



Reviewing Migration and Development

The role of local authorities in Central Asia

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1. Introduction

In the midst of increased human mobility, interaction between migration and development has become a mainstay of policy discussions. Growing number of avenues are explored to see how migration affects development in sending and destination countries and how these processes can be better managed. A clearly neglected avenue in many of the developing countries, with Central Asia not being an exception, is the role of local authorities in this process (IOM, 2015a). Mounting evidence shows advantages of local governments in leveraging developmental benefits of migration but the extent of their engagement remains marginal around the world. Although best practices and success stories are found in rich and poor countries alike, these experiences are scattered, cases of knowledge-sharing remain scarce and examples of migration mainstreaming in local development strategies are hard to find (EC-UN JMDI, 2010).

This paper aims to analyse the role of local authorities in the interaction of migration and development. The goal is to show what are the mechanisms through which migration's developmental potential can be leveraged and to outline local governments' role and potential in this process. In exploring these themes, the paper focuses on the migration from the southern rim of Central Asia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic, to the Russian Federation. The region of Central Asia harbours one of the most stable and large-scale migration flows in the world, attracting over 8 billion US dollars in remittances (Schenk, 2018; World Bank, 2020). Migration also plays a decisive role in the socioeconomic development of these countries, leading some researchers to describe this interrelationship as an *emigration trap*. Although many commonalities can be found between these countries, the priorities of migration policies differ and require a more nuanced analysis. It is to be noted that the forthcoming discussion primarily focuses on international migration, however, some of the concepts and challenges discussed are relevant for internal migration as well.

The following discussion starts off with theoretical concepts to situate development-oriented migration in historical and theoretical contexts. Then, the migratory situation of Central Asian countries is examined to discern important patterns that bear importance in the design of development-driven migration policies. Based on desk review and in-depth interviews with researchers and civil society representatives of Central Asian countries, countries' experiences are analysed through the lens of the migration and development nexus and local authorities' involvement in this interaction. In examining the existing situation, the paper highlights good practices as well as gaps and areas of potentially high-impact interventions where local authorities can intervene in the migration process to tap into its developmental potential.

2. Understanding the link between migration and development

Migration's benefits to more developed destination countries were well-understood throughout most of the twentieth century, as "guest worker" migration was meeting the rising labour market needs in the West and fuelling swelling industrial economies. This drove researchers to frame the influx of cheap and willing labour as "development aid sent from poor countries to the rich" (King & Collyer, 2016). Still, the migration's developmental impact on sending countries remained relatively obscure. The past two decades have seen an unprecedented rise of the belief in the power of migration to drive development in origin countries. Policy and scholarly discourse shifted from seeing migration as a problem to be solved to viewing it as a potential to be harnessed by developing countries (King & Collyer, 2016).

Neoclassical belief that was considered self-explanatory in the post-World War II period posited that remittances sent home gave much-needed relief to families staying behind and alleviated the burden of poverty in sending countries. In 1970s, this was followed by concerns over brain drain in developing

countries and exploitation of their human resources by rich states (Cassarino, 2004). From the 1990s on, more scholarly evidence surfaced highlighting nonlinear and multifaceted interaction between migration and development. Thus, a more heterogeneous picture emerges that recognises the importance of individual country contexts and policy measures tailored to counteract backwash effects and tap the developmental potential of migration processes (De Haas, 2010).

Such nuanced understanding of migration-fuelled development prevents policymakers from assuming positive association between migration and development. It also expands policymakers' vision and helps them look beyond policy interventions that solely focus on remittances (IOM, 2015a). Still, despite the growing evidence of migration's multifaceted effects on development, the perception of remittances as the main, and perhaps only, mechanism of migration's developmental impact on origin countries persists today and fuels a simplistic understanding of the link between migration and development. This view neglects the variety of migration's possible developmental effects that go beyond the pecuniary benefits of remittances and encompass the socio-political development of sending communities. Three major mechanisms can be distinguished through which migration influences development in sending countries: remittances, return migration and diaspora engagement (King & Collyer, 2016). These mechanisms are not exhaustive and overlap in many contexts, but they describe the variety of pathways through which migration links with local development.

Developmental effects of economic remittances are perhaps the most well-studied aspect of migration and development nexus. From the very onset of increased human mobility for labour, remittances were expected to contribute to improved quality of life in sending regions, surpassing what conventional development aid could deliver (De Haas, 2010). In fact, remittances have overtaken the official development aid in the mid-1990s, with the volume of remittances being three times larger than funds sent in development assistance in 2018 (Rathasupriyo, et al., 2019). Money transfers do not capture the entire spectrum of remittances sent by migrants, however - in addition to economic remittances, migration facilitates the movement of *social remittances* – knowledge, ideas, practices, identities and social capital that flow between destination and origin communities (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011). Social remittances are transferred when migrants communicate with their friends, family or communities at home, be it remotely or through personal visits. Throughout their residence and work abroad, migrants are exposed to new ideas and behaviours, they may accumulate new skills and practices that they share with communities at home. Social remittances can include a wide variety of social norms and practices – political participation, democratic values, perceived value of education, lifestyles, health choices, childrearing practices – as well as professional skills and practices that may be beneficial to economic activity and local development at home (Frank, 2005; Fargues, 2006; Lindstrom & Muñoz-Franco, 2005). While economic remittances have amassed a large body of literature, social remittances are far less understood. Existing literature shows, however, that the flow of social remittances is not intrinsic to all migration patterns and may be hindered by multiple factors - migrants' lack of connection with the sending community, limited opportunities in the home country to apply skills and behaviours in practice, political barriers, etc. (Zhanaltay, 2018).

Economic as well as social remittances can be disaggregated into individual and collective remittances. Individual remittances are transferred by a migrant to their family or relatives in the origin country. Collective remittances are sent by a collective of migrants to their community at home for the benefit of the entire community or a group of community members. Recipients of collective social remittances can be different organizations in home communities - church groups, political parties, local governments, etc. These remittances can affect lifestyle choices of community members, practices of an organisation, businesses, cooperatives, or local government, availability and quality of social services in a community (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011). Collective social remittances can have far-reaching consequences on community development by affecting how citizens interact with state

structures, what they expect from their governments and how authorities respond to citizens' demands (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011).

Return migration is another mechanism through which migration processes affect development in origin communities. This link between migration and development has been a part of policy discussions since 1960s and follows the logic of emigrants acquiring new skills and knowledge abroad which they are able to invest upon their return home (De Haas, 2005). There is a close association between the transfer of social remittances and migrants' return to their home countries, as migrants bring new skills and ideas with them upon their return. However, return migration can potentially play a more powerful role in local development as migrants may become agents of change and innovation, practicing new knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial attitudes that can stimulate economic growth in their homeland. Benefits of return migration are at the core of policy discussions on circular migration which is increasingly prioritized on national agendas today as means of leveraging migration for local human capital development. Circular migration is often referred to as a triple win scenario in which all three parties – migrants, origin and destination countries - reap benefits of the migration process (Olesen, 2003).

