



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

In response to spread of COVID-19 the Kyrgyz Republic suspended all international flights since 20 March and domestic flights since 25 March 2020. Similar travel restriction measures were taken by many concerned Governments and countries of destination for Kyrgyz migrants. As of 27 March 2020, thousands of migrants from Kyrgyzstan have found themselves stranded and dramatically vulnerable at the borders and airports of the Russian Federation, Turkey, Kazakhstan and UAE.

Stranded migrants are stuck in the airports, have to sleep on the floor and run out of money as they have to buy water and meals at exorbitant prices. Many of them have started suffering from health problems, including those related to lack of nutrition. Finally, people are at risk of contracting COVID-19 as they are in crowded public places with limited access to protective stuff (masks, sanitizers, gloves, etc).

Trapped in despair migrants from Kyrgyzstan post in the social media video appeals to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic asking for help. They are also vulnerable to exploitative practices. Data on past crises revealed that criminals, employers and others can use the opportunity to exploit migrants by cutting or withholding wages, threatening to report migrants to authorities, and exploiting them in other ways. Therefore, the key importance is to identify the most vulnerable amongst the migrant population, develop and implement case plans, and deliver services necessary to uphold the dignity and rights of vulnerable migrants.



IOM KYRGYZSTAN RESPONSE

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO THE MOST VULNERABLE MIGRANTS OF KYRGYZSTAN IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES

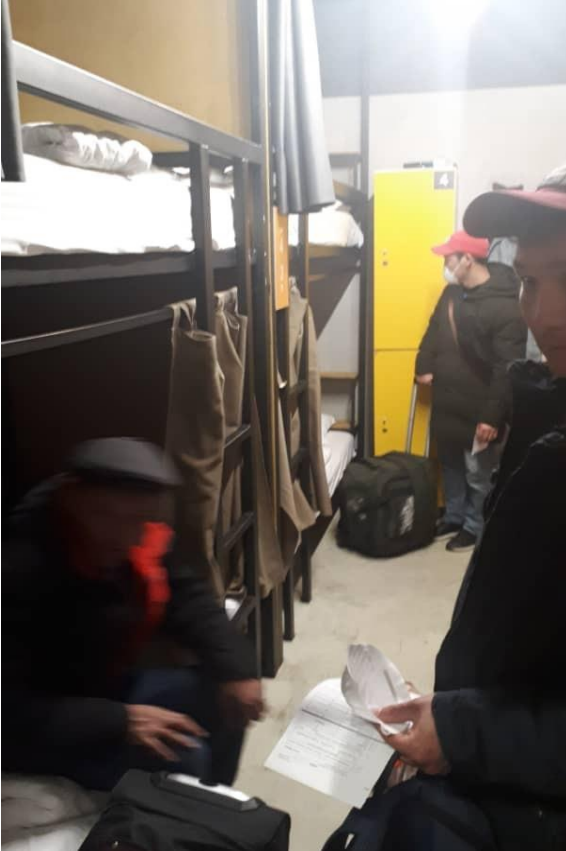
Upon the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic and as per the agreement between IOM Kyrgyzstan and Office of the State Migration Service (SMS) under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation labour migrants stranded in the Russian Federation were provided with assistance the framework of IOM project “Providing immediate assistance to the most vulnerable migrants of Kyrgyzstan in response to the outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19” to. These stranded migrants are citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic who found themselves in a difficult situation, with limited or lacking resources, no place and no money to live. Prior to applying to the SMS Office, each of them had a job and housing, however, due to coronavirus outbreak and quarantine announced in the Russian Federation, migrants lost their jobs, sometimes without payment, and were asked to vacate the housing, and eventually after having made decision to return home have stuck in the airports.

In order to mitigate their vulnerability and protect the most in need such as women and children, IOM Kyrgyzstan has started distributing protective supplies: masks, gloves, antiseptics and hot meals. 282 migrants stranded in airports of Moscow and Novosibirsk were provided with accommodation.

