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The London School of Economics and Political Science

Department of Social Policy

The Social Costs of Migration: Transnational Parenthood and the effects on left behind children

SA 472

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of MSc Social Policy and Development

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ABSTRACT

When discussing about migration and remittances, most academic papers refers mainly to the economic factors of this phenomenon; however less consideration have been paid to other social costs such as how parental migration affects the lives of the children left behind. The aim of this paper is to address the effects of migration on child back home, analysing the effects on both their educational attainment and on their emotional and psychological well-being.

By applying the sustainable livelihood framework the results suggest that the emotional and psychological health of the children left behind is affected during their early years. Therefore, proactive social policies should be implemented to protect this vulnerable population.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

As stated by a wide range of authors, international migration has become one of the most significant strategies of households and families to improve their livelihood and cope with poverty. Hall (2008) claims that there is a growing number of people from poorer countries that find overseas migration as the only way to secure a higher standard of living. People have sought new life opportunities in other countries arguing that at home those chances are scarce. However, international migration is not a new phenomenon. Analysed by de Hass (2007) thinking about migration can be distinguished over four periods since the post-Second World War period: the migration optimists dominated in the 1950s and 1960s, pessimists overcame in the 1970s and 1980s, while more subtle views came to light during 1990s under influence of increasing empirical research and the current rediscovery of the so called remittances along with the resurgence of optimism on migration in recent years.

Some 215 million people or 3 per cent of the world’s population are believed to live outside their countries of birth (United Nations, 2009). According to Ozden and Schiff (2007) the movement of large numbers of people creates significant economic benefits to the migrants, their families back home, and their adopted countries. In the same line, de Hass (2007) argues that migration and remittances have the potential to improve well-being, stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty. Yang and Martinez (2006) cited by Ozden and Schiff (2007) find that an increase in remittances leads to a reduction in migrant-household poverty.

Conventional analysis refers mainly to the economic factors of migration and remittances in sending societies and their impact in the household, such as improvement on income indicators, income growth and the increase on family welfare; however less consideration has been paid to other social costs such as how migration affects the lives of the families that migrants leave behind. As claimed by Boccagni (2011) there is a need for studying the relation among migrant remittances and transnational caregiving practices as a means of social protection for those left behind in their home countries. Based on the information provided by the literature, it could be an inaccuracy to deny the economic contribution that migration, and particularly remittances, makes to the livelihoods and survival of the families.
Therefore it is necessary to consider not only the economic effect of migration but also the social costs hidden behind this issue; a subject that has been less explored in the academy.

It is important to highlight that this paper is particularly concerned with the effects that international migration can have on children left behind by their parents. While acknowledging that migration and remittances are important factors that contribute to the increase of income within the household, the well-being of the children back home could be strongly affected by other aspects that go beyond the economic understanding. Based on the information provided above, this paper devotes particular attention to the current debates in the literature about how long-term migration of both parents affects the children’s educational attainment and general well-being.

There are different possible answers to this question. However, to channel the answer in a proper way it is necessary to bring Cortes’ (2007) claim to the discussion. She stated that migration and remittances are part of poor households’ survival strategies. She underlines that migration and remittances are closely linked, nevertheless a clear distinction needs to be made between the impacts of remittances as compared to those of migration. On one hand if we consider parental migration combined with remittances, the effects could be positive in some children’s basic material welfare as well as in the investment on human capital such as education. On the other hand, the migration of one or both parents could also threaten a child’s psychological well-being. Some reports have highlighted negative emotional effects of migration on children that results from a lack of parental guidance. Therefore, different possible answers are involved in order to tackle the research question.

1.2. Possible policy implications

Migration is a phenomenon that needs to be studied from different perspectives and analysed under diverse conceptual frameworks. Migration can have effects on all the members of the family; from those that decide to begin the migration project, to those that stay at home and both expect to improve their livelihoods. Therefore, the implications for policy are as varied as the concept of migration. In this sense, we will begin with an analysis of this important issue expecting policy implications to emerge.
1.3. **Structure**

This paper will be organised as follows. Chapter two will be devoted to the revision of the literature about the subject, giving a closer look into the theories of migration, remittances and an overview of some country cases. Chapter three will be dedicated to the qualitative analysis of a case study in Ecuador. The case study will help us to make an in-depth study of the dynamics of the household and how migration affects those left behind. With this aim, the livelihood framework approach will be used as a tool of analysis. Chapter four will emerge with some conclusions.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical overview about migration

While revisiting the literature regarding international migration, it can be said that there is no single theory to explain it beginnings. As stated by Massey (1993), contemporary migration requires a full understanding of complex processes and this understanding will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone. He added that its multifaceted nature requires a theory that incorporates a variety of perspectives. In order to channel the analysis of international migration theories, I will concur with de Hass’ (2007) classification of migration theories. He groups the theories into three main phases that from my perspective comprise most of the theories discussed by several authors. These three phases are: The Migration Optimists, The Migration Pessimists and the Pluralist perspectives. These phases will be presented and discussed below.

