

**Part I. Economy Case Studies**  
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# MONGOLIA

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# **Demographic changes and labor migration in Mongolia**

**By**

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## **Demographic changes and labor migration in Mongolia**

Demographic change is expected to have a widespread impact on the economies of many countries, affecting economic growth, health and welfare expenditure, and saving, investment and financial markets. Demographic change has become a key focus for the Governments of many countries in recent years, particularly in relation to its implications for economic growth and migration.

Migration has been a key element in international discussion about increasing cross-boarder economic activity and demographic change. In this context, relevant issues include the relative economic and social impacts of temporary and permanent migration, the implications of the mix of skilled and unskilled workers in migration, the impact of migration on business networks and knowledge exchange, the scope for governments to increase cross-boarder portability of pension and health benefits and access to payments systems, and the impact of migration on social cohesion and national security. These issues directly affect countries' development possibilities.

### **1. Introduction**

As most countries in the Asian and Pacific region, contemporary Mongolia is undergoing mobility transitions. Mongolia is in the midst of its demographic transitions and has pursued model of economic growth that has been more focused on import-substitution. In other hand, Mongolia is in demographic transition, witnessing a moderate, but decreasing, population growth, a sustained decline in fertility and a steep increase in the number of young adults entering the labor market. Population growth reached a peak in the late 1960s and has started to decline since then, mainly because of a sharp decrease in fertility rates from 7.2 in 1975 to 2.8 in 1995. In 2000, total fertility rate was 2.2 births per woman, but it has dropped to the below-replacement level (2.1 births per woman) by 2004 (2.0 births per woman). Population growth reached to 1.2 percent in 2004.

In 1992, Mongolia held the first free elections, and since then has taken important steps toward a pluralistic and demographic society. Political liberalization in Mongolia has brought forth both unprecedented freedoms of religion and travel for its citizens. Additionally, Mongolia's openness has made it very attractive to foreigners, leading to a dramatic increase in the number of foreign residents, both legal and illegal.

It has been almost 15 years since Mongolia started the transition to a democratic society based on a market economy, with the adoption of the new (1992) Constitution of Mongolia that secured free choices and rights of work for all Mongolians. However, during the transition period, unemployment increased sharply, salary rating decreased, and the state has not been able to determine labor cost and to regulate employment. Thus, people have started looking for better, higher-paying jobs and opportunities. Consequently, both internal migration from rural to urban areas and international migration to seek for labor have increased.

Recent patterns of international migration in Mongolia commenced at the beginning of the transition period when many Mongolians started to travel to the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China for short-term petty trade. Opportunities to go to other countries for longer periods of time opened up after the transition began. Thus, many people who studied in Western European countries started to settle in their destination countries for work and to live. Many new young students started to travel abroad, and later, some persuaded their family members, relatives and friends to join them. Moreover, with the opening of the world through media, there were more channels for people to receive information about foreign countries.

Starting from the mid-transitional period, international migration intensified, assuming a more organized form. Especially, the number of people who migrated for long- and short-term labor abroad, officially or privately, increased dramatically within the last few years. By some unofficial estimates<sup>1</sup> approximately 130 thousands Mongolians are residing abroad. Out of these: 65`000 are in Khazakstan, around 30`000 in the Republic of Korea, about 10`000 in the USA, 6`500-7`000 in the Federal Republic of Germany, 3`500-4`000 in the Russian Federation, 3`000-4`000 in Great Britain, 2`500 in Japan, 3`000 in the Czech Republic, 2`500 in China, and 1`500 Mongolians are living and working in Poland respectively.

To create the legal environment for its nationals abroad to live and work in safety, the Government of Mongolia is taking measures such as ratifying international conventions and recommendations. One of the examples of this effort was the adoption of the 2001 "Law on receiving labor and professionals from abroad and sending labor abroad." Since this law was adopted, there has been an expansion of labor export from Mongolia through inter-governmental and inter-organizational intermediary contracts. However, the number of people who are leaving the country through private intermediaries or on their own is not decreasing. Those who are going abroad with employment contracts have secure labor and working conditions, flexible working and rest hours, social security, health insurance, and wage, allowances and benefits in accordance with their labor contracts. However, those who go abroad through unofficial channels are working in insecure work environments and in some cases they have not been able to obtain their salaries. In addition, they do not have access to health care and social services and consequently they are working and living in conditions that may place them at risk of injury and illness and their basic human rights are being ignored.

In connection with the increasing number of people moving abroad, more official and unofficial intermediary services have emerged. Agencies and individuals who deal with communications and money transfers have also developed. Thus a new economic sector has developed to cater to migrants.

## **2. Demography**

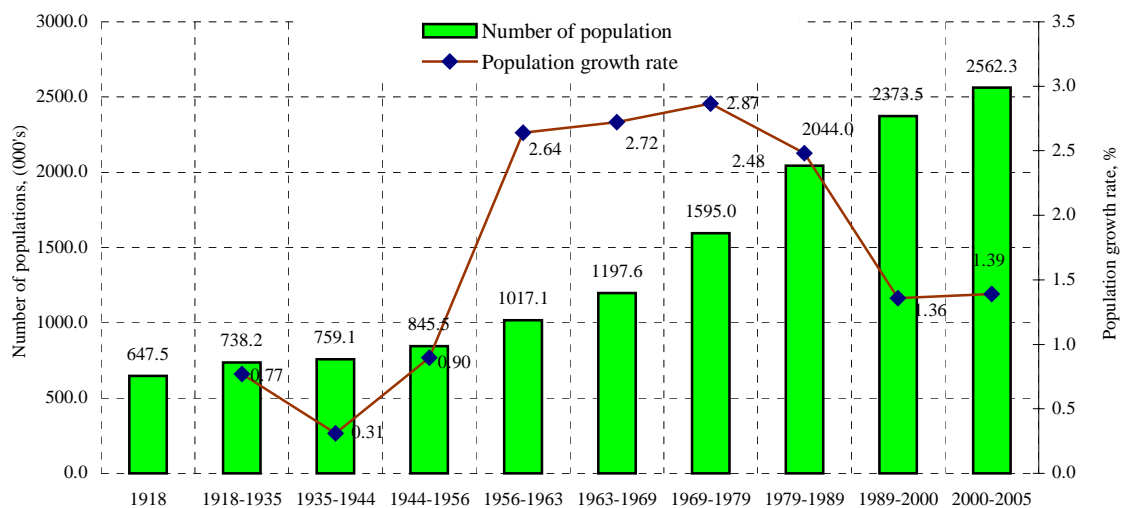
It can be pointed out that the population dynamics of Mongolia is a quite similar to that of majority of other developing countries, especially to Asian transition countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007

Mongolia can simply be placed within the same class as those developing countries, which record population growth rates of 1.0-1.5 percent. However, many important changes have marked the demographic patterns of Mongolia since the beginning of the political/economic/social transition in 1990. But many aspects of the social demography of Mongolia (life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy etc.) differentiate it from other Asian developing countries. Over the past 15 years of transition, Mongolia has shown trends of decreasing total fertility rate, increasing life expectancy, decreasing death rate, decreasing infant mortality rate, and a high rate of rural-to-urban migration in the context of extremely low population density.

