

Review of the Demographic Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period of 2002-2006¹

Dedicated to my father Doolotaliyev Seyit

*Doolotaliyev Tchoro Seyitovich,
Chief economist of the Research group
of the Economic Department NBKR*

In this article the author is analyzing the demographic indices (birth rate, life duration, death-rate, migration) of the Kyrgyz Republic. Also probable trends of the population size dynamics up to the year 2025, risks and losses associated with life time shortening, lack of social infrastructure, labor resources and etc are presented.

Key words: demography, birth rate, life duration, mortality rate, migration.

During the years of independent development of the Kyrgyz Republic there were considerable structural changes and reforms in the economy and social sphere. In the course of the reforms, arranged at the beginning – middle 90-s in the Republic, which provided both positive and negative reactions there were changes in the demographic sphere as well, including population size, education, birth rate, life duration and migration of the population.

Population of the Republic includes such national groups as Kyrgyz (69.2 percent), Uzbek (14.5 percent), Russian (8.7 percent) and other nationalities (7.6 percent)². Within the period of 1989-2007 the population of the Kyrgyz Republic increased by 1.23 times at the background of departure of non-native and native population, starting in the 90-s and continuing at the present time, provided mainly by economic reasons and forcing strengthening of negative migration balance.

Decelerating increase of the population and stable migration flow (-113.4 thousand people within the period of 2002-2006) at poorly developed economy and low income rates, are the factors, which may pose potential threat for economic situation and national safety. In accordance with the UN forecast, in the long-term period the annual rate of the population growth in Kyrgyzstan may decrease by 1.0 percent by 2010-2015, and up to 0.6 percent per a year by 2020-2025³. The existing tendency for decrease in current increment and further reduction of the average annual population growth rates requires accepting policy measures to regulate the population size.

With regard to the expected growth rates of the population the population size of the Kyrgyz Republic may amount to 6080.3 thousand people by 2025 (see Table No.1). Uncertainty on the country's social and economic development in the long-term perspective prevents calculation of possible migration runoff. In this case it is possible only to assume that at persisting migration rates, migration runoff may vary in the range of 40.0 – 58.0 thousand people per year; at conservative approach, i.e. at worsening of the economic situation in the country – up to 50.0-100.0 thousand people per year; in case of stable social and economic situation, the migration runoff may be reduced up to 37.9-38.1 thousand people.

To increase birth rate, including qualitative birth rate, to decrease mortality rate and to promote healthy life style it is necessary to implement the state demographic policy aimed at optimization of these indices.

¹ Opinions and view points of the author, stated in this paper, may be different from ideas of the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic.

² Kyrgyzstan in figures 2008

³ “Demoscope Weekly”, No. 245-246, May 1-21, 2006.
<http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0245/barom02.php>

Table No. 1.**Forecast of the population size with regard to migration runoff**

No.	Indices	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2015	2020	2025
1	Population size (million people)	5 138.7	5 189.8	5 252.0	5 309.0	5 362.1*	5 415.7	5 682.0	5 901.2	6 080.3
2	Population growth rates (in percent)	100.9	101.0	101.2	101.1	101.0	101.0	101.0	100.6	100.6
3	Runoff, people (basic)	26 980	31 003	50 648	37 790	40 152*	42 661	57 767	-	-
4	Runoff forecast in accordance with pessimistic scenario (people)	-	-	-	-	43 459*	49 977	100 522.2	-	-
5	Runoff forecast in accordance with optimistic scenario (people)	-	-	-	-	37 903*	38 017	38 131.1	-	-

*calculations of the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic, based on the data of the National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic

Geographic distribution of birthrate plays an important role. In the territorial view more than a half of newly born children are accounted to the southern regions of the republic thus this area will require additional assistance from executive authorities, including expansion of the access to social services and maintenance of children and maternity, provision of specific services, establishment of pre-school, school and professional infrastructure for children.

Also there is the problem related to decreasing life duration of the population in general. As life duration of women is rather stable life duration of men is decreasing with every passing year. Detection, prophylaxis and elimination of the factors causing early mortality among the men – are the main objectives which should be solved. If those issues are left without proper attention they may affect the economy (loss of labor resources, strengthening of demographic burden, and decrease in the number of tax payers and decrease in consumer demand) as well as the social situation (lack of men in the society and families).

