there in five minutes, so didn’t need a work permit. [...] I was never asked for it [...] never [had problems with police]. I was stopped very rarely on the street for document checks and was let go straight away. They never asked for my work permit. Generally, they treat women fairly leniently, maybe because I have light skin [...] I walked around in national dress”*

**FwE, Penjikent, Soghd**

*“Never [had problems with police]. One time, in summer I was walking in a Tajik dress. A police car drove by, stopped near me, the policeman asked, ‘Young lady, what is your nationality?’ I said ‘Tajik’, he asked for my documents, I started to open my bag, but he didn’t even look, just drove off [...] but my documents were all in order. In summer it’s true that we wore poplin dresses, it’s hot there in summer, but in winter we wore pants, because it’s very cold.”*

**FwE, Dushanbe**

Other information that was important was how to navigate from the moment people leave the airport, how to shop, how to deal with the cold weather, and how to communicate appropriately (especially with authorities and employers). Two female experienced migrants said that friends had to show them how to get a number (mobile phone) and that learning the “Maps” application was very useful to not getting lost. One migrant without experience suggested having courses similar to those held for people planning on undertaking the Hajj pilgrimage.

*“If there is an organisation that can give information in the form of courses, that explain what needs to be done upon arrival at the airport, and what to do after. For example, prior to going on Hajj, there are courses, that explain everything.”*

**FwoE, Bokhtar, Khatlon**

The KIs were more adamant regarding the need for migrants to know both the laws of the country of destination, as well as to know and respect the country's culture, customs, traditions and religion. These obligations, according to KIs, extended to focusing on being a labour migrant and not treating the trip as a holiday or to become involved in political or terrorist activities. KIs also noted that learning the culture, customs and traditions of Russia is different from Turkey, European states and the Gulf states (when speaking about negotiating group employment in the Gulf states, one government KI stated that only indoor employment was sought due to the excessive heat). According to one KI, cultural knowledge is not only a responsibility of the migrant, but also, according to one KI, helps protect them from racism and nationalism. This can be as simple as wearing what the Russians themselves wear (e.g., jeans and a sports shirt), rather than national attire.

*"Let's say that a foreign citizen is conspicuously noticeable. That's why we always say to labour migrants, guys, don't stand out from the background of the local population [i.e., blend into the local population]. Let's say it's customary to wear jeans there, buy jeans, wear jeans and walk around in jeans. If, let's say, they walk around in sports shirts, buy sports shirts and wear them [...] we say, listen guys, before you demand your rights, first you need to adapt, find a common language with the local population"*

**KI, Government Sector**

Finally, the Department for Adult Education dedicates 12 hours to the basics of migration, including the current laws and provides migrants with pamphlets on the topic.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

The MRC could direct migrants to platforms where any changes of migration and labour laws in Russia and other countries are regularly updated and clearly and simply explained.

The MRC could expand and extend existing preparation courses, seminars or information packages, to be disseminated in person or made available online, to cover the practicalities of first arriving and living in Russia (or other countries). They could contain information such as what clothes to bring and wear, how to use public transport, how to interact with authorities, including the

police, and general rules of interaction in public. This could be an opportunity to reiterate the importance of speaking the language of the country of destination and acquiring a network of local acquaintances, who can assist migrants to navigate issues related to accommodation, work, documentation, the police and miscellaneous day-to-day living.

Migrants to Russia could also be assisted in preparing for the Russian history test that needs to be taken as part of the application for the work permit.

## N. OTHER DESTINATIONS

Russia, and to a lesser extent Kazakhstan, have been destination countries of Tajik labour migrants for some time. While rules change and migrants continue to face legal and administrative challenges, a fairly complete picture exists of the legal and administrative needs of migrant workers in Russia.

Based on the interviews conducted, the perspective of migrants is different to that of the KIs. The migrant perspective is linked to migrating to where the migrants know people and therefore are assured of assistance, while the KIs address more political nuances of the situation.

