Women's Migration Processes from Georgia

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Abstract: Purpose of the paper is to study the territorial movement of population in line with predictable and unpredictable changes following world globalization, with its economic and social-political outcomes having become a severe problem for Georgia. World Bank database, materials of Ministry of Resettlement and Refugees of Georgia, IOM's assessment mission report Review in Georgia and data of Geostat (National Statistics Office of Georgia) were used in the study. Methods of statistical observation, grouping and analysis were used to determine the migrants' distribution from Georgia according to age and sex. Scientific aim of the paper is to throw light upon the migration process of women from Georgia in political, economic and social respects and identify the trends and advantages and disadvantages of this process. The paper notes that. Georgia, in respect of migration, is a country of origin, destination and transit. Traditionally, mostly men made up the labour or study migration currents from Georgia. Since the 1990s, the picture has changed. As the statistics of 2014 suggest, 65 females are encountered for every 100 migrants. This ratio changes according to women's age groups. In economic respect, women's migration from Georgia is justified, as money sent by them is the means of living for their families and plays a role in overcoming poverty. Recently, many young girls have left Georgia. Studies demonstrate that migration-prone attitude is quite strong among young people. Such a situation needs much consideration and contemplation by every citizen, whole society and government of the country, as Georgia is going to face severe demographic, social-economic, political, national security and other problems. The state must improve the living standards in the country through job generation, better compensation and gender equality on the labour market and less migrants as an ultimate aim.

Keywords: Feminization of migration processes, Emigrant, Immigrant, Statistical analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

In the face of world global processes, predictable and non-predictable changes take place. The intensity of population's territorial movement belongs to such changes and this movement is already an urgent global problem with its economic and socio-political results. In the era of globalization, international migration processes have gained completely different scale, the intensity of migration between the source and destination countries, as well as geographic scope, gender and age structure of migrants, reasons and factors of migration have changed. According to UN's estimation, in 2000, when world population reached 6,057 billion, the number of international migrants was 2.9%, i.e. 222 million and in 2015 this number reached 244 million.¹ Migration is an urgent problem in Georgia too. Besides, it is worthwhile to note that the number of migrants from Georgia grows every year and majority of migrants are women. Feminization of migration is not a specific Georgian trend. Such trend exists in a whole world. In the past two decades new patterns of female migration have emerged as a result of geopolitical conflicts and economic restructuring in Eastern Europe and the Third World. So too has international mobility due to economic opportunities, higher levels of education and possibilities for travel amplified temporary and permanent migratory movements².

¹ International Migration Report 2015, 2016

² Kofman. E. Women migrants and refugees in the European Union. In Conference jointly organized by The European Commission and the OECD, 2-26, 2003

Experts think that gender specification of Georgian migration (as well as other developing countries) is related to hard economic conditions. Additionally, high rate of feminization of migration can be explained by cultural factors and high demand on women at the international labour market.

2. GEORGIA'S MIGRATION GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

If until 1990's of the 20th century, we have only known compulsory migrants from Georgia because of political and economic reasons, recently the scale of migration has exceeded any expectation. Georgia was in post-war condition, hopeless, cold, dark, unemployed and hungry. Professors were standing behind the shop-boards selling the products, many people were unemployed, houses were dark and cold. The main victim of this political and social chaos was a Georgian man. These processes had an impact on every region, city and village of Georgia. The number of immigrants, who are leaving Georgia for survival, is still increasing. The modern Georgia is an explicitly donor country, if we consider migration processes and the main recipient countries are Russia, Turkey, Greece, Germany and USA. According to information of the Office of The State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues, on 1st January, 2015, approximately 1,607,744 our countrymen are living abroad. Most of them are living in Russian Federation. Their number reaches 800,000 and 285, 915 (2009) of them are citizens of Russian Federation. The following countries are signified with multiplicity of our countrymen: Turkey (100,000), United States of America (80,000), Azerbaijan (35,000), Spain (30,000), Germany (25,000), etc.³ Unfortunately, this data isn't precise. In reality, numbers are higher.

3. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF WOMEN'S MIGRATION FROM GEORGIA

In the field of international migration, international organizations, as well as academic studies, mainly have paid attention to men migrants until 1970s. Men migrants were perceived the basic working force and generally, migrant was considered as a man with passively attendant family member, particularly wife. Such attitude was related to economic aspects of international migration because it was implied that women only minimally participated in international labour migration. In the 80s, women migrants gained more attention, because of global trend of feminization of migration. Afterward, studies considered women not only as the passive dependents on husbands, but as the independent actors, working in different fields of labour market. Women were basically employed as carers and nurses. The term "feminization of migration" comes from this period and it is related to changes of migration context of women in the past decades. UN published its report in 1998 and firstly underlined the high number of women and girls among international migrants. In the 1960s, already 47 were women from 100 international migrants. In 2000, 49% of migrants were women. According to UN's newest report (2016), in 101 countries, more than half of migrants are women.⁴ All these data confirm increasing feminization of international migration.

The global trend of feminization of migration is tangible in Georgia too. Women's labour migration hasn't been characteristics of Georgia until 1990s. "For traditional, Georgian mentality it was unacceptable to compel women, leave families and go away in search of a living. But because of reality, deep socio-economic crisis and drop in living standards, labour migration became one of the ways of physical survival of Georgian population; afterward, women widely participated in the process of labour migration"⁵. We can call this process social despair. Women migrated to foreign countries one after another. Women migrants are in more unfavorable and disadvantaged conditions at labor

³ Office of The State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora. Issues. <http://opendata.ge/ka/request/42514#requests-tabs1>

⁴ International Migration Report 2015, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016

⁵ Review of migration management in Georgia. Report of estimation mission, IMO. 2008

market as the women and as the migrants. They are offered low-wage jobs and they take low wages. Women are discriminated. In spite of these threats, women are still risking. It is the reality of our country and unfortunately, the number of migrants still increases. According to UN's report on international migration (2016), in 2015 from 168,800 international migrants of Georgia, 56.8% are women⁶. Of course, child's welfare is the main source of happiness for Georgian mother, but we must ask, what is the price of it. The price is caring for other women's children, rupture of invisible threads with her children, abandoned parents while caring for others' parents, disturbed relations with her husband, although these relations are close to farce. "Large-scale outflow of labour resources from Georgia can be economically justified because money sent by labour migrants is the only daily riches for many families. Money transfers are the main source of external on flow and play significant role in overcoming the poverty".

In 2014, migrants from developing countries sent home an estimated US \$436 billion in remittances; a 4.4 percent increase over the 2013 level (World Bank 2015), far exceeding official development assistance and, excluding China, foreign direct investment. Money transfers increase every year in Georgia too. Different international studies confirm that women migrants spend much less money and send more to family members, than men. The reason for this is that women spend less on their private needs and send money on a regular basis. If we take into account that more than half of migrants from Georgia are women, majority of transactions are on their side and women are only breadwinners for many families and relatives. Moreover, migrants' money transfers exceed direct foreign investments in our country. According to statistical reports of commercial banks and micro-finance organizations (Figure 1), in 2011, migrants sent approximately 1,268 million US dollars and in 2014, this number was 1440,8 million US dollars, what is more than one-third of the state budget. In January-October of 2015, 714,3 million US dollars were transferred and it is 250,1 million US dollars, i.e. 25.9% less than in January-October of the past year⁷.

Figure 1: Growth of money transfers (in million US dollars)

Source: National bank of Georgia

The majority of money transfers are spent on daily needs, such as food, clothes and communal taxes. Only small portion of this money is invested in business. According to data of integrated research of households, money transfers decrease the level of poverty by 2%, if the threshold of poverty is 60% of median consumption.

⁶International Migration Report 2015. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2016

⁷www.nbg.gov.ge

On the basis of data of World Bank, experts indicate that money transfers occupy not less than 60-70% of whole income from Georgian migration. Therefore, aggregated indicator of money transfers of Georgia can be up to 2.1 billion US dollars. It was 12.1% of GDP (GDP - 17,266 million US dollars) in 2014, it outnumbers direct foreign investments by 65% (1,272 million US dollars) and it is not much less than export (2,861 million US dollars). Money transfers are mainly used as a living-wage for population and therefore, their impact on social stability is very significant. Out of every 100 Georgian migrants, going to improve economic conditions, 67 are women. Proportion changes in favor of women in higher age groups. For example, According to the data of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (2016) out of every 100 migrants, who are 40-44 years old, 61 are women, in 50-54 age groups, the same number is 69, but above 60, the number of women decreases (Figure. 2).

