

## Migration in Context

International migration has grown exponentially in recent decades. Today, over 192 million migrants live outside their country of birth. Women make up nearly half of all migrants around the world. Globalization and economic development have benefited from migration trends while at the same time fuelling them.

Migration's progressive effects, resulting largely from remittances, (funds sent home to the country of origin) can be significantly undercut, however, by the challenging conditions facing children and women who are either "left behind" or who, in the process of migration, can fall victim to social and economic disruption – or even human rights abuses.

**UNICEF takes the position that the impact of migration on children, adolescents and women must be seen in the broader context of poverty, regional conflict, gender issues and children's rights.** Children are affected by migration on multiple levels: when they are left behind by one or both migrating parents, in migrating with parents (or born abroad), or when they migrate alone.

Many families and communities regard migration and remittances as pivotal to survival, and yet the fact is that **millions of migrants and those left behind fall through social protection safety nets or have difficulty accessing basic services like health and education.**

Migrant children, crossing borders in greater numbers, face serious risks at every stage of the migration process. Children and women, especially those migrating without documentation, are vulnerable to trafficking, abuse and exploitation as they embark on frequently prolonged migratory processes.

In countries of origin, a growing number of children are left behind by one or both parents. For instance, since 2000, about 300,000 children and adolescents have been left behind in Ecuador. UNICEF country studies in Moldova, El Salvador, Jamaica and Albania show similar trends. And while **in these labour-sending countries remittances may have helped reduce poverty and spur economic development, the effects of "brain drain" and parental absence take their toll.** Children and women left behind must frequently take on full household responsibilities and endure social stigmatization. UNICEF country studies also suggest that children and adolescents left behind may be at greater risk for drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, psycho-social dysfunction and criminal behavior.

**In countries of destination, the issues are no less challenging: migrants and their families often find themselves victims of discrimination, debilitating poverty and social marginalization.** The millions of undocumented migrants often have difficulty accessing educational and basic social services, and must live in fear of arrest and repatriation.