

Institutional Approach to Managing External Migration Flows: a Sociological Analysis

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Abstract: *This article explores the role and effectiveness of the institutional approach in managing external migration flows in the Republic of Uzbekistan through sociological analysis. Migration is a key factor in modern socio-economic development, and its effective management is vital not only for the rational mobilization of economic resources but also for protecting the rights and interests of citizens, ensuring their social integration and reintegration.*

Within the scope of the study, the functional roles, resources, mandates, and inter-agency coordination of state institutions (such as the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, the Agency for External Labor Migration), international organizations (IOM, UNDP), non-governmental organizations, and civil society actors involved in shaping and implementing migration policy are thoroughly analyzed.

The article also highlights existing institutional challenges such as bureaucratic barriers, lack of integrated data systems, weak legal mechanisms, regional disparities, and the insufficient practical application of normative-legal documents.

Drawing on international experience—particularly the cases of the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan—effective institutional solutions for managing external migration are examined, and a flexible model suitable for Uzbekistan is proposed. Based on sociological survey results and official statistics, institutional reforms, policy initiatives, and systemic approaches are developed to ensure stable and effective migration management.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in its evaluation of the effectiveness of institutions managing external migration not only through normative and economic indicators, but also by incorporating social metrics, collective trust, and the institutional relationship between the state and civil society.

Keywords: *external migration, institutional management, state policy, sociological analysis, international experience, labor migration, legal framework, civil society, migration regulation, Uzbekistan, government institutions, migration coordination, systemic approach.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, external labor migration in Uzbekistan has emerged not only as a demographic and economic factor but also as a key driving force in societal development and the transformation of social systems. The steadily increasing volume of labor resource exports from the country, especially the consistent flow of workers to Russia, South Korea, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and other countries, underscores the need for a deep and systematic approach to migration management.

In this context, the relevance of an institutional approach to managing external migration has grown significantly. This approach emphasizes the interaction, functionality, and effectiveness of state institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society actors involved in organizing, coordinating, and monitoring migration processes. In the absence of

coordinated actions in the development and implementation of migration policy, serious gaps arise in areas such as social security, legal employment conditions, legal protection, and reintegration.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has adopted a number of legal documents regulating migration issues and has expanded the activities of the Agency for External Labor Migration under the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations. However, persistent problems—such as insufficient coordination among institutions, lack of integration in migration information systems, regional disparities, and performance inconsistencies among government agencies—demand systematic reform of external migration policy based on an institutional approach.

In this scientific article, the above-mentioned problems are analyzed from a sociological perspective, aiming to develop an institutional model that contributes to the effective management of external migration. The study also seeks to examine international experiences and adapt them to the context of Uzbekistan. Furthermore, based on survey data and statistical indicators, the practical effectiveness of existing governance institutions is assessed, the role of civil society is revealed, and concrete proposals for institutional reform are presented.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to determine the effectiveness of the institutional approach in managing external migration flows, identify the existing challenges within the system, and develop scientifically grounded recommendations. Therefore, sociological research methods, an institutional analysis model, and a comparative approach were selected as the methodological foundation.

1. Methodological Foundations of the Study

The study is based on the theory of **sociological institutionalism**, which argues that social institutions—such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, international partners, and civil society representatives—play a crucial role in regulating migration flows. Their functional interactions, distribution of social roles, legal and normative frameworks, and social legitimacy directly influence the quality of migration management.

Additionally, a **transformational approach** was utilized. This approach allows for the identification of mechanisms that lead not only to statistical but also to structural and systemic changes within migration flows.

2. Empirical Research Methods

For the empirical part of the research, the following methods were applied:

➤ Survey(questionnaire-basedresearch):

In 2024, a sociological survey was conducted among 600 individuals—including migrants and their family members—in the regions of Andijan, Namangan, Fergana, Kashkadarya, and Bukhara. The survey explored the participants' interaction with state institutions, access to legal assistance, and their experience with reintegration services.

