

Poverty of the children of the Moldovan migrants

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List of abbreviations and acronyms:

NSB – National Statistical Bureau;

SPMU – Strategic Policy Monitoring Unit of the Joint Program of the Government of Republic of Moldova and UNDP/UNICEF “Support to Strategic Policy to Formulation, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Republic of Moldova”;

HBS – Household Budget Survey;

ATU Gagauzia – Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia;

Summary

This report focuses on the impact of migration on the situation of the Moldovan children left behind by migrating parents. It finds that the total number of these children is large and the official figures underestimate the extent of this phenomenon. According to official information around 28000 children in the academic year 2004/2005 were left by both parents and more than 68000 thousand were left by one parent. These numbers do not correlate with the large annual outflows and large total stock of the Moldovan migrants.

We have used three alternative methods to check the magnitude of this phenomenon: 1) based on the results of a statistically representative survey conducted with Moldovan youth, 2) based on fertility rate and number of migrant women and 3) based on the proportion of children in total population under the assumption that this proportion does not change much in case of migrants cohort. The methods return different results with between 150 thousand and 270 thousand children aged 0-14 having been left by one parent. The total number of children remaining behind both migrating parents is more than 40 thousand. The report finds that most of these children live in country-side, which is not a surprise because: a) most of the Moldovan population lives in country side; 2) most of the migrants come from villages; and 3) rural families are larger than urban ones. However, the children living in small towns face the highest risk of remaining behind emigrating parents. This finding correlates with the fact the population living in small towns encounters also the highest risk of becoming poor.

We have not discovered any evidence that children left by migrating parent would be in average more disadvantaged compared to others. Moreover, in monetary terms most of these children are better-off than others. This is a conclusion derived from both qualitative and quantitative studies. However, some of the children who are left by both parents seem to be in particularly severe poverty.

The report makes the hypothesis that remittances which alleviate poverty of most of the children are likely to generate more income inequality among the children. While there are indirect and mostly qualitative confirmations of the hypothesis, the issue deserves further research. The education and health outcomes of the children left by migrating parents are not addressed properly in existing literature. Some of the qualitative report asserts that in most of the cases educational outcomes worsen after parents leave. Also, it is not clear if these children are more likely than others to get accustomed with unhealthy patterns of live: smoking, drinking alcohol or taking drugs. Several reports made by school directors and tutors affirm that there is such a trend, but existing statistical data and researches do not confirm nor infirm this affirmation. Also, a report finds that children living without parents are more inclined to commit crimes, but the quality of this report is not clear.

Children left by parent are more disposed to feel emotional and psychological distress. The long-term impact of this distress is not clear nor is the degree of marginalization of these children. Subjective assessments made by population tend to view the children of the migrants as more likely to be marginalized, mistreated or even abused. Report conducted in Moldova find that these children become easier victims of human trafficking.

The report takes on the issue of integration of these children via the labor market. But again, the analysis suffers from lacking statistical data. Other reports have found that many of potential entrants on the labor market would rather prefer to immigrate in wealthier countries in order to get a better paid job.

Introduction

Sending family members to foreign labor markets and living on currency remittances from migrants has become a “normal” pattern of life for many families in Moldova. Over the last years the phenomenon of migration has emerged as the most sensible policy issue and its negative impact is becoming more and more evident. While being one of the most available strategies for escaping or avoiding poverty, migration is responsible also for many negative consequences in the economic and social spheres. One of the issues that was almost completely overlooked and understudied (not only in Moldova but also in many other migrants-dependent countries) is how the children of the migrants are affected by migration and which are the immediate and the long-term implications of leaving the children. Gaps in knowledge of this issue are substantial as it only begins to enter the attention of the policymakers and researchers in many countries, less in Moldova. However, in our country too, the number of researches pointing to this problem has been increasing in the last couple of years, but still the issue is not addressed adequately and completely.

For obvious methodological and data reasons, this study will not be able to address all important aspects of the current situation and prospects of the children remaining behind migrating parents. It only tries to bring together the existing pieces of knowledge on the matter and to shed more light on some key aspects. The study has many specific objectives:

- Estimating the total number of children left behind by one or both parents that have migrated abroad based on available statistical information and sociological studies.
- Estimating the incidence of monetary poverty among these children based on absolute poverty line.
- Evaluating the degree of exclusion of these children from the use of public services such as health, education and social protection (non-monetary dimension of poverty).
- Studying the links between migration and social poverty of the children.
- Analyzing the (if any) social integration of the children of the migrants through domestic labor market;
- Making policy recommendations based on existing evidence regarding the children left behind by migrants.

The study is affected by significant statistical gaps and policy evidence gaps. We have interviewed several officials in areas relevant for the subject of this paper and yet we have not found too much information. We have discussed with the directors of three departments of the National Statistical Bureau, with representatives of the Ministry of Social Protection and Health, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Migration. From these discussions it became clear that Moldovan authorities do not have much information which would shed more light on the issue children left behind by Moldovan migrants. Therefore it is not a surprise that in Moldova there is no evidence-based policy addressing the problem of these children.

1. How many children left behind by migrating parents?

How many migrants?

The total number of Moldovan children left behind by one or both migrating parents is not known exactly. Existing data are uncertain, contradictory, dispersed among different institutions and incomplete. Under such circumstances statistical inferences are necessary and should be treated as approximations. Obviously, some inferences about the number of the migrants' children could be made based on the number of migrants themselves. However, the exact number of migrants is not known either, because most of the Moldovan migrants go and remain abroad on illegal basis or they register only with public bodies of the recipient country after a long period of illegality. The information provided by the Department of Migration does not reflect the true situation as only about 100 of migrants are deployed abroad by the Department annually. Migrants going abroad independently do not register with the Department or with any other national governmental agency.

We have asked the staff of the SPMU¹ to estimate the number of population living in disintegrated families with children aged below 16. According to their estimates based on Households Budget Survey for the year 2004, as many as 19% of the population live in households with children aged below 16 and with at least one household member being absent (see the Table 1). In most cases the missing member is one of the two parents. They may be absent for many reasons but mainly because they are working abroad from where they transfer money to their families. According to SPMU estimates, other 2% of the population lives in non-disintegrated families but which rely on income received from abroad from other relatives. The SPMU estimates are not fully convergent with other sources quoted below. We believe that this is because the SPMU estimates are limited to households with children under 16 and because of the limits posed by the structure of the HBS questionnaire which does not allow for a precise analysis.

Table 1 Population living in households with children aged below 16 and its poverty incidence at absolute poverty line*, 2004

Type of households	Number of households in survey	Poor, % of total	Non-poor, % of total	Total
One member absent	1299	19.1	80.2	100
Two or more members absent	221	20.8	79.2	100
No absent members but household receiving income from abroad	174	14.4	85.6	100
Other households (no absent members, no income from abroad)	6289	33.2	66.8	100
Total	7983	30.1	69.9	100

Notes: * - the absolute poverty line for 2004 was 327 MDL per person per month (USD 26.5);

Source: computed by SPMU based on HBS 2004

Ghencea and Gudumac research rendered that about 29% of the families under their study have had at least one migrant worker, who either returned home for a short period of time or was working abroad in the first three quarters of 2003². The CBX AXA survey

¹ SPMU, the Joint Program of the Government of Republic of Moldova and UNDP/UNICEF "Support to Strategic Policy to Formulation, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Republic of Moldova";

² Ghencea Boris and Gudumac Igor, "Labor Migration and Remittances in the Republic of Moldova", sponsored by AMM and Moldova-Soros Foundation, March 14, 2004;

states that almost 22% of the households have had somebody working abroad at the moment of conducting the study³. Despite this slight divergence, it is no doubt that the number of Moldovan migrants is large compared to demographic and economic size of the country.

Annual outflows of emigrants increased during the whole transition period and accelerated sizably after the 1998 financial crisis in Russia. The existing surveys (conducted by CBS AXA and National Statistical Bureau⁴) confirm the raising trend of migration (CBS, NSB, see the Table 2) even though, obviously, there are some divergences.

Table 2 Evolution of migration, thousands if not otherwise indicated

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Stock of migrants (NSB)	-	-	-	138	149	234	294	367
Annual outflows of those migrating for the first time (CBS)	11.4	17.4	26.4	52.0	33.2	60.2	76.9	71.1*
Stock of migrants (CBS)	46	64	90	142	176	236	313	384**
Stock (CBS), as % of the total right-bank Moldovan population (NSB)	1,3	1,8	2,5	3,9	4,8	6,5	8,7	10,6
Stock (CBS), as % of the economically active population (NSB)	2,8	3,5	5,4	8,6	10,9	14,6	21,2	26,8

Notes: * - the first ten months, ** - due to statistical errors the annual outflows do not add up to the number of 399 thousand inferred from the CBS survey;

Source: CBS, NSB, last two rows computed by the author;

New official preliminary figures on the number of migrants were released in 2005. According to the general census of Moldovan population (not comprising those living in Transnistrian region) conducted by NSB in 2004, the total number of persons which are abroad is 367 thousand (10.8% of the total population)⁵. The number is much higher comparing to what has been found earlier by the Labor Survey of the NSB conducted in 2003. The Labor Survey discovered that in 2003 more than 290 thousand Moldovans were abroad. It should be noted also that the number of migrants from Transnistria is also apparently large, but there are no quantitative estimates of the phenomenon in this Moldovan breakaway region.

The NSB's official figures for 2004 are consistent with the findings of the CBS AXA survey on remittances which found that in September 2004 the number of Moldovan citizens working abroad amounted to 399 thousand⁶. Taking into account a one-year lag they are consistent also with the Ghencea and Gugumac estimate falling in the interval 265-285 thousand⁷. The absolute increase in the number of migrants in the first ten

³ CBS AXA, "Moldova Remittances Study", Client/Coordinator: International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Commission Food Security Program, December 2004;

⁴ Quoted by IPP in "Migrating Policy in the Republic of Moldova", Chisinau, 2004;

⁵ Preliminary Results of the National Census, October 2004, NSB, posted on the website of the statistical office, www.statistica.md;

⁶ CBS AXA, 2004;

⁷ Ghencea and Gudumac, 2004;

months of 2004 according to NSB survey is 73 thousand, similar to 71 thousand found in the CBS AXA report.

