



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS IN TAJIKISTAN

ASSESSMENT REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2000, the number of Tajik men emigrating abroad in search of work has steadily increased, with over 700,000 leaving their families behind in 2010 alone, usually for a prolonged period of time. While some migrants continue to provide financial and emotional support to their wives, children and other relatives by sending remittances and visiting home, others either do not find it possible or deliberately choose to establish new families and invest their resources elsewhere. As a result, Tajikistan faces the challenge of re-integrating abandoned wives of labour migrants into the socio-economic life of the society.

This assessment report, which is produced in the framework of ODIHR's 2012 project "Social and economic inclusion of women from migrant households in Tajikistan," builds on the 2009 baseline study "Abandoned Wives of Tajik labor migrants," conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Tajikistan. It provides an updated synopsis of the socio-economic challenges faced by women from migrant households through a comparative perspective across four geographical regions and three groups of respondents, as well as an outline of the legislative, policy and institutional framework with a specific focus on gender aspects. Finally, it proposes a number of recommendations to national and local government authorities on how policy, institutional and legislative frameworks to support abandoned women from migrant households can be further strengthened.

There are, of course, many, very substantial challenges in improving the situation of women and, in particular, abandoned women from migrant households in Tajikistan. The following are some of the outstanding gaps identified in this assessment report:

Legislation and Policy Framework

Gaps remain in Tajikistan's policies and legislation, in that they do not effectively take into account the specific situation of vulnerable groups so as to ensure the protection of abandoned women from migrant households. Existing laws could provide more effective protection to the rights of migrant workers and their families. Draft legislation on migration and domestic violence in particular needs to be brought in line with international standards. Tajikistan should also consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would recognize the competence of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to receive and consider complaints from individuals within its jurisdiction. The implementation of migration and gender-related legislation and policies is hampered by insufficient institutional capacities to undertake effective monitoring, reporting and coordination, as well as a lack of financial resources for the implementation of migration and gender policies and programmes.

Social-Economic Situation - Livelihoods

Further, a comparative analysis of the socio-economic situation of women from migrant households in Tajikistan indicates that this group faces a number of specific challenges directly related to the absence of their husbands, such as having less money for basic items such as food, a reduced social status, complex relationships with their husband's relatives, neighbours and community, difficulties in raising their children, and a risk of eviction from their place of living.

Survey data demonstrates that most women from abandoned migrant households are economically inactive, lacking skills and qualifications to find a job, or overburdened by household chores and child-rearing. Although many abandoned women dream of starting their own business, they are, however, unlikely to apply for a loan.

Overall, women from the target group (abandoned women from migrant households) are more financially vulnerable and dependent on external assistance than women from migrant households who have not been abandoned. Only 25 % receive some type of in-kind support from relatives, friends and acquaintances, and little to no support from the international community or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A quarter of abandoned women report that they do not know the original country of destination or the present whereabouts of their spouses; none of these currently receives any financial support from their husbands.

Psycho-emotional Situation and Gender Based Violence

From a psycho-emotional perspective, women from abandoned migrant households often suffer mistreatment and discrimination, as well as social pressure from society in Tajikistan. Abandoned women report a significant level of unhappiness and stress, lack of support from their husband, domestic violence, poor living conditions, social exclusion and problems in the family and with their children. Children of abandoned women are subject to more abuse at school and on the street due to their situation. As a result, abandoned women from migrant households are particularly prone to a range of psycho-emotional problems and suicide attempts. Access to free psychological help is, however, reported by only a fraction of abandoned wives of migrants.

Access to Health Care and Local Government Services

Abandoned women from migrant households report limited access to healthcare and services of the local government, including, a lack of sufficient awareness and knowledge of legislation relevant to their rights and access to legal assistance. The main problem to access local government services is reported as being lack of documentation.

Awareness of State Support Structures and Exercise of Rights

While abandoned women from migrant households report a good knowledge of Sharia law and support from religious leaders, their family and state support structure is weak, with little awareness among abandoned women of migrant households of the existence of free crisis centers and/or the Information Resource and Crisis Centre created by the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Republic of Tajikistan. They are thus often not able to effectively exercise their rights and ensure their own economic and social wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

As a post-conflict state, Tajikistan has limited resources, a poorly functioning social welfare system, and reduced institutional and governmental capacity. With nearly 40% of the population living under the poverty line, it is the poorest of the Commonwealth of Independent State (CIS) members and one of the poorest countries in the world,¹ the average salary throughout the country being about \$110 per month, and the minimum pension less than \$16.² As a result of a lack of economic opportunities at home, out-migration in search for work abroad has been exceptionally common in Tajikistan since 2000. While official data suggest that some 736,446 Tajik citizens, predominantly men, left the country independently in 2010 to look for work in other countries,³ independent experts have put this figure at more than 1 million. The main country of destination, chosen by around 95% of the labour migrants from Tajikistan, is the Russian Federation.⁴

While labour migration is often regarded by the country of origin as a solution to economic problems, and Tajikistan has one of the highest ratios of remittances to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the world,⁵ this effectively transfers responsibility for economic stability and growth onto individual households. Households are therefore forced to send their members as workers abroad, and become strongly dependent on international money transfers. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Tajikistan,⁶ remittances sent by labour migrants to Tajikistan are unable to significantly reduce the level of poverty within the families of labour migrants who remain behind - only 40% of families live above the poverty line, with income of more than \$2.15 a day. In addition to limited financial support, the breakdown of the family or the loss of the breadwinner can lead to a number of problems for the wives and children of labour migrants.

In Tajikistan, women are traditionally responsible for family care and, since the country became an independent state, they increasingly do not work outside the home. As wives, women usually live with their husbands' family; and are not regarded as heads of households. In the absence of the husband, in-laws assume the role of the head of household and are able to claim remittances sent from husbands working abroad as migrant workers. Abandoned wives, who are often under-educated and over-burdened with child-rearing and household duties, face limited prospects of earning a living independently.

Furthermore, wives often do not receive any information from their migrant husbands working abroad, for a number of reasons. In 2009, IOM Tajikistan carried out a baseline study, which investigated the economic, social, and health-related vulnerabilities of women whose labour migrant husbands did not support them financially. It was found that this was

¹ Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan, as of January 2012. Calculated in accordance of World Bank methodology: 1% of GDP per capita growth declines the poverty rate by 0.62%.

² Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, www.stat.tj. It should be, however, noted that as of 1st of September 2012 the minimum pension and wages will grow by 2.5 times in accordance with the Presidential Decree № 1313 of 13 August 2012 on measures to increase the level of social security population, increase the salaries of existing employees of the institutions, organizations, social services, pensions and scholarships.

³ Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Rynok truda 2011", Dushanbe, 2011.

⁴ Data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2011.

⁵ *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*. Development Prospects Group, World Bank, UNDP 2009; p.1, accessed at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Top10.pdf>.

⁶ *Abandoned Wives of Tajik Labor Migrants*, IOM Mission in Tajikistan, 2009.

often due to migrants' own insufficient income or unemployment abroad,⁷ and/or decisions by migrant husbands not to return to Tajikistan, having settled in the country of migration with new families.⁸ Women from migrant households are subsequently forced to search for alternative sources of income to support their children and to escape food shortages, abuse, and domestic violence - often from their own family members - and overall poor living conditions. Cases of trafficking and other illegal crimes committed against Tajikistan's citizens working abroad, further contribute to the deteriorating situation of families left behind in Tajikistan.

According to the IOM Mission in Tajikistan, between 230,000 and 288,000 households in Tajikistan can be considered economically abandoned and living at or below the poverty level. Over 70% of these households are married women with children. At the same time, only 1% of the women from such households have received support from aid organizations.⁹ As a result, abandoned wives are often left with little or no financial support; they are excluded from socio-economic opportunities and prone to depression, suicide, and other health problems.

To assist the Tajik authorities in identifying a systemic solution to address the exclusion of women from households affected by labour migration from public services and socio-economic opportunities, an ODIHR project "Social and economic inclusion of women from migrant households in Tajikistan" was launched in January 2012, with the financial support of Australia. The project aims to provide a platform for discussion at the level of local authorities, involving national and international stakeholders, to produce concrete recommendations and a draft action plan on direct assistance to the women concerned.

While a considerable amount of research has been carried out in Tajikistan on the different aspects of labour migration, including its socio-economic and demographic impact in countries of origin and destination of labour migrants, only the 2009 IOM study¹⁰ has so far targeted challenges faced by the abandoned wives of migrants. This qualitative study provides a valuable insight into many of the challenges faced by abandoned wives of labour migrants.

This assessment report was commissioned to provide an up-to-date synopsis of the socio-economic challenges of women from migrant households through a comparative perspective across four geographical regions and three groups of respondents. The assessment provides an overview of the current legislative and policy framework in place, as well as of ongoing initiatives of relevance to the socio-economic and psychological situation of migrants, with a specific focus on gender aspects. It also provides and analyses updated statistical information on the socio-economic opportunities and access to services of women from migrant households, including assessing their vulnerabilities in all regions of Tajikistan. Finally, it proposes a number of recommendations to national and local government authorities on how policy and legislative frameworks for the provision of support services to abandoned migrant women can be further strengthened, building on ongoing efforts by the state authorities and the international community to improve the situation.

The assessment provides an updated picture of the needs of women from migrant households in four target regions of Tajikistan – the Region of Republican Subordination,

⁷ In particular, during the financial crisis in 2008.

⁸ *Abandoned Wives of Tajik Labor Migrants*, IOM Mission in Tajikistan, 2009.

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*

Khatlon, Soghd and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. The findings of the assessment are based on a survey of 160 women encompassing one target group: the abandoned wives, and two control groups, as well as focus group discussions with target group representatives. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of national and international stakeholders, as well as desk research.

The report consists of four main parts. After the Introduction and Terminology, follows Chapter I on Methodology, which describes the various means of data collection used. Subsequently, Chapter II looks at the legislative and policy framework relevant to the socio-economic and psychological situation of abandoned migrant women, providing an overview of relevant legislation, policies and strategies, as well as the competences of various national stakeholders. Past and present activities implemented by international organisations to support migrant women are also briefly outlined. Chapter III of the report summarizes the main conclusions of the analysis, and sets forth a list of recommendations to local, regional and national public authorities as well as international organizations and NGOs based in Tajikistan.

TERMINOLOGY

Abandoned wife	Wife of a labour migrant whose husband has left her, and who has not received any remittances from him for six months, who does not have any information about his whereabouts, and who has not had contact with him
Control group I	Group of women from non-abandoned migrant households
Control group II	Group of women from non-migrant households
District Task Force	District Task Force (State Committee for Women and Family Affairs)
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
Household	A unit composed by one or more people, sharing the same budget and residence
IOM	International Organization for Migration in Tajikistan
Labour Migrant	Person engaged in permanent or seasonal paid activity abroad
ODIHR OSCE	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE
Remittance	Part of income generated by labour migrants abroad and received by the household in the native country
RRS	Region of Republican Subordination
Target group	Group of women from abandoned migrant households
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

CHAPTER 1. METHODOLOGY

1.1. Objective of the Project

The objective of the OSCE ODIHR project “Social and Economic Integration of Women from Migrant Households in Tajikistan”, is to assist national and local authorities of Tajikistan in the identification of a systemic solution to address the exclusion of women from households affected by labour migration from public services and socio-economic opportunities. The project includes an Assessment of the socio-economic challenges currently faced by women from abandoned migrant households in Tajikistan, and the provision of a platform for discussion among local, national and international stakeholders by means of a National Conference. The Assessment as well as conclusions of the Conference will serve as the basis for the development of a draft Action Plan on direct assistance to the women concerned.

1.2. Objective of the Assessment

The assessment aims to provide a comparative analysis of the socio-economic challenges faced by women from abandoned migrant households in four geographical regions of Tajikistan. Firstly, the document outlines the legislative and policy framework in the areas of migration and gender, the competencies of relevant national authorities, as well as past and current key initiatives aimed at providing support to women from abandoned migrant households. Subsequently, the assessment compiles and analyses updated statistical information on the socio-economic opportunities and access to services of women from migrant households, including assessing their vulnerabilities. The report concludes by outlining recommendations on how national and local governments can strengthen policy and legislative frameworks to address challenges faced.

1.3. Methodology of the Assessment

The research methodology includes four data collection methods: a **survey** of 160 women, including women from abandoned migrant households, 22 in-depth **interviews** with national and local government representatives, international organizations, donors, and civil society, four **focus group discussions** and a **literature review** of current legislation, strategies and policies in the field of labour migration and gender in Tajikistan.

1) Survey:

The objective of the survey was to collect statistical data on women’s rights and opportunities; knowledge of relevant legislation; their socio-economic situation; access to government services at the local level; and susceptibility to domestic violence and discrimination.

In order to provide a representative sample, it was decided to survey 160 women from migrant and non-migrant households in four regions of Tajikistan, covering a total of 40 respondents in each region. The target group consisted of a total of 80 women from abandoned migrant households,¹¹ while the two control groups included 40 women from non-abandoned migrant households (control group I) and another 40 women from non-

¹¹ For the purposes of this study, an "abandoned wife" is defined as the wife of a labour migrant whose husband has left her and who has not received any remittances from him for six months, who does not have any information about his whereabouts, and who has not had contact with him.

migrant households (control group II) respectively. The division of respondents into target and control groups allowed for a comparative analysis of the data collected for the survey. The broad geographical coverage also provided the opportunity to determine if differences exist in relation to the situation of women from abandoned migrant households across the regions.

The following criteria were applied to select a research district in each of the four regions of Tajikistan:

1. An indication of the existence of a considerable number of households, where the husbands have migrated for work;
2. An indication of the existence of a considerable number of women from migrant households, who have been abandoned, and who thus constitute a socially vulnerable category of the population;
3. An indication of the existence of a considerable number of women, who do not have access to services, such as healthcare, social protection, and/or employment services, or access to education.

As a result, the following districts were chosen:

1. Region of Republican Subordination: Vahdat District;
2. Sughd Province: Isfara District;
3. Khatlon Province: Kulob District;
4. Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast: Khorugh city and Roshtqal'a District.

A breakdown of the respondents by region and by group is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of the Selection

Region	City/Village	Target Group	Control Group	Total
RRS	Vahdat	10	10	40
	Tangai	10	10	
Sughd Province	Isfara	10	10	40
	Navgilem	10	10	
Khatlon Province	Kulob	10	10	40
	Dahana	10	10	
GBAO	Khorugh	10	10	40
	Roshtqal'a	6	10	
	Tavdem	2	0	
	Mirsaid Mirshakar	2	0	
TOTAL		160		

The questionnaire for the survey was developed by ODIHR, with the support of the research company M-Vector and a gender expert. It covered the following five broad areas: 1) socio-demographic situation; 2) economic opportunities; 3) access to social services and rights; 4) psycho-emotional well-being; 5) access to support services; and 6) socio-economic aspects related to the absence of the husband. The questionnaire originally consisted of a total of 119 questions.

To ensure the relevance of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was pilot tested with 10 women from Dushanbe from the three groups covered in the study. The women who took part in the testing stage included:

1. Six abandoned wives of migrants (target group);
2. Two women from non-abandoned migrant households (control group I); and
3. Two women who were not from migrant households (control group II).

The testing phase demonstrated that respondents were reluctant to answer questions when the head of the household (husband, father-in-law) was at home. It was thus decided to carry out the survey during working hours on weekdays, when the respondent was at home alone. Furthermore, as a result of the test, the number of questions in the questionnaire was reduced to 104, including 5 screening questions.

The survey was conducted from 18 to 29 June among 160 women in four regions of Tajikistan. A total of 40 respondents were interviewed from each of the four regions of Tajikistan, consisting of an equal number of women from the target and control groups (20 in the target group and 10 in each of the two control groups).

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with respondents 18 and older, who were selected through the snowball method, whereby each surveyed individual provided contact information on other potential respondents, who fell within the scope of the assessment. Lack of official statistics on women from migrant households or on divorces among migrants rendered this method particularly suitable for the purposes of the study. The identities of the respondents have been kept confidential.

2) In-depth Interviews:

The goal of semi-structured in-depth interviews was to collect data from key stakeholders: representatives of District Task Forces (DTF) established by the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs, local government officials specializing in social and gender issues, as well as officials from government and international organizations working in the areas of gender and migration.

Guides for in-depth interviews were developed by ODIHR, with the support of the research agency M-Vector and a gender expert. The guide for local government officials specializing in social and gender areas consisted of 18 questions and covered issues such as: the identification of the main socio-economic challenges related to women from abandoned migrant households, an overview of existing assistance, access to rights and services, and incidences of domestic violence and abuse. The guide for national government structures responsible for gender and migration issues consisted of 10 questions, and centred on the assessment of the socio-economic impact of migration. It also contained questions related to relevant laws, policies and strategies in place and their effectiveness, as well as recommendations on how to address the current situation.

Interviews were conducted from 28 June to 10 August 2012 with three counterparts (one representative of the DTF and two officials from the local government – one responsible for social issues and one for gender issues) in the selected research district per region, amounting to a total of 22 interviews with 10 key counterparts in Dushanbe.

The following respondents from government and international structures responsible for gender and migration issues were selected in Dushanbe:

1. The Administration of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan;
2. The State Migration Service;
3. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan;
4. The State Committee for Women and Family Affairs;
5. The Interior Ministry of the Republic of Tajikistan;
6. The Human Rights Commissioner in Tajikistan;
7. The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Tajikistan;
8. UN Women;
9. The International Organization for Migration;
10. The Aga Khan Development Network;
11. NGO Association for protection of women's and labour migrants' rights.

To ensure consistency, in-depth interviews were conducted in the same four regions of Tajikistan as the survey. With the permission of the respondents, the responses of the stakeholders were recorded.

3) Focus Group Discussions:

To verify and substantiate the findings of the survey, focus group discussions were conducted in the selected research districts of the four regions of Tajikistan – Vakhdat (RRS), Isfara (Sughd region), Kulyab (Khatlon region), Roshtkala (GBAO) in the period of 13 to 20 of July 2012. The target group of the focus group discussions were women from abandoned migrant households, who had also been respondents in the survey.