2.1.1. The Migration Optimists

The first phase, as noted by de Hass (2007), is known as ‘The Migration Optimists’ during the 1950s and 1960s, which tend to believe that poor countries would be able to jump on the movement of rapid economic development and modernisation. Within this group of Migration Optimists, the author divides them into Developmentalist and Neoclassical views. On one hand, Developmentalists tend to argue that migration leads to a North-South transfer of investment capital. In this perspective some authors like Penninx (1982), Beijer (1970), Kindleberger (1965) cited by de Hass (2007) think that return migrants are agents of change, innovators and investment. It is thought that the skills and knowledge that migrants acquire abroad then help developing countries in their economic take-off. On the other hand, the neoclassical economic approach, sometimes called the ‘functionalist’ or ‘traditional’ approach to migration, sees migration as a process that contributes to the optimal allocation of production factors for the benefit of all ‘factor price equalization’ (de Hass, 2007). As claimed by Cortes (2008), early neoclassical theories assumed that migration decisions were made by rational and well informed individuals seeking utility
maximisation. In this line, Massey (1993) divides this approach into macro and micro theory. From a macro neo-classical perspective, as Massey (1993) explains, international migration is caused by geographic differences in the supply of, and demand for, labour. Samers (2010) describes that this perspective is an attempt to show the relationship between the demand for labour in urban areas and the supply of labour in rural areas, and how internal rural-to-urban migration shapes the economic development of both. In light of this theory, migration will lead to a balance as people migrate from job-poor regions to job-rich regions, thus achieving equilibrium with available economic opportunities for people. It is necessary to note that it was labelled ‘macro’ because this theory does not investigate the individual reasons for migrating.

In the microeconomic model of individual choice, as described by Massey (1993), individual rational actors make the decision to migrate because they expect a positive net return, usually monetary, from the movement. In this view, migrants decide to move to a place in which they think can be more productive. As stated by Borjas (1990) cited by Massey (1993), potential migrants estimate the costs and benefits of moving to alternative international locations and migrate to where the expected discounted net returns are greatest over some time horizon. Cortes (2008) adds to the discussion arguing that migration contributes to an equalising of income between regions. In the same discussion, Samers (2010), adds that migrants are ‘utility maximizers’, usually by maximising income, employment, and who seek ‘better’ opportunities in the region or country of immigration. Todaro (1969) cited by Cortes (2008) claimed that wage differentials between sending and receiving countries explained population movements.

All in all, from the neoclassical economic perspective as stated by de Todaro (1969:139), cited by de Hass (1993), the re-allocation of labour from rural agricultural areas to urban, industrial sectors is considered an essential prerequisite for economic growth and, hence, as an integral component of the whole development process.

2.1.2. The Migration Pessimists
The second phase is known as ‘Migration Pessimists’ – 1970s and 1980s also described by de Hass (2007) as those with structural and dependency views. With regards to this phase, as stated by de Hass (2007) some authors like Almeida (1973); Lipton (1980); Reichert (1981); Rhoades (1979); Rubenstein (1992); Binford (2003) seem to support the hypothesis that migration sustains or even reinforces problems of underdevelopment instead of the reverse. The so-called migration pessimists argue that it provokes the withdrawal of human capital and the breakdown of traditional, stable village communities and their economies. From this perspective, as stated by Durand et al (1996b) cited by de Hass (2007), South-North migration was perceived as discouraging of autonomous economic growth of migrant-sending countries. The structuralist approach views migration as an expression of the increasing dependency of the developing world on the global political-economic systems dominated by powerful states. As stated by Samers (2010), structuralist explanations for migration generally have their foundations in various Marxist, neo-Marxist, and historical-sociological readings of capitalism. The structuralist approach has substantive focus on changes in the global capitalist system and its effects on migration.

Additionally, according to Frank (1966) cited by de Hass (2007), the dependency school views migration not only as detrimental to the economies of underdeveloped countries, but also as the very cause of the ‘development of underdevelopment’ capital and labour from peripheral areas. Both schools of thought, dependency and structuralist, highlight the fact that migration can exacerbate international inequalities.

As it can be noted, the debates around the origins of international migration can be divided into significant phases, nevertheless, both phases and their definitions seem to have limitations when referring to international migration that probably cannot help entirely with the final purpose of this paper which is to answer the question of how international migration of parents affects left behind children. On one hand, the debate put forward by ‘migration optimists’ reflects mainly an individual choice to migrate and gives a predominant importance to the wage differentials between receiving and sending areas as well as migrant expectations for higher income. On the other hand, the ‘migration pessimists’ focus on the developing countries’ dependency on the global economy, arguing that migration reproduces and reinforces the capitalist system based on inequality. The definitions and concepts put forward
by these two phases seem too rigid and deterministic to deal with the multifaceted realities of migration. Furthermore, as stated before, they cannot help in the understanding and possible answer to the research purpose of this paper.

Notwithstanding, there is another theory in the literature that could give the basis for linking migration and left behind children. A theoretical review presents another pluralist perspective known as ‘The New Economics of Labour Migration’ – NELM covering 1980s and 1990s. As argued by de Hass (2007), this approach offers a more subtle view of migration that links causes and consequences of this issue.

2.1.3. The new economics of labour migration (NELM): From individual to household strategies

As stated by Massey (1993), the main insight of this approach is that migration decisions are not made by isolated individual actors, as argued by the other two phases. In this approach decisions are made by larger units, families or households; in order to not only increase the income, but also minimise risks associated with the problem of labour and other markets. Mincer (1978:749) cited by Cortes (2008) argues that the migration process is shaped by household composition rather than by isolated individuals. Cortes (2008) claims that migration represents one of a number of possible household strategies to secure income through the money sent back home by migrants working abroad. In the same sense, migration is perceived as a household response to income risks since migrant remittances serve as income insurance for households of origin (Lucas and Stark, 1985). As stated by Samers (2010), the remittances generated by migration serve as a means of providing capital and savings for investment purposes. Cortes (2008) states that there is ample empirical evidence to demonstrate that households send members of the family abroad for, among other reasons, diversified income sources and private social protection for the remaining household members.

