Civil Society Days
Global Forum on Migration and Development
Mexico 2010

Roundtable 2: Human Mobility, Human Development and Human Security

Session 2.3: Effects of International Migration on Families Left Behind

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ABSTRACT

Recent increases in the volume and diversity of international labour migration, and in particular the feminisation of these movements, suggest that the number of families fractured by migration is also growing tremendously. Gender-differentiated transnational migration is no doubt an increasingly significant driver of contemporary social transformation of the ‘family/household’ in sending communities, as clearly seen in its impact on changing familial arrangements and relationships of care. Research has shown that labour migration is often a family livelihood project rather than an individual strategy and socio-economic outcomes of labour migration, therefore, affect not only the migrant but also the left-behind family as a whole. In this paper we set out to: (1) review the academic literature on the effects of international migration on left-behind families; (2) point out major implications and challenges for migration and development policy, and the practices concerning left-behind families of migrants; (3) provide recommendations to different social actors including the state, civil society and corporate entities; and (4) highlight questions for discussion during the forum.

The review of selected academic literature on left-behind families is centred on the effects of international migration on: (a) the household structure and relationships within the transnational household; (b) remittances and the family’s well-being; (c) gender roles, identities and relations; (d) intergenerational relations; and (e) left-behind children’s health and well-being (including educational outcomes). Although findings from academic research are generally mixed, one salient observation that emerges from the literature review is that while international labour migration generates substantial economic resources that contribute to left-behind families’ improved access to healthcare and education, the social costs it brings about are equally significant. The literature shows that children and the elderly are most vulnerable to the adverse effects of international migration and hence, require special attention in development policies and practices.

The major challenges for migration and development policy, and practice that arise from academic research findings include: (a) supporting the elderly grandparents who themselves need care and support but are often called to substitute for migrant parents in childcare and domestic work; (b) helping migrants and their families sustain their relationships across transnational spaces in order to minimise the negative impacts of migration on family relations; and (c) minimizing migrant families’ economic stress and debts caused by exorbitant broker fees. It is important for the government of labour-sending countries to acknowledge not only the benefits but also the costs of international labour migration so as to create an effective legal and institutional framework as well as suitable supporting mechanisms for left-behind families. In minimising the negative impacts on both migrants and left-behind kin, especially children, migration can then be a sustainable development strategy.

In considering policy interventions relating to left-behind families, we emphasize that the impact of migration is highly variable and complex. Left-behind families can be, and are, affected not only by the migration process itself but also by circumstances and policies relating to broader processes including development and urbanization at different levels. Issues discussed in the paper cannot be handled single-handedly by the state but require the involvement of different actors including civil society, businesses and local communities in labour-sending areas in supporting left-behind families. Therefore, different sets of recommendations are offered to the various groups involved. Recommendations to the state
include: (a) Sending nations should be united in applying pressure on receiving nations to sign and ratify the United Nations’ 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICMW); (b) More effective regulation and control of the ‘migration industry’; and (c) Establishment of support schemes directed at left-behind families including provision of medical benefits and counselling services for children and the elderly, and offering academic support to children. Recommendations to the civil society (and even businesses) include: (a) Offering left-behind families free or cheaper access to internet so that they can communicate with migrants easily and regularly; (b) Providing training on remittances management and consultation on investment strategies; (c) Giving both left-behind children and adults psychological counselling and any other necessary intervention; and (d) Engaging both migrants and families in pre-departure briefing to prepare them to cope with any problems relating to long-term separation. Recommendations to banks include: (a) Providing prospective migrants with low-interest loans, not requiring collaterals for small loans, simplifying procedures, and relaxing eligibility criteria to prevent families from taking high-interest loans from exploitative moneylenders; and (b) Reducing remittance charges and offering migrant families specialized investment products and services such as insurance, pension and real estate advice.
INTRODUCTION

This paper is prepared for the fourth meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) – Alliances for Migration and Human Development: Shared Prosperity, Shared Responsibility – in Mexico in 2010. The first GFMD meeting organised in Brussels in 2007 examined impacts of migration on social and economic development in terms of human capital development and labour mobility on the one hand and the contribution of migrant resources (financial and skills) on the other hand. The second meeting in Manila in 2008 focused on ‘Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development’ while the third meeting in Athens in 2009 addressed the overarching theme of ‘Integrating Migration Policies into Development Strategies for the Benefit of All’. While Civil Society Days (CSD) sessions of previous GFMD meetings have made significant contributions in enhancing our understanding of migrant labourers’ work and life as well as promoted advocacy and dialogue on migrants’ rights, issues relating to left-behind families of migrants have not been given sufficient attention. Research has shown that labour migration is often a family livelihood project rather than an individual strategy and socio-economic outcomes of labour migration therefore affect not only the migrant but also the left-behind family as a whole.

As the diversity and volume of international labour migration from different regions around the world continue to grow, the number of families fractured by migration is also increasing simultaneously. Devoid of young and able-bodies, left-behind communities comprising mainly of elderly parents and young children are rendered especially vulnerable due to migration. Even left-behind spouses, whether men or women, are not spared as they often have to shoulder greater responsibilities as single parents and sometimes, sole breadwinners. With key members absent, families will indubitably experience some degree of “displacement, disruptions and changes in care-giving arrangements” (SMC, 2004: 61). However, families with absent mothers will apparently experience greater changes and adjustments given that “changes in women’s roles often have more implications for the family than changes in men’s roles” (SMC, 2004: 3). Hence, this paper attempts to trace, from existing literature, the impacts of migration on families left behind, highlighting all the currently known positive and negative effects in the process. It then proceeds to review the good practices used in different parts of the world to mitigate the negative effects of international labour migration as well as those that maximize its benefits. Finally, it provides some policy recommendations to address the concerns over left-behind families that have been raised in the literature.

It is more common to read about the plight of children, rather than the aged, left by migrants in sending countries such as China, Mexico and the Philippines, and even in receiving countries such as Canada and the United States (US) from mass media. Left-behind families, particularly children, in regions such as Africa, Ex-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent (CIS) States, Latin America and different parts of Asia have also been the object of study by various academics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Department for International Development (DFID), United Nations (UN), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Save the Children. Overall, the media and existing studies have painted a rather depressing picture on the impact of parental migration on their left-behind children, especially when mothers are away. Left-behind children were said to suffer from psychological and emotional stress, are more susceptible to deviant behaviour and criminal offences whilst expressing
feelings of abandonment or resentment at being left behind. Similarly, some of the earlier studies on left-behind elderly have also depicted them as abandoned or burdened with heavier responsibilities and stresses from having to care for the household as well as farm production during their adult children’s absence. The family life of the left-behinds is further exposed to added stress with many studies hinting at broken families and marriages. 

Many of the existing studies relating to the left-behind are largely situated in the US or countries of origin for US-bound migration streams, for instance, Mexico, the Caribbean and other countries in Latin America. Themes of these studies range from experiences and struggles of international male and female migrants, and now gendered studies on international migration; outcomes of international migration and remittances; transnational fathering, mothering and caring; impacts of transnational migration (including well-being of) left-behind wives, husbands, and increasingly children as well as grandparents often in their roles as carers; strategies for family reunification in the US and stories of reunification in home and destination countries; return migration and so on. Research on the left-behind in this region has also seen a shift in methodological approach from forming an understanding of the left-behind spouse, children, elderly or carer through migrants’ voices to relying on firsthand accounts directly from those left-behind them.

