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The Situation of Children Left Behind by Migrating Parents

Study
Report



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The Situation of Children Left Behind by Migrating Parents



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FOREWORD

Children have always been most affected by the phenomena and crises societies go through. Most of the people living in poverty worldwide are children. When, for example, a disease affects thousands of people – children are the ones who are most affected. Disease does not only affect them directly, it also deprives them of parents leaving them unprotected. Social crises destroy the protective environment created by the family and community around children, thus exposing them to the risk of abuse and exploitation, decreasing their trust in their own potential and in their future.

Moldova is going through a transition period which brings about changes that are having a great impact on children and on their families, and often causing many child and family protection problems. Although, important reforms for the purpose of increasing economic growth, of strengthening state services and of promoting social rights have been launched in the public sector in the last years, poverty remains a major concern.

Emigration in search of a job is one aspect of these crises and changes. According to the National Statistics Office, in 2000, 138.000 Moldovans migrated abroad in search of a job, and in 2004, this figure reached 367.000. Some experts have suggested that the real figure might be two or three times higher.

Poverty and migration contribute to the disintegration of the family structure and to the increase of the number of children left without parental care. The data of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as of September 1, 2005 show a figure of 35,000 school age children left without the care of both parents and not less than 75,000 children who have a parent left abroad to work. Living conditions of these children are a concern. Children are usually left in the care of close relatives who often cannot provide the love, the affection and support children need to grow and develop. Unofficial data suggest that children are disproportionately exposed to violence, trafficking, delinquency and school drop-out. There are no institutional or community level mechanisms to help them prevent those dangers.

The generally accepted opinion is that the economic situation of migrants' children improves significantly thanks to remittances sent by their parents. However, there are no studies to confirm the link between migration and an increase of children's living standards. On the other hand, the changes that occur in the emotional and social development of children left without parental care because of migration have not yet been thoroughly analyzed. However, irreversible and negative changes may happen with a significant psychological impact on the child. What are the consequences of these changes? How will they impact Moldovan society? These are questions that are to be answered by this and other studies.

This study, developed within the regional UNICEF initiative on the analysis of the phenomenon of poverty and its impact on children, is a first, but necessary step in performing a deeper evaluation and analysis of the situation of children left without parental care because of parents' migration. We hope that both governmental and non-governmental organizations will find this study useful in looking for efficient family support and child protection services.



Ray Virgilio Torres,
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ARGUMENT

The transition of the Republic of Moldova to the market economy contributed to the emergence of an economic situation in which the high unemployment and poverty increase the phenomenon of migration seeking for a job. For many Moldovan families, it became a normal way of living to see some of the family members go abroad and earn money in order to financially sustain them. In the latest years, this phenomenon increased considerably, as a result, were developed numerous industries of documentation completion in order to work abroad, as well as transportation of persons and goods abroad and from abroad.

As one of the most popular strategies for escaping from poverty, the migration is also responsible for many negative consequences in the economic and social spheres. The labour market, in the Republic of Moldova, began suffering from the lack of qualified workers, and the husband's absence for a long time leads to the family separations.

One of the subjects which were not taken into consideration, related to the migration phenomenon, is its impact on the development of migrants' children. In order to obtain a lot of money, as well as, because of the illegal character of their stay abroad, the migrants spend years there. Thus, they live for years far from their children, communicating with them sporadically by means of telephones and parcels, containing money, food products and clothes.

In this regard, we intended, in this study, to identify the changes occurring in the emotional and social lives of children left without parental care, because of the migration phenomenon. The research tackled the migration phenomenon preponderantly from the qualitative perspective, in order to capture the subtle aspects of the experiences of migrants' children, and to understand the impact of separation from parents at the level of each child, taking into consideration the social context specific to him/her. Being useful for the exploration of a less studied subject, the qualitative research is rather flexible and provides space for new, even unpredictable data.

The research team opted for a participatory approach within the study, being convinced of its advantages and benefits. First of all, the children involved in the study have the opportunity to fulfill their rights, stipulated by the UN Convention on Children's Rights and, namely, the right to express the opinion. As the „best” experts in problems affecting them, children become the most valuable sources of data collection, and in order to elaborate the ideas concerning the improvement of policies and services, it is very important to find out about children's needs from the origin source. On the other hand, the participatory techniques give children the opportunity to gain confidence in their own forces and self-assessment, as well as, to discuss sensible subjects for them, in a secure environment of understanding and support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Methodology

The study aimed at investigating the situation of migrants' children mainly from the qualitative perspective, highlighting the impact of children's separation from parents on their social and emotional development.

The research was conducted between September 2005 – April 2006 in three communities from different geographical areas of Moldova. 231 persons participated in the study. The information was collected from 159 children aged between 10 and 18, as well as from 62 adults. Ten young people between the age of 14-17, who are opinion leaders in their hometowns, were consulted on the analysis of the data.

Data collection was realised through the following methods:

- Workshop using participatory techniques for children from the study's object group and the comparison one;
- Questionnaire for all the children of 10-18 years-old from the communities involved in the study;
- Focus group discussions for teachers and form masters;
- In-depth interviews for caregivers, representatives of community services, representatives of central and local public administration and international organisations.

The greatest part of the collected information was processed using content analysis, and the data supplied by the Questionnaire, and that obtained within the Dot Voting on Likert Smiley Face Scale, was analysed statistically. Drawings by children were analysed based on children's own comments rather than based on researchers' interpretations.

After primary analysis, the information collected from children, teachers, and caregivers was used for consultations with a group of selected youth.

During the process of data collection and consultation, the research team was guided using the following ethical principles: the informed agreement of the participants in the study; confidentiality and the protection of the psychological welfare of the involved children; non-discrimination of opinions and children's participation in data analysis.

Outcomes

In the communities involved in the study, more than a fourth (27.6%) of the questioned children asserted that they had one parent abroad. 9.3% of the children said that both parents had migrated. The telephone and the parcels are the main ways of connection between children and their migrated parents.

The living conditions of the migrants' children improved; they got access to more services than their peers. At the same time, they are more vulnerable to various risks related to drug abuse, dropping out of school, precocious sexual relationships, and socially undesirable behaviours.

After parents' departure, children experience difficult and unpleasant emotional states. The longing, the sadness, the loneliness and the feeling of insecurity felt by migrants' children are complemented by the lack of ability to control and express, non-aggressively, the emotions in different situations. Children feel the most affected right

after their parents' departure and in cases when this is the first experience of this kind.

Parents' departure abroad modified considerably children's sphere of relationships, generating important changes related to the volume and quality of communication. In most cases, children's relationships with migrated parents become colder within time, even after their return.

Children's relationships with caregivers are not close enough, and as a result, the latter do not manage to meet children's needs of moral support because of their old age and style of communication.

Migrants' children prefer to communicate in small groups of peers, as a rule, sharing the same experience of parental separation. They are concerned about finding reliable persons with whom they can approach various subjects of their interest, including their private thoughts and feelings.

After parents' departure, children's academic performance changes in both directions. In most cases, school efficiency decreases because of the lack of parental support and encouragement; in some cases children become more responsible towards school, as a reward for their parents' efforts to work and earn money abroad.

Teachers have various attitudes towards children left without parental care: envy of their better conditions of living or sympathy and emotional support.

Migrants' children are not prepared for the independent life and they do not benefit from any special training in developing abilities of self-management, management of their resources, as well as leading a healthy life style. The support provided by caregivers and other close persons does not always satisfy children's needs.

Even if, as a rule, children's opinions concerning parents' departure abroad are rarely taken into account, the older children's views matter more in the family decision-making process. Household duties and the lack of encouragement from adults determine many migrants' children not to participate actively in school and community activities.

Most migrants' children associate their future with life abroad, together with their families. Their optimism about pursuing education is determined more by their parents' financial possibilities than by their own aspirations and knowledge.

National policies on migrants' children are based only on their registration by the educational institutions at the beginning of every school year. At a local level, the community institutions are not concerned with the situation of migrants' children because they are considered more a privileged category rather than a vulnerable one.

METHODOLOGY

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the situation of children with one or both parents working abroad. The research looked at the migration phenomenon mainly from a qualitative perspective, highlighting the impact of children's separation from parents on their social and emotional development. By virtue of the qualitative nature of the study, its outcomes are not necessarily representative of all the children from the Republic of Moldova who are in a similar situation – with one or both parents working abroad.

Seventy-five children from three rural Moldovan communities, living without one or both parent's care for at least two years as a result of their departure abroad, participated in the main part of the study.

The study had the following objectives:

- to identify the repercussions of separation from parents on the children's social and emotional development;
- to identify the concerns and worries of children living without one or both parents;
- to identify children's competencies and skills in handling the situation of living alone;
- to analyse children's views of their future;
- to determine to what extent children's rights were realised and their participation in community affairs;
- to analyse the existing policies and services provided for children without parental care;
- to formulate a set of recommendations for the improvement of the life situation of children with at least one parent working abroad.

THE PROCESS

The research was carried out by the Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) between September 2005 – April 2006. The table below presents the main phases of the development of the research.

Table 1. Development of the study "The situation of children left without parental care"

| Nr. | Stage | Period |
|-----|--|---------------------------|
| 1. | Elaboration of the study's design and the necessary mechanisms for the data collecting process. | September - December 2005 |
| 2. | Consultation with an international expert in children's affairs with regard to the study's design and the tools used for collecting data. | October 2005 |
| 3. | A study visit to Iargara township (district Leova) during which the research team members, a UNICEF representative, and the international consultant participated in discussions with various community members about the problems to be tackled in the study. | October 2005 |

| | | |
|-----|--|------------------------------|
| 4. | Piloting the instruments for data collection on children and making adaptations as necessary. (Susleni village, district Orhei) | November 2005 |
| 5. | Training the data collection team. | November 2005 |
| 6. | Administration of a questionnaire to school children between the ages of 10 and 18 in the localities covered by the study. | December 2005 |
| 7. | Data collection from children and adults. | December 2005 – January 2006 |
| 8. | Initial analysis of information collected from children and adults. | March 2006 |
| 9. | Consultation with a group of children and teenagers on findings resulting from a preliminary analysis of information gathered from children. | March 2006 |
| 10. | The analysis of the study's results, formulation of conclusions and recommendations. | March 2006 |
| 11. | Preparation of the study's report. | March - April 2006 |
| 12. | Consultation with an international expert and UNICEF on the report. | April 2006 |

PARTICIPANTS

When selecting the three communities to participate in the study, the following criteria were taken into account:

- Geographical location – localities from different zones of the Republic (North, South and Centre).
- The existence of collaborative relations of the organization that carried out the study with a resource person from the selected communities (local administration representatives, teachers) that would contribute to the following:
 - get in touch with all the sources of information in the field;
 - ensure the community agents' commitment in order to conduct the data collection;
 - guarantee access to the groups of children necessary for the study.
- The existence of a lyceum or an elementary school in the locality as means to gain access to children aged 10-18.
- The number of children left without parental care in the community. Using data provided by the resource persons, only localities where the largest numbers of such children live were selected,

231 persons participated in the study - 169 children and 62 adults. Information was gathered from 159 children and youth, aged between 10-18, among them 101 girls and 58 boys. Ten young people between the age of 14-17 (seven girls and three boys) were consulted on the analysis of the data. These youth are opinion leaders in their hometowns and they have some experience of involvement in various participation projects.

The choice to include in the study children between 10-18 years was based on the experience of CRIC. In order to ensure the quality of data collection and analysis, it was decided to limit the study to this age group because working with younger children requires special abilities and methodology.

The disproportionate number of girls participating in the study does not necessarily mean that they are more affected by the phenomenon of adults' migration. Children were involved in the study on a voluntary basis, even if there was the risk that boys would be fewer in number. Girls are more likely to participate in activities which require communication and sharing experience, according to the study "Evaluation of youth participation in the Republic of Moldova"¹. For these reasons, we must mention that this report might not have identified all the specifics of boys' experiences connected with adults' migration. Consequently, the ways in which they deal with separation from parents represents a subject that requires a more thorough investigation.

For a better understanding of these children's life situations the study includes a comparison group, formed by children from the same region and of similar age, but living with parents.

The selection of young participants was carried out by the resource persons from the selected communities, according to the following criteria:

- the agreement to participate in the research, being aware of its broad purpose only, without many details;
- the inclusion of children of both genders when possible;
- the inclusion of children aged between 10 and 18;
- at least a duration of two years of living without one or both parents as a result of their departure abroad (only for children who constituted the study's objective).

The fact that the groups of children participating in the study were selected with the help of a teacher or member of the school's administration might have led to a biased selection of children. Reasons for this decision were limitations of time and the wish to avoid questioning children directly about family situations, which could be distressing. Taking into account the fact that teachers and school administrators are aware of such details of pupils' lives, we preferred to offer the adults the role of selecting children, accepting the risk that they might be biased in their selection of children.

It is difficult to follow the phenomenon of adult migration and its consequences. Children have diverse experiences in this field. Some of them have only one parent abroad while others have both parents living abroad. Some of the children face this circumstance for the first time while others are more used to living without at least one parent's care. We must also mention a difference in the intervals in which children are separated from parents, that is mostly determined by the country to which parents migrate. In order to ensure children's participation in the research as well as their emotional security, it was decided not to take into account these varying aspects during the process of the selection of participants. Therefore, the proportion of young participants in the study with one or both parents working abroad is unknown.

¹ European Youth Exchange Moldova, non-governmental association promoting youth participation projects.

Table 2. Number of children involved in the study, according to their age

| Age | Study's object group | Comparison group | Total |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------|------------|
| 10 years | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| 11 years | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| 12 years | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| 13 years | 18 | 13 | 31 |
| 14 years | 5 | 23 | 28 |
| 15 years | 9 | 13 | 22 |
| 16 years | 16 | 8 | 24 |
| 17 years | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| 18 years | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 75 | 84 | 159 |

To get a broader understanding of the situation of children left without parental care focus groups and expert interviews have been conducted with adults.

Table 3. The categories of adults participating in the study

| Nr. | The source of data collection | Number of persons |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| 1. | Caregivers | 7 |
| 2. | Form teachers and teachers | 29 |
| 3. | Headmasters | 3 |
| 4. | Medical workers | 3 |
| 5. | Local NGO members | 2 |
| 6. | Inspectors for juvenile offenders | 1 |
| 7. | Local administration representatives (mayor, town hall secretary) | 4 |
| 8. | Representatives of the District Department of Education, Youth and Sports and representatives of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection | 6 |
| 9. | Central authority representatives (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Health and Social Protection ; Ministry of Internal Affairs) | 3 |
| 10. | Representatives of the National Council for Child's Rights Protection | 1 |
| 11. | International NGO representatives (International Organisation for Migration; UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova) | 3 |
| | Total | 62 |

During the interview with the inspector for juvenile offenders from one locality, we found that the obtained information was less relevant for this study because it refers to children who have disobeyed the law, whereas children left without parental care do not belong to this category.

During the study, the Department for Migration was going through a process of reorganisation. Because of this and the difficulty to access their information, we made the decision to exclude them from the study.

Adults having the experience of separation from children were not included in the study. Their opinion would be very valuable for the investigation of this phenomenon, but because of the lack of time and access to these persons we did not interview parents.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Based on the study's key-questions (Annexes) a broad range of different methods were triangulated to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

Data collection

The following methods were used

- Workshops using participatory techniques
- Questionnaire
- Focus group discussions
- In-depth interviews

Because the research touches some very sensitive issues in the lives of children, it was necessary to guarantee children's abilities to balance the degree of involvement and externalisation of personal emotions. Participatory methods offer opportunities for analysing personal experiences and sharing experiences with other persons by creating an atmosphere of trust.

Workshops with children took on average of 3.5 hours. Both groups of children were divided into two age-groups, 10-14 and 15-18 year-olds. This helped to create an open and comfortable atmosphere for all children involved, taking into account the particulars of puberty and adolescence in development and communication. In each of those three localities, four data collection workshops were held. All the workshops were held in schools. Teachers were asked not to attend the activities organised with children.

The techniques used for the data collection from children were piloted with two groups of children, one of them with children with at least one parent working abroad. The two workshops differed only in one tool which was connected to the experience of separation from parents: children living with parents were asked to describe their families, while their peers without parental care were invited to explain to what extent parents' departure changed their lives.

In general, when testing the data collection methods, children participants were co-operative and showed interest in the subject. However, one activity, which was aimed at identifying children's internal resources, did not work as well as it had been envisaged and was replaced. Some of the children did not understand the activity, it took too much time to be performed, and it required a lot of space that not all the schools were able to provide. The piloting constituted an important stage for the finalisation of the instructions to children, for the management of time reserved for each of the planned activities, for confirmation of the efficiency of the group activities to create group dynamic, and for the examination of children's readiness to discuss certain subjects.

The team of data collectors was selected from CRIC staff and volunteers (students or graduates in social assistance having experience in facilitating group activities). These persons were instructed in data collection methods and techniques, the specific tasks of a workshop facilitator, focus group discussions and the assistant's tasks, as well as methods to record and store information. Field workers were also asked to take into account the delicate character of the analysed subjects, as well as the importance of respecting ethical principles, like confidentiality. Workshops for children were led by teams of 2-3 persons.

The structure of the data collection workshop for children

1. Visualisation in participatory planning

The participants answered individually, on cards, the following question: "What thoughts bother you during an ordinary day?" The children had the opportunity to complete several cards, depending on the number of ideas they wanted to share with the group. The cards were grouped according to categories suggested by the participants themselves and then commented upon, depending on their content and the frequency of some ideas.

2. Brainstorming

The participants discussed, from a multitude of ideas, a list of difficulties and social problems they could face in the future as grownups. This exercise introduced them to the topic of internal resources that enable a person to overcome problems.

3. Clustering of skills

The participants were invited to group a set of cards, according to their own interpretation of what was written on them, into three different categories - abilities, attitudes, and knowledge. (Annexes). The grouping was made on the basis of co-operation and common decisions of the members of small groups, which showed an "average" opinion of the groups.

4. Impact drawing / Family drawing

Children with one or both parents working abroad were asked to make a drawing representing how their parents' departure had changed their lives. Therefore, it was proposed that the children recall, individually, what their life used to be like before parents went abroad and to compare it with their actual conditions now. Children were invited to meditate upon changes that occurred during this period and to represent them on a sheet of paper. Participants were asked to comment on the drawings.

Children living with parents were asked to draw, individually, their family. It was proposed that participants draw however they wish to represent their real family, not how they would like it to be. Then children were invited to comment on the drawings, mentioning the persons they represented, characterising them and explaining their role.

5. Dot Voting on Likert Smiley Face Scale

Participants expressed, through voting, their personal opinion on the realisation of rights selected by the research team (Annexes). Each participant was requested to vote on a scale from 1 to 5 - "fully agree", "agree", "yes and no", "disagree", "totally disagree". Average ratings for each statement reflected children's opinions on the extent to which their rights are respected.

6. Social mapping

In groups, participants were invited to draw a map of their community and to indicate on it the places they can go in case they need something, regardless of the problem they face (for advice and help, not only for money). Children were requested to indicate with certain signs, invented by them, to what extent the persons and the institutions represented on the map sustain them, encourage them, and are friendly to them.

7. Future drawing

It was proposed that children represent in a drawing their future in five years or after leaving school. Their drawing had to reflect as many aspects as possible concerning

their future life, including the community they will live in, the occupation they will have, their family, etc. Participants worked in small groups, but they had the possibility to choose between representing themselves separately or to make a drawing including all the group members together. Each participant made a comment on his/her drawing.

Questionnaire

The qualitative part of the study was complemented by a quantitative survey. The questionnaire was completed by 743 children in the 5th-12th forms from three localities involved in the research (Annexes). The objective of this methodology was to obtain information about issues like the number of children left without parental care because of parents' departure abroad, children's material conditions, school attendance, the country with the greatest number of Moldovan emigrants, the main ways of communication between parents and children and the reasons for parents' departure.

Focus-group discussion

This method was used in order to collect information from teachers and form masters from communities involved in the study. Teachers constitute a valuable source of information because they are constantly in contact with students left without parental care and play a substantial role in their development. In total, three focus-group discussions were held during which a set of questions designed to tackle the study's main areas of interest were talked about. They lasted about an hour and were recorded on audio tape.

Participants in the focus-group discussions showed interest in the problems and gave insight into various aspects of children's behaviour. Despite the fact that some participants, at the beginning of the discussion, had the tendency to present the conditions of all children in a favourable light, they gradually became more open in discussing the situation of children without parental care.

In-depth interview

This method was applied to probe the opinion of several groups of adults – caregivers, school administrators, local NGO members, inspectors for juvenile offenders, medical workers, local and central public administration representatives, and international organisation representatives. A set of questions and guidelines was elaborated for each group of participants, which aimed at revealing community agents' views concerning the life situation of children without parental care. Some of the interviews with representatives of local public administration took place over the phone because of the difficulty in making an appointment with these persons. The interviews were recorded on audio tapes and their average duration was 30 minutes.

We also solicited stories of children having the experience of separation from parents from the Local Youth Councils, managed by the National Youth Resource Centre. Some of these were included in the report.

Data processing and analysis

Content analysis was used for analysing qualitative data. The data obtained from the Questionnaire and the Dot Voting on Likert Smiley Face Scale were analysed statistically. Drawings by children were analysed based on children's own comments rather than based on researchers' interpretations.

The information gathered within workshops organised with children, interviews, and focus-group discussions with adults was stored, in a standardized electronic form.

Content analysis was based on the identification of the main issues from all the information gathered. The key questions of the research served as main topics for the organisation and systematisation of all data.

Consultation workshop

After primary analysis, the information collected from children, teachers, and caregivers was used for consultations with a group of selected youth. The need for feedback from the youth on the data obtained from these groups of adults was based on the fact that, as a rule, the latter's roles and opinions are known by all the children. Ten teenagers and four members of the research team were chosen to participate in the consultation workshop. Youth consultants have experience in participation projects and were selected from other communities with the help of a partner organization.

The consultation workshop's goal was to verify if the outcomes obtained corresponded with reality. During the workshop the following methods were used: focus-group discussion, visualisation in Participatory Planning and Dot Voting on the Likert Smiley Face Scale. The youth consultants were shown the results of all the study's key questions and the tools with which they were obtained. They were asked to express their opinion on whether the results corresponded with their views of the situation. Data from the workshop were recorded, given an electronic format, and then integrated into the text of the outcomes obtained within the study.

Opinions collected from young workshop participants were very useful for reaching the goals of the study, for the elaboration of the report, and for the formulation of the recommendations.

The report presents relevant comments of participants. The source of quotations is indicated in all the cases. In order to facilitate the quotation of the sources, the following abbreviations will be used:

Gr.I – 10-14 years of age living without one or both parents;

Gr.II – 15-18 years of age living without one or both parents;

Gr.III – 10-14 years of age living with parents;

Gr.IV – 15-18 years of age living with parents.

DCW – participant in the data consultation workshop;

LPA – representatives of local public administration;

DDEYS - representatives of the District Department of Education, Youth and Sports;

DDSAFP – representatives of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection;

MEYS – representative of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports;

MHSP - representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection;

MIA – representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs;

NCCRP - representative of the National Council for Child's Rights Protection;

IOM – representative of the International Organisation for Migration;

UNICEF – representatives of the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova.

CONSIDERATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Informed agreement

Children and adults were informed about the study by the resource persons solicited by the research team. During the data collection process, children and adults were

informed about the study's objectives and the way the gathered information would be used. Before the beginning of the workshops with children and discussions with adults all the participants had the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate in the study.

The research team decided not to give any details about the research beforehand in order to avoid a distortion of the data, for examples through the preparation of answers in advance. From our experience, some adults tend to "prepare" youth so that they present their community in a favourable light.

Confidentiality

Children and adult focus group participants were assured from the beginning that confidentiality would be respected. The names of the localities were not included in the report to reduce the possibility of discovering their identities.

Protection of the psychological welfare

During the process of data collection and consultation, we made sure that our interventions would not affect the children in any way. This was achieved through instructions to the field workers and the methodology used.

Field workers were young, competent in the field of psychology and social assistance, and have experience working with children. This played an important role in assuring a favourable atmosphere for the discussion of all the subjects relevant to the study.

