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## CHAPTER 5. CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF LABOR MIGRATION

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*Having examined the objective facts and figures, it is now necessary to look into subjective perceptions of the migrants and their family members regarding the reasons and effects of labor migration. This chapter summarizes the assessment of the phenomenon from the respondents' point of view.*

### REASONS FOR LABOR MIGRATION

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The research showed that the main reasons behind the decision to migrate were connected with employment problems in Armenia (96.9%). Of this group, 51% of the respondents mentioned lack of jobs in general, 43.0% considered the lack of jobs that pay sufficiently for normal living, and 2.9 % stated that the main reason for their migration was the absence of profession-specific jobs in Armenia. The fact that only 14 out of 454 labor migrants were being driven by other reasons (such as unhealthy atmosphere) was not at all surprising.

It is interesting to note that, while middle-aged migrants paid most attention to high remuneration, the majority of those aged 21-30 and 51 and above stated that they decided to leave because they were unable to find a job in Armenia. This outcome might be explained by the fact that it is generally easier for the middle-aged population to find a job. Bigger demand for middle-aged people in the labor market is natural, since the young are not experienced enough and the elder do not possess the skills required by the contemporary market. This is why the middle-aged population is concerned about finding a “good” job, rather than just enlarging their employment record.

In this sense, it is also reasonable that migrants with higher and post-graduate education would have higher requirements from their jobs than the rest. Indeed, it appeared that 55.1% of them stated that they left Armenia because they were not paid enough, while the majority of those with lower levels of education claimed they could not find jobs in Armenia at all.

In addition to problems with employment in Armenia, the respondents have mentioned the following reasons for emigration: absence of development perspectives in Armenia (9.4%), obstacles to doing business (9.4%), unhealthy moral and psychological atmosphere (5.6%) and unstable geopolitical situation (0.7%).

Given the big share of migrants who left the country because of low wages, it was necessary to assess their minimum salary requirements. It appeared that the average monthly salary the migrants want to get in order not to leave abroad again is 337 USD, which is about ten times more than the actual minimum monthly rate defined by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

## EFFECTS OF LABOR MIGRATION

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The majority of MIGRANTS stated that their last trip met their expectations at least in part (63.7%), and 12.3% were completely satisfied with their journey. At the same time, each fifth migrant claimed his/her expectations were not met at all. Overall, four fifths of the migrants would advise others to work abroad.

As far as the assessments of the MIGRANTS' FAMILY MEMBERS are concerned, they are much more reserved: each third family thinks the trip was not justified and claims it is pointless for the migrants to continue working abroad.

In the opinion of the respondents, the fact that some of their family members are temporarily working abroad does not really influence the FAMILY STRUCTURE. Mostly, they think that the number of children and married couples would be the same if the migrants stayed in Armenia. This is quite logical if we consider that the majority of migrants are 41-50 year old married males. As far as the younger migrants are concerned, the temporary nature of the migration, perhaps, does not keep them from getting married and having children - a situation, which in Armenia you can come across very frequently.

Unlike this, the majority of respondents (76.1%) believe that the family would be financially less sustainable if there were no labor migrants among their close relatives. The remaining one quarter of the respondents, however, thinks that the situation would be the same (19.5%) or even better (3.1%). A sound correlation in this sense was established between the opinions of the respondents and the remittances sent by the migrants during their last business trips. The average amount of money received by the households which consider labor migration to be economically effective, is 1637 USD, whereas those that doubt the ECONOMIC RATIONALE received on average only about 400 USD (or four times less).

The respondents expressed different opinions as to the influence of labor migration on the MORAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE in the family. However, a breakdown of the responses speaks for the fact that the effect is rather positive: the ratio of those who think the influence was negative to those who claimed it was positive is about 1:3 (or 17.3% to 40.3%).

The most probable reasoning for the first point of view is that, for however short a period of time, the families are broken apart. This argument is supported by the finding that the attitude depends on the average duration of the migrants' trips: in the majority of cases when the families considered migration to contribute to the atmosphere within the family, the migrants have usually spent less than 8 months abroad. In contrast, the mean duration of the trips of those migrants whose families were concerned about the psychological consequences of the process is 10.5 months.

At the same time, the opinions of the respondents depend on whether or not the migrant had a job back in Armenia. Thus, it appeared that 60% of the migrants

from families that support the idea were unemployed. Indeed, unemployment, shortage of financial resources and continuous search for sources of living might damage the morale of the family more than the necessity to live away from the family for a period of time.

One of the social consequences of labor migration could be the weakening of the SOCIAL NETWORK: about one-third of the respondents claimed that due to migration of their family members they now get in contact with their friends, relatives and acquaintances less frequently. This situation can still be attributed to the age and gender structure of the labor migrants. Most of them are young or middle-aged males, who perhaps used to contribute the highest value to the social network of the family.