All migrants interviewed intended to travel (or return) to Russia. Only a few migrants without experience expressed a willingness to travel to other countries if an opportunity presented itself and wanting the MRC to provide information regarding other countries. For most migrants, the stated reasons for choosing Russia over other destinations were that migrants knew of relatives, neighbours and friends (and other Tajiks) that were living and working in Russia, and could therefore assist them.

*"I think in Russia it's easier. [...] I know a little Russian. But if, for example, I'm offered to go to America, I don't know English, and in general, no, I wouldn't want to, there are no relatives, no one I know, it would be very difficult."*

**FwoE, Khujand, Soghd**

*"I would go [to another country], if there was a relative, friend or person whom I could trust, why not!?"*

**MwE(1), Khujand, Soghd**

Where reasons were provided against travelling to other countries, other than the absence of Tajik acquaintances, these centred on the difficulties associated with learning the language, obtaining a visa and it being more expensive.

Similarly, experienced migrants want to return to the same country and the same city, not only because of the support network mentioned above, but because, no matter how hard it is, it is familiar.

*"Well, I'm used to [Russia], I have acquaintances there. I can borrow money from someone. If you go to a foreign place, you don't know anyone there and you can't find any accommodation. There [in Russia] I have support, which is why I want to go there."*

**MwE, Bokhtar, Khatlon**

*"People say, a tree puts its roots in one place. I am used to working in one place."*

**MwE(1), Khujand, Soghd**

Some experienced migrants had been offered to travel to or had former co-workers that now work in other countries, mainly Turkey. One male respondent was too scared to go, while another considered it if his acquaintances would guarantee him assistance. A female respondent was offered assistance to find work as a housekeeper, but only after she learnt Turkish. One other female respondent was invited by female acquaintances to Dubai, but was too afraid to go there (would only contemplate it out of desperation). Two migrants applied for the US green card, so far without success.

During FGDs with migrants without experience, they reported knowing people that travelled for work to Turkey, Kazakhstan, the US, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia (construction work, invited by former co-workers in Russia), Japan (travels every 3 months) and South Korea (construction work, travels every 3 months), 'Europe'; and to buy goods in China and Afghanistan.

Apart from Russia and Kazakhstan, countries identified by KIs as attracting some Tajik migrants are South Korea, Turkey, Poland, Qatar, the UAE, Germany, (EU countries in general), Canada, Romania, Czech Republic and Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, the State Agency for Employ-

ment Abroad has already sent people as part of group employment to Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Sweden, Turkey and the UAE.

KIs also outlined some of the difficulties of expanding to other countries. A strong gap exists with regards to the migration laws and labour markets needs of other destination countries. Issues that were identified related to the lack of government protection (formal agreements) with those countries, the lack of information regarding them (including knowledge of the regular migration processes) and the lack of qualifications and technical expertise of migrants to enter the labour markets of those destination countries. For instance, migrants needing to know how to work the industrial agricultural equipment utilised in EU countries, such as in the Slovak Republic (see Skills Training section). With regards to the visa regime, it appears that while there are potential opportunities for group employment in South Korea, the method utilised by Tajik migrants (as per the KI and migrant responses) was to enter and work on a tourist visa.

*“There is work in agriculture [...] in Slovakia, where [...] they physically didn’t have enough people in order to work the fields, to work in agriculture. We don’t have that kind of a workforce, as it’s not manual agriculture [working the fields by hand], but if [...] working with livestock, to use that equipment, if it’s [working] the fields, then it’s necessary to find out the equipment used, right? Those are different skills. And, of course, the language. For that, it’s necessary to undertake a tremendous amount of work in Tajikistan, in order to prepare our workforce, to enter those kinds of other markets [...] Our workforce is not ready to migrate to new destinations, except for the Russian Federation for now. At least not on a large scale”*

**KI, Independent Expert**

KIs also expressed reservations regarding expanding labour migration to Gulf states, with one KI referring to the kafala system,<sup>124</sup> stating that it is equivalent to slavery and that it would be better not to go to these countries in general. There was also an outright reluctance on the part of one government sector KI to send women to work in Qatar or the UAE, even as part of group employment, as it was perceived to create problems.

