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**American University of Central Asia**

**RESEARCH REPORT**  
**“Discrimination of Internal Migrants in Bishkek”**

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

High rates of unemployment, low incomes, desperate poverty in rural areas and political instability have set almost a quarter of our country on the move making the internal and external migration in Kyrgyzstan the most important current political, economic, social and cultural process effecting the lives of people in all regions of our country. There are two major gravitational forces forming the flows of migrants: first one is shaped by the pool of big cities in Russia and Kazakhstan drawing more than half a million of our citizens out of the country, and second is the capital of our country – Bishkek – which is the major gravitational pole for all internal migrants. Issues of internal and external migrants can be separated into two categories: the ones of migrants themselves and the ones of their families, which remained behind. The table below depicts the four distinctive categories of people affected by the migration processes in Kyrgyzstan.

	<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>
<b>Migrants</b>	Migrants in Bishkek	Migrants in Russia and Kazakhstan
<b>Families of migrants</b>	Families in rural Kyrgyzstan	Families in rural and urban Kyrgyzstan

This current project focuses on the category of migrants, who come to the city of Bishkek in the search of employment. The break-up of the Soviet Union followed by the economic crisis of early 1990-s led to the huge wave of migrants running from the rural poverty in various regions of Kyrgyzstan to more job and income opportunities in Bishkek. In the last 15 years the population of Kyrgyzstan's capital has increased almost twofold leading to the chaotic urban sprawl and congestion of its center and its major traffic routes. The inflow of migrants added to the dynamics and economic vitality of Bishkek and brought in rural and Southern cultures. For example, the composition of merchants in such city markets as Dordoi, Osh and Alamedin bazaars is made mostly from internal migrants from other regions of Kyrgyzstan Dordoi bazaar today is considered to be the biggest market not only in Central Asia, but in the whole of Eurasia (Nasritdinov, 2007).. Its role in Central Asian economies and its contribution to the economy of Kyrgyzstan is enormous. Migrants are among the most hardworking people in the city; they work more than 12 hours a day without any weekends. In spite of this, they are not always welcomed in the city. Long existing North-South and urban-rural socio-cultural differences added to the tension between the city old-timers and its newcomers. Hard economic conditions, everyday struggle for survival and increased competition evolved

into negative attitude towards migrants on behalf of the city dwellers. The informal nature of migration and migrants' illegal status made them frequent objects of abuse by the police, authorities and employers and also deprived them of some of their basic rights, such as rights for medical and social services.

To understand the patterns of discrimination the research has to look into various aspects of migrants' life. It is not common for Central Asian communities to expose their negative sides; visitors are always shown more positive, bright and happy things. This goes back to the culturally rooted practices of hospitality. The capital of Kyrgyzstan – Bishkek – just like its southern cousin Osh and the life of its residents are structured in a similar way. Many negative aspects of our life in this metropolis are hidden on its outskirts and in some marginalized enclaves within the city, where regular residents hardly go to. The city governors, common public, media and even people, who form these marginalized communities, do not like to talk about these negative issues. For those on the top it only creates headaches, those in the middle have enough of their own problems, and for those who actually suffer, this is a matter of dignity and shame, that is why they prefer to keep their troubles to themselves, rather than bring them out for discussion. That is why many shameful practices live in parallel dimensions to regular city life, bright and loud city holidays, and glamorous luxury and many people don't even hear about them. As one of the AUCA students from a rather wealthy family has remarked: "Poverty? Do we have any? According to the government statistics it has been significantly reduced". Discrimination affecting the life of internal migrants in Bishkek is one of such hidden "shameful" aspects of city life that requires special attention

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

This study aims to analyze the major ways in which migrants are discriminated and seek ways of improving their situation..

From a number of possible directions, the research has chosen to focus on four large domains of possible discrimination: 1) employment, 2) social and medical services, 3) law-enforcement, and 4) interaction with city residents.

As the results of the survey show, almost all migrants come to the city looking for jobs; therefore employment is number one issue they face. Because of their illegal status, they cannot be officially hired and the majority works without contracts, which gives the employers powers to abuse them since employee cannot complain. Their illegal status is due to having no residential registry; this illegality takes their right for some basic medical and social services, which all city residents are entitled to, like social security and treatment in the hospitals. Except for specialized hospitals, almost all clinics in Bishkek

treat people living in their vicinities and residence is verified through the residential registry stamp in passport. Having no such stamp, migrants have to give bribery or rely on self-treatment at home. Absence of residential registry gives almost unlimited power to yet another discriminating agent – Bishkek city police. Patrol officers have right to check migrants' documents and if there is no stamp – they have a right to arrest them. Arrest can be avoided again by giving bribery and many migrants are forced to do that. The research also suggested that there are cases of physical force used for extracting money during patrols and inside the police precincts. Finally, the last discriminating body is people, who were born or lived in the city for a long time. They often envision migrants as uneducated, rude and ill-mannered “invaders” of “their” city and there is hidden tension between the old-timers and new-comers, which often turn into open conflicts, arguments and remarks made publicly in buses, at the markets, etc.

Each of these four directions for research has its uniqueness and requires special attention. Therefore, the research tried to identify and explore each domain as fully as possible. By breaking the focus into these four tracks and then looking for common trends and for differences in each of them, the research aims to create a full picture of migrants' discrimination in Bishkek.