**Figure 1. Inter-censal annual population growth rates and number of populations, Mongolia, 1918-2005**



Source: Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 1989-2005.

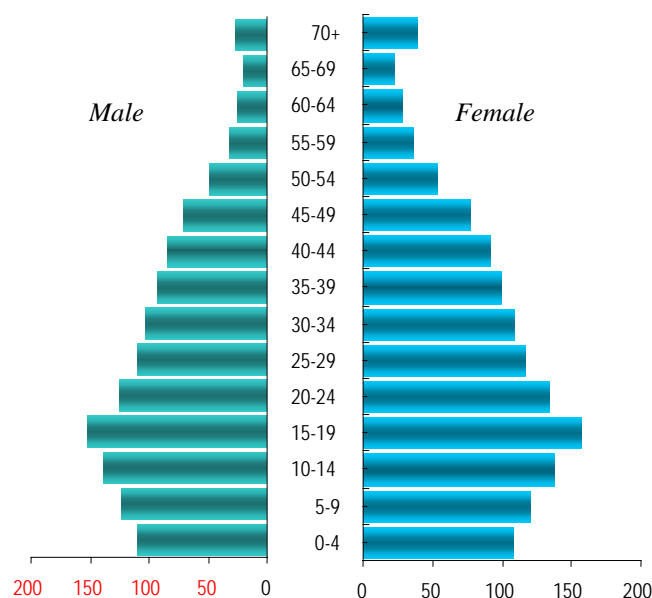
During these early years of the new millennium, 2000-2006, the population growth rate of Mongolia averaged approximately 1.4 percent. As of 2006, Mongolia has a population of 2594.8 thousands persons and has a median age of approximately 23 years – a young population. Over 1.7 million people are of working age (15-64 years old).

The 2006 pyramid clearly shows the process of fertility decline that took place during the 1990s. In the past 15 years, the total fertility rate (TFR) declined by almost 60 percent, falling from 4.3 children per woman in 1990, to 2.2 children per woman in 2000, to 1.9 children per woman in 2005. But it is slightly increased in 2006 and reached to 2.1 children per woman<sup>2</sup>.

During 1990-2006, the death rate declined from 8.3 to 6.5 per 1,000 populations, and the infant mortality rate fell from 64.4 to 19.1 per 1,000 live births. The impressive decline in the level of mortality is closely related to the achievements in the health sector. The life expectancy of Mongolians increased from 62.9 years in 1990, to 63.2 years in 2000, to 65.9 years in 2006<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2007. "Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 2006", Ulaanbaatar.

**Figure 2. Population Pyramid<sup>2</sup>, Mongolia, 2006**



It is important to point out that during the present and next decade the age composition of the Mongolian population could be particularly suitable for a process of economic development. If we look at selected functional age groups, they refer to age and sex groups that have specific needs or functions in the community.

Table 1 shows the main functional age groups for Mongolia from 2000 to 2020. It indicates a large expansion of the working age population and a moderate increase of the elderly. This information also indicates a typical young adult

population putting pressure on the labor market and the housing stock. The fall in the proportion of children and adolescents, as well as the decline in its pace of growth, will probably be beneficial to Mongolia's development and welfare of families. Weaker population pressure to the health and educational systems will allow an improvement of service delivery plus a more extensive geographical and social coverage. At the household level, families will be able to invest in their own well being instead of having to support a large number of children.

**Table 1. Selected functional age groups, Mongolia, 2000, 2010, and 2020**

Functional age groups	Age (years)	Population ('000)			Percentages (as of total population)		
		2000	2010	2020	2000	2010	2020
Total population		2'389.7	2'741.8	3'087.1			
Infants	0-1	48.6	50.4	50.7	2.0	1.8	1.6
Children	1-4	199.1	207.6	200.1	8.3	7.6	6.5
Primary school age	8-11	249.7	194.8	190.6	10.4	7.1	6.2
Secondary school age	12-18	406.1	371.9	360.4	17.0	13.6	11.7
Working age	15-59	1'323.0	1'690.1	1'824.8	55.4	61.6	59.1
Females in reproductive age	15-49	650.9	820.0	871.7	27.2	29.9	28.2
Males in HH formation age	22-28	158.1	195.1	186.1	6.6	7.1	6.0
Aged	65+	82.6	109.2	147.2	3.5	4.0	4.8

Source: National Statistical Office, 2002. "Population Projections of Mongolia: Analysis based on the 2000 Census", Ulaanbaatar.

The proportion of the young population in the overall population will diminish and the proportion of the elderly will not increase very much. The population in working age will increase significantly. Absorption of the numerous labor resources caused by an eventual rapid economic will be likely to result in substantial economic and social development.

Under conditions of a healthy process of economic development similar to that experienced by many Asian countries, the present and especially the future composition of the Mongolian population could be a *demographic bonus*. Will the sectors of economy receive enough investment to create productive employment to absorb the future labor force? It is an important to respond this question.

Mongolia is no exception to Asian and Latin American countries commonly experienced urbanisation pattern. Nevertheless, there are some notable differences in Mongolian urbanisation process. Until 1950s there was no rapid development of cities and other settled places. Mongolia's urbanisation process is comparatively young and inexperienced. Mongolia is dominated by one city, Ulaanbaatar, thus to a very significant extent, discussion of urbanisation in Mongolia centres on this city. It is also noted that Ulaanbaatar is a small city compared to many Asian capitals. Ulaanbaatar's population is 994.3 thousands (2006), about one third of the country's 2.6 million population. In sum, Mongolia has a very unbalanced urban system with virtually all dynamism focusing on Ulaanbaatar. For instance, Ulaanbaatar occupies only 0.3 percent of the total territory of the nation, but the most prominent public and private institutions of economics, higher learning, and medical services are centered in this capital city.

Approximately 40 percent of the population lives in rural areas, and the rural lifestyle is nomadic, semi-nomadic, or residing in soum<sup>3</sup> centers or aimag (=province)<sup>4</sup> centers. Regional disparities throughout the country are extreme in terms of medical provision, schooling, industrial activity, financial transactions, or the location of high-income groups.