Another mechanism of the migration-development nexus is diaspora mobilization and their deliberate engagement in homeland development. Migrants as well as their descendants are seen to have valuable knowledge and resources that can be leveraged for local development. Diaspora mobilisation can reinforce more active transfer of social and economic remittances, encourage return of migrants to their home countries, drive political and social change, engage in philanthropy or stimulate local economic growth by investing in enterprises, setting up businesses and facilitating trade networks (Newland & Tanaka, 2010; King & Collyer, 2016). National governments in sending countries are increasingly directing their attention towards diaspora engagement by establishing databases and information systems, creating platforms for continuous engagement of migrants and introducing incentives to stimulate investment, partnerships and mentoring schemes with diaspora communities (Newland & Tanaka, 2010).

3. Understanding the role of local governments in migration and development

Migration-related policy matters have traditionally been absorbed by national governments and international bodies. Central governments largely neglect the role of local authorities in this process, overlooking the fact that interactions created through migration are often not between states but between specific regions in sending and destination countries (EC-UN JMDI, 2010). This results in local authorities being excluded from global dialogues on migration management. Although isolated cases exist of local authorities' innovative involvement in migration processes, they are not given necessary platforms for experience-sharing and knowledge-building (IOM, 2015a). An important initiative that addresses this gap on international scale is the UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) which focuses on local governments' engagement in migration processes, recognising it as one of the most overlooked fields in migration governance (JMDI, 2015).

Migrants often have stronger emotional ties with the specific places of their origin as compared to origin countries as a whole and feel greater conviction towards contributing to the development of their home communities. Superiority of the local dimension in this regard makes local governments better-suited for engaging migrants in local social and economic development at home and brings to light the importance of creating translocal linkages between the local governments of origin and destination countries (EC-UN JMDI, 2010). Pronounced local character of migration which links one locality in the sending country with another in the receiving country gave rise to the term of *translocalism* in the literature. Translocal ties are local-to-local linkages established across national borders which may involve local governments, businesses, cooperatives, migrant associations or other

groups. These are more or less institutionalized relations through which migrants coordinate to pool and transfer resources, that is, knowledge, funds, investments, experiences. A distinguishing characteristic of these linkages is their local focus and ability to respond and adapt to local needs (Van Ewijk & Nijenhuis, 2016).

There is a strong case to be made for local government's engagement in migration processes. From a good governance perspective, involving local authorities in policy planning and implementation is essential for ensuring that, on the one hand, policies are informed by realities on the ground and on the other, developed policies are duly implemented at the local level. The policy area of migration specifically demands the integration of local governments in the governance chain as migration patterns are heavily dependent on the local context and can vary significantly from one locality to another within the same country. On the backdrop of rising urbanization rates across the globe, local governments are at the forefront of dealing with migration flows within a country (Van Ewijk & Nijenhuis, 2016). This holds true in the case of external migration too, as local governments are the first to feel the effects of migration and are faced with the responsibility to address them. This makes them into crucial actors to engage in migration governance (JMDI, 2015).

Local authorities' engagement in development-oriented migration governance gains in relevance in the context of rising regional inequality within countries. Even when policies are developed to reap developmental benefits of migration, different regions of a country do not always get their fair share of gains (JMDI, 2015). For instance, when diasporas are incentivised to invest in the economy of their home country and educational opportunities are created for increasing human capital of to-be migrants or returning migrants, these opportunities are not equally available to different regional populations. The implication is to move beyond the nationally aggregated data and look deeper into regional disparities of migration, remittances, investments, entrepreneurship practices, etc. (JMDI, 2015). Beyond sheer necessity, local governments are believed to be better suited for engaging in development-oriented migration management as they have closer ties with migrant communities and families staying behind (Van Ewijk & Nijenhuis, 2016).

Mainstreaming migration into local development strategies as a cross-cutting reality is the most comprehensive approach to mitigating the harms and leveraging the benefits of migration for local development. Mainstreaming migration throughout local policymaking and governance facilitates: better engagement of migrants in the development of local policies and services, closer involvement of diasporas in local development beyond the simplistic economic benefits, decentralized cooperation between subnational units across national borders, more effective monitoring of migration flows and better-targeted management (IOM, 2015a).

Four main policy areas can be distinguished (EC-UN JMDI, 2010) where local governments can meaningfully contribute to development-oriented governance of migration processes: Enhancing developmental impact of remittances, supporting migrant communities and engaging diasporas, increasing migrants' capacities and protecting migrants' rights. These policy areas build on the core mechanisms discussed above of how migration affects development in sending countries but specifically focus on the areas that hold greater potential for local government engagement.

3.1. Enhancing developmental impact of remittances

Local governments can reinforce positive effects of remittances on sending communities by introducing supportive measures contributing to families' financial stability and leveraging remittances as resources of social and economic investments. Possible actions include reducing transfer costs of remittances through facilitating arrangements with local banks and making transfers safer, more affordable and easier (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2016). Local governments can introduce

incentive-based programs which stimulate the channelling of migrants' earnings towards high-return investments in their communities of origin. Remittances could support local development plans, construction of schools and necessary small-scale community infrastructure (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2016).

The most renowned case of collective remittances being used for community development comes from Mexico. The program was initially launched by hometown associations which were clubs of Mexican migrants originally formed as a support network for Mexican migrants working in the United States. The initiative was started by a group of migrants from the state of Zacatecas in Mexico and in the first years of its launch, the local government of Zacatecas did not participate in the scheme. At that time, projects were solely funded by migrants but starting from 1986, state governments stepped in, matching each dollar contributed by migrant associations by a dollar from the state budget. From 1993, a program 2x1 was launched through which each dollar contributed by migrant associations was matched by a dollar from Federal and State authorities. The projects funded through the scheme included construction and rehabilitation of potable water and sewer systems, provision of electricity, (re)construction of roads, churches, parks and other public spaces. In 1999, the program was transformed into 3x1 and the municipal government started contributing an additional dollar towards community projects. Following the state of Zacatecas, the scheme was replicated in other states and became a federal program of the government in 2002. Currently, the program is implemented in all states of Mexico and the funds pooled through the program for social spending count billions of dollars (Duquette-Rury, 2014; García Zamora, 2005). In 2006, Western Union joined the programme as well, expanding the program to 4x1 with the fourth dollar contributed by the private sector (EC-UN JMDI, 2010).

3.2. Supporting migrant communities and engaging diasporas

Migrants from a specific region of a country often travel to the same region in the destination country which leads to agglomeration of migrants with the same background in specific localities of host countries. This often leads to the creation of migrant associations which can be structured around churches, NGOs or informal cultural groups (EC-UN JMDI, 2010). The resulting translocal linkages between sending and receiving communities create a fertile ground for local government's impactful engagement in facilitating diaspora development. As demonstrated by experiences of local governments in Mexico and other Latin American countries, involving these associations in local development can bring substantial positive impact to sending communities (Duquette-Rury, 2014). The transnational nature of migrant associations makes them valuable partners to local authorities in sending and destination countries alike as they can support integration of migrants in recipient communities as well as community development in origin countries (Van Ewijk & Nijenhuis, 2016). Better integration of migrants in destination countries can bring substantial benefits for individual migrants but it also contributes to their ability to give back to their communities of origin. The experience of many countries shows that migrant associations can be important platforms for protecting migrants throughout the migration process. Migrant associations can also collaborate with local and national governments in sending countries to improve the quality of migration data, assist in the identification of migrants' most acute needs, ensure government's better outreach to migrants abroad and support targeted delivery of public services to migrants (IOM, 2015a).

