INTRODUCTION

When a person migrates from one country to another, it is not just the individual who is affected but a whole family. While migration can bring benefits, including economic advantages, often it means that families are separated, putting relationships under strain and forcing those left behind to take on new roles and responsibilities. Therefore it is important for those concerned with drawing up policy on international migration and development to understand the dynamics of households involved in and affected by migration. Traditionally, though, migration policy strategies have not adopted a family perspective.

Migration tends to be a family decision, taken in the hope that it will benefit the family as a whole. Remittances from those who have gone to work abroad can be a very important source of income for those family members left behind and also, taken collectively, for entire national economies. While remittances are generally seen as beneficial they cannot, however, replace parental care and guidance. When a parent migrates to another country, a whole range of functions, from caregiving to managing the household budget, must be assumed by others within the family … often the other parent, but also frequently by older children, grandparents or other members of the extended family. While important decisions may be taken jointly, often they are not. Mediated by gender and power relations, these decisions may adversely affect those most vulnerable within families, such as children and adolescents, as well as women and the elderly.

Children are the least likely members to be consulted about family decisions but may be the ones who feel the results most keenly.

Children of transnational families may be exposed to a new material culture by relatives abroad, which may create new aspirations that are difficult to realize. Changed household dynamics as a result of absent relatives may lead to delinquency or general social inclusion challenges among children, and women left behind may find themselves having to act as both mother and father to the family.

UNICEF, along with other partner organizations, has advocated a change in approach to migration issues from a purely economic focus to a broader human rights and gender perspective targeted at vulnerable populations, including children, adolescents and youth. Increasingly, national policymakers have come to recognize families as appropriate frameworks in which to tackle the complex relationship between migration and inequality. With migration's impact on poverty alleviation mediated by household decisions, there is growing interest shown by policymakers in better understanding the relationship between migrant parents abroad and the family members left behind in order to implement comprehensive policies that can better protect vulnerable populations and enhance human development.
A crucial challenge for policymakers is to intervene without exacerbating inequalities within out-migration communities and without reinforcing prejudiced images of members of migrant households, depicting them as different, or even privileged (Cortes 2007). Failure to address the phenomenon of children and adolescents left behind risks leaving a generation in jeopardy, with potentially negative consequences for issues such as national development, citizenship and social inclusion.

This research note examines policy issues pertaining to family dynamics in the context of international migration. It draws on scholarly and policy studies with country-specific examples from Ecuador, the Philippines and Moldova, and as such does not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF. These countries have been highlighted since they are characterized by significant migrant and left-behind populations. Approximately 10 per cent of the population of these countries are migrants living abroad. According to calculations based on the 2000 population census, as many as 1.1 million children in the Philippines have been left behind by their parents working overseas. In Moldova, while the precise number of children left behind in migrant households is not known, statistics show that 17.1 per cent of children live in families where at least one parent is abroad and around 7 per cent of children live in households in which both parents are overseas. In Ecuador, 36 per cent of migrant women and 40 per cent of migrant men left their children behind.

Migration has impacted families in these countries by influencing intra-household dynamics as well as the psychosocial condition of their members. The governments have adopted family-oriented policies in response to these issues, but to different degrees and with different types of interventions. The Philippines, with a long tradition of supporting its migrant workers abroad, responded to the concerns of civil society by setting up new structures to support families left behind. In Ecuador the government acted to develop an institutional framework based on a human rights and gender perspective, while in Moldova, international organizations such as the European Union and UNICEF provided the impetus for reshaping institutions and harmonizing national legislation with international commitments in order to protect families affected by migration. The design and implementation of gender- and rights-sensitive policy agendas in the areas of migration and families has paralleled the increased role of global non-state actors.

THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT ON FAMILIES IN THE PHILIPPINES, ECUADOR AND MOLDOVA: UNVEILING THE TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY

In countries where international migration is prevalent, such as in Ecuador, Moldova and the Philippines, families have been experiencing important transformations. While not all of these changes can be attributed to migration per se, migration has impacted family dynamics in concrete ways. Perhaps the most evident effect has been on the reorganization of roles and responsibilities due to the absence of family members. However, other changes are also relevant. For instance, the support of the extended family is essential to ensure livelihood and risk-diversification strategies, particularly when it comes to children left behind. Finally, a myriad of psychosocial factors affect transnational families and their social environment, and these need to be taken into account in policymaking and planning about international migration and development.

International migration: an accelerator of structural changes affecting the family

While migration is not the sole factor contributing to family transformations, it appears to have become an accelerator of some of these structural transformations. For instance, data provided by the United Nations Development Programme on Moldovan families suggest that migration may be a reinforcing factor in female emancipation and empowerment. For example, women who have worked overseas seem less likely to tolerate abusive behaviours by their partners and more likely to take important family decisions, including divorce (Peleah, 2007: 3).
According to a representative of a local municipality in Moldova, “women are now more confident \[;\] from docile women afraid of their men, they have turned into self-confident persons in control of their lives and even of their family situations.” Migration may also reinforce new values and behaviours affecting families in the context of modernization and globalization. Remittances sent by migrants may for instance, change consumption patterns of some members of the family. Field studies in Ecuador suggest that households that receive remittances have access to higher-quality goods and services. This consumerism may, however, conflict with prevailing values in left-behind families and out-migration communities (Cortes 2007).

Finally, international migration may encourage changes in the organization of the family, evident in the emergence of a diverse set of family arrangements (single-parental families, extended families) that also correspond to structural changes that societies and families undergo regardless of migration. According to Carrillo, Ripoll-Nunes and Schvaneveldt (2012 77), migration has played an important role in the diversification of family structures during the last decade in Ecuador. Although the nuclear family remains the main family structure there, migration has impacted family composition by involving adult figures from the extended family, such as single-mothers/single-fathers, uncles, aunts, and grandparents, into families’ domestic duties and responsibilities (e.g. caregiving activities when children and adolescents are left behind).

**New division of labour, responsibilities, and roles in transnational families**

International migration can transform families’ internal dynamics. First, the absence of some family members as a result of migration affects the division of labour and responsibilities within the household. For example, in Ecuador older brothers and sisters left behind assume adult roles without the required preparation (Cortes 2007). They tend to assume new responsibilities including taking care of their siblings and the management of remittances (Herrera and Carrillo 2009). These new responsibilities are often fulfilled at the expense of their own education and leisure, which has psychosocial impacts on their human development.

Regarding the different roles played by the heads of the household in migrant families, a study by the Scalabrini Centre in the Philippines (2003) showed that women assume men’s responsibilities when the men migrate, but men do not as readily take up caregiving duties when women migrate. Similarly, in Moldova, 64 per cent of mothers continue to play their traditional role of direct caregiver when the father migrates, but when mothers move only 46 per cent of fathers take on the caregiver role (Ghencea and Igor 2004). This is an indication that traditional gender roles influence duties and responsibilities within the family, even if migration may contribute to the empowerment and emancipation of women. Furthermore, even when it is the mother who migrates, children still view their mothers as care providers, which could be explained either by the short-term nature of the migration or by the maintenance of close contacts between migrant mothers and their children (Peleah 2007).