As can be seen, this perspective provides a much broader understanding of the concept of migration by considering it, not as an individual decision, but as a livelihood strategy to cope with risk. This theory allows us to analyse the dynamics that are present within the household and how the decisions are made in order to send
one member of the family abroad. Under this approach people are not seen only as a passive victims of global capitalist forces (de Hass, 2007), but as actors trying to improve their livelihoods. As per this theory the decision making unit is the household, which helps us to understand, among others factors: a) the causes of migration, b) how the family as a unit of analysis copes with the external risks, b) how the household decides on the investment of money to send back home; and, c) how the allocation of remittance helps the family and children left behind. In this sense, another conceptual subject that is necessary to put forward is the role of remittances in the international migration scene and particularly how they intervene with the social development of the left behind children.

2.2. Theoretical overview about remittances

As stated by Terry (2005:6), and cited by Hall (2008:313), remittances represent ‘the human face of globalization’. According to Acosta et al (2008), remittances to developing countries have increased over the years. Remittances now account for about 30 per cent of total financial flow to the developing world; they are more than twice the development aid and they are equivalent to 2.5 per cent of the gross national income of the developing world (ibid.). As stated by Hall (2007), the literature on international migration has devoted increased attention on the development potential of migrant remittances. The same author argues that there are diverse categories of remittances that serve distinctive developmental needs. In this sense, Goldring (2004) distinguishes them as: (a) family remittances, (b) collective remittances; and, (c) entrepreneurial remittances. This paper is mainly focused in the first type of remittances. Family remittances are sent to relatives in the home country, as described by Goldring, which are used to cover basic household needs such as food, clothing and consumer goods, as well as family members’ health and education costs. Is the latter part of this definition of remittances, specifically referring to basic needs of family members back home, which is the one that will help us to answer the question of how parental international migration and remittances affects educational attainment of left behind children.
When we discuss family remittances we are referring again to the theory of international migration that this paper is mainly interested, which is the new economics of labour migration. As it was mentioned before, in the NELM approach, migration is seen as a livelihood strategy of the household to overcome relative deprivation, spread livelihood risks and increase income. In this approach remittances are considered a central strategy of households to cope with constraints and external shocks. Adding to this definition, de la Garza (2010) claims that NELM promotes the idea that remittances are the main catalyst for development in migrant-sending countries. He also cites authors such as Stark (1978, 1991) and Stark and Levhari (1982) to highlight that when considering household dynamics, risk-sharing, and market inefficiencies, the NELM stressed migration as a consequential tool for development and, as stated by Cortes (2007b), the mitigation of income disparities. As argued by Cortes (2008), the NELM literature, and its household strategy theory provides a better basis for linking migration, remittances and those left behind.

In order to approximate to the research question, we need to refer particularly to the relation between migration, remittances and the well-being of children left behind. At this point it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the channels through which migration can positively or negatively affect outcomes for children. As stated by Schapiro (2009), the literature regarding migration and remittances identifies two main channels. First, it is necessary to ask if remittances are used to finance household consumption or if they are invested in physical and human capital accumulation. Yang (2008), Hanson and Woodruff (2003) and Edwards and Ureta (2003) cited by Schapiro (2009) argue that there has been some consensus that remittances allow credit-constrained households to reduce child labour and invest more in education. Therefore, the first channel is the increase of income and its investment in education, which generally has a positive effect on educational outcomes for non-migrant children. However, there is also another effect of migration on child development which is the long-term absence of one or both parents. This absence may disrupt child development and schooling (ibid.). As Hanson and Woodruff (2003) claim, children may be required to take responsibilities on other activities to support the household. Furthermore, as Schapiro states, children face significant stress because of parental absence that could damage the child-parent relationship in the future. Consequently, we cannot separate these two channels by
which migration and remittances could have effects on non-migrant children. On one hand we have the increase of income, and on the other the parental absence; two channels by which the future outcomes of the left behind children can be positively or negatively affected.

Schapiro (2009) enumerates some variables such as child characteristics, household characteristics (income, reference group, existence of substitute parent), country-specific factors, regional economic conditions; that come to define the precise impact of migration on children. Hence, as stated, migration and remittances, depending on a wide range of variables, can have a positive or negative effect on child development.

The next paragraphs will present a brief literature review with regard to the impact of migration and remittances on the educational outcomes of non-migrant children in some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, it is important to highlight that in this research, this outcome will be analysed in the light of the two channels described before: increase of liquidity to the household through remittances and parental absence.

2.3. Educational outcomes of left behind children: An overview of country cases.

It is generally well known that remittances can help to overcome money constraints that limit the expenditure in human development in source countries; however, the migration of family members can have also a disruptive impact on left behind children.

2.3.1. Impact of remittances on children’s education

The existing empirical evidence on the impact of remittances on education in Latin America and the Caribbean establishes a causal impact of remittances on human development outcomes through the relaxation of household liquidity constraints. There is generally a broad agreement in the literature that remittances have a positive
effect on child schooling attendance. Chronologically ordered, below are some of these studies:

In El Salvador, Cox Edwards and Ureta (2003) conclude that receiving remittances reduces the likelihood of quitting school among individuals aged 6-24 years old. In Mexico, Hanson and Woodruff (2003) find that remittances are associated with higher educational attainment; children complete significantly more years of schooling. In the same country, Borraz (2005) concludes that children who live in remittance-receiving households complete more years of schooling than other children. In El Salvador, Acosta (2006) argues that children from remittance-recipient households are less likely to drop out of school. Lopez-Cordova (2006) presents information from Mexico regarding illiteracy arguing that a 1% increase in the fraction of households receiving remittances reduces illiteracy among children by almost 3%.