### 3. Economy

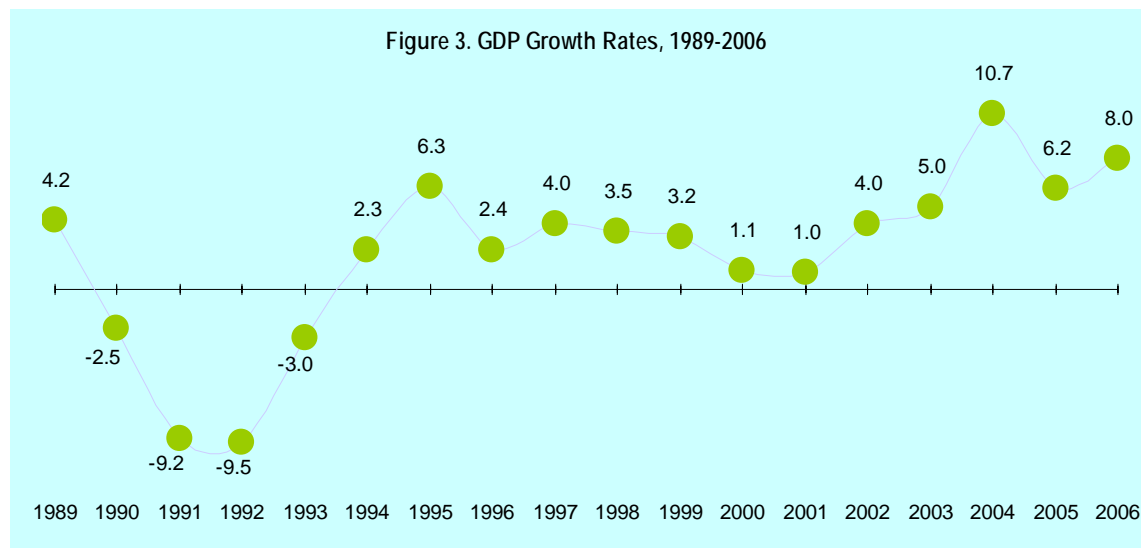
Mongolia has managed the transition from a planned economy to a market economy quite well relative to most other countries in similar circumstances. In a space of short years it has made much progress in undertaking fundamental economic reforms centred on price liberalization, privatization and the establishment of market institutions. These efforts are reflected in the growth performance of the Mongolian economy over the period and the accompanying structural changes in the economy. However, this economic transition also generated disparities in access to national benefits - a situation which led to widening of the opportunity gap and an intensification of social inequality as some social groups experienced declining livelihoods through increasing unemployment, with the consequence of entrenchment in poverty.

As the unstable transition period merges into the development period, the Mongolian economy has been showing positive signs of recovery and growth, as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Mongolian GDP was 4.0 percent in 2002, grew to 10.7 percent in 2004, but decreased to 6.2 percent in 2005.

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<sup>3</sup> Soum = Sub-division of province (unit within aimag).

<sup>4</sup> Aimag = Province. This is the largest administrative unit. Mongolia is divided into 21 aimags.



Source: Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 1989-2006.

According to data of 2006, the GDP has grown to about 8.0 percent. At current prices, the per capita Gross National Income (GNI) has increased from US\$744 in 2005 to US\$950 in 2006 - an impressive growth of US\$210 in one year (NSO 2006). And GDP per capita, is slightly above US\$1000 in 2006.

Traditionally, the main economic activity in Mongolia has been based on agriculture, industries for processing of raw materials, and provision of services. In 2005, these activities accounted for approximately 22 percent, 33 percent, and 55 percent of the GDP respectively. Regarding the industrial sub-sectors of the economy, the main activities are: (i) mining of minerals, (ii) generation of electricity and energy, (iii) manufacture of food products, and (iv) manufacture of textiles.

Sectoral developments have been much more favorable for Mongolia during the second decade of its transition to a market based economy and much progress has been made. Agricultural performance improved sharply and its output has expanded at an average rate of nearly 10 percent a year during 2002-2005.

Overall, the secondary sector has also performed relatively well during the recent period, averaging real increases of 7.7 percent a year during 2001-2004. Much of this overall positive performance has been due to the rapidly expanding mining sector which posted increases of 34.3 percent and 11.3 percent, respectively, during 2001-2004 and 2005. The increase in mining value added is a result both of new activities and projects coming on stream as well as the recent run up in global commodity prices. In 2005, mining accounted for 25 percent of GDP, 71 percent of Mongolia's exports and 13 percent of government revenue. The manufacturing sub-sector expanded at an annual rate averaging 8 percent during 2001-2004 this growth coming from a number of areas including food and non-food production.

The tertiary or service sector is the largest of the Mongolian economy and has been the most consistent performer over the past five years, averaging 8 percent annual growth

during 2001-2004 and 9.1 percent in 2005. This good performance has been driven in the recent past by growth across the spectrum, but especially in retail and wholesale trade, transport, communications and financial services.

In Mongolia inflation pressures remain persistent. The collapse in output during 1990-1992 was accompanied by a large increase in inflation which spiked at over 300 percent in 1992. This was fueled by the price deregulation reforms of early 1991. During 1993-1994 inflation was on a declining trend but remained persistently around 50 percent during 1994-1996, partly because of ongoing adjustments in relative prices, such as the energy price adjustments of late 1996. The measures including implementation of a new round of comprehensive reforms commencing in late 1996 and centred on restructuring of the banking system, higher domestic interest rates, and tight fiscal policy succeeded in reducing inflation progressively and for the first time to single digit levels in 1998. Thereafter, inflation was on a declining trend until 2002. Inflationary pressures re-emerged in mid-2004 as food and fuel prices rose rapidly, and increased again in 2005 due to an expansion in domestic credit growth. As of mid-2007 data, inflation was 7.0 percent.

With favorable conditions in the livestock and mining sectors in 2004, Mongolian exports increased by 36 percent, imports increased by 22.3 percent and taken together, the country's trade deficit declined from 15.7 percent of GDP in 2003 to 10.4 percent in 2004. These developments combined with sustained remittances from overseas Mongolian workers, led to an almost balanced current account by the end of 2004. With sustained capital inflows, including private investment and official capital inflows, net international reserves rose markedly from US\$ 129 million at end of 2003 to US\$ 182 million by January 2005. As a result, Mongolia's freely floating exchange rate appreciated slightly against the US dollar (increasing by 3.5 percent in 2004 to reach MNT 1,209 per US\$).