For instance, at present the retirement age for men constitutes 63 years and for women – 58 years. Increase in the retirement age up to 65 years for men will enable to expand the number of the working population and decrease the burden for the whole economically active population. However, comparing average life duration of men (63.5 years) and possible retirement age (65 years) it becomes clear that at average men will die before their retirement age expiry. It is possible to make the decision on early retirement only in case of high incomes and availability of “long” money on the part of the state and economically active working population. That’s why it is necessary to perform the activities aimed at complex and diligent work with prolongation of life duration among the working population. Also it should be noted that at increase in the average life duration of the whole population from 67.7 to 75-80 years the older generation will be able to help in growing up and bringing up another generation, thus lightening the burden of parents.

Internal and external migration of the population affects demographic development of the country’s population. Considerable changes in the population structure were provided by migration movements.

From the beginning of the 90-s there was a negative migration balance in the republic which continued at the beginning of the 21st century. Negative balance was mainly covered by natural population growth.

Moreover the migration structure includes people with higher, incomplete higher and specialized secondary education (48.8 percent from the total number of migrants and 91.7 percent with regard to people with general secondary education). Migration of such category of the population considerably affects the republic's economy. It causes loss of scientific, intellectual, technical and labor potential. Almost 80 percent of migrants include active working population among which men prevail (more than 50 percent).

However not only migrating population negatively affects the country but also the education system itself. The current processes, related to worsening of knowledge quality, lack of teaching staff and absence of the required training materials in several years will provide decrease in the level and quality of the graduates' education, knowledge and skills. Some of the negative influences of such processes are as follows:

Decrease in the number of kindergartens – there were only 488 operating kindergartens in 2008 in the republic as compared to 1696 kindergartens in 1990. At that there is a constant population growth. The burden on the infrastructure for children increased in the capital.

1. Worsening of the material-and-technical base at schools – schools with the Kyrgyz language education are provided with training materials only by 39 percent; schools with the Russian language education are provided with training materials only by 52 percent.

2. Teaching personnel deficit in the education system – necessity in 3622 teachers.

3. Lack of rotation among the teaching staff – average age of teachers is 45-50 years; many teachers are already pensioners. At that 1.5 thousand teachers graduate from higher educational institutions annually.

4. Education level of teaching and pedagogic staff does not correspond with the current requirements and needs.

5. Insufficient expenses for school and university education. Education expenses for teaching of one school pupil constitutes only 4126 soms, whereas expenses for 1 kindergarten child constitutes 8414 soms and for 1 university student – 12 596 soms⁴.

At that the structural composition of migrants recently considerably changed. By the beginning of the 90-s the national structure of migrants was mono-ethnic; Russian and Russian speaking population left the country. However from the beginning of the 21st century the situation considerably changed. The share of Kyrgyz people leaving the country has been increasing. This is caused by search for higher living conditions as well as by poverty in residence places.

In the migration conditions the agrarian sector of the republic suffers the most. In this sector most of works are performed by people without use of technical means. Thus there is a shortage of workers observed. So there is the necessity in intensification and automation of manual labor in agriculture. Therefore it is necessary to implement the targeted policy for provision of the agricultural equipment to the regions which suffer from labor power absence. Development of leasing, crediting and financing of the agricultural equipment supplies alongside with the state support will enable to somehow solve the existing problems.

In the migration structure of 2006 about 10.5 percent was accounted for people younger than the active working age. Among the migrated Kyrgyz people 6.5 percent was accounted for children younger than the working age. Many parents leave their children without supervision when going abroad to earn money. In accordance with the UNICEF information in the Kyrgyz Republic about 78.0 thousand children or 7.6 percent of pupils do not attend the school. It means that considerable share of these children will perform low-qualified and poorly paid works in their adult lives. On the other hand, extremely low living standards of the population and absence of jobs especially in rural areas led to such phenomenon as working children (children labor resources). Those children are obliged to

⁴ “Sandwiches” are not enough to feed the school... / Interview of Mrs. Boljurova. www.24.kg , 2008.

work in order to provide their families due to absence of bread-winner, sick parents, unfavorable family conditions and other reasons.