However, the CBS' survey discovered also that a large number of 171 thousand Moldovan citizens which were present in the country at the moment of surveying had been abroad in the last 2 years and were back in Moldova only for a short period of time (to visit the family, to renew the visas or to make new documents). This means that the *migrating contingent* is larger, rising to about 571 thousand. There are also other estimates on the number of Moldovan migrants, spanning the interval 800-1600 thousand, but they seem to be implausibly high.

For the time being there are no clear-cut indicators or trends telling that migration will lessen in the future. Instead, there are signs that it may actually increase, and mainly from the rural side. The CBS AXA study computed the number of people who have never been abroad but had the intention to leave. After adding the people ready to go to the migrating contingent the total *migrating potential* raises to almost 690 thousand people. Another indicator suggesting that migration will maintain in the future is the number of those that were back home for a while for various reasons in October 2004, equal to 171 thousand. This number exceeded the number of those citizens who declared to be back forever at the moment of surveying; this number is 48 thousand. Finally, according to current researches, a significant portion of remittances are used for financing the migration of another member of the household or relatives abroad⁸.

In a long-term perspective the emigration may be compounded by the fact that more labor force in rural areas will become redundant as more labor-saving investment will probably be made in agriculture. Indeed, Moldova is rurally overpopulated even compared to most of the countries in our region and the labor productivity in agriculture very low. The current agricultural policy and conditions of conducting agri-business are not stimulating the development of the small-size agricultural units. By the end of 2005 many small-to-medium agricultural units may go bankrupt as result of unfavorable domestic and export environment (Russian interdictions to imports of crop and livestock production from Moldova, Moldovan government prohibiting in 2003-2004 the free export of grains). These bad conditions will likely result in a fall of prices in the domestic market and subsequent fall on disposable revenues in the rural households. From another side, the prices of the inputs in agriculture are steadily increasing, with fertilizers, pesticides and fuel being the main burden on the farming households. All in all, these factors suggest that the emigration from Moldova may register a new tide and the number of children left behind by the migrating parents in the future will probably keep high. The internal migration from rural to urban settlements is the second best option for many Moldovans because in the small towns there are even less economic opportunities and the risk of poverty higher whereas in the two large cities the life is more expensive. The issue of internal migration deserves, however, more attention in the future research.

Existing estimates on the number of the children left behind

All existing studies indicate that the annual number of emigrants has increased steadily (see previous section). Based on this, it is reasonable to think that the number of children left behind increased at par with the number of migrants. Indeed, it should be born in mind that a significant proportion if not the most of the members of the Moldovan migrating contingent have at least one child. The fertility rate has been decreasing in Moldova over the last decade (see Chart 2), but this downward trend is not likely to

⁸ Ghencea and Gudumac, 2004;

have offset the amplifying effect that the sharply rising migration exerted on the number of children left by parents.

There are some quantitative and qualitative estimates on the children remaining behind Moldovan migrants. But in most of the cases the estimates are not convergent, while the methodology of these studies is not always rigorous.

An NGO survey conducted in the schools located in the northern part of Republic of Moldova has found that nearly 50% of the children in village schools had at least one parent working in Europe⁹. However, there are also many migrants working in CIS countries and it is not clear if the authors of the survey included the Western CIS countries in the term "Europe" (Russia is the main destination of Moldovan migrants, while Ukraine accounts for a significant proportion). The quality of the survey is not known. In any case, it should be added that migration from northern part of Moldova is apparently more intense as compared to central and southern regions, despite the fact that their share in total migrants is the smallest¹⁰. Interestingly, the poverty in northern region is smaller both in terms of numbers affected and the risk compared to other regions.

According to a report, in the Ungheni district 2735 children (13.5% of the total number of children living in the Ungheni district) are in "potentially risky situations" as result of migration of one or both parents¹¹.

A World Bank report quotes a study which found that 50% of children in village schools may have one or both parents working abroad, and that in 2002 about 10% of children in rural areas and small towns did not live with their mothers¹². Report attributes the large number of street children and children in institutions in part to the migration of their parents. However, except Chisinau municipality, there are no at least rough estimates on the number of children living on the streets.

An author affirms that in 2001 the children in 13400 Moldovan families were under the care of only one parent or of the grandparents¹³.

Another report provides the rough figure of 20000 Moldovan children left by both migrating parents¹⁴. This figure was obtained from the prosecutor's office but it is not clear where from and how it came into the office.

In a small-scale survey which involved participation of 190 Moldovan young people, 79 (42%) of the respondents indicated to be living in "temporarily disintegrated" families¹⁵.

⁹ Quoted in Shivaun Scanlan, "Report on trafficking from Moldova: Irregular labor markets and restriction migration policies in Western Europe", ILO, May 2002;

¹⁰ Ghencea and Gudumac, 2004;

¹¹ Evaluation of the Project "Developing social services for the children and distressed families in Ungheni district", August 2004.

¹² World Bank, "Recession, Recovery and Poverty in Moldova", report o.28024-MD, Main Report, March 2004, Europe and Central Asia Region, Human Development Sector Unit;

¹³ Presentation "Psychological drama of the children in disintegrated families: possibilities of recovery" made by Tatiana Turchina at the national conference "Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova", September 30, 2004;

¹⁴ IPP, 2004;

¹⁵ Gonta, Victoria, the presentation "Psychological aspects of self-belief and personality of the teenagers educated in temporarily disintegrated families" made at the national conference "Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova", September 30, 2004; the author is working at the Pedagogical State University "Ion Creanga";

In case of 34 youngsters both parents were left, in case of 29 the mothers were left, while in case of 16 – the fathers. This report contradicts, however, other more representative surveys which conclude that children are more likely to live without the migrant father than without mother.

According to the National Report on Early Development of the Children, the number of children aged 0-7 left behind by parents is also very large¹⁶. Out of 1184 families under the study, 89.6% are complete families. However, only in 76.6% of all the families the parents are physically present. The authors of the report consider migration the main cause of absenting parents. In 2.3% of all the families mothers are missing, in 15.9% - the fathers, while in 5.1% - both parents are missing. The report establishes an important correlation: the smaller the children, the less likely are mothers or both parents to be absent due to migration. As for the missing fathers, their distribution is more or less equal across the age of the children. Also, fathers are missing during larger periods of time: in relative majority they are absent more than 12 months, while most of the mothers are absent less than 12 months. These findings are important, but it is not clear how statistically representative is the report. In any case, the total number of children of pre-school age remaining behind the migrating parents appears to be very high.

According to the official information of the Ministry of Education, in December 2003 there were registered 22976 children of school age left by both parents that migrated abroad¹⁷. It is not clear which interval spans the definition “school age”: either 6-14 (incomplete secondary education) or 6-18 (lyceum). In any case, the number has increased and in January 2005 the new registered figure was 27951 children. Children of pre-school age should be monitored by the Ministry of Health. However, we did not find at the Ministry of Health information regarding the number of pre-school children left behind by migrating parents.

The Ministry of Education has also provided the information that as many as 68161 children in Moldova are left by at least one migrating parent. The Ministry’s informational note shows that more than 3700 children eventually abandoned the school in 2004 and went abroad with their parents. However, this may realistically happen only when parents have either migrated legally or have legalized their presence in the host country after coming illegally. But the legal presence abroad in case of Moldovan migrants is rather an exception than a rule so the bulk of the migrants’ children have no prospects for reintegrating with their parents abroad. The Ministry of Education does not possess information either on the number of children of pre-school age leaving Moldova with their parents or on the situation of all the children which are currently abroad (income, whether or not going to school, inclusion/exclusion, integration in the new society etc.). We have not found any relevant and credible information from European governments either.

However, the figures that the Ministry has compiled are not necessarily consistent with the estimates of the local public authorities. For instance, according to the official data gathered by the Ministry of Education, in the Cimislia district in the 2003/2004 academic

¹⁶ National Report of Early Development of the Children, 2003, conducted by Permanent Secretary of National Council for Children Rights Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, with support of the UNICEF Moldova.

¹⁷ Dubrovski, Anatolm report “Psychosocial development of the children in disintegrated families in Republic of Moldova: Official view” presented at the national conference “Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova”, September 30, 2004; the author is vice-minister of education;

year there were 419 children left with no parental care as result of migration¹⁸. But according to the figures presented by a public officer working in the Cimislia district's Department for Education, Youth and Sport, in the reference year as many as 1020 children in the district were left by both parents and 1852 by one parent¹⁹.

The official figures tell that in Cahul district 1230 children have been leaving without both migrating parents. This means that a maximum number of 2460 parents from Cahul have migrated. However, the information from district public authorities is that a total number of 3361 parents that migrated abroad²⁰. The difference may be attributed either to mother or father that migrated while their spouse remained home or to time-lags. In any case, statistical inferences from sociological surveys and majority of existing research conclude that children are more likely to be left by one parent than both.

New estimates

Official estimates of the Ministry of Economy do not comprise the significant proportion of the children of pre-school age. Also, many experts believe that the official figures underestimated the extent of the phenomenon among the children of the school-age. In order to check this, we have made three (very rough) estimates on the number of children left behind by migrating parents based on existing statistical data and on sociological surveys. The methods return different results but they should be interpreted as only indicating the magnitude of the phenomenon and not its exact proportions.

1) UNICEF sponsored a survey conducted in 2005 on "Knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people from Moldova regarding their health and development". The sample surveyed was designed to gather national level indicators representative of all Moldovan youth, with 95% confidence.