**Table 2. Export destinations, Mongolia**

% of exports	1992-99	2000-05
China	24%	47%
Russia	22%	22%
Switzerland	16%	3%
USA	6%	7%
Japan	6%	3%
Kazakhstan	6%	5%
U.K	5%	2%
Total	85%	90%

**Table 3. Import partners, Mongolia**

% of imports	1992-99	2000-05
Russia	41%	34%
China	14%	24%
Japan	12%	8%
South Korea	5%	8%
USA	5%	2%
Germany	4%	4%
Singapore	2%	4%
Total	83%	84%

Source: National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2006. "Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 2005", Ulaanbaatar

Over the course of time the pattern of major trading partners has shifted significantly for Mongolia. During the 1990s, China and Russia were the two largest export destinations accounting for some 46 percent of total exports and each having nearly equal shares. Since 2000, China has emerged as the dominant export destination with 47 percent of total exports going to it, while Russia has seen its share slip to 5 percent. The U.S. has by contrast emerged to become an important export destination during 2000-2005, second only to China.

The picture with respect to imports has been relatively static across the two time periods with the major sources of imports remaining unchanged. Notable trends here are the significant increase in imports from China and nearly offsetting declines in imports from Russia and Japan. Import and export shares of seven largest trading partners have not changed much between the 1990s and the present time (Table 2 and Table 3).

Foreign direct investment and remittances have increased significantly in recent years and are making a positive contribution to the growth process. Remittance income from Mongolians living abroad has increased from less than US\$10 million annually in the late 1990s to nearly US\$200 million in 2005 and US\$174 million in 2005, equivalent to 10 percent and 9 percent of GDP, respectively<sup>5</sup>.

There has also been a fivefold increase in foreign direct investment inflows since the 1990s—from a yearly average of about US\$15 million during 1992-1999 to US\$85 million during the 2000-2005 period (the latter equivalent to about 4 percent of GDP in 2005). Striking too is the seven fold increase in approvals of foreign direct investment (FDI) from an annual average of US\$30 million during 1992-1999 to US\$208 million over 2000-2005. FDI flows during the 1990s were predominantly for non-mining activities with mining related FDI only accounting for about a quarter of all FDI. Within the former the FDI went to light industry, trade, transport and tourism, garments (mainly cashmere), banking information technology and construction sectors in almost equal shares. This situation saw a dramatic shift during the period 2000-2005 when mining sector FDI doubled its share in overall FDI<sup>6</sup>.

High levels of indebtedness have been relatively well managed. Mongolia has been fortunate in that it has received unprecedented support from the international community. Both multilateral and bilateral partners have provided a generous mix of grant and loan funds since the earliest days of the transition which have helped it weather a number of adverse shocks. These have been utilized both for budget support as well as to build international reserves. The most recent joint IMF/World Bank debt sustainability analysis concludes that Mongolia is a moderate risk of debt distress over the medium term, although the debt burden is likely to remain sustainable over the long term, if the authorities continue to borrow exclusively on concessional terms and the external economic development evolves broadly as envisaged in the baseline scenario of sustained output and export growth<sup>7</sup>.

Despite aforesaid economic growth literature, there can be identified a number of “binding” constraints that need to be alleviated to ensure high, broad-based, private sector-led growth in Mongolia in the next years. In recent years, low levels of private investment in sectors, other than mining and construction, have been due to low returns

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<sup>5</sup> The decline in remittances in 2005 is apparently related to loss of unlicensed offshore transfer facilities utilized by migrants.

<sup>6</sup> Arshad Sayed, 2007. “The Next Stage for Mongolia’s Transition: Building a Competitive Economy”, Paper for presentation at the International Conference of the National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, Debtor Reporting System (DRS), 2006. IMF, Staff Report for the 2006 Article IV Consultations, Annex 1 – Mongolia Debt Sustainability.

from economic activities rather than the high cost of capital. Returns have been low due to the following constraints:

- Infrastructure bottlenecks that have led to costly transport, complex logistics, and long transit times;
- Distortionary taxes, including lately in mining sector activities, and complex customs and trade rules that have increased the implicit cost of doing business in Mongolia;
- Negative coordination externalities that have led to the inability of exporters to comply with international quality standards, and environmental degradation has occurred in the production processes;
- Growing corruption and crime – symptoms of rising inequalities – are partly stemming from perceptions of lack of transparency and accountability in policy decision making and public sector governance; and
- The high cost of capital, although lower than in previous years, that is primarily due to poor financial sector intermediation.

The structure of the economy has, however, evolved in a manner where the sources of real GDP growth have become very concentrated, heavily dependent on mining and livestock sector activities, and employment generation elusive, despite having a young and educated labor force. Economic activities and the population are becoming more concentrated in the Ulaanbaatar metropolitan area and its environs (the so-called “ger” areas) with associated issues of pressure on natural resources, increasing demand for utilities (especially water, electricity and heating), and environmental pollution. The increased trade and openness of the economy has meant that Mongolia has become increasingly vulnerable from the dependence on a narrow range of exports, increasing dependence on foreign direct investment inflows and remittances from its citizens living abroad.

#### **4. Labor Market**

It is not surprising that patterns of employment, unemployment, and underemployment have been affected by changes in demographic evolution, international trade, and macroeconomic conditions as well as the restructuring and adjustment that accompanies a period of transition. Mongolia’s demographic trends resulting from earlier policies to promote population growth have produced growing numbers of working age people.

According to the official statistics, the total population of working age grew from 1.13 million to 1.37 million during the 1990s. However, the economically active population dropped from 860,000 to 847,600. The labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 61.7 per cent in 2000, a decline of more than 14 per cent from the 1992 level. The employment rate also declined and was less than 60 per cent in 2000. Fortunately, employment has grown in every sector since 1995 except in agriculture between 1999-2003 years of severe droughts. Labor force participation rate has increased a bit for the last few years. In 2006, it reached to 64.4 percent which increased by 0.9 percent from 2004. At the national level, share of employed population in economically active population was 96.6 percent in 2002, 96.8 percent in 2006 and increased by 0.2 percent.

The role of employment in transmitting the benefit of economic growth to the poor has been increasingly recognized in recent years. Yet studies show there is no automatic link between rapid economic growth and employment generation. When economic growth is not employment-intensive, there will be less progress in poverty reduction<sup>8</sup>. A closer examination of Mongolia employment elasticity data for the last decade in Table 4 reveals considerable variation in trends.

**Table 4. Employment elasticity of growth by three recent periods, Mongolia**

	Elasticity	Growth in employment	Growth in GDP
1997-2006	0.59	0.32	0.55
1997-2000	0.72	0.06	0.08
2000-2003	1.28	0.15	0.11
2003-2006	0.31	0.09	0.29

Source: Mongolian Human Development Report 2007: Employment and Poverty in Mongolia. Table 3.6. pp58.

