
The impact of adult children's migration on wellbeing in later life: voices from Moldova

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Outline

- Background and context
- Research aims
- Data and method
- Results
- Reflections & next steps

Acknowledgements

- Part of broader project funded by DFID/ESRC
'Left Behind in Transition: Older People in Central Asia and the Caucasus'
- Examining economic and social wellbeing of older people in the CIS-7
- Combines quantitative and qualitative analysis
- Project joint with Angela Baschieri, LSHTM and Gail Grant
- Today's presentation focuses on qualitative research conducted in Moldova Autumn 2008 – Spring 2009

Background & context

Location of MOLDOVA In Europe



www.mapsotworld.com

MOLDOVA
Chisinau

Map not to Scale

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**Table 1: Gross Domestic Product per capita in constant (year 2000)
US dollars**

Source: Transmonee Database 2007

	1989	1990	2005	Change*
Moldova	853	829	429	50%
Armenia		794	1,128	142%
Azerbaijan		1,251	1,182	94%
Georgia	1,749	1,493	971	56%
Kyrgyzstan	448	465	319	71%
Tajikistan	501	485	237	47%
Uzbekistan	690	685	673	98%

*Change is calculated by taking per capita GDP in 2005 as a percentage of per capita GDP in 1989 for all countries except Armenian and Azerbaijan. For these countries change is based on per capita GDP in 1990.

