



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY  
**WORKING PAPER**

# MIGRATION, DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Rodolfo de la Garza



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**Migration, Development and Children Left Behind: A Multidimensional Approach**  
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## **Executive Summary**

This report examines the relationship between migration and development from a multi-faceted perspective. It draws on original field research and an extensive review of scholarly and policy studies to examine how migration affects a society's economic, social, political and cultural characteristics. This results in an analysis that encompasses the multi-layered impact of migration, i.e., its effect on the individual, the family and the sending community. Among the key arguments for adopting this approach is that conventional analyses that focus on economic factors such as remittances to the virtual exclusion of others greatly over-estimate the gains resulting from emigration and under-value the costs emigration imposes on the overall well-being of families left behind, and on sending communities in general.

The report highlights how migration affects the lives of the families that migrants leave behind, which often changes how they are organized and function. International migration can lead to the absence of traditional cultural figures that frequently results in the breakdown of essential social norms and customs. It can also impose changes in the role of women and cause severe emotional problems for them and their children. Children may suffer discrimination resulting from the perception that they are better off than their peers because the remittances they receive give them improved access to goods and services. To better account for these phenomena, the report reviews current literature on how migration of one or both parents affects children left behind in developing countries.

By going beyond economic considerations, the report also describes how migration can damage the social stability of sending communities when migrants who have become involved in the drug trade and human trafficking turn to their communities of origin for increased business. The internationalization of criminal activity can force sending states to direct their scarce resources to combating these threats rather than implementing policies that serve and develop communities. While all of society suffers from the chaos resulting from such activities, the long-term effects of such criminal behaviour are especially appalling for women and children. Trafficking explicitly targets both women and children who thus pay an especially high price without reaping any of the benefits remittances may produce for society. The consequences are particularly dire for children who require stable environments and good policies that promote their education, health, diet and overall wellbeing.

This report devotes particular attention to how migration – of one or both parents— affects children left behind and reviews how state policies regarding poverty reduction and social protection can contribute to alleviating the negative impacts of parental migration on the rights of children left behind.

Finally, this report emphatically calls for major changes in a wide range of policies affecting migration that will result in more accountable, responsive, and transparent governmental institutions. Even well designed new migration policies will be of limited value if government leaders are not accountable and the decision processes of public institutions are not transparent.

## Resumen Ejecutivo

En este informe se analiza la relación entre la migración y el desarrollo desde una perspectiva polifacética. Empleando como fuentes diversas investigaciones originales sobre el terreno y el examen de una amplia gama de estudios académicos y políticos, en este informe se examina la manera en que la migración afecta las características económicas, sociales y culturales de las sociedades. El resultado es un análisis que abarca los diversos aspectos de la migración. Por ejemplo, los efectos que tiene en los individuos, las familias y las comunidades de origen. Una de las razones más importantes de la adopción de este enfoque es que los análisis convencionales que se concentran en los factores económicos como los giros de dinero y que excluyen virtualmente otras consideraciones otorgan una importancia exagerada a los beneficios que se desprenden de la emigración en desmedro de la importancia de los costos que impone al bienestar general de las familias que quedan atrás y de las comunidades de origen en general.

Este informe pone de relieve la manera en que la migración afecta las vidas de las familias que dejan atrás los emigrantes, cuya organización y funcionamiento a menudo sufren profundos cambios. La migración internacional puede dar lugar a la ausencia de figuras culturales tradicionales, lo que con frecuencia determina el colapso de normas y costumbres sociales esenciales. También puede ser causa de la modificación del papel de las mujeres, a quienes puede provocarles graves problemas emocionales, al igual que a sus hijos e hijas. Esos niños pueden ser discriminados debido a la percepción de que disfrutaban de mejor situación económica que los otros niños porque las remesas de dinero que reciben sus familias les brindan mayor acceso a bienes y servicios. A fin de explicar mejor esos fenómenos, en el informe se analizan documentos actuales referidos a la manera en que la emigración de uno o ambos progenitores afecta a los niños y niñas de los países en desarrollo que quedan atrás.

Debido a que no se limita a las consideraciones económicas, el informe también describe la manera en que la migración puede afectar la estabilidad social de las comunidades de origen cuando los emigrantes que se han involucrado en el tráfico ilícito de drogas y la trata de personas orientan sus actividades a esas comunidades para incrementar sus operaciones comerciales. La internacionalización de las actividades delictivas puede obligar a los estados de origen a invertir sus escasos recursos en la lucha contra esas amenazas en lugar de emplearlos para financiar políticas de servicio y desarrollo de las comunidades. Pese a que toda la sociedad sufre los efectos del caos que desatan esas actividades delictivas, las consecuencias a largo plazo de las mismas resultan particularmente perniciosas para las mujeres y los niños. Los niños, niñas y mujeres son blancos específicos de la trata de personas, y por lo tanto terminan pagando un precio especialmente alto sin recibir, por otra parte, ninguno de los beneficios que los envíos de dinero pueden significar para la sociedad en general. Las consecuencias son particularmente atroces en el caso de los niños, que necesitan ámbitos estables y políticas adecuadas que fomenten su educación, su salud, su buena alimentación y su bienestar general.

En el informe se dedica especial atención a la manera en que la emigración —ya sea de uno o ambos progenitores— afecta a los niños y niñas que quedan atrás y se examina de qué forma las políticas estatales de reducción de la pobreza y protección social pueden aliviar las consecuencias negativas que la emigración de los padres tiene en los derechos de los niños que dejan atrás.

Finalmente, en el informe se hace un llamamiento enfático en pro de la realización de cambios profundos de una amplia gama de políticas referidas a la migración que den lugar a un aumento de la obligación de rendir cuentas y una mayor transparencia de las instituciones gubernamentales, así como una mayor capacidad de respuesta de su parte. Sin embargo, hasta las nuevas políticas migratorias mejor diseñadas tendrán valor limitado si las autoridades gubernamentales no tienen obligación de rendir cuentas y si los procesos de toma de decisiones de las instituciones públicas no tienen carácter transparente.

## Résumé Analytique

Le présent rapport examine les liens entre migration et développement à partir de multiples perspectives. Il se base sur des recherches originales menées sur le terrain et sur un examen détaillé des études universitaires et des documents techniques spécialisés concernant le sujet, dans le but d'examiner la manière dont la migration affecte les caractéristiques économiques, sociales, politiques et culturelles d'une société. Il en résulte une analyse qui englobe les effets que la migration produit à divers niveaux, par exemple au niveau de l'individu, à celui de la famille et à celui de la communauté d'origine. Un des principaux arguments pour l'adoption de cette approche est que les analyses conventionnelles, qui se concentrent sur les facteurs économiques comme les envois de fonds des émigrés à l'exclusion de quasiment tous les autres, surestiment considérablement les gains qui résultent de l'émigration et sous-estiment les coûts que cette émigration impose au bien-être des familles restées au pays, et plus généralement aux communautés d'origine des migrants.

Le rapport souligne la façon dont la migration affecte la vie des familles que les migrants laissent derrière eux, changeant souvent la manière dont elles sont organisées et dont elles fonctionnent. Les migrations internationales peuvent entraîner l'absence de figures culturelles traditionnelles avec pour effet fréquent l'affaiblissement de normes et de coutumes sociales essentielles. Elles peuvent aussi imposer des changements du rôle des femmes et leur imposer de sévères problèmes émotionnels, ainsi qu'à leurs enfants. Les enfants courent le risque de souffrir de discrimination à cause de la perception que les envois d'argent dont ils bénéficient leur donnent une situation plus aisée que leurs pairs et un meilleur accès à divers biens et services. Afin de mieux rendre compte de ces phénomènes, le rapport examine les ouvrages et articles spécialisés qui examinent la façon dont la migration d'un ou des deux parents affecte les enfants qui restent dans le pays en développement d'origine.

Au-delà de simples considérations économiques, le rapport décrit aussi la façon dont la migration peut endommager la stabilité sociale des communautés d'origine quand les migrants qui se retrouvent impliqués dans le trafic de drogue ou la traite d'êtres humains se retournent vers leur communauté d'origine pour y exercer et élargir leurs activités. L'internationalisation des activités criminelles peut forcer les États d'origine des migrants à consacrer de précieuses ressources à combattre ces menaces, détournant celles-ci de la mise en œuvre de politiques qui servent les communautés concernées et leur seraient avantageuses. Certes l'ensemble de la société souffre du chaos qu'entraînent de telles activités, mais les conséquences à long terme de ces comportements criminels sont particulièrement dramatiques pour les femmes et les enfants. La traite d'êtres humains prend explicitement pour cibles les femmes et les enfants qui paient ainsi un prix particulièrement élevé sans bénéficier d'aucun des avantages que les envois de fonds des migrants peuvent apporter à la société. Ces conséquences sont particulièrement préjudiciables pour les enfants qui ont besoin d'un environnement stable et de politiques qui leur assurent éducation, santé, alimentation adéquate et qui garantissent globalement leur bien-être.

Le rapport s'intéresse en particulier à la manière dont la migration – d'un ou des deux parents – affecte les enfants laissés dans le pays d'origine et comment les politiques de réduction de la pauvreté et de protection sociale du pays concerné peuvent contribuer à atténuer les effets

négatifs que la migration des parents entraîne pour les droits de ces enfants qu'ils ont laissés derrière eux.

Enfin, le rapport réclame avec force des changements importants dans le large éventail de politiques touchant la migration en vue de mettre en place des instances gouvernementales plus responsables, plus réceptives et plus transparentes. De nouvelles politiques migratoires, si bien conçues soient-elles, n'auront qu'une valeur limitée si la responsabilité des dirigeants politiques n'est pas engagée et si les décisions des organismes publics ne sont pas prises dans la transparence nécessaire.

## **Key Messages**

### **A multidimensional approach to development**

This paper conceptualizes development in terms of wellbeing, which refers to quality of life and is measured using a variety of material and immaterial indicators, which allows us to highlight the multitude of mechanisms by which migration affects people's lives from a holistic perspective. This also allows us to use a less arbitrary benchmark to assess the impact of migration on children and families left behind

### **Theoretical overview**

More recent theories have attempted to either correct or go beyond dominant explanations of international migration. This report aims to study motivations for migration and its impacts on development using an integrative approach that incorporates social, cultural and political characteristics.

### **Migration and the economy**

#### *Remittances and poverty reduction*

- Remittances reduce the depth and severity of poverty among those who receive them but the effects are not distributed evenly across countries of origin. Migration is greater in certain regions and neither the poorest nor the richest migrates.
- Remittances have fallen substantially due to the global economic crisis and this has particularly negative effects on already vulnerable populations such as women and children.

#### *Remittances and income allocation*

- The impact of remittances on the alleviation of poverty varies with how the received money is spent by a given household. Gender differences among remittance recipients are associated with how these funds are spent.
- The income effect of remittances on household production in the migrant-sending country depends on how much the person migrating contributed to household income prior to migration

#### *Remittances and income equality*

- Migration and remittances do not automatically lead to increased inequalities between the developed "core" and the underdeveloped "periphery". The impact of migration on income inequality varies according to the type and duration of migration.
- Remittances constitute the largest source of funding for economic development in sending countries but these funds alone cannot save a strapped economy.
- Remittances can contribute to national economic wellbeing when they affect markets in counter-cyclical ways and help stabilize an economy spiraling out of control.

### *Remittances and investment*

- Most households receiving remittances have a higher propensity to invest than non-migrant households, when controlling for income and other relevant variables.
- The multiplier effect generated by productive investment, which is in turn enabled by remittances, will be limited by any constraints of production capacity.
- Remittance-based economic opportunity and productive investment potential are often exaggerated. Positive outcomes are more likely to occur if conditions are in place to set forth a strategic relationship that benefits both migrants and the state.
- Research largely endorses the finding that migration increases bilateral trade flows.