The aims of the focus group discussions were the following:

1. To assess the socio-economic status of women from abandoned migrant households, including their social status in society and the family according to their own perceptions;
2. To determine how knowledgeable abandoned migrant wives are on relevant human rights issues and legislation, services and social support, as well as to determine their access to rights and social services;
3. To assess whether domestic violence incidents and issues occur in families of abandoned wives of migrants;
4. To further define the needs of abandoned wives of migrants, and to provide them with an opportunity to voice suggestions on how their situation could be improved.

In total, 40 women took part in the focus group discussions: 10 in each district – Vakhdat (13 July 2012), Kulyab (14 July 2012), Isfara (16 July, 2012), and Khorog (20 July 2012).

The guide on conducting focus group discussions was developed by ODIHR and the gender expert, and consisted of four sections on: the socio-economic status of abandoned wives of migrants; information and awareness on, as well as access to, public and social services; domestic violence issues; and identification of needs and suggestions for the improvement of their situation.

With the permission of the respondents, the focus group discussions were recorded. The identities of respondents have been kept confidential.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

While the survey provides statistical data, it does not amount to a quantitative analysis. Therefore, while the findings of the research provide valuable insight into the challenges faced by women from migrant households in Tajikistan, they are not sufficiently statistically significant to be representative at regional or national levels.

CHAPTER 2. OVERVIEW OF THE LEGAL, POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Applicable Legislation and Policies in the Areas of Migration and Gender

Mass labour out-migration from Tajikistan has made national and local policy-making related to social protection, gender equality, as well as legal literacy increasingly important to relevant public authorities and the population. In addition to challenges faced by labour migrants in their countries of destination, due to their socio-economic vulnerability, a number of domestic issues have surfaced as the women left behind are forced to take on the unfamiliar role of breadwinner.

As elsewhere across the former Soviet Union, practices related to gender equality were well-established in Tajikistan during the pre-independence period. Since 1991, however, overall underdevelopment and poor access to social services, including education, have pushed many women out of the public sphere and back into the home. This tendency has limited the exercise of civil, political as well as economic rights of women, and has rendered the lives of women from abandoned migrant households particularly challenging.

Relevant national and international laws and policies in the area of migration and gender equality in Tajikistan are briefly summarized below to outline the legislative and policy framework of the study.

2.1.1. Migration

The legislative basis for the creation of conditions for free labour migration is enshrined in Article 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, which stipulates that citizens have the right to free movement and choice of residence, to leave the country and to return to it. Building on this premise, a number of relevant laws, policies and strategies have been developed throughout the course of Tajikistan's independence in the area of migration.

Migration Legislation

The overall framework for the governing of migration policy in Tajikistan is provided by the Law “*On Migration*”, adopted in 1999 and last amended in 2010. While the aim of the law is to provide protection to citizens of Tajikistan leaving for work abroad, including by facilitating the transportation of migrants only to countries where their rights are protected,¹² the actual effectiveness of its provisions is limited. While Article 2 of the law reiterates the right to freedom of exit and movement, as well as the right to free choice of activity or profession, Articles 8 and 25 impose limitations on the right to leave the country, in contravention to Article 13 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In addition to existing legislation, relevant stakeholders in Tajikistan are currently debating a draft Law “*On Labour Migration*”, which focuses mainly on regulating the situation of labour migration from Tajikistan to other countries.¹³ Next to provisions protecting the rights of migrant workers in other countries, the draft law also imposes obligations on migrant workers, for example, adherence to relevant legislation in the host country,

¹² Law on Migration of the Republic of Tajikistan, as amended in 2008, Art 8.

¹³ The scope of the draft Law, however, appears to cover all labour migration, including internal migration.

engagement in vocational training, “adequate representation” of Tajikistan in the host country, and the provision of financial support to families at home.

While efforts to enhance the situation of workers from Tajikistan residing in other countries are laudable, their practical effect remains questionable, given that any laws passed in Tajikistan will only apply within the country. The same is true for obligations imposed on migrant workers abroad; lack of time and finances will often prevent further training, and private citizens should not be expected to function as representatives of their countries. Consideration should be given to adopting new or strengthening existing bilateral treaties between Tajikistan and the most common destination countries; this would more appropriately deal with the improvement of living standards and treatment of migrant workers from Tajikistan residing in such countries. Liability clauses in the draft law would benefit from greater clarity, and should specify exactly what type of behaviour leads to specific violations and sanctions.

Similar concerns have been voiced by the UN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers in its report from the 16th session in April 2012.¹⁴

National Development Strategies

Of particular relevance to the protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families, is the 2007 “*National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2015*”. It recognizes that the country’s economy is heavily dependent on labour migration abroad, which constitutes one dimension of the labour market. The strategy concludes that, in the area of migration, there is insufficient regulation, an incomplete legislative framework, weaknesses in Tajikistan’s social infrastructure, lack of bilateral agreements with destination countries, as well as poor qualifications and a high socio-legal vulnerability of migrants.¹⁵

In order to address the issues identified above, and with the aim to adopt a fundamentally new approach to the regulation and management of labour migration, in 2010 Tajikistan developed the “*National Labour Migration Strategy for 2011 – 2015*”. The strategy defines the general direction as well as policy priorities of the government of Tajikistan. These priorities include: exploring new markets for employment abroad; strengthening economic rights as well as the protection of social and legal rights of migrant workers; and establishing a quality professional and pre-departure training programme for migrant workers. In addition, the strategy envisages a strengthened institutional framework to manage labour migration; to enhance dialogue with NGOs, international organizations (IOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs); as well as to improve the material and technical base and institutional capacity of all government agencies involved in the management of labour migration issues.¹⁶ The strategy does not, however, include provisions on measures aimed at the re-integration of Tajik migrant returnees.¹⁷ In addition,

¹⁴ Issues Concluding Observations and Recommendations on Reports of Paraguay and Tajikistan, UN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers, 27 April 2012, accessed at [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/D59B9F14420E3172C12579ED004D3F66?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/D59B9F14420E3172C12579ED004D3F66?OpenDocument) on 27 August 2012.

¹⁵ National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2007, p. 50.

¹⁶ National Labour Migration Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2010.

¹⁷ Issues Concluding Observations and Recommendations on Reports of Paraguay and Tajikistan, Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers, 27 April 2012, accessed at [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/D59B9F14420E3172C12579ED004D3F66?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/D59B9F14420E3172C12579ED004D3F66?OpenDocument) on 27 August 2012.

its effective implementation is hampered by shortcomings in the institutional and financial capacities of relevant public bodies.

International Conventions

In terms of relevant international obligations, Tajikistan is bound by the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No 97 and No 143, as well as the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. In April 2012, Tajik authorities presented the implementation report for the latter Convention, recognizing, *inter alia*, that migration has social consequences, that it impacts on family life, and that it affects not only labour migrants but also women and children left behind.¹⁸ In response to the report, the Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers of the UN, pointed out the need to step up efforts to improve the migration data collection system, as well as to develop and implement systematic and regular training on the content and application of the Convention for public officials dealing with migrant workers, such as judges, prosecutors, police officers, immigration and emigration officials.¹⁹

In addition, Tajikistan has concluded a number of agreements pertaining to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), such as the 1994 Agreement on Cooperating in Labour Migration and Social Protection for Migrant Workers, the 1998 Agreement Between CIS Countries on Cooperation in Combating Illegal Migration, and the 2008 Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and Their Family Members in the CIS. Tajikistan is party to the Treaty on Long-term Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation Between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It has also concluded a number of bilateral agreements on labour migration, including with the Russian Federation.

State programmes and policies focusing on preparation and support measures for future migrants, such as education, vocational training, and general awareness-raising events, may be adopted by the appropriate state organs and do not require special legislation on labour migration abroad. As for migrant families remaining at home, legislation in Tajikistan - for example in the area of social security - could focus more on their protection, and state programmes on education and employment opportunities for vulnerable groups could enhance stability and sustainability for wives or relatives of migrant workers abroad.

2.1.2. Gender Legislation and Policies

The legislative basis for the promotion of gender equality is set out in Article 17 of the Constitution of Tajikistan, which explicitly states that men and women have equal rights. Further to this, a number of specific laws related to gender issues have been passed in Tajikistan, the most important being the 2004 Law *“On State Guarantees for Equality between Men and Women and Equal Opportunities for Their Realization”*. The main objective of this law is to provide protection against gender discrimination in all areas of

¹⁸ “В Женеве рассмотрят доклад Таджикистана по миграции”, Пайрав Чоршанбиев, accessed at <http://www.news.tj/ru/news/v-zheneve-rassmotryat-doklad-tadzhikistana-po-migratsii>

¹⁹ Issues Concluding Observations and Recommendations on Reports of Paraguay and Tajikistan, Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families, 27 April 2012, accessed at [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/D59B9F14420E3172C12579ED004D3F66?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/D59B9F14420E3172C12579ED004D3F66?OpenDocument) on 27 August 2012.

life. In doing so, the law obliges the government to provide equal opportunities for men and women through regulations, procedures and other measures against discrimination, including in the governing of the state. In addition, the law requires educational institutions to ensure equal conditions for men and women in obtaining general, secondary vocational and higher education. Because of unequal access, education remains, however, one of the obstacles to gender equality, as the number of young women leaving school prior to graduation is increasing.

The “*National State Plan for the Implementation of Gender Policy for 2012 – 2015*” contains guarantees for ensuring gender equality in the area of employment and business. The main objectives of the Plan are to facilitate self-employment among women, and to increase the percentage of women engaged in individual entrepreneurship as well as small and medium-sized businesses. The Plan also aims to make women more competitive in the labour market by improving their access to short- and long-term professional development courses, to improve their qualifications or provide access to re-training, provide access to loans and micro-financing through credit without collateral, and to create a gender-sensitive national system of professional training and orientation for labour migrants²⁰.

Tajikistan has also adopted a number of other gender-related laws, policies, programmes and measures, such as the Presidential Decree of 1999 “*On Strengthening the Role of Women in Society*”, the introduction by the President of a quota system for the education of girls and boys in schools in remote areas (1997, 2006), the State Program on “*Main Directions of the State Policy aimed at Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women for 2001-10*”, the 2002 Law “*On Reproductive Health and Rights*”, the “*Strategy on Poverty Reduction in Tajikistan for 2007-2009 and 2010-2012*”, the 2006 “*State Program on Education, Selection and Appointment of Leading Cadres from Capable Women and Girls in 2007-2016 in the Republic of Tajikistan*”, the 2012 “*National Strategy for Activation of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2011 – 2020*”, as well as the “*National Plan for the Implementation of Gender Policy*.”²¹ While issues related to gender are also included in the 2007 “*National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2015*”, the practical means for their implementation have, however, not been fully developed.

The Civil, Family, Penal and Labour Codes also touch on issues related to gender equality in the country. According to the *Labour Code of the Republic of Tajikistan*, “all citizens have equal opportunities with respect to labour relations. Distinctions, exclusions or preferences, or refusals to hire made on the basis of ethnicity, race, skin colour, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, place of birth, foreign origin or social class that violate the equality of opportunity in the area of labour are prohibited.”²² The Labour Code also puts forward special provisions by the state for individuals needing increased social protection, such as women, minors, and the disabled. For example, refusal to hire pregnant women or women with small children without a legitimate reason is explicitly prohibited.²³

While the *Family Code* includes a provision stipulating equality between men and women in marriage and divorce, in practice, discrimination persists. One of the issues concerns the legality of marriage in Tajikistan. The *Family Code* sets forth that “a marriage concluded within state bodies of civil registration may be recognized. A marriage concluded

²⁰ State Committee on Women Affairs and Family, May 29, 2012.

²¹ Coalition of public organizations in the Republic of Tajikistan on the sexual and reproductive health and rights. *The Strategic Plan for the Coalition 2013 - 2018 years*. Tajikistan, 2012 (p. 8), accessed at http://www.tfpa.tj/ru.tj/files/Strategic%20plan%20of%20the%20NGOs%20Coalition_2012.pdf.

²² Labour Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, Chapter I, Art 1.

²³ Ibid.

according to religious customs shall not have legal status”.²⁴ While meant to protect the rights of women, the provision, however, effectively hampers their exercise, as most marriages are still concluded according to religious customs and therefore are not legally recognized. As a result, wives abandoned by migrants often cannot enforce their rights against their husbands before the courts. Although polygamy is banned by the *Penal Code of Tajikistan*, it is, however, still practiced.

Although Tajikistan has not adopted legislation on domestic violence to date, the development of such legislation has been in process since 2003, with the support of the OSCE. As of 2011, a Consultative Group, chaired by a senior member of the Parliament of Tajikistan and including members from the President’s Executive Apparatus, the Committee for Social Issues, and other Committees, has been developing a draft Law “*On Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence*”, in line with international standards. Currently, provisions related to the prohibition of different forms of assault can be found in the Penal Code.²⁵

In terms of relevant international obligations in the sphere of gender equality and women’s rights, Tajikistan is bound by the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the 1993 Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has signed up to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Notably, Tajikistan has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The implementation of gender-related legislation and policies is, however, hampered by insufficient institutional capacities, incomplete gender mainstreaming in key economic public policies, a lack of effective coordination and cooperation in inter-agency coordinating councils, a lack of financial resources for the implementation of gender policies and programmes, and a lack of coordination among donors, governments and NGOs on the use and distribution of available financial resources, as well as insufficient monitoring and reporting on gender issues.

2.2. Competence of Relevant Government Officials at the Local and National Levels

2.2.1. Migration Issues

Migration issues were under the competence of the Migration Service within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection until 2007, when they were transferred to the Migration Service under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). On the basis of the MIA Migration Service, as well as the MIA’s Representative Office in the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the State Agency for Social Protection, Employment and Migration, a new State Migration Service was established in 2011.

The State Migration Service operates under the supervision of the Office of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and has the mandate to provide a single management system of labour migration, in order to facilitate the effective use of the labour force abroad and to protect the rights and interests of labour migrants.

²⁴ Family Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, Chapter 1, article 3, 2011 ed.

²⁵ Penal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, Art. 112, 116 and 117.

The extensive and prolonged restructuring of migration governance in Tajikistan has, however, rendered inter-agency coordination, cooperation and division of responsibilities challenging. In addition, the institutional and financial capacities of the new State Migration Service require further development, to enable it to implement relevant policies in an effective manner.

2.2.2. Gender Issues

The responsibility for the implementation of gender policy is vested with the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan. The Committee was established in 1991, and has been tasked with drafting, promoting and implementing policies and legislation aimed at improving women's status in all spheres of life, including family, health protection, social security and the environment. The Committee is also part of the Coordinating Council on Prevention of Violence against Women, which consists of representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, court officials, representatives of the General Prosecutor's Office and NGOs.

In recent years, in the framework of the implementation of UN Committee recommendations related to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, structural and financial means have been channeled into strengthening the capacities of the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs. With the support of UN Women, the Committee has created a gender network on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Ministries and other governmental institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan.²⁶ In November 2008, the Public Association "From Legal Equality to Actual Equality" joined the agreement. Government institutions party to the agreement undertook to establish gender groups, which would be responsible for the promotion of gender equality.

The local and national institutional framework for the implementation of gender policy is, however, lacking in effective coordination mechanisms and administrative and financial capacities. Consequently, programs aimed at the promotion of women's rights remain disproportionately dependent on donor assistance.

2.3. Activities of National and International Organizations in Support of Abandoned Families and Wives of Migrants

As the scale of the socio-economic challenges related to abandoned families of labour migrants has become increasingly visible in Tajikistan, a number of national and international organizations have invested efforts in research and projects, aimed at supporting women and families left behind.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Tajikistan produced the 2009 study "Abandoned Wives of Tajik Labor Migrants", which served as the basis for the implementation of a pilot project aimed at improving access to justice and legal awareness

²⁶ The first stage of the creation of the gender network included ministries and institutions responsible for agricultural reforms. Subsequently, a tripartite agreement was signed among the Committee on Women and Family Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Irrigation Engineering and Water Management, the State Statistics Committee, the Agency on Agriculture, Geodesy and Cartography, the Agroinvestbank, the National Association of Dekhan Farms, the Civil Servants Advanced Training Institute, and the UN Women Regional Office.

among this group in 2010, with the financial support of Switzerland. During the project, the IOM opened a free legal-aid centre for members of labour migrant households at the Migrant Support Centre in Kulob. Residents of the Vose' District and the city of Kulob turned to the centre for assistance with various legal problems during the six-month project. In total, more than 450 women received legal aid either when visiting the Migrant Support Centre in Kulob, or by taking part in dozens of mobile consultations in neighbouring districts. Representatives of the IOM Mission in Tajikistan note that the frequency of abandoned wives of migrants approaching the office with requests for help has increased. In response, the Mission continues to conduct research on problems related to migration, to provide legal assistance and psychological help.

Within the framework of a project on Women's Resource Centres, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan promotes the empowerment of women and girls to claim their rights, access state services and institutions, and augment and expand the reach and impact of community-based education and counselling on practical issues related to housing, family law, employment, property, and registration rights of special concern to women and families. Working with a network of women's organizations in small towns and villages, the project promotes and protects gender equality in the Republic of Tajikistan, and strengthens cooperation between civil society and government actors and structures at the local level. The nine Women's Resource Centres which have been established thus far²⁷ have the multi-functional role of providing free legal and psychological consultations to women and girls, including victims of domestic violence, enabling women to receive legal redress when appropriate, raising awareness of women's rights among the local population, supporting women's empowerment via vocational courses, improving participation of the community in addressing issues pertinent to girls' education, and strengthening the knowledge of community participants on gender issues. Since April 2011, the Women's Resource Centres Project has been funded by the Norwegian Government.

In addition, UN Women has been working actively in the area of regulating gender equality in the Republic of Tajikistan. Two studies on women's access to land have been conducted,²⁸ recognizing that, under conditions of unemployment and poverty, land becomes a strategic resource. Unequal distribution of work between women and men, a lack of technical and financial support for female entrepreneurs, unequal access to capital, especially land and loans, and control over them, as well as harmful traditional and customary practices, hinder efforts to expand women's economic rights and opportunities and exacerbate the problem of the feminization of poverty. Accordingly, the studies have concluded that ensuring equal access to land and other economic benefits is a key factor in improving the position of women.

