

GENDER, MIGRATION, AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA - A POLICY PAPER



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This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union as part of the UN Women project 'Promoting and protecting human and labour rights of women migrant workers'. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Publisher: UN Women in Moldova

131, 31 August 1989 str.

Chisinau, MD - 2012

Republic of Moldova

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Introduction

In recent years, international migration has grown enormously, reaching over 232 million people worldwide. It has now become a defining feature of the modern global economy. The main factors underlying this expansion are the processes of globalization themselves, technical and scientific progress and the new economic order.

International migration in Moldova, especially labour migration, is registering continued growth. In 2014, around 341,900 people went abroad seeking a job, (332,500 in 2013), representing 18% of the inactive population aged 15 and over. Men accounted for 64.1% women 35.9% of all migrants. Of these, people from rural areas accounted for 71.7%¹.

Although reasons for migration may be multiple (better employment and earning opportunities, poor quality of public services, environmental matters, family reunification, education, conflicts, etc.), the main cause is labour or employment-related. People migrate to improve their quality of life, to cultivate certain skills, attitudes, values and general development, while remittances sent home serve to assure their family members a decent living.

Against the background of intensifying labour migration there is also an increasing percentage of female migrants leading to a "feminization of migration". If previously it was considered that migration of men was in pursuit of mainly labour goals and enhancing family wellbeing and women's migration was rather of a social character (family reunification, education, escape from domestic violence, etc.), now this view is changing. Female migration today is of a more pronounced labour character, contributing to household wellbeing and the development of the communities to which they belong.

The feminization of international labour migration is determined by several factors, including the change in the nature of work (from manufacturing to service economies), crisis of care systems driven by the mass entry of women into the labour market in destination countries, the formation of "global care chains" etc. All this has led to an increasing demand for female migrant labour and to a "gender division of labour".

Although the number of female migrant workers does not exceed the number of men, the feminization of international labour migration in Moldova is increasing. In this context, the differences between the experiences and problems of women and men must be integrated into migration and development policies.

Without gender equality, there can be no development. In other words, gender equality must be a central objective in any migration model that aspires to development. Here it is a case of overcoming the stereotype that only male migration has an economic character and can be integrated into development.

Greater awareness of the different situations, opportunities, constraints and problems faced by female migrants is needed, and these should be fully integrated into policies, plans and strategies for migration and development.

This study aims to analyse the migration situation, and especially the labour migration of Moldovan women, as well as the extent to which it can contribute to the country's economic and social development. The economic impact of female labour migration is based on an analysis of the remittances sent by female migrant workers in terms of increasing the wellbeing of the household and development of the community to which they belong. The study also analyses the social impact of female labour migration.

The study is structured as follows: 1) introduction, 2) trends in Moldovan female labour migration, 3) the impact of female migration on development, 4) integration of female labour migration in development policies, and 5) conclusions and recommendations.

¹ Labour force in the Republic of Moldova. Employment and unemployment, 2014, www.statistica.md

