

American University of Central Asia

Sociology Department

# **Survival Strategies of left behind wives of labour migrants in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast**

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By

Usniniso Muborakshoeva

Thesis Supervisor: Galina Gorborukova

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

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Kyrgyzstan Republic

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**Abbreviations**

**GBAO** Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast

**GDP** Gross Domestic Product

**IOM** International Organization for Migration

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**Abstract**

This thesis explores the impact of the husband's migration on the left-behind wives and the survival strategies the left-behind wives develop in the absence of their husbands in GBAO, Tajikistan. Although there are many studies on migration in general, there is very little research available about the phenomenon of migration in a post-Soviet Central Asian context. Moreover, the effects of migration on women's position in the society among the left-behind wives in such context have not been studied much either. There is media coverage of the topic, but no systematic studies have been conducted. This is the major reason for this study to research the economic and psychological impacts of husband's migration on the left-behind wives in GBAO, a remote region of Central Asia and Tajikistan.

The main tool of data collection is interview and the total number of respondents is 8 people. The analysis of the data demonstrates that the absence of the husbands significantly increases the economic and psychological problems of the left-behind wives and the household. The left-behind wives often feel deprivation both financially and emotionally. In addition, they face stigmatisation and negative attitudes of some people towards them. As a consequence of this new way of life, the left-behind wives develop strategies for survival in order to adapt to their new situation. The study recommends for the government in Tajikistan and GBAO to support these left-behind wives, since the little governmental support that exist in GBAO was not accessible to the respondents in this study.

**Key words:** migration, left-behind wives, economic impacts, psychological effects, survival strategies, GBAO

## **1. Introduction**

Migration is being widely discussed all over the world. Some people find it as a survival strategy for avoiding poverty, when some others find it the other way round. With the government's failure in providing job opportunities, the people of Tajikistan find migration as one of the survival strategies in improving their living conditions. Among migrants there is no gender difference meaning that both men and women are being migrants. However this paper will only look at married men's migration and its effect on their wives.

During the last 5 years the concept of "migrant's wife" has appeared and extensively discussed in the media. It caught the attention of many people including western scholars and journalists. "Tajikistan's missing men" – one of the documentaries by the Al Jazeera television network provides a great example of migration in Tajikistan and its effects on families left behind. It brought to the attention another story from another less developed country, like Tajikistan. "Tajikistan's missing men" documentary and other related issues discussed in the media, became the reasons for writing this paper. It made me interested in the topic of left-behind wives more and more and there were endless questions that needed more investigations. The media publications about left-behind wives are growing, while all of them have the same ideas. The left-behind wives are often described as the ones who have lost everything and for whom the husband's migration has become a tragedy. However, it is inevitable to look at this issue from scholarly perspective and only then it can be stated which kind of effect the husband's migration has on wives who are left-behind. This paper looks at the economic and psychological effects of the husband's migration and tries to find out whether the issues mentioned by the media and those understood by general public were reliable or not. Additionally it focuses on the survival strategies that women develop during their husbands' migration.

## **Historical Background**

Migration is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, people have moved across borders for economic and political reasons. Tajikistan is also one of the migrant sending and remittance receiving countries in Central Asia. Migration in Tajikistan has strong historical roots, which have had different causes over many years. According to Korobkov (2007), the history of migration in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union is divided into five main periods; the first period (1991-1992), the second period (beginning of 1993-1995), the third period (1996-1999), the fourth period (2000-2005), and the fifth period (2005-2008). Within these periods migration from Central Asian countries to Russia was prominent. People from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, migrated to Russia due to economic and political reasons. During the first and second migration waves after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many families moved together because of ethnic clashes and political instability in their home country. In 2008 because of the world economic crisis the migration flow started to slow down, because in Russia and other more developed countries the demand for migrants' work was reduced. But in comparison with other Central Asian countries, the work opportunities were still available in Russia for migrant workers.

In recent years the Tajik workforce is migrating out of the country mainly because of economic reasons. Families are forced to send their members to another country and this in turn leads to the families becoming highly dependent on the person working as a labour migrant. The separation of migrants from their family can have profound effects on the family organization and the lives of the family members.

### **Table 1. Labour Migration for July 2008**

| City, region | Total   | Men     | Women  | To Russia | To Kyrgyzstan | To Kazakhstan | To Ukraine | To other CIS countries | To other foreign countries |
|--------------|---------|---------|--------|-----------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Dushanbe     | 6,374   | 4,452   | 1,922  | 4,786     | 413           | 490           | 685        |                        |                            |
| Badakhshan   | 21,581  | 17,852  | 3,729  | 20,494    | 355           | 318           | 187        | 112                    | 115                        |
| Khatlon      | 140,694 | 130,753 | 9,941  | 128,465   | 2,672         | 6,557         | 1,743      | 1,112                  | 145                        |
| Sughd        | 158,407 | 137,295 | 21,112 | 149,437   | 1,547         | 4,530         | 1,061      | 1,796                  | 36                         |
| RRP          | 102,939 | 98,284  | 4,655  | 98,985    | 1,326         | 1,714         | 397        | 465                    | 52                         |
| Total        | 429,995 | 388,636 | 41,359 | 402,167   | 6,313         | 13,609        | 4,073      | 3,485                  | 348                        |

Data from the State Agency for Social Protection, Employment of Population and Migrations, Dushanbe as of 1 July 2008.

Source: Abandoned Wives of Tajik Labour Migrants. (2009), pp.14

The above table shows the total number of migrants from Tajikistan during 2008, including their gender, region, and the country to which they migrated. From the table it can be seen that the number of migrant men from Tajikistan is more than migrant women who migrate mostly to Russia (402,167). This large migration from Tajikistan has left families without young, prime aged workers in many households. According to Oynihol Bobonazarova (2010), a human rights activist and the head of NGO "Perspective-plus", there are more than 800 thousand labour migrants who have migrated to the Russian Federation and many of them do not return home. The reasons for not returning home are often illnesses and creating another family. Bobonazarova also mentions that 95% of these labour migrants suffer from various diseases, which can be another reason of their absence. According to Matlyuba Sattorova (2010), the committee member on Women and Family Affairs of Sughd region, the number of male migrants is increasing among whom many are missing – or make new families. By sending a member to another country, families hope to improve their living conditions and economic situation, but instead they receive an adverse effect on the whole family left-behind, particularly the left-behind wives of the migrants. The left-behind wives have to deal with the upbringing of children looking after the parents or siblings of their husbands and do the household chores.