The survey reports that mothers of 14.5% of the children aged 10-14 and 8.5% of the teenagers aged 15-18 have migrated (Table 3)²¹. In case of 14.9% and, respectively, 16.4% of the children and teenagers the fathers were left whereas in case of 6.6% of children and, respectively, 3.3% of teenagers, both parents were left.

These figures are very intriguing as they suggest that the official estimates of the Ministry of Education are rated too low. In case of those living without both parents the figures of the Ministry of Economy are less divergent with those derived from the KAP study than in case of the figures of children living with one parent, which are more divergent.

For instance, 6.6% and 3.3% of the young people surveyed by the KAP and aged 10-14 and, respectively, 15-18 answered to be leaving without both parents. According to the official statistical data, the total number of Moldovan children aged 10-14 is roughly

¹⁸ Dubrovski, 2004;

¹⁹ Salaru, Victoria, report "Children with parents, children with no parents..." made at the national conference "Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova", September 30, 2004; the author is working with the Cimislia district Department for Education, Youth and Sport;

²⁰ Bacalu Elena, report "Supporting children from disintegrated families through the Service of Child Rights Protection" made at the national conference "Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova", September 30, 2004; the author is working with the Cahul district Department for Education, Youth and Sport;

²¹ "Health for Youth" Association, the report "Young people health and development: national baseline evaluation of knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people", 2005;

303700²². The number of teenagers aged 15-19 is approximately 365000, which means that the approximate number of those aged 15-18 is $365000 \times 4/5 \sim 292000$. Based on these data it is easy to find that as many as $(6.6\% \times 303700 + 3.3\% \times 292000) \sim 29680$ children aged 10-18 lived without their both parents in 2004! The official figure is 27951 children. However, using the KAP we did not take into account the group of school children aged 6-9 which may increase significantly the estimate. Besides, there is also the group of the preschool children aged 0-5 that were not taken into account either by the Ministry of Education or by the KAP study. Computations above suggest that the Ministry of Education underestimates the number of children left behind by both parents.

Table 3 Share of young people leaving without family members, %

	Mother migrated	Father migrated	Both parents migrated	Husband/wife
Urban	10.1	16.8	4.4	0.4
Rural	12.9	14.8	0.1	4.8
Women, girls	12.2	16.2	4.4	0.2
Men, boys	10.0	15.8	4.9	0.4
Aged 0-9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	X
Aged 10-14	14.5	14.9	6.6	0.3
Aged 15-18	8.5	16.4	3.3	0.1
Aged 19-24	9.7	17.7	2.5	0.4
Total	11.3	16.0	4.6	0.3

Source: "Health for Youth" Association, the report "Young people health and development: national baseline evaluation of knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people", 2005;

Based on the same statistical data and KAP sources it can be computed that the total number of children aged 10-18 living without *migrating mother* is equal to $14.5\% \times 303700 + 8.5\% \times 292000 \sim 68900$. The number of those living without *migrating father* is equal to $14.9\% \times 303700 + 16.4\% \times 292000 \sim 93000$ children. Therefore, roughly 162000 Moldovan children aged 10-18 live without one *migrating parent*. It is to be noticed that our estimates did not include the children aged 0-9 which make for 40-41% of the total number of Moldovan population aged 0-18! So the total group of Moldovan children remaining without parental care is apparently much larger than the official story tells.

2) We have used a method similar to that used by Bryant in order to estimate the number of children left by their parents²³. As shown by CBS' survey, the total number of migrant women contingent in 2004 was 125 thousand (Table 4).

²² National Statistical Bureau, "Informative note on population of Republic of Moldova at January 01, 2004" NSB, available on www.statistica.md;

²³ Bryant, John, "Children of International Migrants in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines: A Review of Evidence and Policies", Innocenti Working Paper, 2005-05;

Table 4 Distribution of men and women migrating contingent by age

	Under 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	Above 51	Total
Men	13397	90184	68612	56809	13085	242087
Women	4745	34775	44948	35900	4743	125111
Total	18142	124959	113560	92709	17828	367198

Source: CBS AXA

We have excluded the women under 20: they are relatively young and most of them probably went abroad after completing their secondary education and did not give birth to children in Moldova, but this is a weak hypothesis. The average age of the mother giving birth in Moldova is around 25-26 so we have excluded also the women above 41 because most of their children are above 14 year age. This means that the number of absent women aged 21-40 with children aged 0-14 left behind is roughly 79700. Based on the fertility rate of 1.2 (as of 2002) the total number of children aged 0-14 left by their mothers is roughly 95700. This represents 13% of total children aged 0-14. Taking into account the gender structure of the migrants of age 21-40 (65% men : 35 % women) the total number of children aged 0-14 left by fathers is 177700 children. Therefore, the total number of Moldovan children aged 0-14 left behind by at least one migrating parent is 273000 children. This figure is very high as it is equal to a proportion of 38% of the total Moldovan children.

Using the method 1 we have computed that number of children aged 10-14 left by migrating mothers is approximately 45000. This means that the number of 0-9 age children left by mother would be 95700 - 45000 ~ 51000, representing 12% of the children of this age. At this age of the children the mother has to take more care of children and she is probably less likely to emigrate than the father. Indirectly this is confirmed by the fact that men of age 21-30 represent 72% of all migrants. This implies that the proportion of 0-9 age children whose fathers are not at home is higher than proportion of those living without mother.

The fertility rate has decreased sizably from 1.76 in 1995 to 1.20 in 2002, which means that the average number of children per migrant women has been decreasing. However, this is not likely to influence much the result above because the total number of emigrating women apparently has increased so quick that it offset the impact of decreasing fertility.

3) The ratio of the number of Moldovan children aged 0-14 to the population aged 21-40 is equal to 65.3%. Our assumption is that the proportion holds in case of the migrating contingent aged 21-40 which is in the number of 238.5 thousand. Then one can compute that as many as 155800 children in Moldova are left at least by one migrating parent.

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Using the three alternative methods for gauging the extent of the phenomenon of leaving the children behind by the migrants has led us to the conclusion that the official data are underestimated. The total number of children aged 0-14 left by one parent spans the interval 150-270 thousand. The total number of children remaining behind both migrating parents is likely to go beyond 40 thousand. We were not able to find out all the causes of underestimating from the part of the central government. One particular explanation might be the fact that households are not disposed to declare to the local public administration and to the school administration the fact of migration of the parents. Migration is associated with receiving from abroad income which is higher than average and which may attract potential thieves and robbers. Hence, among the reasons for avoiding such disclosure may be the fear of personal and family security.

The interviews we had with inhabitants of three Moldovan villages (Sadaclia, Sadova and Dancenii) revealed that the factor of security is the most pertinent among others.

Where do children live?

In the previous section it was shown that official figures on number of children left behind by migrating parents are not likely to reflect the true numbers. However, structurally they may be closer to the reality. Using the official data from the Ministry of Education one can get the rough rural/urban distribution of the children as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5 Distribution of the children left behind by Moldovan migrants across rural/urban criteria, as of February 2005

	Left by both parents	Left by one parent	Children gone with parents
Large cities	10.8	19.8	19.3
Small towns	25.4	22.4	28.3
Villages	63.8	57.8	52.4
Total, %	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Computed by the author based on the information from the Department of Migration

Based on the data from the Table 5 and on the known fact that 22% of the population of the small towns and 17.5% of the rural localities have left²⁴, it can be presumed that the children living in the small towns face the highest individual risk of being left by parents emigrating abroad. And this is despite the fact that the number of migrants' children living in rural areas is much larger. This pattern correlates with the geographical profile of poverty in Moldova: in spite of the fact that most of the poor (most of the children left behind) live in the countryside, the inhabitants (children) of the small towns face the highest risk of becoming poor (being left by migrating parents).

The lists with administratively collected data of the Ministry of Education show that there are some geographical "pockets" where relatively more children reside without one or both parents. The districts Soldanesti, Cimislia and Floresti and the Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia seem to be among the most worrying cases as shares of left children in total number of children and in total population are high. Even some particular schools, gymnasiums and lyceums can be singled out as having very high numbers of children left behind. These institutions are located particularly in towns and some large villages. Further research is necessary with these institutions as potential case-studies for discovering the social, economic and demographical factors determining the migrants to leave children or to take them abroad.

It seems that the more economically depressed is the area the more intense is emigration and the higher the share of children left behind by the parents. For instance, emigration from the Chisinau is very low compared to Moldovan small towns. Existing reports assert that significant percentage difference between Chisinau and other regional towns is determined particularly by a feeble market for labor force supply and by very low levels of salary payments which are not enough to cover the consumption needs in the small towns²⁵. The Table 5 shows that relatively large number of children leaving in cities Chisinau and Balti is taken eventually abroad by the parents. This may be determined by the structure and educational background of families residing in cities: here families are smaller than in villages and small towns and there are fewer close

²⁴ Ghencea and Gudumac, 2004.

²⁵ Idem;

relatives to whom staying with children could be entrusted. Another factor may be the fact that residents of large cities have more information and access to options of finding a legally paid job abroad and they can take the children. Larger income received by those employed in the cities may make it simpler taking children abroad. However, these factors are only explorative ideas which should be further studied.

2. Poverty of the children left behind by Moldovan migrants

Income of the children of migrants

The quantitative reports on poverty in Moldova do not shed enough light on the situation of the children left behind by their migrating parents.

Generally speaking, children in Moldova form an age group facing higher risk of being poor comparing to other age groups. According to existing researches, they account for 20% of the extremely poor as compared to 18.6% of their share in the population²⁶. The presence of children in a household substantially increases the risk of falling in poverty, with those having pre-school children facing the highest risk. This leads us to the conclusion that members of these households are particularly prone to choose migration of one or many of its members as a viable strategy for escaping poverty. As shown in this report (section 1), fathers are the most probably to migrate from the families with pre-school children, whereas mothers or both parents are less likely to migrate.