**Table 5. Change in employment by industrial classification, Mongolia, 2000-2006**

Industrial (increase in jobs in thousands, and in %)	2000-2006		2000-2003		2003-2006	
	employment	% change	employment	% change	employment	% change
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	-2.1	-0.5	-6.0	-1.5	3.9	1.0
Mining and quarrying	23.3	125.3	13.3	71.5	10.0	31.3
Manufacturing	-7.6	-13.9	0.3	0.5	-7.9	-14.4
Electricity, gas and water supply	12.2	68.5	4.9	27.5	7.3	32.2
Construction	32.9	140.6	11.7	50.0	21.2	60.4
Wholesale and retail trade, repair	76.7	91.4	45.8	54.6	30.9	23.8
Hotels and restaurants	17.7	133.1	10.0	75.2	7.7	33.0
Transport, storage and communication	7.1	20.8	5.4	15.8	1.7	4.3
Financial intermediation	10.0	147.1	5.8	85.3	4.2	33.3
Real state, renting and business activities	4.8	66.7	2.1	29.2	2.7	29.0
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security	12.2	35.2	10.1	29.1	2.1	4.7
Education	7.6	14.0	0.9	1.7	6.7	12.1
Health and social security	5.8	17.3	3.3	9.9	2.5	6.8
Community, social and personal services	-6.1	-21.0	8.0	27.6	-14.1	-38.1
Others	6.4	152.4	1.9	45.2	4.5	73.8
Total	200.9	24.8	117.5	14.5	83.4	9.0

Source: Mongolian Human Development Report 2007: Employment and Poverty in Mongolia. Table 3.7. pp59.

For the all period (1997-2006), this elasticity has responded well to GDP growth. However, decomposing these nine years into three periods of three periods each reveals marked differences. The highest values for elasticity are found in the first two periods,

<sup>8</sup> Rizwan Islam, 2006. "Fighting poverty: The development-employment link".

when GDP growth was considerably slower than from 2003-2006, and, in fact, the elasticity was greater than 1 for the period 2000-2003, with job creation faster than GDP growth. From 2003 to 2006, when growth accelerated rapidly, the elasticity declined sharply to 0.31, a somewhat low rate compared to countries with successful economic growth accompanied by job creation. This examination of recent employment data confirms that more rapid economic growth is not creating enough jobs, and the right jobs. Above table 5 shows job creation trends for 2000-2006, including overall numbers of job growth in this period, and then a breakdown into 2000-2003 and 2003-2006.

The location of the jobs created offers another reason why poverty rates remain high and people move to Ulaanbaatar. Between 2000 and 2006, 28.3 percent of new jobs were created outside of Ulaanbaatar. From 2000 to 2003, 36.6 percent of new jobs were created outside of the Capital city. However, in 2003-2006 that share fell by more than half, to 17.0 percent. It is not surprising that the slow pace of recent rural job creation is one of the root causes of rapid rural-to-urban migration.

Table 6 presents data on current distribution of jobs, the pace of job creation, and salary and productivity trends according to the sector of employment.

**Table 6. Job creation, real wages and productivity by sector, Mongolia, 2003-2006**

Industrial classification	Percentage of total employment, 2006	Share of new jobs, 2003-6	Real monthly salary, in thous. tugriks (2000)		Real salary percentage of change	Labor productivity, current price, in thous.tugriks 2006
			2003	2006		
Agriculture	38.8	3.9	41.8	44.5	6.5	1494.12
Mining	4.1	10.0	77.2	98.8	28.0	23328.90
Manufacturing	4.7	-7.9	72.0	83.9	16.6	4006.70
Electricity	3.0	7.3	84.5	94.3	11.6	2715.70
Construction	5.6	21.2	74.8	89.8	20.1	1230.50
Trade	15.9	30.9	56.2	57.9	3.1	3973.70
Hotels and restaurants	3.1	7.7	76.6	88.4	15.4	886.40
Transport and communication	4.1	1.7	92.3	87.7	-5.0	8271.30
Financial intermediation	1.7	4.2	90.3	172.8	91.2	6664.90
Real state	1.2	2.7	56.8	61.9	9.0	3257.30
Public administration	4.6	2.1	68.1	95.5	40.4	2177.00
Education	6.1	6.7	67.4	83.6	23.9	1620.60
Health and social security	3.9	2.5	52.9	78.8	48.9	1203.10
Social services	2.3	-14.1	46.7	61.7	32.1	1019.40
National average			70.9	86.3	21.7	3207.40

Source: Mongolian Human Development Report 2007: Employment and Poverty in Mongolia. Table 3.9. pp60.

Agriculture by far remains the largest sector by number of workers, with 38.8 percent of total employment. It is also one of the lowest productivity sectors, with average productivity less than half the national average. This low productivity is reflected in the wage earnings of the relatively small of paid employees engaged in this sector, which after adjusting for inflation rose by only 6.5 percent between 2003 and 2006, far below the national average increase of 21.7 percent. Agricultural sector wages are far the lowest

of all sectors. This fact again proves that this smaller amount of salary for agricultural sectors is a one of push factors that moving people from rural area to the capital city.

Wholesale and retail trade, with the second lowest average wage of all sectors, produced the largest share of new employment; 37.1 percent, although a number of the new workers in this sector were in the informal sector. More positively, construction and mining generated 25.4 percent and 12.0 percent of new jobs respectively, and both also showed strong average real wage increases. Among private businesses, only those in financial intermediation had a higher average wage increase, but that sector comprised only 1.7 percent of total jobs in 2006. Public administration wages in this studied period rose strongly in real terms, reflecting Government policy to bring public sector wages to reasonable levels<sup>9</sup>.

Finally, it can say that strong real wages and salaries increase in mining, construction, manufacturing, financial intermediation and Government posts have sharply raised the living standards of 33 percent of the labor force. At the same time, the majority of the work force is still engaged in sectors with low productivity and low wages.

## 5. Labor Migration

Since the transition began (1990), Mongolia has seen a rapid rise in labor migration abroad as well as within the country. There has been a huge movement from rural to urban areas since 1990. The largest outflow during 1991-2000 was from the Western region to other regions, mainly to Ulaanbaatar and aimags in the Central region, which received the most number of migrants. It is common for areas of high in-migration also to record high out-migration. Some aimags in the North near the Russia border and aimags in the South near the China border also witnessed an increase in in-migration.