Even though intergovernmental negotiations do take place and bilateral agreements are signed, some KIs (including from the government sector), suggested the necessity of developing the post of a Labour Attaché. According to the KIs, the role of the post would be to facilitate entry points into the labour market in the countries, finding sectors and employees seeking migrant workers, signing overarching memoranda of understanding or agreements. Once these agreements are established, the (regulated) PEAs would undertake the role of employing Tajik workers to fill the advertised positions. A further function of the post would be to protect Tajik labour migrants, to provide information and to resolve any issues migrants face, including those of exploitation. The Philippines model of Labour Attachés was used as an example. As these functions are partly fulfilled by the current Representation of the MoLMEP of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russia Federation, according to KIs, the role of the Representation could potentially be expanded, given diplomatic status and made better known to migrants.

Finally, even when group employment was organised by the State Agency for Employment Abroad, migrants were hesitant and fearful of undertaking this employment and required encouragement and being reassured.

<sup>124</sup> A sponsorship system used in the Gulf Countries, whereby the migrant worker is legally bound to the employer for the duration of the contract period.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MRC

In addition to the MRC researching the visa regimes of other countries for labour migration, it could encourage migrants to consider other countries. To address the migrants' expressed reluctance to migrate to places where they did not have a family or social network, the MRC could ensure that, in addition to migration information, the cost of migration, where to look for work and accommodation, migrants were put in touch with the Tajik migrant population and/or diaspora in that country.

The MRC could organise information sessions with returned migrants who had engaged in, preferably group, labour migration in other countries. Directing people towards employment services, such as the State Agency for Employment Abroad, would build the number of people to have experienced the (hopefully) positive aspects of that migration to other countries and relate those experiences to their social networks.



## 0. EFFECTS OF COVID

Beyond the border closures, the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that government, non-government and private organisations had a significant reduction in enquiries, with some government centres needing to put a number of their staff on unpaid leave.

The pandemic had an effect on small businesses in Tajikistan. One of the female migrants without experience stated that border closures with Uzbekistan and China put too much financial pressure on her business forcing her to travel to Russia for work.

*"I'm a small business owner. I used to bring goods from China and Uzbekistan. Business was going well. Until the borders closed, everything was okay. [...] Now I'm experiencing some difficulties because of the border closures with China, if the borders were opened, trade would improve. This is why I am going to Russia."*

FwoE, Bokhtar, Khatlon

Migrants in Russia were either quarantined at home with no work, or their hours were significantly reduced. In one FGD of female experienced migrants, women discussed returning home during the pandemic, and paying up to 50,000 Roubles for a return flight.

KIs also reported that during the border closures, migrants were seeking ways of entering Russia illegally, including through Turkey and Belarus. Other migrants signed on as cross border lorry co-drivers. However, according to one KI, shortly after, the Russian authorities introduced a 28-day transit visa to disallow this method of entry.

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## 5. CONCLUSIONS



In many respects, the study confirms the results of other studies on Tajik labour migration. In particular, it confirms that Tajik migrants rely primarily on their family and social networks for information on migration. It also confirms the distrust of Tajik migrants in government institutions as well as their lack of interest regarding the information material (usually in the form of booklets) issued by the government in collaboration with international organisation projects. Finally, the study confirms the lack of coordination between government departments, including an overlap of mandates, which further exacerbates limitations in service provision due to insufficient financial, staff and infrastructure (including technical) resources.

The study, however, also identified a number of gaps that need addressing, and has made a start in doing so. It is assumed that Tajik migrants do not inform themselves about migration in preparation to migration. However, based on migrant responses, it could be argued that migrants inform themselves about each step of migration as they are about to take it. It may be useful therefore to plan and investigate the efficacy of

information provision at key juncture points based on migrants' incremental approach.