Particularly acute is the problem of *infant poverty* with a third of the children under 5 living in extreme poverty. Also, existing literature demonstrates that children face bigger risk of long-term poverty: while households with children account for one-third of temporarily poor, their share in the group of persistently poor during a four-year period is 55%²⁷.

Turning to the situation of the children with parents abroad, some studies found that families with migrants are less likely to be poor. In a significant proportion of the households with migrants, remittances count for a large, sometimes for the largest, share of their budgets. This conclusion is shared by many reports. Since 2000 the number of households receiving remittances from abroad, as both the labor-related migration and amount of transfers has risen “systematically”²⁸. The CBS report finds that the actual income of a family with no migrants is appreciated by the surveyed respondents as being lower compared to families with migrants. An IMF study building on the aforementioned CBS survey affirms that remittances have become the most effective and extensive social safety net, reaching an amount 2.5 times larger than the sum spent by the general government in Moldova for social assistance and pensions²⁹. According to this study, remittances constitute at least 65% of the total income of the family in 41% of the families with migrants.

The estimates made by the SPMU confirm this pattern (see Table 1). As shown in the Table 1 in Moldova there are a large number of households with one or more members “absent”, which actually most of time means that they are working abroad. As shown by the SPMU, these households are less likely to be poor as compared with the households with no members abroad and with no income received from abroad. The average poverty incidence of the population living in households with children under 16 is 30.1%. However, if the households have one member absent (working abroad) the incidence of poverty diminishes to 19%, whereas if they have two or more members absent, then the poverty gets to 21%. More detailed information on the poverty of households with members abroad is provided in Table 6.

²⁶ PPMU 2002;

²⁷ idem;

²⁸ idem;

²⁹ “Migration and Remittances – a Micro Perspective”, by Edgardo Rugiero, in IMF “Republic of Moldova – selected issues”, February 2005;

Table 6 Poverty in households with children aged below 16,%

Type of households	Sub-type of households	Poor	Non-poor	Total	Households in survey, absolute number
One member absent	Couple with children under 16	19.1	80.9	100.0	136
	Lone parent with children under 16	21.3	78.7	100.0	47
	Other households with children under 16	19.0	81.0	100.0	1116
Two or more members absent	Couple with children under 16	31.9	68.1	100.0	47
	Lone parent with children under 16	13.8	86.2	100.0	58
	Other households with children under 16	19.8	80.2	100.0	116
No absent members but household receiving income from abroad	Couple with children under 16	9.6	90.4	100.0	52
	Lone parent with children under 16	.	100.0	100.0	27
	Other households with children under 16	21.1	78.9	100.0	95
Other households (no absent members, no income from abroad)	Couple with children under 16	25.0	75.0	100.0	2843
	Lone parent with children under 16	27.5	72.5	100.0	400
	Other households with children under 16	41.6	58.4	100.0	3046

Source: computed by SPMU based on HBS 2004

Table 6 suggests that being a child with one or both parents abroad does not necessarily mean to be a worse-off child in comparison with the peers. Instead, frequently the monetary income per child in households with migrants is much higher than in households with no migrants. Indeed, in the Table 6 the poorest households are the “other households with children under 16” which do not have members abroad nor do receive money from abroad. Other reports also suggest that “students lucky enough to afford the costs of university are often supported by parents, one or both of whom are working abroad. Better-off children in rural areas are again identified as from families where one or both parents are abroad”³⁰. In many cases remittances are the family’s only support and the only means by which children remain in schools.

As shown in the Table 7 both per capita income and expenditures are higher than in case of households with no members abroad and no income received from abroad. However, what is very intriguing is the fact that households with no members abroad but receiving income from abroad (from distant relatives) are in considerably better-off than those with absent members.

Table 7 Income and expenditures in households with children under 16 years age, MDL

Type of households	Sub-type of household	Monthly consumption expenditures per household member	Monthly disposable income per household member	Monthly income received from abroad per household member
One member absent	Couple with children under 16	471.73	446.11	76.58
	Lone parent with children under 16	380.07	270.55	142.35
	Other households with children under 16	469.57	463.00	203.68
Total		440.46	393.22	140.87
Two or more	Couple with children under	355.45	386.28	44.96

³⁰ „Scanlan, 2002;

members absent	16			
	Lone parent with children under 16	413.56	314.48	164.10
	Other households with children under 16	415.75	399.38	155.58
Total		394.92	366.71	121.55
No absent members but household receiving income from abroad	Couple with children under 16	761.94	907.13	481.03
	Lone parent with children under 16	480.96	559.92	439.57
	Other households with children under 16	430.22	578.13	332.92
Total		557.71	681.72	417.84
Other households (no absent members, no income from abroad)	Couple with children under 16	398.28	387.96	-
	Lone parent with children under 16	457.95	391.58	-
	Other households with children under 16	339.29	336.51	-
Total		398.51	372.02	-

Source: computed by SPMU based on HBS 2004

Many qualitative assessments done by school teachers, directors and public clerks also say that the material wellbeing of the children with parents working abroad is better than in case of their peers with parents staying home. According to their words, “money is not what they lack the most”.

However, it seems that in particular cases of children left by both parents, the former may face very difficult situations of prolonged poverty. Table 6 shows that poverty of the couples with children below 16 and with two absent members are the second poverty-prone group after “other households with children below 16” and with no absent members. Moreover, Table 7 shows that the average income and consumptions expenditures per member of the households with two and more absent members are even lower than in the households with no absent members and no income from abroad.

Interviews that the author made with rural inhabitants showed that particularly acute poverty face children left with very old grandparents or with non-relatives. Frequently to be an emigrant worker results not in higher remitted income but in dramatic conditions of subsisting abroad. In many cases the young mothers emigrating in order to find a decent job end up in sexual industries. Other reports show that illegal emigration abroad is frequently associated with trafficking of human beings³¹.

No surprise, the CBS report shows that one-third of total families with migrants still do not have enough money for meeting basic needs. This raises questions on the anti-poverty efficiency of the migration strategy. As suggested by the PPMU researches, children leaving in non-parent households (with substitute guardians, such as grandparents) are especially endangered by a repeated poverty incidence³². Their fraction is dramatically growing amongst the long-term poor, accounting for 20% of those who have stayed in poverty for at least four consecutive years. Issue of poverty in families with migrants has to be further addressed in researches.

³¹ Scanlan, 2002;

³² PPMU, 2002;

Inequality of the income and expenditures among the children left behind

Inequality is a worrying characteristic of the transition in Moldova. It is not clear how migration influenced the inequality. According to the statistical data, the Gini coefficient of the *monetary income* has decreased from 0.70 in 1999 to 0.53 in 2004, whereas the Gini of the *total disposable income* oscillated between 0.39 and 0.43, with 0.40 in 2004. The quintile ratio has decreased from 10.9 in 1999 to 7.9 in 2003 and then it increased again to 8.5 in 2004. Migration may have contributed to reducing the general inequality.

However, emigration is blamed for generating higher inequality *among the poor* and the most vulnerable strata. This increases income inequality among the children too. Indeed, not all parents can afford the expensive procedure of migrating abroad (visa, travel cost, living costs before finding a job) and not all can leave to the Western labor markets with higher average wage.

Existing literature shows that migrants coming from larger families and with educational background of lower level are more likely to go to Russian and other CIS labor markets³³. Larger households with lower educational background tend to poorer than other households even in the absence of migration. Moreover, emigrants to these countries tend to remit income back home less frequently and in smaller amounts³⁴. All in all, the income per children in families with migrants to eastern countries is lower than in families with migrants to western countries and the discrepancies may be increasing.

As shown in Table 8 the wage differential among the main countries hosting Moldovan emigrants is large and may be viewed as factor generating inequality among the remittances-recipients.

Table 8 Correlation destination country / average salary paid / share of migrants

Country	Share of total migrants, %, 2004	Average monthly salary paid per migrant, USD	Share of long term migrants (> 1 year), %
Russia	58.2	371.7	17.2
Ukraine	2.2	245.3	13.2
Romania	1.9	430.0	10.1
Italy	18.9	934.0	59.0
Portugal	5.0	897.9	68.6
Spain	1.5	890.6	52.9
Greece	2.7	766.3	67.3

Source: CBS

Also, the existing research let us conclude that the children left by migrants in villages probably have disproportionately smaller income as compared with those living in urban area. This hypothesis comes out from the fact that most of the worker in Russia come from rural area³⁵, whereas those working in Italy and other western countries where they enjoy higher salaries are coming from urban area³⁶.

