

Migration and the Rights of Children in Moldova

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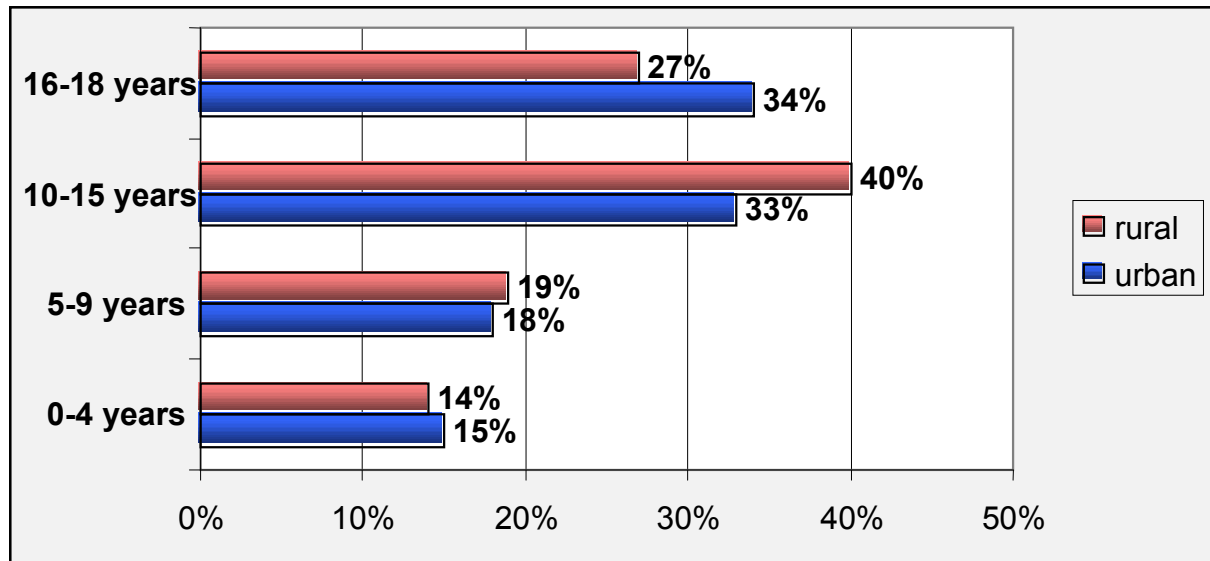
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Migration and the Rights of Children in Moldova

Social and political developments at the beginning of the 1990s had an impact on the living standards of the population of Moldova. Unemployment, low salaries and delays in paying salaries encouraged people to improve their livelihoods by leaving to work abroad. Migration has continued unabated into this century, and there are no indications that it will cease in the near future.¹ A considerable number of people who migrate from Moldova for various periods of time are parents who leave their children behind. An International Organization for Migration (IOM) survey conducted in July and August 2006 estimated that 177,000 children aged 0–18 had been left by parents working abroad; 37 per cent were 10–15 years old.² In all, 40 per cent of rural children between the ages of 10 and 15 had parents abroad compared with 33 per cent of urban children (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age Structure of Children with Parents Working Abroad



Source: *Remittances and Migration in the Republic of Moldova 2006*

While remittances have improved the standard of living in migrant households, the impact of migration on children’s psychological well being, on their overall development and on their education and health is just beginning to be understood. Concern over the welfare of children living in migrant households is not yet a part of anti-poverty development strategies.

This paper summarizes research presented at a conference on children’s rights and migration held in Chişinău, Moldova on November 15, 2007. The rights of children are specifically defined and protected in numerous laws and statutes in Moldova starting with Article 50 of the Constitution that prohibits the, “...exploitation of minors, their use in activities that could harm their health and morality or that could endanger their lives or normal development.” Physical and/or mental punishment is not permitted in schools or in homes, and the Criminal Code lists infanticide, statutory rape, child trafficking, illegally taking children out of the country and abandoning

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) Moldova, *Migration and Remittances in the Republic of Moldova 2006*, IOM, Chisinau, 2006.

² Ibid.

children abroad as felonies. Beating, tormenting and torturing are explicitly defined in the regulations for evaluating the gravity of physical injuries, and the Administrative Code notes that abusive behaviour, insults, maltreatment of any kind and physical and mental violence constitute a breach of the legitimate rights and interests of children.³ The research presented at the conference studied the effect of parents' migration on these legitimate rights. The conference also focused on the rights and duties of parents and the right of children to education, health and social protection services.

I. Why Moldovans Migrate

Since 2000, Moldova's economic performance has been commendable in contrast to its deteriorating performance throughout most of the 1990s after the breakdown of Soviet-era trade and supply links. The country has successfully stabilized. It launched structural reforms to stimulate growth and started setting up an effective social protection system. Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth has been strong at 6 per cent on average over the last six years; however Moldova is still one of the poorest countries in Europe with a GDP per capita significantly below the average of the Central European countries. With economic recovery, the national poverty rate dropped from 73 per cent in 1999 to under 27 per cent in 2004. In 2006, however, the rate increased to 29 per cent largely as a result of an increase in poverty in rural areas and small towns.⁴

Currently, agriculture and agro-processing activities account for roughly 30 per cent of the country's GDP, and many people still make their livelihoods in this sector. Over 50 per cent of the population of 3.3 million people lives in rural areas. Land reform in the late 1990s and the creation of many small private farms provided a buffer for workers from lost industries but did not stop the deterioration of the living conditions of the majority of the population.⁵ A study by Terre des Hommes and Save the Children in 2005 of 1485 adults and 995 children in Soroca, Ungheni and a rural area of Chişinău Municipality included questions on legal family incomes, on household services and on the availability of employment in their communities.⁶ More than half the household members indicated a monthly income for the whole family of less than 1000 lei (approximately US \$75), 21 per cent said there was no heating in their dwellings in winter, 72 per cent said they did not have a sewerage system, 88 per cent of them did not have hot water, only 13 per cent said there were jobs in their communities, almost half (45 per cent) said there were few possibilities and 43 per cent said there either were no possibilities or there were none in their areas of specialization.

These factors have encouraged people to improve their livelihoods by leaving Moldova to work abroad. Migration was negligible prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and even throughout most of the first decade of Moldova's independence. Before 2000, migration was more ethnically or politically motivated. Since 2000, in the wake of the 1998 regional economic crisis that affected Moldova in particular, it was the search for better economic opportunities abroad that fuelled the exodus. According to the Moldovan National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) of 2005, labour was the main reason for migration for 83 per cent of females and

³ UNICEF Moldova, Ministry of Education and Youth, Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child, *State Responsiveness to Violence against Children Annex*, UNICEF, Chisinau, 2007

⁴ UNICEF, *Migration's Impact on Children in Moldova*, UNICEF, Chisinau, 2007.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Terre des Hommes and Save the Children, *Baseline Study for the FACT Project in the Republic of Moldova: Child Labour Migration and Risk Factors for Child Trafficking*, Terre des Hommes, Chisinau, 2007.

91 per cent of males.⁷ Many also left because they wanted to improve their living standards: building a house or buying an apartment were among the most frequently cited reasons for leaving. In a comprehensive qualitative study done for UNICEF by CBS AXA in October and November 2006 in seven communities, parents said they worked abroad for the sake of their children. In all, 72 per cent of parents with a spouse abroad agreed with the statement, “Children whose parents work abroad have greater chances to succeed in life.”⁸ Data for this study were collected from focus group discussions with spouses and children of migrants, guardians and teachers; from case studies; from in-depth interviews of local leaders and children with parents working abroad and from 306 semi-structured questionnaires for households, 68 for migrants’ children aged 10–18 and one for each community.

