

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND ELDERLY LEFT BEHIND AS A CONSEQUENCE OF MIGRATION

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Cover: Drawing made by a child whose parents are abroad.

“Children deprived of parents’ care as a consequence of migration encounter difficulties in defining their personal and family identity. They form their representation of family depending on people who are near. Often, migrants’ children perceive their present family as a „new” family category made of grandchildren and grandparents”.

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Foreword

The negative effects of migration on families who have remained in the country and especially on their most vulnerable members constitute an extremely important issue for a country like the Republic of Moldova where massive labour migration has deprived numbers of children and the elderly of care and attention. This fact was bound to leave its mark on the well-being of these people often affecting their emotional and psychosocial condition, their physical and mental health and also their economic welfare. Often, children and the elderly left behind are not referred to specifically in social structures, provided for in education and sometimes they only see their future abroad.

All together, these issues represent a real challenge for the Government of the Republic of Moldova and particularly for the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family.

For this reason, the Government and its partners acknowledged the need for taking joint measures to approach the needs of these people and to protect their rights comprehensively through a multidisciplinary approach. For this purpose on June the 2nd 2010, the Government adopted the National Action Plan on the protection of children left without parental care for 2010-2011. The respective Plan comprises a range of multidisciplinary activities that complement each other and are aimed at ensuring the protection and wellbeing of children left without parental care. Meanwhile the authorities have established certain priority guidelines for social policies of the Republic of Moldova regarding the protection of the elderly.

This study directly contributes to the implementation of these policies and namely to the identification of specific and essential needs of children and the elderly left behind by family members who migrated abroad for work by submitting recommendations for the development of effective policies based on empirical data.

In the effort to reduce the negative impact of migration on our country, we first of all rely on a complex approach with exact interventions in problematic domains, as well as on a durable partnership between the Government and partners involved in the development of the country, civil society and academic environment. This research is an example of such a partnership representing an initiative of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family conducted with the effort and support of the State University of Moldova and funded by the Czech Development Agency, International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Fund for Population.

The comprehensive approach of the survey resulted in a thorough analysis of the needs of children and the elderly left behind as a conse-

quence of migration and in proposes policy recommendations based on proven findings.

We invite you to read with great attention the report of the qualitative study “Specific needs of children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration”. The outcomes of this research can serve as a basis for planning the policies that will efficiently approach the needs of children and the elderly left behind by initiating and encouraging changes necessary to ensure the wellbeing and to protect the rights of these categories of people.

Valentina BULIGA,
Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Buliga', written in a cursive style.

Acronyms

- CPA** – Central Public Administration
- GD** – Government's Decision
- IOM** – International Organization for Migration
- LPA** – Local Public Administration
- ME** – Ministry of Education
- MH** – Ministry of Health
- MLSPF** – Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family
- UNFPA** – UN Fund for Population

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Executive summary

Labour migration from the Republic of Moldova determines the development of strategies on demographic security together with the implementation of policies that will regulate the migration process and the support provided to vulnerable groups; the elderly and children deprived of parental care. Ensuring economic and social opportunities to vulnerable layers of the population by improving the effectiveness of social assistance services is among the priorities of the *National Development Strategy for 2008-2011* of the Republic of Moldova. Providing assistance and protection to children left behind constitutes a direction of activity of Moldova's Government as stipulated in the *National Action Plan on the protection of children left without parental care for 2010-2011*.

In order to develop social assistance services in the community it is necessary to be acquainted with the specific needs of people affected by migration and deprived of their family members' care. For this purpose a partnership between the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, the Czech Development Agency, the International Organization for Migration, the UN Fund for Population and the State University of Moldova was established that proposed to conduct comprehensive research on the issues and needs experienced by the children and elderly left by family members as a consequence of migration. The general objective of the study focused on the assessment of the situation and needs of children and elderly left behind, thus providing the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (MLSPF) with guidelines to develop effective policies based on empirical data that will anticipate and mitigate the negative consequences of migration through taking measures for the protection of children and the elderly left behind.

The conducted research offers a complex picture of the impact of migration on children and elderly left behind and on social policies promoted in the Republic of Moldova targeted to mitigate negative consequences migration has on these categories of people. For the purpose of identifying specific needs of children and the elderly qualitative sociological research methods (individual in-depth interview, group discussions, free writing technique, drawing) were used that allowed us to understand issues these people are confronted with and explain their effects at the individual level. The analysis of social policies targeted at the mitigation of negative consequences of migration was accomplished through individual in-depth interviews conducted with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, the Ministry of Education and of the Ministry of Health. Group discussions with providers of social, medical and education services from different communities were also held.

The respective study reflects and proves the psychological, social and economic impact of migration on children and elderly deprived of their family members' care by presenting the consequences it has on the family, community and on society in general. The collected data attest that children and

elderly adjust to new changes individually, developing specific behaviours and trying to cope with certain situations triggered by family members' migration, which not only affect them directly but also those who went abroad.

The data gathered during this study show that migration influences emotional processes of the family directly affecting the development of children's personalities, the psychological and physical condition of all family members and not lastly the family as a social institution. A parent's absence in the family deprives the child of attachment, affection, help, advice and leads to gaps in the formation of the child's self-identity, a fact perceived in establishing social contacts and developing social competences, etc. i.e. in the child's social integration. Lack of family attachment will further affect families as these children are deprived of parents' love and warmth. This will inform an ingrained attitude towards family life as they will take into account the way their parents fulfilled their duties.

The study reveals that a father who stays with the child/children cannot always cope with the responsibility of taking care of, raising and educating them. In such situations grandparents are of help for both grandchildren and their parents. It is clear that the help grandparents provide depends usually on their health condition, occupation and their available time. The results of the study highlight that grandparents, regardless of the identified issues (they are not officially appointed as the child's legal guardian, health issues, alcohol abuse, etc.) are the best caregivers, succeeding in creating a positive emotional connection and a climate favourable for the development of the child's personality.

Migrant parents should pay great attention to keep in touch with the school as this institution in our society continues and improves a family's education. In this regard the study reveals that parents should keep in touch with a class teacher in order to be informed on their children's school performance, thus showing to the children that they are concerned with their school results and also in supervising them. School teachers are those who can partially prevent specific gaps related to pupils' emotional deprivation as they constitute a support network and in this way fulfill their duty of "school parent". In this way, the school would become friendlier to children with migrant parents as the school will become a strong point of attraction, something that happens seldom in Moldova. In the same context it is important to develop community social services (psychological counselling, etc.) that will back up children left behind by **labour migrant parents**.

Tenderness, understanding and guidance provided by family members are very important for children and for the elderly left behind which is why the migrant should undertake efforts to leave children and the elderly in a secure environment. The research findings still reveal multiple gaps in this regard: lack of understanding, conflicts of exploitation through work, physical, psychological and sexual abuse that leads some children and also the elderly to attempt suicide.

Diversifying and expanding community social services becomes an inherent condition to prevent children from experiencing difficult situations.

Thus, a major necessity lies in making the guardianship system function for children left behind by parents who are working abroad, so as to make those who take care of children officially responsible and to avoid any legal impediments, for instance, in providing the necessary medical care. Parents' departure abroad without appointing people to take care of children as their legal representative can generate obstacles when children left behind require urgent medical interventions. The high probability of medical emergency without the possibility of asking for help is also present in the case of the elderly. This risk increases along with their aging, imposing the necessity to continuously supervise old people. Consequently, within this research, the existing legal framework on appointing a legal representative for the child/children or the elderly was analysed, listing measures that should be taken in this regard by various stakeholders in the social domain.

The conclusions and recommendations of the study include suggestions for the development of a national system to keep a record of children and elderly left behind that will provide the opportunity to create and diversify social services according to the needs of these categories of persons as well as to improve relevant policies and mechanisms.

The study presents recommendations aiming to reduce the negative impact of migration and to overcome difficult situations faced by children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration¹:

NOTE

¹ Taking into account the specific needs of children and the elderly left behind, the recommendations will be submitted for each category separately.

General (both for children and for the elderly)

• Legal

- **To sign bilateral agreements on labour migration with countries that most Moldovan migrants leave for** in order to regulate the migration process and allow migrants' free movement across borders that will facilitate their communication with family members who are at home by visiting them regularly without the risk of losing their job;
- **To sign bilateral agreements on social security with countries where significant numbers of Moldovans migrate to for work** to guarantee social protection of migrants left abroad;
- **To introduce the mechanism on the procurement of social services that will make private social services providers more active and will increase the quality of services;**

Children

• Legal

- **To improve the legal framework on obligatory appointment of a legal representative** for children left behind as a consequence of migration;
- **To amend the legal framework with regard to the accountability of parents who migrated abroad**, from the perspective of fulfillment of parental duties.

- **To develop forms of support and social services**

For the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family;

- **To develop mechanisms for identifying and assessing the situation of children deprived of parental care**, as the lack of concrete information about the number of children represents an obstacle in developing and implementing social policies;
- **To open a hot line with national coverage which children could call anonymously and receive advice and counselling on psychological and health issues, etc.** To ensure its durability, the line should be administered by a public institution that consequently would refer the cases to child protection institutions;
- **To create an automated information system on social assistance;**
- **To conduct awareness-raising campaigns in partnership with mass media organizations and representatives of civil society** on issues related to children left behind as a consequence of migration, on existing social services, on the accountability of parents, communities and social institutions;

For the Ministry of Education

- **To work out an Action Plan for the educational institutions so that teachers will be able to keep the record of children left behind as a consequence of migration as well as conduct and monitor activities with them;**
- **To keep the record of children and pupils deprived of parental care as a result of migration within educational institutions and to supervise their situation on the national and district level;**
- **To introduce the position of psychologist in all educational institutions and to assign psychologists clear responsibilities related to monitoring pupils' emotional condition and providing them with counselling, therapy, etc.;**

For the Ministry of Health

- **To develop mechanisms that will give family doctors the possibility to identify and supervise young children deprived of parental care or cared for by minors**, setting performance indicators on family doctors' activity in this field;
- **To conduct activities providing information on health, hygiene, nutrition and children's behaviour entailing health risks.** As many of these children are deprived of adults' permanent supervision it is necessary to hold lectures in schools about the circumstances that pose risks to their life and health, including first aid in case of emergency;

For local public administration

- **To keep a record and assess the needs of children left behind as a consequence of migration, the living conditions of families that take care of these children inclusively** and their capacity to provide adequate and secure conditions necessary for the child's development. To map these needs and **to develop appropriate services;**
- **To provide school meals for children of all ages in educational institutions,** including providing payment, in order to reduce the risk of malnutrition. To encourage and support educational institutions in providing children with healthy food and to forbid fast-food in schools and in their immediate neighbourhood;
- **To improve the activity of guardianship authorities in identifying, referring and helping children left behind as a consequence of migration and to establish partnerships at the local level;**
- **To expand the network of social assistance and psychological services in communities as well as foster family services** (*professional parental care, family-type homes for children, etc.*);
- **To inform migrant parents and family members on their duties,** and when parents intend to migrate abroad, **to inform them on the necessity to place the child within a temporary guardianship;**

For social community workers

- **To keep a record and assess the needs of children deprived of parental care as a consequence of migration, including the living conditions of families that take care of these children** and their capacity to provide adequate and secure conditions necessary for the child's development;
- **To establish an effective partnership with educational institutions, medical institutions and other community actors in order to prevent children left behind as a consequence of migration from experiencing difficult situations;**

For educational institutions for children

- **To supervise children left behind as a consequence of migration;**
- **To ensure within educational institutions, opportunities for communication** between parents and their children who remained at home. Also ensuring the teachers' participation thus increasing the level of accountability of both children and parents;
- **To develop extra-curriculum activities in schools** (workshops, interest clubs, etc.) in order to facilitate **social integration** of children left behind as a consequence of their parents' migration;

For private service providers

- **To work out and disseminate information materials** that should be **adjusted to children of different ages**, on the prevention of deviant behaviours and services they could provide; **adjusted to parents** on preparing children for their departure; **adjusted to legal guardians and children's caregivers** on their communication with the child and the family; **adjusted to teachers and other specialists** who will deal with this category of children, parents and their caregivers;
- **To organize trainings on family life, family functioning, preserving family values, etc.** based on a curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education;
- **To organize training on developing children's abilities for correct management of remittances sent by their parents and improving their entrepreneurship abilities** based on a curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education;

For parents who migrate abroad to work or who intend to migrate

- **To place children in a temporary guardianship thus avoiding the risks that could affect children left behind that do not have a legal representative;**
- **To systematically keep in touch with children;**
- **To keep in touch with the educational institution the child/children attend/s** in order to be informed on their school performance.

The elderly

- **Legal**
 - **To amend the regulatory framework on the accountability of children to take care of parents in difficulty** (alimony, to sign contracts with the state, etc.);
 - **Development of the National Policies on Ageing in the context of the National Strategy for Demographic Security.**
 - **To implement new forms of social insurance that will guarantee a decent lifestyle into old age** (to develop private pensions);
- **To develop forms of support and social services**

For the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family;

- **To work out mechanisms for identifying those elderly left behind who are at risk** (collaboration between social community worker, family doctor, etc.);

- **To promote regulations and standards for home-care services;**
- **To develop regulatory framework on diversifying services provided at home** that at present focus on housekeeping and nourishment by introducing occupational therapy, psychological counselling, etc. in order to avoid depression, suicide attempts, etc.;
- **To revise the Job description of social assistant workers** who provide home-care services for the elderly (to exclude the performing of works related to housekeeping);
- **To develop the mechanisms for social services procurement by natural persons;**

For the Ministry of Health

- **To develop mechanisms for medical workers of primary health care to render medical services at home and to supervise the ill elderly;**
- **To conduct campaigns for examining the health condition of the elderly and to ensure the consultation of highly qualified specialists in rural areas** (oncologist, rheumatologist, gastrologist, cardiologist, etc.);
- **To hold training for people involved in providing assistance to the elderly** (geriatricians, social workers, social assistant workers, medical workers, etc.);
- **To conduct national campaigns for promoting healthy eating habits and lifestyle in order to prevent diseases in partnership with private providers and mass media organizations;**

For local public administration

- **To work out mechanisms that will give the possibility to establish some public-private partnerships in developing and providing highly specialized services designed to the elderly;**
- **To diversify home care services** that at present focus on housekeeping and nourishment by introducing occupational therapy, psychological counselling, etc. in order to avoid depression, suicide attempts, etc.;
- **To strengthen and develop local social partnerships** that will initiate and render social services to the elderly in the community;
- **To conduct information campaigns in partnership with private service providers on:** (i) children's duties related to taking care of parents, (ii) the way of appointing a legal representative for a natural person who because of poor health is not able to exercise and defend their rights, (iii) appeals aimed at directing infirm elderly people to social assistance institutions;

- **To offer information on legal assistance guaranteed by the government and provide legal advising on patrimonial issues;**

For community social workers

- **To keep a record of and to supervise the elderly deprived of children's care and living and health conditions inclusively;**
- **To inform people who because of poor health are not able to exercise and to defend their rights, the way of appointing a legal representative;**
- **To encourage volunteering activities** involving more elderly citizens and strengthening civic solidarity for private service providers
- **To develop social services, in collaboration with LPA, according to the community's needs** (Day care Centres, placement centres, services of professional care provided in family for the elderly, psychological services, etc.);
- **To give information about: (i) children's duties related to taking care of parents, (ii) the way of appointing a legal representative for a natural person who because of poor health is not able to exercise and to defend their rights, (iii) appeals aimed at directing infirm elderly people to social assistance institutions;**
- **To make use of the life experiences of the elderly by involving them in activities beneficial to society, including volunteering** (communication services, etc.);

For children who are migrating abroad or intend to migrate

- **To oblige the appointment of a legal representative for a natural person who because of poor health is not able to exercise and to defend their rights.**

Assuming the importance of constant concern of all institutions-in-charge with the responsibility to protect children and elderly deprived of family members as a consequence of migration, the respective study refers to: **decision-makers** who implement social policies in this field; **teaching staff, doctors, community social workers and other specialists** who in their day-by-day activity deal with children and elderly left behind; **migrants** who should inform, discuss and take into account their children and parents' opinion about their leaving abroad; informing **children and elderly deprived of their family members' care as a consequence of migration** on situations that may occur as a result of migration as well as to help them work out a rational strategy for surviving; to help the **entire population** understand various aspects of the migration process and to offer support for people in need.

