

Migration of Families with Children to Russia: Integration Problems (Based on the Materials of Sociological Queries Conducted by the Center for Migration Studies)

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Abstract—The paper is based on materials from two projects carried out by the Center for Migration Studies (CMS, Moscow), which have been realized with support from the UN Women: “Opportunities and Problems of Social Integration of Labor Migrants from Central Asian Countries in Russia” (the sample size is 400 respondents; the query regions are Moscow and St. Petersburg) and “Migrant Women from CIS Countries in Russia” (the sample size is 1169 respondents; the query regions are Moscow and Moscow oblast, Samara oblast, St. Petersburg and Leningrad oblast, and Krasnodar krai). The materials of two focus groups with migrant women from Central Asia in Russia, which were organized in 2010, have also been used.

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Scale of the flow of labor migrants with children to Russia. More than half (about 60%) of labor migrants arriving in Russia from CIS countries, who were covered by a number of surveys carried out by the Center for Migration Studies (CMS), had a marital status (married officially or unofficially); 40–45% of them had children below 16 years of age. One of the important factors helping them cope with the stress associated with temporary migration to a foreign country is maintaining close family ties and mutual family support. Only one-third of married migrants (this makes up 57% of all married migrants) come for the purpose of earning money. Men migrate significantly less frequently to Russia with their spouses (37% of all married men), whereas the number of women leaving their home countries together with their spouses is more than twice larger—50% (77% of all married women). Job seekers migrate even less frequently with their children: in total, about one-third of migrants who have children below 16 years of age take their children with them (on average, it is 15–16% of labor migrants arriving in Russia). We set out below the results of a survey of 1500 women in Russia, who are labor migrants from CIS countries.

The share of women with children below 16 years of age, who answered the question: “*Where are your children currently?*” %*

All my children came with me	28.2
Some of my children stayed at home while others came with me	3.3
All my children stayed at home	62.8
Other*	3.3
No answer	2.5

* Women who gave birth to their babies in Russia preferred this variant of answer.

Migration with children: favorable and obstructive factors. The strategy of migrating with children depends on many factors. A factor of primary importance is the participation of spouses in migration: 84% of those taking their children with them came to Russia with their spouses. Among other factors influencing the decision to migrate with children (or without them) are the following considerations:

– the type of settlement where a migrant originates from (countryside dwellers leave their children behind more frequently);

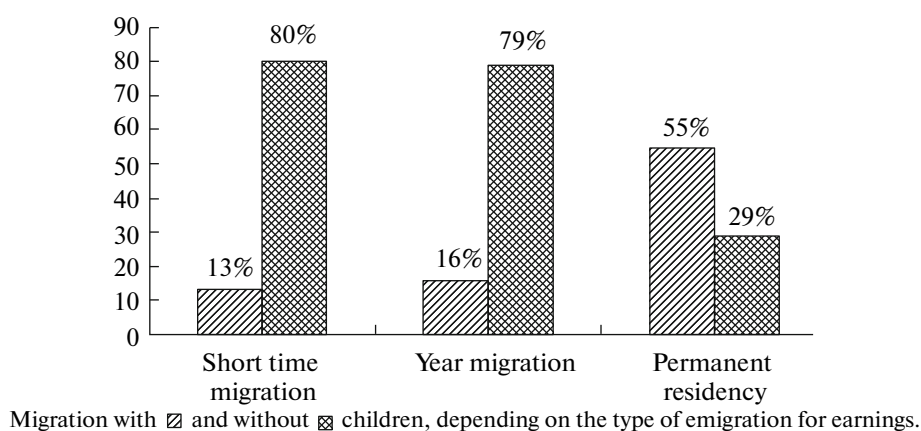
– the level of education: the higher the level of education, the more frequently migrants take all their children with them;

– the country of a migrant’s residence—newcomers from Central Asia leave their children behind more frequently; newcomers from Transcaucasia (Armenia and Azerbaijan), on the contrary, prefer to take their children with them;

– the financial status of their families: the influence of this factor is relatively small, and utter poverty alone (money is not even enough to provide for necessities) forces parents to refuse from taking their children with them;

– the duration of a stay to earn money: the attitude towards migration with children cardinaly changes with the obtaining of a permanent residence permit without trips home, although even in the latter case almost one-third of migrants leave their teenage children behind at home (figure).

