THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL DEPRIVATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND BY MOLDOVAN MIGRANTS

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UNICEF Moldova

Child Rights Information Center (CRIC), Moldova

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<u>**The Impact of Parental Deprivation on the Development of Children Left Behind by Moldovan Migrants**</u>
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Executive Summary

Vulnerable children – especially those deprived of parental care – constitute a specific risk group. Yet until recently, the magnitude of this issue was underestimated in Moldova. Official authorities were more concerned with traditional protection issues and caregivers and parents tended to be complacent, believing that remittance flows automatically lead to improvements in family wellbeing.

A number of recent events have shown that the situation is not as positive as it is understood to be. These events also highlighted the delay in anticipating the problem of parental deprivation due to weaknesses in existing monitoring mechanisms that trace the impact of this issue. This has demonstrated that the systems established to monitor the progress of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy were not tailored to provide information about non-economic deprivations. As a result, these weaknesses are reflected in gaps in social policy and a lack of services.

This survey seeks to assess to what extent children and their caregivers understand the significance of parental deprivation and to what extent they share an awareness of the levels of deprivation children face. The survey also seeks to clarify to what extent these children have a place in their communities and participate in decision-making.

The survey found that children left behind by migrants parents lack emotional support and have difficulty overcoming parental separation, both socially and as individuals. These children tend to cut off relationships with their peers, and instead maintain preferential relationships with other children left without parental care. On the other hand, in the areas of health, nutrition and education, there is no clear evidence that parental deprivation contributes to a worsening of these children's status.

The survey showed that there are significant gaps between adults' views on these issues and children's expectations. This has a direct impact on the availability of social services, except for children considered to be in a highly vulnerable social situation.

The results of this qualitative study confirm that there is an urgent need for local stakeholders to develop their capacity to address more comprehensively the non-economic needs of children who are deprived of parental care. The results also helped to highlight the urgent need to refine the overall system of monitoring the impacts of parental deprivation on children.

Resumen Ejecutivo

Los niños vulnerables –especialmente los que carecen del cuidado de sus progenitores– constituyen un grupo de riesgo específico. Sin embargo, en Moldova, hasta hace muy poco, se ha subestimado la magnitud de esta cuestión. Las autoridades oficiales estaban más preocupadas por las cuestiones tradicionales de protección y los cuidadores y los progenitores se han mostrado en general complacientes, en la creencia de que los flujos de remesas conducen automáticamente a una mejora en el bienestar de la familia.

Una serie de acontecimientos recientes ha revelado que la situación no es tan positiva como se considera. Estos acontecimientos han subrayado también el retraso en la anticipación del problema que supone la privación de los progenitores, debido a las debilidades en los mecanismos de supervisión existentes que registran las repercusiones de esta cuestión. Está demostrado que los sistemas establecidos para supervisar el progreso de la Estrategia para la Reducción de la Pobreza del país no estaban adaptados para proporcionar información sobre las privaciones no económicas. Como resultado, estas debilidades se reflejan en una serie de lagunas en la política social y una escasez de servicios.

Este estudio trata de valorar hasta qué punto los niños y sus cuidadores comprenden la importancia de la privación de los progenitores y hasta qué punto comparten una concienciación sobre los niveles de privación a los que hacen frente los niños. El estudio también trata de clarificar hasta qué punto estos niños tienen un sitio en sus comunidades y participan en la toma de decisiones.

El estudio descubrió que los hijos de progenitores migrantes que permanecen en sus países de origen carecen de apoyo emocional y tienen dificultades para superar la separación de sus progenitores, socialmente y como individuos. Estos niños suelen cortar las relaciones con sus pares y en lugar de ello mantienen relaciones preferentes con otros niños que tampoco reciben cuidado de sus progenitores. Por otra parte, en las esferas de la salud, la nutrición y la educación, no hay pruebas claras que indiquen que la privación de los progenitores contribuya a un empeoramiento de la situación de estos niños.

El estudio reveló que hay diferencias significativas entre los puntos de vista de los adultos sobre estas cuestiones y las expectativas de los niños. Esto tiene una repercusión directa sobre la disponibilidad de servicios sociales, excepto para los niños que se considera que se encuentran en una situación social altamente vulnerable.

Los resultados de este estudio cualitativo confirman que existe la necesidad urgente de que las partes interesadas locales desarrollen su capacidad para abordar más ampliamente las necesidades no económicas de los niños que carecen del cuidado de los progenitores. Los resultados contribuyen también a subrayar la necesidad urgente que hay de refinar el sistema general de seguimiento de las repercusiones de la privación de los progenitores sobre los niños.

Résumé Analytique

Les enfants vulnérables, surtout ceux qui sont privés de soins familiaux, constituent un groupe spécifique d'enfants à risque. Pourtant, jusqu'à une période récente, l'ampleur de cette question était sous-estimée en République de Moldova. Les autorités officielles étaient plus préoccupées par les questions de protection traditionnelles, et les dispensateurs de soins et les parents tendaient à être complaisants, croyant que les envois de fonds conduisaient automatiquement à des améliorations du bien-être familial.

Un certain nombre d'événements récents ont montré que la situation n'était pas aussi positive qu'on ne le pensait. Ces événements ont aussi souligné le retard pris dans l'anticipation du problème de la privation des parents, en raison de faiblesses des mécanismes de suivi qui permettraient d'évaluer les répercussions de cette question. Cela a montré que les systèmes mis en place pour suivre les progrès de la stratégie nationale de réduction de la pauvreté n'étaient pas conçus pour donner des informations sur les privations d'ordre non économique. Ces faiblesses se reflètent donc ans les lacunes de la politique sociale et la pénurie de services.

Cette enquête cherche à évaluer dans quelle mesure les enfants et ceux qui s'occupent d'eux comprennent la signification de la privation des parents, et à quel point ils ont tous conscience des niveaux de privation auxquels les enfants sont confrontés. L'enquête cherche aussi à clarifier dans quelle mesure ces enfants ont une place dans leur communauté et participent à la prise de décisions.

L'enquête a montré que les enfants laissés au pays par des parents migrants manquaient de soutien affectif et éprouvaient des difficultés à surmonter la séparation avec les parents, à la fois socialement et individuellement. Ces enfants ont tendance à rompre les relations qu'ils ont avec leurs pairs, pour entretenir plutôt des relations privilégiées avec d'autres enfants également privés de leurs parents. En revanche, dans les secteurs de la santé, de la nutrition et de l'éducation, rien ne prouve clairement que l'absence des parents contribue à une dégradation de la situation de ces enfants.

L'étude a montré qu'il y avait des différences significatives entre la position des adultes sur cette question et les attentes des enfants. Cela a un impact direct sur la disponibilité de services sociaux, sauf pour les enfants dont la situation sociale est considérée extrêmement vulnérable.

Les résultats de cette étude qualitative confirment qu'il est urgent que les intervenants locaux renforcent cette capacité, de manière à confronter de façon plus exhaustive les besoins non économiques des enfants privés de soins parentaux. Les résultats ont aussi aidé à souligner à quel point il est urgent d'affiner le système général de suivi des conséquences de l'absence des parents sur les enfants.

1. Moldova and its Social and Economic Transition

Since 2000, Moldova's strong growth performance has reversed a decade of economic decline and rising poverty. Between 2000 and 2005, real GDP increased by more than 30 percent and the poverty rate was cut by more than half as a result of the export of labour and the inflow of workers' remittances. Today, 25 percent of Moldova's economically active population is working abroad. Workers' remittances, equivalent to 27 percent of GDP, have raised disposable income and fueled rapid growth in consumption expenditures.[1]

Yet although Moldova has enjoyed political stability, accelerated economic growth, increased government services, and improvements in social rights, 26.5 percent of Moldovans still live in poverty. Despite significant improvements in economic and social areas, Moldova today is considered to be lagging behind its neighbours in terms of wellbeing, equality and social inclusion.

2. Migration, Remittances and Children Left Behind

Over the past few years the phenomenon of migration has emerged as a sensitive policy issue and its negative impact is becoming more and more evident. Although it is one of the most readily available strategies for escaping or avoiding poverty, for many Moldovans migration also has negative consequences in the economic and social spheres.[2] As a result of a rapid, two-decade de-industrialization and the erosion of production and purchasing power in rural areas, migration outflows increased in the aftermath of the 1998 regional financial crisis. Some 371,000 Moldovans, or 25 percent of the economically active population, were estimated to be working abroad at the end of 2004.

Migration is considered an important coping mechanism for the poor. For the population as a whole, the effects of labour migration are mostly negative, and there is a strong relationship between the income and non-income dimensions of inequality. Non-income inequality includes inequality in skills, education, opportunities, happiness and health. Children are especially vulnerable to these non-income inequalities. According to the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy paper (EGPRSP), the poverty incidence for all age groups of children is higher on average than it is among adult residents of the Republic. The poverty level among children in 2002 reached 45.2 percent. The more children there are in a family, the higher the risk of its being included in the category of the poor. Poverty is especially widespread among children in rural areas (50 percent) due to the large family size and relatively low incomes of rural households.

At present, very little information exists on the impact of migration on children. The first study of the magnitude of the problem, commissioned by UNICEF in 2005, highlighted two negative impacts of migration in Moldova. The first is the impact on Moldovan demographic trends and

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[1] *Moldova: Opportunities for Accelerated Growth*, World Bank, September 2005.
[2] The Situation of the Children Remaining behind Moldovan Migrants, UNICEF and Valeriu Prohnitchi, 2005.

their links with the long-term Poverty Reduction Strategy. While reducing poverty in the short term, migration may exacerbate the problem of underdevelopment in the long term. The second and more immediate impact relates to the high, and increasing, number of children left behind. The study estimates that between 150,000 and 270,000 children aged 0 to 14 have been left behind by one migrating parent and that 40,000 have been left behind by both parents. These estimates were confirmed by the national Demographic Health Survey carried out in 2005, which indicated that 31 percent of all children aged 0 to 14 were left without one or both parents, compared to 16 percent in 2000.[3] The study offers the hypothesis that most of these children live better than their peers, who face particularly high risks of being poor. However, the study shows that the children of migrants are more likely to be marginalized, mistreated and abused and to become victims of human trafficking.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many children from the poorest stratum of the population do not attend school, are hired to work in animal care and sheep pasturing and are sometimes encouraged to drop out of school altogether. However, there are few assessments providing relevant information on who the most vulnerable children are, on their living conditions and on the kinds of deprivation they face.

This situation is well known and it was recommended that within the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Moldova's authorities should strengthen poverty analysis by selecting more appropriate methodologies for measuring poverty and by improving sensitive analyses. However, the country still lacks a sensitivite analysis of the relative risks of poverty for children.

3. The Qualitative Survey on the Situation of Children Left Without Parental Care

The most common indicator for measuring welfare, the Human Development Index, (HDI) is a combination of education, health status and data on economic growth. This indicator, however, does not provide a complete understanding of the issue of deprivation faced by children, much less by children left behind by migrant parents. For example, it does not provide information on the basic services used by the children of migrants, on their levels of access to these services, on how responsive the services are or on how these children enter the domestic labour market and on the ways in which they differ from other new entrants.

In order to complete the first assessment, UNICEF commissioned additional work, including a qualitative survey aimed at responding to questions such as: What kinds of deprivation do the children left behind face and how do they, their peers and the communities they live in perceive these deprivations? A special focus was placed on **emotional status**, **education, health, nutrition and access to social services**. This study represents the second component of a broader assessment of this category of children.

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[3] Demographic and Health Survey, Ministry of Health and Social protection, 2005.

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4. Methodology

4.1. Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the situation of children with one or both parents working abroad. The research looked at the migration phenomenon mainly from a qualitative perspective, highlighting the impact of children's separation from their parents on their social and emotional development. By virtue of the qualitative nature of the study, its outcomes are not necessarily representative of all the children in the Republic of Moldova who have one or both parents working abroad.

The target group of the investigation consisted of 75 children from three rural Moldovan communities living without the care of one or both parents for at least two years as a result of their departure abroad.

The study had the following objectives:

- to identify the repercussions of separation from their parents on children's social and emotional development;
- to identify the concerns and worries of children living without one or both parents;
- to identify children's competencies and skills in handling the situation of living without one or both parents;
- to analyse children's views of their future;
- to determine the level of fulfilment of these children's rights and their participation in community affairs;
- to analyse existing policies and services provided for children without parental care;

to formulate a set of recommendations for the improvement of the conditions of children with at least one parent working abroad.

4.2. The Research Process

The research was carried out between September 2005 and April 2006. The table below presents the main phases of the development of the research.

Table 1: Development of the Study, *The Situation of Children Left without Parental Care*

Nr.	Stage	Period
1.	Elaboration of the study's design and the necessary mechanisms for data collection.	September - December 2005
2.	Consultation with an international expert in children's affairs with regard to the study's design and the tools used for collecting data.	October 2005

3.	A study visit to Iargara township (Leova district) during which the research team members, a UNICEF representative, and the international consultant participated in discussions with various community members about the problems to be tackled in the study.	October 2005
4.	Piloting the instruments for data collection on children and making adaptations as necessary. (Susleni village, Orhei district).	November 2005
5.	Training the data collection team.	November 2005
6.	Administration of a questionnaire to school children between the ages of 10 and 18 in the localities covered by the study.	December 2005
7.	Data collection from children and adults.	December 2005 – January 2006
8.	Initial analysis of information collected from children and adults.	March 2006
9.	Consultation with a group of children and teenagers on findings resulting from a preliminary analysis of information gathered from children.	March 2006
10.	The analysis of the study's results, formulation of conclusions and recommendations.	March 2006
11.	Preparation of the study's report.	March - April 2006
12.	Consultation with an international expert and UNICEF on the report.	April 2006

4.3. Participants

When selecting the three communities to participate in the study, the following criteria were used:

- Geographic location – localities from different zones of the Republic (North, South and Centre).

- The existence of collaborative relationships between the organization that carried out the study and a resource person from the selected communities (local administration representatives, teachers) that would contribute to the following:
    - o getting in touch with all sources of information in the field;
    - o ensuring the commitment of community officials in order to conduct the data collection;
    - o guaranteeing access to the groups of children necessary for the study.

- The existence of a lyceum or an elementary school in the locality, because children between the ages of 10 and 18 constitute the study's target group.

- The number of children left without parental care in the community. Using data provided by the resource persons, only localities with the largest numbers of such children were selected.

Two hundred and thirty-one people participated in the study: 169 children and 62 adults. Information was gathered from 159 children and teenagers, aged 10 to 18, among them 101 girls and 58 boys. Ten children between the ages of 14 and 17 (seven girls and three boys) were chosen to help analyse some of the data. These children are opinion leaders in their hometowns and they have some experience of involvement in various community projects.

The choice to include children between 10 and 18 years in the study was dictated by the experience of the organisation that carried out the research. In order to ensure the quality of data collection and analysis, it was decided to limit the study to this age group because working with younger children requires special abilities and methodologies.

The disproportionate number of girls participating in the study does not necessarily mean that they are more affected by the phenomenon of adult migration. Children were involved in the study on a voluntary basis, even if there was the risk that boys would be fewer in number. Girls are more likely to participate in activities that require communication and the sharing of experiences, according to the study *Evaluation of Children Participation in the Republic of Moldova*, carried out by EYE Moldova, a non-governmental organization promoting the participation of children in community projects. For these reasons, we should point out that this report may not have identified all the specifics of boys' experiences connected with adult migration. Consequently, the ways in which boys deal with separation from their parents represent a subject that requires more thorough investigation.

For a better understanding of these children's conditions, the decision was made to include in the study a comparison group, consisting of children from the same region and of similar ages, but living with their parents.

The selection of groups of children participating in the study was carried out by the resource persons from the selected communities, according to the following criteria:

- agreement to participate in the research, awareness of its broad purpose only, without many details;

- the inclusion of children of both genders, when possible;

- the inclusion of children aged between 10 and 18;

- at least a duration of two years living without one or both parents as a result of their departure abroad (only for children who constituted the study's subject group).

The fact that the groups of children participating in the study were selected with the help of a teacher or member of the school's administration could have led to a biased selection of children. The decision of the research team in this regard was dictated by limitations of time and by their wish to avoid direct questions about family situations, which can arouse unpleasant feelings. Taking into account the fact that teachers and school administrators are aware of such details of pupils' lives, we preferred to offer the adults the role of selecting children, accepting the risk that they might be biased in their selections.

The phenomenon of adult migration and its consequences are difficult to follow. Children who constituted the study's subject group have diverse experiences in this field. Some of them have only one parent living abroad while others have both parents abroad. Some of the children face this circumstance for the first time while others are more used to living without at least one parent's care. We must also mention a difference in the intervals during which children are separated from their parents, a difference mostly determined by the country to which the parents have migrated. In order to ensure the children's presence at data collection workshops as well as their emotional security, it was decided not to take into account these varying aspects during the process of selecting the participants. Therefore, the proportion of children participants in the study with one or both parents working abroad is unknown.

Table 2: Number of Children Involved in the Study, by Age

Age	Study's Subject Group	Comparison group	Total
10 years	2	4	6
11 years	5	7	12
12 years	10	11	21
13 years	18	13	31
14 years	5	23	28
15 years	9	13	22
16 years	16	8	24
17 years	8	4	12
18 years	2	1	3
Total	75	84	159

In order to obtain an ample overview of the situation of children who constitute the study's subject group and in order to guarantee verification of the collected data, several categories of adults have been included in the study.

Table 3: Categories of Adults Participating in the Study

Nr.	The source of data collection	Number of persons
1.	Caregivers	7
2.	Form teachers and teachers	29
3.	Headmasters	3
4.	Medical workers	3
5.	Local NGO members	2
6.	Inspectors of juvenile offenders	1
7.	Local administration representatives (mayor, Town Hall secretary)	4
8.	Representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports and representatives of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection	6
9.	Central authority representatives (Ministry of Education, Children and Sports; Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family; Ministry of Internal	3

	Affairs)	
10.	Representatives of the National Council for the Protection of Child's Rights	1
11.	International NGO representatives (International Organisation for Migration; UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova)	3
	Total	**62**

During the interview with the inspector for juvenile offenders from one locality, we found that the information obtained was less relevant to this study because it refers to children who have disobeyed the law, whereas children left without parental care do not belong to this category.

During the study, the Department for Migration was going through a process of reorganisation. Because of the difficulty of accessing their information, we decided to exclude them from the study.

Adults who experience separation from their children were not included in the study. Their opinions would in fact be very valuable for the investigation of this phenomenon, but because of the lack of time and access to these persons we did not interview parents.

4.4. Methods and Techniques

On the basis of the study's key questions, the instruments of data collection were elaborated and adapted to the identified sources of information. The methods and instruments to be used in collecting the data were selected on the basis of their ability to validate the data. The multitude of sources of information represents another way to provide an impartial view on the subject.

Data collection was carried out through the following methods:

- Workshops using participatory techniques
- Questionnaires
- Focus group discussions
- In-depth interviews

The option of using participatory methods of data collection with children is based on the specific nature of the analysed subject. Because of some very delicate issues that are approached in the research, it was necessary to guarantee children's ability to balance their degree of involvement with the externalisation of their personal emotions. The participatory methods offer opportunities for analysing personal experiences and exchanging experiences with other persons. This facilitates the creation of an atmosphere of trust. The participatory methods stimulate self-expression and prevent the children from presenting themselves in a favourable light or from saying what they think the operator in the field expects them to say.

The information was gathered from children during workshops that lasted an average of 3.5 hours. Both groups of child participants, the group that constituted the study's subject and the comparison group, were divided into two categories on the basis of their age. The division into age groups of 10-14 and 15-18 was designed to create an open and comfortable atmosphere for

all of the children involved, taking into account the particulars of puberty and adolescence in development and communication. In each of the three localities, four data collection workshops were held, all of them in schools. Teachers were asked not to attend the activities organised with the children.

The techniques used for collecting data from children were piloted with the help of two groups of children, one which was formed of children with at least one parent working abroad. The workshops planned for these groups of children differed only in one technique which was connected with the experience of separation from parents: children living with parents were asked to describe their families, while their peers without parental care were invited to explain to what extent parents' departure had changed their lives.

In general, when testing the data collection methods, child participants were cooperative and showed interest in the subject. However, one of the evaluation activities was perceived by most of the children differently from how it had been initially envisaged. Some of the children did not understand the first variant of the technique, it took too much time to be performed, and it required a lot of space that not all the schools were able to provide. As a result, the technique aimed at identifying the children's internal resources to cope with the situation in which they found themselves was replaced. The piloting constituted an important stage for the finalisation of the instructions to children for the accomplishment of the tasks, for the management of time reserved for each of the planned techniques, for confirmation of the efficiency of the group techniques to provide dynamism for the process, and for the examination of children's readiness to discuss certain subjects.

The team of data collectors was selected from the CRIC workers and volunteers (students or graduates in social assistance with experience in facilitating group activities). These persons were instructed in data collection methods and techniques, the specific tasks of a workshop facilitator, focus group discussions and assistants' tasks, as well as methods of recording and storing information. Collectors were also asked to take into account the delicate character of the analysed subjects, as well as the importance of respecting ethical principles, i.e., confidentiality. Data collection workshops for children were led by teams of two to three persons.

4.5. The Structure of the Data Collection Workshop for Children

1. Visualisation in participatory planning

The participants answered individually, on cards, the following question: "What thoughts preoccupy you during an ordinary day?" The children had the opportunity to complete several cards, depending on the number of ideas they wanted to share with the group. The cards containing ideas were grouped according to certain categories suggested by the participants themselves and then commented upon, depending on their content and the frequency with which some ideas recurred.

2. Brainstorming

The participants discussed, out of a multitude of ideas, a list of difficulties and social problems they might face in the future as grownups. This exercise introduced them to the topic of the internal resources that enable a person to overcome problems.

3. Clustering of skills

The participants were invited to group the cards, according to their own interpretation of what was written on them, into three different categories: abilities, attitudes, and knowledge. The grouping was done on the basis of cooperation and common decisions of the members of small groups, which led to the expression of an "average" opinion in the groups.

4. Impact drawing / Family drawing

Children with one or both parents working abroad were asked to make a drawing representing how their parents' departure had changed their lives. It was proposed that the children recall, individually, what their life used to be like before their parents went abroad and to compare it with their conditions at present. Children were invited to meditate upon changes that occurred during this period and to represent them on a sheet of paper. Participants were asked to comment on the drawings.