### *Remittances and exchange rates*

- The relationship between remittances and economic development is undeniable when observing the extent to which remittances are responsive to changes in real exchange rates but there is little consensus on whether there is a positive or negative effect.
- Large and persistent remittance inflows can cause an appreciation of the real exchange rate
- The long-term impact of exchange rate appreciation on growth depends more directly on structural economic shifts and the extent to which these affect remittances, savings, investment and productivity.

### *Migration and human capital*

- Although migrant networks are assumed to inspire the return of social capital to the country of origin, new data do not seem to corroborate theories of brain-gain, except in large developing countries.
- Research indicates that the migration-related effects of brain-drain/brain-gain are mixed and vary by region. Overall, employment opportunities at home seem to dictate the occurrence of either brain-drain or brain-gain. Gender also affects the relationship between migration and brain-drain/brain-gain.
- There is substantial controversy around the impact of the outflow of human capital on economic growth and the welfare of children.
- Women represent a larger share of skilled migrants than men and may make the choice to migrate in part due to greater opportunities available in receiving countries.

## **Migration and social development**

### *Migration and education*

The overall effect of migration on educational attainment funded primarily by remittances is mixed. Remittances usually have a positive effect on education but it is still unknown how remittances contribute to the quality of learning among children.

### *Migration and health*

Migration also affects the health of children, depending on their age.

### *Migration and gender*

- Gender equality and the promotion of women's rights have been of utmost priority and have received focused attention throughout development literature.
- The impact of migration on gender dynamics is shaped by the cultural context in both sending and receiving communities.
- That the ramifications of female migration outweigh its benefits is not surprising, given the major care-taking role mothers generally occupy, particularly in developing country households.
- The negative consequences of female migration on children have not curtailed the growth in the number of women migrants.
- When gender is included in empirical models designed to explain migration, the results indicate that there are gender-based differences in how migrants weight the opportunity costs of migration, in how they are affected by the migratory experience and in the extent to which remittance receiving families use remittances for household investments and expenditures, production and the purchase of technology.
- Gender differences play an important role in the psychological impacts of parents' migration on children left behind. Children's experiences with family separation may also differ depending on their gender.
- Men left behind do not always take migrant women's place in performing domestic tasks.

### *Migration, family dynamics and children's wellbeing*

- Migration involves challenges for families and children, having a varying influence on both according to the conditions under which migration occurs.
- Children left behind by migrating parents who are not able to financially support them over a long period of time experience particularly negative outcomes.
- It is still a challenge to distinguish the problems and delinquencies of children left behind from those experienced by other children in their communities.
- A possible explanation for the negative effect of separation from parents on academic performance is that children of migrant parents are often left under-protected, inadequately supervised, or forced to assume adult responsibilities they are not yet ready to handle.
- Adolescents whose parents migrated often experience difficulties in their social relations, isolating themselves in small groups of peers in a similar situation.

### *Emotional and psychological impacts of migration*

- Family disintegration seems to be the most negative consequence of parental migration.
- Children left behind are more prone to psychological and emotional stress, feelings of abandonment, and low-self esteem, all of which may ultimately cause damage to the child's overall development and patterns of socialization.
- Although psychological and relationship problems are associated with parental migration, similar problems occur in families of non-migrants as well.



- Migration changes family structures by changing the role women have in family decision-making.

#### *Migration and effects on adolescents*

- Regardless of which parent migrates, adolescents are often left with responsibilities unfulfilled by the migrating parent.
- The adult responsibilities assumed by children do not negate the structure of authority, which persists within the household post migration.
- The increased demands and pressures faced by children who take over parental responsibilities often result in a deterioration of academic performance and sometimes increased inclination to drop out of school altogether.
- Although increased access to drugs can be explained by the increased spending money among adolescents receiving remittances, pregnancy and social delinquency are symptomatic of the less obvious and more immeasurable impacts of the migration process.
- Adolescents may forsake education to pursue migration themselves
- Research is needed to examine the impact on new generations of children and adolescents who grow up defining their opportunities in terms of emigration rather than in terms of prospects to be found at home, and on those children left behind who grow up in an environment where a new norm exists to consume goods and to pursue careers and other aspirations beyond the confines of national and regional borders.

#### *Transnational families*

- Transnational families are a substitute to traditional solidarity associated with the extended family structure and cohesive communities in countries of origin.
- Transnational families play an essential role in transmitting various forms of “social remittances” across borders, e.g. ideas, behaviours, value structures, and identities that flow from receiving to sending countries and that are transferred along with monetary remittances.

### **Policy implications**

#### *Migration and social protection*

- There is no framework directly linking migration and social protection. Migration can also be a form of social protection.
- It should be noted that migration can also be prompted by improved domestic conditions.
- Government social protection policies should strive to not only protect citizens going abroad but also facilitate their remittance sending pursuits and develop domestic infrastructure to generate employment opportunities in order to both stall further outflow of domestic labor and attract migrants to return home
- One must acknowledge and emphasize the “transformative” potential of social protection, i.e. the pursuit of policies that alter power imbalances that create, stimulate and sustain social vulnerabilities.

- Many issues addressed within social protection require interventions at various levels and in both developed and developing societies.
- Many risks are incurred during the initial stages of migration – a volatile and unpredictable period as regards required social protection.
- Marginalized groups use migration to protect against unequal social relationships.

## Key Recommendations

- 1) Policy must be strengthened in order to **secure children’s basic social and economic rights**. Legislation to regulate child labour must be introduced and strengthened. Policies should be strengthened to better monitor and punish various forms of child abuse.
- 2) **Policies must support government investment in social policy and poverty reduction**. Poverty reduction strategies (including redistributive policies) need to address the issues of migration and development. Public policy dialogues on the root causes of migration and exclusion need to be incorporated into the debate. Policy makers need to develop coherent policies at national, regional and local levels to address the plight of international migrant children as well as children left-behind.
- 3) **Greater attention must be paid to the effects of the economic crisis on children and families left behind** in order to mitigate negative impacts and design policy interventions that will improve the developmental prospects for these families and children in the medium and long term.
- 4) States of origin should develop **comprehensive policies to support the families and caregivers of children of migrant workers in their child-rearing responsibilities**. Policies should be oriented at mitigating the psychosocial impacts of migration on children.
- 5) Education officials should **develop training programs that prepare staff to recognize traits associated with the psycho-social effects of parental migration**.

### *International cooperation*

- 6) States’ must strive to **regularize the status of their migrant populations and improve working conditions through international or bilateral negotiations**, as these are essential to promoting the rights of children left behind.
- 7) Migrant sending countries should engage in dialogue with receiving countries to ensure **bilateral agreements that allow migrant workers to take their children abroad**.
- 8) National governments should focus on designing and implementing **co-development strategies between countries within a particular migration corridor**. Policies and legal frameworks should focus primarily on reducing social, economic, educational, and health inequalities between countries.

### *Data and research*

- 9) **More academic research and policy analysis is needed to fully understand how parents’ migration affects children left behind**.

10) **National level data across countries (and when possible, regional and local level data) should be comparable in terms of its definitions and tabulations. Data collection efforts should be sensitive to gender and age differences** in order to take into account the nuances of the phenomenon.



## **Introduction**

This report examines the relationship between migration and development from a multi-faceted perspective. It draws on original field research and an extensive review of scholarly and policy studies to examine how migration and remittances affect a society's economic, social, political and cultural characteristics. The report highlights how migration affects the lives of the families that migrants leave behind, which often changes how they are organized and function.

By going beyond economic considerations, the report also describes how migration can damage the social stability of sending communities. This report devotes particular attention to how migration – of one or both parents— affects children left behind and reviews how state policies regarding poverty reduction and social protection can contribute to alleviating the negative impacts of parental migration on the rights of children left behind.

This report emphatically calls for major changes in a wide range of policies affecting migration that will result in more accountable, responsive, and transparent governmental institutions. The report emphasizes that social protection policies should be considered in conjunction with overall development projects as well as with institutional reforms in sending countries.

After a short introduction on the multidimensional approach to development employed by this paper, several theories for understanding motivations for migration are explored. The relationship between migration and the economy and the corresponding effects on children are then explored, followed by a section exploring the relationship between migration and the social development of children. Finally, policy implications and recommendations are set out.

## **1. A Multidimensional Approach to Development**

Migration is both an important cause and effect of social, political, and economic change among migrant-sending and receiving societies. While policy makers have become increasingly aware of the potential role of migration on economic development, less attention has been given to the innumerable psychosocial, cultural and political ramifications of contemporary population movements. In order to assess the impact of migration on development and the left-behind it is necessary to delineate exactly what 'development' means within the context of this paper. Defining development poses a significant challenge. The concept is rarely defined and when it is, an atomistic approach is adopted, based solely on income indicators to the virtual exclusion of social, cultural and political factors. Defining development poses a great challenge given its ambiguity and the empirical hurdles that impede meaningful generalizations.

To begin with, migratory flows from one country to another differ widely. Migrant sending countries differ greatly in terms of their demographic, political, economic and social institutions. A temporally bounded migratory flow of a given size and composition may be beneficial to one country and detrimental to another, carrying different developmental implications.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Stahl 1989.

Secondly, countries vary in their institutional capacity to internalize whatever developmental stimuli are produced by international migration. Countries in which credit is widely available may have an advantage channelling remittances, for instance to productive activities, compared to countries where the credit market is fragmented and compartmentalized. The human capital in the form of skills that returned migrants bring back home may also be more productive in economies in which the labour market demands such skills and thus families, as well as the economy in general, will benefit from such transfers.

Thirdly, even though the benefits and costs of migration can be identified across countries, these cannot be accurately evaluated without knowing and understanding the “developmental stage” and developmental objectives of countries.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, given the differences in the composition, forms (permanent, temporal, documented, undocumented, refugee, etc.) and the temporal and spatial dimensions of each migratory flow, arriving at a universally accepted typology of the developmental impacts of migration is a risky enterprise that lacks reliable and valid national comparisons.<sup>3</sup>

In order to overcome these difficulties and thus a potential conceptual backlash regarding how development should be understood, this report conceptualizes development in terms of wellbeing, which refers to quality of life.<sup>4</sup> Wellbeing, in turn, is measured using a variety of material and immaterial indicators including psychological, income, health, and education among others. Conceptualizing development in terms of wellbeing allows us to highlight the multitude of mechanisms by which migration affects people’s lives from a holistic perspective. Moreover, it allows us to use a somewhat less arbitrary benchmark to assess the impact of migration on the left-behind and thus increase policy makers' and stakeholders’ abilities to formulate evidence-based social policies to ensure the rights of children, adolescents and women left behind.

## 1.1. Theoretical overview

To better grasp the role and impact of migration on wellbeing, it is important to understand the motivations for migration. Moving away from conventional economic theory, the reasons may be social, cultural, environmental or political. The past thirty years have seen the development of two dominant explanations of international migration: methodological individualism and structuralism<sup>5</sup>. These two approaches offer markedly different explanations of the origins and development of international migration. Also, they favour different public policy solutions to address migration problems. More recent theories have attempted to either correct the problems of these two major approaches, or go beyond them.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Stahl, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> See Stahl 1989.

<sup>4</sup> See Sen (1999) and Dasgupta (2001) for a discussion.

<sup>5</sup> See Goss and Lindquist 1995.

<sup>6</sup> These models are sufficiently familiar so that only need brief summaries are presented based on Goss and Lindquist (1995) and Massey et al. (1993), Massey et al. (1994), Massey et al. (1998), Massey (1999).

## Methodological individualism

The unit of analysis employed by methodological individualism is the individual who seeks to maximize his or her preferences in a market-like situation. This approach assumes that in their search for higher wages, individuals migrate "from areas of capital scarcity and labour abundance to areas of capital abundance and labour scarcity, or from rural to urban areas and from developing to developed countries."<sup>7</sup> This approach includes a macro model and a micro model, both of which are derived from neoclassical economics. The major difference between the micro and macro models is that the former focuses on individuals, and the latter on aggregations of individuals. A third model, the "New Economics of Migration", has been developed to address the problems of the previous two.