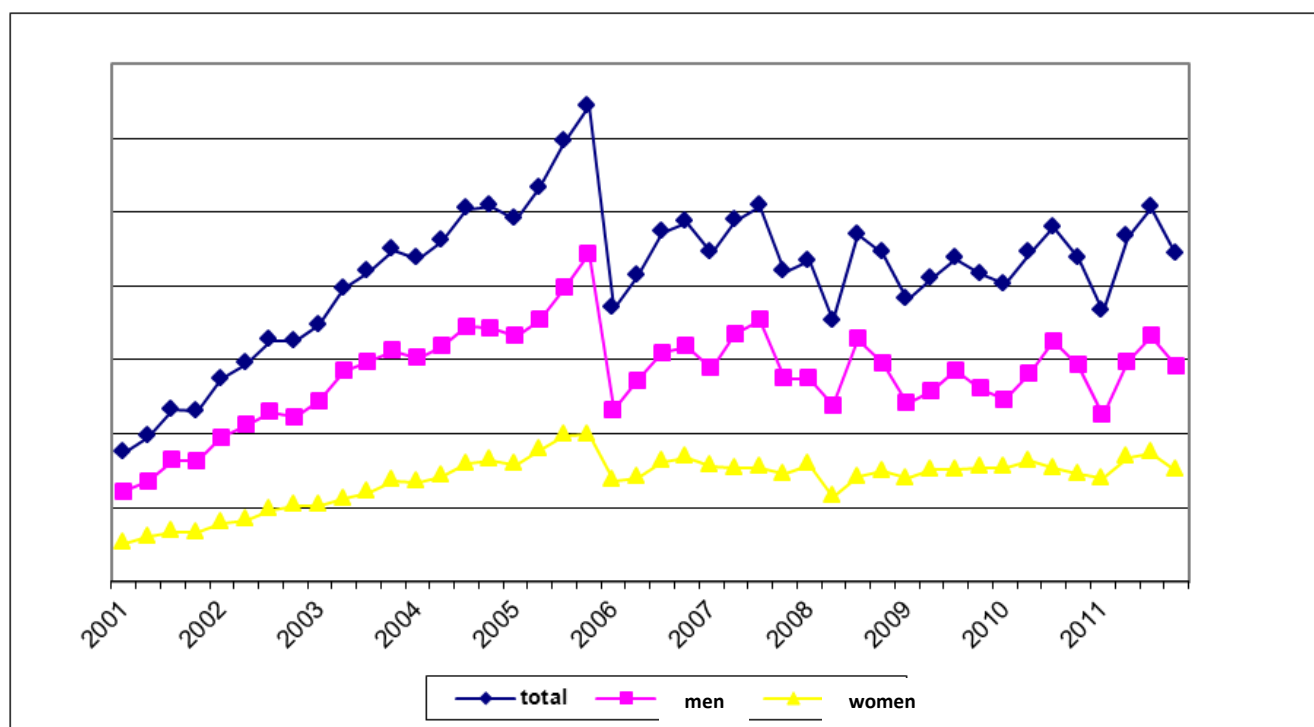
1. Trends in Moldovan female labour migration

International labour migration profile

International labour migration is one of the most marked phenomena that characterize the current situation in the Moldovan labour market.

Since 1998, international labour migration has intensified, and currently about one third of the country's human potential is outside the country. According to the Labour Force Survey for 2014, some 341,900² people went abroad looking for a job.

Figure 1. Quarterly evolution of the number of economically inactive persons aged 15 years and over, working or looking for a job abroad by sex, 2001-2013, thousands



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey

The analysis of international labour migration and its distribution by age, sex and level of education shows significant features. Young people predominate among those leaving to work abroad: in 2014 36% were on the 25-34 age group and 21% aged 35-44.

Although during the reference period the number of female migrants increased, men predominate, 64.1% compared to 35.9% in 2014.

Regarding distribution by educational level, most of those who went abroad looking for a job had a secondary school certificate (25%) secondary vocational (27%) or had completed secondary school (25%). This is because it is

harder for them to integrate into the labour market of Moldova, while it is easier to find a job abroad because they are usually employed in jobs that require unskilled activities that do not involve huge investment in human capital. Indeed, even those with higher education tend to be employed in unskilled work.

In this context, it should be noted that the departure of persons from rural areas seeking a job is more intense than urban, -71.7% of labour migrants in 2014. This was primarily due to the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas.