National governments across the globe are strengthening ties to their diasporas to better engage them in the development of home countries (Newland & Tanaka, 2010). Although this process is often spearheaded by central authorities, the role of local authorities becomes more pronounced as the scale of diaspora engagement increases and large diasporas are created originating in a specific region of a sending country (EC-UN JMDI, 2010). Notwithstanding this potential of mobilising diaspora groups

for regional development in the origin country, local authorities' initiatives in diaspora engagement remain scarce (IOM, 2015a).

When it comes to national efforts to engage diasporas, India has emerged as an uncontested leader on the global arena. Recognising the wealth of knowledge and resources stored in diasporas, in the last two decades, the Indian government invested extensive resources to cultivate strong relationships with Indians residing abroad and even started referring to non-resident Indians as “angels of development” (Hercog & Siegel, 2013). The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), established in 2004, is a testament to the government's commitment to establish long-lasting partnerships with its nationals living abroad. The Ministry operates as a unified agency overseeing all matters related to Indians residing abroad – issues faced by individual migrants, matters related to migrant organisations, trade networks and businesses involving Indian diasporas. Currently, India has one of the most sophisticated systems for diaspora engagement. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), which translates as Day of Non-resident Indians, is the most influential platform of diaspora engagement, created to cultivate the sense of ‘global Indian family’. PBD is an annual convention of Indian diasporas, in which Indian public officials gather Indians residing abroad, the President honours the achievements of an individual migrant or an organisation headed by Indian migrants with a prestigious award, issues facing Indian migrants are discussed and networks are built with diasporas. India's efforts to engage with diaspora's includes the expansion of their political rights as well, such as dual citizenship and parliamentary representation (Hercog & Siegel, 2013). To attract more investments from overseas, The Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) was established as a public–private partnership between MOIA and the Confederation of Indian Industry. OIFC engages Indian diasporas in the economic life of India, promotes investments, reduces transaction costs of business and facilitates skills and knowledge exchange across borders (Hercog & Siegel, 2013).

3.3. Increasing migrants' capacities

Investing in migrants' capacities is important for facilitating their better integration in destination communities as well as increasing their contribution to the development of sending communities. Migrants' capacity building may refer to providing skills, training and formal education as well giving competencies in financial planning, entrepreneurship, investment, business creation and management. Initiatives aimed at increasing migrants' capacities involve improving remittance management practices, encouraging long-term financial planning and financial stability of households, supporting reintegration of returning migrants, providing educational and employment opportunities for their inclusion into the local labour market (IOM, 2015a).

Financial literacy has been recognised as a particularly impactful area of intervention for the countries with large dependence on remittances. Lack of proper financial skills and access to financial services among migrants and their families can lead to excessively high costs of migration, expensive loans to fund a migrant's journey and indebtedness of migrants' households (IOM, 2015a). Local governments are especially well-placed to provide financial literacy capacity-building to migrants as these opportunities should be made available to migrants and their families on a wide scale and close to their homes. Given Nepal's high dependence of remittances and low rates of financial literacy evidenced in surveys (only 12% of migrant households reported using formal channels for remittances), the Central Bank of Nepal developed the National Strategy on Financial Literacy which aimed to expand access to financial services to the most vulnerable groups of the population. Implementation of said strategy at the local level was supported through the UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMIDI) in collaboration with local governments. In the frames of the initiative, Participatory Learning Centers were established in the districts of Nepal to provide training and support to migrants and their families and increase the usage of formal financial instruments. Trainings provide information on safer and more efficient ways of saving and investing money and

teach about the management of household budgets to increase households' financial stability (JMDI, 2017).

3.4. Protecting migrants' rights

Protection of migrants' rights throughout the migration process is arguably the most fundamental function of national or local governments engaged in migration management. Local governments can play an active role in migrants' protection by providing pre-departure trainings to ensure migrants are equipped with necessary information and knowledge prior to embarking on the journey abroad (EC-UN JMDI, 2010). In this sense, protection of migrants overlaps with increasing their capacities as providing information and skills is the primary mechanism for reducing migrants' vulnerability to risk (JMDI, 2015). Pre-departure trainings can provide information on the rights and obligations of migrants in destination countries, warn against the dangers of illegal migration, connect them with key support services abroad and protect them from potential exploitation. Naturally, protection of migrants' rights can encompass a wide array of other policy interventions which include cross-border collaboration between governments, measures to combat crime, human trafficking and exploitation (IOM, 2015a).

Due protection of migrants' rights and provision of basic services is a virtual prerequisite for migrants' engagement in origin country's development. Denying political, social and economic rights to migrants contributes to their exclusion and therefore inhibits their contribution to the development of the home country (IOM, 2015a). Local authorities are uniquely placed to reduce migrants' vulnerabilities by providing information and training on local level. Given the scale of labour migration, decentralized provision of predeparture services gains particular importance. Local governments can better identify potential migrants and offer predeparture services to them. For instance, in Pakistan, although legally mandatory, predeparture trainings have been shown to have only limited effect which was partly attributed the lack of a wider access to predeparture trainings around the country (World Bank, 2018). In Philippines the Government engaged local authorities as partners in the protection of migrants' rights. Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) involved local governments in the campaigns to combat illegal recruitment of labour migrants and trafficking. The POEA developed a centralized curriculum for predeparture trainings and developed capacities of local authorities to take the leading role in providing the training services to migrants (Asis & Rannveig Agunias, 2012).

It is important to emphasize that effective implementation of any of the policies discussed above demands the existence of quality data on migration flows, migrants and diasporas. Only armed with quality data on prospective, current and returned migrants, their households and main challenges faced by them can local government duly plan and implement development-oriented migration policies.

4. Migration patterns in Central Asia

Migration patterns within and from Central Asia are diverse in terms of socioeconomic composition (age, gender, education of migrants), length of stay (short- and long-term), purpose (labour, family reunification, education, ethnic return) and form (formal and informal) (IOM, 2015b). Still, the most prominent push factors driving emigration from Central Asian countries are unemployment, low wages and limited opportunities for improving livelihoods at home (Sagynbekova, 2017; IOM, 2015b). Faced with economic difficulties, migrants choose to seek job opportunities abroad, to support themselves and build financial sustainability for their families (IOM, 2015b). This is reflected in the official statistics as well – over 90% of the Central Asian migrants are labour migrants (Abdulloeva, et al., 2017).