Introduction

“The child does not owe his life to parents but his upbringing”
Nicolae Iorga

The economic instability faced by the Republic of Moldova after gaining its independence led to an increase in poverty and unemployment that influenced the expansion of the process of labour migration. The estimated number of Moldovan migrants varies from about 200-350 thousand people according to the official statistics to 500-600 thousand people according to some sociological surveys conducted by international organisations. According to the data of the National Bureau of Statistics, the number of labour migrants in 2010 was 311 thousand people², an increase of 16,1 thousand people when compared to the previous year.

NOTE

² Labour Force Survey, 2010.

The impact of labour migration is quite controversial. One of the main issues lies with the impact of remittances sent by Moldovan workers from abroad on the economy of the Republic of Moldova and the consumption of family members who remained in the country of origin. According to the data given by the World Bank, Moldova is first place in the world if taking the amount of remittances in proportion to the Gross Domestic Product. Remittances directly influence the well-being of households and in 2009 it reduced on average the absolute poverty rate by 11.7%.³ This income received by households from their family members working abroad helps ensure their daily needs, buying/repairing the dwelling, paying back debts, buying durable goods and to a certain extent its use as investment capital (only 3,3% of migrants set up a business with the money earned as a result of migration).

NOTE

³ Report on poverty and impact of policies 2009. – Ministry of Economy, Chisinau, 2011, p.35.

On the other hand, demographic and social consequences of labour migration are alarming: the absolute number of the population decreases, the ageing process worsens and the instability of families who have members working abroad increases. Migration influences the psycho-emotional development of children deprived of parental care, their health, education and socialization process as well as affecting the psychological condition of the elderly left behind by the children they raised.

Long term effects are not less important as following generations will undertake parents' migration behaviour since they perceive and replicate the model and behaviours of the family they were raised in, including the lack of psycho-emotional responsibility towards their own children.

NOTE

⁴ See: National action plan on the protection of children left without parental care for 2010-2011.

In order to reduce the negative impacts of migration and to maximize its development benefits, the Government of the Republic of Moldova set as one of its priorities, the development of policies and initiatives in this regard. Besides actions related to migration management and effective use of remittances, an important direction refers to the protection of children⁴ and elderly left behind by family members as a consequence of labour mi-

gration. Migrants' children and old family members often face discrimination and the risk of being socially excluded. In this regard it is necessary to develop and implement initiatives targeted at protecting and supporting children and elderly left behind. Planning and working out appropriate measures of support is conditioned by the preliminary identification of concrete needs not only of a financial nature but also those related to core aspects specific to the social and psychological condition of children and elderly deprived of care.

In these circumstances, the Czech Development Agency in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Fund for Population from the Republic of Moldova encouraged the idea of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (MLSPF) to conduct research that would identify the specific needs of children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration and that will further contribute to the creation of a national mechanism of intervention in the case of these categories of people.

The overall objective of this research focused on the analysis of the situation and needs of children and elderly left behind by their family members as a consequence of labour migration that will be of use for the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova (MLSPF) in establishing some guidelines for the development of policies based on empirical data that will anticipate/mitigate the negative consequences of migration through measures protecting children and elderly left behind.

Specific objectives of the research focused on the following aspects:

- The effects of migration on education, health condition, interaction and social integration of children depending on their age and paying special attention to teenagers as a distinct group that experience specific psychological issues related to puberty, risk of drug/alcohol addiction, conflicts with the law, etc.;
- Psychological effect on children and elderly who lack support and care of their family members as a consequence of labour migration as their feelings of uselessness, deprivation and behaviours that result from these states like aggressiveness and isolation;
- Effects on the mental condition of children and elderly: individual feelings of exhaustion, lack of support, psychosomatic disorders, etc.;
- Impact of the lack of connection between generations regarding the roles within family, power structures, examples of communication, choice of future profession and culture of migration;
- Impact of migration on the family's integrity (divorce and the separation of parents from children, etc.) and on the social inclusion and exclusion

of children and elderly left behind by family members as a consequence of labour migration;

- Role of remittances in the well-being and the access to services of children and elderly as well as potential negative role of these in distracting society's attention from non-economic needs and causing conflicts of morality;
- Identification of existing mechanisms through which children and elderly left behind can cope with difficult situations;
- Government's response (institutional and community) to the needs of children and elderly deprived of their family members' care as a consequence of migration.

One of the greatest challenges of the reported research lay in describing the diversity of life situations and consequently the needs of children and elderly left behind and presenting mechanisms for their protection. The lives of this category of children and elderly were explored by analysing their perception of migration for work, the effects on their psycho-social, educational and health condition, the family's integrity, the well-being of the household, life prospects and not least their needs of the community's support.

Methodology of the study

To accomplish overall and specific objective of this research a qualitative approach was chosen that allowed a complex and comprehensive analysis of specific needs of children and elderly left behind. Research tools and methods that were applied include:

- (i) **In-depth individual interview.** Conducted were:
 - 29 in-depth individual interviews with children deprived of parental care (see Annex 1),
 - 26 in-depth individual interviews with the elderly deprived of their family members' care (see Annex 2),
 - 10 interviews with representatives of CPA (Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, National Employment Agency) (see Annex 3);
- (ii) **focus-group discussion.** Were held:
 - Four focus-groups discussions with children (mixed groups including children left behind and children whose parents are at home) (see Annex 4);
 - Four focus-groups discussions with the elderly left behind (two focus group discussions with the elderly who live in the community and two focus group discussions with the elderly placed in the asylum) (see Annex 5);
 - Two focus-groups with community child protection specialists (kindergarten and school teachers, psychologists, family doctors, social workers, police officers, etc.);
 - Two focus-groups discussions with specialists working in the field of elderly protection and care (social workers, social assistant workers, family doctors, etc.) (see Annex 6);
- (iii) **case study** to present some particular situations related to children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration identified in the community;
- (iv) **free writing.** This technique was used in the case of 22 children left behind as a consequence of migration in the community, 40 children placed in residential institutions and 10 children from temporary placement centres;
- (v) **drawing.** The drawing technique was applied for children of a young age (six-nine years old) for the purpose of finding out different aspects related to the life of children left behind after parents' migration abroad for work.

Participants of the research were not only children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration but also children whose parents are both still in the country, kindergartens (as social actors) and school teachers, psychologists, social community workers, social assistant workers, family doctors, police officers, experts of the non-governmental sector, representatives of local and central public administration (officials of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family).

Field data were collected during November, 1st – December, 15th 2010.

The children and elderly who took part in this study were selected through a “snow-ball” method with the help of teachers, social workers, family doctors, etc.

In order to reveal different existing situations and to cover the complexity of specific needs of children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration, the sampling was conducted taking into account the following peculiarities of interviewed people:

One reference person who left abroad and two reference persons migrated abroad;

- (i) The status of reference person who is abroad: legal/irregular migrant;
- (ii) Migration character of reference person: temporary, circular, long term or indeterminate;
- (iii) Who supervises the child – a parent, grandmother/grandfather, other relatives, residential institution/placement centre etc.;
- (iv) Was the person who cares for the child appointed as their legal representative or not;
- (v) Migration wave: migrated for many years or recently;
- (vi) Communication with those departed abroad: existence of or lack of communication, etc.

The research describes the social world of children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration. It has been structured in order to assess their ways of perceiving their situation and assessing the experienced moments and future prospects. It also assesses the existing normative aspects of the situation and those practices and workings that are to be developed in order to reduce the risks for the family, community and society in general.

Chapter 1



The lack of care and affection of parents who migrated abroad for work leaves a mark on the way the child perceives the family. During the study, some children describe in their drawings families comprised only of children emphasising their new duties - housework.

The impact of migration on children and elderly left behind by their migrant family members

1.1. The perception of labour migration

Children

- **The level of acceptance/rejection of migration**

A number of factors determine children's acceptance or rejection of their parents migrating abroad. Among them, we enlist: **(i) the means through which parents requested their children's opinion, (ii) children's age, (iii) the person left in charge of them, (iv) the frequency of communication between children and parents via technical means and when parents return home.**

The research revealed the ways parents consult their children on their intention to leave abroad for work; these vary depending on children's age as well as on family's specific relational model. In most cases, children were asked for their opinions during a discussion. Whereby, it was **brought to their attention the necessity and opportunity to leave to work abroad in an attempt to convince them to accept the situation.** The elder the children – the higher the frequency of the parents requesting their opinion, once children are more grown up – the level of parental trust evolves as well as children's capacity to face difficult situations. For instance, a 15 year old child accepted the situation after having a discussion with his parents who had decided to leave: *"we sat and talked... and I understand..."* (III_C_21).

There were situations when **children's opinions were not asked:** *"we actually were not asked"* (III_C_9) or when **their opinion did not matter:** *"whether they ask it or not – they will do whatever they think it's right. Will they stay home if we would ask them to? Of course not"* (FG_C_1_urban), children have to accept the situation without having the possibility to change it. Even if children take efforts to understand the necessity of their parents' migration, most of them mention that if it would have been possible to turn back time, they would have tried to convince their parents to stay home and not to leave. Moreover, children try various means to hinder their parents' migration, even if they are aware that any actions would be useless: *"My elder brother used to hide her air ticket to stop her from leaving. He had hidden it once but realized that there's no point in stopping her"* (III_C_13). Such actions reveal a specific **contradiction between children's formal acceptance of their parents migrating and their internal wish – that is more or less conscious – to stop them from taking this step.**

Generally, the survey shows **children's obvious dissatisfaction that their opinion has not been asked for when their parents decide to migrate abroad for work:** *"I wish they had asked me..."*; this thing would have

helped them to accept their parents migration. Even if their opinion was not asked, children justify their parents' decision, saying: *"...you have to agree with your parents decision, they are elder, they know what they're doing"* (III_C_16). Or, the acceptance of migration is supported by the certainty that this step is taken in order to ensure the children's well-being, this being inevitable in certain cases.

There is a certain **interdependence between a child's age and the extent to which he/she accepts the situation**, thus the elder the child is the easier it is for him/her to accept the situation of their parents having to migrate and vice versa: *"I am big and I understand that they are not leaving for their own sake but for our future... I do understand this, but my little sister... doesn't..."* (III_C_21). At the same time, the survey highlighted some cases when **migration was accepted at first, but opposed afterwards**, especially due to family problems: *"At first I understood that she had to leave but right now I just cannot accept that she is staying there, I don't think this is right... It is so hard for all of us"* (III_C_19). In some cases, children accept migration but are eagerly waiting for the **moment of their parents' return home**. In other cases, children expressed not only their acceptance of migration but also their content at the situation, explaining this feeling due to a decrease of parental control: *"When my mom left I was happy. Nobody was telling me what to do anymore, how to arrange my hair. I was given more freedom"* (III_C_25). Thus, we encountered situations of an erroneous perception of liberty: *"...we have to accept that there are children who are not happy when their parents come back home. I met a girl who said: my mom is coming back next week and... She will start bothering me again"* (FG_C_3_rural). The pertinence of such feelings contains a high risk of intergenerational relations that will persist in the future and at the society level, it can manifest as a dysfunction within the family.

During focus-group discussions, children whose parents did not leave expressed their regret concerning the fact that some children – whose parents are abroad – adopt a deviant behaviour (skipping school, lying, smoking, drinking, etc). Meanwhile, children whose parents didn't leave explain this by saying *"this is their way of finding consolation"* (FG_C_2_rural). In most cases, such behaviour was indirectly indicated, when the interviewed persons were talking about children in their communities.

An important aspect of accepting/rejecting parents leaving abroad constitutes the personality of the guardian (legal or otherwise) who takes care of the child. The survey listed among them family members (the other parent, for instance), grandparents, aunts, other relatives, friends and even neighbours. An interesting reality was confirmed: the **child's acceptance of the caregiver does not depend directly on the degree of kinship they have**. On the contrary, there were **cases when the child lived with one of**

parents but felt frustrated: “... *he doesn't understand me, I even fear him...*” (III_C_22) and **situations when the child was left under the surveillance of neighbours who are not related to the child, yet the child felt totally secure with them:** “*before leaving, my father asked us who we would prefer to stay with. I told him that its lady Jana we'd like to stay with... She's our neighbour and we're so close... we feel so good with her*” (III_C_15). The role of the caregiver is incontestable when it comes to supporting a child left alone as a result of parental migration as well as the parents ability to identify such a person and to ensure her/his compatibility with their child.