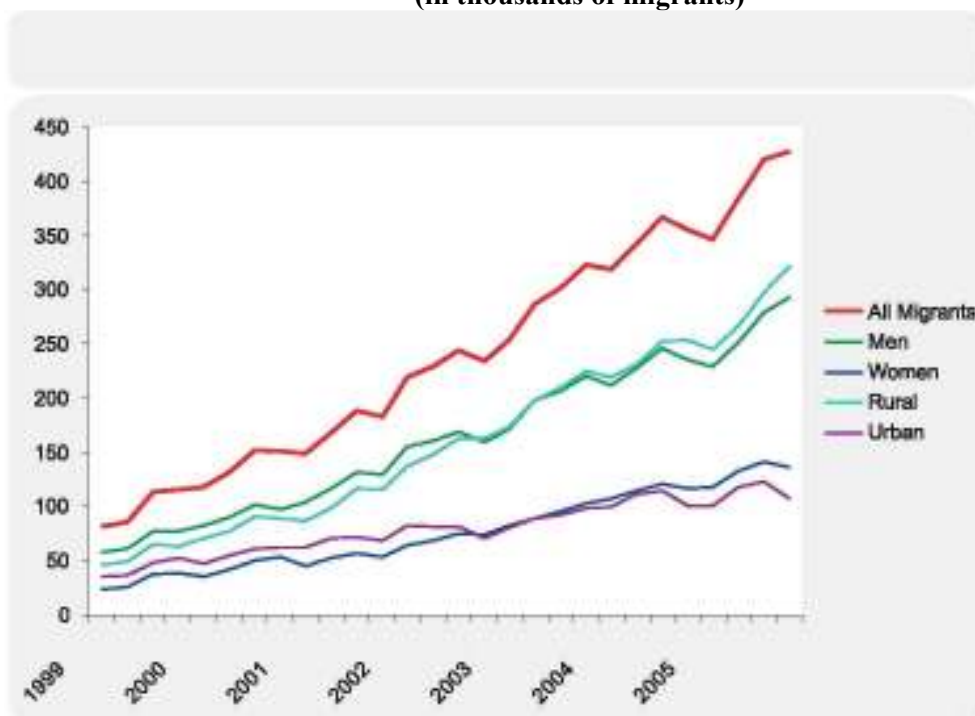
II. Who Migrates

While data on the numbers of migrants vary according to the source, migration is definitely becoming a fact of life in Moldova especially for rural men as shown in Figure 2. These data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics are the only comprehensive data on trends in migration since 1999. The LFS interviews a rolling panel of approximately 6,000 households quarterly with respect to members’ participation in the labour market. A household member is considered a migrant if at the time of the interview the member is “abroad to work or to look for work.” This produces an estimate of the total number of migrants at that point but does not permit firm conclusions with respect to the total number of households with a migrant for at least part of the year. That number will be larger.

⁷ Ministry of Health (MOH) *National Demographic and Health Survey*, MOH, Chisinau, 2006.

⁸ CBS AXA, UNICEF, UNDP, *The Impact of Migration and Remittances on Communities, Families and Children*, Chisinau, 2007.

Figure 2: Trends in Migration from 1999 to 2005 from Labour Force Survey Data in the First Quarter of the Year (in thousands of migrants)



Source: *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*

According to the 2005 NDHS, approximately 75 per cent of all migrants were between the ages of 15 and 39; the most common age group was 20–24 (25 per cent). The majority had higher educations and included experienced teachers, medical doctors and nurses. The highest percentage of households with at least one migrant was in the south (21 per cent) and the lowest was in Chişinău (13 per cent). Overall, households with migrants tended to come from the middle (23 per cent) and fourth (21 per cent) economic quintiles; fewer came from the richest or poorest. More migrants were from rural households (61 per cent of females and 64 per cent of males).⁹ The CBS AXA survey found that migrants from rural areas were significantly younger than those from urban areas: 43 per cent of rural migrants were 20–29 years of age compared with 32 per cent in that age group from urban areas.¹⁰ According to the IOM study, in 2006 the average age of those who worked abroad was 35 years; 42 per cent were women and 58 per cent were men, 65 per cent were from rural areas, and 18 per cent had higher educations.¹¹

The IOM study *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova* published in 2007 identified four distinct groups of migrants: (i) construction workers in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (33 per cent); (ii) those in other occupations in the CIS (25 per cent); (iii) migrants to the European Union (EU) and Israel (33 per cent) and (iv) all others, in particular migrants to Turkey, Romania and Cyprus (12 per cent). Migration to CIS countries tended to be need driven while migration to non-CIS countries was more likely to be opportunity driven.

⁹ MOH, 2006, Op. cit.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ IOM, 2006, Op. cit.

Those in the construction industry in the CIS were predominantly males from rural areas and had relatively low levels of education. CIS migrants in other sectors were also mainly from rural areas, but their educational levels were considerably higher and almost half were women. EU migrants had the highest levels of education; more than half were female and 44 per cent were from urban areas. Two thirds of the other migrants (those to mainly Turkey, Romania and Cyprus) were women, more than half were from rural areas, half were under 30 years of age and 46 per cent had only a primary or secondary education.¹²

For many Moldovans, migration involves illegal border crossings or residence abroad without the proper permits. The extent of illegal migration varied across the four groups. Since travel to CIS countries does not generally require a visa, the frequency of illegal migration to this region is very low. By contrast, it is close to 50 per cent for the EU where visa requirements have been tightened for Moldovans in recent years. The type of job performed and the legal status in the host country largely determine whether a migrant is seasonal or long term. If migration is primarily need driven, the migrant is more likely to be seasonal while opportunity-driven migrants are more likely to be long term or permanent. IOM defines a migrant as seasonal if he or she leaves Moldova regularly but does not stay abroad for more than six consecutive months. According to some respondents in the CBS AXA survey, seasonal migration reduced the impact of migration on family members left behind. Short-term migration also does not sever the bonds of the migrant with the community.¹³ Seasonal migration is, above all, a CIS phenomenon, especially among migrants in the construction industry who are predominately male.

EU migrants, on the other hand, tend to be long term; their average length of stay was 16 months in part because the average cost of one-way travel was US\$3,600 in 2006 which was almost double what it was in 2000. Approximately 44 per cent of EU and other migrants were planning to stay abroad, but only 6 per cent of CIS migrants planned to.¹⁴ The fact that more than half of the EU migrants were women is thus quite significant, especially if they were mothers as it implies a protracted absence from their families. The same CBS AXA survey found that children of migrant mothers found it more difficult to cope with their new family situations.

III. The Impact of Migration on Children and Families

According to the 2005 NDHS, more than 25 per cent of both males and females living abroad left behind a wife or husband. When asked about the two main effects of migration in the IOM study, 22 per cent of households with a migrant mentioned emotional stress caused by the separation of couples and 27 per cent mentioned a lack of parental care. In 22 per cent of households with CIS construction migrants that are typically in rural areas, 20 per cent cited the need to work longer and harder and even to hire a labourer to replace the migrant. The main effect for all groups, however, was the increased household income cited by 85 per cent.¹⁵ The findings of the CBS AXA study agree (Figure 3.)

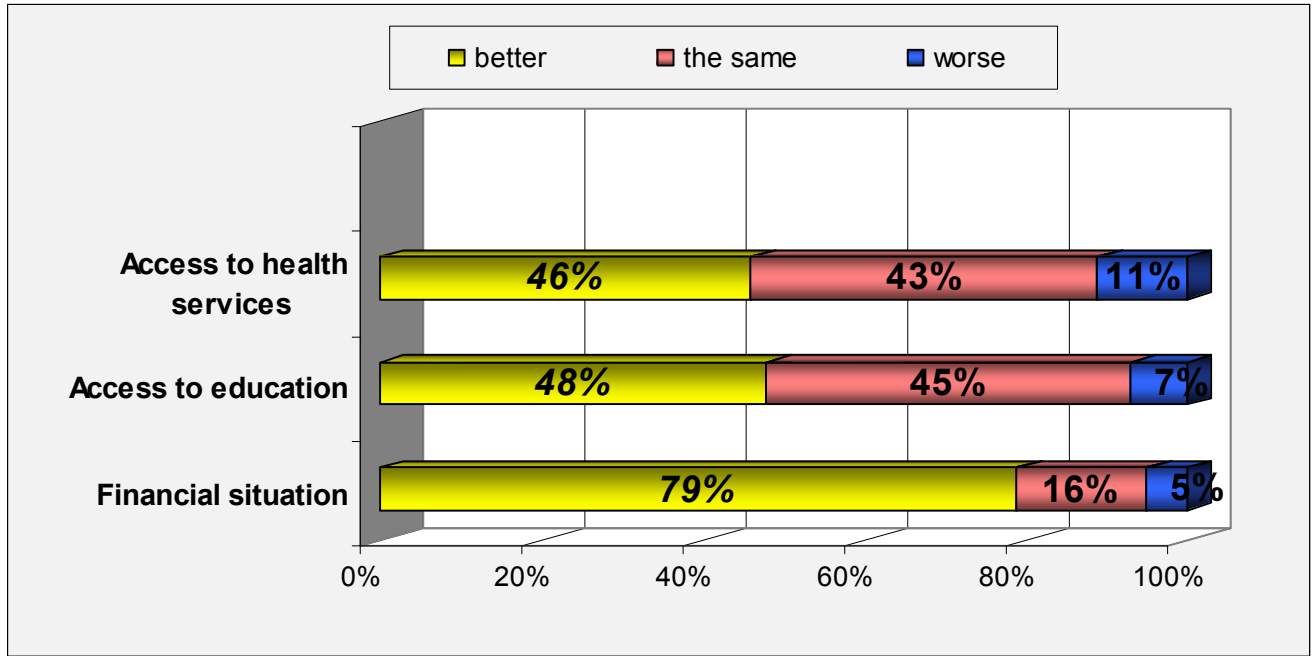
¹² IOM, *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, Chisinau, 2007.