These rearrangements affect power relationships within the family (Peleah 2007). When migrant women combine mothering and breadwinning, they wield considerable decision-making power over their husbands. In the Philippines, Parreñas (2005) shows that women protect earnings from the husband’s drinking and extra-marital behaviours by micromanaging the household finances from overseas. This is often done through their adult daughters who have access to a joint bank account, which indicates the increased power of young adult children over adult relatives. Consequently, these young adult children also increase their decision-making power over their siblings. This is not evidence of women’s emancipation since in the context of mothers’ migration and the new division of labour, the eldest daughter often takes on the extra burden of having to perform the father’s domestic responsibilities, which also has a direct impact on her school performance as well as on her own emancipation (Parreñas 2006).
Rearrangements in intra-household dynamics include the increased participation of the extended family in caregiving activities. In the case of migration of the father, the family’s organization is not altered significantly because, as discussed before, the mother remains the main caregiver and breadwinner at home. However, when the mother migrates the role of the extended family becomes much more important. Nevertheless, evidence on the impact of the extended family as caregivers of children left behind and the new roles that emerge in the international migration context is not conclusive. On the one hand, Battistela and Conaco (1998) argue that in the Philippines, family members may fulfil the role of parents relatively successfully. Yet, in Ecuador and Moldova lack of support and a feeling of abandonment is the most common perception of members left behind. A 2004 survey in Ecuador found that children of migrants in the south of the country complained of a lack of emotional support. In Moldova, despite the caregiving strategies adopted by migrant parents, including childcare facilities and the participation of grandparents in overseeing the welfare of children, many children left behind are affected emotionally, and are sometimes under-protected and inadequately supervised (Ghencea and Igor 2004). Moreover, studies from the Philippines explain that boys left behind by migrant parents are particularly vulnerable to higher rates of physical abuse (Cortes, 2007b: 24).

The psychosocial impact of international migration on family dynamics

According to a UNDP survey data, many children have difficulty adapting to the changes in the intra-household divisions of labour produced by migration (Peleah 2006: 2). International migration impacts on transnational families and their communities in a number of ways, including, as a result of communication problems, discrimination from others, and psychosocial factors (Cortes 2007b: 24). Asis (2006) notes, “regular communication between migrant parents and their children lowers the levels of anxieties and loneliness, although children with both parents away reported unhappiness.” Parreñas (2005) addresses transnational relations between Filipino migrant mothers and their young adult children, and concludes that family members are able to maintain close ties despite distance. However, as a result of lack of capital and resources, technological advances in communication are not uniformly available and do not replace the emotional bonding that exists when mothers are physically present with their children.

Moreover, these interactions are often not of very high quality, as sometimes parents limit themselves to giving instructions concerning remittances. In Ecuador, a 2005 study by FLACSO, referenced in Cortes (2007b: 23), found that “boys and girls in migrant households often share negative views of their mothers and fathers, and even of themselves. At the same time these children are thought to be particularly susceptible to alcoholism, drugs, teen pregnancy and other problems.”

In parallel, additional psychological burdens can arise when children left behind receive remittances. Children and adolescents left behind start to change their usual consumption patterns, sometimes leading to discrimination from friends or members of their communities. For instance, a 2004 survey in Ecuador (Carrillo and Herrera 2005) found that in small cities and in expensive schools, being the child of a migrant had negative connotations because it was associated with poverty, ethnic background or rapid social mobility. However, in public schools, children left behind often become leaders in their class because they have access to more money than their peers.

Battistela and Conaco (1998) studied the impact of migration on children left behind among elementary school children of Filipino migrants. They found that migration is not necessarily disruptive for their development if it is the father who migrates. Ghencea and Igor (2004), meanwhile, demonstrate that the impact of mothers’ migration in Moldova is much more severe compared to the impact of fathers’ migration and results in weakened family ties, higher numbers of family break-ups and worsened school and university results for children and
youth. For example, 24.2 per cent of children’s and youth’s poor school and university results are generated by the migration of women in the household. Yet, the impact mostly depends on how the extended family covers the gaps resulting from parental absence.

Members of the extended family can also be affected by migration. According to UNICEF and HelpAge International (2010), the burden of responsibility that falls on the elderly in Moldova leads to high levels of depression and helplessness. The study reveals that depression and helplessness are felt “very often” and “often” by 37.5 per cent of the representatives of multigenerational households with migrants. Also, the degree of depression is higher among men than women.

Finally, cases from Ecuador illustrate that the absence of a father also affects mothers. For example, according to Herrera (2009), the gap left by the traditional authority figure of the father pushes mothers to strengthen control measures over their children, which creates pressures on the relationships between mothers and children.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, FAMILIES AND THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS IN ECUADOR, MOLDOVA AND THE PHILIPPINES: IS THERE A FAMILY-ORIENTED APPROACH?

