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Article

Labour Migration of Parents and Threats to Children and Youth

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Abstract: Labour migration is a global trend that shapes communities and economies around the world. Growing economic migration carries a specific threat to children and youth. Long-term consequences threaten life outcomes such as educational achievement, career development, mental and physical health. The study examined the problems of children from migrating families in educational institutions. It was also important to determine what assistance is provided to children from migrant families and what institutions support such families. The respondents were class tutors/educators who were teachers of educational institutions: 2317 respondents took part in the study, including 2044 women and 273 men. Significant differentiation of the respondents according to gender is mainly due to the feminization of the teaching profession in Poland. The results of the survey were analyzed with the chi-square test of independence. As a result of the research, threats to children and adolescents resulting from the economic migration of parents were diagnosed. In secondary schools, a decrease in attendance is observed (unexcused absences, truancy, being late). In lower secondary schools there are problems with school results and a decrease in motivation to learn. Educational institutions find it difficult to stay in contact with parents. In the youngest children (kindergartens, primary schools), emotional instability is observed due to the absence of parents in everyday contact. Educational institutions respond to diagnosed problems by providing support to students. In primary schools, students are provided with help in learning and students' free time is organized. There are also activities aimed at providing additional nutrition. In lower secondary schools, as in secondary schools, support focuses more on motivational interviewing, mediation in conflict situations and psychological assistance. In order to solve problems and help students, educational institutions cooperate with the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre, the Social Welfare Centre and the Probation Officer.

Keywords: migrant worker; child; adolescent; left-behind children; parent-child separation; school; health; mental health; psychosocial support; income distribution/inequality



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1. Introduction

Migrations include not only single people, but also people with children. Various circumstances may lead to migration of parents without children (Mazzucato 2015; Jan et al. 2017). Among economic migrants, the main incentive for migration is to improve the situation of their families and children by increasing household income and financial stability. However, despite the financial benefits, a lack of parental monitoring, supervision and support can result in a range of psychosocial and developmental risks to children (Ding and Bao 2014; Zhao et al. 2018). In many low- and middle-income countries, extensive research has been carried out on the well-being of children left behind by immigrant parents. The results reveal that parental migration is detrimental to the mental, behavioral, and nutritional health of abandoned children and adolescents (Fellmeth et al. 2018). Long-term separation from migrant parents may lead to threats to the child's development, despite the potential benefits of a better financial situation.

The greater financial resources of the family can promote cognitive development through the availability of money to purchase nutritious food and learning materials (e.g., books, toys, arts and crafts, computers). At the same time, reducing the physical interactions between parent and child (e.g., reading aloud, building vocabulary, playing and modeling correct speech) would probably threaten cognitive development (Tomopoulos et al. 2006). The availability of parents to interact and talk to children greatly influences the development of vocabulary and language comprehension in children (Vallotton et al. 2017). A study by Hou et al. (2020) found that early separation from both migrant parents has a negative influence on understanding language in schoolchildren. Under the conditions of economic migration, certain patterns of parental absence (e.g., duration, organization of care) may result in different effects on the child's development (Zhao and Egger 2020).

Worldwide, the results of studies on the absence of parents due to migration separation are conclusive in different national contexts. For example, a study by Nguyen (2016) on parental absence due to migration in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam found evidence that parental absence negatively affects children's cognitive abilities. However, Kandel and Kao (2001) found higher academic grades in Mexican children who experienced parental migration to the US for work, in comparison with those whose parents did not emigrate. Finally, there are also studies showing that the absence of parents due to migration affects children's educational performance but not cognitive performance (Lara 2015).

The evidence on the health of left-behind children is contradictory. On the one hand, it can be expected that material benefits and greater security of income from remittances will improve health and facilitate access to health care and education but, on the other hand, some studies indicate worse health outcomes among abandoned children. In China, where the most research on rural-to-urban migration of parents has been carried out so far, studies have shown worse outcomes for the nutrition, development (Wen and Lin 2012) and mental health (Qin and Albin 2010) of abandoned children than those of non-immigrant parents. The negative impact of migration on the children and adolescents left behind was noted in terms of symptoms of depression (Man et al. 2017; Zhou et al. 2018; Tang et al. 2018). A systematic review of the literature on the impact of international labour migration on the mental health and well-being of left-behind children there showed a higher level of depression and loneliness in left-behind children than in children who do not live in transnational families (Antia et al. 2020).