The Russian Federation is the most popular destination for migrants from Central Asia and has consistently held this position over the course of the last two decades (UN DESA, 2020). The migration corridor between Central Asia and the Russian Federation is one of the largest and the most stable migration routes in the world (Zhanaltay, 2018). For Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic alike, migrant stock in Russia was slowly increasing over the last decade but no growth was observed between 2015 and 2019 which is explained by the financial crisis afflicting the Russian Federation (UN DESA, 2020). According to estimates of the United Nations Population Division, in 2019, the total stock of migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation reached 2.2 million people. Russia hosts 58% of Uzbek and 78% of Kyrgyz and Tajik migrants (UN DESA, 2020). Russia is the uncontested gravitational centre while Kazakhstan emerges as a new sub-regional centre due to its growing economy. Combined, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan receive 76% of the cumulative pool of migrants from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan (UN DESA, 2020). It is to be emphasized that these official numbers capture only a fraction of the true magnitude of migration between the countries of Central Asia and Russia. Given the seasonal and, often, informal nature of movement, the actual scale of migrant flow is believed to be as much as three times larger (Ryazantsev & Ochirova, 2019). Central Asian workers' migration to the Russian Federation is principally temporary and seasonal in nature, however, large flows of temporary migration often obscure the sizable scale of permanent migration. In 2018 and 2019, over 80 thousand Tajiks and 40 thousand Uzbeks obtained Russian citizenship and over 80 thousand Tajiks and 81 thousand Uzbeks held long-term residence permits (The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2019).

Central Asian migrants travelling to Russia tend to be low-skilled. In 2017, only 8% of Kyrgyz migrants to Russia had obtained higher education, the numbers were similar for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan - 12% and 9%, respectively (Rosstat, 2018). The share of highly educated Central Asian emigrants to Russia has been consistently declining over the past two decades, with migrant workers increasingly holding only general or primary education diplomas (UNDP, 2015). Migrants from Central Asia are also predominantly young. For Kyrgyz Republic, 53% of migrants in 2017 were aged between 15-29, 30% - between 30 and 44 and 14% - 45 and above (Rosstat, 2018). Age distribution is similar for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where 38% and 47% respectively are in the 15-29 age category (Rosstat, 2018). Although the conventional portrait of Central Asian labour migrants in Russia is that of a former agricultural worker employed in construction, more recent data indicates that only a third of migrants work on construction sites in Russia while most are engaged in the service sector. Only 11% report being involved in agriculture prior to migrating, while the rest are working in trade, transport and communications (UNDP, 2015).

Migration from Central Asia is distinctly male dominated, with about 85% of migrants being male (Abdulloev, et al., 2020). Women form the largest share in the Kyrgyz migrant group, constituting 35% of migrants, while the share among Uzbek and Tajik migrants is 14% and 10%, respectively. The Kyrgyz Republic is viewed to be a more equal society in gender terms, whereas Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have more restrictive social norms towards women's mobility and economic activity which may explain disparity in migrants' composition (Kholmatova, 2018). Although women are currently a minority among Central Asian migrants, their share is steadily increasing given the development of the service sector and light industries in Russia, offering more diverse job opportunities to migrants in addition to traditional employment in construction and heavy industries (Kholmatova, 2018).

The factors attracting migrants to the Russian Federation are apparent when looking at the wage differences in these countries. Real wages in the Russian Federation are two times higher than in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan (Ryazantsev & Ochirova, 2019). Among other pull factors drawing Central Asian migrants to Russia are the visa-free regime, high demand for low-skilled labour, sociocultural affinity and familiar administrative arrangements (Zhanaltay, 2018). Economic growth in Russia accelerated in the beginning of the 21st century through the rise in oil prices which created a

large number of employment opportunities for low and semi-skilled workers from neighbouring countries (Sagynbekova, 2017). Membership of intergovernmental unions is another factor contributing to intensive migration flows. Russia, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States which facilitates stronger integration between these states, but a more important catalyst of migration in the region is the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation are members of the EAEU and Uzbekistan, by some indications, is inching towards membership as well (Bhutia, 2020; Sharifzoda, 2019). The EAEU facilitates labour migration by removing bureaucratic barriers for work permits, visas, Russian language exams and granting the nationals of member states the right to work if they hold a contract with an employer (Sharifzoda, 2019).

The strong combination of social, cultural, economic and political factors attracting Central Asian migrants to Russia contributes to relative stability in the migration flows and forms a so-called migration system in the region. Well-developed migrant networks of Central Asian workers in Russia support the sustained flow of migrants (regular and irregular) to Russia, while weak reintegration systems in migrants' home countries fail to create incentives for migrants' long-term return home (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016). In this system, expanding economies of destination countries have a guaranteed labour supply from the southern rim of Central Asia fuelled by high demographic growth and shortage of economic opportunities at home that would absorb the labour surplus (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016).

Unsurprisingly, the high rates of labour migration are accompanied by large flows of remittances to sending countries. In 2019, Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan collectively received 8.9 billion US dollars in remittances (World Bank, 2020). In 2019, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan were among the top five countries of the world according to the share of remittances in GDP, reaching 29.2% and 28.2%, respectively. The same year, in Uzbekistan, remittances accounted for 6.9% of GDP (World Bank, 2020). Remittance inflows in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic are also high relative to foreign direct investments, official development assistance and export revenues, which means that for these countries labour export and remittances remain as the main channels of economic interaction on international scale (UNDP, 2015).

4.1. Development implications of migration from Central Asia

Labour migration and remittances sent home are currently significant components of the Central Asian population's strive for socioeconomic wellbeing. According to various estimates, remittances contribute to roughly 6-7% reduction in poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic. In Tajikistan, they account for more than half of income for 60% of households and all of household income for 31% (UNDP, 2015). In Uzbekistan, the poverty rate is estimated to rise from 9.6% to 16.8% in the absence of remittances sent home by migrants (Seitz, 2019). Remittances increase households' access to health and education services, improve living standards and increase consumption (Malyuchenko, 2015). While migration has a powerful impact on alleviating poverty in Central Asia's low-income countries, its effect on local economies and social development demands a more in-depth look.

Economic development and the use of remittances

More than a third of total remittances flowing to the southern rim of Central Asia come from the Russian Federation which makes these countries very dependent on the economic and political climate in Russia (World Bank, 2020). Previous studies have shown that reliance of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic on labour migration is large enough to put these countries in an *emigration trap* (Abdurakhimov, 2018). Emigration trap describes a situation in which economic stability of a country is strongly dependent on the flow of remittances from migrants and therefore, on migration policies

of destination countries. Any restrictions on migration or economic disturbances that force migrants to return home would drastically increase unemployment rates in migrants' home countries and exacerbate poverty due to the dried-up flow of remittances. Reduced resources available in the population would decrease the purchasing power of the local population, forcing producers to lower production which on its turn would take its toll on employment rates. In addition to reduced employment, stalling production entails shrinking tax revenues, plunging the state into debt on the backdrop of rising poverty and unemployment in the country. The probability of such a chain of events unfolding in a country leads researchers to label the country as being in an emigration trap (Abdurakhimov, 2018).

Central Asia's high dependence on labour exports to Russia also sparked discussions on a possible Dutch Disease in these sending countries. By introducing undesirable pressures on real exchange rates, Dutch Disease may reduce the competitiveness of local goods and services on international markets and weaken policymakers' incentives to create alternative development strategies in the country to reduce the population's dependence on labour exports (UNDP, 2015). Eromenko (2016) finds partial evidence of this in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan by looking at deindustrialization and higher growth rates of the service sector. Experts argue that the stable inflow of remittances nurtures a false sense of comfort in the governments and reduces the pressure for reforms (Malyuchenko, 2015).