Children living with their parents were asked to draw their families. It was proposed that participants draw their actual families the way they were, rather than the way they would like them to be. Then the children were invited to comment on the drawings, mentioning the persons represented, characterising them and explaining their roles.

5. Dot voting on Likert[4] smiley-face scale

Participants expressed, through voting, their personal opinion on a series of assertions concerning several rights selected by the research team. Each participant was asked to vote on a scale from 1 to 5 – "fully agree," "agree," "yes and no," "disagree," "totally disagree." Average ratings for each statement reflected the children's opinions on the extent to which their rights are respected.

6. Social mapping

In groups, participants were invited to draw a map of their community and to indicate on it the places where they can go if they need something, regardless of the problem they face (for advice, for help, as well as for money). Children were asked to indicate with certain signs, invented by them, to what extent the persons and the institutions represented on the map sustain them, encourage them, and are friendly to them.

7. Future drawing

It was proposed that children represent in a drawing their future in five years or after leaving school. Their drawing had to reflect as many aspects as possible of their future life, including the community they will live in, the occupation they will have, their family, etc. Participants worked in small groups, but they could choose between representing themselves separately or make a drawing that included all of the group's members. Each participant made a comment on his/her drawing.

4.6. Questionnaire

Even though this study is based on qualitative methods, in order to obtain an overview of the situation of children left without parental care, a questionnaire was also used. The questionnaire

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[4] Scale showing respondents' agreement or disagreement with a statement.

was completed by 743 children in the 5th-12th forms from three localities involved in the research. The objective of this methodology was to obtain information about the number of children left without parental care because of parents' departure abroad; children's material conditions; school attendance; the country with the greatest number of Moldovan migrants; the main channels of communication between parents and children and the reasons for the parents' departure.

4.7. Focus-group discussions

This method was used to collect information from teachers and form masters from communities involved in the study. Teachers constitute a valuable source of information because they are constantly in contact with students and play a substantial role in their development. Most of the teachers in the discussions were form masters of the children who represented the study's subject group. In total, three focus-group discussions were held, during which a set of questions designed to tackle the study's main areas of interest were talked about. They lasted almost an hour and were recorded on audio tape.

Participants in the focus-group discussions showed interest in the problems and contributed to the elucidation of various aspects of the children's behaviour. Despite the fact that certain participants from this category had the tendency at the beginning of the discussion to present the conditions of all children in a favourable light, including children without parental care, gradually they became more open in discussing subjects approached in the study.

4.8. In-depth Interviews

This method was applied to probe the opinions of several categories of adults – caregivers, school administrators, local NGO members, inspectors for juvenile offenders, medical workers, representatives of local and central public administrations, and representatives of international organisations. A set of questions and guidelines was elaborated for each category of participants, with the aim of revealing community members' views concerning all the issues discussed in the study. Some of the interviews with representatives of local public administration took place over the phone because of the difficulty of making an appointment with these persons. The interviews were recorded on audio tapes and their average duration was 30 minutes.

During the study's development, we solicited stories about children who have experienced separation from their parents from Local Children's Councils, managed by the National Children's Resource Centre. Several stories that we considered most relevant to the study were included in the report.

4.9. Data processing and analysis

Content analysis was used for most of the information collected. The data obtained from the questionnaire and the Dot Voting on Likert Smiley Face Scale were analysed statistically. Concerning the techniques used in analysing the drawings, in order to reduce subjective the interpretation, the analysis of the information collected during workshops was based on comments made by the children.

The information gathered during the workshops organised with children, the interviews, and the focus-group discussions with adults was stored, in a standardized electronic form that had been drawn up by research teams.

Content analysis was based on the identification of the main tendencies that emerged from all of the information gathered. The key questions of the research served as main topics for the organisation and systematisation of all data.

4.10. Consulting workshop

After a primary analysis, the information collected from the children, teachers, and caregivers was used for consultations with a group of selected children. The need for feedback from the children on the data obtained from these categories of adults was dictated by the fact that, as a rule, the adults' roles and opinions are known by all of the children. Ten teenagers and four members of the research team were chosen to participate in the consulting workshop. Children consultants were selected with the help of a partner organization that works with children that had experience in other participation projects, but children did not consult on studies carried out in their own localities.

The goal of the consulting workshop was to verify if the outcomes obtained corresponded with reality. The consulting workshop used the following methods: focus-group discussions, visualisation in Participatory Planning and Dot Voting on the Likert Smiley Face Scale. The children consultants were shown the results of all the study's key questions and the methods used in their collection and were asked to express their opinions on whether the results corresponded with reality. The opinions of the consulted children were recorded, given an electronic format, and then integrated into the text of the outcomes obtained within the study.

The opinions collected from young workshop participants were very useful for achieving the goals of the study, for the elaboration of the report, and for the formulation of the recommendations included in the report.

The report presents relevant comments of participants related to various aspects of the problems analysed. The source of opinions is indicated in each case. In order to facilitate the quotation of the sources, several abbreviations and symbols will be used:

Gr.I – 10-14 years of age living without one or both parents;
Gr.II – 15-18 years of age living without one or both parents;
Gr.III – 10-14 years of age living with parents;
Gr.IV – 15-18 years of age living with parents.
DCW – participant in the data consultation workshop;
LPA – representatives of local public administration;
DDEYS - representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports;
DDSAFP – representatives of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection;
MEYS – representative of the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports;
MHSPF - representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family;
MIA – representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs;

NCCRP - representative of the National Council for Child's Rights Protection;
IOM – representative of the International Organisation for Migration;
UNICEF – representatives of the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova.

4.11. Consideration of Ethical Principles

Informed agreement

The children and adults from the communities involved were informed about the study by the resource persons solicited by the research team. During the data collection process, the children and adults were informed about the study's objectives and the way the information gathered would be used. Before the beginning of the workshops with children and discussions with adults all the participants had the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate in the study.

The research team decided not to give any details about the research beforehand in order to avoid answers prepared in advance as well as other factors that could distort the study' data. From the experience of the organisation that conducted the study, some adults tend to "prepare" children so that they present their community in a favourable light.

Confidentiality

The children and members of the communities in which the study was conducted were assured from the beginning that confidentiality would be respected. The names of the localities from which the children come were not included in the report in order to reduce the possibility of discovering their identities. Nevertheless, the identity of certain adults can be discovered because they participated in the study as representatives of public institutions. In spite of the personal views that they expressed, these participants were asked to make public the opinions of the institutions they represent; therefore, in these cases anonymity was not a concern.

Protection of psychological welfare

During the process of data collection and consultation, we made sure that our interventions would not affect the children in any way. Instructions to the operators in the field and the methodology used are the main ways this principle was respected.

The data collectors were young, competent in the field of psychology and social assistance and had experience working with children. This played an important role in ensuring a favourable climate for the discussion of all the subjects relevant to the study.

During the consulting and data collection workshops, participants enjoyed the freedom of unlimited expression on any of the pertinent subjects. Many of the data collection methods used drawing as an efficient technique to facilitate children's expression on delicate and private matters. Participants were encouraged to share their emotional state, but some preferred not to do so (for instance, some refused to comment on their drawings). Similar cases also occurred during the workshops organised with children from the comparative group – namely, children living with their parents. For those children who opted not to comment on their drawings, these cases were excluded from the analysis.

Non-discrimination

Some techniques of data collection from children required participants to work in small groups. Data collectors guaranteed equal opportunities for all participants to express themselves in order to capture all the perspectives, sometimes even contrary ones on the same subject.

The research team made every effort to insert in the study's report the whole gamut of opinions gathered from all categories of sources.

Children participation in data analysis

In order to ensure the quality of the analysis of the data collected within the study, a group of children and children consultants discussed the outcomes obtained from preliminary processing of the data. Since children's everyday experiences can be different from adults' perceptions or expectations, we considered that for a more meaningful understanding of children's conditions, consulting the latter would be very useful. With the help of the opinions, views and explanations provided by the consulting workshop participants, the research team tried to allow maximum interpretation of the information and to keep the authenticity of the outcomes obtained as close as possible to the children's reports. The children also participated in the process of making recommendations for their peers left without parental care. This is how they contributed to adjusting the suggested interventions to the real needs of these children.

5. Results

Actually, few studies have been carried out in the Republic of Moldova aimed at the elucidation of the phenomenon of adult migration. Studies that have been made are overwhelmingly statistical in character. Although sometimes contradictory, the official data and the data provided by research reveal that the number of people who go abroad looking for a job is alarmingly large. According to the data provided by MEYS, on September 1, 2005, the number of school-age children with both parents abroad had reached 35,000. At the same time, about 75,000 children lived with only one parent because of the migration phenomenon.

The outcomes of the survey confirm the extent of adult migration from the localities involved in the study. Thus, more than a fourth (27.6 percent) of the children questioned asserted that they had one parent abroad while 9.3 percent of the children said both parents had migrated. In two of the localities, the number of fathers who had gone abroad is significantly larger than the number of migrant mothers. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: The Proportion of Migrant Parents

Migrant parent	Locality I		Locality II		Locality III		Total
	Frequency (pers.)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (pers.)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (pers.)	Frequency (%)	
Father	29	32.2	54	46.6	35	50.7	118
Mother	33	36.7	34	29.3	20	29	87
Both	28	31.1	28	24.1	13	18.8	69
NA*	-	-	-	-	1	1.4	1
Total	**90**	**100**	**116**	**100**	**69**	**100**	**275**

* no answer to the question

The survey revealed that the vast majority of men from the analysed communities work in Russia (almost 48 percent). Italy represents the second country of destination for migrant men. As for women, the respondents most frequently mentioned Italy, followed by Russia. Other countries presenting an interest for Moldovan migrants from communities involved in the study are: Portugal, Ireland, Greece, France, Ukraine, Turkey, Spain, Germany, USA, and China.

The data obtained reveal that 40 percent of migrant fathers and 30 percent of migrant mothers left the country during the current year; 21.4 percent of children have been living without their mothers' care for three years, and 12 percent of children have been living without their fathers' care for the same length of time. A considerable number of the respondents (about 6 percent) asserted that they had been separated from their parents more than four years ago. The question concerning the duration of separation from their fathers was not answered by 4 percent of the respondents. This could be explained by the fact that many of their parents might be divorced.

The telephone and parcels represent the main channels of connection between children and their migrant parents. Regarding the frequency of communication, most of the children (44 percent) mentioned that they communicate 2-3 times a week. Every eighth child questioned communicates daily with his/her parents who are abroad, and a fourth of the respondents communicate weekly. Fifteen percent of the respondents communicate with their migrant parents only several times a month, and about 2 percent of children communicate less than once in a 2-3 months period.

5.1. Children's perceptions regarding social problems that can affect them

Children from all of the groups involved in the study mentioned, among the problems they think they might confront in the future, the following:

- Difficulties in ensuring both their own and their family's welfare, caused by the lack of work, the lack of a place to live, low salaries and insufficient financial resources for pursuing education.

- Health problems, including HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, eating unhealthy food, and the lack of potable water and good-quality medical services.

- Problems concerning relationships with other people, such as loneliness, lack of friends, dishonesty, conflicts, violation of rights, family and social violence, divorce.

- Problems related to violation of social rules – human trafficking, including trafficking in children, involvement in committing offences and terrorism.

- Ecological issues.

Children with parents abroad mentioned the urgent need for them to develop certain personal abilities in order to cope with the eventual difficulties of adult life: independence in the decision-making process, self-confidence, time management and emotional control.

5.2. Adults' perceptions of the risks faced by migrants' children

Of all the categories of adults participating in the study, only caregivers asserted that, as a rule, children left in their care are not more vulnerable to situations involving risks than other children. But in the opinion of the majority of the respondents, migrants' children constitute a group for whom there is a strong probability of risk.

Quitting school is among the most frequently mentioned form of risk. The loss of interest in school and a deterioration of academic performance represent, in the opinion of the representatives of central administration and UNICEF, signs of the risk of early school leaving. The lack of motivation for studies can have negative consequences on children's education. The members of the communities involved in the research expressed the same idea. According to teachers' reports, all of the children in the localities participating in the study are provided with schooling. Certain teachers and headmasters reported that some cases of school leaving among migrants' children had been solved rapidly through counselling, sometimes with the consultation of a psychologist.

> "The main implications for them are connected with the schooling process; there are children tending more often to abandon school... a worse academic performance, because it is not a priority." (UNICEF)

The survey shows that in both groups of children, only 3/4 of the respondents attend school daily. The number of children asserting that sometimes they miss classes is slightly higher among children with parents abroad: 22 percent.

School administrators, some teachers, representatives of local and central public administrations, as well as representatives of the UNICEF office consider that another risk to migrants' children is their vulnerability to drug abuse. In the view of the respondents, quite frequently these behaviours of children and teenagers are caused by pressure from their peers.

> "Children adopt certain undesirable behaviours – vulgar language, smoking and alcohol and drug consumption – if they are not supervised by their parents." (A headmaster)

Some of the adults interviewed mentioned that the probability of children with at least one parent working abroad committing offences is higher than in the case of children living with their parents. Headmasters and certain representatives of local public authorities asserted that there had been registered offences committed by these children, and the representatives of MIA and NCCRP highlighted the role of the child's circle of acquaintances in influencing the adoption of such undesirable behaviours.

> "... to find himself / herself in undesirable circumstances, in groups of children that could make him commit certain illegal acts, beginning with moral and finishing with penal offences". (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

Deprivation of parental care, especially at an early age, is considered by several respondents as a risk factor for children's health. Some of their illnesses can become chronic because they "do not solicit medical assistance when they need it." Some teachers and UNICEF representatives share the view that during the absence of parents, the reproductive health of children is also in danger.

> "... the risk of an unwanted pregnancy, an infection. According to the outcomes of our studies, teenagers are not well enough informed about sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the ways of protection, their symptoms and anything else in this field…" (UNICEF)

Caregivers and representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family enumerated, among the risks children could confront, the lack of opportunities to pursue education and easily find a job.

> "... the risk of unemployment, when they grow up. Maturity does not guarantee them a place in the social life…" (MHSPF: A representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family)

In the opinion of many of the adults questioned, the development of relationships within families with at least one member working abroad proves that in the near future "there will be a generation gap. Divorce represents a very frequent phenomenon in migrants' families. According to the reports of the representative of IOM, in Bălți about 60 percent of the families with one member abroad are divorced. Because of the lack of alternative models for taking care of children left without parental care, there is a risk that children with parents working abroad will be institutionalised.

> "Children educated in such circumstances will not be able to take care of their parents when the latter are old." (NGO)

> "There is already a generation of children who have been living for ten years without one or both parents." (IOM)

Several respondents mentioned human trafficking and labour exploitation among the major issues that can confront migrants' children in their lives.

> "About half of the minors being provided with assistance at our centre after having become victims of trafficking had been left without parental care; their parents had gone abroad two, three or even five years ago." (IOM)

Some adults consider that separation from parents could determine certain deficiencies in children's personal development and in the hierarchy of their values. The feeling that they are abandoned can generate "a complex of inferiority", and this can have negative consequences on the families these children will start in the future. One of the UNICEF representatives expressed the idea that, in the future, adult migration "will have serious consequences at an economic and social level for the whole country".

5.3. Living conditions of migrants' children

According to most adults participating in the study, people from families with a relatively good material situation migrate, for they are able to pay the fees required for travel and visas. For the poorer strata of society, this opportunity becomes too difficult to realise. Respondents stated that, as a rule, children from families who had good living conditions were left without parental care. At the same time, IOM representatives and several participants in the data consultation workshop assert that the number of migrants coming from socially vulnerable families is rather high because "those who leave are not able to find a job here and earn a decent living".

> "Families that lived well before went abroad". (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

> "I did not meet wealthy people in the group we are working with; most of them are from socially vulnerable families...." (IOM)

> "... people from deprived families also go abroad. But the situation in these families, after the departure, worsens". (DCW: A participant in a Data Consultation Workshop)

Most adults questioned noticed that, as a rule, a parent working abroad positively affects the quality of children's lives. Teachers, headmasters, medical workers and representatives of local public administrations consider that the material situation of children left without parental care improved. Children live in better conditions, including repaired and fully equipped houses. They have financial resources that allow them "*to pay without any difficulty all the school fees,"* to buy expensive clothes and various goods, to entertain themselves. According to some respondents, families with members working in countries of Western Europe "*have a better material situation"* than families with members working in Russia.

> "The living conditions of these children are very high, some live like those in a city. The village is provided with gas and they have gas heating systems, warm water and telephones." (A teacher)

> "... they have financial resources and they are able to buy books and other school supplies." (A headmaster)

> "... their living conditions improve...". (A medical worker)

> "Children wear expensive clothes, they have mobile phones..." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

The survey reveals that, in general, the children who were the subjects of the study consider themselves financially better off than their peers. Thus, the number of children claiming that they have more pocket money than their colleagues is two times bigger among respondents with parents working abroad and constitutes 8.4 percent. At the same time, the proportion of children

claiming that they have less pocket money in comparison with their peers is significantly bigger among children living with their parents (about 30 percent and 19 percent respectively).

The majority of caregivers mentioned that the material conditions of children with parents abroad had not improved and that they confronted the same problems caused by a lack of money as before their parents' departure. Children who are not financially sustained, or who are sustained to a small extent by migrant parents, and for whom guardianship has been arranged, benefit from an allowance from the Town Hall. But according to caregivers, this sum of money is insignificant and cannot solve all the problems these children face. In the opinion of some adults, the children whose parents are not able to financially support them over a long period of time risk becoming a burden to their caregivers. In such situations, the feeling of deprivation they must deal with is stronger because they lack, on the one hand, affection and their parents' support and, on the other hand, the material conditions that could satisfy their basic needs.

> "Their material conditions did not improve; we still find it hard to buy all the things they need". (A caregiver)

> "Parents leave and at the beginning they cannot easily find a job. As a result, they do not send money; the relatives who take care of their children are not satisfied and overwhelm the latter with reproaches and behave rudely with them." (IOM)

Thanks to parents who went abroad, some children have the advantage of enjoying various goods such as personal computers, audio recorders, mobile telephones and other consumables, which are usually hard for their peers to acquire. For children left without parental care, mobile telephones become objects of primary importance because they help them get in touch with their parents. Nevertheless, some teachers consider that at an early age the telephone is just a luxury item that spoils children.

> "Most children have got computers at home, audio recorders and they have an occupation. Sometimes parents buy TV sets with satellite antennas." (A teacher)

> "In my class of 24 pupils only four do not have mobile telephones." (A teacher)

> "... they get access to high technology easier than we do. For them the mobile telephone is a need, to talk to parents, for instance, but we must deserve it, for example, when we enter the University." (DCW: A participant in the Data Consultation Workshop)

Some of the adults interviewed assert that the improved material conditions of these children make other community members envious. According to certain respondents, people's departure abroad is motivated not so much by real financial difficulties as by fashion and by the desire to improve their living conditions. During the consulting workshop, the idea was expressed that many adults, including teachers, do not see that despite ameliorations in children's living conditions there is much suffering and loneliness.

> "... in many cases [colleagues, adults] are envious…" (A teacher)

"... this wealthy life makes them do wrong things... the community members consider them spoilt children..." (A medical worker)

"They only think... sometimes he has money and sometimes he does not, sometimes he is in pain and sometimes he is happy, sometimes he is good at school and sometimes he is not. But, they do not understand that children with parents abroad go through difficult situations... there are moments when you just cannot go on..."(DCW: A participant in the Data Consultation Workshop)

Most community agents included in the study asserted that, as a rule, the state of health, including diet and the hygienic conditions of children left without parental care do not differ from those of their peers living with their parents. While medical workers consider that the diet of migrants' children is better than that of other children, several teachers and participants in the data consultation workshop have a different opinion, claiming that some of these children do not eat regularly, which has a negative impact on their health. Some children consulted noticed that, in the absence of parents, children usually tend to "*hide*" certain "*health problems*" and postpone visits to the doctor for various reasons. Caregivers asserted that taking care of a person's child is a big responsibility and requires constant vigilance over their state of health. With respect to personal hygiene, some of teachers questioned expressed the idea that small children "*left in the care of their fathers*" could experience some problems.

"... I would like to say that... their meals are even better, they take vitamins." (A medical worker)

"... they eat only fast food products and many girls have allergy problems of the skin... and stomach aches." (A teacher)

"Very many children with parents abroad do not have regular and healthy meals."(DCW: A participant in the Data Consultation Workshop)

"I will refer only to my class and I will say that children without parental care are clean and proper." (A teacher)

The outcomes of the survey show that most children are supposed to have three meals a day. Nevertheless, this regimen is respected to a lesser extent by children with parents abroad than by children from the comparison group (about 76 percent and 80 percent respectively). It should be mentioned that in both categories there were cases of children who claimed that they had not eaten anything during a whole day. In the group of children with parents abroad the percentage of these answers is twice as high, and constitutes nearly 3 percent.

According to the data provided by the survey, migrants' children claim that they have more school supplies than their peers living with their parents (91 percent and 86 percent respectively). Concerning winter clothes, we get the same picture in both groups of respondents.

5.4. Psycho-emotional development

"Every child would like both parents to be at home. A complete family is more important than anything." (Gr. I)

Separation from their parents affects the internal lives of the children to a great extent. Both grown-ups and children mentioned that their emotional lives suffer the most evident effects.

Almost all the children asserted that after their parents' departure they faced difficult and unpleasant emotional states. Only a few children from a certain region mentioned that their current material condition, which had improved thanks to their parents' work abroad, makes them happy. Some of those who take care of children whose parents went abroad, along with some medical personnel, share the same opinion. However, according to some children, money cannot compensate for the suffering caused by separation from their parents.

> "Before, I didn't have the same possibilities as I do now ... there is a change of the situation; therefore, I drew a joyful mother." (Gr.II)

> "They are glad, but do they understand ... they were glad when both parents left in order to earn money. ..." (A caregiver)

> "When parents go abroad, children are happy, hoping their material condition will improve." (A medical worker)

> "I don't feel the same way right now. I'm sad when I look at the other children. I don't need money anymore and I cry." (Gr.II)

> "Money is not important for me; I would like my parents to be always with me." (Gr.I)

> "Despite an improvement in my material condition and freedom, I miss my mummy very much." (Gr.I)

The gamut of emotions used by children to describe their life is dominated by grey colours. Longing and sadness are among the most frequently mentioned emotional states. Small children say they often cry. Some children report a state of apathy they cannot control.