Acosta et al (2008) provides wide information about this subject and the finding is that in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Haiti and Nicaragua, the access to remittances is positively and significantly associated with higher educational attainment. In the same paper, Acosta shows that for Dominican Republic, the results suggest that higher remittances lead to an increase in schooling. For Mexico, there is a positive effect of remittances on education and this tends to be larger when the schooling of parents is low. Finally, Adams and Cuecuecha (2010) show that in Guatemala households receiving international remittances spend more on education concluding that remittances can actually increase the level of investment in human capital, however there is no mention about the final outcome in education after the investment.

2.3.2. Impact of parental absence on children’s education

There is another channel by which the outcomes of children’s educational attainment can be affected which is the absence of the parents. The great majority of research has emphasised economic issues about the impact of remittances in economic development. The economic dimension of migration and remittances has been widely studied as there is a wealth of data available. However, as claimed by Schapiro
(2009) there is a gap in the understanding of the social costs of migration on children and their rights. Cortes (2008) adds to the debate arguing that there is little evidence on how children cope with their migrant parents’ absence, and on how their well-being is affected. De la Garza (2010) in his paper, citing UNICEF argues that the positive impact of remittances on education must be weighed against the negative effect that parental absence has on the moral development and overall school performance of children left behind.

In this sense, Hanson and Woodruff (2003) claim that even though children in migrant households complete significantly more years of schooling, the migration of parents may also disrupt family life in a manner that hinders children’s educational outcomes. De la Garza (2010) argues that some children do worse in their academic performance because of the lack of parental support and control, as well as the need for them to be responsible for household duties. In Mexico, Kandel and Kao (2001) suggest that international migration has a negative impact on children’s schooling, particularly when it occurs during adolescence. Adding to this debate, Schapiro (2009) argues that the developmental trajectory of the child may be affected by the distance between parent and child, particularly if this absence is during a critical stage in the child’s development. A qualitative study of Battistella and Conaco (1998) in the Philippines shows that children of migrants tend to present problematic aspects, both in terms of school achievement and social adjustment. This study shows that the absence of the mother has the most disruptive effect on the life of the child. In the same regard, Case et al (2000) finds that children raised by non-birth mothers receive less schooling than children raised by their own mothers. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2002) cited by Schapiro (2009) concluded that those children who had experienced separation from their parents were more prone to suffer from depressive symptoms than their non-separated peers.

As it can be noticed, from the studies cited above, the educational attainment of left behind children is not only affected by the increase of income, namely remittances, but parental absence can represent a psychological trauma for children who may feel abandoned. There is a sense of discomfort, unease and awkwardness that children feel towards migrant fathers. As Coronel and Unterreiner (2005) cited by Schapiro
(2009) argue, the social impact of migration may take more time to surface than the economic effects.

2.4. Livelihood framework as a multidimensional perspective

The literature review detailed above takes forward the original research question that was: HOW parents’ international migration affects the future outcomes of left behind children. In a way, this question is partially answered by arguing that children are affected by the international migration of the parents in both their educational outcomes and their social well-being. Therefore, in light of this revision of the academic literature, is necessary to refine the research question asking WHY parents’ migration and remittances affects the future outcomes of children back home. The possible answer to this question is mostly related with the second channel described above, which refers to the absence of parents at home due to the migration phenomena, however, this parental absence could have given more impact in the future outcome of left behind children if it takes place during the first five years of the child. The impact that children might have during this period of time can be detrimental for future life, including their educational outcomes.

With this regard, another concept emerges from the literature to help us with the possible answer of the refined research question, the concept of early childhood, and this term is understood as the period where the child fulfils her or his potential where parents have a preponderant role. As stated by UNICEF (2011), the early years of life are crucial, indeed, when children are well nurtured and cared for in the earliest years, they are more likely to survive, to grow in a healthy way, and to fully develop thinking, language, emotional and social skills (ibid). When they enter school, their future outcomes are improved. Schady (2006) adds to this debate arguing that poor Early Childhood Development (ECD) outcomes associated with inadequate school readiness can condemn children to a poor school performance. Indeed, parental migration, as define above, positively and negatively affects educational outcomes of children, but if parental care or care in their absence is put in place, the future negative educational outcomes and well-being could be diminished.
Recognising that international migration is a multidimensional phenomenon and its complexities can alter and transform the dynamics of the household and particularly the livelihoods of those children left behind, the conceptual framework that emerges from the literature that gave us the opportunity to analyse this issue in a multidimensional perspective is the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF). In order to narrow the subject down and with the goal of proposing an in depth analysis of why parents’ international migration and remittances affects the future outcomes of children back home, chapter 3, will present a country case study.
CHAPTER 3: DATA AND ANALYSIS

In order to provide a detailed insight into the topic of international migration and to answer the research question about why parental migration affects the educational outcomes and well-being of children back home, we will present a case study in Ecuador, in Cañar canton. With this aim, first we will expose country and parish-context information. Then, a qualitative case study based on the results of a survey will be introduced detailing what sort of data will be used for the analysis. After that, the conceptual framework will be applied to examine the livelihood of migrant and non-migrant households and the different strategies and tools that these families use to cope with external shocks and how these distresses affect the children at home. Lastly, some findings that emerge from the case study will be presented.