They take up male responsibilities and roles by spending more time on agriculture, domestic cattle and other household chores, that were previously done by men. However, it happens that their husbands who leave them behind do not always appreciate their work. Additionally some of the migrant workers marry other women in Russia and some of them decide to end marriage through a phone call or sending divorce text messages to their wives. This way of life often brings new kinds of problems for the family members and many left behind wives may experience emotional and physical stress. The psychological changes that are experienced by left-behind wives are often observed in the migrant's families. As Gordon (cited by Chaney, 1985) suggests, when the head of the household migrates, the family tension increases considerably, to a point of becoming unbearable, especially for the female left in charge. However, some studies focus on the positive impacts of the husband's absence arguing that women assume more responsibility and become the main decision makers in the family when their husband are absent. This gives them more power to be independent and decide issues concerning their family.

The present study is designed to investigate the effects of the husband's migration on the lives of their left-behind wives only in one part of Tajikistan, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. It attempts to discover in what ways does husband's migration affect the women's lives both from economic and psychological point of views, and which kinds of survival strategies women apply in order to live without their husbands. There are several objectives for this study:

**Table 2: Objectives of the study**

| <b>Assess the survival capability of the wives</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Economic issues</b>   | <b>Psychological issues</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of money</li> <li>• Amount of property</li> <li>• Financial support (from whom)</li> <li>• Division of household chores;<br/>before and after husband's migration</li> <li>• Number of children</li> <li>• Children's education, health,</li> <li>• Main decision maker</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-identification</li> <li>• Personal feelings</li> <li>• Relationship with relatives</li> <li>➤ In-laws</li> <li>➤ Women's relatives</li> <li>➤ Her children</li> <li>➤ Friends</li> <li>➤ Other men</li> </ul> |

**Research Questions:**

- How does husband's migration affect their wives left-behind and their household in general?
- What kinds of survival strategies do women employ in order to manage their families in the absence of their husbands?

**2. Literature Review**

The complicated issue of migration and the effects of it on families leave many questions unanswered. Researchers presenting different assumptions about the migration issues draw attention of the public to look at this issue from their perspective. However, not all of them are looking at the effects of migration on the household and family members who are left behind. This chapter looks at available studies about the effects of migration on left-behind wives and provides arguments that support the proposed research questions. I will bring some examples of literature that have theoretically and empirically dealt with the migration and the effect of it on the household and left-behind wives both economically and psychologically. Starting from the brief overview of GBAO, the site where the research is done, it will provide general description of Badakhshan in order to introduce what kind of area it is. Then it will talk about the women's

role in GBAO and the social position of women there. Further it will focus on migration pattern of Tajikistan in general and then the impact of migration on the family left behind. The effect of migration is the central point of this study and it focuses on transformations of gender roles, psychological well being and the economic factors.

### **General Description of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast**

One of the most remote areas of Tajikistan, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, is the biggest in the area and the smallest in population compared to the other regions of Tajikistan. This area lies at the South-East of Tajikistan, bordering with Kyrgyzstan to the north, China to the east, and Afghanistan to the south. GBAO is isolated from the rest of Tajikistan with the high Pamir Mountains and is also known by these mountains as well as is often called the “Roof of the World”. There are six districts such as Murghab, Darvaz, Rushan, Roshtkala, Ishkashim, Shughnan in the province, and the city of Khorog is the centre of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).

**Table 3: General Indicators of Tajikistan Regions**

| <b>Region</b>                       | <b>Population (2012)</b> | <b>Area (km2)</b> | <b>Center</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Badakhshan                          | 208,500                  | 24,750            | Khorog        |
| Dushanbe                            | 748,000                  | 40                | Dushanbe      |
| Khatlon                             | 2,765,800                | 9,500             | Qurghonteppa  |
| Regions of Republican Subordination | 1,786,100                | 11,040            |               |
| Sughd                               | 2,298,800                | 9,730             | Khujand       |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>7,807,200</b>         | <b>142,600</b>    |               |

Source: Gwillim Law (1999). “Regions of Tajikistan” [Online:<http://www.statoids.com/utj.html>]

GBAO is the area where the ethnic minorities live, who makes up 208,500 of the total population. They are often called the Pamiris, practicing Ismaili religious faith and speaking different languages, but the main language spoken in Khorog, the site for this research, is

Shughnani language. There are many issues around the identity of people with regard to ‘Tajik and Pamiri’, which became very prominent since the Civil War in the early 1990’s and continue to exist till now. The issue of ethnic identity however, is a study on its own right and is not dealt with in this research. Instead this research reviews researches that have explored family structure and its link with current issue of migration.

### **Family Structure and Women’s Roles in Tajikistan**

As the other Central Asian countries, Tajikistan could be described as a patriarchal society despite the large degree of freedom women enjoyed since the Soviet time. Temkina (2005) studying the traditional gender roles in Tajikistan proposes that, in Tajikistan there is a tendency of strengthening patriarchy but at the same time mentions that there is a certain modernization process. Different regions in Tajikistan practice different kinds of family systems. There can be found places where the traditional way of living is very strong and places where people are not practicing the patriarchal family structure at all and are now on their way of becoming modern. However, people in GBAO as well as the rest of Tajikistan continue to live in the extended families, with three or more adults and children (Falkingham, 2000). Such kind of family structure still exists and the relation ties are very strong.

Although the degree of freedom women enjoy in urban and rural areas could be different, it is well known that majority of population in Tajikistan in general and GBAO in particular live in rural areas. Temkina (2005), in her research about gender issues in Tajikistan states that, 73% of the populations live in the rural areas, where people are more tied to the traditional patriarchal system and where the social categories of men and women are different from the urban areas.

Women’s role in Tajikistan was varied in different time periods. Falkingham’s (2000) work about the gender relations in Tajikistan is that during the Soviet rule women’s role was very important and they were occupying different high positions. However, after the collapse of Soviet system the situation changed, because of the economic condition and war women lost

their jobs and many of them stayed home as housewives. The religious practice was no longer prohibited after the collapse of the Soviet Union and people started to live according to the Muslim religious laws that had a direct impact on gender roles. The degree to which people started to live according to Muslim religious laws could be contested, especially in the context of Khorog where the population are mostly Ismaili Muslims who follow flexible religious practices. Nevertheless it is widely acknowledged that women's position in the public and politics was no longer important, instead they were supposed to stay at home and look after their children. Women started to have unpaid work within the household. Falkingham (2000) also states that, "with the closure of state-run kindergartens, and the increasing reliance on the consumption of home produced foodstuffs, unpaid work in the home has increased rather than diminished with the result that women are bearing the heaviest burden of economic transition". Thus one can observe a shift in women's position both in the society and the family. Migration, as is discussed below, added to these difficulties of women positions further burden.