In the framework of the Central Asia Regional Migration Programme (CARMP), implemented jointly by UN Women, IOM, ILO and the Department for International Development of Great Britain, assistance has also been provided to migrants and migrants' families through self-help groups (SHG) and various mobilization projects to improve livelihoods. All 1,650 members of SHGs (97% are women) are involved in income-generating activities and initiatives; 514 members are undertaking sustainable economic initiatives, including animal breeding, rabbit breeding, small trade, carpet weaving, agricultural production, catering and sewing services, by using micro-credits and other

²⁷ An additional two centres are to be established shortly.

²⁸ "Land reform and women's rights to land in Tajikistan", 2003; "Improved Food Security and Enhanced Livelihoods through Institutional and Gender-sensitive Land Reform", 2008.

resources. In total, 191 SHG members have been trained on business development within CARMP, and have received micro-credits from local micro-finance institutions, including interest-free credit from the national Agency of Social Protection, Employment and Migration of Sughd region, which amounted to 462,235 Tajik Somoni (USD 95,899).

In addition, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation has been supporting the “Project on Violence against Women in Tajikistan” (ProVaW) since 2000. The project aims at raising awareness of domestic violence and its consequences in Tajikistan, and providing assistance in the development of a draft law on domestic violence. Several organizations, such as ABA ROLI, as well as local NGOs also carry out important work on access to justice and women’s rights issues in Tajikistan.

Other studies relevant to the protection of the rights of the families of migrants include the 2011 UNICEF report on the *Impact of Labour Migration on “Children Left Behind” in Tajikistan*,²⁹ the 2012 World Bank report on “Opportunities for Men and Women in Emerging Europe and Central Asia of 2012”,³⁰ as well as the 2011 Conclusions of the Civil Society Seminar on “The Rights of Migrant Workers” by the Delegation of the European Union in Tajikistan.

²⁹ “Impact of Labour Migration on “Children Left Behind” in Tajikistan, UNICEF, 2011, accessed at http://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/resources_18660.html on 1 September 2012.

³⁰ “Report on Opportunities for Men and Women in Emerging Europe and Central Asia”, World Bank, 2012, accessed at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/258598-1322580725430/WB_genderReportFINAL.pdf on 1 September 2012.

CHAPTER 3. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF WOMEN FROM ABANDONED MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS

This chapter of the report deals with the interpretation of the findings of the survey, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The assessment employs a qualitative approach, as described in the Chapter I section on Methodology.

Interviews were conducted in four regions of Tajikistan among three groups of women – from abandoned migrant households (target group), women from labour migrant households (control group I) and women from non-migrant households (control group II). The last two groups serve as control groups, while the first is the target group of the research. Where identified, significant regional differences in data are noted at both regional and group levels. Otherwise, the analysis focuses only on data variations across the three groups, as it is precisely this differentiation that will serve to inform policy-making.

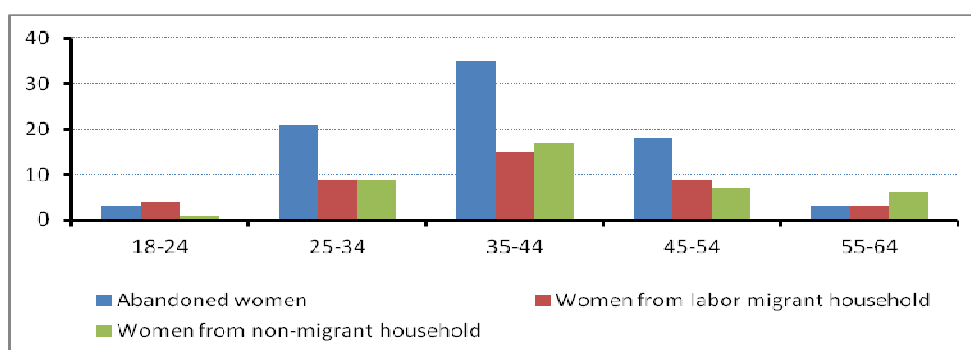
The main findings of the survey have been compared against the outcomes of the focus group discussions, held in the same four regions of Tajikistan among women from abandoned migrant households. Where the conclusions of the focus group discussions either corroborate or contradict the results of the survey, it has been explicitly stated. The analysis also integrates information obtained through in-depth interviews with representatives of local and national public authorities.

The Chapter is divided into six sections: 1) Socio-demographic characteristics of women from abandoned migrant households; 2) Economic opportunities; 3) Access to social services and knowledge of rights; 4) Psycho-emotional well-being; 5) Community, state, and international support; and 6) Socio-economic issues directly related to the absence of a husband. The main socio-economic challenges in the particular area under discussion are summarized at the end of each section.

3.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Almost 70% of the target group are between the ages of 25-44, while in the control groups, this figure is closer to 60% (**figure 3.1.1**).

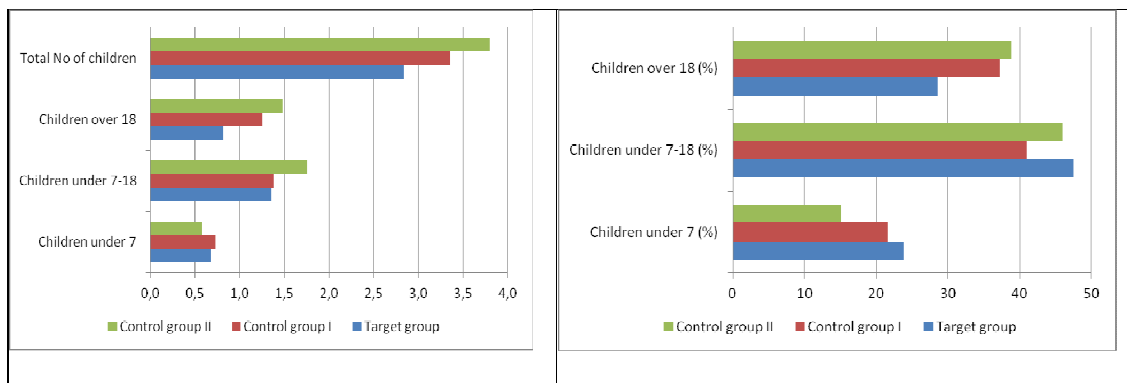
Figure 3.1.1 Age groups (%)



On average, there are fewer children among the target group (2.8) than among the two control groups (3.3 for control group I and 3.8 for control group II); this can be explained by the absence of the husband and the poor living conditions of abandoned migrant

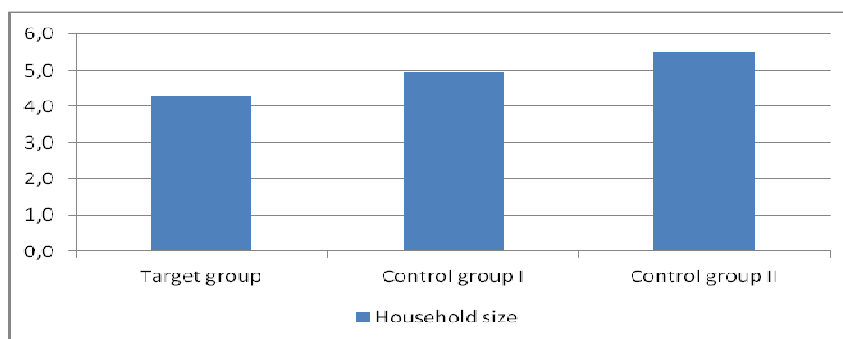
households. The share of children in the 7 – 18 age group in the target group is 48%, while in control groups this figure is slightly smaller. Among the target group, children under 7 and over 18 constitute 24% and 28% respectively (**figure 3.1.2**).

Figure 3.1.2 Number and percentage of children by age group



Consequently, the size of the household among the target group is smaller than among control groups. On average, there are four persons per household in the target group, while the figure is around five for both control groups (**figure 3.1.3**).

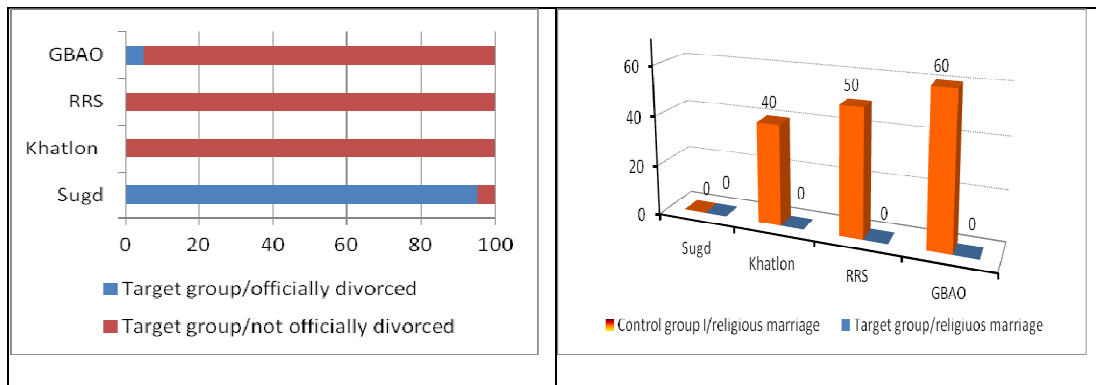
Figure 3.1.3 Size of household



In almost all households of the target group and control group I across all targeted regions, it is the husbands that are labour migrants. While there is on average one labour migrant per household in the target group, women from control group I report that their sons, brothers and sisters have also left abroad in search for work (Khatlon (1.25), RRS and GBAO (1.15)). Having more than one labour migrant per household in control group I can be explained by a more successful labour migration experience in this group and the presence of adult sons, as compared to the target group.

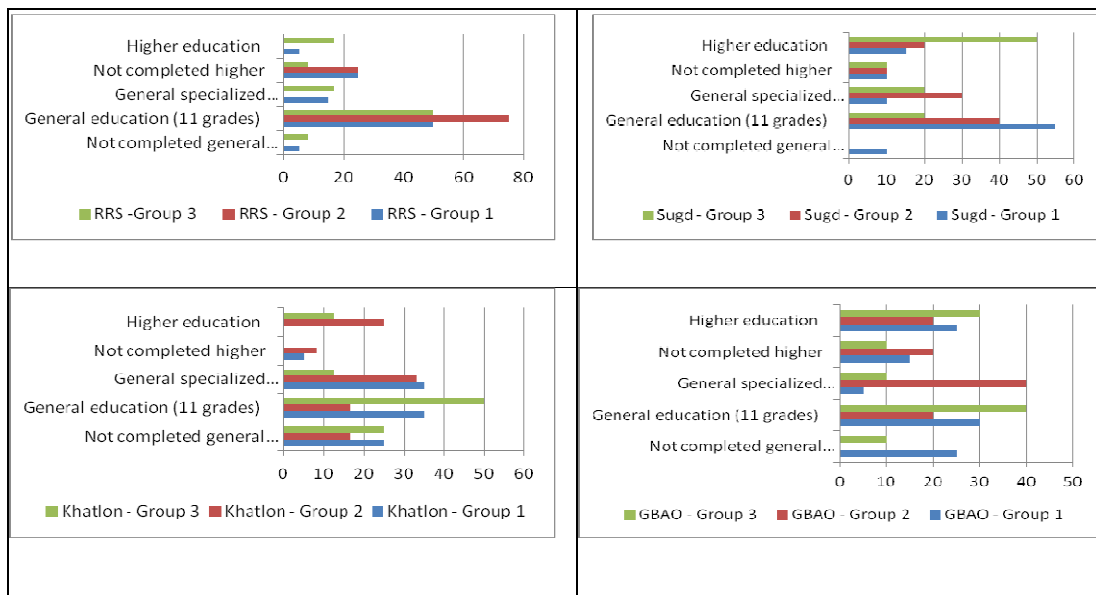
In Sugd region, 95% of women from the target group are officially divorced, while 5% remain married (separated, but not officially divorced). In contrast, in Khatlon and RRS respectively, 100% of women from the target group are still officially married; in GBAO the rate is 95%. Religious marriage is not reported among the target group; it is considerably more common among women from control group I (**figure 3.1.4**).

Figure 3.1.4 Marital status of women from target group and control group I (%)



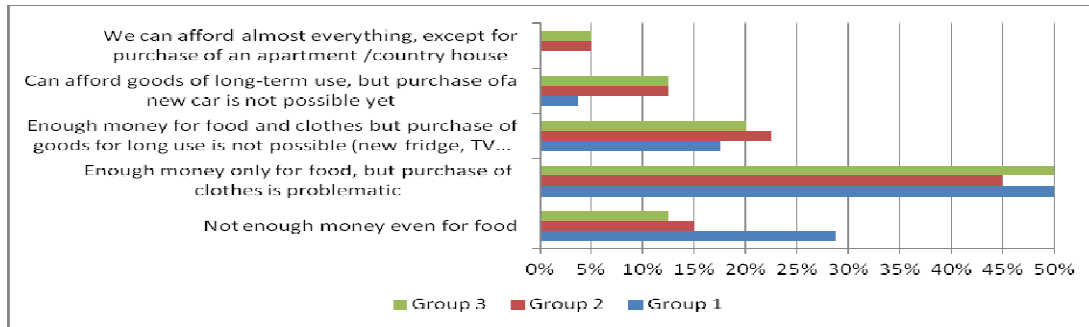
There is no significant difference between the groups in relation to their educational levels. Women with a general education (around 40%) constitute the majority in all groups and regions. The percentage of women with unfinished higher and higher education in the target and control groups in GBAO and Sugd is higher than in the RRS and Khatlon regions (**figure 3.1.5**).

Figure 3.1.5 Level of education (%)



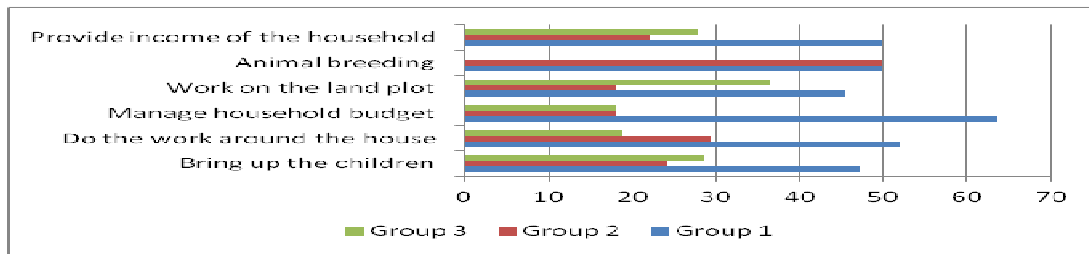
Survey data demonstrates that the financial vulnerability of women from the target group is two times higher than that of women in the control groups. No representative from the target group is able to afford “everything, including clothes, food and goods for long-term use, with the exception of an apartment/country house,” while a few representatives of control groups are able to do so, although the percentage is very low (just 5%). Overall, the purchasing power of the target group to buy goods for long-term use is four times lower than among the control groups (**figure 3.1.6**).

Figure 3.1.6 The households' material wellbeing



In addition, the study demonstrates that the target group is involved in household chores to a much greater degree than the representatives of the control groups (**figure 3.1.7**). This is one of the factors that reduce the opportunities for women to engage in paid activity outside the home.

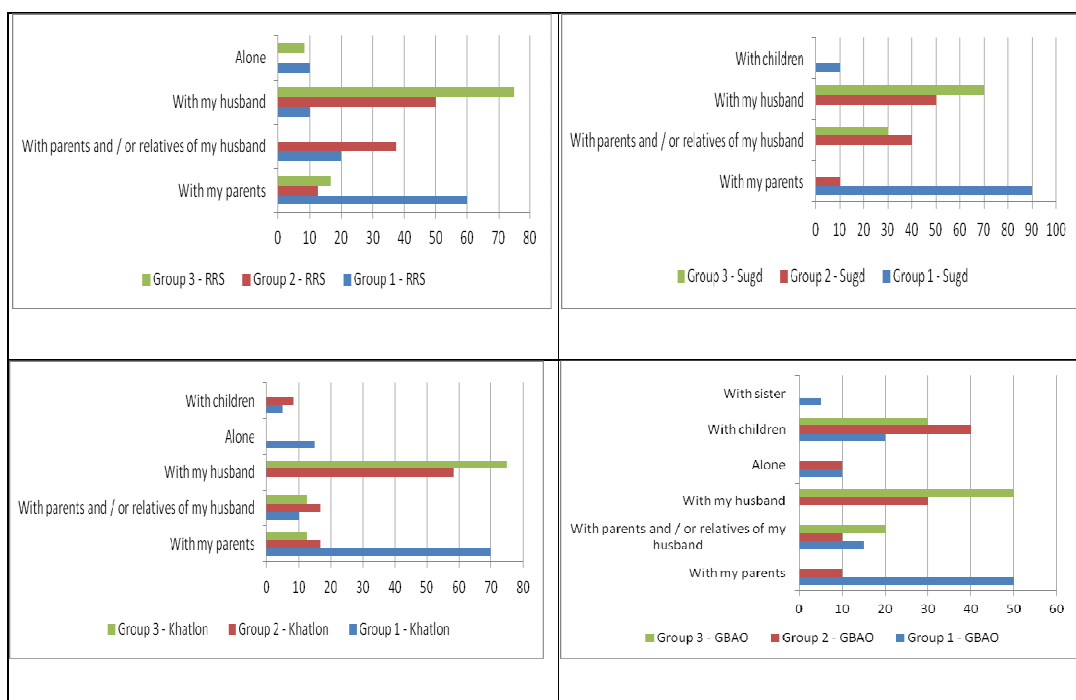
Figure 3.1.7 Involvement in household chores (%)



Survey results indicate that very few women from the target group live alone with their children. Mainly, they reside with their own parents, as they have either willingly left the house of their husband or his parents, or have been forced to move. This figure is highest in Sugd (90%) and lowest in GBAO (50%) (**figure 3.1.8**). A significant number of women from the target group, however, continue to live with parents and other relatives of the husband. The percentage of women from the target group who own the place they live in, ranges from 0% in Khatlon to a maximum of 20% in RRS.