**Table 7. The percent of migrants, by the main reasons for movement, according to sex, Ulaanbaatar**

Reasons*	A Micro study of internal migration			Urban poverty and in-migration survey		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
To start-up a business	3.9	2.8	3.4	3.2	3.5	3.3
To have employment	40.7	28.3	34.5	45.7	37.7	41.4
To improve living conditions	34.2	30.3	32.3	43.5	34.0	38.4
To be close to market	40.7	34.3	37.5	31.2	25.1	27.9
To study	24.8	38.4	31.6	32.5	40.7	36.9
To meet social/intellectual needs	13.8	13.3	13.6	9.1	8.6	8.9
To join relatives	25.3	28.9	27.1	24.3	23.2	23.7
To be close to health services	a	a	a	12.6	12.1	12.4
Children's future	27.9	29.3	28.6	a	a	a
Environmental/ecological	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.6	2.2	1.9
Other	1.3	0.8	1.1	3.4	4.0	3.8
Number of migrants	383	502	885	547	141	688

Source: A micro study of internal migration in Mongolia, and Urban poverty and in-migration survey. Author's own calculations.

Note: \* - Multiple answers.

a - The category was not provided in the survey.

<sup>9</sup> Mongolian Human Development Report 2007: Employment and Poverty in Mongolia.

The existing surveys (see Table 7) found that the main reasons for rural-to-urban migration were related to seeking employment, closer access to markets, improving living conditions, studying, and staying closer to relatives. When the results are broken down by sex, more men were found to migrate for economic reasons in order to get a job while women were more motivated by the family reasons, such as, the need to stay closer to relatives.

The great majority of migrants also evaluated that economic conditions (including employment, income, marketing, etc.) and public services (improved housing, better educational opportunities for children and self, better community service institutions, etc.) have been appreciably improved after moving to Ulaanbaatar.

**Table 8. Percentage distribution of migrants by primary cause of migration and progress in the lives after moving, Ulaanbaatar**

Specific situation/Progress since arrival at the destination	Primary cause of moving to Ulaanbaatar				
	To have employment	To improve living conditions	Study for		To be close to market
			Self	Children	
<u>Work</u>					
Better	61.5	25.8	48.8	40.5	35.8
Same	26.9	45.2	27.6	31.7	49.1
Worse	10.6	16.0	2.4	21.4	9.4
NA/DK	1.0	13.0	21.2	6.4	5.7
<u>Income</u>					
Better	62.6	48.4	25.2	58.7	45.3
Same	26.9	25.8	42.2	26.2	41.5
Worse	8.8	22.6	3.5	14.3	9.4
NA/DK	1.7	3.2	29.1	0.8	3.8
<u>Educational/Professional skills</u>					
Better	35.7	9.7	74.8	23.0	15.1
Same	60.4	77.4	21.6	68.2	83.0
Worse	2.8	3.2	0.8	4.8	1.9
NA/DK	1.1	9.7	2.8	4.0	0.0
<u>Children's studies</u>					
Better	32.4	41.9	10.6	69.0	22.6
Same	20.3	19.4	9.1	19.0	32.1
Worse	2.2	3.2	0.0	3.3	0.0
NA/DK	45.1	35.5	80.3	8.7	45.3
<u>Market/Buying/Selling</u>					
Better	81.3	80.6	82.7	81.0	88.7
Same	15.9	16.1	12.2	11.9	7.5
Worse	2.8	3.3	3.5	5.6	3.8
NA/DK	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.5	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of migrants	182	31	254	126	53

Note: NA/DK – Not applicable/Do not know

Source: A micro study of internal migration in Mongolia. Author's own calculations.

Compared to migrants who have the reasons for migration that are related to improving living conditions, migrants who have the main reasons for moving associated with employment, study and marketing were in better position in terms of fulfilling their goals in migration. Also, migrants with non-economic reasons have met their expectations much better than migrants who have economic motives for moving to the Capital city.

In addition to migrating to Ulaanbaatar, an increasing number of Mongolians have gone abroad to look for employment in recent years. Despite more rapid economic growth, Mongolians continue to migrate in search of employment. The Government has established a framework and procedures for international migration through a “Law on receiving foreign workers and sending labor abroad”, adopted in 2001 which amendments now under review. This set up a system to facilitate employment in other countries through Government-to-Government agreements and inter-organizational contracts. The purpose of this legislation is to migrate labor migration and protect migrant workers.

Despite the fact that some migrants are now finding positions through official channels and registered agencies, many travel through irregular channels with support from a growing number of private intermediaries. These include some large companies that advertise services through local media and smaller operations that operate informally and illegally.

According to some unofficial estimates, there are about 130,000 Mongolians working and studying abroad. The vast majority of Mongolian labor migrants work irregularly in the Republic of Korea, USA, Japan, Taiwan (China), and in many other countries of European Unions.

The Republic of Korea outranks the other countries in terms of accommodating our Mongolian migrants. Out of the total of about 25,000-30,000 Mongolian nationals living in the South Korea, approximately 9,500 are illegal and others have legal status. Illegal Mongolian migrants mostly do the most difficult, dangerous, and dirty works or the “3Ds” in small and medium scale factories. There have been many cases where Mongolian citizens suffered industrial accidents, or have been victims or accomplices to crimes. 72 people have lost their lives during 2000-2004. Currently, 16 of Mongolian citizens are serving sentences in the South Korea. Mongolian Embassy in Seoul is taking such measures as covering illegal workers with work insurance, getting allowance for people in desperate need, assisting them with sending their children to school etc in collaboration with a social security fund under a prestigious Korean company. In addition to this, an advocate’s bureau was established in Korea to defend our citizens’ interests and has delivered good results.

About 10,000 Mongolians live in the United States and over 100 in Canada. The majority of our migrants are illegally residing in the United States, and are doing hard labor in small private companies, stores, restaurants of foreign immigrants<sup>10</sup>. Most of them possess relatively high education. Initially, 60 percent of them enter the United States on student visa, 34 percent on tourist visa and merely 3 percent on working visa.<sup>11</sup> 47 percent of those working in the United States live with their family members. Lately, Mongolian citizens living and working in America are giving birth to their children in the US where the babies are granted US citizenship. So far about 300 Mongolian children

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<sup>10</sup> MPDA and UNFPA, 2005. “Status and Consequences of Mongolian Citizens Working Abroad” Survey Report. pp.12.

<sup>11</sup> MPDA and UNFPA, 2005. “Status and Consequences of Mongolian Citizens Working Abroad” Survey Report. pp.21

have been born in the United States and it is estimated by the Mongolian Embassy in the United States that this number could grow to 1000 by 2015 and to 2000 by 2015<sup>12</sup>. 50-70 people come for visa interview every day at the Embassy of the United States in Mongolia. This shows that the number of Mongolians interested in migrating to the United States would remain high for times to come.

