

Tajik Migrants with Re-entry Bans to the Russian Federation



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Executive Summary

Labour migration to the Russian Federation has become a phenomenon unprecedented in scale and importance to the Tajik economy, on the national as well as household levels, having made invaluable contributions to the country's development and helping reduce poverty significantly over the last decade. On the other hand, labour migration has also created strong dependencies, with whole families relying entirely on income earned abroad by migrant family members. Most of the remittances are spent on household consumption, while income-generating investments are rare. Seasonal labour migration has become and will most likely continue to be the most appealing employment option for Tajik men because of the weak Tajik economy; however, the high rate of irregular migration to the Russian Federation makes it a very volatile option. Previous research has shown that 60 per cent of all Tajik migrants stay and work without proper documentation in the Federation. As one measure to control and limit irregular migration, Russian authorities are tightening law enforcement in the sphere of migration, including by widening the grounds for issuing re-entry bans to foreign nationals who have repeatedly breached Russian laws and administrative regulations.

Varying in duration from three to five years, these re-entry bans have led to a growing category of involuntary returnees who lack economic prospects in their home countries and who wait desperately for their chance to go back to the Russian Federation. Since 2012 the list of foreign citizens with re-entry bans to the Federation has kept growing and is expected to soon reach 300 thousand entries, most of them Central Asian migrant workers. More and more migrant workers are consulting IOM Tajikistan for support – migrants who, after returning to Tajikistan during the low season, are subsequently denied entry to the Russian Federation, leading to serious economic difficulties for most. Unable to resume work in the Russian Federation for extended periods of time, these “banned” Tajik migrant workers must now look for other sources of income in their home country – which is difficult because the lack of economic prospects in Tajikistan is why these workers left in the first place. Past research has shown that involuntarily returned migrant workers are often poorly reintegrated in and face socioeconomic vulnerabilities upon return to their home countries. The accounts of IOM's legal consultants dealing with Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation corroborate this prognosis; thus far, however, no baseline data on the socioeconomic status and reintegration needs of this particularly vulnerable group are available. Drawing on in-depth personal interviews with 102 respondents and two focus group discussions, this study is able to give a detailed picture of the situation of migrant workers with re-entry bans, as well as provide recommendations to help decrease their vulnerabilities and harness their potentials.

Since more than two thirds of the migrant workers in our sample migrated to the Russian Federation due to the lack of jobs and the low salaries in Tajikistan, it comes as no surprise that for a majority of them, the re-entry ban to the Russian Federation has led to a significant deterioration of their and their families' economic situation. Some 24 per cent of the migrants in our sample stated that their families now have difficulties affording enough food, and 33 per cent said that while their income is sufficient for food, it hardly allows them to buy new clothes and other daily necessities. These numbers are alarming and show that for many, the re-entry ban has caused serious economic vulnerabilities and even outright poverty. Because of the lack of jobs (which is especially severe in rural areas) and low salaries that do not allow breadwinners to provide for their families, a substantial part of the migrant workers in our survey find themselves in a grave economic situation. Unlike in the Russian Federation, they see no economic prospects in their home country, where they feel “stuck” and incapable of fulfilling their role as providers for their families. Even though a majority of the respondents left at a young age and had no direct family responsibility, all but five interviewees sent remittances to their families – the majority on a monthly basis – and thus provided them with money to cover their families' basic needs. Compensating for the loss of income (roughly 75% of the migrants sent between 100 and 500 USD per month when they were still working in the Russian Federation) in the context of the weak Tajik economy turned out to be impossible for most of them, and this has caused serious economic vulnerabilities.

The situation of many was aggravated by the unforeseen character of their re-entry bans. Because there was (and still is) no automatic mechanism to inform “offenders” that they had been banned from re-entering the Russian Federation, 80 per cent of the migrants sampled in our survey did not know about their re-entry bans when they last left the country. Many of them only found out about their ban when they were turned down at Russian airports by border guards, after making the (expensive) trip to the Russian Federation and planning and preparing to work there again. That their stay in Tajikistan, which for 85 per cent of them was originally intended to be a temporary one, would now have to last for at least three years led to reactions of shock, worry and despair.

Irregular migration was the reason behind the re-entry bans of most of the interviewees. The visa-free regime requires only an internal passport for Tajik citizens to enter the Russian Federation. However, if a migrant’s stay is to exceed 90 days and if work is intended, further steps need to be taken in order to avoid slipping into irregularity. Only 60 per cent of the respondents officially registered at their places of residence within the duration of their stay. The same percentage of interviewees declared that they had obtained either a work permit or a patent (depending on the type of work), either of which is needed in order to work legally in the Federation. In most cases, poor knowledge of Russian migration laws led to a re-entry ban, but there were numerous cases wherein migrants used middlemen to obtain immigration documents or deliberately stayed only in partial compliance with the law and thought that they would be able to hide this fact from Russian authorities.

Since their return from the Russian Federation, the most severe problem that Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans have been facing is economic reintegration. Some 30 per cent are unemployed, but even many of those who have been able to find work struggle with low salaries. Returning from the Russian Federation, where their salaries were sufficient to provide for themselves and their families, many now feel the frustration of doing the same work, but for significantly lower pay, which has discouraged several of them from working at all. Many simply wait for their re-entry bans to be lifted so they could return to the Russian Federation. Unfortunately for some, the circumstances do not allow them to wait for so long, and there are reported cases of migrants who enter the Federation with forged documents or through the help of smugglers who bring them across the border illegally. Faced with a frustrating and precarious living situation, it is highly likely that migrant workers see this step into irregularity as the only feasible way to sustain their livelihoods.

There are, however, also cases in our sample wherein migrants have been able to benefit from their migration experience and describe their current situation as “improved” from the time they were still working in the Russian Federation. This illustrates that, given certain conditions, successful return and reintegration is possible even in the case of migrants with re-entry bans. Professional skills enhanced by working in the Russian Federation can translate into new employment opportunities in Tajikistan; 40 per cent of the interviewees stated that they, indeed, gained new professional skills abroad, with five respondents even receiving certificates for learning new professions. However, only a third of the migrants who acquired new skills abroad have been able to put them into practice in Tajikistan. The rest are struggling with the current condition of the Tajik labour market, because either the jobs they learned to do in the Russian Federation do not exist in Tajikistan at all, the equipment necessary for exercising their newly acquired skills is unavailable, or the salaries they are offered are too low for their qualifications.

Another impediment to successful return is the extremely low participation of the return migrants in reintegration support programmes. Only a marginal 5 per cent of the respondents stated that they sought help from specialized organizations – State or non-State – that provide reintegration assistance through vocational training, welfare benefits, certification of skills or microcredits. More than half of the migrants in our sample said that they simply did not know of any such support services, but dissatisfaction with the conditions set by the reintegration programmes, which often require additional expenses, was another frequent reason for not availing. As a result, majority of the migrant workers with re-entry bans in our sample are poorly reintegrated into the Tajik economy and fail to profit from their migration experience. Without a single exception, all respondents who were close to the expiry of their re-entry bans stated that they would go to the Russian Federation again as soon as they are allowed to. Instead of taking steps towards a sustainable return, most migrant workers choose to remain in their economically vulnerable situation and await the end of their ban

to re-enter the Russian Federation. A number of measures are thus necessary to decrease their vulnerability and draw on their potential, as follows:

- (a) Build knowledge of Russian laws and regulations among Tajik migrant workers in order to prevent re-entry bans and avoid irregularity;
- (b) Raise awareness of the dangers of irregular migration in order to discourage migrant workers from taking this risk;
- (c) Promote cooperation among migration authorities, specifically for the purpose of ensuring that migrants are properly informed about their legal status before they attempt to depart for the Russian Federation again;
- (d) Implement early-warning mechanisms to inform Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans about their status before they leave for the Russian Federation;
- (e) Increase awareness about existing reintegration opportunities to promote return migrants' economic reintegration;
- (f) Immediate assistance at the border for migrants who have been expelled or turned down at Russian airports, because they form the most vulnerable category;
- (g) Develop income-generating activities that draw on the skills of migrant workers with re-entry bans that are often not put into use but which could lead to new economic opportunities in Tajikistan;
- (h) Use reintegration programmes as a means to prevent further irregular migration because especially vulnerable migrants are prone to trafficking and smuggling;
- (i) Create employment opportunities abroad in countries other than the Russian Federation, since many Tajik labour migrants are potentially interested in migrating to other countries but do not have the necessary networks.



I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

“While I was working in Russia, I was able to support my family financially. Now that I can’t go back, I cannot guarantee this any more because the salaries here are too low. It’s hard to live with the thought that you’re not able to support your family, especially when the kids grow up and need money for school and clothing.”

– 49-year-old male return migrant, Dushanbe

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent civil war left the Tajik economy in ruins, labour migration to the Russian Federation became the preferred livelihood strategy of many Tajik households. Due to the low salaries and lack of jobs in Tajikistan, especially in rural areas, an increasing number of Tajiks left to work in the Russian Federation in order to support their families back home. Seasonal labour migration has become a widespread phenomenon, with one in four families having at least one member working abroad (ILO, 2010). Their remittances make up a significant portion of the GDP – recent estimates pin the net remittance inflow at around 40 per cent of Tajikistan’s GDP, making it one of the world’s most remittance-dependent countries (World Bank, 2012). The Russian Federation is by far the most preferred destination of Tajik migrant workers, with over 90 per cent of them emigrating to the former Soviet republic because of the visa-free regime, the significantly higher salaries in the Federation, and the widespread need for unskilled labour following the construction boom and economic upswing in Russian cities. The Federal Migration Service (FMS) of the Russian Federation estimates that 1.15 million Tajiks are currently residing in the country (Federal Migration Service, 2013a), many of whom provide livelihoods for their families while their remittances keep the Tajik economy afloat.

This situation, however, has made many Tajik households fully dependent on labour migration. Remittances have become vital for covering even these families’ most basic needs, and once this money flow dries up, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to make ends meet. Financial dependence on employment in the Russian Federation thus leaves Tajik migrant workers and their families especially prone to economic vulnerability when the opportunity to work there is lost. During the last two years, IOM Tajikistan recorded a significant increase in the number of migrants facing this problem, which is due to the Russian Federation’s tightened control over irregular migration. As a result of recent changes to legislation, the number of foreign nationals who are banned from re-entering Russian territory because they violated migration legislation and administrative regulations has increased significantly. Because of infringements of the law and administrative regulations committed during a previous stay in the Russian Federation, Tajik migrant workers – who often return home to their families seasonally – are denied re-entry and, therefore, cannot resume work in the country. Due to the length of time involved – in most cases, the re-entry ban is imposed for a period of three years – migrant workers often have to alter their plans and look for new sources of income, since employment in the Federation has ceased to be an option for the foreseeable future. However, since economic hardship, in many cases, was the very reason for migrating in the first place, these migrant workers often face substantial problems with finding alternative livelihood sources in Tajikistan.

What makes the problem all the more pressing is the increasing number of re-entry bans imposed on Tajik migrant workers. A list of Tajik nationals with re-entry bans from December 2012 that was forwarded to IOM Tajikistan by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation counts more than 42 thousand names. In a recent press release, the FMS stated that the list, which currently has the names of 180 thousand foreign citizens, will soon be expanded to 300 thousand foreigners who will not be allowed to enter the country because of violations of Russian law (Interfax, 2013). In addition, the FMS stated that it has identified around 400 thousand Tajik citizens whose status in the Russian Federation is irregular, and are thus potentially subject to re-entry bans (Federal Migration Service, 2013b). It is not only the mere number of banned migrant

workers that will inevitably lead to difficulties; migrant workers' lack of awareness about the re-entry ban often constitutes an even bigger problem. Large numbers of Tajik migrant workers turned to IOM Tajikistan for help because they were unexpectedly faced with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation either at the Russian border or upon arrival at Russian airports, that is, they did not receive prior notice of the bans, such as when they last left the Russian Federation. A hotline set up by IOM for migrant workers receives up to 50 phone enquiries about re-entry bans on average per day, as more and more Tajik migrant workers become worried about being denied re-entry to the Russian Federation and losing their employment opportunities there. The fear of receiving a re-entry ban became the principal concern among Tajik migrant workers who often completely rely on income earned in the Russian Federation.