3.1. International migration country context in Ecuador

As expressed by Hall (2008) migration from Ecuador is registered from the 1940s and 1950s. Some historical information informs that since the 1960s migrants start to leave the country with final destination Venezuela, United States and Canada (FLACSO, 2008). However, in the late 1990s there is an impressive upsurge of migrants due to the economic crisis that affected Ecuador the country (Boccagni 2010). As claimed by Boccagni and Lagomarsino (2011) in this period of financial collapse, the country underwent accelerated impoverishment. Migration reached a peak in 2000 but at the same time it dropped due to the conditions imposed by the recipient countries, namely, Spain, the USA and Italy (Boccagni, 2010). Nowadays, Ecuador is the country with the highest percentage of migrants in the Andean Region with respect to its population (ibid). The last census that took place in Ecuador in November 2010 was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC). The Census reports in 2010 a migratory balance of 5,477 people, contrasting with the peak-balance of the year 2000 which was 175,922 people (Census INEC, 2010). This is shown in the Graph No. 1 below.
According to the numbers provided by Boccagni and Lagomarsino (2011), by 2004 around two million Ecuadorians were working abroad, around 14 per cent of the Ecuadorian Population. It is important to underline, though, that these numbers only consider legal international migration. International migration is a phenomenon that has risen other demographic changes in the second half of the twentieth century (FLACSO, 2008). In national numbers, the quantity of men leaving Ecuador is superior little higher to that of women, 53% versus 47% respectively (ibid). When referring to the area of the residence of migrants, urban migration accounts for 73.6% while rural 26.84%. With regards to children, the survey EMEDHINO (2000) cited in FLACSO (2008) revealed that in 1991 the number of left behind stood at 17,000 while in 2000, this number increased to 150,000. The period of time that parents and children are separated can be up to 10 or 15 years.

As claimed by Mansuri (2007), Ecuador is a particularly useful context to analyse the outcome in this sending community, because among others, most human development indicators point to low investment in children. The author states that almost one-third of rural children suffer from severe stunting because both the school enrolment and retention rates are low. Once the background context of Ecuador has being presented, is important to narrow the issue down by analysing a particular case study in Cañar, a canton located in the southern region of Ecuador.
3.2. Children and migration - Case study in Cañar canton

According to the last population and housing census in Ecuador in 2010, Cañar canton has a total population of 59,323 people (INEC, 2011). Escobar et al (2008) shows that 55 per cent of the population in Cañar are mestizos while the 45 per cent are indigenous. Additionally, the people of this canton mainly live the rural areas (81 per cent) leaving just 19 per cent who live in the city (ibid). The number of children from migrating parents is around 8,000 and 30% of the population are children between 0 and 5 years (ibid).

As explained by Escobar et al (2008), Cañar is a particularly interesting canton to analyse for several reasons: First, because it is one out of ten cantons in Ecuador with higher incidences of international migration. Second, more than 60 per cent of the migrants in Cañar have left behind children. Third, the rural migration is predominant with 85% of the population from this area out of the country. Finally, Cañar is a territory where 48% of indigenous households and 35% of mestizo households have at least one family member who adopted international migration as a coping strategy.

For all the reasons stated above, it is imperative not only to give a comprehensive diagnosis of the phenomenon of international migration in the Cañar canton and its consequences in the future outcomes of the children left behind, but also a complete analysis regarding the implications and necessary interventions of social policy in order to tackle the needs of this vulnerable population. With this aim in mind, in 2007 some institutions in Ecuador, namely: the Observatory of Children’s and Adolescents Rights (ODNA), the Latin-American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), the Project Cañar-Murcia of the Spanish Agency of Cooperation (AECID), the Cañar Municipality, International Plan and UNICEF, applied a survey in Cañar canton about the current living conditions of the population and its relation to migratory practices (Escobar et al, 2008). This survey was applied in 1,200 households in Cañar canton, both in rural and urban areas, indigenous and mestizo households and with and without a migrating population. Therefore, the kind of data that will be used to provide a detailed insight into the topic will be the results of this survey. Particularly, regarding the new reorganisation of the household after migration, the care arrangements back home, which is mainly the
grandparents’ responsibility and the situation of the children left behind that have and do now have remittances.

It is interesting to underline that as the literature review has already told us in chapter 2, this survey showed that all children from migrant families, around 8000, have both, access to education by attending the school or high school in urban centres, and better health due to less children suffering of malnutrition (Escobar et al, 2008). However, the vulnerability of the left behind could be affected due to the absence of their parents. These results confirm that the HOW parental migration affects the offspring has been mainly answered. Though, the WHY, goes beyond and will be tackled and examined the Sustainable Livelihood Framework as a tool for analysis.

3.3. Livelihoods and migration an analysis

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) emerges from rural development analysis and it has been used as a tool to identify interventions to address poverty and vulnerability. This framework is people-centred and it takes a holistic view of the livelihood of households. This approach analyses the assets and capabilities that people have and the livelihood strategies adopted to obtain certain final outcomes. This process takes place in the middle of an external environment in which there is an interaction of institutions, policies, processes and services. As stated by Moser (1998), this approach focuses on what people have (assets) rather that what they do not have. In this sense, international migration can be understood as one of the many livelihood strategies that the households adopt to face economic disruptions in the source country. Migration as a multidimensional social phenomenon has to combine a series of elements to become a reality, however in this particular case study, the reasons behind the decisions are eminently socio-economic: the need of employment in order to guarantee the sustainability of the family in the source country. Is necessary to underline that this strategy is not taken by the family member in isolation, on the contrary, in line with the NELM theory, this coping strategy is taken after an analysis within the households and after deciding on care arrangements for the family that is left behind.
International parents’ migration necessarily brings with it some care arrangements that have to be done back home with regards to the children. It is known from the survey that 47% of children have both parents living abroad. It is also shown that when parents have migrated, grandparents have the responsibility of the left behind children; and 67% of the children are left behind are living with grandparents (Escobar et al., 2008).