In the future, due to large wage differential between the remote countries and proximate countries, the share of those migrating to geographically remote countries will likely increase. If this trend occurs, than it will tend to alleviate income inequality. But on

³³ Ghencea and Gudumac, 2004;

³⁴ CBS AXA;

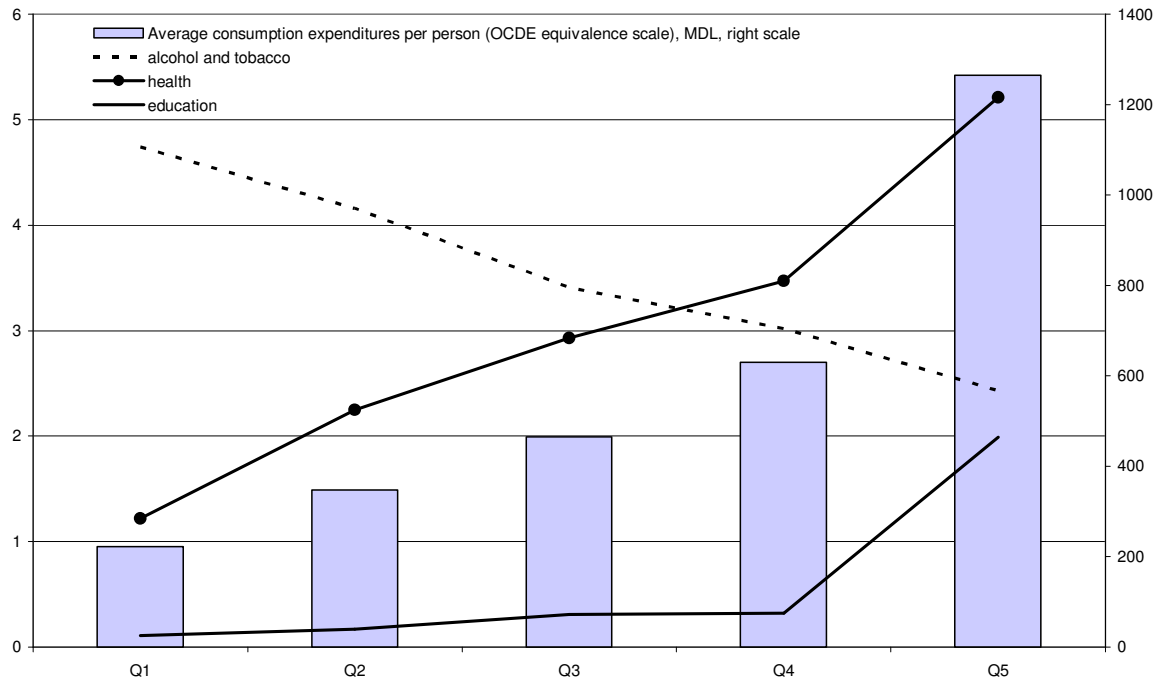
³⁵ Ghencea and Gudumac, 2004;

³⁶ CBS AXA;

remote labor markets the share of long-term migrants (> 1 year) is very high. This means that inequality among the migrants may decrease only at the cost of more Moldovan children being left for longer periods of time. These negative prospects are compounded by the fact that Moldova remains an economically depressed area in comparison to the other countries in the region and will remain so in the close future and no reversal of migration is expected for the time being.

More research and data on children's living standards and income need to be gathered in order to better understand the implications of migration. There are reported cases when despite large remitted income received from parents they children do not enjoy anything. This may occur when the adults (one parent, grandparent, older sibling) who remained home are alcoholic, do not care after the children, has to repay family's debts.

Chart 1 Proportion of some items of consumption in households budgets across quintiles



Paradoxically as it may seem, but as Chart 1 indicates, the poorer the Moldovan households the higher is the share of the household budget allocated to purchasing of alcohol and tobacco and the smaller the share for purchasing of education and health services. The future research should look at intra-household allocation of resources, with focus on gender, age and geographic area.

3. Access to education and health services

Pre-school

Number of the preschool childcare institutions diminished from 356 in 1996 to 12 in 2003, reflecting both supply-side problems and shrinking demand. While the number of children in preschool institutions shrunk by 27% in the same period, the share of children educated in private preschool institutions fell from 16% to 0.7%. There is no statistical data or qualitative research indicating directly that access of the children left behind by migrants is different comparing to other children.

A report asserts that family income has little effect at preschool level, but it reflects the situation for 1999³⁷. Nowadays the share and volume of informal payments for kindergarten services is reportedly unaffordable for many poor households. While families with migrants are generally better-off in monetary terms than others, it is not clear how the absence of one or both parents influence the decision of the remaining family members to send the pre-school children to kindergarten. Further research is necessary, especially in respect to attendance of the kindergarten by the children living without both parents. The latter are especially prone to face the situation of not being to pay informal costs associated with children visiting the kindergarten.

Primary

There are many qualitative evaluations of the educational outcomes of the children left by migrating parents. The qualitative reports are conducted mainly based on teachers' subjective evaluations and on children self-evaluations. No thorough quantitative research on the educational outcomes of the children left behind by migrating parents has been conducted ever, despite the fact that it is relatively easy to be done. All the information exists it should only be centralized and analyzed properly.

Current researches do not respond unequivocally to the question whether the children educational outcomes change as result of living without parents. The conclusions are different, sometimes contradictory. An author used a small-scale survey for evaluating the dynamics of children educational outcomes but the quality of the survey is not known³⁸. Most of the interviewed children of migrants (56%) perceived that their outcomes did not change, 23 perceived an improvement while 13% had the perception of worsening results. A similar distribution of the answers provides Beznitski³⁹. In Carpineni village the share of those children that registered worse educational outcome after being left behind by parents is 47.2%.

However, according to the Goras-Postica report, the class tutors deem the answers as "very subjective". In Soroca district 56% of the interviewed class tutors are affirming that children outcomes worsened, while 42% - remained the same.

³⁷ Tibi and others.

³⁸ Goras-Postica, Viorica, "Psychosocial development of the children in disintegrated families in Republic of Moldova: researches and conclusions", presented at national conference "Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova", September 30, 2004;

³⁹ Beznitski Lidia, "Illusion of security in an insecure world", presented at national conference "Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova", September 30, 2004;

Another report asserts that some children start to learn worse because they either expect to continue their education on contractual basis or want to go abroad⁴⁰. Others start learning better in order not to disappoint their parents who are working hard for their children.

The difficult economic conditions make the children in poverty to abandon the school in order to get involved in different income-generating activities (in agriculture, street vendors, even in constructions) to support the family and improve their living conditions. According to the UN Common Country Assessment at least 11% of Moldovan children of school age are not enrolled due to low income of their families.⁴¹

We do not know exactly how many of these children have been left by migrating parents. However, according to the official information, the number of children abandoning the school as result of migration of their parents is relatively low. In February 2005 only 49 children were registered as having abandoned the school because of migration of parents. The number is apparently underestimated. For instance, in Chisinau municipality only 1 child abandoned the school. Meanwhile, in ATU Gagauzia the reported number is the highest, 14. Interestingly, in the academic year 2003/2004 more than 100 children abandoned the school. Further and methodologically more rigorous research is necessary in order to compare the results of the children left behind by parents with other children and to find out if the rate of abandonment and absenteeism are higher if parents are abroad.

University

In Moldova high education is an important factor enabling easier escaping the threat of poverty. Indeed, the PPMU studies on poverty show the Moldovans having high education are 3.3 times less likely to be poor than persons holding secondary and vocational education, and 4.3 less likely than those with primary education⁴². Additional research is necessary, however to study the age distribution of the non-poor with high education in order to find out the share of the “new graduates” (that may have used acquired contemporary skills and new visions that they got in universities in order to escape/avoid poverty) or the “old graduates” (that may have inherited advantages and personal relationships from previous positions).

Table 9 Number of students at various levels of education, per 10000 inhabitants

	1996/ 97	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 2000	2000/ 01	2001/ 02	2002/ 03	2003/ 04
Primary schools	1813	1796	1790	1770	1737	1710	1670	1607
Vocational education	94	89	89	63	63	63	63	63
Colleges	93	90	81	70	55	47	42	52
Universities	162	180	199	212	217	238	262	288
Share of students paying for studies in,								
private universities, %		95	98	90	100	100	97	95
state universities, %		27	34	42	48	57	66	72
Share of students studying in private universities, %	9,2	14,4	17,6	20,5	23,4	24,7	22,8	19,8

Source: DSS

⁴⁰ Kuznetsov Larisa, “Ethics of behavior and children-parents relationship in disintegrated families”, presented at national conference “Psychological Development of the Children in Disintegrated Families in the Republic of Moldova”, September 30, 2004;

⁴¹ UN in Moldova, Common Country Assessment, 2000

⁴² PPMU, Poverty in Moldova 2002;

Anyway, high education in Moldova is perceived as a valuable asset which parents and their children look for. As statistical data show, the number of students in universities has increased tremendously, while the primary, secondary and vocational education is becoming more and more depressed.

The increasing number of students in universities is linked by most of the authors to the increased migration and remittances from the migrating parents. The share of students paying for their studies from their own private resources has increased both in private and state universities. Also, the share of students in private universities increased from 9.2 in 1996/97 academic year to almost 25% in 2001/02. Since 2002 the proportion of those studying in private universities has been decreasing. Many observers in mass media explain this trend by increasing interest of the government and public educational institutions to take under their “control” the huge flow of money paid annually for education. Partly this seems to be true. The recent policy has been indeed of reducing the number of private universities which were working with no authorization. Many of these private universities lacked any basic infrastructure and personnel necessary for providing students with high quality education.

Attitudes and practices on healthy life

In Moldova there is more qualitative information about the attitudes of children from families with migrated parents on healthy life and reproductive health. One author asserts that children left with no parental care suffer negative psychological and physical distress. She concludes that this is responsible for the high share of early alcoholism among young people. According to official statements too, the children left behind start smoking, drinking alcohol and taking drugs.

However, the limited quantitative information does not support all these affirmations. According to the existing research, as may as 15% of the children aged 13 do smoke but there is no confirmation of the fact that children with migrating parents do smoke more frequently or start sooner. There is indirect information from sociological surveys that children which parents are abroad start sexual life earlier⁴³. The report has shown that parents are the most frequent source from which young people get information on healthy life-style and healthy reproduction. Missing parents would probably imply inadequate information on this matter and as result inadequate life-style patterns, but still there are no quantitative confirmations of this hypothesis.

Table 10 Correlation age of starting drinking / are there migrants from family

		Before 10 years	10-14 years	15-18 years	> 19 years	Do not remember	Total
Is someone from your family gone to work abroad?	Yes	3.8	26.4	38.8	4.3	24.8	100
	No	5.7	28.5	36.7	4.9	24.1	100
Total		5.2	28.0	37.3	4.8	24.8	100

Source: Association “Health for Youth”

There is also no proof to the fact that emigrants’ children would drink more alcohol or would drink more frequently than those living in integrated families. Moreover, the national baseline study on KAP shows that children from families with migrants are likely to start drinking latter than others (see Table 10).