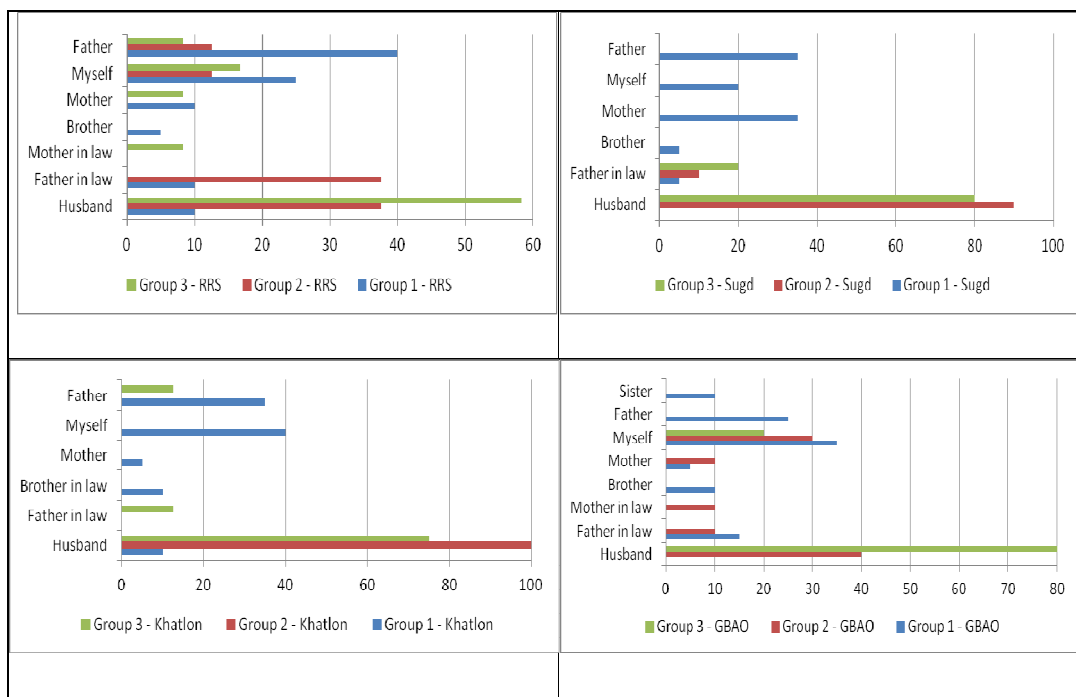
A number of challenges arise when woman from abandoned migrant households do not have the opportunity to establish their own households. During the focus group discussions, several women noted insufficient personal space and emotional abuse; they also mentioned that the tight living space precludes the marriage of their siblings as well as grown-up children. Most women expressed a wish to have their own place of living and a conviction that this would significantly improve their situation.

Figure 3.1.8 With whom do you live? (%)



A significant differentiation among groups is observed in determining who the head of household is. Women from the target group reported their husband as the head of the household in 10% of cases in RRA, 5% in Khatlon, 0% in Sugd and GBAO (**figure 3.1.9**). In contrast, the percentage of women from both control groups which identify their husbands as the heads of household is considerably higher.

Figure 3.1.9 The head of household (%)

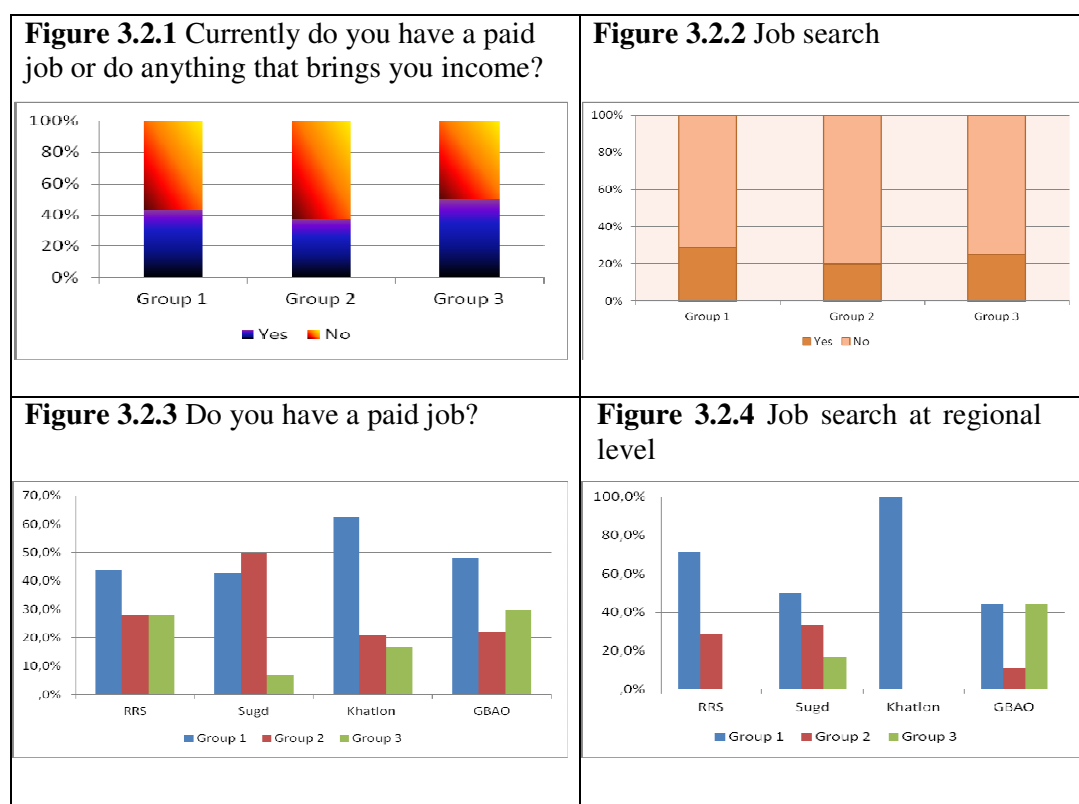


In summary, the main socio-demographic challenges are the following:

- Women from the target group are considerably more burdened with household chores than representatives of the control groups, thereby limiting opportunities to find paid work outside the home;
- The financial vulnerability of women from the target group is two times higher than that of women in the control groups;
- Most women from the target group live with their own parents, the parents of their husbands or with other relatives. This causes a considerable amount of distress to the women, and many of them expressed the wish to establish a separate household;
- In the absence of their husband, more women from the target group than from either control group have assumed the role of the head of household.

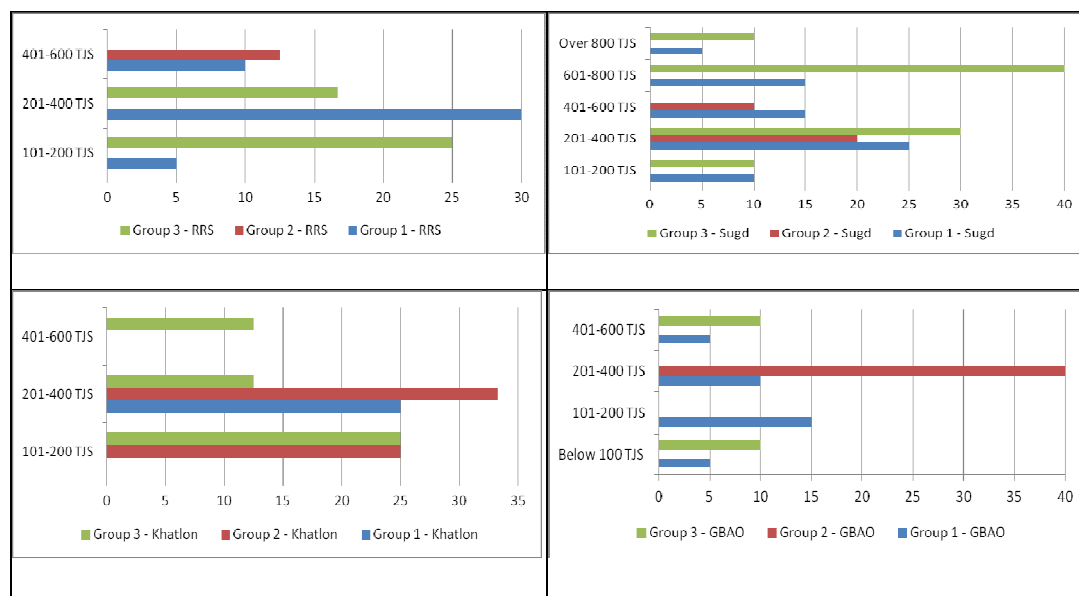
3.2. Economic Opportunities

Collected data for this assessment suggests that 50% of women from control group II, 56% of control group I and 63% of women from the target group currently do not have a paid job (**figure 3.2.1**). Women from the target group are searching for a job more actively (29%) than representatives of the other two groups (**figure 3.2.2**). The highest rate of those who do not have a paid job (63%) and those searching for a job (100%) are among women from the target group in Khatlon region (**figures 3.2.3 and 3.2.4**).

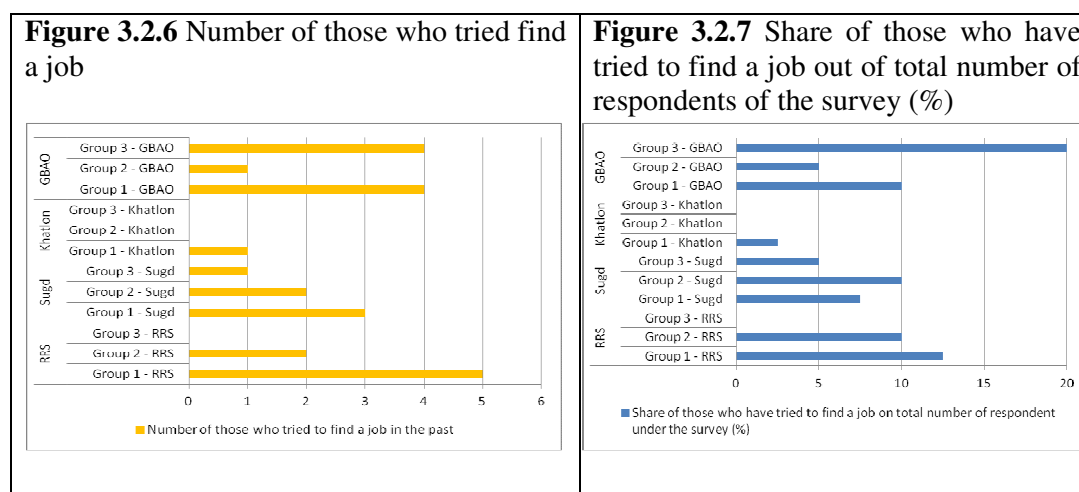


The highest salary level is observed among the target group and control group II in Sugd (over 800 TJS³¹ or over 168 USD), while the lowest earnings are reported in GBAO (below 100 TJS or 21 USD in target group). It should, however, be noted that the highest and lowest salary levels apply to only a small percentage of respondents. The average monthly salary among women from the target group across all regions is 201-400 TJS per month (figure 3.2.5).

Figure 3.2.5 Monthly salary



Absolute numbers, however, demonstrate that very few respondents across all groups are actively looking for a job (figure 3.2.6). Some regional variation is noted - for instance, in RRS, it is members of the target group who are more engaged in job searching, while in GBAO, it is representatives of control group II (figure 3.2.7).

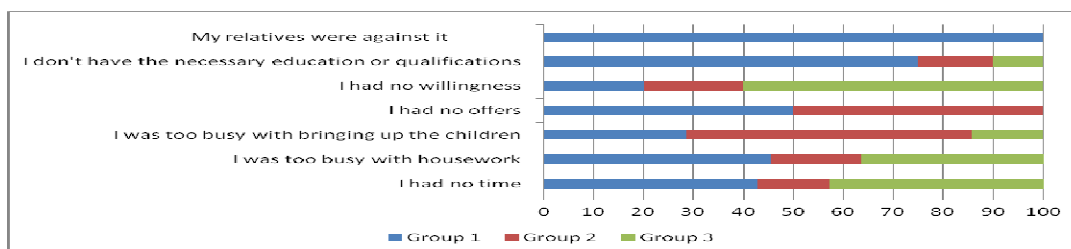


Collected data in this assessment suggests that the reasons for not applying for a job differ between the target and control groups. Among the abandoned women, reasons such as objections by relatives, lack of necessary education and qualifications, lack of open

³¹ As of 1st August 2012 in accordance with National Bank of Tajikistan the official exchange rate for 1 USD is equal 4.7546 TJS.

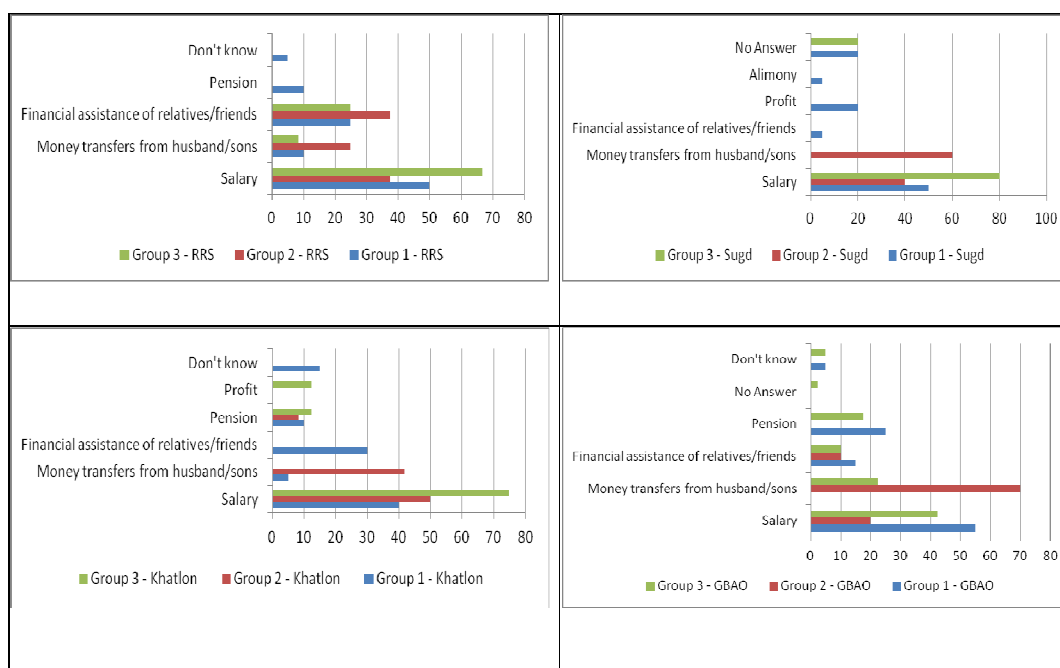
vacancies and time, and being occupied with household chores and child-rearing, prevailed (**Figure 3.2.8**).

Figure 3.2.8 Reasons for not applying for a job (%)



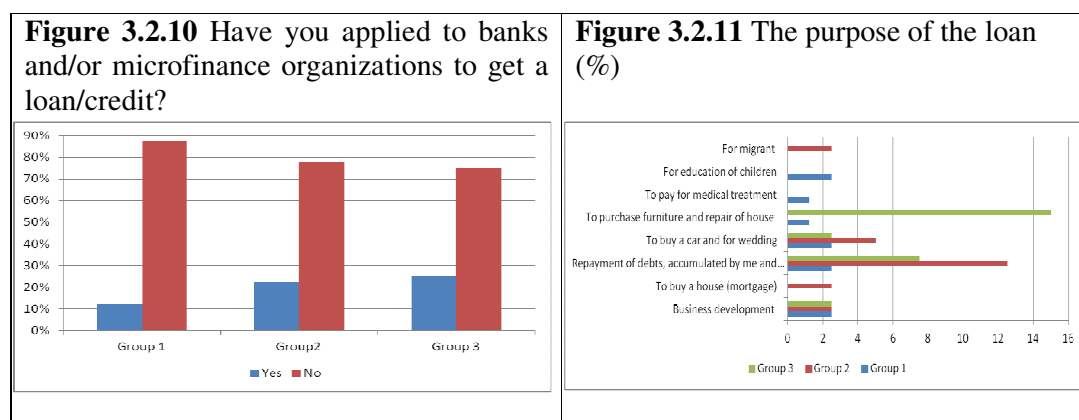
For women from the target group across all regions, their salary constitutes approximately 50% of the total income, while the financial assistance of relatives and/or friends makes up around 20% of the income of the household. Nonetheless, there are significant differentiations in the share of assistance from relatives/friends in total household income among the regions. The highest value of financial assistance of relatives/friends is observed in Khatlon (30%) and RRS (23%), with the lowest rate reported in Sugd (5%) region (**figure 3.2.9**). The survey results also demonstrate that remittances are a significant additional source of income among control group I.

Figure 3.2.9 Source of income (%)



A few of the respondents in all groups have approached banks and/or other microfinance organizations to obtain a loan. A significant difference is observed between the target and control groups – almost two times fewer women from the target group than representatives of the control groups have applied for a loan (**Figure 3.2.10**). This may be linked to the overall poorer financial situation of women from the target group.

The Agency of Social Protection, Employment and Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection provides loans of 4000 TJS (more than 800 USD) without an interest rate for the period of one year, to women for the start-up of small businesses.³² Research findings, however, indicate that women from abandoned households are not informed about this specific opportunity.



The higher rate of borrowing among the control groups points to their better financial capacity vis-à-vis the target group, and may indicate their ability to return the loan on time; this appears to be in conformity with survey findings concerning their financial vulnerability. The results of the survey indicate that respondents across all groups are informed about the possibility of applying for a loan to banks, and that the rate of success at being granted one is very high. However, while many women from the target group express a wish to start their own business, they, as well as representatives of control groups, are hesitant to obtain a loan due to high interest rates, which render re-payment difficult, and result in increasing financial burdens for recipients.

The analysis of the economic opportunities of survey respondents produces the following conclusions:

- More than half of the women from the target group are economically inactive, while nearly 30% are actively searching for a job;
- The main reasons for not applying for a job among the women from the target group are: a lack of necessary education and qualifications, a lack of open vacancies and time, and being occupied with household chores and child-rearing;
- For abandoned women across all regions, their salary constitutes approximately 50% of their total income, while financial assistance by relatives and/or friends makes up a significant 20% of the income of their household;
- While the results of the survey indicate that respondents across all groups are informed about the possibility of applying for a loan to banks and microfinance organizations and that the rate of success of being granted a loan is very high, high interest rates preclude women from using this opportunity;
- The Agency of Social Protection, Employment and Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection provides loans of 4000 TJS or more than 800 USD

³² Reported by: Boronova Davlatbi, Chief Specialist – Department of Social Protection, employment and migration in Kulyab city.