The main reason for external migration to Kazakhstan, Russia and other countries is poor level of the population living standards. For instance, in 2008 the average wage level in the Kyrgyz Republic constituted 5422 soms (in accordance with the National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic) or 137.5 US dollars. In Russia and Kazakhstan this rate constituted 17 226.3 rubles (in accordance with the Russian Statistics Committee) or 564.4 US dollars and 60 734 tenge (in accordance with the Statistics Agency of the Kazakh Republic) or 502.0 US dollars correspondingly.

Table No. 2.

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GDP per capita in USD PPP adjusted

No.	Country	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
1	Kazakhstan	6246.6	6933.5	7734.6	8732.0	9961.6	11086.1	11862.4
2	Kyrgyzstan	1442.0	1561.5	1698.1	1729.0	1818.9	1998.6	2156.7
3	Russia	8847.5	9709.0	10740.1	11832.0	13173.0	14692.4	16085.4

*www

As shown in the table in 2008 the GDP per capita remained short from similar indices of Kazakhstan by 5.5 times and Russia – by 7.5 times. With every passing year this spread only increased.

In accordance with the National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2001 the share of Kyrgyz people in the external migration constituted 6.7 percent, whereas in 2005 and 2006 these indices increased to 20.5 and 31.0 percent correspondingly.

In the structure of Kyrgyz people migrating to Russia citizens of the southern regions prevail. It may be explained by extremely low living conditions and poverty in the southern oblasts⁵.

Migration flows are especially intensive in the regions with poor living standards and tough social-and-economic conditions. Nowadays there is an active “creeping” migration (empty houses are occupied by representatives of neighboring countries which suffer from lack of lands and other resources) which causes striving for achievement of land plots sometimes even illegally. Desolate and geopolitically important territories may lead to increase in marauding and illegal utilization of the available resources, to disruption of the country’s defense power and security of its citizen, to higher vulnerability at the borders, to possible break-in of drugs, weapons, smuggling, illegal aliens and terrorists.

The tendency for the population runoff under the influence of such factors as considerable income growth, improvement of living conditions, social security of the population is not completed yet. As is shown in the chart the migration downfall occurred in 2008 due to economic situation worsening in the countries-recipients of labor migrants and after stabilization of the economic situation in these states the migration runoff will continue increasing.

Critical scope of the population migration runoff capturing from 24.0 to 60.0 percent of the population natural growth rates does not allow developing concise forecast of the migration situation in the republic especially in the long term perspective.

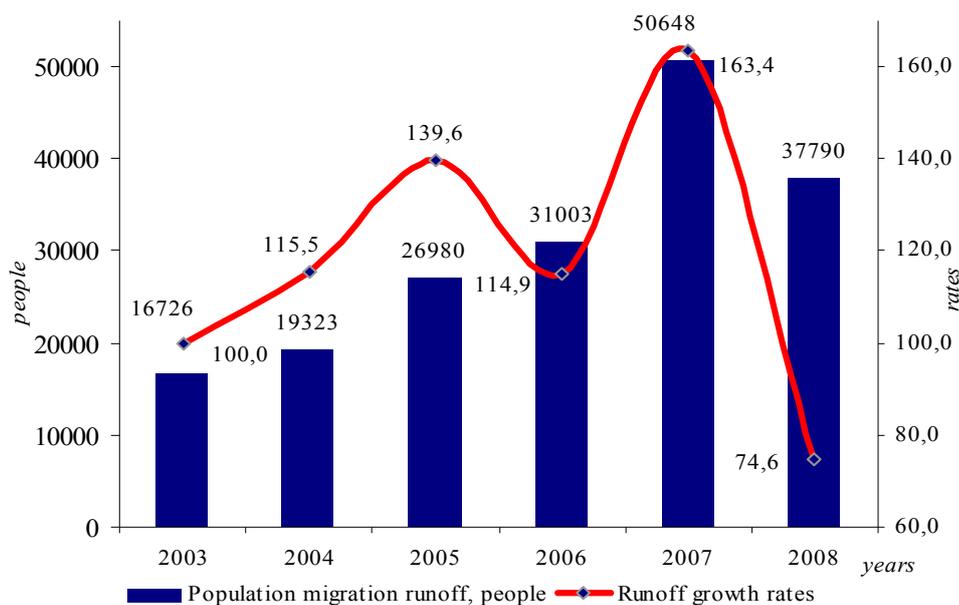
Besides internal migration processes special attention should be paid to demographic processes which occur in the neighboring countries especially in China and Uzbekistan. For instance, annually in China about 20 million of “new workers” are in search for job. This part of Chinese population is ready to work in neighboring countries including the Kyrgyz Republic. Fergana region of the Uzbek Republic has one of the highest population density rate in the world - 550 people per 1 square kilometer⁶.