Besides the mode of migration, remuneration, and working and living conditions, one important feature differentiating low-skilled from high-skilled migration flows is the fact that low-skilled workers often migrate on fixed-term contracts with no or little possibility of family reunification or obtaining citizenship in destination countries while such restrictions are less likely for high-skilled workers. Research on left-behind families, therefore, mostly deals with low-skilled labour migration. Given the fact that a major part of the existing migration literature is on Latin America while studies in and on Asia have been more sporadic, the focus in what follows is placed mainly on the lesser known region. We review the academic research relating to left-behind families of international migrants in the Asian context – supplemented where appropriate by findings from studies in other regions – according to the following organising themes: (a) impact on household structure and relationships within the transnational household; (b) impact of remittances on family well-being; (c) impact on gender roles, identities and relations; (d) impact on intergenerational relations; and (e) impact on children’s health and well-being (including educational outcomes of left-behind children).

Major research findings on left-behind families

Impact on family structure and relationships within the transnational household

The migrant’s departure inevitably and almost immediately affects the family in countries of origin, often requiring left-behind family members to make adjustments of varying degrees. Tasks will need to be reassigned and existing roles of the remaining family members have to be changed so as to fill the void created by the absent migrant. The type and degree of adjustments required as well as the capacity for change depend on a variety of factors, including the gender and social class of the migrant, socio-cultural norms as well as other “lines of influence” which will “indicate and highlight what are regarded as the pivotal issues” (Rigg, 2007:175). For instance, left-behind Filipinas appear to be able to take over the roles of their migrant husbands successfully and continue looking after their children whilst
preserving their existing nuclear household structure. On the other hand, though Sri Lankan women are also capable of taking on the roles of their absent husbands, societal norms disapprove of them living ‘alone’, thus requiring the inclusion of one or more relatives into the nuclear household (Bruijn et al., 1992).

In cases where mothers migrate, many left-behind families turn to extended family members – often female – for help with caring or nurturing tasks vacated by the absent mothers. As a result, pre-migration nuclear household structures may have to be expanded after migration to incorporate extended kin such as grandparents and aunts. Converting to an extended household type allows the left-behind to fill the gaps resulting from the migrant’s absence; conversely, living in an extended household in the first place may be an important reason why either or both parents are able to migrate. It should be noted however that extended family structures may also break apart upon the migrant’s departure due to “inherent social conflict[s]” (Bruijn et al., 1992: 173). Hugo (2002: 32) explains that in leaving the country, the migrant is actually ‘resigning’ from his or her role as a worker on the family land and is thus no longer ruled by the head of household, which will in turn weaken “patriarchal authority and the dominance of the extended family”. The availability of remittances also encourages the nucleation of households and helping young families become independent from their extended kin.

At the same time, current nuclear families may disintegrate and merge with another temporarily when left-behind children are fostered out to other households during their mothers’ absence. The situation becomes more problematic when the basic structure of the nuclear family crumbles permanently after spouses separate due to labour migration. Extended absences of the migrant can exacerbate marital instability and lead to the break-up of the family unit. There are signs of a higher incidence of divorce among migrant households, resulting in abandoned families being left to fend for themselves. Left-behind children may in turn experience feelings of jealousy and abandonment while parents who have formed new families may find it difficult to negotiate the conflicting demands presented by having two families.

It should be noted that the adverse social and emotional effects on the health of familial relations are not predetermined. Hugo (2002) notes that of key importance is the presence of support networks for left-behind families of low-skilled migrants in maintaining resilient family lives in the absence of one parent. Migrants themselves who are physically absent from ‘home’ may still contribute to the durability of the family. Studies in the Philippines, for example, have shown that female migrants worked actively at maintaining a sense of connection with their children through phone calls, letters and other means of long-distance communication. Whatever the costs and triumphs, sustaining the family across distance may be regarded in itself a form of resistance against the circumstances.

Impact of remittances on family well-being

Sending remittances home is a reaffirmation of migrants’ commitment toward their left-behind kin. Analyses of the use of remittances by left-behind families show that while there is a general consensus that remittances constitute a valuable economic contribution to the family, their long-term effects are contentious. Some uses of remittances include purchasing basic necessities, repaying debts taken to cover the costs of migration, investment and buying luxury goods. While a large proportion of
remittances are used to sustain basic needs, the distribution of remittances to other expenses, mitigated by kin obligations, is significant in influencing the long-term economic benefits to the family. The extended family helps to utilize migrant remittances for business investment purposes through the provision of information, thereby facilitating wealth creation for left-behind kin. Such prudent reciprocal treatment of remittances then strengthens the relationship between the migrants and the left-behind.

Some households, however, remain trapped in the vicious poverty cycle even upon the receipt of remittances from migration. This is especially evident in accounts of mother migrant households where left-behind husbands squander away the remittances from their migrant wives on ‘social activities’ such as drinking and gambling. For cases where remittances have been mismanaged, conflicts over the control of money and how it should be spent is thus a common occurrence between the migrants and their left-behind spouses. In some cultures, the social expectation of women to be mindful of the well-being of their families removes their control over their own incomes. Some families do not treat migrants’ failure to remit money kindly, continually plying pressure and increasing expectations on them until they are driven to despair and even death. In many parts of Southeast Asia, the privileging of male over female offspring often mean that the income and remittances sent back by young women migrants are channeled to their brothers’ education, or to facilitate their migration, while the women themselves are not accorded similar opportunities for self-improvement (Asis, 2000).

While the economic benefits of labour migration in the form of remittances have often been taken for granted, little attention has been paid to the fact that a significant portion of migrants’ earnings goes to debt payment resulting, therefore, in limited effect on poverty reduction. Many of the transnational labour migrations in Asia are arranged by brokers, legal or illegal, who are known to charge exorbitant fees, sometimes well beyond the legally sanctioned amount and driving migrant families into debt. Compounding the situation, the decision to migrate is sometimes made with inaccurate information and migrants thus run high risks of being cheated of their money, exploited or repatriated prematurely. Various studies have suggested that large amounts of debts incurred through migration may compel migrant workers to overstay their visas, run away from legal employers or commit crime. In the case of ‘failed’ migration, the burden of debts has dire consequences on the health and well-being of the left-behind family, especially children and the elderly.

Impact on gender roles, identities and relations in the family

Gender-differentiated migration may also lead to altered gendered divisions of labour within the left-behind household. In the past when emigration flows was dominated by male migrants, it was believed that women, children and the elderly were rendered most vulnerable because the absence of men may lead to women and children performing tasks traditionally done by the former, including agricultural work. Aside from women assuming greater responsibilities and additional workloads, studies also showed that male migration led to more financial hardships as well as difficulties with disciplining their children for women, lower access to food and increased loneliness and isolation.

However, not all the studies on male migration revealed negative outcomes for women. Women who remained in the source area from which men migrate may also find themselves taking on a wider range of roles and responsibilities, becoming more autonomous and involved in decision-making within the
family and community. For example, long term absences of males in Punjab due to migration have often accorded wives with greater autonomy and decision-making power over land issues, children’s education and household finances (Donnan and Werbner, 1991). Women in this situation are likely to continue holding on to their increased power even after their husbands’ return. As a result, it was found that women generally gained greater self-confidence from being more actively involved in decision-making and also experienced an improvement in their socioeconomic status (Hadi, 1999; 2001).