The reasons, for which labor migrants do not take their children with them, are both objective (no possibility to provide for their care during their parents’ working hours or a shortage of money for their support) and subjective—not inclined to plunge them into a foreign educational environment and take them



away from the school they are attending at home. The latter reason is the most solid one, and its share practically remains unchanged even among those who are planning to move to Russia for permanent residency (that is, in the parents' eyes the quality of Russian schools cannot "outweigh" the minuses associated with their child's stay in a foreign and, perhaps, not very comfortable environment).

The share of women whose children stayed at home and who answered the question: "*If your children (or any of your children) have not come with you, what is the reason?*" %

It is expensive to support them here	12.0
No possibility to provide for their care here	36.7
I do not want to take them away from their school	42.0
Children do not want to live here with me	2.2
Other	3.1
No answer	4.0

From statements uttered in the focus groups:

"Uncertainty scares me. It is difficult to rent a dwelling with a child. The wage limits it."

"I do not want my child to attend a school or kindergarten here, and my parents do not approve of it. I left her behind when she was 6 months old, and my mother and father were raising her."

Migrants very seldom have a chance to meet with their children left behind at home: thus, only 2% of the interviewed women can visit their children once a month or more frequently; about their half (48%) see their children a few times a year; and one-third (35%) can afford this about once a year. Migration without children is actually a forced complete departure from parental duties and a refusal from the joys of motherhood. The majority of women realize it very well: when asked about the consequences for their families associated with their departure for a job, 83% of those who left children behind at home gave the answer that: There is no possibility to see children as often as I need to and raise them (on average, the share of women with children, who chose this variant of answer accounted for 57%).

From statements uttered in the focus groups:

"The last time I went home was a year ago and I only make phone calls in between. The travelling is very expensive."

"Good memories are the most difficult of all, but the plus is, of course, money, financial status, and that I can give my child education there."

"I have never been able to save money for a trip home. It is four years since I have been home and have not seen my child."

The desire to bring their children with them, despite numerous difficulties, is often an indirect indication that these migrants plan to move further to Russia for permanent residency: for example, among the women interviewed by the CMS, who left their children at home, only 10% want to live permanently in Russia; among those who came with husbands, but without children, this figure accounted for 30%; and among those, who came with children, 57% want to stay in Russia (the average indicator for the whole sample of interviewed was 27%).

From statements uttered in the focus groups:

"Certainly, any decent person, who wants to give education to his or her children, seeks a job to support their children. I am here for this reason."

"After the war and after the earthquake, there were no gas or power in Armenia, and, of course, the living conditions were very hard with three kids, even more so when they are 6, 4, and 2 years of age. My husband was straight away offered a position here as a technician at an automotive service facility. Of course, I do not regret it; I could not have raised three kids there."

Migrants' children and education in Russia.

Migrants' children raised in Russia would have significantly higher chances to be integrated into Russia's society than those who arrived with their parents. The role of educational institutions in this process must be very important. First of all, we mean the access of migrants' children to Russia's preschool institutions.

Preschool education. The conditions for the enrollment of migrant children in Russia's preschool institutions are the same as for the children of Russia's citizens. They specify that it is necessary as early as possible to join the waiting list for a kindergarten (nursery) according to one's residence address and then, after receiving a voucher, the child should pass a full medical examination in a clinic for completing his or her documents (birth certificate, either parent's passport,

and a complete medical chart). It is irrelevant if the residence permit is temporary or permanent. This is the official order, and part of migrant parents is able to successfully pass it.

From interviews with migrants:

"As soon as my baby was born, I was placed on a waiting list without problems, although my registration was temporary at that moment. They phoned me just now that my turn has come."

"I was lucky that the waiting lists were not too long. We, newcomers, paid then 3000 rubles. This was all on legal grounds. He easily joined a kindergarten, and after two months we began to pay the same fee as Russians—800 rubles."

