



Migration

Regional Focus: CENTRAL ASIA AND MONGOLIA

Essays and creative works by
Open Society Scholarship Programs'
grantees and alumni

Contents

- 3 Cover Topic: Migration
- 10 Regional Focus: Central Asia and Mongolia
- 14 Academic Showcase
- 18 Alumni Updates
- 23 Contribute to the Next ScholarForum

Dear Readers,

Migration, the topic focus of this edition of ScholarForum, could not be a more prominent or pressing concern on the world stage. As 2016 begins, flows of migrants in and out of their countries of origin are bringing stresses and challenges to societies across the world. The issues that the essays in this edition highlight are complex, and they demonstrate how they cannot be reduced to simple statements and easy answers.

Our contributors have risen to this challenge, and present sophisticated thinking and analysis about the effects of internal, regional, and global migration. We have two innovative summaries of PhD-level research on Tajik migrants in Russia and the effect of climate change on conflict and the movement of people. One of our alumni shares his personal reasons for pursuing advanced research into migration and his thoughts on where academics should pursue more research.

Regionally, we solicited articles focusing on Central Asia and Mongolia, areas that have seen hundreds of scholarships granted over our 20 years of grant making. A summary of recent research into education in Mongolia and tense water politics between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are complemented with images of vistas from a seemingly forgotten part of Kyrgyzstan.

Though we provide brief citations within the text, we would be happy to share the full references for any of the texts if you email us at: scholarforum@opensocietyfoundations.org. We also encourage you to use this address to send us any suggestions, comments or letters to the editor.

Happy Reading,

Open Society Scholarship Programs

The Open Society Scholarship Programs fund the participation of students, scholars, and professionals from Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, the Middle East, South Asia and South East Asia in rigorous, competitive academic programs outside of their home countries. The goals of these programs are: to revitalize and reform the teaching of the social sciences and humanities at higher education institutions; to provide professional training in fields unavailable or underrepresented at institutions in the countries served; and to assist

outstanding students from a range of backgrounds to pursue their studies in alternative academic and cultural environments.

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 100 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

www.opensocietyfoundations.org

ScholarForum

The Journal of the Open Society
Scholarship Programs

Spring 2016 · Number 18

Editorial Committee: Zoë BROGDEN,
Barbara DENTE, Joseph GLICKSBERG,
Ankita SURI, Zarina USMANOVA

Designer: Samuel BUGGELN

ScholarForum is published by the Open Society Scholarship Programs, an operational program of the Open Society Foundations. ScholarForum is distributed to current and former scholarship recipients, host institutions, educational advising centers, and educational professionals.

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Chairman: George SOROS

President: Christopher STONE

www.opensocietyfoundations.org

OPEN SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

Director: Martha LOERKE

NEW YORK OFFICE

Deputy Director: Phillip WATKINS

Open Society Foundations–New York
224 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019 USA

Tel: +1-212-548-0600
Fax: +1-212-548-4679

LONDON OFFICE

Deputy Director: Dr. Audrone UZIELIENE

Open Society Foundations–London
7th Floor Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank
London, SW1P 4QP

Tel: +44-207-031-0200
Fax: +44-207-031-0201

[www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/
programs/scholarship-programs](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/scholarship-programs)

COVER PHOTO: Zulaika ESENTAEVA

Migration

The Effect of Social Remittances from Afghan Diaspora in Germany on Education and Health Care in Afghanistan

Oybek KHAMDAMOV, Uzbekistan
Civil Society Leadership/DAAD Awards, 2014-2016

After years of war, Afghanistan's schools and health care institutions have suffered significant destruction (Goodson, 2001). In line with the destruction of educational and health care facilities, the already poor infrastructure has further deteriorated. Since education and health care are two major domains vital for Afghanistan's development, this paper will rely on secondary sources of information to illustrate how the social remittances of Afghan migrants living in Germany are impacting the education and health care spheres in Afghanistan. The number of Afghan people living in Germany in 2014 was approximately 125,000 (Koser 2014), which makes them the biggest Afghan diaspora in Europe.

As a migration scholar, Levitt has noted that social remittances are "ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities" (Levitt 1998). They play an important role in promoting "immigrant entrepreneurship, community and family formation, and political integration" (Levitt 1998). From Levitt's theory, it can be argued that migrants remit ideas socially at the individual and collective levels. While individual social remittances refer to interactions between members of the diaspora and particular people or family members and friends, collective social remittances "are exchanged by individuals in their role as organisational members and are used in organisational settings such as home town associations, church groups or political parties" (Levitt 2011).

From this basis of communicating social remittances through organizations, Afghan diaspora NGOs in the educational and health care spheres are taken as examples. Social remittances here are mixed with material remittances (Levitt and Nieves 2011), as in order to reach their social goals in education and health care, they need a material source to operate.

The Impact of Social Remittances on Education and Health Care

Koser (2007) argues that both individual Afghan migrants in Germany and migrant organizations, also called home town associations, are sharing the responsibility of developing the education system of Afghanistan due to the weakened power of the Afghan government to rebuild the country's infrastructure.

Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the world. According to statistics provided by the Central Intelligence Agency (2015), only 38 percent of the population is literate. The role of diaspora organizations in improving the literacy level seems to be considerable, particularly in the education of females. One of these organizations is the Afghan-German Womens' Forum (Organisation Afghanisch-Deutsches-Frauenforum, ADFF) in Bonn, which has as among its goals not only the education of Afghan women and girls, but also the improvement of the general situation of women in Afghanistan (Baraulina et al., 2007).

"The role of diaspora organizations in improving the literacy level seems to be considerable, particularly in the education of females"

Another organization in this field is the German Afghan Initiative (Deutsche Afghanische Initiative), which implemented many educational projects, including building schools and granting scholarships in Afghanistan. The initiative was established by two Afghans—Omar Sayami and his sister, Susanne Sayami—in 2005 (Spiegel, 2010). Unfortunately, as the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated, the initiative stopped its activities in 2012 (Afghan Initiative, 2012). An analysis of the educational activities of such diaspora organizations shows that Afghan attitudes toward women's education are changing and the number of literate children and women is increasing (Spiegel, 2010).