### **Patterns of Migration in Tajikistan**

According to World Bank report, Russia is the second after the United States, which has the migrant population, with estimates ranging from 7 to 12 million migrants in 2005. Almost 80 percent of this population are migrants from the former Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries (Human Rights Watch Report, 2009). Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are the most migrant sending countries of Central Asia. The population of these countries migrate to Russia because of sharing the intra-regional characteristic with Russia, which is due to the shared history, similar educational system and some of the common cultural ties, which were acquired while being under the Soviet Rule.

Migration has become a social reality for Tajikistan, and it is an important phenomenon in the review of the Tajikistan's history. Migration in Tajikistan has deep historical roots, but in every period there are different causes for it. Within these periods of migration, as we stated in

the introduction, are divided into five periods and the major reasons for such migration are economic and political. Presently the Tajik population is migrating out of the country because of economic reasons. According to World Bank statistics, 35% of Tajikistan's GDP is composed by remittances that make Tajikistan one of the most remittance dependent countries in the world in 2010 (World Bank, 2010). The violent civil war in 1992 has affected the economic well being of the country to a high level. It was estimated that more than 500,000-600,000 people died during the civil war and over million others were sent to the neighbouring countries as refugees (Foroughi 2002; Lynch 2002). This can be one of the causes when Tajikistan is remaining as one of the poorest countries of Central Asia.

Tajikistan finds migration as the only way to avoid poverty and increase the life condition of migrants themselves and their family as well. Usually from one household only one or more members leave the country for work, however there can be found some families who leave together and live abroad for a permanent time. (Anderson & Mirkasimov, 2007) According to the study of IOM (2008) more than 74% of the household in Tajikistan is involved in labour migration and the favourite destination is Russia. Because of the cultural norms of society in Tajikistan, a man is perceived to be the breadwinner and almost 90% of the migrants are men. (Khakimov & Mahmadbekov, 2009) According to the IOM study, the decision of becoming a migrant is made by the migrant himself, while the role of wife in such kind of decision-makings is less significant. This again shows the traditional patriarchal system of the country where women are not the ones whose decisions are perceived as important and have to live with and suffer the consequences of the decisions made by male members of the family.

### **Impact of Migration on women left-behind**

The migration of any family member has a significant effect on other family members that lead to further problems in the family. This impact can be seen from different sides; there can be parents who are left behind, a child who are left behind, or wife who is left behind. However this study is only focusing on women who are left behind by their migrant husbands.

The specific condition of labour migration has a significant effect on the marital life. When men cross the border to work in Russia, they leave their wives and children behind in the villages and towns of Tajikistan. Gordon (2001) studying the impact of migration on women in Lesotho, states that the nature of the interaction between the migrant and his family members is determined by his circumstances and motivations. Some migrants keep their close contact with their family member at home, while some find that it is the best and the easiest way to abandon their family.

### **Economic impacts**

According to Falkingham (2000), the civil war in Tajikistan left many household without men. Some women lost their husbands during the war, while others lost them after the war when the process of migration became popular. Some scholars suggest that the female-headed households in a patriarchal society are facing large amount of economic problems, than male-headed households. Believing that in the absence of the men, the breadwinner, women are not capable of earning that amount of money as their husband earned. (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2004)

Tajikistan where there are mostly extended families, where many members are living, the remittances are usually controlled by the migrant's parents. This is usually common for the newly married brides. However, the situation can be changed for this category of women after having children. Many women acquire power on the money that is sent by their husband (Sadiqi and Ennaji, 2004). Children can be additional agents for whom the father's money is very important

and as the husband is perceived to be a breadwinner, feeding his children is his primary responsibility.

Though Sadiqi and Ennaji (2004, p.72) state that, “migration often results in a restructuring of the family and the emergence of women-headed households in a heavily patriarchal society”. Because of the shortage of money, women may try to seek jobs for them that give them the opportunity of having more autonomy and power. For the women who are left behind and have children and do not receive any financial support from their migrant husband, the situation is even more difficult. They acquire double burden and they will be the ones who have to earn money both for themselves and the household.

### **Autonomy and decision-making**

Another impact of migration on women left behind can be seen in the level of autonomy and decision-making. Agadjanian, Yabiku, & Sevoyan (2010) in their study about the wives’ autonomy in Mozambique, propose that women’s autonomy and decision making in the extended family is different from the nuclear family. In the extended family other family members may have influence on husband’s migration and these members, usually male members, could have more significant impact on the autonomy and decision making process of women (Desai and Banerji, 2008). Successful and unsuccessful migration is the main cause that leads to the autonomy of the women. The authors find out that greater increase in autonomy occurs when women’s husbands are not successful in labour migration. This also means that the increased autonomy can be forced upon women by dragging them with greater responsibilities and duties.

Hadi (2001) in his paper argues that migration significantly improves the position of left-behind women. In the nuclear families women have more control over money and have more power of decision-making process. Such kind of control over economic activity gives woman a power to spend their money according to their own desires. The author states that, “in the



absence of husband overall status of women improves as they have greater access to money which they can spend as they wish; they have the freedom of movement; they can take independent decisions regarding the education of their children and type of treatment to be given to them if they fall sick.” (Hadi, 2001, p. 297) While the family structure in Tajikistan is nuclear, there are many cases where the migrants’ wives have to live with their in-laws or move back with the in-laws due to problems with accommodation once the husband is gone for migrant work. This changes their situation and they may lose their decision-making powers, which then leads to losing their confidence and being psychologically affected as we can see from the discussions below.

### **Psychological impact**

One of the most sensitive impacts of the male migration on their wives is the psychological impact. Gordon (2001) observing the migrant family life of Lesotho describes the women as helpless and lonely. Her children are seen as being raised by her own efforts and the lack of husband’s presence causes stress and loneliness. Whilst Hogan (1990) suggested that living in extended family help women feel more flexible in allocating domestic and economic roles. Other family members often help women with the free childcare and domestic chores. By the help of other family members in free childcare women get more opportunity to work and earn money. According to the author such kinds of support from the extended family members help women feel more confident and secure.

Chaney (1985) proposes that male migrates and leaves women with the double responsibility of being in charge of the housework and the children as usual, and with the additional responsibility for the economic welfare of the household. Women in the absence of their husbands feel responsible for the whole household and if they will be not able to go fulfil these responsibilities, they often feel stressed, and lonely.