Analysis of the geography of international labour migration from Moldova suggests that there is no one specific vector of this territorial mobility. People travelling abroad in search of work migrate to both western and eastern countries. A key factor that facilitates and stimulates labour migration eastwards, as opposed to the

west, is knowledge of the language, culture and traditions and also the absence of a visa regime. At the same time, Moldova's independence and liberalization of society have allowed the opening of its borders with European countries. This has led to the diversification of the direction of labour migration geography, with a growing shift from east to west. Thus, according to the Labour Force Survey, of 311,000 persons who went abroad looking for a job in 2013, although most, some 191,000 went to the Russian Federation, Italy ranked second as a destination with 58,000, followed by Turkey (9,000), Ukraine (6,500), Portugal (5,100) and Greece (2,500) (Table 1).

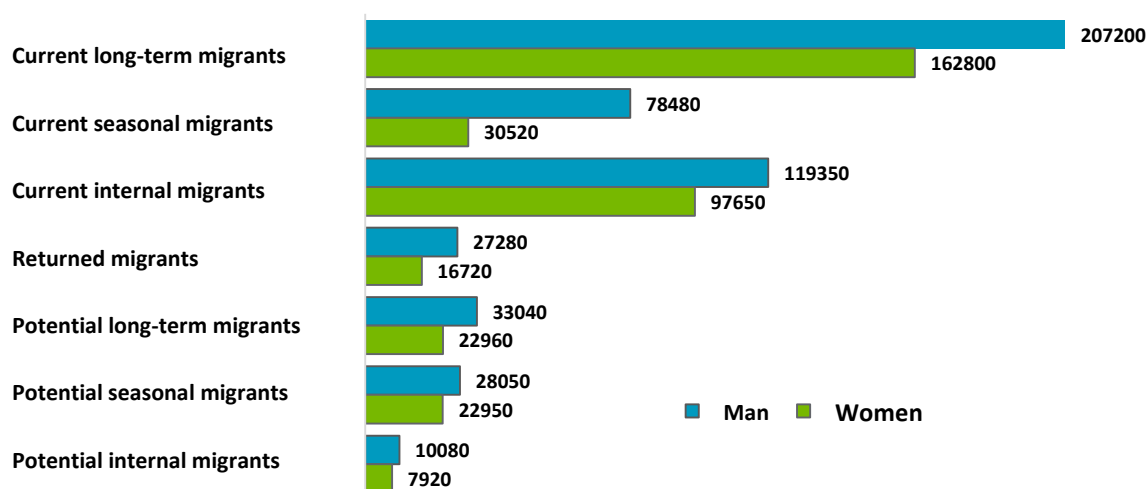
² Labour force in the Republic of Moldova. Employment and unemployment, 2014, www.statistica.md,

Table 1. Economically inactive persons aged 15 years and over, working or looking for a job abroad, by destination country, year 2013 (000s)

Destination country	Total	Men	Women
Greece	1.6	0.6	1
Israel	7.1	1.4	5.7
Italy	50.7	12.2	38.6
Portugal	4.1	3	1.1
Romania	3.5	2.6	0.9
Russia	223.6	170.7	52.8
Turkey	7.5	1.9	5.7
Ukraine	5.4	4.5	0.9
Other	28.9	19.9	9
Total	332.5	216.9	115.6

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey

Other data on international migration from Moldova show the same trends. According to a study of the "Nexus" project³ in Moldova in 2013, long-term international migration accounted for 411,000 persons or 12.4% of the total population, of which 370,000 were migrant workers. A further 109,000 persons or 3.3% of the total population were migrant seasonal workers. At the same time, 44,000 persons or 1.3% of the total population of Moldova returned, 54.5%, returned in 2010-2013.

Figure 2. Estimates of the different categories of labour migrants current, returned and potential

Source: Nicolaas de Zwager, Ruslan Sintov, *Market Research: Innovation in circular migration - Migration and Development in Moldova*, Chisinau, IASCI 2014.

The Nexus study showed the same vectors of international migration from the country. According to the study, the majority of Moldovan migrants (56%, 206,000 people) go to the Russian Federation, and to Italy (22% or 81,000 people), and between 2% and 3% (8,000 to 10,000 people) to countries such as France, Portugal and Turkey. Regarding seasonal labour migration, 81% of migrants work in the Russian Federation (88,000 people) and 7% in Italy (7,700 people).