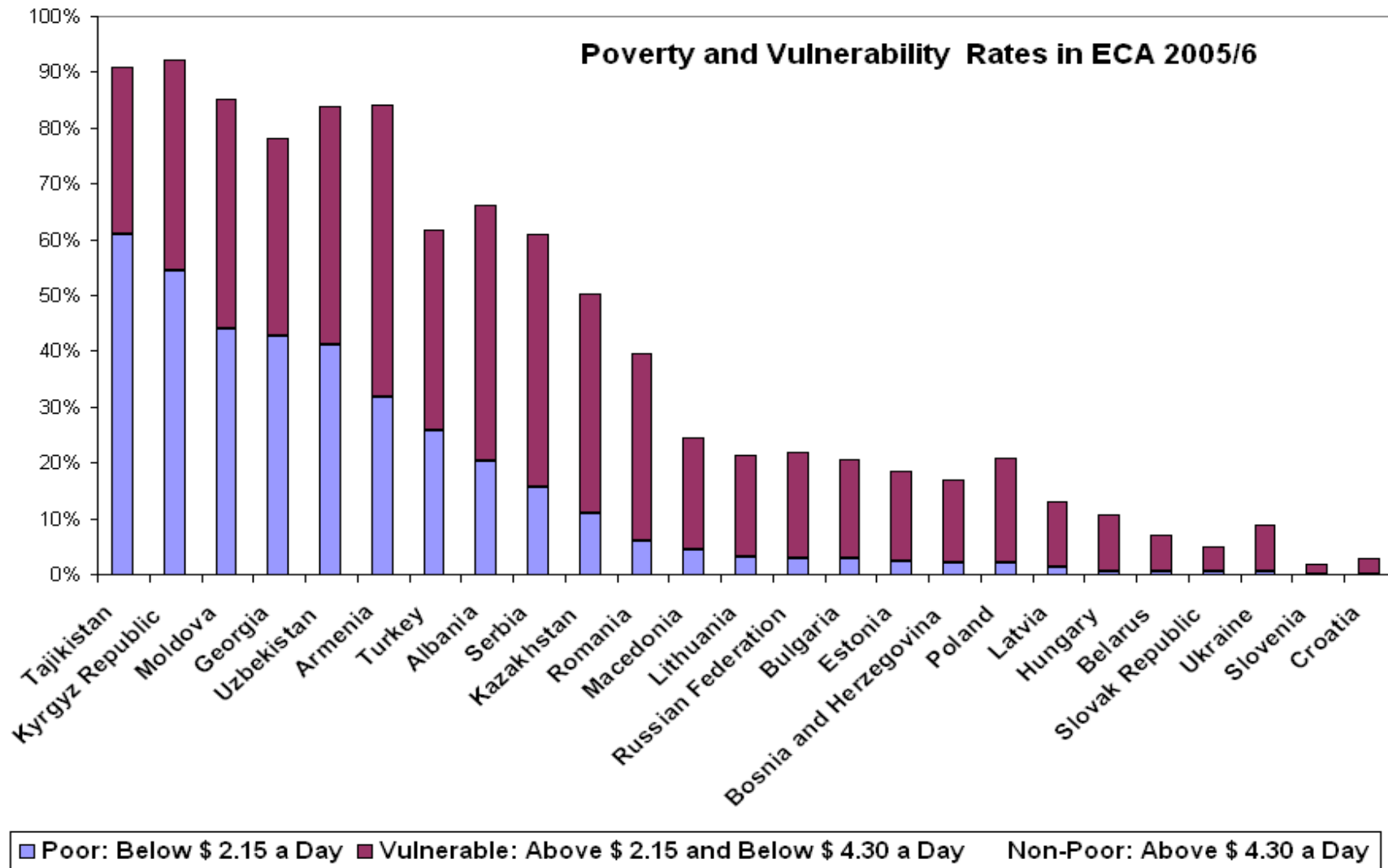


Table 2: Poverty rate 2003 (% in each age group living below absolute poverty line of \$PPP2.15 per day)

Source: Alam et al (2005)

	children (<16 yrs)	adults (17-65 yrs)	elderly (>65)
Armenia	54	49	47
Azerbaijan	5	4	4
Georgia	57	49	53
Kyrgyzstan	80	66	51
Moldova	53	40	38
Tajikistan	76	72	72
Uzbekistan	50	45	40

- Appears that older people are better off than other age groups

Old people left behind in transition?

- Economic and political change
 - Pensions
 - Privatisation
 - Prices
- Migration
 - Literally left behind as younger people leave
 - Individual and community impacts
- Cultural
 - Changing social mores
- Psycho social impacts

Overall project research questions



- What are the living conditions of older people in the countries of the CIS-7?
- Are older people more or less likely to be at risk of being poor?
- What is the role of the extended family in providing economic and social support to older people? **What is the role of remittances?**
- What is the role of older people in providing support within the extended family, particularly to children in their role as grandparents?
- **How have social networks been affected by the extensive migration that has taken place in the region?**
- What other coping strategies have older people adopted?
- **What are the views and priorities of older people themselves?**

Methods & Data

- Mixed method approach
- Secondary analysis of Living Standard Measurement Surveys (or Household Budget Surveys)
- Qualitative
 - Focus groups
 - Indepth interviews
- Content analysis of policy documents, especially PSRPs

Listening to older people

- In view of the concerns surrounding survey findings
- To find out how older people view their own situations
- To describe what it means to an older person to be poor
- And to ask older people what they think should be done
- We conducted qualitative research
 - Using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews
 - With people over retirement age, men and women, ethnic/linguistic groups
 - Recorded, transcribed/translated
 - Coded and analysed using MAXQDA (ongoing!)

Listening to Older People

3 Data Collection Sites

- **Chisinau (Kishinev)**
 - The capital and ‘primate city’
 - Wealthy in comparison to other regions
 - Attracts migrants from within Moldova
 - Multi ethnic
- **Chadyr-Lunga**
 - A small city located in a semi-autonomous region called Gagauzia
 - Multi ethnic but few Moldovans
- **Satul Nou**
 - A village, only a couple of hours south of the capital but one of the poorest areas
 - Nearly all Moldovan