### *Macroeconomic model*

The central argument of the macro model is that the "international migration of workers is caused by differences in wage rates between countries."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, without wage differentials, the movement of labour will not occur. This approach credits the international flows of labour to differing conditions in labour markets.

The macro model leaves some major questions unanswered. It cannot explain why sometimes migration ceases before wage disparities disappear, or why migration can sometimes take place without the presence of wage disparities.<sup>9</sup> Also, this theory does not clarify why international migration flows have increased despite high levels of unemployment or under-employment in receiving societies. These patterns lead to the conclusion that wage and employment differentials by themselves "appear to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for labour migration."<sup>10</sup> Certainly, the macro model does not explain other forms of migration that are not as strictly related to the labour markets. Why for example, would members of the middle and higher classes from Colombia migrate, given that, in several cases they do not do it for economic reasons.<sup>11</sup> The macro theory also does not explain disparities in exit rates between countries at a similar stage of development. Why does one country lose population to migration, while an economically comparable country does not?

These discrepancies suggest the need to focus on factors other than economic variables. An additional variable could be proximity to the receiving country. However, this may not be a sufficient explanatory factor, given that there is significant migration to the United States from places such as China. Such variations suggest the need for additional explanations. One factor to consider is the domestic political condition of the sending societies.

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<sup>7</sup> Goss and Lindquist (1995:320)

<sup>8</sup> Massey et. Al., 1993:434

<sup>9</sup> Massey et. al., 1998 and Goss and Lindquist, 1995

<sup>10</sup> Massey et al., 1998:8

<sup>11</sup> The case of migration from Colombia is certainly interesting. In most cases, Colombian migrants to the United States have not been considered political migrants and have not been granted refugee status. Certainly, however, they are not strictly economic migrants, at least not all of them. On that account, they have been left in a definitional limbo. See Forero (2001).

### *Microeconomic model*

This theory focuses on individual choices made by rational actors. According to this theory, people migrate because “a cost-benefit calculation leads them to expect a positive net return, usually monetary, from movement.<sup>12</sup>” As in neoclassical macroeconomic theory, the micro theory argues that migration decisions are determined by an imbalance between labour markets. A relevant and helpful aspect of this theory is that it considers that individuals within the same country can display very different proclivities to migrate.<sup>13</sup> These differences include objective factors such as personal characteristics “that increase the likely rate of remuneration or the probability of employment in the destination relative to the sending country,<sup>14</sup>” or the presence of social conditions that lower the migration costs and increase the net return. This approach, however, does not include many subjective factors such as family reasons or political views that may have an impact on the decisions to migrate.

### *New economics of migration*

This theory addresses some of the limitations of the macro and micro models. It argues that migration decisions “are not made by isolated individual actors.<sup>15</sup>” Rather, groups of related people, such as families, decide to send one or more members abroad to maximize their expected overall income or to minimize the risks associated with a variety of market failures, other than those related to the labour market. In developing countries, families respond to market uncertainties by supporting the migration of family members who will remit money and thus diversify the family's general income and minimize the risks associated with crop losses or price drops.

Although this theory introduces new perspectives to the neoclassical economics approach, such as the consideration of other economic markets, it nevertheless has very clear limitations. For example, it does not explain why developing countries with similar conditions, such as the lack of effective systems to protect crops, present different migration patterns. This theory is also confined to economic factors, and hence does not explain other non-economic aspects.

One of the problems with methodological individualism models is that they only offer economic explanations; the role of politics or the general social conditions of sending societies in motivating migration is not acknowledged. Even though the focus of analysis and interest is the individual, these models do not study individuals' perceptions about policy and political processes, and the way these perceptions may affect their decisions to migrate, independently of events taking place in the labour market. As was mentioned before, methodological individualism leaves out institutional and structural variables that may be relevant to fully understanding international migration, such as the role of the state or the structure of the political system.

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<sup>12</sup> Massey, 1993: 434

<sup>13</sup> Massey et al., 1993: 435

<sup>14</sup> Massey et al., 1993: 435

<sup>15</sup> Massey et al., 1993: 436



## Structuralism

Structuralism examines macro-phenomena in social structures, in particular, ongoing relationship patterns among social groups or strata. This approach argues that international migration reflects the "exploitative political-economic relationship between sending and receiving societies."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, structuralism does not consider the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the migrant *per se* --as methodological individualism does -- but considers only the social class position of migrants in their native societies. Two major theories of international migration within this approach are dual labour market theory and world systems theory.

### *Dual labour market theory*

This theory differs from neoclassical economics and "new economics" theories in that it does not consider the migration phenomenon from a micro-level or individual perspective. Instead, dual-market labour theory focuses on the structural needs of the receiving economy. From this perspective, "international migration stems from the intrinsic labour demands of modern industrial societies."<sup>17</sup> This theory does not see low wages or high unemployment in sending countries as causing migration, but argues that the chronic and unavoidable need for foreign workers in developed countries acts as a magnet that attracts foreign labour. This need for labour is sustained by the unwillingness of native populations of advanced democracies to accept certain jobs considered to be of low status and often low social mobility. Foreign workers, in contrast, accept low-status jobs because they do not consider themselves to be part of the receiving community, but rather measure themselves as part of their home community where working abroad and sending money home carry honour and prestige.

Although this theory has some interesting views, such as a wider understanding of labour markets than that presented by neoclassical economics, it nevertheless is confined to economic views and has certain limitations. For example, it does not distinguish between the different social, economic and political conditions that prevail in different sending societies and that may or may not motivate migration, independently of the labour market conditions in the receiving societies.

### *World systems theory*

This theory does not consider the origins of international migration as reflecting clear differences between developed and developing countries, but rather as the result of the penetration of the global economy into peripheral regions which creates major distortions in the local economy and motivates people to leave. According to this theory, the way in which the world market is structured promotes the international flow of labour in opposite directions to the flow of goods and capital. This theory presents limitations similar to the dual-labour market theory: it does not distinguish between the different conditions prevailing in each sending society and how those conditions affect migration patterns.

In summary, structural approaches are more interested in politics than models derived from methodological individualism. Nevertheless, the notion of politics embodied by these theories is confined to the power relations between sending and receiving countries. The local politics of

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<sup>16</sup> Goss and Lindquist, 1993:322

<sup>17</sup> Massey et al., 1993: 440

sending societies beyond class conflict have never been seriously studied as independent or intervening variables in motivating migration.

### **Network theories**

More recent methods of studying international migration have attempted to correct for the limitations of structuralism and methodological individualism by integrating them or by going beyond them.

Network theory argues that: “acts of migration at one point in time systematically alter the context within which future migration decisions are made, greatly increasing the likelihood that later decision makers will choose to migrate.”<sup>18</sup> Over time, migration patterns become institutionalized and independent of other causal factors regardless of whether these factors are individual or structural. According to this theory, governments can do little to solve this situation, because “network formation lies largely outside their control and occurs no matter what policy regime is pursued.”<sup>19</sup>

Although this theory is helpful to understand why migration patterns perpetuate, it does not explain why migration starts in the first place. A second limitation is that it does not clarify why, given the availability of networks and the pressures of economic factors, some persons choose to migrate and others to stay. Third, network theory does not leave room for policymaking because it argues that governments cannot solve the emigration problem once it is institutionalized.

Goss and Lindquist criticize network theory for idealizing the social interactions between sending communities and established immigrants in receiving countries. Networks are presented as the result of affective ties developed among people, “governed by informal norms of reciprocity and sustained by personal interaction.”<sup>20</sup> These authors argue that migration networks have become highly formalized and are “governed by commercial and bureaucratic relations as recruiters, brokers”, who, along with the state, seek to profit from overseas migration.<sup>21</sup> This remark implies that migration flows are not completely out of the control of the state in sending countries. In fact, in some cases such as that of the Philippines, the state actively exports its citizens through a series of institutions that establish and coordinate contact between citizens at home and employers abroad. This was also the case in Mexico during the bracero program, when the Mexican government coordinated migration and employment of Mexican citizens with the U.S. government.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the criticisms of network theory, integrative approaches represent one of the most promising ways to study international migration and its impact on well-being because they allow for the incorporation of individual as well as structural variables and thus for a broader view of the migration phenomena.

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<sup>18</sup> Massey et al, 1993:449

<sup>19</sup> Massey et al., 1993: 450

<sup>20</sup> Goss and Lindquist, 1995: 330

<sup>21</sup> Goss and Lindquist, 1995: 330

<sup>22</sup> Some scholars such as Robert Bach have argued that even today there is a clear project of the Mexican state to export large sectors of the Mexican population to the United States as a form of economic development and social release. Whether or not the export of persons is a political strategy may become clearer now that Vicente Fox is the president of Mexico. Fox favors a borderless future of freely moving capital and workers (Washington Post, 2000).

## 1.2. Conceptual approach of this study

This report aims to study the motivations for migration and its impacts on development using an integrative approach that incorporates economic, social, cultural and political characteristics. By using a multidimensional view of development, the report goes beyond the historically dominant economic discourse on international migration to assess the impact of migration on the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities in countries of origin.

## 2. Migration and the Economy

The great majority of research has emphasized economic issues, especially the role of remittances in generating economic development, and, by extension, national and household wellbeing. The reciprocal relationship between migration and economic development is both controversial and complicated.<sup>23</sup> Historically, economic perspectives dominated the debate about the relationship between migration and economic development.

As discussed earlier, neoclassical views, prevalent throughout the 1950s-60s, saw migration as a major source for capital transfers and industrialization in developing countries; establishing it as principal catalyst for modernization, and, as a result, for economic development.<sup>24</sup> In the 1970s-1980s, this view was replaced by a historical, structuralist and dependency view, which highlighted the negative side effects of migration and outlined the possibility of it actually prolonging and reinforcing problems of underdevelopment.<sup>25</sup>

Current views strive to establish a more direct cause-effect relationship between migration and development, making room for and stressing the importance of government involvement in navigating migration toward having a more positive impact on economic development. The New Economics of Labour Migration promotes the idea that remittances are the main catalyst for development in migrant-sending countries. Taking into consideration household dynamics,<sup>26</sup> risk-sharing,<sup>27</sup> and market inefficiencies,<sup>28</sup> the NELM stressed migration as a consequential tool for development and the mitigation of income disparities.<sup>29</sup>

Migration can be stimulated by new economic development.<sup>30</sup> International migrants therefore do not necessarily originate from the poorest strata of society.<sup>31</sup> Instead, they frequently come from regions and nations undergoing economic transformations that generate increases in production and trade.<sup>32</sup> Such changes within a country can lead to improved personal resources and greater aspirations of its citizens, which would then increase the likelihood for growth in

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<sup>23</sup> Ellerman 2005

<sup>24</sup> de Haas, 2007a, 3

<sup>25</sup> Almeida 1973; Lipton 1980; Reichert 1981; Rhoades 1979; Rubenstein 1992; Binford 2003 in de Haas, 2007a, 4

<sup>26</sup> Stark, 1978, 1991

<sup>27</sup> Stark and Levhari 1982

<sup>28</sup> Stark 1978; Stark and Levhari 1982; Stark 1991; Taylor 1999; Taylor 1986; Taylor and Wyatt 1996 in de Haas, 2007a, 5-6

<sup>29</sup> Cortes 2007a.

<sup>30</sup> Massey 1998

<sup>31</sup> Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002, 51

<sup>32</sup> In Olesen, 2002, 140

outgoing migration flows. Thus, in the short or medium term, domestic economic improvements may coincide with an increase rather than a decrease in emigration.