Silver (2006) states, that the family breakdown is another situation that is considered to be the cause of migration. The family breakdown is often based on children's discipline, when women are not able to discipline and cooperate with their children in the absence of their husbands (Rouse, 1989). The adolescents may also be affected by the migration of one of their parents. They feel less support from their father's and the absence of paternal advice can lead to their future well being. Many of the male children after turning to adolescent are willing to follow the footsteps of their father to migrate. Such kind of behaviour is having a significant impact on women's psychological distress.

### **Conceptualization and Operationalization**

There are some concepts in the paper, which need to be defined in order not to make the reader confused. The first concept, which is important to know, is labour migration. It is the process during which people go abroad from their home country, in search of better economic opportunities. In this case labour migration is mostly seen between two main countries Tajikistan and Russian Federation. Russia is seen by the Tajik – as one of the main sources of work and economic opportunities. Labour migrant is the one who is playing the central role in the migration process. According to the International Labour Organization, “migrant workers are people who are permitted to be engaged in economic activities in a country other than the country of their origin”. (Olimova & Bosc, 2003).

By arriving to the migrant receiving country, Russia, the migrants are supposed to work there and send from the earnings some part of the earned money to their families. So, here another concept derives, which is remittance. Remittance is the income earned in the country where a migrant works and which is received by the family in the home country (IOM, 2007). However, some of the migrants stop sending money to their family members and their wives. The paper is focused on the life of left-behind women and it is inevitable to define the concept of “left-behind”. The left- behind wife is defined, as a wife of labour migrant who left Tajikistan in

search of work and who has been absent for more than 1 year, without sending money or contacting the family (Olimova, 2009). These wives are raising their children alone and some of them don't know the current location of their husbands.

Below are other concepts that are used in this paper and need to be defined:

**Survival strategies** is “the relationship between changing forms of production and the domestic group formations through which the immediate material needs of most people are met” (Redclift, 2008, p. 218)

**Decision-making** is the capacity of whether a woman can make her own decisions or can actively participate in the decision making within the family. Decision issues include: amount of money to be spent for family members, type of medical treatment to be given to herself or her children, whether to visit places, and whether to work or not (Hadi, 2001).

### 3. Methodology

Research is the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting the data that is relevant to the subject of the research. Every research is conducted through certain method and procedure. Explaining the methodology of a research is an inevitable task of every researcher. This chapter will provide a brief description of the process of writing and the methodology adopted for this study.

#### **Data collection**

Data collection is one of the most important parts in every research. For this research the data collection consisted of in-depth interviews, which is one of the best ways of getting exact information. Based on the verified data of the in-depth interviews the research gains trustworthiness and reliability. When the data was collected there was a further analysis of it in order to draw conclusions and make necessary recommendations. According to Ader (2008) data

analysis is a process of examining, transforming and modelling the data with the aim of highlighting important information that will be used in the research.

### **Data type**

The research was initiated in September 2013 when I started to consider topics of interest and explore scientific literature on Tajikistan. Right after choosing this topic an actual research started. The first semester was spent by, collecting contextual knowledge, scholarly articles, research proposal and preparation for the fieldwork. The data collection procedure took place from December 20<sup>th</sup> of 2013 to January 15<sup>th</sup> of 2014. All the interviews were translated and transcribed by the end of February. Since then the analyses procedure started.

### **Selection Criteria**

The study used a purposive sampling, because in this type of sampling the subjects are selected based on some characteristics. This type of sampling is useful for situations when a researcher needs to reach the target sample quickly because of time limitation (Babbie, 2001). For this study several criteria were developed for the respondents:

- Females whose husbands were labour migrants
- Live in GBAO
- Have been married for at least 1 year
- Whose husbands have been absent for 1-3 years, so that the household was forced to adjust to this new situation

Based on the above criteria the women who met the criteria were chosen to be included in the sample. The primary contact with the respondents was made through the community informants such as person who works at the registry office, neighbours, teachers at school and

others. According to the above-mentioned criteria and additionally only women whose husbands were in labour migration at the time of interview were included. As the field procedure involved the researcher staying in the region for an extensive period, every effort was made to reach all respondents eligible for the study.

### **Interviewing**

The interviews were conducted in different places according to the respondent's will. 4 from the total of 8 interviews were conducted in the respondents' workplaces, 2 of them were conducted in my house and the other 2 were in the respondents' houses. The main reason for not conducting the interviews in the respondents' house was mostly because of the problems facing with house. Most of the respondents were living in the parent's house and there was limited condition to conduct interviews there, because I made sure to conduct the interviews in a calm environment with no external interventions.

The interview guide was written and administered in Shughnani or Pamiri language, the native language in Khorog, GBAO. It contained questions about the life of left-behind wives including the impact migration had on their economic and psychological conditions. Due to sensitive nature of the interview questions, I had to establish a trustful relationship with the respondents and create a psychological space for the interviews.

### **Transcription and analysis**

After having obtained the interviewee's consent, all interviews were recorded on tape. Since the interviews were conducted in Pamiri language, in order to interpret the tape-recorded interviews, the data had to be translated and transcribed first into English language. The total numbers of interviews are 8, which are in different sizes; some are long and detailed while some are short, but all of them had specific and important information. As the gathered interview

recordings were rather excessive in terms of their length, only the relevant data that was considered more important was translated and transcribed.

### **Socio-economic factors**

It is important to find out the social position of respondents that were interviewed in this study. Defining the socio-economic status of the respondents helps to better understand their social position and explain observed phenomena. For this study the indicators of the socio-economic characteristics were respondents' age, number of children, marital status, and place of residence and length of separation with their husband.

**Table 4: Socio-demographic characteristic of sample for this research**

| <b>Respondents</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Number of Children</b> | <b>Length of separation</b> | <b>Marital Status</b> | <b>Place of Residence</b> |
|--------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| R1                 | 35         | 2                         | 1,5 years                   | Separated             | Parent's house            |
| R2                 | 40         | 2                         | 13 years                    | Separated             | Aunt's house              |
| R3                 | 32         | 2                         | 1 year                      | Separated             | Parent's house            |
| R4                 | 38         | 1                         | 5 years                     | Divorced              | Parent's house            |
| R5                 | 32         | 1                         | 7 years                     | Separated             | Parent's house            |
| R6                 | 38         | 2                         | Died                        | Widowed               | Parent's house            |
| R7                 | 47         | 3                         | 7 years                     | Separated             | Own house                 |
| R8                 | 49         | 4                         | 5 years                     | Divorced              | Own house                 |

The above table shows that all 8 respondents had children, from 1-4 in numbers. The age range of the respondents was from 32-49. Since all of the women were left-behind by their husbands, their separation length was from 1 year to 13 years. The word 'Separated' is used here both in its conventional sense, namely the husband and wife live separately but are not divorced, as well as in its literal sense meaning that the husband is not living in Khorog and the wife is living in Tajikistan. As the table shows the length of separation being more than a year gives important information for this study, because throughout this time the respondents are already

having some kind of experience with the absence of their husbands. However, only 2 respondents are divorced with their migrant husbands. This shows that there are some internal issues, which affect the marital status of the women. Despite this, left-behind wives are deprived of housing property and live with their parents, which also have specific impact on the data analysis and conclusions within this study.