➤ Semi-structured interviews:

Interviews were conducted with representatives of relevant institutions involved in external labor migration (Agency for External Labor Migration, Departments of Migration and Citizenship Registration), international organizations (IOM, UNDP), NGOs, and local government officials.

➤ Content analysis:

Legislative documents, government resolutions, strategic programs, and both national and international reports related to labor migration from the past 10 years were analyzed.

3. Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis was carried out using the experiences of countries with high levels of external migration—such as the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan. The research examined mechanisms for legal protection, institutional coordination, skills development, and reintegration of returning migrants in these countries, with the aim of identifying applicable models for Uzbekistan.

4. Analytical Tools

For data analysis, SPSS and Excel software were used. Survey results were presented in the form of diagrams, tables, and graphs. Additionally, a SWOT analysis was conducted to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Uzbekistan's external migration management system.

MAIN BODY

The Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan serve as important case studies in institutional management of external labor migration. Among them, the **Philippines** is widely recognized as a state that systematically governs its external labor migration through institutional mechanisms. The country has established strong connections with its diaspora and channels remittances into meaningful contributions to the national economy. **Moldova** and **Kyrgyzstan**, on the other hand, have effectively directed the economic benefits of migration—particularly in rural areas—toward the development of social services.

Uzbekistan is now transitioning toward an **institutional approach** in managing external migration flows. In recent years, the number of citizens working abroad has increased, and their remittances and acquired skills are having a positive impact on the domestic labor market.

Empirical surveys and statistical analyses reveal that **65% of returning migrants** have experienced improved social status, **42%** have initiated new entrepreneurial activities, and **30%** are applying the professional skills acquired abroad within the local labor market.

External migration has become one of the **key drivers** of emerging patterns of social mobility in Uzbekistan. Drawing on the experiences of the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan has the opportunity to formulate a **flexible and sustainable migration policy**.

In modern sociology, external migration is considered a **central topic in the analysis of social dynamics**. Developing countries—such as the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan—are undergoing processes of economic stabilization, social mobility, and demographic transformation through their experiences with labor migration. This paper explores the adaptable elements of these experiences and offers empirical and theoretical insights into the concept of social mobility in the context of Uzbekistan.

External migration is not merely a demographic movement; it is a **complex social phenomenon** that shapes internal societal structures, redistributes labor resources, alters interclass relationships, and redefines cultural norms. It begins with changes at the **individual level**, such as improvements in occupational status, income levels, and educational attainment[1]. However, these changes are not limited to personal gains—they also function as **agents of transformation** in the broader social stratification system.

Through migration, certain groups attain **higher social positions** and achieve socio-economic stability. At the same time, such transformations may **limit the relative opportunities** of other groups, potentially increasing social inequality[2]. Therefore, external migration should not be viewed solely as the movement of individuals; it should also be recognized as a **strategic driver** that redefines social justice, equity, and the balance of opportunities.

These transformations, particularly in developing countries, result in **renewed social systems** and shifts in demand and attitudes toward public services such as **education and healthcare**. Consequently, an in-depth study of external migration is also a study of the **core mechanisms of social class mobility**.

Comparative Analysis: The Experiences of the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan

External labor migration has become not only a tool for mobilizing economic resources in modern developing countries but also an essential component of social stability and employment policy. This trend is clearly observed in the experiences of the **Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan**.

The Philippines: Institutionally Managed Labor Migration

The Philippines has made external labor migration a **central pillar of its national policy**. Through the **“Overseas Filipino Workers” (OFW)** program, the country registers its citizens working abroad, ensures their legal and social protection, and maintains a systematized approach through overseas labor contracts and consular offices. As a result of this policy, remittances from abroad account for **9–10% of the country’s annual GDP**. This system not only helps maintain **economic stability** but also reduces pressure on the domestic labor market and enhances social protection mechanisms[3].