⁴³ Association “Health for Youth”, 2004

4. Migration and social poverty of children

Family disintegration

Migration has affected seriously the Moldovan family as basic social institution. This has led to considerable disruption in personal lives and family relationships, as more and more Moldovan children, especially in rural areas and small towns live without their mothers. According to World Bank, in 2002 more than 10% of children residing in small towns and rural areas were living only with their mothers, whereas in 1997 this indicator was equal to 3.4%, and respectively, 4.1%. However, as shown in section 1, this numbers are much larger.

It is a well known fact that most of the migration is illegal and many young women have become victims of trafficking⁴⁴. This has exerted a dramatic impact on the relationship among spouses and among parents and children. As the migrants themselves believe, migration weakens social-moral family ties, family may break-off and negative behavior of the adult members emerges (see Table 11).

Table 11 Negative effects generated upon migration of one or another family head member

Negative effects	Men migrants, %	Women migrants, %	Total, %
Weakened socio - moral family ties	25,8	40,8	33,1
Family break-off	7,9	20,0	13,8
Children's poor school/university results	10,8	24,2	17,3
Children's negative behavior	9,0	16,2	12,5
Family's adults' negative behavior	7,5	16,2	11,8
Migrant's health deterioration	20,1	23,0	21,5
Exposed to robber's attacks, theft, other crimes	2,5	2,6	2,6

Source: Ghencea and Gudumac

Qualitative studies have found that the prolonged separation of the spouses involved in labor migration has altered the relations of authority in families, leading to considerable tension, abuses, violence and divorce.⁴⁵ The general rate of divorce (per 100 marriages) has increased constantly from 37.9 in 1999 to 51 in 2001 and to 58.8 in 2003⁴⁶. This trend correlates very closely with the intensity of emigration over the same period of time. It is no surprise that the fertility rate has been decreasing steadily over the last decade (Chart 2).

In part this is explained by "modernization" of the society associated with general transition of Moldovan society, but in part migration is responsible for this outcome. Most of the experts believe that causal link goes from migration to divorce and only rarely in opposite direction. Interestingly, the share of divorce among the long-lasting couples (more than 10 years) has increased in the total number of divorces in the period 1995-2003, whereas the share of relatively young families did not change or even decreased⁴⁷. All existing reports affirm that in case that family disintegrates children are

⁴⁴ World Bank, 2004

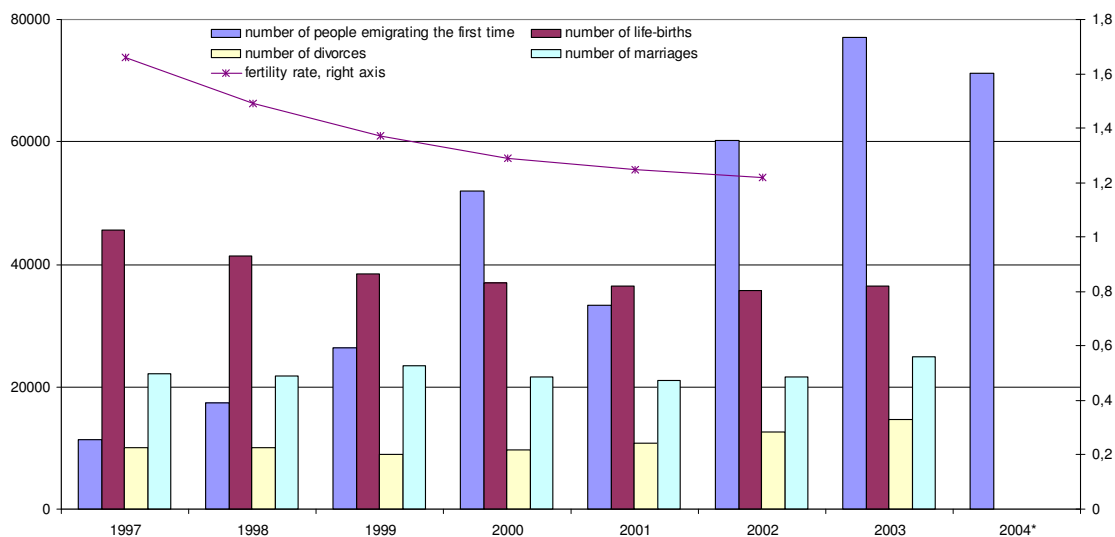
⁴⁵ De Soto, Hermine and Dudwick Nora, "Poverty in Moldova: the social dimensions of transition", in "Moldova: poverty assessment technical papers", report 19846-MD, World Bank, October 1999.

⁴⁶ Innocenti, Social Monitor 2004 and NSB 2004 Statistical Yearbook;

⁴⁷ Statistical Yearbook 2004, National Statistical Bureau, 2005;

those suffering the most and their socialization and emotional is more difficult when there is a lack of role models⁴⁸.

Chart 2 Correlation of the number of emigrants and demographic indicators



Source: NBS, CBS; Note: * - in 2004 only the first 10 months;

The number of the children without parental care is on rise, even though probably not entirely due to migration. The rate of children living without parental care rose from 0.93 per 1000 in 1994 to 1.77 in 2002⁴⁹. The number of “orphans” in institutional care increased from 1.45 per 1000 children in 1992 to 2.46 in 2002. It should be born in mind that a significant (not-known-exactly) proportion of the children are “social orphans” i.e. their parents are alive.

Moral qualities in Moldovan society also weakened. This is denoted, among others, by the share of non-marital births that has been increasing rapidly over the transition period (Chart 3). Which is more worrying is the pace of growth of the non-marital births to mothers aged below 20. More research is necessary in order to establish the links of this phenomenon with migration. What is important to say is that frequently the young mothers giving birth to a non-marital child are likely to migrate abroad in order to provide children with subsistence means. In some cases children are reportedly taken abroad. Most frequently they are left with close relatives (grandparents) or in institutions.

Also, the prolonged absence of the men reportedly turns into abandonment of the families in Moldova when they establish new families abroad⁵⁰. However, there are no data on how many families have been abandoned by their heads working for long periods of time abroad. According to some qualitative reports, 16% of the interviewed children did not see their migrant parents for more than 4 years.

In case that both parents migrate the negative impact on the children emotions is probably more profound. This may be mitigated by the fact that only 5% of the children left behind are left beyond the “extended family”, i.e. with neighbors, friends and other non-relatives. 62% are left with one parent and around 20% with grandparents. The impact on family cohesion is not clear, but no doubts, the child has to be loved and

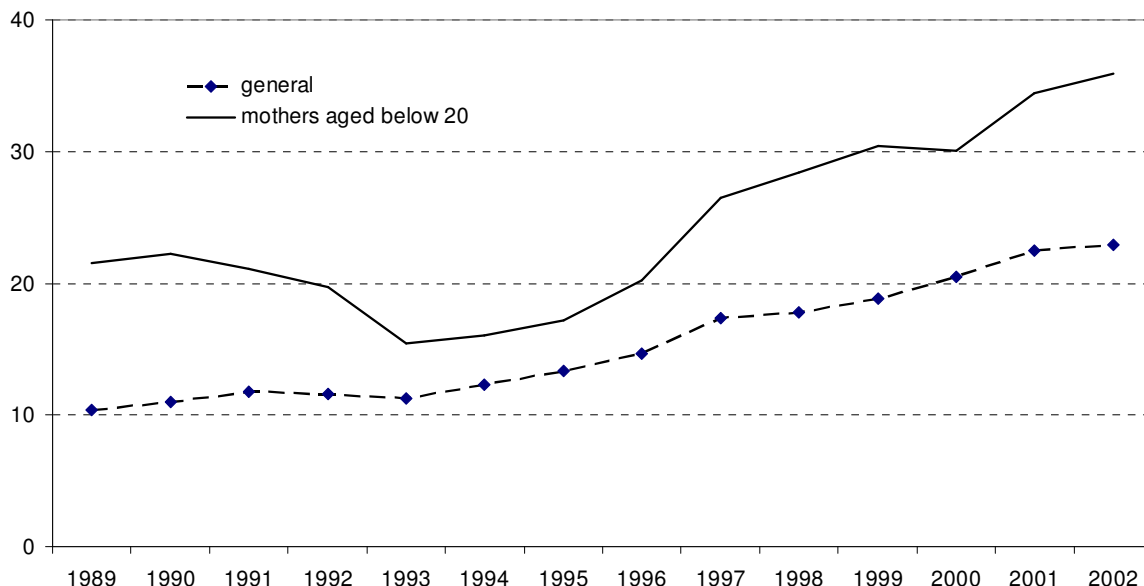
⁴⁸ Weeks et all;

⁴⁹ Idem;

⁵⁰ De Soto and Dudwick, 1999;

cared by both parents in order to grow up into an emotionally normal and socialized adult.

Chart 3 Rate of non-marital births, as % of total



Source: *Innocenti, Social Monitor 2004*

It is difficult to assess rigorously what economic implications the family disintegration may have. This problem has to be researched in depth not only in Moldova, but on a larger international scale. One can suppose that disintegration of the family in long run leads to reduction of consumption and it also reduces the manpower available as workforce, which is already in short supply in Moldova. In short run, the disintegration of the family may worsen the situation of the family members remaining in Moldova, because the remitted income would probably shrink or even stop. In case that one of the spouses stayed home with the children before the divorce, he/she will face more difficulties in raising the children. His/her migration prospects may be very poor if no close relatives or friends are available to take care after the children.

Also, the formal divorce or the informal disintegration of the family ties may render the spouse remaining in Moldova prone to alcohol or drug consumption or to other forms of negative behavior. According to statistics, in 2002 there were more than 61 thousand alcoholics in Moldova. The incidence of alcoholism and associate psychoses has risen from 100 cases per 100 thousand inhabitants in 1997 to 120.3 cases in 1997 and apparently it still increasing. The registered drug addicts increased from 71 cases in 1989 to 1228 cases in 2002.