The access of Afghan citizens to adequate standards of health care is known to be very limited. The lack of medical personnel, especially for women, makes the situation worse (Acerra et al, 2009). For these reasons, various diaspora organizations are engaged in improving the health care sector. One of these organizations is the Doctors'

Association for Afghan Refugees (Ärzteverein für Afghanische Flüchtlinge, AFAF), which was established in 1983 together with the Afghan Medical Staff Association (AMSA) (Baraulina et al., 2007). AMSA consists of six diaspora organizations working on health care for Afghans in Afghanistan and abroad (AMSA, 2015). Its objective is to improve health care in Afghanistan by educating local personnel and sending doctors and medical equipment (AFAF, 2015).

The first reason why Afghan migrants living in Germany send social remittances to their home country is their strong connection to home. Most of them have family members at home and want their relatives to receive money from abroad and use it to improve their lives. Though they face various social barriers like language, religion, and culture, Afghan migrants in Germany see the assimilation into German society as their only option (Braakmann, 2005), due to the instability in Afghanistan. Further, Braakmann (2005) states that the second generation, which often battles with the

dilemma of identity, tends to see working for the improvement of the political, economic, and social rights of Afghans in Afghanistan as their form of civic engagement.

In summary, the theoretical views of Levitt and others about social remittances guide us in analyzing factors explaining how migrants can impact their country of origin. After 2001, many NGOs, including some established by Afghan diaspora, were established in Germany and were contributing their efforts to building infrastructure. However, as long as the first precondition for an NGO's activities—peace and stability—is not present in Afghanistan, they are not able to operate freely and effectively. As NATO-alliance forces handed over the security to Afghan national forces, many NGOs, including Afghan diaspora NGOs, are finding it difficult to operate. Some of them had to cease their activities because of security concerns. Despite these challenges, as long as the diaspora have social and cultural bindings to Afghanistan, they will continue to feel a responsibility to improve the living standards of people at home. ■

PHOTO ESSAY: Building Their Dream Homes from Afar: Migrant Laborers Fund a Housing Boom in Bishkek

Nail NASRITDINOV, Kyrgyzstan
Social Work Fellowship Program, 2008-2010

Nearly one fifth of Kyrgyzstan's population is currently working as migrant laborers in Russia and Kazakhstan. Upon their return, many migrants prefer to settle in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan,

instead of going back to their towns or villages. They buy plots and build houses in novostroikas, new settlements on the city's periphery, thus contributing to Bishkek's urban expansion. The stories of these migrants are ones of struggle and achievement. For years, these migrants endure hardship and long hours in order to earn money and send it home. A large share of these remittances is spent on the construction of houses. Brick by brick, migrants build their future and solidify their dreams of returning to Kyrgyzstan. The following images I took depict how migrants and their families are using remittances to build their dreams at home from afar. ■



A woman harvests tomatoes outside her home
in the Ak Bosogo novostroika of Bishkek.
Photo: Nail NASRITDINOV



“For years, these migrants endure hardship and long hours in order to earn money and send it home”

A man takes a break during the construction of his home in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
Photo: Nail NASRITDINOV



Homes under construction are a frequent site in the Ak Bosogo novostroika, as property in Bishkek is otherwise expensive.
Photo: Nail NASRITDINOV



Building homes on land they purchase is popular for migrant workers returning to Kyrgyzstan. This man works on improving his home.
Photo: Nail NASRITDINOV

In and Out: Mining-Induced Migration in Mongolia

Batchimeg SAMBALKHUNDEV, Mongolia
Undergraduate Exchange Program, 2006-2007

Due to its geographic and geopolitical uniqueness, Mongolia is not a popular destination for migrants. Internal migration to and from mining sites is, however, a significant phenomenon. People are either attracted to mining areas due to promises of economic prosperity, or they are forced to leave these areas due to disasters caused by unsafe, destructive mining operations. In this article, I attempt to describe the problems of in and out migration, with informal case studies of the South Gobi and Gurvanbulag mines.

Located in the South Gobi desert, 1.7 million ounces of gold and 2.7 tons of copper deposits make Oyutolgoi the world's largest gold copper mine (omnogovi.gov.mn). Since the discovery of the mines by a Canadian company, Ivanhoe, in 2001, there has been an increasing flow of migrants to the Khanbogd soum, a region of South Gobi province. As South Gobi became a classic mining region as well as the largest site for foreign investment in Mongolia's history, the economic prospects of the region started looking up. After negotiations between the Mongolian government and the mining companies, the mine started copper extraction in 2013. The population increased from 20,000 in 2012 to 24,200 by the end of 2014.

People continue to move to South Gobi, drawn by the lure of the province's salaries—the highest monthly salaries per capita in the central region—with an average of 785,100 Mongolian tugruk or U.S. \$394 in 2014 (South Gobi Statistics Office, 2014). This is slightly above the average monthly wage in the central region of 692,200 tugruk or just over U.S. \$340 (South Gobi Statistics Office, 2014). In 2013, the mining company also invested in social services, spending \$33 million on education, the environment, and health. This is an example of the positive effects of migration within Mongolia. Mining, however, does not always have such beneficial results. Gurvanbulag, a soum or

sub-administrative division of Bayankhongor province in the southwest of the country, is a tragic example of negative migration.

Since the late 1990s, Gurvanbulag had gold mining companies running sub-standard mining operations and was doing nothing to address the environmental damage caused by the mine. In 2012, Mongolian media reports, such as on the UnenNews website, started to bring attention to Gurvanbulag, outlining serious environmental problems, including desertification and ruined pastureland. The main problem that forced herdsman and local people to migrate from the soum,

"The main problem that forced herdsman and local people to migrate was a lack of fresh water"

however, was a lack of fresh water caused by mining activities.