Acknowledging Schapiro (2009), some social costs of migration in children are generally mitigated by the involvement of the extended family, and the analysis under the livelihood framework perspective is focussed mainly on how grandparents face the responsibility of the left behind children and how this affects their future outcomes. Following the asset framework within the sustainable livelihoods approach, the analysis will be presented as follows: (i) assets vulnerability framework and livelihood strategies, and, (ii) livelihood outcomes.

3.3.1. Assets vulnerability framework and livelihood strategies

a) Social Capital

There are some elements to consider within the analysis of social capital within this context. When considering international migration, this asset is probably the most important in that people are drawn the the pursuit of a better livelihood. When the household has made the decision to begin the migration project, the social networks, relationships of trust and reciprocity are immediately activated in order to achieve the final goal of the migration venture. In this case study, the caregiving duties of the left behind children are delegated mainly to grandparents. This can be considered as the livelihood strategy of the household. It is necessary to underline that in Cañar, 7 out of 10 children were left behind when they were between 0 to 5 years. Therefore by leaving the offspring with grandparents at this early stage, this could have a positive or negative long-lasting effect in their lives.

It is also argued in the case study that care arrangements could be interchangeable among extended family members; uncles, aunts and the community itself. However, it is necessary to consider the possible emotional effects that this could have on the children due to those changing roles and potential lack of stability.
b) Human Capital

It is argued by Carney (1998) that human capital involves the skills, knowledge, ability to work and good health which is important in pursuing different livelihood strategies. In this sense, what happened in terms of education and health when children stayed at home with grandparents? When referring to education, the case study goes one step back and first shows data concerning parents. The educational attainment of the parents in Cañar canton is lower than the national mean, and 68% of the parents just finish the basic education (primary school). With regards to grandparents as can be concluded, the situation is no better. The survey shows that 36% of grandparents responsible for the caregiving duties of the left behind are illiterate. This can be considered a serious threat for the child who cannot find guidance for his/her schooling duties back home.

In this topic, the livelihood strategy adopted by the household is that grandparents tend to translate the responsibility of the educational project to the school due to their incapacity of provide guidance. In the case study, the Director of the School Rigoberto Navas expressed:

‘…approximately the 80% of the children’s parents are in Europe or in United States. This has a massive effect on the children in all aspects. You can notice that they are suffering because of their parents’ absence; they are with the grandmother who cannot do much for the child because of her ignorance. The values are lost, and I’m sure is because of the migration…’
(Translation from Spanish).

As stated before, there is no doubt that remittances are a means to obtain a better educational attainment for children. This case study is not the exception. Children with access to remittances have more options to access schooling, however those who do not receive it, have less possibility of social mobility.

When we refer to the health status of children inside the household, the case study shows that grandparents do not have enough experience or knowledge to ensure adequate health care for children in the first years of their lives, acknowledging
that this is the period of time when they are mainly left behind. For the grandparents, the livelihood strategy to cope with this stress is more difficult to manage, mainly due to two different factors: the lack of access to public health services and because caregivers do not consider it necessary to visit a physician. Here again the role of the grandparents is transcendental, nonetheless the absence of knowledge could have a detriment impact on the future outcomes of the left behind.

c) **Natural Capital**

As described before, the population of Canton Cañar is mainly settled in the rural area, therefore the natural resource, namely land, is an important asset that grandparents could draw upon to build their grandchildren’s livelihood. Therefore, besides the remittances that caregivers will receive from abroad, they also receive some income from working the land.

d) **Financial Capital**

When considering the financial assets, remittances are in the centre of the analysis. Grandparents rely on being the recipients of the money sent by the family abroad. As it has been mentioned, this financial asset can have a positive impact when referring to the educational attainment of the pupils. This case study follows the same pattern. Households that are remittance recipients invest in the human capital of the children, namely their education. As it is stated in the case study, the cash remittances are the most important asset for the survival of the household. Nonetheless, remittances are not only monetary in Cañar canton, they are also gifts, clothes, appliances and also houses. As stated by Levitt (2001) cited by Escobar *et al* (2008), remittances are also used to maintain and reinforce family ties. They are considered transnational ties that help to maintain the communication between parents and children back home.

e) **Physical Capital**
When referring to the well-being of the children left behind one important aspect, in order to comply with their rights, is to consider what the conditions of physical capital, infrastructure, shelter, access to water, communication, and so on should be. With regards to shelter, the case study shows that in the rural zone 31% of households are inadequate however in the case of migrant people this indicator improves. As Escobar et al (2008) states, the investment of remittances from migrants in infrastructure in the household back home have allowed them to improve the livelihood of the family. As presented in the case study, basic services, namely water and sanitation are also an issue in Cañar canton. Only 16% of households in the rural area have access to a sewer system.

With regards to care services for children provided by the Ecuadorian Government (home visits and child care centres), the case study does not mention if the household is accessing these facilities. However in this point, it is interesting to cite a paper by Rosero and Oosterbeek (2011) which finds that home visits are more beneficial for children’s cognitive outcomes and less costly for the government than the attention in the care centres. This also demonstrates that the household environment is critical for the future outcomes of children.

With regards to the communication ties, a wide range of literature agrees that this is one the most important assets that migrant parents count on in order to keep contact with the children back home. As a matter of fact, the case study presents quite a significant number of children’s testimonies showing that the most interaction with the migrant family take place via the telephone. However, in the rural area of Cañar, this service is scarce. Only 10% of the households have access to fixed telephony, therefore, the communication takes place through mobile phones. As is described in the case study, 8 out of 10 households use this technology to keep contact with the family. With this regard, grandparents do not only the role of ‘bridging’ children with their parents facilitating the communication but also it allows the migrant parents to be involved in the decisions that grandparents are taking back home. Therefore, communication is one of the most important livelihood strategies that households take in order to cope with the shocking break that migration represents for children.
After having finished the analysis of the five dimensions, it is relevant to underline the concept of vulnerability in the livelihood framework in relation with children. It is stated by Chambers (1989) that vulnerability means exposure to risk, shocks and stress. In this case study vulnerability should be understood in terms of defencelessness and powerlessness of children and not just in terms of needs or asset deficit. With this in mind, it is important to analyse the possible outcomes and the effects on the children with regards to the livelihood strategies that households opt for.