In the last two decades, there has been a growing recognition that families play an important role as the principal agents of the migration process. However, it was not until recently that policymakers in Ecuador, the Philippines and Moldova began adopting family-oriented policies to comprehensively address issues pertaining to the family unit and vulnerable populations left behind. The extent to which family-oriented policies have been adopted in each country has been dependent on multiple factors, including the strength of civil society organizations, the characteristics of the migration system, the system of national governance, the policy context and the role of global non-state actors.

A holistic approach to migration in the Philippines: families, civil society and an institutionalized migration system

The Philippines is today well known for its good practices in the area of international migration and development; however, as a study by the Scalabrini Centre in the Philippines (2004: 59) has noted, “when it comes to the families [left behind] of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) much remains to be done.”

Initially, protective measures targeting families were instituted within the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). The latter was created in 1987 as a welfare programme for temporary overseas migrants in response to recommendations within government. These recommendations called for a greater focus on protecting OFWs rather than solely on recruiting and placing them (Rannveig and Ruiz 2007).

The OWWA generated limited resources to address the social needs of households, particularly those left behind. Families within this programme were mainly framed as dependents of overseas migrants; therefore, their protection was considered as another aspect of the “welfare package” directed to OFWs. Family protection in this welfare programme was closely related to the concept of insurance and was meant to protect migrants and their dependents against costly expenditures linked to the migration process. Besides a repatriation programme (the flagship service of the OWWA), migrants and their dependents were provided with services including counselling for distressed workers, paralegal services, low-key diplomatic initiatives (i.e. negotiations for imprisoned OFWs, mobile welfares services, hospital and prison visits, cultural and recreational activities, contingency operations during crisis situations), insurance (i.e., life and personal accident insurance while abroad, monetary assistance to workers who suffer), loan products (pre-departure loans, family assistance loans for emergency purposes or family needs,
livelihood loans to improve entrepreneurial development opportunities), and scholarships and training opportunities which in some cases are directed to dependents (Rannveig and Ruiz 2007).

The Republic Act (RA) 8042, also known as the “Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995”, strengthened the OWWA. Nevertheless, this reform did not radically change the approach of the system, which relied on providing migrants and their dependents with insurance and repatriation services. According to Rannveig and Ruiz (2007), in 2005 the OWWA spent only 3 per cent of their fund balance on services that could benefit families.

Protective mechanisms provided to migrant families that went beyond the insurance-based approach of the OWWA have been adopted. For instance, the Philippine government has exerted continuous pressure on labour receiving countries to sign the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Their Families, which held another view on families beyond the insurance-based approach contained in the OWWA. The Philippines signed the Convention in 1993 and ratified it in 1995.

Civil society and NGOs have also advocated for the implementation of comprehensive family-oriented policies in the context of international migration. According to the IOM (2003), these actors have played a key role in addressing the gaps and problematic issues of the Filipino migration system. Today, at least 38 migrant NGOs provide a variety of services and assistance to migrant workers and their families and RA 8042 recognizes them as partners in protecting migrant workers and their dependents (IOM 2003). The role of churches in this activity cannot be dismissed. For instance, the Apostolate of the Sea (AOS), which is a special organization of the Catholic Church for seafarers, engages in activities that address the needs of migrant households left behind, including visitation, counselling, spiritual support, and organizing ways for families left behind to provide support to each other (Scalabrini 2004).

Renewed measures undertaken by government authorities resulted in the creation of a network of 25 Family Welfare Offices (FWO) in 2002. The FWOS address the needs of families and children left behind and are based in areas with heavy concentrations of migration. Their activities involve collecting information on families of migrants, designing interventions, providing advice, and acting as advocates (Bryant 2005, IOM 2003). As a result of these trends, the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) and other Overseas Workers Welfare Administration are also implementing more comprehensive family-oriented policies in partnership with NGOs. DOLE, together with several NGOs and other church-based organizations, such as the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples (ECMI), Institute on Church and Social Issues (ICSI), and Mother Ignacia National Social Apostolate Centre is also attempting to expand the reach of spiritual counselling and psychosocial care for OFWs and dependants (IOM, 2003: 150). The OWWA is now undertaking actions to strengthen the OFW organizations and family circles by providing them with organizational planning training and seminars to make them more self-reliant and sustainable self-help groups (IOM 2003).