Based on the migrant and KI interviews, it can be seen that Tajik migrants trust in the experience of other migrants. This has two types of implications for the dissemination of information. The first relates to information provision by institutions, which has to be secondary to useful service provision. The latter allows for the building of good experiences and therefore trust of migrants, with the reputation of the trusted institutions spreading by word of mouth through the migrant family and social networks. The second relates to the need to research and collate the experiences of migrants and their methods of navigating migration safely and legally – although it is also useful to know how migrants navigate migration illegally in order to address the causes of these actions. In the Russian context, it is important for migrant experiences to inform information provision, including how to navigate interactions with the Russian bureaucracy, police, as well as which migrants do not apply for residence and/or work permits, together with the how and the why of those actions and omissions.

More research targeting these types of questions needs to be undertaken and relied on when designing information provision platforms and content.

The information provision platforms are another gap identified and partly addressed by this study. The study confirmed the general ineffectiveness of traditional methods of information distribution, i.e., television, radio, newspapers, SMS or leaflets. It has also confirmed that many other ideas have been tried, unsuccessfully. The next step is therefore to utilise the methods of communication and online social interactions of migrants through mobile phone application use. More research needs to be conducted to map communication and social media use by Tajik migrants across different regions, genders and ages, together with barriers and limitations of that use. This study was able to identify the use of applications such as IMO, WhatsApp and Viber for communication and Facebook, Instagram and YouTube for entertainment and information attainment. It also identified the limitations of internet connection in remote villages, as well as prohibition of mobile use of some female migrants by their husbands. Information provision utilising these platforms needs to be attempted and the success and failure of these attempts monitored.

This study confirmed and clearly outlined the differences between different types of migrants, their differing information needs and the gaps that need to be filled by further research. While migrants without experience need all the basic information about the steps of migration, migrants who have previously migrated to Russia need more sophisticated information, such as how to start a business and how to buy property. Vulnerable migrants need to be identified and assisted. If migrants become vulnerable after arrival in Russia (i.e., their friends do not provide the promised assistance of picking them up from the airport, providing accommodation or helping with finding a job), they need to know where to turn to for assistance. In this respect, all Tajik migrants would benefit from being informed about whom to turn to for which problem over detailed information on how to navigate the legal intricacies of migration.

The element of vulnerability and the need to know where to turn applies especially to female migrants. Although some studies have been undertaken, not enough is known about the number or the lives of Tajik female migrants in Russia. This study confirmed that female migrants are more likely to be undocumented, as much out of financial necessity as resulting from not knowing the correct procedures for obtaining a residence and/or work permit. More research needs to be undertaken on the lives of female migrants, especially spouses, and especially in Russia. Methods of providing female migrants with information need to be devised, as well as assistance in situations of domestic abuse or other types of violence, irrespective of whether they are properly documented or are in an irregular status. Other information as it relates to female migrants warrants further research. For instance, it is not just spouses or divorced and/or widowed women that migrate. Young, single women also undertake labour migration. More research is needed on: how female migrants navigate accommodation and how to assist them; how female migrants navigate fertility issues – whether by travelling back to Tajikistan or remaining in Russia and how to assist them; how female migrants navigate migrating with children and how to assist them, including providing information on how to enrol children in day care and school.

Finally, this study confirmed the lack of information regarding other destinations countries. This is exacerbated by the lack of intergovernmental agreements and protection between the Tajik government and other countries, as well as the lack of technical knowledge of the population to expand migration beyond the unskilled or low skilled sectors. Migrant responses further outlined the fear and insecurity that contributes to Tajik migrants hesitating to travel to destinations other than Russia. Besides the visa free travel, this hesitation is linked to the lack of knowledge of other migrants who had experienced migration to those countries. Considering that trust is linked to experience, information provision about labour migration to other countries, individually or through group employment opportunities, have to come from experienced migrants to be effective.