> "I miss my mother very much." (Gr.II)

> "I'm sad now. My heart is incomplete without my mother." (Gr.I)

> "At the beginning I was rather depressed; I felt very bad in summer." (Gr.II)

> "... every night I cry; I miss them.". (Gr.I)

> "It's like I lost a part of my soul." (Gr.II)

"I'm sad because I don't feel her love anymore." (Gr.II)

"I don't have love from both parents." (Gr.I)

"I used to be happy; I used to love life. Now I miss them." (Gr.II)

"... sometimes I don't understand myself; I become sad for no reason." (Gr.II)

"... I knew Mummy would always be by my side and I was happy." (Gr.II)

According to the participants in the data consultation workshop, smaller children express their emotions more easily; this creates the impression that they are more affected by their parents' absence. In reality, all children, regardless of their age, suffer greatly when separated from their parents. Some simply don't express their feelings so openly.

"... I'm overwhelmed by my longing for them; I don't have words to express what I feel." (Gr.I)

"... when you're 17-18 you just don't show your longing for your parents, but it isn't a matter of inhibition. Perhaps they are shy, or they are already personalities and it isn't visible." (DCW: A participant in the data consulting workshop)

"Sometimes they seem to be emotionally stronger, but this is just appearances." (DCW)

"They don't like to share problems in public, but in private, open discussions we discover they have more preoccupations than we do."(DCW)

The adults noticed that a great number of children become inhibited, reserved and solitary. According to the consultation workshop participants, as well as according to other adults, this change in behaviour is associated with problems of self-expression that many children experience. The respondents affirmed that isolation is more obvious when analysing boys. This could be explained by the traditional view that expressing emotions, for a man, is a sign of weakness.

"Generally, youngsters and children rarely express their feelings about problems; the separation from their parents is not an exception. They don't express their emotions. They often say, 'It's tough,' without offering any details." (DCW: A participant in the data consulting workshop)

"They're inhibited and there is no one to support them at home." (A teacher)

"After their parents' departure, children become more reserved." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

"... they become shyer; they don't have enough daring." (LPA)

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"... they isolate themselves emotionally. Sometimes they become arrogant, especially boys." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

"The absence of their parents causes constant suffering to the very little ones; the older ones try not to show their feelings." (A teacher)

"As the years pass, they become more inhibited and isolated." (A teacher)

Most children mentioned that they are aware of the repercussions of their emotions on their own personality and on others. The older the children are, the greater their awareness is. At the same time, children claim they are unable to control and express their emotions in different circumstances without aggressiveness. This is especially true of the older children. The participants at the consultation workshop confirmed this tendency in teenagers, adding that it manifests itself not only in children of that age but also in grown-ups.

"I'm aware of the effects; I don't want to be aggressive because I don't like to be threatened, and I know how it feels, but I have to be because he makes me act this way." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"First you say something, then you think of what you've said. When you're angry, you say all you have on your mind regardless of who they are, teenagers or adults."(DCW)

"Physical aggression is excluded but there is verbal aggression." (DCW)

It was proved that the absence of their parents represents an obvious preoccupation for these children. They recall their previous life with both parents by their side; they miss them, they look forward to seeing them again, to talking to them, and they want to become a family again.

"I'm always thinking about them." (Gr.II)

"My thoughts are with my father who is not with me and who will soon come back." (Gr.I)

"Who will greet me when I return home?" (Gr.II)

"I want my parents to be with me."(Gr.II)

"Will my daddy and mummy call me today?" (Gr.II)

"... I want them to call me." (Gr.II)

"I want us to be a family again." (Gr.II)

"Children look forward to seeing their parents." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"...there is a deep longing for their parents." (DCW)

Caregivers, teachers, school administrators and representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports (DDEYS) witness the children's sufferings. They confirm that children are overwhelmed by their parents' absence all the time.

"... they miss their parents." (A caregiver)

"Their thoughts are focused on their parents ... all the time." (A teacher)

"Children growing up without their parents suffer a lot." (A teacher)

"They are deprived of their parents' love." (A teacher)

"They think it's just a matter of time and that soon their parents will return home and everything will get back on track." (A teacher)

"Children are traumatised." (A headmaster)

"Children lack their parents' love, they're emotionally traumatised, they suffer longing for them." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

The characteristics families in which children live with their parents only partially apply to families in which the parents have gone abroad. Children in the former situation consider family as an environment of love and care. Cohesion, co-operation, confidence, mutual support and friendship are its inherent features. All these give children a sense of protection and safety.

"I'm happy; we are together as a family. I drew all of us in the middle of a big heart, which means we love each other." (Gr. IV)

"Unity and freedom characterise my family; everyone is responsible for his chores and everyone's position is taken into account." (Gr.III)

"I am supported by my family." (Gr. IV)

"When a problem comes up, we try to solve it together, as a family."(Gr. IV)

"We do the housework together and we read together in the evening." (Gr. IV)

"Before making a decision, daddy consults us. Mummy is like a friend to me." (Gr. IV)

"Mummy is, and will always be, my best friend. I can share all my secrets with her."(Gr. IV)

"There is mutual respect in my family and we try to be kind to each other." (Gr. III)

"I have a four-member family. We are friendly and eager to help one another."(Gr. III)

"Here is a drawing of me as a boxer, because boxers are strong. This is exactly how I feel when my parents are with me." (Gr. IV)

On the other hand, many respondents mentioned that a lack of security characterises children who have to face their parents' absence. According to young consultation workshop participants, children actually fear the physical loneliness they find themselves in. Grownups say that this insecurity can be observed in children' relationships, including relationships with their relatives.

"...our house is empty without them. When I'm alone I'm afraid." (Gr. II)

"I know some children who are afraid to stay home alone. There's a girl in our class who has been living alone since she was in the 7th form." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"... they know they are not protected." (A teacher)

"... they spend the night alone." (A teacher)

"... they're afraid because they don't feel protected by their parents." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

"... he doesn't feel safe; he doesn't feel somebody's love." (MEYS)

"... how protected do they feel when they are left by one or both parents? Their safety is at stake. They are likely to be abused, hurt or even beaten and there will be no one by their side to protect them." (UNICEF)

Analysing the way children describe their families before their parents' departure leads us to conclude that some of them are reassessing their attitudes and behaviour in the relationship with their parents. The lack of parental love on the one hand, and dealing with adult problems on the other, has caused them to appreciate the advantages of having a family.

"I felt what a parent's love means only after my father's departure, though I had been very happy before." (Gr. I)

"I didn't use to help my mother. One day I thought to myself: 'Was it so difficult to bring her a pail of water?' It is hard when there is nobody to help you about the house." (Gr. II)

"We realise the true value of a thing after we lose it." (Gr. II)

"Getting presents was making me happy, but now there is only one present I am dreaming of: my parents." (Gr. II)

"... I take into account the advice they gave me." (Gr. I)

Most children said they were happy before, despite the fact that they were experiencing financial difficulties, the main reason for their parents' departure. Children enumerated many advantages of living with their parents, among them: comfort, support in various activities, leisure.

"We were happy together." (Gr. I)

"I was happy when my parents were with me. There was a mutual help between us." (Gr. I)

"I was joyful because they showed me a lot of love." (Gr. I)

"... they were waiting for me to come home from school." (Gr. I)

"Mummy was cooking for me." (Gr. I)

"I could talk to them, complain about any problem." (Gr. I)

"Mummy used to help me with my homework." (Gr. I)

"We played football together." (Gr. I)

According to the results of the research, some children are preoccupied with their parents' integration abroad and with their welfare; others even have to worry about the relatives who are supposed to take care of them. Children know various cases of mistreatment or even trafficking of adults who migrate, and they are afraid this could occur to their parents. Finding out that their parents face certain difficulties, many children tend to consider themselves responsible. Sometimes the parents tell their children that they are going abroad for their sake, and later caregivers remind them of this, amplifying their sorrow.

"I worry about them." (Gr. II)

"I'm very concerned about my father's health." (Gr. I)

"I hope nothing bad will happen to my parents while they are working." (Gr. II)

"I hope granny will be O.K.; she is taking care of me right now." (Gr. I)

"All I asked him to do was to study because his parents are sacrificing themselves for him." (A caregiver)

Some adults claim that children whose parents went abroad feel guilty about this. In such circumstances children express regret about the way they behaved before their parents' departure. According to the IOM representative, this sense of guilt can have severe effects on a child's development and can manifest itself in an inferiority complex.

> "Unconsciously, these children feel guilty, considering themselves the cause of their parents' departure. They think they are to blame for all the harm occurring to their families. ... It is childish but the sense of guilt has a very serious psychological impact on the children; they can't have normal psychological development. ... this guilt turns into a feeling of sinfulness and they feel ashamed about everything they have ever done to their parents". (IOM)

Some adults affirmed that one of the greatest disadvantages for children whose parents work abroad is the lack of an emotional support system, which results in feelings of loneliness. Children have to make huge efforts to overcome this feeling and quite often they don't manage to adapt well to the situation. Certain circumstances and events in their lives remind them of their parents, and this tends to increase their suffering.

> "When a mother goes abroad, her child is traumatised ... the child loses his mother, in many cases both parents..." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

> "There is no one to help him deal with emotional problems, to give him advice, to tell him what is right and what is wrong." (IOM)

> "Children and teenagers need love, advice; they need to be caressed and understood, but how can they get all of this unless their parents are with them?" (UNICEF)

> "... some emotions, some special feelings for these children, because they suffer from their parents' absence ... they use up a great deal of psychological energy in coping with these feelings: they miss their parents, and they have no possibility of sharing their thoughts and sorrows." (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

> "On holidays there are just are few of us. I become sad and I miss my parents' love." (Gr. II)

> "... they are psychologically traumatised even when their parents can't attend meetings at school." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

It was observed that the feelings provoked in children by the separation from their parents vary over time. They usually feel most affected right after their parents' departure and this first period being is considered the most difficult. As time passes, they adapt themselves to the new circumstances. But time is not able to ease the sufferings of all children.

"... I was crying on the first days after they left." (Gr. I)

"We miss her; everything reminds me of her." (Gr. I)

Almost all caretakers confirmed that the period right after the departure of a parent is the most difficult for the children. They noticed that during this period children become more timid, sadder and more reserved, but as time passes they recover, for they need to talk and share their feelings. Some respondents explain this situation as a form of shock children go through when they obtain a freedom and independence they cannot handle.

"It was very hard ... especially the first time." (A caregiver)

"He stayed in his room for three days..." (A caregiver)

"At the beginning, my nephews were crying constantly. I knew what they were going through, but what could I do...?" (A caregiver)

"I noticed they needed to talk." (A caregiver)

"They say they need their parents..." (A caregiver)

"This sudden change of responsibilities is quite difficult for them.... Our children need to be guided and controlled. This enormous freedom and so much responsibility confuses them..." (UNICEF)

Children's adaptation to new life circumstances with no parents by their side is an extremely difficult process. Despite the fact that in the consultation workshop the idea was expressed that independent life is an opportunity for children to self-examine and to develop different competencies, only a few teenagers affirmed they had really managed to overcome the problems they face. Thus, only a few children matured and managed to adapt constructively to their new life conditions, while the great majority of children did not adapt successfully, a fact confirmed by the feelings overwhelming them and their opinions about their new-found freedom.

"Now I have pulled myself together and I think that is right. I became a grown-up earlier, but that is good. I see things differently; life became real." (Gr. II)

"I pulled myself together and I helped those who needed my help." (Gr. I)

"I wanted to get more freedom before. My parents left and I have got the freedom I was dreaming of, but I am sick and tired of it right now. After my mother's departure, freedom became like a jail for me." (Gr. II)

"Right after their parents' departure, children rejoice at the freedom they get, but soon after they begin suffering from loneliness." (A headmaster)

As a result, some persons keeping in contact with children notice various nuances and identify several "types" of behaviour. Quite often they give a confused and ambivalent description of

children's behaviour, making conflicting assertions concerning their emotional lives. These adults seldom try to explain children's reactions.

"... there are children who are calm and cope with it..." (A teacher)

"Some children feel they are inferior." (A teacher)

"Perhaps it is some kind of resistance because his parents left him." (A teacher)

"A pupil in the 7th form can be cheeky, but he is still too small and doesn't understand. Besides, sometimes his grandmother takes care of him, sometimes one of his relatives." (A teacher)

"Some children are always sad and others give the impression of needing more attention and help. But there are also optimistic children who involve themselves in all school activities."(A headmaster)

"Children become more arrogant and boastful. But at the same time they are shyer and uncertain." (A local NGO member)

"Children become more aggressive ... they are spoilt ... Or, on the contrary, they become more responsible..." (A medical worker)

"On the one hand they become self-confident, on the other – vice versa." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

"Children who have parents who work abroad have quite noticeable behaviour; either they try to show they have a lot of money, or they are too timid and reserved." (MEYS: A representative of the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports)

Teachers claim that the extent of the phenomenon of migration in the community influences a child's ability to adapt to new life circumstances. According to some, paradoxically, the more children there are living without their parents, the more they learn to better accept and deal with this situation. But other teachers believe that time makes children realise the negative consequences of this phenomenon.

"At the beginning, after the first parent's departure, I didn't even dare to ask: how is your mummy? Or how are you? ...their eyes were filling with tears. But later they became inured to the situation. Many parents have left since then. At the beginning it was tough for them ...now it has become fashionable." (A teacher)

"Some children don't react so painfully to their parents' absence right now." (A teacher)

"... several years of separation from their parents have made them aware of the fact that children with parents are happier than children with money, like them. Now there is a more profound awareness of this fact, but at the beginning it was quite prestigious [to have money]." (A teacher)

Many adults believe that children with parents working abroad attribute an exaggerated importance to money. Surprisingly, some people who are supposed to provide services to these children label them "money children," an expression that is strongly pejorative.

"Some children attribute greater importance to material things. When they get presents from their parents they say, 'I have money and I don't [need to] speak to you.'" (A caregiver)

"...they become greedy for money at an early age." (A teacher)

"This phenomenon creates 'money children,' who don't aspire to anything because they are certain that money opens any door. Moral values are neglected in their education." (A local NGO member)

"They are consumers; they know their parents will send them money and parcels and they no longer care how their parents earn this money." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

"They constitute a category of 'money children;' they wear mobile telephones, they know what the power of money means and they are sure Mummy's money can solve any problem." (DDEYS)

"... they have no cares about money because they are 'money children.' (MHSPF: A representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family)

Some adults said that money sent by parents makes many children feel superior to others. These children wear expensive clothes and can afford to buy things that even some adults cannot afford. The young consultation workshop participants and numerous adults considered that the attribution of an excessive importance to money and material goods represents a defensive reaction to the lack of affection these children feel.

"I know several cases when children consider themselves superior, for their material situation has improved." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"There are people who always boast about their wealthy, beautiful life." (DCW)

"If you have money you respect yourself." (A teacher)

5.5. The Evolution of Relationships

Relationships with parents

The research results show that children's relationship sphere underwent big changes after their parents' departure. Almost all children recognized a lack of interaction with others as the most essential change that happened to them during the separation period. Children mentioned that both the number and the quality of their relationships had changed. Despite the fact that most children participating at the study are being taken care of by a relative, many described themselves as lonely, isolated and deprived of support.

> "I am alone." (Gr. I)

> "She left and I miss our talks." (Gr. I)

> "I've drawn a cloud which means isolation." (Gr. II)

> "I don't have many friends." (Gr. I)

> "I am more reserved right now." (Gr. II)

> "I need advice." (Gr. I)

> "Nobody can help me now." (Gr. I)

> "No parents – no support." (Gr. II)

> "When they were at home they sustained me; now I have only my granny by my side." (Gr. I)

> "Children don't know who can listen to their problems. There is a girl in our class whose parents left and she is supposed to take care of her two younger brothers. She has questions and problems but she doesn't know who can help her." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

It was clear that a great concern of children with parents working abroad is their relationships with their parents and other family members. At the age of 10-14 this preoccupation becomes more important than their relationships with children of their own age. As for teenagers, it was clear from both the subject and the comparison groups that problems of relationships with people their own age become paramount. The attention attributed to family relationships by children with parents working abroad is understandable and real. Young consultation workshop participants affirmed that one of the main differences between children with parents working abroad and children of their own age living with their parents is the lack of psychological support for the first group. There is nobody at home waiting for them who cares about their everyday problems and successes. A key feature of children living with their parents is "the thought that any problem can be solved with somebody's help."

Some adults also mentioned that children living without their parents don't have a reliable person with whom they can share their preoccupations, feelings and happy moments. According to teachers, it is more common for small children to become disoriented when their parents leave.

> "Without their parents, they just can't share." (A teacher)
> "If you have a problem you can share it with your parents, but if your parents are gone there is nobody you can share with." (A teacher)

> "Getting advice from a parent is one thing, but getting advice from someone else..." (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

> "Parents usually look after their children, telling them what to do and how to do it. A child living without his mother is a child living on his own. Too much freedom he can't handle." (A teacher)

> "If from his early childhood a child has not been looked after by his parents, he is desperate, he doesn't know what is right and what is wrong." (A teacher)

These teachers' observations coincide with the assertions of many children aged 10-14, who mentioned that the separation from their parents had had an impact on their ability to make decisions. Most children participants in the study estimated their own ability of making decisions in different circumstances to be average, while the same aged children living with their parents recognized that they had not developed this ability yet. Not getting advice from their parents makes it hard for children to make decisions on their own.

> "It's difficult, quite often I need a piece of advice." (Gr. I)

> "Now, I find it difficult to make up my mind on my own." (Gr. I)

> "Daddy is the head of the family; he used to make the decisions. Now we have the freedom to decide but I don't think this is good." (Gr. I)

Telephone contact between parents and children

The survey revealed that the most frequent form of communication between parents and children is the telephone (almost 86 percent), followed by the sending of parcels (almost 13 percent). Both adults and child participants in the study confirmed that these ways of communication are in current usage. At the same time, some children emphasised that it was unsatisfactory for them to talk over the phone with their parents because this communication is a poor substitute for real contact, which is more profound.

> "Despite the distance, I talk to them almost every day." (Gr. I)

> "We talk over the phone, but I want to feel her next to me; I can't see her." (Gr.I)

"... the sound of her words over the phone can't be compared to her real voice. "
(Gr. I)

"Children communicate with their parents over the phone." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

"... anyway, they keep in touch with their parents over the phone." (A teacher)

"... over the phone, parents are concerned about their children and about what they left at home." (A teacher)

"... his mother is in Italy and she calls once a week, sometimes more often." (A teacher)

Some caregivers and teachers reported that for children, telephone conversations with their parents are very important and they look forward to them, even if, quite often, this causes unpleasant emotions and increases their longing for their parents and their feelings of loneliness.

"She is excited while talking over the phone [with her mother], she misses her."
(A caregiver)

"... they both cry over the phone and traumatize themselves." (A teacher)

Some teachers consider telephone conversations are an especially good way for parents to maintain a strong tie with their children. But according to other teachers' opinions, and in the DDSAFP (District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection) representative's view, the main topic discussed during the communications between parents and children is the need for money and various material goods as well as the need for parcels, while they ignore the child's emotional state.

"... parents guide them, but only over the phone." (A teacher)

"... they pursue their education through letters and phone talks." (A teacher)

"... they trust their children." (A teacher)

"Their conversation focuses on the subject of money and parcels. Unfortunately, some parents don't worry about their children's health." (A teacher)

"Even if parents keep in touch with their children, gradually these telephone talks become less frequent and less affectionate." (A teacher)

"Telephone conversations or even tapes and pictures of their parents can't replace real contact for children." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

When parents send parcels to their children

As a result of the migration process several regions strongly affected by this phenomenon developed a network of regular bus routes for transporting people, parcels and money. In such communities children sometimes miss classes in order to receive parcels from their parents. Teachers involved in the study affirmed they understand children in such cases. The MHSPF (Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family) representative mentioned that this phenomenon could constitute an obstacle in the education process.

> "On Wednesdays there is a bus transporting parcels." (A teacher)

> "... they send them parcels and buy them goods, such as clothes. " (A teacher)

> "... there are buses coming directly to our village; others pass through and collect parcels." (A teacher)

> "... they ask for permission to miss lessons when they have to receive parcels, and we allow them to leave." (A teacher)
> "... on the day the minibus is supposed to arrive with presents from abroad, children don't even go to school. We have discussed this problem with mayors who should prevent the minibuses from coming during school hours." (MHSPF: A representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family)

Despite the fact that children have frequent conversations with their parents, they don't tackle subjects such as their emotional state and the everyday difficulties they have to face. Reasons for this include the high cost of phone conversations, the difficulty of dealing with more delicate issues on the phone, and children's desire that the communication between parents and children should focus on the household, the child's success in school and their need for money and other goods. Before leaving, most parents made a plan and established some rules according to which children should lead their lives, and communications between parents/children/caregivers are centred on the assessment of the development of the plan. For some children, telephone conversations take place only at certain intervals or in emergencies. These circumstances make it difficult for them to share their ordinary problems, their sorrows, situations or events that could be of interest.

> "...parents call regularly; they are interested mainly in their children's success at school." (A caregiver)

> "... in emergency cases we call parents to consult with them." (A caregiver)

> "... parents are not preoccupied with their children's problems." (A teacher)

> "... we discuss with them, but he also needs his mother for advice... and there is nobody he can share with. And what can they decide over the telephone...this is not the way." (A teacher)

"Sometimes children don't learn anything from telephone conversations; parents don't know what advice to give them." (A teacher)

Visits from parents

More than a third of the children participating in the survey (36 percent) mentioned that their parents visit them once every 2-3 months; 17 percent said once in six months, and 10 percent, once a year. A fourth of the children (26 percent) see their parents less than once a year. The frequency of visits depends directly on the distance between the foreign country where the parents have found a job and their homeland, as well as on their legal or illegal status. As a rule, parents working in Russia visit their children more frequently than those working in Western Europe. The frequency of visits from parents in the second category depends on whether or not they possess a visa. Several cases of internal migration were noted, with children saying their parents work in another locality and return home for a couple of days every week or month. Teachers expressed the opinion that it is easier for children to adapt to their parents' absence if it doesn't last for too long.