Within consulting and data collection workshops, participants were able to express their views on any subject freely. Many of the data collection methods used drawing as an efficient technique of facilitation of children's expression on delicate and private subjects. Participants were encouraged to share their emotional state, but some of them preferred not to do it (for instance, some refused to comment on their drawings). Similar cases also happened within workshops organised with children living with parents. For those children who opted not to comment on their drawings, these cases were excluded from the analysis.

Non-discrimination

Some techniques of data collection from children required participants to work in small groups. Field workers guaranteed equal opportunities for all participants to express themselves in order to capture all the perspectives, sometimes even contrary ones on the same subject.

The research team made every effort to include the whole range of views from both children and adults in the report.

Children's participation in data analysis

In order to ensure the quality of the analysis of the data, a group of children and youth consultants discussed the preliminary results. Children's everyday experiences could be different from adults' perception or expectations; therefore, we considered that for a more meaningful understanding of children's conditions, consulting the latter would be very useful. With the help of the opinions, views and explanations provided by the consultation workshop participants, the research team tried to allow maximum interpretation of the information and to keep the authenticity of the outcomes as close as possible to children's reports. Children also participated in the process of making recommendations for their peers left without parental care. This is how they contributed to the adjustment of the suggested interventions to the real needs of these children.

RESULTS

■ GENERAL OVERVIEW

There are few studies, in the Republic of Moldova, analysing the phenomenon of adult migration. Existing studies are mostly statistical. Although sometimes contradictory, the official data and the data provided by research reveal that the number of people who went abroad looking for a job is alarmingly high. According to the data provided by MEYS, on September 1, 2005, the number of school-age children with both parents abroad reached 35,000. At the same time about 75,000 children live with only one parent because of migration.

The outcomes of the conducted survey confirm the extent of adult migration from the localities involved in the study. Thus, more than a fourth (27.6%) of the children questioned asserted that they had one parent abroad while 9.3% of the children said both parents had migrated. In two of the localities, the number of fathers who went abroad is significantly larger than that of migrated mothers (Table 4).

Table 4. The proportion of migrated parents

| Migrated parent | Locality I | | Locality II | | Locality III | | Total |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|------------|
| | Frequency (pers.) | Frequency (%) | Frequency (pers.) | Frequency (%) | Frequency (pers.) | Frequency (%) | |
| Father | 29 | 32.2 | 54 | 46.6 | 35 | 50.7 | 118 |
| Mother | 33 | 36.7 | 34 | 29.3 | 20 | 29 | 87 |
| Both | 28 | 31.1 | 28 | 24.1 | 13 | 18.8 | 69 |
| NA* | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1.4 | 1 |
| Total | 90 | 100 | 116 | 100 | 69 | 100 | 275 |

* no answer to the question

The survey revealed that the great majority of men from these communities work in Russia (almost 48%); Italy represents the second country of destination of emigrated men. As for women, the respondents mention most frequently Italy, followed by Russia. Other countries that were mentioned as destination are: Portugal, Ireland, Greece, France, Ukraine, Turkey, Spain, Germany, USA, and China.

The data reveal that 40% of the migrated fathers and 30% of migrated mothers left the country during the current year. 21.4% of children have been living without their mothers' care for three years, and 12% of children have been living without their fathers' care for the same period of time. A great number of respondents (about 6%) reported that they had been separated from their parents more than 4 years ago. The question concerning the duration of separation from their fathers was not answered by 4% of the respondents. This could be explained by the fact that many of their parents might be divorced.

Telephone and parcels represent the main ways of connection between children and their migrated parents. Many children (44%) mention that they communicate 2-3 times a week. Every eighth child communicates daily with his/her parents abroad, and a fourth of the respondents communicate weekly. Fifteen percent of the respondents communicate with migrated parents only several times a month, and about 2% of children communicate less than once in a 2-3 months period.

Children's perception regarding social problems that can affect them

Children from all groups expect to be confronted with, among others, the following problems in their future:

- Difficulties in ensuring both personal and family welfare, caused by the lack of work, the lack of a living place, low salaries, as well as insufficient financial resources for education.
- Health problems, including HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, eating unhealthy food, and the lack of potable water and quality medical services.
- Problems concerning relationships with other people, like loneliness, lack of friends, dishonesty, conflicts, violation of rights, family and social violence, divorce.
- Problems related to violation of social rules – human trafficking, including trafficking in children, offences, and terrorism.
- Ecological issues.

Children with parents abroad mentioned the urgent need for them to develop certain personal abilities in order to cope with possible difficulties of adult life, in particular independence in the decision-making process, self confidence, time management and control of emotions.

Adults' perceptions of the risks that migrants' children face

Of all the groups of adults participating in the study, only caregivers thought that, as a rule, children left in their care are not more vulnerable than other children. But, in the opinion of the majority of the respondents, migrants' children constitute a group of children for whom *"there is a strong probability of risk"*.

Quitting school is among the most frequently mentioned risks. The loss of interest in school and a decrease in academic performance are, in the opinion of the representatives of central administration and UNICEF, signs of the risk of early school leaving. The lack of motivation to study can have negative consequences on the children's education. Community members expressed the same idea. According to teachers' reports, all the children in the localities are provided with schooling. Certain teachers and headmasters reported that some cases of school leaving among migrants' children had been solved rapidly through counselling, sometimes with the consultation of a psychologist.

- *"The main implications for them are connected with the schooling process; there are children tending more often to abandon school... a worse academic performance, because it is not a priority". (UNICEF)*

The conducted survey shows that in both groups of children only 3/4 of the respondents attend school daily. The number of children reporting that they miss classes sometimes is a little larger among children with parents abroad, 22%.

School administrators, some teachers, representatives of local and central public administrations, as well as representatives of the UNICEF office consider that another risk to migrants' children is their vulnerability to drug abuse. In the view of the respondents, rather often these behaviours of children and youth are generated by pressure from their peers.

- *"Children adopt certain undesirable behaviours – vulgar language, smoking, alcohol and drug consumption - if they are not supervised by parents". (a headmaster)*

Some of the interviewed adults mentioned that the probability for children with at least one parent working abroad to commit offences is higher than in the case of children living with parents. Headmasters and some representatives of local public authorities mentioned that there had been registered offences committed by these

children, and the representatives of MIA and NCCRP highlighted the role of peers in influencing the adoption of such behaviours.

- *“... to find himself / herself in undesirable circumstances, in groups of children that could make him commit certain illegal acts, beginning with moral and finishing with penal offences.” (NCCRP)*

Deprivation of parental care, especially at an early age, is considered by several respondents as a risk factor for children's health. Some of their illnesses can become chronic because they *“do not solicit medical assistance when they need it”*. Some teachers and UNICEF representatives share the view that during the absence of parents, the reproductive health of youth is also in danger.

- *“... the risk of an unwanted pregnancy, an infection. According to the outcomes of our studies, teenagers are not well enough informed about sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the ways of protection, their symptoms and anything else in this field...” (UNICEF)*

Caregivers and representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection listed, among the risks children could face, the lack of opportunities to pursue education and find easily a job.

- *“... the risk of unemployment, when they grow up. Maturity does not guarantee them a place in the social life...” (MHSP)*

In the opinion of many adults, the development of relationships within families with at least one member working abroad proves that in the nearest future *“there will be a generation gap”*. Divorce is very frequent among migrants' families. According to the reports of the representative of IOM, in Bălți city about 60% of the families with one of the members abroad are divorced. Because of the lack of alternative models for taking care of children left without parental care, there is a risk that children with parents working abroad will be institutionalised.

- *“Children educated in such circumstances will not be able to take care of their parents when the latter are old”. (NGO)*
- *“There is already a generation of children who have been living for 10 years without one or both parents”. (IOM)*

Several respondents mentioned human trafficking and labour exploitation among the major risks for migrants' children.

- *“About half of the minors being provided with assistance at our centre after having become victims of trafficking had been left without parental care; their parents had gone abroad 2, 3 or even 5 years ago”. (IOM)*

Some adults think that separation from parents could lead to certain deficiencies in children's personal development and in the hierarchy of their values. The feeling that they are abandoned can generate *“a complex of inferiority”*, and this can have negative consequences on the families these children will start in the future. One of the UNICEF representatives said that, in the future, adult migration *“will have serious consequences at an economic and social level for the whole country”*.

The conditions of living of migrants' children

According to most adult respondents, migrants come from families with a relatively good material situation, for they are able to pay for travel and visas.

For the poorer strata of society this may be too difficult to realise. Respondents stated that, as a rule, children left without parental care come from families who had good living conditions. At the same time, IOM representative and several participants in the consultation workshop state that the number of migrants coming from socially vulnerable families is rather high because *“those who leave are not able to find a job here and earn a decent living”*.

- *“Families that lived well before went abroad”. (LPA)*
- *“I did not meet wealthy people in the group we are working with; most of them are from socially vulnerable families....”. (IOM)*
- *“... people from deprived families also go abroad. But the situation in these families, after the departure, worsens”. (DCW)*

Most adults noticed that, generally, work abroad has a positive impact on the quality of children's lives. Teachers, headmasters, medical workers and representatives of local public administration think that the material situation of children left without parental care improved. Children live in better conditions, like repaired and fully equipped houses. They have financial resources which allow them *“to pay without any difficulty all the school fees”*, to buy expensive clothes and pay for entertainment. According to some respondents, families with members working in countries of Western Europe *“have a better material situation”* than those working in Russia.

- *“The living conditions of these children are very good, some live like those in a city. The village is provided with gas and they have gas heating systems, warm water and telephones”. (a teacher)*
- *“... they have financial resources and they are able to buy books and other school supplies”. (a headmaster)*
- *“... their living conditions improve...”. (a medical worker)*
- *“Children wear expensive clothes, they have mobile phones...”. (DDSAFP)*

The survey reveals that, in general, children without parental care consider themselves financially better off than their peers. Thus, the number of children claiming that they have more pocket money than their peers is two times bigger among respondents with parents working abroad (8.4%). At the same time, the proportion of children claiming that they have less pocket money in comparison with their peers is significantly higher among children living with parents (about 30% and 19% respectively).

The majority of caregivers mentioned that the material situation of children with parents abroad had not improved and that they faced the same financial difficulties than before the parents' departure. Children who receive no or very little money from migrated parents, and who have guardians, benefit from an allowance from the town hall. But, according to caregivers, this sum of money is insignificant and it can not solve all the problems. In the opinion of some adults, the children whose parents are not able to financially support them over a long period of time, risk becoming a burden to their caregivers. In such situations, the feeling of deprivation they must deal with is stronger because they lack both, affection and parents' support and material conditions that could satisfy their basic needs.

- *“Their material conditions did not improve; we still find it hard to buy all the things they need”. (a caregiver)*
- *“Parents leave and at the beginning they can not easily find a job. As a result, they do not send money; the relatives who take care of their children are not*

satisfied and overwhelm the latter with reproaches and behave rudely with them". (IOM)

Thanks to parents who went abroad, some children have the advantage of enjoying various goods like personal computers, audio recorders, mobile telephones and other consumables, which are usually hard for their peers to get. For children left without parental care, mobile telephones become very important because they help them get in touch with parents. Nevertheless, some teachers consider that at an early age the telephone is just a luxury item which spoils children.

- *"Most children have got computers at home, audio recorders and they have an occupation. Sometimes parents buy TV sets with satellite antennas". (a teacher)*
- *"In my class of 24 pupils only 4 do not have mobile telephones". (a teacher)*
- *"... they get access to high technology easier than we do. For them the mobile telephone is a need, to talk to parents, for instance, but we must deserve it, for example, when we enter the University". (DCW)*

Some of the interviewed adults assert that better material conditions of these children make the other community members envious of them. According to some respondents, people's departure abroad is motivated not so much by real financial difficulties as by fashion and by the improvement of living conditions. Youth in the consultation workshop pointed out that many adults, including teachers, do not see that, beyond amelioration in children's living conditions, there is much suffering and loneliness.

- *"... in many cases [peers, adults] are envious..." (a teacher)*
- *"... this wealthy life makes them do wrong things... the community members consider them spoilt children..." (a medical worker)*
- *"They only think... sometimes he has money and sometimes he does not, sometimes he is in pain and sometimes he is happy, sometimes he is good at school and sometimes he is not. But, they do not understand that children with parents abroad go through difficult situations... there are moments when you just cannot go on..." (DCW)*

Most community agents in the study said that, as a rule, the state of health, including diet and hygienic conditions of children left without parental care do not differ from those of their peers living with parents. While medical workers consider that the diet of migrants' children is better than that of other children, several teachers and participants in the consultation workshop have a different opinion, claiming that some of these children do not eat regularly, which has a negative impact on their health. Consulted children noticed that, in the absence of parents, children usually tend to "hide" certain "health problems" and postpone visits to the doctor. Caregivers say that taking care of a person's child is a big responsibility that requires constant vigilance towards their state of health. With respect to personal hygiene, some teachers think that small children "left in the care of their fathers" could experience some problems in this regard.

- *"... I would like to say that... their meals are even better, they take vitamins". (a medical worker)*
- *"... they eat only fast food products and many girls have allergy problems of the skin... and stomach aches". (a teacher)*

- *“Very many children with parents abroad do not have regular and healthy meals”. (DCW)*
- *“I will refer only to my class and I will say that children without parental care are clean and proper”. (a teacher)*

The outcomes of the survey show that most of the children have three meals a day. Nevertheless, this regimen is respected to a lesser extent by children with parents abroad than by children from the comparison group (about 76% and 80% respectively). It should be mentioned that in both categories there were cases when children mentioned that they had not eaten anything during a whole day. In the group of children with parents abroad the percentage of these answers is twice as high, nearly 3%.

According to the survey data, migrants’ children claim that they have more school supplies than their peers living with parents (91% and 86% respectively). Concerning winter clothes, we get the same picture in both groups of respondents.



PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Several years ago my parents went abroad to earn money. Grandparents became our second family and we began sharing the same house, theirs. I never thought it would be so difficult for us, me and my brother, to live without parents. When they left for the first time I felt lonely in this crazy world. It was hard for me to accept the idea that they are gone, that they are so far away from me. I can hear only their voice every day, but it is not real, because it is on the phone. I have never opened my heart to anyone since then. The only person who helped me overcome this crisis was my brother. He used to cheer me up, encourage me and give me hope. I can not explain how he managed to hide his feelings, but he never expressed his sorrows, despite the fact that he was younger. Who says it is better to have money and expensive clothes if in exchange you do not enjoy parents' presence? I think the other children suffer the way I do. I wish so much that my parents could come back home and we could become a real family! I got used to the fact that granny is like a mother to us, who takes care of us, and grandpa, too. If I have children in the future, I will never abandon them, no matter how difficult life will be. When you love you overcome easier all the difficulties."

Prezent

Prezent



flacarea copilului
fericite



capacitate
responsabilitate
si a caracter
rădăcină putere

PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Each child would like both parents to be at home. A complete family is more important than anything". (Gr. I)

Children and grown-ups agree that separation from their parents strongly affected the personal well-being of children.

Almost all the children reported that after their parents' departure they had faced difficult and unpleasant emotional states. Only a few children from one region mentioned that their current material situation, improved thanks to their parents' work abroad, makes them happy. Some of those who take care of children of migrating parents, along with some medical personnel, share the same opinion. However, according to some children, money can not compensate for the suffering caused by the separation from their parents.

- *"Before I didn't have the same possibilities as I do now ... there is a change of the situation; therefore, I drew a joyful mother". (Gr.II)*
- *"They are glad, but do they understand ... they were glad when both parents left in order to earn money ...". (a caregiver)*
- *"When parents go abroad children are happy hoping their material condition will improve". (a medical worker)*
- *"I don't feel the same way right now. I am sad when I look at the other children. I don't need money any more and I cry". (Gr.II)*
- *"Money is not important for me; I would like my parents to be always with me". (Gr.I)*
- *"Despite an improvement in my material situation and my freedom, I miss my mummy very much". (Gr.I)*

The gamut of emotions used by children to describe their life is dominated by grey colours. Longing and sadness are among the most frequently mentioned emotional states. Small children say they often cry. Some children report a state of apathy they cannot control.

- *"I miss my mother very much". (Gr.II)*
- *"I am sad now. My heart is incomplete without my mother". (Gr.I)*
- *"At the beginning I was rather depressed; I felt very bad in summer". (Gr.II)*
- *"... every night I cry; I miss them". (Gr.I)*
- *"It's like I lost a part of my soul". (Gr.II)*
- *"I am sad because I don't feel her love anymore". (Gr.II)*
- *"I don't have love from both parents". (Gr.I)*
- *"I used to be happy; I used to love life. Now I miss them". (Gr.II)*
- *"... sometimes I don't understand myself; I become melancholic for no reason". (Gr.II)*
- *"... I knew mummy would always be by my side and I was happy". (Gr.II)*

According to the participants of the consultation workshop, smaller children express their emotions more easily; therefore, it gives the impression that they are the most affected by their parents' absence. In reality, all children, regardless of their age, suffer painfully from the separation from their parents. Some of them simply do not express their feelings so openly.

- *"... I am overwhelmed by the longing for them; I don't have words to express what I feel". (Gr.I)*
- *"... when you are 17-18 you just don't show your longing for parents, but it isn't a matter of inhibition. Perhaps they are shy, or they are already personalities and it isn't visible". (DCW)*
- *"Sometimes, they seem to be emotionally stronger, but this is just an appearance". (DCW)*
- *"They don't like to share problems in public, but in a private, open discussion we discover they have more preoccupations than we". (DCW)*

The adults noticed that a great number of children become inhibited, reserved and solitary. According to the consultation workshop participants and some adults, this change in behaviour is associated with problems of self-expression that many children experience. The respondents affirm that isolation is more obvious when analysing boys. This could be explained by the traditional view that expressing emotions, for a man, is a sign of weakness.

- *"Generally, youngsters and children express their feelings about any problem quite rarely; the separation from their parents is not an exception. They don't express their emotions. They often say 'it's tough' without offering any details". (DCW)*
- *"They are inhibited and there is no one to support them at home". (a teacher)*
- *"After their parents' departure children become more reserved". (LPA)*
- *"... they become shyer; they don't have enough daring". (LPA)*
- *"... they isolate themselves emotionally. Sometimes they get arrogant, especially boys". (DDEYS)*
- *"The lack of parents causes a constant suffering to the very small ones; those who are older try not to show their feelings". (a teacher)*
- *"Years pass and they become more inhibited and isolated". (a teacher)*

Most children mention that they realise the repercussions of their emotions on their own personality and on others. The older the children are, the higher the awareness is. At the same time some children claim they are unable to control and express their emotions non-aggressively in some situations. This is especially true for the older children. The participants at the consultation workshop confirmed this tendency of teenagers, adding that it manifests itself not only with children of that age but also with grown-ups.

- *"I'm aware of the effects; I don't want to be aggressive because I don't like to be threatened, and I know how it feels, but I have to because he makes me act this way". (DCW)*
- *"First you say something, then you think of what you've said. When you're angry, you say all you have on your mind regardless of who they are, teenagers or adults". (DCW)*
- *"Physical aggression is excluded but there is verbal aggression". (DCW)*

It was shown that parents represent an obvious preoccupation of these children. They recall their previous life with both parents by their side, they miss them, they look forward to seeing them, to talk to them, and they want to become a family again.

- *"I am always thinking about them". (Gr.II)*
- *"My thoughts are with my father who is not with me and who will soon come back". (Gr.I)*
- *"Who will greet me when I return home?" (Gr.II)*
- *I want my parents to be with me". (Gr.II)*
- *"Will my daddy and mummy call me today?" (Gr.II)*

- *“... I want them to call me”. (Gr.II)*
- *“I want us to be become a family again”. (Gr.II)*
- *“Children look forward to seeing their parents”. (DCW)*
- *“...there is a deep longing for their parents”. (DCW)*

Caregivers, teachers, school administrators and DDEYS experts are those who witness the children’s sufferings. They confirm children are overwhelmed by their parents’ absence all the time.

- *“... they miss their parents”. (a caregiver)*
- *“Their thoughts are dedicated to their parents ... all the time”. (a teacher)*
- *“Children growing without parents around suffer a lot”. (a teacher)*
- *“They are deprived of their parents’ love”. (a teacher)*
- *“They think it’s just a matter of time and that soon their parents will return home and everything will get back on track”. (a teacher)*
- *“Children are traumatised”. (a headmaster)*
- *“Children lack their parents’ love, they are emotionally traumatised, they suffer longing for them”. (DDSAFP)*

Children living with their parents consider family as an environment of love and care. Cohesion, co-operation, confidence, mutual support and friendship are its inherent features. All these give children a sense of protection and safety.

- *“I’m happy; we are together as a family. I drew all of us in the middle of a big heart, which means we love each other”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“Unity and freedom characterise my family; everyone is responsible for his deeds and everyone’s position is taken into account”. (Gr.III)*
- *“I am supported by my family”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“When a problem occurs, we try to solve it together, as a family”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“We do the housework together and we read together in the evening”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“Before making a decision, daddy consults us. Mummy is like a friend to me”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“Mummy was and will always be my best friend. I can share with her all my secrets”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“There is a mutual respect in my family and we are trying to be kind to each other”. (Gr.III)*
- *“I have got a four-member family. We are friendly and eager to help one another”. (Gr.III)*
- *“Here is a drawing of me as a boxer, for boxers are strong. This is exactly how I feel when my parents are with me”. (Gr.IV)*

Many respondents mentioned a lack of security characterising children facing their parents’ absence. According to consultation workshop participants, children fear the physical loneliness they found themselves in. Grownups consider this insecurity can be noticed in children’s relationships, including relationships with their relatives.

- *“...our house is empty without them. When I am alone I am afraid”. (Gr.II)*
- *“I know some children are afraid to stay at home alone. There is a girl in our class who has been living alone since she was in the 7th form”. (DCW)*
- *“... they know they are not protected”. (a teacher)*

- *“... they spend the night alone”. (a teacher)*
- *“... they are afraid, for they don’t feel protected by their parents”. (DDEYS)*
- *“... he doesn’t feel safe; he doesn’t feel somebody’s love”. (MEYS)*
- *“... how protected do they feel when they are left by one or both parents? Their safety is at stake. They are likely to be offended, hurt or even beaten and there will be no one by their side to protect them”. (UNICEF)*

Analysing the way children describe their families before their parents’ departure it seems that some of them are reassessing their attitudes and behaviour in the relationship with their parents. The lack of parental love on the one hand and dealing with adult problems on the other has led them to appreciate the advantages of having a family.

- *“I felt what a parent’s love means only after my father’s departure, though I had been very happy before”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I didn’t use to help my mother. One day I thought to myself: ‘Was it so difficult to bring her a pail of water?’ It is hard when there is nobody to help you about the house”. (Gr.II)*
- *“We realise the true value of a thing after we loose it”. (Gr.II)*
- *“Getting presents was making me happy, but now there is only one present I am dreaming of: my parents”. (Gr.II)*
- *“... I take into account the advice they gave me”. (Gr.I)*

Most children mentioned they were happy before, despite the fact that they were experiencing financial difficulties, the main reason for their parents’ absence. Children enumerated many advantages of living with parents, among them: comfort, support in various activities, leisure.

- *“We were happy together”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I was happy when my parents were with me. There was a mutual help between us”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I was joyful, for they showed me a lot of love”. (Gr.I)*
- *“... they were waiting for me to come back from school”. (Gr.I)*
- *“Mummy was cooking for me”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I could talk to them, complain about any problem”. (Gr.I)*
- *“Mummy used to help me with my homework”. (Gr.I)*
- *“We were playing football together”. (Gr.I)*

According to the results of the research, some children are preoccupied with their parents’ integration abroad and their welfare; others have to worry even about the relatives who are meant to take care of them. Children know various cases of ill-treatment or even trafficking of adults who emigrate, and they are afraid this could happen to their parents. Finding out that parents face difficulties, many children tend to see themselves as responsible. Sometimes parents tell their children they go abroad for their sake, and later caregivers remind them of this, amplifying their sorrow.

- *“I worry about them”. (Gr.II)*
- *“I am very concerned for my father’s health”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I hope nothing bad will happen to my parents while they are working”. (Gr.II)*
- *“I hope granny will be o.k.; she is taking care of me right now”. (Gr.I)*
- *“All I asked him to do was to study because his parents are sacrificing themselves for him”. (a caregiver)*

Some adults claim children whose parents went abroad feel guilty about this. In such circumstances children express regret about the way they behaved before their parents' departure. According to the IOM representative, the sense of guilt can have severe impacts on the child's development and can manifest itself in an inferiority complex.