The population of Gurvanbulag was estimated at 2,116 in 2014, of which 1,841 were nomadic herdsman (Bayankhongor Statistics Office, 2014). I spoke to one of them, Erdene, who was also featured in a documentary film about the area. He had over 800 head of livestock before the mining started. As mining activities got underway, the Shar River, the main potable water source near his spring pasture camp, was altered to produce several artificial lakes which were used for mining activities, such as cleansing the minerals (Mongolian National Broadcasting, 2012). After 10 years of living in the area, Erdene could no longer raise his herds as the diversion of water for mining turned the pastures into a desert. Eventually, Erdene settled in the center of Gurvanbulag and took a position with a government administrative agency (Mongolian National Broadcasting, 2012).

Erdene's loss of his traditional livelihood is not an isolated example. Due to unregulated and aggressive mining opera-

tions, large stretches of the river were either contaminated or dried up. Since 2006, 230 nomadic herding households have had to carry or purchase their drinking water from distances of up to 30 km away (Mongolian National Broadcasting, 2012). Families unable to travel these distances or who cannot afford to buy water are forced to drink contaminated water from the Shar River.

Several NGOs tried to help the local people of Gurvanbulag fight against the mines, including the NGOs, Bosoo Khukh Mongol and Delhiin Mongol Nogoon. Eventually, these groups worked with local people to discontinue the mining operations.

Both of these cases highlight the positive and negative effects of economic development on migration. Mongolia is a sparsely populated country and the numbers mentioned here are not huge. However, these cases do reveal serious flaws in the system of

local governance that could later lead to bigger migration problems and environmental degradation. The case of Gurvanbulag is one of the few examples that has come to light that reveals how the government's poor enforcement of laws and implementation of regulations on mining operations can impact the lives of native residents. In addition, these cases also show how difficult it is for native populations in isolated rural areas to make their voices heard. These communities are going against the power of multinational mining corporations that are often able to prevent municipal authorities from protecting the rights and interests of local populations. Without reform and regulation, the impact of multinational mining development on migration patterns and native populations will undermine many Mongolians' fragile confidence in governance 25 years after the country's democratic transition.

Erdene says he expects little from the next election. His only wish is a sentiment shared by thousands of nomads across the country: to keep his native land for his people and future generations. ■

Water in Central Asia: A Source for Conflict or Cooperation?

Aziz ELMURADOV, Uzbekistan
DAAD-OSF Awards, 2013-2014
Institute for Peace Research and Security
Policy, University of Hamburg

Some of the most controversial resource conflicts in the world are linked to disagreements over the management of international waters. Indeed, water is a vitally important resource and its distribution is not only ecological or economic, but ultimately a political question. Water, in this respect, can become a powerful catalyst for conflict or cooperation (Zeitoun and Mirumachi, 2008).

“Countries in Central Asia have faced serious challenges in dealing with trans-boundary rivers”

Over the past two decades, countries in Central Asia have faced serious challenges in dealing with trans-boundary rivers in the region. In particular, there have been increasing tensions between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan over the Amu Darya river. As a downstream country, Uzbekistan uses much of the water for irrigation purposes. Tajikistan is an upstream country which is in the process of constructing one of the tallest hydropower dams in the world, the Rogun Dam. Tajikistan sees the construction of the dam as a means to create energy security and stimulate economic growth. From Uzbekistan's perspective, the dam's construction will endanger the supply of water needed for its agricultural production. Simultaneously, both states consider water a critical prerequisite for peace and prosperity.

Agriculture is an important economic sector in Uzbekistan, with irrigation consuming much of the available water resources. Cotton is the country's most important crop. In the 1980s, as a Soviet country, about 2 million tons of cotton was produced in Uzbekistan per year. After independence in 1991, the government made efforts to restructure the agricultural sector to grow food crops and reduce water consumption, which led to a decline in cotton production by about one-third (Abdullayev, 2009). However, Uzbekistan still remains dependent on agriculture as a main economic sector, and believes that the Rogun Dam will change the flow of the Amu Darya River, thus impacting water, food, and environmental safety for Uzbekistan and all other downstream countries. Once built, the reservoir may take as long as 16 years to fill (World Bank, 2014), and during this period, water flow to downstream countries would be dramatically reduced, creating a tense situation in the region. Uzbek authorities suggest Tajikistan could pursue smaller projects with a smaller impact on downstream countries. At the time of writing, Tajikistan has not

considered alternative projects.

Tajikistan has a rich potential for harnessing hydropower on its territory, but at present, only 5 percent of this potential is being exploited, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan. Importantly, Tajikistan's main export is aluminum, and production takes up nearly 40 percent of total electricity consumption, contributing to regular power cuts. Approximately 70 percent of the Tajik population suffers from extensive shortages of electricity during the winter (Bensmann, 2010). Upon completing the dam, Tajikistan hopes to end these shortages and export more electricity to neighboring countries. Given the large investment required, as well as the long construction period, Tajikistan could pursue smaller projects and consider other renewable energy resources and energy-efficiency projects. On the other hand, considering its consumption of huge amounts of water, Uzbekistan could also opt for a more rational use of water resources for irrigation purposes.

The final outcome depends on cooperation. According to the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (May, 1997) states have to consult each other and give timely notification if they want to use the watercourse in a new or different way, which may have a significant adverse effect on other states. This universal document sets out a basic obligation to use international waters in an equal and reasonable way, calling on the international community to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution.

These neighboring countries, first and foremost, need to build trust and increase confidence through shaping a dialogue. Given that the present situation is in deadlock, this may seem naïve. However, if we take a closer look at the options each side can pursue unilaterally, then there seems to be no best alternative to a negotiated agreement in the long term. What is needed is a patient and balanced approach in dealing with this complex problem. An equally balanced approach from the international community would also be welcome. During his visit to Uzbekistan within his Central Asian tour, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry introduced Smart Waters, a new U.S. multiyear program for the five Central Asian countries and Afghanistan which seeks to build a cadre of administrators capable of managing shared water resources to maximize their economic value (*Uzbekistan Today*, 2015). If pursued with patience and zeal, this program could well pave the way for more mutual understanding in the long term.