With the more recent feminisation of labour migration in the region, studies on the gender impact of female migration have also emerged. In general, studies show that when women migrate, men left behind do take on more caregiving roles. This is evident in studies on Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka but the change, especially in the case of the Philippines, is not always sustained nor continued after the women’s return. In addition, husbands who take on household chores in the absence of their migrant wives often do so with the help of older children or other female relatives. On the flip side, more left-behind fathers appear to be experiencing greater stress in this reversed situation as more of them pick up drinking and drug-taking habits as a form of escape. This may eventually increase risks among the children, adversely affecting children’s emotions and their academic performance (Gamburd, 2005).

It should be noted that migrant parents do not necessarily forsake but instead adapt their parenting roles after migration. In the case of the Philippines, mothers away continue to bear most of the responsibility for childcare even after leaving the Philippines while eldest daughters and female kin are tasked with taking over household chores (Asis, 2006; Parreñas, 2002; 2005a). Migrant Filipino mothers continue to maintain close contact with their children and take charge of providing funds and arranging for others to raise their children (Parreñas, 2005b). Some Filipino fathers neither change the way they view their place in the family nor contribute more towards caring or other household responsibilities when their wives are away. This has led to confusion among children left behind, resentful of fathers who further widen the distance by shunning nurturing roles and generally failing to “reconstitute fathering in ways that balance and reciprocate the efforts of mothers to perform transnational mothering” (Parreñas, 2005a: 140).

According to Parreñas (2005a), eldest daughters assume heavier burdens when their mothers are away than when their fathers leave while sons are saddled with more responsibilities when their fathers leave. However, the workload of the sons is still not comparable to those undertaken by the daughters. According to some studies, the situation for left-behind daughters tends to be discouraging as they, despite their mothers’ best efforts, tend to leave school earlier and form their own families through early marriages and unplanned pregnancies. Daughters from poorer families especially, experience a large decrease in the quality of life after their mothers leave. Nonetheless, they do benefit from the process by picking up new skills and becoming more independent.

To summarise, when women – traditionally linked with care-giving and the upkeep of the household – migrate, they leave gaps in household work which are often picked up by other female members of the household such as grandmothers, sisters, aunts and daughters. Whether this empowers women is a question which does not lend itself to easy generalizations. Positive impacts of migration on women’s status and role have been observed in Sri Lanka, Laos and Indonesia. In brief, the question as to
whether migration is a strategy of empowerment for women yields rather mixed conclusions depending on the perspective taken. It is unlikely, in the short term at least, that there would be significant changes in women’s identity as lynchpins of the family even with the enlarged sphere of autonomy opened up to women as a consequence of migration.

**Impact on intergenerational relations**

International migration not only influences household structures and gender identities, it also affects intergenerational relationships. In terms of parent–child relationships, Parreñas (2005a: 67) found that the migration of fathers produced a “gap” or “a sense of social discomfort and emotional distance” between Filipino fathers and their left-behind children. Generally, Filipino children feel “embarrassed” and “awkward” around their fathers even after their return because there was less intimate communication between both parties during the time when they were apart. Migrant fathers who continue to uphold their macho role as the disciplinarian even when they are away tend to obstruct the possibility of forging closer ties with their children, while those who invest in quality time communicating with their children will have more opportunities to bridge the parent-child gap. In contrast, left-behind children experienced feelings of abandonment when their mothers are not present since mothers continue to be the sole nurturers even in their absence. Such feelings of abandonment decrease when mothers continue to show their care through frequent intimate communication and close supervision over their left-behind offspring.\(^\text{15}\)

Similarly, studies on left-behind children in Guatemala divulge that they tend to lose “respect, trust, and love” for their migrant parents over time, and beginning to prefer money over intimacy from their migrant mothers (Moran-Taylor, 2008a: 89). They become disappointed with their mothers when they fail to send any money home (Moran-Taylor, 2008a). Long-distance parenting becomes even more difficult when left-behind children, on reaching adolescence, refuse to acknowledge the authority of migrant parents. Such defiance may eventually show up in higher cases of child delinquency and neglect (Gamburd, 2000).

The migration of one or both parents poses another set of intergenerational issues between migrants and their (sometimes elderly) parents – many of whom also double up as the carers of the left-behind children. Ties between the elderly and their adult children are weakened by migration and may result in the splitting of extended families due to the inability to meet the various familial, social and monetary expectations imposed by each generation.\(^\text{16}\) As manifested in Gamburd’s (2000) study in Sri Lanka, conflicts often arise when migrant parents fail to remit money as promised or remit less money over time. Relationships between migrant mothers (or even fathers) and their elderly parents tasked with caring for their children may also become fractured owing to the tensions and divergences in care-giving practices between generations (Gamburd, 2000).\(^\text{17}\) For example, migrant mothers may be upset with the carers’ inability to discipline their children and for spoiling them, while carers blame the mothers for leaving (Moran-Taylor, 2008a). Left-behind children are often sensitive to such tensions, turning them to their advantage by playing the feuding parties against each other in order to get what they want.

Despite the special call at the 30\(^{\text{th}}\) section of the Commission on Population and Development in New York in 1997 (NGLS, 1997; UN, 1997) for greater attention to be given to the impact of migration on
the left-behind elderly, we know little of how they cope with the absence of their children and the state of their relationships after migration. Available evidence seems to suggest that the costs outweigh the benefits as the left-behind elderly are often saddled with looking after their grandchildren, which may lead to health problems and stress (Knodel and Saengtienchai, 2002). Other researchers have found that remittances do not provide a satisfactory means of old-age insurance and that the absence of a close family member along with a lack of financial support (in the case of Albania) is associated with marked health effects in the left-behind parent, with women being at higher risk than men (Burazeri et al., 2007). In this vein, Hugo’s (2002) study in the Indonesian context suggests the abandonment of the elderly as a result of the dwindling of the ‘carer generation’. In contrast, Xiang’s (2007) review of studies on the left-behind elderly in rural China shows that although the elderly felt lonely without their children, a higher percentage of them expressed that they were satisfied with their lives compared to those whose children had remained behind.

Impact on children’s health and well-being

A number of effects on the health and well-being of left-behind children from the strain of family separation have been catalogued, ranging from a higher incidence of mental disorders among women and children to lower levels of school performance and impeded social and psychological development among children (Hugo, 2002). Using a diversity of methods, researchers from different fields such as public health, psychiatry and sociology have worked towards augmenting the literature and extending our understanding on this topic.

The 2003 Children and Families Survey conducted in the Philippines (hereafter referred to as the 2003 Philippines study) with 1,443 children found that the socio-economic status and gender roles in the family are obviously affected by migration (SMC, 2004). The survey reports that higher frequency of communication between children and migrant parents appears to contribute to better well-being outcomes, which is similar to Parreñas’ (2005b) observation that left-behind children from working-class families are more likely to feel abandoned since they have less ability to sustain transnational communication with migrants. SMC (2004) also found that parental migration has a positive effect on the physical health of left-behind children; and non-migrant children fall sick more frequently although there was also a slightly higher proportion of mothers-away children who are more susceptible to common ailments and loss of appetite. Overall, the 2003 Philippines study did not uncover any alarming impact of mother’s absence on the physical well-being of children. This can perhaps be attributed to better nutrition from the higher socio-economic status of migrant families as well as the quality of caregivers. However, among the children, more of them with mothers away report themselves as being unhappy, more anxious and lonely, and able to get the least hours of sleep. More left-behind boys, than girls, are also reportedly more vulnerable to being “touched in sensitive areas” (SMC, 2004: 51).