### **Ethical considerations**

My research is an overt research; with the oral consent form I have informed them about myself and about the purpose of my study. The respondents were not forced to participate in the study and they were free to leave the interview whenever they wanted. However many of them were worried about the confidentiality of the interview and only after I guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of their participation, they agreed to participate.

Since the issue of left-behind wife is a sensitive topic, it was vital to conduct the data gathering with very careful consideration of ethical issues. Respondents were guaranteed that their personal information will not be disclosed in the course of the study and everything will be kept confidential. My respondents names are not mentioned only some of them willingly mentioned their name in the audio records, but during my analysis all of them are assigned different numbers like: R1, R2, R3 and so on. On the separate coding paper some information about respondents was given in order to remember them. But in the analysis part only the respondent's number is mentioned.

Moreover I keep the data secure and consider precautions against accidental disclosure. I feel responsible for the data and do not show carelessness toward the data I gathered, because any kind of information might have some descriptive aspects and the subjects might be disclosed.

## **Limitations**

The timeframe of the data collection of this research was one month, during the winter break. This was not the best time for my respondents to give interviews, because it was the time when people were busy with the preparation for the New Year holidays. Almost all of the respondents were busy with holiday preparation and this was the main reason we had to reschedule some of the interviews after the New Year. After the holidays the working days began and the interviews were held in the respondents' job places. One of the respondents during the interview time led her friend to stay in the same room that the interview was held, saying that she was confident with her friend's presence. However, it seemed that the presence of her friend had significant effects on the answers of my respondent.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

This chapter focuses on the major findings of this research and provides the theoretical explanation of these findings. The findings are based on the main objectives of this research that were mentioned in the introduction about the assessing the survival capabilities of the wives. The respondents were asked about the economic and psychological impacts of their husbands' migration and the survival strategies that they employ.

### **Impact of Migration on wives left-behind**

To find out whether the migration of men has any impact on the family members, such as women, was the initial question in this paper. According to the data, all of the respondents mentioned that the absence of their husband had a significant effect on their family. They had to adjust to such a situation and manage the household chores in their husband's absence. The absence of a husband causes changes in financial aspects, social status of women, relations with relatives and society, psychological well being, and the upbringing of the children. In some cases women experience positive changes while in others negative changes.



## **Economic impacts**

Almost all the respondents are facing financial problems and the analysis of the interviews demonstrates that the migration of their husbands has major economic impacts on the left-behind wives and their families. According to the data, majority of the respondents didn't receive remittances from their husbands. There were only two respondents (R5 and R7), who started to receive some money from their husbands, only after several years of their absence. Because of the absence of financial support from the husband's side, it is difficult for the left-behind wives to find money for them and for their children.

**R7:** During his first years of working as a migrant he helped us a lot, but then after some time he stopped helping us. For about 3 years my daughter was sick and we needed money, but he didn't help us at all. I don't know what the reason was. Then when my children already grew up he again started to help us.

The left-behind wives having more than 1 child face more problems, than those who have fewer children. Women have to provide all their children with the basic needs through which they fulfill their motherhood roles.

**R8:** I faced many difficulties with my children. I had financial problems. It was not easy for me to provide financial support for all 4 children. I had to ask help from relatives and I had to earn as much money as I could in order to provide my children with all basic needs.

This chapter of economic impact is more accurately grasped by dividing it into several sub-themes; property problems, support structure for left-behind women, job decision making issues, and finally autonomy and decision making issues.

## **Property Problems**

5 left-behind wives out of the total 8 did not have their own house and were living in their parent's houses. However, living in the parent's house was complicated for them, because of the insufficient amount of space for all the family members. In some cases there were up to 2 families living in their 2-3 bedroom house.

**R3:** We have only 2-bedroom house and as my parents are from the village, and in the village there are no hospitals or markets, so when our relative need hospital or bazaar they

all stay in our house. In the summer it is ok to sleep in the outside area but in the winter it is very difficult.

This is always seen in the patriarchal system where the parental property like a house, is always considered to belong to the son, while a married daughter is not allowed to receive this kind of property. The situation is being even harder when a family has several sons and the struggle for property becomes more complicated. However in most of the cases the parental house is considered to belong to the youngest son and only he is having a full right over it. So, that is why many of the women in GBAO are willing to marry the youngest son or the only son, with whom the property problems are less and easier to solve. However, it is not always the case, one of the respondents mentioned about the property problems with her husband's family.

**R2:** When he migrated to Kyrgyzstan his mother and his sisters again wanted me to leave the house. Then they changed all the documents on their name and my husband was left without any house. As I had no son they said that there is no need to give this house to you and your daughters.... he is sick now...no one wants to take care of him.

Another respondent had a different problem. Her husband didn't have his own house and when they finally bought a house after some time it was no longer her property:

**R4:** Even when I bought the house in Dushanbe he wanted to use it in his selfish goals, because when I returned from Kurgantyube I found that his parents and his sister were living there and the house no longer belonged to me, it was transferred to the name of his father. It was because they are going to give it to my husband's sister in future.

Thus it seems that the problem with house is very prominent in the respondent's families and there can be seen different causes of having these problems. One of the causes is the patriarchal system where there is a big inequality in property distribution, which leads to misunderstandings between family members. In this society woman is not allowed to own a house of her parents and therefore for women the house of her husband is the only place where she could live.

### **Support Structure for left-behind women**

In GBAO there are very few jobs available for women and because of the low level of education for women it was difficult to find a well-paid job. However, 7 from 8 respondents did have job and they were confident with having such kind of job, even if it was not paid well. R1 was the one who didn't have a permanent job, but by the help of her relatives she was going to find a job outside GBAO.