“What is needed is a patient and balanced approach in dealing with this complex problem”

In summary, transboundary water disputes pose complex questions and carry the potential to spark conflict or cooperation. In Central Asia, there seems to be the potential for both. We hope for a peaceful settlement in the future. ■

RESEARCH ABSTRACT:

Climate Change, Mass Migration, and Civil Conflict

Ramesh GHIMIRE, Nepal

Global Supplementary Grants Program, 2012, 2013

Climate change is increasingly viewed as a global security threat. Many officials and analysts have warned that it will destabilize fragile countries by displacing countless people. As a result, a growing body of literature has started analyzing the direct links between natural disasters and conflict. However, very limited research looks at the potential channels through which natural disasters can ignite conflict, such as displacement and migration. In a study recently published in *World Development*, my fellow researchers and I analyze the link between flood-induced displacement and civil conflict to understand how the movement of populations impacted by large floods can lead to armed conflict. Using a two-step econometric estimation approach, we are

able to account for the fact that displacement, and even the very occurrence of a flood disaster, may be more likely in areas already experiencing conflict. Moreover, our econometric analysis accounts for a range of socioeconomic and political variables that are believed to ignite civil conflicts. Our results suggest that large floods significantly increase the probability of the continuation of *existing* armed conflicts due to sudden and mass influxes of people displaced by flooding. If the historical relationship between populations displaced by floods and armed conflict continues, our results suggest that the future is likely to see more conflict, in the absence of adaptation and mitigation efforts. ■

Keywords: Climate change, natural disasters, mass migration, and civil conflict

From: Ghimire, Ramesh, Susana Ferreira, and Jeffrey H. Dorfman (2015), "Flood-induced Displacement and Civil Conflict," *World Development*, 66 (Feb.): 614-628.

Ramesh GHIMIRE is currently a research fellow in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia, USA.

RESEARCH ABSTRACT:

Unsafe in the Home of the Other: Understanding Anti-Immigrant Violence (The Russia-Tajikistan Case)

Abdusabur ABDUSAMADOV, Tajikistan
Doctoral Fellows Program 2008-2013,
Civil Society Scholar Awards 2014

This research examines the problem of growing violence by sections of Russian society and how they are experienced by Tajik labor immigrants. At present, flows of labor migrants, an absence of accurate mechanisms regulating these flows, and frequent changes of, and amendments to, migration policy are factors that have the

potential to contribute to violence against labor immigrants. The main focus of this research is to examine the dynamics of violence against Tajik labor immigrants caused by inefficiency in the norms regulating the process of migration flows in Russia. This analysis has focused on cross-national patterns of violence committed by individual Russian citizens and the Russian state and authorities against immigrants on the base of the stories of labor immigrants themselves.

The subject of anti-immigrant violence is relatively new in post-Soviet academia, as well as in sociology in general. By observing the lived experience of Tajik labor immigrants in Russia, this research sheds light on the violent situations experienced by them on a daily basis. It also examines the phenomenon of the skinhead subculture as a new source of violence and demonstrates how the rights of labor immigrants are violated through a nationalized

immigration policy and the xenophobic nature of segments of the population of Russian society.

The results of this study will produce research-based knowledge to develop a deeper understanding of how anti-immigrant violence is experienced and interpreted by the immigrants themselves. It will help in the design of anti violence approaches and ultimately increase the awareness of the situation of Tajik labor immigrants and their social lives. ■

Keywords: anti-immigrant-violence, Tajik labor migrants, lifeworld, xenophobia, interpretive understanding, social theory, sociological perspective.

Abdusabur ABDUSAMADOV is pursuing a PhD in sociology at the University of Missouri, USA.

ALUMNI INTERVIEW

Ramesh SUNAM

Research Associate Crawford School of Public Policy
Global Supplementary Grants Program 2013, 2014

The Open Society Scholarship Programs has funded thousands of people around the world to enable them to advance research that is critical to promoting a better understanding of their home countries. Ramesh Sunam, a Global Supplementary Grants Program alum from Nepal, is focusing his academic career on migration flows and the myriad impact it has on the people and communities involved. We spoke to him about his research, the nature of the academic field, and his motivations for studying this complex phenomenon.

ScholarForum (SF): Ramesh, you have recently completed your PhD at Australian National University. Can you tell us a little about your research?

Ramesh Sunam (RS): My PhD research topic is a simple but interesting one in both theoretical and policy terms. I examined whether international labor migration helps poor people to come out of poverty. I answered this question by focusing on the case of Nepal, where a large number of rural people have been travelling overseas for employment to change their lives back home. My research revealed a mixed story: by being involved in labor migration, some rural people were able to come out of poverty, while others fell into poverty traps. Critical factors in helping people either come out of or remain in poverty include the level of assets rural people hold, including land; the exploitation they experience during the migration process; and the terms and conditions of the employment in destination countries, to name just a few. We can safely say that international labor migration is a double-edge sword as it can be a pathway for some poor people to prosperity, but can also drive others deeper into poverty.

SF: What made you interested in researching migration issues? What made you focus on these particular populations?

RS: Poverty is a critical development issue. It is no longer only linked to land and agriculture. Poor people have been struggling to improve their livelihoods by engaging only in agriculture. In rural places, a lack of state support means that a crisis in agriculture looms large and employment is scarce. As a result, poor people are moving out of their home countries in search of work. They are more mobile now than before. In the past, only well-

"We can safely say that international labor migration is a double-edged sword"

off people could afford long-distance migration. In recent years, poor people are also travelling overseas. This form of migration is a rising trend and is different from rural-urban or seasonal migration in that migrants spend a longer time in destination countries and potentially generate larger remittances. It also raises these questions: How has this kind of migration impacted the poverty status of migrants? Are they improving their livelihoods or falling into poverty traps? These critical questions compelled me to pursue research into international labor migration. I'm also motivated by my own family background. I grew up in a poor family in rural Nepal. I have seen what it means to be poor. My younger brother was a migrant worker.