"... those who work legally come home once a year, once in a three months period... and they keep in touch with their children." (A teacher)

"... parents come back in summer. There are parents who have been living abroad for five or six years, but they return home regularly because they have working visas." (A teacher)

"... some parents who have the status of legal immigrants visit their children quite often." (A teacher)

"Visiting their children once in two or three months, parents try to give them so much love, energy, advice and care that it will last till the next visit." (A teacher)

How children try to please their parents

Children rarely analysed the development of their relationships with their parents working abroad. Those who expressed themselves on this subject mentioned that their relationships with their parents are as close as before or have even improved. The study shows that despite difficulties, some children try hard to meet their parents' expectations, becoming more responsible, succeeding at school and in other fields. Consultation workshop participants confirmed that children's desire to retain parents' confidence and maintain a close relationship with them is very great; it concerns all children and teenagers, including those living with their parents. Most children say they appreciate their parents' efforts to give them a better life and don't want to let them down.

"... my love for them is as strong as before." (Gr. I)

"I still love her like I did before." (Gr. I)

"We loved her before when she was next to us; we love her now when she is far away in the same way." (Gr. I)

"Now I feel we are closer with my mummy [than before she left]." (Gr. II)

"...they want to show they are adults and independent." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"...I am alone but I try to succeed in everything: at school, at home...I don't want my parents to be ashamed of me." (DCW)

"... they don't want to let their parents down, especially the one working abroad." (DCW)

"First of all, they don't want to lose their parents' confidence." (DCW)

Some adults, especially teachers, consider that the children's sense of responsibility has increased as a result of effective control by their parents or caregivers. In their opinion, children's positive behaviour is due to the fear that news of all their bad behaviour will subsequently reach their parents.

"Perhaps they are aware that parents will come back and punish them." (A teacher)

How children perceive the reasons for their parents' migration

According to adults, children have different perceptions of their parents' need to go abroad. Some children understand that working abroad is a unique opportunity for their parents to support families. For others, their parents' frequent departures represent a disappointment, which emphasizes the psychological distance between them.

"Sometimes parents come back after two years of absence, bring some money and promise their children not to leave any more, but when they don't find a job here, they leave again." (IOM)

"There are children who agree that their parents must leave again after having visited their families; they are not able to find a job here." (A teacher)

The survey showed that children from communities included in the study are aware of their parents' motives for going abroad. For some of them, understanding these causes helps them overcome difficult experiences.

"Nobody wants to leave his homeland and go abroad. The main reason is the need for money." (Gr.II)

"Parents are ready to do anything for their children; they care about our welfare and education." (Gr.II)

Children enumerated the following motives for their parents' departure:

- Poverty, unemployment, a lack of financial means to support their families

  "The lack of money."

  "No job in the homeland."

  "They can't find a job at home but they can make a lot of money abroad."

  "...in order to buy food, clothes and shoes."

  "We don't have enough money for all we need to buy."

  "She couldn't support our family with the salary of a teacher."

  "...in order to support the family. If she hadn't gone abroad we would be leading a hard life."

  "There is not enough money to buy food, clothes or pay the electricity, gas or telephone bills."

  "... in order to get rid of poverty."

- Lack of the financial means to finish building a house or make renovations

  "... in order to finish the constructions."

  "... to renovate our house."

  "We wanted to build a house."

  "... to make enough money to buy a house."

- The need to repay numerous loans

  "... to repay loans."

  "We had many loans."

  "... in order to make money and repay loans."

- Parents' wish to offer their children a better future / an education

  "... they want to be sure we have a better life."

  "In order to offer their children a decent future."

"They want us to be able to go to the university."

"... to further our education after leaving school."

"To enter a prestigious profession."

- The illness of a family member

"I am ill and it causes big expenses."

"My father got sick and Mummy had to go abroad."

- Conflicts between parents

"Because of money and constant quarrels with Father."

"My parents quarrelled and Mummy left for Italy."

"Mummy and Daddy divorced; Mummy had to go abroad to support us."

Children's attempts to adapt to their parents' absence

Some teenagers reported various experiences in their attempts to adapt to life without their parents. They mentioned that sometimes they were looking forward to seeing them, but after a week of living together again they were anxious for them to leave. At the same time, most teachers said that relationships between parents working abroad and their children become colder over time. These situations could be considered a defence mechanism against possible separations from parents. Life without one or even both parents triggers a great upheaval in a child's life. They live under constant stress, overwhelmed by emotions and new, unknown situations they are not ready for. Gradually, they "accustom themselves" to handling problems on their own, they get used to a new style of life and live according to their own rules. These rules can include apparently insignificant things like ways of dressing, diet, housekeeping, etc. When the newly returned parents suggest that their children reconsider their behaviour, it is quite difficult for them to obey. Regardless of what our attitude towards the child's new style of life is, it helped him overcome all the problems he had to face alone.

"...his mother is due to come home soon; he looks forward to seeing her." (A teacher)

"They feel their parents will soon return and they are anxious to see them." (A caregiver)

"Quite often, after several days of living together, children react by asking their parents when they intend to leave again, especially after having received all the material goods they need." (A teacher)

"... anyway it is an incomplete family; they have become almost strangers." (A headmaster)

"Finally, the child becomes estranged from his parents; they no longer represent authority. Sometimes he even hates these parents unconsciously.... [Parents] discover their children have become estranged from them..." (IOM)

"The relationship between parent and child becomes colder and more reserved." (A teacher)

"These children isolate themselves from their parents. Soon after their arrival, the children want their parents to leave.... She established a new order at home and her parents usually tend to destroy it, and she doesn't accept some of their remarks and comments. She is independent, she is on her own, and she wants her mother to leave." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"... children feel embarrassed at their parents' presence, for they got used to being alone and now they come and begin telling... " (DCW)

"Children forget how they should behave in their parents' presence. They become estranged from them." (DCW)

Children's relationships with caregivers

Almost all the children involved in this study were cared for by relatives. Some lived with one of their parents, but most lived with grandparents or aunts.

However, local public administration representatives mentioned that there are cases where children are left in the care of complete strangers. According to caregivers and teachers, adults who migrate leave their children in the care of people they trust, usually relatives. Central public administration representatives have reported situations where parents do not let anybody from the community know about their departure abroad, because it is illegal, and therefore their children are left without care.

"... of course, before leaving they asked a reliable person to look after their children." (A caregiver)

"... some children live with their grandparents, others with relatives, only teenagers in the 11,12 13th form live alone." (A headmaster)

"Children are left in the care of relatives who support them." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

"... in the most frequent cases, mothers go abroad illegally and can't grant somebody the guardianship of their children, so they leave them alone at home

... we are lucky that neighbours report such cases in time." (MEYS: A representative of the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports)

According to respondents, smaller children usually move into their caregivers' houses, whereas older children stay at home and are regularly visited. During the consultation workshop, the opinion of the participants was that most teenagers with both parents working abroad prefer to live in their parents' house, separately from caregivers. They also mentioned that the best caregivers are relatives whom they could ask for help in difficult situations. During the research, various cases were reported in which children had to leave for other localities to stay with caregivers.

"Grandparents only visit them, but they spend the night alone." (A teacher)

"... some children live with uncles or aunts, but most frequently with grandparents. There are cases where even three children had moved to another family. We have a concrete case when the sister from X brought the boy here in Y." (A headmaster)

It appears that for smaller children the presence of an adult in the house is very important. It was ascertained that many children who had been taken care of and brought up by caregivers from early childhood call them "Mummy" and "Daddy," while they call their parents by their names.

"... she was only 8 months when they left; she calls my husband "daddy". He tells her "I am not your daddy", but she replies "you are because I don't know another one". And she loves him very much." (A caregiver)

"A girl living with her grandmother said 'I have got two mothers'". She is in the 3rd form and she has lived with her grandmother since she was a baby! ... her mother explained to the girl that she has a grandmother and only one mother who gave her birth. The girl is aware, but she spends most of the time with grandma..." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

The children seldom described their relationships with the persons looking after them. This is also due to the methods used in the study, which didn't focus on these persons' roles. Nevertheless, the children's comments on caregivers lead us to the idea that these relationships are not close enough to cause the children to share with them.

"I could tell Mummy about any problem." (Gr. II)

"... I became reserved. I can't tell Grandma everything ... I am alone." (Gr. II)

Caregivers participating in the study consider that their role is mainly to offer children adequate living conditions, to look after their school success, and to try to prevent undesirable social behaviour. At the same time, they had different appraisals of the difficulty of this role. Most mentioned the first period, after the parents' departure, as the most difficult time. The suffering of the child coincided with the process of adaptation to life in the caregiver's family. In only one

case the caregiver affirmed that the child adapted more easily because from early childhood he had been spending a lot of time at his grandparents' place.

> "At the beginning ... he was shyer, it is understandable, there was no mummy, no daddy – it is easier with them. But now he got used to us ..." (A caregiver)

> "They felt like strangers at the beginning, they behaved well, they were afraid I would punish them, now they feel at home." (A caregiver)

> "After my sister's departure my nephews used to cry a lot, but what could I do?" (A caregiver)

One of the most difficult situations is when a caregiver or even an elderly relative is supposed to look after several children. Only a single case of this kind was identified during the research, but the children consulted said that this happens rather frequently and, as a rule, in such conditions children feel neglected. In the opinion of the NCCRP (National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights) representative, realising they are not a priority for caregivers makes children feel uncertain and isolated.

> "... Besides the children, I also have to take care of their abandoned grandfather and it is quite hard ..." (A caregiver)

> "... in addition to me, my aunt has to look after some other nephews." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "... anyway, these people have a spectrum of interests and the responsibility of caring for these children is a supplementary one. It can't be compared with parental care. Children are sensitive creatures and feel this estrangement ... they feel a lack of care and support." (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

According to some consultation workshop participants, numerous caregivers, thinking that children have adapted themselves to life in their new families, don't really know the true feelings of these children and accept only the outward appearances. They cannot see the children's suffering because the children usually don't feel free to talk about their personal experiences. Children expressed the idea that caregivers find it hard to admit that children don't feel as comfortable with them as they feel with their parents.

Most caregivers and some teachers mentioned that looking after somebody else's child is a bigger responsibility than looking after your own. Therefore, many caregivers tend to become overprotective. Some teachers, on the other hand, claim that some caregivers are "*more indifferent than parents.*"

> "The responsibility is enormous... with your own child you worry a lot; when you are looking after someone else's child it is even more complicated." (A caregiver)

> "... it is a huge responsibility, especially when both parents have left..." (A teacher)

An absolute majority of community officials – mayors, teachers, medical workers – affirmed proudly that in their localities each child with parents working abroad is being closely looked after by adults. At the same time, most respondents mentioned that as a rule caregivers attend to only the physical conditions of children. And, unfortunately, this is far from ensuring harmonious development for the child. In their opinion, caregivers are not able to meet all the needs of children, mainly those of teenagers. Living in the caregiver's family, the child lacks parental care. Some interviewed adults mentioned these children usually don't have enough leisure and sometimes they are deprived to some extent of interaction with other children of their own age, due to household chores for which they are responsible.

> "I am good as a guardian – [I am able] to provide them with food, to give them a shelter, to shape their behaviour. But I can't replace their mother. I can offer true love only to my own children." (A headmaster)

> "...looking after somebody else's child is like calling a complete stranger 'Mummy'... you can't feel what you feel for your own child, it is not the same kindness, the same love or the same care..." (A medical worker)

> "...they offer them food, a warm house, all kinds of basic things. But concerning the emotional aspect – it's not like being with their parents..." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

Some caregivers described how they try to compensate for the parents' absence:

- Giving equal treatment to your own children and those left in your care;

- Discussing topics of interest to the children in order to distract them from unpleasant emotions;

- Exercising extreme control over the children's everyday activities to prevent them from adopting undesirable behaviour;

- Replacing previous leisure activities with household duties.

> "I do my best to be fair to both of them. I don't want them to quarrel or hate each other and say, 'Her children are playing, while we are exploited.' When they play, they play together, when they work, they work together, too." (A caregiver)

> "...I buy footwear for both girls. I don't want them to think there are favourites." (A caregiver)

> "...do you like Shakira? Look what I read... I tackled such a subject and we talked about music and I noticed a change in my child's eyes..." (A caregiver)

> "...he is under strict control, every movement, every step. He is not allowed to go anywhere without permission... this is what I asked him at the beginning: 'Are you able to obey or not?'" (A caregiver)
> "He should not complain about the living conditions, only that he is under constant control..." (A caregiver)

> "...feed the animals and the poultry, chop some wood for the fire and wait for me... when the child is busy with household duties it is like he is 'contained' and you can control him." (A caregiver)

Many adults noticed aggressive behaviour in children with parents working abroad. Some of the young consultation workshop participants affirmed that quite often caregivers try to replace parents and, in order to ensure the child's discipline, tend to become authoritarian. The great majority of children, especially teenagers, don't accept such an attitude and register their protest by becoming aggressive. A local public administration representative expressed his view that excessive guardianship can negatively influence a child's self-confidence.

> "...when the relative looking after him tells him what to do, he replies, 'you are neither my mother nor my father.' They are very aggressive." (a medical worker)

> "... grandparents can't deal with them; they don't obey." (A headmaster)

> "They don't tolerate remarks from grandparents or relatives." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

> "Children become aggressive; they don't recognise the caregiver's authority. They are spoiled." (A medical worker)

> "I think excessive control leads to a loss of self-confidence; children don't feel comfortable anymore." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

Children reported cases where caregivers infringe on the child's right to privacy. Perhaps, intending to prevent children from doing undesirable deeds, caregivers want to be aware of the children's personal lives and resort to reading their diaries or letters addressed to their parents. Teachers and caregivers have also mentioned such situations.

> "... he has a copybook and writes down everything that happens during the day. I find it and read it...I tell him: 'you are already a big boy'... But he replies: 'Granny, I thought you couldn't read in this language.'" (A caregiver)

> "... I read a girl's letter to her mother who is abroad..." (A teacher)

Almost all of the adults interviewed and all of the children consulted mentioned that in the relationship between caregivers and children various conflict situations can arise. Teachers expressed the idea that differences between parents' ideas about education and those of

caregivers can lead to conflicts between them. When parents come back they reproach caregivers for what they believe to be negative behaviour in their children. A central public administration representative reported that there are cases when relatives who are supposed to look after children "can't handle it" and therefore ask the mayor to place the children in residential institutions. Adults included, among factors generating conflicts between children and caregivers, several features of the latter:

- Old age, which represents concepts of life that are completely different from those of children and teenagers. This includes the incapacity to help children with their homework and support them, when it is required, in their spheres of interest;

- The use of an ineffective style of communication because of lack of awareness of the particulars of adolescence;

- A restrictive educational strategy, adopted in order to avoid or reduce the risks of undesirable behaviour.

   "The problem is the grandparents' traditional education... this situation requires knowledge of psychology, of child-parent attitudes, and many other problems, especially connected with morality.... It is not enough to explain the problem to a child; he needs concrete examples from the family." (A headmaster)

   "... she can't help the girl with her mathematics homework. The girl is in the 4th form and when her mother was home they used to do homework together." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

   *"...*they can't agree with their grandparents because of differences in age; for instance, the grandfather goes to bed at 9 o'clock and he turns the light off, saying, 'It's bedtime.' Or he often asks, 'Why should you go there?' or 'Why are you doing this?' Children have their own interests... this is how conflicts arise."* (A headmaster)

   "... the difference in age and convictions is too significant." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

   "... children have their own opinions and modern views, but grandparents, due to their age, see life differently." (DDSAFP)

   "Maybe they want more freedom... but their grandparents disagree. This also has an impact on their character." (LPA)

   "They want to take part in contests in the city ... sometimes they are not allowed to because their grandparents are old and are not able to accompany them." (LPA)

Money sent by parents from abroad was also mentioned as a cause of conflict between children and caregivers. Parents send money not only to ensure their children's support, but also as a reward for the caregivers' efforts. In both cases, there were situations where caregivers' attitudes oscillated based on whether the sum of money had been transferred on time or was late. Within the consultation workshop it was confirmed that people's attitudes towards these children change if their material conditions worsen.

- *"... a distant relative expects payment for looking after children."* (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

The way caregivers administer money sent by parents can also create tensions between children and caregivers. Such situations occur even if there are agreements on this issue between parents and caregivers. It is possible for adolescents to feel frustrated by the way caregivers spend money because, on the one hand, they are told that their parents work and earn money for them, but, on the other hand, they are not involved in discussions about how the money is used. In some cases, caregivers abuse their prerogatives and start spending the money that was intended for other purposes. The research revealed the case of a young girl who had not been able to organise her birthday party with her friends as she wished because of a caregiver who 'saved' some money from the sum sent by the girl's parents for the party.

"The girl wanted to organise her birthday party and [her mother] sent her the necessary money, but it didn't happen as planned. [Her aunt] made some modifications in order to pocket the savings." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"... perhaps it happens because parents send money, but caregivers use it for personal purposes." (DDEYS: representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

Some adults claim that there are cases where children with at least one parent abroad become witnesses to or sometimes even victims of caregivers' inappropriate and dangerous behaviour. Among them are fathers, stepfathers or relatives.

"Parents leave them with grandparents, but sometimes the latter have bad habits, they drink alcohol, quarrel, swear." (A headmaster)

"Mothers leave and girls stay with their fathers who begin drinking. There are cases where fathers abuse their daughters." (IOM)

"...fathers abuse alcohol and then the risk for children of being physically abused is high... or they are not understood, or there is no one in whom they can confide. A father who spends his time drinking has no time to interact with his children, understand them or offer them what they need." (UNICEF)

"...there is a high risk of sexual abuse .... [especially in] situations where fathers abuse alcohol ... or when boys or girls are left in the care of stepfathers." (UNICEF)

Children's relationships with their peers

Interpersonal relationships with peers constituted a constant preoccupation for the children participating in the study. At the ages of 10 to 14, children from the comparison group mentioned that they pass their free time in the company of their friends, whereas children who are the focus of the study mentioned envy and distrust as characterizing their relationships. Adolescents from both groups expressed similar concerns – [lack of] mutual support between friends, the importance of colleagues' and friends' opinions, relationships with people of the opposite sex. Within the consulting workshop many participants asserted that numerous children living with their parents want to show their maturity by trying to prove to their peers that they were independent of their parents. The children who were consulted noticed that most children with parents working abroad tend to avoid activities in large groups and prefer, as a rule, inter actions in small groups of people who are experiencing the same situation of separation from their parents. These children are concerned about finding 'authentic friends,' which means reliable people, with whom they can share various problems, including personal matters. It was also mentioned that these children '*easily find themselves under the influence of negative circles of friends.*'

Most of these ideas can be found in the comments made by different adults involved in the study. Caregivers represent the only category of adults who asserted that relationships between children left in their care and their peers remained as friendly and as close as before the parents' departure. Only a few teachers from one locality involved in the study agreed that these children's circle of friends had not changed and the conflicts between them had not been determined by their families' living conditions. It should be also mentioned that this community is characterized by a tradition of children's participation.

> *"…it's the same social environment… according to my observations, I can't say it has changed; it's the same circle of friends and colleagues…"* (A caregiver)

> *"…she is quite friendly towards everybody; she plays and invites them all to her place."* (A caregiver)

> *"…they aren't isolated in class; I didn't notice anything like that. They are all friends. Even if sometimes they quarrel, it's not because of the fact that 'your parents are working abroad…' I wouldn't say they quarrel because of their parents' departure."* (A teacher)

> *"Children with parents abroad aren't isolated from their colleagues and the conflicts between them aren't based on such reasons."* (A headmaster)

Almost all teachers believe that parents' departure abroad is a negative factor that influences children's relationships with their peers. In their opinion these relationships usually evolve in two directions: consolidation, thanks to sympathy and understanding of these children's situations, or coldness or tension, because of the envy of their material conditions. In the opinion of teachers and other community members, envy is more frequent.

"I think their colleagues protect and support them." (A teacher)

"…unfortunately, they are the object of people's envy." (DDEYS)

"…children's relationships are dominated by envy. The one who has something starts mocking the one who doesn't…and this creates many problems." (A medical worker)

"...on the one hand they have mobile telephones and expensive clothes…there is envy, but on the other hand, people feel sorry for them because they are far from their mothers; there's no one they can share with and talk to, and it's hard for them to manage household responsibilities." (A headmaster)

Some adults noticed that most children with parents working abroad restrict their friendships to peers who are in a similar situation – a tendency more characteristic and noticeable among adolescents. In the opinion of adults, this can be explained by the fact that these children share the same concerns as well as the same improvement of their material status, and this makes them feel superior to other children. The latter, in their turn, envy them their improved material conditions and sometimes even hurt them, knowing that there is nobody they can turn to for help or support. As a result, many children left without parental care want to give the impression that they don't face any problems. Teachers and headmasters report that these are determining factors that make these two groups of children come into conflict.

"…we can talk about grouping; they begin grouping themselves, sharing either a positive or a negative interest. This phenomenon is not often seen in the 5th - 6th forms, but in the 8th - 9th it is seen quite often. In the 10th, 11th, and 12th forms they are mostly on their own." (A headmaster)

"…they are united generally in material matters: 'let's go to the bar or somewhere'…" (local NGO member)

"…they consider themselves members of the local elite. Children living with their parents are considered people of low social rank and there is hatred between them… the same situation characterises the adults." (A medical worker)

"At the disco they have their circle of friends and detest the others." (A headmaster)

"They show they are superior in relationships with colleagues." (DDEYS: representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

"…fights…it sometimes happens. They say, 'He pushed him.' Of course he knows nobody will stand up for him because his father is abroad." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

"…those living with parents know that if a conflict occurs…'my daddy will come to school, but in your case only your mother [will come].'" (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

It was observed that children don't always consider their favourable financial situation as an advantage. A consultation workshop participant asserted that children with parents abroad also envy their peers, especially their free time and their lack of household responsibilities. These are things they can't enjoy. Children in a good financial situation are sometimes accepted by people or in different groups quite easily, especially because they can buy whatever they want.