- *"Unconsciously, these children feel guilty, considering themselves the cause of their parents' departure. They think they are to blame for all the harm occurring to their families. ... It is childish but the sense of guilt has a very serious psychological impact on the children; they can't have a normal psychological development. ... this guilt turns into a feeling of sinfulness and they feel ashamed for everything they have ever done to their parents". (IOM)*

Some of the adults affirmed that one of the greatest disadvantages of children whose parents work abroad is the lack of an emotional support system which results in feelings of loneliness. Children have to make huge efforts in order to overcome this feeling and quite often they don't manage to adapt well to the situation. Many circumstances and events in their lives remind them of their parents which tends to increase their suffering.

- *"When a mother goes abroad her child is traumatised ... the child loses his mother, in many cases both parents..." (DDEYS)*
- *"There is no one to help him deal with emotional problems, to give him advice, to tell him what is right and what is wrong". (IOM)*
- *"Children and teenagers need love, advice, they need to be caressed and understood, but how can they get all this unless their parents are with them". (UNICEF)*
- *"... some emotions, some special feelings for these children, because they suffer from their parents' absence ... they use up a great deal of psychological energy to cope with these feelings: lack of parents, lack of any possibility to share their thoughts and sorrows". (NCCRP)*
- *"On holidays we are few. I become sad and I miss my parents' love". (Gr.II)*
- *"... they are psychologically traumatised even when their parents can't attend meetings at school". (DDSAFP)*

It was ascertained that children's feelings about the separation from their parents changes over time. They usually feel the most affected right after their parents' departure and see this first period as the most difficult. As time passes, they adapt themselves to the new circumstances. But time is not able to ease the sufferings of all children.

- *"... I was crying on the first days after their departure". (Gr.I)*
- *"We miss her; everything reminds me of her". (Gr.I)*

Almost all caretakers confirmed that the period right after the departure is the most difficult for children. They noticed that during this period children become more timid, sad and reserved, but that they recover as time passes, for they need to talk and share their feelings. Some respondents explain this situation as a kind of shock children go through when they gain a level of freedom and independence they cannot deal with.

- *"It was very hard ... especially the first time". (a caregiver)*
- *"He stayed in his room for three days..." (a caregiver)*
- *"At the beginning my nephews were crying constantly. I knew what they were going through, but what could I do..."? (a caregiver)*
- *"I noticed they needed to talk". (a caregiver)*

- *“They say they need their parents...”. (a caregiver)*
- *“This sudden change of responsibilities is quite difficult for them.... Our children need to be guided and controlled. This enormous freedom and so much responsibility mislead them...”. (UNICEF)*

Children’s adaptation to new life circumstances with no parents by their side is an extremely difficult process. Despite the fact that in the consultation workshop the idea was expressed that independent life is an opportunity for children to self-examine and to develop different competencies, only a few teenagers affirmed they had really managed to overcome the problems they face. Thus, just a few children matured and managed to adapt constructively to their new life situations, while the great majority of children did not adapt successfully, a fact supported by the feelings overwhelming them and their opinion about their new-found freedom.

- *“Now I have pulled myself together and I think that is right. I became a grown-up earlier, but that is good. I see things differently; life became real”. (Gr.II)*
- *“I pulled myself together and I helped those who needed my help”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I wanted to get more freedom before. My parents left and I have got the freedom I was ,dreaming of, but I am sick and tired of it right now. After my mother’s departure, freedom became like a jail for me”. (Gr.II)*
- *“Right after their parents’ departure, children rejoice at the freedom they get, but soon after they begin suffering from loneliness”. (a headmaster)*

As a result, some persons keeping in contact with children identify several “types” of behaviour. Quite often they give a confused and ambivalent description of children’s behaviour, making conflicting assertions concerning their emotional lives. These adults seldom try to explain children’s reactions.

- *“... there are children who are calm and cope with it...”. (a teacher)*
- *“Some children feel they are inferior”. (a teacher)*
- *“Perhaps it is some kind of resistance because his parents left him”. (a teacher)*
- *“A pupil in the 7th form can be cheeky, but he is still too small and doesn’t understand. Besides, sometimes his grandmother takes care of him, sometimes one of his relatives”. (a teacher)*
- *“Some children are always sad and others give the impression of needing more attention and help. But there are also optimistic children involving themselves in all school activities”.(a headmaster)*
- *“Children become more arrogant and boastful. But at the same time they are shy and uncertain”. (NGO)*
- *“Children become more aggressive ... they are spoilt ... Or, on the contrary, they become more responsible...”.(a medical worker)*
- *“On the one hand they become self-confident, on the other – vice versa”. (DDEYS)*
- *“Children having parents who work abroad have quite a conspicuous behaviour; either they try to show they have much money, or they are too timid and reserved”. (MEYS)*

Teachers claim the spread of the migration phenomenon in the community influences a child’s ability to adapt to the new life circumstances. According to some of them, paradoxically, the more the number of children living without parents rises, the more they learn to better accept and deal with this situation. But other teachers believe that time makes children realise the negative consequences of this phenomenon.

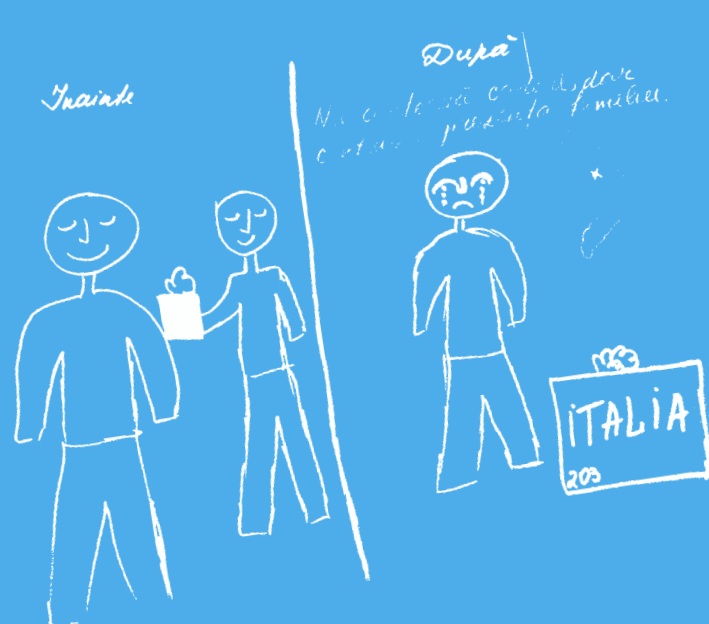
- *“At the beginning, after the first parents’ departure, I didn’t even dare to ask: how is your mummy? or How are you? ...their eyes were filling with tears. But later they became inured to the situation. Many parents have left since then. At the beginning it was tough for them ...now it has become fashionable”. (a teacher)*
- *“Some children don’t react so painfully to their parents’ absence right now”. (a teacher)*
- *“... several years of separation from their parents have made them aware of the fact that children with parents are happier than children with money, like them. Now there is a more profound awareness of this fact, but at the beginning it was quite prestigious”. (a teacher)*

Many adults believe that children having parents working abroad attribute an exaggerated importance to money. Surprisingly, some of those who are supposed to provide services to these children label them as “money children”, an expression with a strong pejorative meaning.

- *“Some children have attributed a greater importance to the material side. Getting presents from their parents they say: I have money and I don’t [need to] speak to you”. (a caregiver)*
- *“...they become greedy for money at an early age”. (a teacher)*
- *“This phenomenon brings up “money children”, who don’t aspire to anything because they are certain that money opens any door. Moral values are neglected in their education”. (NGO)*
- *“They are consumers; they know their parents will send them money and parcels and they no longer care how their parents earn this money”. (DDEYS)*
- *“They constitute a category of “money children”, they wear mobile telephones, they know what the power of money means and they are sure mummy’s money can solve any problem”. (DDEYS)*
- *“... they have no care about money for they are “money children”. (MHSP)*

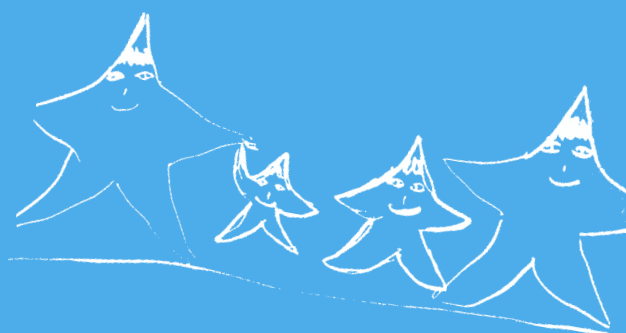
Some adults mention that money sent by parents makes many children feel superior to others. These children wear expensive clothes and can afford buying things that even some adults can’t. The young consultation workshop participants and numerous adults consider that the attribution of an excessive importance to money and material goods represents a defensive reaction to the lack of affection these children feel.

- *“I know several cases when children consider themselves superior, for their material situation has improved”. (DCW)*
- *“There are persons who always boast about their wealthy, beautiful life”. (DCW)*
- *“If you have money you respect yourself”. (a teacher)*



CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS

"It happened a year ago. My parents went abroad for work, leaving me and my brother in the care of our aunt. For I was quiet I became the victim of older boys. When my aunt was away in her own village, all the bad boys and girls used to gather at my place. I began changing radically, my only concern being the mobile telephones and the entertainment. The village is small and gossips spread fast, soon all my teachers knew about it. In spite of my poor academic performance, I attended school regularly, but going to school was like a torment for me, because teachers mocked constantly at me and they used events from my private life as bad examples for the other children. I was suffering from these everyday tortures, but I did not try to protect myself, for I was shy. It lasted until my parents came back home. Now, I am at home with my mummy, my school performance improved and I have a girlfriend. My dream is to join my father abroad. I hate teachers and I love my friends."



■ CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships with parents

The research results show that children's relationships suffered big changes after their parents' departure. Almost all children recognized the lack of communication as the most essential change that occurred to them during the separation period. Children mentioned that both the volume and the quality of their relationships had changed. Despite the fact that most children participating in the study are being taken care of by a relative, many of them describe themselves as lonely, isolated, and deprived of support.

- *"I am alone". (Gr.I)*
- *"She left and I miss our talks". (Gr.I)*
- *"I've drawn a cloud which means isolation". (Gr.II)*
- *"I don't have many friends". (Gr.I)*
- *"I am more reserved right now". (Gr.II)*
- *"I need an advice". (Gr.I)*
- *"Nobody can help me now". (Gr.I)*
- *"No parents – no support". (Gr.II)*
- *"When they were at home they sustained me, now I have only my granny by my side". (Gr.I)*
- *"Children don't know who can listen to their problems. There is a girl in our class whose parents left and she is supposed to take care of her two younger brothers. She has questions and problems but she doesn't know who can help her". (DCW)*

It was ascertained that a great concern of children with parents working abroad is their relationships with parents and other family members. At the age of 10-14 this preoccupation becomes more important than their relation with children of their own age. As for teenagers, both from the analysed and comparison groups, problems concerning relations with peers become essential. But family relationships remain important. Young consultation workshop participants point out that one of the main differences between children having parents working abroad and those living with their parents is the lack of psychological support for the first group. There is nobody at home waiting for them and who cares about their everyday problems and successes. A key feature of children living with parents is "the thought that any problem can be solved with somebody's help".

Some adults also mentioned that children living without parents do not have a reliable person to share their worries, feelings and happy moments. According to teachers, it is more common for small children to become disoriented when parents leave.

- *"Without parents they just can't share". (a teacher)*
- *"If you have a problem you can share it with your parents, but if your parents are gone there is nobody you can share with". (a teacher)*
- *"Getting advice from a parent is one thing, but getting advice from someone else..." (NCCRP)*
- *"Parents usually look after children, telling them what to do and how to do it. A child living without his mother is a child living on his own. Too much freedom he can't handle". (a teacher)*
- *"If from his early childhood a child has not been looked after by his parents, he is desperate, he doesn't know what is right and what is wrong". (a teacher)*

These teachers' observations coincide with the views of many children aged 10-14, who mentioned that the separation from parents had had an impact on the process of making decisions. Most young participants in the study estimated their own ability of making decisions in different circumstances to be average, while their peers living with parents recognised they had not developed this ability yet. Not getting advice from parents can make it tough for children to take decisions on their own.

- *"It is difficult, quite often I need a piece of advice". (Gr.I)*
- *"Now, I find it difficult to make up my mind on my own". (Gr.I)*
- *"Daddy is the head of the family; he used to make decisions. Now we have the freedom to decide but I don't think this is good". (Gr.I)*

The survey revealed that the most frequent way of communication between parents and children is the telephone (almost 86%), followed by sending parcels (almost 13%). Both, adults and children, confirmed these ways of communication are in current usage. At the same time some children emphasised that it was unsatisfactory for them to talk over the phone with their parents because it is a poor substitute for real contact, which is more profound.

- *"Despite the distance I talk to them almost every day". (Gr.I)*
- *"We talk over the phone, but I want to feel her next to me; I can't see her". (Gr.I)*
- *"... the sound of her words over the phone can't be compared to her real voice ". (Gr.I)*
- *"Children communicate with parents over the phone". (LPA)*
- *"... anyway they keep in touch with their parents, over the phone". (a teacher)*
- *"... over the phone, parents are concerned about children and about what they left at home". (a teacher)*
- *"... his mother is in Italy and she calls once a week, sometimes more often". (a teacher)*

Some caregivers and teachers reported that for children telephone conversations with parents are very important and they look forward to them, even if, quite often, this causes unpleasant emotions and increases their longing for parents and a feeling of loneliness.

- *"She is excited while talking over the phone [with her mother], she misses her". (a caregiver)*
- *"... they both cry over the phone and traumatise themselves". (a teacher)*

Some teachers consider telephone conversations to be a unique way for parents to maintain a strong tie with their children. But according to other teachers' opinions and in the DDSAFP representative's view, parents and children mainly talk about the need for money, various material goods and parcels, ignoring the child's emotional state.

- *"... parents guide them, but only over the phone". (a teacher)*
- *"... they pursue their education through letters and phone talks". (a teacher)*
- *"... they trust their children". (a teacher)*
- *"Their conversation focuses on the subject of money and parcels. Unfortunately, some parents don't worry about their children's health". (a teacher)*
- *"Even if parents keep in touch with their children, gradually these telephone talks become less frequent and less affectionate". (a teacher)*
- *"Telephone conversations or even tapes and pictures of their parents can't replace for children real contact". (DDSAFP)*

Children themselves agree that they do not discuss subjects like their emotional state and the everyday difficulties they have to face. Reasons such as the high cost of phone conversations, the difficulty of dealing with more sensitive issues, and children's concern for their parents make communication between parents and children focus only on the household, children's success at school, and their need for money and other goods. Before leaving, most parents made a plan and established some rules according to which children should lead their lives and communication between parents/children/caregivers are centred on the assessment of the development of the plan. For some children, telephone conversations take place at certain intervals or in emergency situations. These circumstances make it difficult for them to share ordinary problems, their sorrows, or events that could be of interest.

- *"...parents call regularly; they are interested mainly in their children's success at school." (a caregiver)*
- *"... in emergency cases we call parents to consult with them." (a caregiver)*
- *"... parents are not preoccupied with their children's problems." (a teacher)*
- *"... we discuss with them, but he also needs his mother for a piece of advice... and there is nobody he could share with. And what can they decide over the telephone...this is not a way." (a teacher)*
- *"Sometimes children don't learn anything from telephone conversations; parents don't know what advice to give them." (a teacher)*

As a result of the migration process several regions with high levels of migration developed a network of regular bus routes for transporting people, parcels and money. In such communities children happen to miss classes in order to receive parcels from their parents. Teachers involved in the study said they understand children in such cases. The MHSP representative mentioned this phenomenon could constitute an obstacle in the education process in schools.

- *"On Wednesdays there is a bus transporting parcels." (a teacher)*
- *"... they send them parcels and buy them goods like clothes." (a teacher)*
- *"... there are buses coming directly to our village; others pass through and collect parcels." (a teacher)*
- *"... they ask for permission to miss lessons when they have to receive parcels, and we allow them to leave." (a teacher)*
- *"... on the day the minibus is supposed to arrive with presents from abroad, children don't even go to school. We have discussed this problem with mayors who should prevent the minibuses from coming during the teaching hours." (MHSP)*

Almost a third of the children participating in the survey (36%) mentioned that parents visit them once every 2-3 months, 17% - once in six months, and 10% - once a year. A fourth of the children (26%) see their parents less than once a year. The frequency of visits depends directly on the distance between the foreign country where parents found a job and their homeland, as well as on their legal or illegal status. As a rule parents working in Russia visit their children more frequently than those working in Western Europe. The frequency of visits from the latter depends on whether or not parents possess visas. Several cases of internal migration were also registered, children saying their parents work in another locality and return home for a couple of days a week or month. Teachers expressed the opinion that it is easier for children to adapt to their parents' absence if it does not last for too long.

- *“... those who work legally come home once a year, once in a three months period... and they keep in touch with their children”. (a teacher)*
- *“... parents come back in summer. There are parents who have been living away for 5-6 years, but they return home regularly because they have working visas”. (a teacher)*
- *“... some parents having the status of legal immigrants visit their children quite often”. (a teacher)*
- *“Visiting their children once in 2-3 months, parents try to give them so much love, energy, advice and care that could be enough till the next visit”. (a teacher)*

Children rarely characterised the development of their relationships with parents working abroad. And those who expressed themselves on this subject mentioned that their relations with parents are as close as before or even improved. The study shows that despite difficulties, some children try hard to meet their parents' expectations, becoming more responsible, succeeding at school and in other fields. Consultation workshop participants confirmed that children's motivation to maintain parents' confidence and a close relationship with them is a very important one; it concerns all children and teenagers, including those living with their parents. Most children say they appreciate their parents' efforts to offer them a better life and don't want to let them down.

- *“... my love for them is as strong as before”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I still love her like I did before”. (Gr.I)*
- *“We loved her before when she was next to us, we love her now when she is far away in the same way”. (Gr.I)*
- *“Now I feel we are closer with my mummy [than before she left]”. (Gr.II)*
- *“...they want to show they are adults and independent”. (DCW)*
- *“...I am alone but I try to succeed in everything, at school, at home...I don't want my parents to be ashamed of me”. (DCW)*
- *“... they don't want to let their parents down, especially the one working abroad”. (DCW)*
- *“First of all they don't want to lose their parents' confidence”. (DCW)*

Some adults, especially teachers, think that the children's sense of responsibility has increased as a result of effective control by their parents or caregivers. In their opinion, children's positive behaviour is due to the fear that all their undesirable deeds will subsequently reach their parents.

- *“Perhaps they are aware that parents will come back and punish them”. (a teacher)*

According to adults, children perceive their parents' need to go abroad in different ways. Thus, some children understand that working abroad is a unique possibility for their parents to support families. For others, parents' regular departures represent a disappointment, which emphasises the psychological distance between them.

- *“Sometimes parents come back after 2 years of absence, bring some money and promise their children not to leave any more, but not finding a job here they leave again”. (IOM)*
- *“There are children who agree with the fact that their parents must leave again after having visited their families; they are not able to find a job here”. (a teacher)*

The survey showed that children from communities included in the study are aware of their parents' motives for going abroad. For some of them, understanding these causes could help them overcome difficult experiences.

- *"Nobody wants to leave his homeland and go abroad. The main reason is the need of money". (Gr.II)*
- *"Parents are ready to do anything for children; they care about our welfare and education". (Gr.II)*

Children mentioned the following motives for their parents' departure:

■ Poverty, unemployment, lack of financial means to support families

- *"The lack of money".*
- *"No job in the homeland".*
- *"They can't find a job at home but they can make much money abroad".*
- *"...in order to buy food, clothes and footwear".*
- *"We don't have enough money for all we need to buy".*
- *"She couldn't support our family having a salary of a teacher".*
- *"...in order to support the family, if she hadn't gone abroad we would lead an austere life".*
- *"There is not enough money to buy food, clothes, to pay the electricity/gas/ telephone bills".*
- *"... in order to get rid of poverty".*

■ The lack of financial means necessary to complete the building of a house or to make renovations

- *"... in order to finish the constructions".*
- *"... to renovate our house".*
- *"We wanted to build a house".*
- *"... to make enough money for buying a house".*

■ The need to repay loans

- *"... to repay the loans".*
- *"We had many loans".*
- *"... in order to make money and repay the loans".*

■ Parents' wish to offer children a better future / an education

- *"... they want to be sure we have a better life".*
- *"In order to offer their children a decent future".*
- *"They want us to be able to go to the university".*
- *"... to further our education after leaving school".*
- *"To enter a prestigious profession".*

■ The illness of one of the family members

- *"I am ill and it causes big expenses".*
- *"My father got sick and mummy had to go abroad".*

■ Conflicts between parents

- *“Because of money and constant quarrels with father”.*
- *“My parents quarrelled and mummy left for Italy”.*
- *“Mummy and daddy divorced; mummy had to go abroad to support us”.*

Some teenagers talked about their experiences in their attempt to adapt to life without parents. They mentioned that sometimes they were looking forward to seeing them, but after a week of living together they were anxious to see them gone. At the same time, most teachers said that relationships between parents working abroad and their children become colder in time. These situations could be considered a defence mechanism against possible separations from parents. Life without one or even both parents means a great upheaval in a child's life. They live under constant stress, overwhelmed by emotions and new, unknown situations they are not ready for. Gradually, they “accustom themselves” to handling problems on their own, they get used to a new lifestyle and live according to their own rules. These rules can include apparently insignificant things like ways of dressing, diet, housekeeping, etc. When returning parents suggest that their children reconsider their behaviour, it is quite difficult for them to obey. Regardless of what our attitude towards the child's new lifestyle is, it helped him overcome all the problems he had to face alone.

- *“...his mother is due to come back home again soon; he looks forward to seeing her”. (a teacher)*
- *“They feel their parents will soon return and they are anxious to see them”. (a caregiver)*
- *“Quite often, after several days of living together, children react by asking their parents when they intend to leave again, especially after having received all the material goods they need”. (a teacher)*
- *“... anyway it is an incomplete family; they have become almost strangers”. (a headmaster)*
- *“Finally, the child becomes estranged from his parents; they no longer represent authority. Sometimes he even hates, unconsciously, these parents.... [Parents] discover their children have become estranged from them...”. (IOM)*
- *“The relationship between parent and child becomes colder and more reserved”. (a teacher)*
- *“These children isolate themselves from their parents. Soon after their arrival, children want their parents to leave.... She established a new order at home and parents usually tend to destroy it, and she doesn't accept some of the remarks and comments. She is independent, she is on her own, and she wants her mother to leave”. (DCW)*
- *“... children feel embarrassed at their parents' presence, for they got used to being alone and now they come and begin telling... ”. (DCW)*
- *“Children forget how they should behave in their parents' presence. They become estranged from them”. (DCW)*

Children's relationships with caregivers

Almost all children in this study were taken into care by relatives. Some live with one of their parents, but most live with grandparents or aunts.

Local public administration representatives mentioned cases in which children are left in the care of complete strangers. According to caregivers and teachers, adults who

migrate leave their children in the care of persons they trust, usually relatives. Central public administration representatives have reported situations when parents do not let anybody from the community know about their departure abroad, for it is illegal, and therefore children are left without care.

- *“... of course, before leaving they asked a reliable person to look after their children”. (a caregiver)*
- *“... some children live with grandparents, others with relatives, only teenagers in the 11, 12 13th form live alone”. (a headmaster)*
- *“Children are left in the care of relatives who support them”. (LPA)*
- *“... in the most frequent cases, mothers go abroad illegally and can’t grant somebody the guardianship of children, leaving them alone at home ... we are lucky that neighbours report such cases in time”. (MEYS)*

According to respondents, smaller children usually move to the caregivers’ houses, whereas older children stay at home, being regularly visited. In the consultation workshop, the opinion of the participants was that most teenagers with both parents working abroad prefer living in their parents’ house, separately from caregivers. They also mentioned that the best caregivers are relatives whom they could ask for help in difficult situations. Within the research, various cases were reported in which children had to leave for other localities to stay with caregivers.

- *“Grandparents only visit them, but they spend the night alone”. (a teacher)*
- *“Some children live with uncles or aunts, but most frequently with grandparents. There are cases when even three children had moved to another family. We have a concrete case when the sister from X brought the boy here in Y”. (a headmaster)*

Perhaps for smaller children the presence of an adult in the house is very important. It was reported that many children who had been taken care of and brought up by caregivers from early childhood call them “mummy” and “daddy”, while parents are called by their names.