It is equally possible to observe a cyclical relationship between migration and poverty. Migration is typically brought about by poor economic conditions, the lack of employment opportunities, poverty, and abysmal living conditions that prompt individuals to seek employment outside of their borders. As they begin to send money back for consumption and investment at the household level, the multiplier effects generated by remittances, such as increased consumption in the remittance-receiving community, fuel a growth in demand. This augmentation of the domestic market can lead to lower unemployment rates among non-migrants, greater productivity, and an influx of foreign direct investment. The improvements within the sending country serve as further incentives for locals to migrate, thereby continuing the cycle of increased migration and declining poverty.

In this section, we review the impact of remittances on poverty reduction, income allocation, inequality, investment and exchange rates in order to highlight some of the major mechanisms by which migration, via remittances, may affect individuals' wellbeing.

## **2.1. Remittances and poverty reduction**

One of the main benefits of migration, and, by extension, remittances, is the positive impact on the reduction of poverty. A study using a cross-country data set for seventy-one developing countries shows that official international remittances, i.e. those tabulated by central banks, reduced poverty in the developing world. Migrants remit funds primarily because they are motivated to support the families they leave behind. These monies are part of household strategies designed to diversify familial sources of income and to provide additional funds for on-going expenses. There is substantial evidence that indicates this objective is largely realized.<sup>33</sup>

It should be noted that the degree to which results can be deemed conclusive also depends on how one defines 'poverty.'<sup>34</sup> It is possible to dismiss the significance of this argument by citing a study based on a sampling of 101 countries from 1970 to 2003, which found a link between poverty reduction and remittances, regardless of whether poverty is measured in terms of personal income or in terms of national income gaps.<sup>35</sup>

While remittances reduce the depth and severity of poverty by raising household income among those who receive them, the overall effects are not distributed evenly across countries of origin, because migration is greater from some regions of a sending state. For much the same reason, the economic behaviour and income allocation decisions of migrants and their families are not representative of a given country's population.<sup>36 37</sup> This is because neither the poorest nor the richest migrate, and the number of lower income migrants greatly exceeds the number of migrants who are wealthy. From an economic perspective, lower-skilled migration has a greater

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<sup>33</sup> Cortina, J. and R. de la Garza, 2004

<sup>34</sup> Cortina and de la Garza, R., 2004

<sup>35</sup> Spatafora in Page and Plaza, 2006, 284

<sup>36</sup> Cortina, de la Garza and Ochoa-Reza 2005

<sup>37</sup> In Page, and Plaza, 281

impact on reducing poverty among remittance recipients than migration does among more skilled workers. This is due to the fact that low skilled individuals send funds to lower-income households, for which remittances are a more vital component of income.

Despite indications of the limited impact of remittances on poverty reduction, much of the literature maintains that remittances alleviate poverty.<sup>38</sup> Specifically, this is illustrated by an analysis of the relationship between migration, remittances, and the extent, depth, and severity of poverty in seventy-four developing countries. The analysis concluded that, controlling for income and inequality, remittances have a strong impact on reducing the extent and severity of poverty.<sup>39</sup> While officially tabulated remittances in South Asia have no statistical impact on the level and depth of poverty, the level of poverty in the region was reduced when estimating the combined value of official and 'unofficial' remittances.<sup>40</sup> Remittances have also been shown to reduce the proportion of poor people in the population by 11% in Uganda, by 6% in Bangladesh, and by 5% in Ghana. In Latin America, however, the impact on overall poverty reduction is very small.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to note that, despite the potential of remittances to deliver positive benefits for development and poverty reduction, global remittance flows are expected to have fallen by 6.1 percent in 2009 as a result of the economic downturn.<sup>42</sup> The effects of the slowdown in remittances will be most evident among national economies and families heavily dependent on these flows. The contraction of household income can result in severe reductions in consumption and substantial changes in labour supply. Moreover, since remittance-recipient households frequently do not have access to credit, many must generate additional labour income or rely on government social assistance to cover their basic needs. Women and children are the most vulnerable populations affected by the crisis. Recent studies by the ILO suggest that women are more likely to be employed in the informal economy with lower earnings and less social protection, a situation that will be exacerbated by the current crisis. These implications can have serious consequences for children left behind, as families are forced to cut back on children's education and health-related expenses.

## **2.2. Remittances and income allocation**

The impact of remittances on the alleviation of poverty varies with how the received money is spent by a given household. Analyses of remittance utilization patterns show that remittances are mostly used to purchase food, clothing and to cover other basic needs, with little difference in consumption patterns between families with and without children.<sup>43</sup> In addition, recipient households, typically coming from relatively less well-off parts of society, are often obligated to use a substantial portion of the received funds to repay debts incurred to support or to initiate migration. Consequently, despite the dominating motivation to support children left behind and

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<sup>38</sup> De Haas 2007a, 25

<sup>39</sup> Adams and Page in Page and Plaza 2006, 283

<sup>40</sup> Munzele 2005 in Page and Plaza, 2006 284

<sup>41</sup> World Bank, 2006, 4

<sup>42</sup> Ratha et al., 2009

<sup>43</sup> Lowell and de la Garza, 2002, 3

their caretakers, in actuality only a small portion of received remittances is spent explicitly on children.<sup>44</sup>

Gender differences among remittance recipients are also associated with how these funds are spent. A number of reports find that there are significant disparities in the way in which men and women left behind invest remittances: women prioritize family needs such as food, clothing, home, education, and health, whereas men often use resources for savings and investments to generate greater benefits in the future.<sup>45</sup> In Ghana, after controlling for total income, international remittances have a significant positive impact on family budget allocations for food, consumer and durable goods, housing, health, and other goods in female-headed households, while no such effect is evident in the expenditure patterns of male-headed households.<sup>46</sup> With respect to household expenditure patterns, households with the female sent abroad spend significantly less on education than similar households without female migrants.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, research in Mexico found that, overwhelmingly, the impact of male migration on household production is negative, while that of female migration is positive or insignificant. These findings suggest that the gender of the migrant may impact not only the expenditure patterns, but also the productivity levels of remittance-receiving households in the country of origin.<sup>48</sup> It should be noted that neither female nor male migration has any effect on the propensity to produce staple crops, whereas non-staple crop production responds negatively to male but not to female, migration.<sup>49</sup> The role of gender in migrant households will be explored to a greater extent later in this section.

Studies on children of migrants often tend to ignore or confuse the distinction between the different categories of children affected by migration. For instance, welfare outcomes are prone to substantial variation depending on whether the fathers, the mothers or both parents migrate. Research shows that male migrants tend to remit more than female migrants do and, therefore, the income level of the households of migrant fathers is significantly higher than those of migrant mothers. Some studies also indicate that women have a higher tendency than men to stay in the country of destination, and therefore they prefer to purchase expensive durable goods in their host country rather than save money for their return home or send it as remittances.<sup>50</sup>

It is also important to note that the income effect of remittances on household production in the migrant-sending country depends on how much the person migrating contributed to household income prior to migration. Baseline effects of international migration in general, and of remittances in particular, on economic development are measured at the household level. Unfortunately, migration can initially generate negative effects. In the short run, the absence of the migrating person may result in a production loss, which will not necessarily be compensated for by remittances and the subsequent increase in household wealth, both considered long-term

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<sup>44</sup> Spatafora 2005

<sup>45</sup> Cortes 2007, 21

<sup>46</sup> Guzmán, Morrison, and Sjöbloms in Schiff et. al., 2007, 7

<sup>47</sup> Schiff et al., 2007, 6

<sup>48</sup> Schiff et al., 2007, 4, 7

<sup>49</sup> Schiff et al., 2007, 6

<sup>50</sup> Ramirez, Dominguez, and Morais 2005, 25-26

benefits of migration, as the migrant is unlikely to immediately earn enough to be able to afford remitting.<sup>51</sup>

As has been noted, there is substantial evidence indicating that remittances generally benefit children economically. Some concrete examples outline the situation of children left behind in Moldova, who improved in terms of better housing conditions and education. Similar patterns are evident among children of migrants in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines,<sup>52</sup> and in Latin American and Caribbean countries, where households receiving remittances show better nutrition, education, health care and housing than non-receiving households.<sup>53</sup>

### **2.3. Remittances and income inequality**

Contrary to traditional arguments of ‘dependency’ critics, migration and remittances do not automatically lead to increased inequalities between the developed “core” and the underdeveloped “periphery”. Instead, the impact of migration on income inequality varies according to the type and the duration of migration.<sup>54</sup> If migrants are from poorer households, remittances contribute to increasing family income and reducing inequality; if remitters are from wealthier households, inequality is likely to increase. There can, however, be indirect effects that occur as a result of various consumption and investment patterns.<sup>55</sup> In the short run, remittances can increase inequalities, but such a result is mitigated over time as the gradual development of migrant networks allows poorer individuals and families to migrate. The increased activity among poor migrants expands the average income of poor families that stay behind and receive remittances and also reduces the size of the poor population in the sending community.<sup>56</sup>

One of the most prevalent and effective means for a migrant to reinvest in the sending country is by sending back a portion of the income earned abroad. Remittances constitute the largest source of funding for economic development in sending countries. The value of remittances world-wide totaled \$338 billion in 2008.<sup>57</sup> However, regardless of the total value of remittances received by a country, these funds cannot alone save a strapped economy. They cannot independently generate economic growth or state-wide sustainable development. They are likewise unable to solve structural problems that stifle economic development, such as those caused by poor economic policy driven by corrupt officials and high levels of economic and social insecurity.<sup>58</sup>

Remittances can contribute to national economic wellbeing when they affect markets in counter-cyclical ways. In so doing remittances can help stabilize an economy spiraling out of control. This was the case during the financial crises in Mexico in 1995 and in Indonesia and Thailand in 1998. Similarly, the application of a random effects model to the most recent waves of the Ghana Living Standards Survey to look at the impact of remittances on households shows that the flow of remittances to Ghana increased during periods of economic shock, and that the power of such

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<sup>51</sup> Taylor et al., 1996, 408

<sup>52</sup> Bryants 2005

<sup>53</sup> DEmilio et al. Gavriiliuc, Platon, and Afteni 2006 undated, 11

<sup>54</sup> de Haas, 2007a, 12

<sup>55</sup> de Haas, 2007a, 12

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, J. E., et al., 1996, 408

<sup>57</sup> Ratha et al., 2009

<sup>58</sup> Page and Plaza, 2006, 251-52, 261

periods to adversely affect households is reduced by remittances.<sup>59</sup> The stability provided by remittances may lessen the probability that investors, anxious in this type of climate, simply pull out their money. Consequently, remittances indirectly contribute to the improvement of investment inflows, treated in greater detail later in the report. Furthermore, countries with bad credit ratings are in a position to use future hard currency receivables, such as remittances, as a means of letting investors circumvent sovereign credit ratings.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to conclude whether or not and how remittances would, through their ambiguous impact on household and national income, affect the wellbeing of children and families left behind by migrant workers.<sup>61</sup>

## 2.4. Remittances and investment

Most studies since the 1990s show that, in addition to using remittance income for subsistence goods, households receiving remittances also have a higher propensity to invest than non-migrant households, when controlling for income and other relevant variables.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, ample evidence shows remittances to have the tendency to promote conditions amenable to self-employment and to increase investment in small businesses.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, although existing research emphasizes the negative view that remittance-based consumption has little impact on development, there is evidence that the “multiplier effect” of local expenditures funded by remittances provides non-migrants in sending countries with jobs and income in the short run.<sup>64</sup> However, the temporary increase in production, prompted by an increased demand due to higher income, does not seem to generate long term investments that stimulate economic development.<sup>65</sup>

The “multiplier effect” generated by productive investment, which is in turn enabled by remittances, will also be limited by any constraints on production capacity.<sup>66</sup> These restraints include poor public services, inadequate infrastructure and the lack of functioning credit markets.<sup>67</sup> Further complicating the ability to evaluate the effect of remittances on economic development are the different criteria for determining what qualifies as “productive investment,” as well as the unavoidable divergence of judgments regarding the determination of what is considered to be a ‘good use’ of money.<sup>68</sup> How do constraints on production affect migration? If they are truly constrictive, there will be a greater incentive for migration, and remittances sent to the country of origin will, inevitably, increase as well. In other words, if citizens resort to migration as the most viable economic strategy in times of domestic market failures, the impact of remittances sent home can be very consequential. This is illustrated by research done at the village level, showing that remittance-induced investment will magnify the positive effects of

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<sup>59</sup> Quartey and Blanson 2004 in Page and Plaza, 2006 285

<sup>60</sup> UNCTAD, 1975, Docquier and Rapoport 2004a and b in Page and Plaza, 2006, 257

<sup>61</sup> Cortina and de la Garza 2004; Cortina, de la Gaarza and Ochoa-Reza 2005; de Haas, 2007a, 25

<sup>62</sup> Massey et al. 1998; Adams 1991; Taylor 1999; Woodruff and Zenteno 2007; de Haas 2006 in de Haas, 2007a, 14

<sup>63</sup> In de Haas, 2007a, 14

<sup>64</sup> de Haas, 2007a, 16

<sup>65</sup> Alper and Neyapti, 2006 in de Haas, 2007a, 14

<sup>66</sup> OECD, Development Centre, 2007, 86

<sup>67</sup> Taylor et al., 1996, 403

<sup>68</sup> Taylor et al., 1996, 403; de Haas, 2007a, 17



migration on community income in the long run.<sup>69</sup> However, the important caveat here is that such benefits come at considerable sacrifice to the household, and can have significantly negative psychological consequences for children left behind, as will be discussed later in the report.