The extent of Central Asian countries' reliance on migration to Russia was revealed during the 2014 economic crisis in Russia. Economic hardship caused a reduction in job opportunities available to labour migrants and the devaluation of the rouble brought a sharp decline in the real values of remittances sent home (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016; Ryazantsev & Ochirova, 2019). In addition to economic fluctuations in Russia, migrant households in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were heavily affected by tightening administrative sanctions against irregular migrants in Russia. With new regulations introduced in 2012 and 2015 in Russia, migrants could become subject to deportation, large fines and re-entry bans for up to 10 years for overstaying, record of administrative or criminal violations, lacking proper registration documents and failure to comply with other regulations of employment and residence. The harshness of measures was most strongly felt by migrants from Central Asia. Migrants were largely caught off-guard by the bans and deported individuals struggled to readjust to labour markets at home (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016). Studies show that migrants returning from Russia to the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan find it difficult to readjust to their home countries and local job markets. As many took up their first employment in Russia, their informal support networks and personal strategies for finding employment are relevant for Russia and, conversely, of limited use at home. Additionally, job opportunities offered at home tend to be much less lucrative in terms of work conditions which often contributes to the marginal effectiveness of governments' reintegration schemes. Consequently, migrants subject to re-entry bans consider local employment only as a temporary strategy and households seek 'replacement' migrants for the family members subjected to re-entry bans in Russia (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016). By all indications, migration system of the region successfully withstood the shock of the economic crisis and migrants remain drawn to the Russian labour market due to the strong diaspora which provides effective support networks for finding employment, accommodation and navigating the reality of a foreign country (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2016).

Although large sums are transferred through remittances to Central Asian countries, they don't seem to be leading to significant investment in local production. The largest share of remittances is spent on food, daily expenditures, health expenses, construction and renovation of homes (JICA Research Institute, 2019; Seitz, 2019). In Tajikistan 95% of households report using remittances for food, over 40% spend remittances on health services and only 5% are able to make savings (JICA Research Institute, 2019). In Uzbekistan, expenses on food and home renovation account for 82% of remittance use (Seitz, 2019). Remittances have had a positive reinforcing effect on the construction sector in

recipient countries as families often use funds to build and renovate their homes and purchase real estate (Ryazantsev, 2016). Only a minor share of Russian-earned capital is used to start small businesses such as small convenience stores, bakeries, market stalls or commercial delivery services (Zotova & Cohen, 2016). Less than 2% of migrant households in Tajikistan report using remittances for starting a business (JICA Research Institute, 2019). Access to finance remains a pervasive issue to Central Asian migrants as they are largely considered “unbankable” by financial institutions due to high risks, high transaction costs linked with small loans and lack of traditional collaterals (Kakhkharov, 2018). Even with funds saved up from the work abroad, migrants are not more likely to invest the surplus money in business (Clement, 2011). Although, currently, use of remittances for entrepreneurship remains marginal, starting a business is considered a sign of high status in rural societies (where most of migrants originate) and more than half of households in Tajikistan report readiness to invest in a new enterprise. Owning a business creates a sense of accomplishment for migrants, allows them to distinguish themselves from the community of farmers and redeem themselves from the marginalization frequently experienced during their employment in Russia (Zotova & Cohen, 2016).

Migration has become an integral part of life for many households in Central Asia and in some cases, even a family duty of young males towards their family and relatives (Kholmatova, 2018). Migrants maintain close contact with their families staying behind, most migrant households are in touch with migrant members at least several times a week and less than 5% report having little or no contact (Seitz, 2019). Money and ideas sent home by labour migrants have powerful effects on the lives of families staying behind. Thus, remittances are also used to purchase symbols of success and prestige, such as new houses, cars, weddings and celebrations (Zotova & Cohen, 2016). Migrants themselves actively participate in reaping the benefits of their remittances sent home, they share the prestige granted by new acquisitions and participate in affluent weddings and celebrations organized through remittances (Abashin, 2016). Studies show that upcoming wedding ceremonies are sometimes the primary reason driving young people from Central Asia to earn money in Russia. Subsequently, hard-earned income is spent on lavish wedding ceremonies and celebrations at home (Kakhkharov, 2018). There are notable instances of remittances being used for collective purposes in sending communities. In various communities of Tajikistan, remittances are pooled by local residents to repair public infrastructure, improve water and sanitation systems and fill the gap of lacking public services the region. Considering the informal nature of this practice, statistical data on the communal use of remittances is scarce, however qualitative data from Tajikistan points to prevalence of cash and in-kind community contributions in local public works (JICA Research Institute, 2019). Remittance-receiving households report greater willingness to support local community projects than to deposit money in banks and only 1.5% say they do not want to contribute to local infrastructural initiatives (Ryazantsev, 2016). Recognising the potential of remittances in contributing to a more long-term development of the country, the government of Tajikistan recently announced the intention to set up a centralised fund aimed at pooling migrants’ remittances to be used for public investment. The fund will potentially be administered by a unit with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Labour, Migration, and Employment (Phiruz, 2018).

Migration and skills development

As mentioned previously, migration from Central Asia is predominantly low-skilled, however the relationship between education and migratory decisions is not linear and appears to be bell-shaped. Those with no or only basic education are less likely to emigrate, people with full secondary and vocational education find means to seek employment abroad and those with higher education tend to establish their lives in home countries (Abdullov, et al., 2020). Based on the survey data from the three countries, only 9% of current and former migrants had obtained tertiary education, 28% had completed vocational education and over 70% had secondary education or less (Abdullov, et al.,

2020). Data also suggests that Central Asian migrants tend to be employed in positions below their skill levels, thereby, wasting their human potential. Migrants with education and work experience in manufacturing, health services and education are less likely to find jobs in their field and more likely to work in trade and construction (UNDP, 2015).

While the low share of highly educated among emigrants may alleviate some concerns over brain drain in the Central Asia migration system, migration's interrelation with education is far more nuanced. Evidence from various countries of the region suggests that although migration has become a livelihood strategy for numerous households and remittances are fuelling local economies, it is hindering human capital formation for men as well as women in sending communities and thereby, undermining long-term development prospects of the Central Asian countries. Studies show that the pattern of low-skilled migration between Russia and Central Asia influences education attainment in sending countries. Abdulloev, et al. (2020) find that high rates of labour migration are causing *forsaken schooling* effect in Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan driven by large differences between the wages in Russia and at home. When low-skilled job opportunities abroad offer higher wages to migrants regardless of their schooling, population in the sending country has less incentives to invest in education at home and chooses to abandon schooling beyond compulsory levels in favour of more lucrative employment abroad. Adding to wage differences, ease of migration due to large diaspora networks and free labour movement agreements, drives young people in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to choose high-paying low-skilled work abroad over professional education at home. The exodus of young people leads to loss of human capital formation at home and limits Central Asian countries' ability to turn the bulging young population of the country into economic gains. Constraints on human capital formation also slows countries' progress towards building of a knowledge-based local economy (Abdulloev, et al., 2020).