¹³ CBS AXA, 2007, Op. cit.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ IOM, 2007, Op. cit.

Figure 3: Changes in the Household with One Family Member Working Abroad

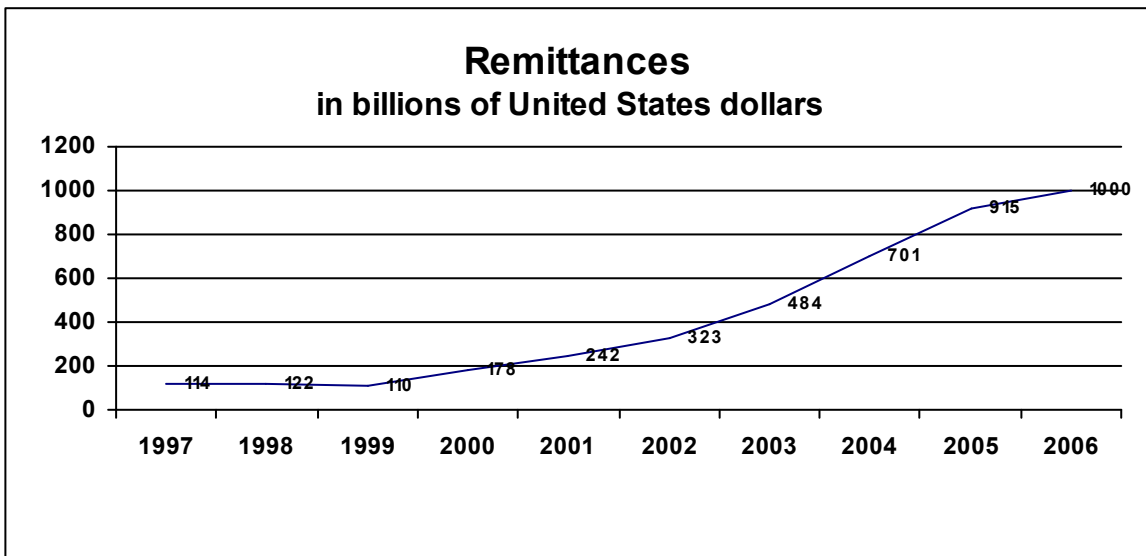


Source: *The Impact of Migration and Remittances on Communities, Families and Children*

A. Economic Impact

The number of migrants and the volume of remittances have both grown steadily since 1999. In 2006, remittances from migrant workers to their families in Moldova amounted to one third of Moldova’s GDP and surpassed the US\$ 1 billion mark according to the balance of payments compiled by the National Bank of Moldova (Figure 4); about 40 per cent of Moldovans lived in households that received remittances.¹⁶

Figure 4: Remittances to Moldova from 1997 to 2006



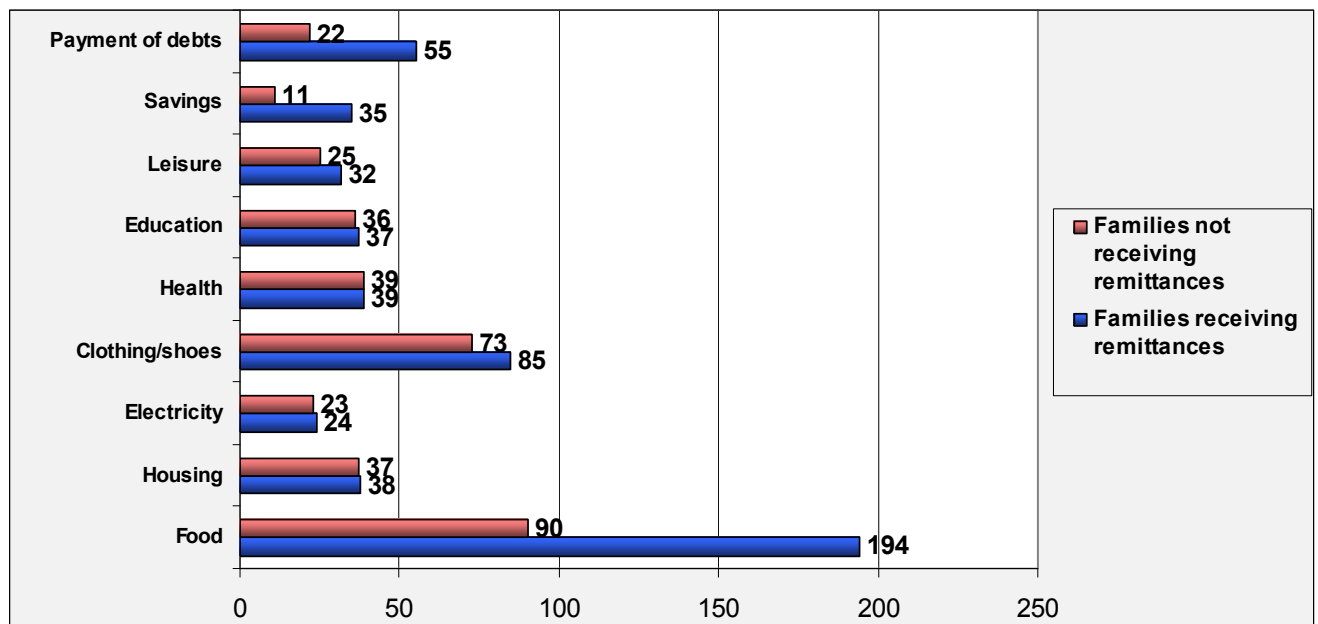
¹⁶ UNICEF, 2007, Op. cit.

Source: National Bank of Moldova

The contribution of remittances to the family budget was highly significant for most households receiving them. In 52 per cent of households with children aged 0–18 years with a family member working abroad, remittances constituted over 50 per cent of the family budget. The same was true for 36 per cent of families without children. Thus, for three out of four households that received them, remittances represented the main source of income. There was also a positive correlation between the presence of children and the contribution of remittances to the family budget. Remittances represented more than 75 per cent of the family budget for 27 per cent of families with children but for only 12 per cent for families without children.¹⁷

The IOM study on remittances and migration in 2006 found that families receiving remittances spent more than twice as much on food each month while amounts spent on health, education through high school, housing and electricity were virtually equal (Figure 5). Households that received remittances managed to save three times as much as households that did not.¹⁸ In the survey on patterns and trends IOM did in 2007, households with migrants were almost four times more likely to have savings exceeding US \$500 (29 per cent) than non-migrant households (8 per cent). Households with EU migrants saved more than households with CIS migrants.¹⁹

Figure 5: Monthly Expenditures in Lei per Person in Families with Children that Do and Do Not Receive Remittances



Source: *Remittances and Migration in the Republic of Moldova 2006*

Remittances played a major role in household budgets funding more than half of the current expenditures in about 60 per cent of them across all four groups of migrants. Most remittance-receiving households stated that remittances were primarily spent on daily needs such as food, clothes or rent. A second priority was consumer durables such as TV sets, refrigerators or computers. The rest was used mainly for larger household investments such as cars or home

¹⁷ CBS AXA, 2007, Op. cit.

¹⁸ IOM, 2006, Op. cit.