The accounts of IOM staff involved in providing legal support to migrants with re-entry bans paint an alarming picture of their and their families' economic situation, now that labour migration to the Russian Federation as the main income-earning strategy is no longer feasible. To date, no baseline information exists on the socioeconomic situation and reintegration needs of this particularly vulnerable group. The objective of our report is to provide this baseline information by investigating the problems, vulnerabilities and economic opportunities of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation. It looks at how the re-entry bans have affected the migrants' economic and social situation, how it has changed their future plans and how they cope with this unforeseen situation. The study also investigates the migrants' reintegration potentials and needs through an assessment of the entire migration cycle, and provides evidence and recommendations for necessary measures that help decrease the vulnerability of migrant workers with re-entry bans. It is an exploratory study that primarily uses a collection of testimonies gathered through interviews that highlight the nature of the problems experienced by the banned migrant workers. Since no prior records of such accounts exist, the baseline information this study provides will help in understanding the scope of the phenomenon in order to address this issue through policy development. Although a countrywide quantitative survey is not performed at this stage of the research, the interviews with migrants with re-entry bans provide a better understanding of the problem and serve as a starting point for further research.

This exploratory study adopts a qualitative approach to understanding the problem. It provides in-depth descriptions of the migration histories, current socioeconomic statuses and future plans of migrant workers with re-entry bans. To achieve this goal, the study relies largely on interviews with members of the target group. This way, not only factual data, but also migrants' opinions about the issue could be gathered. Two methods were used. Structured interviews based on a three-stage questionnaire were first carried out either face-to-face or over the telephone, covering a sample of 102 migrants with re-entry bans living in different rural and non-rural regions of Tajikistan. Afterwards, two focus group discussions based on semi-structured questionnaires were conducted in Dushanbe and Kulob to gather additional information about and insights into these migrants' reintegration needs and potentials. Data from secondary sources were used to further define the context of the research problem, and expert interviews with IOM legal consultants were carried out to collect information on the legal aspect of the re-entry ban to the Russian Federation. Based on these sources, the study provides evidence that significant numbers of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans face considerable economic hardship upon return to their home country. The low salaries and the lack of jobs in Tajikistan leave them and their families prone to poverty, while the various skills they earned while working in the Russian Federation can hardly be put into use back home. Economic reintegration remains the largest problem, with a vast majority of the migrant workers counting the days until their re-entry ban expires and they are allowed to go back to the Russian Federation.

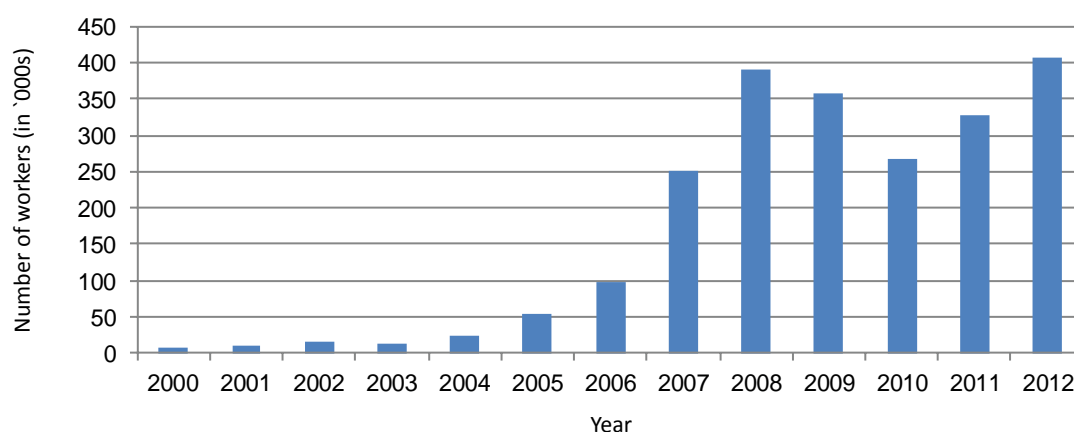
I.2 BACKGROUND

The labour migration of its citizens is not a new occurrence for Tajikistan. During the Soviet Union era, urbanization, industrialization and forced relocation were already leading to considerable migratory movements on Tajik territory. However, it was only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent Tajik Civil War between 1992 and 1997, that migration became the widespread phenomenon it is today. The transition to a new economic system, followed by a devastating civil war, ruined the already weak Tajik economy. Unemployment, inflation and poverty rates soared, leaving the country (which relied heavily on subsidies from Moscow) in a position unable to provide all of its citizens with adequate jobs and income. On

the other hand, Tajik independence also meant newly won mobility for its citizens, who before were subject to a strict Soviet residency regime that restricted migration and travel. After the Union's dissolution, borders became increasingly porous, and agreements within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to allow visa-free crossing of borders between Tajikistan and the Russian Federation led to an unprecedented increase in migration. When labour migration was found to be a viable economic coping mechanism, more and more (predominantly) young Tajik males moved to the Russian Federation to work, sending home remittances to support their families.

The Russian Federation became Tajik labour migrants' most preferred destination country for various reasons. The migrants could draw on existing ties with Tajik communities living in the Federation to find work and housing. In addition, many Tajiks who were educated during Soviet times speak Russian, the lingua franca of the former Soviet Union. While the visa-free regime makes, initial entry to the Russian Federation relatively easy for Tajik citizens, permits to live and work within the Federation need to be acquired subsequently. However, the main reason why a vast majority (more than 90%) of all Tajik labour migrants choose to seek employment in the Russian Federation is its continued high demand for labour, especially manual labour in the construction sector. After a long and hard economic transition following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an industrialized Russian Federation experienced an economic boom that led to an increase in demand for unskilled labour. The Russian population is rapidly ageing and the birth rate remains very low, resulting in a labour shortage that requires large-scale labour migration to feed the demand (Ivakhnyuk, 2009). Tajik and other (mainly) Central Asian migrant workers in the Russian Federation fill this gap and, provided that the country's economic and political situation does not change, will continue to do so in the years to come.

Figure 1: Tajik Migrant Workers in the Russian Federation, 2000–2012*



*Based on the number of issued work permits and patents.

Source: Russian Federal State Statistics Service, Russian Federal Migration Service.

The Russian Federation's demand for labour and the relatively high salaries paid for unskilled work attract predominantly young, male Tajiks, who increasingly do not see a future in their country employment-wise. All studies on Tajik migration have come to the conclusion that the main driving forces behind labour mobility to the Russian Federation are unemployment and the low salaries in Tajikistan (International Labour Organization, 2010). Although the Tajik economy experienced robust growth during the past decade, which contributed to a significant reduction in poverty, Tajikistan remains the poorest country in Central Asia. Largely dependent on the export of cotton and aluminium, its economy took a severe hit during the global economic crisis (World Bank, 2012), while persistent widespread corruption impeded the creation of new jobs, as small and medium size businesses suffered from the poor investment climate. Because the consistently high birth rate further increases the job shortage, many Tajiks embrace labour migration as the most appealing employment opportunity; Tajiks are, in fact, encouraged to do so by their Government. The National Strategy for Labour Migration of the Citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan Abroad for 2011–2015 aims to facilitate labour migration, which is seen as beneficial to Tajik economy and society because it raises standards of living, thanks to migrants' remittances.

Indeed, remittances play a preponderant role in Tajik economy. Adding up to 40 per cent of Tajikistan's GDP, their positive impact on families cannot be underestimated. Their leveraging effect on the financial situation of Tajik households helped halving the poverty rate during the last decade. The impact of the global economic crisis that resulted in a decline in remittances was widely felt across the country by households that heavily depended on remittances to sustain their livelihoods (World Bank, 2012). The money sent home by labour migrants to be managed by their families is used for various purposes, but mainly to cover basic family needs, house repairs and reconstruction, and costly ceremonies like weddings (Khakimov and Mahmadbekov, 2009). This explains why labour migration in Tajikistan is hardly ever an individual decision. In most cases, families influence the migration decision-making process and provide the necessary money for the migrant's trip (Khakimov and Mahmadbekov, 2009). Since the majority of Tajik migrants only work seasonally in the Russian Federation, returning home during winter, family ties remain strong, as reflected in the high percentage of migrant workers who send remittances home on a regular basis.

Labour migration to the Russian Federation, on the other hand, involves various risks for Tajik labour migrants. Studies show that more than 70 per cent of these migrants are prone to various forms of trafficking because of their irregular status in the Federation (ILO, 2010). The visa-free regime makes it easy to enter the country, but many Tajik migrant workers choose to not go through the required registration procedure and the complicated work permit issuance process, staying and working in the Russian Federation only in partial compliance with the law. In an effort to simplify the requirements and procedures of labour migration for citizens of CIS countries, the Russian Federation started gradually reforming its legislation since 2007, which helped increase the share of "regulars" among migrant workers. Nevertheless, the problem of irregular migration remains pressing, with studies showing that only 60 per cent of Tajik migrants are working legally in the Russian Federation (Khakimov and Mahmadbekov, 2009). In accordance with the State Migration Policy Concept Paper (adopted in 2012) and its Implementation Plan, a series of legislative changes were introduced to enhance immigration control measures and strengthen liability for repeated violations of administrative regulations and migration legislation. Sanctions imposed on offenders range from financial penalties to the classification of their residence or sojourn as "undesirable." As a result, the number of foreign nationals who have been banned from entering the Russian Federation grew from 55,397 in 2012 to 242,170 in 2013 (Federal Migration Service, 2013c). On the implementation level, the Central Database on Foreign Nationals keeps records of foreign nationals properly staying in the Russian Federation, as well as records of their past entries, including information on their legal violations and existing bans on their entry to the country, if any. Overall coordination of the database is managed by the Border Control Service, with 11 State agencies having the power to impose entry bans on foreign nationals.

Press releases announcing further increases in the number of re-entry bans issued are becoming more frequent, with a predicted growth of more than 50 per cent of a list that already counts 180 thousand names of foreign, mostly Central Asian, citizens. For migrants affected by the re-entry ban, two main difficulties can be identified. First and foremost, a large majority of them are not aware of their ban to re-enter the Russian Federation. These affected migrants are not formally notified of the measure – that is, they are added to the list of foreign citizens with re-entry bans without prior notice or warning. Hence, many return home to Tajikistan at the end of the work season and are subsequently turned away at the Russian border or at Russian airports when they try to re-enter the country to resume work.

Confirmation that one is under a re-entry ban needs to be obtained directly from the Border Control Service of the Russian Federation, which makes it difficult for Tajik citizens to check their status. The list of Tajik citizens under a re-entry ban issued by the Russian Federal Security Service (or FSB, "Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti") is shared with the National Security Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan. However, the Russian FSB does not provide updated versions of the list on a regular basis, which makes the information available from the National Security Committee outdated in many cases. To date, the Tajik Border Guards still lack a technical solution to inform migrant workers of their re-entry bans prior to their return to the Russian Federation, which would save them costly ticket expenses. So far, the most viable solution provided by the Tajik Migration Service and IOM Tajikistan and its Migration Support Centres is to respond to individual requests of migrant workers to check their respective statuses on the latest list provided by the Russian FSB, and help them draft letters to the Russian Government to inquire about their statuses in case the information provided by the list is not recent enough.