"I consider the engagement of researchers with civil society as paramount to transforming them"

SF: You have published articles in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* and the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, among others. What do you think are under-researched areas, be them geographical or theoretical, within the migration studies field?

RS: There is a large body of literature on migration. However, the literature is diverse as there is no single type of migration: temporary, rural-urban, seasonal, forced, climate-induced, and so forth. Among these, there has been limited in-depth research on the terms of inclusion into global labor circuits experienced by temporary migrant workers. This is a very important topic, as there has been growing international news coverage regarding the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers in destination countries, particularly in the Middle East and Malaysia. This is unfortunate. Spending large sums of money and leaving their loved ones, workers travel overseas for employment in the hope of building prosperous families back home. But they often end up being trapped in exploitative labor conditions and regimes. Equally important topics worth exploring are South-South labor migration and migration as a climate change adaptation strategy.

SF: How do you engage as a scholar with civil society? What tools or mechanisms do you find effective to bridge that gap?

RS: I consider the engagement of researchers with civil society as paramount to transforming them. While the role of scholars is important to illuminate multiple realities and explore ideas for change through rigorous research, this is not enough to ensure that key messages reach policy makers and the public, and then make a difference. Regular dialogues may facilitate communication between scholars and social activists. Research-informed policy briefs, documentaries, seminars and blogs constitute important communication tools. Currently, what we need is more than a dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and civil society. We need to focus on creating a research environment where these actors can work together to coproduce policy-relevant knowledge and ideas to promote an equal and just society. ■

Ramesh SUNAM is currently working as a research associate at the Crawford School of Public Policy at Australian National University where he received his PhD in 2015. Ramesh is an alumnus of the Open Society Global Supplementary Grants Program.



REGIONAL FOCUS

Central Asia and Mongolia

The Multiple Faces of Civil Society: Inherited “Public Organizations” in Mongolia

Dr. Byambajav DALAIBUYAN, Mongolia
Global Supplementary Grants Program, 2010-2011

Map adapted from CIA World Factbook. Public domain.

Like many former socialist-bloc countries, Mongolia had state-sponsored organizations representing large socio-demographic groups such as workers, young people, and women, as well as smaller organizations promoting special interests such as environmental conservation, art and athleticism. The main objective assigned to these “public organizations” (*olon niitiin*

baiguullaguud) (abbreviated to PO hereafter) was to assist the Communist Party in enforcing the Marxist-Leninist line and to educate the population in the spirit of communism. After two decades of post-socialist transition however, POs did not disappear, nor were they replaced by new associations as some had predicted. The trajectory of these inherited POs in the

post-socialist transition has varied, but some organizations still remain significant in Mongolia.

Mongolia is relatively distinct among post-socialist countries, as the Communist Party enjoyed high levels of public support in the aftermath of the transition to democracy and a market-based economy. The Mongolian People’s Revolutionary

Party (MPRP), now the Mongolian People's Party, won the first free parliamentary election in June 1990, and had overwhelming wins in 1992 and 2000. The MPRP's political status alone could not be sufficient for POs to remain significant in society. Unlike

of demonstrations in 2005 to demand a government pension increase. The Association of Mongolian Senior Citizens (AMSC), a PO, criticized FAMSC's actions as tactically wrong because they conflicted with social norms and expectations for

during socialism. Participants internalized social activism and became aware of the potential of collective action. Importantly, the image of POs as a frontrunner for social change still lingers in today's public discourse. A notable example is the Mongolian Youth Federation that often refers to the positive role played by youth leagues in the socialist era to mobilize young people across the country.

However, it should be noted that, while some POs remain active, their membership and supporter base has declined substantially. Many special interest POs, such as environmental conservation societies, have ceased to exist. Local chapters of POs lack the capacity and resources to sustain their operations, relying on local government personnel instead. Reforms need to be initiated within POs, along with innovative leadership, to change them into independent and participatory organizations while preserving their inherited advantages. In the absence of organizations that can create spaces for civic engagement, especially in rural settings, POs may become a potential way that has not yet been fully utilized to cultivate civil society

“Unlike fledgling voluntary and civic associations, POs had inherited institutional capacity and human capital”

fledgling voluntary and civic associations, POs had inherited institutional capacity and human capital. The leadership of prominent POs was often comprised of government employees who had the capacity to mobilize people and resources. Thus, organizational structures remained largely unchanged and were effective in maintaining relations with the grassroots.

Unlike NGOs, which are to a large extent dependent on donor funding, some POs were more resourceful despite the fact that the state funding and subsidies were mostly suspended in 1990. Some POs received government grants or contractor payments as the only legitimate organization representing a particular sociodemographic group. Some POs inherited office buildings and other facilities. Moreover, like NGOs, POs were also looking for their own niche within transnational aid programs. Some POs, especially those working for women and youth, were more successful in gaining this funding (Byambajav, 2012), in part due to a lack of competing organizations.

There have been many occasions since the 1990s in which new “free” or “independent” associations challenged the legitimacy of POs. A lack of consistent effort to advance the interests of their constituents has been a major point of criticism against POs. The Free Association of Mongolian Senior Citizens (FAMSC) organized a series

of demonstrations in 2005 to demand a government pension increase. The Association of Mongolian Senior Citizens (AMSC), a PO, criticized FAMSC's actions as tactically wrong because they conflicted with social norms and expectations for elders. In turn, the FAMSC criticized the AMSC for serving the interests of the ruling party (Byambajav, 2012). In addition to different modes of action, differences in ideological perspectives also caused divides. A notable example is two main networks of women's NGOs, one of which is led by the Mongolian Women's Federation, a PO. The two groups seem to have significantly different views on the objective of the women's movement in Mongolia. One group promotes feminist ideas, while the other has a rather traditional view of gender roles regarding the family and society (Byambajav, 2013).