¹⁹ IOM, 2007, Op. cit.

renovations. The IOM survey also asked about changes in asset ownership since the economic crisis in 1998 that triggered the first wave of migration. Increases have been much larger for migrant households as 17 per cent had acquired an apartment or a house, 18 per cent a car, 19 per cent a washing machine and 26 per cent a computer compared with 9 per cent, 16 per cent, 12 per cent and 20 per cent of non-migrant households respectively. The recent real estate boom in Chişinău appears to have been financed at least in part by remittances.²⁰ Children said that their material situations had improved following their parents' migration: 90 per cent said their clothing was better, 75 per cent said their housing had improved and 74 per cent had better food.²¹

These findings suggest that remittances may have a large impact on household welfare and may contribute to reducing poverty. Just after the crisis in 1998, 40 per cent of migrant and non-migrant households were poor. By 2006, however, the incidence of poverty had fallen to just over 20 per cent for migrant households but was still 32 per cent for non-migrant households. The impact on poverty is greater for EU migrants.²²

To date, there is little cooperation between local public authorities and migrants. Migrants tend not to trust local leaders and the latter consider that those who work abroad are no longer interested in the problems and needs of the community. Thus remittances have played an insignificant role in the development of local infrastructure. In the opinion of the participants in CBS AXA study, those who worked abroad avoided contributing to community activities and projects or investing in the community.²³

B. Impact on the Health and Education of Children

Parents who work abroad are very much concerned about their children's health; it is the most frequently discussed subject when parents call home. Children often avoid telling their parents abroad about their health problems, however, to protect them from additional worries. The majority of participants in the CBS AXA study believed that the absence of parents negatively affects children's physical and psychological health though this belief was more widely held by families without migrants (Figure 6). Children who live with both parents are physically healthier was the conclusion of 87 per cent of families without migrants and of 69 per cent of families with migrants.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid.

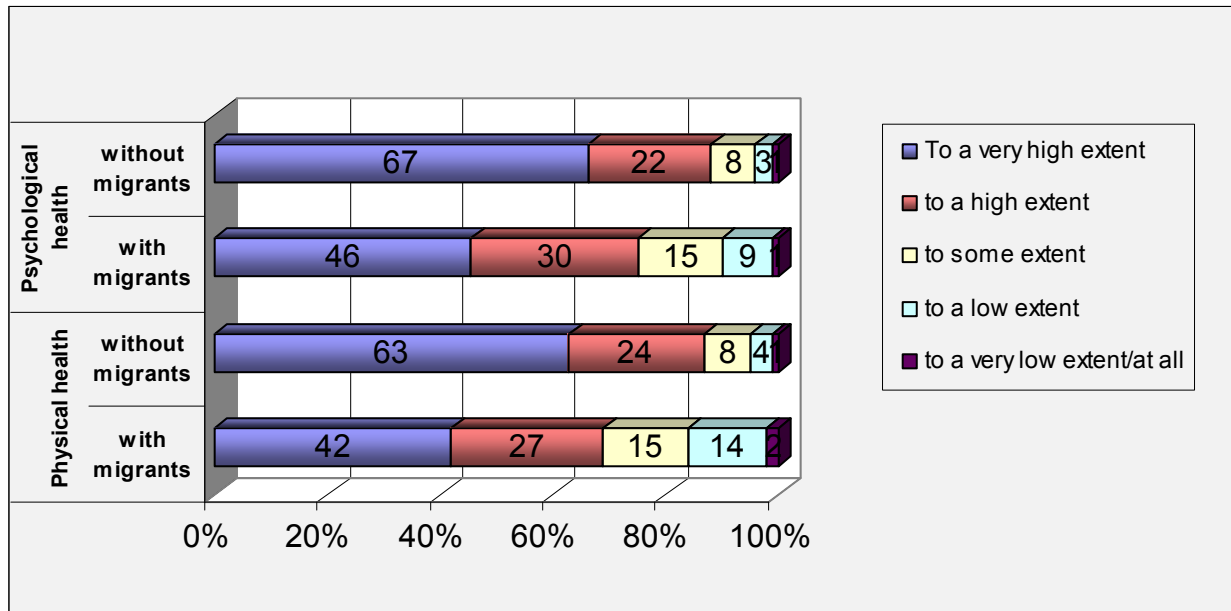
²¹ CBS AXA, 2007, Op. cit.

²² IOM.,2007, Op. cit.

²³ CBS AXA, 2007, Op. cit.

²⁴ Ibid.

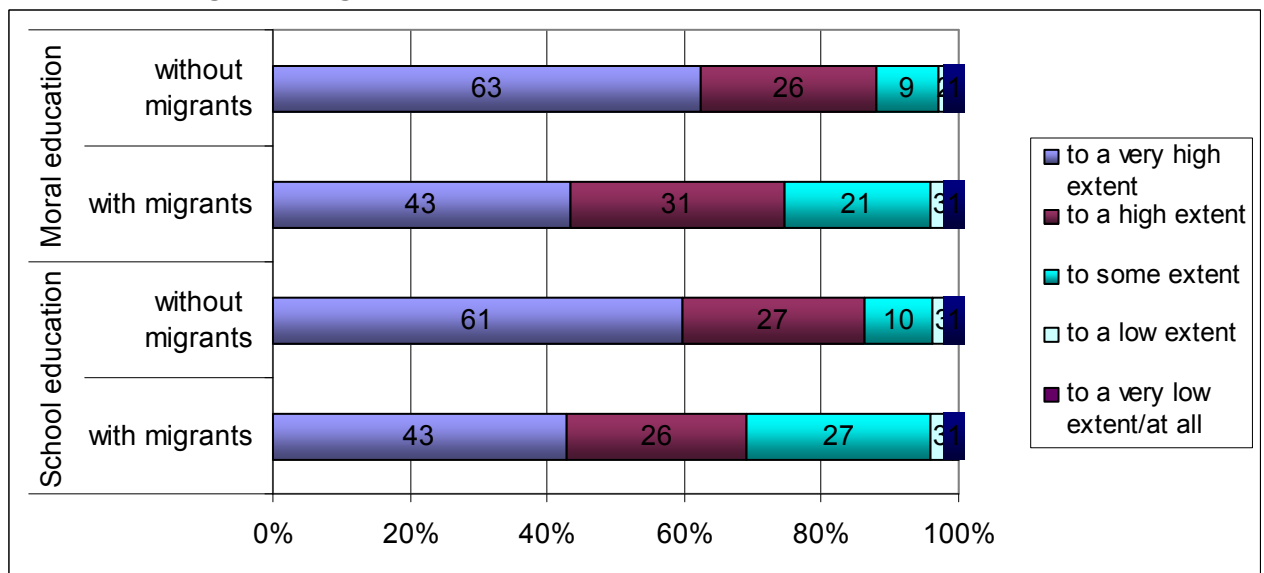
Figure 6: Parents' Perception of the Negative Impact of Their Absence on Children's Health



Source: *The Impact of Migration and Remittances on Communities, Families and Children*

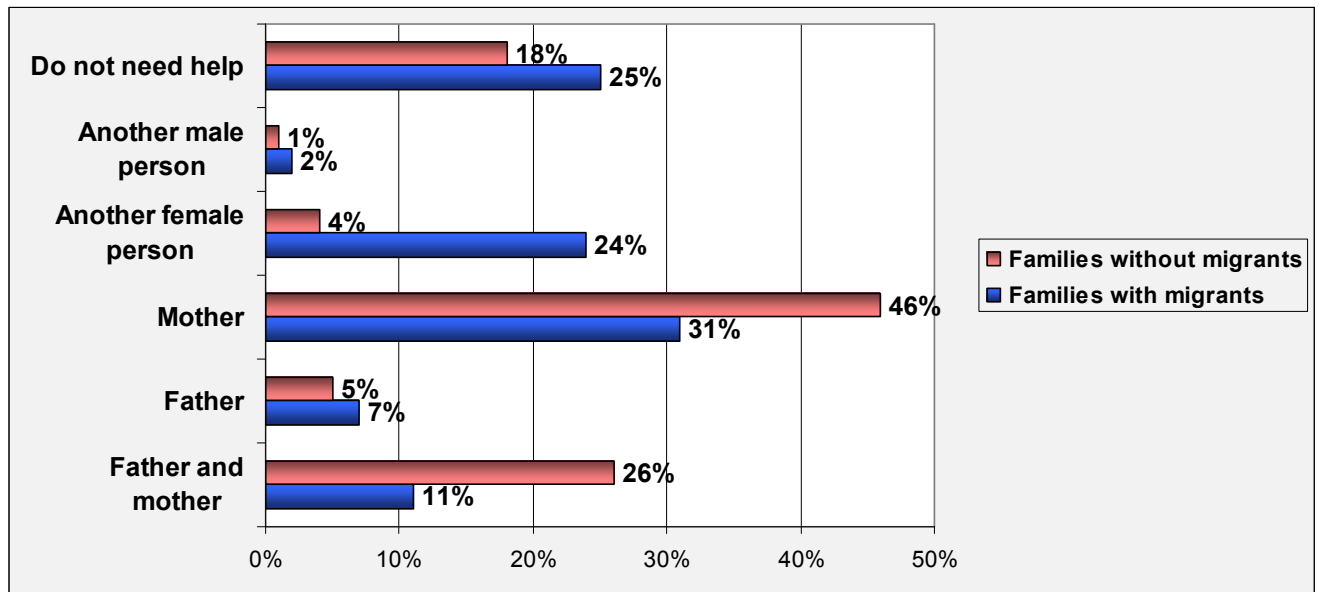
In the opinion of most participants, the absence of parents also had a negative impact on the moral and academic education of children though again, this opinion was more widely held by families without migrants. In all, 89 per cent of them thought migration had a negative impact on moral education compared with 74 per cent of families with migrants. Very few respondents (1 per cent) believed that parents' departure did not influence children's education (Figure 7) especially if the migrant was the mother as mothers usually help their children with their homework (Figure 8). Children's access to information technology, on the other hand, was greater if their parents worked abroad; 72 per cent noted a positive change in this regard.