Nevertheless, according to different CMS surveys, only 15–25% migrants' preschool children attend kindergartens in Russia, while the share of Russia's preschool children covered by preschool institutions varies from 50 to 80% (depending on the region). The cause is both the absence of vacant places in kindergartens, which is an equal problem for Russian preschool children, and the shortage of information about the procedure of placing children on waiting lists, as well as the lack of money among migrants to pay for a kindergarten and the complexities associated with gathering documents for children, including the requirements for parents' registration and a special medical policy, without which a child will not be admitted to a full medical examination, and, therefore, the child will be unable to enroll in a kindergarten (about one-third of migrants living in Russia with their preschool children would want their children to attend kindergartens, but they cannot place them there for a variety of reasons). To arrange a kindergarten for a child appears to be the most difficult problem to newcomers from Central Asia, and more than a third of the respondents from Central Asia indicated this in the course of queries (the truth is that only 10% of children coming with parents from this region attend kindergartens); migrants from Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan and Armenia) overcome these difficulties easier, and about half of their preschool children living in Russia attend kindergartens.

From statements uttered in the focus groups:

"I have tried to (referring to kindergartens) but was told about the length of queues there. They said that the queue was very long, and my turn could only come after three years. Nevertheless, after three years, the child will be 6 years of age and will start attending school; it will be late for a kindergarten."

"I had to buy a policy for the child for 5500 rubles for six months."

Attending preschool institutions (not necessarily on a full-time basis) is recognized in Russia as a necessary step in the proper preparation of infants for schooling. It is no less important for migrants' children, as kindergartens also give them a good chance to adapt to the environment of Russian children of the same age and a precious experience in speaking Russian (which will allow them in future to avoid problems in school).

From interviews with migrants:

"The eldest daughter, of course, had certain problems (with the Russian language) due to the language barrier, as she had not attended a kindergarten and did not use Russian at home. How-

ever, our youngest child has no problems, since he studies Russian at his kindergarten and speaks it."

From this point of view, the fact that 50 to 70% of migrants claim that their preschool children do not need Russian kindergartens is an alarming signal. It is in the interests of Russia's society to conduct an informational campaign among such parents, and, in addition, it is necessary to remove bureaucratic barriers to the access of migrant children to preschool institutions and create more places in preschool institutions, considering the number of migrant children who do not attend kindergartens.

School education. Officially, all school-age children living or staying in the territory of the Russian Federation will enjoy equal access to school education in Russia. This is guaranteed by the constitution of the Russian Federation, the Law on Education, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as under various resolutions by regional authorities, which stipulate the order for the access of children to educational institutions in a particular federal constituent (for Moscow, for example, it is Decision no. 19/1 of December 22, 2005, by the Collegium of the Moscow City Department of Education "On the Integration of Foreign Migrants' Children into the Educational Environment of the City of Moscow"). At the point of admission of children to school, only their birth certificate, their either parent's passport, and their medical chart (with the results of their full medical examinations and vaccinations according to their age group) are required. Their parents' legal status and the presence or absence of registration should not have any effect on the admission of children to school.

In fact, the overwhelming majority of migrants' school-age children, who live in Russia, attend school (70 to 80% according to the CMS).

From interviews with migrants:

"When we were commencing the first grade, we missed the date for submitting documents...and all vacancies were occupied, but we were told the address of a school a little farther, and we were accepted...there were vacant places there."

"It was easy to enroll in a school. I do not feel any difference, no difference at all...(compared to Russian children)."

"I myself was accepted to school to the eighth grade. I studied in the seventh grade in Khorog, Tajikistan, and brought my documents here from my school. I was accepted on the basis of these documents. No registration or policy was required. I studied there up to the 11th grade."

Nevertheless, at least one-quarter to one-third of the interviewed migrants spoke about problems related to the enrollment of their children in schools. They most often mentioned problems, such as the absence of a child's registration (i.e., as in the past, everything depends on a particular school administration's will); absence of medical records on a child; and poor knowledge of Russian. Some even mentioned unjustified refusals, "They did not want to accept them."

From interviews with migrants:

"It is already three years since I have been living here myself, but my child arrived here this year and straight away went to the second grade. I had some problems with it when I was told at four

schools at our place of residence that they had no vacancy. I did not appeal to the department of education. A vacancy was found at a school some distance from my place..."