The generally positive results of migration on left-behind children from the 2003 Philippines study differed considerably from Battistella and Conaco’s (1998) earlier observation that children of migrants lagged behind those of non-migrants. Although Battistella and Conaco (1996; 1998) reported that migrants’ children are generally normal and well-cared for by the extended kin, they performed less well in terms of academic performance and social adjustment. Also, they found that mothers-away children tend to suffer more than other migrant children.
Migration of one or both parents may affect children’s social behaviour in different ways. Battistella and Conaco (1998) learned that Filipino children with absent mothers showed poorer social adjustment and suffered from impeded social and psychological development. The 2003 Philippines Study in contrast showed that the children in the survey have generally adjusted well socially, have strong social support and get along well with other family members. This result was not very different from that of non-migrants’. In Sri Lanka, the Save the Children (2006) study also reported that children left behind have positive relationships with their caregivers and that minority ethnic groups have higher extended family ties when mothers migrate. Nonetheless, the Sri Lankan study also reaffirmed Jampaklay’s (2006) findings in Thailand that a mother’s love is often irreplaceable even by the best caregivers as more negative effects on the children left behind by mothers can be observed. Xiang’s (2007) review of studies on children left behind in China showed children developing behaviours at two extremes under the care of their grandparents. Children left behind are either withdrawn or excessively aggressive as their grandparents either spoil or neglect them.

The agency of the child in determining migration outcomes also deserves close attention. Asis (2006) suggests that children play a role in improving their own well-being by taking charge of their lives, devising ways of coping with parental absence and also keeping the family together. Children are also given space to grow independently upon the removal of restrictive parental control and may learn many important skills when they view their left-behind circumstance positively. In summary, findings from the above studies generally support those from elsewhere showing that remittances contribute to better nutrition and access to modern health care and child care services. On the downside, left-behind children also seem to have a higher vulnerability to the spread of HIV/AIDS, a higher rate of drug use and heroin addiction (Battistella and Conaco, 1998) and suffer higher levels of emotional disruption, stress and sadness (Mendoza, 2004; Ganepola, 2002).

We now turn to Latin American studies to further our understanding on left-behind children. Aguilera-Guzman’s et al. (2004: 721) study of the impact of Mexican fathers’ absence due to international migration on the mental health of their teenage children (11-14 years) left behind in rural Zacatecas found that while migrants’ children are more “vulnerable to psychosocial problems” than non-migrants’ children, they are generally “ambivalent” about their father’s absence and that it is ultimately the gender of the left-behind child that matters more. It was observed that changing gender roles in the community creates more stress for teens in the study than paternal absence. In another similar study in southern Ecuadorian Andes, Pribilsky (2001) reported that while the locals were quick to attribute the rising incidences of children suffering from nervios - a culturally specific depression-like disorder – to their father’s absence, he instead cautioned that it might perhaps not be the father’s absence per se but the children’s way of using nervios as a mechanism of coping with their changing lifestyles brought about by new transnational family formations and transnational consumption practices. Finally, Kana’laupuni’s et al. (2005) study on social and kinship networks in Mexico confirmed that kinship support and networks matter in positively affecting the health and well-being of left-behind children, especially on mothers with young children from poorer families.

Educational outcomes are clearly one of the more observable (and studied) impacts of migration although no consistent result have been found to date. Positive impacts (i.e. higher rate of school enrolment, better investment of parents on children’s education, better performance at school) seemed to
dominate in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Thailand, while mixed consequences were found in the Philippines and negative outcomes in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Where a large proportion of migrants’ remittances are used for children’s education, positive outcomes were reported, although some studies suggest that parental absence may not be fully compensated for by remittance flows. We turn to selected case studies for a clearer understanding of the specificities involved.

In Thailand, Jampaklay’s (2006) study showed rather negative outcomes of migration on school enrolment and attitudes toward education in their studies. She concluded from her study that it is the gender of the migrant and the period of absence that are the significant independent variables; longer absences of mothers tend to lead to lower education prospects of their children as compared to long-term paternal absences. The short-term absence of fathers, however, also appeared to reduce children’s chances of school enrolment. Jampaklay (2006: 108) explained that the adverse effects of mother’s absence on children left behind are probably due to “the situation of living in the extended household that jeopardizes the educational chances of children”. Lastly, she argued that while migrants’ remittances raised the prospects of children left behind staying in school, they might also have lured the children into dropping out and migrating as well.

In contrast, Rahman et al.’s (1996, cited in Afsar, 2003) research in Bangladesh found that school enrolment rates were higher among migrants’ families in the rural areas. The study by Kuhn (2006) further showed that migration of fathers and brothers often resulted in improvements in the education of children left behind in some rural Bangladesh areas. However, the migration of sisters has no effect on their sibling’s education while cases of migrant mothers were still too rare to warrant any conclusion. While parent’s migration sometimes provides Bangladeshi children with better educational prospects, Siddiqui (2003) counter-argued that the absence of mothers causes children’s education to suffer. In India, it was found that migrants to urban areas have a heightened awareness of the value of education which translates into greater attention to education; however, the migration of males affects girls’ chances of acquiring an education as they have to take on more domestic responsibilities (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003).

In the Philippines, the 2003 Study shows that migrants’ children are mainly enrolled in private schools and that they are generally happy at school. At least during the elementary years, children of migrants performed better at school, received higher grades as well as school awards when compared to children of non-migrants. On the contrary, Battistella and Conaco (1998) reported that Filipino children of migrants fared worst academically in relation to non-migrants’ children. Both studies have similar findings relating to children with migrant mothers – those with absent mothers have a tendency to lag behind children of the other groups. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the educational performance of children left behind by mothers is also lower than those with mothers working in Sri Lanka and non-working mothers. According to Gamburd (2005), the children of migrant mothers tend to drop out of school to look for work or help with household chores. A common point that emerges repeatedly in these studies is the observation that the gender of the migrant parents has a very strong impact on the educational achievements of left-behind children. More often, children with absent mothers tend to perform poorly while the absence of fathers in Kuhn’s (2006) study are shown to correlate positively with the pace of schooling of left-behind children.
Implications/Challenges for Migration and Development Policy and Practice

Although findings from academic research are generally mixed, one common observation that emerges from the literature review is that while international labour migration generates substantial economic resources that contribute to left-behind families’ improved access to healthcare and education, the social costs it brings about are no less significant. Before discussing the implications of academic research for migration and development policy and practice, we summarise three major negative impacts of migration on left-behind families that need to be addressed. First, in terms of care arrangements, extended family members – particularly elderly grandparents who need care and support themselves – are often called on to substitute for migrant parents in childcare and domestic work. This has multiple negative implications for the health and well-being of the elderly carers and the grandchildren they care for as well as intergenerational relations in the family. Grandparents are unable to provide adequate academic support to their grandchildren or exert control over them which may result in poorer academic performance and behavioural problems among left-behind children of migrant workers. Conversely, the burden of care work and, in many cases, the absence of remittances from migrant parents place considerable stress on the elderly with detrimental consequences on their health and well-being. Divergences of care practices and carers’ inability to meet migrant parents’ expectation in terms of care and discipline lead to tensions and fractured relations in the family.

Second, the vast majority of migrants who leave their families in home countries are low-skilled, low-wage workers on fixed-term contracts with no or little possibility of family reunification or settlement in host (and often developed) countries. Their terms of contracts and low incomes do not allow them to visit or even maintain regular communication with the family over extended periods of time. This results in an unbridgeable emotional gap between migrants and their loved ones. On the one hand, left-behind children experience feelings of loss, confusion and abandonment, and at the same time lose “respect, trust, and love” for their migrant parents over time. On the other hand, the frustration, anxiety and psychological stress resulting from long-term separation with children, the pressure to remit, as well as the tension and rupture in spousal relations over time are negatively implicated in migrant parents’ health and well-being. In the case of mother-migrant families, left-behind fathers find it extremely difficult to cope with the reversion of gender roles and may turn to vices to reassert their masculinity or as a form of escape.