The second – and even more pressing – problem for Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation is the loss of employment opportunity in that country for a prolonged period of time. This has severe consequences for these migrants and their family's socioeconomic well-being, since they have no choice but to return to Tajikistan, where economic prospects are lacking. The remittances that previously covered the family's basic needs now have to be supplanted by other forms of income; salaried employment is rarely an option, as the lack of adequate jobs is, in many cases, the very factor that drives migrants to work in the Russian Federation in the first place. Due to the scale of the phenomenon, the socioeconomic situation and reintegration needs of the particularly vulnerable group of migrants with re-entry bans need to be assessed. Especially because this category of migrants continues to grow in number, their problems and needs need to be addressed in order to decrease their economic and social vulnerability and maximize the benefits from their past migration experiences. This study draws on detailed qualitative work with an underresearched target group in order to gain insights into their problems and potentials. It examines the migration, starting with migrant workers' reasons for migrating, then focusing on their experiences working in the Russian Federation, followed by an exploration of returned migrants' reintegration experience. In doing so, this report is able to highlight opportunities for Tajikistan to benefit from the sustainable return of its migrants with re-entry bans, which would help move the development of the country forward. Most importantly, it points out the difficulties and hardships these migrants face and recommends ways to address these issues through policy and project development.

1.3. UNDERSTANDING RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

The return of migrants to their home societies has recently gained heightened interest from researchers and policymakers alike. The nexus between migration and development, widely recognized by all stakeholders, since recently has also included return migration as a focus of interest. Whereas neoclassical theories of migration tend to view the return of migrants as a consequence of their failed experiences abroad, and thus draw a negative picture of return and the returnee, transnationalism and social network theories highlight the contribution of returnees to the development of their home country. Since they bring with them skills and capital they acquired abroad, the phenomenon of brain drain is reversed and return migrants become important actors of change. Return is not seen by these new perspectives as the abrupt end of the migration cycle, but as a next step where individual experiences, skills and values can be transferred to the country of origin (Cassarino, 2004). However, just like the benefits of emigration, the benefits of return migration are highly context-specific and depend on a wide array of factors, ranging from the experiences earned abroad to the migrant's preparedness for return and his/her reintegration. While return remains the least well understood of all the stages of the migration process, important efforts have been made to shed more light on the conditions of successful and beneficial return of migrants. This study will draw on those valuable insights.

Return migration is defined by Gmelch (1980) as the “movement of emigrants back to their homeland to resettle.” It needs to be distinguished from circular migration, and three main types have been identified: (a) temporary return, in which the returnee goes back to his/her home country for a limited period of time; (b) forced return, in which the returnee intends permanent migration but is forced to return; and (c) voluntary return, in which the returnee chooses to return of his/her own free will. With each type of return migration, one has to cope with the problem that the line between forced and voluntary return is often very difficult to draw. It is hardly ever unambiguous, and distinguishing cases where return is a conscious choice from ones where it was forced upon, through either personal circumstances or government regulations, is always context-dependent. This typological problem is all the more pre-eminent because research stresses that the degree of voluntariness of return is among the main factors of a successful and sustainable return, and determines the role that returnees can play at home as actors of positive change (APC Observatory on Migration, 2013). Cassarino (2004) argues that “the propensity of migrants to become actors of change and development at home depends on the extent to which they have provided for the preparation of their return [...] in terms of *resource mobilisation* and *preparedness*.” Whereas the resource mobilization of a returnee largely depends on his/her migration experiences, his/her preparedness in terms of the willingness and readiness to return is hardly ever given in the case of a forced return.

Latest research on the challenges and opportunities presented by return migration stress that all phases of the migration cycle have to be taken into account in evaluating the potential for successful reintegration and sustainable return. Three interrelated elements shaping reintegration have been pointed out (Cassarino, 2008): (a) the context of reintegration in the home country of the migrant, particularly in terms of the existence of adequate return and reintegration programmes; (b) the type of migration and the duration of stay abroad, which should neither be too long, in order not to lose social networks back home, nor too short, in order to acquire sufficient human and financial capital abroad; and (c) the factors and conditions that motivated return and, thus, affect the preparation for it. Migration management policies around the globe are increasingly starting to encompass return migration, and the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme administered by IOM, in cooperation with its Member States, draws on the insight that the sustainability of a migrant's return and his/her reintegration depends on his/her involvement in the return decision-making process. Only when coupled with assistance that creates socioeconomic opportunities and prevents the exclusion of returnees can return be sustainable and lead to social and economic reintegration. Studies have shown that in situations where such assistance is not available, returnees are likely to re-migrate because various socioeconomic factors pressure them to do so. The challenging situation poorly reintegrated migrants find themselves in often even serves as a driver for irregular migration, which is perceived as the only opportunity left (Schuster and Majidi, 2013). This further increases the vulnerability of such migrants, making them prone to various forms of trafficking.

Previous studies have assessed the impact of return migration to Tajikistan; so far, however, there has been no account of the effects of involuntary return. A study by the International Labour Organization conducted in 2009 showed that while returned migrants represented a fairly small proportion of the Tajik population, they were still able to make valuable contributions to the country's development. Their education level was typically higher than that of the general population, and a large majority of them acquired additional skills abroad that they could put into use back home in Tajikistan. About half of the returnees in the sample started and developed business or entrepreneurial activities, as they brought back with them not only valuable skills but also great capacity for innovation and change (ILO, 2010). However, only a fraction of the returnees who participated in the survey returned to their home countries due to an administrative expulsion or some other form of government regulation that hindered them from staying abroad. Their preparedness and potential to be actors of change consequently differed greatly from that of migrant workers with re-entry bans. Research on involuntary return has led to the assumption that Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans to their former host countries have difficulties reintegrating back home and are prone to economic vulnerabilities, impeding a sustainable return that would be beneficial for them, as well as their home country. Through a detailed qualitative examination of the full migration cycle, this study tests this hypothesis and provides recommendations for successful reintegration and sustainable return.

I.4. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out by IOM in Tajikistan from June to August 2013. It utilizes information gained from intensive qualitative research that encompasses in-depth interviews with Tajik labour migrants with re-entry bans. All the migrant workers interviewed had previously been working in the Russian Federation and were subsequently put under re-entry bans that have prevented them from going back since then. They all currently live in Tajikistan, and many still do not know when their respective, individual bans will be lifted. These migrants found out about their re-entry ban one way or another: several of them were expelled from the Russian Federation; others were turned down by immigration officers at Russian airports; and some found out about their status after consulting IOM Tajikistan.

Purposive sampling was used to select the survey respondents. These respondents were handpicked from an IOM database of migrants with re-entry bans who had previously turned to IOM Tajikistan for support and consultation. They were chosen for their likelihood to provide valuable information about their general situation and reintegration experience. Special attention was given to ensure that the sample reflected the diversity of Tajik migrant workers, who come from various regions of the country, belong to diverse age groups and have different family statuses. Ensuring a gender-balanced sample, however, turned out to be

impossible; only three female respondents could be secured throughout the conduct of the interviews. In total, 116 migrants with re-entry bans were surveyed through two types of interviews: individual and focus group.

The individual interviews covered a sample of 102 respondents, 100 of them male and 2 female. The interviews were administered either face-to-face or on the telephone, when long distances made face-to-face interviews too costly and inconvenient. A standardized, three-stage questionnaire with a combination of fact-based and opinion-based questions was developed and tested for this purpose, and interviewers were trained in order to ensure valid data. The structured interviews collected the main demographic characteristics of the respondents and details of their migration histories, as well as their future plans and intentions. The whole migration cycle was taken into account, starting with the migrant's initial motivation to work abroad, followed by his/her experiences in the Russian Federation and a subsequent account of his/her return and reintegration in Tajikistan. Although considered a qualitative study on the whole, some of the data were subjected to quantitative assessment (that is, data gathered through a questionnaire with mostly closed-ended questions), the responses to which could be entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and subsequently analysed. Interviews were conducted with respondents from all parts of Tajikistan in order to check for differences between the challenges faced by migrants from urban areas and those faced by migrants from rural areas. The age distribution of the sample was designed to reflect the age profile of Tajik migrant workers, who are predominantly youths less than 30 years of age (ILO, 2010). Some 35 per cent of the respondents were single, while the rest were married. Approximately 60 per cent of the sample had children.

Figure 2: District of residence

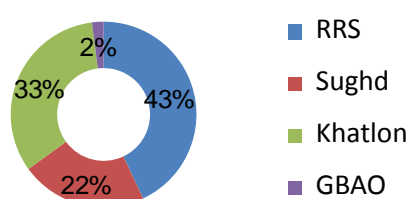
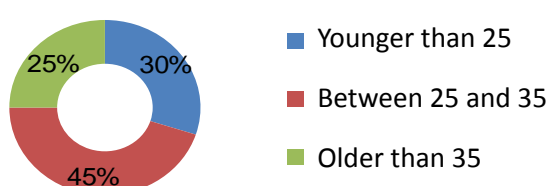


Figure 3: Age distribution



For the focus group interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed that gave emphasis on the migrants' return and reintegration experience. Two focus groups were conducted – one in Dushanbe, with eight participants, and one in Kulob, with six. As with the individual interviews, the participants of the focus group were selected through purposive sampling. Except for one participant in the focus group in Kulob, all of them were male. Findings from the individual interviews were checked against those from the focus groups, enhancing data validity and improving data analysis. The semi-structured questionnaire used in the focus group discussions allowed respondents more freedom in their answers and permitted them to discuss their views and personal experiences of return and reintegration. Responses from the participants in the two focus groups are woven into the narrative of the report. Age, gender and place of residence are indicated with their quoted statements. In-depth qualitative data gathered from the two types of interviews are used in the following chapters to analyse the socioeconomic status and reintegration needs and potentials of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans.

This survey provides a detailed qualitative account of the respondents' situation. A quantitative analysis would have provided more precise conclusions, but such could not be conducted at this stage because of limited time and resources. Some further limitations have to be noted. For example, while the IOM database of migrant workers with re-entry bans who sought support through its hotline proved to be a rich source of contact details that allowed controlled purposive sampling, it also allowed the possibility of bias. To be specific, because no migrant workers were interviewed who did not seek legal support and information about the length of their re-entry ban, and, therefore, showed limited interest in going back to the Russian Federation, the sample may have been biased towards migrants with strong intentions to resume work in the Federation. In addition, a significant number of migrants in this database could not be reached due to inactive phone numbers. This might indicate that the migrant has already left for another country to work there. Because these migrants' situation and opinions could not be taken into account, the results of the survey may be skewed towards a portion of the target group that did not have sufficient resources to migrate to countries other than the Russian Federation.

Figure 4: Map of Tajikistan



I.5. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The structure of this report is intended to reflect the different phases of the migration cycle. It starts by contextualizing the return experience by taking into account the migrants' socioeconomic situation prior to leaving for the Russian Federation, as well as their motivation for migrating. The study then provides a detailed description of the migrants' situation in the Russian Federation, focusing on their occupations and their relationship with the countries' government authorities. It then turns its focus on return: the reasons and drivers behind it, what the process has been like and how the migrants' economic and social reintegration is manifesting. The study ends by presenting conclusions and recommendations.



