The impact of migration on children

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migrant sugar cane workers, India 2002

D. Lange - FSA, Oklahoma, 1930

"KEY MIGRATION ISSUES" WORKSHOP SERIES
WORKSHOP ON MIGRATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS
New York, 27 June 2006
The challenges

- Little attention has been given to children in the international debate on migration
- Children and young people are big stakeholders
- Invisible and neglected phenomenon. Focus only on specific groups: refugees, victims of trafficking, AIDS orphans, child soldiers, street children
- Lack of statistics and data
- Dynamic process
- Multidimensional impact of migration on children
Art 2 NON DISCRIMINATION

- “States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status”.

The CRC protects every child, regardless of nationality or immigration status
Impact relationships

MIGRATION
Children
Migration can affect children in different forms. “Affected children” is used to refer to children and young people under 18 years of age:

- Migrating with their parents (children of migrants)
- Migrating alone
- Left behind by one or both migrating parents
- Living in context affected by migration
Child migrants

Children no longer living in their place of origin.

- 10% moving with their parents
- 7% have moved because of the loss of a parent
- 37% having been sent by parents to live with their current households
- 46% had migrated alone

Source: Ghana LFS, 2003
China has 19.81 million migrant children, nearly 20 percent of the total migrant population.

(China Census, 2000)
Living in a family with at least one parent away for long periods is part of the normal experience of childhood for many children in the developing world.

- South Africa: 25% of all households have members who are migrant workers, but this proportion rises to over 40% of households in deep rural areas (SAMP 2004).
- Bangladesh: between 18 and 40% of rural households have at least one migrant member living and working elsewhere (Afsar 2003).
- Tanzania: that between 50-60% of people living in rural households have at least one member away, while the figure for rural Mali was 80% (Tacoli 2002).
A different approach

Assessing the impact of migration: a misleading question?

Unpack Child Migration

Impact on each child

From general assumption to a specific assessment for each child
## Impact of migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children migrating with their parents</th>
<th>Negative impacts</th>
<th>Development benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children migrating alone</td>
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</table>

- **Impact of migration**
  - Family reunification
  - Contribution to family income
  - Reaction to negative contexts, such as violence at home or discrimination (such as the case of girls in many countries), lack of schooling, or lack of future opportunities in their villages or communities
  - Child agency
  - Better opportunities on education, health. For themselves, for siblings. Fostering.
  - Learning experience
  - Vulnerability
  - Risk of trafficking and exploitation
  - Exclusion
  - Lack of birth registration, stateless
  - Absence of adult protection,
  - Undocumented
  - Better life for their children
  - Migration as a surviving strategy
  - Family unity
  - Better opportunities for children (education, health)
  - Quicker adaptation to new context
  - Discrimination
  - Instability
  - Exclusion
  - Barriers (language, opportunities)
  - Lack of birth registration, stateless

- **Development benefits**
## Impact of migration

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Children left behind</td>
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- Indirect benefits from remittances
- Cross fertilization of cultures
- Age structure of labour force
- Lack of services
- Structural change
- Lack of integration
- Children living in a context affected by migration
- Remittances may increase health and education opportunities
- New decision making power for women
- Lack of parental care
- Marital instability and the break-up of the family unit
- “Dual families”
- Not recognition by fathers
- Absence of men adds to material and psychological insecurity, leading to pressures and negotiations with wider family
- Children left behind

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**Development benefits**

- **Education**
  - Access to educational opportunities
  - Improved educational outcomes
- **Healthcare**
  - Increased health resources
  - Access to medical care
- **Economic stability**
  - Financial support for families
  - Increased productivity
- **Social cohesion**
  - Enhanced community support
  - Improved social networks

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**Negative impacts**

- **Psychological distress**
  - Stress and anxiety
  - Depression
- **Educational challenges**
  - Disruption of learning
  - Lower achievement
- **Healthcare issues**
  - Access to medical care
  - Mental health problems
- **Economic instability**
  - Financial strain
  - Loss of income
- **Social isolation**
  - Reduced social interaction
  - Feelings of loneliness

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**Impact of migration**

- **Positive impacts**
  - Economic growth
  - Cultural exchange
  - Improved infrastructure
- **Challenges to development**
  - Resource allocation
  - Socio-cultural disruption
  - Environmental impacts

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**Children affected by migration**

- **Emotional distress**
  - Attachment issues
  - Behavioral problems
- **Educational challenges**
  - Disruption of learning
  - Lower academic performance
- **Healthcare issues**
  - Access to medical care
  - Mental health problems
- **Economic challenges**
  - Financial strain
  - Loss of income
- **Social isolation**
  - Reduced social interaction
  - Feelings of loneliness

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**Impact of children's migration**

- **Positive impacts**
  - Increased resilience
  - Enhanced social skills
  - Improved problem-solving abilities
- **Challenges**
  - Emotional distress
  - Educational challenges
  - Health issues
  - Economic challenges
  - Social isolation
The income and livelihood effects on household members left behind depend on

- The level of income that migrants earn,
- The extent to which they can and do send remittances back and
- How is used in the household
Remittances

- **Salary** Extent to which the work that migrants are doing is well rewarded in local terms (change over the time)

- **Percentage sent back.** It can decline, as rates of unemployment and the cost of living in urban areas has gone up. Gender: women may send back home an higher percentage even if they are earning a lower salary

- **Uncertainty of the timing** and magnitude of remittances can push women and children from poor labouring households to participate in the labour market under adverse conditions

- **Intra-household distribution** In some cases women domestic workers sent money to parents rather than to their husbands because they feared their husbands would spend money on liquor and new girlfriends.
Remittances

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Remittances

Policies affecting each components
The extent to which it is fathers, mothers, or both parents who migrate and whether they leave their children behind varies very much from circumstance to circumstance.

- Due to barriers to many migrants being accompanied by spouses and children.
- To avoid exposing them to uncertainty and protect them from the dangers of traveling without documents and crossing the border.
- Possibility to leave the children within the extended family (grandfathers).
Vulnerability of children greatly increases with irregular migration
Child Protection

Protecting migrant children from:

Child labour
Child trafficking
Violence
Conflict with the law
Lack of birth registration/stateless
Early marriage

...not from migration
The needs of vulnerable young migrants can be met only through comprehensive understanding of their motivations and of the cultural and economic context in which their movements occur. Not doing it can increase migrants’ risks of harm and exploitation.
Child trafficking

Mobility

- Abduction
- Sale
- Family Migration
- Migrating alone
- Disasters/conflict
- Asylum

 Trafficking

- Economic exploitation
- Sexual exploitation
- Illicit adoption
- Early marriage
- Child soldiers
- Other (e.g. sport)
- Begging

Exploitation
Child Rights Approach

- Non discrimination
- Best interest of the child
- The child’s right to have her or his views taken into account
Questions

• Is repatriation the best interest or the only solution?
• Do migrant children have full access to child protection services?
• Does the child want to be rescued?
• What is a long term solution?
Key actions

- Reach the children
- Evidence based programming to decrease negative impact and maximize development benefits of migration
- Cross-sectional approach
- Youth and adolescents
- Monitor enforcement and impact
- Non duplication - added value
Thank you!

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