Some of the issues that children have to face during their parents migration can be reduced by **communication** or by their **parents' periodical return home**. The longer the time parents dedicate to communication the less children are affected by their migration as they accept more quickly their parents being away: “*it is not so difficult because we often talk via Skype... they support me and encourage me*” (FG_C_1_urban). We can conclude that the frequency of communication varies from one discussion per week to 2-3 discussions per day. To keep in touch they use landlines and cell phones, Internet (e-mail, Skype, Messenger). The main subjects that are discussed by children and parents refer to school marks, relations within the family as well as the children's wishes. The share of discussed topics vary significantly depending on the gender of the parent who is abroad, thus children talk less with their migrant fathers about how things are going on between them and the persons who are taking care of them or about the problems they have to face. Research data also revealed that in most cases discussions about children's feelings are avoided.

As a result, **the acceptance of migration** sometimes can generate feelings of separation between parents and children that represent a **means of re-adjusting to reality**. The longer parents are abroad and the more seldom they leave to work abroad, the bigger is the risk of estrangement: “*... the first time she left, I was saying that I didn't know where my mom was going and I started crying, but the second time... I just cried for two days and that was it. Now I have forgotten about her, I think about her very rarely...*” (III_C_10). Thus, there is an obvious tendency in families with migrants – the parent becomes a stranger, a person who is far from his/her child's soul while the children repress their feelings towards their parents. It also should be taken into consideration that the problem does not always consist of the departure itself, but in the **moment and the context** (see J.Bowlby and J.W.Douglas works).

As a conclusion, it should be mentioned that the extent to which children accept or reject their parents' migration is mainly determined by factors which the parents themselves can influence in order to reduce all negative consequences of the separation. The situations described by the inter-

viewed are relevant in confirming the importance of honest discussions parents should have with their children before migrating as well as their acceptance of their children's opinion. It is important to highlight that children are working hard to adapt themselves to the circumstances that in fact are greater than their psychological potential, respectively an initial acceptance can degenerate into an ultimate rejection. The elder the child is the higher the probability of an easier acceptance of their parents' migration. Finally, the variety of concrete situations can be explained by the fact that interviewed children were of different ages, segregated by the nature and frequency of communication as well as by the degree of understanding with their guardian.

- **Explaining the reasons for parents' migration**

The majority of interviewed children explain and even justify the necessity of their parents going abroad for work via the following reasons; **poor financial conditions of the family** (*“she had to leave because we needed money”*), **high unemployment rate or salaries that do not provide a decent living, the impossibility to pay for children's education, health issues, the need to buy a house or to pay back debts, domestic violence**, etc. As a rule, children associate their parents departure abroad with their objective to **provide a good level of welfare**: *“to be able to save money in order to educate me”* (III_C_3); *“to have clothes, school supplies... to be able to pay the heating...”*, being aware that *“for us our parents are leaving abroad to work”* (FG_C_4_rural).

Some of the interviewed experts talked about **children who had severe health issues**, this fact determining their parents to leave abroad: *“We know a lot of cases when the leaving of parents abroad for work was motivated by a severe condition that their child suffered from, and which involved the necessity of an expensive medical intervention or treatment abroad. Parents decided to leave in order to save their child's life and health. These ones are the kind of decisions that are worth all the respect”* (III_EC_3).

During the realization of the study, some **particular situations** were highlighted that convinced parents to migrate. For instance, after her husband's death a mother of three children had to struggle to provide for her children's upbringing: *“It was so hard for my mother to provide for us after my father's death. Then she left us in our grandparent's care and went abroad”* (III_C_18). In some cases, the interviewed explained the decision to migrate abroad for work by **a collection of situations** that influenced the person: *“she had no money to provide us and my father was beating her when he was drunk... he was beating her so cruelly”* (III_C_22).

The study unveiled that parents decide to leave abroad for work not only because of despair but also to prevent an ultimate poverty as they are aware

that once their children will grow up their needs will increase too and their incomes will not be sufficient to cover all the necessary expenses.

So, parents' migration is determined by several causes, the most important in children's opinion being those of the financial kind, which – generate multiple deficiencies: the impossibility to get an education, to have a place to live or to provide for the household, to undergo any necessary treatment, etc. Still, within this research situations were unveiled that showed a poor quality of life (for instance, various types of abuses) was an aggravating circumstance in the ultimate decision to go abroad to work.

- **The perception of problems that can affect the children**

Within the reported research, the extent to which children with parents abroad perceive problems and the risks they are exposed to, due to parents' migration were studied. Children are aware of the existing situation mentioning that the biggest problem they have to face is the **feeling of loneliness generated by the absence of one or both of their parents**: *"... you go home, but there's only loneliness there, you want to talk to somebody – but there is no one to talk to... You have to cook for yourself, if you have any domestic animals you have to take care of them too and it is very difficult"* (III_C_1); *"the pain"*; *"the weight"*, etc. A specific expression of an interviewed child that shares her sad experience says: *"I don't feel like I have my mom beside me"* (III_C_16). It is obvious that **during the period that the child's personality is being developed the direct participation of parents is of utmost importance in the educational process.**

The departure of the mother is more painfully felt by children than that of the father; this being explained by a special emotional connection between mother and child, even when talking about boys (see Box 1. Case study). The data collected shows that children whose mothers are working abroad are more introverted and sad, and find it difficult to contain their emotions, compared to cases where the father has gone. This situation is caused by the lack of an emotional pillar within the family as well as by the multitude of tasks falling on children's shoulders (a situation that is more characteristic for girls) when the mother goes abroad. When talking about the parent's role in a child's life, they think it is *"very important, when your parents are with you – you feel ok, but when your parents are not home there is no one you can talk to"* (III_C_9).

While the parents are away the children's attachment is transferred towards the person who takes care of them, for instance their grandparents: *"I already like to stay with my grandmother..."* (See the Case study, Box 2).

BOX 1**Case study. The life of a child whose parents left abroad for work (III_C_5)**

Bogdan, a 13 year old boy from an urban area. Both parents are abroad. Currently living with his uncle's family.

At the moment of conducting the interview his father was at home but was about to leave again. Bogdan is the youngest of three children of the family. He considers his 24 year old brother as his second father with whom he is very close. Although he has new responsibilities because of his parents' departure abroad the child thinks these are equally shared among all three brothers. The most important household responsibilities relate to gardening. One of the problems that he has to face is his situation at school which has worsened, as the child does not manage to learn all his school material, while teachers provide no effective response: *"It has worsened because I don't understand everything my teachers explain. If you ask them to repeat what they have said they just give you a 2 and send you out of the class. My mom is not there to talk to the teachers... When my mom was here she used to come to school and talk to them, but now she can't do it"*. He sees no benefit from his parents leaving and says *"I'm not the same person who I used to be before... My mother is not near... Everything was different when my mom was here, she always spoke so calmly, it's different"*. The child could not exactly explain why he needs his parents; still he perceives this at an intuitive level: *"I just want her close. I don't know why..."*

BOX 2**Case study. The grandmother becomes a "mother" for her grandchildren (III_E_2)**

Maria, 61 years old, living in the rural area, is taking care of her 2 grandchildren, a girl aged 12 and a boy aged 11. This has been the arrangement since they were aged 2 and 1 respectively. They are both children of her daughter. Besides this, Maria is taking care of her ailing father. At the moment when the interview was conducted she knew nothing about her daughter who disappeared in 2004 *"she didn't come home. We kept calling... talking to the police, we approached the TV show "Wait for me". My son who is in Russia appealed to Interpol, but there have been no results"*. She communicates with her grandchildren *"very well, they are obedient, the girl is cooking... and they both clean"*. One day the grandchildren told their grandmother: *"Mammy, for now you will be our mammy... but when our mother will be found we will call her mammy and we'll call you grandmother..."* The woman concludes that *"they are even more precious than your own children as they are your grandchildren"*.

The collected data reveals the concern of some children for the integrity and well-being of their parents who work abroad while others worry for their relatives who take care of them. When children find out that their parents are facing certain difficulties, most of them tend to consider themselves responsible for this situation. It is possible that this feeling is unintentionally intensified by parents who say they left for the sake of their children as well as by their guardians who are frequently reminding them

of this fact. Therefore in these situations a child's level of self-blaming increases causing anxiety.

Tomorrow is perceived as a problem by children, explaining this situation through the uncertainty that their parents have to face at work: *“at one point they have a job and a salary but you never know what tomorrow brings. Tomorrow their boss can deceive them and not pay them the salary or even worse – close the place they work in”* (FG_C_3_rural).

Young children (Nine - 13 years old) as well as elder children (14 -18 years old) mentioned they **feel lonely and frustrated**, differences in age do not affect this underlying attitude, however the younger child will express their feelings more obviously by crying, obvious sadness, attempts to hinder their parents leaving, etc. It was concluded that children's emotional experiences caused by their separation with parents could change in time, so children feel more affected immediately after their parents' departure and this period is considered the most difficult one.

Sometimes **apparently simple problems can be very important to every child**: *“I remember how great it was when she was at home, there was somebody to plait my hair but now I'm just doing it the way I can. She was often making me cookies but now I have to buy them at the market”* (III_C_6). It sounds contradictory but children wish their parents would stay home even if they used to beat them: *“even if he used to beat me I still want him back”* (III_C_16).

Among other perceived problematic situations mentioned by children is **the need to perform many tasks**, which they did not use to do when their parents were at home. They chop wood, clean the house, bring water, look after domestic animals and repair the house: *“my sister would not obey me... Sometimes I was coming back from school hungry and I had to cook... It was very difficult... we didn't even have time to talk... the cleaning, the cooking and I had to take care of my sister and look after the animals... it's really hard”*(III_C_21).

The study revealed cases of **degradation of family relationships caused by the appearance of a deviant behaviour of the parent who remained at home**: *“When my mom left, everything became so hard. I was the head of the family... My father was coming home drunk late at night, he just was going to bed and nothing would interest him. He was drunk every other night. My mom was mad with me when she would call and find out that my dad was drunk again and she started blaming me for not taking good care of him and for letting him drink... But what should I do?”* (III_C_19). Thus, besides taking over household tasks, sometimes children, especially girls, transform into “wives” who are responsible for the behaviour of the parent who is at home. This affects the perception of girls about family life increasing the risk of premature marriages as an escape from their own father.

Children also understand that they are forced to **grow up prematurely**, thus they are a generation learning to play social roles that are not specific for

their age: *“We grow up prematurely and we lose our childhood. For instance, I became an adult earlier than I should have and I am taking care of the things that my mom used to do. I have forgotten when I was childishly smiling not so long ago and sometimes I smile because I have to, but deep down inside I have a gap filled with sadness”* (FG_C_3_rural). The consequences of this problem will be perceived at the society level after a certain period of time.

It should be mentioned that the most important issue represents the separation with their parents and consequently the loneliness that is perceived by respondents as a reality that will pass when their parents will return back. Still, specialty books explain the seriousness of the loneliness phenomenon as well as potential consequences that may unfold over time, affecting the multilateral development of a child’s personality. Regardless of their age and sex, children feel frustrated and feel their parents’ absence as a problem forcing them to grow up prematurely. The study highlighted the fact that, unfortunately there are cases when this maturation is considered an adequate moment to try various deviant behaviours.

- **The way migrant family members perceive problems (according to children’s point of view)**

The relationship between parents and children also depends on **the level they perceive problems** that their children being at home have to face. A decrease in relationship intensity can lead to a drop in family cohesion as happened in a family with two daughters living in a rural area. Their father comes home only when he has a day off from his job in Chisinau and the girls’ mother and their brother are both abroad: *“during those eight days that I had to stay in the hospital neither my mom nor my dad called me although they both knew that I was in hospital...”* (III_C_19).

The interviewed children claim that **parents generally understand their problems**: *“they (parents) always encourage me in my actions and decisions and they help me accomplish my dreams”* (III_C_1). Children are especially grateful that their parents started to talk to them as to their peers, to approach serious matters that previously were avoided: *“she behaves like I’m one of her friends, we talk about grown-up things”* (III_C_18). The problems that children confess to their parents refer to the communication with their peers, school activities and their school situation, health, leisure, money management and daily activities.

The problem is differently perceived **depending on the gender of the parent**, the interviewed (especially the girls) think that a mother shows a higher degree of understanding while a father is more reserved: *“my mom understands me better than my father does...”*

There are cases of major difficulties in the relationship between children and parents, generated by the discontinuity of sincere communication,

thus **they do not share their problems** and are not interested about each others situations. Children think they cannot discuss their problems with their parents because “... *they don't understand anything and I'm not discussing my problems with them...*” (III_C_17), or they explain the situation by saying that their parents “*have their own problems*”, that absorb their lives and thoughts too much, hindering the possibility to understand their children's problems. The discontinuity of the relationship with parents can degenerate and lead to serious issues; one example is presented in Box 3.

BOX 3**Case study. Poverty as an essential cause of migration (III_E_12)**

Ana, 62 years old, from a rural area, is taking care of her 2 small grandchildren, she says: “*She had no money to feed her children. My smaller daughter was not married at that time but the other one was married. Her child was so small, he was less than a year old and they lived really badly. Her husband who died had used to take their elder boy to relatives to feed him. But she, she was starving with the little one at home. She used to tell me, before she left: “Mom, we are starving”. There was the season of corn and they used to boil and bake it. And she also told me that they had a neighbour who had some puppies that were so fat and she was going there every night to steal one of the puppies and kill it, boil it and eat it.*”

The grandmother said that the mother of the children rarely calls her. She got married abroad and has another child there. Although her new husband beats her she does not want to come back home.

According to children, their parents are generally aware of the problems their family members have with little difference depending on the gender of the migrant parent. The study estimated specific development cases related to the way parents perceive problems, thus, *on one hand*, there are parents who, although they understand problems their children have, still decide to continue their migration process, *on the other hand*, the migration process acts as a coolant in the relationships between family members.

The elderly

- **The level of accepting/rejecting migration**

Factors that lead to the **development of a positive or negative parents' attitude towards their children's migration** are mainly determined by the **status and age of the elderly**, his/her **self capacities**, the **existence of grandchildren they have to look after** while their children are abroad, the **reasons for their children's migration** and the **value of the remittances they transfer home**.