Migration's interaction with education has been explored further by examining educational attainment of female children in migrants' households. Studies in Tajikistan have shown that financial resources gained through remittances have a positive influence on girls' school attendance but only in pre-puberty age (7-11). For girls aged 12 and above, migration is negatively associated with educational attainment (Gatskova, et al., 2017). Remittances tend to ease budgetary constraints on households, which explains the positive relationship between migration and education in young girls, however, in post-puberty age, girls are under increasing pressure to get married and assume care responsibilities at home, which limits their opportunities to receive further schooling (Gatskova, et al., 2017). Further studies find negative or no association between migration and educational attainment as missing adults in households increase pressure on younger family members to engage in agricultural work and surplus household income is spent on real estate rather than education (Wang, et al., 2019). In Kyrgyzstan, remittances did not increase children's school enrolment in migrant households. Instead, in the case of 14-18 year-old boys, having a family member working abroad had a significant negative impact on the years of schooling, as young boys have to contribute to household work when a family member (often male) is absent (Kroeger & Anderson, 2014). No significant relationship has been found between remittances and education expenditures in Uzbekistan as well, which may indicate that migrant households do not anticipate high returns on education spending or alternatively, are compelled to direct their resources towards more pressing needs of the household (Ahunov, et al., 2015).

Migrants' conditions abroad

Central Asian migrants are by far the largest group among the labour migrants in Russia. Officially, they form close to 70% of the total pool of labour migrants in the country (The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2019). Migrants play a sizable role in the economic development of the Russian Federation, they fill a myriad of "non-prestigious" positions that have challenging working

conditions, low pay and are largely unattractive to local jobseekers (Ryazantsev, 2016). Central Asian workers have to endure poor living and working conditions, many of them living in extremely dense spaces, basements, abandoned factories, vans and other non-residential premises lacking basic amenities. They often find themselves in extremely vulnerable conditions, as many work informally (in the “grey” market) without contracts, proper documents, insurance or legal protection which makes them easy targets for labour exploitation and human trafficking (Ryazantsev, 2016). Absence of formal employment contracts makes cases of abuse on the part of employers common, leaving migrants no legal means of defending their rights in courts (UNDP, 2015). Vulnerability of Central Asian migrants in Russia is exacerbated by the lack of Russian language skills and unfamiliarity with the local legal framework. Migrants often inadvertently step into an illegal status and become prey to fraudulent schemes of intermediaries offering expensive services for obtaining residence and work permits. Even though Central Asian migrants enjoy visa-free travel to Russia, they are required to take steps to extend their stay. According to surveys, many migrants lack information on these requirements, which results in fines, deportations and re-entry bans (IOM, 2015b).

Studies show that the level of migrants’ integration in host societies remains low and they tend to live on the margins of mainstream social life (Zotova & Cohen, 2016). Lacking Russian language skills and harsh working conditions limit their opportunities of interacting with locals which often creates ethnic enclaves of Central Asian labour migrants in Russian cities (Kholmatova, 2018). Migrants often work 12-16 hours a day, take cheap accommodation in crowded communal housings of labour migrants and have little communication with Russians apart from their employers. Migrants also have to face distrust from local communities as evidenced by public opinion polls showing generalized disapproval of labour migrants in the Russian society. In 2019, 72% of the Russian population thought the Russian Government should limit the inflow of labour migrants into the country and 63% believed there were too many immigrants in their city/region (Levada-Center, 2019). Migrant-averse public attitudes are supplemented by frequent media stories and statements by politicians depicting migrants’ presence in the country as harmful (Zotova & Cohen, 2016). Conversely, official government rhetoric in Russia is that of integration of immigrants in order to support population increase and satisfy the demands of the local economy (Abashin, 2016).

Diaspora

Prolonged and stable flow of migrants from Central Asia to Russia contributed to the formation of large diaspora in the country. The diaspora serves as a reinforcing factor, attracting further migrants to the country, as migrants’ choice of a destination country is strongly influenced by the size and development of the local diaspora. Surveys of Central Asian migrants in Russia show that most migrants came to Russia with the help of relatives and acquaintances already working in Russia (Ryazantsev, et al., 2017).

Contrary to belief, formation of diasporas is not an imminent process, it is a response to perceived need and enabling environment. Recognising the potential that is harboured by diasporas, governments of Central Asian countries have taken steps to establish stronger links with their nationals abroad and engage them in local development. In the Kyrgyz Republic, large-scale meetings of Kyrgyz diaspora representatives (Mekendeshter, Zamandash) were initiated by the former President of the Republic and are held on an annual basis. The gatherings aim to attract investments from well-established migrants abroad as well as engage high-skilled nationals in the local economy (Ryazantsev, et al., 2017).

As the government of Uzbekistan shifted its stance on international labour migration in 2017, there was a greater recognition of the potential of migration that can be leveraged for local development in Uzbekistan. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev conducted meetings with representatives of Uzbek

diasporas in various OECD countries and encouraged them to use their skills in support of Uzbekistan's development (Eraliev, 2019). The government also established an expert council, Buyuk Kelajak, which is a platform engaging highly skilled Uzbeks from a variety of disciplines residing in different countries for discussing development strategies for Uzbekistan. Uniting around 300 members, the platform amasses expertise in law, economics, finance, medicine, governance, education, etc. and supports the government in developing reform programs in relevant fields (Eraliev, 2019). A Government's further initiative relates to the establishment of El-Yurt Umidi Foundation which aims to train Uzbek specialists abroad and engage in a more personal dialogue with Uzbek professionals abroad (El-Yurt Umidi Foundation, 2020). The foundation identifies Uzbek professionals working across the globe and engages them in a dialogue to match their skills with the needs of national ministries and other government institutions. Migrants can provide their services to government institutions remotely or by returning to their home country to take up full-time employment (El-Yurt Umidi Foundation, 2020).

4.2. Key gaps in policymaking

This chapter lays out key gaps in policymaking in the countries of Central Asia. The goal is to identify the areas where governments fail to provide necessary support to their migrants and take advantage of the potential created through large migrant networks, remittance flows and migrants' persisting attachment with their communities of origin.

Supporting (re)integration

Central Asian migrants in Russia are among some of the most vulnerable groups of workers. Migrants largely live excluded from the social life in Russia, which increases their vulnerability to risk and exploitation. Primary reasons obstructing migrants' integration in Russia are prevalence of undocumented migrants, limited knowledge of the Russian language, negative public image of Central Asian labour migrants and shortage of integration services in the Russian society (Abashin, 2016). Central Asian governments often underestimate the importance of migrants' integration in the Russian society as they see integration in Russian societies as a threat to migrants' ties to the home country (Abashin, 2016). In practice, perceived contradiction between integration in host societies and maintained connection with home communities is largely fictional, given the transnational character of migrants' lives. Migrants build social spheres that transcend geographical boundaries and simultaneously connect them with host communities as well as their places of origin. Furthermore, meaningful integration in host communities often helps migrants maintain quality interaction with their communities at home. This vision is largely absent from the policies of Russian and Central Asian authorities however, which impedes migrants' integration in host countries as well as their effective contribution to the development of their home countries (Abashin, 2016).

Central Asian authorities' support for diaspora communities in order to facilitate integration of migrants in host communities remains lacking. Diasporas are largely self-organized to provide support for everyday needs for migrants but their impact on improving the inclusion of migrants into Russian communities remains limited.