**R1:** recently my father's brother who lives in Leninabad called me to live and work there with them... Tomorrow I am going to leave... I just want to find work for me at first and then maybe I will take my daughters with me too

This can be explained by the concept provided by Pierre Bourdieu (2010), the "capital". Three types of capital are defined, by Pierre Bourdieu; economic, social and cultural capital. Economic capital is in which the power is defined by money and property; social capital is defined by social ties and networks; and finally the cultural capital in which the level of cultural or symbolic capital he possesses determines the person's status. All three types of capital are interrelated to each other while here economic capital and social capital would be the initial concepts which best explain the data. As we have discussed earlier, the shortage of finances and property leads to all sorts of issues within the family and with the in-laws. In case of R2 it ended with being separated from her husband and for R4 it ended up with a divorce. The use of social capital at the individual level is seen from the interviews, when having high level of social capital women feel more confident and with the help of these ties they develop the economic capital. Social support is often associated with strong ties that are made of family, neighbours, or close friends. According to Dominguez and Watkins (2003, p. 113), "These ties generally provide individuals with emotional and expressive support as well as certain forms of instrumental help like rides, small loans, or a place to stay in case of emergency (Briggs 1998). They can also help to ensure that basic needs are met, assist in child rearing, and provide tools for improving

employment situations”. Interviews show that relatives are the one who support left-behind women in finding jobs and additionally they support left-behind women emotionally.

While having financial problems all respondents have mentioned the help from their relatives. This can be defined from the type of community a person comes from. People in GBAO often define themselves as one big family living in a small area. As the place is small in area people all know each other and most of them are relatives to each other. As one of the respondent states:

**R2:** But thanks to my mother and my relatives for their help I overcame through all of it... Maybe if my relatives were not there we would die of starvation. Thanks to my relatives now I have a house and a good job.

As many of the left-behind women are living with their parents and other siblings, all of the family members are helping them financially.

**R4:** my sisters are always helping me. One of my sisters is in America and she is helping my daughter a lot, mostly she sends clothes for her and money. My sisters are all helping me a lot.

Along with sisters their brothers are also helping them in upbringing of their children:

**R1:** my parents are helping me, my brother is also helping – whatever he buys something for his children he will buy the same things for my children too and we eat everything together.

While relatives are one of the primary groups who help the left-behind women, there are some other organizations, which try to promote their quality of life. Non-governmental organization “Madina”, is giving loan for women and additionally the Aga Khan Foundation has a new project “Community Based Savings Group”, that allows women to get loans with a discount. According to the interview of the member of Family Issues Office, G. Orumbekova, it was said that;

We are helping women whose husbands are in migration, by attracting them to take part in some activities which would develop their quality of life such as: sewing, cooking, and learning some language skills. By participating in such kind of activities they are getting

the certificates with which they could have a good workplace in the country. Also despite that we are giving them a loan for with the amount of 3000 somoni (\$600) for one year with a special discount.

Such kind of developments are starting to be introduced only in the last 2 years and according to Orumbekova's interview, the issues concerning the quality of life of left-behind women will be developed more in the near future. However, none of the respondents mentioned these kinds of activities, which were provided by the government.

### **Job related issues**

In her book "A world full of woman", Martha Ward states that all women work. This might be invisible and unrewarded, acknowledged or ignored, easy or life threatening it is beside the point, woman still work (Ward, 1999). Furthermore, the author gives the different types of work that women do; work as production, works of reproduction, work of status enhancement, and the last major type is work as morale, caring, repairing and integration. These are the tasks that are assigned to women in different cultures. I think in addition to what the author states, if we look at it more deeply then we probably would find innumerable works that women do. Of course man does as much work but as the authors mention the society assigns more jobs for woman. And even on a daily basis women can arrange wedding, family reunions, they can unite community and give stronger bonds that hold group of people together. Moreover the author states a number of other categories of job that woman does. It is homework, mother-work, kin-work, sex-work, bodywork and above all marriage as work. So here, if woman works she has to combine both; her job and her work in the household, which makes the life of women more complicated. However there are often women who work on double jobs, because the salary from one job is not always enough for her and her children. As one of the respondents says:

**R2:** I called to my husband and asked him to help us because at that time I was not working...but he refused to help and again he said that he had a new life and he was to marry another woman. Then I went to Dushanbe and decided to work there... I worked there for double work, I started to sew and at the same time I was a babysitter. Then after

that I found a job in the Center of AIDs here in Khorog, as a nurse...now I am still working there.

Another respondent says the same:

**R4:** now I am working in the hospital of the region as a nurse. Honestly the money, which I get, is not enough for my daughter and me. Today the life condition is also very unstable and people's demand is also rising. So because of this I am also selling in the bazaar and try to get more money.

Women did not have any other choices of getting money and because of this some of them had to accept additional burden in order to survive. While talking about their double jobs, it was seen that they accepted such way of life and they have already adapted to it. There are often the cases when a husband doesn't let his wife to work, but when his income is not enough then these wives start to search for alternative ways of earning money.

**R6:** Before he didn't let me to work but then I was forced to work and I didn't ask him anymore, so I started to work in the medical centre... I said you are not sending money on time and I have to work so that to feed my daughters, no one is going to give us money for nothing.

The problem of finding a well-paid job is of course linked with the level of education a woman gets. Some of the respondents state that:

**R1:** I always regret that I haven't got any education, because if I would be educated I wouldn't have such kind of life. Learning is very important. I know many girls who are divorced from their husbands and because they are educated they have good lives and good jobs. They even don't need to have husband, but I am dependent on my husband.

While one of the respondents was regretting about not having an education, the other women said:

**R2:** Then I started to collect money for myself and applied for the part time study at the department of Biology here in Khorog University...I think that a girl should have a good education first of all and then she will have courage and she will go through all difficulties that will be on her way. We have to work on ourselves and there is no situation that doesn't have a solution!

For all respondents having a good education was a very important issue in their life. Most of them are willing to have better education and continue their lives and look after their children without their husbands. However it is difficult for them financially and with their children to

continue their education further, so most of them are still waiting for their husbands in order to have financial support.

### **Autonomy and decision-making**

In the absence of their husbands many of the left-behind women have gained autonomy and have more power on decision-making process. According to the interviews all of the respondents were expressing their freedom in deciding some of the issues concerning their household. One of the respondents stated:

**R4:** before my parents controlled everything that I earned in law...now I am spending my money myself and I am free to do whatever I want. I spend all the money on my daughter and me and gather some of it for my daughter's future in order not to face any difficulties

Some of the respondents replied about the decisions concerning their children in the following way:

**R2:** Decisions concerning our daughters, I was not deciding with him, because he was not even interested about the school of his daughters, he was only interested in drugs and his own life. Only my mother and my sister were helping me to decide some issues. But I hadn't any problem with my daughters.