According to unofficial data, 7,000 Mongolians reside in Germany, 3,000 in Britain, 2,000 in Czech Republic, and 1,000 Mongolians are living in Poland. The European Union countries are maintaining a strict policy to only allow entries of major investors, highly specialized personnel, and a few best students to enroll in their colleges and universities. They are firm on not aggravating the existing social problems like unemployment, poverty etc. Mongolians go to Germany, France, Norway and Switzerland with the intention of immigrating. When they realize they are not allowed to remain, some of them seek political asylum. Although difficult living conditions were the actual reason behind their intention to immigrate, they tend to make false claims about their country and government, pretend to have fled political repression, or lie that they are Chinese or Inner Mongolian nationals in an attempt to obtain political refugee status<sup>12</sup>. Recently, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Refugee Protection Agency of France have added Mongolia in their joint “list of countries that guarantee human rights”.

Actually, Mongolia does not have an accurate time series for international migration given the fact that this is a complex phenomenon – often beginning with visas for tourists and students. Fortunately, it does have more detailed information from research which was conducted in 2004 by Mongolian Population and Development Association. This survey focuses on three countries (Republic of Korea, United States, and Czech Republic) and highlights the different characteristics of migrants and work.

According to this survey results, most Mongolian labor migrants were aged between 20 and 35 and were highly educated or had completed their upper middle education. The percentage of those who reported having had completed their upper middle education was high among those living in the United States and the Republic of Korea compared to those living in the Czech Republic.

The majority of migrants received their initial knowledge and understanding about the destination countries from their relatives and family members or from acquaintances who had returned from living abroad. Intermediaries played an important role for Mongolian migrants who had moved to the Czech Republic.

Most Mongolian labour migrants were irregular migrants. Survey respondents reported that weak language skills, finding a job, invalid documents, money and homesickness were the most difficult problems they faced living abroad.

Labour export was facilitated through a few authorized agencies and organizations and through unauthorized individuals and organizations. In addition, people who were or who

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<sup>12</sup> Ts. Munkh-Orgil, 2005. “National Summit on Migration”, Ulaanbaatar.

remained, students in destination countries, received labour intermediary services through religious organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Pre-departure and post arrival information about destination countries delivered by intermediary agencies to migrants was insufficient. In comparison to the quality of services intermediaries provide with and the benefits received from their services, the fees for intermediary services were high. Depending on the destination country, visa classification, and types of services provided, intermediary fees varied widely. Although intermediary services for labour export were legally accepted, unauthorized intermediary services often occurred.

Mongolian migrants mainly worked in industrial, service, trade and construction sectors. Three fourths of survey respondents reported that they performed non-professional work where they were unable to apply their professional skills. They reported that their work was also unstable.

Mongolian migrants worked in very bad and insecure conditions with limited hygiene. Especially, migrants, who were living in the Republic of Korea, reported that they worked in worse conditions than in the other two study countries.

Compared to the earnings of destination country residents, Mongolian migrants earned much less. Men on average earned 1.7 times more than women.

**Table 9. Average monthly earnings of migrants in three countries, 2004**

Mean monthly income (US dollar)	Destination country					
	Korea		Czech		USA	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<250	0	0.0	46	24.9	0	0.0
250-500	12	3.2	120	64.9	0	0.0
500-750	111	29.3	9	4.9	4	4.5
750-1000	139	36.7	4	2.2	3	3.4
1000+	100	26.4	4	2.2	82	92.1
Did not want to say	17	4.5	2	1.1	0	0.0
<b>Mean monthly earnings</b>	<b>1238.5</b>		<b>418.5</b>		<b>2037.6</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: MPDA and UNFPA, 2005. "Status and Consequences of Mongolian Citizens Working Abroad" Survey Report. p44.

One in every ten respondents was working without an employment contract, a work permit, had an expired visa, worked in bad work conditions, and worked 40 or more hours per week. One in every five respondents, residing in the Republic of Korea, reported that they were working in such conditions. Consequently, irregular or unauthorized Mongolian migrants were economically at risk. There were limited possibilities for protecting their human rights, they had very little choice for work, and thus they had to accept any work conditions.

Survey findings revealed that most Mongolian migrants were living in critical situations without health insurance and few possibilities of obtaining health care and treatment. In case of illness or health complications, most turned to their friends, acquaintances, relatives, private doctors and clinics.

Living and housing conditions of migrants were not satisfactory in terms of sanitation and hygiene. Some migrants, especially those in the Republic of Korea, lived in inadequate structures such as halls, shelters, underground storage halls and entrances.

Due to their unauthorized status, including lack of work permit, lack of legal documents, and expired visas, many migrants did not have access to social security and other social services.

Although there were various internationally adopted legal acts such as conventions, recommendations and resolutions, relevant to labour migrants, many countries continue to not properly follow these acts. Many countries also have their own nationally approved legal regulations concerning labor migrants. However, the main problem was that Mongolian migrants were unaware about these legal acts.

Remittances make an important contribution to families, communities and the economy in Mongolia. Almost all send money home: 87.0 percent from the Republic of Korea, 76.5 percent from the Czech Republic and 62.8 percent from the United States. However, a great deal is spent for consumption purposes or loan repayments, rather than for investment. An important contribution of remittances is investment in education and training for the following percentage of migrants: 23.4 percent from the Republic of Korea, 5.0 percent from the Czech Republic and 13.7 percent from the United States. Remittances are often sent through insecure channels and, once received, are often used inefficiently.

The amount going through official channels was estimated to be US\$153.6 million in 2006. Estimates show that another US\$76.6 million was transferred out of the country by people working in Mongolia.

**Table 10. Workers' remittances through official channels<sup>13</sup>, Mongolia, 2003-2006, in millions of US dollars**

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Workers' remittances (net)	74.3	146.3	133.8	77.1
Credit				
Debit	128.6	195.4	174.2	153.6
	54.3	49.1	40.4	76.6

Respondents listed the following as the main advantages of living abroad: getting acquainted with the life of foreign countries, living and working independently from their parents, getting work experience, gaining new education and professional skills, saving money, raising their children under better conditions, providing financial support for their families, and making contributions to Mongolia's development from a distance.

<sup>13</sup> Source: National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2007. "Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 2006".

As disadvantages of working and living abroad, respondents listed the following as the main disadvantages: loss of time for education, late marriage and family formation, loss of professional skills, separation from their home country, homesickness, and mental stress. Migrants often reported that they suffered mental stress and as a consequence some abused others. In addition, there were negative implications for children's behaviour and the health of migrants and their family members.

An increasing trend in both the number of people intending to go abroad and the number of destination countries was observed. Labour export may have an impact on labour shortages in Mongolia.