Research results show that maternal migration is significantly detrimental to the socio-emotional development of infants and young children in rural China. Additionally, low education and poor mental health of foster carers and inadequate parenting care contribute to the harmful effects (Shi et al. 2021). Other studies also show that maternal migration has a significantly negative impact on the mental resistance of left-behind children (Liu et al. 2020). A study by Mao et al. (2020) found that left-behind children had lower cognitive and academic test scores, and that they also went to college less often. In particular, the absence of the mother appears to have a lasting negative impact on children's development.

The problems among left-behind children are hyperactivity, which occurs especially in boys, and emotional problems, which are more common in girls (Luo et al. 2019). A study analyzing risk factors related to physical health such as underweight, lower weight, growth retardation, unhealthy food preferences, less physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, injuries and incomplete vaccinations showed that they were more widespread among children left behind (Račaitė et al. 2021).

From the child's point of view, attention is paid to such threats as: lowering the sense of security; loneliness; difficulties in shaping identity; disturbances in the development of emotional, intellectual and decision-making self-control; difficulties in shaping the value system and carrying out tasks related to school education. These threats result in the loss of meaning of life, as well as leading to various manifestations of social maladjustment such as aggression, and even behaviors that violate the law, especially in children and adolescents from lower secondary and upper secondary schools. In the case of adolescent children, there is a problem of looking for people who could satisfy emotional needs,

tenderness, love, as well as care and belonging. A permanent neglect of school education or even its abandonment is also not uncommon. The analysis of the literature shows that most of the research on threats to left-behind children was carried out in China, i.e., the country where migration is mainly economic migration from rural areas to cities. There is a serious research gap in countries outside of China, potentially limiting the possibility of arrangements for other forms of migration and other environments (Fellmeth et al. 2018). Therefore, the conducted research project was aimed at: (1) investigating what difficulties/problems are caused by children from migrating families in educational institutions, (2) determining what help is provided to children from migrant families and what institutions support migrant families. The above-mentioned most important threats resulting from the parents' departure to work abroad fully justify the need to examine the problem.

2. The System of Education in Poland

The system of education in Poland includes an 8-year primary school (7–15 years of age); 4-year general secondary school (15–19 years of age); 5-year technical secondary school (15–20 years of age); 3-year first-cycle vocational school (15–18 years of age); and 2-year second-cycle vocational school (18–20 years of age). Pre-school education covers children aged 3–6.

Until September 2019, there was a 6-year primary school (7–13 years of age); 3-year lower secondary school (13–16 years of age); 3-year general secondary school (16–19 years of age); and 4-year technical secondary school (16–20 years of age). As a result of the reform in 2019, lower secondary schools were closed.

Compulsory schooling (i.e., the obligation to attend 8-year primary school) applies to children and adolescents aged 7–15. Compulsory education applies to young people aged 15–18 and may be implemented at school or in an out-of-school form (e.g., through vocational training with the employer).

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted in April–May 2019 in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Board of Education in Rzeszów. The research covered all educational institutions in the south-eastern region of Poland. Heads of educational institutions subordinate to the Board of Education in Rzeszów received information about the study and they then passed it on to form teachers/tutors. The questionnaire was completed by tutors/guardians who have a student/students in their class of whom at least one parent went abroad for work purposes. The research tool was a questionnaire.

The results of the survey were analyzed with the chi-square test of independence. This test is used to examine the dependencies between variables based on a nominal scale. The aim of the analysis was to verify the hypotheses about the dependence of individual categories of answers to the questions included in the questionnaire on the type of institution.

The null hypothesis about the independence of both variables was rejected if the calculated value of the test probability (p) was lower than the adopted significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. In these cases, further interpretation was made on the basis of the residual count values. The calculated chi-squared values and the test probability " p " values were tabulated.

4. The Research Results

Characteristics of the Respondents

Social characteristics of the respondents included as the characteristics: gender, type of educational institution in which the respondent works (Table 1). A total of 2317 educators/guardians participated in the research. Most of the teachers participating in the study were women. The questionnaire was completed by 2044 women who constituted 88.22% of the respondents, and 273 men, who constituted 11.78% of the respondents (Table 1).