"When I meet someone living with their parents they always speak about what they saw on TV, about homework, about what they ate, what they did, with whom they played and how they spent their leisure time." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"…it is well known that parents will send them money and they won't be in need of anything, thus friends are always with them." (A teacher)

"Rather often people take advantage of those having money, but when there is no more money they are usually isolated and forgotten." (DCW)

Consultation workshop participants mention that pocket money facilitates children's access to various services and this determines differences in ways they spend their free time. Children with parents abroad form their circles of friends because they have a lot in common: emotional experiences, interests, discussion topics, household concerns, and their ways of enjoying leisure. Often, because they go through quite different experiences, they cannot talk about these things with peers who live with their parents.

"They have nothing in common. Children living with their parents…don't have as many problems as the others. When I meet my friend, whose parents are also abroad, we speak about how difficult life is without our parents, but sometimes this life can also be pleasant." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"It is self-isolation from children living with their parents because of their financial situation; children with parents abroad have more money: 'Let's have lunch in town.' 'I can't afford something like that,' is often the response of the child living with his or her parents. Maybe a child with parents can say yes once, but those with parents abroad do it almost every day. It's easier for them to go out and have a meal instead of cooking at home for two hours." (DCW)

"…they have their own interests, their circle of friends, they celebrate their birthday parties at home, they get together at someone's place, listening to music, watching I don't know what kind of video tapes. Sometimes they form alliances… I can't say whether it's good or bad – I don't know." (A headmaster)

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Numerous members of the community involved (medical workers, local NGO representatives, teachers) and local public administration representatives asserted that the group formed by children with parents abroad often exhibit socially undesirable behaviour, like drug abuse, an exaggerated interest in various forms of entertainment, school abandonment, precocious sexual relationships and delinquent behaviour. Adults explained this phenomenon by the lack of control over these children's behaviour from parents and caregivers, as well as by the fact that they have at their disposal free access to financial resources. Participants in the data consultation workshop mentioned that children's desire to be noticed in the social environment, combined with their vulnerability, make some of them adhere to groups with bad reputations. Similar situations were reported both by headmasters and teachers.

> *"They want to be noticed, but it does not always happen in groups of good teenagers."* (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> *"These children usually form their own circle… and being influenced by the rules of the street, they obey a programme of education that suits only them."* (A local NGO member)

> *"Children in our suburb, for instance, don't aspire to anything; they don't fear their parents or God and they aren't concerned about their education."* (A local NGO member)

> *"Some of them become thieves or there are other problems. They think they are free to do anything…"* (A medical worker)

> *"…they stay out till late at night, they talk and you can hear shouts and other things… Girls fall in love earlier and boys reach maturity faster. [They use] cigarettes and alcohol, they have money, they are free…"* (A medical worker)

> *"There are cases where they cause us trouble…they feel independent, they have money and they get involved in negative things: smoking, drinking alcohol… they want to prove they are heroes and take part in robberies. The police had to deal with such a case".* (A headmaster)

> *"…some are manipulated by other adolescents."* (A headmaster)

> *"They become spoilt, they go to bars and have contact with adults who are…I would say offenders."* (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

> *"…most of them abuse alcohol, they sometimes steal, they run away from their homes and don't obey to their grandparents. I can say we lose these children."* (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

Some of the children consulted claim that the isolation brought on by worries and other emotions causes some children with parents abroad to become indifferent to group activities. Most of the

children participating in the study consider that they have an average ability to participate effectively in a group of their peers. In one community, children from both age categories, with parents abroad, estimated that they had a high level of ability in this area, whereas in another community, children between 10 and 14 living with their parents placed this ability at a low level of development. Taking into account the different experiences of these communities in the area of participation, the results lead us to believe that both interactive methods and children's participation in different community activities develop their social interaction abilities. Within the consultation workshop the idea was expressed that the main condition for children's participation in group activities is based on the existence of a "common interest or purpose."

> *"They refuse to get involved in group activities. We notice an isolation; not complete, but an isolation. About 2 – 3 persons."* (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> *"When we approach the subject of parents they leave; they feel the need to isolate themselves."* (DCW)

> *"…they are distant and don't get involved because of the longing for their parents and all these feelings. They want to become members of our groups, but they must be helped by other children, too. There must be a strong connection between these two categories of children."* (DCW)

5.6. The effects of parents' migration on their children's education

Assessing the school activities of children left without parental care was not among the research's aims. Nevertheless, we cannot neglect this aspect because it was identified as being one of the children's biggest daily preoccupations, especially school attendance, homework, and marks.

> *"I want to do well at school and get good marks."* (Gr. III)
> *"School is our greatest concern because we spend most of our time at school."* (Gr. II)

Similar responses were recorded in all the groups of children included in the two age categories. The difference becomes significant when comparing the frequency of responses that contained concerns about school given by children aged 10-14 from the study's subject group and those from the comparison group. Despite the fact that children with parents working abroad are preoccupied mostly with school, it was noticed to a lesser extent than with children from the comparison group. This difference is insignificant in children between 15 and 17.

Having good results at the end of the term represents an important concern for children in secondary school. Because the workshop was held on the eve of their examinations, this concern was even more evident.

> *"I have to prepare for my exams and get good mark".* (Gr. II)

"We are very concerned about school now because at this time we have to take a lot of tests". (Gr. IV)

Analysing the effects of their parents' departure, children notice two types of changes in their school performance. The decline in school performance is associated by some children with the lack of parental support and encouragement. On the other hand, improvement in performance at school is due to children's will to reward their parents' efforts or to meet their requirements.

"My father used to make me read; now there is nobody to help me." (Gr. I)

"My school performance is better because they are working hard there for me." (Gr. I)

"I am studying better now, and I want them to be proud of me when they come back." (Gr. I)

In the opinion of the consultation workshop participants, parental supervision and presence is very important at an early age when children are learning to study on their own. They consider that too long an absence from parents makes it difficult for children to realize the usefulness of studying; it also leads to the refusal of children to accept their parents' subsequent criticisms with regard to their school performance.

"My mother didn't teach me anything since I was in the 6th form because she was absent; I am now in the 12th form and it is too late." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

Most children consulted mentioned that, after their parents' departure, their school proficiency diminished. They consider that children left without supervision are not able to manage their freedom, don't resist temptations such as entertainment and peer pressure and spend little time on homework.

"It's difficult to stay home and study when you're alone and friends invite you, 'Come out!' And nobody is there to stop you from going. Why not?" (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

Most adults think that with parents' departure abroad children's school competence declines. Children are less motivated to get good results, convinced that education does not ensure a prosperous future. In some adults' opinion, the same attitude is held by many parents, for whom a high school diploma is more important than the actual quality of the studies.

"A parent says: 'You must get your diploma, the marks don't matter.'" (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

Failing to fulfil educational requirements is explained as being the result of a lack of parental supervision, stimulation, and monitoring. At the same time, caregivers are not always able to

check the school performance of children in their care. Some teachers claim that children's school efficiency diminishes in cases where both parents go abroad, but if the child stays with one parent his school success does not suffer any changes. Adults also assert that in some cases after the parents' departure children have poor school attendance and even become disobedient.

"Some children don't do their homework. Adults don't look after them." (A teacher

"Their school performance is going down. Grandparents and aunts provide them with food and clothes. In the majority of cases the material aspect is taken care of. But their successes at school... it's hard for an old person to look after a child." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

Adults also notice that after the parents' departure children are too busy with household chores that become their daily duties and therefore they have little time for their studies.

The poor school outcomes of children with parents working abroad are also associated by adults with the children's confidence that money will allow them to pay for their university studies and that it is not necessary for them to make the effort to meet educational requirements. Some adults express the opinion that many children envisage joining their parents abroad after leaving school and don't see the need to study.

"Children say: 'Why should I study?' For instance, his parents had a poor school performance and now they are in Italy and they are wealthier than those who received good marks and stayed in the country.'" (A local NGO member)

"...more precisely his motivation decreases because the financial motivation prevails: having money is important." (A headmaster)

Caregivers think that the school performance of children left in their care did not change after the parents' departure. On the contrary, they believe that children are motivated to study because the goal of the parents is to provide them with a better future. Teachers share the same idea, confirming that some children become more responsible in completing their homework.

"Their parents went abroad to offer them a better future so they should be hard-working." (A caregiver)

One of the main risks children face after their parents' departure is dropping out of school. Some adults claimed it is important for these children to be supported in order to prevent them from discontinuing their studies. At the same time, most teachers and adults noted that there were no cases of children with parents abroad dropping out of school.

"The risk of dropping out of school goes up. It all begins with the fact that the child left without care is late for school because he or she forgot to set the alarm clock and then.." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

"There haven't been any recorded cases of children in this category leaving school." (A teacher)

The representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family mentioned that in cases of children leaving school early, local social workers take action immediately to bring the child back to school. In the opinion of the representative of the International Organisation for Migration, city and school officials are responsible for identifying children who do not attend school and reintegrating them into the educational system, as well as determining their particular needs. The representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs asserted that the parents' absence or the lack of legal representatives for children make it difficult to haul somebody over the coals for not respecting his or her parental obligations in cases of children dropping out of school.

"...there is nobody we can sue or bring to justice for neglecting their parental responsibilities." (MIA: representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs)

Relationships with teachers and their attitude toward and support for children left without parental care represent an important aspect of school life. Teachers claim that they have the same attitude towards children with parents abroad and children living with their parents. Adults from the community share the same point of view.

"…there is no difference in teachers' attitudes towards children living separately from their parents and those living with their parents." (A teacher)

According to the data obtained by the study, academic performance constitutes for most teachers the main criterion for assessing children's personal values. If the pupil shows good academic results, as a rule, the teacher is not interested in the other aspects of his life, even if he is experiencing problems. But if the school performance of children with parents working abroad declines, some teachers associate this fact with an improved material situation, the expensive clothes, telephones and computers the children have.

"…when bad things happen, teachers start asking themselves, 'If these children are better clothed and they can afford to buy different things like mobile phones, why don't they want to learn'?" (A headmaster)

Consultation workshop participants mentioned that teachers do not always manage to identify the problems faced by children left without parental care. This happens because children hide the difficulties they face in order to avoid becoming the subject for discussions among community members, and also to prevent their parents from learning about their problems. At the same time, in the opinion of children consulted, there would be better communication between children and teachers if the latter had more psychological experience and were available to approach delicate subjects that are of great importance to children, connected with their physical and emotional development.

"…some children behave more formally with adults because they don't want the latter to discuss them or tell their parents bad things about them." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"Teachers are the only people children can share with and consult with on delicate subjects." (DCW)

Some adults think children do not tend to speak openly with teachers. The image of an authoritarian teacher promoted by schools and society make children reserved, and they don't perceive teachers as partners in discussions about private problems.

"We teachers are willing to discuss things with them, to make them be honest with us, to give them advice, but we are still strangers to them. The teacher in our school is an authoritarian who 'makes me study, behave well, teaches me to be polite,' etc. We can't give him that which only his parents are able to give." (A headmaster)

"We teachers talk to them in private about their situation. But on their own initiative they don't tell us their problems." (A teacher)

Other adults, by contrast, claim that children solicit the help of their teachers when they need it. Openness to children's problems and a friendly attitude are the main features that determine whether or not children ask for some teachers' support.

"When they have a problem, children generally talk to their teachers about it; they don't come to the Town Hall," (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

"Children are willing to share only with teachers who are good communicators, who understand them and are reliable." (UNICEF)

At the same time, most of the representatives of the educational system assert that the school, through its teachers and form teachers, does try to compensate for the lack of parents. School workers understand the delicate situation in which these children find themselves; they sympathise with them, communicate with them, pay special attention to their emotional state and encourage them to overcome difficult times. In some localities, elementary school children with parents abroad benefit from greater attention from their teachers.

"Teachers are the first to notice changes in children's behaviour after their parents' departure; they try to talk to them in private." (A headmaster)

"…sometimes we also accomplish this role; we get close to them, discuss things with them and even caress them. We try to fill the gap created in their souls by their parents' departure." (A teacher)

"The headmaster requires that form teachers take care of these children, especially those in the 1st – 4th forms. They are given a lot of attention, they are called upon more frequently, and even during breaks teachers spend time with them." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

Some adults believe that teachers play an important role in supervising children, disciplining them and finding solutions to conflicts among them. Nevertheless, some teachers mentioned that their efforts to educate children left without parental care are insufficient in the absence of similar actions from the parents' side. The latter, unfortunately, very seldom tell the school administration about their decision to go abroad.

> "Teachers are the first to notice various changes in these children because they spend six hours a day in their company." (A medical worker)

> "As long as they are at school it is fine because they are supervised by teachers…but when they meet in the street or elsewhere, huge conflicts occur." (A medical worker)

> "…school workers and form teachers talk to them, but in spite of our efforts, we cannot succeed. Only parents are able to control their behaviour and that's the big problem." (A headmaster)

Teachers who have experience in care-giving report that their colleagues have conflicting attitudes towards children left without parental care: both envy and sympathy. Some teachers envy these children for the improved material situation they have after their parents' departure. This feeling is amplified by the fact that they are entirely responsible for the educational process of the migrants' children during their parents' absence. Thus, their work increases, but their remuneration remains the same. On the other hand, parents working abroad have higher incomes than those of the teachers and are not concerned about their children left at home. As a consequence, some teachers feel deeply wronged and they take revenge on the children, not giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities or, on the contrary, asking secretly for "rewards" for the attention and marks the children receive.

> "Teachers' attitudes towards these children can be qualified both as envy of the goods they possess and sympathy for the situation they are in – their parents' absence, household chores..." (A headmaster)

> "There are cases when children are reproached, 'your mother earns money abroad and I am supposed to take care of you now.'" (A teacher)

In some cases, unwillingly, teachers create states of envy between children living with their parents and those with parents abroad. The latter, having various resources at their disposal, including personal computers, manage to meet their teachers' requirements to a greater extent than children living with their parents.

> "…when we ask them to accomplish a task using the computer we notice a feeling of envy." (A teacher)

5.7. Children's resources

Independent living brings about changes in children's sphere of knowledge and abilities. Many confronted certain situations like cooking, budgeting, looking after younger siblings, making everyday decisions connected with the household, and allocating time for the first time. This chapter presents some of the resources that children with at least one parent abroad have at their disposal in order to cope with the situations they confront. The results refer to the knowledge and abilities children develop as well as to the people whom they ask for support.

Children's internal resources

None of the groups of children involved in the study placed independence among the qualities they had developed to a high degree. Younger children living with their parents, as well as adolescents with parents abroad, consider that they have average ability to deal independently with different situations. At the same time, children between the ages of 15 and 18 living with their parents and younger children with parents abroad place this ability at a lower level.

In the same context, the children consulted asserted that the degree of competence concerning the independent management of their freedom can depend on the age at which children are left without parental care. If the separation from their parents occurs when adolescents require greater autonomy from their parents, their chances of success are very high. At the same time, older children living with their parents feel overprotected and need more freedom in order to assert themselves. Living apart from their parents at an early age can be very difficult for the great majority of children because they are not ready to be on their own.

Some adults express the idea that the way in which children manage to deal independently with situations and problems depends more on the education they get than on the age at which they are left alone. At the same time, very few respondents share the view that these children possess the necessary experience and knowledge to face the difficulties of independent life. Most adults doubt the ability of these children, claiming that they are able to cope only if they are left "*in the hands of a good person,*" which means in the care of their relatives. Representatives of international organisations mention that family and school traditions do not pay enough attention to the development of an independent young generation.

> "Those coming from a good family possess some life skills like taking care of themselves and fulfilling certain household activities." (IOM)

> ".... it depends entirely on the education that the child received before his or her parents left." (MEYS: A representative of the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports)

> "Our schools do not prepare children for real life. It gives them the opportunity to become academicians and physicians, but too much theory is taught with very little attention to practical knowledge." (UNICEF)

Increases in household chores

In the opinion of the representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights (NCCRP), when living without one or both parents children really "become more independent and this is a beneficial process." But taking into account all the other difficulties children confront, it must be stated that the absence of their parents usually results in the children being beset with various overwhelming duties and this represents a serious obstacle to their harmonious development. It was found that after their parents' departure most children participating in the study got involved more actively in household chores. In both age groups, children with at least one parent abroad are more frequently engaged than their peers in the responsibilities they received after their parents' departure.

> "To tidy the rooms." (Gr. I)

> "To help my granny around the house." (Gr. I)

> "To feed the animals."(Gr. II)

> "I go shopping every day." (Gr. II)

Children with parents abroad deal with a series of problems and "several responsibilities;" quite often they have to fulfil duties that are not appropriate for their age. Many reach maturity precociously and unwillingly. Children participating in the evaluation workshop also considered that circumstances require that children assume responsibilities intrinsic to the adult world.

> "Their thoughts are focused on the family; they do not waste time and are responsible for the administration of the family budget." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Becoming mature at age 12 is a tragedy for a child." (DCW)

The roles of children with at least one parent abroad are different from those of children in the comparison group. In the case of the latter, as they mentioned, responsibilities are distributed among family members; therefore, they have distinct roles. As a rule, the father plays a key role and he is seen as the leader or the head of the family because he earns the money, he accomplishes the most difficult tasks, and he has the vital role in the decision-making process. The mother is responsible for household chores and takes care of the children. The latter must study, help their parents, and take care of their younger siblings.

> "I have a family of three members: My mother is responsible for the cooking and cleaning, my father goes to work, and I must attend school and do my homework." (Gr. III)

> "I usually help Mummy and my brother helps Daddy." (Gr. III)

> "My mother is a housewife, my father has a job, and I take care of my younger sisters." (Gr. IV)

Only a few of the children left without parental care mentioned that taking over adult responsibilities made them become mature faster, enabling them to develop abilities that they would need and use in adult life. Children 15 to 18 years old were the ones who appreciate this situation. The comments made by some younger children indicate that participation in new activities gives them a newfound feeling of usefulness, whereas other children assume these roles with resignation. Some children asserted that they had less free time and too little time for entertainment. Several teachers from a locality involved in the study shared the same idea.

> "I became mature: I do the laundry, the cleaning and turn the soil in the garden."
> (Gr. I)

> "I took over all the difficult tasks from my parents. I matured faster, but that's good." (Gr. I)

> "We mature much faster." (Gr. II)

> "We try to adapt ourselves to the changes; we become more independent and it will be useful in the future." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "I became more responsible and I help my granny." (Gr. I)

> "I have more tasks now; I don't have time for entertainment." (Gr. II)

> "I don't have so much time as before; I gave up some of my hobbies." (Gr. II)

Adults expressed different opinions concerning the extent to which children with parents working abroad are involved in household chores. Some teachers and medical workers mentioned that most of these children fulfil "adult" duties like cooking, chopping firewood, feeding the animals and working in the field. School managers and certain teachers associated the poor academic performance, tiredness, absenteeism, and lack of motivation to study that they observed in some children with parents abroad with the fact that they are usually overloaded with household responsibilities. The same idea can be found in the comments made by children in the 15 to 18 age group living without their parents. They mentioned more frequently than any other participants that they lack sufficient time for doing homework.

> "... they do work more ... at the age when they should play and have fun." (A medical worker)

> "... a pupil who was very tired during class told me, 'I'm sick and tired of accomplishing adult duties. I must do my job as well as my mother's and sometimes I can't manage to prepare for the lessons.'" (A teacher)

> "Children ask why one of their schoolmates didn't come to school and are told that it was because he had a lot of work at home." (A headmaster)

On the other hand, caregivers claim that children's activities are the same as the ones they had when they used to live with their parents. At the same time, some caregivers mention that they involve children in various household activities in order to fill their free time and avoid possible undesirable activities. Some of the caregivers interviewed asserted that children's help was very useful to maintain the house.

> "They weed their own field and then mine." (A caregiver)

> "... he must be always busy because if you don't keep an eye on him, at his age...
> He must be supervised until he is in the 6th form." (A caregiver)

> "... they are very hard-working; they work very fast." (A caregiver)

Participants in the consultation workshop asserted that generally the number of household activities accomplished by children increased. "*When the mother was at home the child used to tidy his or her room, but now there are other duties he or she is responsible for like housework and school and other things.*" Children also added that they can negotiate about certain activities with their parents whereas they cannot with caregivers.

After their parents' departure, besides household chores, children have to do those jobs that their parents did: take care of their younger sisters and brothers. Some adults, as well as consultation workshop participants, asserted that this responsibility constitutes a huge challenge for many of these children. On the other hand, in some teachers' views, fulfilling such duties is beneficial to girls because they learn how to become "*good wives and mothers.*"

> "... I help my younger brother with his homework." (Gr. I)

> "She has to become a mother for her younger brother and sister..." (A teacher)

> "The girl said: 'It's not enough that I don't have a mother when I need her, but I have two brothers who exhaust me.'" (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "...the child with parents abroad knows that he must come home early and do household chores, cook. If he has a younger brother or a sister he has to take care of them and help them with their homework..." (A teacher)

Children from both age groups with at least one parent abroad, as well as those 10 to 14 years old living with parents at home assert that they are quite able to do household chores. At the same time, children's physical work is a normal phenomenon in rural localities; therefore, such activities did not constitute a radical change in their lives. According to the representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights (NCCRP) and some medical workers and school managers, "*Children from rural localities are much more independent than children from cities;*" therefore, when a parent leaves they adapt more easily and succeed in accomplishing household activities. But unfortunately, the amount of work often increases too much and they do not manage to cope with the situation they find themselves in.

Managing the family budget

Children participating in the study expressed very different opinions about their ability to manage the family budget. In all the localities, children mentioned all levels (low, average, high) of development of such a skill. Taking into account the fact that even children living with their parents have little ability to manage money, we can suppose that most of the children left without parental care are not capable of dealing with such an activity right after their parents' departure. During the consultation workshop, the idea was expressed that in most cases, children learn to manage the money they get from their parents gradually, from their own experience. At the same time, it was mentioned that some children try to save their parents' remittances in order to spend the money together when they come back.

It was observed that in the great majority of cases caregivers play the key role in the administration of money sent home by parents. Caregivers assert that when it is possible, they provide children, with money for various school and entertainment expenses. Certain respondents mentioned that it is very important for children to develop a sense of respect for the money earned by their parents.

> "He tells me what he plans to spend the money on, but he doesn't have free access to the money sent by his parents. They can't send money every week and I tell him to spend sensibly." (A caregiver)

All the categories of adults interviewed asserted that, as a rule, most children with parents abroad have more pocket money than their peers. Some teachers consider that children should not be given all the money sent by their parents because they might spend it irresponsibly. Thus, when caregivers provide them with regular, small amounts they "*develop their sense of responsibility.*" Only teachers from one locality affirmed that, as a rule, children manage the money that they receive "correctly" because they value their parents' work.

