

# Children Youth and Migration

D. Lange - FSA, Oklahoma, 1930



migrant sugar cane workers, India 2002

# 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.
- Lack of statistics and data
- Dynamic process
- Multidimensional impact of migration on children

# The CRC

## 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”.*

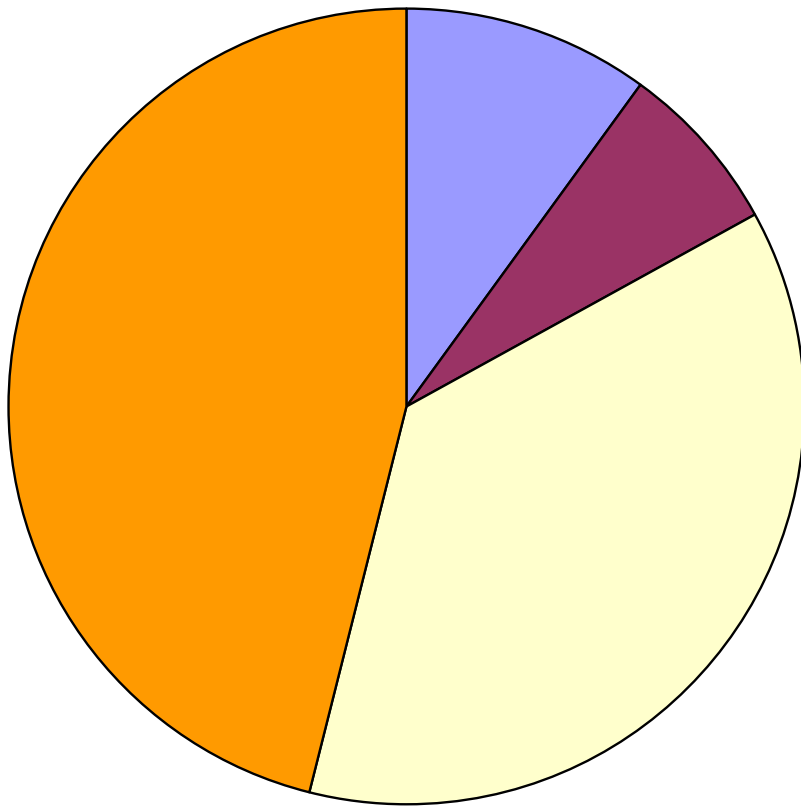
**The CRC protects every child ,  
regardless of nationality  
or immigration status**



# Children (0-



# Child migrants



# Child migrants

China has 19.81 million migrant children, nearly 20 percent of the total migrant population .

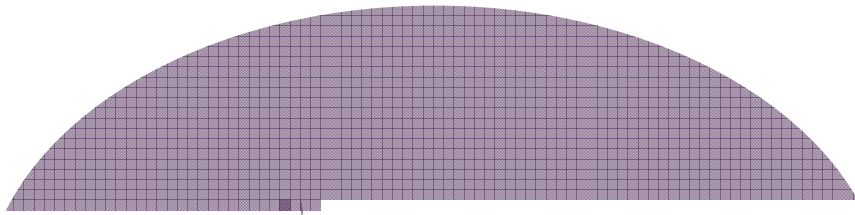
(China Census, 2000)

# Left Behind

- **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



# Children migrating with their parents

## Development benefits

- **Better life for their children**
- Migration as a surviving strategy
  - Family unity
- Better opportunities for children (education, health)
- Quicker adaptation to new context

- Danger of traveling
- Discrimination
- Instability
- **Exclusion**
- Barriers (language, opportunities)
- Lack of birth registration, stateless
- (children born abroad)

**Negative Impact**

# Children migrating alone

## Development benefits

- 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.
- Learning experience
- Vulnerability
- Risk of trafficking and exploitation
- Exclusion
- Lack of birth registration, stateless
- **Absence of adult protection,**
- Undocumented