This broader ***Aim of the Research*** can then be stated to *identify in what ways migrants coming to Bishkek from other regions of Kyrgyzstan are discriminated?*

This aim can be achieved by answering specific ***Research Question***:  
*How internal migrants are discriminated by their employers, by medical personnel in hospitals, by police officers and by city residents?*

Based on this question, the researchers proposed that there will be a number of factors that contribute to the discrimination of migrants in these four fields. With all members of the research team having lived atleast few years in Bishkek and being familiar with the context, we have analyzed and selected a number of possible discriminating factors. This helped us formulate the ***Research Hypothesis***:

*Internal migrants are discriminated in Bishkek on the basis of: residential registry, origin by regions, knowledge of Russian language, and financial situation.*

Answering these questions and testing the hypothesis required a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. These are described in the following section on research methodology.

## **CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY**

The study employs positivistic and critical paradigms. From scientific perspective, the researchers' team approaches the case with the assumption that migrants have been and currently are discriminated in Bishkek, as they are discriminated against in many other cities around the world. The methodology is designed to test this hypothesis. The results are expected to enrich current theories on migration by bringing new findings from the unique Kyrgyzstan's context. From the critical and socialist perspective, the researchers hope to contribute to the improvement of migrants' situation.

The research uses a case-study approach combined with survey techniques. The study is both exploratory (seeking the answer to what is happening with migrants and why it is happening) and descriptive (aiming to create the complex and objective picture of situation with discrimination against migrants). The research team has conducted a questionnaire survey of some 120 respondents. Given the limited research resources the sampling was non-representative. Several sites were identified in Bishkek for one-day trips with a team of researchers, who used to go out every Saturday and work for half a day for about two and half months. Fieldwork was conducted in Oshskii bazaar, Dordoi bazaar, Batken bazaar, near the Labor Registry, and in some factories. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used to select migrants for this survey.

Researchers have self-administered the survey. They asked questions and filled answers themselves. The questionnaire included nearly 50 questions grouped into five main sections: 1) background information, 2) discrimination at the workplace and in the process of finding the job; 3) language barrier; 4) discrimination by the medical services; discrimination by the police; and 5) discrimination by the residents of Bishkek. The questionnaire tried to create as full picture of migrants' life in the city as was possible within limits of relevancy. Questionnaires were translated into Russian and Kyrgyz languages. Whenever opportunity was there, the researchers tried to conduct more in-depth interviews with participants and collect their personal stories of discrimination.

The second or parallel part of the survey included semi-structured interviews with city residents, employers of migrants, police officers and medical workers. Four teams of researchers were formed to work in pairs on each of these cases. Questions were brainstormed by the whole team and later each pair used these questions to interview their respective informants.

The results of the questionnaire survey were entered into and analyzed in SPSS format. Simple descriptive statistics, like frequencies, descriptives and cross tabulations

were used to portray migrants' characteristics and patterns of discrimination and to explore the relationships between variables.

A three-part analysis presents the findings of the study. The first part describes main characteristics of migrants in this survey. The second part analyzes the main ways of discrimination. The third part describes the factors that contribute to or reduce the effects of discrimination. All three parts of the analysis are presented individually in the following sections.

## **CHAPTER III: NATURE OF DISCRIMINATION OF MIGRANTS**

### **A. Characteristics of Migrants**

Some basic background information can help the research portray the average profile of internal migrants' population in Bishkek and reveal some trends.

#### Age, gender and family

The migrants' jobs in the city are often based on heavy physical labor and long hours of work. Thus it requires physical strength. That is why the majority of surveyed migrants were found to be males (69%) in their 20-s and 30-s (67%). There were very few youngsters under 20 and elders beyond 60. It is commonly accepted in Kyrgyzstan that it is usually physically capable men who leave their houses in rural areas in search for jobs in a city, while women remain in villages to look after children. However, this is not completely true in regards to migrants in this research sample: almost three quarters (71%) of married migrants brought their families with them. Based on this fact and on the gender proportions, we suggest that women come to the city but many of them stay at home and look after children. The analysis of family situation shows that the big majority of migrants (79%) were married and 76% of those married had children. The average number of children (in families with children) was 2.76. Analyzing these trends the research can suggest that perhaps the unmarried young people prefer to migrate long distances externally to countries like Russia and Kazakhstan, while the internal migration processes are dominated by migrants with families, majority of whom bring their families with them.

Having family seems to have positive effect on migrants' situation: there were more married than not married migrants who owned their houses (29% vs. 12%), while more single migrants rented or lived with relatives. Figures also show that married migrants are more satisfied with their income (68% vs. 60%) and have slightly better relationships with city residents.

#### Ethnicity

Almost all migrants were Kyrgyz (83%) and there were few Russians (6%), Tatars (3%), Koreans, Uigurs, Kazakhs and Uzbeks.

#### Education

The majority (66%) of migrants had secondary or secondary special education. Only 23% were with higher education.

### Purpose of coming

Almost all (88%) of migrants came to Bishkek with a purpose of finding the job. Therefore, the internal migration process in Kyrgyzstan can easily be identified as Labor Migration.

### Residential registry and housing in Bishkek

67% of migrants did not have residential registry in the city and 66% of migrants rented their housing. Living conditions of migrants were very far from descent. Average number of people per room in an apartment was 2.5. In some cases there were up to seven people sharing one room. Of course, it might not be as bad as a situation with external migrants in Russia, where it is said that up to 30 people can live together in one apartment, but still it is quite dense. Some migrants do not have permanent places to sleep. They live in one-night hotels, where the average cost of staying is 50-70 som (US\$2). They can afford it if they managed to earn this amount during the day. In case if they don't find this sum, some choose to sleep underground, next to hot water pipelines during the winter time. The conditions there are terrible: migrants get burned, suffocated, frozen and they share these spaces with rats. But even these places are not easily accessible: one can get underground only after about 10pm after the police patrol checks and would have to get out of there quite early. The situation with homeless in Bishkek is exacerbating. During last winter of 2007-2008 more than 70 homeless people were frozen to death. More and more migrants join this community of homeless.

