

Social mobilization of migrants' families in Tajikistan – success stories in 2011

Small Income Generating Initiatives Bring to Rural Women Life Difference

They must hunger in winter frost– time for spring is short. This is the motto that members of the self help group (SHG) named “Sitara” introduced once starting their small business initiative. The SHG formation initiative is implemented in the framework of the "Social mobilization of family members of migrants" project implemented by the Association “Woman and Society” in partnership with the UN Women / IOM in Jamoat Kistakoz, Bobojon Gafurov district to improve the economic conditions of migrants' family members.



During summer time, the group members start preserving vegetables and fruits in jars and sell them back to villagers. They dash for sold vegetables, fruits and all necessary products from local farms that will then be preserved for the

next winter. “Now everything is continually available and prices are not very high,” says Matluba, the head of the group. Group members hope that they will be able to sell the preserved products in the winter. The villagers buy the preserves with pleasure preferring home-made to the commercial canning. Thus, preserving vegetables and fruits positively affects the life of rural women and makes a significant improvement for their family's economic situation.

Matluba Mavlonova is a head of SHP “Sitara”. Besides it, she is a school teacher. The group makes provision of pickles, tomatoes, strawberries, and apricots cultivated in local farms. “I will sell the stocks during winter time when my husband arrives from labor migration from Russia. At this time, our family income level usually decreases. The money received from selling is shared between the group members,” added Matluba.

All members of the SHG have different job positions. One works as a bookkeeper and another as a local school teacher. A small initiative like setting a SHG is just a right decision for empowering local rural women to improve their living situation. Members of SHG “Sitora” are very happy and thankful to initiators of this idea. They say formation of SHGs is a useful tool not only for income generation but also for social networking between migrants’ families.

Formation of self-help groups (SHG) composed of migrant workers family members is part of the Central Asia Regional Migration programme (CARMP) aimed at improving living conditions of families of migrant workers back home. CARMP is a three year multi-partner programme implemented by IOM, UN Women and World Bank with a financial support of UK Government and in partnership with Migration Agencies and Ministries of labour in Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan and Russia, mass media and a number of sub-contracted civil society organizations. The Goal of the programme is to contribute to poverty reduction through improved livelihoods for migrant men, women, and family and to protect their rights. UN Women particularly achieved to enhance the skills and knowledge of families from labor migrants for life improvement.

By September 2011, 178 SHGs covering 1049 members of migrant families were established to improve families’ economic welfare in Tajikistan. Based on a successful experience, SHGs are foreseen to be improved and strengthened in Sughd Oblast of Tajikistan through trainings in specific business skills (business planning, financing strategy) and in gender and legal issues. Capacity building is a key strategy for future perspectives of SHGs. Furthermore, access to services for SHG members like microcredit for income generating activities should be provided to improve their livelihoods.



Floriculture - a path of development for migrants' families

"A profit of 5000 dollars can be targeted if fields are properly cultivated", says Farogat, the head of the self help group (SHG) "Sadbag". She does not have a single plot of land in a few acres, but only a garden with five hundred square metres suitable for planting. Villagers are wary of Farogat's statement. But when they come to her house and see her hard work, all their doubts disappear.

Farogat works as an accountant but her salary is not sufficient to feed her family. All group members endure same conditions. Above all, education, work and marriage are determined by Tajik customary practices. In this perspective, she feels morally obliged to marry her son, to hold a celebration on the occasion of circumcision of grandchildren that makes it even more difficult, if not impossible, to overcome financial difficulties. Farogat's son immigrated to Russia, leaving his wife and children under the care of the mother.

Farogat loves to grow flowers and her house is filled with various flowers and vegetation. If earlier, she used to grow flowers to ennoble and beautify her house, she now plants them to improve her social life with four women from SHG under her supervision. In July this year, Farogat found out about "Social Mobilization of Migrant Workers' Family Members" project implemented by Association of "Woman and Society" in partnership with UN Women office in Tajikistan. After familiarization with project activities, Farogat formed a SHG with her colleagues and named it "Sadbag." (Rose)

Because Farogat had a great experience in growing flowers she began to grow flowers together with four SHG members. Mavluda, leader of the group and agronomist, helped to develop the group thanks to her professional skills. She gave advice and instructions on how to plant flowers and also taught the group how to grow rose from cuttings while keeping seedlings for later selling as well. Group members are working hard in the garden. They mould up the land, collect the weeds and prepare the land for plantations. All group members are like full-bloom flowers because they like their work that keeps them busy all day long.

There will be lots of work for SHG "Sadbag" in October. They need to prepare the land for planting juniper cuttings. The group plans to participate at the fair "Flowers and Ornamental Plants" which is annually held in March or February once a year by the City Mayer's Office. Following the selling of the group's flowers and seedlings, the gain acquired will be equally divided among group members.

Next year, SHG will be very busy. The group received an order from Khujand city to decorate its streets with flowers. Teamwork is a guarantee for efficiency since they will be able to complete all orders on time. And extra money is of course more than welcome for migrant families.