According to the data it can be stated that the left-behind women are economically deprived. The lack of economic and emotional support from their husbands' sides is the main reason of feeling of deprivation of these left-behind women, pushing them to the borders of survival. Women often decrease their spending on luxury goods, by purchasing only the basic needs of the household.

From the analysis of the economic impacts migration has on the left-behind wives, issues they face with property, job and decision-making, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- All of the respondents in the study are economically not active and experience financial problems in the absence of their husbands.
- Men migrating with the aim of supporting their families forget about their responsibilities, instead women, who are left in the home country, start to find different solutions in order to feed their children and themselves.

- Among the left-behind women the household income mostly consists of the women's salary and the help from the relatives' side
- Many of the left-behind wives have not full education, which makes it difficult to find a well-paid job.
- About half of the respondents are working in the hospital as a nurse, which means that their salary is one of the lowest paid in Tajikistan.
- In the absence of their husbands, women have become more active in decision-making process, which means they are freer to spend their money on themselves and are not dependent on their husbands.

### **Psychological impact**

It is indicated that when one of the family members migrates to another country, the family's psychological structure suffers important changes. Wives are among the ones whose psychological structure changes when their partner leaves the family, and it will increase when he decides not to return any more. According to the interviews, all of the respondents had psychological changes, which are mostly negative ones. Stress, lack of support, bad life conditions and problems in the family are the most known reasons of psychological well being. Most of the respondents compare their lives before and after their husband's leave.

**R1:** of course our life became difficult. Before my husband sent money and called to his children and everyone was happy, I was also happy that I am not depending on my parents...but now it is different I have no money and I have to ask help from my parents

Though the other woman has already overcome these problems and now she is feeling good while her husband is in migration.

**R2:** During those times I was in depression and I could understand what was going on and what to do, I thought as I don't have any education and a good job I would not be able to feed my children. For about two years I had such kind of feelings starting from 2000. But thanks to my mother and my relatives for their help I overcame through all of it.

Women are always feeling alone and abandoned:



**R3:** it is the hardest situation in person's life when he is alone... even if all these years I am alone I have my close people with me who are helping me, I suggest to everyone to be together and integrated.

Many of the respondents mentioned the effects of their stressful conditions on their children, who also suffer from psychological stress by their father's absences. They are caring about their children's feelings more than their own:

**R4:** but I think even if she has no problems now she still needs a father. The child who has a father no matter how he is either alcoholic or something else, but he is still father, and she also needs to have a father and his love...she looks at her classmates when their fathers come to school and when daughters go with their fathers to some concert and she also wishes to have the same. But this lasts only for some time maybe till 8-9<sup>th</sup> grade and after that she will forget about that.

While the above respondent is willing her daughter to forget about her father, the next respondent tries to help her son not to forget his father and love him.

**R5:** If I would be always in a bad mood this will affect my son too and he will also feel bad. Every year when he has a birthday I organize it and make this day very special in order not to make my son feel alone without his father. I try to replace his father in everything. But I hope that his father will come and they will find some common things together.

For almost all respondents the relationship with their children was a vital factor. This can be seen from their interviews, where they say that children are their future hope and they are the only reason that makes them live.

**R1:** think because of our children we have to live and God will help us always. I am now trying to work and provide my children with everything, and take them with me.

Further the other respondent also replies:

**R6:** I even don't want to have any relations with other men because now I am always with my daughters and they are the only hope that I have, I am always thinking about their future.

While women are having depressed feelings inside their house, there are also people's attitudes and thoughts which bring additional stress for the women left-behind. The data shows that the respondents experience negative attitudes from the people around in forms of rumours, economic and social isolation, and other men's opinions about them. As the respondents say:

**R2:** Here if a woman is without a man then she is perceived very differently. People will always think that she is bad – behaved and she is talking to other men a lot.

Women know about the attitude of people toward them and even got used to such kinds of attitudes, but still hope that their husbands will return and people's minds will change about them.

**R5:** I say that my husband will return and we will live again together. But sometimes as I am building my house alone mostly people say that “she lies about her husband, they are not talking even, it is already 8 years that she is building her house when some people are building something else during these years. She is just pretending”. But I hope that he will return and everyone will believe that I was not lying.

This can be best explained by the theory of stigma which is defined by Erving Goffman as: “a mark that sets an individual apart from others and often connects the stigmatized individual to a set of negative characteristics that result the discrimination and devaluation” (Goffman 1963, Massoglia, Remster and King, 2011). Women are often seen as bad behaved by their community members, because people often think that if a woman is left without her husband for certain period of time, then she starts to form relationships with other men. As Tajikistan is a patriarchal society, left-behind women in this society are viewed very cruelly. They are often subject to blame and often badly treated. These left-behind women often accept the type of judgements people make about them, which influences their behaviour to a certain level. However, the women often try to prove their position and defend their behaviour by spending more time with their children and finding a job, in some cases even having double jobs. This is one of the ways when women try to change people's ideas about them and keep themselves out of the blames.

According to the interviews all of the women mentioned that it was impossible for them to build relations with other men, first of all they were afraid of their relatives and secondly because they think that their husbands will finally return:

**R5:** you know, it is very small area and almost everyone knows each other and it is impossible to do such kind of things in front of all relatives. Of course it is difficult but I have to wait, my sisters and my mother are helping me with these thoughts.

From another respondent's it can be seen that, there is a feeling of hate toward other men:

**R2:** I stopped to like men and they have become the same as my husband. I start to hate men a lot. I am afraid to talk to other men because I think that my brother, or my uncle, or my other relatives will know about that and it will be shame for me. And also our Khorog is very small place and here it is difficult to do such kind of things people all know each other.

However, one of the respondents blamed herself about her husband's behavior:

**R1:** I don't know yet, but I think maybe we will be together again. Because I think it is not his fault that the girl is with him now, because she is a bad girl and I understand him. I am always saying to women that they shouldn't leave their husbands alone. Maybe she knew about it and stacked to him now, maybe we will be again together once

The high feelings of stress and depression can lead to more serious problems such as suicide. However, according to the data majority of the respondents were criticizing women who tried to commit suicide. One of the respondents also criticised such kind of behaviour, however from her words it was found that she has talked with someone about this and changed her mind:

**R3:** But I don't suggest for people to choose this kind of solution. I think mostly young people are thinking about this. Once I was asking a person, and she said that it is not allowed for me to commit suicide because now I have children and I have to grow them up and look after them. You had to commit suicide when you were without children, but now you have children and there is no way to commit suicide.

