



LABOR MIGRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN: SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

Dilfuza Karimovna Israilova

Professor, Department of Economics, Doctor of Economics
University of Economics and Pedagogy, NVUZ

Abstract

This article examines the problems of labor migration and its socio-demographic costs. In modern conditions, the nature of migration is changing, with new forms of territorial and labor migration (population movements) emerging.

Keywords: Demographic situation, demographic potential, labor migration, migration situation, migration policy, labor export.

Introduction

The demographic situation is a complex socioeconomic process characterizing the dynamics of a country's population, its main sources, natural reproduction and family structure, population migration, its distribution and urbanization, the ethnic and social composition of the population, the labor force and employment, etc.

The demographic situation at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries acquired qualitatively new characteristics. In many economically developed countries, the reproductive function of society has declined to a point that does not ensure population replacement, and the birth rate has fallen below the replacement threshold, at which point one can speak of a demographic crisis. At one point in history, the rate of global population growth in absolute terms was not particularly high. By the end of the 20th century, the planet's population exceeded 6 billion people, and this growth is projected to continue. The current very high rates of global population growth are decisively determined by the rate of population growth in developing countries, where approximately 80% of the world's population lived by the end of the 20th century. Against this backdrop, developed countries faced a critical labor shortage in the last decades of the 20th century, primarily due to declining birth rates and increasing structural imbalances in the labor market. Labor needs are being met by bringing in labor from abroad. As a result, more than 150 million people (or approximately 2.5% of the global population) currently live in countries other than their birthplace.





Demographic problems are common to virtually all countries in the modern world. While the population of some countries has significantly declined as a result of the transition to market economies, it continues to grow in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is one of the most prosperous countries in the CIS. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the population of Uzbekistan has grown almost sevenfold, reaching over 37.5 million as of January 1, 2025[15]. According to several forecasts, Uzbekistan will maintain relatively high population growth rates until the mid-21st century [16]. However, according to UN projections, they will decline significantly in the next 20-25 years, a trend already observed in the last two decades of the 20th century. We also believe that the country's demographic situation will shift toward that of developed countries, especially in the near future. Consequently, increased migration, including labor migration, is expected outside the country.

The emergence of a market economy has had a significant impact on migration processes in all countries, including Uzbekistan. Under the new economic conditions, the nature of migration has significantly changed, with new forms of territorial and labor migration emerging, as well as population movements. However, the migration situation in Uzbekistan has remained generally stable by the beginning of the 21st century, despite the radical changes in the socioeconomic system, which have fundamentally altered it, as migration flows, which were once internal within the Union, have become external. Although certain difficulties arose in this area during the dissolution of the former Union and the establishment of an independent state in Uzbekistan, external migration flows subsequently stabilized, as did the socioeconomic situation in the country itself.

The stabilization of external migration processes has also affected internal migration. Moreover, in recent years, all major migration flows in the country have seen a decrease in volume. Nevertheless, 200,000-250,000 people change their permanent residence in Uzbekistan annually, including over 100,000 members of the titular population (in Uzbekistan, these are Uzbeks and Karakalpaks).

Since Uzbekistan is, according to some economists, a so-called "labor-surplus" state, labor export as an economic resource could become an important component in implementing a strategy for developing an effective economy. In addition to the undoubted benefit of additional foreign exchange earnings, labor migration to a certain extent addresses employment and unemployment issues, and also generates savings by reducing costs for training, retraining, and upgrading workers. The efficiency of labor export is several times higher than the efficiency of goods export.