Third, it is noteworthy that labour migration is not always a successful economic venture for families because of the enormous amount of debts they take on to pay for brokerage fees and relocation costs. Economic outcomes of migration are, therefore, marginal for many families and they face risks of bankruptcy and destitution in the event of ‘failed’ migration. The economic stress caused by debts incurred to fund migration is detrimental to not only the migrant’s well-being but also that of the left-behind family, especially children and the elderly. The problem lies largely in the absence of appropriate legal frameworks, the inefficiency of the state management of labour exports and, last but not least, the lack of political will in the protection of migrant workers’ rights. Migration does not necessarily lead to development. Without adequate political tools and measures to effectively address the ‘migration industry’ as well as support migrant families, migration may in reality lead to ‘underdevelopment’.
According to the World Bank, international migrant remittances increased by 58% to US$232 billion between 2001 and 2005, whereby developing countries received the biggest share of around US$167 billion (World Bank, 2006: xiii). Although not all families benefit from overseas labour migration, its significant contributions to the national economy of developing countries are undeniable. Moreover, labour migration from the developing world is one of the endemic family strategies for survival. It is important for the government of labour-sending countries to acknowledge not only the benefits but also the costs of international labour migration in order to create an effective legal and institutional framework as well as suitable supporting mechanisms for left-behind families so that migration can be a sustainable development strategy with minimal negative impacts on both migrants and left-behind families, especially children and the elderly.

**Recommendations**

The mixed findings from academic research raise important questions of what can be done to maximize positive impacts and minimize negative impacts of migration on the left-behind family. In considering policy interventions relating to left-behind families, it must first be stressed that the impact of migration is highly variable and complex. Left-behind families can be, and are, affected not only by the migration process itself but also by the circumstances and policies relating to broader processes including development and urbanization at different levels. Issues discussed in previous sections of the paper cannot be handled single-handedly by the state but different actors including civil society, businesses and local communities in labour-sending areas also have a role to play in supporting left-behind families. Here, we offer different sets of recommendations to the state, civil society and businesses respectively:

**The state**

- Sending nations should be united in putting pressure on receiving nations to sign and ratify the United Nations’ 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICMW)

The only international legal document that addresses the protection of the rights of migrants’ families is the ICMW which came into force in July 2003. However, UN member states, especially labour-receiving countries, have been largely reluctant to ratify the ICMW. To date, only 42 countries have done so and none of them are major receiving countries. Reasons behind countries’ unwillingness to ratify the ICMW have been investigated by Robyn Iredale and Nicola Piper in a UNESCO-sponsored study in 2003. On the one hand, sending countries feared that ratification would result in a loss of labour markets in destination countries to their non-ratifying competitors. On the other hand, receiving countries in the region faced sensitive political obstacles because of the protections the ICMW would give to irregular migrants and the perception that it would require the admission of migrant workers’ family members. Despite its flaws such as the inadequate coverage of the feminisation of labour migration and the increasing short-term nature of migration flows, the ICMW is by far the only international legal framework concerned with the treatment of migrant families. It is important that the state in both receiving and sending countries is aware of, sign and ratify the ICMW so that the basic rights of migrants and their families are recognised and respected.
Although this is a major challenge, it is not impossible. First, labour-sending nations need to be aware of the importance and content of the ICMW, and sign and ratify it themselves. Second, they should commit to an international treaty binding all members to an agreement of not sending labour to a country that has not ratified the ICMW. This requires co-ordination at the international level by a major organisation, ideally the UN. Seeing how OPEC (The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) works for the benefit of oil-exporting countries, a similar international body/model uniting labour-sending countries can also be established for the protection of migrant workers’ rights.

- Effective regulation and control of the ‘migration industry’

In Asia, where labour migration on fixed-term contracts has become the most important form of transnational mobility, commercial migration brokers provide the most important channel of transnational labour migration. However, weak and inefficient state control over the labour export market coupled with the fact that the supply of labour always exceeds demand put migrant workers and their families at the mercy of exploitative brokers who mislead and overcharge them at will. The measures that can be taken at the policy level to reduce risks and exploitation associated with labour migration are:

- Centralisation of the control over the migration industry in a national-level institution that is also responsible for promoting and responding to the welfare of migrants and left-behind families. Recruitment agencies are required to register every migrant they send abroad to this institution and pay insurance for the workers through them. This also allows labour-sending countries to obtain accurate statistics for the purpose of policy formulation and academic research.
- Establishment of a legal fee frame that assigns part of the broker’s fee to the employers to increase their accountability and at the same time, relieve the financial burden on the migrant family. This requires inter-governmental collaborative effort among major labour-sending countries.
- Investing in and improving the quality of telecommunication infrastructure in labour-sending countries.

Example 1: Philippines

The Philippines experience has often been hailed as a model of migration management. It is one of the few states in Asia to have ratified the 1990 International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. State involvement in the labour migration program has been cited as an important factor that contributes to sustaining the phenomenon (see for example Asis, 2006; 2008). The Welfare Fund for Overseas Workers or Welfund established in 1980 under Presidential Decree 1694 was mandated to promote workers’ welfare and to respond to the welfare of the workers’ families. In 1987, the Welfund was renamed as the Overseas Workers’ Welfare Administration (OWWA).

OWWA is a quasi-governmental entity funded by contributions of its members. The employer or recruitment agency is required to enrol departing migrant workers in the OWWA to entitle them to insurance benefits for workers and their families. Another way of obtaining membership is by voluntary enrolment in the job site. Membership fee is at US$25 per contract.
As of May 2007, OWWA had over one million members, representing 28% of the estimated 3.8 million Filipinos who worked abroad legally on temporary contracts as of 2006 (Agunias and Ruiz, 2007: 12). Departing migrant workers are also required to enrol in PhilHealth (PHP900/annum) for the health insurance of workers and their families in the Philippines.

- Establishment of supporting schemes directed at left-behind families

Special attention should be paid to the two most vulnerable groups in left-behind families: children and the elderly. Concrete measures to be taken include:
- Medical benefits for children and the elderly in migrant families.
- Counselling services offered to children of migrants and other left-behind members.
- Extra academic support offered to children of migrants by schools.

Example 2: Sri Lanka
The Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) requires agencies to submit fees and documentation when a migrant goes abroad. With the revenue generated, the SLBFE funds various programs for migrants. Beginning in October 1994, registered migrants automatically received Jatikha Suraksha, the SLBFE’s Foreign Employment Insurance Policy, which offered a life insurance and disability policy, medical benefits for the family left at home, and repatriation of migrants if killed or stranded abroad. Further incentives for registration included tickets to a raffle with cash awards for all registered migrants and scholarships for children of registered migrants (Gamburd, 2000: 53).

Civil Society

Civil society can support left-behind families in different ways at different levels:
- Communication with migrants is the key to the well-being of left-behind families. Community-based organisations may help establish and run internet centres that provide migrant families with free access to Skype, MSN or any locally popular instant internet messaging services so that they can keep in touch with migrants.
- NGOs can offer migrant families training on remittances management and consultation on investment strategies.
- Both NGOs and local communities may provide children and adults in left-behind families with psychological counselling and any other necessary intervention.
- NGOs and community-based organisations may engage both migrants and their families in pre-departure briefing to raise awareness of the importance of sustaining communication over time and distance, and prepare them to cope with any problems relating to long-term separation.