### Origin

The figures on migrants' origins reflect the major direction of internal migration in Kyrgyzstan: from the impoverished and overpopulated South to more affluent and not so densely inhabited Northern regions, especially to Bishkek. Almost three quarters (73%) of migrants came to Bishkek from the Southern provinces (Osh, Jalalabad and Batken) and only one quarter from the North (Naryn, Talas, Issyk-Kol and Chui). Osh province is the biggest provider of migrants (35%) followed by Jalalabad (27%).

If we were to portray an average migrant, he would be a married Southern Kyrgyz in his 20-s, 30-s or 40-s with secondary education, who came to Bishkek with his family looking for a job and now living without a registry in the city. He usually rents a place and lives with a number of relatives or friends to offset the growing rental costs. He works long hours without weekends as a trader in the market or doing some heavy physical labor. This portrait of migrant is quite homogenous by many factors. The next question that

research has focused on was whether there is also a commonality in regards to the patterns of discrimination. The following section is going to analyze them.

## **B. Patterns of Discrimination**

The research pursued analysis of discrimination in four main focus areas: by employers, by medical personnel, by police officers and by city residents.

### Employers

The main areas of migrants' concentration in the city are markets, Labor Registry, construction sites and small-scale factories. The range of occupations of migrants in the survey was quite broad. The majority worked as traders in the markets, construction workers or handymen for different small jobs. Other occupations included: cleaner, cart-pusher, security, nanny, housemaid, chief, waitress, furniture maker, electrician, taxi driver, bank worker, and even croupier in casino. Migrants in all of these professions work very hard by global standards: 83% work more than 40 hours per week and 71% work without any days off. Hard work seems to pay off – 66% of migrants were satisfied with their income. In the markets, large share of traders work independently without bosses. But in the cases when there is a boss, the relationships are usually either neutral (50%) or positive (44%).

The research comes to conclusion that on the level of more long-term employer-employee connection, the relationships are quite stable and productive. However, things change when the employment is short-term. The majority of complaints about employers came from the migrants waiting near the Labor Registry. These are usually hired for a day or few days. There is so much competition in the Registry that they are ready to do work for a very minimal compensation. On top of that they are very often cheated by their employers. One migrant told a story about working with a group of his friends for one police officer, who after one month of work “found” some faults in their work and kicked them out without paying a penny. According to many informants, cases like this are very common.

The main reason why this happens is because migrants who stand near the Labor Registry are not protected by law. 95% of migrants in this survey did not have any work contract. If in the long-term employment there are internal mechanisms to have it running, in the short-term commitments nothing prevents an employer from abuse, because having no contract and having no legal status in the city migrants cannot complain anywhere.

## Medical services

The majority of migrants or members of their families (82%) visited hospitals and one fifth (20%) of those who visited were refused treatment. The main reason for refusal was residential registry (9 out of 11 cases) followed by lack of money. From those who never visited hospitals, the majority (58%) did so because they were not sick or they used self-treatment (13%). Few people (may be to write in %???) didn't go because they didn't have registry and few because they didn't have money.

We see from these figures that residential registry in the city and money are two of the main factors leading to the discrimination of migrants in medical establishments. Currently, any adult in order to receive a treatment in his neighborhood clinic must show a stamp in his passport showing that he lives in this neighborhood. In some exceptions children can be accepted without having registry, but usually all children without registry are sent to the special hospital #3, where documents are not required. For adults there is usually only one solution – bribery. So, almost half of migrants (44%) had to give bribery to medical personnel.

Long are gone days when medical treatment in Kyrgyzstan was free. Today, there are so many private clinics and health centers that provide more or less proper medical services and never even ask for the stamp in a passport. But these are very expensive and usually not affordable for a large share of impoverished migrants. Doctors and nurses in the state hospitals and clinics have to work for very small salaries, which are rarely given in time. That is why they resort to such unethical measures like bribery, which in the context of rising prices often seem justifiable even to patients. The financial difficulties experienced by medical personnel often turn into negative attitudes. It is very common to be yelled at by a physician or a nurse in the clinic for no reason. As the study reveals, almost 40% of migrants have experienced such negative attitudes.

## Police

From all discriminating agents analyzed in this study the most ferocious ones are the police officers. Corruption within law-enforcing agencies gives almost unlimited powers to the officers in regards to migrants. Having no permanent or temporary residential registry in the city, migrants become an easy pray for “predators” in blue uniform. Without proper documentation migrants have no right to stay in the city and therefore police officers can easily arrest them. If a person is arrested, the decision on his case is made by a judge, who is a part of the system and usually does not spend too much time analyzing the case. The decisions usually involve a fine or a 15-day arrest.

Whenever police officers need money, they travel to places like Labor Registry, where the majority of migrants do not have residential registry and start checking their documents. The common sum for bribery is 50-100 som (US\$2-3). If migrants do not have money, police arrests them and then they will have to pay it anyhow to get out of the precinct, unless they want to spend there two weeks. That is why the majority prefer to pay this amount on the spot. Migrants are not aware that they can complain about it and they are also afraid of more serious revenge on the side of police if they complain.

The Labor Registry is located on the Lev Tolstoy street and because there are so many migrants waiting there to be picked up, it is easier for them to spread along the street and stand in small groups. This way it is also easier for customers to select and pick up workers. However, police requires them all to stand in one location, right next to the Registry. This creates a number of potential conflict situations and arguments over customers. Few migrants suggested that police officers do that on purpose: they wait for a fight to start to have a reason to arrest people.

There were several stories told about police officers putting migrants into a van, taking them to the city outskirts, beating, taking off their clothes and then leaving them there to walk back to the city. Quite frequent are also cases of short-term “enslavement” of migrants: whenever a police officer or his acquaintance needs free labor, he goes to the Labor Registry, finds a migrant without documents and without money and then forces him to work for free. The unfortunate migrant has no choice if he does not want to be arrested and possibly beaten.