When the social status of the elderly is valued, the respect for their contribution to the development is present and there are cases when **children**

ask their parents permission to go abroad: *“they asked for advice before leaving “mother, if we don’t go we’ll die of hunger, I have to go to make some money”(III_E_2); “of course it wasn’t only about me letting them go... but also about taking care of their children” (III_E_9).* This shows the migrants taking into consideration their parents advice and also using their ability to care for their grandchildren. Similar situations can be identified in the case of the elderly placed in residential institutions: *“.. of course she asked me about it. She could not leave just like that. But I wouldn’t stop her as she has to live on something ...” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).*

In families that place a lower value on the social status of their elderly, children do not coordinate their leaving abroad with parents: *“She did not ask me, I found out about it when she was already there...” (III_E_15),* the fact being announced post-factum. This action is hardly tolerated by the elderly because the feeling of social uselessness and abandonment are increasingly present: *“she even took her daughters and husband with her. Since then I do not know anything about them. They left for money! (She raises her voice in anger) Money, money... What else for? And nobody asked me anything about it. I found out about it when she was already there...” (III_E_15).* The elderly greatly regret this: *“... I feel angry that all of them left... that if the two of them would remain in Sadova, I would have known that they are with me... even if it’s rather far, but would felt that they were with me... and they are not... the only thing I can do now is to cry...” (III_E_10).* This situation is characteristic to the institutionalized elderly: *“my daughter did not do well when she left, I cried a lot, ... she stopped calling me a year ago, there’s no one to come to see me, I have no one”; “what they did is not right, she should have stayed home, why did she leave me alone” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).*

At the same time, the data reveals that although the elderly are not asked (especially the ones who are placed in residential institutions), they still try to protect and to justify their own children’s actions: *“no, they didn’t ask me anything. They just said that they have their own families and they are leaving to make some money to raise their kids... On one hand I can agree with them, on the other...” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).* This is probably determined by the aspirations to return home and the lack of desire to recognize an obvious fact that he/she is institutionalized and there is no one to take care of him/her.

There is also a **dependency between the age of the elderly, their independency and the level of acceptance of the children’s migration.** The age, reduced capacity to take care of themselves, chronic and severe diseases, limited access to medical and social services which lead to the fact that parents show little acceptance of their children’s migration: *“to ask me about it? If I’d said “no” she’d say “give me some money, mom” (III_E_6)* and discontent for their situation. This dissatisfaction towards the migration

of their children can be also explained by the fact that, after experiencing severe changes in their private life by losing their family and professional roles – the elderly are addressing younger people in order to get indications on how they should react and ask for support in certain situations. The lack of this very important support leads to the rejection of the situation, to the identification of another person who would take care of them, the cooling of the relations between them and their children, their mental and physical degradation and placement into social institutions, etc.

The existence of grandchildren of whom they have to take care when their children are abroad **do not represent any impediments** in the majority of cases **when the elderly have to accept their children's migration**: *“she couldn't do anything else but go. She had no job, she could not count on her husband, and the children had to be educated. You cannot just give them water if you want them to grow up. She had to talk to me about it – she was about to leave her 2 kids with me. It is a great responsibility”* (III_E_20). This is conditioned by them regaining some social roles the elderly have: *“the kids are with me, I did not conclude any documents for them because I consider them my own children. She went to work and I am staying with the kids”* (III_E_16), by the awareness of the reasons their children leave, their “parental sacrifice”: *“I got used so much to them that I would not be able to live without them, without the care... It is a real happiness for every grandmother to nurse her grandchildren. I think it's better this way, rather than living alone and having no one beside them”* (III_E_14). The case of a 71 year old woman is quite expressive as she has been raising the child of her daughter since she was little, her daughter divorced as a result of her migration. The person accepts this fact considering herself useful for her daughter's “un-arranged” life: *“I am not doing bad... We have everything... my daughter is sending us everything we need... I just feel sorry for her... that she is all alone...two babies... it will be even more difficult for her to set her life now... and she is not a bad girl, with education... Me and my husband were living quite all right, we had a good salary and we had never thought we will have to go through such an experience...”* (III_E_9). Consequently, a share of the elderly has the tendency on balance to accept their children's migration. In most cases, the elderly taking care of their grandchildren receive remittances for their grandchildren's physiological and social development, and the migration of their children is well-tolerated: *“they did what they had to do, there was nothing for them to do here...”*(III_E_1).

The situation becomes rather difficult when there is a perceived imbalance: insufficiency of remittances, elderly or children's health issues, behaviour deviations and maladjustment at school of grandchildren: *“she takes care of elderly in Italy but there is no one to take care of her own mother and father, that's more than we can take”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

At the same time, **on the background of an initial acceptance, most elderly would like to have their children at home:** *“we never agreed, but they asked me and I said it was ok. You ask me why – well, because it is the biggest spiritual and bodily pain to part with your children and I lay my head down on my pillow but my mind is far in America, Portugal and Spain and I keep thinking that I gave them birth, I raised them as a true Christians but they had to leave to be able to survive...”* (III_E_5). They wish their children to have a traditional family.

We can conclude that the level of acceptance of children's labour migration depends on the social status of the elderly. The lower it is, the deeper the feeling of uselessness and abandonment of the elderly becomes. The attempt to justify the migration of their children as well as their abandonment without leaving any money or leaving them in residential institutions seems to be governed by the hope of the elderly to change things. The necessity to take care of their grandchildren does not generally cause difficulties in accepting their children's migration, this being determined by the regaining of some social roles as well as traditions related to autonomous families. The study reveals a dependency between the age of the elderly, their capacity to take care of themselves and the level of accepting their children's departure abroad. The compliance of the elderly, including those that are institutionalized and those that take care of their grandchildren, within a situation where they have to accept their children's migration, sits within the context of a background of disapproval and is linked to the disintegrated family lifestyle. They wished that their children would have a more traditional family.

- **Explaining the reasons for their children's migration**

- Children's labour migration is explained by elderly, **first of all, by financial or survival reasons:** *“gaining 800 lei per month was not enough for her and she decided to leave for Moscow”* (III_E_3). Still, the economic factor, even if important, is not the only one that determines the decision to migrate. The interviewed named several reasons for their leaving abroad for work:
- **The liquidation of factories, plants:** *“in Hîncești 830 people left abroad. They had no jobs – the plant was closed.”; “...there were no jobs – the kolkhoz was liquidated”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum);
- **The lack of opportunities to get a job, unemployment, sharp economic crisis:** *“their financial situation was bad. Their children were little and they had no jobs. He was receiving 300-400 lei, what could he do for his family with that? Although she was a governess she couldn't find a job”* (III_E_19); *“my girls left because they couldn't find a job here...”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum);
- **Unattractive labour market, the search of better-paid jobs:** *“Yes, she had to go. Teachers were always paid badly. She worked as a teacher for 20*

years in Nisporeni, but I know that her salary was miserable. I used to help her (III_E_13);

- **Escape from poverty and improving the living standards** (the lack of resources to have a decent life – food, clothing, utilities, medical services, education, etc.): *“she left when her boy was five, because she couldn’t even feed her child; her husband was not sending any money. She had no firewood for the winter”* (III_E_16); *“they left because they had no money to live on, they had to educate their children but they needed money”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum);
- **Family issues:** *“the need to raise two children, an irresponsible husband – these were the causes leading to Svetlana’s leaving so far away”* (III_E_20); *“my daughter also left because she had to, she needed money to bring up her child, her husband died and she was alone”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum);
- **Various social vices** (alcohol and drugs), violence, etc.: *“he used to drink, smoke and also “this thing” (she shows her veins, i.e. was on drugs) and behaved badly. Moreover, he began doing weird stuff. And that’s when she said: “Mom, I have to leave, one day he’ll drag me into this”* (III_E_21); *“he was beating her... If I wasn’t going to them he would have probably killed her”* (III_E_18); *“he used to beat her badly and would not let her go to work as he was very jealous”* (III_E_12);
- **Appealing factors or beautiful stories** the villagers/acquaintances would provide, the use of informal acquaintances and relatives network: *“why don’t you come to work with us”* (III_E_17); *“you can make some money there and save it”* (III_E_14);
- **A government that faces the expectations of the population** *“we didn’t chase them away. The law sent away our children”* (FG_E_2_rural).

The study classifies short-term migration (temporary, seasonal): *“Svetlana comes back home every three months”* (III_E_20); long-term: *“my boys left long ago, they are there for almost nine years; my daughter has been there for four years, and now the fifth...”* (III_E_1), these are sometimes characterized by a clandestine stay: *“she went away and I didn’t see her for 3 years because she couldn’t get all the necessary papers, it was so difficult”* (III_E_4) or permanent migration to long-distance places: *“...in San Francisco, cause that’s where they live, they have a house, he (the son) is the head of a scientific company, he’s doing his best and he gets a good salary, they have been there for six years. My son graduated there”* (III_E_1).

Seasonal migration helps people shift their unemployment periods with employment abroad, even if these ones are not essentially improving their living conditions. Nevertheless these types of migration are mostly tolerated by the elderly as they allow “respite” periods, especially when they have to look after their grandchildren.

The research reveals that regardless of the reason; there are a number of causes, which lead to leaving abroad for work. The children's migration involves significant changes at level of cross-generational relations for both the elderly who stay at home and those who are institutionalized

- **The perception of problems that would affect the elderly**

The collected data highlighted that the elderly whose children are abroad for work have to face various difficulties, specific and frustrating crises that force them to change their whole lifestyle.

The status of an “elderly left behind”, voluntarily or involuntarily assumed, **implies in most of the cases the physiological decline of their mental condition** and can sometimes refer to mental problems such as:

- **The re-assumption of the parental role** for their grandchildren who they are taking care of including the whole set of responsibilities;
- **Loneliness, isolation, institutionalization** after their children's departure;
- **Realization and well-being.**

All interviewed categories of elderly highlight their **fears and problems they perceive** related to:

- **The appearance or aggravation of some diseases** (somatic or mental) that they cannot face: *“when you're very sick and there is no one to take care of you, your child is not at home to come to help you”* (FG_E_1_rural);
- **The decrease or lack of capacity to perform daily tasks** (hygiene, cleaning, shopping, small agricultural works, etc.): *“if they had been at home they would have helped us, but there is no one to help us... During the harvest season there are a lot of problems, it's the most difficult time for us, we are old and it is not an easy task for us to reap, to lift things, to take care of the stock, to feed them...”*(III_E_1); *“I don't know how to put it – if she would have been disobedient it would have been hard, but she's obedient, it's not morally but rather physically difficult, I have to see the teachers, it's actually hard to go meet her”* (III_E_3); *“we have our land, but the land should be processed”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum);
- **The decease of family members or close friends:** *“I feel so lonely since my wife died”* (III_E_20);
- **Bad/unpleasant events in the personal environment** (children's/grandchildren's poor health, problems related to their children's/grandchildren's marital status, their children's/grandchildren's education and career, etc.): *“starting last year he dropped out of studying (the grandchild she takes care of),... he just took some money from the house and spent*

it with his friends... and I had to go to school... I lost control of him... it's probably my fault, I have to take care of him day by day" (III_E_8);

- **Personal security issues:** *"they tried to break in. It happened at 2 am and I heard there was somebody trying to open my door..."* (III_E_3); *"they entered my place, I was alone at home and they tied my hands and feet and they wrapped my mouth so that I would not be able to scream, but I was screaming so hard that I thought I'd break into pieces. I was alone and my children were gone back then"* (III_E_5);
- **The lack of any contacts with their children or even the children's disappearance:** *"I couldn't let her go. She told me that she would be back in two months. There have been 14 years already that she's been gone..."* (III_E_18);
- **Difficult relationships within the family:** *"she never visited me here"; "she only visited me once since all those years that I've been here"* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum);
- **Financial issues:** *"I have a pension of 840 lei including all allowances they pay. I am telling you straight: it is not enough! It is not enough for a pensioner who has no domestic animals at the household to live only by the pension he receives – he will just not be able to live! Because everything is so expensive"* (III_E_13);
- **Limited social interaction with people outside the residential institution:** *"my brother is visiting me once in awhile. My children – never..."* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

In this context the authors consider the prioritization of fears and problems that various age categories of elderly face. Thus, the feelings of the **elderly who are taking care of grandchildren** are based on **unpleasant events in their close environment, especially regarding their grandchildren they take care of, the lack of any contact with children who have left or even disappeared, the decrease or lack of their capacities to perform their daily tasks, the lack of any remittances**. An elderly woman who takes care of her two granddaughters says that the biggest problem lies in the fact that she and his wife had to raise two other children (granddaughters). This was actually quite difficult at their age. From a financial point of view, it is easy as there are means to do it, but physically it is difficult (III_E_20).

Elderly couples or single elderly persons left behind highlight the existence of **problems related to the appearance or aggravation of certain diseases that are compounded by the loss of one of the partners and personal security issues**. There is a good example of a person aged 86 living for 63 years with his wife who mentions: *"with old age comes with a lot of suffering. I underwent three eye surgeries and I can see only with one eye,*

and even with that one only 20%. My hearing is not so good, my body is not that strong as it used to be and it's getting harder every day”, and since their children are abroad for work “there are numerous problems that we have to face and at every step I take, I feel the need to be helped”, and the fear he experienced when somebody broke in his house “when they broke in that day fear simply destroyed me and I still cannot recover, sometimes I feel shivers down my back. And I always feel fear” (III_E_5).

The institutionalized elderly highlight the **difficulties they experience within their family, the appearance or aggravation of some diseases and the lack of remittances**. Among the problems that are enlisted by beneficiaries of an asylum, there are the following: *“to go home, to see my relatives”, “my heart condition started when my daughter left”, “we need to buy pills”, “to give us money because financially it’s so hard” (FG_E_urban_asylum).*

The elderly going through a deplorable financial situation indicate **financial and health issues and the limitation of the ability to perform daily tasks**. An elderly woman aged 68 whose daughters left for Russia and Italy, lives in a damaged house, in poor sanitary conditions and has only her pension to survive on, lost her toes because of the cold as she was sick and she did not have the possibility to heat her house (III_E_15).

The collected data reveals that the **elderly enlist a reduced range of problematic events or potential impediments in their day-to-day life, compared to their strategic timing**. This can be explained by their life experiences and advanced capacities to adaptation and protection that depend on personality particularities and living and social and economic conditions of the elderly: *“everything is so expensive and I don’t really know how to use money for everything, but my daughter used to send me stuff once in a while, it’s just – I really don’t know how to explain – my daughter has an apartment for rent and that’s actually how I survive” (III_E_4)*. **Problems that the elderly cannot take control of** are especially critical: **severe diseases, the loss/death of a close person, loneliness**, if compared to those that can be controlled – financial losses: *“when she told us that she was having difficulties I sent her a parcel and I called her to let her know and she asked me how many kilograms did it weigh. When I told her that it weighted 20 kg she got scarred and she didn’t know if she’d be able to pay it. I told her that I already paid for everything. Then she said “Where did you get the money?” and I told her that I managed to find some and I’ll give it back later” (III_E_4).*

The risk of becoming a **victim of various frauds, thefts and violent acts** is quite topical for the elderly: *“well, there was somebody who rang the bell one day and I asked: “Who is there?” They said: “There is water trickling*

from your apartment to ours.” I opened the door and I saw two huge lads. I say: “There’s no water trickling in here.” They say: “We know that there are renters who live here.” I say: “Well, try to find them.” They gazed at the old man who was reading something and they left. I have no idea who they were” (III_E_21). There are cases when the employees of various institutions are taking advantage of the elderly, especially helpless persons left behind: “I used to give five lei to the person who was bringing me my pension... the next time she came to me at 9 pm... She gave me the money and she left, but when I started counting, I saw that 150 lei were missing. I was scared then...” (III_E_22).