Such a significant differentiation of educators according to gender is mainly due to the feminization of the teaching profession in Poland.

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents ($n = 2317$).

Description	Categories	N	%
Sex	Woman	2044	88.22
	Man	273	11.78
Type of institution	Nursery School	151	6.52
	Primary School	1348	58.18
	Lower Secondary School	500	21.58
	Secondary School	315	13.60

Among the teachers, 1348 people (58.18%) are primary school employees, 500 people (21.58%) are employed in a lower secondary school, 315 people (13.60%) are secondary school employees, and 151 people (6.52%) are kindergarten employees (Table 1).

The number of teachers from individual types of educational institutions results from the fact that primary schools have the longest teaching cycle, i.e., 6 years, and thus teach the largest group of students. On the other hand, the smallest number of teachers was in kindergartens.

5. Problems of Children and Adolescents from Families Migrating for Work

The obtained results from the study revealed the problems faced by educational institutions with students whose parents went abroad for work purposes (Table 2). Form teachers indicated that the greatest problem was the lack of or difficult contact with parents (46.7%). Educators indicate emotional instability (39.2%) and deterioration of school results (34.8%) in children whose parents are abroad. The educators also report difficulties in disciplining students to school duties (29.9%).

Table 2. Problems and actions taken to provide the students with the necessary support.

Description	N	%
Difficulties faced by the school with students whose parents have gone abroad		
No or difficult contact with parents	1076	46.7
Deterioration of school results	810	34.8
Truancy	181	7.8
Unexcused absences	243	10.4
Late for classes	181	7.8
Helplessness of the child's guardians	287	12.3
Lack of willingness and motivation to learn on the part of students	515	22.1
Difficulty disciplining for school duties	696	29.9
Lack of adult control over a child's development	520	22.4
Emotional instability	912	39.2
Aggression	112	4.8
Actions taken by the educational institution to provide students with the support they need		
Intensified observation of the student	1762	75.8
Organizing the student's free time	321	13.8
Maintaining constant contact with parents	919	39.5
Maintaining constant contact with guardians	524	22.5
Help in learning	961	41.3
Material support	111	4.8
Feeding	362	15.6
Psychological and pedagogical help	833	35.8
Social therapy classes	67	2.9
Motivational interviewing	1483	63.8
Mediation in conflict situations	686	29.5
Cooperation with institutions in the field of providing assistance to students whose parents have gone abroad		
Family Court	159	6.8
Probation Officer	183	7.9
Social Welfare Centre	809	34.8
Police	96	4.1
Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre	1564	67.2
Family Support Centre	225	9.7

The survey revealed activities undertaken by educational institutions to provide students with the support they need. The educators monitor the students intensively (75.8%), the students are supported through motivational interviewing (63.8%) and help in learning (41.3%), as well as psychological and pedagogical help (35.8%).

The study showed cooperation with institutions in providing help to students. Educational institutions most often cooperate with the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre (67.2%) and the Social Welfare Centre (34.8%).

The value $p < 0.05$ indicates that with the selected significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, there are grounds to reject the hypothesis of the independence of both variables, in the case of opinions about the following difficulties: lack of or difficult contact with parents, worse

school results, truancy, unexcused absences, being late, lack of willingness to learn, lack of adult control, emotional instability (Table 3). This means that identifying these difficulties depends on the type of educational institution. In other cases, the value $p > 0.05$, which proves that there is no differentiation of opinions about difficulties depending on the type of educational institution.

Table 3. Differentiation of difficulties faced by an educational institution with students whose parents have gone abroad.