- *“... she was only 8 months when they left; she calls my husband “daddy”. He tells her “I am not your daddy”, but she replies “you are because I don’t know another one”. And she loves him very much”. (a caregiver)*
- *“A girl living with her grandmother said ‘I have got two mothers’. She is in the 3rd form and she has lived with her grandmother since she was a baby! ... her mother explained to the girl that she has a grandmother and only one mother who gave her birth. The girl is aware, but she spends most of the time with grandma...”. (LPA)*

Children rarely described their relationships with caregivers. This is also due to the methods used in the study, which did not focus on these persons’ role. Nevertheless, children’s comments on caregivers show that relationships do not seem to be close enough to cause children to share with them.

- *“I could tell mummy about any problem”. (Gr.II)*
- *“... I became reserved. I can’t tell grandma everything ... I am alone”. (Gr.II)*

Caregivers consider that their role is mainly to offer children adequate living conditions, to look after their school success, and to try to prevent undesirable social behaviour. At the same time, they appraised differently the difficulty of this role. Most of them mentioned the first period, after parents’ departure, as being the most difficult one. The suffering of the child coincided with the process of adaptation to life in the caregiver’s family. In only one case the caregiver affirmed that the child

adapted easier because from early childhood he had been spending a lot of time at his grandparents' place.

- *"At the beginning ... he was shy, it is understandable, there was no mummy, no daddy – it is easier with them. But now he got used to us ...". (a caregiver)*
- *"They felt like strangers at the beginning, they behaved well, they were afraid I would punish them, now they feel at home". (a caregiver)*
- *"After my sister's departure my nephews used to cry a lot, but what could I do?" (a caregiver)*

One of the most difficult situations is when a caregiver is supposed to look after several children or even an elderly relative. Only a single case of this kind was identified during the research, but consulted youth said that this happens rather frequently and, as a rule, in such conditions children feel neglected. In the opinion of the NCCRP representative, realising they are not a priority for caregivers makes children feel uncertain and isolated.

- *"... besides children I also have to take care of their abandoned grandfather and it is quite hard ...". (a caregiver)*
- *"... in addition to me, my aunt has to look after some other nephews". (DCW)*
- *"... anyway these persons have a spectrum of interests and the responsibility of caring for these children is a supplementary one. It can't be compared with parental care. Children are sensitive creatures and feel this estrangement ... they feel a lack of care and support". (NCCRP)*

According to some consultation workshop participants, many caregivers, thinking that children have adapted themselves to life in their new families, actually do not know the real feelings of these children, accepting only the outward appearances. They cannot see children's suffering because children usually do not feel free to talk about their personal experiences. Youth expressed the idea that caregivers find it hard to admit children do not feel as comfortable with them as they feel with parents.

Most caregivers and some teachers mentioned that looking after somebody's child is a bigger responsibility than looking after your own. Therefore, many caregivers tend to become overprotective. Some teachers, on the other hand, claim that there are caregivers *"more indifferent than parents"*.

- *"The responsibility is enormous... with your own child you worry a lot; when you are looking after someone else's child it is even more complicated". (a caregiver)*
- *"... it is a huge responsibility, especially when both parents have left...". (a teacher)*
- *"... it depends on the caregiver's family... there are some deviations...". (a teacher)*

An absolute majority of community agents – mayors, teachers, medical workers – said proudly that in their localities each child with parents working abroad is being closely looked after by adults. At the same time, most respondents mentioned that generally caregivers only attend to children's physical living conditions. And, unfortunately, this is far from ensuring the child's harmonious development. In their opinion, caregivers are not able to meet all the needs of children, mainly those of teenagers. Living in the caregiver's family, the child lacks parental care. Some adults mentioned these children usually do not have enough leisure and sometimes they are deprived of communication with other children of their own age, due to household activities for which they are responsible.

- *"I am good as a guardian – (I am able) to provide them with food, to give them a shelter, to shape behaviour. But I can't replace their mother. I can offer true love only to my own children". (a headmaster)*

- *"...looking after somebody's child is like calling 'mummy' a complete stranger... you can't feel what you feel for your own child, it is not the same kindness, the same love or the same care..." (a medical worker)*
- *"...they offer them food, a warm house, all kinds of basic needs. But concerning the emotional aspect – it is not like being with parents..." (LPA)*

Some caregivers reported how they try to compensate for the parents' absence:

- Giving equal treatment to your own children and those left in your care;
 - *"I do my best to be fair to both of them. I don't want them to quarrel or hate each other, saying: 'Her children are playing, while we are exploited'. When they play, they play together, when they work, they work together, too". (a caregiver)*
 - *"...I buy footwear for both girls. I don't want them to think there are favourites". (a caregiver)*
- Discussing topics of their interest in order to distract them from unpleasant emotions;
 - *"...do you like Shakira? Look what I read... I tackled such a subject and we talked about music and I noticed a change in my child's eyes..." (a caregiver)*
- Increasing to an extreme degree the control of children's everyday activities to prevent them from adopting an undesirable behaviour;
 - *"...he is under strict control, every movement, every step. He is not allowed to go anywhere without permission... this is what I asked him at the beginning: 'Are you able to obey or not?'" (a caregiver)*
 - *"He should not complain about living conditions, only that he is under permanent control..." (a caregiver)*
- Replacing leisure activities with household duties.
 - *"...feed the animals and the poultry, chop some wood for the fire and wait for me... when the child is busy with household duties it is like he is 'framed' and you can control him". (a caregiver)*

Many adults noticed aggressive behaviour of children with parents working abroad. Some of the young consultation workshop participants confirmed that quite often caregivers try to replace parents and, in order to ensure the child's discipline, tend to become authoritarian. The great majority of children, especially teenagers, do not accept such an attitude and show their protest by becoming aggressive. A local public administration representative said that an excessive guardianship can negatively influence a child's self-confidence.

- *"...when the relative looking after him tells him what to do he replies 'you are not either my mother or my father'. They are very aggressive". (a medical worker)*
- *"... grandparents can't deal with them; they don't obey". (a headmaster)*
- *"They don't tolerate remarks from grandparents or relatives". (LPA)*
- *"Children become aggressive; they don't recognise the caregiver's authority. They are spoiled". (a medical worker)*
- *"I think excessive control leads to the loss of self-confidence; children wouldn't feel comfortable any more". (DDEYS)*

Youth reported cases when caregivers infringe on the child's right to privacy. Perhaps, intending to prevent children from doing undesirable deeds, caregivers want to be aware of children's personal lives and resort to reading diaries or letters addressed to parents. Teachers and caregivers have also mentioned such situations.

- *"... he has got a copybook and writes down everything that occurs during the day. I find it and read it...I tell him: 'you are already a big boy'... But he replies: 'granny, I thought you can't read in this language'". (a caregiver)*
- *"... I read a girl's letter to her mother who is abroad..." (a teacher)*

Almost all the interviewed adults and all the consulted children mentioned that there are many situations that can lead to conflicts in the relationship between caregivers and children. Teachers thought that differences between parents' educational concepts and those of caregivers can lead to conflicts between them. When parents come back they reproach caregivers for what they believe to be negative behaviour of their children. A central public administration representative reported that there are cases when relatives who are supposed to look after children *"can not handle it"* and therefore ask the mayor to place the children in residential institutions. Adults pointed to a range of factors contributing to conflicts between children and caregivers:

- Old age, which represents concepts of life completely different from those of children and teenagers. This includes the incapacity to help children with their homework and sustain them, when it is required, in their spheres of interest;
 - *"The cause is the grandparents' traditional education... this situation requires knowledge of psychology, of child-parent attitudes, and many other problems, especially connected with morality.... It is not enough to explain the problem to a child, he needs concrete examples from family". (a headmaster)*
 - *"... she can't help the girl with her mathematics homework. The girl is in the 4th form and when mother was home they used to do homework together". (LPA)*
 - *"...they can't agree with their grandparents because of differences in age; for instance, grandfather goes to bed at 9 o'clock and he turns the light off ordering: 'It is bed time' or he often asks: 'Why should you go there?', or 'Why are you doing this?' Children have their own interests... this is how conflicts occur". (a headmaster)*
- The use of an ineffective style of communication because of lack of awareness of the particulars of adolescence;
 - *"... the difference in age and convictions is too significant". (DDSAFP)*
 - *"... children have their own opinions and modern views, but grandparents, due to their age, see life differently". (DDSAFP)*
- Restrictive educational strategy, adopted in order to avoid or reduce the risks of undesirable behaviour;
 - *"Maybe they want more freedom... but grandparents disagree. This also has an impact on their character". (LPA)*
 - *"They want to take part in contests in the city ... sometimes they are not allowed because grandparents are old and are not able to accompany them". (LPA)*

Money sent by parents from abroad has also been mentioned as a cause for conflict between children and caregivers. Parents send money not only to ensure children's support, but also as a reward for caregivers' efforts. In both cases, there were situations when caregivers' attitudes changed depending on whether the sum of money had

been transferred on time or late. The consultation workshop confirmed that people's attitudes towards these children changes if their material conditions worsen.

- *"... a distant relative expects payment for looking after the children". (DDEYS)*

The way caregivers administer money sent by parents can also create tensions between children and caregivers. Such situations occur even if there are related agreements between parents and caregivers. Adolescents may feel frustrated by the way caregivers spend money because, on the one hand they are told that parents work and earn money for them, but, on the other they are not involved in discussions about how the money is used. In some cases, caregivers abuse their position and start spending money designed for other purposes. The research revealed the case of a young girl who had not managed to organise her birthday party with her friends as she wished because of the caregiver who 'saved' some money from the sum sent by parents for the party.

- *"The girl wanted to organise her birthday party and [her mother] sent her the necessary money, but it didn't happen as planned. [Her aunt] made some modifications in order to pocket the savings". (DCW)*
- *"... perhaps it happens because parents send money, but caregivers use it for personal purposes". (DDEYS)*

Some adults claim, there are cases when children, having at least one parent abroad, become witnesses to or sometimes even victims of caregivers' inappropriate and dangerous behaviour. Among them are fathers, stepfathers or relatives.

- *"Parents leave them with grandparents, but sometimes the latter have bad habits, they drink alcohol, quarrel, swear". (a headmaster)*
- *"Mothers leave and girls to stay with fathers who begin drinking. There are cases when fathers abuse their daughters". (IOM)*
- *"...fathers abuse alcohol and then the risk for children of being physically abused is high... or they are not understood, or there is no one with whom they can share. A father who spends his time drinking has no time to communicate with his children, understand them or offer them what they need". (UNICEF)*
- *"...there is a high risk of sexual abuse [especially in] situations when fathers abuse alcohol ... or when boys or girls are left in the care of stepfathers". (UNICEF)*

Children's relationship with peers

Children and youth in the study are very concerned about their relationships with peers. At the age of 10-14, children from the comparison group mention that they pass their free time in company with their friends, whereas children without parental care mention envy and distrust in their relationships. Adolescents from both groups expressed similar concerns – [lack of] mutual support between friends, the importance of colleagues' and friends' opinions, relationships with persons of the opposite sex. Within the consultation workshop participants said that many children living with parents want to show their maturity by trying to prove to their peers that they are independent of parents. Consulted youth noticed that most children with parents working abroad tend to avoid activities in large groups and tend to prefer communication in small groups of people in a similar situation. These children's are concerned about finding 'authentic friends', which means reliable persons, with whom they can share their problems, including personal matters. It was also mentioned that these children "find themselves easily under the influence of negative circles of friends".

Most of these ideas can be found in the comments made by adults involved in the study. Caregivers are the only group of adults who think that relationships between

children left in their care and peers remained as friendly and as close as before parents' departure. Only a few teachers from one locality involved in the study agreed that these children's circle of friends had not changed and the conflicts between them had not been caused by their family situations. It should be also mentioned that this community is characterised by a tradition of youth participation.

- *"...it's the same social environment... according to my observations, I can't say it has changed; it's the same circle of friends and colleagues..." (a caregiver)*
- *"...she is quite friendly towards everybody; she plays and invites them all to her place". (a caregiver)*
- *"...they aren't isolated in class; I didn't notice anything like this. They are all friends. Even if sometimes they quarrel, it is not because of the fact that "your parents are working abroad..." I wouldn't say they quarrel because of their parents' departure". (a teacher)*
- *"Children with parents abroad aren't isolated from their colleagues and the conflicts between them aren't based on such reasons". (a headmaster)*

Almost all teachers believe that parents' departure abroad is a negative factor which influences children's relationships with their peers. In their opinion these relationships usually evolve in two directions: consolidation, thanks to sympathy and understanding of these children's situations, or coldness or tension, because of the envy of their material conditions. In the opinion of teachers and other community members, envy is more frequent.

- *"I think colleagues protect and support them". (a teacher)*
- *"...unfortunately, they are the object of people's envy". (DDEYS)*
- *"...children's relationships are dominated by envy. The one who has something starts mocking the one who doesn't...and this creates many problems". (a medical worker)*
- *"...on the one hand they have mobile telephones and expensive clothes... there is envy, but on the other hand, people feel sorry for them, for they are far from their mothers; there is no one they can share with and talk to, and it is hard for them to manage the household responsibilities". (a headmaster)*

Some adults have noticed that most children with parents working abroad restrict their friendships to peers who are in a similar situation, a tendency more characteristic and noticeable among adolescents. In the opinion of adults, this can be explained by the fact that their members share the same concerns as well as the same improvement of their material status, and this makes them feel superior to other children. The latter, in their turn, envy them their improved material conditions and sometimes they even hurt them, being aware there is nobody they can turn to for help or support. As a result, many children left without parental care want to give the impression that they do not face any problems. Teachers and headmasters report that these are factors that make these two groups of children come into conflict.

- *"...we can talk about grouping; they begin grouping themselves, sharing either a positive or a negative interest. This phenomenon is not often seen in the 5th - 6th forms, but in the 8th - 9th it is seen quite often. In the 10th, 11th, and 12th forms they are mostly on their own". (a headmaster)*
- *"...they are united generally in material matters: 'let's go to the bar or elsewhere'..." (NGO)*
- *"...they consider themselves members of the local elite. Children living with parents are considered people of low social rank and there is hatred between them... the same situation characterises the adults". (a medical worker)*

- *“At the disco they have their circle of friends and detest the others” (a headmaster)*
- *“They show they are superior in relationships with colleagues”. (DDEYS)*
- *“...fights...it sometimes happens. They say: ‘he pushed him,’ of course he knows nobody will stand for him because his father is abroad”. (LPA)*
- *“...those living with parents know that if a conflict occurs...‘my daddy will come to school, but in your case only your mother [will come].” (DCW)*

It was mentioned that children do not always consider their favourable financial situation as an advantage. A consultation workshop participant claimed that children with parents abroad also envy their peers, especially their free time and their lack of household responsibilities. These are things they cannot enjoy. Children in a good financial situation are sometimes accepted by persons or in different groups quite easily, especially because they can buy whatever they want.

- *“When I meet someone living with parents he always speaks about what he saw on TV, about homework, about what he ate, what he did, with whom he played and how he spent his leisure time”. (DCW)*
- *“...it is well known that parents will send them money and they won’t be in need of anything, thus friends are always with them”. (a teacher)*
- *“Rather often people take advantage of those having money, but when there is no more money they are usually isolated and forgotten”. (DCW)*

Consultation workshop participants mention that pocket money facilitates children’s access to various services and this determines differences in ways they spend their free time. Children with parents abroad form their own circles of friends because they have a lot in common: emotional experiences, interests, discussion topics, household concerns, and their ways of enjoying leisure. Often, as they go through quite different experiences, they cannot talk about these things with peers living with parents.

- *“They have nothing in common. Children living with parents...don’t have as many problems as the others. When I meet my friend, whose parents are also abroad, we speak about how difficult life is without parents, but sometimes this life can also be pleasant”. (DCW)*
- *“It is a self isolation from children living with parents because of their financial situation; children with parents abroad have more money: ‘Let’s have lunch in the town’. ‘I cannot afford something like that’ is often the response of the child living with parents. Maybe once a child with parents can say yes, but those with parents abroad do it almost every day. It is easier for them to go out and have a meal instead of cooking at home for about 2 hours”. (DCW)*
- *“...they have their own interests, their circle of friends, they celebrate their birthday parties at home, they get together at someone’s place, listening to music, watching I don’t know what kind of video tapes. Sometimes they form alliances... I can’t say whether it is good or bad – I don’t know”. (a headmaster)*

Many community members (medical workers, local NGO representatives, teachers) and local public administration representatives noted that the groupings of children with parents abroad often show risk behaviour, like drug abuse, an exaggerated interest in various forms of entertainment, school abandonment, precocious sexual relationships and delinquent behaviour. Adults explained this phenomenon by the lack of control from parents and caregivers, as well as by the fact that they have free access to financial resources at their disposal. Participants in the consultation workshop mentioned that children’s will to make themselves noticed in their social environment

combined with their vulnerability make some of them join groups of persons having a bad reputation. Similar situations were reported both by headmasters and teachers.

- *“They want to be noticed, but not always does it happen in groups of good teenagers”. (DCW)*
- *“These children usually form their own circle... and being influenced by the street rules, they obey a program of education that suits only them”. (local NGO member)*
- *“Children in our suburb for instance don’t aspire to anything; they don’t fear their parents or God and they aren’t concerned about their education”. (local NGO member)*
- *“Some of them become thieves or there are other problems. They think they are free to do anything...”. (a medical worker)*
- *“...they stay out till late at night, they talk and you can hear shouts and other things... Girls fall in love earlier and boys reach maturity faster. [They use] cigarettes and alcohol, they have money, they are free...”. (a medical worker)*
- *“There are cases when they cause us trouble...they feel independent, they have money and they get involved in negative affairs: smoking, drinking alcohol... they want to prove they are heroes and take part in robberies. Police had to deal with such a case”. (a headmaster)*
- *“...some are manipulated by other adolescents”. (a headmaster)*
- *“They become spoilt, they go to bars and have contact with adults who are...I would say offenders”. (DDSAFP)*
- *“...most of them abuse alcohol, children sometimes steal, they run away from their homes and don’t obey to their grandparents. I can say we loose these children”. (DDEYS)*

Some consulted children say that worries and other specific emotions isolate some children with parents abroad so that they become indifferent to group activities. Most of the children in the study consider they have an average ability to participate effectively in a group of peers. In one community, children from both age groups with parents abroad, estimated that they had a high level of ability in this area, whereas in another community, children of 10 – 14 years, living with parents placed this ability at a low level of development. Taking into account the different experiences of these communities in the area of participation, the results suggest that both, interactive methods and child and youth participation in community activities develop their social abilities. It was noted in the consultation that the main condition for children’s participation in group activities is the existence of a *“common interest, purpose”*.

- *“They refuse to get involved in group activities. We notice an isolation; not a complete one, but an isolation. About 2 – 3 persons”. (DCW)*
- *“When we approach the subject of parents they leave; they feel the need to isolate themselves”. (DCW)*
- *“...they are distant and don’t get involved because of the longing for their parents and all these feelings. They want to become members of our groups, but they must be helped by other children, too. There must be a strong connection between these two categories of children”. (DCW)*



SCHOOL



■ SCHOOL

The assessment of the school situation of children left without parental care was not among the research's aims. Nevertheless, we can not neglect this aspect because it was identified as one of the children's biggest daily preoccupations.

Children identified school as their most important daily preoccupation, especially school attendance, homework, and marks.

- *"I want to do well at school and get good marks". (Gr.III)*
- *"School is our greatest concern because we spend most of the time at school". (Gr.II)*

Similar responses could be seen in all groups of children. Differences appear when comparing the frequency of responses regarding concerns about school given by children aged 10-14 with and without parental care. Despite the fact that children with parents working abroad are preoccupied mostly with school, it was noticed to a lesser extent than children from the comparison group. This difference is insignificant regarding children of 15-17 years.

Having good results at the end of the term represents an important concern for children in secondary school. Because the workshop was held on the eve of their examinations, this concern was even more evident.

- *"I have to prepare for my exams and get good mark". (Gr.II)*
- *"We are very concerned about school now because in this period we have to take a lot of tests". (Gr.IV)*

Analysing the effects of parents' departure, children notice changes in school performance in both directions. The decline in school performance is associated by some children with the lack of parental support and encouragement. On the other hand, improvement in performance at school is due to children's will to reward their parents' efforts or to meet their requirements.

- *"My father used to make me read; now there is nobody to help me". (Gr.I)*
- *"My school performance is better because they are working hard there for me". (Gr.I)*
- *"I am studying better now, and I want them to be proud of me when they come back". (Gr.I)*

In the opinion of the consultation workshop participants, parental supervision and presence is very important at an early age when children are learning to study on their own. They consider that too long an absence by parents makes it difficult for children to realise the usefulness of studying. It also leads to the refusal of children to accept their parents' subsequent criticisms in regard to their school performance.

- *"My mother didn't teach me anything since I was in the 6th form because of her absence; I am now in the 12th form and it is too late". (DCW)*

Most consulted children mention that, after their parents' departure, their school performance is decreasing. They consider that children left without supervision are not able to manage their freedom and cannot resist temptations like entertainment and peer pressure, spending little time on homework.

- *"It is difficult to stay at home and study when you are alone and friends invite you: 'Come out!' And nobody is there to stop you from going. Why not?" (DCW)*

Most adults think that with parents' departure abroad children's school performance declines. Children are less motivated to have good results, having the conviction that education does not

ensure a prosperous future. In some adults' opinion, the same attitude is held by many parents, for whom a high school diploma is more important than the studies' quality.

- *"Parent says: 'You must get your diploma, the marks don't matter'". (DDEYS)*

Failing to achieve educational requirements is explained as a result of the lack of parental supervision, stimulation, and monitoring. At the same time, caregivers are not able to always check the school performance of children in their care. Some teachers claim that children's school efficiency diminishes in cases when both parents go abroad, but if the child stays with one parent his school success does not suffer any changes. Adults also say that in some cases after parents' departure children have poor school attendance and become disobedient.

- *"Some children don't do their homework. Adults don't look after them". (a teacher)*
- *"Their school performance is going down. Grandparents and aunts provide them with food and clothes. In the majority of cases the material aspect is taken care of. But their successes at school... it is hard for an old person to look after a child". (LPA)*

Adults also notice that after parents' departure children are too busy with household activities, which become their daily duties and therefore they have little time for their studies.

Poor outcomes of children with parents working abroad are associated by adults with children's confidence that money will allow them to pay for their university studies and that it is not necessary to make efforts to meet the educational requirements. Some adults express the opinion that many children envisage joining their parents abroad after leaving school and do not see the need to study.

- *"Children say: 'Why should I study? For instance, his parents had a poor school performance and now they are in Italy and they are wealthier than those who received good marks and stayed in the country'". (local NGO member)*
- *"...more precisely his motivation decreases because the financial motivation prevails: having money is important". (a headmaster)*

Caregivers think that school performance of children left in their care did not change after parents' departure, but on the contrary children are motivated to study because the purpose of their parents' migration is to provide them a better future. Teachers share the same view confirming that some children become more responsible in completing their homework.

- *"Parents went abroad to offer them a better future and they should be hard-working". (a caregiver)*

One of the main risks children face after parents' departure is dropping out of school. Some adults claim it is important for these children to be supported in order to prevent them from discontinuing their studies. At the same time, most teachers and adults mention that there are no cases of dropping out of school by children with parents abroad.

- *"The risk of dropping out of school goes up. It all begins with the fact that the child left without any care is late because he/she forgot to set the alarm clock and then...". (DDEYS)*
- *"There haven't been any registered cases of school leaving by children of this category". (a teacher)*

The representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection mentioned that in case of early school leaving, local social workers take action immediately to bring the child back to school. From the opinion of the representative of the International Organisation for Migration, city and school officials are responsible for identifying

children who do not attend school, reintegrating them back into the educational system as well as determining their particular needs. The representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs said that parents' absence or the lack of legal representatives for children makes it difficult to haul somebody over the coals for not respecting his/her parental obligations in case of school abandonment.

- *"...there is nobody we can sue or bring to justice for neglecting parental responsibilities". (MIA)*

Relationships with teachers, their attitude and support for children left without parental care, represent an important aspect of school life. Teachers claim that they have the same attitude towards children with parents abroad and children living with parents. Adults from the community share the same point of view.