Significant challenges remain in the realm of migrants' reintegration in home communities. As labour migration patterns of workers from Central Asia are often temporary, their reintegration in sending communities should be a high priority on local political agendas. However, studies show persistent gaps in policies at national and local levels in reintegration of returning migrants in social and economic lives at home (Abdulloeva, et al., 2017). As tightening administrative measures in Russia are expelling more and more migrants to their home countries, the increasing volume of return migration demands a more concerted policy response. Experts point to the lack of sufficient services offered to

return migrants and the threat of exacerbated poverty and crime as more migrants come home from Russia (Abdulloeva, et al., 2017; ILO, 2010).

Effective use of remittances and entrepreneurship

Migrants hold a large potential that can be channelled towards the development of local economies. International studies indicate superior cognitive skills among migrants as well as proclivities to risk-taking which are both qualities that can be harnessed for the development of a local entrepreneurial climate (Dustmann, et al., 2017). This potential remains largely untapped in the countries of Central Asia. Migrants returning to their home communities often struggle to find employment and readjust to local economies. Unable to find employment, many prefer to start an enterprise but their knowledge on entrepreneurship remains limited due to little experience and exposure to business making (Ryazantsev, et al., 2017).

Although most migrants report willingness to start a business, only 5-7% of migrants report using their accumulated funds for investment (Kakhkharov, 2018). An unfavourable business environment, corruption and the lack of supportive mechanisms in home communities create unsurmountable obstacles that drive migrants into idleness and unemployment during their return home. Array of permits to be obtained and bribes to be paid to local authorities discourage initiatives from potential entrepreneurs. Support mechanisms encouraging entrepreneurship and granting privileges to small entrepreneurs remain limited which leaves migrants unable to direct their funds towards productive purposes (Zhanaltay, 2018). Although start-up-friendly policies remain limited in Central Asia, surveys also show that more than half of migrants are unaware of the existing financial benefits and privileges granted to small businesses (UNDP, 2015; Ryazantsev & Ochirova, 2019).

The sheer volume of remittances received by Central Asian countries creates an enormous socioeconomic potential for the improvement of local livelihoods. However, studies show that remittances are predominantly used to satisfy short terms needs, refurbish or purchase real estate and organize opulent celebrations. Governments have failed to introduce any substantial changes in these spending patterns short of introducing restrictions on the number of guests on weddings (Zotova & Cohen, 2016). While there are a number of grassroots initiatives spearheaded by migrant groups or local NGOs which facilitate collective use of remittances for public infrastructure, governments offer no contribution to reinforce their socioeconomic impacts on community development (Ryazantsev & Ochirova, 2019).

Predeparture trainings for migrants

Central Asian migrants are among the most vulnerable migrants due to pervasiveness of irregularity, lack of language skills, lack of awareness on migratory regulations and marginal levels of integration in host communities. Government mechanisms for supplying migrants with necessary predeparture information on their legal rights, opportunities and obligations fall severely short, evidenced by large numbers of deportations and cases of labour exploitation reported in the Russian Federation. Particular challenges remain in rural areas and small towns which give rise to the largest flows of migration and simultaneously, have the least access to predeparture trainings and mainstream communication channels. Surveys predominantly show that relatives and friends remain the primary sources of information for migrants when seeking legal advice on their migration plans (UNDP, 2015). Tajikistan still lacks an effective system of pre-departure preparation services for migrants. Although there is a centrally administered network of consultation centres for labour migrants, the centres have a very limited capacity in view of a lack of funding, little staffing and limited scope of responsibilities. Centres provide only legal consultation to migrants and offer no further trainings to better equip migrants for work abroad, such as teaching foreign languages and professional skills, providing

information on employment opportunities and mechanisms for finding work, providing information on the availability of services abroad, etc. (Abdulloeva, et al., 2017). As discussed previously, preparation of migrants prior to their departure plays a pivotal role in protecting them from risks of exploitation and abuse abroad. Additionally, better predeparture services could help migrants to expand their choice of destinations in order to reduce dependence on Russia and seek potentially more lucrative employment opportunities in other countries (Abdulloeva, et al., 2017).

5. Involvement of local authorities in migration governance in Central Asia

This chapter discusses the current state of affairs in the governance of migration in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic and discusses the role of local governments' in this process. Based on the policymaking gaps identified in the previous chapter, recommendations are developed on harnessing the developmental potential of migration through a better engagement of local authorities in migration management.

5.1. Current state of affairs

Tajikistan

Tajikistan was one of the first states in Central Asia to adopt a Concept for State Migration Policy in 1998 which highlights the importance of migration processes in national policymaking (Ryazantsev, 2016). The Law on Migration was developed in 1999 and still remains in force with a number of changes introduced in subsequent years. The most recent policy document regulating migration in Tajikistan is the National Strategy on International Labour Migration of the Citizens of The Republic of Tajikistan for the years 2011-2015 which has not been renewed since. Migration issues are currently regulated by other policy documents such as, the National Strategy for Counteracting Terrorism and Extremism and the National Program for Supporting Employment of the population of Tajikistan (Abdulloeva, et al., 2017). None of these documents highlight the involvement of local authorities in migration management and the implementation of the migration policy largely falls under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Migration, and Employment. The ministry has Bureaus of Migration service established in several locations across the country and a network of pre-departure centers for counseling and training. The network of the centers however falls short of the demand, lacks in funding and fails to provide large-scale pre-departure trainings to prospective migrants (Abdulloeva, et al., 2017). The network also fails to take advantage of the local governance structure and overall, the involvement of local authorities in migration management remains marginal.

Kyrgyz Republic

At the time of writing this paper, the Kyrgyz Republic is in the process of finalising a new concept on State Migration Policy which, along with the Law on International Migration, will be the main document governing migration processes in the country. The development of the document was characterised by a strong involvement of international and local non-governmental bodies and prominently features the role of local authorities in the implementation of the state's migration policy. The concept emphasizes the importance of actively engaging local governments in migration management and leveraging the potential of a wide network of regional authorities to expand the reach of migrant services. The concept recognises that engagement of local authorities is decisive to ensure due consideration of local migratory and labour market contexts in migration management, to provide targeted predeparture and reintegration services to migrants and leverage migration for the development of the most vulnerable communities of the country. The concept also sees the local authorities' role in reaching out to diasporas to involve them in local development and create mechanisms for cross-border skills transfers.

Uzbekistan

A change in leadership in 2017 brought a drastic change in the government's approach to international labour migration (Seitz, 2019). In the period since 2017, the country has made marked progress in the regulation of labour migration by developing a Draft Law on Migration in December of 2019 and ramping up its efforts in the protection of migrants' rights. The newly strengthened Agency for External Labour Migration under the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan took on the leading role in managing migration, opening regional offices across the country and setting up offices abroad (Seitz, 2019). Engagement of local authorities in this process remains a significant gap in this process and highlights the need for a unified strategy document defining the government's approach to migration management. The most recent concept of migration policy was developed in 2013 which is clearly outdated now and falls short of adjusting to subsequent changes in international and local migratory contexts (IOM, 2019). An important shortcoming highlighted in reports is the shortage of predeparture and reintegration services across the country. In response to this gap, the Agency for External Labour Migration collaborates with subnational administrative units to expand the network of reintegration services, keep records of migrants returning to their communities and provide targeted services to encourage their integration into the local labour market (IOM, 2019; Bazyleva, 2018).