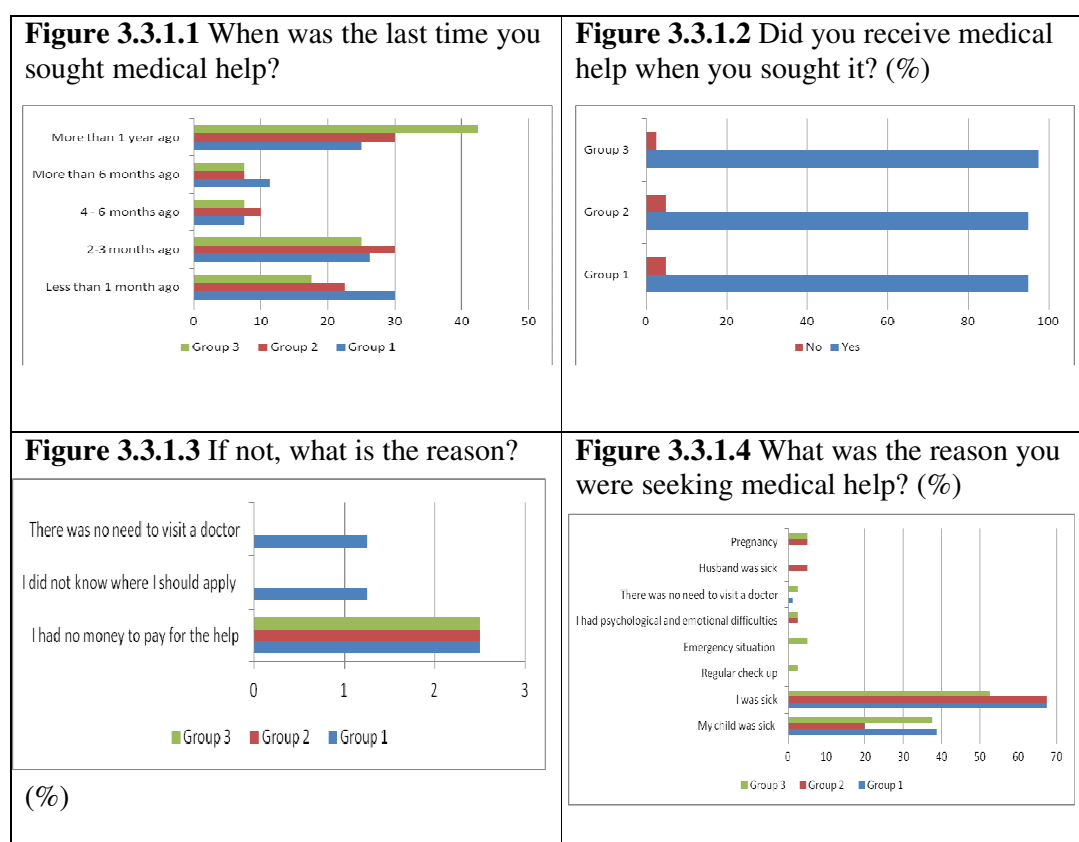
without an interest rate for the period of one year to women for the start-up of small businesses. Women from the target group, however, are not well informed about the existence of such loans.

3.3. Access to Social Services and Knowledge of Rights

3.3.1. Social Services

3.3.1.1. Medical Care

Survey results demonstrate that women from all groups rarely seek medical help and the difference between the groups in this area is not significant (**figure 3.3.1.1**). Almost all women receive medical care, when they seek it (**figure 3.3.1.2**); when medical help is not received, it is mostly due to women's inability to cover its cost (**figure 3.3.1.3**). The main reasons of seeking medical help are listed in **figure 3.3.1.4**.



3.3.1.2. Access to Kindergartens and Schools

70% of women from the target group report that kindergartens are not accessible for their children; this figure stands at 50% and 64% for control groups I and II respectively (**figure 3.3.1.5**). The main reasons for lack of access to kindergartens listed by women from the target group are the following: the children are too small to go to kindergarten (22%); women cannot afford to send their children to the kindergarten or that the kindergarten is not important (7% each); 3% mention that the kindergarten is located too far away from their home (figure 3.3.1.6).

Figure 3.3.1.5 Are kindergartens accessible to your children?

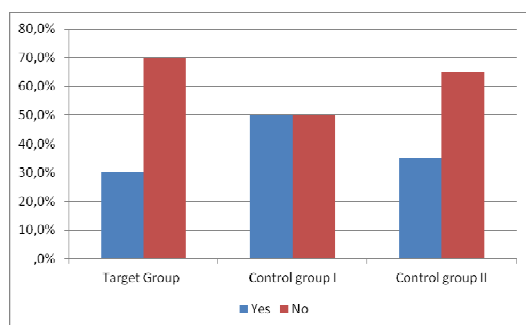
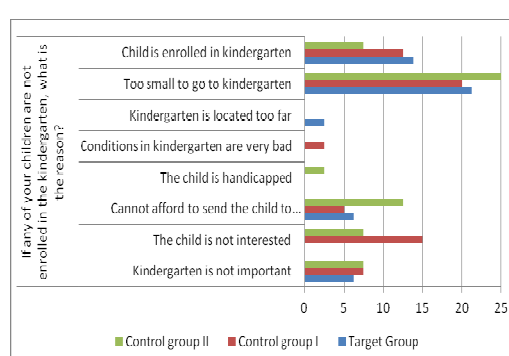


Figure 3.3.1.6 If not, what are the reasons?



The majority of women from all groups report that schools are accessible to their children. Only 3% of women from the target group note that their children do not attend school, because the conditions there are very bad (**figure 3.3.1.8**).

Figure 3.3.1.7 Are schools accessible for your children? (%)

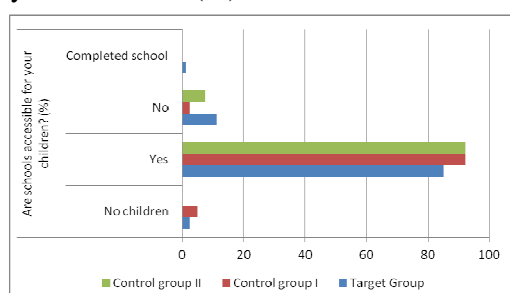
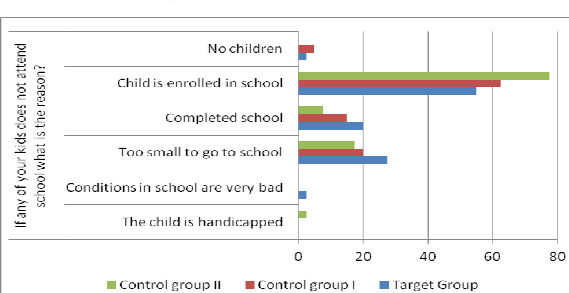


Figure 3.3.1.8 If any of your child does not attend school, what is the reason?



3.3.1.3. Basic Services of the Local Government

Around 40% of respondents in all groups report that they do not receive, or do not have access to, basic services of the local government (**figure 3.3.1.9**). The reasons are similar across all groups, but lack of proper documentation is the main reason among the target group in comparison to the control groups (**figure 3.3.1.10**). Among the basic services provided by the government, the target group mainly uses municipal services. Utilities, administrative and social services are more commonly used among the control groups (**figure 3.3.1.11**). Access to employment services (40%) is reported as nearly the same for all groups (**figure 3.3.1.12**).

Figure 3.3.1.9 Receive or have access to the basic services of local government (%)

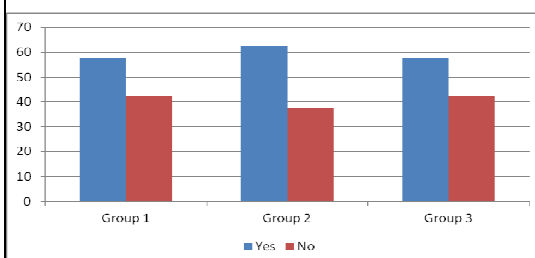


Figure 3.3.1.10 The reasons for not receiving or not accessing these services? (%)

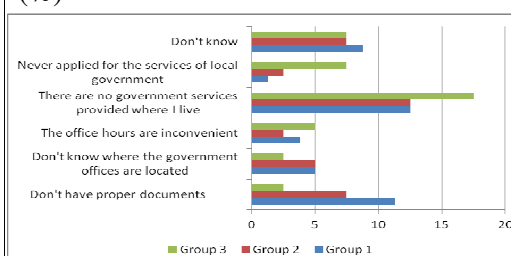


Figure 3.3.1.11 Use of the basic services provided by the local government (%)

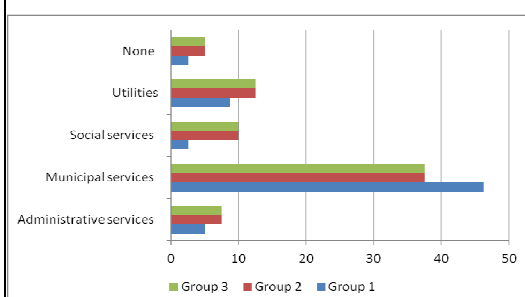
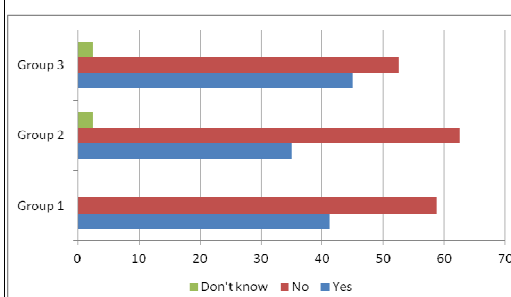


Figure 3.3.1.12 Access to employment services (%)



3.3.1.4. Addressing Requests/Applications to the Local Government

A difference can be observed between the target and control groups in the frequency with which they approach local authorities with applications and requests - the rate is lower among the target group of abandoned women. Only 18% of them have ever approached the local authorities, while 28% of women from control group II have done so (**figure 3.3.1.13**). Predominantly, women from all groups approach the district authority (hukumat of rayon) with applications and requests (**figure 3.3.1.14**). Women from the target group mainly address local authorities with requests (10%), complaints (5%) and propositions (**figure 3.3.1.15**). The complaints of abandoned women to local authorities usually deal with issues related to family, relatives and neighbours, while requests mainly seek to obtain information about state allowances and benefits, land for construction of a house, and employment opportunities (**figure 3.3.1.16**).

Figure 3.3.1.13 Have you ever turned to the local authorities with an application/request?

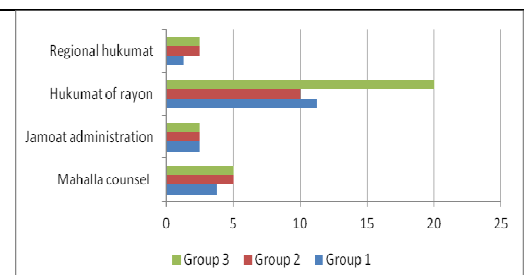
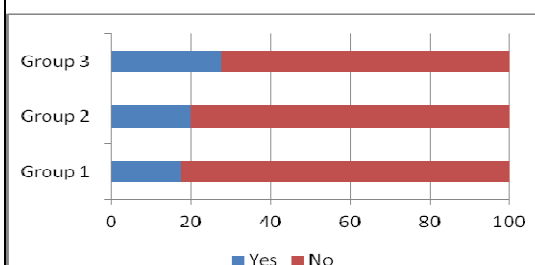
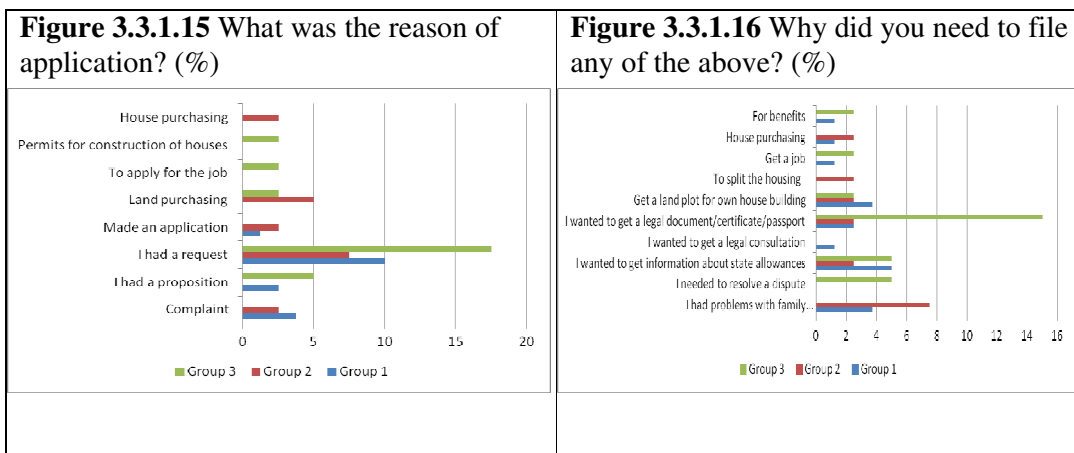
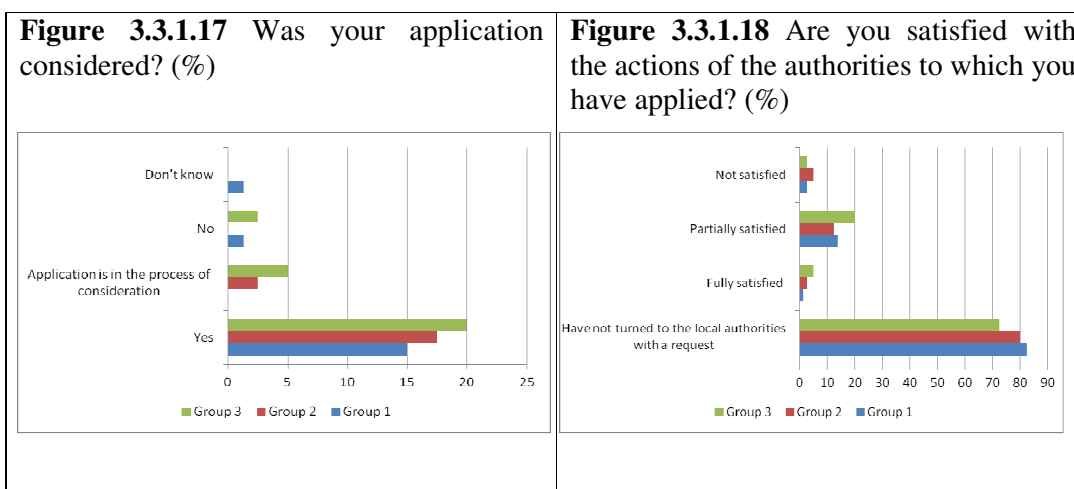


Figure 3.3.1.14 Which local authorities are these? (%)



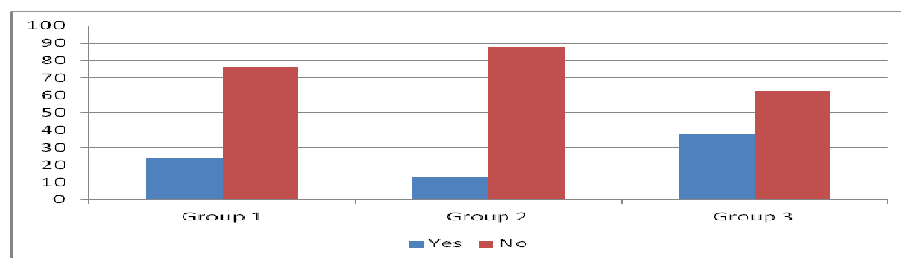
Collected data demonstrates that almost all applications filed by all groups were considered by local authorities (**Figure 3.3.1.17**). Those who have approached the authorities with requests and applications are predominantly partially satisfied, while the percentage of fully satisfied and not satisfied is very small (**3.3.1.18**).



3.3.1.5. Access to Crisis Centers

In the survey, 23% of women from the target group, and 12% and 38% of women respectively from control groups I and II, reported that they have access to free crisis centers. These differences may, however, be attributed to some respondents being better informed than their counterparts in other groups. During the focus group discussions, however, women from the target group reported no knowledge of the existence of free crisis centers. They were also not informed of the existence of the Information Resource and Crisis Centres created by the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Republic of Tajikistan.

Figure 3.3.1.19 Do you have access to free crisis centers?

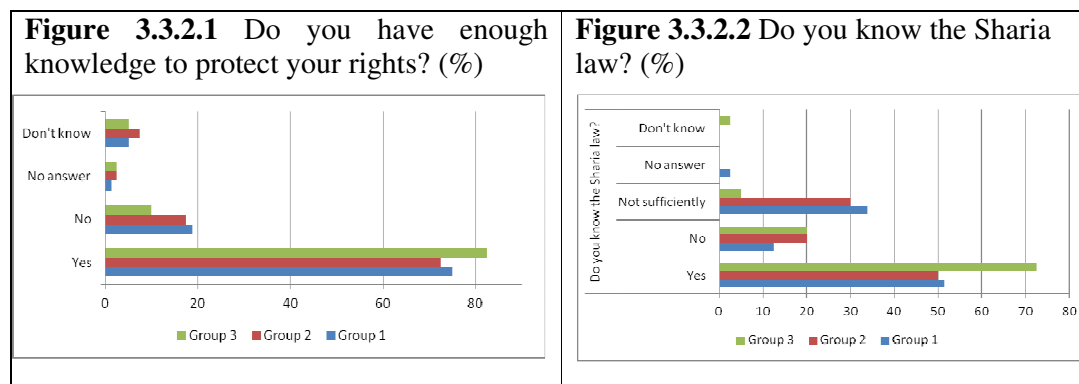


An analysis of the access to social and local government services of survey respondents highlights the following challenges:

- Women from all groups rarely seek medical help; in some cases, health care is not obtained due to its cost;
- Access to kindergartens is not always provided;
- Women from the target group have little to no access to or knowledge of the existence of free crisis centers and the Information Resource and Crisis Centre created by the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Republic of Tajikistan;
- Around 40% of respondents in all groups report that they do not receive, or do not have access to, the basic services of local government. The reasons are similar across all groups, but lack of proper documentation is the main reason cited among the target group in comparison to the control groups. Among the basic services provided by the government, the target group mainly uses municipal services. Utilities, administrative and social services are more commonly used among the control groups;
- Women from the target group approach local authorities with applications and requests more rarely than their counterparts from control groups.