- *"...there is not a difference in teachers' attitude towards children living separately from their parents and those living with parents". (a teacher)*

For teachers the main criterion to assess children's personal value seems to be their academic performance. If the pupil shows good academic results the teacher is generally not interested in other aspects of his life, even if he experiences problems. But if the school performance of children with parents working abroad decreases, some teachers associate this fact with an improved material situation, the expensive clothes, the telephones and the computers they have.

- *"...when bad things happen, teachers start asking themselves, 'if these children are better clothed and if they can afford to buy different things like mobile phones, for instance, why don't they want to learn?'" (a headmaster)*

Consultation workshop participants mention that teachers do not always manage to identify the problems that children left without parental care face because children tend to hide the difficulties they meet in order to avoid becoming the subject of discussion between community members, but also to prevent their parents from learning about their problems. At the same time, in the opinion of consulted children, there would be better communication between children and teachers if the latter had more psychological experience and were available to approach delicate subjects that are of great importance to children, connected with their physical and emotional development.

- *"...some children have a formal behaviour with adults because they don't want the latter to discuss them or tell their parents bad things about them". (DCW)*
- *"Teachers are the only people children can share with and consult with on delicate subjects". (DCW)*

Some adults think children do not tend to speak openly with teachers. The image of an authoritarian teacher promoted by school and society make children become reserved, and they do not perceive teachers as partners in discussions about private problems.

- *"We teachers are willing to discuss with them, to make them be honest with us, to give them a piece of advice, but we are still strangers to them. The teacher in our school is an authoritarian who 'makes me study, behave well, teaches me to be polite' etc. We can't give him that which only his parents are able to give". (a headmaster)*
- *"We teachers talk to them in private about their situation. But on their own initiative they don't tell us their problems". (a teacher)*

Other adults, on the contrary, claim that children solicit the help of their teachers when they need it. Openness to children's problems and a friendly attitude are the main features that determine whether or not children ask for some teachers' support.

- *“When they have a problem children talk generally to their teachers about it; they don’t come to the town hall”. (LPA)*
- *“Children are willing to share only with teachers who are good communicators, who understand them and are reliable”. (UNICEF)*

At the same time, most of the representatives of the educational system assert that the school through teachers and form teachers tries to compensate for the lack of parents. School workers understand the delicate situation in which these children find themselves; they sympathise with them, communicate with them, they pay special attention to their emotional situation and encourage them to overcome difficult moments. In some localities, elementary school children with parents abroad benefit from greater attention by their teachers.

- *“Teachers are the first to notice changes in the children’s behaviour after parents’ departure; they try to talk to them in private”. (a headmaster)*
- *“...sometimes we also accomplish this role, to get close to them, to discuss with them and even to caress them. We try to fill the gap created in their souls by their parents’ departure”. (a teacher)*
- *“The headmaster requires that form teachers take care of these children, especially those in the 1st – 4th forms. They are given a lot of attention, they are called upon more frequently, and even during the breaks teachers spend time with them”. (LPA)*

Some adults believe that teachers play an important role in children’s supervision, discipline and finding solutions to conflicts. Nevertheless, some teachers mention that their effort to educate children left without parental care is insufficient in the absence of similar actions from the parents’ side. The latter, unfortunately, very seldom tell the school administration about their decision to go abroad.

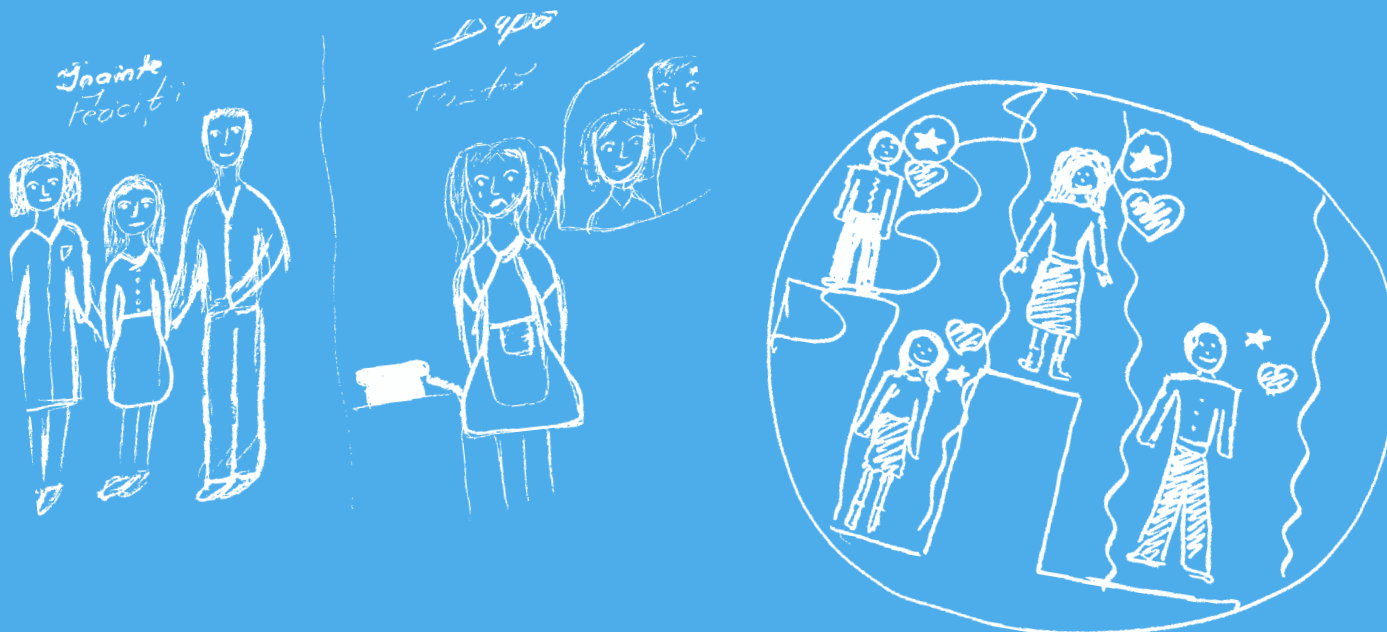
- *“Teachers are the first to notice various changes in these children because they spend 6 hours a day in their company”. (a medical worker)*
- *“As long as they are at school it is fine because they are supervised by teachers...but when they meet in the street or elsewhere, huge conflicts occur”. (a medical worker)*
- *“...school workers and form teachers talk to them, but in spite of our efforts, we can not succeed. Only parents are able to control their actions and that’s the big problem”. (a headmaster)*

Teachers having experience in care giving report that their colleagues have different attitudes towards children left without parental care: envy and sympathy. Some teachers envy these children for the improved material situation they have after parents’ departure. This feeling is amplified by the fact that they are entirely responsible for the educational process of the migrants’ children during their parents’ absence. Thus, their work increases, but the remuneration remains the same. On the other hand, parents working abroad have bigger incomes than teachers and do not seem to be concerned about their children left at home. As a consequence, some teachers feel deeply wronged and they take revenge on children, not giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities or, on the contrary, asking secretly for rewards for the attention and the marks they get.

- *“The attitude towards them can be qualified both as envy of the goods they possess and sympathy for the situation in which they are - parents’ absence, household activities”. (a headmaster)*
- *“There are cases when children are reproached “your mother earns money abroad and I am supposed to take care of you now”. (a teacher)*

In some cases, unwillingly, teachers create states of envy between children living with parents and those with parents abroad. The latter, having at their disposal more resources, including personal computers, manage to meet teachers' requirements to a greater extent than children living with parents.

- *"...when we ask them to accomplish a task using the computer we can notice a feeling of envy". (a teacher)*



CHILDREN'S RESOURCES

"I am a pupil in the 11th form and I have a younger brother who is in the 9th form. Our parents have been working abroad, in Moscow, for 2 years, but they came home during this period of time. Life is difficult without parents. Besides the hard work we were doing, we lacked parental love and sweet words. We communicated only over the phone. We have got 2 cows, a horse, 2 pigs and 10ha of land that we used to plough, because parents sent us money. Moreover, we had to study and this was really tough. We woke up at 6 o'clock every morning, fed the animals, cooked breakfast and then we went to school. I had lunch only at 4-5 p.m. because I attended the discussion club and I was a scout too. At home, my responsibility was to cook, because I did not always manage, in the evening, to prepare food for the next day. In spring I almost did not have time for my homework, because of the work I had to do in the garden. My homework was done by 11-12 at night. In winter it was easier, for the nights are longer. I am doing well at school, I am among the best. In summer it was hard for me, because I had to weed 3 ha of corn and sunflower. In August we had to hire a combine harvester to gather the harvest and it is a difficult task for children. We have 2 ha of alfalfa and in summer we must mow it 3-4 times. At night we did not sleep well, because we were afraid of robbers. It is really very hard without parents. A month ago my parents returned home."

■ CHILDREN'S RESOURCES

After the departure of their parents many children are for the first time confronted with tasks like cooking, budgeting, looking after younger siblings, making everyday decisions connected with the household, and allocating time. This chapter presents some of the resources that children with at least one parent abroad have to cope with these situations. The results refer to children's knowledge and abilities as well as to the persons from whom they ask support.

Internal resources

None of the groups of children placed independence among the qualities they had developed at a high level. Younger children living with parents, as well as adolescents with parents abroad, consider that they have an average ability to be independent in different situations. At the same time, children of 15-18 living with parents and younger children with parents abroad place it at a lower level.

In the same context, consulted youth think that the degree of competence concerning the independent management of freedom could depend on the age at which children are left without parental care. If the separation from parents occurs when adolescents require a greater autonomy from their parents, their chances to succeed are very high. At the same time, older children living with parents feel overprotected and need more freedom to assert themselves. Living separately from parents at an early age could be very difficult for the great majority of children because they are not ready yet to be on their own.

Some adults say that the way in which children manage to deal independently with situations and problems depends more on their education than on the age at which they are left alone. At the same time, very few respondents share the view that these children possess the necessary experience and knowledge to face the difficulties of an independent life. Most adults doubt the ability of these children, claiming that they are able to cope only if they are left *"in the hands of a good person"*, which means in the care of their relatives. Representatives of international organisations mention that traditions in family and school are not attuned to the development of an independent young generation.

- *"Those coming from a good family possess some life skills like taking care of themselves and fulfilling certain household activities". (IOM)*
- *"... it depends entirely on the education that the child received before his/her parents left". (MEYS)*
- *"Our school does not prepare children for real life. It gives them the opportunity to become academicians and physicians, but too much theory is taught with very little attention to practical knowledge". (UNICEF)*

In the opinion of the NCCRP representative, when living without one or both parents, children really *"become more independent and this is a beneficial process"*. But, taking into account all the other difficulties children confront, it must be stated that parents' absence usually leads to the fact that children are beset with overwhelming duties and this represents a serious obstacle to their harmonious development. It was found that after parents' departure most children participating in the study got more actively involved in household duties.

- *"To tidy the rooms". (Gr.I)*
- *"To help my granny around the house". (Gr.I)*
- *"To feed the animals", (Gr.II)*
- *"I go shopping every day". (Gr.II)*

Children with parents abroad deal with a series of problems and “*several responsibilities*”; quite often they have to fulfill duties which are not specific to their age. Many of them reach maturity too early and unwillingly. Youth participating in the evaluation workshop also consider that circumstances require that children assume adult responsibilities.

- *“Their thoughts are focused on the family; they do not waste time and are responsible for the administration of the family budget”. (DCW)*
- *“Becoming mature at 12 years is a tragedy for a child”. (DCW)*

The roles taken over by children with at least one parent abroad are different from those of children from the comparison group. In the case of the latter, as they mention, responsibilities are distributed among family members; therefore, they have distinctive roles. As a rule, the father plays a key role and he is seen as the head of the family because he earns the money. He accomplishes the most difficult tasks, and he has a vital role in the decision-making process. The mother is responsible for household activities and takes care of children. The latter must study, help their parents, and take care of younger siblings

- *“I have a family of three members: My mother is responsible for the cooking and cleaning, my father goes to work, and I must attend school and do my homework”. (Gr.III)*
- *“I usually help mummy and my brother helps daddy”. (Gr.III)*
- *“My mother is a housewife, my father has a job, and I take care of my younger sisters”. (Gr.IV)*

Only a few of the children left without parental care mentioned that taking over adult responsibilities made them become mature faster, which allowed them to develop abilities that they would need and use in adult life. 15-18 years-olds were the ones who appreciated the situation. The comments made by some younger children denote that participation in new activities gives them a newfound feeling of usefulness, whereas other children assume these roles with resignation. Some children say they had less free time and not enough time for entertainment. Several teachers from a locality involved in the study shared the same idea.

- *“I became mature: I do the laundry, the cleaning and turn the soil in the garden”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I took over all the difficult tasks from my parents. I matured faster, but that’s good”. (Gr.I)*
- *“We mature much faster”. (Gr.II)*
- *“We try to adapt ourselves to the changes; we become more independent and it will be useful in the future”. (DCW)*
- *“I became more responsible and I help my granny”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I have more tasks now; I don’t have time for entertainment”. (Gr.II)*
- *“I don’t have so much time as before; I gave up some of my hobbies”. (Gr.II)*

Adults expressed different opinions concerning the extent to which children with parents working abroad are involved in household activities. Some teachers and medical workers mention that most of these children fulfil “*adult*” duties like cooking, chopping fire wood, feeding the animals and working on the field. School managers and some teachers associate the poor academic performance, tiredness, absenteeism, and the lack of a motivation for studies seen in some children with parents abroad with the fact that they are usually overloaded with household responsibilities. This view is shared by 15-18 year-olds living without parents. They mention more frequently than any other participants that they lack sufficient time for doing homework.

- *“... they work more indeed ... at the age when they should play and have fun”. (a medical worker)*
- *“... a pupil who was very tired during class told me: ‘I am sick and tired of accomplishing adult duties. I must do my job as well as my mother’s and sometimes I don’t manage to prepare for the lessons’”. (a teacher)*
- *“Children ask why one of their schoolmates didn’t come to school and are told that it was because he had a lot of work at home”. (a headmaster)*

On the contrary, caregivers claim that children’s activities coincide with the ones they had when they used to live with their parents. At the same time, some caregivers mention that they involve children in various household activities in order to fill their free time and avoid possible undesirable activities. Some of the interviewed caregivers asserted that children’s help was very useful to maintain the house.

- *“They weed on their own field and then mine”. (a caregiver)*
- *“... he must be always busy because if you don’t keep an eye on him, at his age... He must be supervised until he is in the 6th form”. (a caregiver)*
- *“... they are very hard-working; they work very fast”. (a caregiver)*

Participants at the consultation workshop say that generally the number of household activities accomplished by children increased, *“When the mother was at home the child used to tidy his/her room, but now there are other duties he/she is responsible for like house and school and others”*. Children also add that they can negotiate about certain activities with their parents which they cannot do with caregivers.

After parents’ departure, besides household duties, children have to do those jobs that their parents did and also have to take care of younger sisters and brothers. Some adults, as well as consultation workshop participants, note that this responsibility constitutes a huge challenge for many of these children. However, in some teachers’ views, fulfilling such duties is beneficial to girls because they learn in this way how to become *“good wives and mothers”*.

- *“... I help my younger brother with his homework”. (Gr.I)*
- *“She has to become a mother for her younger brother and sister...”. (a teacher)*
- *“The girl said: ‘It’s not enough that I don’t have a mother when I need her, but I have got two brothers who exhaust me’”. (DCW)*
- *“...the child with parents abroad knows that he must come back home early and do household activities, cook. If he has a younger brother or a sister he has to take care of him/her and help him/her with homework...”. (a teacher)*

Children from both age groups with at least one parent abroad, as well as those 10-14 year-olds living with parents at home say that they are quite able to do household activities. At the same time, children’s physical work is considered normal in rural areas; therefore, such activities were no radical change in their lives. According to the NCCRP representative and according to some medical workers and school managers, *“children from rural localities are much more independent than children from cities”*; therefore, when a parent leaves they adapt themselves easier and succeed in accomplishing household activities. But, unfortunately, the amount of work increases too much and they do not manage to cope with the situation they find themselves in.

Children participating in the study expressed very different opinions about their ability to manage the family budget. Children mentioned all three levels (low, average, high) of development of such a skill in all the localities. Taking into account the fact that even children living with parents have a low ability to manage money, we can suppose that

most of the children left without parental care are not capable of dealing with such an activity right after parents' departure. According to consultation workshop participants children learn to manage money they get from parents gradually, from their own experience. At the same time, it was mentioned that some children try to save parents' remittances in order to spend the money together when they come back.

It was mentioned that in the great majority of cases caregivers play the key role in the administration of money sent by parents. Caregivers assert that they provide children, when it is possible, with money for various school and entertainment expenses. Some respondents mentioned that it is very important for children to develop a sense of respect for the money earned by their parents.

- *"He tells me on what he intends to spend the money, but he doesn't have free access to the money sent by his parents. They can't send money every week and I tell him to spend reasonably". (a caregiver)*

All groups of adults note that, as a rule, most children with parents abroad have more pocket money than their peers. Some teachers consider that children should not be given all the money sent by parents because they may spend it irrationally. Thus when caregivers provide them with regular small sums they *"develop their responsibility"*. Only teachers from one locality thought that children usually manage their money *"correctly"* because they value their parents' work.

In the view of community members, children with at least one parent abroad spend the money they get from parents in bars, night clubs and internet centres. They buy sweets, fast-food, expensive clothes, and mobile telephones.

Representatives of local and central public administrations share the view that children lack the ability to manage the money they have. In the opinion of the UNICEF representative, the lack of the tradition *"to discuss financial management within family"* and to approach this topic within schools constitutes the main causes for children's inadequate and unsatisfactory competence in this field.

According to some caregivers, headmasters, and representatives of local and central public administrations, if children lack leisure opportunities, their inability to manage money could lead to the risk of alcohol consumption, withdrawal from school and distortion of values. Local NGO representatives express the opinion that absent parents who provide children with money and various material goods use this as an attempt to compensate for their absence. Some school teachers and administrators think that parents working abroad should invest more in their children's education and less in material things. The idea that money coming from abroad should be invested in Moldova was also expressed by the consultation workshop.

- *"Reaching adolescence, certain boys begin consuming alcohol and tobacco, instead of spending the money on something else". (a headmaster)*
- *"... they begin worshipping money and expensive clothes ... parents are responsible for the fact that money becomes everything for them". (DDSAFP)*
- *"Sometimes, children who receive money from migrated parents abandon school because they taste the pleasures of entertainment and a wealthy style of life". (MEYS)*

After parents' departure, most children find themselves in a situation where they have to decide how to spend their leisure time. It was noted that the majority of children left without parental care appreciate, at an average level, such an important ability. In two localities, children of 15-18 years living with parents said that they did not develop this skill well enough. In the opinion of the consultation workshop participants, children living without parental care are obliged to organise their time in order to fulfil all the necessary activities, including household duties, supervising and taking care

of younger siblings, and preparing for classes. This explains their *“strict rhythm”* and sometimes the lack of free time. One of the consulted children, having the experience of separation from parents, asserted that he felt frustrated at not being able to enjoy as much leisure as his peers who live with parents.

- *“I am angry and I don’t want to hear something like this. Is it fair? You entertained yourself, while I was working until 5 p.m.”. (DCW)*

At the same time, among the concerns reported by the participants in the study, those connected with managing leisure time have an important place in the hierarchy of children’s preoccupations, regardless of age. Another concern was the lack of opportunities for spending free time in their communities.

In one of the localities, some teachers mentioned that most children were helped by parents to organise their leisure and that they were *“well co-ordinated”*. Others share the view that in organising their time, children favour household and school activities to the detriment of free time.

- *“I know young girls who, after graduating from the 9th form, don’t go to the disco because they study for their lessons”. (a teacher)*
- *“... perhaps in order to fulfil a task they sacrifice a part of their free time”. (a teacher)*

In the opinion of a local NGO representative, children who are not being supervised by parents adopt an undesirable style of living. They *“become free”* because they are not able to organise efficiently their time and they are not systematically involved in school and household activities.

In all the groups participating in the study, children mentioned that they possessed enough knowledge concerning a healthy life style, including damage to their health caused by smoking and using alcohol as well as the danger of HIV/AIDS. At the same time, some admit that many adolescents do smoke and abuse alcohol. Consulted youth assert that most children and youth are well informed in this field, but nevertheless they do not respect these principles. The lack of strict supervision from adults, the lack of opportunities to spend their free time, as well as peer pressure are circumstances which cause children to adopt behaviour that is detrimental to their health, despite the fact that they are aware of the dangers.

In spite of an average level of development of abilities and attitudes in the area of communication, consulted youth mention that they notice various deficiencies in their relationship with peers in this area.

15-18 year-olds from the comparison group in two localities said that they could not solve their conflicts peacefully. Consultation workshop participants mention that their generation *“is too impulsive, energetic and quick”*; therefore sometimes they prove to be aggressive in relationships.

In the opinion of consulted children, among the qualities all children and youth should develop are the following: tolerating suggestions from other persons as well as the ability to hold on to your own opinions regardless of the pressure coming from other persons. Despite the fact that they seem contradictory, these skills can help youth become more confident in their relationships with others.

Social resources

According to the study’s results, children living with parents feel more secure from any form of violence and neglect. Most children left without parental care on the other hand said that they generally find it difficult to ask for support. In only one locality most children affirm that they had developed the ability to ask for help from other

persons. In another locality only children with parents abroad recognised they had such ability. In the third community, children consider that they are able to manage this skill to an average degree.

At the same time, consultation workshop participants think that most children left without parental care experience difficulties and that there is no one they can ask for help or advice because they do not have a reliable person close to them. As was mentioned in the previous chapters, children with parents abroad have difficulty establishing relationships of trust with people other than their parents. When they need help they prefer talking to parents, and if it is not possible they appeal for help to caregivers, to persons recommended by parents, or to friends and colleagues. In difficult situations many adolescents refuse to ask other people for advice. Perhaps this tendency can be explained by their desire to become independent, while asking for help means for them showing weakness. As a result, these children quite rarely ask their teachers for help. Some of the consultation workshop participants mentioned that some teachers had refused to help them despite the fact that previously the teachers had promised to provide them support as often as needed.

- *“Many teenagers do not trust anybody. They rely on their own abilities”. (DCW)*
- *“You must be sure that the person you ask for help is ‘a capable one’... if he/she is not competent, or is old, I refuse to talk to him/her”. (DCW)*

According to the NCCRP representative, it is very important that children ask for help persons who are willing to provide them with the necessary support because if not *“the situation can worsen”*. According to the same respondent, children’s choices as to whom to ask for help depends on their age. Younger children are more likely to appeal to *“persons close to them – relatives, neighbours”*. For older children, the credibility of the person matters more. Therefore, in order to prevent children, whether or not their parents are abroad, from going through unpleasant, risky situations, it is extremely important that somebody in the community monitors the situation and refers children to experts who can give them qualified support.

Representatives of local NGOs and UNICEF believe that children more frequently ask their peers for help. One of the UNICEF representatives mentioned that many children and youth *“have little confidence”* in teachers and health services; therefore, they talk to their friends and school mates about their problems. At the same time, respondents share the view that this source is not always the best one.

- *“The group they are part of provides them support when they need it”. (local NGO member)*
- *“... I can hardly believe that within the gatherings they organise they open their hearts to each other”. (local NGO member)*
- *“... youth themselves say that first of all they appeal to their friends for help: ‘How can I solve this issue?’ If the person you ask for advice is a close friend with experience and information, it is wonderful, but quite often the advice is not useful”. (UNICEF)*

Caregivers claim they are the first source of help for children they look after and in *“difficult situations”* they *“consult”* the children’s parents. All the interviewed caregivers said that situations in which children asked for their help usually involved the need for money for school and entertainment activities.