Although large-scale labour export has already started in Mongolia, its socio-economic impact has not been studied. Furthermore, support mechanisms for migrants living abroad have not been established and therefore remittances, foreign investment and new businesses are not well managed. Migrants and their family members often reported that they did not have experience in using remittances efficiently.

The Law on Sending Workers Abroad and Employing Foreign Workers, adopted in 2001 and now under review, outlines the conditions under which employers may hire foreigners in Mongolia. According to the Foreign Citizen and Naturalization Office report, as of January 2005, 21,518 foreign nationals from 95 different countries are living in Mongolia. Out of this 8,500 are from China, 4,200 from the Russian Federation, and 1,400 from South Korea.

By resolution number 96 dated 2001, the State Great Khural of Mongolia established the number of immigrants that could be permitted to enter between 2000 and 2004 as 100 per year. Out of this 100, the number of immigrants from China and Russia can be 30 each, while immigrants from all other nationalities should not exceed 40. During the past 4 years, 120 people from 15 countries have been granted permission to immigrate, which equals 30 percent of the permitted number each year. The number of immigrants has decreased by 0.3 percent each year for the last 4 years. Presently there are about 2,270 immigrants in Mongolia.

As of January 2005, there are about 245 citizens from 28 foreign countries on long-term residence for personal business in Mongolia. This represents an increase of 53.8 percent compared to 2001.

There are about 996 permanent residents. Marriage of Mongolians to foreign nationals and residence in their spouses' country constitutes the basis for the increase in the number of permanent residents. Marriage to foreign nationals is increasing by the year. According to research a total of 1847 marriages have been registered within the last 5 years. Compared to 2000 and 2004, it has multiplied five fold, and 57 percent of them have married to Korean nationals.

As of 2005, 7,757 foreign citizens from 61 countries under employment, and 3,520 foreign investors from 53 countries are on long-term official business in Mongolia. They work according to intergovernmental agreements, on projects and programmes, in NGOs, in the education, culture and science sectors, as well as for private business entities and organizations. Although their number fluctuates throughout the year depending on the number of those employed, it has increased regularly for the last few years.

Some foreign nationals commit administrative such as not registering at the relevant authority, overstaying the period stated in their visa and residence permission, and taking up employment without the requisite permission.

The Foreign citizens and Naturalization Office has taken measures for halting and preventing such administrative... 5,540 foreigners and 605 foreign business entities and organizations have been imposed administrative penalties between 2001 and 2004 for breaking the law. The Chairman of Foreign Nationals and Naturalization Office has issued 43 orders to ban entry of 257 nationals from 12 countries that seriously violated the law from entering the territory of Mongolia for 1-5 years. The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs issued 3 orders for expulsion of 5 citizens from 2 countries from Mongolia. Apart from administrative breaches, foreigners also commit crimes, though the number is relatively less. According to the General Police Agency, foreigners were linked to 313 crimes within 2000 to 2004. Presently 50 foreigners from 5 countries are being investigated for 35 crimes. Within the last 4 years, 45 people from 3 foreign countries have been imprisoned. Currently, there are 12 russians and 1 chinese national in prison.

## **6. Some Final Remarks**

In Mongolia low birth rates appear to have been a response on the one hand, to the economic limits placed on the family especially scarce and undersized housing and limited consumer goods and, on the other, on the emphasis on female education and labor participation.

The main present and future population problem in Mongolia is whether or not the main economic sector of the country, the livestock economy, will be able to absorb the large population in working age that is resulting from the past high fertility rates.

One of the main external policies of Mongolia is to protect the rights of Mongolian citizens residing abroad. The positive and negative impacts of Mongolian labor migrants residing abroad, will affect the socio economic development of Mongolia, especially the labour market. Therefore, the following policy recommendations have been made based on the abovementioned literature.

The Government of Mongolia, as a sending country of labour migrants, should undertake the following:

- Study international and ILO conventions and legal act relevant to labour migrants and find out the possibilities of ratification and the implementation of relevant ones.
- Protect the rights and economic interests of labour migrants. For this purpose, Mongolia should participate actively in international debates, meetings and conferences on creating favourable conditions for active participation of labour migrants in the social and economic life of the host countries. The voice of Mongolians should be heard at all international meetings and initiatives concerning the rights of labour migrants.
- Review and revise the existing legal acts concerning labour migrants taking into account the current trends of labour migration
- Taking into account the rising number of Mongolians who are travelling, studying, living and working abroad, the government of Mongolia should properly manage the demand and supply of labour exports, and develop and implement long term regional and country specific programs on sending labour migrants abroad
- Mongolia should initiate consultations with authorities of countries where many Mongolians live and work on the accessibility of health and social security services to irregular migrants. This would serve the interest of public health by preventing sickness or injury, and by reducing risks of affecting others (for instance HIV/AIDS).
- As many children of labour migrants become citizens of foreign countries, Mongolia should initiate actions on establishing a mutual consultation and consular convention about dual citizenship.
- The government should cooperate with organizations and individuals that deal with money transfers in order to make money transfers easier, cheaper, faster and safer. By doing so, this would create favourable conditions for increasing domestic savings, encourage investment in productive fields and encourage banking organizations to open their branches in foreign countries.
- Strictly monitor labour intermediary services and create legal sanctions for those organizations and individuals, which illegally offer intermediary services. In order to eliminate illegal intermediary services, only assigned organizations and offices should be authorized by legislative acts to provide intermediary labour export services. Current procedures should be reviewed and revised.
- Disseminate correct information about travelling to, and living in, foreign countries. Especially, reliable information about legal rights, risks, health and safe remittance transfers should be provided to all migrants. Thus, Mongolia should closely cooperate with host countries, international organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations in providing information to migrants.

- Mongolia should encourage return migration. For this purpose, there is a need to create opportunities and choices for safer living in Mongolia. For example, equipment or technology brought from foreign countries by migrants should be considered as foreign investments. Therefore, customs and import tax exemption regulations could be applied for such cases. In consultation with the authorities of host countries, Mongolia should assist those who have advanced knowledge, education and skills, who are capable of transferring technology, and who have specific professions, to return and work in Mongolia.
- Exercise actions on improving the legal status of migrants: 1). Labour intermediary agencies may select their clients/contractors from irregular migrants who are already in destination countries and who make labour contracts with them. 2). The government may establish labour contracts with individuals on a competitive basis, selecting from irregular migrants who have received advanced training and education, and who are able to transfer new technology.

To receiving countries of labour migrants we may recommend that:

- If the country has already ratified the international conventions and recommendations concerning labour migrants, they should respect human rights of all international migrants and travellers in all circumstances.

We believe that as Mongolia develops, prospers and people's livelihood improves out-migration of the people would decrease, and ultimately spur the interests of those already abroad to return home.

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