It should not be overlooked that remittance-based economic opportunity and productive investment potential are often exaggerated. Such positive outcomes are more likely to occur if conditions are in place to set forth a strategic relationship that benefits both migrants and the state.<sup>70</sup> Such a relationship could occur when there is significant migrant demand for country-of-origin goods and services. When host countries with large migrant populations are supplied with the migrant-demanded goods, this could create the necessary economic infrastructure for influencing state policy, corporate capital and small-scale business involvement in the participating countries, and has the potential of benefiting sending communities. A prime example of such a condition being met is that of Corona Beer. The popularity of Corona in the U.S. was initiated by marketing campaigns targeting the Mexican population in the U.S.<sup>71</sup> Another similar instance is that of ritual handicraft production in rural Mexico, which expanded to meet migrant demand in the U.S.<sup>72</sup> There is also the case of La Tapachulteca, a Salvadorean supermarket chain, which found success in Los Angeles.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, the research largely endorses the finding that immigration increases bilateral trade flows.<sup>74</sup> This may be a result of active diaspora networks between migrant-sending and receiving countries. Migrants can help their countries of origin by providing valuable information about the market demand and conditions abroad.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, migrants abroad tend to sustain demand for goods from their country of origin; while companies for which they work may benefit from a more direct and elaborate connection to a market outside of their domestic economy. It is frequently the case that migration generates linkages between retailers in sending countries and consumers in communities of destination.

## 2.5. Remittances and exchange rates

The relationship between remittances and economic development is undeniable when observing the extent to which remittances are responsive to changes in real exchange rates. However, there is little consensus about whether remittances have a positive or a negative effect on the exchange. In general, remittances seem to offer a more stable and sustainable source of income than the more volatile sources of foreign exchange, such as agricultural exports (i.e. coffee, vegetables, flowers, etc). This could help to explain why remittances, in particular, have a tendency to partially protect people from the destabilizing effects of poorly functioning markets, inept economic policies, and a lack of state-provided social security.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Taylor et al., 1996, 407

<sup>70</sup> Nyberg-Sørensen, 2007, 201

<sup>71</sup> Willis, 1999

<sup>72</sup> Mummert, 2001

<sup>73</sup> Guarnizo, 2003, 683

<sup>74</sup> Gould 1990, 1994; World Economic and Social Survey, 2004; Light et al., 2002 in Page and Plaza, 2006 298-299

<sup>75</sup> Rauch and Trindade, 2002 in Page and Plaza, 2006, 299

<sup>76</sup> de Has, 2007a

On the other hand, large and persistent remittance inflows can, in theory, cause an appreciation of the real exchange rate. There is, however, little empirical evidence documenting adverse effects of large inflows of foreign exchange and even less proof pointing to the negative impact on exchange rates of remittances in particular.<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, a doubling of workers' remittances resulted in real exchange rate appreciation of about 22% in a panel of thirteen countries in Latin America. In addition, remittances are prone to respond to changes in the real exchange rate.<sup>78</sup> If the exchange rate is overvalued, migrants send goods rather than cash.<sup>79</sup>

Despite these realities, the long-term impact of exchange rate appreciation on growth depends more directly on structural economic shifts and the extent to which these affect remittances, savings, investment and productivity.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, much of the theoretical and empirical literature regarding the impact of the so-called "Dutch disease" on growth, which can be stimulated by remittances, relies on externalities such as the loss of technological mastery in manufacturing non-traditional exports. However, the complex relationship between remittances, exchange rates, and economic growth is a topic that remains largely unexplored in the literature.<sup>81</sup>

## 2.6. Migration and human capital

Two dominant migration trends are most evident through country studies: economy-boosting patterns of reduced unemployment and increased wages for migrant workers in real terms.<sup>82</sup> These effects are seen when there is a tighter market with fewer workers, thereby causing wages to rise. This is the case for the skilled construction workers of the Philippines and for those of Pakistan who emigrate to oil producing states in the Gulf. On the other hand, in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, departing workers are easily replaced, as is true when the labour market is slack, and emigration does not cause a loss in output or an increase in wages. However, these case studies also suggest the possibility that migration could have detrimental effects, with the departure of high-skilled workers stifling employment opportunities for low-skilled workers remaining at home.

Although migrant networks are assumed to inspire the return of social capital to the country of origin, new data developed by OECD/DELSA do not seem to corroborate theories of brain-gain, except in large developing countries like India, Brazil or China.<sup>83</sup> These data suggest that migrant networks contribute to brain-gain only when they include a large number of relatively well-educated, high-skilled workers, as happens to be the case with these large developing countries.

There is substantial controversy around the impact of the outflow of human capital on economic growth and the welfare of children. Thirteen studies focus their attention on the identification and analysis of brain drain (outflow of skilled workers) and gain (contribution of migrants to the

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<sup>77</sup> El-Sakka & McNabb, 1999; Glytsos, 1998, 1999 in Page and Plaza, 2006 281

<sup>78</sup> Yang in Page and Plaza, 2006 283

<sup>79</sup> Rajan and Subramian, 2005 in OECD, Development Centre, 87

<sup>80</sup> In Page and Plaza, 2006, 281

<sup>81</sup> Page, and Plaza 2006, 281

<sup>82</sup> Lucas, 2005, 150

<sup>83</sup> Dumont in OECD 2007, 2

country of origin). It is well established that brain drain negatively impacts society by reducing the cadres of a nation's educated and skilled professionals. This outflow weakens the economy and leads to losses in tax revenues, corporate earnings and foreign investment. It should also be noted that if emigrants are among the cultural and intellectual elite of a sending community, their exit can have a negative effect on morale in the sending community.<sup>84</sup> By contrast, brain gain produces benefits through knowledge infusion, and is aided by the intentions of returnees and the strength of networks developed in receiving countries. The desire to generate brain gain at home motivates prospective migrants to invest more in education which will help them get better jobs not only abroad, but in their home countries as well. This investment also can result in better preparation of their children for higher-paying jobs at home or in the countries to which they might migrate in the future.<sup>85</sup>

Research indicates that the migration-related effects of brain-drain/brain-gain are mixed and vary by region. For example, sub-Saharan Africa is severely affected by brain-drain, as are other out-migration countries, albeit to a lesser degree relative to countries where high-skilled workers seek higher incomes elsewhere.<sup>86</sup> Approximately one-third of the most qualified African nationals have settled outside their country of origin. In the cases of Mozambique, Ghana and Tanzania, almost half of the highly skilled workers in the population leave.<sup>87</sup> While these numbers point to the severity of the brain-drain phenomenon, it is important to view these effects as negative in the short term. The long term effects of the emigration of the highly skilled are, on the other hand, often more positive, particularly if migrants become well integrated into the receiving countries.<sup>88</sup>

Overall, employment opportunities at home seem to dictate the occurrence of either brain-drain or brain-gain. From this perspective, underdevelopment, as manifested by limited economic opportunities, is a cause more than a symptom of brain-drain.<sup>89</sup> This suggests that brain drain can be circumvented when a community is predisposed to improving its human capital rather than relying on remittances or on the return of migrants who have acquired improved skills.<sup>90</sup>

Gender also affects the relationship between migration and brain-drain/brain-gain. Women represent an increasing share of OECD immigration and are more linked to the brain-drain than men (17% on average).<sup>91</sup> Women represent a larger share of skilled migrants than men and may make the choice to migrate in part due to greater opportunities available in receiving countries than in their communities of origin where they may not have the same access to education and well paying jobs as men. If women and men's access to education and work were equal, we would probably not see these gender-based differences in migration and brain-drain.

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<sup>84</sup> Ellerman, 2005, 620-621

<sup>85</sup> Page and Plazas 2006, 292-293

<sup>86</sup> OECD Development Centre, 2007, 12, 65

<sup>87</sup> World Bank, 2000 in Davies, 2007, 60; Dumont & Lemaitre, 20005 in Davies, 2007 60

<sup>88</sup> de Haas, 2007a, 22

<sup>89</sup> OECD, 2007, 2

<sup>90</sup> Stark 2005, 138

<sup>91</sup> Docquier, Lowell and Marfouk 2007, 1

### 3. Migration and Social Development

The following segment of this report discusses the impact of migration on social development, paying particular attention to the role of remittances and their varied and numerous effects on children left behind, as gauged by the following measures: education, health, crime, gender, family dynamics and children's wellbeing.

#### 3.1. Migration and education

The overall effect of migration on educational attainment, which is funded primarily by remittances, is mixed. While it is evident that migration has a beneficial impact on all key measures of educational attainment, the results vary by gender, showing that girls benefit more than boys in some countries.<sup>92</sup> Studies in El Salvador and Sri Lanka found that children in remittance-receiving households have lower school drop-out rates. By contrast, Mexico is an exception to this pattern, predominantly in the case of boys. In particular, rural Mexico has witnessed a decrease in schooling among 16-18 year-old children influenced by migration.<sup>93</sup>

Remittances usually have a positive effect on education. When other factors are held constant, children in remittance-receiving families have higher levels of human capital as measured by higher and better educational attainment.<sup>94</sup> For instance; remittances in Ecuador have enabled many migrant children to regularly attend school including more elite schools.<sup>95</sup> Similar improvements are evident in the Philippines, where remittances are used to send children to private schools, which are considered to be better than public schools.<sup>96</sup> Children of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parents exhibit not only better academic performance, but also greater involvement and participation in academic organizations and extra-curricular activities.<sup>97</sup> A similar array of positive outcomes has been found in Albania and Moldova.<sup>98</sup>

However, it is still unknown how remittances contribute to the quality of learning among children, who have either one or both parents absent for extended periods of time.<sup>99</sup> Some studies conclude that remittances have minimal and insignificant effects on academic attainment, though they may help children to complete secondary education.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, evidence regarding the positive impact of remittances on education must be weighed against the negative effect that parental absence has on the moral development and overall school performance of children left behind.<sup>101</sup>

Overall, children's academic performance is subject to change following their parents' migration. Some children do worse because of the lack of parental support and control, as well as

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<sup>92</sup> Özden and Schiff, 2007, 6

<sup>93</sup> World Bank, 2006, 4

<sup>94</sup> Cortes 2007

<sup>95</sup> Camacho Z. and Hernandez B. 2007

<sup>96</sup> Bryant 2005

<sup>97</sup> Edillon 2008

<sup>98</sup> Institute for Economy, Finance and Business 2007 and UNICEF Moldova, undated.