Figure 7: Negative Influence of Parents' Absence on Education



Source: *The Impact of Migration and Remittances on Communities, Families and Children*

Figure 8: Who Helps with Homework?



Source: *The Impact of Migration and Remittances on Communities, Families and Children*

Data from the LFS indicated that young adults in migrant households were significantly more likely to enrol in universities than their counterparts in non-migrant households. The recent, rapid increase in the number of university students in Moldova, including at private universities, thus appears to have been financed in large part through remittances.²⁵ It was the perception of families without migrants that children of migrants would have more opportunities for higher education as 73 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Children left in care and who receive money from their parents working abroad have better chances to continue their educations than the rest of the children.”²⁶

The Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) investigated the situation of migrants’ children from a mainly qualitative perspective to highlight the impact of separation on their social and emotional development.²⁷ The research was conducted between September 2005 and April 2006 in three rural communities: one in the north, one in the centre and one in the south. In all, 231 persons participated. Information was collected from 62 adults and from 159 children aged 10 to 18 years, 75 of whom had one or two migrant parents who had been gone for at least two years.

The study found that the living conditions of migrants’ children had improved; they had access to more services than their peers. On the other hand, in the opinion of the majority of the respondents, migrants’ children were at a higher risk for drug abuse, dropping out of school, precocious sexual relationships and socially undesirable behaviour. Almost all teachers believed that parents’ departure abroad was a negative influence on their children’s relationships with their peers because of envy of their standard of living, a situation that would affect their psychological health. Children with parents abroad said that both the volume and the quality of their relationships had changed. Many described themselves as lonely, isolated and deprived of

²⁵ IOM. 2007. Op. cit.

²⁶ CBS AXA. 2007. Op. cit.

²⁷ CRIC and UNICEF, *The Situation of Children Left Behind by Migrating Parents*, UNICEF, Chisinau, 2006.

support. They felt they had an urgent need to develop personally to cope with the possible difficulties of adult life. In particular they needed to make decisions independently and they needed self-confidence, time management skills and the ability to control their emotions. Beginning in September 2005, schools offered an optional course in life skills to help children face these challenges.

After parents' departure, children's academic performance changed in both directions. In most cases it deteriorated because of the lack of parental support and encouragement; in some cases children did better to show their appreciation for their parents' efforts. Their optimism about pursuing their educations was determined more by their parents' financial possibilities than by their own aspirations and academic performance.

Most children of migrants in the CRIC study said they had been happy before their parents had left despite the fact that they were experiencing financial difficulties, which was the main reason their parents migrated. Children enumerated many advantages of living with parents, among them comfort, support in various activities and leisure time. Children's opinions concerning parents' departure abroad were rarely taken into account.

The telephone was the main ways of communicating with migrant parents; however, children said that they did not discuss subjects like their emotional states and their everyday difficulties on the phone. Reasons such as the high cost of phone conversations, the difficulty in dealing with sensitive issues and children's concern for their parents well being limited conversations to the household, children's progress at school and their need for money and other goods.

Almost a third of the migrants' children in the CRIC survey (36 per cent) said that their parents visited them every two to three months, 17 per cent said every six months, and 10 per cent said once a year. A fourth of the children (26 per cent) saw their parents less than once a year. The frequency of visits depended directly on the country where parents were working and on their working status. As a rule, parents working in Russia visited their children more frequently than those working in Western Europe.

C. The Impact of Separation on the Social and Emotional Development of Children

Since 2002, psychological counselling has been provided to 125 urban and rural families affected by migration. In 2007, an analysis of counselling sessions conducted between 2002 and 2007 at the Municipal Centre for Psychological Assistance for Families was done for stakeholders. The data were based on sessions with 57 children and 43 adolescents, 30 per cent whose parents returned to Moldova on holidays, 40 per cent of whom were cared for by grandparents, 20 per cent of whom were cared for by relatives and 10 per cent of whom received care from other people (neighbours, friends). The study also provided background information on child psychology for the age groups 2–6, 7–11 and 12–18 and is the source of the case studies reproduced in this report.²⁸

According to this analysis, parents' migration abroad represents a long-term separation that implies maximum stress for the age group 2–6. Parents play a huge role in all aspects of the emotional development of children at this stage, especially in self-regulation and expression. One of the basic functions of parents is to ensure positive emotions and thus a positive emotional outlook. The absence of parents is one of the main causes of affective and anxiety disorders in

²⁸ Beradze M., Z. Bolea and G. Ohrband, *Effects of Parents' Migration on the Psychology and Health of their Children*, UNICEF, Chisinau, 2007.

this age group. Parents prepare children for school emotionally, intellectually and socially which implies huge efforts to develop psychological maturity (self-regulation, a positive attitude towards school, skills to adapt to new social situations), academic readiness and social readiness (Box 1).

Early childhood is also a very important period in language development. At the age of six, children already have a rich vocabulary (2000–3000 words). Language development at this stage plays a predominant role in the development of thinking and communication. Stress at this stage can cause retardation in language development, stuttering and phonological disorders. The development of motor skills during this period is very important because it is closely related to the development of thinking. At this stage, children also learn and internalize behaviours that encourage autonomy like feeding, bathing and dressing themselves. They develop both gross and fine motor skills.

The cognitive development of young children depends to a great extent on the amount and the quality of visual and audio information they receive. The development of verbal skills is achieved through conversation, story telling, learning songs and poems, discussions, answers to questions and stimulating games. It is very important at this stage to solve speech problems. Social skills include a positive self-image and the development of self-awareness. Developing self-awareness initially depends on the quality of family relationships, especially with the parents. By the age of five, children should be participating in groups to develop their group communication skills.

Box 1: Case Study of Marcel

Marcel was three and a half years old when his mother came for help in March 2003. They lived in a suburb of Chişinău.

Most pressing issues: Marcel had stopped talking and had symptoms of autism. He had apparently unmotivated crying attacks, problems in urinating and anxiety.

Life story: His father had been working in Russia for two years. Before the father left, the family had been living with grandparents. The child was developing well; he had attended kindergarten since the age of two. Later his mother left to join her husband. The reasons for her leaving were their wish to be together and to have a higher income. She was away for eight months.

History of the disorder: Marcel had been left in the care of his grandparents since the age of 34 months. His mother says that she was frightened when she came back from Russia because she could not recognize her child. She started visiting experts. At the time of counselling she said that since she had come home, Marcel's behaviour had improved. He did not cry so much and had become calmer. Before she left, she was satisfied with his mental development (speech, games, communication with other children). She says that when she left, the grandparents stopped taking Marcel to kindergarten. When they left the house to cultivate their land, they locked him in the house alone. When she came back after eight months, the child was not talking. Marcel was anxious and had apparently unreasonable crying attacks as well as problems urinating. His mother tried to find out what had happened while she was away and what it was that had caused the child's condition. The grandparents did not want to say anything about the changes. They said they took care of him the best they could but that they had a lot of work to do.

Marcel's behaviour during the counselling session: During the discussion Marcel was very passive; he did not show any motor activity. He was not interested in toys. He had a small car that he had brought with him from home and held it in his arms during the whole visit. The psychologist did not succeed in establishing contact with him by asking questions or offering toys. When offered toys and invited to play, he started crying. He did not want to play or to paint.

