

FOREIGN EXPERIENCE IN REGULATING EXTERNAL LABOR  
MIGRATION: LESSONS FOR UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract**

Labor migration is a key factor influencing Uzbekistan's socioeconomic development. Millions of citizens work abroad—mainly in Russia, Kazakhstan, South Korea, and Gulf countries—sending remittances that account for around 16% of the national GDP. However, large-scale migration also creates challenges such as insufficient legal protection, weak reintegration mechanisms, and lack of professional training for migrants. This article examines the foreign experience of regulating external labor migration through the cases of Mexico and Kyrgyzstan, highlighting effective practices that can be adapted in Uzbekistan. Comparative analysis shows that bilateral agreements, institutional support systems, and regional integration mechanisms are essential for building sustainable migration governance.

**Keywords:** labor migration, migration policy, Mexico, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, international cooperation, economic development

**Introduction**

In the globalized economy, international labor migration plays a dual role — it supports household welfare and stabilizes labor markets but also poses policy and social challenges. For Uzbekistan, labor migration has become an inevitable outcome of demographic pressure, limited domestic employment opportunities, and regional income disparities. According to the Central Bank of Uzbekistan (2022), remittances from migrants represent approximately 16% of GDP, making migration one of the main sources of household income.

To improve migration governance, Uzbekistan can benefit from studying successful international experiences. This article focuses on Mexico and Kyrgyzstan, two labor-sending countries that have developed effective frameworks for managing migration flows. Mexico, with its extensive experience in protecting its nationals in the United States, and Kyrgyzstan, through its participation in the Eurasian Economic

Union (EAEU), provide valuable models for bilateral, institutional, and legal regulation of external labor migration.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

The phenomenon of labor migration is widely explained through several economic and sociological theories. The neoclassical theory of migration views migration as an individual decision aimed at maximizing income differences between countries. The dual labor market theory explains the persistent demand for foreign labor in developed economies, while the push-pull model interprets migration as the result of negative conditions in the home country (unemployment, low wages) and attractive opportunities abroad (higher salaries, stability).

Institutional approaches emphasize the importance of state intervention and international coordination in regulating migration. These include the role of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations (UN) in developing global standards for protecting migrant rights, such as the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers (1990) and ILO Conventions No. 97 and No. 143.

## **Case Study 1: Mexico**

Mexico's migration policy has evolved through decades of economic and political interaction with the United States. Historically, the Bracero Program (1942–1964) allowed seasonal agricultural workers to migrate legally, establishing early institutional cooperation. After its termination, irregular migration surged, leading to social and legal issues for Mexican workers in the U.S.

In the 21st century, Mexico adopted a modern legal framework through the Ley de Migración (2011), guaranteeing the right to humane treatment and legal protection regardless of a migrant's status. The National Institute of Migration (INM) oversees visa issuance, border control, and migrant legalization programs. The government also implements social reintegration initiatives, such as the “*Somos Mexicanos*” program, which provides returning migrants with legal aid, employment support, and vocational retraining.

Through bilateral agreements under NAFTA/USMCA, Mexico has enhanced labor mobility for skilled professionals and improved protection mechanisms for its citizens abroad. This integrated approach—combining national regulation, international cooperation, and social reintegration—forms the foundation of Mexico's migration management model.

## **Case Study 2: Kyrgyzstan**

Kyrgyzstan represents a regional model of migration management within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Membership in the EAEU grants Kyrgyz workers the right to freely move and work in Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Armenia. This significantly simplifies legal employment procedures and strengthens migrants' social protection.

The Kyrgyz government has established the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Youth, which coordinates policies on labor export, professional training, and reintegration of returnees. Programs such as "Amanat" and "Mekendeshter" provide financial literacy training and support for migrant families. In cooperation with Russia and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan also organizes bilateral employment agreements and vocational centers that prepare workers before departure.

This strategy ensures not only the legal employment of citizens abroad but also their reintegration and financial inclusion at home, mitigating the "brain drain" effect and stabilizing national labor markets.

### **Comparative Analysis**

Both Mexico and Kyrgyzstan demonstrate that effective migration regulation depends on three interrelated pillars:

1. Legal and Institutional Frameworks – Ensuring clear legislation on migration, supported by specialized agencies (INM in Mexico, Ministry of Migration in Kyrgyzstan).
2. Bilateral and Regional Cooperation – Developing cross-border agreements (Mexico–USA; Kyrgyzstan–EAEU) that guarantee workers' rights and simplify procedures.
3. Social and Economic Reintegration – Introducing support programs for returning migrants through employment services, retraining, and microfinance initiatives.

While Mexico operates within a North–South migration corridor, Kyrgyzstan exemplifies regional integration-based mobility. Both systems show the value of cooperation, data exchange, and public–private partnerships in ensuring sustainable migration governance.

### **Lessons and Recommendations for Uzbekistan**

Based on the experiences of Mexico and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan can adopt the following measures to strengthen its external labor migration policy:

1. Enhance legal protection abroad through expanded consular networks and bilateral agreements with major host countries.

2. Introduce pre-departure training in language, culture, and labor law to increase migrants' competitiveness and safety.
3. Develop reintegration programs providing microcredit, entrepreneurship training, and local job creation for returnees.
4. Establish a digital migration database for tracking contracts, skills, and remittance flows to improve coordination.
5. Promote gender-sensitive migration policies, recognizing women's role in remittance-based household economies.

Such measures would align Uzbekistan's migration management with international best practices, contributing to sustainable economic development and human capital utilization.

## Conclusion

The international experience of Mexico and Kyrgyzstan demonstrates that successful migration management combines legal regulation, international cooperation, and social reintegration. For Uzbekistan, adopting a holistic migration governance strategy can transform labor migration from a temporary solution into a long-term development mechanism that strengthens the national economy, protects citizens abroad, and enhances the country's global integration.

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