3.3.2. **Livelihood outcomes**

The strategies that individuals and households adopt produce livelihood outcomes, which are defined in terms of greater or lesser overall well-being. Once we have analysed the five dimensions of the livelihood framework, we will highlight some possible predictable outcomes as a result of this practice.

a) **Social Outcomes:**

When children are in their early years (0 to 5 years), they are exposed to potential severe damage to their future life if they do not have the appropriate environment to develop, and the effects of parental absence could be long lasting. Some studies (see Herrera and Carrillo, 2005 cited by Escobar et al, 2008) have demonstrated that when grandparents take care of the children back home, the shock for the offspring is less traumatic. In fact, this is one of the best scenarios for the children that are left behind, however the shock and stress for the child is still present. These shocks will depend on different factors such as how close the children are to their grandparents, the past relationship established between them, the availability and willingness of the grandparents to take care of the child and so on. The threat of psychological and emotional damage for the child is still a risk. Therefore, the final outcomes of the children when living with the grandparents cannot be guaranteed.
In fact, even if grandparents are present, long-term parental international migration creates ‘a gap’ as Salazar-Parrenas (2005) has described. The author explains that when children refer to a gap, they denote to a sense of discomfort, unease and awkwardness that they feel towards migrant fathers. This author underlines that children feel ‘embarrassed’ with their parents, they become inhibited because they are not used to seeing their parents every day. Therefore, even though grandparents are at home, emotional problems for the children are not totally solved and the child’s livelihood outcomes could be affected.

b) **Human Outcomes:**

As claimed by Schady and Araujo (2008), investment in human capital in childhood is critical for adult well-being. In fact, in this case study the investment in this asset is generally assured by the remittances, therefore, as it has been demonstrated by the survey, the educational attainment of the children left behind have improved. However we need to bring into the analysis two considerations. First, grandparents with low educational attainment will have an effect on the children’s educational outcomes. Second, if children are emotionally affected by their parents’ absence, as it has been stated in the social outcomes, the final educational results of the child can be threatened.

In terms of physical health, children under the charge of grandparents could be affected with sickness due to a lack of public services or by ignorance, and are not treated properly when ill. Consequently, if children do not have their physical health in good condition from the beginning, we cannot assume better educational outcomes in the future.

c) **Physical Outcomes:**

When basic services such as water, sanitation, and sewerage are not completely available for the household, it could be a hard duty for grandparents to raise healthy children. However, these are the real conditions of the rural areas in the present case study. With this regard, the grandparents have to cope with the limited resources they count on.
With regards to the care centres provided by the government, it is interesting to note that the paper of Rosero and Oosterbeek (2011) show that better outcomes are secured if care takes place in the house in terms of home visits. This invites us to think about the types of care centres that government could invest in in order to achieve better outcomes for the left behind.

When referring to communication, grandparents are a crucial figure that link parents and children. As Salazar-Parenas (2005) claims, there are several measures to ease the gap between transnational families. One of these measures, she stated, is mutual effort for regular communication. When children have continuous contact with their parents; by phone, by receiving presents, by photographs, and so on, it could be assumed that the child keeps in mind that parents are taking care of them. However, as previously stated, this is not a guarantee that the emotional sensitivity of the left behind is not affected.

To sum up, when analysing the outcomes of the children left behind with grandparents in the light of the Livelihood Framework, we can note that in fact the impact of the international migration of the children’s parents can be reduced, and therefore we can still talk about a positive impact in the educational attainment of the offspring as a consequence of the investment of remittances on human capital. However, as it has been demonstrated in the case study that there are still some issues affecting the child’s emotional and physical health due to the parental absence; issues that have to be tackled from the beginning of children’s lives. In this sense, it is not appropriate to measure the educational attainment of the left behind, when from their early years their well-being has already been affected.

In this chapter using an illustrative case study we examined the livelihood of the children back home considering their early years. This has helped us to answer the research question with a more deep understanding, and consider why parents’ international migration affects educational attainment and well-being of children. We propose an answer to the question that is rooted ‘one step behind’, namely during the early years of the children. Hence, from this analysis, we see emergent findings and results that are presented in the next section in a table format.
3.4. Findings from the analysis of the data

The research question is: why does parents’ international migration and remittances affect the educational outcomes and well-being of the children left behind? From the case study emerge some findings that are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Capital</th>
<th>Human Capital</th>
<th>Natural Capital</th>
<th>Financial Capital</th>
<th>Physical Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networks are activated. Grandparents take care of children however the psychological and emotional damage for the children are still present.</td>
<td>Grandparents’ low educational attainment could affect children’s educational attainment.</td>
<td>Besides the money received by remittances, grandparents work in the rural land in order to complement the income.</td>
<td>Remittances have positive effect in the educational attainment of the left behind.</td>
<td>Remittances affect positively well-being of children by investing in infrastructure and therefore, improving their livelihood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>Migration + remittances positively related to educational attainment of the offspring.</td>
<td>Remittances are used to maintain and reinforce the family ties – transnational ties.</td>
<td>Household environment is critical for the future outcomes of children (Home visits instead of child care centres)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ migration create a gap. Emotional problems for the children are not solved.</td>
<td>Health of the left behind could be affected due to lack of acknowledge of the grandparents.</td>
<td>Grandparents as a link communicating parents and children back home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children emotionally affected by parental absence, educational results can be threatened.</td>
<td>By maintaining communication children keep in mind that parents are taking care of them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of this paper, the question was HOW migration affects left behind children. Once this question was answered during the literature review, the question was reformulated to WHY migration affects the children back home. In order to make a deeper analysis about this issue and to answer the question, this paper analysed the phenomena of parental migration and its effects on children from their early years. In this
sense, the case study helped us to illustrate that even though the shock is argued to be one of the less traumatic options, the emotional and psychological threat for children is still present; and these threats can have a long lasting effect on their future educational outcomes and in their well-being as a whole.