“Participation in public organizations was a privilege and a social opportunity for many people during socialism”

Donors often prefer to support newer “free” associations and NGOs while being cautious about hybrid, quasi-state or informal associations. However, some of them can be effective in advancing social causes due to their embeddedness in the cultural context. POs were not merely satellites of the Communist party, but were a way in which individuals pursued their own interests within the remit of the political framework. Participation in POs was a privilege and a social opportunity for many people

in Mongolia. As Lane argues, a policy agenda should be developed to support associations embedded in post-socialist societies, even though they do not necessarily fit conveniently into the mainstream approach of promoting civil society (Lane, 2005). If well-managed, for instance, some POs may serve as an optimal way to deliver social services to different sociodemographic groups in Mongolia. ■

PHOTO ESSAY: From Ruin to Renaissance on Lake Issyk-kul

Zulaika ESENTAEVA, Kyrgyzstan
Doctoral Fellows Program, 2012-2017

Balykchi is a small town in Kyrgyzstan near Lake Issyk-Kul. Since independence in 1991, the town has witnessed massive out-migration. People have been moving to Bishkek, the capital, as well as farther afield to Germany, Kazakhstan, and Russia in search of jobs and other economic opportunities. What used to be an industrial city with working factories was slowly turning into a gloomy and grey town, losing its citizens, prosperity, and hope. Soviet-style socialism was replaced by ill-running capitalism with privatization that led industries to be torn into small parts and sold off piece-by-piece.

But citizens adapted. When you travel to Lake Issyk-Kul in the summer, you can see Balykchi from a car window as the region's first welcoming post. You can see the old cinema theater, the untouched Lenin monument, as well as renovated and new shops and cafes on the main road used by all the tourists. The town is rising from the ashes, but it will never return to its former glory under the Soviet Union. Rusting industries are a strong visual symbol of the Soviet Union's implosion and the rise of "Wild West"-style capitalism. ■





Ships on the lake serve as
a reminder of Balykchi's
former industrial glory.
Photo: Zulaika ESENTAEVA



“The town is rising
from the ashes,
but it will never
return to its former
glory under the
Soviet Union”

Cranes are a feature of the
landscape along Lake Issyk-kul.
Photo: Zulaika ESENTAEVA

Academic Showcase

The following articles reflect the diversity and substance of the academic work conducted by Scholarship Programs scholars and alumni. We hope that both the methods and the content of the research finds resonance with your own research interests. References are available upon request to scholarforum@opensocietyfoundations.org.

Changes caused by the market in academic programs at institutions of higher education in Mongolia

Narantuya JUGDER, Mongolia
Global Supplementary Grants Program, 2012-14

Introduction

With the collapse of the socialist bloc, Mongolia faced sudden political and economic changes that abruptly moved its higher education system from total control by the state to a self-governing and self-financing system. This article describes what the causes of academic expansion were in universities. It does so in light of the changes in the relationship between the state, market, and academia in Mongolian higher education that began with the new education law that established the foundation for market practices in higher education.

“The rapid expansion of academic offerings by universities failed to supply the country with specialists with relevant qualifications”

Employing a multiple case study methodology for both state and private universities, my research engages Clark’s (1983) concept of “the triangle of coordination,” which focuses on three elements of coordination—the state, the market, and academe—and Jongbloed’s (2003) model of “the eight conditions for a market” for higher education institutions. Through a thematic analysis of 50 interviews with university administrators and decision-making officials as well as a document review, the case study shows how higher education reform policy has been interpreted and implemented at the institutional level, as well as how this context has influenced undergraduate curricular provision. The focus of the study is on the undergraduate, rather than postgraduate level, due

to the study’s financial and time constraints.

The study finds that for both state and private universities, academic programs were the core factor behind increases in financial resources, consumer attraction, and institutional reputation. However, the rapid expansion of academic offerings by universities failed to supply the country with specialists with relevant qualifications. This is because universities focused on offering the most marketable or profitable courses to earn income. Due to this, the state was “called in” to regulate and ensure adequate course offerings in fields deemed crucial to national development.

Causes for Expanding Academic Programs

In accordance with the legal changes within the system during the transition, higher education became more engaged with market forces. Universities thus faced the necessity of transforming their academic content, as this was crucial to adapt curricula to changing external needs. The study evidenced that in response to the changing market, state institutions began to expand their offerings to new fields along with their old specialized areas, while newly emerging private institutions started with specialized areas, such as language studies, or solely as an institute of law. Within four or five years, those private institutes rapidly extended their academic programs, primarily in the fields of social science and the humanities. As one respondent stated, in the 1990s the ministry was led by the decisions of higher education institutions and there was no consistency in organizing academic teaching at private institutions. Although the market’s influence was generally demonstrated in the expansion of provision both at state and private universities, it was strongest in the case of private universities. The difference between state and private universities was in the way they expanded their courses. While overlapping courses across schools was typical at state universities, for private universities each case was different. Some kept adding new courses to existing programs, while others kept changing their courses.

There were two distinctive phenomena in terms of curricular responsiveness. One was the emergence of a wide range of new courses and fields. The other was conceptual changes in the way knowledge was delivered. Based on Jongbloed’s (2003) concept of the market model for higher education, this study sought the

causes of change in academic programs. The findings regarding the causes behind the offering of new fields were important, as they illustrated the strength of the influence of either the state or the market. Interviewee responses showed that the market had a strong influence over curricular provision during the transition in the 1990s, but this changed slightly in the middle of the 2000s in favor of the state, as evidenced by increasing state coordination.

In terms of conceptual changes, the aims of curriculum and curriculum content have changed significantly.

Interview sources illustrated that the aims of the curriculum have shifted from more academic, or as some people call it “theoretical, or Russian type,” to more “pragmatic” or a “more American” model. The latter was viewed as a curriculum focused primarily on producing graduates who are able to apply knowledge and skills in specific areas of employment.