It should be noted that the extent of migration from Moldova is far from being exhausted. The Nexus study showed about 107,000 people planning to go abroad for seasonal work or long term. This implies a potential increase in the number of migrants of some 22%.

³ Nicolaas de Zwager, Ruslan Sintov. *Market Analysis. Driving innovation in circular migration. Migration and development in Moldova*, IASCI, Chişinău, 2014.

History of international migration in Moldova

Although the phenomenon of international labour migration is considered new for Moldova, this is only partially correct. During the era of the socialist economy, Moldova, as one of the republics within the Soviet Union, was characterized by fairly intensive internal work migration. This high level of migration was explained by the fact that of the 15 Soviet republics, Moldova had the highest population density (130 persons per square km) while the economic structure was mainly agrarian. As a result, Moldova was characterized by an excess of labour supply, which was often absorbed by the great centres of "socialist construction" through labour placement services of the Soviet Union. Many migrants were employed outside the country, especially in the northern regions of the former Soviet Union, in order to earn a higher wage or to ensure a more successful career. Labour migration in the Soviet Union was also the result of emigration of young people for study or for military service in the Soviet Army outside the Republic, some of whom stayed to live and work where they studied or did their military service.

Since the dismemberment of the USSR, internal migration has become external, also changing in intensity and motivation. The emergence of borders between the republics did not restrict migratory worker flows to the east. On the contrary, they have become more intense, mainly driven by higher incomes and better employment opportunities abroad. The difficulties in the early years of transition, the challenges imposed by administrative reforms, and economic and social policies, have boosted migration processes, particularly labour migration.

During this period, migration has also changed in character. Once permanent, it has become mainly temporary, even if long-term or seasonal.

Although in the early years of transition, Moldova was faced with a pronounced wave of permanent migration (usually Moldovans emigrating to countries such as Canada, Israel, the Russian Federation, Ukraine,), the most commonly observed form of migration was temporary voluntary migration, based on economic reasons. Driven by the socioeconomic situation, the

Soviet republics. This led to bilateral agreements on labour migration signed with the Russian Federation (May 1993), Ukraine (December 1993), Belarus (1994), as well as other CIS countries⁵.

A drastic deterioration in the economic and social situation, mass layoffs of workers as a result of privatization, increasing poverty etc., led to intensified migration, mainly as commercial labour migration. Migrants travelled abroad, usually to Turkey, Romania, the Russian Federation and Poland) where they sold indigenous goods, using the proceeds to buy goods and sell them back home at a profit. Over time, this form of labour migration decreased and disappeared, becoming unprofitable due to the introduction of visa regimes, strengthened customs controls, balancing of prices in post-communist countries, and the active involvement of large and medium-sized import-export businesses trading with European countries.

The second phase (1995-2000). This stage saw intensified migration, primarily economic. By 1997, the Government's social and economic reforms had led to the beginnings of an economic recovery. Despite this, the economic situation worsened in 1998 following the regional financial crisis and the default in Russia, Moldova's main trading partner. This was followed by a ban on imports of Moldovan agricultural and industrial production into the Russian Federation, the collapse of the national currency and rising inflation. The period 1998-1999 was marked by an acute economic crisis, with the closure of businesses, job losses, rising unemployment and increased poverty. All these taken together compromised the functioning of the country's labour market. The result was growing spontaneous labour migration, mostly illegal, growth in businesses employing illegal migrants and an increase in human trafficking. At the same time, the positive effects of labour migration also began to be felt. Foreign currency inflows into the country increased, arousing increased interest among both decision makers and the general public.

The third stage (2001-2006). This stage is characterized by the maturation of measures taken by the Government regarding regulation of labour migrant flows, protection of migrants' rights, and combating illegal migration, including human trafficking. 2001 saw the creation of the State

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