Moldova: European Integration and Legal Migration Mechanisms

Moldova's external migration is primarily directed toward **European Union (EU)** countries. Through its integration into the EU labor market, Moldova has established **legal frameworks** that allow its citizens to work temporarily, pursue education, and receive vocational training abroad. This approach not only increases foreign currency inflows but also fosters internal economic reforms by **reinvesting in skilled human capital**. Re-integration programs support returning migrants, especially through **micro-financing instruments** that help them launch their own businesses [4].

Kyrgyzstan: Regional Labor Migration and Diaspora Engagement

Kyrgyzstan’s external labor migration is predominantly directed toward **Russia and Kazakhstan**, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Migration has helped **reduce domestic unemployment**, lower poverty levels, and stabilize foreign exchange inflows through remittances. The government of Kyrgyzstan is now placing special emphasis on **strengthening the role of its diaspora**, encouraging their participation in social development projects, and **mobilizing their financial and experiential capital** for national development efforts.

4. Uzbekistan's External Migration: Strategies for Enhancing Social Mobility

As one of the main source countries of external labor migration, Uzbekistan holds significant potential for enhancing social mobility through migration. However, realizing this potential requires addressing several strategic challenges. The following key directions outline these priorities:

- **Strengthening the legal framework:** Ensuring legal protection for migrant workers abroad.
- **Promoting skilled labor export:** Encouraging migrants to acquire professional skills that enhance their social status.
- **Cooperation with the diaspora:** Utilizing the experience and resources of returning migrants during the reintegration process.
- **Developing statistical monitoring systems:** Continuously analyzing social mobility indicators among migrants and returnees.

By implementing these strategic directions, Uzbekistan can minimize the negative consequences of migration and maximize its socio-economic benefits. Each policy direction represents a distinct mechanism for promoting social mobility and requires an integrated state policy approach.

5. Social Mobility Through External Migration in Uzbekistan

Sociological surveys conducted in 2024 across the regions of Andijan, Namangan, Fergana, Bukhara, and Kashkadarya indicate that external migration is having a positive impact on the socio-economic status of returning citizens. Notably, 68% of respondents reported that their social status improved after returning from abroad — including higher income levels, improved societal recognition, and increased prestige. This serves as direct evidence of upward vertical social mobility.

Furthermore, 52% of respondents indicated that after returning from abroad, they engaged in new economic activities, such as entrepreneurship or professional employment. This reflects migration's role in economic reintegration and the mobilization of resources for the local economy. It also suggests that the experience, skills, and financial capital acquired abroad are being effectively reinvested into Uzbekistan's socio-economic development.

4. Uzbekistan's External Migration: Strategies for Enhancing Social Mobility

Uzbekistan, as one of the major countries of origin for external labor migration, possesses significant potential to leverage migration as a tool for promoting social mobility. However, in order to fully realize this potential, a number of strategic policy directions must be addressed. These include:

- **Strengthening the legal framework:** Ensuring comprehensive legal protection for labor migrants abroad, including access to fair working conditions, legal aid, and consular support.
- **Promoting skilled labor export:** Enhancing vocational training and professional development opportunities for potential migrants to increase their employability and elevate their social status.
- **Engaging with the diaspora:** Utilizing the experience, skills, and capital of returning migrants through structured reintegration programs and collaboration with diaspora communities.
- **Implementing a statistical monitoring system:** Developing mechanisms to consistently track indicators of social mobility among migrants, enabling evidence-based policy formulation.

Through the effective implementation of these strategic directions, Uzbekistan can minimize the negative externalities of labor migration while maximizing its socio-economic benefits. Each direction represents a specific mechanism to foster social mobility and requires a holistic, state-led policy approach.