Interaction of the State, the Market, and Academia

Based on Clark’s (1983) concept of the triangle of coordination, a comparative analysis of the state and private universities was developed based on the two themes of state/university and market/university relationships. A changing relationship among government, market, and university was well evidenced in the changes of curricular provision.

The primary purpose of the state policy has been to assure the quality of programs and increase competitiveness. Respondents from policy making institutions and universities were in agreement that the existing courses and their quality had not been meeting consumer or employer expectations. The case studies revealed that all schools opened numerous programs to earn money. This in turn became an obstacle to development and still causes a big problem with content overlap. The assumption that the market can regulate the need for professionals such as engineers and primary school teachers (a provision currently lacking in Mongolia) was not justified because consumers were not making rational decisions. Moreover, some higher education institutions, especially private institutions, could change their academic programs so fast that it was hard to see any coherent policy.

Most notably, the market gradually failed to supply the country with specialists with relevant qualifications because consumers rushed to choose popular courses such as law, economics, computer science, and business management. This has been a pattern in undergraduate education. For example, if in the early 1990s law

“The market gradually failed to supply the country with specialists with relevant qualifications because consumers rushed to choose popular courses such as law, economics, computer science, and business management”

and languages were the most popular fields, since 1995 the choice has become more selective and has shifted to English, Japanese, and Korean. The reason for this selectivity was connected with labor demand. The latest trend in languages is increased demand for English, followed by Chinese. This situation has created an imbalance in human resources and is a significant feature of market failure. This market-driven characteristic was indicated in documentary sources and interviewee responses.

The failure of the market to supply strategically important fields called for state intervention. All these factors show that the immature market seemed unable to regulate this situation and led to chaos in the system, causing the public to demand state control. This resulted in the redefinition of the role of the state. As a result, state authority was restored through political influence and legal homogeneity (Neave and Van Vught, 1994) to create a similarity of provision and conditions within the national higher education system. Nevertheless, in the 20 years since the fall of communism, the increase in the private market share of higher education has been significant, and the government does not consider the market as antithetical because, as with many other countries, the Mongolian state sees a more market and economically-oriented higher education sector as important to national interests (Kubler, 2010).

However, the findings also show that academic freedom has shrunk to a great extent with state involvement in the content of the curriculum through standardization and licensing, along with an admission quota for both state and private institutions. The findings confirmed that the direction of state policy in the first

decade of the post-communist transition focused on deregulation and decentralization leading to institutional autonomy. In the last decade, however, state policy has become more consolidating, even recentralizing, to some extent.

Conclusion

In sum, the findings of the study demonstrated the rising trend of the market-driven approach in academic programs in response to consumer demand on the one hand, and increasing state coordination policy to steer it in a direction beneficial to the country, on the other. The findings of the case studies and the comparative analysis showed that the relationship between the three forces of the state, the market, and academia has not been static but dynamic because the demand for quality increased a form of interaction between the state and the university cur-

“Academic freedom has shrunk to a great extent with state involvement in the content of the curriculum”

riculum (Becher, 1994). In general, it should be noted that the marketization of Mongolian higher education was not a process on its own, but was rather profoundly connected with changes in the political, social, and cultural context of the country.

This study also suggests further research to see if the case is similar in other post-communist transitioning countries. ■

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Women and Religion in Central Asia

Aziza SHANAZAROVA, Uzbekistan
Civil Society Scholar Awards 2014-2015

My primary area of research focuses on the issues and problems of the religious and socio-political status of women in Central Asia, with an emphasis on the early modern period. During my pre-dissertation research in Uzbekistan in the summer of 2014 as a Civil Society Scholar Award recipient, I carried out exploratory research at research libraries in Uzbekistan. This opportunity helped me significantly to gather important materials for my dissertation.

One of the objectives of my dissertation is to explore the role that women played in the development of Sufism and Islam in Central Asia. For this, I use the case of a sixteenth-century Sufi woman who was known under the title “Agha-yi Buzurg,” which means “Great Lady.” The main historical source I will be examining is the hagiography entitled *Mazhar al-‘aja’ib*, a text dedicated to Agha-yi Buzurg written in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, by her male disciple, Hafiz Basir, in the second half of the sixteenth century. This work still remains in manuscript form.

Using the case of Agha-yi Buzurg, I will explore the position of women in the history of the broader Central Asian region in different economic, social, and ethnic groups. I will engage with the question of gender in Islamic societies of Central Asia, exploring how these societies make gender distinctions, how designations of male and female and masculinity and femininity developed, and how these perceptions were, and are, propagated. I will also examine how these patterns change over time, especially in increasingly globalized contexts. Most importantly, my dissertation will examine the fundamental role played by religious traditions in defining roles for women in the Islamic societies of Central Asia. ■

Keywords: Central Asia, women, religion, Sufism, gender.

Aziza SHANAZAROVA is a doctoral candidate at Indiana University-Bloomington’s Central Eurasian Studies and Religious Studies Departments, and will be a visiting fellow at Stanford University in the 2016-17 academic year.

ALUMNI VIEWS

What I'm Learning: Reflections on the Social Work Fellowship Alumni Conference, January 2015

Noor MAJDALANI, Jordan
Social Work Fellowship Program, 2012-2014

As a social worker, I continue to see that poverty, in all its multifaceted forms, remains the most pressing problem affecting Jordanian society. Consequently, poverty remains the most frequently occurring problem that social workers have to deal with. I have been working on youth development programs for over seven years now, aiming to provide better social, educational, and employment opportunities to vulnerable youth.