- *“I am always there for them and when they need something they talk to me. As long as I can ...”. (a caregiver)*

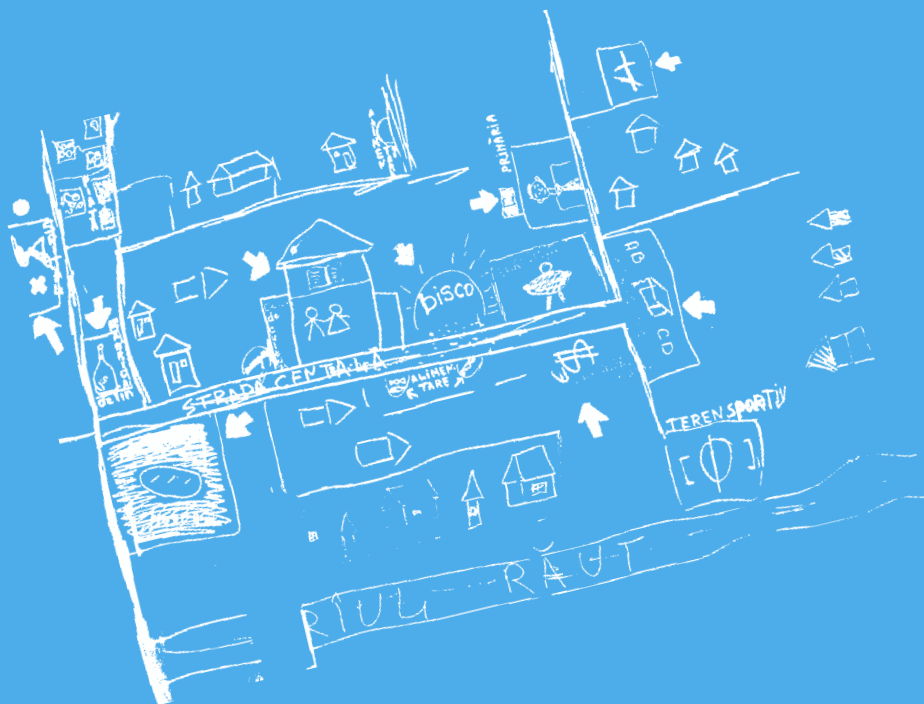
Most teachers think that when children with parents abroad need help they come to them, as well as to relatives and friends. In the opinion of headmasters children usually

appeal to parents for help. In their turn the latter ask caregivers or teachers to solve the issue. Children also ask their teachers for help because *“they are closer to them”*.

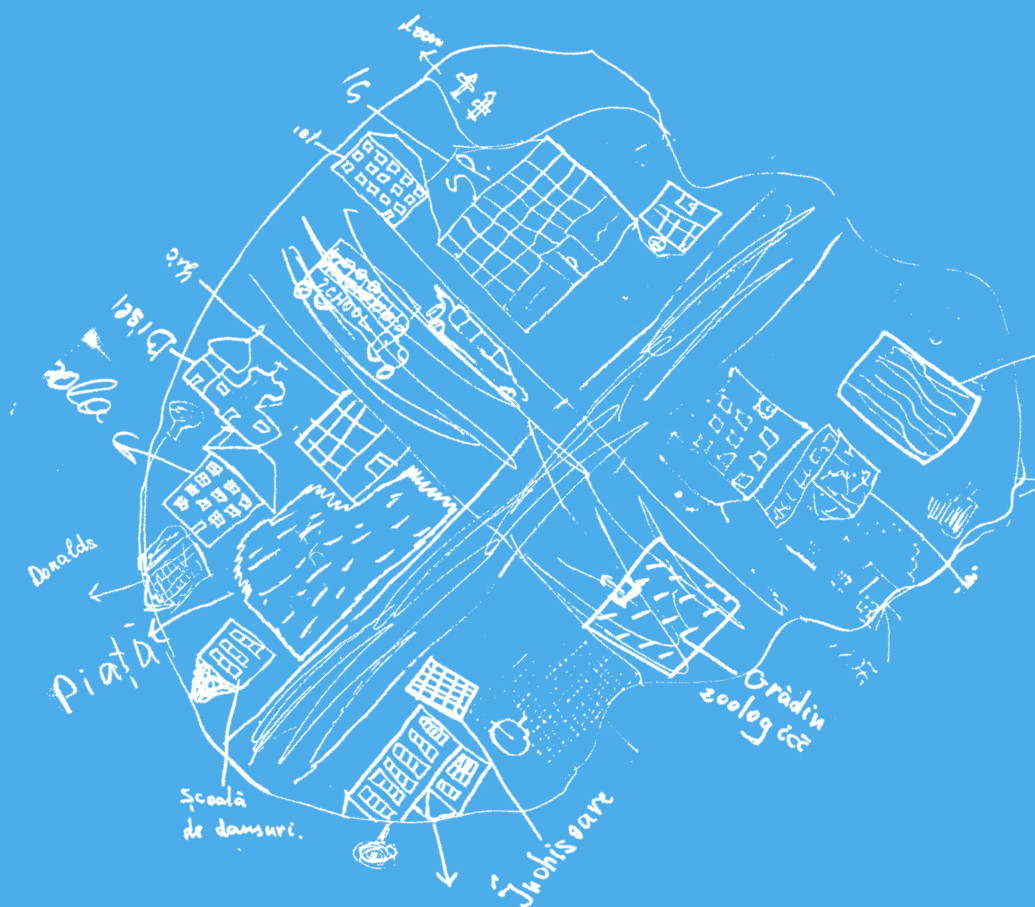
- *“The form master is the first person children go to for help, or other teachers, caregivers, grandparents and even parents – while talking to them over the phone”. (a headmaster)*

Medical workers, as well as representatives of local and central authorities, report that they had not received requests from children with parents abroad. In their opinion, these children talk more frequently to their relatives and teachers about their problems.

- *“Children usually ask their relatives for help not us... we did not register such cases...”. (a medical worker)*
- *“... quite often the form teacher becomes like a parent for them...”. (DDSAFP)*
- *“They don’t come to us for help; we identify them thanks to the town hall, school or neighbours. Children seldom ask for help”. (MEYS)*



CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION



■ CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

In this study only one aspect of children's participation was investigated; that is, if children express their opinion and if it is taken into account by adults in decision-making processes that affect children. Nevertheless, during data collection, participants referred to other aspects related to children's opportunities to participate as well as parents' readiness to encourage their participation.

The communities included in the study are regions that have differing experiences in children's participation. Two of them have traditions of children's involvement at school and at community level while the other has no experience in projects relating to children's participation.

Participation within family

The opinions of 10-14 year-old children living with parents influence to a greater extent the family decisions than the opinions of those left without parental care. We get quite a different picture with 15-17 year-old young people; those who have parents working abroad have a greater influence on the decisions affecting them.

Some of the 10-14 year-old children living with parents mention that in their families the opinions of each member are taken into account when making a decision.

- *"My parents listen to my point of view when reaching a decision and they even take it into account". (Gr.III)*

At the same time, several children from the same age group say that even if they are asked to express their opinion it is not taken into account. This happens because parents do not think their children are ready to influence the decisions affecting them. But there are also children who believe that their participation is not always necessary.

- *"Parents rarely take into consideration our opinions. They are not important. Just in certain situations do our opinions count". (Gr.III)*
- *"They are seldom interested in hearing our opinions, often saying we are not enough old to participate in the process of making family decisions". (Gr.III)*
- *"I don't think children really have to be aware of all family problems or even problems concerning themselves". (Gr.III)*

10-14 year-old children with one or both parents working abroad believe that their opinion does not significantly influence family decisions because this is a parents' exclusive prerogative - they know what is good for children. At the same time, some children say they are consulted when problems concerning them are discussed.

- *"In families decisions are made by grown-ups and parents". (Gr.I)*
- *"We are small; our opinion is often wrong". (Gr.I)*
- *"Parents only explain the reasons. Even if they ask the children's opinion they ignore it". (Gr.I)*
- *"When they want to buy something for us, they always ask us to accompany them". (Gr.I)*

At the age of 15-17, some youth living with parents participate in the family decision-making process. They feel that parents treat them as their equals and that it is fair to take their opinion into account. But others say they are only consulted about problems that directly affect them.

- *"Parents can't make decisions for us". (Gr.IV)*
- *"Grown-ups take into consideration our opinion when they realize we are their future". (Gr.IV)*

- *“They don’t consult us about adult problems. We are [only] allowed to express ourselves on childish matters”. (Gr.IV)*

15-17 year-olds, with one or both parents working abroad, are active family decision makers. Both youth and teachers share the same view. The oldest child in the family enjoys the privilege of being consulted first, and his opinion is seriously taken into account.

- *“Parents always consult me about what I want them to buy me”. (Gr.II)*
- *“The opinion of the oldest child is taken into consideration by parents; they consult with him”. (DCW)*
- *“Yes, they participate, deciding on how to spend money. They are very active”. (a teacher)*

Most children and young people are not consulted about their parents’ departure. Even if children are asked to express their opinion it is not taken into consideration because parents think they know what is best for children. Some grown-ups say children agree from the very beginning with the departure of their parents because they realise it’s in their own interest.

- *“Parents decide alone where and when to go. The child’s opinion doesn’t count”. (DDEYS)*
- *“...when the matter is under discussion children are aware of their parents’ plans, but I can’t say that children’s decision is decisive”. (NCCRP)*
- *“There are cases when children are asked if they agree or not. Nevertheless, children realize parents have to go abroad, make money, and offer them a better future”. (a teacher)*

It is very rare that a child’s opinion changes their parent’s decision or influences it to a great extent.

- *“I wanted both parents to go abroad in order to prevent my family from tearing apart. But it would have been easier for me if one of them had stayed at home”. (DCW)*
- *“... I know concrete cases when one parent gave in to the child’s demands”. (NCCRP)*
- *“Sometimes when children don’t agree, parents don’t leave. But mostly their opinion is not taken into account”. (a medical worker)*

Sometimes parents only explain to children the reasons for going abroad, sometimes they discuss with them their responsibilities. Grown-ups say older children accept the decision more easily because they are involved more frequently in such discussions, and as a result, they better understand all the aspects of the separation from children.

- *“They are used to discussing such things, especially with teenagers”. (a teacher)*
- *“Parents usually prepare their children emotionally, telling them what to do”. (a teacher)*

In order to justify the need to go abroad parents promise their children, as a compensation for their absence, some material goods or a decent future. Parents as well as other adults think children are happy about their decision in such circumstances. However, most children deny accepting such bribes in exchange for their parents’ departure.

- *“Seeing that his standard of living improves, that he has clothes and food and all he needs, the child can’t say that it hadn’t been the right decision”. (a teacher)*
- *“Even if the child doesn’t agree, his parents bribe him with arguments like - we’ll make much money, we’ll buy a beautiful house, clothes, etc.” (IOM)*

- *"It's hard for me to say that most children approve of their parents' decision to go abroad only in order to get sweets or to improve their standard of living". (NCCRP)*

In some cases parents postpone telling their children that they are going abroad until the day before the departure, for they do not feel ready to face their children's disapproval. But children consider it important to be told beforehand about their parents' plans, the period of time they will be gone, and the reasons for the departure, even if their opinion is not taken into account.

- *"Fearing they won't be understood by children, parents tackle the subject only a couple of days before the departure". (DCW)*
- *"Parents share their decision with children in the last moment. Children's opinions aren't taken into consideration". (DDSAFP)*
- *"I think parents announce the decision to go abroad to children when all the required documents have already been concluded. They are told they will have to stay at home alone and they are given some basic instructions". (UNICEF)*

Children's opinions matter more when choosing a caregiver. But quite often there are not many choices available and the child has to comply with the parents' decision.

- *"Children should be consulted about who is going to take care of them after parents' departure, but it doesn't often happen this way". (LPA)*
- *"Some parents don't explain to children the reasons for their departure, they just tell them they will have to stay with granny or with an aunt". (NCCRP)*
- *"What can a child say after mother and father have already made up their minds?" (a caregiver)*
- *"Teenagers are consulted, but children – no". (a teacher)*
- *"Parents discuss this problem with children and they are interested in participating". (a teacher)*

During parents' absence some children gain, along with freedom, more opportunities to express themselves; they become more self-assertive. They manage their resources and their leisure time, and they get involved in various activities even without their parents' permission.

- *"Without parents children have greater opportunities to express themselves". (DCW)*

In some cases, in the caregiver's family the child's opinion is ignored, in other cases, thanks to the caregiver's high level of responsibility, the child's opinion counts even more than it did in his own family. Consultation workshop participants note that the child's emotional state, caused by the parents' departure, makes him indifferent to the decision-making process in the caregiver's family, even if he is asked to express his view.

- *"In the caregiver's family the child's opinion counts even less. On the other hand he doesn't want to get involved". (DCW)*
- *"A mother understands you if you choose doing homework instead of working around the house. A caregiver will never accept that. Every day, after classes you are supposed to do some work about the house and if you don't...". (DCW)*
- *"Living without parents is one thing, add to this living in a strange house and you get real stress". (DCW)*

When several siblings are being taken care of by a relative, the elder brother's opinion matters a lot. He is the family's representative in relations with the relatives and other community members.

Whether the child's opinion is respected or not in the caregiver's family depends entirely on the latter's personality. Children get involved easily in the family decision-making process when they live in their own house. They rarely participate in the process living in the caregiver's family. At the same time, if the child loses the caregiver's confidence, he becomes the subject of stricter controls.

- *"It depends on the age and malleability of grandparents, for a temperamental child won't be able to live with old, conservative grandparents". (DCW)*
- *"It's easier when they look after you when not sharing the same house. You show them you respect their rules, but at your place you can do whatever you like". (DCW)*
- *"If you lose the caregiver's confidence, you will be kept under close supervision and they will complain to your parents about all your deeds". (DCW)*
- *"... the older grandparents are less likely to ask for the child's opinion". (UNICEF)*

Participation in school and out-of-school activities

Children's involvement in school affairs, both those with parents at home and those with parents working abroad, is insufficient. There is no tradition of children's active participation in the school management in the Republic of Moldova. In some schools children's self-governing bodies have been registered, but these seem to represent purely decorative forms of participation. Most teachers understand child participation rather as children's involvement in out-of-school activities, organised by adults.

- *"...school doesn't solicit either children's or parents' opinion in the education and school governing processes". (UNICEF)*
- *"There is a pupils' Council in our school. Its members participate in school assemblies. There is no difference between children living with parents and children with parents working abroad concerning participation in Council assemblies". (a teacher)*

Children living with parents get involved in out-of-school activities more frequently than those having parents abroad. In the view of consultation workshop participants, for some children living with parents these projects offer a way of self-expression they lack within their families.

- *"Children living with parents have a more developed sense of participation". (DCW)*
- *"Children living with parents are more protected and many of their problems are solved by parents. Participation in seminars and other activities are a desire for them to prove to their parents that they are reliable and capable of making decisions". (DCW)*

On the other hand, in other communities, both groups of children equally get involved in out-of-school activities.

- *"There isn't such a difference in our lyceum". (DCW)*
- *"Those who get involved in out-of-school activities do it gladly and enjoy it. There is no difference between children living with parents and children having parents abroad". (a teacher)*

The high level of participation of children living with parents can be explained by the fact that they are less involved in household activities and more encouraged by their parents. Others try to prove parents that they are independent and reliable because they want parents to trust them. On the other hand, children with parents working abroad are forced by their circumstances to develop abilities of self-government.

- *“The will and the possibility of children living with parents to get involved in activities are greater than those of children with parents working abroad – they have much more leisure time and they are encouraged by parents”. (DCW)*
- *“Children want to prove to parents they are clever and skilful and they want parents to trust them. This is the only way parents will allow them father their education”. (DCW)*
- *„We don't try to prove we are responsible in order to get their confidence, we have to do it through force of circumstances”. (DCW)*

At the same time, certain children living with parents take part in different activities, not on their own initiative, but because they are obliged to by parents, who think they are important for children. Some children appreciate this and consider such an approach from parents to be necessary. We should also mention that for some parents the participation of children in out-of-school activities is a way to promote a positive image of the family within the community, for it is a unanimously accepted value. In other cases, parents do not approve such activities and it is up to the child to convince them of their advantages.

- *“There are shy persons, like me, who need a push from parents. I think it's very important to be backed up by parents and I don't consider it negative if they make me get involved”. (DCW)*
- *“Children frequent out-of-school activities, but they don't willingly do this; they are forced by parents”. (DCW)*
- *“If parents don't agree, children know how to persuade them”. (DCW)*

It is more difficult for children with parents working abroad to become involved in out-of-school activities because they are burdened by adult household responsibilities and overwhelmed by new emotional problems connected with parents' departure.

- *“I like playing football, but I don't have enough time for it”. (Gr.II)*
- *“If parents work abroad, children aren't interested in out-of-school activities; they must solve personal and household problems”. (DCW)*

Participation at the community level

The community offers children very few activities in which they can get involved. And the existing ones do not meet children's needs and interests. Children consider those activities as interesting and useful that are organised and managed by themselves.

- *“There aren't many activities we can get involved in, except at school and home”. (Gr.II)*
- *“If we want to have fun, we need to organise our own out-of-school activities”. (Gr.III)*
- *“The town hall deals with rural problems; our problems aren't of interest to them. There are no programs for children”. (DCW)*
- *“Teenagers want to take part in activities, but there are few opportunities for them”. (UNICEF)*
- *“I think children are eager to participate, but conditions are inadequate. If there is a specialised body in the community, they become involved willingly, but if not.... Sometimes children create initiative groups themselves”. (CNPDC)*

Children and young people would like to establish a successful relationship with the town hall within the framework of developed projects. But the local administration is not always receptive to children's problems and ideas. Nevertheless, in the view of some children, when they insist, the local administration gives in and supports projects.

- *“When we want to set up a project, the town hall should act as a partner”. (Gr.I)*
- *“If we don’t insist, we get nothing. We ask them several times until we manage to persuade them”. (DCW)*

In general, at the community level, the 10-14 years-old children’s opinions are not taken into account by grown-ups, regardless of what they are. However, the data revealed that the opinion of children with parents working abroad is taken into consideration to a greater extent than that of children living with parents. Some children from the first group think they should be consulted by grown-ups when making decisions affecting them, insisting on the importance of children’s participation from an early age. This would help them to develop life skills.

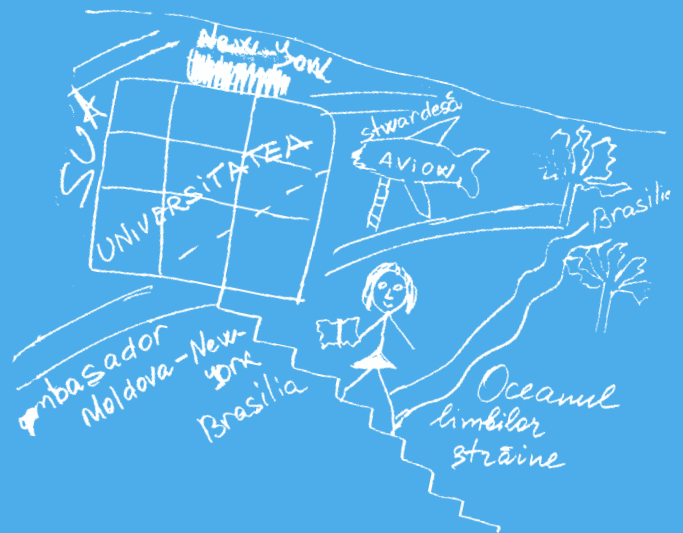
- *“This is how they raise us, we grow and they still tell us we aren’t capable of making decisions on our own. Later we will be afraid to make up our minds concerning more serious matters”. (Gr.III)*
- *“When organising an activity we should be consulted beforehand to find out if we like it”. (Gr.I)*

The 15-17 year-olds’ opinions have greater importance in the decisions made by adults at the community level than those of younger children. In communities with traditions of children’s participation, children with parents working abroad believe that adults consult them more frequently than children living with parents. At the same time, some children living with parents think their opinion matters to their parents more than it does for the other grown-ups.

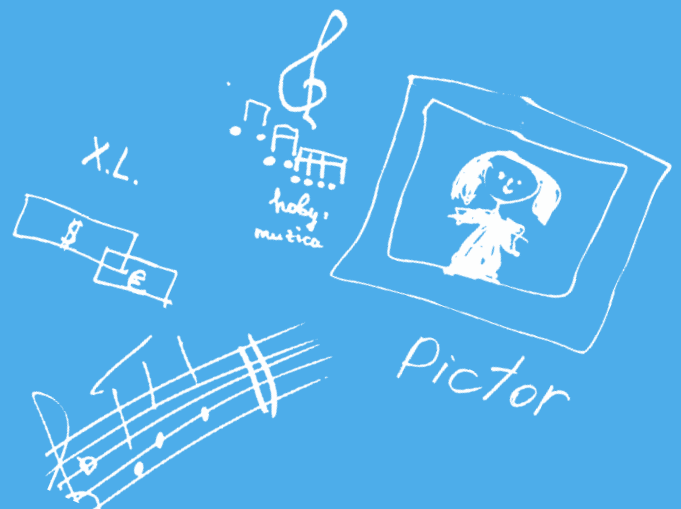
- *“Before doing something for the youngsters, they usually consult us”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“Sometimes they ask for our opinion, but more often parents are interested in our opinions, not others”. (Gr.IV)*

Local Youth Councils (LYC) represent an efficient body in the promotion of children’s rights. Through LYC children can make suggestions to improve their situation in schools. According to the data provided by the National Youth Resource Centre a third of the members of youth councils have one or both parents working abroad.

- *“LYC protects our rights and makes suggestions about how to improve children’s situation in schools”. (Gr.III)*
- *“Many of these children are both volunteers and LYC members”. (a headmaster)*
- *“...both the [LYC] mayor’s parents are in France and the deputy mayor’s parents are in Portugal...”. (a teacher)*



CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THEIR FUTURE



■ CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THEIR FUTURE

"... they are children and they can have a future only with parents at their side". (DCW)

Children with parents working abroad see their future more often in a foreign country than their peers living with parents. A frequent aspiration is family reintegration by joining parents abroad rather than by their parents' return home. Children from the comparison group more rarely have the idea of going abroad; and then it is more often expressed by 15-18 years-old participants. The latter associate life abroad with education and professional development, whereas for other children it means, to a great extent, a good material situation.

All groups of adults, as well as consultation workshop participants, expressed the opinion that most children and youth envisaged leaving their homeland in the near future. Some adults think it is also valid for children and youth whose parents live and work in Moldova. The respondents explained this by pointing to the children's awareness of the lack of work opportunities in the Republic of Moldova, both for them and their parents. It was noted that in both age groups, children living with parents are not aware of their job or career opportunities, whereas children with parents abroad proved to be more confident in this regard.

The UNICEF representative mentioned that for many children this situation represents "a dilemma" because they "are connected to this country and they would not like to leave". At the same time, there are situations when emigrated parents take their children to the country of emigration and this is seen as success. Children aspire to high standards of living, but parents' experiences are proof of the impossibility of such a perspective in Moldova, especially in the rural communities. This explains why most children are eager to leave their localities by going either abroad or to other localities in Moldova where they can succeed. The most attractive areas are the cities, namely the capital. Only some caregivers and teachers noticed that many children are aware of the difficulties their parents face abroad; therefore, they prefer not to repeat that experience or would accept only "some more prestigious jobs".

- *"I would like to work abroad, for wages are high there". (Gr.III)*
- *"I see myself working in Chişinău or abroad. There are no work opportunities for youth here". (Gr.IV)*
- *"I won't be able to find a job here and I will have to go abroad like my parents did". (Gr.I)*
- *"I want to emigrate; I don't see any opportunities here". (Gr.II)*
- *"They want to lead a wealthy life and further their education". (a teacher)*
- *"70% of children don't see themselves working in their homeland in the future; they want to join parents abroad". (DDSAFP)*
- *"In many cases parents settle in a foreign country and take their children with them". (DCW)*
- *"Their mother told them that she would take them abroad with her". (a caregiver)*
- *"Some children dream of going abroad. And their parents look for a job for them". (a teacher)*
- *"I don't think youth see their future in their homeland, and this is rather sad". (UNICEF)*

Teachers, some public local administration representatives, and medical workers think that going abroad is attractive for youth out of many reasons. For some of them this is a way to pursue education, for others, after graduation, it is a chance to get a job. Some choose this opportunity after they get married and need a place to live.