2. TAJIK MIGRANT WORKERS WITH RE-ENTRY BANS TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

2.1. MOVING ABROAD

2.1.1. Reasons for migrating

The initial motivation for moving abroad is often an indicator of whether successful return and reintegration is likely in the future. When migrants leave because of a lack of economic prospects in Tajikistan, it is questionable whether they would come back and settle down for good if the situation that led them to migrate in the first had not changed. Asked about their reasons for migrating to the Russian Federation, many of the interviewees gave a response that is all too familiar among Tajik migrant workers. More than two thirds of the migrants sampled in the survey stated that the lack of jobs and low salaries in Tajikistan were the main drivers of their migration. The lack of viable economic prospects in their home country, reinforced by the accounts of family or community members' successful migration experience in the Russian Federation, served as the main motivation for them to try their luck there. Struggling with poor socioeconomic conditions and trying to escape their "difficult lives," as several of them put it, the respondents saw labour migration to the Russian Federation as the most feasible option to earn enough money to support themselves and their families.

Figure 5: Financial situation prior to migration

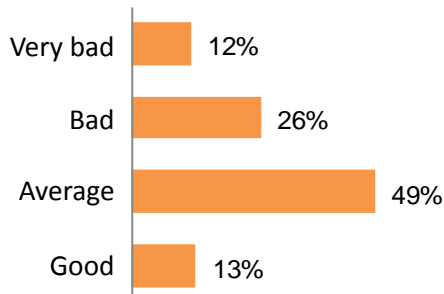
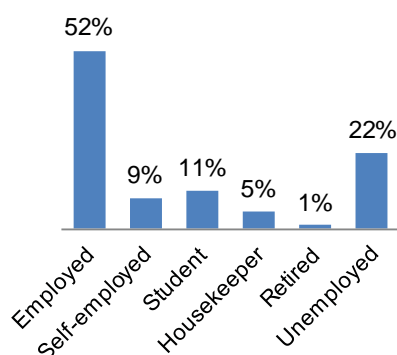


Figure 6: Occupational status



Although most of the respondents have a comparatively high level of education, with only a handful of interviewees not having finished secondary school, they faced considerable economic hardship in Tajikistan and were unable to secure decent jobs with decent pay. More than 20 per cent of the respondents were unemployed before migrating, and more than a third described their financial situation prior to migration as "bad" or "very bad." However, a lack of economic prospects was not the respondents' only reason for migrating. Some respondents sought work in the Russian Federation to make additional savings, either to

afford expensive ceremonies like weddings and projects like the house construction or repairs, or to start a business. Earning money for the medical treatment of family members was another frequently stated reason.

“I had to leave Tajikistan because my brother had severe pneumonia and needed money for medical treatment. My parents were already pensioners at that time, and the money I earned was just not enough, neither to pay for the treatment nor to afford anything for myself.”

Female, 44, Kulob

“My parents were ill, so I had to go to Russia for work. Since I am the eldest son in our family, I needed to earn enough money for their medical treatment and to support my younger brothers. Russia was the only place where I could earn this kind of money.”

Male, 31, Kulob

Respondents who described their financial situation before migrating as “good” remain a small minority among those who left to provide for themselves and their families because they saw no economic future in Tajikistan. Particularly in rural areas, where the lack of jobs is more prevalent than in the cities, migration to the Russian Federation was seen as the only economic option left – not only for the migrants themselves, but also for their families. Although the majority of the migrants in the sample left at a young age and many had no direct family responsibility because they were single, they felt a sense of duty to care for their parents and their extended families.

“I am one of eight sons in our family, so there was no other possibility for me than to migrate to Russia. We needed the money to improve our financial situation.”

Male, 34, Kulob

Many also relied on the help of their families to produce the necessary money for migrating to the Russian Federation. For example, a fifth of the respondents stated that their families helped them buy their plane tickets out of Tajikistan. This mutual help continued when the migrants arrived in the Russian Federation.

2.1.2. Occupation in the Russian Federation

For most of the migrants sampled in the survey, migration to the Russian Federation was well planned in advance. Two thirds of them were able to secure jobs either before or immediately after their arrival in the country, because many of them were helped by family members or friends already living there. The professions they worked in are typical for Tajik migrant workers. A vast majority worked on construction sites or in factories, and most of the other professions stated also fall under the general category “unskilled manual labour.” The main purpose of going to the Russian Federation was to earn money, which explains why only four respondents pursued vocational training courses or university studies in the country. An alarming finding of the survey is that more than 80 per cent of the migrant workers only had informal contracts, that is, oral agreements with their employer. Without a formal written contract, the migrant workers were prone to various forms of exploitation and abuses of their rights, a widespread problem among foreign workers in the Russian Federation (Human Rights Watch, 2009)

2.1.3. Remittances

Sending home money is part and parcel of labour migration, moreso for Tajik migrant workers, who often work in the Russian Federation on a seasonal basis and send as much of their salaries as possible to their families. Their wages allow them to accumulate capital that would not otherwise be available to them in Tajikistan and

send large shares of their gains to their families through either official or unofficial channels. Remittances represent the most significant financial flow to developing countries and by far exceed the amount of official development assistance that these countries receive (Sutherland, 2013), being beneficial both at the national and household levels, where they reduce poverty and serve as the major, if not only, source of income. This key role of remittances is reflected in the findings of this survey, in which nearly all participants stressed the importance that the money they sent home had as a source of income.

One in two migrants sampled in our survey sent remittances on a monthly basis, and only five respondents stated that they never sent money to their families. The volume of money sent is significant in the Tajik context, where the per capita GDP amounts to approximately USD 70 a month (World Bank, 2012). Roughly 75 per cent of the migrants sent between USD 100 and 500 per month each to their families, and some even managed to send more than USD 1,000. Regardless of the amount sent, the intended purpose of the money sent was, in 80 per cent of cases, the satisfaction of basic family needs, that is, food, clothing and other everyday necessities. Only a few sent remittances to pay for the education of their children or to be invested in land or housing. This finding demonstrates the important role that remittances play in reducing poverty and as a source of steady income in a country where well-paying jobs are scarce. However, it also highlights the fact that only a small portion of the money sent home is invested or used in income-generating activities. For many, a large share of the remittances is spent on consumption and the improvement of living standards, while a more sustainable use of the money is either not feasible or not desired. This leaves households largely dependent on the steady inflow of remittances from family members abroad. The study later on shows how the economic situation of these families deteriorates once the money flow stops.

Figure 7: Average monthly remittance amount

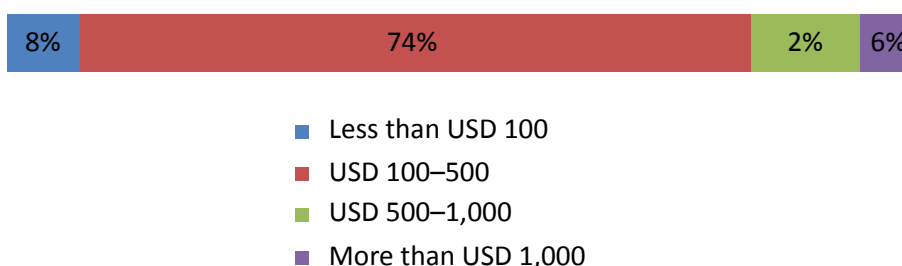
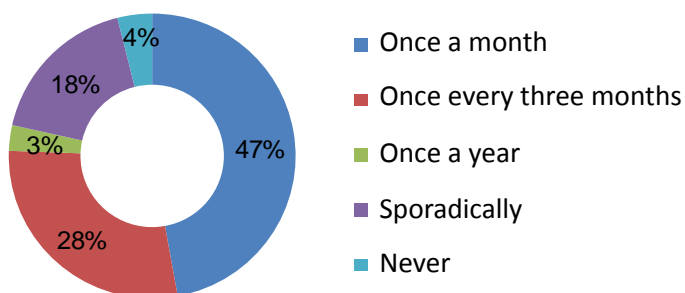


Figure 8: Frequency of remittance-sending



2.1.4. Legal status and routes into irregularity

Examining the migrant workers' status in terms of the legality of their stay and employment in the Russian Federation is one of the key components of this study in understanding the reasons behind their re-entry ban. Due to the visa-free regime between the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, a valid internal passport is the only requirement for Tajiks to enter the Russian Federation legally. However, if the stay in the Federation exceeds 90 days and if work is intended, further steps need to be taken in order to not slip into irregularity. For various reasons, many migrant workers do not take these necessary steps, foregoing the required procedure.

The lack of knowledge about laws and regulations pertaining to their stay and employment in the Russian Federation may be pointed out as a main factor. Asked whether or not they breached any rule or regulation concerning their stay and employment in the Federation, two thirds of the migrant workers in our survey stated that they were in full compliance; several of them said they were not sure; while only 25 per cent responded outright that they, indeed, breached some regulations or laws. When the questions went into greater detail and the migrants were asked if they had acquired all documents necessary for staying and working in the Russian Federation, it became obvious that a majority, in fact, did not work and stay in accordance with the law. Many, however, were merely unaware of the necessary procedures and required documents. This widespread lack of knowledge among migrant workers of the Federation's immigration laws has been pointed out in various studies on Tajik labour migration, and despite Russian efforts to simplify and liberalize migration legislation through the 2007 reforms, the number of legally working Tajik migrants remains relatively low at 60 per cent (Khakimov and Mahmadbekov, 2009). Another reason for the high rate of irregular migration into the Russian Federation is its still highly complicated and rigid migration law. The annual quotas for work permits distributed among companies are fixed and do not allow for adjustments to accommodate increases in manpower requirements, often leading to a shortage of work permits for companies in dire need of migrant workers. Because migrants want to take advantage of existing work opportunities, they choose to work illegally or obtain work patents instead, which is not in accordance with Russian law, as such is intended only for foreigners working for private individuals (e.g. babysitters, personal chauffeurs, housemaids and the like).

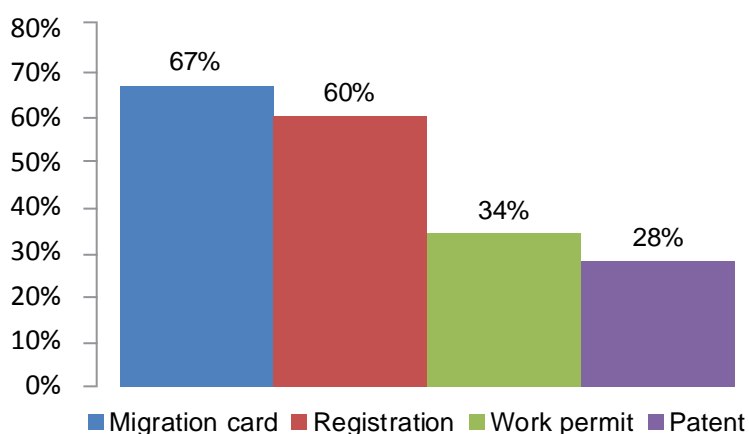
The main reason for the re-entry bans imposed on our sample of migrant workers is the lack of documents required for the legality of work and stay in the Russian Federation. Only 60 per cent of the respondents, according to their own statements, officially registered their place of residence during their stay in the country. The same percentage of interviewees reported that they obtained either a work permit or work patent, one of which is needed, depending on the type of work, in order to work legally in the Russian Federation. In this regard, our sample of migrants with re-entry bans is representative of the overall population of Tajik migrant workers, of whom only 60 per cent have the required documents (Khakimov and Mahmadbekov, 2009). An often-stated reason for the lack of proper registration common among migrant workers in the Russian Federation is the expensive registration fee, which the workers found unnecessary in the first place because they resided at their workplace and never left it. When asked why they did not obtain the required documents, other migrants in the sample said that either a "middleman" or their employer took care of it.