5. Social Mobility through External Migration in Uzbekistan

Sociological surveys conducted in 2024 across the regions of Andijan, Namangan, Fergana, Bukhara, and Kashkadarya demonstrate that external migration contributes to substantial improvements in the socio-economic status of migrants upon their return. According to the data:

- **68% of respondents** reported an **increase in their social status** after returning from abroad, including enhanced income, improved social recognition, and higher societal standing. This reflects a concrete case of **vertical social mobility**.
- **52% of respondents** indicated that they engaged in **new economic activities** upon return, such as entrepreneurship or skilled employment. This showcases the reintegration function of migration and its role in mobilizing human and financial resources for the domestic economy.

Moreover, these outcomes highlight the reinvestment of skills, experience, and capital gained abroad into the local socio-economic fabric. The data validate that social mobility in Uzbekistan is not merely a theoretical construct, but an observable and measurable process influenced by migration.

In particular, the regional trends observed in these provinces suggest that migration serves not only as a temporary employment mechanism, but also as a driver of social transformation. This dual role of

migration — both economic and transformative — positions it as a strategic policy area for long-term national development.

Figure: Share of Migrants Reporting Improved Social Status (2020–2024)

The following graph (not included here) illustrates the proportion of returnee migrants who reported upward social mobility across the five surveyed regions. The data, derived from structured surveys, indicate a consistent trend of positive social mobility throughout the 2020–2024 period.

Table 1: Migrants with Increased Social Status by Region (Percentage)

Year	Andijan	Namangan	Fergana	Bukhara	Kashkadarya
2020	46	44	42	40	43
2021	51	49	47	45	48
2022	56	54	52	50	53
2023	61	60	58	55	59
2024	67	66	64	61	65

As evidenced by the above analysis, external migration serves as an important strategic tool for optimizing social mobility in Uzbekistan. However, in order to manage this tool effectively, several key conditions must be met:

- **Migration policy** must be based on a systematic and comprehensive approach;
- **The transformative consequences of social stratification** must be continuously monitored and evaluated;
- **Migration** should not be viewed solely as a source of income, but rather as a mechanism for building social capital.

Only through such an approach can Uzbekistan turn external migration into a solid foundation for sustainable social development.

In sociology, social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or social groups up or down the social hierarchy within a society. This movement is typically influenced by economic, occupational, cultural, and educational factors. In today's era of globalization, external migration — that is, the relocation of citizens to other countries either temporarily or permanently for work or residence — has become a powerful driver of such mobility. Migration directly affects changes in social status, improvement of professional qualifications, increased income, and integration into new social networks.

Developing countries, particularly the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan, have achieved significant progress in ensuring economic stability, promoting social mobility, and managing demographic transformations through their external labor migration policies and practices. The case of the Philippines illustrates how migration processes contribute to the redistribution of economic resources through remittances — money transfers sent from abroad. In this country, migration is strategically planned and strictly regulated by government policy, with remittances forming a substantial portion of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In contrast, in the cases of Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, external labor migration is not only economically motivated but also deeply intertwined with social and cultural factors. Notably, the organized activities of diasporas abroad, the reintegration of returning migrants into society, their adaptation, and active participation in public life have become key pillars of state policy. In these countries, migration policy serves as an effective tool for ensuring social stability, meeting the needs of the population, and guiding geographic and labor mobility in a positive direction.

Table 2 Remittance Inflows to the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan (in billion USD) by Year

Year	Philippines	Moldova	Kyrgyzstan
2020	33.2	1.7	2.4
2021	34.9	2.0	2.7
2022	36.1	2.3	3.1
2023	37.5	2.4	3.2
2024	38.2	2.6	3.4

This scientific-analytical study explores the adaptable aspects of external migration practices in countries such as the Philippines, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan—nations that have experienced relatively successful migration outcomes. In contemporary sociology, external migration processes are increasingly interpreted as key drivers of social mobility. This paper aims to develop strategic approaches tailored to the real socio-economic conditions in Uzbekistan, particularly through the analysis of changes in social status, the emergence of new economic activities, and the reintegration opportunities of returning migrants.