Our study sites





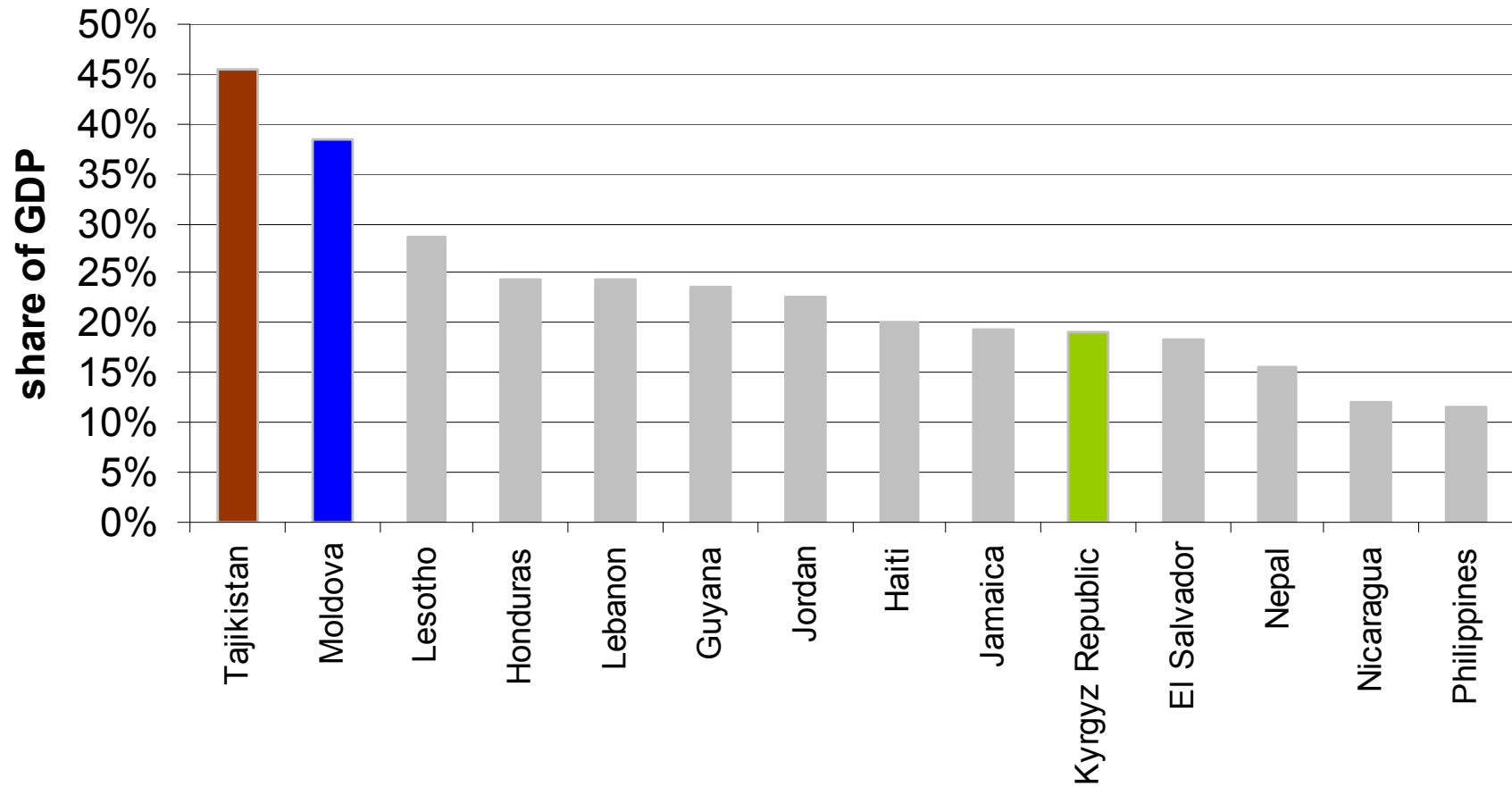
Results

Migration emerged as a major theme shaping older Moldavian's lives

- Estimated 500,000 Moldovians earning a living outside the country
- One in ten of population living abroad
- 30% of GDP is made up of remittances

- Almost 1 in 7 children in villages and 1 in 2 in towns live with their grandparents

Remittances as a share of GDP 2007



Migration and older people

Six major themes / concerns emerged regarding the consequences of migration of working age population at individual, community and national level

- Financial needs and remittances
- Emotional costs of separation
- Concerns over care
- Increased responsibilities of older people
- ‘Empty’ villages
- Impact on ‘the Nation’

Financial needs & remittances

- Financial need main driver for migration, but migration is not without costs

My daughter has recently gone to Israel. Some years ago my granddaughter was departed. There were no sources for living. My daughter has borrowed some money to go. Now she has to work hard to give this money back. Only after this she would start to earn for herself. [IDI1 capital Ukrainian female, 67 years, former cook]

- Remittances important for many but not reliable

My sons don't give me any money. It's not because they're bad, it just happened so. My son has been abroad for more than 10 years... He has family there. And I don't get any money from him. I don't know how much he gets, and I don't ask. Because I don't want to depend on him. I've been working for 42 years not to be dependant on anybody, to get a good pension. And another son is in Moscow. He has no work so far. [FGD3 capital Russian female]

Emotional costs of separation

Sometimes it happens that parents die and their children can't come to the funerals.