"When I came to Russia, I quickly found work. Then I paid a middleman to get me officially registered. The paperwork was too complicated for me, so I let him take care of this."

Male, 34, Kulob

In such cases, it is highly likely that not all necessary documents have been obtained and correctly filled out. Middlemen, in particular, as well as employers, are known to forge documents in order to cut costs and make more profit. One interviewee in our sample responded outright that he let someone forge all the required documents in order to avoid going through the long procedure.

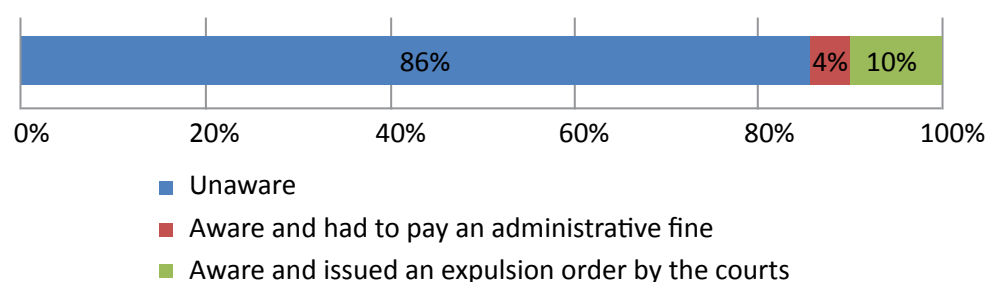
Figure 9: Document obtained while working in the Russian Federation



The fact that many interviewees did not know that they were not working or staying legally in the Russian Federation – either because they were not informed about the law or because they relied on others to acquire the necessary documents for them – explains why many of them were surprised when they found out about their ban to re-enter the country. Only after receiving an explanation of the proper procedure, which they failed to follow, and of the risks involved in letting middlemen or employers do the work, did they realize that their re-entry bans were indeed imposed because of their repeated infractions of the law.

Those who were aware of their irregular status were astonished by the Russian authorities' capability to find out about their non-compliance with the law. In many instances, respondents said that they felt they were "safe" because they were never stopped or controlled by Russian authorities during their stay in the Federation, and could therefore leave the country without being interrogated by border guards or issued a re-entry ban. Having entered the country legally – courtesy of the visa-free regime – these migrant workers thought that, as long as they did not leave their workplace and avoided contact with the Russian police and the Federal Migration Service, their lack of documents would be of no consequence. On their next attempt to enter the Russian Federation, however, they unexpectedly found out about their re-entry ban, and only after making a written enquiry at the Russian FMS to learn about the reason(s) for their re-entry ban did they realize that the Russian authorities were, in fact, well aware of their irregular status.

Figure 10: Migrants' awareness of any administrative procedure against them



A small group of respondents in our sample found out about their ban to re-enter the Russian Federation upon leaving the country. In several cases, a court issued an administrative expulsion order. The court clearly stated that they are not allowed to re-enter the country for five years because of repeated violations of Russian law. A respondent whose registration expired was detained by the Russian FMS and summoned before the court.

"The FMS staff stopped me on the street and requested to see my documents. Because my registration had [already been] expired [for] one day, they told me I had to come to the court the next day. There, they took my passport and placed me under detention until the following day, when they put me on a plane back to Tajikistan."

Male, 32, Kulob

While some of the migrants were expelled, several other interviewees were already aware of their re-entry bans even before leaving the country. Some had to pay administrative fines because they were missing documents or had other infringements of the law. Migrants committing an offence for the second time or remiss in paying a fine were issued re-entry bans of three years. At any rate, even some migrant workers who had previously been stopped and checked by the Russian authorities, and had to pay fines, were surprised to know that they had existing re-entry bans because they paid their fines on time and knew they committed an offence only once. As a result, only one out of five migrant workers in our survey stated that they knew for certain that they were banned from re-entering the Russian Federation when they last left the country. A large proportion of the respondents knew that their status in the Russian Federation was or had become irregular, with many of them thinking that they had succeeded in hiding this fact from the Russian authorities, believing that such irregular status was not sufficient to warrant a re-entry ban, or simply not knowing that such a measure was in force. Because of their poor knowledge of Russian migration laws and regulations –

and because not all cases of legal infringement require that the offender be issued an official notification of a re-entry ban – many migrants returned home with the misconception that they could later go back to and smoothly resume work in the Russian Federation.

After this brief account of the migrants' experiences in the Russian Federation, the following chapter will shed some light on the reasons behind their return to Tajikistan and their experiences upon return, in order to examine their socioeconomic situation after returning, as well as their reintegration needs and potentials and future plans.

2.2. Moving back home

2.2.1. Reasons for return

The migrants in our sample who were not expelled from the Russian Federation were asked about the reasons behind their return to Tajikistan. Nearly all of them made it clear that their return was intended to be a temporary one, with 85 per cent of the respondents saying that their initial plan was to go back to the Russian Federation after staying for a brief period in Tajikistan. Labour migration to the Federation is largely seasonal – although the number of Tajik migrant workers who stay for prolonged periods of time has been growing (ILO, 2010) – with most migrants returning to Tajikistan during the low season in winter, when there is less need for manual labourers, especially on construction sites. Many migrants in our sample expressed that, apart from this fact, there was no particular reason for their temporary return to Tajikistan: 60 per cent of them said that they would come home to see their families when they had finished work in the Russian Federation for the season and migrate back to the Federation again in the spring. Consequently, the re-entry ban came as a shock for most of them since they were not at all prepared nor did they intend to stay in Tajikistan for more than a couple of months.

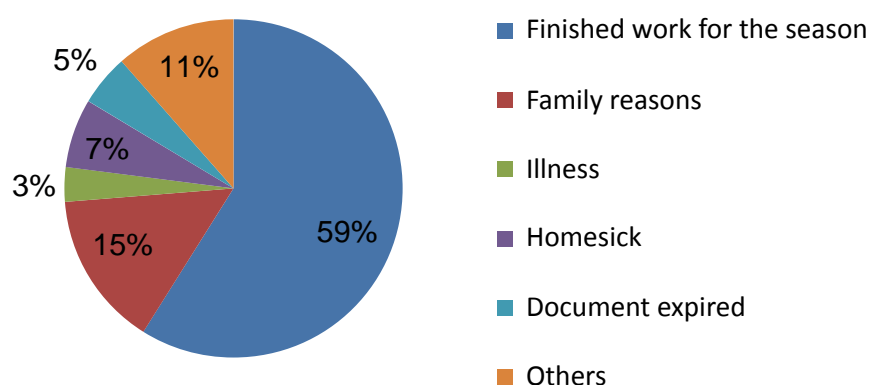
Return as part of the seasonal labour migration cycle was not the only reason given for coming back to Tajikistan. Many of the migrant workers in our sample pointed out special circumstances that led to their temporary homecoming. Family occasions like weddings and funerals, or, in some cases, the illness of family members, required some of them to come back. However, these migrant workers intended to stay home only for as long as necessary and planned to return to the Russian Federation afterwards. Still others had to come home because their documents had expired, leaving them no choice but to get new documents for their return to the Federation. Other respondents stated that they came back to Tajikistan for medical treatment.

“I have kidney stones, and since the treatment in Russia is very expensive, I decided to return to Tajikistan for the medical treatment. After my treatment was over, I wanted to take off to Russia again, but was turned down at the airport in Moscow because of my re-entry ban.”

Male, 31, Kulob

In all the cases mentioned, the return to Tajikistan was intended to be temporary. None of the migrants came home to settle down in their home country, that is, to live and work there permanently. Consequently, these migrant workers did not make any plans for a prolonged return, but instead focused on resuming work in the Russian Federation. Only a minority of the migrant workers in our sample returned to Tajikistan with the intention of staying for good. Some decided to leave the Russian Federation permanently because they could not find work, suffered from the harsh living conditions that migrant workers commonly have to endure there, or simply missed Tajikistan and wanted to come home. Additionally, two respondents returned because they wanted to continue their studies in Tajikistan. However, these cases remain a small minority among the large group of planned temporary returns.

Figure 11: Reasons for returning to Tajikistan other than expulsion from the Russian Federation



For the many migrant workers who were planning to go back to the Russian Federation but did not know about their re-entry bans, the notification about the bans came as a shock. Having left the country without knowing about their bans, their future plans made a 180-degree turn when they eventually found out that they could not go back to the Russian Federation for work. The migrant workers in our sample described the different ways they found out about their re-entry ban. In the best-case scenario, the migrant had an initial suspicion and contacted the IOM hotline to find out about his or her status. This way, the migrant avoided losing money paying for the expensive plane ticket to the Russian Federation and instead start planning on how to cope with the new situation. These cases, however, are rare, as most of the migrant workers sampled in our survey found out about their re-entry bans only after leaving Tajikistan anew, that is, at Russian border checkpoints or upon arrival at Russian airports. On the assumption that everything was in order, they bought plane tickets to the Russian Federation, only to be denied entry into the country. Consequently, these migrants could not leave the airport transit zone and had to buy tickets for the next flight back to Tajikistan.

“I found out about my re-entry ban at the airport in Samara. When I wanted to leave the transit zone, the Russian border guards stopped me and told me that I [was] not allowed to enter Russia and had to fly back to Tajikistan. I was stuck at the airport for two days, and then they put me on a plane and sent me back home.”

Male, 27, Dushanbe

Some of the migrant workers found out about their re-entry bans through the airline companies that were supposed to take them to the Russian Federation. Some of these airlines check, prior to departure, if any of their passengers is on the list of Tajik citizens with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation and inform those who are. Obviously, with only hours before their departure and with suitcases already packed, such news is hard to cope with and often leads to frustration, suspicion or outright denial among banned migrant workers. Some of the interviewees reported that they nevertheless boarded their flights despite such warning because they could or did not want to believe the bad news.

“My airline told me on the day of my departure that I [had] a re-entry ban to Russia. I thought they wanted to trick me into giving back my ticket so that they can resell it [at] a higher price, so I did not believe them and took off. But when I arrived at the Russian airport, they would not let me enter Russian territory, and I had to leave [on] the next flight back to Tajikistan.”

Male, 34, Kulob

Coming as a surprise to most of them, the ban to re-enter the Russian Federation had a decisive effect on the migrant workers' lives. For a large proportion of them, the ban meant having to change their plans and abandoning the idea of working in the Russian Federation to earn money for themselves and their families. The next chapter will describe how the migrants in our sample came to terms with this new situation and how the re-entry ban affected their and their families' socioeconomic situation.

2.2.2. Socioeconomic situation after return

The socioeconomic situation of migrant workers with re-entry bans cannot be fully described without a larger, representative sample and a more in-depth quantitative study. Nevertheless, the data gathered from the interviewed migrants' personal accounts provide a general understanding of their socioeconomic characteristics.

One of the initial assumptions of this survey was that migrant workers' financial situation typically change for the worse after return because steady income flow for themselves and their families could no longer be secured by working in the Russian Federation and sending home remittances. Instead, most of these migrants have no choice but to look for sources of income in a country that they left because of a lack of economic prospects. The findings of our survey correspond with this hypothesis in a compelling way. For the majority of those who came back to Tajikistan, whether as seasonal returnees or as expellees from the Russian Federation (around 9 out of 10 respondents) the re-entry bans caused socioeconomic deterioration. Only in a minority of cases did we witness an improvement of the migrant's situation, largely due to enhanced professional skills (made possible by working in the Russian Federation) that translated into new employment opportunities in Tajikistan. These cases, although only a relatively small portion of our sample, will be highlighted in the next chapter because they point out the potentials that need to be harnessed in order to ensure the successful and beneficial return of migrant workers with re-entry bans. Generally, and especially during the initial phase of return, however, the migrants' socioeconomic situation deteriorated.