There are various means of cheating the elderly and in most cases the offenders are familiar with their victim’s situation and they are taking advantage of his/her credulity and feelings: “...there was someone who called me and told me that my Ana (daughter) is in Ungheni and she’s in jail and that I have to buy a 200 lei telephone card to talk to her. When I heard about that (her daughter has been missing since 1997), I could not even think that somebody would want to trick me. I managed to find 200 lei and I bought those minutes to be able to talk to her but that was it. They robbed me of 200 lei. Moreover, it was somebody who knew about my condition... How can someone do such a thing?” (III_E_18). In some cases the offenders do not stop but they continue with threats of physical punishment: “there is this man who is my neighbour and he took my firewood, my chicken..., he came at night to threaten me, saying that he will hit me with the spit, that’s the same man who stole my corn... Then the police summoned him to the city hall and he signed a paper saying that he was not going to do anything to me...” (III_E_6).

Issues regarding **deprivation of real estate** continue to be extremely frequent for the elderly: “neighbours and various institutions are trying to deceive these old people through various means and are taking away their houses. There are various cases. This problem is frequent and if they get to medical institutions they are deceived there too, especially those who suffer from alcohol abuse, these ones are left outside with no place to go” (FG_EE_urban).

There are even a lot of cases when the elderly are deprived of various goods by their own children: “in order to go abroad they usually need a big sum of money and that’s when elderly people decide to sell their dwelling to solve the problem and to help their children leave, while they are then being placed in medical-social institutions called “Nursing Homes for the Elderly” (FG_EE_urban); “his children left him, his daughter is in Moscow, she sold her house. After his wife died, she came back and took him to the notary, fooled him and sold his house too. He has no place to live now...” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

The institutionalized elderly whose children are abroad have a specific approach to the situation they face. This fact can be seen in the way they per-

ceive their own abandonment something which is not always recognized, thus creating a self-defending reaction. Therefore, an elderly person aged 85 who has been institutionalized for four years in a *Nursing Home for the Elderly* in a rural area and whose granddaughter visited her only when she had to perfect her papers for inheriting her house, says with safety and hope in her voice: *“she visited me once”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). Another elderly aged 78 who stays in the same Nursing Home for the Elderly and whose children abandoned him sold the house in an illegal way and consequently he has nowhere to go – he changes the subject when we want to talk to him about whether his children visit him. This person finds himself in the situation where his children are not returning his calls and are not interested in him and they actually intend to file a denial of paternity (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). These situations characterize the elderly placed in such institutions.

There are cases when the problems of the institutionalized elderly are solved by other people rather than by their children. Children make use of third person’s help (managers of institutions, nurses, nannies, etc.) that inform them of their parents needs. This fact does not allow the elderly to perceive their situation as it is and they don’t feel responsible for their life anymore: *“they used to talk to me when I was at home, but now they talk to the manager of the institution.”*; *“he doesn’t call me, he calls the nurses (medical workers)”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

The study shows that most of the elderly placed in **institutions reveal a certain state of safety and an improvement of their problems**. This is acknowledged and appreciated: *“We like staying here, it’s clean and we are well-fed..., I do not bother to cook”*; *“My wife died here. We have to like it as there is no other place for us to go”*; *“They feed us, they wash us and take good care of us”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

The situation of people who lived on the streets for a period of time is also special. These ones particularly value the existence of daily safety: *“I am not living anymore at railway stations as I used before. This is it. I can say that I have a family here, a bigger one. The asylum is the one that buries us”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

The study allows us to conclude that the elderly have a certain strategy of minimizing the weight of the problems that appeared after their children left abroad for work – replacing parents for their grandchildren, instability, and suffering. The elderly continue to behave as nothing happened, with a philosophical approach accepting the routine of their life: *“we just have to do it and we are getting used to this, who will be able to carry our weight? The sins are ours, we had a good time in our life but there is also suffering that we have to accept”* (III_E_5); *“when I was at home I felt younger, I was still able to work and I had a different lifestyle but it’s over now”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

BOX 4**Case study. The story of a business man that ended up on the streets later in his old age (FG_E_3_urban_asylum)**

lon, 75 years old, told us: *“At first I opened a bakery to sell bread. I was making money, but it was little. Then we decided to start baking other products... The business was going well. Then I had to switch to sausages...I had to sell my apartment and I invested everything in my business. I bought the necessary equipment for 850 thousand lei..., but those bandits took away my business. I went from trial to trial; I was beaten and cut...”*

Afterwards, when they took my business I had nowhere to go. I began spending the nights at the railway station and my feet were stiff because I had to sleep on concrete. At a certain point, I wanted to get up but I could not. So the woman who was cleaning the place helped me stand up and she called an ambulance and the police...”

Thus, the problems that the elderly whose children migrated have to face are multiple and complex. Their gravity is closely related to the degree of affection between parents and children. When children take care of their own parents, when they frequently communicate and send remittances or pay their fees, or in the case of institutionalized elderly, problems related to life and age are eased. If children fail to get involved in the life of their parents, the abandonment and the deprivation of a dwelling lead to the loss of physical and financial autonomy of the elderly and often to their institutionalization. The more independent the person is the more adequate the elderly perceives the gravity of the problems that could affect him/her. The institutionalization that still requires a basic fee also implies isolation from the external environment that leads to an erroneous perception of reality.

- **The way migrant family members perceive problems (according to the opinion of the elderly)**

A great number of children abroad, according to the elderly, feel deeply responsible for their family members who remained at home: both children and elderly, and their responsibilities refer to the care that they need and financial support when appropriate. Regardless of the extent to which they get involved and provide support, the interviewed people mention the interests of those who left: *“I tell him that it’s hard for us at our age and with our diseases and my poor son, he just sighs at the telephone and we tell him that we don’t have enough money but he also knows that we are not big spenders and we have to go on living”* (III_E_5); *“generally speaking, they understand everything I say, they tell me to stay in and watch the TV and to dig no more in the garden as I already have a hump on my back”* (III_E_16). This situation is relevant for some institutionalized elderly: *“father, we are*

doing well and we will help you when you'll be in the asylum. I had some problems with my legs for three years and I lost one foot, it was cut at the hospital and they brought me here, to the asylum because at home there was nobody who would take care of me. I have no wife..." (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

There are many cases, also highlighted by the study, when **labour migrant children are not aware of the situation of their parents**. The story of an institutionalized elderly man aged 75 whose child is abroad for work is quite relevant. When he came to visit his parent *"he started asking me to give him money because he wanted to get married and to buy a studio"*. The parent was ignored because of the immaturity of his child: *"Victor is 29 years old and he asked me to give him money and I told him: "Do you think I have it? Don't you see where I am right now?" And he said: "But dad, you had your own business." Yes, there were times when I had money, but I have nothing now. He got upset"* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

Expressive are the cases that show **indifference towards one's own parents**, cases that are frequently met by institutionalized people. The elderly are aware of the lack of interest from their labour migrant children: *"I want to say that my daughter is not calling me and is not interested in my situation at all. She has no compassion for me, how could she do something like that to me, she never called me to ask how I'm doing, where and how I live – nothing"; "Children don't want to know anything about us, I used to tell my younger daughter: "Tonya, I'll die and you won't even know where my grave is, because you never answer the phone..."* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

It is important to mention that the **perception of problems the elderly face is related to their social status and general family situation**. A high social status of the elderly leads to high receptivity towards his/her own health and daily issues. The subjects that are of major interest to them are health, food and the help they need. A low social status of the elderly leads to abandonment, neglect or superficial and occasional involvement in their life by their labour migrant children, which often leads to their placement in residential institutions.

The existence of grandchildren in old people's care increases the receptivity level towards the situation at home of their children abroad. Communication by phone, Internet, remittances and periodical visits are the forms that they show their care and interest. Their means, length and frequency vary in most cases depending on the situations of those abroad. In this regard, the area of children's attention widens comprising all the grandchildren's problems that are cared for by the grandparents. Still, there are cases of parental immaturity that represent an exception: *"Let me tell you straight, you know she doesn't want to know anything about the children or my health. She just asks me how am I doing and that is all. It's like these kids are not her own"* (III_E_12) and the disappearance of those who left abroad: *"My*

daughter left with her husband abroad and left their little girl with me. They left in September 1996 to Moscow. In July 1997 we received the last telegram and since then we do not know anything about them. Their daughter was one year and seven months old then. She will be soon 16” (III_E_18).

When the perception of problems that parties have to face (those at home and those abroad) has a **bilateral character** the appearance of some idealization or elements of sacrifice can be observed: *“In Moscow they would not get the same salary as a [Russian] citizen would and we know that, it’s less and we know that they are working even during nights. I call them at 2 or 3 am and they say that they are still at work and when they come back home there is not even enough money to pay the rent, the utilities and to support children, money for their school” (III_E_2).*

The study highlighted the **aspect of hiding certain problems that the elderly face** from their children abroad, which is determined by their wish to protect them as well as their awareness of the impossibility to get involved in the distant settlement of problems: *“Why would we tell them about that, so that they would get sick? Our children do not tell us everything that burdens their minds” (III_E_24).*

As a conclusion, it is important to note that it is essential for children abroad to understand the problems of the elderly at home. It is also essential for their physical and psychological well-being and for their autonomy or dependency. Children who have developed a strong sense of duty towards their parents get involved in their life. In these cases, a healthy and positive emotional relationship also has a positive impact on the physical condition of the elderly. The detachment from their own parents and the lack of any involvement in their life shows selfishness and a lack of traditional family values.

1.2. Psychological and social effects of migration

Children

- **Children's emotional condition**

Emotions play an important role in children's life and development: they help them to understand reality and to form a relationship with it. Expressed by their behaviour, they inform the adult about the things they like, dislike or make them sad.

The qualitative research that we conducted allows us to identify the impact of migration on the **sensitivity of children** who are left without parental care due to labour migration. The data that we managed to collect proves that the family has the unique quality to influence the utmost part of a child's life, having a strong impact on their **attachment between them and their parents** as well as on **primary emotional processes that rule a family's life and the development of a child's personality**. The psychological perspective of the emotional deprivation demonstrates that the lack of communication with the mother, the lack of emotional contact have a direct impact not only on their physical development but may also cause certain disorders in physical and, first of all, in a child's emotional development. This is the cause of a premature development of negative behaviour in a person (fear, mental affective conditions and communication barriers).

A range of specific needs of children are not met such as security, affection, and safety which explains the negative emotions experienced by children left alone as a result of migration. The absence of one parent or both of them triggers the appearance of emotional weaknesses as the contact between them and their parents is rare and temporarily broken. The effects of the lack of affection grow even more seriously and more irreversible if the absence of parents last in time.

Parents' departure strongly affects the child and is intensely felt: *"I feel lonely and I miss them so much"* (III_C_28); *"I cried, I didn't want her to leave, I didn't want to be left alone"* (III_C_8).

Sadness and longing are felt by children in certain circumstances and are caused by the absence of their parents, their mother's affection, the provision of a secure environment: *„When you are all alone and you are coming back home, you enter the house and you feel that the house is empty and there is nothing to do there. When there is at least somebody in, you can talk to him during dinner, but otherwise you eat alone. And you have no appetite"* (FG_C_2_rural); *„We, especially the girls, need our mother's affection. There is no one to talk to"*; *"Sometimes, if you're alone with your sister or brother various conflicts may arise but if a parent would be home, he/she would solve them"* (FG_C_2_rural). The labour migration of parents

creates an unfavourable situation for children as they are deprived of their relationship with adults from whom they would be able to learn the art of affectivity. Emotional deprivation has a negative impact on children of labour migrant parents. This deprivation is revealed through anxiety, guilt and mistrust to adults, the incapacity to establish constructive social relations, etc. Children who have to face the absence of one or both of their parents live in discomfort caused by the incapacity to meet their security and emotional needs.

A number of interviewed children named several types of behaviour that they adopted trying „to hold their parents home”: they cried, asked them not to leave, hid their air ticket, etc. The survey shows that some children used magic to bring their parents home: „Do you believe in Father Christmas (traditionally brings presents in Moldova.)? *I believe in Santa Claus! I even wrote him a letter and I told him that I would like to have the same thing that other children have. I would like to have both of my parents home, together. I would wish that Santa Claus would give my mom a ticket so that she would be able to come home. I also asked him to give me a PC or a notebook for me to do my homework even better. Why do you believe in Santa Claus but do not believe in Father Christmas? Because Father Christmas is only dressed up while Santa is real, I understood that when watching the TV, from my cartoons*” (III_C_8).

The first **shock** caused by their parents' departure is substituted by a **feeling of revolt**: *“well... I feel sad, unpleasant. I feel like there is a revolt in my soul because I knew they were leaving only because of me, so that they will be able to educate me and to give me everything I need”* (III_C_16). The data of the survey proves how essential the role of the family is, especially the role of the mother in a favourable development of a child. Maternal deprivation is expressed through isolation, estrangement, separation, anxiety, which disadvantages the harmonious development of a child and generates psychological disturbances with characteristics of development restraint.

The separation influences, first of all, moral and psychological development of a child's personality and causes a child's anxiety. The feeling of insecurity is specific to children who already went through the separation from their parents. They show fear towards physical loneliness, caused by the fact that their parents are not there for them, as well as the feeling of insecurity when building interpersonal relations with their peers.