In the view of adults from the communities involved in the research, children with at least one parent abroad spend the money they get from their parents in bars, nightclubs and Internet cafes. They buy sweets, fast food, more expensive clothes than those of their peers, and mobile telephones.

Representatives of local and central public administrations shared the view that children lack the ability to manage the money they have. In the opinion of the UNICEF representative, the lack of a tradition "*to discuss financial management within the family*" and to approach this topic in school is the main cause of children's inadequate and unsatisfactory competence in this field.

The dangers of access to money

According to several respondents, among them caregivers, headmasters, and representatives of local and central public administrations, when children lack leisure opportunities, their inability to manage money can lead to dangers such as alcohol consumption, withdrawal from school and a distortion of values. Local NGO representatives expressed the opinion that absent parents who provide children with money and various material goods use this as an attempt to compensate for

their absence. Some schoolteachers and administrators consider that parents working abroad should invest more in their children's education and less in material things. The idea that money coming from abroad should be invested in Moldova was also expressed during the data consultation workshop. This could guarantee a decent living in our country for the migrants' families.

> "When they reach adolescence, some boys begin consuming alcohol and tobacco, instead of spending the money on something else." (A headmaster)

> "... they begin worshipping money and expensive clothes ... parents are responsible for the fact that money becomes everything for them." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

> "Sometimes, children who receive money from migrant parents drop out of school because they taste the pleasures of entertainment and a wealthy lifestyle." (MEYS: A representative of the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports)

After their parents' departure, most children find themselves in the situation where they have to decide how to spend their leisure time. It was observed that the majority of children left without parental care value, to some degree, the acquisition of this ability. In two localities, children between the ages of 15 and 18 living with their parents said that they did not develop this skill well enough. In the opinion of the consultation workshop participants, children living without parental care are obliged to organise their time in order to accomplish all the necessary activities, among which are household duties, supervising and taking care of younger siblings and preparing for classes. This explains their "*strict rhythm*" and the fact that sometimes they lack free time. One of the children consulted, having experienced a separation from his parents, said that he felt frustrated at not being able to enjoy as much leisure as his peers who live with their parents.

> "I'm angry and I don't want to hear something like this, 'Is it fair? You entertained yourself, while I was working until 5 p.m.'" (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

At the same time, among the concerns reported by the participants in the study, those connected with managing leisure time have an important place in the hierarchy of children's preoccupations, regardless of their age. Another concern was the lack of opportunities for spending free time in their communities.

In one of the localities, some teachers mentioned that most children were helped by parents to organise their leisure and that they were "*well co-ordinated*." Others shared the view that in organising their time, children favour household and school activities to the detriment of free time.

"I know young girls who, after graduating from the 9th form, don't go to the disco because they study for their lessons." (A teacher)

"... maybe they sacrifice part of their free time to do their chores." (A teacher)

In the opinion of a local NGO representative, children who are not being supervised by their parents adopt an undesirable lifestyle. They "*become free*" because they are not able to organise their time efficiently and they are not systematically involved in school and household activities.

Children in all the groups participating in the study mentioned that they possessed enough knowledge concerning a healthy lifestyle, including damage to their health caused by smoking and using alcohol as well as the danger of HIV/AIDS. At the same time, some admitted that many adolescents do smoke and abuse alcohol. Children consulted asserted that most children and adolescents are well informed in this area, but nevertheless they do not respect these principles. The lack of strict supervision from adults, the lack of opportunities to spend their free time, as well as peer pressure are circumstances that cause children to adopt behaviour that is detrimental to their health, despite the fact that they are aware of the dangers.

In spite of an average level of abilities and attitudes in the area of communication, children consulted, especially adolescents, mentioned that they notice a number of deficiencies in their relationships with their peers in this area.

Children between the ages of 15 and 18 from the comparison group in two localities asserted that they could not solve their conflicts peacefully. Consulting workshop participants mentioned that their generation "*is too impulsive, energetic and quick,*" hence, sometimes they prove to be aggressive in relationships.

In the opinion of children consulted, among the qualities all children and adolescents should develop are: tolerating suggestions from others, as well as the ability to hold on to your own opinions regardless of the pressure coming from other people. Despite the fact that they seem contradictory, these skills can help children become more confident in their relationships with others.

Social resources

According to the study in the three localities involved, children living with their parents feel more secure from any form of violence and neglect. On the other hand, in almost all the cases of children left without parental care, these children said that as a rule they find it difficult to ask for support when they need it. In only one locality did most children affirm that they had developed the ability to ask for help from others when they need it. In another locality, only children with parents abroad recognised they had such ability. In the third community, children consider that they are able to manage this skill to an average degree.

At the same time, consultation workshop participants considered that most children left without parental care experience certain difficulties and that there is no one they can ask for help or advice because they do not have a reliable person close to them. As mentioned above, children who constituted the study's subject group have difficulty establishing relationships of trust with

people other than their parents. When they need help they prefer talking to their parents, and if this is not possible they appeal for help to caregivers, to people recommended by their parents, or to friends and colleagues. In difficult situations many adolescents refuse to ask other people for advice. Perhaps this tendency can be explained by their desire to become independent, whereas asking for help to them means showing weakness. As a result, these children rarely ask their teachers for help. Some of the consultation workshop participants mentioned that some teachers had refused to help them, despite the fact that previously the teachers had promised to provide them support as often as needed.

> "Many teenagers don't trust anybody. They rely on their own abilities." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "You must be sure that the person you ask for help is 'a capable one'... if they are not competent, or if they are old, I refuse to talk to them." (DCW)

According to the representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights (NCCRP), it is very important that children appeal for help to the people around them who are willing to provide them with the necessary support because if they do not, "*the situation can worsen.*" According to the same respondent, the way in which children choose the people they ask for help depends on their age. Younger children are more likely to appeal to '*people close to them – relatives, neighbours.*' For older children, the credibility of the person matters more. Therefore, in order to prevent children, including those with at least one parent abroad, from going through unpleasant, risky situations, it is extremely important that the community provides a person who can monitor the situation and send children to experts who can provide them qualified support.

Representatives of local NGOs and UNICEF consider that children ask for help from their peers more frequently. One of the UNICEF representatives mentioned that, as a rule, most children and adolescents 'have little confidence' in teachers and health services; therefore, they talk to their friends and schoolmates about their problems. At the same time, respondents shared the view that this source of help is not always the best one.

> "The group they are part of provides them support when they need it." (A local NGO member)

> "... I can hardly believe that within the gatherings they organise they open their hearts to each other." (A local NGO member)

> "... children themselves say that first of all they appeal to their friends for help, 'How can I solve this issue?' If the person you ask for advice is a close friend with experience and information, it's wonderful, but quite often the advice is not useful." (UNICEF)

Caregivers claim they are the first source of help for the children they look after and in '*difficult situations*' they '*consult*' the children's parents. All the interviewed caregivers related that situations in which children asked for their help usually involved the need for money for school and entertainment activities.

"I'm always there for them and when they need something they talk to me. As long as I can …" (A caregiver)

Most teachers say that when children with parents abroad need help they come to them, as well as to relatives and friends. In the opinion of headmasters, as a rule, children appeal to their parents for help. In their turn the latter ask caregivers or teachers to solve the issue. Children also ask their teachers for help because '*they are closer to them.*'

"The form master is the first person children go to for help, or other teachers, caregivers, grandparents and even parents – talking to them over the phone." (A headmaster)

Medical workers, as well as representatives of local and central authorities, said that they had not received requests from children with parents abroad. In their opinion, these children talk more frequently to their relatives and teachers about their problems.

"Children usually ask their relatives for help, not us... we did not record such cases..." (A medical worker)

"... quite often the form teacher becomes like a parent for them... " (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

"They don't come to us for help; we identify them through the Town Hall, the school or their neighbours. Children seldom ask us for help." (MEYS: A representative of the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports)

5.8. Children's participation

In this study only one element of children's participation was tackled; that is, whether or not children express their opinion and whether or not it is taken into account by adults during the decision-making process that affects the child. Nevertheless, during the data collection, participants referred to other elements connected with children's opportunities to participate as well as to their parents' readiness to support their participation.

The communities included in the study are regions that have differing experiences in children's participation. Two of them have traditions of children's involvement at school and at the community level while the other has no experience of projects relating to children's participation.

Participation within the family

The opinions of children between the ages of 10 and 14 who live with their parents influence family decisions to a greater extent than the opinions of those left without parental care. We get

quite a different picture with children between the ages of 15 and 17; those who have parents working abroad have a greater influence on the decisions affecting them.

Some of the children between the ages of 10 and 14 living with their parents mentioned that in their families the opinions of each member are taken into account when making a decision.

> "My parents listen to my point of view when reaching a decision and they even take it into account." (Gr. III)

At the same time, several children from the same age group claimed that even if they are asked to express their opinion it is not taken into account. This happens because parents don't think their children are ready to influence the decisions affecting them. And there are also children who believe that their participation is not necessary in all areas.

> "Parents rarely take our opinions into account. They're not important. Only in certain situations do our opinions count." (Gr.III)

> "They're seldom interested in hearing our opinions; they often say we're not enough old to participate in the process of making family decisions." (Gr.III)

> "I don't think children really have to be aware of all family problems or even problems concerning themselves." (Gr.III)

Children between the ages of 10 and 14 with one or both parents working abroad considered that their opinion influences family decisions insignificantly because this is a parent's exclusive prerogative. They know what is best for their children. At the same time, some children said they are consulted when problems concerning them are under discussion.

> "In families, decisions are made by grown-ups and parents." (Gr.I)

> "We're small; our opinions are often wrong." (Gr.I)

> "Parents only explain the reasons. Even if they ask the children's opinion they ignore it." (Gr.I)

> "When they want to buy something for us, they always ask us to accompany them." (Gr.I)

At the age of 15 to 17, some children living with their parents participate in the family decision-making process. They feel that their parents treat them as their equals and that it is fair to take their opinions into account. But others say they are only consulted about problems that directly affect them.

> "Parents can't make decisions for us." (Gr. IV)

> "Grown-ups take our opinion into account when they realize we are their future." (Gr. IV)

"They don't consult us about adult problems. We are [only] allowed to express ourselves on childish matters." (Gr. IV)

Children of 15 to 17, with one or both parents working abroad, are active family decision-makers. Both children and teachers share this view. The oldest child in the family enjoys the privilege of being consulted first, and his opinion is taken seriously into account.

"Parents always consult me about what I want them to buy me." (Gr. II)

"The opinion of the oldest child is taken into account by parents; they consult with him." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"Yes, they participate, deciding on how to spend money. They are very involved." (A teacher)

Most children, however, are not consulted about problems connected with their parents' departure. Even if children are asked to express their opinion, it isn't taken into account because the parents think they know what is better for their children. Some grown-ups say children agree from the very beginning with the departure of their parents because they realise it's in their own interest.

"Parents decide where and when to go. The child's opinion doesn't count." (DDEYS: A representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports)

"...when the matter is under discussion children are aware of their parents' plans, but I can't say that the children's opinion is decisive." (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

"There are cases where children are asked if they agree or not. Nevertheless, children realize their parents have to go abroad to make money and offer them a better future." (A teacher)

In very rare cases does a child's opinion change their parent's decision or influence it to a great extent.

"I wanted both my parents to go abroad in order to prevent my family from breaking tearing apart. But it would have been easier for me if one of them had stayed at home." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"... I know concrete cases when one parent gave in to the child's demands." (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

"Sometimes when children don't agree, their parents don't leave. But mostly their opinion is not taken into account." (A medical worker)

Sometimes parents only explain to their children the reasons for their going abroad, other times they discuss their responsibilities with them. Grownups say older children accept the decision more easily because they are involved more frequently in such discussions, and as a result, they understand better all aspects of the separation from children.

> "They used to discuss such things, especially with teenagers." (A teacher)
> "Parents usually prepare their children emotionally, telling them what to do." (A teacher)

In order to justify the need to go abroad, some parents promise their children material goods or a decent future as compensation for their absence. Both parents and other grownups think children joyfully approve their decision in such circumstances. At the same time, most children deny accepting such bribes in exchange for their parents' departure.

> "Seeing that his standard of living improves, that he has clothes and food and all he needs, the child can't say that it hadn't been the right decision." (A teacher)

> "Even if the child doesn't agree, his parents bribe him with arguments like, 'We'll make a lot of money, we'll buy a beautiful house, clothes, etc.'" (IOM)

> "It's hard for me to say that most children only approve of their parents' decision to go abroad in order to get sweets or to improve their standard of living." (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

In some cases, parents postpone the discussion about going abroad until the day before their departure, as they don't feel ready to face their children's disapproval. But children consider it important to be told beforehand about their parents' plans, the period of time they will be gone, and the reasons for the departure, even if their opinion is not taken into account.

> "Fearing they won't be understood by children, parents tackle the subject only a couple of days before the departure."(DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Parents share their decision with children in the last moment. Children's opinions aren't taken into consideration. (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

> "I think parents announce the decision to go abroad to children when all the required documents have already been concluded. They are told they will have to stay home alone and they are given some basic instructions." (UNICEF)

Children's opinions matter more when choosing a caregiver. But quite often there aren't many choices available and the child has to comply with the parents' decision.

"Children should be consulted about who is going to take care of them after their parents departure, but it doesn't often happen this way." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

"Some parents don't explain the reasons for their departure to their children, they just tell them they will have to stay with granny or with an aunt." (NCCRP)

"What can a child say after Mother and Father have already made up their minds?" (A caregiver)

"Teenagers are consulted, but children – no." (A teacher)

"Parents discuss this problem with children and they are interested in participating." (A teacher)

During their parents' absence, along with freedom, some children get more opportunities to express themselves; they become more self-assertive. They manage their resources, including their leisure time, and they get involved in various activities even without their parents' permission.

"Without their parents, children have greater opportunities to express themselves." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

In some cases, the child's opinion is ignored in the caregiver's family; in other cases, thanks to the caregiver's high sense of responsibility, the child's opinion counts even more than it did in his own family. Consultation workshop participants asserted that the child's emotional state, caused by the parents' departure, makes him indifferent to the decision-making process in the caregiver's family, even if he is asked to express his views.

"In the caregiver's family the child's opinion counts even less. On the other hand, he doesn't want to get involved." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"A mother understands you if you choose to do homework instead of working around the house. A caregiver will never accept that. Every day after classes you are supposed to do some work around the house and if you don't…" (DCW)

"Living without your parents is one thing, add to this living in a strange house and you get real stress." (DCW)

When several brothers are being taken care of by a relative, the elder brother's opinion matters a lot. He is the family's representative in relations with the relatives and other community members.

Whether the child's opinion is respected or not in the caregiver's family depends entirely on his personality. Children get involved easily in the family decision-making process when they live in

their own home. They rarely participate in this process when they live in a caregiver's family. At the same time, if the child loses the caregiver's confidence, he becomes subject to stricter controls.

> "It depends on the age and malleability of grandparents, because a temperamental child won't be able to live with old, conservative grandparents." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "It's easier when they look after you but don't share the same house. You show them you respect their rules, but at your place you can do whatever you like." (DCW)

> "If you lose the caregiver's confidence, you will be kept under close supervision and they will complain to your parents about everything you do." (DCW)

> "... older grandparents are less likely to ask for the child's opinion." (UNICEF)

Participation in school and out-of-school activities

Both for children with parents at home and for those with parents working abroad, involvement in school affairs is deficient. There is no tradition of children's real participation in school management in the Republic of Moldova. In some schools children's self-governing bodies have been registered, but these represent purely decorative forms of participation. At the same time, most teachers from communities providing data to this study perceive the phenomenon of children's participation as their involvement in out-of-school activities, organised by adults.

> "... our school doesn't solicit either children's or their parents' opinions in the education and school governing processes." (UNICEF)

> "There is a pupils' Council in our school. Its members participate in school assemblies. In terms of participation in Council assemblies, there is no difference between children living with their parents and children with parents working abroad." (A teacher)

Children living with their parents get involved in out-of-school activities more frequently than those with parents abroad. In the opinion of consultation workshop participants, for some children living with their parents these projects represent a way of self-expression because they lack such opportunities within their families.

> "Children living with their parents have a more developed sense of participation." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Children living with their parents are more protected and many of their problems are solved by their parents. Participation in seminars and other activities comes from a desire to prove to their parents that they are reliable and capable of making decisions." (DCW)

On the other hand, in other communities, both categories of children get involved equally in out-of-school activities.

> "There isn't such a difference in our lyceum." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Those who get involved in out-of-school activities do it gladly and enjoy it. There is no difference between children living with their parents and children whose parents are abroad." (A teacher)

The high level of participation among children living with their parents is determined by the fact that they are less involved in household activities and more encouraged by their parents. Others try to prove to their parents that they are independent and reliable because they want their parents to trust them. On the other hand, children with parents working abroad are forced by their circumstances to develop abilities of self-government.

> "The will and the opportunity for children living with their parents to get involved in activities are greater than for children with parents working abroad – they have much more leisure time and they are encouraged by their parents." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Children want to prove to their parents that they are clever and skilful and they want their parents to trust them. This is the only way their parents will allow them to further their education." (DCW)

> "We don't try to prove we are responsible in order to get their confidence, we have to do it through force of circumstances." (DCW)

At the same time, some children living with their parents take part in activities, not on their own initiative, but because they are obliged to by parents, who think such activities are important for their children. Some children appreciate and consider such an approach from parents to be necessary. We should also mention that for some parents the active participation of children in out-of-school activities is a way to promote a special image of their family in the community, since this is a unanimously accepted value. In other cases, parents don't approve of such activities and it's up to the child to convince them of their advantages.

> "There are shy people, like me, who need a push from their parents. I think it's very important to be backed up by your parents and I don't consider it negative if they make me get involved." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Children frequent out-of-school activities, but they don't do it willingly; they are forced by their parents." (DCW)

> "If parents don't agree, children know how to persuade them." (DCW)

It's hard to involve children with parents working abroad in out-of-school activities because they are weighed down by adult household responsibilities and overwhelmed by new emotional problems connected with their parents' departure.

> "I like playing football, but I don't have enough time for it." (Gr. II)

> "If their parents work abroad, children aren't interested in out-of-school activities; they have to solve personal and household problems." (DCW)

Participation at the community level

The community offers children very few activities in which they can get involved. And the ones that exist do not serve children's needs or interests. Children consider interesting and useful the activities organised and managed by themselves.

> "There aren't many activities we can get involved in, except at school and home." (Gr. II)

> "If we want to have fun, we need to organise our own out-of-school activities." (Gr. III)

> "The Town Hall deals with rural problems; our problems aren't of interest to them. There are no programmes for children." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Teenagers want to take part in activities, but there are few opportunities for them." (UNICEF)
> "I think children are eager to participate, but conditions are inadequate. If there is a specialised body in the community, they become involved willingly, but if not.... Sometimes children create groups themselves." (NCCRP – A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

Children would like to establish a successful relationship with the Town Hall within the framework of developed projects. But the local administration is not always receptive to children's problems and requests. Nevertheless, in some children's opinions, when they insist, the local administration gives in and supports certain projects.

> "When we want to set up a project, the Town Hall should act as a partner." (Gr. I)

> "If we don't insist, we get nothing. We ask them several times until we manage to persuade them." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

In general, at the community level, the opinions of 10 to 14-year-old children are not taken into account by grownups, regardless of what they are. However, the data obtained revealed that the opinions of children with parents working abroad are taken into consideration to a greater extent than those of children living with their parents. Some children from the first category consider

they should be consulted by grownups when making decisions affecting them, insisting on the importance of children's participation from an early age. This helps them develop life skills.

> "This is how they raise us, we grow up and they still tell us we aren't capable of making decisions on our own. Later we will be afraid to make up our minds concerning more serious matters." (Gr. III)

> "When they organise an activity, we should be consulted beforehand to find out if we like it." (Gr. I)

The opinions of 15 to 17-year-old children have greater importance in the decisions made by adults at the community level than the opinion of children between the ages of 10 and 14. In the communities with traditions of children's participation, children with parents working abroad say that adults consult them more frequently than children living with their parents. At the same time, some children living with their parents think their opinions matter to their parents more than they do to other grownups.

> "Before doing something for the youngsters, they usually consult us." (Gr. IV)

> "Sometimes they ask for our opinion, but more often it's our parents who are interested in our opinions, not other people." (Gr. IV)

Local Children's Councils (LYC) are efficient in the promotion of children's rights. Through LYC, children can make suggestions to improve their situation in school. According to the data provided by the National Children's Resource Centre, a third of the membership of youth councils has one or both parents working abroad.

> "LYC protects our rights and makes suggestions about how to improve children's situation in school." (Gr. III)

> "Many of these children are both volunteers and LYC members." (A headmaster)

> "...both the [LYC] mayor's parents are in France and the deputy mayor's parents are in Portugal…" (A teacher)

5.9. Aspirations for the future

"... they are children and they can have a future only if their parents are with them." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

Children with parents working abroad associate their future with life in a foreign country to a greater extent than their peers who live with their parents. A frequent aspiration in this sense is the desire for family reintegration through joining parents abroad rather than through their return home. Children from the comparison group have the idea of going abroad more rarely; it is most often expressed by participants between the ages of 15 and 18. The latter associate life abroad

with education and professional development, whereas for other children it means, to a great extent, a good material situation.

All categories of adults interviewed, as well as participants in the data consultation workshops, expressed the opinion that most children and adolescents envisage leaving their homeland in the near future. Some adults think this is also true for children and adolescents whose parents live and work in Moldova. The respondents explained this by pointing to the children's awareness of the lack of job opportunities in the Republic of Moldova, both for them and their parents. Nevertheless it was observed among both age groups in the study, children living with their parents are not aware of their job or career opportunities, whereas children with parents abroad proved to be more confident in this regard.