The predominant picture drawn by our respondents of their first weeks after the return to Tajikistan is one of shock and worry, as they knew that they could not go back to work in the Russian Federation for at least another three years. During the first three months after return, more than 40 per cent of the migrant workers in our sample were unemployed and were struggling to come to terms with their situation.

"The re-entry ban upset me very much, because I cannot earn enough money for a living anymore. I stay with my parents and don't work since I'm psychologically depressed because of my situation."

Male, 34, Kulob

Many interviewees reported that they did not know how to cope with their new situation, as the re-entry ban turned all their future plans upside-down.

"The re-entry ban to Russia destroyed all my plans. I was building a house for my family, but now I simply don't have any money left to pay for the roof. Half of the house is already built thanks to the money I could send home from Russia, but now that I don't have this source of income any more, I am in despair."

Male, 34, Dushanbe

The first months after return are a decisive period for the overall success of return and reintegration, and many of the migrant workers in our sample stressed that their families were of vital help in overcoming the initial shock, even though they themselves had to struggle with the unforeseen situation.

"My parents were very upset when they heard that I was turned away at the airport in Moscow and that I have a re-entry ban. My mother even cried, because this meant a lot of problems for our financial situation. I myself am lost and don't know what to do. But my family and friends supported me throughout this time, which helped me a lot."

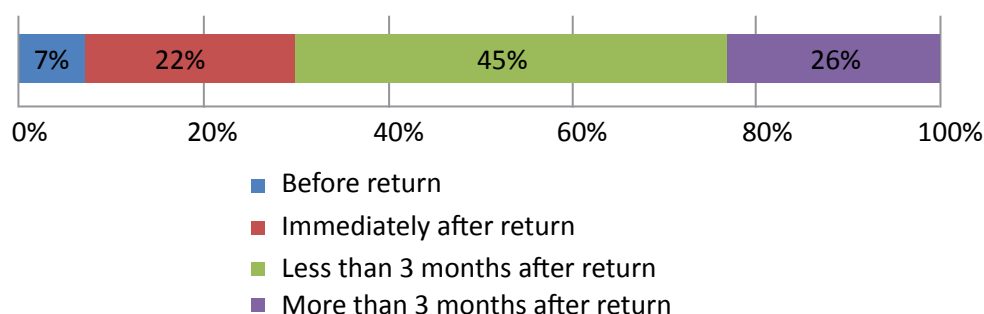
Male, 31, Kulob

Once the initial shock had faded away and the migrants came to terms with the fact that they would not be able to work again in the Russian Federation and would have to look for new sources of income, the situation improved slightly for many of our interviewees. Asked about their current employment status, 70 per cent said they were employed now, and only a quarter of them took more than three months to find a job. Being employed and having a source of income, however, does not necessarily solve these migrants' financial problems. Almost all interviewees complained about the low salaries in Tajikistan, which do not compare well to what they used to earn in the Russian Federation. No longer able to afford their previous living standards was one of the main problems voiced by our respondents. For their families who heavily relied on remittances, their new jobs in Tajikistan are hardly ever an adequate substitute because the migrants cannot support them to the same extent that they could when they were still working in the Russian Federation.

"If I were in Russia now, I would be able to sufficiently provide for my parents and my brothers. And most importantly, I would be able to save some money to get married, because I'm already 27 years old."

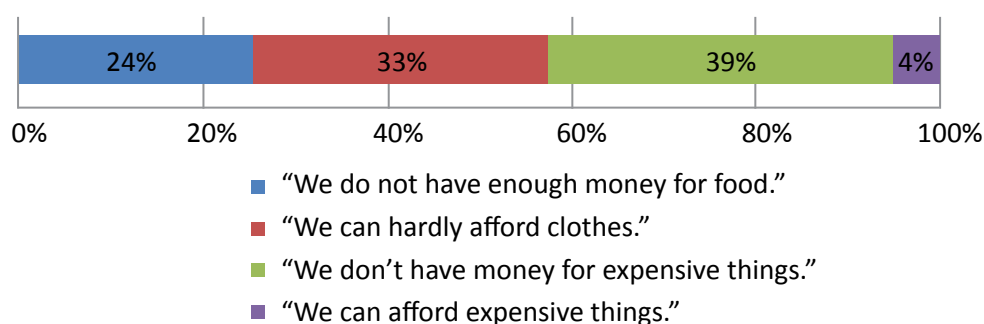
Male, 27, Kulob

Figure 12: Time it took for returnees to find a job in Tajikistan



For many, their new socioeconomic situation is not merely about readjusting to standards of living in Tajikistan. About 24 per cent of the migrants in our sample stated that their families are having difficulties affording enough food, and 33 per cent said that while their income is sufficient for food, it hardly allows them to buy new clothes and other everyday necessities. These numbers are alarming and show that for many, the re-entry ban leads to serious economic vulnerabilities and outright poverty. Because of the lack of jobs – which is particularly pre-eminent in rural areas – and low salaries that do not allow the breadwinner to sufficiently provide for his family (or at all), a substantial part of the migrant workers with re-entry bans sampled in our survey find themselves in a grave economic situation. Unlike in the Russian Federation, they see no economic prospects in their home country and feel stuck and incapable of fulfilling their role as provider to their families. This has severe consequences for their social and economic reintegration, which is examined in more detail in the following subsection.

Figure 13: Respondents' description of their families' situation



2.2.3. Reintegration needs and potentials

One of the main objectives of this study is to highlight the benefits of rendering the return of the migrant workers sustainable and successful. Since banned migrant workers cannot re-emigrate to the Russian Federation for at least three years, and because they face serious difficulties upon return, as this research shows, there is a need to conceive ways of easing these difficulties and promoting reintegration through policy development.

What does a successful and sustainable return entail in the case of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans? Most definitions of successful return tend to focus on the absence of re-emigration or the desire to re-emigrate; in a globalized world with increasing degrees of mobility, however, this is an increasingly unlikely scenario and does not take into account circular and seasonal migration, the latter being the most prevalent type in Tajikistan. Instead, sustainable return is best determined by three key factors: economic, social and psychosocial reintegration (APC Observatory on Migration, 2013). From the economic point of view, reintegration is successful if the returnee can provide for his or her own means of living and ensure his or her livelihood. Social reintegration may be framed in terms of social capital, that is, valuable social contacts and a functioning social network. Lastly, psychosocial reintegration relates to issues of identity, home and belonging, which are often affected by an extended absence from one's country of origin (Davids and Houte, 2008).

Psychosocial reintegration was only in a minority of cases perceived as problematic. In general, Tajik migrant workers have very few difficulties readjusting to their home society, since many of them have not been away for long periods of time, returning periodically before. Tajik culture and society remain an integral part of their identity despite staying in the Russian Federation. In fact, because of the widespread xenophobic attitudes and prejudices against Central Asian migrant workers in the Federation, their home society often becomes an even stronger point of reference and part and parcel of their identity. Due to their limited integration into Russian society, none of them thought of the host country as their new home and thus had to return to a country they had become estranged from. In fact, 75 per cent of the respondents said they were happy to be back in Tajikistan despite all the problems, since it is, after all, their home and there they could be close to their friends and family again. Only when a migrant has started a family in the Russian Federation, and are to be separated from them for a long time, does the re-entry ban cause a psychosocial burden that leads to reintegration problems. One participant in the focus group in Dushanbe stressed that the biggest challenge he has to face is to be without his wife and children, who remain in the Russian Federation. Although there were only few such cases in our sample, it is quite likely that many more Tajik migrant workers have started families in the Russian Federation, as they are migrating at an increasingly younger age. In such cases, a re-entry ban inevitably creates a psychosocial burden that is hard to overcome and impedes successful return and reintegration. For the rest, however, problems with belonging and with the notion of home, which some return migrants know so well, are nearly non-existent, since feelings of belonging in Tajikistan have hardly changed.

Social reintegration, as well, is only to a lesser extent perceived to be a problem among returned migrant workers with re-entry bans. Their circles of friends tend to remain the same as before they first went to the Russian Federation to work, and, as indicated in one testimony, these friends often provide them with vital support and help. The news of a migrant worker's re-entry ban usually spreads very fast in the home community, and feelings of pity and offers of help were described as the most frequent reactions among friends and community members.

"In my village, there are a lot of migrants who return home and then find out that they have a re-entry ban to Russia. Naturally, everyone feels very sorry for us because they understand that we are now facing serious economic problems."

Male, 30, Dushanbe

Friends and family are a valuable source of comfort in this difficult situation, and even migrants who have been living and working in the Russian Federation on an on-and-off basis for 10 years reported to be on very

good terms with old friends from their home communities. Of course, however, the re-entry ban and its resulting problems also possess a large potential for conflict with family and community members. Where migrants can no longer fulfil their role as breadwinners for their families, conflicts may naturally arise and lead to strained relationships. One interviewee reported that he now is in constant dispute with his brothers, who all have their own families and cannot provide for their parents – a role that the interviewee used to fulfil until his re-entry ban. Others described the shame of coming back to Tajikistan and needing to rely on others, instead of providing for them like they used to.

The social networks the migrants maintained over time, and now can rely on after returning, prove to be useful in another regard as well. In its most literal sense, social capital can be used to increase one's chances of finding employment, which is the most common strategy in a country like Tajikistan, where employment service bureaus and recruitment agencies are only in a fraction of cases the starting point for finding a job. Asking friends and acquaintances about employment opportunities is the most natural first step in job-searching, now that the migrants cannot rely on employment in the Russian Federation anymore. In fact, it was the most frequent answer given when unemployed migrant workers in our sample were asked what steps they had taken to find work. In this regard, their functioning social networks prove to be a valuable resource and are beneficial to reintegration. Of course, social capital can only address returnees' economic problems to a limited extent, as they result mainly from the poor economic situation in Tajikistan. This remains the most serious problem and impediment to reintegration for Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans.

As described in the previous chapter, the socioeconomic status of the migrant workers sampled in our survey can best be described as "poor," with many of them facing serious economic vulnerabilities. The high proportion of respondents who stated that their financial situation deteriorated due to the re-entry bans highlights the fact that only in a minority of cases were remittances invested in a sustainable way that enabled new sources of income in Tajikistan. Instead, searching for employment is the main strategy for maintaining a livelihood and ensuring economic reintegration. However, as the high rate of respondents who live in poverty or are threatened by it illustrates, this strategy (and, thus, economic reintegration) can only be described as a failure. In their cases, successful return is constrained and the potential to benefit from one's migration experience is lost.

"My biggest problem is that it is nearly impossible to find work with a decent salary in Tajikistan. During the first weeks after coming back I worked on a construction site. Now, friends helped me to find a job working at a market. But the money I earn there is just not enough to make ends meet. I constantly have to bribe the police at work, and most of my salary goes to my parents. For me, there is next to nothing left."

Male, 27, Kulob

This account is characteristic of a large share of the migrants sampled in our survey. Coming back from the Russian Federation, where their salaries were sufficiently high to provide for themselves and their families, they now feel the frustration of doing the same work, but for significantly lower salaries. Because they see no other way to provide for their livelihood aside from paid employment, the returnees reluctantly seek better-paying work in Tajikistan, but fail to find jobs that pay enough to cover their and their families' needs and enable their prosperity. It was often reported that through a series of odd jobs, or by working two jobs at the same time, return migrants manage to make enough money for a living; however, additional expenses like business investments or their children's education were not possible because of the low salaries.