Example 3: ATIKHA in the Philippines
ATIKHA, Inc. (Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiatives) - an NGO established in 1995 in the Philippines comprising religious leaders, migrant returnees, academics, social workers and entrepreneurs - has been very active in supporting families of migrant workers. The organization aims to help families address the social cost of migration and tap the development potential of migration. Its activities cover a breadth of issues:
• Providing psychological counselling and other intervention for families affected by separation through school visits, consultations with school guidance counsellors and referrals to social work and community development agencies.

• Helping migrant families identify viable enterprises through feasibility and market studies.

• Establishing and operating Batang Atikha Savers Club targeting mostly children of Filipino overseas workers. To date, the club boasts 500 members.

• In partnership with local schools, ATIKHA implements its school-based psychosocial programs for children of migrants which include: (1) Migration Realities Seminar - seminars on the life and work conditions of migrants, and the negative and positive effects of migration raise children’s awareness of the realities of their parent's life and work conditions abroad. It helps to make them more responsible in doing their part by spending money wisely, studying harder and helping the family to achieve their financial goals; (2) Capacity Building Seminar - training of children on “Leadership Skills, Peer Counselling, Gender Sensitivity and Young Entrepreneurship” aimed at building up the child's self confidence, sense of cooperation, decision making and discovery of one's self; and (3) Integrating Migration Issues in the Elementary & Secondary Curriculum - in cooperation with the Department of Education, ATIKHA conducts teachers’ training to help them integrate migration issues in their lesson plans and school activities.

For more information, visit ATIKHA’s website http://atikha.org/index.php.

Example 4: Financial literacy programs in the Philippines
The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and ATIKHA (Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiatives) in the Philippines developed the Financial Planner that provides a simple and practical guide for migrant workers and their families to manage their budget and remittances within a framework of wise-spending, savings and investment. It includes tools on the budgeting process, planning for retirement, savings and entrepreneurial undertakings, cash flows monitoring, property acquisition, investment portfolios and overall financial standing. For more information, please visit http://www.bsp.gov.ph/downloads/FinancialPlanner.pdf.

Businesses

Banks can play an important role in supporting left-behind families in different aspects:

- Providing prospective migrants with low-interest loans, not requiring collaterals for small loans, simplifying procedures and relaxing eligibility criteria. These proposals will help families avoid taking high-interest loans from exploitative moneylenders.

- While large parts of remittances are spent on basic necessities, high bank charges discouraging migrants from sending money home regularly may put left-behind families in precarious situations. Hence, it is important to drive down remittance charges and offer migrant families specialized investment products and services such as insurance, pension and real estate services.

Example 5: Bangko Sentral NG Pilipinas
The Central Bank of Philippines (BSP) has a number of initiatives to help migrants and their families...
families, namely: encouraging Philippines commercial banks to bring down transaction costs for remitters and to offer migrant families specialized investment products and services, e.g., insurance, pension and real estate advice; offering microfinance program for poverty alleviation to help channel remittances sent to rural households to investment in small scale businesses; and running financial learning campaigns that aim to promote a culture of savings among overseas Filipinos and their families.

Questions for Discussion

- How can labour-sending countries be united in order to pressure labour receiving countries to: (1) sign and ratify the 1990 UN Convention on Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; (2) adopt and enforce the mutually agreed fee frame that assigns a part of the brokerage fees to the employers; and (3) introduce accreditation of licensed agencies?

- How can the different groups better assist left-behind fathers to adapt to their new role in the family and encourage them to be more involved in childcare and domestic work without compromising their self-esteem and sense of masculinity?

- How can awareness of migration issues, particularly the social impacts at different levels be further promoted?

1 Children as well as other members of the family are not only left behind by international migrants but also by internal migrants, deceased and/or diseased parents (especially in Africa) or as victims of war, unrest and other forms of displacement. Left-behind families in these circumstances are also vulnerable to effects that are similar to those brought about by international migration and more, including susceptibility to infectious diseases. The scope of this review focuses only on those left behind by international migrants although it must be highlighted that it is often not possible, or necessary, to distinguish between the effects of internal vis-à-vis international migration.

2 For more information on some of the studies conducted for/ by these organisations, please see Bryant (2005), D’Emilio et al. (2007), de la Garza (2010), Jespersen (2006), Save the Children (2006), Tobin (2008) and Whitehead and Hashim (2005).

3 For more information on some of the studies, please see Hugo (2002), Toyota, Yeoh and Nguyen (2007) and Settles et al., (2009).


5 Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of key research findings discussed in this section.

6 For more research on the Philippines, please see Battistella and Conaco (1998), Parreñas (2005a; 2005b) and SMC (2004).

7 See Afsar (2005), Bruijn et al. (1992), Hugo (2002) and Yea (2008) for more information.


9 Refer to Barber (2000), Gamburd (2000) and Sampang (2005) for more information on remittances and family relationships.

10 See Hoang and Yeoh (2010) for more information.


12 For more information, see Afsar (2005), Chantavich (2001), Hugo (2005) and Parreñas (2005a).

13 This is also true among other migrant communities where the role of caregiving continues to fall on women’s shoulders even after migration (see for example Dreby (2006) and Spitzer et al. (2003)).

In the case of Mexico, gender expectations in parenting in Mexico affect the relationships between migrants and their children across distances even when migrant fathers and mothers communicate with their left-behind children in similar ways. Dreby (2006: 56) found that the relationships between migrant Mexican mothers and their children left behind are dependent on their ability to “demonstrate emotional intimacy from a distance” while the relationships between migrant fathers and their children are correlated with their capability in providing economically for the family when away. As successful economic migrants, fathers are able to maintain stable and regular relationships with their children in Mexico.

See Bruijn et al. (1992), Gamburd (2000) and Hugo (2002).

Moran-Taylor (2008a) further reveals that migrants often pick up new cultural practices from their host countries that may change their views on disciplining their children as compared to the carers who have stayed in the same environment.

Using the life stories of four children (two boys and two girls) left behind in Leeward Island of Nevis, Olwig (1999) draws a picture of the social, economic and emotional feelings of left-behind children involved in growing up in a transnational home. Dreby (2007: 1050) on the other hand uses ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with 141 Mexican transnationals to argue that left-behind children are not the powerless beings as they are often depicted in the literature but that they are actually empowered in “different ways at different ages”.

The results revealed that “being a man or a woman in a subculture that encourages male migration with gender-based demands and constraints places teenagers at greater risk of experiencing the psychosocial problems associated with FPAIM, such as dropping out of school, drug abuse, child abuse, and familial and social vulnerability and uncertainty” (Aguilera et al., 2004: 721).


Jampaklay’s (2006) analysis draws upon the 2000–2003 data-set of a longitudinal study (Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System) in Kanchanaburi province, Thailand. She used a four category dependent variable (enrolled and not moved; enrolled and moved; not enrolled and not moved; not enrolled and moved) describing the children’s enrolment and migration status in 2003 while the key independent variables were father’s and mother’s living status during 2000 to 2002.

The study integrated data from Matlab Health and Socio-Economic survey with Matlab Health and Demographic Surveillance System and covered the Matlab Thana (sub-district) of Bangladesh.

In the study conducted by Save the Children (2006), children with migrant mothers are found to have poorer attendance and performance at school. The study stated that children left behind in rural areas did better in school but felt more lonely and sad due to the departure of one or both parents.
References


Asis M.M.B and Baggio, F. (2003) The other face of migration: children and families left behind. Paper presented at the workshop on Taking the lead: successful partnership initiatives for the delivery of settlement services at the 8th International Metropolis Conference, 15–19 September, Vienna, Austria.