Interviews with police officers revealed following information. Police considers migrants potentially very criminal: “Migrants come to the city looking for job. Many do not like hard physical labor and soon set on a criminal path looking for easy money. This includes robberies, thefts and even murders”. One officer suggested that 80% of crimes in the city are done by migrants, 35% of all crimes by migrants from the South and that many migrants become members of organized criminal networks. Such networks are often structured around their origins: a migrant brings his friends from home and they “work” together. There was a group of “barsetochniks” from Talas, who were tracking businessmen on their way from banks and then either breaking into their cars or robbing them in the streets. The officer suggested that there are many such organized groups in the city.

One interviewed officer has agreed that bribery is a part of the system and that the way to uproot it is by increasing the officers’ small salaries. He also said that physical force is applied only in cases when migrants are drunk, fight with a patrol and refuse the

arrest. Inside the precinct, conditions for all arrested are the same whether one is a migrant or a local resident.

The analysis of both migrants' and police officers' perspectives suggests that migrants do have potential to turn to criminal activities. But that is why the role of police is so important and instead of taking bribes from defenseless migrants in the Labor Registry who try to earn money in the honest way, the police officers should focus on the real criminal structures to make the life of both city residents and other migrants safer.

### City residents

Finally, the research analyzed the relations between migrants and the old-time residents of Bishkek. It is common to hear negative remarks towards migrants in public places, mostly related to the crowdedness, garbage, bad manners, slums, etc. The researchers wanted to hear both sides of the story and conducted interviews both with migrants and with city residents.

Interestingly, half of migrants (47%) have never experienced any negative attitude on behalf of city residents; 38% experienced it time to time; and only 15% experienced it often. On the question on what makes migrants different from city residents 37% identified language factor, 31% appearance, 11% behavior, and 22% said there is no difference at all. The majority (82%) of migrants had city residents as neighbors and the majority (58%) had friendly relations with them. Only 4% had bad relations. One more factor falls into the trend: only 12% of migrants had their neighbors complaining about them. Some individual stories point to the arguments or bad words, but not to real conflicts.

City residents, on the contrary, complained about migrants much more. On the question about discrimination, one city resident suggested: "It is them who discriminate us!" Others told that migrants tease girls in the streets, do not know how to behave in public places, throw garbage everywhere, break things, and that there is a world of differences: from clothing to world views. A contrary perspective given by other city residents suggests that there is really no difference; migrants are "same people like us"; they work hard and achieve many things; they might not be well-educated, but they are smart; and they don't really create more problems than regular city residents.

The results of this section are probably the most difficult to summarize and homogenize, because there is no one common trend; as one city resident remarked: "All depends on an individual". There is a multitude of perspectives: some people (both from migrants and city residents) had some negative experience and this formed their opinion.

Others approached the issue more philosophically and more humanly. Perhaps, we could suggest that on behalf of migrants there is an attempt to integrate into the city community, while many city residents perceive them as intruders and relate to them negatively. Perhaps the biggest obstacle for integration of two communities is language: city residents usually speak Russian, while the majority of migrants speak Kyrgyz.

In the above sections, the research has analyzed the main trends of discrimination in four main domains. We revealed that migrants are strongly discriminated mostly in the medical sphere and by the police officers. The discrimination on behalf of employers and common city residents are not that noticeable, with some rare exceptions. The next task would be to cut across these four focus areas to reveal what common factors actually contribute to discrimination. This is done in the following section.

### **C. Factors Contributing to or Reducing the Discrimination of Migrants**

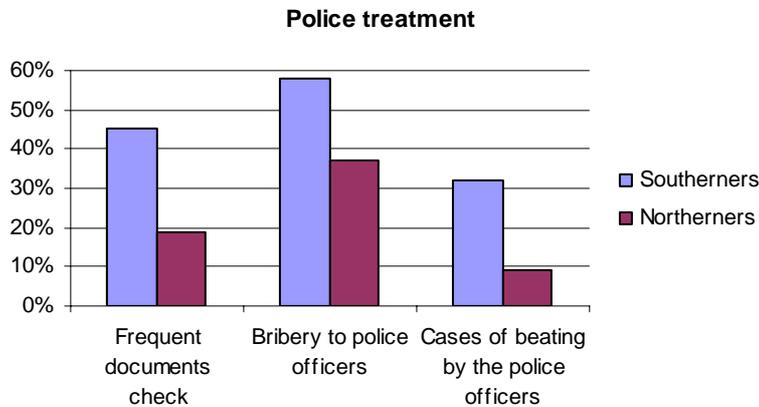
Four factors were suggested in the original Research Hypothesis as influencing the discrimination of migrants: origin, residential registry, knowledge of Russian language, and financial situation. The results of the analysis have confirmed the hypothesis and revealed one more important feature – the support of relatives as a smoothing factor reducing the impact of discrimination. All five correlations are analyzed in the sections below.

#### Origin

We have previously described that the majority of migrants come from the South. That is why the discrimination of migrants often involves the North-South tensions: many informants mentioned this when they were asked to describe cases of discrimination. Migrants from the South are often called “Sarts” and one of the most common phrases used by city residents and by the Northerners is “Понаяхали тут с юга”, which can be translated like “All these guys coming here from the South”.