<sup>99</sup> Cortes 2007, 18

<sup>100</sup> Sawyer and Keyes 2008

<sup>101</sup> UNICEF Moldova, undated, 21.

the emerging need for them to devote more time to family duties. This is mostly problematic in rural areas with a shortage of labour, where children can be forced to drop out of school to engage in farming in order to support the family.<sup>102</sup> Adolescents are particularly affected due to the expectation to either become the new caregiver, or the new breadwinner for the family after the migration of one or both of the parents. A more thorough analysis of the impact of migration on adolescents will be undertaken later in the report. Improvement in performance at school may be prompted by children's willingness to reward their parents' efforts or to meet their parents' expectations.<sup>103</sup> Academic performance is also influenced by the presence of the mother in the household. Thus, children whose mother is abroad tend to reject non-compulsory education.<sup>104</sup>

### **3.2. Migration and health**

Migration also affects the health of children. Its effects vary with time, however. This is documented in a study on Mexico, which shows that the general health of children declines during the first years of their parents' migration. In later years, however, it improves in part because remittances enable children to have improved access to health-care facilities.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, a study in Albania reports that remittances improve children's overall health because remittances enable families to provide better diets and to attain access to health care.<sup>106</sup> Experiences of Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua further support the conclusion that positive health outcomes are mainly due to remittances, which over time improve access to health care.<sup>107</sup>

Mexico-based research also indicates that migration's impact on children's health depends on the age of children.<sup>108</sup> This conclusion was based on the finding that infant mortality increased in the period immediately following parental migration. Additionally, there is evidence that, despite the higher living standards afforded by remittances, negative effects on children's health are generally linked to this initial phase of migration, when the sense of family disruption may be at its zenith. Among the possible negative health impacts cited in the research are symptoms of psychological disturbance.<sup>109</sup> Health repercussions associated with migration also include increased risk of sexually transmitted disease contracted from returning migrants.<sup>110</sup>

### **3.3. Migration and gender**

Gender equality and the promotion of women's rights, together one of the eight main Millennium Development Goals, have been of utmost priority and have received focused attention throughout development literature. Female migration is estimated to account for almost half of all current international migration. As the number of female migrants continues to increase, it is imperative to analyze the prevalent effects, both positive and negative, that the

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<sup>102</sup> Institute for Economy, Finance and Business 2007

<sup>103</sup> Camacho Z. and Hernandez B. 2007; Gavriiliuc, Platon, and Afteni 2006

<sup>104</sup> Stirbu 2006, 14

<sup>105</sup> Cortes 2007, 16.

<sup>106</sup> Institute for Economy, Finance and Business 2007

<sup>107</sup> Cortés, 2007, 20

<sup>108</sup> Kanaiaupuni & Donato 1999

<sup>109</sup> Fletcher-Anthony 2008

<sup>110</sup> Cortés, 2007, 20

feminization of migration has on the wellbeing of children left behind and economic development as a whole.

The impact of migration on gender dynamics is shaped by the cultural context in both sending and receiving communities. While migrants can be exposed to new gender roles abroad, empirical evidence suggests that migration does not automatically result in structural changes to traditional gender roles or to patriarchal customs.<sup>111</sup> For instance, the motivations for female migration include “the need to escape unhappy social situations, including bad marriages, harassment, violence and idle husbands” which makes women a socially disadvantaged group for whom migration becomes a “quest for independence and a means of realizing their self-worth.”<sup>112</sup> It is well established that female migrants are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in countries of destination, as well as during the migration process. Moreover, the migration of women, especially migrant mothers who leave their children behind, tends to bring significant changes in family relations.

That the ramifications of female migration outweigh its benefits is not surprising, given the major care-taking role mothers generally occupy, particularly in developing country households. In contrast, when fathers migrate, life may go on with relatively little disruption for the children. However, if fathers do not send remittances, or do not send enough to sustain the household, their absence becomes more significant. Nevertheless, even when the male-workers do remit, their relationships to their children may be severely damaged. In the West Indies, there is evidence to suggest that children may define their fathers’ love only in monetary terms.<sup>113</sup> When mothers migrate, however, the family often experiences even greater disruptions, especially if fathers are derelict in assuming broad parental responsibilities. This behaviour by left-behind children helps to explain the gender-specific consequences generated by migration.<sup>114</sup> For example, young children left behind in Mexico were resentful of their migrant mothers when the children perceived mothers to be showing less care from abroad and of their fathers when they were perceived to fail to provide financially for them.<sup>115</sup>

In addition, remittances often encourage the consumption of new types of goods such as luxuries and brand name items. This leads to new social patterns such as the creation of “barrel children,” i.e., children left behind whose parents provide them with significant material resources in the form of cash remittances and barrels of clothing and toys. Such children soon begin to perceive parents simply as economic means for survival.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, when remittances stop, the desire for material goods often leads these children to turn to crime and violence in order to continue acquiring the types of items to which they have become accustomed.<sup>117</sup>

The negative consequences of female migration on children have not curtailed the growth in the number of women migrants. Data from 1960-2005 indicate that the percentage of international

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<sup>111</sup> King et al., 2006; Hampshire, 2006; Taylor, 1984 ; Day and İçduygu, 1997, in de Haas, 2007a, 20

<sup>112</sup> Siddiqui 2003, cited in Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003

<sup>113</sup> Fletcher-Anthony, 2008

<sup>114</sup> Fletcher-Anthony, 2008

<sup>115</sup> Dreby, 2008

<sup>116</sup> DEmilio et al. undated; Reis undated

<sup>117</sup> Reis undated, 17

female migrants increased almost three percent, from 46.7% to 49.6%.<sup>118</sup> Although the share of female migrants is substantially higher in developed than in developing countries, the largest increases in the proportion of women migrants during this time period were observed in Oceania (from 44% to 51%), in Latin America and the Caribbean (from 45% to 50%), in Africa (from 42% to 47%), and in the former Soviet Union (from 48 to 58%). The only region registering a drop in the share of female migrants was Asia (from 46% to 43%). It should be noted, however, that U.N. data do not clarify whether these changes are due to inflows, outflows, or to the mortality of migrants.<sup>119</sup>

When gender is included in empirical models designed to explain migration, the results indicate that there are gender-based differences between men and women in how they weigh the opportunity costs of migration, in how they are affected by the migratory experience and in the extent to which remittance receiving families use remittances for household investments and expenditures, production and the purchase of technology choices, as was discussed earlier in the report.<sup>120</sup> For reasons that are unclear, there also appear to be gender-based differences in the extent to which households invest in education. In Ghana, households receiving remittances from the wife allocate much less of their budget to education than do households that receive remittances from the husband.<sup>121</sup> As mentioned earlier, remittances constitute a significant contribution to the amelioration of education for children. Therefore, researchers and policy makers should pay closer attention to the gender patterns prevalent and emerging in labour flows.

Gender differences play an important role in the psychological impacts of parents' migration on children left behind. When the father has migrated, the family seems to be less affected than it does post the migration of the mother. This is probably related to cultural traditions that make mothers more responsible for managing the household. Culturally, migration can provide women with a variety of otherwise unattainable opportunities, such as increased educational participation, labour market experiences, and expanded roles as decision makers.<sup>122</sup> Women migrants often experience empowerment in the form of greater physical and financial independence,<sup>123</sup> but shifts in gender roles are not necessarily positive, as the emotional and physical burden of increased responsibilities can be substantial.

It should be noted that left-behind men don't always take migrant women's place in performing domestic tasks. Instead they sometimes turn to the extended family for help, regardless of their ability to assist.<sup>124</sup> The perceived importance of fathers diminishes further if fathers stops sending the remittances or if they are inadequate to cover the basic needs of the family. When the mother has migrated, however, the family is strongly affected almost immediately, and its vulnerability levels depend on whether the father directly takes over the care of the children or receives support from other women in the family.<sup>125</sup> Even when extended families provide

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<sup>118</sup> UN dataset, 2006

<sup>119</sup> Schiff et al., 2007, 2

<sup>120</sup> Schiff et al., 2007, 4

<sup>121</sup> Guzmán, Morrison, and Sjöblom in Schiff et al., 2007, 8

<sup>122</sup> de Haas, 2007a, 20

<sup>123</sup> OECD, Development Centre, 2007, 76

<sup>124</sup> Cortés, 2007, 29

<sup>125</sup> Camacho Z. and Hernandez B. 2007

substantial support in the absence of the mother, the fact remains that before family members are able to settle into this new arrangement, children and fathers live for a while in a disrupted family that is likely to be emotionally tense.<sup>126</sup>

Children's experiences with family separation may also differ depending on their gender. Generally, boys seem to be more prone to internalizing their pain and manifesting it in aggressive behaviour.<sup>127</sup> Overall, there are gender differences in how young children left behind view their parents: children in general are resentful of mothers who do not show they care for them from a distance, and they are resentful of fathers who fail to provide financially for them.<sup>128</sup> The gender-specific response among children left behind is also evident among older children who are both more aware and more affected by the departure of one or both of their parents. Adolescent girls, as will be discussed in greater detail shortly, are more affected by the departure of the mother, having to modify their lives to take over care-giving and house-maintenance roles traditionally performed by the female head of household. Adolescent boys, on the other hand, have been noted to be less responsive to the gender difference in parental migration. However, they respond to migration as an incentive for them to follow in their parents' footsteps. As children age, their responses continue to vary by gender: the resentment of young men fades when they begin to consider their own labour force participation; young women, in contrast, often better understand parents' decisions as they mature and form their own relationships.

### **3.4. Migration, family dynamics and child well-being**

Migration involves challenges for families and children, having a varying influence on both according to the conditions under which migration occurs. As elaborated upon earlier, migration has the potential to significantly improve the welfare of children left behind when remittances are able to reduce the effects of poverty or abuse. In Moldova, for example, a study compared 75 children left behind with 84 children without migrating parents, and found that the material situation of the former improved post migration.<sup>129</sup> The benefits of migration are usually most evident in connection with education, because, as is the case in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, remittances are often used to send children to better schools.<sup>130</sup>

On the other hand, children left behind by migrating parents who are not able to financially support them over a long period of time experience particularly negative outcomes. In addition to the psychological problems they develop, children often become—and may be treated as—burdens to their caregivers. In such situations, the feelings of emotional and economic deprivation they experience leave migrant children in a much worse state than children raised in traditional families.<sup>131</sup> When children are left to the care of much older relatives, generational differences can become an obstacle to effective communication, further depriving migrant children of the emotional support that is so crucial to their healthy and prosperous development. These effects are exacerbated by tense relations between children and their peers, who may

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<sup>126</sup> Coronel and Unterreiner 2007.

<sup>127</sup> Reis undated, 10.

<sup>128</sup> Dreby 2008

<sup>129</sup> Gavriliuc, Platon, and Afteni. 2006

<sup>130</sup> Bryant. 2005, 5

<sup>131</sup> Gavriliuc, Platon, and Afteni, 2006, 21



resent the benefits they receive as a result of remittances. Community organizations that similarly view these remittance-endowed children as more privileged, can add to the discrimination and hostility experienced by these children.