"For enrollment, a registration card, a health insurance policy, a CV, a medical record, and a vaccination certificate were required. When the registration expires, it should be extended."

From statements uttered in the focus groups:

"No school or clinic is possible without registration..."

"When the children reach their school age, we will have to send them home, as they will not be accepted into school here."

At the present time, the most difficult barrier for migrants to overcome when trying to enroll their children in a school is health insurance, without which it is impossible to pass a full medical examination and have necessary vaccinations. Moreover, even if one was successful in arranging a (paid) full medical examination for his or her children, the school administration additionally demands the purchase of a policy for at least a year. Considering its price (10000 to 13000 rubles and even more), this is a serious obstacle for many families.

A particular problem that has become aggravated in recent years is the ability of migrant children to speak Russian. In recent years, migration to Russia has been becoming more and more culturally backward, and migrants arriving now have a lower level of education with a much lower level of knowledge of the Russian language than it was typical of previous arrivals. As to migrants' children, they often arrive without being able to speak Russian at all or having very poor vocabulary. If in the past children (predominantly urban dwellers) compensated for the lack of Russian by communicating within their families and studying Russian in Russian-language schools before arriving in Russia, now the number of such well-prepared pupils is becoming smaller and smaller (particularly, due to the predominance of rural migrants).

Adapting such migrant children into the Russian school education is hugely difficult.

In Russia's many regions, in particular, in Moscow, authorities are trying to solve the problem with the Russian language through arranging additional classes. They open special groups for studying Russian as a foreign language (RAF) for those who need extra support for being included in the educational process. Two years ago, about 300 schools in Moscow had such groups. In principle, this is realizable in every school where migrants with insufficient knowledge of the Russian language are enrolled. Municipal budget resources are allocated for two extra hours a week for learning Russian¹, but these two hours a week can only help children who know a little Russian. Those children who come to school with no knowledge of Russian (first-grade schoolchildren, who did not attend a kindergarten in Russia; secondary-school students, who did not attend Russian schools in their native countries) need special training. Structural divisions of general-education schools—Russian-language

¹ <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/poehali/555474-echo/>

schools—have been opened for migrant children in Moscow by the Department of Education of Moscow's Government. Such schools exist in each of Moscow's administrative districts (there are also two evening schools where adult migrants can acquire education). Migrant children take preparatory language classes for one school year and then join the corresponding grade of a general-education school².

Very good programs for schools of the Russian language have been developed, but, unfortunately, the number of vacancies in these schools is only about 300 for the entire Moscow region, whereas the number of migrant children who are receiving education in Moscow, according to the Department of Education, is approaching 25000. Unfortunately, additional classes are not organized in every school, despite their demand. Moreover, migrants often remain uninformed about their opportunity to attend additional classes for learning Russian.

From interviews with migrants:

"Two Tajiks are attending the class, and one cannot speak Russian at all, so he has more problems." "Has anybody told you that children can learn Russian free of charge?" "No, we know nothing about it."

As a rule, migrant children who enroll in Russian schools do not encounter discrimination: according to their parents, the attitude is quite good towards them in school (about 80% of the covered migrants gave this answer). It follows from the above that Russian school students treat their migrant schoolmates much better than those feelings of Russia's communities at large towards adult migrants³.

From the interviews with migrants:

"Classmates and teachers treat her well and even help with studies; they realize that she is bilingual and give her additional consultation."

Nevertheless, almost every tenth migrant interviewed indicated the presence of an ill-disposed attitude towards their children, and among those who indicated these fact immigrants from non-Slavonic countries (from Central Asia and Transcaucasia) are predominant. Their problems obviously emerge owing to ethnic differences, so integrated education, as it is, cannot solve these problems and particular attention is needed here on the part of adults.

From statements uttered in the focus groups:

"...Problems certainly exist owing to ethnic differences. For example, one teacher of the Russian language made a joke, 'Do not annoy Maratik, otherwise he will get his Caucasian dagger and kill all of you.'"

"My son was a 2-year-old child when we arrived here, so he attended a kindergarten and finished school here. Successfully finishing the 11th grade, he told me, 'Mother, I cannot see my future

² <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/publications/interview/interview0050.html>

³ According to the Levada Center, 18% of respondents in Russia support the slogan "Russia is for Russians," and another 36% consider it possible to realize this idea, but within reasonable limits. (NEWSRU.com, December 8, 2009).

here. I would rather live further in Armenia.' He has never been to Armenia, but despite this he is considered here to belong to a second or even a third grade of people."