Case analysis/conceptualization: Marcel suffered separation from his parents at a very sensitive age for emotional and intellectual development. Most often, children at this stage do not make a distinction between short-term and long-term separation from parents. Separation is very stressful and dramatic. The literature says that one of the most typical forms of anxiety in children is separation anxiety, the form of anxiety expressed the most between the ages of six months and four years as a reaction to separation from parents.

Another stressful factor was the fact that he was isolated when his parents left. The stress caused by the separation from his parents was intensified by the fact that Marcel stopped attending kindergarten where he could socialize. His living conditions when he was locked inside the house were psychologically disastrous for a child. As a reaction to his stressful conditions, his intellectual development regressed in terms of speech and language, and he returned to the stage of simple manipulation of toys with a lack of cognitive interest and motor skills. Emotionally, separation stress caused anxiety (phobias) and elimination disorders (enuresis and encopresis).

Marcel's mother said that she now understood how important it is to stay with her child and that she did not intend to leave. She says that her decision to leave the country was determined by the fact that she did not know how important the presence and the commitment of parents is for the mental development of children. She says she followed the old custom whereby children are all right with their grandparents too. This case shows that when parents leave, the grandparents may satisfy the physical needs of the child (food, shelter, safety) but may neglect psychological needs. She is very stressed by the fact that she does not know everything that happened to her child while she was abroad. This lack of complete, accurate information is an important problem and it is very frequently observed in cases of migration.

The years 7 to 11 are very important for the cognitive and social development of children. Children become pupils attending school and learn to function accordingly. Developing internal discipline and a sense of responsibility are two new dimensions that are very important for success during this period. Their new social roles imply the development of new, related communication and physical skills. The main problems at this stage are those related to adapting to school and to learning. Depending on the child's personality and on the environment, starting school can be a tragic or a happy event. Despite the positive aspects of school, young pupils often encounter failure, conflicts, frustration and anxieties. Even if children attended kindergarten, the first years of school can be full of tension. Children at this stage can rarely overcome school problems alone (boxes 2 and 3).

Parents must ensure the intellectual and emotional readiness of children for school by helping them to develop personal discipline. Parents help children with the new social relations in the school environment. Children become very sensitive to social information, to the opinions of their classmates and to their status in the classroom. Parents mediate the relationship between children and academic success or failure. In the case of failure they can help to find its causes and develop solutions. Success or failure at school can have a strong impact on the self-confidence of children.

Box 2: Case Study of Liviu

Liviu was 11 years old when he came for counselling with his mother who had come back for a short holiday in December 2005.

Most pressing issues: Liviu skipped school, he had failed many subjects, he was stealing from his family and he was vagrant.

Life story: Before his mother left for Italy, he had lived with her, his elder sister and his grandmother. His mother has a higher education degree. The parents are divorced. Three years ago the mother decided to leave the country and work abroad. Her then 13-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son were left in the care of their grandmother. She found a job in Italy and is satisfied with the money she earns. She does not intend to come back to live in Moldova any time soon. When she came back for holidays in 2005, she was frightened by the changes that had occurred in Liviu that year.

History of the disorder: The mother said that according to the grandmother the problems started during the last year. The grandmother was not able to control the behaviour of her grandson. He did not go to school, had bad results in many school subjects and stole money from his grandmother. He had new friends and was not close to his classmates anymore. When his mother asked him to explain his behaviour, Liviu said that he did not intend to study any more as he was not interested in that. The mother came to the psychologist to find concrete solutions to the problems of her son, but she did not intend to stay home to take care of him because she needed to work abroad for the future of her children in order to give them the possibility to get higher educations.

Liviu's behaviour during counselling: It was difficult to establish contact with Liviu during the session. He gave yes or no answers to questions. He said he felt well and had no problems. He refused to take the psychological tests. He said he was not interested in school lessons; he did not always understand what was said. He did not want to see the psychologist. He did not want to talk to teachers because all adults were always scolding him. He did not admit that he steals money from his grandmother. When asked what he wanted to do in the future, he said that he also wanted to go to Italy to work. He spent the money he stole from his grandmother on computer games with his friends or on candies.

Case analysis/conceptualization: In this case we can assume that the absence of his parent affected the development of a harmonious relationship with school. Thus Liviu did not communicate with his classmates not because he did not want to, but because the support of his parents was absent during crises and major difficulties. We can assume that Liviu did not get help with academic problems or with conflicts related to school life. Truancy can be a way of avoiding these problems, and because he possibly had no one to discuss these problems with, he was in a vicious circle he could not break. In addition to that, Liviu was not a well organized person. He also lacked a scale of values in relationships with others and in his functioning in society. It is a frequent problem of children trying to adapt to school without parental support and without anyone who can help them to internalize proper values and principles. Stealing from family members often reveals problems related to communication and to the unsatisfied needs of children.

Box 3: Case Study of Vlad

Vlad was 7.5 years old and in first grade when the friend of his mother who was taking care of him took him to see the doctor in May 2003.

Most pressing issues: Vlad was disobedient and did not want to go to school. He ran away from school and could not adapt to first grade. He showed a lack of motivation and difficulties in concentrating. He cried in the morning when he had to go to school and had a negative attitude towards the teachers and his peers. He could not communicate effectively. At night he wet the bed.

Life story: His mother had been working in Italy for two years. Until the age of five, he had slept in the same bed with his mother and was very attached to her and had a very intense relationship with her. He grew up with both parents. When his mother went abroad, Vlad was left with his father and a friend of his mother's. Now they live all together in one house. The father is not very involved in Vlad's education because he works a lot. His mother's friend has undertaken this responsibility.

History of the disorder: The friend said that the problems started immediately after Vlad's mother left, but they were not so obvious (he was sad and cried and was fickle). Gradually the problems intensified, especially six months ago when he went to school. The friend said that she could not solve these problems. She had done everything she could to make him study well, but she had failed. She tried talking to him and explaining. It did not work. Finally she invented a method to punish him: each time he did something wrong, she cut some of his hair. She came to see the psychologist because a teacher suggested that she should do so saying that Vlad was probably "not healthy."

Vlad's mother had not been told about the psychological state of her child so that, "she can work in peace." The mother calls once a week and sends many presents from abroad. The friend says that the mother cries each time she calls home and talks to Vlad.

Vlad's behaviour during the counselling session: Vlad was passive and offered very little information. He answered questions with a yes or a no only. He agreed to paint.

Case analysis/conceptualization: Vlad exhibited emotionally unstable reactions to the departure of his mother (depression, enuresis). The parents did not prepare him psychologically for his mother's departure as they slept in the same bed up until she left. This fact made the situation worse. After the mother left, a new family environment appeared: a woman took the role of mother. This situation can be quite difficult also for the father. All three adults in Vlad's life (mother, father, friend) are focused on Vlad's physical needs and are neglecting to a great extent his emotional needs. The friend has positive intentions towards Vlad, but again she focuses on his physical needs and on the fact that he must study well. She is also focused on the daily family needs.

Vlad began school in this emotionally unstable state and under huge emotional stress. He had to adapt simultaneously to three stressful factors: the departure of the mother, his "surrogate mother" and starting school. Both adults, the father and the friend, were convinced that they were right in not telling Vlad's mother about his problems. The mother herself suffered because of the separation from her child. She was depressed and she cried on the phone. She suffered strong feelings of guilt and tried to compensate with presents. Also we can assume that she felt insecure and she tried to compensate through frequent phone calls (the only possibility to control the situation). The father was probably aware of Vlad's psychological problems, but they scared him so he left the responsibility for Vlad's education to the woman who took care of him. The friend's attitude towards the boy and his education was positive, but she did not understand his emotional needs and the reasons for his behaviour. She explained his problems by saying, "He was spoiled by his mother," or "He has a difficult temper." When discussing bed wetting, she said that he did it intentionally in order to torment her.