Despite all of these negative side effects, it is still a challenge to distinguish the problems and delinquencies of children left behind from those experienced by other children in their communities.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, intense depression and feelings of abandonment have been observed as persisting well beyond initial stages of parental migration.<sup>133</sup> Likewise, the parent–child relationship does not necessarily improve during the course of the migration period.<sup>134</sup> This breach in the bond between children and their parents has negative ramifications in other facets of children’s lives. For example, a study showed that the reaction of Jamaican children to their parents’ migration was directly connected to long-term psychological difficulties and underperformance in school.<sup>135</sup>

A possible explanation for the negative effect of separation from parents on academic performance is that children of migrant parents are often left under-protected, inadequately supervised, or forced to assume adult responsibilities they are not yet ready to handle. Children under five, left behind by a migrant mother or both parents, face the highest risk of psychological trauma as a result of a lack of nurturing, which is so crucial during the early stages of development. Virtually all such children reported having psychological problems after their parents migrated.<sup>136</sup>

Adolescents whose parents migrated often experienced difficulties in their social relations, isolating themselves into small groups of peers in a similar situation.<sup>137</sup> In addition, the period of parent-child separation interrupts parent-child bonding, which leads to the inability to establish stable adult relationships, even after re-unification.<sup>138</sup> Although some contend that the convergence of family strategies and the construction of social networks may buffer the emotional impacts of parents migration, it is often the case that children’s relationships with new caregivers are not close enough, and as a result, the latter do not manage to meet children’s needs of emotional support because of their style of communication. Furthermore, the children whose parents are not able to financially support them over a long period of time are especially at risk of becoming a burden to their caregivers. In such situations, the feeling of deprivation they must deal with is stronger because they lack affection, parental support and material conditions to satisfy their basic needs.<sup>139</sup>

### **3.5. Emotional and psychological impacts of migration**

Overall, family disintegration appears to be the most negative consequence of parental migration. Parental absence can produce psychological and social damage, which may exceed the benefits

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<sup>132</sup> Bryant. 2005, 7

<sup>133</sup> Camacho Z. and Hernandez B. 2007, 6

<sup>134</sup> Smith, A., et al., 2004, 107; Levitt, 2001

<sup>135</sup> Pottinger 2005 in Cortés, 2007, 26

<sup>136</sup> UNICEF Moldova, 2006 in Cortés, 2007, 25

<sup>137</sup> Gavrilue, Platon and Afteni 2006

<sup>138</sup> Fletcher-Anthony 2008

<sup>139</sup> Gavriluic, Platon, and Afteni 2006, 21.

from remittances for the remaining adults in charge of the family and particularly for the children.<sup>140</sup> It results in children experiencing less supervision, a loss of support and encouragement, and the loss of role models. Children whose parents are absent also have a more limited role in their communities and often experience a lack of respect for their rights to participate in local activities. In addition, migration of a family member initiates changes in duties and tasks for the members left behind. Therefore, children left by one or both parents take up more responsibilities in their households, and this sometimes ends up in an overwhelming load of duties for the child.<sup>141</sup>

Children left behind also are more prone to psychological and emotional stress, feelings of abandonment, and low self-esteem, all of which may ultimately cause damage to the child's overall development and patterns of socialization.<sup>142</sup> Even the temporary absence of one or both parents decreases parental care and may reduce stimulation, which has significant implications for early childhood development. The most frequent impacts are evidenced between the ages of 11 and 13 when children are transitioning from primary to secondary school.<sup>143</sup> More acute forms of psychological distress, such as the adoption of risky behaviour, have also been observed as a result of migration among adolescents left behind. In Jamaica, a survey found that the absence of mothers was a key determinant of children's involvement with violence. In addition, migration, especially of mothers, significantly increases risks for children to be physically and sexually abused or exploited.<sup>144</sup> There are also claims that children of migrants have difficulty making decisions because they are used to having two layers of authority in the family, first their caregivers and then the absent parent.<sup>145</sup>

Although psychological and relationship problems are associated with parental migration, similar problems occur in families of non-migrants as well. Comparing children of migrants and children of non-migrants in the Philippines reveals no systemic differences in the psychological problems, reports of abuse, or experiences of delinquencies. This may be because poverty is still a potent source of family problems, and migration is usually an effective way of alleviating poverty.<sup>146</sup> The extent to which the extended family helps fill the gap left by the absent parent remains an open question, just as is the impact that poverty has on preparations for migration in the spending of remittance money. Therefore, to argue that migration causes more problems than it alleviates requires more comprehensive data regarding the prevalence of psychological and social problems among non-migrant vs. migrant children than is currently available, as well as a better understanding of cultural norms and social networks and their roles in the caretaking of children.

Migration changes family structures by changing the role women have in family decision-making. As women become financial providers, their decision roles within the household inevitably expand and their status and social privileges increase and grant them access to social roles otherwise not available to them. This change may also make women role models for other

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<sup>140</sup> Cortes 2007; Coronel and Unterreiner 2007

<sup>141</sup> UNICEF Moldova, undated, 16-17

<sup>142</sup> Bryant 2005; Coe 2008; Coronel and Unterreiner 2007; Demilio, et al. undated; Edillon 2008; Gavriiliuc, Platon, and Afteni 2006; Stirbu 2006

<sup>143</sup> Reis, undated, 10-11

<sup>144</sup> Demilio, et al. undated; Reis undated.

<sup>145</sup> Bryant 2005, 6

<sup>146</sup> Bryant 2005.

women in the community and upcoming generations.<sup>147</sup> Long-term male migration serves to endow wives with more autonomy and with greater decision-making power over issues relating to children's education and household finances.<sup>148</sup> Women who remain in their countries of origin are therefore not merely passive recipients of remittances or victims of spousal desertion; they become responsible for the allocation of remittances and the implementation of strategies aimed at diversifying income-generating activities aimed at mitigating the irregularity or precariousness of household income.<sup>149</sup> Thus, a husband's migration may lead to a wife's involvement in traditionally male-lead activities, with the wife continuing her new role even following the return of the husband.<sup>150</sup> It should also be noted that migrant parents often modify but do not abandon parenting roles when they migrate, continuing to maintain close contact with their children and financially supporting them.<sup>151</sup> These new parenting practices result in the construction of "transnational families" – a new institution that replaces traditional face-to-face parent-child interactions that are constrained by geography with international contacts that rely on cell phones and the internet to expand the geographical and cultural universe of children left behind.<sup>152</sup>

### **3.6. Migration and effects on adolescents**

Regardless of whether the mother, father or both parents migrate, adolescents left behind are often assigned the responsibilities left unfulfilled by the migrating parent. Traditionally male household obligations are transplanted onto females and children left behind, while female responsibilities tend to fall on either other females within the extended family or on older children within the immediate household.<sup>153</sup> The tendency of males to designate tasks usually performed by their female partners to other females reflects their understanding of the specialization and peculiarities of skills and knowledge, which are inherent and unique to the identity of women. It is evident that, at least during the initial phases of migration, the absence of females has a substantially more negative impact on children in the family. The additional caretaking roles assumed by older siblings impact both the distribution of inter-household responsibilities and the time these children dedicate to education, work, and entertainment.

The adult responsibilities assumed by children do not negate the structure of authority, which persists within the household post migration. Despite the observed change in the decision-making process and the subsequent increase in autonomy that occurs when women are left to make decisions about the allocation of remittances, children left behind do not experience the same empowerment. Adolescents often face conflicting realities of needing to take a dominant place in the household as the primary caretakers, but having to remain subordinate to the parents, whether they are present or not. The contradictions that exist between the role and the level of

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<sup>147</sup> Ramirez, Dominguez, and Morais 2005, 38

<sup>148</sup> Yeoh and Lam 2007.

<sup>149</sup> Ramirez, Dominguez, and Morais 2005, 39

<sup>150</sup> Yeoh and Lam 2007, 17

<sup>151</sup> Yeoh and Lam 2007, 19

<sup>152</sup> Cortes 2007, 15

<sup>153</sup> Cortes 2007a

authority held by an adolescent result in escalating tensions between children and their migrating parents.<sup>154</sup>

The increased demands and pressures faced by children who take over parental responsibilities often result in a deterioration of academic performance, and sometimes increased inclination to drop out of school altogether.<sup>155</sup> As examples in Ecuador, Moldova, and Pakistan, among others, show, the trend in declining accomplishment in school is mainly associated with girls, since they are more likely to take over household tasks than their male siblings following the mother's migration.<sup>156</sup> A heavier workload within the household becomes increasingly difficult to balance with school attendance and performance, and adolescents begin to resort to either dropping out or substance abuse as coping mechanisms. As an extension, various UNICEF country studies indicate that children left behind are more vulnerable to drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, psychosocial problems and violent behaviour.<sup>157</sup>

Although increased access to drugs can be explained by the increased spending money among adolescents receiving remittances, pregnancy and social delinquency are symptomatic of the less obvious and more immeasurable impacts of the migration process. Adolescents left behind assume adult behaviour in conjunction with adult responsibilities, and, as is evident in Moldova, are more likely than non-migrant children to partake in illegal and criminal activity.<sup>158</sup>

Yet another issue is the aspiration of adolescents to follow the perceived success of their parents and pursue migration with the intention of securing employment themselves. The idea of forsaking education in the hope of earning a higher income is a powerful incentive for adolescents, who often undervalue education relative to short-term income gains. Additional pressure for migration is put on adolescents by parents struggling to generate sufficient income for the household. The need for adolescents to accelerate their development into adulthood is thus not only self-induced, but enforced by the unfortunate economic circumstances of the household as well.

Migration is an undeniable reality in the lives of children who live in migrant-sending communities, yet very little is known about how this experience affects them. Research is needed to examine the impact of such communities on new generations of children and adolescents who grow up defining their opportunities in terms of emigration rather than in terms of prospects to be found at home, and on those children left behind, who grow up in an environment where a new norm exists to consume goods and to pursue careers and other aspirations beyond the confines of national and regional borders. The legal context in the host country also bears on the constitution of the family and the kind of family life persisting in sending communities. Moreover, these and other society-wide problems such as family breakdowns and dysfunction are not necessarily the result of migration, as many of these issues precede parental emigration or are experienced by families not involved in migration.<sup>159</sup> However, despite the ambiguity

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<sup>154</sup> Herrera 2004

<sup>155</sup> Moctezuma 1999

<sup>156</sup> Global Forum on Migration and Development, 2007

<sup>157</sup> UNICEF 2008

<sup>158</sup> UNICEF 2008

<sup>159</sup> Nyberg-Sørensen, 2007, 205

involved in isolating the effects of migration on families and children left behind, some research lends hope for more conclusive analysis. For example, a study of Mexican migration found that migration to the U.S. significantly increases the odds of union dissolution for individuals with medium-to-extensive levels of migration experience, in part because of changes in familial and general social values induced by the experience of those who migrate.<sup>160</sup>

### **3.7. Transnational families**

Transnational families are a substitute to traditional solidarity associated with the extended family structure and cohesive communities in countries of origin. In particular, these measures serve as coping mechanisms, as they provide a more distant support system for members of the household and are driven primarily by remittances received from family members living and working abroad.<sup>161</sup> In this respect, the success of migrant families depends as much on the regular flow of remittances and financial support, as on the creation of strong affective and effective ties and elaborate links for communication between those who leave and those who stay.<sup>162</sup> Without such ties, migrants might not be motivated to remit funds. There has also been an observed transformation of household responsibilities and family practices, as distance between family members can alter the hierarchy structure within the household, create additional tension on family members left behind (who face the daunting task of balancing the juxtaposition of maintaining the inferior position within the family and having to tackle the obligations of the absent superior on a daily basis), and project a foreign system of rights from the migrant to the family members.

Of course, transnational families are not universal. In many Caribbean countries, for example, high levels of poverty make virtual contact impossible for the lower-income groups who engage in serial migration.<sup>163</sup> Transnational families can be looked at as a variation on the idea of diasporic networks described earlier. By extension, it can be seen that remittances and migration outside of the transnational family and close-knit relationships between migrants and those they leave behind lose their effectiveness and the ability to minimize the social and psychological detriments from migration.