Figure 2: Emigrants and immigrants by Sex and Age
Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2016

In studies of 2008-2009, related to migrant women and gender problems, different reasons for migration were named. Young women, most of whom are migrating to Germany as a nurse, named European education and possibility of legal work as the reasons for migration. What about relatively old women, their choice was totally determined with economic goals. Their majority was participating in the process of illegal migration to financially support their families. Studies confirm that in many countries, structural changes of labour market caused feminization of labour migration. Women, who are single, married or better educated than men, try to find a job abroad and improve living conditions. Migration implies certain novelty and adventure with a terrible ordeal, because each migrant, may she be shy housewife or successful women, tried to find compensation for those terrible years of stress and fatigue. They prepared for a new life that required hard work and will, but promised luxury of remaining alone with herself. Therefore, it is not a lie that many women found themselves exactly "there". Traditional gender model of labour distribution changes step by step. Employed women participate in formation of the family budget along with men. For women not only financial factor is important, but moral too.

Women's family activities became non-prestigious. A woman employed in non-formal sector feels herself more comfortable and independent. Therefore, many women choose to work outside family.

The reason for women's labour migration is hard social and economic conditions of families and this situation has a negative impact on the development of families. For women, being outside family, is harder than for men. The majority of Georgian women migrants are going to Greece (24.3%), Germany (23.5%), USA and Russia (14.3%). Migration often has illegal forms. Studies indicate that majority of women are employed in the service sector. They work as nurses (33.1%), tutors (9.2%), waitresses (4.8%), housemaids (9.2%), salespersons (5.5%), etc.

Youth's labour emigration can be considered as a positive phenomenon if it is of short term and returnable nature, takes place in a legal way and the purpose of leaving corresponds to the existing real situation in a receiving country. In addition to improving material conditions, the main purpose of students' emigration is a desire to get education, to improve their knowledge in foreign languages and gain experience. At the same time, it is acknowledged that through the short-term emigration more funds flow into the country than through the long term one. Besides remittances, returned youth's professionalism and their high competitiveness is much more valuable.

Many young people have left Georgia in recent period because of numerous reasons and problems. Probably, many will leave in the nearest future. The results of our study indicate that predispose to migration is quite strong in our youth. More than half of young people (51.9%) are psychologically prepared to go abroad and in corresponding conditions may become migrant any moment. Also, it is worthwhile to note that every fourth young person (24.4%) isn't planning to leave the country and one-third, i.e. 8% of respondents is categorically against this. Besides, many potential migrants have the desire to return back. Absolute majority of respondents (84%) think that in the case of leaving the country, they will definitely return to the homeland. It is also worthwhile to note that majority of migrant family members of respondents (66.6%) haven't returned to Georgia. Probably in this case desire and reality are far from each other.

At the same time, unmanaged labour migration can gain more negative features. In the case of non-return of youth, the country experiences direct economic and demographic losses that result in the fall of labour potential. In relation to this, the government's objective is to find a compromise between youth's labour migration and maintaining the necessity of their return; to collaborate with the countries where the labour migration is directed in view of mutual profitability, effective use of human resources and protection of their citizens' labour and social rights.

4. CONCLUSION

According to quantitative and qualitative studies that were conducted in Georgia before 2015 and that were related to migration, as well as analysis of documental video materials, revealed several basic factors of feminization of migration. These factors are positive attitude of society towards women's labour, high demand for women's labour in foreign countries, women's feeling of more security while living abroad, women's high responsibility towards their children and other family members;

Facilitative factors of women's growing migration are considered high indicator of divorces and scarce opportunities of the local economy. Besides, significant factor is high demand on women at labour markets of neighbouring countries (so-called "feminine" labour) and all these support women's migration;

Women's large-scale migration from Georgia can be economically justified because money sent by labour migrants is daily riches for many families. Money transfers are the main source of external inflow and play significant role in overcoming poverty;

Migration implied certain novelty and adventure with a terrible ordeal, because it required hard work and will, but promised luxury of remaining alone with herself. Many women found themselves exactly

“there”. Employed women feel more comfortable and independent, that's why they choose employment outside families, if there is any opportunity;

In the recent period many young women have left Georgia. The results of the study show that predisposition towards migration is quite strong in youth. More than half of them (51.9%) are psychologically prepared to leave Georgia and in corresponding conditions, may become migrant any moment.

The current situation requires serious consideration and discussion from every citizen, whole society and authorities. State's role must inevitable increase in regulation of potential and real migration. In a different case, Georgia will face serious demographic, socio-economic, political, national security and other problems.

State must care for improving living conditions. Good living standards mean high productivity. It implies multiple jobs, high wages and at last we have the main result: gender equality at the labour market and less migrant.

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