Mahallas

In discussing local authorities' involvement in migration processes of Central Asia, it is important to highlight the culture of *mahallas* in these countries. Mahalla refers to a collective of resident families in a neighbourhood in an urban or a rural setting which is headed by a self-administrative organ of a mahalla committee. Mahalla committees consist of local respected elders, spiritual leaders and regular citizens who meet regularly to discuss public issues of the neighbourhood. Mahallas are involved in solving various infrastructural and development issues of the neighbourhood, organising collective events of celebration or communal work (Fryer, et al., 2016). Mahallas have a long history in Central Asia, especially among Uzbek and Tajik ethnicities. Having survived through the tumultuous years of Soviet rule, they remain relevant in modern lives of communities in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. These communal units are present in all urban and rural settlements of the countries, uniting around 3000 residents from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds (Kuliev, 2019). In Uzbekistan, mahallas have been institutionalised by the national government, integrating it as an official self-governing administrative unit in the governance structure of the country. While, historically, mahalla leaders were chosen informally by community members, currently, they are elected by the neighbourhood and subsequently, officially appointed by city administrations (Dadabaev, 2017). Mahallas are seen as means of compensating for the shortcomings of local and central administrative units by bringing governance closer to people, localising dissatisfactions and creating consensus on a smaller scale to foster collaborations for public good (Dadabaev, 2017).

Mahallas play an important role in migration processes by participating in community members' decision making to migrate for work, providing assistance in finding employment opportunities abroad, providing information on conditions abroad, engaging migrants and their families in local development and supporting reintegration of migrants (Fryer, et al., 2016). The very nature of mahallas as a tightly wound network of families in a neighbourhood serves as a system fostering greater engagement of migrants in local development. Qualitative research of labour migrants' ties to their home communities has shown the prominent role of mahallas in facilitating this linkage, by encouraging migrants to contribute to community development and direct a portion of remittances towards the public good. Migrants also express greater trust towards mahallas as opposed to regional and national governments and show more willingness to contribute to the development of their immediate communities (ILO, 2010). Mahallas can be described as the most widely shared meaning

of a *community* among Uzbek and Tajik ethnicities. As migrants and their families are expected to contribute to community development through their increased income, mahallas generally represent the communities they most actively engage with (Fryer, et al., 2016; ILO, 2010). Although the potential of mahallas has a widespread recognition, their role in modern governance structures remains vague and their role in mobilising communities and serving as an extension of public administration for development-oriented migration management remains underutilized (Dadabaev, 2017).

5.2. Leveraging local authorities' potential – recommendations

The document examined migration patterns from the southern rim of Central Asia and analysed its developmental implications for sending communities and migrants themselves. Based on the analysis of policy gaps in development-oriented migration management in these countries, the following recommendations have been developed to facilitate impactful engagement of local authorities in migration governance.

Predeparture orientation

Local governments should play the leading role in migrants' protection by providing wider access to quality pre-departure consultation and trainings to migrants. Pre-departure trainings should provide information on the legal rights and obligations of migrants in destination countries, connect them with key support services abroad.

Given the scale of labour migration from the southern countries of Central Asia, decentralized provision of predeparture services becomes instrumental. However, to ensure the quality and extensiveness of consultations and trainings, it is important to develop a centralised curriculum in close collaboration with migrant groups, local authorities and local and international non-governmental bodies. The centralised curriculum should unite lessons drawn from the experiences of migrants and organisations providing support to migrant groups. Subsequently, a decentralized network of consultation centres on the basis of local governments can take the leading role in providing the training services to migrants. The centres can use the resources of past labour migrants in the provision of consultations and trainings to prospective workers as a part of the larger package of reintegration services offered to returned migrants.

Reintegration services

Reintegration services remain severely lacking in the sending communities of Central Asian countries. Even in the presence of relevant government programs, due outreach to migrants remains a problem (migrants' awareness of reintegration programs is limited) and therefore more decentralised administration of such initiatives is needed. It is important to actively engage local authorities (including mahallas) in the delivery of reintegration services and provide reintegration packages tailored to regional contexts. Local authorities are uniquely placed to provide reintegration services to returning migrants and facilitate their smoother readjustment to local social and economic contexts. Studies show that migrants from Central Asia are predominantly young and their work in Russia is often their first experience of an employment. Given the lack of experience of engaging with the local labour market, returning migrants struggle to adjust, requiring additional support from authorities. Reintegration of labour migrants should be included in local development strategies to develop targeted programs for their integration in labour markets and social lives of communities. Targeted programs can include:

- healthcare services to remedy any health problems inherited from the harsh labour conditions abroad.

- short-term training and retraining programs to facilitate rapid inclusion into the job market.
- preferential grants and loans to increase access to finance and support entrepreneurship.
- preferential tax schemes to incentivise migrants' economic activity in the communities of their origin.
- specialised trainings and guidance to support them at the early stages of business making.

Use of remittances for local development

Effective use of remittances for long-term development investment in household and community development remains a challenge for Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan alike. There are community initiatives spearheaded by mahallas in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan which direct communal remittance to public good, however, these initiatives currently have no official support from local governments. Building on the experiences of other countries receiving large flows of remittances, countries of Central Asia have a good opportunity to introduce 1x1 schemes, in which remittances of migrants are matched by an equal amount of funds from local governments.

More effective use of remittances can be supported through a widescale provision of financial literacy trainings to migrant families. Financial literacy has been shown as a particularly impactful area of intervention for the countries with large dependence on remittances as they provide skills on safe and efficient ways of saving and investing money, teach about the management of household budgets and increase the use of funds for developmental purposes.

Diaspora engagement

Initiatives of diaspora engagement are often spearheaded by central authorities, but it is important to recognise the relevance of engaging local authorities in this process initiatives. Surveys of Central Asian migrants show migrants' greater willingness to contribute to the development of their immediate communities, thus, mahallas and other local authorities are better placed to encourage investment and engagement from diasporas. Furthermore, when centrally administered, such schemes tend to neglect certain regions of a country and as a result, opportunities are not equally available to different regional populations of the country.

Continuous outflow of workers from Central Asia has created large communities of Central Asian nationals abroad, however, diaspora formation is not necessarily an automatic process and requires active facilitation from sending communities. By providing quality predeparture orientation and creating mechanisms of diaspora's engagement with their home communities, local authorities can play an important role in supporting the formation of migrant associations abroad. As evidenced from the experiences of other countries, migrant associations can be a valuable translocal platform for improving migrants' integration in host communities and facilitating their continued engagement in local development of home communities.

Leveraging the potential of mahallas for development-oriented migration management

Mahallas hold a large potential in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan given their active engagement in community development, proximity to the needs of residents, high status in the population and trust from migrants. Mahallas already play a significant role throughout the migration cycle by participating in community members' decision to migrate, providing assistance in preparation for migration, receiving communal remittances from migrants and maintaining contact with migrant communities. Mahalla committees can play an important role in the delivery of predeparture and reintegration services, engaging diasporas, administering remittance matching schemes and providing support to migrant families.

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