One of the questions raised during the analysis asked: Are Southerners more discriminated than Northerners and if yes, in what ways? Here are some facts that can answer this question. Southerners had to give bribery to police officers in the case of not having documents much more often than Northerners (58% vs. 37%), while Northerners were more often allowed to go without any discrimination (33% vs. 15%). Southerners were beaten by the police almost four times more than Northerners (32% vs. 9%). Fewer of Southerners have residential registry in the city (32% vs. 39%). They were refused

treatment in the hospital twice more often (25% vs. 11%). These figures show that in many aspects, especially in the treatment by the police officers in Bishkek, migrants from the South are more discriminated than migrants from the North. Following graph demonstrates the discrimination of migrants by the police.



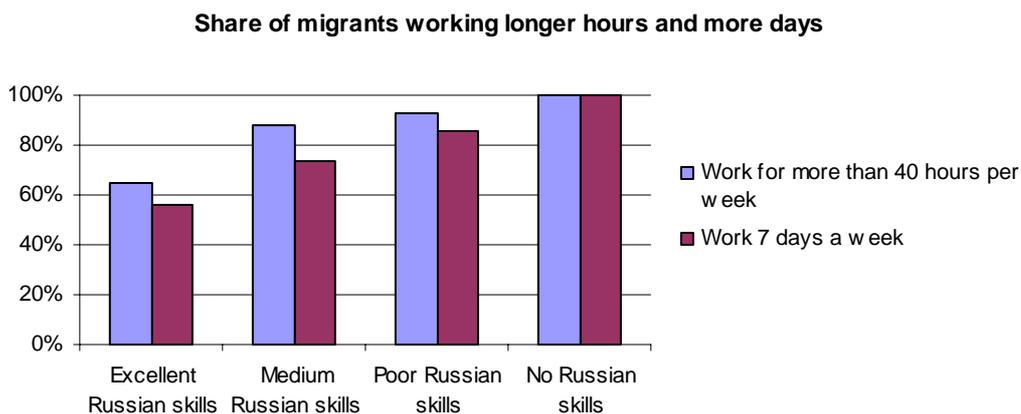
What factors contribute to such unequal treatment based on North/South division? The research suggests that one of the most important ones is the knowledge of Russian language. As figures show, there are only half as many excellent speakers of Russian among the Southerners then among the Northerners (20% vs. 37%). This is common fact. In the Northern provinces, like Chui and Issyk-Kol, one can hear Russian speech more often, perhaps due-to the fact that the majority of Russian population in Kyrgyzstan lives in the North, while in the South, one would hardly hear anyone speaking in Russian, perhaps, only in the big cities, like Osh and Jalalabd. Almost all Russian population has left these regions. The reason why we suggest that language factor contributes to the discrimination based on regional origins is the analysis described in the next section, which shows that language is among the strongest factors affecting the discrimination patterns.

### Knowledge of Russian language

Kyrgyzstan is a bi-lingual country, where both Kyrgyz and Russian languages are considered as state languages. Bishkek has always been the city, where the majority of city residents spoke Russian. Many Kyrgyz families in the capital spoke Russian better than they spoke Kyrgyz. Several factors contributed to that: Bishkek was the administrative capital of the country and during the Soviet time Russian was the official language for all documentation; almost all higher education institutions and colleges taught in Russian; there was a large Russian population, etc. With the collapse of the Soviet Union things started changing: the government officials started speaking Kyrgyz; more schools and

university programs started teaching in Kyrgyz; large portion of Russian population migrated to Russia; and there was a huge inflow of Kyrgyz-speaking migrants coming to Bishkek in the search of job opportunities. However, the heritage of the Soviet time is still very strong and today Russian language is still very important for city residents. The results of the study confirm this: for 93% of migrants knowledge of Russian language was a necessary component of their job and almost half of migrants (47%) have experienced difficulties in finding the job because of their limited Russian language skills.

Let us look more closely at the Russian language abilities of respondents in this survey and at the connection between these skills and discrimination patterns. As figures show, only a quarter (25%) of migrants spoke Russian fluently. For the majority (60%) the knowledge was medium; 13% spoke Russian poorly and 2% did not speak Russian at all. More Kyrgyz-speaking migrants were refused treatment in hospitals. Migrants with poor Russian has experienced more negative attitude on behalf of city residents. Interestingly, Kyrgyz-speaking migrants had to work longer hours. Following graph demonstrates this:



There also seems to be a direct correlation between the knowledge of Russian and frequent documents check: the poorer is the knowledge, the more frequent is the check. This connection perhaps can be explained by the ethnicity factor (Russian migrants are less likely to be checked) and the place of work (the majority of migrants near the Labor Registry and in the more “Asian” Osh and Batken bazaars are checked more frequently).

All factors described in this section suggest that the ability to speak in Russian raises the personal status of a migrant and the power to express oneself better helps in negotiating certain bases for discrimination, such as absence of residential registry for example, the importance of which is described in the following section.

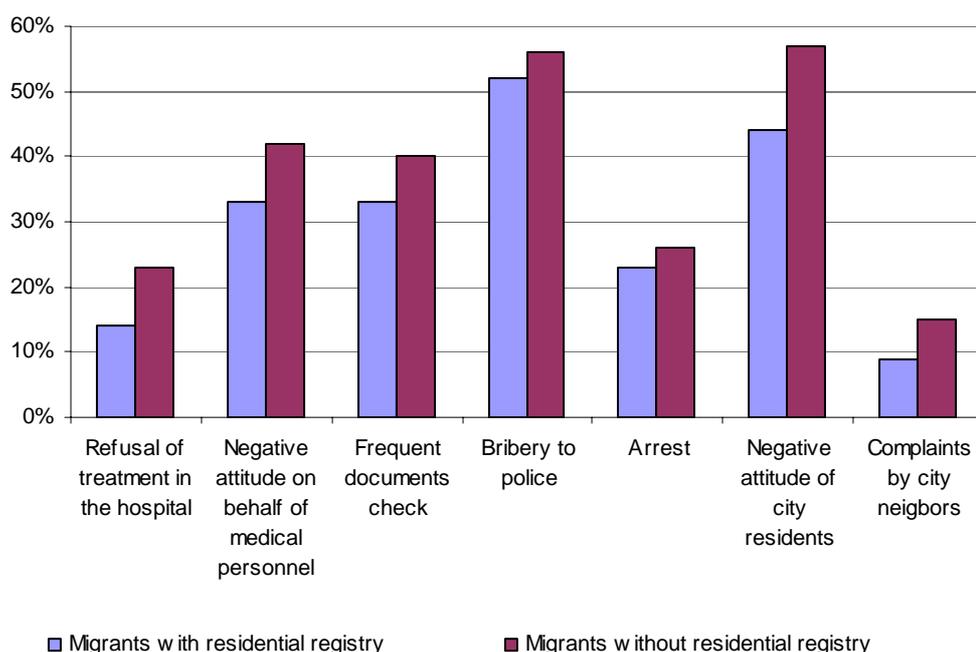
### Residential registry (*nponycka*)