Behavioral aspects

According to official statements children left behind by migrating parents commit violent crimes and offences⁵¹. Weakening and disintegration of the family as basic social institution responsible for the early institutionalization of the children has led to a growth in juvenile violence and crime. Other expert affirms that predisposition of teenagers left behind to commit suicide is higher. Indeed, one cannot overlook the alarming trend of the increasing rate of registered juvenile crime (Table 12).

⁵¹ Dubrovski, 2004

Left without adult supervision and without any means of existence the children leave the schools. A part of these children raise the number of street children, which often are involved in committing serious crimes. Growth of criminality among minors represents another alarming phenomenon: about 55%-60% of minors who committed crimes were left under the care of grandparents or distant relatives⁵². It is not clear how this figure was obtained and more research is definitely necessary in order to make the issue clearer.

Table 12 Indicators of behavioral deviations among the young people in Moldova

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Suicide rate for population aged 15-19 (per 100,000 relevant population)	11.3	10.1	7.4	5.7	9.0	3.6	6.7	5.1	6.1	4.1
Registered juvenile crime rate (juvenile)	671	746	702	651	807	822	928	1007	912	1014

Source: Innocenti Social Monitor 2004.

As for the juvenile suicide rate, it registered an opposite evolution. The average suicide rate in the period when migration accelerated (1998-2002) is lower than in average five years before. However, the share of young people left behind by migrating parents in those having committed suicides is not known.

Social exclusion

The report conducted by the PPMU on the situation of poverty in 2002 mentions a pilot qualitative study conducted based on the people opinion which found the children abandoned by the parents who have gone abroad in search for a job as a group which is particularly exposed to the risk of *social exclusion*⁵³. And so are the wives of the migrant men.

There is no detailed statistical information about the exclusion or self-exclusion of these children. According to the Ministry of Education, in the academic year 2003/2004 as many as 104 children in Moldova left behind by parents abandoned the school. In 2004/2005 this number went down to 49 children. Why did they abandon, who were the sources of exclusion and do they do presently is not known.

According to the research conducted by Gonța, 46.8% of teenagers left behind by the migrating parents have an unfavorable self-perception⁵⁴. One-third of them have a deficient self-perception and only one-fifth of the young people have a favorable self-perception. The author asserts that this distribution impedes the social integration of the young people. However, there is no comparative research on self-perceptions of the children and teenagers living in complete families and those living in disintegrated families.

Emotional distress

Generally, the children left behind are likely to feel more frequently emotional distress than others⁵⁵. This is suggested by the fact that majority of women are permanent

⁵² National Report on the phenomenon of trafficking in children for sexual exploitation and labour in Moldova;

⁵³ Poverty in Moldova 2002, report conducted by the Poverty and Policy Monitoring Unit, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Moldova, 2003.

⁵⁴ Gonta, 2004;

⁵⁵ Innocenti Social Monitor 2004

migrants staying abroad for more than 1 year. The studies conducted in small groups of school children point to the fact that more than 80% of them are “much” or “very much” affected by missing parents. 85% of the interviewed children face moral or sentimental problems, and only 15% material problems. The most affected are the children having no information from their parents or those communicating rarely.

Class tutors affirm that children left behind by migrating parents suffer a lot and they generate specific educational problems. According to one report, 1/3 of these children are confronted with psychological and behavioral deviations. There are no quantitative data confirming this thesis.

In particular cases the psychological problems apparently are mitigated by the fact that children are left in the “extended family” not alone or with strange people. Actually, the existent evidence shows that most frequently the children remain with one parent, with their grandparents or with their older siblings. While in the first case the emotional distress is not particularly acute, in case when children remain with grandparents or with older siblings (which are children too!) the situation may be distressful.

Meetings with village inhabitants have shown that children left by both parents may become victims of physical or sexual aggression.

Many women have left. Often 60% of women of working age left Moldovan villages which may result in a serious distress of their children.

Over 50% of traffic victims had children and over 50% had been married, divorced or separated. On divorce or separation overwhelmingly women receive no financial assistance for children from the father and remain solely responsible for both the children and elderly family.

Personal security risks

Human traffic has become one of the most difficult problems that Moldova faces in the area of human and state security. The difficult economic conditions faced by many children make them more vulnerable to be abducted by traffickers. Many children from poor families perceive the migration, even on illegal basis, as a unique solution to improve the life. Between 12% and 39% of the children interviewed by many researchers indicated migration abroad as their main intention after finishing the education. No surprise, many of children in poverty and left by both parents accept traffickers' proposals.

According to the “National Report on the phenomenon of trafficking in children for sexual exploitation and labor in Moldova”, the child in the risk group usually comes from either a socially vulnerable, dysfunctional or one-parent family or from families where child is abused and often is in the custody of relatives, acquaintances, neighbors (parents being abroad) or from specialized institutions. These children have incomplete secondary education; some are even illiterate, who may have dropped out of school in exchange for begging or working to support their families.

When children of migrants remain at home under the care of relatives or neighbors, they run the risk of leaving the school early, moving away from home, and ending up as street children. Children become subjects of human trafficking. According to the data from the Ministry of Interior, Moldova became a major source in supplying underage girls to Russia for sexual exploitation, with an estimated 5,000 trafficked there annually. Children from care institutions, forced to leave at sixteen with few job skills or support

network, were in a particularly risky situation, and there were allegations implicating an orphanage director in selling girls to traffickers⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ Weeks et al, "Economic Policy for Growth, Employment and Poverty Reduction: Moldova in Transition", unpublished, 2005;

5. Labor market and labor attitudes

It is not quite clear to what extent and how do the children of the Moldovan migrants enter the domestic labor market and in which way do they differ from other new-entrants. It should be noted that unemployment/employment among all youth in Moldova is by and large an unknown phenomenon, let alone the relation to the labor market of the dependents of the migrants. Some presuppositions can be made based on a number of qualitative researches and on mass media publications. The general story that can be perceived from the mass media and from a number of reports is the following: the numerous examples of people working abroad and sending money home create among children and youth the culture of dependency or the culture of getting wealthy by working abroad and not in Moldova⁵⁷. Thus, a part of the children and youth may not see any particular reasons for continuing their studies at national universities or vocational schools as long as their parents earn good money by providing unskilled work abroad.

Based on parent's experience and financial assistance his/her offspring can easier access the country hosting the parent. We do not know too much about the social networks and channels of assistance arising in these relations. However, in case of foreign labor market the children of the migrants seem to benefit of a larger access than others. According to anecdotic evidence most of the time they replicate the pattern of employment of their parents. For instance, those working in Russia are coming mostly from numerous rural families and had before leaving an income equal to two thirds of the average per Moldovan household⁵⁸. These conditions usually associate with lower education and lower skills. Also, the children and young men migrating to Russia together with or after their fathers and mothers are likely to be employed in constructions or petty trade too because the entry to other segments of the Russian labor market is very difficult and is controlled by the representatives of other nations. In case of children of the migrants heading towards Western labor markets much depends on the legal/illegal situation of the parents residing abroad and on children own skills. In these countries Moldovan diasporas are emerging and this may simplify in many respects coming and finding a job for a descendant of a current migrant.

Many authors have found that the number of Moldovan children wishing to go abroad after completing their education is large. The estimates that we found in available qualitative researches span the interval of 12-37% of all the interviewed children. However, these researches did not take into account the predispositions of the students enrolled in vocational and high education. It should be born in mind that while studying at vocational school or university, the strategic options of the migrants' children may change a lot comparing to their previous plans. Taking into account the reluctance of the domestic employers to employ fresh graduates and the difficulty that youth face when starting own businesses, it should be expected that many graduates would eventually choose to emigrate abroad. Actually, according to mass media reports they do so and this option may have little to do with the educational outcomes of the graduate.

Their emigration will considerably aggravate the situation on Moldovan labor market. There are already clear symptoms that the domestic labor market comes under serious strains as dependency ratio is on a growing path, while the labor force replacement

⁵⁷ National Report on children trafficking;

⁵⁸ Gudumac and Ghencea, 2004;

rate⁵⁹ has been decreasing markedly (Table 13). The unemployment among youth has been increasing since 2002 and this may trigger new waves of young migrants.

Table 13 Indicators of the Moldovan labor market

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Economic dependency ratio	1408	1428	1413	1671	1745
Labor force replacement rate	107.5	101.2	95.2	89.3	-
Unemployment rate, %, youth aged 15-19			15.3	22.0	25.2
Unemployment rate, %, youth aged 20-24			15.1	16.1	17.1

Source: NBS

Emigration of the children of emigrants will generate additional fiscal and monetary implications in medium and long-term. First of all, emigration of these children to their parents will probably come along with a reduction of the amount of income remitted in Moldova by migrants. This scenario is not negligible because as many as 14.5% of the migrants answering the question regarding their future residence said that they will settle abroad with or without family⁶⁰. This share may get additional inputs from those more than 22% who are yet undecided.

Secondly, emigration will further compound the difficult situation of the pension system and will diminish its financial sustainability. With increasing economic dependency ratio, the fiscal pressure on individual workers remaining in Moldova will increase and will consolidate the incentive of questing for a job abroad, in fiscally more liberal countries.

Thirdly, the quality of the domestic human resource will get worse as new tides of emigration will start. This will worsen further prospects of Moldovan economy in competing for foreign direct investment which seeks not only cheap but also educated and ready-available workforce.

Probability that many of current university students will go eventually abroad is confirmed by the structure of the educational services supply. The current number of students graduating universities and colleges with “prestigious” but by now less solicited professions and specializations is very high. For instance, in 2003 the proportion of students graduating law departments was 22%, economics – 21%, whereas food industry technology, construction and agriculture – below 2% each.