## 6. METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX

### A. MIGRANT INTERVIEWS

No.	District	Region	Gender	Migrants 'with' or 'without' experience	Dates
1	Dushanbe	Dushanbe	F	With	11 February 2021
2	Dushanbe	Dushanbe	F	Without	12 March 2021
3	Dushanbe	Dushanbe	M	With	12 March 2021
4	Dushanbe	Dushanbe	M	Without	10 March 2021
5	Bokhtar	Khatlon	F	With	12 February 2021
6	Bokhtar	Khatlon	F	Without	12 February 2021
7	Bokhtar	Khatlon	M	With	11 February 2021
8	Bokhtar	Khatlon	M	Without (1)	11 February 2021
9	Bokhtar	Khatlon	M	Without (2)	12 February 2021
10	Bokhtar	Khatlon	F	Without	12 February 2021
11	Farkhor	Khatlon	F	With	16 February 2021
12	Farkhor	Khatlon	F	Without	16 February 2021
13	Farkhor	Khatlon	F	Without	16 February 2021
14	Farkhor	Khatlon	M	With (1)	15 February 2021
15	Farkhor	Khatlon	M	With (2)	15 February 2021
16	Farkhor	Khatlon	M	Without	15 February 2021
17	Darvoz	GBAO	F	Without	12 February 2021
18	Darvoz	GBAO	M	Without (1)	12 February 2021
19	Darvoz	GBAO	M	Without (2)	12 February 2021
20	Darvoz	GBAO	F	With	12 February 2021
21	Darvoz	GBAO	M	With (1)	12 February 2021
22	Darvoz	GBAO	M	With (2)	12 February 2021

23	Khorog	GBAO	W	Without	27 February 2021
24	Khorog	GBAO	M	Without	11 February 2021
25	Khorog	GBAO	F	With (1)	27 February 2021
26	Khorog	GBAO	F	With (2)	27 February 2021
27	Khorog	GBAO	M	With (1)	19 March 2021
28	Khorog	GBAO	M	With (2)	11 February 2021
29	Khujand	Soghd	F	Without	15 March 2021
30	Khujand	Soghd	M	Without	15 March 2021
31	Khujand	Soghd	F	With	15 March 2021
32	Khujand	Soghd	M	With (1)	15 March 2021
33	Khujand	Soghd	M	With (2)	15 March 2021
34	Khujand	Soghd	M	With (3)	15 March 2021
35	Penjikent	Soghd	F	Without	17 March 2021
36	Penjikent	Soghd	M	Without	17 March 2021
37	Penjikent	Soghd	F	With (1)	18 March 2021
38	Penjikent	Soghd	F	With (2)	17 March 2021
39	Penjikent	Soghd	M	With (1)	17 March 2021
40	Penjikent	Soghd	M	With (2)	18 March 2021



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## B. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

No.	District	Region	Gender	Migrants 'with' or 'without' experience (Number of Participants)	Dates
1	Varzob	DRS	F	With (9)	11 March 2021
2	Bokhtar	Khatlon	M (Youth)	Without (8)	12 February 2021
3	Farkhor	Khatlon	F	With (8)	17 February 2021
4	Khorog	GBAO	M	With (8)	12 February 2021
5	Penjikent	Soghd	M	Without (7)	17 March 2021
6	Khujand	Soghd	F	Without (7)	18 March 2021

## C. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

No.	Institution	Sector	District
1	Department of Migration of MoLMEP	Government	RT
2	Migration Service under MoLMEP	Government	RT
3	Migration Service (Soghd region)	Government	Soghd
4	Migration Service (Khatlon region)	Government	Khatlon
5	Migration Service (GBAO)	Government	GBAO
6	Centres on Consulting and Pre-departure training of labour migrants	Government	RT
7	State Agency for Employment Abroad	Government	RT
8	State Agency "Adult Training Centre of tajikistan"	Government	RT
9	Agency of Labour and Employment of Population	Government	RT
10	'Alternativa'	NGO	Shaartuz, Khatlon
11	'Madina'	NGO	GBAO
12	'Umed' network	NGO	Soghd
13	Public Fund Civil Internet Policy Initiative (CIPI)	NGO	Dushanbe
14	Winrock International	IO	
15	Open Society Foundation	IO	
16	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation	IO	

17	ILO	IO	
18	Private Employment Agency “Sharif Asri Nav”	Private Sector	
19	Migrant Consultation Centre “Mukhochir”	Private Sector	
20	Independent Expert		
21	Independent Expert		
22	Independent Expert		



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**All photos used in this report had been selected from MRC's photo-gallery.**