**A family-oriented policy: the role of global non-state actors and the policy environment**

In contrast to the Philippines, the adoption of comprehensive family-oriented policies in Moldova was not the result of a dynamic civil society network, but the outcome of policy advocacy work by global non-state actors and the acknowledgment by the government of Moldova of the need to place issues relating to children and multigenerational households left behind on the policy agenda.

When migration from Moldova increased during the 1990s and early 2000s, the Moldovan migration system placed little emphasis on the protection of families left behind. Most policy work in the area of international migration focused on protecting the rights of migrants.
overseas. During this period, the government of Moldova engaged in a strategy of establishing bilateral agreements with countries of destination to protect the rights of Moldovan workers and to harmonize national legislation with international law. This process was reinforced with the signing and enactment of the Declaration on Mobility Partnership between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union in 2008, which improved the management of migration issues, particularly irregular migration and trafficking (Cruc et al. 2009).

The Moldovan government only focused its policies on families left behind when issues pertaining to vulnerable populations, such as children in childcare facilities, gained momentum in national politics.

The Government of Moldova has since acknowledged the challenges posed by migration, particularly to the welfare of children left behind, through innovative social protection policy frameworks that address the needs and vulnerabilities of children living without parental care, including specifically, the reform of residential childcare facilities. According to UNICEF Moldova (2008: 12), only 3 per cent of the children residing in these facilities were orphans, while 83 per cent were temporarily placed in the institutions and have biological parents or extended family.

Global non-state actors, think tanks and the European Union played an important role in this process as they raised awareness on this category of children. For instance, surveys and studies funded by organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF and the Institute of Public Policies discovered that the organization of residential facilities was inadequate to meet the needs of children in compliance with the Moldova Constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, a UNICEF report on the impacts of migration on children left behind in Moldova (UNICEF, 2008: 22) showed that the framework regulating Moldova’s policies on social protection remained “underdeveloped, non-conclusive, inconsistent, and not well enforced.” The study also noted that “the category of children left behind by migrant parents was not clearly defined, falling implicitly under the general category of children in difficulty.”

The European Union, UNICEF and other child development stakeholders have also been prominent in highlighting the negative implications of international migration on families. For instance, UNICEF published a report in 2008 analysing the impacts of migration on families left behind, including on the extended family. In 2010, a National Study by HelpAge International and UNICEF was published on the effects of migration on older people and children. More recently, on 25th May 2011, the EU-funded project “Addressing the Negative Effects of Migration on Minors and Families Left Behind” was officially launched. The project is co-funded and implemented by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in close partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family of Moldova (MLSPF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

These efforts from global non-state actors, as well as from Moldovan government officials, have had an impact on national policies over the past decade. The Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Children was created and later transformed into the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family as a result of these new policies of attention. Moreover, under the supervision of this ministry, the Moldovan government launched a childcare reform in 2006 aimed at establishing a network of community social assistants and developing family support and alternative family placement services for children without parental care, including children left behind. The outcome of this reform was the National Strategy and Action Plan for the reform of the residential childcare system 2007-2012, which had the support of UNICEF and the European Union. Furthermore, in April 2010 the government of Moldova created a governmental commission on children left without parental care as a result of migration. With the support of line ministries, the Commission has drafted a plan of action to alleviate the negative impact of migration on these children. Finally, the adopted National Action Plan on Children without
Parental Care for 2010-2011, addressed the multiple aspects of vulnerability of children left behind, including the creation of social services for children at the community level, awareness-raising among both the general population and potential migrants on the negative impacts of migration on children, and capacity-building for professionals (including teachers, psychologists, police and health workers) working with children left behind on their vulnerability and the protection of their rights.

In parallel, changes in legislation were also undertaken. In 2008, the family code was amended to include a range of important provisions on child rights protection and on ensuring the sustainability of child protection system reforms. The new family code includes provisions on families as well as protective measures for children left without parental care.