The results of the study prove that the emotional life of children who are deprived of parental care as a consequence of migration is characterized by **disappointment, feeling of being lied to and betrayed**: *„When she left she actually lied to us by saying that she is going to Chisinau because she had something to do... Then we found out that she left for Italy. I felt abandoned, as if I have lost a friend, the help and support I had... I wrote a poem about that:*

*“You are going far my mother,
 Somewhere so far away,
 I am telling you, my mother
 We will not forget you, pray...
 I will shed my tears all day and night
 And I'll continue praying
 For you to be ok
 Wherever you will stay.
 Now stop and think about it,
 There is only a minute left,
 To go away and leave us,
 To say good-bye to us...
 A last and only second,
 A last and only pain,
 I will hold you now and tell you,
 Good buy my beloved mother.
 No matter what – we will love you,
 And we will be there forever,
 To wait for you together,
 At our lonely house” (III_C_19).*

The results of the study show that children of labour migrant parents do not have the emotional experiences necessary for a harmonious development of personality. A child's mind has a continuous necessity of emotional fulfillment. Intense negative emotions that are experienced by children of migrant parents significantly influence their mental health, reduce their life potential and limit the development of relations based on trust and affection. Children who are separated from their parents and rarely experience positive emotions stop developing their competencies of managing their excitement as well as ensuring a normal functionality of all their systems.

Some children (especially those who have both parents abroad) mention that they **feel deprived of any help and guidance**; *„the fact that my mom was not around and she couldn't give me the advice that I needed“*; *„sometimes you feel that you need their help, their advice when you are trying to find a way out“* (FG_C_2_rural). The child's reaction can be explained by the fact that his/her need for attachment is a biological one, an inherited one and has the aim to help them survive; it is part of our genetic adaptation, representing a prerequisite to the best emotional development. The **biological mother represents the “primary reference person”, the “primary matrix” (including mother, father, sister, brother if there are any) and the “security niche”**. The attachment relation with the mother develops simultaneously with the attachment with the other family members. The children's reaction to long-term separation from their main attachment person is, at first, shown through protest, despair and finally detachment,

while the return of this person may cause indifference or even hostility. These life experiences that bear a stressful character hinder children's normal psychological development: they weaken the development of social relations, raise difficulties in the perception of new situations, reduce the possibility of developing social competencies, determine the development of self-identity weaknesses, etc.

While talking about the feelings that they experience regarding the fact that their parents are abroad, some children motivate their state of **happiness** due to increased financial possibilities and gained liberty: „*we have the possibility to buy more things. I can buy what I want more often as before. I can have the things I want*”; „*more freedom*” (FG_C_2_rural). This kind of position that children adopt denotes a false perception of liberty.

Some children felt happy at first because of the decrease of their parents' control but at last, they understood the seriousness of the separation from their migrant parents. The fact that children are happy, because they got the opportunity to feel free, reveals their tendency to find a compensatory explanation for their frustration and internal conflicts caused by the separation. Depriving children of a family environment constitutes an essential share for their moral and spiritual development. These peculiarities are more obvious when speaking about the institutionalized children. Unfavourable contacts with close adults lead to the feeling of discomfort, danger and instability. The psychology of memory demonstrates that memories bearing a positive charge remain for a longer period in one's mind in comparison to those bearing a negative one. Emotional memories are meant to develop in time. Thus at first the reproduction of emotional experiences is intense, afterwards it fades. These observations would explain the **emotional distancing between parents and children who are subject to separation**.

Meanwhile the results of the study allowed us to highlight several **peculiarities of emotional processes** experienced by children who are left without parental care as a consequence of their parents' migration abroad for work:

The polarity of emotional processes, that is shown in their tendency to gravitate either around the positive pole or the negative one, a tendency that emerged as a result of the differentiated satisfaction or non-satisfaction of a child's needs and aspirations. The polarity is revealed by the pleasant or unpleasant, sthenic or asthenic character of the emotional states of children who are left without parental care as a result of their parents' migration. Thus, regardless of the fact that most of children left behind by their family members indicated **happiness and satisfaction** as emotions they experience intensely when their mother/father/parents return home. We noticed that the same situation arose **opposite emotions**

to other children: „...if their parents left them with their grandparents or even alone at home and left abroad ... they are alone and they are their own masters, they do whatever they want to... that is why **they are not so happy when their parents are home and tell them what to do**” (FG_C_3_rural). The results of the study reveal the decrease and even the extinction of any attachment between some children and their parents, the habit of living in a new kind of family (a family with one or both parents abroad) and the child's unwillingness to take instructions and to bear responsibility.

In some cases parents are seen by their own children as a source of discomfort, guidance and control, as a stress factor that the child is trying to avoid. Here is an example of what a girl confessed: „We have to admit that there are children who are not happy when their parents come home. I met a girl this week who told me that her mother was coming home next week and she would make her do her chores and would keep bothering her. They are happy. It is obvious that you want your mother to hold you, to feel her warmth, to feel parental love, to hear her saying “ I love you so much, my dear”, but sometimes there are cases when they say „**I want her to leave because I am so tired of her**” (FG_C_3_rural). Keeping adequate relations between parents and children who have already experienced the separation phenomenon is a difficult process. In this context, the efforts that adults are taking are of extreme importance. Children feel the need to be understood, they are expecting their mother to show empathy.: „When she returned home the previous time I was getting tired of her, she was always telling me what to do, this and that, but when she returned this time I just couldn't get enough of her. I just did not want her to leave. I think that she just started to understand me, she did not forbid me to do things that she was forbidding me to do when she returned the previous time and I liked that. She did not stay long, only for 4 days. **Can it be the reason why you did not get tired of her this time?** No, it's not about that, she used to stay for 2 or 3 days before, but she was asking me to do things that I didn't want to, but this time she just understood me, I like the way we just sat and talked” (III_C_4). The consequences of the voluntary “rupture” of parents from their children can be disastrous and can lead to the breakdown of mutual emotional link, which can affect the child and his/her parents. Sometimes the adult migrant adjusts to a different lifestyle and **distances him/herself from his/her own family.**

The results of the study emphasize the fact that children do not like unexpected changes as these can lead to the failure of their balance, while slow changes are not possible because of the repeated departure of their parents. This conclusion was supported by one of the experts from the rural area: „I witnessed the following case. The mother is abroad for a couple of years and when the girl was little she suffered a lot because of her mother's absence and when asked if she missed her mother she used to answer affirmatively... Now

that she is a young lady I asked her a month ago if she wants her mother to come back and she said **no, she would better stay there**. She changed her opinion because she realized that her mother could impose some limits on her” (FG_EC_rural).

The answers of some respondents prove that frequent and long-term parents’ departure generates a **decrease in emotional sensibility of the child towards their absence**. As a result children left behind by their migrated family members had to adjust to a new situation, the one where his/her „**parents who travel to work**” and **children who are not emotionally responding** to this event: “my parents always come and go and it became **a habit for me**. You cope with the idea that this is the way it has to be and you usually get used, **you just don’t feel it when they come or go**, it’s something that I got used to” (III_C_10).

If the attachment is poor children make use of self-defence mechanisms showing emotional coldness towards their mothers: „when she went away for the first time... I used to say that she does not know where she is going and I started crying, but the second time... **I cried for two days and that’s all**, while now **I forgot about her**, and sometimes, when I remember, I look at her pictures. **My elder brothers don’t even think about her**, my brother keeps saying silly things, my sister sometimes thinks about her and anyway she’s more attached to our father. When my mother left for the first time my sister just started to speak...” (III_C_10).

Speaking about the development of **new attachment relations with the caregivers** while their parents are abroad, we could notice that at this stage there is a transition from their parents as being main people of attachment to the final development of a **new set of attachment relations** (other people, objects, places, etc.). Thus, some children explain and even justify their adjustment behaviour: „well, it happened with me when my mom came back home... I was coming from school and **instead of going home, I went to our neighbour**. Therefore, there is a kind of a reflex. I opened the door, I came in, I put down my bag and I started to change my clothes and my neighbour said: „Did you move with me, again? I said “I didn’t realize”. I got used with her. I went home and I told my mother what have happened and she started laughing” (III_C_13).

Interviewed experts noticed a correlation between the length of a mother’s absence and the degree of estrangement of her child from her: „a teacher who is working as a Court inspector in Nisporeni... she told me that his mother gave him everything he needed but was absent for many years. When she came back **he was not accepting her as a mother anymore** because he got used to live alone” (FG_EC_rural).

Another characteristic feature that was revealed during the study regard-

ing the emotional processes that children left behind experience was the **intensity**. The power, the force, the profoundness of **separation and loneliness as emotional experiences** shown as a **continuous longing** (in Romanian language “dor”) was expressed by the majority of children. The study shows the direct and/or indirect presence of the longing of children for their parents in most cases. Their answers prove that the intensity of their emotional experiences depend on the emotional value that parents have for their children as well as on child’s emotional capacity.

We concluded that some children experience severe **emotions derived from the separation from their parents** and the way they perceive their own family. This observation is also true for children who continue living in their families as well as for those who are institutionalized after their parents’ departure. For instance, the essays on the topic of family reflect their intense emotional excitement linked to the trauma they experienced when separating from one or both of their parents: „*A rock full of darkness and a candle that is about to fade is my family now. Even if my aunt and uncle are close I miss my mother’s soft glow of her hazel eyes and her soft lips smile. I live with the idea that in 6 months or maybe a year, they will be back, and I pray to God to give them force, patience, health to get home safe. My family is like an altar with no chancel – I have a family but I miss my mom’s sweet words and my father’s powerful voice. You cannot even imagine how much I want to have a family to feel happy, but now, if the possibility is not there I just sit all day long and live a dream: that my parents are home again. You, who have a family, take good care of it as if you lose you will never be able to regain it again*” (E_13_14 years old_female_family).

The content of the stories told by children denote that they are scared of loneliness, a feeling that can be explained in psychoanalysis by the fear of losing their parents. The lack of love, attention and appreciation from their parents is felt intensely. The children’s emotional experience is very important for the personality in their childhood. The children’s affectivity is deprived from the care of their family because of their parent’s migration. The emotional lack, as shown by the data of the qualitative research appears as a disturbing condition that finally leads to frustration and emotional stiffness. In order to free themselves of the emotional burden they experience because of separation they write poems, thus expressing their emotions:

A Poem for Parents

*I look through the window
And I wait for them to come
So that our house will be filled again
With happiness, smiles and bread for the table.
I want to see my mother sewing*

*On the bed near our stove,
 To see my father happily singing
 At weddings again.
 I want to see them smiling
 I want to see them happy,
 I want to be with them to know we are smiling
 I want them here, I want them near.
 I want them to come home
 To see their children who have grown,
 I want to tell my mother: do your best meal!
 I want to tell my father: Come back faster from your deal!
 I am waiting for the moment
 When they will soon be here
 I want them to cross the border
 So that we would be all near*

(E_13_14 years_female_family).

Long-term separation constitutes a severely traumatic experience bearing immediate or late effects on the intrapsychic development of a child and on the process of his social integration. Parents represent a predominant concern for children left behind. They tend to recall their life in a “united” family, they often think about their parents, they want to see them, talk to them and they want to be together with them again.

The increase and decrease of the emotional intensity is gained through the shift of affectionate feelings of parents or the person with whom the child lives. Thus, the interviewed experts mentioned that the gap between parents and their children is obvious. Emotional decrease in the relations between children home alone and their parents abroad is reflected in children’s behaviour: *“children become irritable, stressed, their mother is not there to cook for them, even if they buy ready-to-serve food, they don’t feel their mother’s warmth the way they used to... Even if they talk to their mother she can tell them things but she can’t do anything from where she is, not even hold her children or tell them a good night story, they communicate by Internet but the distance is always there”* (FG_EC_rural). As a result of separation, the amount and the quality of the relationship with the parents change. Psychology shows that painful experiences in the family create the basis of a special character of children, called „**the basis of anxiety**”. In this case, the child develops feelings of helplessness and abandonment, the child is prone to the fear of finding him/herself among people, is open to committing offences, deception, attacks, anger, betrayal and envy. The more the child hides his discontent towards his family the more obvious his discontent is. The child loses confidence in his own forces, becomes aggressive and is unable to defend himself.

Another peculiarity unveiled by the research refers to the **length of the emotional experiences** felt by children left behind. We concluded that most of the interviewed children strongly express **longing for their mother, father, parents, the happiness to meet them again and sadness when they leave again**. These emotions persist in time, regardless if the people who caused them are present or not. This peculiarity is of great importance as by permanent nourishment of the emotional significance of a stimulus (a concrete person for a child), the child can maintain a healthy emotional attitude towards it.

The essay *My family* (a distant prospect) reveals children's long-term emotions, attitude and aspirations, fed by moment feelings. The child compensates through her reveries not only her family that she misses at the moment but also her emotional family relationship: *"I can almost see them waiting for me at the door with their eyes full of tears and reaching for us to hold us and kiss us with longing and love and I can see them being happy that they have us and I can see them praying to the icon every single night and us eating home-made bread. What a wonderful word the family is"* (E_36_14 year old_female_boarding school).

This feature is also true when speaking about the relationship with the caregiver not only with parents: *„when I was 7 months old my father left me. I grew up with my grandmother and I still live with my grandparents and can give you only advice to love your grandparents as much as they love you, and never leave them no matter what happens"* (E_63_16 year old_male_boarding school). The emotional maturity or immaturity is determined by the relationship children have had with their parents or caregivers. The possibility to communicate with parents, to meet the need of security through the means of favourable family relations represents a premise to the development of a morally healthy person, harmoniously, socially and mentally developed and able to keep their positive emotions towards their parents or caregivers. A person who is emotionally immature is easily susceptible, vulnerable and socially unadjusted.

The results of the research denote that some children feel happy with their grandparents who take care of them; nevertheless they continue to deeply suffer from the separation from their parents. For instance a girl 13 years old confesses: *"I live with my grandparents right now. My mother and father are abroad and I miss them very much. I stay with my grandparents for 12 years and I am happy with them. Still, I am waiting every day for my mom to get back. I must be very happy to have such great grandparents who take care of me since I was 1 year old"*.

You are far away, my mother

*Even if you're gone,
I love you very much,*

*I wake up and I fall asleep
 With your picture next to me.
 I wrote to you and I cried
 And my life is so hard,
 I cannot live without you
 I cry at night, I miss you.
 I wait for you, my mother
 I will always wait for you
 I will never stop crying
 Until I see you.*

(E_22_13 years old_female_family).