According to the interview it was found that, women often rely on past events, which were traumatic for them. While during the interview, most of the women have gone through the period when they felt depressed and lonely. This can be best explained by the concept of "trauma" that was introduced in the book of Rogers and Leydesdorff (1999) about trauma. "Life stories seem to be particularly suitable for gaining an understanding of the significance of trauma in people's lives. Traumatic events create a multifaceted complex of reactions, which may even be contradictory at times" (Benezer, 2004). Women who always express their feelings of depression, experienced before and may be lasted for a long time period, is defined as a traumatic state for them that has certain influence on their present life. As Dawson (2005) states, "trauma refers to the psychological impact of some violent or otherwise shocking event, producing deep-rooted effects which are difficult to come to terms with". Because of the previous experience, the left-

behind women stopped to believe on other men and don't want to have any relationships with other men. There are feelings of horror and dislocation among left-behind women, and in order to struggle with these traumatic feelings women try to distance themselves from other men in order not to be offended again.

From the analysis of psychological impacts of the respondent's lives the following conclusions emerge:

- All of the left-behind women talk about their feelings of loneliness and usual psychological stress.
- There is negative attitude of people toward these women.
- Their psychological stress has significant effect on their children
- Women still wait for their husbands and are ready to accept them, not only because of themselves but also mostly because of their children.

## **5. Conclusion**

The civil war and its devastating social and economic consequences have affected the traditional way of life in Tajikistan. Not being able to maintain their traditional way of life, every year more and more citizens of the republic migrate to Russian Federation and consider it as one of the possibilities of earning in a post-Soviet space. Labour migration became a new socio-economical phenomenon during the 90s, after the civil war. For many labour migrants poverty is the main reason of migrating, because of which they leave their family behind hoping to earn money and feed their family members. The present study was concentrated on the effects of the husband's absence on the left-behind wives and the survival strategies that these women adapt in order to develop their life in the absence of the husband.

The results show that women experience economic and psychological difficulties while their husband is absent. In order to avoid these kinds of difficulties, women find alternative ways of survival and continue to look after their children. The commitment to supporting their children

was the most important task that women had, because all of them were considering their children as the ones who shape their life while their husband was absent.

This paper has shown that women play several roles, as men are absent; women find themselves working more than men by finding jobs and at the same time taking care of the children and the household. They have to keep up both household and their jobs, which is difficult for many of the women. It was also found out that help from the side of the relatives is very prominent in GBAO and all of the respondents mention the support from their relatives, which means that there is a high solidarity between people in this area. So, for many of these women the support from the family and friends' side was very important because they would feel less lonely.

The absence of the husband gave women power to have autonomy and make decisions on their own. Left behind wives are now more empowered than before and there is very less dependency on their husbands. The autonomy that they get is mostly expressed on going outside and deciding what to do including the money spending.

However, there is a high level of psychological stress that women experience in the absence of their husbands. The feelings of loneliness and abandonment, is seen in all of the interviews. Along with these feelings women try to hide their emotions from their children in order not to destroy the psychological feelings of their children as well.

**Suggestions for further research**

Consequently, it can be concluded that the live of the left-behind wives is not an easy one and their husband's migration has major economic and psychological impacts on them. Additionally, they face stigmatisation and negative attitudes of some people towards them. As a consequence of such new way of life, the left-behind wives develop strategies for survival in order to adapt to their new situation. The study recommends for the government in Tajikistan and GBAO to support these left-behind wives and reach out to as many as they can, since the little governmental and NGO's support that exist in GBAO was not accessible to the respondents in this study.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

#### **I. General Information:**

1. Could you please introduce yourself?

Inquiry in: age, education, and professional career

2. Please describe the household you are living in?

- Your family members
- When did you get married?
- How many children do you have?
- How old are they?
- Do you live with in-laws or separate

3. Let's talk about your husband?

- How was the decision made about your husbands' migration? Who decided?
- How long has your husband been in labor migration?
- When was the last time you spoke to your husband? How often do you communicate?

Does he talk to his children? How often?

4. In your opinion, since your husband went to work there, did the living condition in your household changed? How?

#### **II. Economic issues**

5. Have you ever faced any financial problems after your husband's migration?

- When? Which kind? How did you cope with that?

6. Does your husband help economically?

- How often? How much?

7. Who mainly decides on how to spend the money that your husband sends?

8. What about the relatives, do they help economically?

- Who exactly? How often? How much?

### **III. Psychological issues**

10. How did you feel, when your husband migrated? What were positive and negative effects when he migrated? How did your children feel, when their father migrated?

11. Do you face any difficulties with your children?

- School
- When they ask about their father? What do you say to them? How do you feel when they ask such kind of questions?

12. (If she lives with in-laws) do you face difficulties with your in-laws? What kinds of problems? How do you cope with that? With whom do you talk about these problems?

13. Do you know other women whose husbands are in migration for many years? How do you think about them? How do you compare your life with those whose husbands migrated and with those whose husbands are living with them?

14. Do your friends help you? How do they help? How often, before or after your husband's migration?

15. I have heard that there are some cases when wives have tried to commit suicide, what are your views on that?

16. Would you like to add anything?

## **Appendix B**

### **Brief details about respondents**

Respondent 1: 35 years old, had 2 daughters, lived with her parents, her brother and his family in her parent's house, had a secondary education, unemployed, 1,5 years separated from her husband

Respondent 2: 40 years old, had 2 daughters, lived with her younger daughter and her nephew in her aunt's house, had a higher education, employed, 13 years separated from her husband

Respondent 3: 32 years old, had 2 daughters, lived with her daughters and her grandmother in her parent's house, had a higher education, employed, 4 years separate from her husband, divorced

Respondent 4: 40 years old, had 1 daughter, lived with her parents and 2 sisters in her parent's house, had a higher education, employed, 5 years separated from her husband, divorced

Respondent 5: 32 years old, had 1 son, lived with her parents and her brother's family in her parents' house, had a higher education, employed, 7 years separated from her husband, separated

Respondent 6: 38 years old, had 2 daughters, lived with her parents and her nephew in her parents' house, had a higher education, employed, widowed

Respondent 7: 47 years old, had 3 children, lived in her own house, had a higher education, employed, 7 years separated from her husband, separated

Respondent 8: 49 years old, had 4 children, lived with her 2 children in her own house, had a higher education, employed, 5 years separated from her husband, divorced.