It is interesting to note that since the signing of a bilateral agreement between Uzbekistan and South Korea in 2007, the number of legal Uzbek migrants arriving in





South Korea has been growing. From 10,000 migrants in 2005, the number of Uzbek migrants in South Korea has grown fivefold, reaching 50,000 in 2015. This number has been growing since the signing of a memorandum of agreement in 2015/2016 to stimulate economic cooperation between the two countries. Given the widespread demand for state support for labor migrants abroad, the government of Uzbekistan is taking measures to cooperate with countries that host labor migrants from Uzbekistan. Along with major migration projects in recent years, an agreement "On the organized recruitment and involvement of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan for temporary labor activity in Russia" was recently adopted. This agreement was approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 19, 2017 No. PP-3069 "On approval of international treaties." To create working conditions in the Russian Federation, a comprehensive examination is conducted to assess knowledge of the Russian language, history, and fundamentals of Russian legislation [17]. A detailed roadmap for the implementation of systematic work in the area of labor migration in cooperation with the Russian Federation has been approved. To date, the agency has concluded agreements with the Russian Federation, European countries, Japan, and South Korea, which represents a major step in the development of migration legislation based on the experience of these countries.

Uzbekistan needs to significantly more intensively utilize its high demographic potential for stable economic growth and sustainable social development.

Therefore, the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan has outlined measures to achieve the country's migration policy objectives. The most important of these are the regulation of migration flows, overcoming the negative consequences of spontaneous processes in this area, and creating conditions for the unimpeded exercise of migrants' rights. The practical implementation of constitutional and legislative norms ensuring the rights of Uzbek citizens to employment abroad is facilitated by international agreements concluded between Uzbekistan and Germany, South Korea, Russia, and a number of other countries.

In our research, we paid special attention to the changing gender characteristics of labor migration. Currently, women make up almost 50% of informal labor migrants. Analysis shows that their number is on the rise. This situation is largely due to structural changes in the global economy. The development of the "household services economy" and the "hotel industry," as well as the growing need for care for the elderly, the sick, and children, is increasing the demand for female labor. In these sectors, women primarily occupy low-skilled jobs. We believe that the increasing share of women in migration flows indicates a trend toward the marginalization of a fairly large group of migrants in the global labor market. Consequently, gender issues in labor





migration remain relevant. Women constitute almost 30% of Uzbek labor migrants working abroad. Research results indicate that the majority of them are employed in low-skilled jobs. In many cases, the rights of women leaving the republic "illegally" are violated, and in some cases, they are subjected to violence. Therefore, protecting the rights of female labor migrants should be a priority for national and international institutions dealing with labor migration.

Each stage of a country's socio-economic development presents specific challenges in the development and utilization of labor potential, which require appropriate developments tailored to specific conditions as a necessary prerequisite for managing ongoing processes in the interests of the development of society as a whole. Labor migration is beneficial for all participants. Thus, a migrant:

- has the financial resources to develop their own business;
- independently supports their family;
- establishes themselves as professionals in their field or independently retrains in a specialty that may be in real demand in the labor market, both abroad and in their own country.

Thus, spontaneous and informal external labor migration is fraught with the following negative consequences:

- an increase in divorce rates due to prolonged separation between spouses;
- the negative impact of the prolonged absence of one or both parents who have left for work on the upbringing of children;
- work-related injuries among migrants due to the lack of an occupational safety and health system;
- low security at retirement age due to unrecorded work experience during their stay abroad as labor migrants;
- the importation and spread of diseases.

The Migration Service of the Republic of Uzbekistan has licensed several dozen organizations involved in the employment of Uzbek citizens abroad. The introduction of the system has helped prevent unscrupulous practices by a number of firms and agencies. At the same time, many issues, including those related to the return of migrants, require further development and clarification. Given the increasing proportion of women involved in external labor migration in recent years, it is advisable to take measures to prevent their departure from the country by establishing training centers for them and improving their skills. Improving women's knowledge and skills is an important factor in the socialization of the younger generation, as well as the formation and development of human capital. Since knowledge enables one to



take advantage of opportunities in society, qualifications and skills ensure social progress and economic growth.

Therefore, labor migration is an area in which the need for clear regulation and policy implementation is particularly evident. Therefore, a human rights-based approach to ensuring the protection of migrants and regulating migration processes is fundamental. This entails improving human rights legislation, recognizing international humane labor laws, and respecting ethnic diversity. Such measures guarantee democracy, peace, and social stability.

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