- *"... after marriage not all the families have enough money to build a house or buy an apartment in the city. Their only way to solve this issue is by going abroad". (a teacher)*

- *"Many go abroad to further their education, even pupils in the 4th, 5th, 6th forms..." (LPA)*
- *"Many choose to go abroad because of low salaries, especially for young workers. They also want to start families, improve their conditions and leave our country even if they graduated from the University or Academy". (a medical worker)*
- *"... the departure abroad gives them the possibility to earn money and create a family". (a medical worker)*

It was highlighted that many children, regardless of their family conditions, want to pursue their education. Most children opt to go to the University, but they do not specify how they can achieve this goal. According to interviewed adults all children wish to study and count on their parents' financial support. To what extent this aspiration will become true depends not so much on academic performance as on the parents' possibility to sustain them financially. The great majority of children without parental care have the conviction that a certain amount of money can guarantee their education in a higher education institution or a technical college, which is the main cause for the decrease in their school performance. This means that children with a good academic performance, but with parents working in Moldova, have few chances to go to the University because they cannot afford it. In some caregivers' opinion, children accept to be deprived of parental care and to go through all the difficulties generated by this situation because they understand that higher education requires huge sums of money.

- *"In Moldova you need money to succeed because there are others who study very well, but don't succeed". (a caregiver)*
- *"These children dream of a faculty; they know that everything is for money and parents will provide them the necessary money". (a headmaster)*
- *"Children say: 'Why should I study? Parents who had a bad school performance are now in Italy and are wealthier than those who did well at school, but stayed in the country.'" (local NGO member)*
- *"...in many cases they are not good at studying; parents promise them that they will give money for entering the University ...". (DDSAFP)*
- *"Children who often miss classes usually don't pursue education after the 9th form and their only possibility is to go abroad". (DCW)*
- *"... they have to make efforts; they have to work harder than children with parents abroad". (a teacher)*

In the consultation workshop it was noticed that children's chances to continue their education depend on whether they live with parents or have parents abroad, the latter one's chances being higher. Participants believed that some children choose the faculty at the University according to parents' financial conditions, without taking into consideration their own abilities and the labour market requirements.

- *"... some choose the faculty according to the money their parents have". (DCW)*

It was pointed out that most children living with parents aspire to exact professions, regardless of the prestige of a profession: "teacher", "doctor", "lawyer", "designer", "actor", "programmer", "shop-assistant" etc. The ideas for the future of children with parents abroad refer less to the professions they would like to go into and more to the countries they would like to live in. Many of these children opt for jobs which would guarantee a benefit, while the others value the professional development.

- *"I want to become a fire-fighter and work in Chişinău". (Gr.III)*
- *"My plan for the future is to set up a football centre after graduation". (Gr.III)*

- *“... an oncologist at the Republican Hospital in Chişinău”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“I want to study at the Technical University and be a mechanic”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“I want to be a shop-assistant; I like to be in direct contact with people”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“I wish to have a house on the beach and a boat”. (Gr.I)*
- *“...to own a supermarket”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I would like to have a villa in Miami, much money and a Ferrari”. (Gr.II)*
- *“The most important is to have a lot of euros”. (Gr.II)*
- *“My dream is to own a restaurant, a hotel, to have much money and a Porsche”. (Gr.II)*

In some teachers' opinions, children with parents abroad are more optimistic about the future than their peers, even if they do not always have a clear image of how it will be. One of the interviewed teachers reported that many of the children in the 9th form with at least one parent abroad only had a vague idea about what they would do after graduation. Consulted youth also mentioned that it would be more difficult to fulfill these children's dreams, due to the lack of a concrete plan for future.

- *“They will be sustained in the near future; they are sure that they will enter a University, they will pay the University fee, but what will they do later?” (a teacher)*
- *“Children living with parents think of starting a career, while the others have only “money” on their mind... they don't have a concrete plan. All they do is dream about material goods, cars, villas and restaurants”. (DCW)*

Teachers, central public administration representatives, and representatives from international organisations say that in spite of children's desires to pursue higher education, regardless of their family conditions, they were not sure they could start a career in Moldova. The high rate of unemployment in the Republic of Moldova, low wages that cannot ensure an adequate standard of living and a great number of people with higher education among those emigrating create circumstances that make children more willing to go abroad. This is more obvious when parents with migration experiences encourage their children to embrace the idea of going to a foreign country. The study's results reveal that parents' main reasons for going abroad is to obtain financial resources to ensure both a decent living and educational opportunities for children. But, over time, the situation can change and many adults wish to reintegrate their family in the country where they migrated. Consulted children report cases when adults return after their material conditions improved, but they are soon forced to leave again because of failing to integrate both socially and professionally.

- *“...they join their parents abroad; even the university graduates can't get a job”. (a teacher)*
- *“... seeing that adults don't have a job in rural localities, children embrace the same idea from an early age, and the majority of them end up going abroad”. (MIA)*
- *“It is obvious now that education has no value for children because a University degree doesn't always guarantee a place of work”. (UNICEF)*
- *“Parents do their best for children to join them abroad; they look for a job for them and encourage them not to study”. (DCW)*

Children from both groups included in the study expressed the wish to see their locality prosper in the future, with a highly developed infrastructure, with institutions providing quality services, and with an active social and cultural life. This wish is stronger in children living with parents. This could be explained by the fact that their future is more closely linked to their homeland. The other children agree that

improvement of community life is one of the necessary conditions for their return to their locality after graduation. Most interviewed adults see it as very unlikely that youth will come back to their native communities. It was found that in one community with experiences in children and youth participation, regardless of family conditions, they consider themselves to be active citizens who care about the future of their locality and who show their intention to improve its situation.

- *“Our village will be new and modernised, with improved public services”. (Gr.III)*
- *“New blocks of flats will be built in our locality”. (Gr.III)*
- *“It will become a locality where all the rules will be respected, with many beautiful things like museums and fountains”. (Gr.III)*
- *“I will set up a Children’s Rights Centre where children could appeal for help and their opinions will matter”. (Gr.III)*
- *“I will repair the roads”. (Gr.I)*
- *“The future of our village depends entirely on us, the young generation”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I want to build a new school in our village. And there will be a summer camp for children. ” (Gr.II)*
- *“Those who go abroad should do something for our locality on their return. If I go to a foreign country, I will come back to my homeland to use the experience I gained”. (Gr.II)*

The group of children with parents abroad referred more frequently to family when speaking about future plans. It is due to their experience of separation from parents that made them think about the importance of family. Young children envisaged the future of their family of origin, expressing the wish to live with all its members and have very close relationships with them. Older children drew the family they would start in the future and referred to the quality of relationships, number of children, free time management in the family, importance of material welfare, and decent living conditions.

- *“My dream is to see my parents back at home and to live again together as a family”. (Gr.I)*
- *“I want to have a family with two children”. (Gr.II)*
- *“... to spend my free time with my family”. (Gr.II)*
- *“You can not get married without good material foundations and if you didn’t graduate”. (Gr.II)*

Almost all adults believe that most children with parents working abroad do not have the opportunity to follow traditional family role models. At the same time, the respondents think that the way in which children’s relationships within the family will evolve depends on each person. In some teachers’ view, some children could perceive the model of life and relationships they know from experience as a normal one. As a result, there is a risk that they could apply it to their own future families. According to some groups of adults and according to consultation workshop participants, the experience of separation from parents is one that makes children want to protect their own families from the sufferings they are facing; therefore, they *“will tend to prevent their children from going through the same problems”*. Consulted youth also point out that the great majority of adolescents are aware of the responsibility of starting a family.

- *“... they think it is normal and it is supposed to be this way”. (a teacher)*
- *“... they could become selfish and refuse to share love with others. They didn’t feel parental love and care when they needed it. But it can be vice versa. They learn from experience. It’s a matter of individual cases”. (a headmaster)*

- *“... if the boy hasn’t seen his father doing household activities, he will not be able to do it. It’s the same thing with girls”. (a headmaster)*
- *“... as parents they will not leave children. They are suffering, they are going through these unpleasant moments, and they will probably not abandon their children. They know from experience what life without parents and parental advice means”. (a teacher)*
- *“They wouldn’t like their children to be deprived of what they had been deprived in their childhood. But, instinctively, they would follow their parents’ examples”. (a teacher)*
- *“By family one should understand that this does not refer to the house, but to the relationships between its members, and if the child doesn’t have a good example of a family he will behave in the same way in his own one”. (a teacher)*
- *“... some really get this impression and they live for “tomorrow”; they will become adults and they will go abroad seeking a better life. But, life is complex and a parent’s departure arouses a feeling of protest in some children, thus they say they will not act like this with their own children”. (NCCRP)*
- *“They are not eager to start families; it is a huge responsibility, especially when a child appears”. (DCW)*

POLICIES AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND BY MIGRATING PARENTS

Within the framework of this study, we intended to examine public administration policies and services as well as those of other social agents targeting children left without parental care. During data collection and analysis it was found that they either are not well developed or do not exist; therefore this chapter gives an overview of policies and services which refer to all children, even if these were not originally created for the protection of migrants' children. We also thought it would be important to present the respondents' opinions on the services needed by migrants' children, being aware of the fact that some of these ideas can be found in the chapter "Recommendations".

National policies

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS)

According to a MEYS representative, migrants' children are not included in the category of disadvantaged children, who benefit from special attention from the State, unless they are not left in the care of a relative or they are in a financially precarious position.

The first national data concerning the situation of migrants' children were collected in 2004-2005. The extent of migration abroad determined MEYS to charge the deputy headmasters and the form masters with monitoring the situation of children left without parental care.

MEYS promotes the policy of children's education within families, even if the latter are not the biological parents; therefore, migrating parents' requests to leave children in residential institutions are rejected. On the contrary, parents are encouraged to grant somebody the guardianship of children. In such cases, children do not benefit from a state allowance.

In collaboration with NGOs working in the same field, MEYS has developed projects in schools aimed at migration and human trafficking prevention. Beginning in September 2005, schools offer an optional course "Life skills", which will help children face life challenges.

At the level of the District Department of Education, Youth and Sports (DDEYS) the child protection inspector is responsible for children at risk. Representatives of this department admit that the position of children left without parental care was not investigated and the information they possess is mainly based on observations and discussions with teachers. Some DDEYS representatives believe that only orphan children and children from socially disadvantaged families need growing attention, but that migrants' children are not deprived because they are materially cared for.

With regard to State policy, some teachers affirm that they do not know if there is legislation on migrants' children at national level, while adults were sure that the State did not have concrete strategies in this field and, that it began to look into the migration phenomenon only in 2005.

Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP)

According to the National Strategy on Child and Family Protection, district and local councils are obliged to develop local strategies on child protection. But in most cases these strategies are lacking, and the provision of humanitarian aid is the only concrete action taken regarding child protection. In the view of the MHSP representative,

migrants' children are at risk of quitting school; therefore, social assistants in the field pay a great deal of attention to these children at the start of the new school year aiming at the integration of all children in the educational system. Children from disadvantaged families are provided with material aid in the form of school supplies and free lunches at school from local funds for population support.

MHSP does not have information about children left without parental care; data is stored at the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection (DDSAFP) by each expert individually. The MHSP representative does not consider guardianship as the best solution for migrants' children. If the child can be brought up by a single parent or by his/her relatives, the involvement of a stranger as guardian is not necessary. An accepted alternative could be in some cases professional maternal assistance, which unfortunately is not sufficiently developed in Moldova.

As a result of the implementation of compulsory medical insurance, the state assumed responsibility to insure all children up to 18 years of age. Thus, medical assistance for children is free, regardless of whether or not they live with parents.

MHSP supports the foundation of community centres, financed by the Fund of Social Investments of Moldova. The social assistants are the resource persons in these communities. They identify the required services and they develop the design and strategy of the working centres. In accordance with the opinion of the MHSP representative, the community centres provide special educational services for children experiencing difficulties in school activity.

DDSAFP, in accordance with its representatives' views, cooperates with town halls, with District Departments of Education, Youth and Sports, and with policemen in order to identify children in precarious situations. At the caregivers' requests, DDSAFP supplies humanitarian aid to migrants' children whose parents do not send money for their sustenance.

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

According to the reports of the MIA representative, migrants' children are not a specific target group for prevention activities organised by the local departments of MIA. Nevertheless, local inspectors are obliged to pay special attention to children left without parental care, as well as to organise activities aimed at informing the public of the legal stipulations, including educational classes in schools.

UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova

The policies of the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova aim at creating a favourable and secure environment for each child. The guarantee of the right to a family, the right to quality education, and the right to protection and participation are among UNICEF's priorities regarding children left without parental care.

The UNICEF Office collaborates with the Government and civil society on the improvement and implementation of legislation and policies regarding children and youth. The encouragement of projects on promotion of children's rights has, as a main goal, the development of a human resources network, including Youth Centres, which could provide qualitative services concerning information, consultation, medical assistance and leisure, especially for disadvantaged children.

Promoting services that sustain the family, including the extended one, UNICEF highlights the importance of children growing up in a family. Leaving the child in the care of a residential institution is an extreme and undesirable approach to child protection; therefore, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, takes concrete actions regarding the improvement of the residential care system, particularly focusing on deinstitutionalisation and prevention of children left in institutions by parents.

Local policies and services

School

According to the results of this study, the services most used by children are those provided by the school. Both, children living with parents and children with parents working abroad share the same opinion. The popularity of schools is explained by school being compulsory, but also by the fact that children spend most of their time at school. In this regard, the consultation workshop participants mentioned the importance of the quality of services provided by school.

- *“Children spend most of their time at school; therefore, the school psychologist has a great responsibility”. (DCW)*
- *“When children are in trouble they talk to teachers first; they don’t come to the town hall for help”. (LPA)*

Migrants’ children prove to be less interested in the quality of school services than children living with parents. The latter are preoccupied with necessary equipment and information in schools, the practical applications of knowledge, teachers’ qualifications, prevention of teachers’ migration, as well as the insurance of a means of transport from distant localities to school.

- *“We need more computers, for all children”. (Gr.III)*
- *“The books in our library are pretty old; we need more books”. (Gr.III)*
- *“We don’t want teachers to leave us and go abroad”. (Gr.III)*

Children explain school importance by the fact that it offers them the opportunity to study, exchange information, and get ready for adult life. Some children appreciate the opportunity to interact both with peers and teachers and to benefit from their support. The subject “Life Skills” is considered by some teachers and children as an effective solution to the lack of education and migrated parents’ support.

- *“It educates us; it helps us to create our personality and to get knowledge”. (Gr.III)*
- *“We are encouraged and supported by school mates, older school friends, and teachers”. (Gr.III)*
- *“For instance these subjects about life skills.... School prepares them for school instead of their parents”. (a teacher)*

In the opinion of UNICEF representatives, school does not prepare children to face the everyday risks and challenges of life, focusing more on providing knowledge than on developing abilities to become independent. Moreover, some teachers do not have the psychological experience and the necessary attitude to satisfy children’s needs for communication and support for children left without parental care. Some teachers assert that the migration of their qualified colleagues affects the quality of services provided by school.

Deputy headmasters are responsible at the school level for the records of children left without parental care. In some schools the council of teachers made the decision to charge form masters with the monitoring of children left without parental care and the provision of a necessary emotional support. On the other hand, some school managers note that, in spite of teachers’ discussions about migrants’ children conditions, there was no decision taken concerning them.

Primary pupils and children from socially vulnerable families have the opportunity to have free lunch at school. Some teachers claim that some migrants’ children benefit from this service, even if they are generally not considered a deprived group.

Psychological services in schools are highly appreciated by children for the availability of counselling and support, especially concerning personal issues. Children who do not have a similar service in their schools expressed their wish to institute it, mentioning the importance of a psychologist for children's protection against abuse and neglect. In the opinion of consultation workshop participants, the psychologist's age and proficiency have an important impact on the quality of his/her services, as well as on the number of visitors because children prefer to talk to a young psychologist, receptive to their problems. The MEYS representative shares the same view, claiming that only a competent psychologist could solve the problem of lack of communication affecting children, and many Moldovan schools do not provide such an indispensable service. It was also noted that the lack of financial resources makes it difficult for headmasters to ensure the presence of a psychologist in each school and nursery school.

- *"At school we benefit from a psychologist's services; he gives us advice and guides us". (Gr.III)*
- *"Only a psychologist possessing the art of communicating with a child could meet this need". (MEYS)*

Extracurricular activities organised by schools are highly appreciated by children, for they are one of the few organised free-time activities within the community. But some of them are not satisfied with the quality and diversity of these services, and they mention that the activities organised by their peers are closer to their needs and interests.

- *"We need other out-of-school activities that would help pupils overcome timidity". (Gr.I)*
- *"Children can participate only in activities we organise for them at school". (a teacher)*

According to school administrators, nowadays schools face financial problems and this does not allow them to organise more out-of-school activities. At the same time, they mention that schools would be able to take care of the education of children left without parental care if the local public administration agreed to finance the extracurricular activities, including paying for the services of a person hired to deal with children in a vulnerable position.

- *"Teachers are not paid for extracurricular activities". (a headmaster)*

Many adults think that most out-of-school activities provided for children do not correspond to their interests and needs and are not that effective both concerning the subjects tackled and the information technologies used. Nevertheless, some caregivers appreciate the effort of the education institutions to involve children in various extracurricular activities.

- *"Children would like things like computers, internet, some up-to-date equipment, but we can [only] offer them activities like wickerwork, crochet or woodwork and metalwork, which do not interest our youth". (UNICEF)*
- *"The activities offered are not attractive; they are old-fashioned". (a headmaster)*
- *"They study tae-kwon-do and organise parties at school". (a caregiver)*

At workshops with children, the statement "At school, the attitude towards all children is the same" received the lowest rating by all groups of children (3.35 points from a total of 5 possible). Thus, even if some children say that teachers treat all children equally, regardless of age and whether they have parents working abroad or not, these results point out the existence of some discriminatory attitudes of teachers.

In children's opinions, their material conditions influence to a great extent their teachers' attitudes towards them. In some cases migrants' children are favoured by

teachers, receiving in exchange rewards from their parents. Some children consider that teachers have a better attitude towards children wearing expensive, new clothes. Children's behaviours and academic performances can also be considered as reasons for teachers' unequal attitudes towards children.

- *"Children having money get good marks, for parents come and solve any problem". (Gr.IV)*
- *"Teachers judge by clothes". (Gr.II)*
- *"Teachers' attitudes depend on children's behaviour and school performance". (Gr.III)*

The nursery school was mentioned as a community service only by children living with parents. They appreciated it because it gives adults the opportunity to leave small children in childcare while they are at work.

The Town Hall

The town hall is one of the institutions that children mention most frequently. It was ranked second after school for the support it provides to both children living with parents and children with parents working abroad.

Children's views of town halls are divided. Some say that town hall supports some of their leisure time activities and the participation of sports teams in various competitions. Others claim that they do not benefit from any support and, moreover, when solicited, the town hall does not react in any way or indicates its refusal by the lack of financial resources. So the young people believe that town hall focuses only on rural problems and on problems of deprived families. Teachers have the same view and mention the humanitarian aid that is provided by the town hall to children from socially disadvantaged families. Some children highlight the role of the town hall in the protection of their security, especially concerning violent conflicts.

- *"It sponsors the basketball team of the lyceum". (Gr.I)*
- *"There are electricity problems in our classroom; we asked the mayor for help, but there was no response from his side". (Gr.IV)*
- *"The mayor helps school, people in the village, but children get very little help from him". (Gr.I)*
- *"When clashes break out at school or at the disco, everybody is afraid of the town hall representatives who together with the police decide how to punish the brawlers". (Gr.III)*

The local public administration from the communities involved in the study did not take any decisions about the situations of migrants' children. According to some teachers, decisions concerning certain children are taken only when the latter adopt undesirable behaviour or face financial problems, for migrants' children do not belong to any of the socially vulnerable groups.

Participants in the data consultation workshop point out that the town hall and implicitly its **social assistance** sector did not develop concrete programmes for children left without parental care because they do not consider them to be at risk. At the community level, social assistance representatives put their efforts into work with elderly, socially deprived families, and orphaned or disabled children. In the opinion of consulted children, there is not sufficient media coverage of the social assistant's services in the community, and in many cases they are not trained to work with children and youth.

- *"These children are not considered disadvantaged, so they do not benefit from social assistance". (DCW)*
- *"Social assistance is associated with the elderly; it lacks transparency". (DCW)*

Representatives of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection (DDSAFP) said that the lack of financial resources explains the lack of a social assistant in each town hall. His/her responsibility, in the community enjoying such services, is to provide psychological support for children left without parental care and to discuss with form teachers and even with migrated parents ways to improve children's conditions.

In some communities according to some local authorities, the Committee for minors' problems was set up. It is formed of the headmaster, the director of the nursery school, the inspector for juvenile offenders, and a deputy mayor. The Committee is charged with the examination of the behaviour of children left without parental care, but it focuses mainly on those breaking the law.

Most caregivers note that at the community level there are no concrete services for children left without parental care, and if there is an exception children are not aware of its existence. Moreover, some caregivers do not dare solicit the support of certain institutions or persons.

- *"...perhaps there are specialised services, but I don't know anything about it. Besides, I am ashamed to ask for help". (a caregiver)*

According to teachers the institution of guardianship contributes greatly to the respect for the rights of children left without parental care. Some caregivers explain that the local public administration allocates a certain sum of money if they agree to accept the guardianship of children they are looking after, but it is insignificant (50 lei). On the initiative and, sometimes, at the insistence of the town hall or the school administration, the guardianship is instituted. Local administration representatives affirm that only children whose parents do not send money receive allowances.

- *"All I will get is 50 lei for each child if I agree to institute the guardianship". (a caregiver)*
- *"...they are not accepted at school if nobody is responsible for them". (a caregiver)*

Free time activities and entertainment

Children living with parents are more preoccupied with free time services the community provides than migrants' children. But, to a great extent, their concerns refer to the same interests: visiting sports clubs and dance halls, taking part in various extracurricular activities, and getting access to new information technologies.

- *"I want to go to the wrestling classes". (Gr.III)*
- *"I am interested in computers and internet". (Gr.III)*

All groups of children say that their opportunities to organise their free time in the community are limited. In one locality, the statement "I have enough possibilities to spend my free time in the community" had the same ratings for children of 10-14 years from both groups, whereas at the age of 15-18 years, the rating obtained by migrants' children was considerably higher. However, in the other two communities, children with parents abroad have far fewer opportunities to organise their free time in comparison to their peers living with parents. Children indicate this by mentioning the lack of activities corresponding to their interests, and also, because of the responsibilities they must accept after parents' departure, they enjoy less free time. In the view of the UNICEF representative, *"the lack of opportunities to manage free time is one of the greatest problems of youth in Moldova"*.

- *"There are very few activities we can get involved in other than at school and home". (Gr.II)*
- *"We have almost no free time". (Gr.I)*

In some communities, according to caregivers, children benefit from some free time activities. But they also mention, that the lack of material resources, including low salaries of persons responsible for the organisation of such activities, lead to their inefficiency and disappearance. Some town hall representatives, teachers, and medical workers share the same view, admitting that children are deprived of opportunities to spend their free time in the community. Only in a few cases parents sponsor extracurricular activities attended by their children.

- *“... sometimes children get together for parties where it used to be the job of the school; this is how they entertain themselves”. (a caregiver)*
- *“Persons organising these activities [in the past] had low salaries, but now nobody wants to work for free”. (a caregiver)*
- *“There is a library, but it offers a very little choice because of insufficient number of books, nor does it subscribe to any journal or magazine”. (a teacher)*

Some teachers mention that the community offers sports clubs, dance halls, music and drama schools, but they are more frequently visited by children from primary school. In their opinion, children left without parental care attend these schools thanks to parents' who will enrol them and pay all the fees before going abroad. Not lacking financial resources, migrants' children have access to paid leisure activities in neighbouring localities or districts like the cinema, internet, and music school.

In communities involved in the study, cultural centres organise most of the leisure activities. They do not target migrants' children, but provide certain services for all children, among which are dance halls and sports clubs, libraries, concert, cinema, and disco halls.

- *„We entertain ourselves in these clubs in the evening. During parties we meet new friends, we participate in various activities. There are two dance halls and a library to borrow books from”. (Gr.III)*

In children's opinions, sports clubs and dance halls give them equal opportunities to communicate with peers from different localities and to assert themselves, regardless of age, school performance, or financial position. Some caregivers share the same view, adding that these clubs help children get support from their peers.

- *“All children can attend sports clubs. We make no selection here”. (DCW)*
- *“...they enjoy coming here; perhaps they feel differently as members of a team”. (a caregiver)*

Only adolescents are allowed to go to the disco in the cultural centre. Children are dissatisfied with its physical aspect and the lack of modern equipment, even if they are among the most visited places. Some teachers, as well as caregivers, mention that they do not allow children in their care, especially small ones and girls, to go to the disco in the cultural centre because it is associated, in their opinion, with drug abuse and violent behaviour.