Hence, transnational families play an essential role in transmitting various forms of “social remittances” across borders, e.g. ideas, behaviours, value structures, and identities that flow from receiving to sending countries and that are transferred along with monetary remittances. These may alter long-standing patterns of investment in human capital.<sup>164</sup> For example, migrants may influence changes in gender roles by advocating increased education for all members of society, regardless of gender. By helping children attend or stay in school, remittances help to build human capital that can be used when these children become migrants. Indeed, children of migrants tend to have higher levels of education and thus fare better than their parents when they eventually migrate to the U.S. Social remittances are particularly important if they generate a

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<sup>160</sup> Frank and Wildsmith, 2005

<sup>161</sup> DEmilio et al. undated, 12

<sup>162</sup> Camacho Z. and Hernandez B. 2007

<sup>163</sup> Reis undated

<sup>164</sup> Cortes 2007, 18

“call effect” that produces a “culture” promoting the migration of children and others.<sup>165</sup> This effect is observed among the children of Haitian migrants, who exhibit a disproportionately high tendency to migrate.<sup>166</sup> There has also been an emerging trend of ‘astronaut’ families who take advantage of the location of the migrated parent by sending children to the host country to reap the benefits of better academic, medical, cultural and political settings.<sup>167</sup>

## 4. Policy Implications

In order to develop effective, efficient, context-specific and gender-based policy responses, it is necessary to provide a framework directly linking migration and social protection. In order to do so it is imperative, as this report highlights, to take a holistic perspective; i.e. one that takes into account both migration’s material and psychosocial effects on development and children-left behind.

### 4.1. Migration and social protection

Although it has become an important part of the development discourse at both national and international levels, there is no framework directly linking migration and social protection. Social protection consists primarily of governmental policies designed to provide low-income individuals, households and communities access to social services and basic goods. It has not yet become a convention to acknowledge the extent to which migration is a root cause of the set of problems that social protection attempts to resolve. Instead, migration has been treated as an independent problem to be addressed.<sup>168</sup>

Migration can also be a form of social protection. Poor economic and social conditions may encourage permanent migration to areas with better economic opportunities and social services. Formal social protection measures should therefore aim to reduce the outflow of migrants due to domestic ills via the development of local employment opportunities and improved infrastructure within the sending communities.

It is important to note that migration can also be prompted by improved domestic conditions. This contradiction can be explained as follows: households are often forced to look for income outside of their country of origin due to domestic market failures or social restrictions at home. After the migrant-generated income surpasses the initial costs of migration, households begin to inject capital, liquid or credit, into the domestic economy. This has both direct and indirect effects, as children aspire to migrate in order to achieve the same economic success as their parents (or to add to the household income due to the insufficiency of one migrant salary), and increased domestic demands lead to an escalation of demand for labour. Hence, economic improvements lead to further migration.

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<sup>165</sup> Camacho Z. and Hernandez B. 2007, 5

<sup>166</sup> Nicholas 2008

<sup>167</sup> Yeoh and Lam 2007

<sup>168</sup> Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003, 5-6

Although the effects of migration are ambiguous and varied, government social protection policies should strive to not only protect citizens going abroad, but also facilitate their remittance-sending pursuits, and develop domestic infrastructure to generate employment opportunities in order to both stall further outflow of domestic labour and attract migrants to return home.

One must acknowledge and emphasize the “transformative” potential of social protection,<sup>169</sup> i.e., the pursuit of policies that alter power imbalances that create, stimulate, and sustain social vulnerabilities, such as poverty and the lack of access to health services and education. A transformative focus also redirects policy making away from serving as a mechanism of the state, used to mobilize or reward key societal sectors, toward an approach that calls for citizens to renegotiate their relationship with the state in order to institutionalize the state’s commitment to social protection. In sum, a transformative approach expands social protection to include issues of equity, political empowerment and social rights. According to this approach, social protection policies may be categorized as:

- a. **“Promotive” measures**, which aim to improve real incomes and capabilities. These may include macro-economic, sectoral and institutional methods relevant to poverty reduction, such as the improvement of primary education, reduction of communicable diseases and facilitation of access to land or sanitation;
- b. **“Preventive” measures, which aim to avert deprivation in specific ways. These typically** refer to state and non-state social insurance provision;
- c. **“Protective” measures**, which are even more specific in their objective of guaranteeing relief from deprivation. These are narrowly targeted safety net measures aimed at providing relief from poverty and deprivation to the extent that promotive and preventive approaches have failed to do; and
- d. **“Transformative” measures**, which aim to alter the bargaining power of various individuals and groups within society such that social equity concerns are addressed, and people are protected against social risks such as discrimination or abuse.

Many of the issues addressed within the scope of social protection require interventions at various levels. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that social protection should be implemented in more developed and in developing societies, where social protection plays an especially productive role because of its immediate impact on the general standards of living and an indirect effect on productivity.<sup>170</sup>

Many risks are incurred during the initial stages of migration – a volatile and unpredictable period as regards required social protection. Thus, it is useful to think of migration as an opportunity for individuals to engage in the promotive, preventive and protective elements of social protection. When individuals migrate to improve their life chances or incomes, they are undertaking promotive measures; when migration is used as an insurance or risk diversification

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<sup>169</sup> Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003, 7-8

<sup>170</sup> Wuyts 2006

strategy, it serves a preventive function; and the protective strategy comes into play when migration is used to provide an economic safety net for the household.<sup>171</sup>

Studies also show that marginalized groups use migration to protect against unequal social relationships.<sup>172</sup> This type of migration is of particular interest, as it has been noted to increase the feminization of migration flows.<sup>173</sup> Therefore, analogous to the “promotive” social protection measures that contribute to development, a form of “transformative” social protection strategy can be developed to enhance the social status of women.

## **4.2. Social protection and children left behind**

Social protection policies frequently do not emphasize the specific needs of children left behind. This is particularly worrisome, as these needs are not necessarily balanced by the potential gains resulting from remittances. Those countries most affected by migration contain a large number of the children left behind but often lack sufficient resources to implement policies that address the unique needs of these children. In addition, children left behind are often relatively ignored by governmental agencies because they are considered more privileged than children who do not receive remittances and thus are excluded from the main target groups of interest to traditional social protection policies. The purpose of this section of the report is to focus on general approaches that policy makers should take in enacting and implementing social protection measures addressing migration and difficulties children left behind face.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) embodies four general principles regarding the protection of children:

- The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions affecting children (Article 3);
- There shall be no discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (Article 2);
- States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life and shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (Article 6); and
- Children shall be assured the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with the child’s age and level of maturity (Article 12).

In addition to these four principles, the CRC pays particular attention to the role of the family in providing care to the child and to the special protection needs of children deprived of their family environment.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003, 17-18

<sup>172</sup> Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003, 22

<sup>173</sup> Ramirez, Dominguez, and Morais 2005

<sup>174</sup> UNHCR, Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child



Clearly, social protection policies must be geared towards providing the services that children left behind need. However, this raises an important policy dilemma. Is there a need to cater such policies exclusively to children left behind rather than develop policies that benefit all children in general? Special programs and targeted interventions can generate important discriminatory issues, which would likely make them counterproductive. This undermines the plausibility and desirability of the idea of devising social protection policies that are solely focused on the children left behind. Instead, there is a greater emphasis placed on the transformative elements of social protection intended for the empowerment and the promotion of social rights of all children.

### 4.3. Policy recommendations

- 1) Policy must be strengthened in order to **secure children's basic social and economic rights**. It is especially important that legislation to regulate child labour be introduced and strengthened. In many rural areas with a shortage of labour, parents' migration often forces children to drop out of school and to work to help support the family. In addition, policies should be strengthened to better monitor and punish various forms of child abuse. This is particularly important for young girls, as they are vulnerable to sexual abuse by their mother's companions when fathers have migrated.<sup>175</sup>
- 2) Remittances are not substitutes for government policies and institutional frameworks that need to address exclusion, inequalities and the provision of social services. Remittances can only supplement ODA and governmental and private initiatives. **Policies must support government investment in social policy and poverty reduction**. Poverty reduction strategies (including redistributive policies) need to address the issues of migration and development. Public policy dialogues on root causes of migration and exclusion need to be incorporated into the debate. Policy makers will need to develop coherent policies at national, regional and local levels to address the plight of international migrant children as well as children left-behind.
- 3) **Greater attention must be paid to the effects of the economic crisis on children and families left behind** in order to mitigate negative impacts and design policy interventions that will improve the developmental prospects for these families and children in the medium and long term.
- 4) States of origin should develop **comprehensive policies to support the families and caregivers of children of migrant workers in their child-rearing responsibilities**. Policies should be oriented at mitigating the psychosocial impacts of migration on children by providing programs to caregivers on parenting skills, gender sensitivity, and management of peer relationships. These programs must be sensitive to migrant communities' own cultural values and mores, especially regarding gender roles, youth participation and the mitigation of risky behaviours.
- 5) Education officials should **develop training programs that prepare staff to recognize traits associated with the psycho-social effects of parental migration**.

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<sup>175</sup> Reis undated

## International cooperation

- 6) States' must strive to **regularize the status of their migrant populations and improve working conditions through international or bilateral negotiations**, as these are essential to promoting the rights of children left behind.
- 7) Migrant sending countries should engage in dialogue with receiving countries to ensure **bilateral agreements that allow migrant workers to take their children abroad, in order to avoid the abandonment of children by parents working abroad** (especially mothers) and to allow the full and harmonious development of children's needs.
- 8) National governments should focus on designing and implementing **co-development strategies between countries within a particular migration corridor**. Policies and legal frameworks should focus primarily on reducing social, economic, educational, and health inequalities between countries. This should be the basis for incorporating migration, its causes, and consequences into countries' developmental strategies aiming at maximizing migration's developmental potentials, while reducing its negative consequences.

## Data and research

- 9) It must be emphasized that **more academic research and policy analysis is needed to fully understand how parents' migration affects children left behind**. The literature review clearly indicates that although a number of negative consequences have been identified in past studies, we still do not know how many children actually experience them and how severely they are affected. Sound policy requires valid data regarding the demographics of the children of migrants as well as of their care-givers, the latter in relation to the children, and the amount and type of remuneration care-givers receive. Efforts to generate such data should include multinational and state-specific representative surveys as well as coordinated rigorous qualitative analyses that are amenable to being aggregated to yield generalizable results.
- 10) In order to increase children's visibility in the migration debate and to formulate evidence-based policies, **national level data across countries (and when possible, regional and local level data) should be comparable in terms of its definitions and tabulations. Data collection efforts should be sensitive to gender and age differences** in order to take into account the nuances of the phenomenon.

## Conclusion

This report focuses on two issues. First, after reviewing the relationship between migration and development from a multi-faceted perspective, it rejects defining development primarily in terms of economic wellbeing, and instead favours conceptualizing it in terms of economic, social, political and cultural characteristics. This approach encompasses the total effect of migration on the individual, the family and the sending community. Among the key arguments for adopting this approach is that the economic perspective and the benefits of migration have been greatly over-emphasized and over-estimated. Indeed, even remittances, the principal source of economic gain, contribute less to the economic wellbeing of families, especially children, and sending communities in general, than analysts have usually recognized.

Additionally, the report describes how migration and remittances alter economic and socio-cultural patterns including how families and communities are organized and function. The impact it has on the social and cultural stability of sending communities can be especially harmful to children left behind. The first section of this report concludes by arguing that unless governments are made more accountable to their citizenry and significantly change how public institutions function, even well-designed new migration policies will be of limited value.

The report also focuses on migration's impact on children left behind in ways that may not be compensated for by the increased economic resources they enjoy because of remittances. Although children benefit from remittances in terms of their economic well-being, education and health, they also have to pay significant psychological and social costs due to the absence of proper parental guidance and to the rearrangement of family structures. In addition, studies indicate that the problems may worsen when mothers or both parents migrate.

In order to address the negative consequences of parents' migration on children left behind, this report calls for a social protection framework with a particular emphasis on transformative measures that focus on the realization of the rights of development of all children instead of targeting and thus privileging children of migrants. Particularly, it emphasizes that social protection policies should be considered in conjunction with overall development projects as well as with institutional reforms in sending countries.

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