Concluding, we can state that the situation with access to school education and the situation with schools for migrant children are so far relatively favorable. Nevertheless, it would be a big mistake to think that these issues may not require more attention. The number of migrant children is constantly increasing, their Russian is still not perfect, and they are less adapted to the environment. Apart from this, migrants have settled down unevenly; for example, there are schools in Moscow where migrant children already make up 20–30% of the students in a classroom. They are correspondingly concentrated in ordinary schools, since Moscow's model schools (gymnasiums, centers of education, and schools with advanced learning of foreign languages) accept children on a competitive basis, and these children are well-prepared. It is clear that migrant children are less competitive for studying in such schools. In addition, the local population is blaming migrants for the established situation in school education. Not dealing with the current issues that have emerged will mean that there will be even greater and more difficult problems to solve in the future.

Migrants' children and their access to healthcare services in Russia. The queries conducted by the CMS in 2010 have shown an obvious advantage of migrants' children compared to their parents in the issues of access to medical care in Russia.

The share of respondents answering the question: "Have you personally or your children required medical help here?" %

	Migrant women	Children
Yes, for a fee	39	36
Yes, free of charge	11	32
No, there was no necessity	37	16
No, we cure ourselves, since doctor's services are expensive for us	12	7
Did not respond	1	9

As can be seen, about 70% of migrant children were provided with medical care, and the latter was free of charge for half of them. According to a variety of surveys, overcoming bureaucratic hardships, half of migrants managed to enroll their children at a public health center (at least for conducting a full medical examination), visit a pediatrician, and received the required vaccinations. It is understandable that the enrollment at a health center granted by the regional department of public healthcare (in Moscow, this is the so-called "pink coupons") could not solve all problems related to medical care for migrant children, and parents had to pay for the treatment of serious diseases in any case. Nevertheless, the necessary mini-

num of medical services for children was provided, and it is for this reason that the share of respondents who treated their children at exclusively their own expense was so relatively small, namely, less than 10%.

From statements uttered in the focus groups:

"I passed a full medical examination at school as usual and as all others. Nobody told me anything, although I did not have any (Russian) documents."

From interviews with migrants:

"Before the Department of Healthcare used to send them to health centers, and all vaccinations were made free of charge. There was no insurance as such, but today they do not do that anymore."

"I received all vaccinations at school as all other children (free of charge), but today it is for a fee for my brother."

The situation changed drastically in 2011. Immediately after the change in the order of issuing compulsory medical insurance (CMI) policies to adult migrants legally working in Russia, regional departments of healthcare began to refuse from a free practice of enrolling the children of migrants in polyclinics without a residence status or Russian citizenship. Until 2010 each Russian employer was obliged to arrange for working migrants a CMI policy permitting migrants to have free-of-charge medical care. Starting from January 1, 2010, only those who have permits for temporary or permanent residence are eligible for obtaining a CMI policy⁴ (in the meantime, the majority of labor migrants stay here on a temporary basis, and, since they do not live here, they cannot have a CMI policy). Six months after the implementation of these amendments, regional departments of public healthcare annulled the possibility of receiving free healthcare for migrant children and pregnant women in Russia's institutions of healthcare. Now migrants only have a possibility of paid visits to doctors: either through purchasing a CMI policy for some period or paying for each visit to doctors (often unofficially and directly into a doctor's pocket, bypassing the medical institution's account).