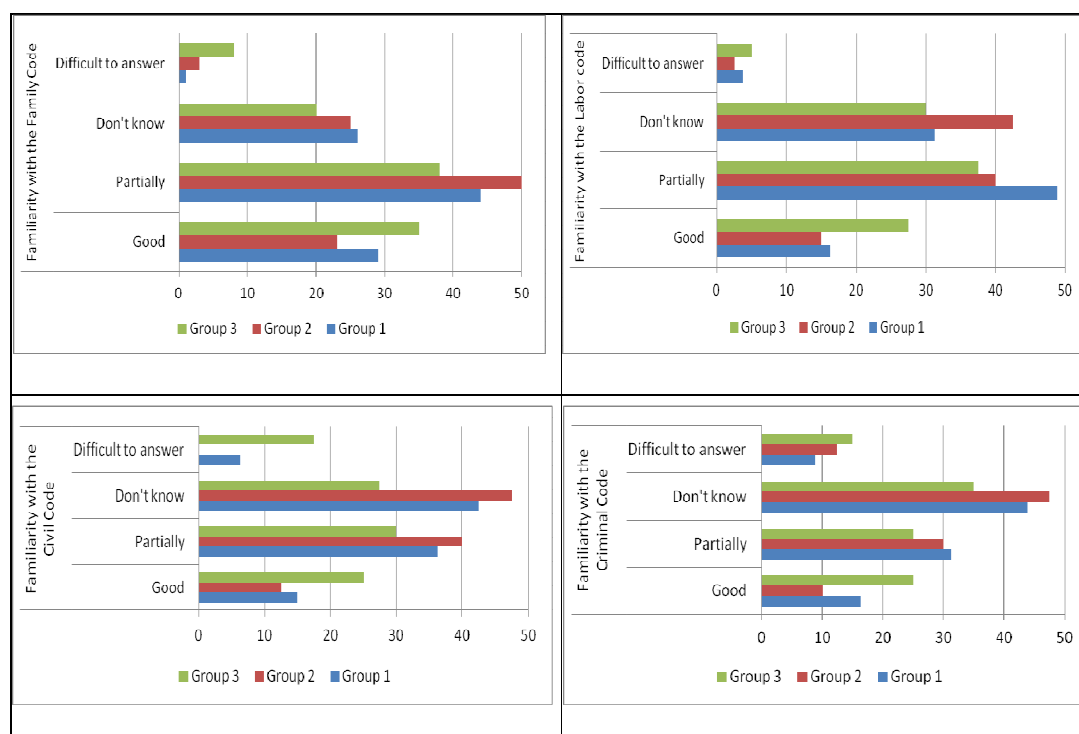
3.3.2. Knowledge of Legislation and Rights

During the survey, around 80% of respondents in all groups reported that they had sufficient knowledge to protect their rights (**Figure 3.3.2.1**). Collected data indicates that the knowledge of Sharia law among all respondents is above 50% (**Figure 3.3.2.2**).



However, the majority of women from all groups report no or partial knowledge of the specific laws of the Republic of Tajikistan relating to women's rights. 30% of women from the target group indicated they knew the Family Code well, while only 15% could say the same about the Labour, Civil and Criminal Codes (**figure 3.3.2.3**).

Figure 3.3.2.3 How familiar are you with the laws of the Republic of Tajikistan on women's rights? (%)



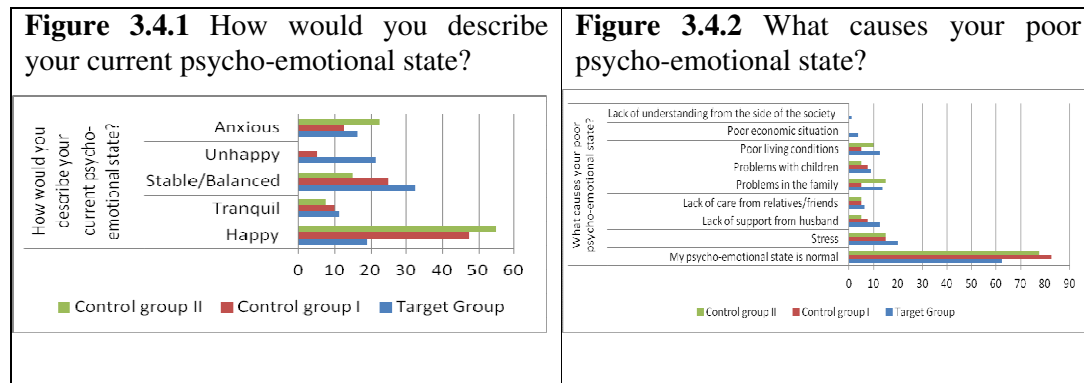
When probed further and asked about the knowledge of relevant legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan during the focus group discussions, women from the target group, however, reported only partial or no familiarity with specific provisions. This indicates that the actual knowledge of relevant laws and their rights among women from the target group is low, and that they are not aware of their rights, or how these could be exercised. Knowledge of Sharia law, however, corresponded to the findings of the survey.

In summary, an analysis of survey responses demonstrates that women from the target group have insufficient knowledge of relevant legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan and their rights; they are, however, more familiar with the provisions of Sharia law.

3.4. Psycho-Emotional Well-Being

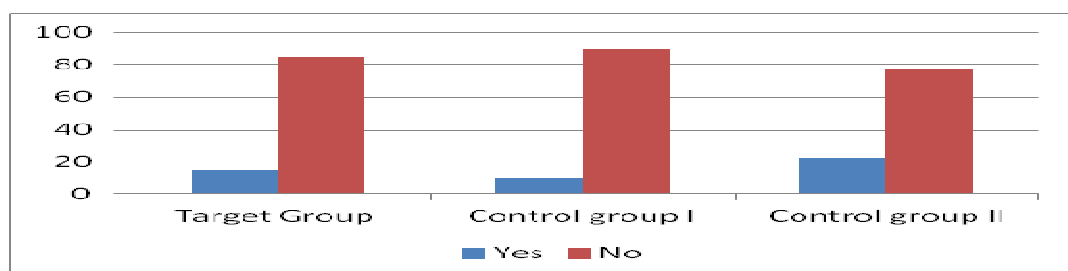
During the survey, women from the target group reported unhappiness (20%) despite a stable/balanced psycho-emotional state (33%), slightly more frequently than representatives of control groups (**figure 3.4.1**). Considerably fewer women from the target group describe their psycho-emotional condition as happy – the share is 2.5 times less than among women from control groups. This is confirmed through the focus group discussions, during which many abandoned women complained that they do not feel comfortable in their current situation, and that their emotional state is poor.

Stress, lack of support from their husbands, poor living conditions, and problems in the family and with children are listed as the most common reasons for the poor psycho-emotional condition of women from the target group (**figure 3.4.2**). During the focus group discussions, women also noted that their own poor psycho-emotional state impacts that of their children, who, in addition, suffer from poor living conditions, the absence of their father, and bullying at school or on the street. Survey data demonstrates that the children of abandoned women are abused slightly more often than children from the control groups, the rate of absence of abuse standing at 80% in the control groups, and 65% in the target group.



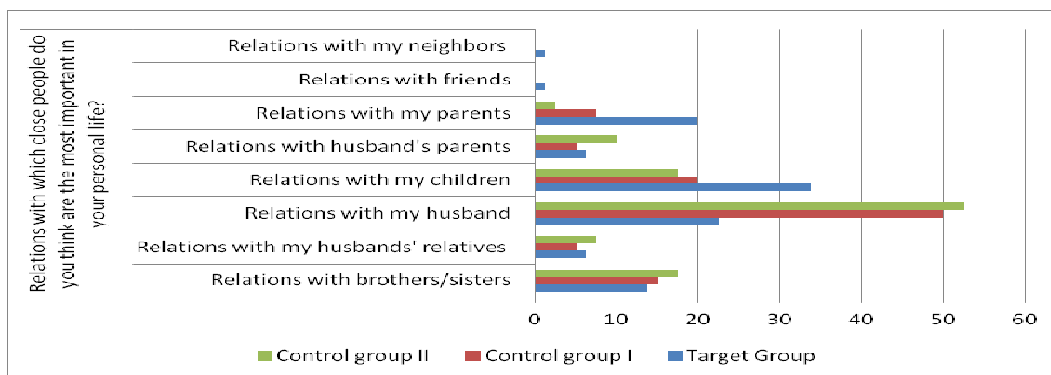
Focus group discussions suggest that women from abandoned migrant households have a strong need to talk about painful issues related to the absence of husband. All of the participants noted how important it was for them to be able to express their views, discuss the challenges they face, and to be heard. Although abandonment clearly affects the emotional make-up of the families left behind, only 18% of women from the target group reported having access to free psychological assistance (**figure 3.4.3**).

Figure 3.4.3 Do you have access to free psychological assistance?

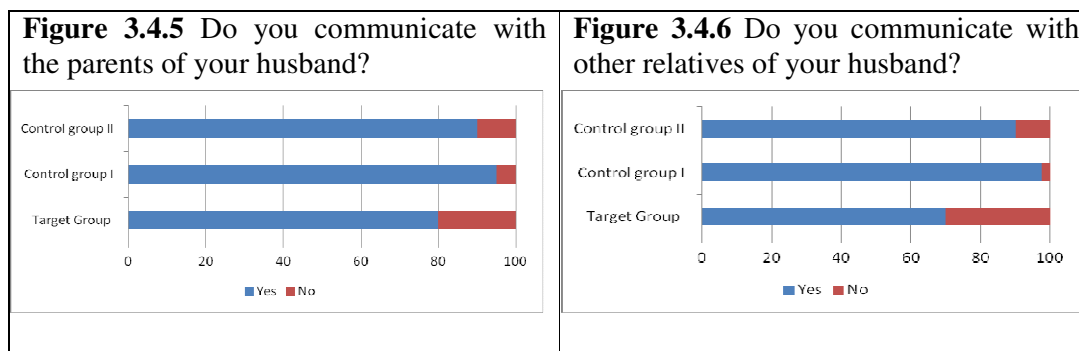


Survey data indicates that the most important relationship for women from the target group is with their children (33%). This finding is confirmed by the focus group discussions, during which most women stated that their children are the only purpose and hope of their lives. As the next most important relationship, women from the target group listed their relationships with their husband (22%), their own parents (20%) and with brothers and sisters (14%). In contrast, the relationship with the husband is reported as the most important among the control groups (50%) (**figure 3.4.4**).

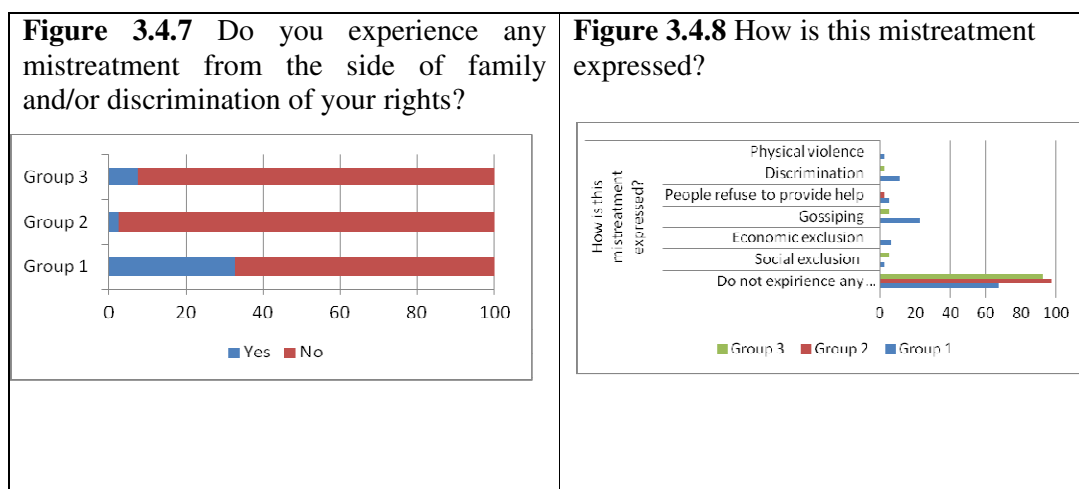
Figure 3.4.4 Relations with which close people do you think are the most important in your personal life?

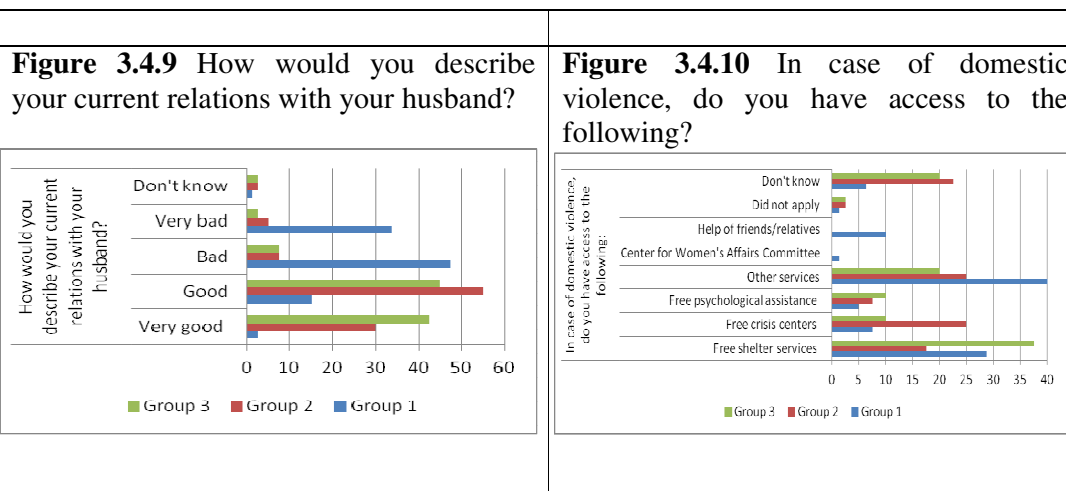


While husband's relatives are not mentioned among those people women from the target group consider as close, 80% of them still communicate with the parents of their husband, and 70 % with his other relatives respectively (**figures 3.4.5 and 3.4.6**).

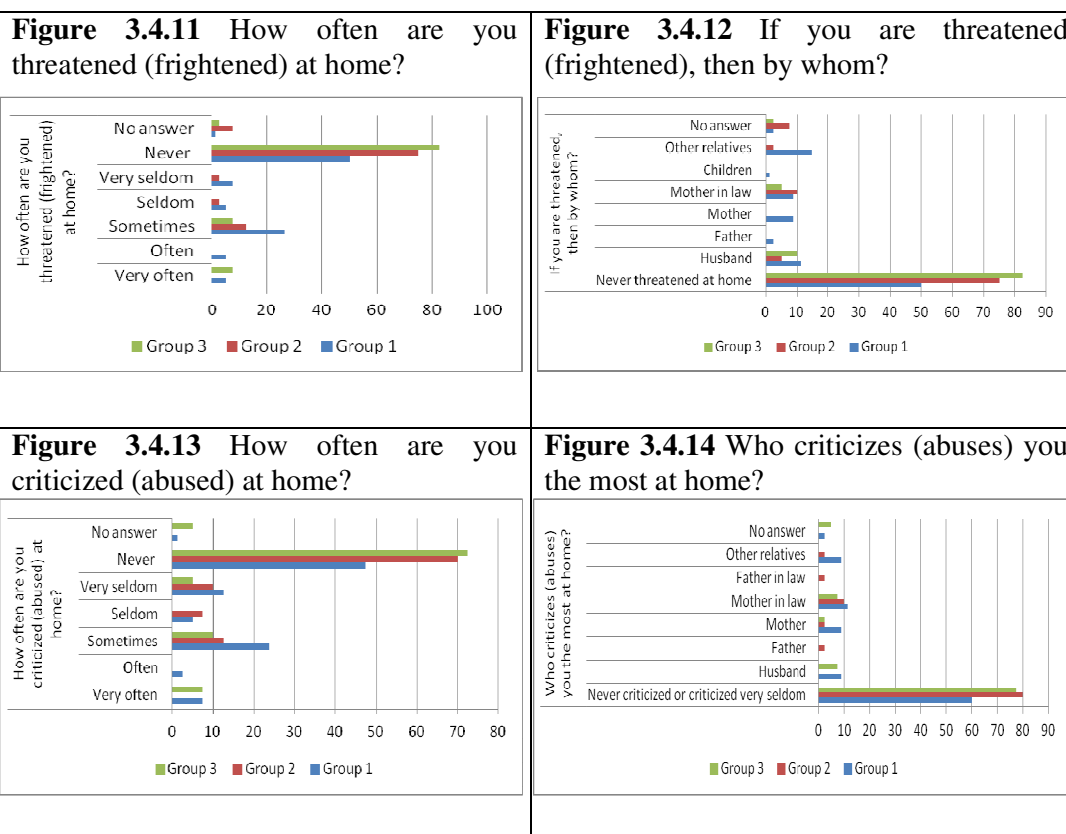


Survey data indicates that women from the target group suffer more serious mistreatment and discrimination of their rights by their family members than representatives of control groups (**figure 3.4.7**). The main forms of mistreatment, social exclusion and discrimination that the target group members face are gossip, physical violence, and economic and social exclusion (**figure 3.4.8**). During the survey, women from the target group reported less access than representatives of control groups to the Centers of the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs, free psychological assistance and free crisis centers (**figure 3.4.10**).



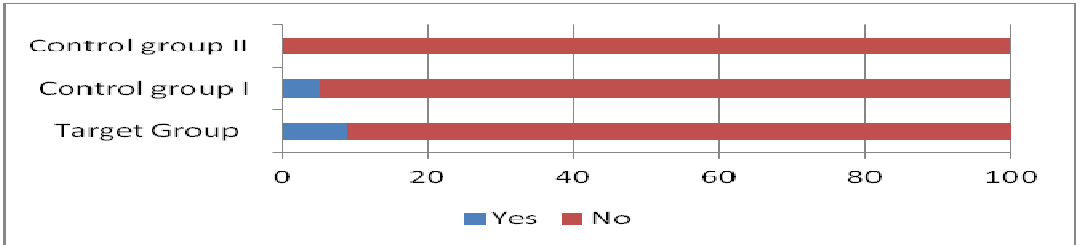


Nearly 8% of abandoned women are threatened very often and often, 10% - very seldom and seldom, 26% - sometimes, and 50% - never. In contrast, the rate of women reportedly never threatened is nearly 80% among the representatives of control groups (**figure 3.4.11**). Women from the target group are most often threatened by their husbands (11%), other relatives (15%), by their own mothers and mothers-in-law (8%) and by their father (8%) (**figure 3.4.12**). Around 11% of them are criticized often and very often, nearly 20% very seldom and seldom, with 50% of abandoned women reporting no criticism at all (**figure 3.4.13**). This figure is significantly higher among control groups (**figure 3.4.14**). These findings are confirmed by the results of focus group discussions, which also suggest that the precarious position of women within their families and the households they reside in exacerbates the problem.