**Negative Impact**

# Left Behind

## Development benefits

- **To avoid exposing them to uncertainty and protect them from the dangers of traveling**
- Remittances may increase health and education opportunities
- New decision making power for women

- Lack of parental care (also left alone)
- **Break-up of the family unit**
- “Dual families”
- Not recognition by fathers
- Absence of men can create material and psychological insecurity, leading to pressures and negotiations with wider family

**Negative Impact**





# Benefits

*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*
- (different outcomes depending on institutional local and national framework)*

# Illegal migration

Vulnerability of children  
greatly increases with  
irregular migration







# Queries

- Is repatriation the best interest or the only solution?
- Does the child want to return?
- Does the child want to be “rescued”?
- Do migrant children have full access to public social services?
- Is there a long term solution?

# Key actions

- Identifying and reaching out all children affected by migration (adolescents, gender perspective)
- “Protection paradox” : need for cross-sectional and universal approach in order to overcome sample selection bias.
- Evidence based programming and policy approaches to decrease negative impact and maximize development benefits of migration for children
- Monitor enforcement and impact
- Coherence - building added value among stakeholders

# **MIGRATION AND CHILDREN:**

a need to fill information gaps in order  
to guide policy responses

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# CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND – HOW MANY – AND WHERE?

**Official data may grossly underestimate;**

**Moldova – 0-14 year olds left behind by one or both**

<b>Official</b>	<b>Mo Educ</b>	<b>Bryant methodology</b>
<b>96,000</b>	<b>68,000</b>	<b>150,000-270,000 (5-8%)</b>

**Bryant: changes in pop stock, (est.) female migration in reproductive ages, historic fertility rates – strong assumptions about similar fertility behaviour**

**Philippines: 3-6 million (10-20%) children left behind**

**Indonesia: 1 million (2-3%)**

**Thailand: ½ million (2-3%)**

**Moldova: Concentrated in certain rural areas, small towns**

## CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND ... BY MOTHER, FATHER OR BOTH

### UNICEF Survey, Moldova:

Absent	Mother	Father	Both
10-14 Y	14.5%	14.9%	6.6%
15-18 Y	8.5%	16.4%	3.3%
	68,000	93,000	30,000 = ca 190,000

**When mother or both parents leave: left with grandparents, aunts, older siblings, non family care givers or in institutions (CEE/CIS)**

- **Philippines survey: 63 % of households w mother migrant had kin living in the household**
- **Philippines: mother serves one or more 2 year contracts**

## Large scale migration since 1989...

### Out-migration of families from Poland in 2002 , STOCK

	Number of families (thousands)
TOTAL	341.6
Married couples with dependent children up to 24 years of age - parents abroad	103.9



## **CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND ... ARE *OFTEN* MATERIALLY BETTER OFF**

- **IMF/Moldova: remittance > 60% of income among 40+% families**
- **Moldova: except in cases where both parents have left**
- **Mexico: lower infant mortality, higher birth weight**
- **Moldova: weak evidence that educational outcome worsens –but more children of migrants attending higher education**

## EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Managed migration (Philippines) allow more regular home visits by mothers, migrant parents**
  - and through one off fee allows access to social services for family (Thailand) if adequate incentives (affordable, non discrimination)
- **Philippines – counseling of families**
- **To assess and address an issue it needs to be measured – immigration service statistics could capture information on children left behind by registered migrants; need for qualitative surveys; school admission data**
- **Philippines – proposal to use teachers as ‘social workers’ in high migration areas**

## CHILDREN BORN ABROAD /BROUGHT ALONG

- Albania: up to 100,000 born abroad '89-'01
- Issue of citizenship and access to services
- Often pre-school children
- Albania: high skilled leave (permanently) w families
- Potentially better social and materi



## ISSUES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- Orders of magnitude and location
- Formal, social and other support systems at origin and destination
- Legal framework to protect the rights of the child



