

**Male labor migration and migrational aspirations among rural women
in Armenia**

Arusyak Sevoyan
Victor Agadjanian

Arizona State University

Male labor migration and migrational aspirations among rural women in Armenia

Abstract

Using data from a survey of married women in rural Armenia, this paper examines whether men's seasonal labor migration attaches their wives to their communities of residence or, on the contrary, encourages them to leave. The results from a multinomial regression model comparing wives of migrants and of non-migrants' desires to migrate indicate that the former are significantly more likely to opt for international migration vs. not migrating and even to opt for domestic migration vs. not migrating, net of other factors. When looking at non-migrants' wives and migrants' wives separately, we find that the desire to migrate among former is strengthened by community economic indicators and migration-related social networks, whereas the desire to migrate among the latter is impervious to any of these factors. We see these results as indicative of the destabilizing role of labor migration and reflect on their long-term implications for the sending communities.

Male labor migration and migrational aspirations among rural women in Armenia

Background

Factors affecting migration decisions have been studied both at macro and micro levels. Lee (1966) defined factors affecting migration decisions as factors associated with the area of origin, factors associated with the area of destination, intervening obstacles and personal factors, which are interrelated with each other. While some approaches try to explain migration decisions by macro characteristics of areas of destination and areas of origin, in recent decades studies have been focusing on the individual and household level factors. The economic theories, such as the neo-classical theory, new economics of migration, and dual labor market theory, focus on labor demand and supply differences between countries and rational choices of individuals or households. However, these theories have been critiqued for not providing comprehensive understanding of migration decision processes (Arango, 2000).

Another broad approach focuses on migrant networks as a factor influencing migration decisions. The migrant networks perspective suggests that migrant networks decrease the costs and risks related with the migration process, positively affecting individuals' decision to migrate (Massey et al., 1993). However, studies have shown that migrant networks do not affect migration decisions the same way for men and women (Hagan, 1998, Cerrutti and Massey, 2001, Curran and Rivero-Fuentes, 2003).

The gendered outcomes of migration are considered to be influenced by unequal access to resources for men and women which in its turn is a result of weak (non-kin) networks for men and strong (family and kin) networks for women (Hagan, 1998).

Cerrutti and Massey (2001) found that while the primary determinants of male migration are human and social capital characteristics, for women having a family member or a close relative in the country of destination is a stronger predictor of migration. Some studies have shown that women are more likely to follow their husband's or parents in migration rather than initiate individual migration (Cerruti and Massey, 2001, Nivalainen, 2004). However, in some settings, due to higher degree of women autonomy, women are more likely to engage in international migration flows in search of job and do not necessarily follow their husbands (Lauby and Stark, 1988). Whether women follow their husbands or initiate migration themselves highly depends on the country context and its cultural and gender value system. So, to be able to understand the factors that make women prone to migrate the country context should be studied as well.

As one of the independent nations that emerged from the rubble of the Soviet empire fifteen years ago, Armenia's migration dynamics are exemplary of the post-Soviet international migration system. Notwithstanding the recent economic and socio-political changes on both the sending and receiving ends of this migration system, labor migration to Russia, locally known as khopan (lit. "virgin land" in Armenian), remains widespread and generates a sizeable portion of Armenia's national income (OSCE 2006; Roberts and Banaian 2005). Despite its large scale and complex economic mechanisms and ever evolving legal regimes, this migration system, has not been adequately studied.

Using a data from Armenia, this paper examines whether men's seasonal labor migration is a factor attaching their wives to their communities of residence or, on the contrary, encouraging them to leave, controlling for individual, household and community characteristics, as well as migrant and non-migrant networks. We expect that

husband's migration status will be a significant predictor of women's desire to migrate after controlling for all other factors, especially in international migration decisions. We also expect that for women married to non migrants, desire to migrate will more likely be affected by household and community indicators than for women married to migrants.

Data and Methods

Data for this study come from the survey on Migration, Social Capital and Reproductive Health in Armenia, conducted in Armenia in 2005. The survey consisted of 1040 standardized interviews with women in 52 villages of two marzes (administrative units) of Armenia that differ in their geographic, economic and social characteristics with one of them being comparatively prosperous province and the second one as one of the most vulnerable regions of the country. Women of 18 to 45 years old married to migrants and non-migrants were interviewed for the survey. They were selected randomly with women with migrant husbands being over-sampled. Husbands that were out of country for work reasons for at least three consecutive months were considered migrant.