“Social work as a profession directly contributes to poverty reduction”

I had the chance to get an international perspective on the work of other social workers at the Social Work Fellowship Program Alumni Conference in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in January 2015. It was an inspiring experience. Initially, I had envisioned a limited discussion of social work in each country, but I was impressed at the diversity of topics presented and discussed. Through the conference, I got to hear from other participants about how poverty in Tajikistan is affecting children, and that orphanages are filled with “social orphans”: children whose biological parents have given them up due to limited access to education, food, or health care. Further north in Kyrgyzstan, I heard about poverty being one of the main reasons behind a gender gap within the education system, as boys often have to drop out of school at earlier ages to begin working in order to help the family.

Generally speaking, in Jordan and the Middle East, there is a convergence of views toward a holistic approach to poverty eradication. Despite this, there is little direct involvement in policy, planning, and programing efforts from the side of social workers.

Social work as a profession directly contributes to poverty reduction. In the case of Jordan, there is a clear underrepresentation of ‘macro level’ practice, in terms of research, policy advocacy, and social action, to address issues at the institutional and broader

structural levels. Such a focus on research and policy could help Jordan’s poverty pockets, underserved areas, and communities with a high influx of Syrian refugees, which has placed significant strain on public services.

One of the most inspiring achievements I heard at the conference was the experience of Georgian and Mongolian alumni who established, developed, and ran social work associations. These associations now have the power to implement reforms in the social work sector. Their academic and practical work in the social sphere is very important, and these models demonstrate the positive impact collaboration can have when academia, ministries, and social workers work together.

My main takeaway from the conference was learning new ways of how social workers can help engage with the “bigger picture” of developing policy reforms aimed at supporting grassroots activities that create a tangible impact on people’s lives. It was also clear that local social work education and training needs to produce a professional social welfare workforce. Jordan needs the creation of an effective system of social services that strategically contribute toward progress in social development, specifically toward policies to alleviate poverty. It is essential for Jordanian social work fellows like us to

“It is essential for Jordanian social work fellows like us to learn from the experience of other countries”

learn from the experience of other countries and create effective social work curricula, and sustainable and active social work associations. The Bishkek conference nourished my ideas for work to come, and I felt a renewed sense of community with social work fellowship alumni. The meeting highlighted how much we really can learn from each other. ■

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEXT ScholarForum

The 19th edition of *ScholarForum*, produced in early 2017, will be accepting submissions from Scholarship Programs' grantees and alumni for articles, opinion pieces, and short essays.

A call for papers on specific topics will be sent out in late summer 2016.

Please send any responses or expressions of interest for topics you may wish to write on to scholarforum@opensocietyfoundations.org.

In addition, we very much welcome any articles within these broad categories:

Personal Essays and Fictional Pieces

We welcome any thoughts you have on your experiences during your scholarship: your reflections, opinions, and photographs

are welcome. Works of original fiction that can be serialized can also be submitted for editorial consideration.

Maximum length: 300–750 words

Alumni

Updates from Scholarship Programs' alumni are key to evaluating our work and provide inspiring material for future leaders in your countries and beyond. Please feel free to send us a brief note on your current professional activities, research interests, or any calls for collaboration at an upcoming event or conference.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor regarding the content of *ScholarForum* are welcome and will be printed at the editor's discretion.

Maximum length: 300 words

All submissions, queries, and feedback can be sent to:
scholarforum@opensocietyfoundations.org

ACADEMIC SHOWCASE

To build on the wealth of knowledge and critical inquiry Open Society Scholarship Programs' grantees create during their scholarship and beyond, we invite all scholars to submit summaries or abstracts of their research to be published in the *ScholarForum*'s **Academic Showcase** section.

Submissions should be short and relate to an area of research undertaken as part of an MA or PhD degree, or to independent research conducted in the field. Due to space constraints, Scholarship Programs will only print a selected number of pieces, but will try to send comments from the editorial board to each author.

Guidelines for Academic Showcase submissions

Abstracts:

Abstracts are concise texts encapsulating the whole body of research to be addressed in a longer paper or presentation to follow. Outline the topic of research, the main objective of the research or the research problem, the methodology employed, the main findings, and your conclusions.

Maximum length: 350 words

Research in Progress Essays:

Authors need to be cognizant of the educated but general nature of *ScholarForum*'s audience; therefore specialized terms and concepts should be concisely explained in simple language. Articles should include footnotes and references, and any ideas expressed by other authors should be referred to in Harvard-style citations within text.

Introduction: Include a brief statement on the thesis/rationale to be developed in the article, as well as a short summary of the findings and recommendations. Outline what the work is part of (i.e., PhD, MA, independent research).

Analysis and Discussion: Clearly and concisely explain any of the theories, concepts, and terminology, citing concrete examples. Keep in mind that the audience will be outside of your discipline.

Recommendations: Outline your recommendations or aspects for further study or research.

Conclusion: Concisely summarize the content of the work above.

Maximum length: 1500 words

GRANTS FROM THE OPEN SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERSHIP AWARD

The Civil Society Leadership Awards provide fully funded master's degree study to individuals who clearly demonstrate academic and professional excellence and a deep commitment to leading positive social change in their communities. CSLA directly assists future leaders in countries where civil society is challenged by a deficit of democratic practice in local governance and social development.

CIVIL SOCIETY SCHOLAR AWARDS

The Civil Society Scholar Awards support international academic mobility to enable doctoral students and university faculty to access resources that enrich socially engaged research and critical scholarship in their home country or region. The awards support activities such as fieldwork (data collection); research visits to libraries, archives, or universities; course/curriculum development; and international collaborations leading to a peer-reviewed publication.

DISABILITY RIGHTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Disability Rights Scholarship Program provides yearlong LLM awards to disability rights advocates and lawyers to develop new legislation, jurisprudence, impact litigation, and scholarship.

PALESTINIAN RULE OF LAW AWARDS

The Palestinian Rule of Law Awards provide scholarships for one-year academic masters of law (LLM) programs for qualified applicants from the West Bank and Gaza for study at selected law schools in the United States and Central European University (CEU) in Budapest.

For more details please visit
www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/scholarship-programs/

ScholarForum

Open Society Scholarship Programs
224 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019 USA