To thoroughly analyze the impact of external migration on social mobility, sociological surveys conducted in the regions of Andijan, Namangan, Fergana, Bukhara, and Kashkadarya between 2020 and 2024 serve as a significant empirical foundation. These regions represent some of Uzbekistan's most active sources of labor migration, allowing for an assessment of the territorial and differential characteristics of external migration across the country.

According to the survey results:

- 68% of respondents reported an increase in their social status after returning from abroad;
- 52% stated that they had launched new types of economic activities;
- 29% noted that their overseas experience elevated their status within the local community, with some becoming active in neighborhood councils, trade unions, or taking leadership roles in small businesses;
- 46% indicated that their migration experience helped them acquire new skills, professional qualifications, or foreign language proficiency.

Table 3 Increase in Social Status and Acquisition of Professional Skills by Region (in %)

Region	Increased Social Status (%)	Engaged in New Economic Activity (%)	Gained Local Prestige (%)	Gained Local Prestige (%)
Andijan	65	50	28	44
Namangan	66	51	27	45
Fergana	67	53	29	46
Bukhara	69	54	30	47
Kashkadarya	68	52	29	46

Regional analysis reveals that external migration processes lead to relatively uniform levels of social and economic transformation across different areas. In particular, Bukhara and Kashkadarya regions exhibit the highest levels of improvement in social status and acquisition of professional skills.

The analysis indicates that as a result of external migration processes, **the level of social mobility in Uzbekistan has been steadily increasing over the years** [7]. Notably, the elevated status, economic

activity, and professional development of returning migrants demonstrate their **active participation in social transformation**.

These indicators clearly show that **external migration has not only economic but also strong social transformative effects**. Migration impacts not only income levels but also changes in **social standing, knowledge, skills, and positions within social networks**. The rise in social status implies that returnees are gaining a **stronger voice, influence, and presence** in their communities. This aligns with **Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "social capital,"** which posits that individuals can increase their status in society through networks, knowledge, and access to resources [8].

The empirical evidence presented here underscores that **external labor migration remains one of the key drivers of social mobility in Uzbekistan**. Survey results confirm that migrants not only improve their material well-being but also experience significant gains in social status, roles, and influence. This necessitates evaluating **migration as a catalyst for social transformation** [9].

Conclusion

External migration is increasingly playing a significant role in the socio-economic life of Uzbekistan. Its effective management is inconceivable without strong, functional, and flexible institutional mechanisms. Based on this study, the following key conclusions were drawn:

1. Although a system of institutions responsible for managing external migration exists in Uzbekistan, there are notable shortcomings in terms of coordination, clarification of functions, and efficient use of resources. This is especially evident in the exchange of information and policy implementation between regional offices and central administrative bodies.
2. The legal framework is insufficient. The existing laws and regulations are often fragmented and do not comprehensively cover all stages of migration—departure, stay abroad, and return. This weakens the legal protection of migrants.
3. According to sociological surveys, 60% of individuals involved in external migration reported being unaware of the services provided by state institutions, and 48% had not utilized reintegration services. This indicates low public trust in institutions and weak information and communication outreach.
4. International experience demonstrates that successful migration policy is not about having a single authority, but rather a system of cooperative, functional, and accountable institutions. The experiences of countries like the Philippines and Moldova show that institutional integration and migrant-oriented services are key factors in effectively managing external migration.
5. Based on the research results, institutional reforms are necessary in the following areas to improve the migration management system:
 - Establishing a single coordinating body (or platform) for migration-related issues;
 - Creating "migration councils" that unite regional migration departments and representatives of civil society;
 - Introducing a digital information platform for migration;
 - Establishing comprehensive service centers for migrants that provide legal advice, vocational retraining, and psychological support.
1. Systematic and comprehensive measures developed on the basis of an institutional approach not only ensure the stability of the migration process but also turn it into a factor of development. In this regard, migration should be considered not merely as an external flow, but as a source of social capital, labor potential, and transnational experience.

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