Description.	Educational Institution								$\chi^2; p$
	Kindergarten		Primary School		Lower Secondary School		Secondary School		
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	
	%		%		%		%		
	Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		
No or difficult contact with parents	59.73 8.9	40.27 −8.9	57.58 51.9	42.42 −51.9	49.81 −20.2	50.19 20.2	40.65 −40.6	59.35 40.6	34.74 *; 0.000
Deterioration of academic performance	83.89 27.9	16.11 −27.9	67.11 26.2	32.89 −26.2	56.23 −46.0	43.77 46.0	62.58 −8.0	37.42 8.0	44.29 *; 0.000
Truancy	93.29 1.6	6.71 −1.6	98.67 87.3	1.33 −87.3	89.69 −13.0	10.31 13.0	67.74 −75.9	32.26 75.9	342.09 *; 0.000
Unexcused absences	95.97 9.6	4.03 −9.6	96.75 97.3	3.25 −97.3	85.60 −20.3	14.40 20.3	61.61 −86.6	38.39 86.6	348.67 *; 0.000
Late for classes	97.32 7.6	2.68 −7.6	95.34 42.3	4.66 −42.3	90.66 −8.0	9.34 8.0	78.71 −41.9	21.29 41.9	104.38 *; 0.000
Helplessness of the child’s guardians	87.25	12.75	88.62	11.38	85.99	14.01	86.45	13.55	2.91; 0.405
Lack of willingness and motivation to learn on the part of students	89.93 18.0	10.07 −18.0	79.08 16.6	20.92 −16.6	69.07 −45.2	30.93 45.2	81.29 10.6	18.71 −10.6	38.95 *; 0.000
Difficulty in disciplining for school duties	79.19	20.81	69.48	30.52	68.87	31.13	70.32	29.68	6.50; 0.089
Lack of adult control over the child’s development	75.84 −2.7	24.16 2.7	80.71 41.5	19.29 −41.5	73.74 −20.1	26.26 20.1	71.61 −18.7	28.39 18.7	18.62 *; 0.000
Emotional instability	36.24 −36.6	63.76 36.6	55.28 −74.5	44.72 74.5	71.79 56.5	28.21 −56.5	78.39 54.5	21.61 −54.5	121.24 *; 0.000
Aggression	96.64	3.36	95.27	4.73	94.16	5.84	95.81	4.19	2.15; 0.542

The symbol * next to the chi-square value means that the null hypothesis of independence of both variables at the selected level $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p < 0.05$) should be rejected.

The values of the residual number (Table 3) indicate that there are difficulties in secondary schools to a greater extent than in other schools: unexcused absences (38.339%), truancy (32.26%), being late (21.29%). Difficulties that occur in lower secondary schools to a greater extent than in the remaining schools are: lack of contact with parents (50.19%), worse school results (43.77%), lack of willingness to study (30.93%), lack of adult control (26.26%).

In kindergartens and primary schools, to a greater extent than in the remaining schools, there are difficulties related to emotional instability, reported in 63.76% and 44.72% of responses, respectively.

The value $p < 0.05$ indicates that with the selected significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, there are grounds to reject the hypothesis of the independence of both variables, in the case of the following activities: organization of free time, contact with guardians, help in learning, feeding, psychological help, motivational interviewing, mediation (Table 4). This means that the application of these activities depends on the type of educational institution. In other cases, the value $p > 0.05$, which proves the lack of differentiation of the applied activities depending on the type of institution.

Table 4. The variety of activities undertaken in order to provide students with the necessary support.

Description	Educational Institution								$\chi^2; p$
	Kindergarten		Primary School		Lower Secondary School		Secondary School		
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	
	%		%		%		%		
	Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		
Intensified observation of the student	30.87	69.13	25.06	74.94	21.01	78.99	22.90	77.10	7.28; 0.064
Organizing the student’s free time	83.89 −3.4	16.11 3.4	83.59 −35.3	16.41 35.3	88.33 10.9	11.67 −10.9	95.16 27.8	4.84 −27.8	31.28 *; 0.000
Maintaining constant contact with guardians	55.70	44.30	60.98	39.02	62.06	37.94	58.06	41.94	2.85; 0.414
Maintaining constant contact with caregivers	85.23 11.6	14.77 −11.6	81.01 47.8	18.99 −47.8	71.60 −30.2	28.40 30.2	68.06 −29.2	31.94 29.2	40.71 *; 0.000
Help in learning	76.51 26.6	23.49 −26.6	54.99 −50.0	45.01 50.0	56.42 −11.6	43.58 11.6	70.00 35.1	30.00 −35.1	44.61 *; 0.000
Material support	95.30	4.70	95.64	4.36	94.94	5.06	93.87	6.13	1.85; 0.603
Feeding	83.89 −0.8	16.11 0.8	81.74 −36.4	18.26 36.4	84.24 −1.0	15.76 1.0	96.77 38.2	3.23 −38.2	43.42 *; 0.000
Psychological help	70.47 9.4	29.53 −9.4	67.33 42.5	32.67 −42.5	60.51 −18.9	39.49 18.9	53.55 −33.0	46.45 33.0	26.67 *; 0.000
Social therapy classes	96.64	3.36	96.38	3.62	98.44	1.56	98.39	1.61	8.78; 0.075
Motivational interviewing	48.32 18.0	51.68 −18.0	38.51 30.6	61.49 −30.6	31.91 −22.3	68.09 22.3	27.74 −26.4	72.26 26.4	26.29 *; 0.000
Mediation in conflict situations	9.9	22.82 −9.9	72.65 29.0	27.35 −29.0	66.34 −21.4	33.66 21.4	64.84 −17.6	35.16 17.6	15.27 *; 0.002