Pre-adolescence and adolescence are periods of important biological, psychological and social changes and of great challenges and great risks too. Adolescence is the period when an individual

goes through enormous cognitive development and develops new forms of thinking including hypothetical, abstract and critical thinking. The dominant type of activity is communication with peers. Friendships are intensified and differentiated. Adolescents must develop positive and appropriate relations with peers of both genders and may express a strong affiliation towards a reference group. They may also make a first choice of a profession. Adolescence also presents challenges in expressing sexuality, in temptations to experiment with smoking, alcohol and drugs and in possibilities for anti-social behaviour or to commit criminal offences. Adolescence is a very sensitive period. It presents many problems, and the intense socialization process imposes new difficulties. Adolescents have to overcome a number of age-specific issues they cannot cope with alone. Although peer relations are most important, good academic performance is a necessity and a socially imposed priority. Parents have the important role of helping adolescents to maintain their academic interests and to persevere in their studies. Parents also help adolescents to develop communication, social and physical skills so that they can become independent and successful, and they are the first to assist them in choosing a profession, taking into account the adolescent's skills, interests and the financial and social possibilities of the family. Parents help adolescents to become responsible and mature and to accept the need to make their own decisions (Box 4).

Box 4: Case Study of Marius

Marius was 17 years old and in high school when he came for counselling with his father. His parents wanted to consult a psychologist.

Most pressing issues: The father was worried because his son spent most of his time in front of the computer, sometimes the whole night. He was interested only in computer games and did not want to go out. He did not help around the house, was not interested in reading and did not communicate with peers or with persons of the opposite sex. This situation generated family conflicts.

Life story: Marius was the youngest in the family. He had an older sister who was an adult and lived abroad. When Marius turned 15, his parents left to work abroad. For the past two years he had lived with family friends. His parents came home twice a year: for six weeks in summer and for a month in winter. They satisfied all his financial needs. Marius studied at a very prestigious school. His parents wanted him to get a good education and invested money in his studies. Marius was a very good student. He spoke good English and managed the money his parents sent him very well.

History of the disorder: His father considered that Marius spent all of his time in front of the computer. He had no friends and did not have a girlfriend either. He refused to do anything else besides surfing the Internet. His father said that before they went abroad, Marius had not been addicted to the computer. They began to notice it when they came home on vacations. The family Marius lived with confirmed that his interest in the computer had turned into an addiction. The parents were satisfied with the care the foster family provided. They looked after his health and provided him with food and shelter.

Marius's behaviour during counselling: He interacted easily with the psychologist. He said he loved computer games and that he had many Internet friends. He participated in various group activities on the Internet. He often won and helped other team members or helped the leader of his team to win. He said he was happy with this web communication system and that he began to play because he was bored and did not know what else to do. Other activities did not seem interesting to him. From the conversation, one could see that he had a very naïve attitude toward friendship. He defined it in relation to games played on the Internet. He said his parents did not understand him and did not let him become independent. He became anxious and irritated when the possibility of limiting the time he dedicated to the Internet was discussed. He said he had a lot of commitments to his on-line friends and that he had paid money for the connection. He did not think it was wrong to be constantly on line and said all adolescents lived that way. "I have many on-line friends from different countries, even adult men." The test results showed regression in emotional development and in the ability to make conscious decisions. His psychological age corresponded to a chronological age of 15. Conversation with Marius showed that he had a low level of general knowledge. He was not interested in topics and areas other than the ones that related to his future career; he wanted to become an economist.

Case analysis/conceptualization: This case points out important issues in the development of adolescents and problems caused by migration. A lack of emotional communication with parents could have caused feelings of loneliness and isolation that could be a reason for Marius's Internet addiction. We also see the problem of structuring the leisure time of adolescents. His parents were gone; his care givers were not interested in talking to him and just controlled him. He was not allowed to go anywhere which was convenient for all the adults—for the parents who worried about him and for the family who looked after him. This situation is quite frequent in the context of migration.

His parents focused their attention on his academic performance and control of the money they sent him. They were not interested in his free time, his extracurricular activities or his communication with his peers. Like any adolescent, Marius needed to talk to his peers. When he was not allowed to go out, he could do so only on the Internet. He went on line willing to communicate with his peers. Virtual communication became easier and more accessible than real communication, and he soon became addicted to it. Peer communication in his real life was confined to talks during school breaks about Internet and on-line issues.

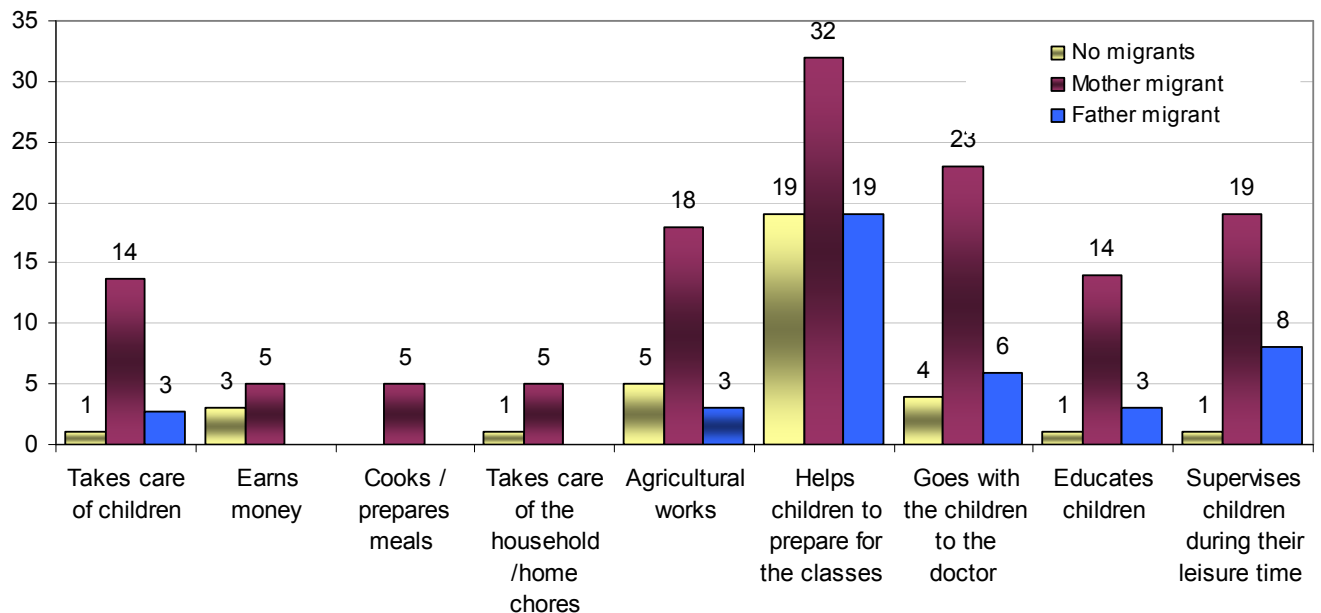
In the discussion with the psychologist, it was established that neither Marius nor his parents knew anything about his Internet addiction and were surprised that such a type of addictive behaviour existed. His parents said that when they left they did not foresee such a problem. Literature shows that an Internet addiction in children and adolescents appears most frequently in families that lack emotional communication or where communication is rather formal. The virtual life on line creates the illusion of communication and self-importance and promotes adolescent infantilism and distancing from real life.

C. The Impact on Family Structure

A family member's departure in search of a job abroad entails handing over responsibilities to other family members. The findings in the CBS AXA study indicated that in families with a migrant mother, her role may be taken on by the father. In families without migrants, for example, the father cooked only 1 per cent of the time while in families where the mother had migrated, 41 per cent of fathers prepared meals. In the CRIC survey, some of the children had to assume the duties of migrant parents which left them no time to play or interact with their peers.

Some family roles may not be performed at all after a member or members migrate especially if the migrant is the mother. In 14 per cent of families with a migrant mother, the children perceived that nobody took care of them, but this was the case in only 3 per cent of families with a father abroad (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of Children Saying Family Roles Not Filled



Source: *The Impact of Migration and Remittance on Communities, Families and Children*

Divorce is frequent among migrants' families. According to the representative of IOM in Bălți, about 60 per cent of the families with one member abroad were divorced.²⁹ Divorce was also a frequently cited outcome of migration in the CBS AXA study.

IV. Protecting the Rights of Migrants' Children

Recent research has stressed the importance of social networks for removing social barriers and helping to protect people at risk. In Moldova, migration affects these networks, especially those in rural areas. Because of the loss of social capital, social networks fall apart and the protection they offer evaporates. Communication with those who have left to work abroad occurs very rarely

²⁹ IOM. 2007. Op. cit.

except for contact with immediate family members and close relatives. In the CBS AXA survey, 88 per cent of migrants kept in touch with their family members, but only 12 per cent maintained contact with neighbours, 11 per cent stayed in touch with work colleagues and only 5 per cent were in contact with acquaintances in their communities. Migrants form new networks in their host countries isolating family members left behind; community authorities have not assumed responsibility for them.