Residential registry is one of the most prominent factors on the basis of which migrants are discriminated. According to the current Kyrgyz legislation, people who come to the city have to register within three days. However, there are many complications in regards to this process. Because many migrants come to the city only temporarily, they do not want to lose their registry at home in the regions; while changing the registry every time they come for work or go home is just too much hassle. If one changes residential registry, one has to change military registration too. That also requires time and lots of paperwork. Another reason is that in order to register migrants have to have a letter from a landlord where they rent apartment. However, this is not in the interests of the landlord because he has to pay extra tax for income he gets from a resident. He also has to pay more on the utility bills (water, central heating, garbage collection, etc.). For these reasons, there is usually only one person who signs the contract with a landlord, while the rest of residents officially do not live in that place. As a result, many migrants never get registered even if they live in the city for years.

As described in previous sections on medical services and police, migrants are strongly discriminated by these agents, for whom not having a registry is a very simple reason to extract money from migrants.

Here are some additional questionnaire survey results that show the connection between residential registry and discrimination of migrants. Migrants with the registry in the city are more satisfied with their income than those without registry (74% vs. 62%). Migrants without registry have been more often refused treatment in the hospitals (23% vs. 14%) and from those who were refused three quarters were refused because they didn't have registry. They also experienced more negative attitude on behalf of the medical personnel (42% vs. 33%). Among those who did not visit the hospitals when they were sick 30% did so because they didn't have registry. Migrants without registry were more often checked for their documents (40% vs. 33%) and as a result of having no documents they had to give bribery or be arrested slightly more often, while migrants with a registry were more often allowed to go. One interesting fact stands out though – migrants registered in the city were beaten more often. Perhaps, police resort to violence when they have no right to extract money from citizens. Finally, the analysis of relations with city residents and neighbors shows that migrants without registry have experienced negative attitude on behalf of city residents more often (57% vs. 44%); they have worse relations with their city neighbors and their neighbors have complained about them more often (15% vs. 9%). The following graph illustrates some of the above figures:

**The effect of having residential registry on discrimination of migrants**



The research findings confirm our hypothesis: absence of residential registry augments the impact of discrimination. However, there are cases when migrants without registry are quite happy about their status; they live without registry for years and many do not plan to get it at all. There is one last factor exacerbates the absence of registry – it is low and unstable income. This is analyzed in the next section.

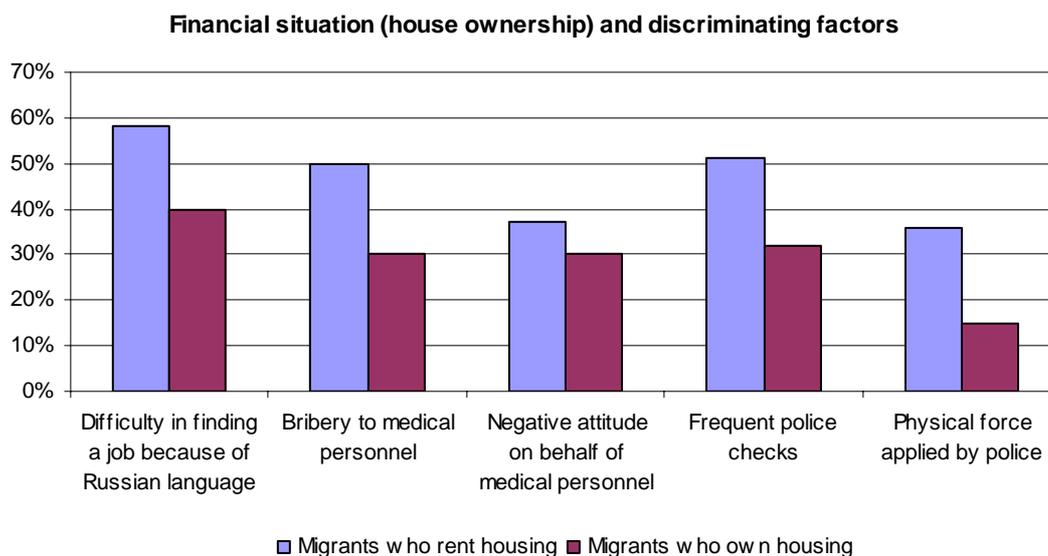
### Financial situation

The last factor to take into consideration is the financial situation of migrants. The observations have shown that migrants who work in the markets (like Dordoi, Osh, Batken) are less discriminated than those who stand near the Labor Registry. One reason for that is that market is a source of more or less stable income. In the context of discriminative practices, especially on behalf of Bishkek police, this means that these migrants have financial means to offset the effects of discrimination by giving bribery to the police and medical personnel; they can find a better housing, have better meals, clothes, etc. This suggests that migrants without stable incomes are more discriminated.