The outcome measuring women's desire to migrate is a nominal variable with three categories, coded 0 if women don't want to migrate, coded 1 if women want to migrate internally, and 2 if they want to migrate internationally. Multinomial regression fitted in SAS was used to compare desire to migrate internationally vs. not migrate, migrate internally vs. not migrate and migrate internationally vs. migrate internally. The independent variables include individual, household and community level characteristics and migrant and non-migrant network variables. The models were fitted first for all the women, with husband's migration status as the main predictor. Secondly, the models

were fitted for women with migrant and not migrant husbands separately. The distribution of the variables in the models is presented in Table 1.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary analyses have shown that husband's migration status is a significant predictor of women's desire to migrate both internationally and internally when the reference is desire not to migrate (Tables 2, 3). However, it does not have a significant effect on women's desire to migrate internationally vs. to migrate internally (Table 4). When we look at the effects of independent variables on the desire to migrate for women married to migrant and non-migrants separately we see that migrants' wives' desire to migrate internationally is not affected strongly by other socio-demographic indicators (Table 2). The significant factors predicting these women's migrational aspirations are previous migration experience and living with parent(s) in-law. Living with parent(s) in-law may act as a push factor since migration is often initiated in order to buy a new house and live separately from the parents.

For women married to non-migrants the desire to migrate internationally rather than not to migrate, besides the previous migration experience, is significantly affected by the existence of migrant networks and by the distance of their village from the province center (Table 2). The desire to migrate internally rather than not migrate is negatively associated with the number of households in the village, which is the only significant predictor, besides the previous migratory experience (Table 3). However, when it comes to the decision to migrate internationally rather than migrate internally number of households in the village has a significantly positive effect, while the existence of non kin contacts in the village, living in Tavush marz (poorer) rather than in Ararat

marz (more prosperous), and having an agricultural community makes it less likely to want to migrate internationally than internally (Table 4).

The predicted probabilities of the desire to migrate by husband's migration status (Graph 1) show that in all three cases – migrate internationally vs. not migrate, migrate internally vs. not migrate and migrate internationally vs. internally, women married to migrants are much more likely to want to migrate than women married to non migrants. So, it seems that women married to non-migrants, compared to women with migrant husbands, are less likely to want to leave, or when wishing to move would rather remain in the country than migrate internationally.

Next steps

In elaborating and expanding the study for the PAA presentation, we will further refine the statistical models and add to the analysis data from a similar survey conducted in a different marz of Armenia in 2007. A discussion of the final results and their implications will also be added

References

- Arango, J. 2000. "Explaining migration: a critical view" *UNESCO*.
- Cerrutti, M. and Massey, D. 2001. "On the auspices of female migration from Mexico to the United States" *Demography* 38(2): 187-200.
- Curran, S and Rivero-Fuentes, E. 2003. "Engendering migrant networks: The case of Mexican migration" *Demography* 40(2): 289- 307.
- Hagan, M. J. 1998. "Social networks, gender and immigration incorporation: Resources and constrains" *American Sociological Review* 63(1): 55-67.
- Lauby, J. and Stark, O. 1988. "Individual migration as a family strategy: young women in the Philippines" *Population Studies* 42: 473-486.
- Lee, E. 1966. "A theory of migration" *Demography* 3(1): 47- 57.
- Massey, D., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A. and Taylor, E. 1993. "Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal" *Population and Development Review* 19(3): 431- 466.
- Nivalainen, S. 2004. "Determinants of family migration: short moves vs. long moves" *Journal of Population Economics* 17: 157- 175.
- OSCE. 2006. Labor Migration from Armenia in 2002-2005: A Sociological Survey of Households. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Yerevan office. http://www.osce.org/yerevan/item_11_18193.html (Accessed in March 2007).
- Roberts, Brian W. and King Banaian. 2005. "Remittances in Armenia: Size, Impacts, And Measures to Enhance Their Contribution to Development" *Armenian International Policy Research Group*, Working Paper No. 05/01.

Table 1. Distribution of the independent variables in the models.

	Husband is migrant	Husband is non-migrant	Total
Husband is migrant (%)	-	-	36.9
<i>Individual level</i>			
Woman's age (mean)	36.6	33.0	34.3
Education (%)			
Secondary and less	47.4	54.4	51.8
Vocational and higher	52.6	45.6	48.2
Currently working (%)	16.2	16.9	16.6
Number of times moved (mean)	1.2	1.0	1.1
Number of kids under 18 (mean)	1.7	1.8	1.8
<i>Household level</i>			
Land ownership (%)			
Has no land	8.6	11.9	10.7
Has small land	55.5	49.9	51.9
Has large land	35.9	38.3	37.4
Cattle ownership (%)			
Has no cattle	56.5	44.1	48.7
Has few cattle	33.6	33.5	33.6
Has many cattle	9.9	22.4	17.8
Monthly HH income in USD (mean)	170.0	137.3	149.4
Co-residence with in-laws (%)	50.5	61.1	57.2
<i>Networks</i>			
Has migrant network (%)	86.4	85.9	86.2
Has network in Armenia (%)	98.4	98.6	98.6
Has relatives in the village (%)	90.6	92.5	91.8
Has non kin contacts in the village (%)	86.7	83.5	84.7
<i>Community level</i>			
Marz (%)			
Tavush	38.5	56.7	50.0
Ararat	61.5	43.3	50.0
Main occupation of the village agriculture (%)	68.8	66.5	67.3
Number of households in the village (mean)	700.3	638.2	661.1
Distance of the village from the marz center (mean)	30.1	38.2	35.2