⁵ Information bulletin of the Kyrgyz Republic on Food Safety and Poverty. Bishkek: 2007, pages 27-29.

⁶ B.Musaev. Andizhan fan – is a killing machine. Hamburg, 2007, page 46.

Chart No.1

Dynamics (left scale) and growth rates (right scale) of the population migration runoff in the Kyrgyz Republic



**Data of the national Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic*

In the long-term and short term periods, there is still the possibility that the Kyrgyz Republic (border territories) may become the country-recipient for migrants from the neighboring countries. This may lead to the problem of assimilation and ethical character issues in the region. In accordance with the data provided by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) the population of the Uzbek Republic will amount to 38 million people⁷ by 2015 and in the nearest 15-20 years we can observe its migration to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. It is necessary to start solving this issue right now both on governmental and inter-governmental levels.

The problem of the mid-term and long-term decrease in the population growth rates may be solved by attracting migrants as well as by increasing birthrate.

Increase in the population by means of migration of the countrymen and ethnic Kyrgyz people will not change the situation considerably, it will be more efficient to solve the problem by increasing quality of birthrate. However it is necessary to consider that the increasing number of children will lead to additional necessity in social services, for instance educational. So it is necessary to develop and improve school and pre-school infrastructure for children.

Another way to increase the population size is motivating to return people who lived in Kyrgyzstan earlier. Russian speaking population (75.4 thousand people⁸) is highly educated among other large national groups and loss of such a valuable intellectual and labor resource may cause grave and negative consequences. Compensation of such losses will require a great deal of time.

Achievement of sustainable economic growth and improvement of the population well-being become more difficult with regard to constant losses of qualified and non-qualified labor resources.

In the conditions of natural and material resources shortage the Kyrgyz Republic should pay special attention to maintenance and development of human capital. With regard

⁷ Site of the International Business Faculty. <http://catalog.fmb.ru/uzbekistan4.shtml>

⁸ "Population of Kyrgyzstan" / In edition of Kudabaev, Giyo, Denisenko. Bishkek 2004. pages 109-115.

to the fact that working population of the Kyrgyz Republic is constantly decreasing it is necessary to develop the system to motivate valuable workers to stay and those who left the country to return. At present the country suffers the deficit in workers of technical professions due to their migration. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic arranges accelerated professional technical training and re-training for those people who want to work abroad. Thus after receiving education in the Kyrgyz Republic our citizens “present” their knowledge and skills to other countries.

As other countries Kyrgyzstan could implement the policy for attraction of highly qualified workers to work in our republic. There is no well-defined policy of selection, acceptance and citizenship provision to foreigners who possess knowledge, skills and sufficient qualification. To attract other people to the Kyrgyz Republic it is necessary to implement the selective policy, including provision of citizenship and work for those specialists who want to work here. Also it is necessary to develop approaches to provision of motivation possibilities to labor migrants and students, studying abroad or leaving the country to work on labor contracts. First of all, it concerns highly qualified specialists and businessmen. Motivation possibilities should include provision of safety, housing, working positions, corresponding wages, social protection etc.

It is necessary to rehabilitate the demographic situation and to create conditions for stable population growth. The most important objective is conducting active regional economic policy aimed at maintenance of the population size in crucial geopolitical regions. Active movement of the population within the republic’s area may be promoted by establishment of the transportation network (automobile roads, railways, airports and airways) between all regions of the country.

It is necessary to maintain the Russian and Russian speaking population as well as other nationalities in the Kyrgyz Republic as labor potential which is the personnel intellectual fund. This objective may be achieved through creation of favorable working and living conditions. It is necessary to maintain the qualitative structure of the available population and to reduce migration (internal and external); otherwise not only economic but also geo-economic and geo-political problems will occur.

To eliminate the existing demographic problems it is necessary to consider the possibility for development of the demographic policy concept which will reflect interests of the national demographic safety of the republic. This concept should include various programs aimed at reduction of the mortality rate among men and children, at rehabilitation of the pre-school and school education system, at attraction and motivation of labor resources.

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