For many of the migrant workers, the low salaries even serve as a reason to not work at all. They see work in Tajikistan as futile because it hardly improves their economic situation. Some 80 per cent of the unemployed migrant workers surveyed in our sample answered that insufficient salaries were the reason why they currently are not working; only 6 per cent reported that they were not able to find jobs in the first place. Another reason given for not working include expenses that work entails (such as transportation costs); some return migrants did not want to perform physically demanding labour for such low wages. Some have even totally given up on finding a job with an adequate salary, and instead choose to wait until their re-entry bans to the Russian Federation are lifted or expire.

For the group of unemployed returnees in our sample, economic reintegration can only be described as “failed.” For many, even their most basic economic needs cannot be met, with more than half stating that they have difficulties affording clothing, and several not even having enough money for food. Unemployment and inadequate pay are the main impediments to the successful reintegration of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans, and if these issues remain unaddressed, their chance of sustainable return is lost. In the best-case scenario, they simply wait for their re-entry bans to be lifted and return to the Russian Federation. Unfortunately, however – because for many, the circumstances do not allow them to wait for so long – there have been reported cases of migrants who re-enter the Russian Federation with forged documents or through the help of smugglers who bring them across the border illegally. Faced with a frustrating and precarious living situation, it is highly likely that many will see this step into illegality as the only feasible way to sustain their livelihoods. This, in turn, creates even more vulnerabilities, and calls for decisive steps that need to be taken in order to render return and reintegration successful.

The occasional cases where migrants have actually been able to benefit from their migration experience and describe their current situation as “improved” from their time in the Russian Federation illustrates that, given under certain conditions, successful return and reintegration is still possible. Around 20 per cent of the respondents in our sample said that their financial situation now is better than when they were migrant workers in the Russian Federation, and all of them stated that they have enough money to buy food, clothes and other everyday necessities. These returnees usually continue working in the same profession as in the Russian Federation, and most of them found work within weeks of their return. Some of them even stated that they now can afford more expensive things like a new refrigerator or television. They do not face serious economic difficulties and are able to ensure their and their families’ livelihoods, which makes their reintegration a success worth investigating for the sake of improving the return situation of migrant workers with re-entry bans.

In general, a large share of the respondents in our sample continued working in the same profession as in the Russian Federation. About half of the interviewees currently work on construction sites, several others have jobs as drivers, and some continue working in retail and trade. This is a clear indicator that some migrant workers are able to put to use in Tajikistan the skills they learned while working in the Russian Federation, allowing them to profit from their migration experience. Even though nearly all of the migrants in our sample performed unskilled labour while working abroad, many of them were able to acquire or consolidate professional skills, and some even learned new professions. Around 40 per cent of the respondents stated that they gained new skills while abroad – mostly professional qualifications and specialties in the construction sector – and five interviewees even received certificates for learning new professions. These are significant numbers, considering that the migrants were mainly doing manual labour and often received only on-the-job training. It demonstrates that migrants’ return can be a valuable contribution to the Tajik economy if their skills are put to use and harnessed upon return. The main problem, however, is that only a minority of the migrant workers in our sample stated that they are able to fully use their newly acquired skills in Tajikistan.

“I worked as a geriatric nurse in Russia for nearly 10 years. I helped the nursing staff and doctors with everything, and my employer still keeps calling me to ask when I [will] come back, because they need specialists like me. But here, I am unemployed and sit at home. I only occasionally give injections to neighbours or acquaintances, but apart from that I do not use my skills here.”

Female, 44, Kulob

Previous research on return migrants in Tajikistan has shown that a lot of returnees struggle to put their skills into practice because the necessary equipment and technologies are lacking in Tajikistan. Some try to circumvent this problem by starting their own businesses (ILO, 2010). This works only to a limited extent, as starting one’s own business requires funds and preparation, both of which migrant workers with re-entry bans usually lack. This is why it comes as no surprise that only a third of the migrants who have acquired new skills abroad responded that they can put them into practice in Tajikistan. About half of the migrants with new professional skills are struggling with the work conditions in the Tajik economy, which is lagging behind international standards. Either the jobs they learned in the Russian Federation do not exist at all in Tajikistan, or the equipment necessary for exercising their skills are lacking. Others stated that there is not yet a market in Tajikistan for the skills they have to offer.

“I learned how to apply stucco on the walls and ceilings of buildings while working on construction sites in Moscow. But here in Tajikistan, I cannot use my new skills at work. Instead, when I work at home I use them for the renovation of my house.”

Male, 34, Kulob

The low salaries in Tajikistan are another obstacle to the practice of skills gained abroad. Many migrants do not work in their respective job specializations because the wages are paid for these qualifications are inadequate. Instead, the migrants work in jobs that provide sufficient salaries but where they have no special training in, leading, in the worst-case scenario, to the loss of the skills they acquired in the Russian Federation. Others said that their lack of certificates hinder them from practicing their skills in Tajikistan. Although they have the qualifications, they cannot find work in this field because they have never received official certificates.

Especially in the latter cases, where the only obstacle is a missing certificate, reintegration support would be very effective and could help harness the potential of migrant workers with re-entry bans. Such support, as a matter of fact, is readily available. Migrant workers who have acquired professional skills abroad can get certified after passing an exam at the National Adult Training Centres of the Tajik Ministry of Labour. However, many migrant workers do not know of such opportunities and are unlikely to find out about them. Because most of the migrant workers in our sample are facing serious difficulties, economic or otherwise, they were asked if they have ever sought the help of specialized organizations – State or non-State – that can provide reintegration assistance. Only a mere 5 per cent of the respondents said that they have received support upon return – in two cases in form of business loans, and in three in the form of vocational training. The large remainder did not take advantage of these opportunities, which would have most likely contributed to improving their situation.

The lack of awareness about reintegration support opportunities can be pointed out as the main reason behind the extremely low rate of participation by returnees. When asked about the reason why they did not partake in any form of reintegration programme and did not receive any specialized support upon return, more than half of the migrants in our sample stated that they simply did not know of any such support opportunities. Lack of knowledge about programmes offered by State agencies, NGOs and international organizations deprives these migrants of potentially useful assistance and highlights the need to bring these support opportunities to the migrants’ attention.

The interviewees’ responses pointed out another issue – one that has more to do with the content of the support and reintegration programmes. More than a third of the respondents said that the opportunities they knew of hardly ever sounded promising or helpful, so they decided against giving these a try. Most of them involve additional costs, either directly (e.g. through interests on loans or fees for training) or indirectly, as they require time that is not spent on earning money. As a consequence, the shortcomings prevailed in the eyes of many migrant workers and they did not consider the support opportunities as helpful.

“Having worked as a nurse in Russia, I tried to find work here at the hospital. But I don’t have a certificate, so I would have to go to a vocational college for two months and pass an exam for 1,000 Somoni [approx. USD 200]. On top of that, the only college is in Dushanbe, so I would have to rent a flat there or commute every day.”

Female, 44, Kulob

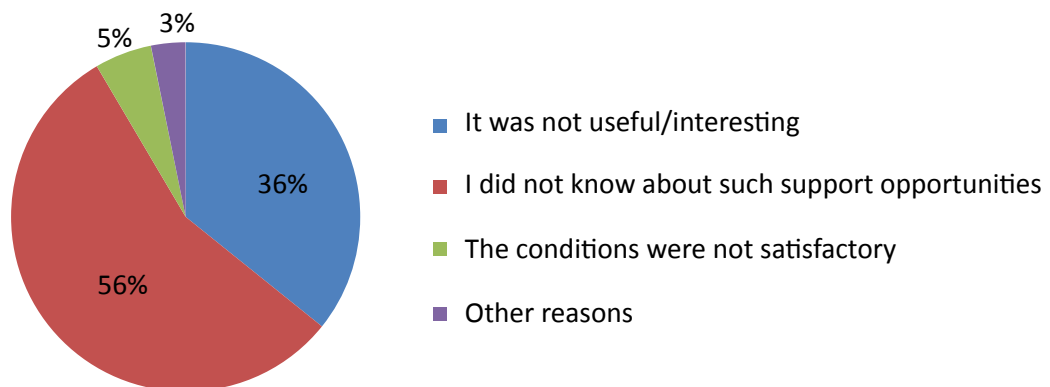
A more general reluctance to accept help from third parties like the State or NGOs can be pointed out as the third reason for the low rate of participation in reintegration and support programmes. The migrants often stated that they do not and cannot wait for help from others, but instead rely on their friends and family if there is urgent need for support.

“Vocational training courses, certification and micro-loans – this all did not sound interesting to me and I didn’t even consider any of it, because we are all used to handling such problems on our own.”

Male, 49, Dushanbe

As a result, only five migrant workers in our sample sought and received help from specialized organizations. Even though many of the interviewees would potentially be interested in such forms of support, the lack of information about support opportunities or unappealing programmes hindered them from taking part in such. Previous research has shown that reintegration assistance can be of vital importance for successful return, but most of the Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans missed out on this opportunity.

Figure 14: Why didn’t you receive any support from specialized organizations?



2.2.4. Future plans of migrant workers with re-entry bans

As described in the previous chapter, reintegration poses a serious problem for many of the migrant workers with re-entry bans that were interviewed for this study. Economic reintegration, that is, the capacity to provide for their own means of living, in particular, has failed for the many migrants who face difficulties covering their and their families’ most basic needs. Since it will take some time before they can go back to the Russian Federation, and because they face considerable hardship in their home country, the interviewees were asked about their future plans in terms of work and migration. Previous research on returned migrants has shown that especially forcibly returned migrants and those with low levels of preparedness for return tend to re-emigrate because the reasons that led to migration in the first place would push them to do so again (Schuster and Majidi, 2013). This coincides with the findings of our study, where a majority of the sampled migrants stated that they see no economic future for themselves in Tajikistan and plan to re-emigrate.

Seasonal migration, once found to be a viable livelihood strategy, tends to become the preferred strategy among the migrant workers in our sample, regardless of the long “break” imposed by the re-entry ban. Without a single exception, all respondents who were close to the expiry of their re-entry ban said that they would go to the Russian Federation again as soon as they are allowed to. In addition, even among those who were still in doubt about the exact duration of their bans to re-enter the Federation, a majority nevertheless stated that they would leave once the ban expires. Making sustainable plans for return and reintegration into the Tajik labour market, for example, through professional training or by starting a business, was seen by many of the interviewees as less promising than waiting until they can go back to the Russian Federation. Only a quarter of the respondents stated that they would not move abroad again and that they intended to stay in Tajikistan. Many more, however, said that they would like to, if their socioeconomic situation would allow them to do so.

“If I could find a job here, where they pay me 2,000 Somoni [approx. USD 400], then of course I would not go to Russia. But I don’t think this will happen, so it is of course better for me to work in Russia.”

Male, 32, Kulob

The interviewees were also asked if they had ever considered migrating to a country other than the Russian Federation. Many found this idea appealing in principle, but did not know how to bring it to fruition. Being used to working in the Russian Federation, the migrants know the work conditions and the employment opportunities available there. Many had secure jobs, a place to stay and a circle of friends in the Russian Federation – none of which they have in other countries of destination. Moving to another country involves great risks, especially in financial terms, and none of the migrants in our sample would dare to do so. Other countries of the former Soviet Union were likewise described as appealing destinations for labour migration, but without a network of friends and acquaintances that can help them find jobs and provide them housing, they do not see conceivable ways of migrating there.

