

Success Story: Tamar Zurabishvili, CRRC Fellowship Program

Very little is known about the status of labor migrants in Georgia. The 2002 Georgian Census data is outdated, and the questions that addressed issues of migration on the census forms were flawed and did not yield reliable results.

In order to better understand the migration dynamics in Georgia, Tamar Zurabishvili, Assistant Professor at Telavi State University and Researcher at the Institute of Demography and Sociology conducted an alternative household census in Daba Tianeti, a settlement in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, which according to migration experts, is characterized by one of the highest rates of out migration in Georgia.

The study showed that, among Tianeti migrants, men constitute a minority (32%). Therefore, Zurabishvili found that the “feminization of migration” is occurring in Georgia, as traditionally in Georgia only men migrated. The majority of migrants from Tianeti perform unqualified jobs abroad – more than half of them work as housekeepers, nannies/babysitters or care-givers. Most of the migrants live and work abroad without proper work permits and experience the hardships that undocumented emigrants often encounter.

The study found that only 7% of migrants study abroad – these are mostly young people, living in Germany. Of the surveyed households, 71% receive remittances, although the amount and regularity of remittances varies significantly. It was estimated that 280,000 euros were sent by Tianeti labor migrants between July 2005 and August 2006. According to the survey, almost all remittance money is being spent on consumption, and there were only a few cases where migrants or their family members invested the money or bought or renovated houses/apartments. Only three households reported having started their own businesses with the money sent by migrants. These findings shed light on the current relationship between migration and development in Georgia.

By the end of the project, the researcher published three articles in Russian. The results of the research were also presented at a conference organized by the Migration Study Center of Tbilisi State University and the International Office for Migration (IOM) on June 11th, 2007 and at CRRC premises. IOM Focal Point Specialist, Tamuna Mardaleishvili, attended the presentation and her interest was piqued by the research. Mardaleishvili reiterated that IOM will use the findings of the research in their future projects. The final report and presentation were posted on CRRC-Georgia’s website and are available to the research community, policy makers and all interested parties.



Tamara Zurabishvili is just one example of the CRRC Fellowship Program. To date, CRRC has given out over 70 fellowships worth more than 200,000 dollars. Increasingly, other organizations have recognized the value of supporting CRRC fellowships and many now receive support from other organization interested in research in the South Caucasus.

The fellowship selection process requires learning before applications are completed and is run transparently online. As of 2007, fellows are also required to submit their work to a peer-reviewed journal. Fellows are also brought together to increase the formation of research communities in the South Caucasus.