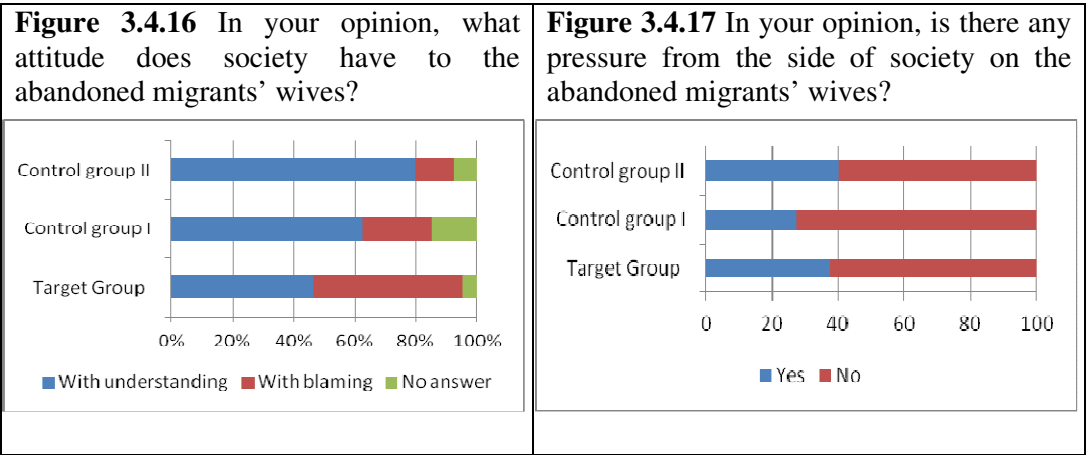


Suicide is another serious issue pointing to the precarious psycho-emotional state of survey respondents, as a number of women from the target group reported to have attempted to take their own lives. Survey data points at a rate of attempted suicide among the target group of abandoned women (8%) that is twice as high as among respondents of control group I (4%), while women from control group II do not report attempted suicide at all (figure 3.4.15).

Figure 3.4.15 Have you ever tried to commit suicide?

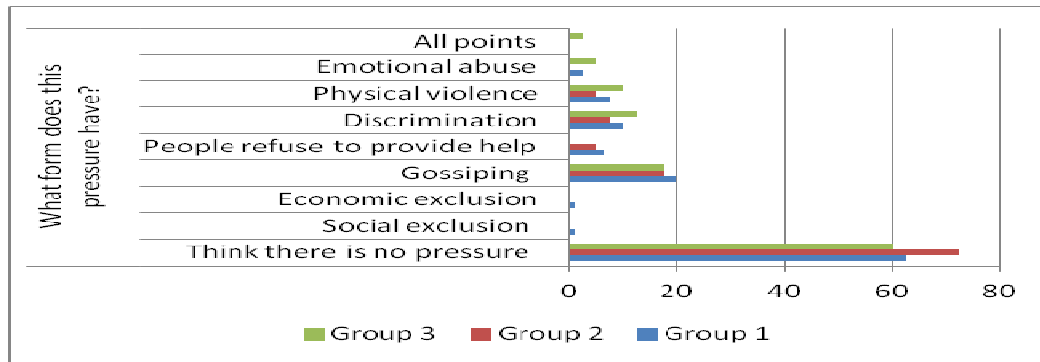


Perceptions of the attitude of society towards abandoned women from migrant households also differ among the target and control groups. As demonstrated by the results of focus group discussions, the attitude of society towards abandoned women from migrant households ranges from supportive to critical – some described society’s attitudes as understanding and pitying, others as blaming and full of suspicion. The findings of the survey indicate that 80% of women from control group II report that society is understanding towards abandoned women, while this perception is not shared among control group I (62%) and the target group of abandoned women (44%) themselves (figure 3.4.16). Focus group discussions indicate that women from abandoned migrant households often feel excluded from the community and society, which leads to loneliness and despair. 62% of abandoned women however do not report any pressure from society on them (figure 3.4.17).



Where pressure exists, it mainly manifests itself in societal exclusion in the form of gossip, discrimination, and the refusal to provide help, as well as incidents of physical violence and emotional abuse (figure 3.4.18).

Figure 3.4.18 What form does this pressure have?



An analysis of survey data indicates the following challenges faced by respondents in relation to their psycho-emotional well-being:

- Women from the target group report significantly lower levels of happiness than representatives of control groups;
- Stress, lack of support from their husband, poor living conditions, and problems in the family and with children are the most common reasons for the poor psycho-emotional state of women from the target group. The emotional well-being of women impacts that of their children;
- Women from the target group report that their most important relationship is with their children, who often are the purpose and hope of their existence;
- Women from the target group suffer more mistreatment and discrimination of their rights from the side of the family, than representatives of control groups. The main forms of mistreatment, social exclusion and discrimination that abandoned women face are gossip, physical violence, and economic and social exclusion;
- Women from the target group often feel isolated from the community and society;
- Nearly 8% of women from the target group are threatened very often and often - mostly by their husbands (11%), other relatives (15%), their own mothers and mothers-in-law (8%) and by their father (8 %). Around 11% of them are criticized often and very often;
- The children of women from the target group are abused slightly more often than children belonging to households from control groups;
- Suicide is a serious issue, as a number of women from the target group reported that they had attempted to take their lives. Survey data points at a rate of attempted suicide among abandoned women (8%) that is twice as high as among control group I (4%), while women from control group II do not report attempted suicide at all.

3.5. Community, State and International Support

3.5.1. Family and Community Support

Survey data indicates that only 24% of abandoned women receive some kind of support from relatives, friends and acquaintances, while the level of such support is higher with 28% and 38% for control groups I and II respectively (**figure 3.5.1**). Women from the target group receive support mainly from their own parents (15%), relatives (5%), friends (4%) and husbands. In comparison, representatives of the two control groups are supported mainly by their husbands, and are less dependent than abandoned women on the support of their parents. Moreover, representatives of the control groups also obtain support from the relatives of their husbands as well as neighbours, while this is not observed among the target group (**Figure 3.5.2**). Overall, women from the target group receive less support than their counterparts from the control groups.

In terms of the type of support received, no major differences are observed. Most commonly, the following assistance is rendered: financial support and help in raising children (10% each); housework and managing of the household's budget (5% each); taking care of the elderly, with work on the land plot, and in the form of advice/consultation (**Figure 3.5.3**).

Figure 3.5.1 Do your relatives, friends or acquaintances provide any kind of support to you?

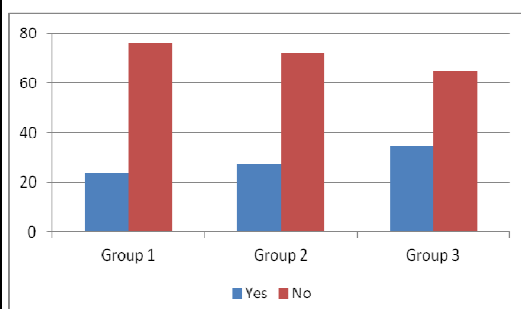


Figure 3.5.2 Who from your relatives, acquaintances or friends provides this help/support to you?

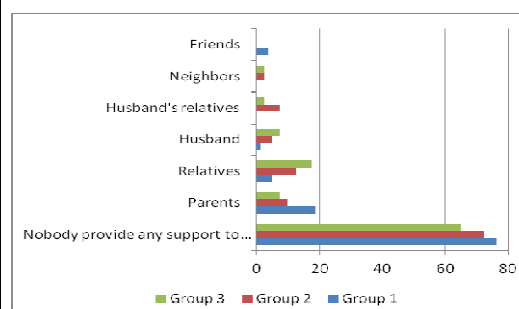
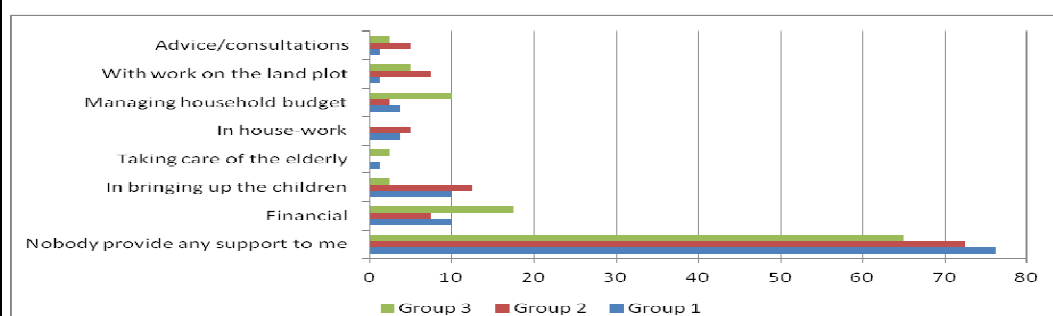


Figure 3.5.3 What type of help/support do you get from them?



3.5.2. Support by Local Government and International Organizations

One respondent (more than 1%) from the target group and two respondents (5%) from control group II mentioned that they received support from local and international

organizations. The representative of the target group receives support in the form of benefits by the state Joint Stock Holding Company “Barki Tojik”, whereas the two women from control group II are recipients of humanitarian aid and financial support from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the private/commercial company “Nakukor”.

The main challenges faced by survey respondents related to their family and state support structure are the following:

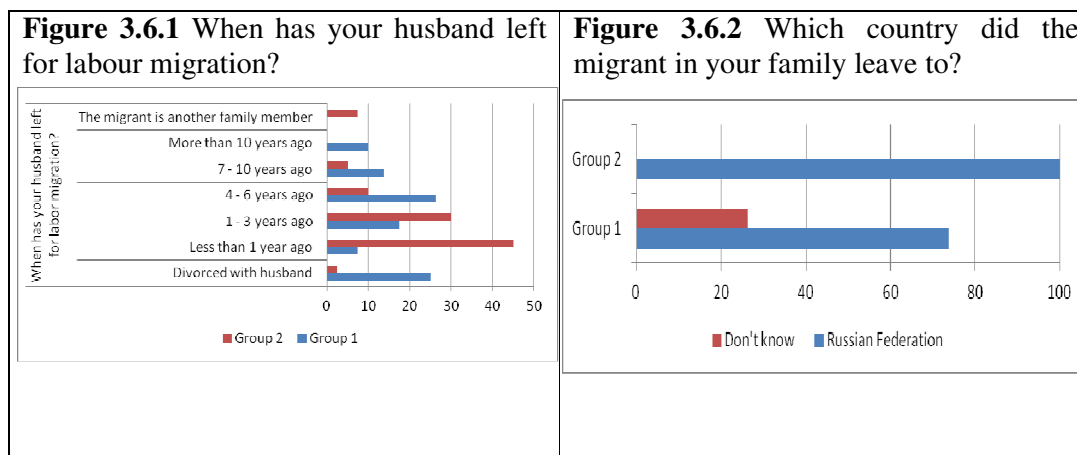
- Only a quarter of women from the target group receive some type of support from relatives, friends and acquaintances, which is less than representatives of control groups;
- Support to women from the target group is provided mainly by their own parents, relatives and friends;
- The respondents in the target group do not receive support from the local government and international organizations.

3.6. Specific Socio-Economic Challenges Related to the Absence of Husband

This section deals with socio-economic challenges specifically related to the absence of their husband, based on data relating only to women from the target group and control group I.

Survey data indicates that most husbands of abandoned women left Tajikistan 4 to 6 years ago in search of work (26%). A quarter of women from the target group report that they divorced their husbands after they became labour migrants; they do not specify the duration of their absence.³³ Around 10% of husbands left home more than 10 years ago (**figure 3.6.1**). 12% of women from the target group do not know the whereabouts of their spouses, and are not in touch with them (**figures 3.6.2 and 3.6.3**). This was also confirmed during focus group discussions.

Data suggests that the decision to leave for work abroad was taken by the husbands alone among 45% of respondents in the target group; a significant portion of respondents did not provide an answer to this question at all (30%). In contrast, a joint decision is more common among control group I (**figure 3.6.4**).



³³ For details, please refer to figure 3.1.4 in the first section of this chapter.

Figure 3.6.3 Where is your husband currently?

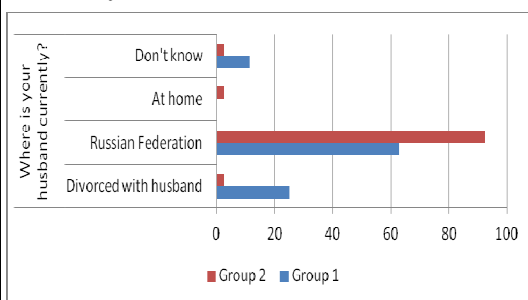
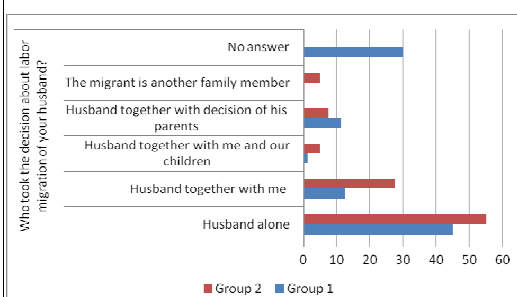


Figure 3.6.4 Who took the decision about the labour migration of your husband?



The survey demonstrates that, currently, women from the target group do not receive any financial support from their husbands (**figure 3.6.5**); this is confirmed through focus group discussions. At only 4%, the figure of women from the target group having received financial support from their husbands in the past is very low (**figure 3.6.6**). The average amount ever sent by the husband annually to women from the target group was less than 500 USD, while the amount is significantly higher among control group I - 32% received around 1000 USD per year, and nearly 20% more than 1500 USD (**figure 3.6.7**).

Figure 3.6.5 Does your husband currently send financial support?

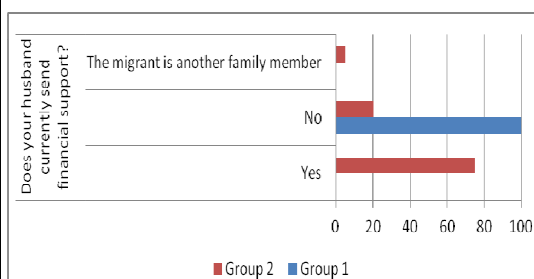


Figure 3.6.6 Has your husband ever sent financial support?

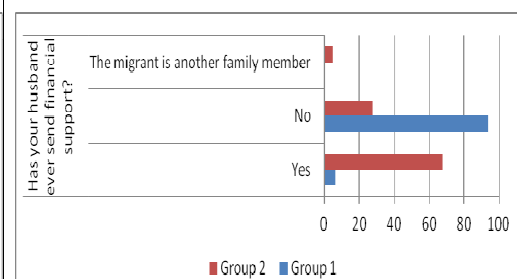


Figure 3.6.7 What is the average amount of money sent by your husband per year?

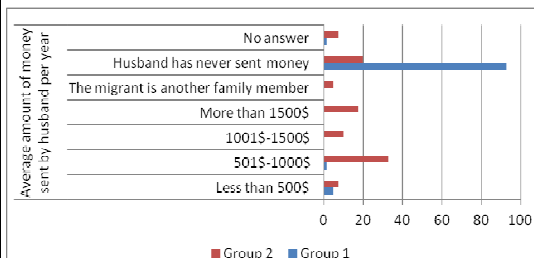
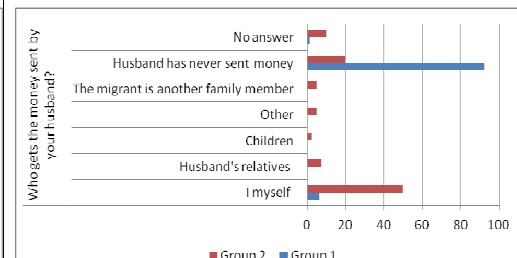


Figure 3.6.8 Who gets the money sent by your husband?



The last time remittances were sent to women from the target group was on average 7-12 months ago, while in case of control group I it was less than 3 months ago (**figure 3.6.9**). Women from the target group spent the amount received on children's education, medical treatment and basic food, whereas the spending of the control group was more diversified (for more details see: **figure 3.6.10**). Although the motivation for many men to go abroad

in search of work is indicated as being the possibility to save money for the purchase of a place of living, in reality, remittances are spent on basic items and do not provide sufficient means to acquire an apartment or a house.

Figure 3.6.9 When was the last time your husband sent you money?

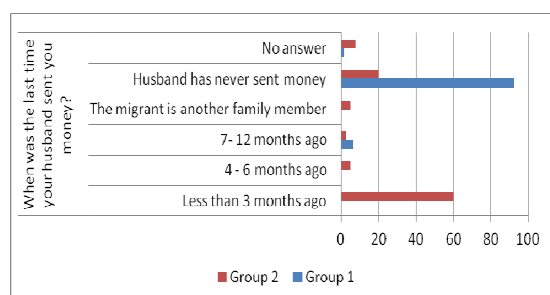


Figure 3.6.10 What do you spend the money on?

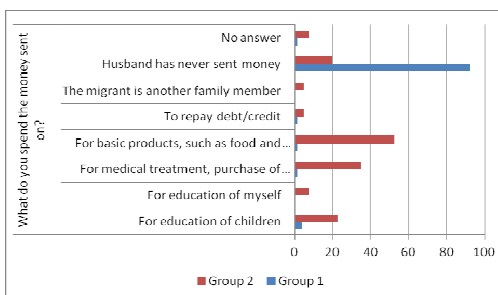


Figure 3.6.11 Is this money enough to fully supply/take care of you and your family?