Since many migrant workers do not have any prospects of finding lucrative work in Tajikistan, they spend their time waiting for their re-entry bans to be lifted. When asked about what kind of measure would help them improve their current situation, a response that was often stated was an earlier lifting of, or shorter, re-entry bans. However, since they knew this is impossible, several migrant workers in our sample reported that they investigated ways of circumventing the re-entry ban illegally, or were advised to do so by friends and acquaintances. Paying smugglers to get them across the Russian border, taking someone else’s passport to enter the Russian Federation, or changing one’s name were frequently stated ideas on how to bypass their re-entry bans. These interview findings, as well as the cases reported to IOM of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans who actually did so, highlight the fact that administrative expulsion and bans do not necessarily deter undocumented migration if the migrants are not taken care of upon return. Without addressing their needs, forced return and a ban to re-enter the Russian Federation may create incentives that lead to more irregularity instead of inhibit it. Faced with a lack of alternatives, the push factors resulting from these migrants’ precarious living situation in Tajikistan are likely to outweigh the risk of entering the Russian Federation illegally.

The following chapter will conclude the findings of this study and provide recommendations on how to address the reintegration needs of migrant workers with re-entry bans and how to harness their potentials for sustainable and successful return.



3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Labour migration to the Russian Federation has become a phenomenon unprecedented in scale and importance for the Tajik economy, on both national and household levels. It has made valuable contributions to the country's development and has helped reducing poverty, specifically through migrant workers' remittances. However, it has also created dependencies, with whole families relying on a member's income earned abroad. Most of the remittances are spent on consumption, and income-generating investments are rare. Labour migration has become and will most likely continue to be the most appealing employment option for Tajiks, but the high rate of irregular migration to the Russian Federation makes it a very volatile option. The increasing number of re-entry bans and administrative expulsions imposed on Tajik migrant workers for repeated infractions of Russian law has led to a growing category of involuntary returnees who lack economic prospects in their home country and wait desperately for the chance to go back to work in the Federation. Struggling with the low wages and the lack of appropriate jobs in Tajikistan, many of these migrants fail to profit from their migration experience because they cannot apply new skills and invest their human capital. Instead, the economic situation deteriorates in most cases, leaving migrants vulnerable to poverty and further irregularity.

This study relied on interviews and testimonies of 116 migrant workers with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation, gathered either via individual interviews or through focus group discussions. Although the sample is not representative, the study was able to provide an in-depth picture of the socioeconomic situation of the migrant workers upon their return to Tajikistan and evaluate their reintegration needs and potentials. The main findings match our initial hypothesis that migrants who return involuntarily face considerable difficulties upon return because of their lack of preparedness, and are less likely to be positive agents of change and development in their country of origin. Instead, the factors that drove them to migrate in the first place continue to pressure them to move abroad, sometimes even at the cost of regularity. In many cases surveyed in this study, the successful reintegration of migrant workers failed because of the economic hardships and precarious living situations they face. A majority of the sampled migrant workers cannot sustain their and their families' livelihood to the extent they used to, and nearly 50 per cent of the interviewees reported that they now have difficulties affording food and other basic needs of their families. These are alarming findings that highlight the need for a decisive policy response that addresses the issues faced by Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans to the Russian Federation. As a very particular category of returned migrants, they need a specialized form of support that helps decreasing their vulnerabilities and harnesses their potentials.

Many of our respondents returned with new or improved professional skills, and some even learned new professions abroad. Whereas several migrant workers managed to put these skills into use in Tajikistan and thus benefited from their migration experience, the majority are not able to draw on their new professional skills because of the lack of equipment, jobs and adequate salaries in Tajikistan. Their skills need to be leveraged in order to improve the migrants' economic situation; so far, however, only a fraction of the interviewees turned to specialized organizations for support, in order to harness their potentials through the certification of skills, vocational training or micro-loans for income-generating activities. The lack of awareness about such opportunities, as well as inadequate or unsatisfactory programmes, has led many migrants to refrain from what could have been the first important step towards successful reintegration. A number of measures are necessary to decrease vulnerability and draw on this potential.

Starting 2012, the Russian Federation has introduced several significant legislative changes to increase responsibility over violations of legislation and enhance immigration control measures, which include imposing re-entry bans on foreign nationals in irregular situations. If the migrants' issues remain unaddressed, the number of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans will remain high, and the consequences are likely to be devastating for many Tajik households, as well as for the Tajik economy. The most effective way to avoid the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that a re-entry ban entails is to curb irregular migration. A first set of recommendations thus aims at averting re-entry bans and its serious socioeconomic consequences by preventing irregular migration. The Government of Tajikistan should remind its citizens of their responsibility to respect Russian migration laws and of the risks and consequences of irregular migration. Mechanisms to

prevent irregular migration to the Russian Federation should be put into place in order to raise awareness and knowledge of laws and regulations relating to work and stay in the country. It is each Tajik migrant's obligation to respect the laws of its host country and it is the responsibility of the Tajik Government to ensure that Tajik migrant workers are aware of this fact. The following recommendations therefore target awareness-building among the Tajik population:

- (a) **Build knowledge among Tajik migrant workers of Russian laws and regulations.** The research has shown that many Tajik migrant workers have limited knowledge of Russian migration law and often rely on the superficial knowledge of their fellow migrants. Public information campaigns and pre-departure orientation should be organized by the Government of Tajikistan, jointly with local *hukumats*, on a national scale to raise awareness of Russian laws relating to work and stay.
- (b) **Raise awareness of the dangers of irregular migration in order to discourage migrant workers from breaching migration legislation.** There is still a large portion of Tajik migrant workers who deliberately work and stay in the Russian Federation irregularly. An information campaign pointing out the risks and dangers of irregular migration can help discourage them from risking irregularity. The overwhelming demand on IOM Tajikistan's migration hotline shows that re-entry bans have become a major fear among migrant workers. Pointing out the vulnerabilities caused by irregular migration will influence their decision and curb irregularity.

A further issue that needs to be addressed is the communication (to banned migrant workers) regarding the issuance of re-entry bans, in addition to promoting coordination and cooperation between Russian and Tajik authorities regarding the list of Tajik nationals with re-entry bans. Without automatic notification measures, many migrant workers only find out about their bans when it is already too late, that is, when they have already paid for their plane tickets back to and have arrived in the Russian Federation. Migrant workers need to be informed as early as possible about their re-entry bans in order to avoid expenses and readjust their future plans, which would increase their potential for successful reintegration.

- (c) **Promote cooperation between migration authorities, specifically with the purpose of ensuring that migrants are properly informed about their legal status before departure.** Since the individual inquiry of migrant workers about re-entry bans at the Russian Federal Migration Service and Federal Security Service is very time-consuming and complicated, the Government of Tajikistan should enter negotiations with the Government of the Russian Federation to share its list of Tajik citizens with re-entry bans with relevant Tajik counterparts, such as the Migration Service and the Border Guards, on a more regular (at least monthly) basis. Today, the list is shared in a sporadic manner, which complicates the work of the Tajik Migration Service of informing migrant workers and keeps the migrants in suspense. Providing a recent list every month would simplify responding to inquiries of migrant workers, and ultimately help them readjust their future plans as early as possible.
- (d) **Implement early-warning mechanisms for Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans.** Only a fraction of all migrant workers with re-entry bans investigate their status on their own initiative. The larger proportion, because they do not know of this measure or have no suspicions, continue to leave Tajikistan, only to be denied entry at Russian airports and border checkpoints. Early-warning mechanisms need to be developed that automatically inform migrant workers about their re-entry bans. Examples include a software program for use by the Tajik Border Forces that informs Tajik citizens returning from or leaving for the Russian Federation about their re-entry bans, if any, or another for use by airline companies that notifies them if a prospective passenger booking a flight to the Federation is on the list.

The most substantial share of work needs to be done in the field of reintegration support. Left on their own, involuntarily returned migrants are unlikely to succeed in reintegrating, especially when it comes to economic reintegration. The survey was able to point out economic vulnerability as the main problem of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans. Coordinated efforts by the Government of Tajikistan and the international community are necessary to promote economic reintegration support and harness the potential of returned migrants.

- (e) **Increase awareness about existing reintegration opportunities.** A high number of migrants in our sample stated that they did not know at all about existing and readily available reintegration support offered by the Tajik Government or NGOs in Tajikistan. A referral mechanism needs to be put into place that informs and provides returned migrant workers with tailor-made reintegration support based on their needs and skills, including but not limited to vocational training, welfare benefits, certification of skills and micro-loans.
- (f) **Immediate assistance at the border to migrant workers who have been expelled or denied entry by Russian authorities.** The research has shown that expelled migrants and migrants who were turned down at Russian airports form the most vulnerable category and suffer especially during their first weeks after return, notably from psychological stress. Existing support opportunities are insufficient, because they do not address these returned migrants' immediate needs. Air companies, Tajik Border Guards and other relevant staff at the airports of Dushanbe, Khujand, Qurghonteppa and Kulob need to be trained on how to provide these migrant workers with immediate assistance in terms of information and consultation, referral, reintegration support opportunities and, if needed, psychosocial help.
- (g) **Develop income-generating activities that draw on the skills of migrant workers with re-entry bans.** The study was able to highlight that many migrant workers return with improved professional skills, but struggle to put them to use because of the conditions of the Tajik labour market. In a joint effort, the Government of Tajikistan, with the technical support of international organizations, should create jobs that, on the one hand, absorb the excess supply of labour composed of returned migrant workers and, on the other, leverage these returnees' skills acquired abroad, notably in the construction sector. This will help ease the migrants' socioeconomic situation and utilize their human capital.
- (h) **Use reintegration programmes as a means to prevent future irregular migration.** As there have been reported cases of Tajik migrant workers who entered the Russian Federation illegally after receiving their re-entry bans, economic reintegration programmes should be put into place for the most vulnerable migrant workers. Because their precarious living situation might otherwise compel them to clandestinely return to the Russian Federation, income-generating activities need to be implemented especially in rural areas of Tajikistan to reduce economic vulnerability.
- (i) **Create employment opportunities abroad in countries other than the Russian Federation.** A large share of the migrant workers in our sample stated that they were potentially interested in working in other countries. Other former Soviet republics, such as the Ukraine and Kazakhstan, were particularly described as possible destinations if adequate jobs are available there. Since Tajik migrant workers do not usually have a network of acquaintances in these countries that they could rely on, organized recruitment programmes need to be implemented that provide employment abroad. Kazakhstan is a particularly favourable destination for Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans because of its recent construction boom and need for manual labour.

Because the present study has an evaluative character and was mainly designed to provide a more detailed picture of the socioeconomic situation and reintegration needs and potentials of Tajik migrant workers with re-entry bans, further research on key areas needs to be conducted. An in-depth quantitative analysis of the phenomenon will increase the feasibility of recommendations and point out further potential areas of action. Special focus should be put on the migrants' skills acquired abroad and the coping mechanisms of migrant workers with re-entry bans. Additionally, the scope of labour-related smuggling to the Russian Federation needs to be explored, and current reintegration programmes for involuntarily returned migrant workers should be evaluated. This would lead to a better understanding of the migrants' situation and enable the Government of Tajikistan and the international community to address their needs more properly.

Migration has for a long time been treated as an individual phenomenon, as a decision of individuals to move to another country that does not warrant attention and coordination on the national and international level. However, labour migration from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation stands as a case in point that coordination

and cooperation in migration management benefit not only the migrants, but also their origin and destination countries. An isolationist approach to migration flows from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation will fail, which is why dialogue and cooperation between the two countries, with the participation of IOM and UN agencies concerned with labour and migration issues, need to be improved. Only a multisectoral approach to migration management that involves national and international organizations and the non-governmental sector from both countries will be able to address migrant workers' issues, improve assistance and lead to the economic development of sending and receiving countries.

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