Another problem that is strongly felt by children is related to the lack of their parents' emotional involvement in appreciating the efforts their children take, support when they fail, the impossibility of parents' emotional participation in events children think to be important. Children wish to celebrate **together with their parents**, to feel their empathy, support and affection when succeeding in something: „when you're getting an award at school or you're being nominated a diploma you just feel that there is no one who is happy for you" (FG_C_2_rural). Similar cases are met by experts. A rural kindergarten teacher says: „I know a girl whose mother is abroad, and you know how it happens ... there are feasts and matinees that we have here and there are many mothers who come to see their children acting, but when this girl saw that her mother is not there she started crying... then the teacher took her aside and calmed her down... She is alone, there is no one to dress her up, to prepare her, take good care of her..." (FG_EC_rural). Children living in urban areas have a similar reaction. For instance, a primary school teacher considers "**psychological stress**" a consequence of parental migration: "... children whose parents are abroad stay with their grandparents or relatives, elder sisters or brothers. During their adjustment period, they are taken to school. Most of children whose parents are abroad feel the pain of not being taken home by their mother or father and this can be seen through their nervousness during extracurricular activities, for instance during winter feasts there are many parents who come to see their children on the stage, but those who are alone have no one to come to look after them" (FG_EC_urban).

Children are frustrated not only because of the impossibility to get affection but also because they are not able to give it back. „There are children who celebrate International Women's Day (the equivalent of Mother's Day) when all children congratulate their mothers while the little ones who are alone have to suffer because they are giving the gifts they make to their grandmothers or elder sisters" (FG_C_2_rural).

The study indicates that parents also represent an **anxiety and fear source** for children: „I'm really concerned about my mother's health", „I hear a lot

*of cases when parents get into accidents or return very sick and this is what scares me the most”, „I was at school and I started a fight with Adrian and the police arrived what **scared me** was the fact they may bring my mom back in the country because of that” (III_C_5).*

Children’s **sadness, revolt and puzzlement** is also caused by the **impossibility to communicate and maintain direct relations with their parents**. Remote communication bears another connotation for a child. The study proves that children protest towards the absence of one or both parents and towards the impossibility to communicate with them directly. They **protest by avoiding and refusing to communicate**: *„I know a case where the mother left abroad, the child lived with the father, she asks him what to send, what kind of toys and he says that he doesn’t want anything he just wants her to come back home and when they talk through Skype he always runs away because he doesn’t want to see her on the Internet but he wants to see her home”; „Sometimes they don’t want to talk on the phone with them, those who are very small, and when you ask them why they just ask you “Why they do not want to come back?” (FG_EC_rural). The children’s behaviour expresses their emotions and their attitude related to their parents departure. The ways children **express the protest** vary: *„my daughter left for Italy and my grand son was 2 years old. He couldn’t speak yet but was constantly sighing” (FG_EC_rural).**

The children’s **emotional demonstrations** noticed and recorded in their behaviour during the research confirm their intense emotions connected to their parents’ migration: children were introvert, nostalgic, were crying or had tears in their eyes, were hiding their look, etc. These observations were seen by the interviewed experts during the children’s daily activities: *„if both of their parents would have been at home they would not be so shy, so introvert. But now that their parents are abroad for 4-5 years I noticed that they are not talkative, they’re always shy.... If you want to ask them something their eyes get filled with tears...” (FG_EC_rural). Their meetings with their parents are very emotional: „and I’ve waited for those two days to pass and then I went to meet my mom, and **when I looked at her, I turned pale**. I could not believe that it was my mother, she changed her hair colour. I thought she was somewhere outside. When I saw her I started crying” (III_C_12). Sometimes their emotions are expressed in the way they are waiting for their parents, in their **behaviour**: *„I don’t know why she didn’t come. She called and said she was coming home and **I have waited for her at the station but she didn’t come” (III_C_10).****

The parents’ situation abroad influences their children’s emotional life. A lot of children associated the state of their parents with the *feeling of loneliness, isolation, uncertainty, helplessness, lack of protection, sadness, the lack of support and the absence of their family, they are just lost. „I*

think that it's not very easy for my mom to be without us and I wrote a poem about that:

*What fate my Lord has given me,
 To wander among strangers,
 To live away from my house,
 That makes my life so heavy,
 And late at night I pray,
 To God to give me force,
 And to take good care of me,
 And to get home to you,
 It is so hard for me,
 I miss my house, my daughter, my baby
 And it is only He
 That knows how hard it is for me.
 I cry and pray along
 To God to take good care
 Of you, I know it is hard
 For all of you,
 I know you pray a lot
 For me to almighty God
 And when I call you
 I tell you that I love you,
 And everything is good,
 And I want to be near...
 I promise, it is soon
 That I will come back to you.
 I want to come back home,
 But money won't allow me to...
 There is nothing you can do
 If you have no money on you,
 And there are enemies all around you,
 No matter where you go.
 I know, when I'm with you
 There is nothing they can do
 As our love is stronger,
 And foes exist no longer" (III_C_19).*

The study lists **emotional issues** that parents abroad have to face, according to their children. The interviewed stated that their parents also *miss them; they also suffer and are anxious and stressed*. Children left behind bring the following arguments: parents worry for their family members at home, they are among strangers, they feel lonely, they are affected and stressed because they are away from their home: „*They are alone there... among*

strangers, people turn their backs at them..., but here there are three of us and we support each other while the person who left must be very lonely and stressed”; „They suffer because they worry about their children left alone”; „They are continuously stressed because at any moment they may get a call and find out that their child has burnt down the house” (FG_C_2_rural).

If talking about mothers who raise their children alone as a result of paternal migration some behaviour changes are noticed. A mother tends to support her child, considering him/her as an emotional support, thus involving him/her in adult interaction structures for which the child is not sufficiently prepared: *„I don't want to have a father, I got used to my mother. I know that the two of us are getting along, and I do not need anybody else to come and tell us what to do. We are not used and we know what to do without somebody else telling it to us” (FG_C_2_rural).* Children cannot express their feelings and conflict emotions; nevertheless they can demonstrate various forms of “hidden” reactions, which might result in some nervous behaviour.

The stories told by the interviewees prove that children experience negative emotions caused by their parents' departure abroad which also deprived them of certain customs, values and important family habits: *„I remember that when I was sick as a young child my mom cooked something and my father just comforted me and I remember that when he left I got sick and asked “where's my daddy? I want my daddy back!”, and then I called him and we talked and he calmed me down and I got better” (III_C_2); “he doesn't call us or send us any parcels and he doesn't tell us where he is... We talked on the phone really long ago... He is not calling us anymore. He did not even call me on my birthday. My aunt always congratulates me and Lady Helen (another aunt) made me a cake. I could not blow all the candles. Only two of them left” (III_C_12).* These examples prove that parental behaviour has an inconsistent and unpredictable character and the attachment has an alarming character. Besides, children undertake inadequate models of domestic relationships that risk to be re-applied in their future families.

The emotional condition of children left behind as a consequence of migration **sometimes overpasses the limits of emotional balance**. Thus, some experts stated that: *“children whose parents are abroad are **very violent and aggressive** and display undesirable behaviour” (FG_EC_urban).*

Not all the children can cope with their situation. The respondent confessed to the interviewer that she **had recently an abortion** and she does not feel good. She got pregnant with her boyfriend whom she dates for a couple of years and this, according to her, is her **second abortion**. She passes through an acute state of uncertainty, fear, anxiety as well as the awareness of her maturity in taking decisions. The need for emotional and maternal support is

obvious. The girl is alone, having to face a problem that will have a long-term impact on both moral and physical health of the minor.

BOX 5
Case study on abortions among children left behind as a consequence of parental labour migration (III_C_17)

Daniela, a 17 year old girl from the rural area who currently lives with her aunt, both of her parents are abroad. When her parents left she was not asked an opinion. Today her situation has worsened. The interviewed confesses that a lot has changed in her life: *“I became even more closed up. I know that I should talk more, but this is what I need”*. At only 17 years old she got pregnant with her boyfriend whom she has been dating for a couple of years. According to her, her parents do not know about it. *“I suffer a lot, I have to take all decisions by myself and I’m scared. I have no one to talk to and I do not know if what I am doing is good or wrong. Nevertheless, everything will be just fine in a little while because my boyfriend is coming home for the winter holidays. I talk to him a lot”*.

The discussions with a teacher whom an interviewed girl trusts highlighted that *„when her parents are not at home she’s taking care of the household by herself and her grandmother cannot help her as she lives in another part of the village. Sometimes at night, Natalia hears voices and sees shadows and when that happens she covers her head with the blanket and tries to fall asleep again”*. The effects caused by the separation from their parents are alarming and prove the intense negative experiences that children of migrant parents are going through, experiences that influence considerably children’s mental health. It can be asserted that the absence of a mother is tolerated less by a growing child and has long-term consequences.

The results of the study stress **frequent child abuse cases**. Even if the **neglect and emotional abuse** cause severe damage to the mental and personality development of a child these types of abuse are being tolerated or justified by the absence of parents, their poor situation, situational behaviour, etc. Still, according to the results of the study some children left behind experience physical and sexual abuse, and even suicide attempts. For instance one of the respondents had hidden this experience but noted that her dream is to “escape Moldova”. This can be explained by the **transfer of her negative emotions** towards the aggressor. Her **tendency to move away from her aggressor** was clarified during a discussion with her friend.

The experiences of another respondent allowed us to reveal the mental traumas caused by **sexual abuse**. This case of incest highlighted the problem of a mother’s indifference towards her child who had previously gone through an experience of abuse; moreover she left her child in the care of her abuser, her stepfather. The girl, the victim of a sexual abuse misses her very much (see Box 7).

BOX 6**Case Study. Suicide attempts among children with labour migrant parents (III_C_22)**

Her friend told us:

„Maria committed two suicide attempts but she failed because the first time her rope broke and the second time I don't remember what exactly happened. Why? Because her father is exploiting her, she has to work a lot, he often beats her. She has no time to rest because her father is used to come home at 2-3 am and he wakes her up and shouts at her, and in the morning he wakes her up to feed the animals and the poultry. When she's asleep she often shudders and she's very scared”.

Below there is one of her messages that the girl sends to her friend—she often writes this kind of messages:

„I would not wish for anybody else to have a life like mine. I cannot stand the pain and I cannot live with a fool like him. I am going crazy. I don't want to live, nobody cares about me, and I'm all alone”.

BOX 7**Case Study. Sexual abuse among children left behind by labour migrant parents (III_C_24)**

Elena, a 12 year old girl confessed to the interviewer:

“It is so hard without my mother; when she's near things go different. It is good that I found out that there are people who can take care of us. There are good and bad people... My life, if compared to other children's life is determined by the presence of my mother and children's attitude depends on the presence of their parents. When children have their mom near she can give them so much love (while she was talking about her mother she continuously cried)”.

When did the abuse happen?

“After 12 – 17 days that my mom left, that's when I was sexually abused. It was after my birthday party. I told my aunt Ana, my brother, I spoke to mom on the phone, to aunt Maria, to my uncle”.

Do you think that it was something planned?

“I don't know. But there was another abuse situation in 2008. My brother was at home and he told my mother everything he saw. My mom was about to leave, she gathered all her things to go but he convinced her to stay, and he said it will not happen again. My stepfather threatened me that if I tell anything he will be sent to prison”.

What bothers you the most? What makes you feel unhappy?

“There are things in my life that I find unpleasant as the presence of my stepfather. He is looking for us even now. One day, when I was going to school there was a man who started talking to me. He told me that he has a daughter in Italy and she sends him clothes and he can give me some, too. I understood that he was sent by my stepfather. He told me to go with him to the spring to show me something. I quickly entered the bus and I ran away. I told everything to my teacher and she told me that if it happens again I'd need to come to school accompanied by somebody from the Centre...”.

Experts say that as a result of the parents' migration, children: *“change their way of thinking, when they are teenagers it is not as obvious as when they are little children, preschoolers, school students... Psychologically speaking children suffer a lot because of their family breakup, the absence of one parent or both parents... Children, especially little one are strongly affected by the breakup of couples”* (FG_EC_rural).

We can conclude that the impact of migration on children's emotions is shown through:

- The lack of parental care and affection that has a powerful impact on the development of a child personality;
- Children left behind as a consequence of labour migration are in permanent need of emotional saturation. This need is not fulfilled and the lack of emotional saturation is reflected in the children's behaviour;
- The emotional content of children left behind – their specific emotions prove that the most important functions of the family are affected, functions that are essential in the development of a child's personality:
 - **Psychological function:** providing emotional support, a favourable environment of therapeutic effect, security needs, protection, including mutual help based on equity, respect and love between partners, parents and children, brothers and sisters;
 - **Identity function,** ensuring the feeling of belonging and cohesion, the development of a personal identity, close relationship between spouses and children, through the transfer of inherited capital: the name, resources, family stories, customs according to the genealogical principle;
 - **Children's socialization function,** meant to ensure the children's care and development, learning and education processes within the family and adequate conditions for children's education and professional training;
- Emotional disadvantage – During extended influence of a stressful character stable and negative emotions and experiences are emerging (traditionally called emotional disadvantage). Emotional disadvantage aggravates the process of mental development of a child, it hinders the establishment of positive relationships based on mutual trust with other people, taking on new social roles and the development of affective communication;
- Children who grow up without love and spiritual closeness from their family (deprived of normal emotional attachment) are generally passive, indifferent, incapable to know or exploit the world and they will spend their emotional energy in search of emotional security;

- The poems written by children left behind, their drawings, essays, messages, and their personal diaries represent a way of expressing their feelings.

- **Self-image and self-perception**

The **self-image** of children without parental care as a consequence of migration and the **social perception** they get from other people are **interdependent**. The study allowed us to make a profile of the **self-image of children left behind**. The results provided by children regarding the representation and assessment of their situation were analysed. Although understanding they were left behind, children find positive moments that maintain a good self-perception.

BOX 8

My Family (present) (E_37_14 year old_male_boarding school)

My family is small and lonely. Everybody goes wherever they want to... My mom left Moldova and my father behaved badly and used to drink and that's why we started hanging around in this school. But we are both happy because we feel good here and we got to Drochia school. We also have some brothers abroad and they are far away from us as well as our mother, they are all far away from us.

The **self-perception of children left behind** is determined by comparing themselves to other people and foresees the setting of the value of their own world, of the meaning of social behaviour and individual characteristics. As a rule, the children we interviewed had a healthy self-perception, perceiving themselves as *self-confident, patient, sincere, hard-working, beautiful, smart, intelligent, powerful, kind-hearted, obedient, pure, talented*, etc.

Some children perceive themselves as being advantaged in comparison to the other children whose parents are not abroad. The participants of focus-group discussions stated that their parents' departure made them more *independent in their decision-making process, changed their financial status and they have a more vast experience*. Children's confidence and positive self-image derives from their appreciation of financial benefits: *"I feel that this is it, I have everything, I don't miss anything"* (III_C_13); *"because they left for our sake and I don't think they went there just for fun, but to give us a better future, to be well-educated"*; (FG_C_1_urban); *"we live more decently, there's maybe more experience in our life, we get to know more than our colleagues with parents do"* (FG_C_1_urban).