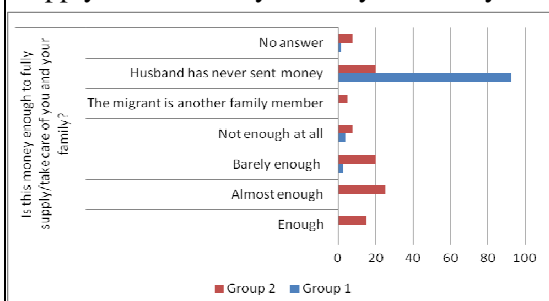
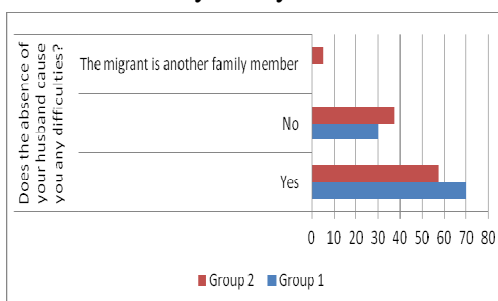


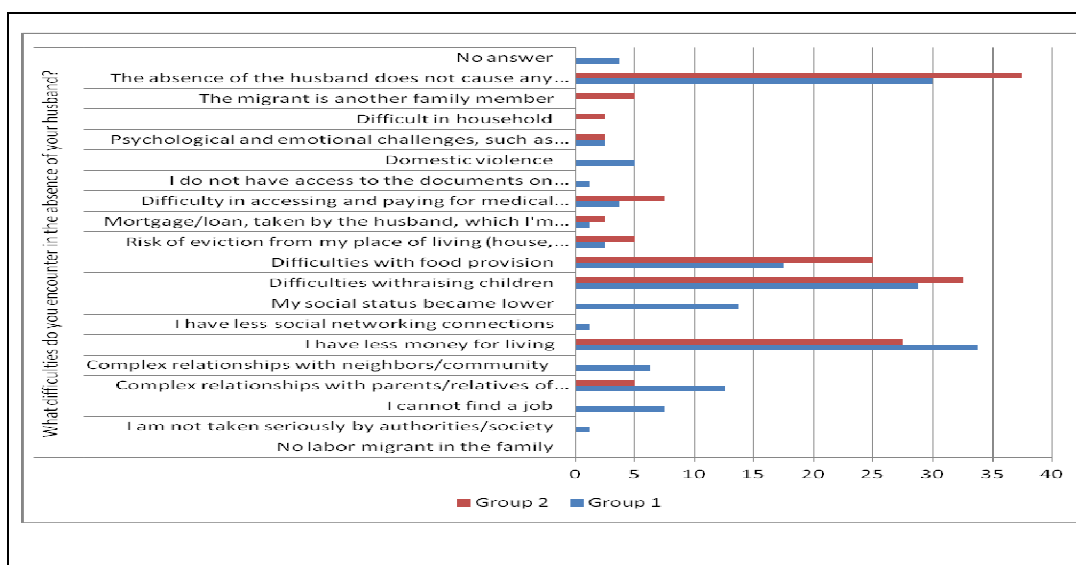
Figure 3.6.12 Does the absence of your husband cause you any difficulties?



70% of abandoned women report difficulties caused by the absence of the husband – more than among control group I, where the share is a little below 60% (**figure 3.6.12**).

While some of the types of difficulties women face are similar across both groups, some difficulties are only faced by the target group (see **figure 3.6.13**). These difficulties are: having less money for living expenses, a reduced social status, complex relationships with husband's relatives, neighbours, and the community, difficulties in raising their children, a risk of eviction from their place of living, domestic violence, and difficulties with food provision. Around 30% of women from the target group reported, however, that the absence of their husbands did not cause any difficulties to them at all (**figure 3.6.13**). Opinions expressed during the focus group discussions suggest that this statement is mostly valid, when the husband did not support his wife even during times of co-habitation.

Figure 3.6.13 What difficulties do you encounter in the absence of your husband?



A majority of women from the target group (80%) report that the absence of their husband worsened the overall situation of the household; about one-fifth (17%) stated that it did not change the overall situation at all (**figure 3.6.16**). None of the respondents reported an improvement in their living conditions as a result of the absence of their husband in either the survey, or during focus group discussions.

Figure 3.6.14 How do you keep in touch with your husband?

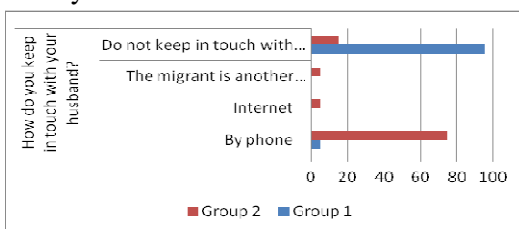


Figure 3.6.15 How often do you keep in touch with your husband?

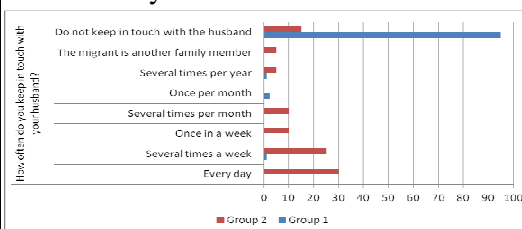


Figure 3.6.16 The fact that your husband has left your household has....

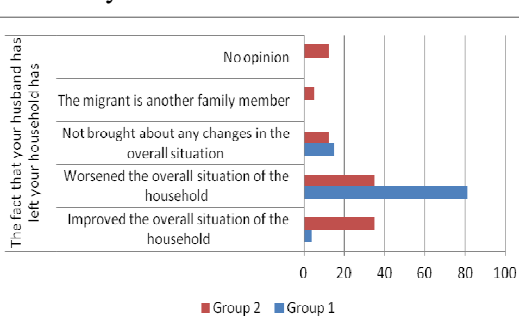
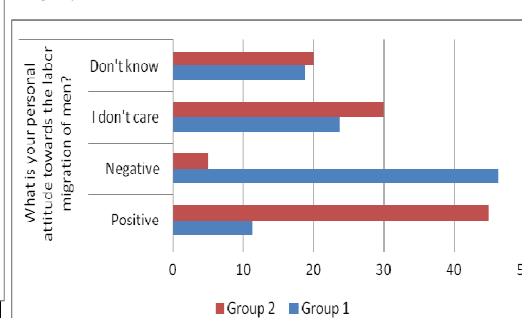


Figure 3.6.17 What is your personal attitude towards the labour migration of men?



In summary, an analysis of the specific challenges faced by the target group related to the absence of husband points at the following:

- The absence of the husband has led to difficulties such as having less money for living expenses, a reduced social status, complex relationships with the husband's relatives, neighbours, community, difficulties in raising their children, a risk of eviction from their place of living, domestic violence, and difficulties with food provision;
- Most husbands of abandoned women left Tajikistan in search of work 4 to 6 years ago. A quarter of abandoned women report that they do not know the original country of destination of their husbands or the current whereabouts of their spouses;
- The absence of the husband has rendered women from the target group increasingly financially vulnerable as they do not currently receive any financial support from their husbands;
- A majority of women from the target group (80%) report that the absence of their husband has worsened the overall situation of the household.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Main conclusions

1.1. Policy and legislative framework

The assessment results demonstrate that Tajikistan's policies and legislation could be strengthened to more effectively take into account the specific vulnerabilities of abandoned women from migrant households and thus ensure their protection, as gaps remain in existing laws that limit the provision of effective protection to the rights of migrant workers and their families. Draft legislation on migration and domestic violence in particular needs to be brought in line with international standards. Tajikistan has also not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which limits access to legal remedies in cases where the state is unwilling or unable to address violations of rights.

The implementation of migration and gender-related legislation and policies is hampered by insufficient institutional capacities to undertake monitoring, reporting and coordination, as well as by a lack of financial resources for the implementation of migration and gender policies and programmes. This could be alleviated by increased coordination among donors, governments and NGOs regarding the use and distribution of available financial assistance.

1.2. Socio-Economic Situation of Women from Abandoned Migrant Households - Livelihoods

The comparative analysis in this assessment of the socio-economic situation of women from migrant households in Tajikistan indicates that this group faces a number of specific challenges directly related to the absence of their husbands, such as having less money for basic items such as food, a reduced social status, complex relationships with husband's relatives, neighbours and community, difficulties in raising their children, a risk of eviction from their place of living, discrimination and susceptibility to domestic violence. A quarter of abandoned women report that they do not know the original country of destination or the present whereabouts of their spouses; none of them currently receives any financial support from their husbands. Where support was provided in the past, it was used for the purchase of basic goods such as food, children's education and medical treatment. A majority of women from the target group report that the absence of husband worsened the overall situation of the household.

Survey data demonstrates that the financial vulnerability of women from the target group is two times higher than that of women in the control groups, and that the purchasing power of the target group to buy goods for long-term use is four times lower than among the control groups. This is caused by lack of support on the part of the husband; in addition, more than half of women from the target group are economically inactive.

Economic inactiveness is mostly underpinned by a lack of necessary education and qualifications, lack of open vacancies and time to look for employment. In addition, women from the target group are considerably more burdened with household chores and child-rearing than representatives of control groups, as not all of their children have access to kindergarten. This situation further limits their opportunities for finding paid work outside the home, and for establishing sustainable livelihoods.

Data suggests that women from the target group are heavily dependent on outside assistance. On average, the salary of an employed representative of the target group constitutes approximately 50% of the income of the household, while financial assistance of relatives and/or friends makes up another significant 20%. Only a quarter of women from the target group receive some type of in-kind support from relatives, friends and acquaintances, which is less than representatives of control groups. This support is provided mainly by their parents, relatives and friends; whereas assistance by local or international organizations to the target group is very low. Although many abandoned women dream of starting their own business, they are, however, less likely to apply for a loan and, in general, are not well informed of the existence of interest-free loans provided by the Agency of Social Protection, Employment and Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

1.3. Access to Health Care and Local Government Services

Access to healthcare and services of the local government are not accessible to many women from the target group. They rarely seek medical help; in some cases, health care is not obtained because its cost is too high. Around 40% of respondents in all groups report that they do not receive, or do not have access to the basic services of local government. The reasons are similar across all groups, but lack of proper documentation prevails among the target group in comparison to the control groups. Overall, women from the target group approach the local authorities with applications and requests more rarely than their counterparts from control groups.

1.4. Awareness of State Support Structures and Exercise of Rights

The assessment suggests that abandoned women from migrant households possess insufficient knowledge of relevant legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan and their rights; they are, however, more familiar with the provisions of Sharia law. In addition, there is little awareness among the target group of the existence of free crisis centers and the Information Resource and Crisis Centre created by the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Republic of Tajikistan.

1.5. Psycho-emotional Situation and Gender Based Violence

Living circumstances appear to cause considerable distress among women from abandoned migrant households, as their position is rendered precarious by the absence of the husband. Many abandoned wives suffer mistreatment and discrimination by the relatives of their husbands, such as physical violence, threats and criticism. Often, they either voluntarily leave the house of the parents of the husband, or are evicted. When abandoned wives move to live with their own parents, the living conditions, however, usually do not significantly improve. Consequently, many of them express a wish to buy a separate apartment or to build a house.

Assessment results demonstrate that women from abandoned migrant households are particularly vulnerable to a range of psycho-emotional problems, directly related to the absence of their husbands. They report significantly lower levels of happiness than representatives of control groups, and indicate stress, lack of support from their husband, domestic violence, poor living conditions, and problems in the family and with children as the most common reasons for their poor psycho-emotional state. The distress felt by women impacts the emotional well-being of their children, who already are forced to deal with the consequences of their father's absence at a young age. Children of women from

the target group are subject to more abuse at school and on the street than their counterparts from households belonging to control groups.

In addition, as a result of their reduced social status, perceived or existing pressure from society, women from the target group often feel socially and economically isolated. This aggravates already existing feelings of loneliness and despair. Consequently, some women resort to suicide – the target group is reported to have attempted suicide twice more often than control group I – women from control group II, in turn, do not report attempted suicide at all. Access to free psychological help is, however, reported by only a fraction of abandoned wives of migrants.

2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, two sets of recommendations are provided. The first set is addressed to the local, regional and national governments of Tajikistan, including but not limited to jamoats, regional structures tasked with issues related to migration, gender and social protection, the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan, the State Migration Service, and line Ministries. The second set targets international organizations, and local and international NGOs based in Tajikistan.

2.1. Recommendations addressed to local, regional and national government structures:

2.1.1. Legislative and Policy Framework, and Institutional Capacities:

- Define and mainstream gender related aspects into relevant policies, legislation and strategies with a focus on vulnerable groups, including abandoned women from migrant households;
- Earmark sufficient administrative and financial resources to ensure the implementation of existing legislation and national strategies to the benefit of all migrants;
- Further develop the institutional capacities of relevant local, regional and national authorities to implement legislation and national strategies, including ensuring effective coordination and cooperation at inter-agency level;
- Establish a system for sex-disaggregated data collection to gather national and regional statistical data on the phenomenon of migration in Tajikistan, including its impact on abandoned women and families left behind;
- Study the experience and good practices of other countries in the OSCE region with respect to providing socio-economic assistance to migrant families and vulnerable groups;
- Adopt bilateral treaties with countries of destination of Tajik migrants, to improve living standards and treatment of migrant workers from Tajikistan residing there;
- Adopt legislation in the area of social security with a particular focus on the issue of alimony, which facilitates the protection of the rights of particularly vulnerable groups, including women, and thereby promotes stability and sustainability for wives or relatives of migrant workers abroad;
- Continue the drafting and revision of the draft laws on migration and domestic violence to bring them in line with international standards; consider recommendations provided by ODIHR;
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would recognize the competence of the UN

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to receive and consider complaints from individuals within its jurisdiction.

2.1.2. Social and Economic Support – Livelihoods:

- Review the social services available to particularly vulnerable categories of households affected by migration, including abandoned women and children from migrant households, consider providing adequate benefits and exemptions, as well as reviewing taxation for single mothers;
- Ensure that abandoned women from migrant households obtain adequate documentation to access government services;
- Facilitate the access of women from abandoned migrant households to micro-credits, to running a business, farming, or craft activities;
- Ensure that abandoned women from migrant households in particular are made aware of opportunities to obtain loans and micro-credits with beneficial conditions;
- Facilitate the access of abandoned women from migrant households to free legal assistance;
- Organize vocational trainings for abandoned women from migrant households and access to employment services;
- Provide access to cost-free kindergartens to particularly vulnerable categories of persons affected by migration, including abandoned women from migrant households, and consider targeted subsidies and quota for the education of abandoned children from migrant households;
- Provide free of charge basic healthcare to particularly vulnerable categories of persons affected by migration, including abandoned women and children from migrant households;
- Provide assistance to particularly vulnerable categories of persons affected by migration, including abandoned women from migrant households, in obtaining land for construction and access to social housing.

2.1.3. Psycho-Emotional Support and Gender Based Violence:

- Provide free psychological assistance to women from migrant households, in particular abandoned women and their children;
- Inform women from migrant households, in particular abandoned women, of their rights and possibilities of assistance in incidents of domestic violence, including the provision of psychological assistance and support;
- Establish state support structures in support to victims of domestic violence, such as safe houses;
- Further investigate suicide cases among women in Tajikistan and determine, what share of those is constituted by abandoned women from migrant households to enable preventive measures through psycho-emotional support;
- Organize support groups for abandoned women from migrant households and provide them with a venue for association.

2.1.4.. Awareness Raising and Education:

- Organize information campaigns and awareness-raising activities among abandoned women from migrant households on available social services, including those provided by the Information Resource and Crisis Centre, as well as the possibility to obtain interest-free loans for the start-up of a business;

- Increase public awareness via TV and radio programmes on the general risks associated with migration and effects it has on family members left behind, with a focus on abandoned women. Gender-based legislation, domestic violence and gender equality should be highlighted;
- Involve religious leaders in educating women from abandoned migrant households on their rights.

2.2. Recommendations addressed to the International Organizations, Local and International NGOs:

2.2.1. Legislative and Policy Framework, and Institutional Capacities:

- Assist the Tajik authorities in defining and mainstreaming gender aspects related to migration into relevant policies, legislation and strategies, taking into account the situation of vulnerable groups, such as abandoned women. Support the government in ensuring their implementation through provision of policy and legislative advice;
- Support the further development of institutional capacities of relevant local, regional and national public bodies through provision of training and good practice exchange;
- Assist the national authorities in establishing a sustainable migration data collection and monitoring system, with capacities to collect sex-disaggregated data;
- Support Tajikistan in the further development and adoption of legislation in the area of social security with a focus on the issue of alimony, which facilitates the protection of the rights of particularly vulnerable groups;
- Continue providing expertise in the revision of draft laws on migration and domestic violence to bring them in line with international standards - consider ODIHR recommendations in this respect.

2.2.2. Social and economic support - livelihoods:

- Support the national authorities in facilitating the access of abandoned women from migrant households to micro-credits, to running a business, farming, or craft activities in order to improve their family's living conditions;
- Support the local authorities in facilitating the access of abandoned women from migrant households to free legal assistance;
- Organize vocational trainings for abandoned women from migrant households and access to employment services;
- Support the local authorities in ensuring access to cost-free kindergartens to particularly vulnerable categories of persons, including abandoned women from migrant households;
- Support the local authorities in the provision of free basic healthcare to particularly vulnerable categories of persons, including abandoned women and children from migrant households;
- Establish and support, in cooperation with local authorities, shelters and free crisis centres, and facilitate the access of abandoned women from migrant households to these services;

2.2.3. Psycho-Emotional Support and Gender Based Violence:

- Provide assistance to the government in assessing the phenomenon of suicide cases among women to determine, what share of those is constituted by abandoned women from migrant households and to enable preventive measures through psycho-emotional support;
- Support the government in training appropriate personnel to providing free psychological assistance to abandoned women from migrant households and their children.

2.2.4. Awareness Raising and Education:

- Support government information campaigns and awareness-raising activities among abandoned women from migrant households on available social services, including those provided by the Information Resource and Crisis Centre, as well as the possibility to obtain interest-free loans for the start-up of businesses;
- Support the government in raising public awareness via TV and radio programmes on the general risks associated with migration and the effects it has on family members left behind, with a focus on abandoned women. Gender-based legislation, domestic violence and gender equality should be highlighted.

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