In fact, now nobody, except the parents, takes care of their children's health, since none of Russia's educational or medical institutions is in control of this process. If in the past diseases in migrant children were revealed in the course of yearly full medical examinations and the parents (frequently poorly oriented in the medical field) were given qualified recommendations on the treatment of the revealed diseases, today such help is absent. Parents have to purchase a policy for their children, observe the dates of vaccinations and revaccinations, and bring their children for yearly full medical examinations. Considering the busy schedule of migrant parents, their low income and isolation from local social networks (which, for example,

⁴ Insured persons are citizens of the Russian Federation, foreign citizens permanently or temporarily living in the Russian Federation, persons without citizenship (for the exception of highly-qualified specialists and their family members in conformity with the Federal Law of July 25, 2002, no. 115-FL "On Refugees" (<http://www.rg.ru/2010/12/03/oms-dok.html>)).

frequently help Russian families find a necessary doctor or be admitted to a hospital, etc.), the consequence of such a situation will certainly be a worsening health condition among migrant children. Apart from this, the absence of the required vaccinations among migrant children leads to a risk of a worsened infectious situation for Russian children who attend the same classes.

From an interview with the coordinator of a hotline for migrants:

"After cancelling free enrollments for children, the number of calls concerning children increased twofold. This also concerns immunization or diseases. In the past, immunization was conducted free of charge and in the same polyclinic, in which a child was registered. However, now parents have to purchase a policy for enrolling their children in one polyclinic, but the children should have vaccinations in another. Even when those who were enrolled but whose term has expired try to visit a doctor who has known them for a long period of time, the doctor does not accept them. The doctor says, 'You must go to the insurance company and purchase a policy that specifically covers immunization. Then by this policy a child can have vaccinations in our polyclinic.'"

From interviews with migrants:

"I have been here for two years with a child, but I have never applied to any children's polyclinic. Until now I have arranged all necessary vaccinations in Tadjikistan, but revaccination will be done for a fee. Since I am a medical worker, I can monitor this process. ('How about your acquaintances who are not medics? Who monitors this process—vaccinations or immunization?') Nobody."

"For example, a planned full medical examination was conducted a short time ago and my child was not examined; only a dentist examined him, and that is all...I cannot do that, because I have to purchase a policy. I have no money."

Educational institutions are certainly trying to exercise at least a controlling function in relation to the health condition of migrant children coming to them, in particular, at admission they require a medical record with the results of a full medical examination; a vaccination certificate (the same requirements are also applied to Russian children); and, in addition, a compulsory insurance policy for a child. However, first, these requirements are only frequently observed at the beginning of schooling and later they are forgotten or become formal (only a copy of a new policy and sometimes a reference that a child is healthy are required annually), and, second, the requirement for purchasing an expensive CMI policy (on average, 10000–13000 rubles per year for registration with the polyclinic by the residence address and free vaccinations) in some cases becomes an illegal obstacle for the access of migrant children to preschool and school education (the presence of a policy alone does not mean a passed full medical examination).

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Access to medical care for migrants, especially for their children, is now a serious problem in Russia; the interviewed migrants sometimes admitted that their main motivation to seek a residence status and Russia's citizenship was not due to a desire to become Russia's full-right citizens, but because of their concerns about themselves and their children being left without medical care.

From interviews with migrants:

"Now we have a medical insurance for children (we were granted a residential status) and feel secure, as no hospital would accept us without an insurance policy. Now everything has been settled and the attitude of doctors has normalized. Until recently, I have been anxious about where to appeal and what doctor to go to for medical help."

* * *

Migration of families with children to Russia is not a very widespread phenomenon so far, but it increases every year. It does not only present problems, but also a large benefit for the Russian society. Despite all difficulties that migrant children experience on their way to Russian education and healthcare, they are children who are raised in Russia and attend kindergartens, schools, and polyclinics here and they have considerably higher chances to be successfully integrated into Russian society compared to their parents who arrived here job seeking. Migrant parents themselves realize the situation very well.

From discussions within the focus groups:

"Children make friends freely and are invited to parties. They are on equal terms."

"No, they (children) have no problems."

"My daughter has only Russian friends."

"When I ask something in the mother tongue, they answer in Russian. They speak both languages equally well."

The integration issues of migrants are now of particular importance and utmost interest for Russia, especially in educating migrants' children together with Russian children. Migrant parents should be encouraged to send their children to Russia's educational institutions; the opportunities for additional and free learning of Russian should be widened for migrant children at as many schools as possible so that children are not withdrawn from the main process of education. As a result, all will win: Russia's society by receiving new potential members for whom additional integration will not be required and migrant children themselves, since they will not have to overcome all difficulties associated with adaptation and integration in Russia, which their parents had to overcome.