IOM Kyrgyzstan teamed up with IOM Moscow, diaspora members, SMS, Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Moscow, and consulates and jointly rendered assistance to migrants in a timely manner. To assist migrants, the Interior Ministry of the Russian Federation is currently developing regulations that will allow to resume the issuance of permits for employers to hire foreign workers as well as work permits for foreign citizens.



Fresh hot meals for 150 stranded migrants delivered in airport in Moscow



First group of migrants accommodated in hostels.



Masks, hand sanitizers, and other essentials distributed in the airport



Migrants in Novosibirsk



Migrants in Novosibirsk are on the way to hostels

©All photos provided by the State Migration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic



Instructions on accommodation placement and further assistance for migrants are given



Additional face masks distributed for migrants

©All photos provided by the State Migration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic



ONLINE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS ON SAFE MIGRATION DURING COVID 19 OUTBREAK

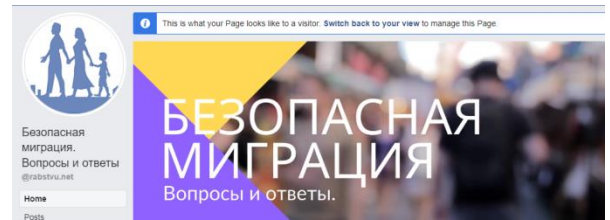
IOM Kyrgyzstan with the support of NGO partners continues raising awareness through “Safe Migration” social media pages informing the population of the risks of COVID-19, related government safety instructions and restrictions, as well as WHO-recommended measures on health protection. IOM assists to develop “Migrant friendly” messages to raise awareness among migrants and population to fight the stigmatization.

Information campaigns is an entry point to the UN Crisis Communication Plan (CCP), which is aimed at helping the UN agencies to provide an integrated UN communication response to spread of COVID-19 in the Kyrgyz Republic. When the first cases of COVID-19 were registered in the Kyrgyz Republic since 18 March 2020, the UN Communication Group was transformed into a UN Crisis Communications Team.

Quarterly number of persons reached via IOM online social media

Online exposure **134 897** persons

Online engagement **12,000** persons



MIGRANT VOICES



“My family members are in airport; can someone help them to return?”

“My employers did not pay our last salaries. Whom can I address for help?”

“Why is all assistance for migrants concentrated in Russia? I am here in Turkey, and there are many of us, migrants who wants to go home as well.”

“Now the price of ticket Moscow -Bishkek is 580 US dollars. I do not even earn that much”.



TOLL FREE “HOTLINE 1899” EXPENDS WORKING HOURS TO CONSULT MIGRANTS

IOM Kyrgyzstan’s toll-free hotline 0 800 0000 189 contributes to the Government’s efforts during the COVID-19 outbreak in the Kyrgyz Republic ensuring provision of information on COVID-19 measures in a timely manner. During the emergency period from 24th of March till today dozens of women and men migrants reached out for consultations. People seek for consultations about the entry ban list imposed by the Russian Federation, registration procedures for migrants in the Russian Federation during the emergency situation, Korean languages test scheduled for migrants participating in employment program of South Korea, about assistance available for those who returned from migration; others ask contacts of the SMS Office in the Russian Federation. Due to emergency the working hours of hotline expend and now available 24/7.

CONTINUITY OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR MIGRANTS

IOM strives to mobilize more resources to be able to continue the assistance to most vulnerable Kyrgyz migrants in the destination countries, primarily in Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. However, it should be noted that COVID-19 crisis has affected not only Kyrgyz migrants abroad. The declare of the state of emergency and quarantine imposed by the government affected also foreigners residing in Kyrgyzstan. Many foreign workers in the country suddenly found themselves in a difficult situation. Thus 35 (10 women, 13 men, 12 children and one elderly) citizens of Moldova are currently stranded in the south of the country. They’ve been struggling to renew their residence/work permits – five (5) of them are expired permission holders. Upon their request IOM provided them with food and firsthand essentials. They request IOM also to help with the return to Moldova.

IOM Kyrgyzstan continues to assist victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants and provide them with essential services.



Read us on Facebook:
[IOM – UN Migration Agency in Kyrgyzstan](#)