The symbol * next to the chi-square value means that the null hypothesis of independence of both variables at the selected level $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p < 0.05$) should be rejected.

The values of the residual number (Table 4) indicate that in primary schools, to a greater extent than in other schools, the following measures are used: organization of free time (16.41%), help in learning (45.01%), and feeding (18.26%). In lower secondary schools, to a greater extent than in the remaining schools, the following measures are used: contact with guardians (28.40%), help in learning (43.58%), psychological help (39.49%), motivational interviewing (68.09%), and mediation (33.66%). In secondary schools, to a greater extent than in other schools, the following measures are used: contact with guardians (31.94%), psychological help (46.45%), motivational interviewing (72.26%) and mediation (35.16%).

The value $p < 0.05$ indicates that with the selected significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ there are grounds to reject the hypothesis of independence of both variables in the case of contact with the following institutions: Family Court, Probation Officer, Social Welfare Centre, Police, Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre (Table 5). This means that contact with these institutions depends on the type of educational institution. In the case of a family support centre, the value $p > 0.05$, which proves the lack of differentiation in the use of contact with this institution depending on the type of educational institution.

Table 5. Diversification of cooperation with institutions in the field of providing assistance to students whose parents have gone abroad.

Description	Educational Institution								$\chi^2; p$
	Kindergarten		Primary School		Lower Secondary School		Secondary School		
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	
	%		%		%		%		
	Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		Residual Numbers		
Family Court	97.32 6.2	2.68 −6.2	94.31 15.5	5.69 −15.5	89.69 −17.9	10.31 17.9	91.94 −3.8	8.06 3.8	17.30 *; 0.001
Probation Officer	97.99 8.7	2.01 −8.7	93.35 16.4	6.65 −16.4	89.69 −12.6	10.31 12.6	88.06 −12.6	11.94 12.6	21.11 *; 0.000
Social Welfare Centre	70.47 7.8	29.53 −7.8	61.27 −53.4	38.73 53.4	67.51 11.8	32.49 −11.8	76.13 33.8	23.87 −33.8	28.56 *; 0.000
Police	95.97 0.1	4.03 −0.1	97.12 16.8	2.88 −16.8	94.75 −5.8	5.25 5.8	92.26 −11.2	7.74 11.2	17.18 *; 0.001
Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre	27.52 −7.8	72.48 7.8	35.03 30.8	64.97 −30.8	32.10 −3.4	67.90 3.4	26.45 −19.6	73.5 19.6	10.74 *; 0.013
Family Support Centre	87.92	12.08	90.47	9.53	89.69	10.31	91.94	8.06	2.18; 0.537

The symbol * next to the chi-square value means that the null hypothesis of independence of both variables at the selected level $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p < 0.05$) should be rejected.

The values of the residual number (Table 5) indicate that contact with the Social Welfare Centre is used to a greater extent in primary schools than in other schools (38.73%). In lower secondary schools, contact with the Family Court and the Probation Officer is used to a greater extent than in the remaining schools (10.31%). In secondary schools, contact with the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre (73.50%), the Probation Officer (11.94%) and the Police (7.74%) are used to a greater extent than in other schools.