Now, let us have a look at some questionnaire survey results. As there were no direct indicators of income for migrants in this survey, the research employed two indirect indicators: ownership of housing and satisfaction with income. Those who owned their houses were assumed to be wealthier than those who rented; and those who were satisfied with their income were assumed to be better off than those not satisfied. Only 26% of

migrants owned their houses/apartments, while the rest either rented or lived with relatives. 66% of migrants were satisfied with their income, 7% were more or less satisfied and 27% were not satisfied. Following figures show some cross-tabulations between these factors indicating the migrants' financial situation and some main factors of discrimination.

First of all, those who rent were less satisfied with income than those who own houses (67% vs. 84%). They also had more difficulties in finding job because of the Russian language skills (58% vs. 40%). They had to give bribery to medical personnel more often (50% vs. 30%) and experienced more negative attitude on behalf of them (37% vs. 30%). Police checks their documents more often (51% vs. 32%) and as a result of police checks they had to give bribery more often and they were arrested more often. They were also beaten by the police significantly more often (36% vs. 15%). Following graph shows visualizes these figures:



The analysis of the second indicator – satisfaction with income – also confirms the connection with discrimination. Those who were not satisfied with their income were refused treatment in hospitals more often (24% vs. 16%). They had to give bribery to medical personnel more often (50% vs. 41%). More of them did not have residential registry in the city (78% vs. 62%). They have experienced more negative attitude on behalf of medical workers (46% vs. 33%) and city residents (63% vs. 49%); and they have less friendly relations with city neighbors.

Therefore, the results confirm that migrants differentiate significantly by their financial situation and that those who earn less and whose income is less stable are more discriminated. So far, we have analyzed four factors that contribute to more discrimination. But in their struggle for survival, migrants develop mechanisms that help

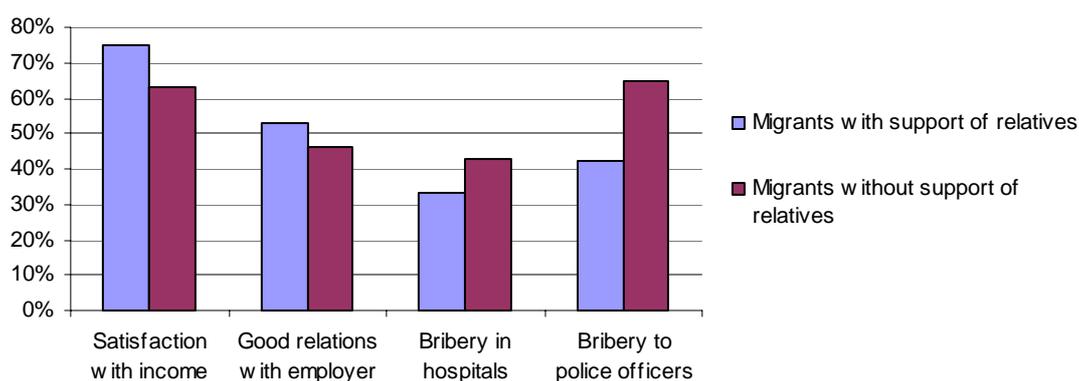
them cope with discrimination. In the next section the research is going to review one of such mechanisms – reliance on family and relatives' networks.

### Support of relatives

The traditional Kyrgyz society was always based on the support of tribesmen and relatives. For centuries, Kyrgyz tribes moved in the small groups from pasture to pasture along with their herds. This tribal community was always absolutely vital for survival in the harsh climatic conditions and under continuous threat from aggressive neighbors. To be left alone meant to die. Therefore, from ancient times, relatives were dependent on each other and support in the time of difficulties was not just encouraged, it was a social obligation. During the Soviet times, under the policy of sedenterization, settlements in Kyrgyzstan were organized on the basis of clan and tribal structures and Kyrgyz preserved their tribal links. In the time of Post-Soviet transformations, the relatives' networks became one of the main social resources of Kyrgyz community.

This study confirms that in regards to migration processes, relatives' networks are also very important as a support apparatus for people coming to the city. The results show that 73% of migrants had relatives in Bishkek and more than half of them (53%) received some help from these relatives. This help was in the form of money (48%) and housing (43%). The further analysis of results shows that help, which migrants get from relatives works as a lubricator for many discriminating factors. Following figures confirm this: migrants supported by relatives are more satisfied with their income than migrants without relatives' help (75% vs. 63%); they have better relationships with their bosses (53% vs. 46%); they have less often given bribery to doctors in hospitals and clinics (36% vs. 58%) and have less often experienced negative attitude there (33% vs. 43%); they had given bribes to police officers less often (42% vs. 65%); and they had fewer cases of bad relations with their neighbor city residents (2.5% vs. 6%). These indicators of discrimination do not necessarily point to the direct correlation between relatives' help and discrimination factors, but there is some connection, which shows that the support of relatives helps to overcome many aspects of discrimination. Following graph illustrates the above figures:

### Support of relatives as a smoothing factor against discrimination



Migrants without relatives in the city are like Kyrgyz left alone in the mountains in the past – it is very hard for them to survive. The dangers and difficulties come from all directions. In this chapter the research has analyzed several of these ‘dangers’: major forces of discrimination and several major factors that increase that discrimination. This thorough quantitative analysis and all stories told by migrants allow the research to formulate some major conclusions and offer policy recommendations for improving the situation of internal migrants in the city of Bishkek. These are presented in the last chapter of this report.

#### CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall impression that one forms after all this analysis is that internal migrants are really discriminated. Police is the strongest discriminating agent, followed by medical workers. Employers discriminate in short-term employments. As for city residents, there is no really direct discrimination, but individual cases of dislike and/or disagreement. The analysis section has answered the research question in details and has confirmed the research hypothesis: factors like origin, language, residential registry and financial situation of migrants contribute to discrimination. Migrants rely on the help of relatives to offset the impacts of discrimination.

On the basis of the research findings, authors offer some logical policy recommendations. There exists a strong opinion, especially among many government and police officers and among city residents that the way to overcome the problems of discrimination is through strengthening and reinforcing the passport and registry regimes to keep migrants away from the capital. That is to say: If they are not allowed to come they will not be discriminated and there will be fewer troubles for the city. This research strongly objectifies to this perspective. Migrants do not come to the city looking for easy

life. The main reason for their migration is extreme poverty in the rural areas, especially in the Southern Kyrgyzstan. The situation has been exacerbated in the last ten years due-to the steadily progressing degradation of natural environments, increased competition for natural resources, and lack of land. What should a family whose homes were destroyed by a landslide, who were relocated to the places, where there is no water to cultivate land or no pastures to graze animals, and who don't get any extra support from the government, do to survive? Migration, of at least one member, is the only way for such family to survive. Closing the capital for such families is leaving them to die from hunger. This would be simply inhuman. The research proposes that the only way to stop people from migrating is through improving the situation in the regions and creating local incentives for people to stay. As for those who come to the city, their right for free movement within the country and for a share of city's wealth and economic opportunities should be acknowledged and legalized. These and other recommendations are described individually in the following sections.

#### Changing the legislation in regards to the residential registry

Acknowledging migrants' presence in Bishkek cannot be accomplished without giving migrants a legal right to stay in the city. By giving migrants such rights the government would provide them with opportunity to stand up to their other civil rights when it comes to dealing with police officers, medical personnel in the hospitals and employers. This can only be solved through changing the current legislation. We propose that the problem with residential registry can be solved in two ways:

1. Introducing the easy attainable legal status of a "temporary resident" for migrants coming to the city
2. Adopting the United Nations Convention of Migrants' Rights about the right for free movement and choice of place to live within the country and abolishing the residential registry requirements.

The steps towards such goal would include first of all studying current legislation, finding faults, overlaps, and unnecessary complications in regards to the process of getting residential registry. Secondly, there is a need to establish a dialogue with the government and lobby these amendments.

#### Improving the financial situation of migrants: Social Enterprise

However, as the results of this study show, it is not enough to simply legalize migrants' presence in the city. There is a strong need to address the financial aspects of

migrant's life. Among the fairly homogenized by many characteristics, but economically diverse group of Bishkek migrants, there is a group of the most disadvantaged ones. They don't have stable jobs or initial capital to start a business; many of them do not have support of relatives. To help this marginalized group of a migrants' community, the research proposes to introduce and disseminate the concept of a *Social Enterprise* as one way of helping migrants find their niche in the city smoothly. The practice of social enterprises is quite common and popular in many countries around the world. Such enterprises give people opportunity get special qualifications and at the same time work and earn money. Social enterprises are often offered a number of economic incentives, like tax holidays or donor contributions to offset the costs of establishment and maintenance. With a targeted effort, the chain of such enterprises could engage a large body of poor newcomers to the city and offer them a gradual and meaningful transition. The skills offered at such enterprises could be based on the city demand for specific types of labor. This would be beneficial both for the city and for migrants.

#### Improving the language skills

One other aspect that social enterprises could address as a part of their program is Russian language courses. As the results of this study show, migrants with better Russian language skills are less discriminated. Setting up a network of evening courses on Russian language could help migrants to learn the basics or improve their current Russian skills, which would significantly increase their chances of getting better job and establishing better communication with city residents, Russian-speaking medical personnel in the hospitals, police officers, government office workers, etc. If government cannot fund such initiative, then collaboration could be sought with international development agencies and funding bodies to establish and run such network.

The contrary/additional language policy would be to recommend government, police and medical officers to start learning Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz language will inevitably be the most spoken language in the country. Therefore, we need policies and programs enabling the non-Kyrgyz speaking group, to start learning Kyrgyz.

#### Medical treatment for migrants

The research also recommends some changes in the ways that migrants are treated in Bishkek hospitals. If the residential registry issue is solved, then this problems is solved automatically and migrants will have same rights as city residents. However, if the migrants' status is not legalized and while lobbying is in progress, the migrants' rights to

receive proper medical treatment should be addressed. Perhaps, a special clinic could be set up, which would be opened to everyone; or even better, a special status of a temporary patient could be created to allow migrants without registry to receive treatment in the local neighborhood clinics.

#### Police treatment

The research suggests working with human rights experts, lawyers and top management in the police department towards changing the behavior of police officers in regards to migrants. Some monitoring and control measures should be introduced for stopping police officers from abusing their powers. As was already suggested once, police should focus their efforts on real criminals and not on those migrants, who work hard to feed their families.

#### Media campaign

Finally, a proper media campaign should bring the discussion of issues of migrants into public instead of hiding them from everyone's eyes. A series of films about migrants' life in the city, publications in the newspapers, regular *Migrants' News* on TV with latest updates, lectures and round-table discussions open for public would all help the issue come out of the closet and become everyone's concern. Of course, this should be done ethically and thoughtfully, not with a purpose of damaging reputations, but achieving public awareness and motivation towards improving the situation.

The researchers believe in the great potential that Bishkek community on all of its levels, from a top government official to a simple city resident, has in terms of accommodating and integrating our fellow citizens from other regions. In this time of difficulties and big transformations, the last thing we as Kyrgyzstanians want is to "eat" each other and force people out of "our" territories. Instead, we should look for the models, where incomers (who play such an important role in the life of the city) would be better integrated into the urban community.