**A family-oriented policy in Ecuador: the role of the governance system with a human rights and gender perspective**

Ecuador is a good example of the impact of the role of governance and institutional dynamics on the adoption and implementation of family-oriented policies with a human rights and gender perspective.

The rapid growth in migration from Ecuador is certainly a factor in the new policies of attention to families left behind. Nevertheless, several institutional and governance factors are worth mentioning since they helped shape national politics and promote a more focused policy agenda on international migration, families and children left behind.

The most influential institutional factor affecting the migration and development policy agenda was the 2008 constitution, which contained significant provisions on international migration issues, including recognizing the right to migration and promoting the protection of migrants' rights overseas regardless of their migratory status.

In 2007, the government of Ecuador created the National Secretariat for Migrants (SENAMI), in order to institutionalize, coordinate and implement its migration policy in a coherent manner. Line ministries including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration, and the Ministry of Labour Relations were involved in this policy initiative to facilitate coordination and ensure policy coherence. This new governance arrangement has been useful in mainstreaming migration issues into national development planning and in facilitating family-oriented policies with a human rights and gender perspective.

As a direct consequence of the 2008 constitution and the new governance system in Ecuador for international migration issues, a wide range of actors became involved in the policy-making process. Prominent civil society and academic institutions such as the Facultad Latino-americana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), the Universidad Andina, the Centro de Planificación y Estudios Sociales (CEPAES), and the Observatory of Children's Rights were actively engaged in the migration policymaking process. Additionally, other government agencies, including the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CNNA), and the National Child and Family Institute (INFA), were involved. Finally, local authorities and local partners were also important stakeholders.

Global non-state actors were instrumental in the process leading to the mainstreaming of migration issues in the new constitution as well as the creation and sustainability of the above-mentioned community of actors. Their advocacy efforts helped influence the formulation of the policy agenda as well as the policymaking process in favour of a family-oriented approach to national development planning. In parallel, efforts were directed to expanding the monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of migration on populations left behind. For instance, following a preliminary study conducted with national institutions in 2005, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (SU-SSC) undertook a
policy initiative to develop a profile of the migrant population and to examine the economic and social impacts of migration in left-behind populations. In 2008, along with Albania, Ecuador became a pilot country for household surveys to look at the impact of migration on those left behind (United Nations Secretariat 2009).

This policy advocacy and knowledge work established an institutional capacity that resulted in two national development plans, 2007-2009 and 2009-2013, which included initiatives to support migrants and their families, with special emphasis on young migrants and children left behind. Additionally, SENAMI with UNICEF support was involved in the coordination of the UNDP/Spain Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund – Thematic Window on Youth, Employment and Migration, which made mention of migrant youth rights. Finally, SENAMI has created an investment fund for projects related to migration, gender, human rights and human development in out-migration communities.

Despite these efforts, Ecuador has a long way to go in implementing a comprehensive family-oriented policy in the area of international migration and development. According to Carrillo, Ripoll-Nunes and Schvaneveldt (2012: 78), policies and programmes relating to families revolve around children's care in daycare centres or at home, as well as parenting education and women heads of household's participation in childcare. These policies are considered narrow as they do not address more elaborate needs related to children's social and psychosocial wellbeing. Although programmes exist that address the basic needs of children, including ensuring nutrition, reducing morbidity rates, and improving school attendance, they neglect important aspects of children's development, including the socio-emotional and moral development of children, which are essential in addressing child development concerns, particularly resulting from family separation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 provides an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in the context of development. In this context, mainstreaming migration into development planning should not only involve policies and programmes that focus on protecting migrant workers and their families in countries of destination, but also address the equity needs and the human development of families left behind in countries of origin.