6. Discussion

The results of the research show the threats to children and adolescents resulting from the economic migration of their parents. In secondary schools, a decrease in attendance is observed (truancy, unexcused absences, being late). Deprived of parental supervision and support, young people decide to stay outside the educational institution. This problem may be related to the lack of or difficult contact with parents—often parents may not know what their child is doing in their absence. There are problems with school results in lower secondary schools. Lack of willingness to learn is observed. Educational institutions have difficulties in maintaining contact with parents and children are deprived of parental supervision. In the youngest children (kindergartens, primary schools), emotional instability is observed due to the absence of parents in everyday contact. Other studies found evidence that children and adolescents had an increased risk of depression, suicidal thoughts and anxiety compared with children of non-immigrants. The children left behind were also smaller in height or were at risk of stunted growth and use of prohibited substances (Man et al. 2017; Fellmeth et al. 2018; Tian et al. 2017; Zhao et al. 2017). Disadvantaged children and adolescents in terms of mental well-being and cognitive development are indirectly supported by the emotional well-being of their guardians and education (Yue et al. 2020).

Educational institutions respond to diagnosed problems. In primary schools, students receive help in learning and their free time is also organized. Efforts are being made towards supplementary feeding. In lower secondary schools, as in secondary schools, support focuses more on motivational interviewing, mediation in conflict situations and psychological help. In lower secondary schools, help in learning is additionally organized. The literature also documents the positive effects that various school initiatives can have on

the mental health and psychosocial well-being of adolescents. For example, a 2017 systematic review found that widespread school interventions improved school results, behavior problems, emotional stress and the use of psychoactive substances among students from various sociodemographic groups (Taylor et al. 2017). Several reviews have also found that school therapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety among students, as well as other mental health related symptoms (Das et al. 2016; Bennouna et al. 2019; Fazel et al. 2014).

In order to solve problems and help students, educational institutions cooperate with other institutions. In primary schools, assistance is organized in cooperation with the Social Welfare Centre. In lower secondary schools, contact is maintained with the Family Court and the Probation Officer. In secondary schools, in order to help students, contact is maintained with the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre. Secondary school students may violate the law with their behavior, which results in the school's cooperation with the Probation Officer and the Police. With the right resources and preparation, schools are particularly well placed to offer adolescents a stable social environment while fostering a sense of integration and security (Kia-Keating and Ellis 2007; Montgomery 2011; Trentacosta et al. 2016).

7. Conclusions

This study showed that labour migration of parents poses many risks related to the child's performance, such as mental health, school results, motivation to learn, attendance at school, and conflict situations. Our research shows that educational institutions try to solve and mitigate the negative effects of parental migration. The organized help varies depending on the problems encountered in a given educational institution. Primary schools focus on the organization of free time. In lower secondary and secondary schools, the help focuses on motivational interviewing, mediation and psychological help. Our analysis showed that educational institutions organize help within the available possibilities, establishing cooperation with, for example, the Social Welfare Center or Psychological and Pedagogical Counseling Center. There are no support programs that can mitigate the effects of parental labour migration. The support would make it possible to organize activities aimed at raising school results, developing students' interests, and also providing food. Research findings emphasize the rarely discussed consequences of global migration on global policy making and the provision of healthcare in the countries sending migrants.

Our findings complement the existing literature on the main impact of parent absences and the resulting problems for children and adolescents in educational institutions. Finally, we hope to bring insights that can be used to develop more comprehensive theories of changes and projects to mitigate the effects of parental migration by better helping children and young people. Research evidence on these aspects will be used to develop tailored intervention programs for children and will strengthen the capacity of families and communities to best meet the needs of children affected by prolonged parental absence. The scale of the risks and difficulties faced by migrants' children should be part of a broad spectrum of research, given the complex cost-benefit conditions of parental migration.

Effective interventions are urgently needed in all communities affected by external migration around the world to mitigate the risks to left-behind children and to improve guardians' ability to meet children's socio-emotional and cognitive development needs.

In sum, children and adolescents left behind have significant unsatisfied needs for mental and semi-nutritional health. The frequency of labour migration is increasing, so support interventions are urgently needed to prevent long-term negative effects on their health and development. Interventions are also needed to support guardians, many of whom may be elderly relatives with their own health needs. One-parent families as a result of migration separation need institutional support and assistance, in particular from the state and institutions carrying out such tasks.

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