The 2002 National Concept on Child and Family Protection and the 2003 National Strategy on Child and Family Protection acknowledged the challenges posed by migration to children's welfare, and they mentioned issues such as illegal migration and the risk of human trafficking. They identified categories of children with difficulties that included children without parental care. The authorities considered this strategy relevant for children left behind by parents working abroad. It is, however, too broad, and little has been done to make it more explicit for children of migrants.

The first national data concerning the situation of migrants' children were collected in 2004 and 2005. Because of the extent of migration abroad, the Ministry of Education and Youth (MEY) put deputy headmasters and form masters in charge of keeping records on children left behind. This is done once a year. MEY promotes the policy of children's education within families, even if they are not biological families; therefore, migrating parents' requests to leave children in residential institutions are now refused. Parents are encouraged to establish guardianships for their children. In such cases, children do not receive a state allowance.

In the district departments of education and youth (DDEY), the child protection inspector is responsible for children at risk. Representatives of these departments admitted that the position of children of migrants had not been investigated, and the information they possessed was mainly based on observations of teachers. Some DDEY representatives believed that only orphan children and children from socially disadvantaged families needed attention and that the children of migrants were not deprived.³⁰

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; providing humanitarian aid is the only concrete action taken regarding child protection. When questioned for the CRIC survey, Ministry of Health (MOH) representatives did not have information about migrants' children as data are collected at individual district departments of social assistance and family protection.

MOH supports the foundation of community centres financed by the Fund of Social Investments. Social assistants are the resource persons in communities. They identify the services necessary and they design strategies for the centres to deliver them. The community centres provide special educational services for children with difficulties in school. District departments of social assistance and family protection cooperate with DDEY and with the police to identify children in precarious situations. At a caregiver's request, the district department supplies humanitarian aid to migrants' children whose parents do not send money for their maintenance.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, migrants' children are not a specific target group for the prevention activities organised by its local departments. Nevertheless, local inspectors are

³⁰ CRIC, 2007, Op. cit.

obliged to pay special attention to children left without parental care as well as to organise activities to inform the public of services available including classes in schools.³¹

V. Conclusions and Suggestions for Policy Makers

For many Moldovans, migration is a viable alternative for supporting their families; the financial impact is felt by the 1.5 million citizens who live in households that receive remittances as for three out of four of them, remittances represent their main source of income. While going to work abroad contributes significantly to household incomes, it has many social costs. The average age of migrants in 2006 was 35, and 42 per cent were women both of which have had a negative impact on the birth rate and on children left behind as qualitative studies indicated that their situation was worse when their mothers left than when their fathers did. The fact that more than half of the EU migrants were women is also significant as EU migrants stay abroad longer and are more likely to settle abroad than seasonal migrants. Priority should be given to investigating the relationship between migration, remittances and family patterns and in particular to assessing the impact of the departure of mothers.

Temporary migration has fewer deleterious effects on children and families than long-term migration has; developing temporary work programs would give migrants the right to work for a limited time in specific jobs. Employment would be legal with income tax normally payable in the host country, health insurance also in the host country and other social security contributions payable either in the host country or at home. A small scheme along these lines exists for agricultural students from Moldova working summer jobs in the United Kingdom, and for several years Israel has attracted several hundred thousand workers, including from Moldova, through similar schemes.³²

The UNICEF/UNDP survey showed that potential migrants learned about the possible benefits and pitfalls of migration primarily from other migrants who may underrate the risks involved. Therefore, the IOM study on patterns and trends suggests that it would be helpful if objective, unbiased and comprehensive information about travel, employment and any other issues related to migration were widely available in Moldova so people could make responsible decisions. Non-government organisations may be in a good position to provide comprehensive information without raising political sensitivities about the illegality of some options.

Migration has psychological and emotional effects on family members and their relationships and changes the roles within the family as additional tasks must be assumed by those left behind. Parents' migration abroad represents a long-term separation that implies maximum stress for the age group 2–6. Stress at this stage can cause retardation in language development, stuttering and phonological disorders. The years 7 to 11 are very important for the cognitive and social development of children. Pre-adolescence and adolescence are periods of important biological, psychological and social changes and of great challenges and great risks too. Caretakers, guardians and single parents may not be able to fully meet the demands of their roles. Projects should be developed to support all caregivers to deal with their specific problems. It would also be useful to identify preferred models of guardianships for children. The set of existing policies and regulations should be revised to go beyond the notion of vulnerable groups and specifically

³¹ Ibid.

³² IOM, 2007, Op. cit.

mention children left behind by migrants. They should be identified and addressed in national development frameworks such as the National Development Plan.

Another focus should be on gaining a better understanding and anticipating the effects of migration on future generations. The growth in the number of migrants in the last seven years raises the question of how this trend will continue and of what the implications will be for children and families. LFS and IOM survey data on migrants by key socio-economic characteristics for the years 1999, 2005 and 2006 identified three waves of migration. The first wave comprised relatively young migrants with medium levels of education, mostly male and quite often from urban areas. The departure of this group in the late 1990s led to the formation of migrant networks. Information about migration opportunities became more widely available, and the cost of migrating declined because new migrants could build on the experience of their predecessors. As a result, a second wave of migration took off during the early 2000s and appears to be still going strong. These migrants tend to be older, still predominantly male, but less educated and predominantly from rural areas. These characteristics suggest that the second wave of migration can be classified as need driven.

Individuals who are planning to migrate in the near future represent the third wave for which evidence is currently anecdotal at best. The IOM survey on trends indicated two aspects of migration that are likely to have a particular bearing on the future: shifts in the age and educational achievements of new migrants and migrants' intentions to return to Moldova. According to their 2007 survey, future migrants are likely include fewer middle-aged persons with higher numbers both among the young (under 30) and the relatively old (more than 50). This third wave will also comprise more females and people with higher levels of education with a majority from urban areas. Hence, future migration looks set to be increasingly opportunity driven and could involve more permanent migration and a greater risk of a brain drain. Also, if the new wave of female migrants is composed of mothers, the social and emotional development of their children left behind may be compromised.

A growing number of children are going abroad to join their parents, a phenomenon that will gather momentum in the coming years according to community leaders interviewed for the UNICEF/UNDP survey. Currently, children in migrant households are twice as likely to see their futures abroad as children from non-migrant households. Future trends in migration will also, however, depend on developments in host countries. Italy may be moving toward further amnesties for illegal migrants that would cover Moldovans and permit more family reunification. In Russia, Moldovans might one day be welcomed as a strategy for dealing with that country's demographic crisis.

In the medium to long term, however, the impact of labour migration on Moldovan society will depend not only on who leaves but also on who returns. The 2006 IOM survey indicated that about 80,000 migrants have returned to Moldova for good and do not plan to leave again. While remittances have thus far played an insignificant role in the development of local infrastructure and businesses, savings and entrepreneurial activities by returning migrants can be important potential benefits of migration. The IOM survey on trends and patterns indicated that compared to 2004, there is now a small but discernable group of migrants investing in local financial and real assets and running their own businesses. This will create jobs which in turn will reduce need driven migration. Not surprisingly, 75 per cent of families without migrants in the UNICEF/UNDP survey disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was more important to provide financial support than to live with their children, but it was surprising that 87 per cent of families with migrants did also. This indicates that migration would not be the first choice if employment alternatives were available domestically.

The IOM survey suggests, however, that migrants who invest their earnings in Moldova face unreasonably high business start-up costs. Complaints ranged from excessive red tape to pervasive corruption among state officials, from the tax inspectorate to the fire brigade. Not surprisingly, these comments echoed those by investors in Moldova. While the business climate and corruption have improved somewhat since 2002, both the Corruption Perception Index produced by Transparency International (2007) and the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey conducted by the World Bank (2007) indicated there was a great deal of room for further improvement.

Efforts by the Moldovan government to improve public services and the business climate have been under way in recent years with substantial donor support. The success of these improvements may ultimately be crucial for the future of Moldova's children. Respect for their rights and the quality of their lives depend on the availability of acceptable public services—from public safety to education and health care—as well as on an economic environment that rewards individuals adequately for their efforts and investments. If reforms are not successful, today's children may form the next wave of migrants taking with them skills and entrepreneurial ambitions that could have generated sustainable economic growth and a better standard of living at home.

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