UNICEF representative mentioned that for many children this situation represents "*a dilemma*" because they "*are connected to this country and they do not want to leave.*" At the same time, there are situations where migrant parents take their children to the country of migration and this, in people's opinions, represents an example of success. Children aspire to high standards of living, but their parents' experiences are proof that such a dream is impossible in our country, especially in rural communities. This explains why most children are eager to leave their localities, either by going abroad or to by going to other localities in Moldova where they can succeed. The most attractive options are the cities, especially the capital. Only certain caregivers and teachers noticed children tend to be aware of the difficulties their parents face abroad; therefore, they prefer not to repeat that experience or would accept only "*the more prestigious jobs.*"

> "I would like to work abroad because wages are high there." (Gr. III)

> "I see myself working in Chişinău or abroad. There are no job opportunities for children here." (Gr. IV)

> "I won't be able to find a job here and I will have to go abroad like my parents did." (Gr. I)

> "I want to emigrate; I don't see any opportunities here." (Gr. II)

> "They want to lead a wealthy life and further their education." (A teacher)
> "Seventy percent of children don't see themselves working in their homeland in the future; they want to join their parents abroad." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

> "In many cases, parents settle in a foreign country and take their children with them." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "Their mother told them that she would take them abroad with her." (A caregiver)

> "Some children dream of going abroad and their parents look for a job for them." (A teacher)

"I don't think children see their future in their homeland, and this is rather sad." (UNICEF)

Teachers, some local public administration representatives, and medical workers think that going abroad is an attractive idea for children from many perspectives. For some it is a way to pursue their education, for others, after graduation, it is a chance to get a job. Some choose this opportunity after they get married and need a place to live.

"... after marriage not all the families have enough money to build a house or acquire an apartment in the city. Their only way to solve this problem is by going abroad." (A teacher)

"Many go abroad to further their education, even pupils in the 4th, 5th, 6th forms..." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

"Many choose to go abroad because of low salaries, especially for young workers. They also want to start families, improve their conditions and leave our country even if they graduated from the University or Academy." (A medical worker)

"... their departure abroad gives them the possibility to earn money and create a family." (A medical worker)

It was ascertained that many children, regardless of their family conditions, hope to pursue an education. Most children opt to go to the University, but they don't specify how they can achieve this goal. According to the adults interviewed, all children want to study and count on their parents' financial support. To what extent this aspiration will be realized depends not so much on academic performance as on the parents' ability to support their children financially. The great majority of children without parental care have the conviction that a certain amount of money can guarantee their education in a higher education institution or a technical college, which represents the main cause of the decline in their school performance. This means that children with good academic performance, but with parents working in Moldova, have few chances to go to the University because they cannot afford it. In some caregivers' opinions, children accept to be deprived of parental care and to go through all the difficulties caused by this situation because they understand that higher education requires huge sums of money.

"In Moldova you need money to succeed because there are others who study very well, but don't succeed." (A caregiver)

"These children dream of higher education; they know that everything is available for money and that their parents will provide them the necessary money." (A headmaster)

"Children say: 'Why should I study? My parents who had a bad school performance are now in Italy and are wealthier than those who did well at school, but stayed in the country.'" (A local NGO member)

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"...in many cases they are not good at studying; their parents promise them that they will give them money to go to University ..." (DDSAFP: A representative of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection)

"Children who often miss classes usually don't pursue education after the 9th form and their only possibility is to go abroad." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"... they have to make an effort; they have to work harder than children with parents abroad." (A teacher)

During the consultation workshop it was noticed that children's chances to continue their education depend on whether they live with their parents or have parents abroad, the latter children's chances being higher. Participants expressed the idea that some children choose the faculty at the University according to their parents' financial conditions, without taking into account their own abilities and the labour market requirements.

"... some choose the faculty according to the money their parents have." (DCW: a participant in the data consultation workshop)

It was observed that most children living with their parents usually aspire to specific professions, regardless of the prestige of the profession: "*teacher*," "*doctor*," "*lawyer*," "*designer*," "*actor*," "*programmer*," "*shop-assistant*," etc. The ideas for the future of children with parents abroad refer less to the professions they would like to go into and more to the countries they would like to live in. Many of these children opt for jobs that would guarantee benefits, while others value professional development.

"I want to become a fire-fighter and work in Chişinău." (Gr. III)

"My plan for the future is to set up a football centre after graduation." (Gr. III)

"... an oncologist at the Republican Hospital in Chişinău." (Gr. IV)

"I want to study at the Technical University and be a mechanic." (Gr. IV)

"I want to be a shop-assistant; I like to be in direct contact with people." (Gr. IV)

"I want to have a house on the beach and a boat." (Gr. I)

"...to own a supermarket." (Gr. I)

"I would like to have a villa in Miami, lots of money and a Ferrari." (Gr.II)

"The most important is thing to have a lot of Euros." (Gr.II)

"My dream is to own a restaurant, a hotel, to have lots of money and a Porsche." (Gr.II)

In some teachers' opinions, children with parents abroad are more optimistic about the future than their peers, even if they don't always have a clear image of how it will be. One of the teachers interviewed reported that many of the children in the 9th form with at least one parent abroad had a vague idea about what they would do after graduation. At the same time, children who were consulted mentioned that it would be more difficult to fulfil these dreams, due to the lack of a concrete plan for future.

> "They will be sustained in the near future; they are sure they will enter a University, they will pay the University fee, but what will they do later?" (A teacher)

> "Children living with their parents think of starting a career, while others have only 'money' on their mind... they don't have a concrete plan. All they do is dream about material goods, cars, villas and restaurants." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

Teachers, central public administration representatives, and representatives from international organisations said that in spite of children's desires to pursue higher education, regardless of their family conditions, they were not sure they could start a career in Moldova. The high rate of unemployment in the Republic of Moldova, low wages that cannot ensure an adequate standard of living and a great number of people with higher education among those migrating abroad are circumstances that increase children's tendencies to go abroad. This is most apparent when parents with experience abroad encourage their children to embrace the idea of going to a foreign country. The study's results reveal that parents' main reason for going abroad is to obtain financial resources to ensure both a decent living and educational opportunities for their children. However, with time, the situation can change and many adults wish to reintegrate their family in the country to which they migrated. Children consulted report cases where adults return after their material conditions have improved, but they are soon forced to leave again because they fail to integrate both socially and professionally.

> "....they join their parents abroad; even the university graduates can't get a job." (A teacher)

> "... seeing that adults don't have jobs in the rural areas, children embrace the same idea from an early age, and the majority of them end up going abroad." (MIA: representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs)

> "It is obvious now that education has no value for children because a University degree doesn't always guarantee a job." (UNICEF)
> "Parents do their best so that their children can join them abroad; they look for a job for them and encourage them not to study." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

Children from both groups included in the study expressed the wish to see their locality prosper in the future, with a highly developed infrastructure, with institutions providing services of quality, and with an active social and cultural life. For children living with their parents, this idea comes to their minds most often. This can be explained by the fact that their future is tied to a greater extent to their homeland. The other children affirmed that improvements in the community life represent one of the necessary conditions for their return in their locality after graduation. Most adults interviewed consider that it is very unlikely that children will come back to their native communities. On the other hand, in the locality with an experience of participation by children and adolescents, regardless of family conditions, it was found that people consider themselves to be active citizens who care about the future of their locality and who show their intention to improve its current situation.

> "Our village will be new and modernised, with improved public services." (Gr. III)

> "New blocks of flats will be built in our locality." (Gr. III)

> "It will become a locality where all the rules are respected, with many beautiful things like museums and fountains." (Gr. III)

> "I will set up a Children's Rights Centre where children can appeal for help and their opinions will matter." (Gr.III)

> "I will repair the roads." (Gr. I)

> "The future of our village depends entirely on us, the young generation." (Gr. I)

> "I want to build a new school in our village. And there will be a summer camp for children. " (Gr. II)

> "Those who go abroad should do something for our locality on their return. If I go to a foreign country, I will come back to my homeland to use the experience I gained." (Gr. II)

The group of children who constituted the subject of this study referred most frequently to their families when speaking about their future plans. This is due to the experience of separation from their parents which has made them think deeply about the importance of family. Young children envisaged the future of their family of origin, expressing the wish to live with all its members and have very close relationships with them. Elder children represented the family they would start in the future and referred to the quality of their relationships, the number of children they would have, free time management in the family, their importance of material welfare, and decent living conditions.

> "My dream is to see my parents back home and to live together again as a family." (Gr.I)

> "I want to have a family with two children." (Gr. II)

"... to spend my free time with my family." (Gr. II)

"You cannot get married without good material foundations and if you didn't graduate." (Gr. II)

Almost all the adults said that most children with parents working abroad don't have the opportunity to observe the prototype of the working family and examples of the roles played by its members. At the same time, the respondents considered that the way in which children's relationships within the family will evolve depends on each person. In some teachers' opinions, some children perceive the model of the life and relationships they know from experience as normal. As a result, there is a risk that they may apply it to their own future families. According to some categories of adults and participants in the consultation workshops, the experience of separation from their parents is makes children protect their own families from the sufferings they are facing; therefore, they "*will tend to prevent their children from going through the same problems.*" Children consulted also asserted that the great majority of adolescents are aware of the responsibilities of starting a family.

"... they think it's normal and it's supposed to be this way." (A teacher)

"... they could become selfish and refuse to share love with others. They didn't feel parental love and care when they needed it. But it can also be vice versa. They learn from experience. It's a matter of individual cases." (A headmaster)

"... if the boy hasn't seen his father doing household chores, he won't be able to do them. It's the same with girls." (A headmaster)

"... as parents they will not leave their children. They are suffering, they are going through these unpleasant moments, and they will probably not abandon their own children. They know from experience what life without parents and parental advice means." (A teacher)

"They wouldn't like their children to be deprived of what they were deprived of in their childhood. But, instinctively, they will follow their parents' examples." (A teacher)

"One should understand that a family is not a house, but the relationships between its members, and if the child doesn't have a good example of a family he will behave in the same way in his own family." (A teacher)

"... some really get this impression and they live for 'tomorrow;' they will become adults and they will go abroad seeking a better life. But life is complex and a parent's departure arouses a feeling of protest in some children, thus they say they will not act like this with their own children." (NCCRP: A representative of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights)

"They are not eager to start families; it's a huge responsibility, especially when a child arrives." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

5.10. Policies and services for children left without parental care

Within the framework of this study, we intended to examine public administration polices and services as well as those of other social agencies targeting children left without parental care. During the data collection and analysis it was found that such policies and services are either not developed or do not exist; therefore, we decided to include in this chapter descriptions of polices and services that focus on all community children, even if these were not originally created for the protection of migrants' children. We also thought it would be important to present the respondents' opinions on the services needed by migrants' children, even though some of these ideas can be found in the chapter, Recommendations.

National policies and services

Ministry of Education, Children and Sports (MEYS)

According to a MEYS representative, migrants' children are not included in the category of disadvantaged children who benefit from special attention from the State, unless they are not left in the care of a relative or are in a financially precarious position.

The first national-level data concerning the conditions of migrants' children were collected in 2004-2005. The extent of the phenomenon of migration abroad inspired MEYS to charge deputy headmasters and form masters with monitoring the situation of children left without parental care.

MEYS promotes the policy of children's education within families, even if the latter are not their natural families; therefore, migrating parents' requests to leave their children in residential institutions are rejected. On the contrary, parents are encouraged to grant someone the guardianship of their children. In such cases, children do not benefit from a state allowance.

In collaboration with NGOs working in this field, MEYS has developed a number of school projects aimed at preventing migration and human trafficking. Beginning in September 2005, schools have offered an optional course in "Life skills" designed to help children face life challenges.

District Department of Education, Children and Sports (DDEYS)

At the level of the DDEYS, the child protection inspector is responsible for at-risk children. Representatives of this department say that the position of children left without parental care has not been investigated and the information they possess is mainly based on observations and discussions with teachers. Some DDEYS representatives consider that only orphan children and children from socially disadvantaged families need attention, but that migrants' children do not constitute a deprived category because they are materially cared for.

With regard to State policy, some teachers affirm that they do not know if there is legislation on migrants' children at a national level, while adults expressed their certainty that the State had not elaborated concrete strategies in this field and, moreover, that it had begun to approach the migration phenomenon only in 2005.

Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Family (MHSPF)

In accordance with the National Strategy on Child and Family Protection, district and local councils are obliged to develop local strategies on child protection. In the great majority of cases these strategies are lacking, and the provision of humanitarian aid is the only concrete action taken regarding child protection. In the view of the MHSPF representative, migrants' children incur the risk of quitting school; therefore, social assistants in the field pay a great deal of attention to these children at the start of the new school year, aiming to integrate all children into the educational system. Children from disadvantaged families are provided with material aid in the form of school supplies and free school lunches from local funds for population support.

MHSPF does not have information about children left without parental care; this is stored at the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection (DDSAFP) by each expert individually. The MHSPF representative does not consider guardianship as the best solution for migrants' children. If the child can be brought up by a single parent or by his or her relatives, the involvement of a stranger as guardian is not necessary. In some cases, an accepted alternative could be professional maternal assistance, which unfortunately is not sufficiently developed in Moldova.

As a result of the implementation of compulsory medical insurance, the state assumed responsibility to insure all children up to 18 years of age. Thus, medical assistance for children is free, regardless of whether they live with their parents or are left without parental care.

MHSPF supports the foundation of community centres, financed by the Fund for Social Investments of Moldova. Social assistants are the resource persons in these communities. They identify the services that are required and elaborate the design and strategy of the community centres. In the opinion of the MHSPF representative, the community centres provide special educational services for children experiencing difficulties in school.

In the views of its representatives, DDSAFP cooperates with Town Halls, District Departments of Education, Children and Sports, and with the police in order to identify children who are in a precarious position. At the caregivers' requests, DDSAFP supplies humanitarian aid to migrants' children whose parents do not send money for their sustenance.

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

According to the reports of the MIA representative, migrants' children do not constitute a defined target group for prevention activities organised by local departments of MIA. Nevertheless, local inspectors are obliged to pay special attention to children left without

parental care, as well as to organise activities aimed at informing the public of their legal rights, including educational classes in schools.

UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova

The policies of the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Moldova aim to create a favourable and secure environment for each child. The fulfilment of the right to a family, the right to an education of quality, and the right to protection and participation represent the priorities of this body concerning children left without parental care.

The UNICEF Office collaborates in this regard with the government and civil society on the improvement and implementation of legislation and policies regarding children and adolescents. The encouragement of projects to promote children's includes, as a main goal, the development of a human resources network, including Children's Centres, which can provide quality services such as information, consultation, medical assistance and leisure, especially for disadvantaged children.

In promoting services that sustain the family, including the extended family, UNICEF highlights the importance of a child's education within the family. Leaving the child in the care of a residential institution represents an extreme and undesirable solution to the problem of child protection; therefore, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports, is taking concrete actions to improve the residential care system, especially to reduce the numbers of children in these institutions and prevent parents from leaving children in them.

Local policies and services

Schools

According to the data obtained in this study, the services most solicited by children in the communities involved in the research are those provided by the school. Both children living with their parents and children with parents working abroad shared this opinion. The importance of school is explained by its compulsory character, but also by the fact that children spend most of their time at school. In this regard, participants in the consultation workshop mentioned the importance of the quality of services provided by schools.

> "Children spend most of their time at school; therefore, the school psychologist has a great responsibility." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "When children are in trouble they talk to their teachers first; they don't come to the Town Hall for help." (LPA: A representative of a local public administration)

Nevertheless, migrants' children proved to be less interested in the quality of school services than children living with their parents. The latter are preoccupied to a greater extent with issues concerning the necessary equipment and information in schools, the practical applications of

knowledge, teachers' qualifications, the prevention of teachers' migration, as well as ensuring a means of transport from distant localities to school.

> "We need more computers, for all the children." (Gr. III)

> "The books in our library are pretty old; we need more books." (Gr. III)

> "We don't want teachers to leave us and go abroad." (Gr. III)

Children explained the importance of school by the fact that it offers them the opportunity to study, exchange information, and get ready for adult life. Some children appreciate the opportunity to interact both with their peers and their teachers and to benefit from their support. The subject "Life Skills" is considered by some teachers and children as an effective solution to the lack of education and the lack of migrant parents' support.

> "School educates us; it helps us to create our personality and to get knowledge."
> (Gr. III)

> "We are encouraged and supported by our classmates, older school friends and teachers." (Gr. III)

> "For instance, these subjects about life skills…. School prepares them for school instead of their parents." (A teacher)

In the opinion of some UNICEF representatives, school does not prepare children to face the everyday risks and challenges of life, focusing more on providing knowledge than on developing abilities to become independent. Moreover, some teachers do not have the psychological experience and the necessary attitude to satisfy the needs of children left without parental care for communication and support. Some teachers said that the migration of their qualified colleagues affects the quality of services provided by school.

At the school level, deputy headmasters are responsible for the records of children left without parental care. In some schools the council of teachers make the decision to charge form masters with the monitoring of children left without parental care and the provision of necessary emotional support. On the other hand, some school managers assert that, in spite of teachers' discussions about the conditions of migrants' children, no decision was taken about them.

Primary pupils and children from socially vulnerable families have the free lunches at school. Some teachers claim that some migrants' children benefit from this service, even if they are generally not considered a deprived category.

Psychological services in schools are highly appreciated by children for their availability to provide consultation and support, especially on personal issues. And children who did not enjoy this service in their schools expressed the wish to institute it, mentioning the importance of a psychologist to protect children from abuse and neglect. In the opinion of participants in the consultation workshop, the psychologist's age and proficiency have an important impact on the quality of his or her services, as well as on the number of children they see because children

prefer to talk to a young psychologist who is receptive to their problems. The MEYS representative shares this view, claiming that only a competent psychologist could solve the problem of lack of communication affecting children, and many Moldovan schools do not provide such an indispensable service. According to MEYS, the lack of financial resources makes it difficult for headmasters to ensure the presence of a psychologist in each school and nursery school.

> "At school we benefit from a psychologist's services; he gives us advice and guides us." (Gr. III)

> "Only a psychologist who knows how to communicate with a child could meet this need." (MEYS)

Extracurricular activities organised by schools are also highly appreciated by children, as they represent one of the few ways of managing children's free time within the community. At the same time, some children are not satisfied with the quality and diversity of these services, and they mention that the activities organised by their peers serve their needs and interests to a greater extent.

> "We need other out-of-school activities that would help pupils overcome shyness." (Gr. I)

> "Children can participate only in activities we organise for them at school." (A teacher)

According to school administrators, education institutions are currently experiencing a number of financial problems and this does not allow them to organise more out-of-school activities. At the same time, they mention that schools would be able to take care of the education of children left without parental care if the local public administration agreed to finance extracurricular activities, including paying for the services of a person hired to deal with children in a vulnerable situation.

> "Teachers are not paid for extracurricular activities." (A headmaster)

In the opinion of many adults, most out-of-school activities provided for children do not correspond to their interests and needs and are not that effective either in terms of the subjects addressed or the information technologies used. Nevertheless, some caregivers appreciate the effort of educational institutions to involve children in various extracurricular activities.

> "Children would like things like computers, the Internet, some up-to-date equipment, but we can [only] offer them activities like wickerwork, crochet or woodwork and metalwork, which do not interest our children." (UNICEF)

> "The activities offered are not attractive; they are old-fashioned." (A headmaster)

> "They study tai-kwon-do and organise parties at school." (A caregiver)

During the data collection workshops, the statement, "At school, the attitude towards all children is the same" registered the lowest rating with all categories of children (3.35 points out of a possible total of 5). Thus, even if certain children assert that teachers treat all children equally, regardless of age and whether they have parents working abroad or not, these results point to the existence of some discriminatory attitudes of teachers.

In the opinions of children, their material conditions influence their teachers' attitudes towards them to a great extent. In some cases migrants' children are favoured by teachers, who receive in exchange rewards from the parents. Some children consider that teachers have a better attitude towards children who wear expensive new clothes. Children's behaviours and academic performances can also be reasons for teachers' unequal attitudes towards them. And there are cases where teachers label children.

> "Children who have money get good marks, because their parents come and solve their problems." (Gr. IV)

> "Teachers judge you by your clothes." (Gr. II)

> "Teachers' attitudes depend on children's behaviour and school performance."
> (Gr. III)

The nursery school was mentioned as a community service only by children living with their parents. They appreciate it because it gives adults the opportunity to leave small children in the care of educators while they are at work.

The Town Hall

The Town Hall is one of the institutions most frequently mentioned by children. It was ranked second after school for the support it provides to both children living with their parents and children with parents working abroad.

At the same time, children's opinions in this regard are divided. Some asserted that the Town Hall supports some of their activities connected with free time management and participation of sports teams in various competitions. Others claimed that they do not benefit from any support and, moreover, when solicited, the Town Hall does not react in any way or signals its refusal by the lack of financial resources. The latter share the idea that the Town Hall focuses only on rural problems and on those of deprived families. Teachers have the same view and mentioned the humanitarian aid that is provided by the Town Hall to children from socially disadvantaged families. Some children highlighted the role of the Town Hall in the protection of their security, especially concerning violent conflicts.

> "It sponsors the basketball team of the lyceum." (Gr.I)

> "There are electricity problems in our classroom; we asked the mayor for help, but there was no response." (Gr.IV)

"The mayor helps the school and people in the village, but children get very little help from him." (Gr.I

"When clashes break out at school or at the disco, everybody is afraid of the Town Hall representatives who, together with the police, decide how to punish the brawlers." (Gr.III)

The local public administration from the communities involved in the study did not take any decisions about the conditions of migrants' children. According to some teachers, decisions concerning certain children are taken only when the latter adopt undesirable behaviour or face financial problems, but migrants' children do not belong to any of the socially vulnerable categories.

Participants in the data consultation workshop consider that the Town Hall and implicitly its **social assistance** sector do not elaborate concrete programmes for children left without parental care because they do not consider them to be at risk. At the community level, social assistance representatives put their efforts into working with the elderly, with socially deprived families and with orphaned or disabled children. In the opinion of the children consulted, there is not sufficient media coverage of the social assistants' services in the community, and in many cases the latter is not trained to work with children and adolescents.

"These children are not considered disadvantaged, so they do not benefit from social assistance." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"Social assistance is associated with the elderly; it lacks transparency." (DCW)

Representatives of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Social Protection (DDSAFSP) assert that the lack of financial resources explains the lack of a social assistant in each Town Hall. His or her responsibility, in the community enjoying such services, is to provide psychological support for children left without parental care and to discuss ways to improve children's conditions with form teachers and even with migrant parents.