The ideas presented in the literature review are also replicated in the case study. In the sense that migration plus remittances have a positive effect on the educational outcomes of the left behind, however parental absence is still an issue and as shown in the analysis of the case study, this absence from the early years of the offspring can have long lasting effects on future outcomes.
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

As it has been argued in this dissertation, international migration is a multidimensional phenomenon that should be analysed from different perspectives, with a variety of conceptual frameworks in order to gain a holistic understanding. From the analysis of the literature review, and taking into account the present global situation in the economic world, it can be assumed that migration is something that we cannot stop. However we do can deal with the possible effects on those left behind.

In this paper, we have proposed the analysis of migration from the point of view of the family left behind and particularly children. We began this paper with analysis of the main subjects, namely: migration, remittances and what the literature review states about this issue. When referring to migration we positioned our discussion within the NELM theory, arguing that this analysis of migration has to be understood as a collective strategy more than an individual decision. Then, with respect to remittances, we examined the family remittances due to the context of the analysis. The literature review about the effect of migration and remittances in children left behind mostly show a positive relation. In general, the research in some Latin American countries show that children have a higher educational attainment, complete significantly more years of schooling and that children from remittance-recipient households are less likely to drop out of school. However, it was also stated that parental absence could affect these achievements.

Following the literature review, the question of how migration affects children was already answered. Accordingly, the reformulated question was why this phenomenon affects the offspring. In order to help us with an in-depth analysis of the issue and the answer to the question, it was decided to analyse the issue from one step behind. In this line, we proposed an analysis of a case study in Ecuador in Cañar canton from the livelihood framework perspective. This case study has shown us that even though children stay at home with grandparents, the emotional and psychological trauma is diminished, but not necessarily eliminated. Children’s well-being is disturbed by parental absence and this could have future negative effects in educational attainment. Therefore, the possible answer to the question could be that parental migration affects educational attainment and well-being because the parental absence is during the early years, and even with the presence of the grandparents, this affects the emotional and psychological health of the offspring.
These findings in part confirm the conventional wisdom on the subject because as it has been shown in the literature and also in the case study that migration plus remittances have a positive effect on the educational attainment of those left behind. However, the analysis from ‘one step behind’ helps us to argue that the emotional and psychological health of the children needs to be tackled in order to guarantee a more integral positive well-being.

Considering migration is a phenomenon that we cannot simply decide to stop, it is crucial to think about transversal policies to diminish the impact of family disruption and to protect vulnerable agents of this phenomenon: children. In this sense, the implications for existing research is that we cannot only measure educational attainment of the left behind, these results could have positive effects as those shown before, but we also need information in order to measure if children back home are actually learning at school, and if not, what the reasons are behind it. As it has been shown in this paper, the reasons could be hidden in the emotional and psychological health of the offspring that are suffering from parental absence. Considering the high vulnerability of the left behind and the multidimensionality of the migration phenomena, the repercussions for policy makers and future actions have both: vulnerability and multidimensional implications.

4.1. Vulnerability policy implications

- Through external public action, the governments are called to reduce external stress and shocks by providing employment in the source country. In the same line, the government is called to encourage not only the reunification of the family back home, but also to facilitate this reintegration process and make it less disturbing for the children.

- When referring to services provided by the public sector, and in line with the result of the paper of Rosero and Oosterbeek (2011) the government should improve the so called ‘home services’ and include special treatment devoted to grandparents living with grandchildren, focusing attention on cognitive, linguistic and social skills.
• With respect to internal measures, in order to reduce vulnerability, the household, namely the grandparents, can add to the portfolio of assets a wider repertory of responses. In this sense, the government could develop training programmes that prepare the caregivers to help with the psycho-social and emotional effects of parental migration.

• It is also important to narrow the generational gap between grandparents and children in terms of education by providing training programmes directed to deal with the issue of how grandparents can accompany the educational process.

• In order to solve the so-called ‘gap’ between parents and children, the transnational caregiving and ties should be an everyday and easily accessible option for grandparents. This caregiving practice can be facilitated through providing easy accessible and low costly means of communication.

4.2. Multidimensional policy implications

• The multi-faceted and multidimensionality of the migration phenomenon invites us to think about transversal public policies, to tackle from all different perspectives the effects of migration on the left behind. This includes the Ministries of Health, Education, External Relations, and so on.

• When referring to educational policies, it is necessary to foster them, not only for caregivers, but also for teachers that are daily in contact with the left behind children, and establishing a migrant-friendly educational framework.

• With regards to health policies, it is essential that training programmes are directed to health care workers to increase their awareness of the problems experienced by left-behind children. These training programmes should facilitate an integral physical and psychological intervention.
Children left behind by migrating parents are the most vulnerable individuals. Therefore, it is our responsibility to analyse, implement and evaluate all the necessary social policies in order to protect their current and future lives. As we are working for a better and more equitable development of our countries, investment in children should be our priority.


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