

The Effects of Migration on Children and the Elderly Left Behind in Moldova and Georgia

Migration is a complex phenomenon, often viewed in the context of benefits and/or risks which it brings. Despite the growing public discourse on the subject of migration, little is known about the migration process itself, notably, on how many people have immigrated, how they feel as immigrants, what the feelings of their family-members left behind are, what are the effects of their migration, etc.

Giving answers to the above questions was the objective of a two-year EU-funded research project entitled Effects of migration on children and the elderly left behind by migrants in Georgia and Moldova. The research was undertaken by the Maastricht University School of Management (the Netherlands) in cooperation with the Kiel Institute for the World Economy (Germany) and the International Centre for Social Research and Political Analysis (Georgia). The project was simultaneously implemented in Moldova and Georgia; the following mixed research methodology was used:

a nationwide survey of representative household samples and themes, in-depth interviews with family members of migrants and a survey of target groups composed of the government and civil society representatives.

The methods listed above helped the project to:

1. Identify levels and characteristic features of immigration from Georgia;
2. Show effects of migration, specifically on children and the elderly left behind by migrants;
3. Assess possibilities of reducing negative effects of migration and increasing its positive effects on family members left behind;
4. Create the first database of children and the elderly affected by migration allowing for the elaboration of practical recommendations required for defining a policy in the field.

With regard to Georgia the project managed to collect large-scale, detailed and qualitatively new data on current trends in migration and its effects on the families left behind.

The data collection was carried out using the following research methods:

- A nationwide survey of 4,011 representative household samples, comprising 16,225 persons;
- Research of themes covering 150 towns and villages;
- In-depth interviews with 34 families of immigrants;
- Survey of 15 target group members representing the government and the civil society.

The household survey results were especially rich in presenting the essence of current migration. The questionnaire contained data on the demographic composition of households, their material conditions (employment, income, expenditure, property and accommodation issues), and a detailed migration history of each family member since 1999. T

he questions also referred to information on children (their health, education and care) and the elderly (their health, employment record, movement and social interaction).

The data collected during the research made it possible to provide an in-depth description of the significant impact that migration of a family-member may have on the lives of the other member left behind. Additional information about the project may be seen on the web-site of the Maastricht University School of Management: http://mgsog.merit.unu.edu/research/moldova_georgia.php

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