

Announcement for an MSc Thesis

Effects of labour migration on rural livelihoods in Tajikistan, with special regard to temporary cropland in rainfed areas [working title]

In many parts of rural Tajikistan, labour migration has become an important livelihood strategy. Seeking for income sources, mostly young people migrate to urban areas, mainly in Russia. The money which they send back to their families (remittances) has become a pillar for the livelihoods of many rural households.

At the same time, cultivation of cereals and pulses on small plots often situated on steep slopes generates a considerable part of rural non-cash income. These temporary plots contribute to food security, especially in times of uncertain wheat availability on the markets or rising wheat prizes. The yield mostly serves subsistence needs. However, since cultivation of such plots is considered an emergency measure, no soil conservation is applied and soil resources are rapidly degrading.

The question therefore is whether and how these two livelihood strategies – labour migration and land cultivation – are linked with each other. Who are the migrants, and when do they migrate? How much money do they send back to their families? What for do the families use these remittances? Are remittances invested into land cultivation (e.g. fertilizer, soil conservation measures, machinery)? If yes – how and what for? And how does the absence of migrants affect the labour division within rural households in regard to gender and age? Could cultivation of temporary plots not be upheld anymore without the migrants' remittances; or does migration hinder sustainable land management of temporary cropland?

The Master study is carried out under the NCCR North-South in close collaboration with a Swiss MSc student. It includes approximately three months of fieldwork in rural Tajikistan, to be conducted between April and September 2010. Preparation work should start at the latest on January 2010.

We offer

- Co-supervision by local and Swiss senior researchers
- Financial support for field work, infrastructure (e.g. internet), equipment (e.g. laptop, field material, books/literature), and travel
- Targeted topical trainings based on individual needs (e.g. GIS)
- GIS and remote sensing facilities at the NCCR North-South office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

We require

- BSc in geography, agronomy, economics, social science or a related field.
- Good Tajik knowledge, English working knowledge (at least spoken)
- Ready to work in rural areas and under basic conditions

Supervision

Supervision will be conducted jointly between a supervisor from a Tajik national institution and researchers from the NCCR North-South Program.

Supervision from NCCR North-South:

Dr. Bettina Wolfgramm (duty station Dushanbe, Tajikistan)

Dr. Susan Thieme, University of Zurich

To apply:

Please send the following documents until September 30th 2009:

- Curriculum vitae
- Motivation letter including relevant research experience
- Study curriculum with rankings
- Pdf of diploma and transcripts

Please contact Bettina Wolfgramm, bettina.wolfgramm@cde.unibe.ch

Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)

Institute of Geography, University of Bern, Switzerland

Kh. Khakimzade Street 14, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 734003