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**INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN EASTERN EUROPE:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT¹**

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¹ The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

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A. EASTERN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Since the fall of communism in early 1990s, intern

Ukraine - 8,471, Romania - 4,795, Poland -4,760 and Serbia and Montenegro - 3,642 (IFAID, 2006).

Economic migration is a very important process in some of the countries in the region such as Moldova, where in 2006 about one quarter of the economically active population was employed abroad and the remittances sent home represented about one third of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With more than US\$ 1 billion in remittances, Moldova has the highest ratio of remittances to GDP in the world (IOM, 2007). These remittances have greatly contributed to poverty reduction for Moldovan households, from 40% of migrant and non-migrant households in 1998 to 20% of migrant households in 2006 (while poverty only decreased to 32% of non-migrant households) (IOM, 2007). When asked what the main effects of migration are, 85% of members of immigrant household indicated the increased income, 26% the lack of parental care, and 22% emotional stress. Data indicate that for most households the remittances received are used primarily for daily needs such as food, clothes or rent, a second priority is represented by consumer durables (TV, computers) and the rest for home renovations, cars, investments or education (IOM, 2007). Similar results can be obtained in other Eastern European countries.

C. EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRATION: CHALLENGES

The challenges of economic migration on Eastern European families and children are not yet understood due to the very limited research on this issue (UNICEF, 2008). Most of the migration policies in migrant sending countries such as the ones in Eastern Europe focus on developing advantageous labor contracts with the receiving countries. There is not much attention paid to the psychosocial impact that migration has on children and families and the support they need to adapt to this process. Consequently, a major problem is the lack of social support programs in schools or communities for children and parents in migrant families. In the last few years, there have been an alarming number of children who committed suicide due to parents leaving them at home for long periods of time (Dabija, 2006). This situation indicates the urgency in understanding of how parental migration impacts child development and outcomes.

Moreover, the media portrays this phenomenon in a negative light, presenting migrant parents as uncaring and neglectful of their children (e.g., Dabija, 2006). For the majority of families with a migrant member, the remittances represent the only way out of poverty. Many of these parents sacrifice themselves by accepting positions that are lower than their educational credentials only to be able to provide for their children. Moreover, emigration of workers has a positive impact on their countries of origin, in particular by easing the pressures on their local labor market or in the form of remittances (Fratini, 2007). As such, these highly motivated parents need to be supported in their efforts by the society.

Previous research with other migrant groups indicates that parental migration poses several challenges (e.g., Cortina, 2006). For example, studies with Mexican parents migrating to the US to work while leaving their children with relatives in Mexico, indicate that the lack of mother's or father's presence for a long period of time have lasting negative consequences on children, on their social, psychological, or academic functioning. Due to lack of parental monitoring and constant support, children left behind by their migrant parents represent a vulnerable group with

higher risk of psychological (e.g., depression) and behavioral problems (e.g., violence). In many cases their academic performance is also affected, dropping out or having lower grades, but also presenting a higher risk of being abused or becoming victims of human trafficking.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The increase in the recent Eastern European migration poses new opportunities for the study of this group's adaptation to this phenomenon. A major problem in these migrant sending countries is the lack of structures and expertise at community level to tackle the problems of migrant families. Migration has been noted as one of the major contemporary policy concerns. It has been recommended for governments to integrate a family perspective in international migration policy and to develop effective family-friendly migration policy that will help maximize the opportunities and minimize the challenges of migration (Robila, 2009; In Press). Given that

challenges and how they cope with them, giving them a chance to learn from each other. Research has indicated that immigration has diverse effects on individual family members that vary depending on their gender. For example, boys become less adaptive in adolescence while girls become more adaptive, perhaps due to their increased ability to identify social support systems that promoted adaptation (Lamb, & Bougher, 2009). As such, targeted help for boys and girls is also recommended.

Child-caregivers represent another category that might benefit of social support. There are many situations in which both parents migrate and the child is cared by a family member, most likely a grandparent. In Eastern Europe, grandparents are very involved with their grandchildren even when parents are at home. However, being a grandparent raising a grandchild full time brings up some challenges such as requirements for higher level of energy and more responsibilities (e.g., Goodman, 2008). Having *support programs for caregivers* are beneficial in providing source of comfort and release of anxiety.

Finally, the third type of *programs supporting migrant families* should be targeted to preparing *school and community officials* to support the children who have migrant parents. Given that a child's universe is mostly focused on school, it is very important for the school personnel to be prepared on how to support these children. There is evidence that sometimes the teachers' are not supportive but rather poignant about migration, underlining only the negative consequences of migration and approaching these children as "being neglected by their parents". Instead a more supportive attitude and efforts to reach out to parents abroad (e.g., by email) to inform them about child's progress, is recommended

Societies should make these programs available to migrant families in order to support their success. Given the high impact of remittances and economic benefits brought by international migration, the governments should provide these types of strategies that would increase the

International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2007). Remittances in the Republic of Moldova: Patterns, trends and effect.

Lamb, M.E., & Bougher, L.D. (2009). How does mi