Appendix 1

Summary of Findings from the Literature

(1) Impacts on household structure and relationships within the transnational household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional stress on the family life of those left-behind.</td>
<td>Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia</td>
<td>Hugo, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reassigning tasks and changing the existing roles of remaining family members in order to fill the void created by the absent migrant.</td>
<td>Nurture for sale: Sri Lankan housemaids and the work of mothering</td>
<td>Gamburd, 2000</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes</td>
<td>Parreñas, 2005a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children</td>
<td>Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes in family structures</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) Preservation of existing structure</td>
<td>Impact of labour migration on the children left behind: Philippine Study</td>
<td>Battistella and Conaco, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes</td>
<td>Parreñas, 2005a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour Migration to the Middle East: From Sri Lanka to the Gulf</td>
<td>Bruijn et al., 1992: 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia</td>
<td>Hugo, 2002: 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Emotionally extended" Indonesian families are transformed into “emotionally nuclear families” due to migration. This is accompanied by “the erosion of..."
patriarchal power”, “patriarchal authority and the dominance of the extended family” due to the eventual disintegration of the extended household as an economic unit.

Remittances from siblings facilitated the movement of sisters and husbands from the extended household into their own nuclear households.

3) Transformation from nuclear to extended family structure

Sri Lankan women – though capable of taking on the roles of their absent husbands – had to include one or more relatives into the nuclear household as societal norms disapprove of them living ‘alone’.

Most families left behind by migrant mothers tend to enlist the help of extended family members – often female – or even friends to undertake caring or nurturing tasks vacated by the absent mothers.

4) Break up of nuclear families

Disintegration of nuclear families to merge with another temporarily when left-behind children are fostered out to other households during their mothers’ absence.

| The impact of remittances, albeit from internal migration, on household division in Nang Rong, Thailand | Piotrowski, 2008 |
| Labour Migration to the Middle East: From Sri Lanka to the Gulf | Bruijn et al., 1992 |
| Nurture for sale: Sri Lankan housemaids and the work of mothering | Gambur, 2000 |
| Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes | Parreñas, 2005a |
| Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children | Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004 |
| Labour Migration to the Middle East: From Sri Lanka to the Gulf | Bruijn et al., 1992 |
| Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia | Hugo, 2002 |
| Hugo, 2005 |
Extended absences of the migrant can exacerbate marital instability and lead ultimately to the break-up of existing family units and creation of new ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian international domestic workers: contemporary developments and issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation of transnational “circuits of affection, caring and financial support”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I’m here but I’m there’: the meanings of Latina transnational motherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m here but I’m there”: the meanings of Latina transnational motherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of support networks for left-behind families of low-skilled migrants in maintaining resilient family lives in the absence of one parent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipina migrants worked actively to maintain a sense of connection with their children through phone calls, letters and other means of long-distance communication. They are successful in keeping their families physically and emotionally intact throughout the period of their absences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the life stories of Filipino women: personal and family agendas in migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>From the life stories of Filipino women: personal and family agendas in migration</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Positive impacts**

| Relationships between left-behind children and their migrant parents remained strong across the distance. |
| Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes |
| Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes |
| Migrants continued to feel the same closeness to their parents with constant communication. |
| Intergenerational relationships in a transnational context: the case of Turkish families |
| Intergenerational relationships in a transnational context: the case of Turkish families |
| Relationships between migrant parents and carers improve if carers assume the “fundamental responsibility for raising the children” by providing love while the migrant parents ensure financial support. |
| Guatemala: migration and child rearing |
| Guatemala: migration and child rearing |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(2) Impacts of remittances on family well-being</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Remittances do trigger changes in social relations within families, which become a site of struggle and negotiation over the distribution of resources, mediated by gender, patriarchal and generational relations”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendering migration and remittances: evidence from London and northern Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendering migration and remittances: evidence from London and northern Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women carry with them ingrained expectations to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agency in Philippine women’s labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agency in Philippine women’s labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>“mindful of the wellbeing of [their families]” back in the Philippines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The extended family helps to utilize migrant remittances for business investment purposes through the provision of information, thereby facilitating wealth creation for left-behind kin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged absence of migrant women will greatly diminish their control over the money they remit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-behind husbands in Sri Lanka squander away the remittances from their migrant wives on ‘social activities’ such as drinking and gambling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In many parts of Southeast Asia, the privileging of male over female offspring often mean that the income and remittances sent back by young women migrants are channelled to their brothers’ education, or to facilitate their migration, while the women themselves are not accorded similar opportunities for self-improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money can unify and reinforce family relationships/structures but it can also create rifts between migrants and their extended family members as not all migrants and their spouses are keen on sharing the economic benefits of migration outside their nuclear unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts often arise when migrants fail to remit money as promised or remit less money over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances may act as a form of insurance for migrants in the expectation that their children will reciprocate by looking after them in their old age, or help maintain good family relations with extended kin in order to protect their inheritance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances do not provide a satisfactory means of old-age insurance and the absence of a close family member along with a lack of financial support (in the case of Albania) is associated with marked health effects in the left-behind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
parent, with women being at higher risk than men.

### (3) Impact on gender roles, identities and relations in the family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender-differentiated migration may lead to altered gendered divisions of labour within the left-behind household, the configurations of which depend on the existing divisions of power, negotiated along the lines of age, gender and the relationships among members of the household.</td>
<td>Households, gender and rural-urban migration: reflections on linkages and considerations for policy</td>
<td>Chant, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Changes in women’s roles often have more implications for the family than changes in men’s roles”</td>
<td>Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children</td>
<td>Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When fathers migrate</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women generally gain greater self-confidence from being more actively involved in decision-making and also experience an improvement in their socioeconomic status.</td>
<td>International migration and the change of women’s position among the left-behind in rural Bangladesh</td>
<td>Hadi, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not an easy experience for left-behind wives/mothers but they have learnt new things and many have successfully managed the economic advantages of migration.</td>
<td>Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children</td>
<td>Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The migration of male heads of households may lead to women and children performing tasks traditionally done by men, including agricultural work.</td>
<td>Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia How far are the left behind left behind? A preliminary study in rural China.</td>
<td>Hugo, 2002 Xiang, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male migration led to more financial hardships as well as difficulties with disciplining their children for women, lower access to food and increased loneliness and isolation.</td>
<td>Impact of labour migration on the children left behind: Philippine Study Migration issues in the Asia Pacific: issues paper from Indonesia Vulnerability to HIV/STIs among rural women from migrant communities in</td>
<td>Battistella and Conaco, 1998 Dwiyanto and Keban, 1997 Smith-Estelle and Gruskin, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When mothers migrate</td>
<td>Effects of international migration on the family in Indonesia</td>
<td>Hugo, 2002</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When women migrate, men left behind do take on more caregiving roles but they do not do so as readily, and the change is not always sustained nor continued after the women’s return.</td>
<td>Conditional mobility: the migration of Bangladeshi female domestic workers Female Labour Migration in South East Asia: Change and Continuity Indonesian international domestic workers: contemporary developments and issues Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes</td>
<td>Afsar, 2005 Chantavich, 2001 Hugo, 2005 Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004 Parreñas, 2005a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When more Sri Lankan men take over ‘women’s chores’ during their wives’ absence, traditional concepts gender roles and family responsibilities may gradually change.</td>
<td>Nurture for sale: Sri Lankan housemaids and the work of mothering</td>
<td>Gamburd, 2000: 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More left-behind fathers appear to be experiencing greater stress as more of them pick up drinking and drug-taking habits as a form of escape, which in turn increase risks among the children, adversely affect children’s emotions and their performance in school examinations.</td>
<td>“Lentils there, lentils here!” Sri Lankan domestic labour in the Middle East</td>
<td>Gamburd, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The disparity between women’s perceived lack of domesticity given her outmigration and the continued pressure to follow gender norms with respect to caring practices, has led to a “gender paradox” that in turn, hinders the acceptance of “the reconstitution of mothering” in transnationally split</td>
<td>Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes</td>
<td>Parreñas, 2005a: 92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mothers away continue to bear most of the responsibility for childcare even after leaving the Philippines while eldest daughters and other female kin such as grandmothers, sisters and aunts are tasked with taking over household chores.