⁵⁹ Defined as the ratio of the population aged 0-14 and a third of the population aged 15-59;

⁶⁰ Gudumac and Ghencea, 2004;

Table 14 Structure of specializations, graduates from universities

	2000	2001	2002	2003
<i>Total, absolute</i>	12248	12496	14531	15296
law	16,6	21,8	22,8	21,7
economics	26,0	23,4	21,4	21,3
philology	9,8	10,8	10,5	11,6
science	8,1	8,7	7,3	6,4
information technologies	1,3	2,7	3,7	5,8
pedagogics and psychology	6,1	5,3	5,9	4,3
engineering and industrial technologies	3,5	3,9	3,2	4,1
political and administrative science	0,8	1,4	3,4	3,6
medicine and pharmaceutics]	6,2	4,9	3,4	3,3
electronics, energy and communications	2,8	2,6	2,8	2,8
transports and mecanics	2,7	2,3	2,1	2,5
constructions	2,4	1,9	1,8	1,7
agriculture	2,7	1,9	1,9	1,7
arts	2,4	2,8	2,4	1,4
services	0,4	0,6	0,6	0,7
others (each below 1,3%, 2003)	8,0	5,0	6,8	7,1
<i>Total, %</i>	100	100	100	100

Source: NSB

This structure of new labor supply does not meet existing demand of labor on domestic market thus increasing the probability that graduates will choose emigration as best option. This is also aggravated by the fact that many universities do not offer high quality education (especially in social science and other sectors repressed during the Soviet times). Most of the time the university graduates are not able to enter immediately the work force and they have to be trained additionally by the employer. Among the students of “prestigious” professions, those with parents abroad apparently hold a large share; this is why we believe that the emigration will be further fed from this contingent.

A proportion of the graduates will, of course, seek for a career domestically. It is well known that in many domestic sectors jobs (medicine, justice, public sector) may be received only after paying a bribe to a public official, often rising to thousands of dollars. One can suppose that the young competitors whose parents are working migrants dispose more money than competitors of non-migrants and so the former enjoy unfair comparative advantages against the latter.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Migration from Moldova has reached already dangerous quotas threatening national security, even though such publicly used figures as 0.8-1 million Moldovans working abroad overestimate this phenomenon. Two inter-independent studies conducted recently show that the total stock of migrants from Moldova rises to 360-390 thousand persons. But the current situation of the most vulnerable groups of citizens (farmers, agricultural workers) and the exogenous factors affecting their livelihoods (undiversified agricultural risks, bad current situation and prospects on foreign markets) lead us to the conclusion that migration will not lessen and in the future it may actually increase.

Migration has certain positive implications as it provides relief to those households in poverty or risking falling in poverty. Remittances from the migrants feed the domestic consumption and finance partially the huge trade deficit. In the first quarter 2005 the remitted income from migrants amounted to USD 112 million as compared with USD 67 million in Q1 2004.

From another hand, however, we conclude that the migration has a remarkably bad impact on demographic outcomes, on family cohesion and on domestic productive capacities. So, while diminishing poverty in short-term, the migration may exacerbate the problem of underdevelopment in a long-term perspective. This reports found that this aspect is not adequately addressed by Moldovan policymakers and it found also that children are the group most affected by social consequences of the migration. The most significant gap in the literature is the lack of understanding on how differ the children of the migrants left behind. While some of them enjoy higher income and better perspectives of continuing education, others are marginalized and continue to face prospects of migration, trafficking or criminal life.

Family is the main tool of regulating interactions of the children with society. When it disintegrates, it cannot perform its functions properly. In Moldova it seems to be the case. Estimates done in this report show that between 150-270 thousand children aged 0-14 have been left by one parent. The total number of children remaining behind both migrating parents is likely to go beyond 40 thousand. Most of these children live in country-side, but children living in small towns face the highest risk of remaining behind emigrating parents.

In monetary terms, most of the children with one parent abroad are better-off than their peers. However, the remittances which alleviate poverty of most of the children are likely to generate more income inequality among the children. Attention of the policy-makers should be focused primarily on the children living without both parents beyond extended family or with their older siblings. These children face particularly high risks of getting poor, even extremely poor. Discussion we had with public officials from various ministries and departments have shown that the needs of these children are not a distinct issue of the current policy.

It is not completely clear how emigration of the parents affects children education and health outcomes and access to these services. Existing qualitative literature hints to the fact that in most of the cases educational outcomes worsen after parents leave. While there are affirmations that children left behind start earlier smoking, drinking alcohol or even taking drugs, the existing statistical data and researches do not confirm nor infirm this affirmation. One report affirms that these children are more likely to commit crimes.

From the current literature it results that the most significant impact of parent's migration for a child is emotional and psychological distress. This is compounded by the higher likelihood of family disintegration in case when one or both parents are missing for long periods of time. In popular perception, the children of migrants are more likely to be

marginalized, mistreated or even abused. Frequently these children become victims of human trafficking. This is why it is extremely important that these children receive some attention and care from the community and they should be integrated in other families if the natural one is not possible to reunite.

It is not clear to what extent and how the children of the migrants enter the domestic labor market and in which way do they differ from other new-entrants. Many of them are affected by the “dependant” or “migrant syndromes” and will choose in the future to go abroad. Others are targeting domestic universities in order to get a diploma, but it is not clear how quickly a child of migrant would find a job. Having money sent by parents and relationship with them working in western countries may simplify significantly for the graduate the task of getting to these countries and of finding a job.

The policy recommendations that we give are the following:

- Negative economic and social consequences of the migration are huge not because of the migration as such but because main part of it takes place illegally. Migrants themselves are suffering, but so are their children. Helping the migrants establish permanent communication with their children and other members of the households by legalization and a better control of the migration process will reduce significantly the social impact of migration.
- The government has to attack not the migration itself which is a rational response of the impoverished people to the challenges that the transition offers them daily. The government has to deal with the underlying causes of the migration: poor business environment which impedes more jobs to be created, bureaucracy and corruption affecting small and micro-enterprises, lack of civil trust in state institutions.
- The government has to pay a special attention to development of economic opportunities for youth in rural area which provides the largest number of migrants. Eventual depopulation of the Moldovan village may alter dramatically the cultural and spiritual background of the nation.
- Most of the children living in families having adult members abroad are better-off than others. Their relatives, the local community and the local public administration have to watch closer their school attendance and outcomes. A special attention deserve children left by both parents that migrated and with whom children do not communicate. Their material situation is much poorer than of all the other children, even those living in families with no migrants and no income received from abroad. Most of the time they are living with close relatives who may not be very responsible on child needs. We believe that the local and central governments have to enact programs of help directed to these children or other assistance which cannot be exchanged for alcohol or something else by their “tutors”. This help may go along in form of clothes, footwear, books and other school essentials.
- The official estimates of the number of left children do not reflect the true situation. Local and central government should update their administrative databases on the number of school age children left by parents working abroad should create such databases for the children of under-school age.
- The HSB should be improved in order to get it useful in assessing the extent of migration, its factors and consequences. The questionnaire used for the HSB should be refined in order to study better the migration and the links of the migrants with the households members remaining home;

Also, we believe that some recommendation can be given to those that in the future will conduct or finance more research on children of the migrants:

- Assessing more precisely the extent, the gender-age-origin-destination structure and the dynamics of the migration in Moldova;
- Studying the issue of internal migration: the flows, directions, family and age structure, is it able to compensate for the gains provided by international migration?
- Conducting international research on the issue of Moldovan children taken with parents abroad: how do they integrate in new society, which are their needs, how do they compare to those left home and with the children in recipient countries and so on.
- Conducting in-depth and complex, interdisciplinary-tailored research on the factors determining the parents to leave the children without care or with the care of the relatives; why is this phenomenon particularly acute in specific towns, large villages and in specific schools?
- Conduct research of the unemployment and employment patterns among youth.

Annex

Number of children whose parents migrated abroad, as of February 2005

Districts	Both parents migrated		One parent migrated	Children gone abroad with parents	Children that left the school because of migrating parents
	December 2003	February 2005			
Anenii Noi	247	810	2509	93	0
Basarabeasca	245	367	601	182	0
Briceni	19	497	1157	12	0
Cahul	1230	1047	2436	152	4
Călărași	621	716	1609	243	2
Cantemir	412	670	1440	43	2
Căușeni	326	1148	2593	94	3
Cimișlia	419	1002	2077	130	0
Criuleni	162	302	430	164	0
Dondușeni	16	427	777	74	1
Drochia	1056	1107	2259	25	0
Dubăsari	185	60	488	119	1
Edineț	402	709	1245	4	1
Fălești	1018	1057	2604	67	0
Florești	1114	1248	1324	28	0
Glodeni	749	712	655	41	0
Hâncești	1034	1359	3622	192	1
Ialoveni	294	358	1681	62	4
Leova	461	426	1648	63	0
Nisporeni	344	833	1753	332	0
Ocnita	421	624	1053	164	0
Orhei	1236	1247	2617	104	1
Rezina	589	537	842	63	1
Râșcani	359	568	1303	66	3
Sângerei	380	970	425	30	0
Soroca	768	1090	1759	11	3
Strășeni	460	598	1523	153	0
Șoldănești	383	733	854	0	0
Ștefan-Vodă	326	587	1623	29	1
Taraclia	313	47	595	0	0
Telenești	254	495	2210	84	0
Ungheni	1283	1051	3084	81	6
UTA Gagauzia	1573	1523	3980	91	14
Mun. Bălți	539	927	1611	148	0
Mun. Chișinău	3738	2099	11864	567	1
Rural	-	17803	39437	1945	29
Small towns	-	7122	15339	1051	19
Cities	-	3026	13475	715	1
Total	22976	27951	68161	3711	49

Source: Department for Migration

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