- *“Our disco is at school because only adolescents attend the one in the village”. (Gr.III)*
- *“It is in deplorable condition (no heat), besides it is not organised more than once a week”. (a teacher)*
- *“... at 13 years it's too early; I don't let them go”. (a caregiver)*
- *“Girls living with grandmothers do not attend parties because it is not allowed”. (a teacher)*

Most children mention that there is an urgent need to create, at the community level, a number of services that would satisfy their needs and interests concerning their free time. Some children say that their participation in the organisation and provision of these services would make them more attractive.

- *“In order to entertain ourselves as we want, we must organise our out-of-school activities”. (Gr.III)*
- *“We need a hall to meet with friends...”. (Gr.I)*
- *“We want a sports club and a dance hall to be built”. (Gr.IV)*

Children mention that there are some **community organisations** or initiatives in their communities which approach social problems, but migrants’ children are not direct beneficiaries. There is a childcare centre for pre-school children from socially disadvantaged families in one of the communities.

- *“There is an NGO called “Smaranda” in our locality which deals with ecological issues. It helps keep our village clean”. (Gr.II)*
- *“The association ‘Children’s rights’ developed the project connected with environment pollution and several of us are volunteers”. (Gr.IV)*

Consulted children and some DDEYS representatives report that there are **community centres**, managed by local NGOs in some communities. These centres also focus on children without parental care, providing services for them under the same roof. In spite of the fact that they are few in number, communication with peers, the use of interactive methods, and psychological support are great assets of these institutions, which make them very attractive to children and youth. DRASPSF representatives say that such activities are developed mainly in district centres and less in rural localities.

Medical institutions

Both, migrants’ children and children living with parents appreciated medical institutions for the health support it provides for children. Some children mentioned the importance of medical workers’ informative visits to schools. Some children consider that the lack of necessary equipment and the migration of qualified medical workers diminish the quality of services supplied by the medical centres and children’s confidence in them.

- *“We are supported by medical workers who come to the secondary school and give us lessons”. (Gr.IV)*
- *“The hospital doesn’t have enough equipment to support us”. (Gr.IV)*

Consultation workshop participants, as well as some adults, report that most medical centres do not provide special services for migrants’ children. Moreover, these places are, to a great extent, not friendly towards children, especially because medical workers are not ready to work with children. They do not have communication skills, they do not respect confidentiality, and their services are paid. At the same time, consulted children are convinced of the necessity to provide information and psychological consultations within medical centres.

- *“It is not considered a friendly place to be and you go there when there is no other alternative. Children are not treated with confidentiality. Medical services are paid, despite the fact that they should be free”. (DCW)*
- *“They should provide informative services and psychological consultation”. (DCW)*

Teachers point out that at school the medical assistant is only able to provide first emergency assistance for children. However, all children benefit from a yearly medical consultation with the participation of experts from the district medical centre. The lack of material resources is seen by teachers as the main reason for the low quality of medical services. According to some teachers, in spite of various resources offered by donors to medical centres, benefits are not seen because they are not correctly managed.

Many children mentioned the importance of the services provided by the **post office**. Migrants' children much appreciated the opportunities it offers for periodical communication with parents. Several children accomplish, through the postal office, the duties connected with household activities for which they are now responsible.

- *"Thanks to the post office we can send letters and call our parents. It helps us keep in touch with parents". (Gr.II)*
- *"Most of the bills are paid at the post office". (Gr.I)*

The **police** was mentioned as a community service by both children living with parents and migrants' children. They both have confidence in this institution and they are aware of its tasks to ensure security at the community level. But police do not necessarily supervise children left without parental care unless they get into conflict with the law.

- *"The police take concrete measures against offenders, including small ones like us". (Gr.III)*
- *"We appealed to the police when our house has been robbed". (Gr.II)*
- *"Policemen should protect us, increasing our security". (Gr.IV)*

Migration's relationship with **economic agents** has several aspects. The majority of the economic agents were created on the basis of funds obtained from abroad, but also in order to satisfy the needs for goods and services of migrants' relatives, a significant part of the incomes coming from their remittances. Consulted youth think that economic agents are not eager to materially sustain migrants' children, not only because they do not consider them socially disadvantaged, but also because they are not motivated by the tax system.

Adults' mass exodus abroad led in some communities to the creation of regular bus services which ensure the connection between the migrants and their native localities. Thanks to them, migrants go abroad, send money and various industrial goods, and receive national products. Teachers say they are tolerant with pupils who miss classes to get parcels from their parents.

Consulted youth consider that frequenting **entertainment clubs** (bars, discos) represents for migrants' children a way to spend their free time with friends, as well as to spend the money received from parents. At the same time, adults do not have a positive attitude towards such activities and they usually associate them with alcohol consumption. As a result some children refuse to attend such clubs in order not to become the subject of discussions of other community members. Local administration representatives point out that young people are allowed to spend their time in such clubs only till 11 p.m. According to teachers, in some localities the bars are the only places where youth can meet and communicate.

- *"This is a place where youth meet, not necessarily a place where they drink alcohol". (DCW)*
- *"The community has created a negative image of the bar; people prefer not to be seen there". (DCW)*

The **church** was mentioned by some children as a community service and as a place where they can reflect, and meditate in peace. Children living with parents say that the church gives them moral support and helps them in overcoming difficult situations at school and within the family. Migrants' children go to church, praying to God e.g. for the health of their parents and for good exam results.

- *"...at church we pray to God for help at school and in the family". (Gr.III)*
- *"We pray for our parents who went abroad". (Gr.II)*

Consulted youth believe that most children do not go to church though they see a number of reasons why church may become attractive for migrants' children. On the one hand, after parents' departure, children become sad and isolated and the church gives them spiritual advice to deal with overwhelming problems and care for their well-being. On the other hand, these children attend church services because of their religious grandparents, in whose care they were left. In some communities priests urge parents in sermons not to go abroad.

Necessary services at community level

Talking about services they would like to have at community level, children living with parents proved to have more ideas than migrants' children. This may be due to the fact that only a few of them envisage living in their homeland and as a result they are less interested in the development of any community services.

Thus children expressed their wish to create some institutions which would facilitate their access to information, including information about a healthy way of living, career, and family planning. In their opinion, this would be possible if there were a computer centre providing internet services and if there were a local journal for children, printed and distributed regularly. Many children mentioned the urgent need to provide schools with up-to-date, new equipment, including the gyms and sports clubs.

Several children living with parents highlighted the importance of the development, at the community level, of institutions offering credits to the population and for sustaining small business.

Caregivers underlined the need to organise sports and cultural activities for children left without parental care at the community level. Only some caregivers expressed the need of material support for families that have more than one child in their care.

Teachers, DDEYS, and MEYS representatives consider that, at the school level, migrants' children are in need of qualified psychological services, which could give them both the opportunity to express themselves and to get counselling and advice concerning problems they face.

In teachers' opinion, the institution, at the community level, of a young person, responsible for working with children and youth, would increase the quantity and the quality of free time activities and entertainment organised for them.

Among national strategies for the protection of children left without parental care, teachers mention first the prevention of parents' migration through the creation of new jobs and increased salaries. At the same time, teachers consider that legalisation of work abroad could offer parents the opportunity to visit their children 2-3 times a year, as well as to better keep in touch with them.

DDEYS representatives see it as necessary to improve and harmonise the legislative framework on child protection, as well as to raise public awareness of the consequences of the phenomenon of labour force migration.

At the same time, some teachers assume that migrants' children do not need special services at the community level, justifying their view by the fact that they have neither different needs nor different behaviours from those of children living with parents. They add that coming from *"respected families"* they were left in the care and under the protection of close relatives.

Medical workers, UNICEF staff, NGOs and ministerial representatives are persuaded of the necessity to develop at the community level some multifunctional day centres providing a wide range of facilities and services such as: information, counselling, life skills development, health services friendly to children, and interest and sports clubs for children left without parental care. Careful consideration of children's needs should be the first step to the development of these services, and wide media coverage of these services would facilitate the increased awareness of how to get access to them.

CONCLUSIONS

The study focuses on the experiences of children left behind by migrating parents. The information from workshops with children was supplemented with that from caregivers of migrants' children, teachers, representatives of different community services, representatives of public administration, and international organisations accredited in the Republic of Moldova. After a primary analysis the data was used in consultation with a group of adolescents who were opinion leaders in their community.

The data show that parents' departure has an impact not only on children's material conditions, but also on their emotional development, social relations, and their school performance. These can be both complex long-term or short-term changes, depending on a multitude of factors, ranging from the period of separation from parents, child's preparation for an independent life, and the relationship with caregivers to the attitude of community members towards migrants' children.

Psycho-emotional development

Children left without parental care face difficult and unpleasant emotional states – they become sad, they feel isolated, and they often cry and feel insecure. The lack of abilities to manage emotions, as well as the lack of a reliable person's support, amplify these emotional states and create a climate in which children adopt aggressive behaviour.

Serious preoccupation with parents' safety in foreign countries contributes to children's increased awareness of family values, but it can also create a sense of guilt as parents leave to provide a better future for them.

Smaller children externalise more easily emotions caused by the separation from parents, whereas adolescents tend to prefer not to express feelings. Children find it harder to bear the first period of separation from parents or the first experience of this kind.

Showing material welfare is a way some children compensate for the lack of affection. At the same time, adults characterise them as feeling superior to others.

Children's relationships

On the one hand, parents' departure led to both a quantitative and qualitative decrease in children's communication; on the other hand, there seemed to be an increase in children's preoccupations with family relations. The frequency of migrated parents' visits depends on the country of destination, as well as on the legal or illegal character of the stay. The most common way of communication between parents and children is the telephone. Even if most children communicate rather often with migrated parents, they do not manage to discuss their emotional well-being or difficulties.

Children's relationships with parents change, becoming either more distant or closer. Most children appreciate parents' efforts to guarantee them a better life, they do not want to disappoint them, and they make their best to meet their expectations. At the same time, the lack of meaningful communication and the tendency to deal with problems of everyday life independently cause an estrangement between parents and children.

Almost all the migrants' children have been left in the care of a close relative. About 2/3 of them live with one parent and the others are supervised by grandparents or aunts. According to caregivers their main tasks are to provide children with adequate living conditions, to monitor their school performance, and to prevent children from the engaging in socially undesirable behaviour. Caregivers' growing responsibilities for children can lead to overprotection and an excessive control of children's activities, sometimes even with violation of their privacy.

From the perspective of children, relationships with caregivers are not sufficiently close and the latter do not manage to meet children's needs for emotional support. Caregivers' old age, their restrictive and authoritarian style of communication, as well as their ways of managing money sent by parents generate conflict situations in the relationships between caregivers and children.

The relationships of migrants' children with peers living with parents develop in two directions. On the one hand they feel protected and included, thanks to the feeling of sympathy and understanding of their situation, but on the other hand, some feel coldness or tension because of envy of their living conditions.

Common experiences and concerns as well as their material situation cause children left without parental care to form their own circles of friends. They prefer communication in small groups and they are interested in finding reliable persons who can give them emotional support and with whom they can share personal thoughts.

School

Parents' departure abroad influences children's school performance in different ways. Lack of parental support, of time for homework and the conviction that studies are useless may cause a decrease in children's attainments. On the other hand, children's desire to reward parents working abroad for their efforts motivates children to maintain or even to improve school performance.

The development of relationships between children left without parental care and teachers depends to a great extent on teachers' personality. Those who prove to be friendly, sympathetic, and receptive to children's problems become very soon resource persons close to them. Other teachers who are envious of the improved material conditions of families tend to take advantage of the special relationship established with migrants' children.

Children's resources

Parents' departure requires children to become independent very early. However, few children prove to have developed abilities to live independently, to manage their resources, and to practice a healthy way of living. In these conditions, the lack of supervision from adults, lack of spare time activities, the possession of financial means, as well as a growing pressure from peers raise the vulnerability of migrants' children to risks related to drug abuse, school abandonment, and precocious sexual relationships.

The household duties children must undertake after parents' departure are often far from being specific to their age; as a result children reach maturity precociously and both their free time and the time they spend on their homework is limited. Even if they have developed relevant abilities and knowledge, most children are unhappy that they have been given these tasks whether they want to or not without taking into account their own opinion. Children left without parental care at an early age seem to develop the abilities to cope with new circumstances more easily.

The feeling of insecurity overwhelms children left without parental care and it is difficult for them to find a reliable person they can turn to for support. Most frequently they ask parents, caregivers and peers for support, the latter being given priority in the discussion of sensitive issues. Children seldom solicit support from representatives of community services and only do so when they have a close relationship, based on trust, with these persons.

Children's participation

The existence and functioning of children's participation in the community contributes to prevent children's vulnerability through the development of life skills. There is

a greater tolerance and empathy, as well as high solidarity of members, towards disadvantaged children in such communities. Thus, children left without parental care benefit from an environment that facilitates peer to peer communication and supports in regard to any problem they face.

The level of children's involvement in the family and community decision-making process depends on their age. Young people of 15-18 years are consulted more frequently by parents and other adults concerning matters affecting them. In parents' absence, the opinion of the eldest child in the family counts the most, especially in relationships with relatives and the community.

After parents' departure abroad, children enjoy more freedom, but they also have less free time, numerous household activities, and insufficient support for involvement in different extracurricular activities.

Children's views of their future

The example of parents' migration, the lack of opportunities to ensure a decent living in the homeland, as well as preoccupation with family reintegration are some of the reasons which make children plan to live abroad in the future more often than their peers living with parents. The wish of migrants' children to create a complete and united family is increased by their suffering from separation from parents.

Most migrants' children wish to pursue their education, even if they are convinced that it will not guarantee them a decent living and they do not have a concrete plan in this regard. The financial support provided by parents ensures them a place at the university, and this can be considered as one of the main reasons for the decrease in their academic performance.

Policies and services for children left behind by migrating parents

According to public authorities responsible for child protection, migrants' children do not constitute a deprived group; therefore, there is neither concrete legislation nor special strategies developed for their protection. Even if parents' migration has been widespread for a long time, the situation of migrants' children appeared on the public agenda only in 2005, and the actions taken in this regard are sporadic and consist mainly of data collection.

The community institutions are generally not concerned with the situation of migrants' children. There are few educational and leisure services provided by the school for children, regardless of their family conditions. Their capacity to meet children's needs, as well as their quality and popularity, decrease because of the lack of financial resources and a substandard training of professionals working with children and youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the opinion of the great majority of participants in the study, seeking a job abroad is an effective strategy for avoiding poverty. Beyond immediate economic benefits of migrating, the consequences of separation from parents for children become more obvious and more serious over time.

The complexity of this phenomenon is linked to the fact that the prevention of parents' migration would contribute, on the one hand, to an improvement of children's emotional and social welfare, and, on the other hand, to the aggravation of the material situation of families. This makes it difficult to elaborate certain recommendations in this regard. Taking into account these facts, we present both the recommendations expressed by the participants and consulted youth within the study, and those put forth by the research team.

- Raising administration and public awareness of the consequences of parents' departure abroad on children's development in order to adopt a national strategy for the protection of children left without parental care.
- The formulation of legal mechanisms for working abroad that would allow migrated parents to systematically visit children and maintain an affective connection with them, without the risk of losing their work.
- Encouraging private investment, including investment of resources coming from abroad, due to simplification of company registration procedures; providing people with special training to start their own business; promoting a fiscal policy that would favour new economic agents.
- The creation of social rehabilitation and reintegration programs for parents returning from abroad in order to prevent repeated migration.
- The implementation of programs for community development which would include the creation of infrastructure and qualitative services for children and adults. This would encourage children to see their future within their community.
- Parents' education in the field of communication and children's development, which would allow them to prepare children for independent life and provide them the emotional support necessary for the duration of their absence.
- The development of programs for encouraging children's participation in the family decision-making process, as well as persuading parents of the necessity of consulting and taking into account children's opinions, including negotiation of the duration of their absence.
- Psycho-pedagogical education of guardians in whose care children are left so that they understand their obligation to provide all the required support and attention for children during their parents' absence.
- Teachers' psychological preparation, including form masters, so as to meet children's needs for communication and emotional support.
- The implementation, at the community level, of programs for life skills development, focusing on skills such as self-administration, communication and relationships, and management of resources and emotions.
- The promotion of various models of children's participation at the community and school level, depending on the local needs, with a special focus on socially deprived children.

The Situation of Children Left Behind by Migrating Parents

- Development, in each community, of multifunctional centres for children and youth, providing opportunities of involvement for children with parents working abroad in out-of-school activities together with children living with parents, in order to facilitate their social integration.
- Diversification of leisure activities for children and youth from the community, in accordance with their interests and needs. Preparation of a competent person responsible for the work with children and youth.
- The establishment of certain groups of peers, trained for communicating with children left without parental care and for providing them with necessary informational and emotional support.
- The establishment of psychological and counselling services, friendly towards children, respecting the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. Provision of psychological services in schools by young, qualified persons, who can gain easily children's confidence.
- The development, at the community level, of professional maternal and paternal assistance services that would help to diminish the consequences of separation from parents on the child's education and welfare.
- The psychological training of medical workers and social assistants; supplying medical centres with the necessary, up-to-date equipment in order to guarantee qualified information and consultation services, friendly towards children.
- Insurance of wide media coverage of community services aimed at supporting children left without parental care.

ANNEXES

I. Study's key-questions

1. Which are children's everyday preoccupations and concerns?
2. What are the resources (material, personal, social) children have at their disposal in order to deal with life challenges?
3. What is the role of parents / family in children's development?
4. To what extent children's rights and their participation in decision making processes affecting them are guaranteed?
5. What services and policies for children are there in communities?
6. How do children represent their future?

II. The list of qualities proposed for categorisation.

Knowledge

1. I know my needs, my interests and my own abilities.
2. I am aware of the necessity for rules and laws.
3. I know children's rights and responsibilities.
4. I am conscious of the effects of my emotions and feelings on myself and on the others.
5. I know how to solve conflicts in a peaceful way.
6. I know how to behave in situations when I am a victim of abuse or violence.
7. I am aware of my job / career opportunities.
8. I know what it means to lead a healthy way of living.
9. I am conscious of the consequences of smoking, alcohol and drugs consumption.
10. I have been informed of HIV / AIDS

Abilities

11. Before making a decision I always inform myself.
12. I find easily the information I need.
13. When I need help I can ask other persons for help.
14. I can do well all the household activities (cooking, cleaning, taking care of animals etc)
15. In various circumstances I can take good decisions.
16. I am good at managing money.
17. I can organise correctly my time and I manage everything.
18. I can efficiently communicate with different people.
19. I can control and I do not express aggressively my emotions in various situations.
20. I can act effectively in a group of peers.
21. I am able to take the initiative in a group of people and I act in a responsible way.
22. I participate actively in the life of my community.

Attitudes

23. I am optimist in what concerns my future.
24. I am confident in my own forces.
25. I am insistent on achieving my goals.
26. I analyse the eventual consequences of my behaviour.
27. I respect other people's rights and laws.
28. I am convinced that other people's way of living, opinions and ideas are as valuable as my own ones.
29. I have the sense of humour.
30. I deal independently with various situations.
31. I fulfil my obligations.
32. I try to understand other people.

III. The list of rights proposed for the voting procedure

1. My opinion influences the decisions taken within family.
2. At school the attitude towards all children is the same.
3. I have sufficient opportunities to spend my free time in the community.
4. I have enough time to spend on my homework.
5. Adults take into account our attitude when they decide problems concerning us.
6. I feel protected from all forms of violence and neglect.
7. When I need help, there is always somebody ready to help me.

IV. Questionnaire

We ask you to complete this questionnaire. In this way you can help us make a study about children in Moldova. There is no need to write your name on this paper. We assure you that nobody will find out your answers. Read carefully all the variants of proposed answers and circle the variant you choose, and write the answer to the question, where there is a line. Thank you for your co-operation and for your time!

1. How old are you? _____ **years**

2. Sex **M** **F**

3. How many children are there in your family? **1 2 3 4 5 more**

4. With whom of your parents are you living now?

- a) with both
- b) with your mother
- c) with your father
- d) without parents

5. Who is taking care of you?

- a) your mother
- b) your father

- c) your grandparents
- d) your brother / sister
- e) your uncle / aunt
- f) other relatives _____
- g) your neighbours
- h) your form master / teacher
- i) other people _____

6. Which member of your family usually pays for the food and clothing?

- a) your mother
- b) your father
- c) your elder brothers and sisters
- d) _____

7. How often did you attend school in the last 3 months?

- a) every day
- b) several times a week
- c) I miss classes from time to time
- d) I seldom go to school

8. Will you go to school next year?

Yes No I do not know

9. Do you have the necessary school supplies?

Yes No Part of them

10. What do you think, by comparison with your classmates you have

- a) more money
- b) less money
- c) almost as much money as them

11. How many times a day do you eat?

- a) 1-2 times
- b) three times
- c) more than three times
- d) it occurs not to eat at all

12. Do you have winter clothes?

Yes No

13. Is one of your parents working abroad?

Yes No

! Answer to the following questions (nr.14-20) only if you answered „Yes“ to the question nr.13!

14. Which one of your parents went abroad?

- a) your father
- b) your mother
- c) both

15. In what country did he / she / they go?

Your father _____

Your mother _____

16. Since when are they gone?

Your father – _____ months / years

Your mother – _____ months / years

17. How do you keep in touch with your parent(s)?

- a) through the telephone
- b) through letters
- c) through parcels (parcels with various goods)
- d) through other persons

18. How often do you communicate with your migrated parent(s)?

- a) every day
- b) once a week
- c) once in 2-3 months
- d) once in a half a year
- e) once a year
- f) more seldom

19. How often does / do your parent(s) visit you?

- a) every week
- b) every month
- c) once in 2-3 months
- d) once in a half a year
- e) once in a year
- f) more seldom

20. What was, in your opinion, the main reason for your parent(s) departure?

V. The description of the sample of interviewed children

Table I. Number of enquired children in each community

| Locality | Children living with parents | | Children with at least one parent abroad | |
|----------|------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|
| | Nr. of persons | Frequency (%) | Nr. Of persons | Frequency (%) |
| I | 252 | 54.1 | 91 | 33.2 |
| II | 113 | 24.2 | 116 | 42.3 |
| III | 101 | 21.7 | 67 | 24.5 |
| Total | 466 | 100% | 274 | 100% |

Table II. Respondents' distribution according to age

| Age | Children living with parents | | Children with at least one parent abroad | |
|--------------|------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|
| | Nr. of persons | Frequency (%) | Nr. of persons | Frequency (%) |
| 10 years | 15 | 3.2 | 19 | 6.9 |
| 11 years | 68 | 14.6 | 38 | 13.9 |
| 12 years | 68 | 14.6 | 29 | 10.6 |
| 13 years | 62 | 13.3 | 56 | 20.4 |
| 14 years | 66 | 14.2 | 33 | 12 |
| 15 years | 70 | 15 | 41 | 15 |
| 16 years | 49 | 10.5 | 27 | 9.9 |
| 17 years | 48 | 10.3 | 22 | 8 |
| 18 years | 20 | 4.3 | 9 | 3.3 |
| Total | 466 | 100 | 274 | 100 |

Table III. Respondents' distribution according to gender

| Sex | Children living with parents | | Children with at least one parent abroad | |
|--------|------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|
| | Nr. of persons | Frequency (%) | Nr. of persons | Frequency (%) |
| Female | 213 | 45.7 | 129 | 47.1 |
| Male | 253 | 54.3 | 145 | 52.9 |
| Total | 466 | 100 | 274 | 100 |

Table IV. Data on the number of children in the respondents' families of origin

| Number of children in the family | Children living with parents | | Children with at least one parent abroad | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|
| | Nr. of persons | Frequency (%) | Nr. of persons | Frequency (%) |
| One child | 28 | 6 | 22 | 8 |
| Two children | 200 | 42.9 | 168 | 61.3 |
| Three children | 170 | 36.5 | 57 | 20.8 |
| Four children | 41 | 8.8 | 22 | 8 |
| Five and more children | 21 | 4.1 | 3 | 1.1 |
| NR | 8 | 1.7 | 2 | 0.7 |
| Total | 466 | 100 | 274 | 100 |