[FGD4 village Moldovan female, former agricultural worker]

They have departed illegally and can't come back. If they come back to Moldova, they wouldn't be able to depart again.

[FGD3 village Moldovan female, former kolhoz worker]

(crying) When they come here, when they call me, I ask them every time to come back. My son works there, but doesn't get much. They are treated there so badly! They hardly make ends meet. And for the first 4 years it was awful. They hardly survived. I was crying every time they called. And my grandson - he's a very smart boy... But at school he was treated so badly. They said he was an immigrant so he didn't have any rights.

[FGD3 capital, Russian woman]

They go there young and come back old and exhausted.

[FGD4 village, Moldovan female, former agricultural worker]

They invite me (to Russia), but I'm a Chisinau citizen, I was born here...

(showing the picture of a three story house, which belongs to his son)

There's a room especially for me. Everything's equipped. I don't go there. I can't leave from here, first of all... I have to pay for everything, take care of things. If I go – who would take care of the house? That's first. Secondly, I go there – they all work there. I stay alone. They leave and I stay - me, the dog and the cat. I don't know anyone around there.

[IDI4 capital, Russian/Jewish male, 87 years, former engineer]

Increased responsibilities of older people

I went with my granddaughter to school. In the beginning of the school year I had to pay 400 lei but my pension is 420. They needed curtains at school. I told them I didn't have money. "How is it possible you don't have?! You are sending your child to school!" So, from all my poverty I gave money so that my granddaughter would not be without education. [FGD3 village, Moldovan female, former kolhoz worker]

At school if children broke something they [teachers] used to say before: "You should come with your parents." Now they say "You should come with your grandmother." [FGD3 village, Moldovan female, former kolhoz worker]



Concerns over care

- *Older people are alone. Their children go to other countries – who is going to help them here? [FGD1 town, female]*
- *Our children go to look after other persons, but nobody can look after us! The pay money there! We raised them but we remain alone. [FGD3 village, Moldovan female, former kolhoz worker]*

Empty villages

Where I lived I was alone as Robinson Crusoe on his island. All my neighbors died. Five houses were around and there no one was living. In this situation I decided to move to Chisinau. [IDI11 capital, Moldovan female, 75 years old, former science teacher]

In my neighbourhood just one old woman lives. Nobody else! You can die in your own house and nobody will find you. [FGD3 village, Moldovan female, former kolhoz worker]

A lot of the fields lie waste. Who is to work them? The vineyards are covered by the overgrowth; it's a pity nobody wants to work this fine land. [IDI7 village, Moldovan male, 77 years, former kolhoz driver]

I'd say that in five to six years there will be nobody in the village who knows how to drive a tractor. [FGD6 village, Moldovan male, former manual worker]

Impact on the nation

- “... a young and talented person is working for another country, not for his homeland” “Look, all our Moldovan youth is abroad. What will there be left for Moldova?” [FGD1 capital, Russian male]
- ...as for my sister, she is working there (Italy) as a labourer. And she’s a PhD! What is she doing there? She is building a house! ...She is now 56 years old...
- I think that migration is a tragedy for our people. Our people had their traditions, customs, language. About a million people left the country. And it is clear that they will never come back... But we need people to remain in the country. We do not want to disappear as a nation. We are Moldavian people... [FGD4 capital, Moldovan female, former teacher]

Reflections & next steps

Older people see migration as a mixed blessing

- Many older people see migration as inevitable as a result of low pay & high unemployment in Moldova; only way for children and grandchildren to improve their lives
- Remittances are recognised as very important, but not always reliable
- High non-material costs – emotional loss; lack of physical care; isolation
- Increased responsibility for grandchildren
- Losses appear to outweigh the gains

Next steps

- Empirical analysis of Moldova Household Survey 2008
 - Living arrangements of older people
 - Role of public and private transfers in older person's income
 - Social networks
- Empirical analysis Living in Transition Survey 2006