Table 2. The significance and direction of the effects of independent variables on the outcome “Wants to migrate internationally” vs. “Don’t want to migrate”

Independent variables	Total sample	Husband is migrant	Husband is non-migrant
Husband is migrant	+	.	.
<i>Individual level</i>			
Woman’s age	ns	ns	-
Vocational and higher education (Ref.-Secondary and less)	ns	-	ns
Currently working	ns	ns	ns
Number of times moved	+	+	+
Number of kids under 18	ns	ns	ns
<i>Household level</i>			
Have small land (Ref.-no land)	ns	ns	ns
Have large land (Ref.-no land)	ns	ns	ns
Have few cattle (Ref.-no cattle)	ns	ns	ns
Have many cattle (Ref.-no cattle)	ns	ns	ns
HH income (logged)	ns	ns	ns
Co-residence with in-laws	ns	+	ns
<i>Networks</i>			
Migrant network	ns	ns	+
Network in Armenia	ns	ns	ns
Relatives in the village	ns	ns	ns
Number of non kin contacts	ns	ns	ns
<i>Community level</i>			
Marz - Tavush (Ref.- Ararat)	ns	ns	ns
Main occupation of the village agriculture	ns	ns	ns
Number of households in the village	ns	ns	ns
Distance of the village from the marz center	ns	ns	+

Table 3. The significance and direction of the effects of independent variables on the outcome “Wants to migrate internally” vs. “Don’t want to migrate”

Independent variables	Total sample	Husband is migrant	Husband is non-migrant
Husband is migrant	+	.	.
<i>Individual level</i>			
Woman’s age	-	-	-
Vocational and higher education (Ref.-Secondary and less)	ns	ns	ns
Currently working	ns	ns	ns
Number of times moved	+	+	+
Number of kids under 18	ns	ns	ns
<i>Household level</i>			
Have small land (Ref.-no land)	ns	ns	ns
Have large land (Ref.-no land)	ns	ns	ns
Have few cattle (Ref.-no cattle)	-	ns	ns
Have many cattle (Ref.-no cattle)	ns	ns	ns
HH income (logged)	ns	ns	ns
Co-residence with in-laws	ns	ns	ns
<i>Networks</i>			
Migrant network	ns	ns	ns
Network in Armenia	ns	ns	ns
Relatives in the village	ns	ns	ns
Number of non kin contacts	ns	ns	ns
<i>Community level</i>			
Marz - Tavush (Ref.- Ararat)	ns	ns	ns
Main occupation of the village agriculture	ns	ns	ns
Number of households in the village	-	ns	-
Distance of the village from the marz center	ns	ns	ns

Table 4. The significance and direction of the effects of independent variables on the outcome “Wants to migrate internationally” vs. “Wants to migrate internally”

Independent variables	Total sample	Husband is migrant	Husband is non-migrant
Husband is migrant	ns	.	.
<i>Individual level</i>			
Woman’s age	+	+	+
Vocational and higher education (Ref.-Secondary and less)	ns	ns	ns
Currently working	ns	ns	ns
Number of times moved	ns	ns	ns
Number of kids under 18	ns	ns	ns
<i>Household level</i>			
Have small land (Ref.-no land)	ns	ns	ns
Have large land (Ref.-no land)	ns	ns	ns
Have few cattle (Ref.-no cattle)	ns	ns	ns
Have many cattle (Ref.-no cattle)	ns	ns	ns
HH income (logged)	ns	ns	ns
Co-residence with in-laws	ns	ns	ns
<i>Networks</i>			
Migrant network	ns	ns	ns
Network in Armenia	ns	ns	ns
Relatives in the village	+	+	ns
Number of non kin contacts	ns	ns	-
<i>Community level</i>			
Marz - Tavush (Ref.- Ararat)	-	ns	-
Main occupation of the village agriculture	ns	ns	-
Number of households in the village	ns	ns	+
Distance of the village from the marz center	ns	ns	ns

Graph 1. Predicted probabilities of woman's desire to migrate internationally and internally vs. not to migrate, and migrate internationally vs. internally by husband's migration status