# Overview of the Current Migration Debate

- Contemporary migration is not optional but driven by globalization-related forces:
  - Influence of cultural and consumption standards from industrialized societies that do not match local wage levels
  - Labor demand from industrialized countries
- Migration can be both a liability and an opportunity for development
- Research on 7 countries by UNICEF/UNDP south-south flagged the linkages relevant to children between migration and remittances

## Overview of the Current Remittances Debate

- UN agencies and international stakeholders have focused on remittances' potential economic impacts for the MDGs:
  - Remittances are one of the most important sources of income in many countries
  - They can reduce poverty and improve access to social services
  - Hopes for a remittance-based model of development
- However, this perspective ignores social dimensions



# Overview of the Current Remittances Debate

- Remittances can promote further migration:
  - Remittances increasingly become essential for the survival of poor households and communities: this tends to generate dependency on further migration
  - Changes in consumption patterns of remittance receiving households affect values and aspirations of the local community, fostering new waves of international migration
- Disruptive impact on households left behind: care keepers, elders, wider family networks.

# Challenges

- The multidimensional effects of both migration and remittances should be seen through an interdisciplinary perspective
- A common approach between UN agencies and other relevant international stakeholders is crucial
- How can we maximize the social benefits and minimize the social costs of migration and remittances?

Evidence from ongoing research and surveys  
UNICEF/UNDP Special Unit for South-South  
Cooperation Study with UNICEF field offices in  
Albania, Moldova, Ecuador, Mexico, El Salvador,  
the Philippines, Syria, Morocco.

# Remittances and Human Capital

- **Remittances can contribute to human capital formation (health and education)**
  - **Increasing access to social services, which can reduce infant mortality, improve child health and education**
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# Remittances and Communities

- **Remittances' impacts affect all members of receiving communities**
  - Migration disrupts informal social and family networks and increases vulnerability to external shocks
  - Changing life-style and consumption patterns of remittance-receiving families can lead to stigmatization of their children
- **Transnational families and communities**

Can transnational, “virtual” family ties substitute for more intimate contact? Need for further research

  - Negative social capital: Rise of transnational youth gangs (El Salvador UNDP Report 05)

# Migration and Gender

- Potential chance for greater gender equality flagged in literature
- But also danger of increased female vulnerability
  - Female migrants are particularly vulnerable.  
Examples
    - Philippine female migrants working as entertainers in Japan are ostracized upon return.
  - Male out-migration in Syria increases dependency

## Remittances migration and Children's Rights

- Although children adolescents are most affected by the impact of migration, they are absent from the migration and remittances debate. There is an urgent need to increase awareness of children and young people's rights and to include their voices

## Conclusions (1/3)

- Effects of migration and remittances depend on the social, cultural, political and economic context which will have to be taken into account to minimize social costs and maximize social benefits
- There is no immediate positive effect on the realization of children's rights without policy intervention. Access to public goods and safety nets must be ensured especially during the first years of migration
- Remittances by themselves cannot guarantee the realization of the right to quality education and health care, nor surmount gendered care,
- Remittances do not immediately

## Conclusions (2/3)

- Remittances should not replace public social investments
- Even if the poor are recipients of remittances flows, these contributions cannot solve poverty's structural problems
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# Knowledge Gaps for Policy Formulation

- Social impacts of remittances
- Monitoring of individuals, households and communities before and after the reception of remittances
- **Gender:** Empirical studies on gendered patterns of uses of remittances
- ●

## Way Forward

- Legislation to protect women and children
- Increase participation of children and young people in the social, economic, political and cultural sphere to facilitate their transition to adulthood and avoid exclusion and decrease vulnerability
- Prioritization of children and women from migrant households on the agenda; specific programs targeted at families who have a parent living abroad
- Promote discussions and share information on issues, trends and practices that will advance the agenda of women and children and a coherent approach among UN agencies and other stakeholders
- A rights-based approach to take social costs into account and identify ways in which social vulnerabilities can be diminished  
Further research on the social, gender, cultural and political impacts of migration and remittances

# Thank you!

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