In certain communities, according to some local authorities, a Committee for Minors' Problems was set up. It consisted of the headmaster, the director of the nursery school, the inspector for juvenile offenders, and a deputy mayor. The Committee is charged with examining the behaviour of children left without parental care, but it focuses mainly on those breaking the law.

Most caregivers involved in the study asserted that at the community level there are no concrete services for children left without parental care, and if there are, children are not aware of their existence. Moreover, some caregivers do not dare solicit the support of certain institutions or persons.

"...perhaps there are specialised services, but I don't know anything about it. Besides, I'm ashamed to ask for help." (A caregiver)

According to teachers, the institution of guardianship contributes greatly to upholding the rights of children left without parental care. Some caregivers assert that the local public administration

allocates a certain sum of money if they agree to take on the guardianship of children they are looking after, but it is insignificant (50 lei). Guardianship is established on the initiative, and sometimes at the insistence, of the Town Hall or the school administration. Local administration representatives said that only children whose parents do not send money receive allowances.

> "All I will get is 50 lei for each child if I agree to take on guardianship." (A caregiver)

> "...they are not accepted at school if nobody is responsible for them." (A caregiver)

Free time activities and entertainment

Children living with their parents are more interested in the free-time services the community provides than are migrants' children. But to a large extent, their interests focus on the same categories of activities: visiting sports clubs and dance halls, taking part in various extracurricular activities, and getting access to new information technologies.

> "I want to go to the wrestling classes." (Gr. III)

> "I'm interested in computers and the Internet." (Gr. III)

According to the data obtained during the study, all free-time opportunities in the community are limited. In one locality, the statement "I have enough possibilities to spend my free time in the community" had the same ratings for children between the ages of 10 and 14 from both groups, whereas in the 15 to 18 age group, the rating obtained by migrants' children is considerably higher. On the other hand, in the last two communities, children with parents abroad have many fewer opportunities to organise their free time compared to their peers living with their parents. Children indicate this by mentioning the lack of activities that correspond to their interests, and also because of the responsibilities they must accept after their parents' departure, they enjoy less free time. In the view of the UNICEF representative, "*The lack of opportunities to manage free time is one of the greatest problems of children in Moldova.*"

> "There are very few activities we can get involved in other than at school and home." (Gr. II)

> "We have almost no free time." (Gr. I)

In some communities, according to caregivers, children benefit from certain free time activities. Yet they mentioned, at the same time, that the lack of material resources, including the low salaries of the people responsible for organizing such activities, lead to their inefficiency and disappearance. Some Town Hall representatives, teachers, and medical workers share the same view, admitting that children are deprived of opportunities to spend their free time in the community. In only a few cases do parents sponsor extracurricular activities attended by their children.

> "... sometimes children get together for parties whereas this used to be the job of the school; this is how they entertain themselves." (A caregiver)

"People organising these activities [in the past] had low salaries, but now nobody wants to work for free."(A caregiver)

"There is a library, but it offers very little choice because there are so few books, and it doesn't subscribe to any journals or magazines." (A teacher)

Some teachers mentioned that the community offers sports clubs, dance halls, music and drama schools, but they are more frequently attended by children from primary school. In their opinion, children left without parental care attend these schools if their parents enrol them and pay all the fees before going abroad. Not lacking financial resources, migrants' children have access to paid leisure resources in neighbouring localities or districts, such as like the cinema, the Internet and music school.

In the communities involved in the study, cultural centres organise most leisure activities. They do not target migrants' children, but provide services for all children, among which are dance halls and sports clubs, libraries, concerts, cinema, and disco halls.

"We entertain ourselves in these clubs in the evening. At parties we meet new friends, we participate in various activities. There are two dance halls and a library to borrow books from." (Gr. III)

In the children's opinions, sports clubs and dance halls give them equal opportunities to interact with their peers from different localities and to assert themselves, regardless of their age, school performance or financial position. Some caregivers share this view, adding that these clubs help children get support from their peers.

"All children can attend the sports clubs. We make no selection here." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

"... they enjoy coming here; perhaps they feel differently as members of a team." (A caregiver)

As a rule, only adolescents are allowed to go to the disco in the cultural centre. Children are dissatisfied with its physical aspect and lack of modern equipment, even if it is among the most visited places. Some teachers, as well as caregivers, mention that they do not allow the children they are taking care of, especially small ones and girls, to go to the disco in the cultural centre because it is associated, in their opinion, with drug abuse and violent behaviour.

"Our disco is at school because only adolescents attend the one in the village." (Gr. III)

"It's in deplorable condition (no heat); besides, it's not organised more than once a week." (A teacher)

"... at 13 it's too early; I don't let them go." (A caregiver)

"Girls living with their grandmothers do not attend parties because it's not allowed." (A teacher)

Most children mentioned an urgent need to create, at the community level, a series of services that would satisfy their free-time needs and interests. Some children claim that their participation in the organisation and provision of these services would make the services more attractive.

"To entertain ourselves the way we want to, we have to organise our own out-of-school activities." (Gr. III)

"We need a hall to meet our friends..." (Gr. I)

"We want a sports club and a dance hall to be built." (Gr. IV)

Children involved in the study mentioned that there are some **community organisations** or initiative groups in their communities that approach social problems, but migrants' children are not direct beneficiaries of the activities organised by these centres. For example, there is an education centre for pre-school children from socially disadvantaged families in one of the communities involved in the research.

"There's an NGO called "Smaranda" in our town that deals with ecological issues. It helps keep our village clean." (Gr. II)

"The association 'Children's Rights' developed a project connected with environment pollution and several of us are volunteers." (Gr. IV)

The children consulted and some representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports (DDEYS) said that there are **community centres** managed by local NGOs in certain communities. These centres also focus on children without parental care, providing several services for them under one roof. In spite of the fact that they are few in number, interaction with peers, the use of interactive methods, and psychological support are the great assets of these institutions, which make them very attractive to children and adolescents. Representatives of the District Department of Social Assistance and Family Protection (DDSAFP) said that such activities are developed mainly in district centres and less in rural localities.

Medical institutions

Both migrants' children and children living with their parents appreciate medical institutions for the support they provide to children concerning health problems. Some children mentioned the importance of medical workers' informative visits to the schools. But some children consider that the lack of necessary equipment and the migration of qualified medical workers diminish the quality of services supplied by the medical centres and children's confidence in them.

"We're supported by medical workers who come to our secondary school and give us lessons." (Gr. IV)

"The hospital doesn't have enough equipment to support us." (Gr. IV)

Participants in the consultation workshop, as well as some adults, said that most medical centres do not provide special services for migrants' children. Moreover, these places are, to a great extent, not friendly towards children, especially because medical workers are not ready to work with children; they do not have communication skills, they do not respect confidentiality, and their services are paid. At the same time, children consulted are convinced that medical centres should provide information services and psychological consultations.

> "It's not considered a friendly place to be; you go there when there is no other alternative. Children are not treated with confidentiality. You have to pay for medical services, despite the fact that they should be free." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "They should provide information services and psychological consultation." (DCW)

Teachers say that at the school level the medical assistant is able to provide only basic emergency assistance for children. At the same time, all children benefit from a yearly medical consultation with the participation of experts from the district medical centre. The lack of material resources is considered by teachers to be the main reason for the low quality of the medical services. According to some teachers, in spite of various resources offered by donors to medical centres, benefits are not seen because the resources are not correctly managed.

Many children mentioned the importance of the services provided by the **post office**. Migrants' children especially appreciated the opportunities it offers for regular communication with their parents. Several children accomplish, through the post office, the duties connected with household activities for which they are now responsible.

> "Thanks to the post office we can send letters and call our parents. It helps us keep in touch with them." (Gr. II)

> "Most of the bills are paid at the post office." (Gr. I)

The **police** was mentioned, to the same extent, as a community service by both children living with their parents and migrants' children. Both groups have confidence in this institution and are aware of its prerogatives connected with the provision of security at the community level. At the same time, the police do not necessarily supervise children left without parental care unless they disobey the law, according to their own reports and the reports of adults.

> "The police take concrete measures against offenders, including small ones like us." (Gr. III)

> "We appealed to the police when our house has been robbed." (Gr. II)

> "Policemen should protect us, increasing our security." (Gr. IV)

The relationship of **economic agents** with the localities studied has several aspects. The majority of the economic agents were created with funds obtained from abroad, but also in order to satisfy

the needs for goods and services of migrants' relatives, since a significant part of their incomes is from remittances. Children consulted assert that economic agents are not eager to sustain migrants' children materially, not only because they do not consider them socially disadvantaged, but also because they are not motivated by the tax system.

In several localities, the mass exodus of adults abroad resulted in the creation of regular bus service to ensure a connection between migrants and their native localities. Thanks to these services, migrants go abroad, send money and various industrial goods home, and receive Moldovan goods. Teachers say they are tolerant of pupils who miss classes in order to get parcels from their parents.

Children consulted consider that frequenting **entertainment clubs** (bars, discos) represents for migrants' children a way to spend their free time with friends, as well as to spend the money received from parents. At the same time, adults do not have a positive attitude towards such activities and they usually associate them with alcohol consumption. As a result, some children refuse to attend such clubs in order not to become the butt of comments by other community members. Local administration representatives assert that children are allowed to spend their time in these clubs only until 11 p.m. According to teachers, in some localities the bars are the only places where children can meet and interact.

> "This is a place where children meet, not necessarily a place where they drink alcohol." (DCW: A participant in the data consultation workshop)

> "The community has created a negative image of the bar; people prefer not to be seen there." (DCW)

The **church** was mentioned by some children as a community service and a place where they can reflect and meditate in peace. Children living with their parents consider that the church provides them moral support and helps them overcome difficult situations at school and within the family. Migrants' children also go to church, praying to God for the health of their parents and for good exam results.

> "...at church we pray to God for help at school and in the family." (Gr. III)

> "We pray for our parents who went abroad." (Gr. II)

However, according to the children consulted, most children do not go to church. At the same time, they explained the interest of migrants' children in church by several factors. On the one hand, after their parents' departure, children become sad and isolated and the church gives them spiritual wellbeing and solutions to the problems overwhelming them. On the other hand, these children attend church services thanks to the advice of their religious grandparents, in whose care they were left. In some communities priests use their sermons to urge parents not to go abroad.

5.11. Services that are needed at the community level

Talking about services they could benefit from at the community level, children living with their parents proved to have more ideas than migrants' children. This is explained by the fact that only a few of the migrants' children expect to continue living in their homeland and as a result they are less interested in the development of any community services.

Thus children expressed their wish to create institutions that would facilitate their access to information, including information about a healthy lifestyle, careers and family planning. In their opinion, this would be possible if there were a computer centre providing Internet services and if there were a local journal for children, printed and distributed regularly. Many children mentioned the urgent need to provide schools with up-to-date, new equipment, including gyms and sports clubs.

Several children living with their parents highlighted the importance of the development, at the, of community-level institutions offering credit to the population for sustaining small businesses.

Caregivers underlined the need to organise community-level sports and cultural activities for children left without parental care. Only certain caregivers expressed the need for material support for people who have more than one child in their care.

Teachers and representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports (DDEYS) and the Ministry of Education, Children and Sports (MEYS) consider that migrants' children need qualified psychological services in the schools. This could give them the opportunity to express themselves and to receive consultation and advice concerning the problems they face.

In the opinion of teachers, the availability of a young person at the community level responsible for working with children and adolescents could increase the quantity and the quality of free-time activities and entertainment organised for them.

Among national strategies for the protection of children left without parental care, teachers mentioned first the prevention of parents' migration through the creation of new jobs and increased salaries. At the same time, teachers consider that changes in legalisation of work abroad could offer parents the opportunity to visit their children two or three times a year, as well as keeping in touch with them.

Representatives of the District Department of Education, Children and Sports (DDEYS) say that it is necessary to improve and harmonise Moldova's legislative framework on child protection, as well as to raise public awareness of the consequences of the phenomenon of labour force migration.

At the same time, some teachers said that migrants' children do not need special services at the community level, justifying their view by the fact that these children have neither different needs nor different behaviours from those of children living with their parents. They add that those coming from "*respected families*" are left in the care and under the protection of close relatives.

Medical workers, UNICEF staff, NGOs and ministerial representatives are persuaded of the need to develop community-level, multifunctional day centres providing a wide range of facilities and services, such as information, consultation, life skills development, health services friendly to children, and hobby and sports clubs for children left without parental care. Careful consideration of children's needs should be the first step in the development of these services, and wide media coverage would facilitate increased awareness of how to gain access to them.

Conclusions

The present study is based on the experiences of children left without parental care because of the migration phenomenon. The information obtained within data collection workshops was supplemented with that provided by the caregivers of migrants' children, teachers, representatives of different community services, representatives of public administration, and international organisations accredited in the Republic of Moldova. After a primary analysis the data was used in consultation with a group of adolescents and opinion leaders in their community.

The data gathered show that parents' departure has an impact not only on their children's material conditions, but also on their emotional development, social relations and school performance. These impacts are complex and can be both long-term or short-term, depending on a multitude of factors, beginning with the length of the separation from their parents, the child's preparation for an independent life and the relationships with their caregivers and ending with the attitudes of community members towards migrants' children.

Psycho-emotional development

Children left without parental care face difficult and unpleasant emotional states – they become sad, they feel isolated, and they often cry and feel insecure. The lack of the ability to manage their emotions and the lack of a reliable person's support amplifies these emotional states and creates a climate in which children adopt aggressive methods of expressing their emotions.

Serious preoccupation with their parents' safety in foreign countries contributes to an increase of awareness of family values on the part of these children, but it can also produce a sense of guilt over the fact that their parents left to provide a better future for them.

Smaller children externalise the emotions caused by separation from their parents more easily, whereas adolescents prefer not to express their feelings. Children find it harder to bear the first period of separation from their parents or the first experience of this kind.

Showing material wellbeing is a way some children compensate for the lack of affection. At the same time, adults characterise them as feeling superior to others.

How children's relationships evolve

On the one hand, their parents' departure causes both a quantitative and qualitative decrease in children's interactions; on the other hand, there seems to be an increase in children's

preoccupations connected with the relationships within their families. The frequency of migrant parents' visits depends on the country of destination, as well as on the legal or illegal character of their stay. The most common means of communication between parents and children is the telephone. Even if most children communicate often with their migrant parents, they do not manage to tackle subjects related to their spiritual or emotional state or even to ordinary difficulties children go through.

Children's relationships with their parents undergo changes; either they distance themselves, or they become closer. Most children appreciate their parents' efforts to guarantee them a better life, they want not to disappoint them, and they do their best to meet their expectations. At the same time, the lack of meaningful communication and the tendency to deal with problems of everyday life independently cause an estrangement between parents and children.

Almost all the migrants' children in the study had been left in the care of a close relative. About two thirds of them live with one parent and the others are supervised by grandparents or aunts. According to the caregivers, their main tasks are to provide children with adequate living conditions, to monitor their school performance, and to prevent children from the exhibiting socially undesirable behaviour. Caregivers' growing responsibilities for children lead to their overprotection and to excessive control of the children's activities, sometimes even involving a violation of their privacy.

From the perspective of the children, relationships with their caregivers are not sufficiently close and the latter do not meet children's needs for moral support. The often advance age of caregivers, their restrictive and authoritarian style of communication, as well as their ways of managing the money sent by parents generate conflicts in the relationships between caregivers and children.

The relationships of migrants' children with their peers who live with their parents evolve in two directions, depending on several factors. On the one hand the migrants' children feel protected and included, thanks to the feeling of sympathy and understanding of their situation, but on the other hand, some feel coldness or tension because of envy of their living conditions.

The existence of several common characteristics connected with their material situation, their concerns and their feelings cause children left without parental care to form their own circles of friends. They prefer to interact in small groups and they are interested in finding reliable people who can give them moral support and with whom they can share their personal thoughts.

School

Their parents' departure abroad influences children's school performance in different ways. Most often it declines as a result of the lack of their parents' support and lack of time for doing homework, but this decline is also caused by the conviction that studies are useless. On the other hand, children's desire to reward their parents working abroad for their efforts motivates some children to maintain or even to improve school performance.

The development of the relationship between children left without parental care and their teachers depends to a great extent on the personality of the latter. Those who prove to be

friendly, sympathetic and receptive to children's problems very soon become resource persons for them. At the same time, some teachers who are envious of the improved material conditions of migrant families tend to take advantage of the special relationship established with the migrants' children.

Children's resources

Their parents' departure forces children to act on their own. However, few children prove to have developed the ability to live independently, to manage their resources and to practice a healthy lifestyle. In these conditions, the lack of supervision from adults, lack of spare time activities, access to money, as well as a growing pressure from their peers raise the vulnerability of migrants' children to risks related to drug abuse, school abandonment, precocious sexual relationships, and undesirable behaviours.

The household responsibilities children must undertake, after their parents' departure are often far from being age-appropriate for them; as a result, children reach maturity early and both their free time and the time they spend on their homework is limited. Even if they have developed certain abilities and knowledge in this regard, most children are unhappy that they have been given these tasks whether they want them or not, without asking their opinions. On the other hand, children left without parental care at an early age develop the ability to cope with new circumstances more easily.

Nevertheless, a feeling of insecurity often overwhelms children left without parental care and it is difficult for them to find a reliable person they can turn to for support. Most frequently they appeal to parents, caregivers and peers, the latter having priority in the discussion of sensitive issues. Children seldom solicit support from representatives of community services and do so only when they have a close relationship, based on trust, with these persons.

Children's participation

The existence of certain models of children's participation in the community can help prevent children's vulnerability through the development of life skills. In some communities there is a greater tolerance and empathy, as well as solidarity, towards those who are disadvantaged. Thus, children left without parental care benefit from a supportive environment that favours communication with equals concerning any problem they face.

The level of children's involvement in the family and community decision-making process depends on their age. Children of 15 to 17 years are consulted more frequently by their parents and other adults concerning matters affecting them. In their parents' absence, the opinion of the eldest child in the family counts the most, especially in relationships with relatives and the community.

After their parents' departure abroad, children enjoy more freedom, but paradoxically they also have less free time, with numerous household activities and insufficient support for involvement in extracurricular activities.

How the children of migrants see their future

The example of their parents' migration, the lack of opportunities to ensure a decent living in the homeland, as well as their preoccupation with family reunification are some of the main reasons that cause the children of migrants to associate their future with life abroad to a greater extent than their peers who live with their parents. The desire of migrants' children to create a complete and united family is increased by their unpleasant experience of separation from their parents.

Most migrants' children wish to pursue their education, even if they are convinced that it will not guarantee them a decent living and they do not have a concrete plan in this regard. The financial support provided by their parents ensures them a place at the university, and this can be considered the main reason for the decrease in their academic performance.

Policies and services for children left without parental care

According to the public authorities responsible for child protection, migrants' children do not constitute a deprived category; therefore, neither concrete legislation nor special strategies have been elaborated for their protection. Even if the phenomenon of parents going abroad for work has long been widespread, the situation of migrants' children appeared on the public agenda only in 2005, and the actions taken in this regard have been sporadic and have been limited, to a great extent, to data collection.

Community institutions are generally not concerned with the situation of migrants' children. Few educational and leisure services have been provided by the school for children, regardless of their family conditions. The capacity of such services to meet children's needs, as well as their quality and popularity, have declined because of a lack of financial resources and the substandard training of professionals working with children and adolescents.

Recommendations

In the opinion of the great majority of the participants in the study, seeking a job abroad represents an effective strategy for eluding poverty. However, beyond the immediate economic benefits of migration, the consequences for children of separation from their parents have become more obvious and more serious with time.

The complexity of this phenomenon is determined by the fact that the prevention of parents' migration would contribute, on the one hand, to an improvement of children's emotional and social welfare, and, on the other hand, to the aggravation of the material conditions of families. This makes it difficult to elaborate certain recommendations in this regard. Taking these facts into account, we present both the recommendations expressed by the participants and children consulted during the study, and those put forth by the research team during the data analysis process.

- Raising administration and public awareness of the effects of parents' departure abroad on children's development in order to adopt a national strategy for the protection of children left without parental care.

- The formulation of certain mechanisms to legalise work abroad that would allow migrant parents to visit their children regularly and maintain an affective connection with them, without the risk of being fired.

- Encouraging private investment, including the investment of resources coming from abroad, through a simplification of company registration procedures; providing people with special training to start their own business; promoting a fiscal policy that would favour new economic agents.

- The creation of social rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for parents returning from abroad in order to prevent repeated migration.

- The implementation of programmes for the development of localities, including the creation of infrastructure and qualitative services for children and adults. This would help children to associate their future with life in their community.

- Instruction for parents in the fields of communication and children's development, which would allow them to prepare their children for independent life and provide them with the emotional support they will need for the duration of the parents' absence.

- The development of programmes that encourage children's participation in the family decision-making process and persuade parents of the necessity of consulting and taking into account their children's opinions, including negotiation of the duration of their absence.

- Psycho-pedagogical instruction, through the establishment of guardianship, of persons in whose care children are left so that they understand their obligation to provide all the required support and attention children need during their parents' absence.

- Psychological preparation for teachers, including form masters, in order to meet children's needs for communication and emotional support.

- The implementation, at the community level, of programmes for the development of life skills, focusing on skills such as self-administration, communication and relationships, and management of resources and emotions.

- The promotion of various models of children's participation at the community and school level, depending on local needs, with a special focus on socially deprived children.

- The development, in each community, of multifunctional centres for children and adolescents, providing opportunities for children with parents working abroad to be involved in out-of-school activities together with children living with their parents, in order to facilitate their social integration.

- Diversification of leisure activities for children and adolescents from the community, in accordance with their interests and needs. Preparation of a competent person responsible for working with children and adolescents.

- The establishment of groups of peers trained to interact with children left without parental care and provided with the necessary informational and emotional support.

- The establishment of child-friendly psychological and consultation services that respect the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. Provision of psychological services in schools by young, qualified persons who can easily gain children's confidence.

- The development, at the community level, of professional maternal and paternal assistance services to help mitigate the consequences of separation from their parents on the child's education and welfare.

- The psychological training of medical workers and social assistants; and the supplying of medical centres with the necessary up-to-date equipment in order to guarantee qualified, child-friendly information and consultation services.

- Broad media coverage of community services aimed at supporting children left without parental care.

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