Asis, 2006

Parreñas, 2005a

The continued division of labour across generation by gender will undoubtedly affect the “socialization of children, since the gendered division of task assignments to children usually moulds household work patterns in a later age”.

Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes

Parreñas, 2005a: 92

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>A higher percentage of the elderly in China, though feeling lonely without their children, expressed that they were satisfied with their lives compared to those whose children had remained behind.</td>
<td>How far are the left behind left behind? A preliminary study in rural China</td>
<td>Xiang, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outmigration of all children, albeit from rural-urban areas in Thailand, is associated with lower depression among left-behind rural-dwelling elderly parents.</td>
<td>Rural-urban migration and depression in ageing family members left behind</td>
<td>Abas et al, 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Negative impacts

- There is a “gap” or “a sense of social discomfort and emotional distance” between Filipino migrant fathers and their left-behind children.
- Left-behind children tend to lose “respect, trust, and love” for their migrant parents, favouring material returns over time. They become disappointed with their mothers when they fail to send any money home.
- Migrant mothers may be upset with the carers’ inability to exert control over their children and for spoiling them, while

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<td>Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes</td>
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<td>Parreñas, 2005a: 67</td>
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<td>Guatemala: migration and child rearing</td>
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<td>Moran-Taylor, 2008a: 89</td>
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carers blame the mothers for migrating.

The inability to meet various familial, social and monetary expectations imposed by each generation resulted in relationships ending on a sour note or leading to the splitting of extended families.

Relationships between migrant mothers (or even fathers) and their elderly parents tasked with caring for their children may also become fractured owing to the tensions and divergences in care-giving practices between generations.

Ties between the elderly and their adult children have been weakened by migration in Indonesia.

Costs outweigh the benefits as the left-behind elderly are often burdened with looking after their grandchildren.

Some left-behind elderly were abandoned or loaded with heavier responsibilities and stresses from having to care for the household as well as farm production during their adult children’s absence.

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<tr>
<td>Left-behind children were said to suffer from psychological and emotional stress, are more susceptible to deviant behaviour and criminal offences whilst expressing feelings of abandonment or resentment at being left behind.</td>
<td>The impact of international migration: children left behind in selected countries of Latin America and Caribbean Migration and children: a need to fill information gaps in order to guide policy responses</td>
<td>D’Emilio et al., 2007</td>
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<td>Jespersen, 2006</td>
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<td>Save the Children, Sri Lanka, 2006</td>
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(5) Impacts of migration on children’s physical and psychological well-being
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Positive impacts</th>
<th>Living with migration: experiences of left-behind children in the Philippines</th>
<th>Living with migration: experiences of left-behind children in the Philippines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Though the children miss their absent parent(s), they continue to receive attention from their left-behind parent or other female relatives.</td>
<td>Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children</td>
<td>Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children</td>
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<td>- Left-behind children hence are not necessarily emotionally disadvantaged when compared to children from non-migrant families.</td>
<td>Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004</td>
<td>Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004</td>
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<td>- They receive care and socialization that is similar to children of non-migrants.</td>
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<td>Children play a role in improving their own well-being by taking charge of their lives, devising ways of coping with parental absence and also keeping the family together.</td>
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<td>Children are also given space to grow independently upon the removal of restrictive parental control and may learn many important skills when they view their left-behind circumstance positively.</td>
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<td>School enrolment rates were higher among migrants’ families in the rural areas.</td>
<td>Internal Migration and the Development Nexus: the Case of Bangladesh</td>
<td>Internal Migration and the Development Nexus: the Case of Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absence of fathers is shown to correlate positively with the pace of schooling of left-behind children.</td>
<td>The effects of fathers’ and siblings’ migration on children’s pace of schooling in rural Bangladesh</td>
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<td>Left-behind children in the Philippines are better off economically, which in turn has other advantages:</td>
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<td>- They are mainly enrolled in private schools and that they are generally happy at school.</td>
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<td>- They are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities which help broaden their learning.</td>
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<td>- At least during the elementary years, children of migrants performed better at school, received higher grades as well as school awards when compared to</td>
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Parental migration has a positive effect on the physical health of left-behind Filipino children:
- Migrants’ children tend to be taller and have better general health than non-migrant children; and
- Non-migrant children fall sick more frequently although there was also a slightly higher proportion of mothers-away children who are more susceptible to common ailments and loss of appetite.

Filipino children in the survey have generally adjusted well socially, have strong social support and get along well with other family members. This result was not very different from that of non-migrants’.

“Negative marginal effects were largest for extended families with both parents present”, larger for household types where both parents have migrated and also single parent or grandparent households, fewer marginal negative effects when one parent is present and the other has presumably migrated.

Negative impacts

The strain of family separation resulted in higher incidence of mental disorders among women and children to lower levels of school performance and impeded social and psychological development among children.

The gender of the migrant and the period of absence are the significant independent variables: longer absences of mothers tend to lead to lower education prospects of their children as compared to long-term paternal absences. The short-term absence of fathers, however, also appeared to reduce children’s chances of school enrolment.

That children with migrant mother tend to suffer more are not necessary so as migrant mothers remain intimately connected to their left-behind offspring.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Left-behind children from working-class families feel more abandoned since they have less ability to sustain transnational communication.</th>
<th>Long distance intimacy: class, gender and intergenerational relations between mothers and children in Filipino transnational families</th>
<th>Parreñas, 2005b</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children with migrant mothers tend to suffer more and have a tendency to lag behind children of the other groups. For example, they</td>
<td>Impact of labour migration on the children left behind: Philippine Study</td>
<td>Battistella and Conaco, 1998</td>
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<td>- performed less well in terms of academic performance;</td>
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<td>- showed poorer social adjustment; and</td>
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<td>- suffered from impeded social and psychological development.</td>
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<td>More children with mothers away report themselves as being unhappy, more anxious and lonely, and able to get the least hours of sleep. More left-behind boys, than girls, are also reportedly more vulnerable to being “touched in sensitive areas”.</td>
<td>Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino children</td>
<td>Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004: 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children of migrant mothers tend to drop out of school to look for work or help with household chores.</td>
<td>“Lentils there, lentils here!” Sri Lankan domestic labour in the Middle East</td>
<td>Gamburd, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The situation for left-behind daughters tends to be discouraging as they, despite their mothers’ best efforts over long distance, tend to leave school earlier and form their own families through early marriages and unplanned pregnancies in order to complete their own lives</td>
<td>Nurture for sale: Sri Lankan housemaids and the work of mothering Maid in Singapore: the Serious, Quirky and sometimes Absurd Life of a Domestic Worker</td>
<td>Gamburd, 2000; Sampang, 2005</td>
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