UNICEF's experience with transnational families and international migration indicates the need for a shift in awareness of migration issues away from a purely economic perspective to broader human rights and gender approaches focused on vulnerable populations, including children, adolescents, youth and young girls. While the impacts of mobility may be positive for households and out-migration communities, particularly through remittances, the negative consequences of international migration on family dynamics may outweigh any positive effect on human development. The cases of Moldova, Ecuador and the Philippines have shown that the vulnerabilities of children, adolescents, youth and women may be exacerbated by new intra-household dynamics, as well as by the psychosocial impact of family separation and fragmentation. The aim of policy must be to help enable members of transnational families to reach their full potential.

To accomplish this, the research reviewed suggests the following:

- Recognize the social cost of migration for sending countries—this cost can be seen in terms of reduced social cohesion and the dislocation of left-behind communities
- Because within left-behind households it is usually women and girls who suffer the most negative effects of migration, special attention to their needs is required
- Particular attention is required to ensure that changed household dynamics do not overburden children of migrant families leading to them to stay away from school
• The psychological impact on those left behind should be recognized and psychological services offered to the most vulnerable, particularly children, adolescents and women—these could include school guidance counselling, communication seminars, counselling centres and mentoring programmes for transnational families.

• Policy should not only focus on left-behind families but also on the wider community in order not to exacerbate tensions between different groups in society; similarly, steps should be taken to reduce stigmatization of members of migrant households.

• Non-state actors have an important part to play, particularly in terms of bringing a human rights and gender perspective to bear; in kind, partnerships between government ministries, local authorities, UN agencies and civil society organizations should be strengthened.

• Broad participation by civil society organizations will tend to make interventions more effective; additionally, at the local level, the involvement of teachers, schools and local authorities is crucial, as the active participation of young people and other vulnerable groups should be encouraged.

• The capacity of social institutions, including schools and colleges, to respond to the needs of transnational families should be enhanced, and community offices responsive to the needs of transnational families, such as those instituted in the Philippines, can be an important conduit for intervention.

Finally, more work needs to be done in this area. Data collection, analysis and dissemination of family-oriented migration studies that could strengthen the evidence base of policies and programmes should be expanded. There remains a gap in available data on the psychosocial impact of those left behind, qualitative information on the role of migrant organizations, the experience of migrants abroad and returned migrants, and the magnitude of migration issues and their impact on national development. Further information should be collected on the families of migrants, including psychosocial data, and the characteristics of social protection systems that address the needs of left-behind populations. International cooperation should be promoted to strengthen the capacity of state and non-state actors to ensure effective advocacy and implementation of rights- and gender-sensitive family-oriented policy frameworks and conventions (i.e., the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families).

Endnotes

1. Although these countries have been highlighted in this study as demonstrating good practice, this does not necessarily imply that they represent best practices on a global scale. Other cases may be of interest for future research endeavours on families in the context of international migration.

2. 2 300 Moldovan families with children that were surveyed in October 2006 within the framework of the UNDP/UNICEF study on the ‘Impact of Migration and Remittances of Families and Communities.’


4. 7 Global non-state actors were also important actors in the implementation of comprehensive family oriented policies in Philippines. For instance, UNICEF supported two major multi-agency dialogues to bring government and civil society together to focus on the rights of children and women left-behind.

5. 8 See the 2002 National Concept on Child and Family Protection and the 2003 National Strategy on Child and Family Protection.

7. During the late 1990s, Ecuador experienced a massive financial crisis that resulted in deepening poverty, a lack of social services, a dearth of economic opportunities, and ultimately, an unprecedented exodus of migrants seeking jobs in North America and Europe. According to estimates, over the course of the last decade, as many as one million people migrated from Ecuador, increasing the total number of Ecuadorians overseas to almost three million.

8. For instance, in 2007 UNICEF, UNDP, and the Centre for Social Planning and Research (CEPLAES) co-sponsored a dialogue in partnership with the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (SU-SSC), UNFPA and IOM. Specific attention was given to issues affecting families and children left behind. As a direct outcome of these dialogues a report on “Families, Children and Migration in Ecuador” was published. In the same year, UNICEF, the National Institution for Children and Families (INFA), and CEPLAES conducted a study entitled “Children and migration in Ecuador: Situation diagnostic”.

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