But many children take their parents migration as a **disadvantage**. It is obvious that this perception of their own reality has a strong impact

on the way they assess the situation and their self-image. „I don't think I'm advantaged by the fact that my parents are abroad for work, on the contrary I am experiencing great difficulties when it comes to problems that I have. There is no one to talk to about it. It is hard for me, because I have been living in a strange house for a very long time and I do not feel comfortable at all. It is not my house; I do not have a place of my own there. There's no place for me to adjourn somewhere to relax or to rest because her children and husband are everywhere...”(III_C_17); „I grew up prematurely, my childhood was stolen..., although I cannot say that I didn't have a childhood, I did, we went together to Moscow in summer when I was in first grade, so I saw the world... and then my little sister was born”(III_C_21); “since she has gone it just feels like the house is empty. For instance when we sit at the table my mom's place is always free and... (the child begins to cry)” (III_C_16); “In fact I think that I do not have a family” (III_C_17).

Children enlist the following **losses** they had as a result of parents' migration: childhood and education.

Some children think that migration caused more losses to their parents than to them. Thus, some children assert: „I think that our parents are losing more than we are. They are losing our childhood, as they do not see us growing up, I mean when they leave we are little and when they return they see us all grown up and they lose a lot of our life. We are not always telling them what happens here. They do not know the essential anyway, as we do not tell them” (FG_C_1_urban).

The results of the study prove that children deprived of parental care assess their life through a set of **emotional words**: *longing, pain, caress, advice, worries, sadness, hope, waiting, struggle, loneliness, hate, helplessness, lack of harmony, orphan*. This assessment has a strong impact on the self-image. Children feel quite sharply the absence of their parents and they express their feelings in a more or less obvious manner. A number of them demonstrate apathy that they cannot control while others become reticent, inhibited, reserved. This explains why in some cases the intensity of the children's emotions does not change significantly and their adjustment to all living conditions, in the absence of their parents, produces slowly. Only a small number of children grow up and manage to constructively adjust themselves to their new living conditions while the majority of children are not able to find sufficient strategies to cope. This is confirmed by the fact that emotions overwhelm them. There are individual differences, marked by the way the child reacts to separation, the frequency and the content of the communication between migrant parents and children and the age at which the children were separated from their parents.

BOX 9

Words that characterize the life of children of labour migrant parents (the opinion of children left behind and children whose parents are at home)

Longing (in Romanian language “dor”), *“I miss my parents a lot, and often I long for them and I can’t stop my tears. And when I miss them a lot I call them...”*

“Pain. *I feel a lot of pain, because there are a lot of parents who stay at home together with their children and have the possibility to stay home and to take care of them. I am aware that my parents want the best for me and I do my best not to disappoint them.”*

“Caress. *I don’t feel that I lack the caress... it is not there...”*

“Advice. *Their advice is very useful for me. I always take them into consideration and I cannot live without them.”*

“Sadness. *This is the word that comes to my mind, because it overshadows the soul when you feel the lack of your parents and you want more than anything in this world to have somebody to support you, to help you, whenever you need it. It happens to me quite often, especially when I need their support... but I understand the situation. I am not a very talkative person, I am a shy person. There are just moments that I need to step over and I always hope for a brighter future.”*

“Hope *is the word... it means that I hope... I hope that with time my parents will get back home and I will have a united family and we will never part again.”*

“The waiting. *Sometimes you just understand that everything is infinite and you cannot turn back time, it seems that is she has been gone forever. Still, when I hear my mom saying through the phone “Just wait a little more, my darling, I’ll be back” I understand that the waiting is a hope. I wait.”*

“The fight. *I fight because I wish a lot to be the winner of this fight, of this longing and sadness, because most of us live with their grandparents and we have to fight because life can take us all over the world and this is the reality we have to face.”*

“Indisposition. *That’s what I feel most often because I know they left because of me, because they want a better future for me, but I understand the troubles they have to go through and everything they do is for me, just for one child who sometimes wants to have everything. But with time, when you get to know things, you understand that doing something is not always that easy, it is difficult.”*

“Aggressiveness, *which also implies the lack of education. Children left behind behave differently, they are wilder. Their parents are not there to tell them “Don’t do this or that”. They are aggressive. I mean girls. Their mothers are not there to tell what they need to do and what not. There are many girls in our village, some of them are elder, but some of them are little. They do whatever you tell them to; there is no one to guide them. They behave differently with boys, for instance the fact that they are touched.”*

"Hunger. My best friend lives without her parents. Both of them are abroad. She comes to me everyday and she is starving. **Loneliness.** I also referred to her. It is often that she says "Come to my place or I can come to yours, because I'll go out of my mind."

"Hate. Sometimes she hates that her mother is not with her."

"Helplessness. I refer to children who have no parents, because when my mom was abroad I left with her and I did not feel lonely. Children whose parents are abroad must feel helpless, because no one, not even their grandparents, can tell them things that their parents will."

"Lonely. They can have a lot of friends, they can have everything but still they feel lonely without their parents' love. That is what I meant."

"Worries. Often children without parents can smile but nobody knows what is exactly happening deep down in their soul and how sad they feel. Some of them are optimists and they do not show everything they feel but the others just can't do so."

"Unbalanced. Kind of uneducated. What kind of education can a child left behind get? He may take after his friends but this is not education, this is just doing something that everybody does."

"Orphans. That is how a child feels whenever he/she sees children with parents but he/she is alone. The child feels like an orphan although he has parents, they are not near. When the child sees others walking with their parents he/she thinks that it would have been great to have the mother near. In this moment you don't feel offended or you don't hate these children but you just feel pain and indisposition and you would not like to be in their situation."

The results of the study reveal differences between the life of children who live with their parents and children left behind. Children deprived of parental care see themselves as children who have more concerns, who are more responsible but with no control from their parents. „**If you're alone everything is under your control, I have to take care of the house, to be careful at what I'm doing..**” (FG_C_1_urban); „... Children left behind have to work a lot, they are more responsible but at least they are going out wherever and whenever they want. They are not controlled” (FG_C_urban); „For instance, when one of your parents is gone there's lack of communication, just like in my case as I live with my father and brother and I cannot discuss some problems that I have with my father. Moreover, because my mom is not there I have to solve my problems by myself. We are doing well, but it is not the same. And it's not always okay to solve your problems by yourself, you don't see other options. We learn to be **more independent**” (FG_C_1_urban).

Self-image depends on the way the subject is seen and **appreciated by others**. Children without parental care are seen by other children as being less protected, deprived of the possibility to communicate with their mothers: „We are more protected. Parents check our homework, they come to school meetings” (FG_C_1_urban).

Children left behind are more frequently exposed to risks. The participants to focus-groups discussions brought the following arguments that increase the vulnerability of children: „*they have more liberty than they need*”; „*they have time for other things, too*”; „*they have no protection and no support*”.

Sometimes children see themselves as **incapable of rationally spending the money**. They mentioned that they sometimes buy things they don't need and some even considered useless: „*Not big things, small ones. Some of them are bought without any use. I am not talking only about myself, my brother does the same even if it is just about pants or a tie. For example, shoes. He has a lot of new pairs that he never wore. Now he does not use them but later he might. He also buys clothing that he simply doesn't need*” (FG_C_2_rural).

Children whose parents are abroad are **perceived by their peers** as different from children who have both parents in Moldova. In this regard, the respondents named:

Ways they show their emotions: „*I think a lot. Because I noticed that he shows his feelings using words that really hurt and he tells everybody that he'd like very much that his parents would be near and his classmates are making fun of him saying that “You don't have parents” or even “Your parents are not together*”;

- **A better financial situation:** „*They are different from children who have both of their parents at home because they have more money, they dress differently. Even when they are at school or go to a store they can afford buying everything they want while the ones with parents at home cannot. They are not given as much money as they want, only 5, 10 lei per day, whereas these ones get more... and they come to school and spend all they have on food*”;
- **Aggressive behaviour and false necessities:** „*Children with parents at home are good children, obedient, while those without parents behave badly. They smoke*” (FG_C_3_rural).
- The experts pointed out that children do not want to get involved in daily activities, **their consumption orientation:** „*Their behaviour is poor... These are children who wait for the things to be done for them and they don't know what “work” or “I did it myself” means, they always wait for their parents to give them everything and it is obvious that psychologically speaking they are more tough*” (FG_EC_rural); **financial dependence** on their parents: „*I don't even want to imagine what will happen in a couple of years when parents who are abroad will not be able to send money anymore, what will actually happen to that child, what kind of attitude and behaviour he/she will have for his/her parent who will already be an old man...*” (FG_EC_rural).

Still, a significant number of children who were asked to choose between “having their mother home” and “a better life, with more money and things” chose the presence of their mother „*I want her to be near. I don't know why...*”.

It can be concluded that **the self-image of children left behind by migrant parents** is not developed only as a result of a simple self-analysis. There is a double nature of their self-perception. Children's self-knowledge is led in two ways: **firstly, through the way in which the child perceives his/her own thoughts, feelings, emotions etc.**, and **second, through the way he/she sees other people living and acting and it is under this angle that the child gets to know him/herself by the way he/she gets to know other people**. Labour migrant parents influence their children's self-image being instrumental in the way children assess themselves. Some children whose parents are abroad become more preoccupied about their well-being and personal integrity. When they find out that their parents face difficulties they have the tendency to consider themselves responsible for their parents' situation and feel guilty. The science of psychology claims that it is the fear of losing parents' love that causes the **sense of guilt**. In such circumstances, children regret their behaviour before their parents' departure. Social instability, the loss of the parents' social position, distrusts with the day of tomorrow, the sense of guilt linked to the fact that they are not close to their children are premises leading to the tendency to transfer all these emotions to their own children. As a result of this lack of emotional development, children develop an incomplete and negative self-image.

- “New worries”

Parents' migration conditioned new worries for children left behind. **There is interdependence between household activities performed by the mother or father before they left and the activities taken over by children who remained at home**. Boys and girls whose parents are abroad noticed that their schedule radically changed because of the **new duties** they received.

Thus, the absolute majority of children deprived of parental care mentioned: „*We began cooking and we became more independent*”. Many children have similar activities keeping the house in good order: „*We take care of the house, we feed animals, clean up the yard*” (FG_C_1_urban); „*Chop the wood fire for winter, I help my grandfather*” (FG_C_1_urban); „*As a girl, I clean everyday, I have to do the laundry. I like the most of all when everything is in good order. I also do other things. I attend the music school, I come home at 4 pm, and I have to cook if my father is not home. But my greatest wish is to see my mom home, because I know that when I will be back from my music school the house will be clean, the food will be ready and I will have*

only to do my homework, but now I am the one who cleans the house, does the dishes, I have to chop the firewood, to dig in the garden" (FG_C_3_rural).

All those "new duties" fill the children's free time and they feel they **lack free time**: *"I had more free time before, but now I don't. I would like to have more free time"* (FG_C_1_rural); *„It's more difficult, during the winter as I have to make the fire and to do the laundry, it's easier in summer because you just take your laundry outside and it dries there, while in winter is much more difficult because I have to dry it in the house... it's very difficult"* (III_C_21).

The responsibilities are being **differently assumed by children, depending on the number of children that remained at home and the gender of the migrant parent**. If the father is abroad and there is an elder brother at home, the father's responsibilities pass to the elder son. One of the interviewed girls told us: *„I don't feel the difference because my father is abroad and I don't have to do whatever he was doing, it's more about my brother who took over and just like any other girl I have to help my mother with everything she does, cooking, cleaning, anything"* (FG_C_1_urban).

Some children have little brothers and sisters and they have to take care of them. The **role of looking after and educating little children is the "new responsibility" of elder children**: *"I had anyway the responsibility to look after him taking him to and from the kindergarten and somehow participating in his education. I mean it was a responsibility in a way"* (FG_C_2_rural); *"Since my parents left, and they left long ago, my biggest responsibility is to help my brother. He is in the first grade now and I have a lot of duties because he is developing intellectually now and I have to show him the way, the right way for life, to help him with his homework. When he was in the kindergarten he was a good and hard-working child so it was easy for me, but it is just that I always have the responsibility to ask him "Did you do your homework?", "Did you learn the poem?"* (FG_C_3_rural); *"Now that my mom is gone I have to work more and I have to stay with my little sister. And since I began taking care of her I cannot work because she wants me to continuously stay with her. Sometimes her brother stays with her but he is harsher with her so she doesn't like staying with him"* (III_C_6); *"I have to take care of my sister. Everyday, when she goes to school, I have to wake her up, to comb her hair"* (III_C_28).

Another "new responsibility" that appeared in the children's life after their parents left abroad is **money management and taking care of bills**: *"I have to cook and to take care that all the bills are paid on time. Everything is around the house: the animals, the poultry I have to take care of them, too. I also have to look after my grandmother as she's old and I have to help her"* (III_C_28).

Some children deprived of parental care as a consequence of migration list **income increasing activities: poultry or prunes** as "new responsibili-

ties": "I live in the suburb, but there is another house where my parents used to **breed poultry** during spring and summer. My brother is big now and he studies at the university. I am alone at home, but when we go to the countryside, we have cows and a lot of animals. I stay alone there and I have to take care of everything, I am even doing a man's work. I was doing everything in the house and now I also have to cook for them and to bring them food, because they don't have the possibility to cook there, I have to do the laundry, sometimes I used to take their clothes at home to wash it and it is very difficult" (FG_C_3_rural).

BOX 10**Case Study. The life of a boy that is responsible of drying prunes (III_C_9)**

Vasile is 16, he lives with his grandmother and his mother is in the Ukraine. He told us the following:

"I wake up..., and first of all I have to make the fire for the boiler pot to put the prunes. We have a special technology of drying them. I put them in bags, then we let them to swell and we send them. We have a big boiler pot of 300 litres and after bringing water from the well I light the fire and pour around 200 litres of water, and I need firewood for that (we buy it). I just have to wait for about 5 hours. It often happens that I put it boil at 10 pm or a little earlier, at 8 pm and I take the prunes out at about 3 am... I boil only on Friday, Saturdays and Sundays. For instance, I can put prunes to boil at 5.30 and let it for about 6 hours and I have to manage to go to school."

Was there ever a time that you did not manage to take care of the prunes and you spoil it, did your mother or grandmother shout at you?

"Yes, it happened once that I put it to boil at 6 pm and I had to wake up at 12 am but I fell asleep. I was so tired and when I woke up at 6 in the morning I saw that I burnt everything and they were upset with me."

Did they show you they were upset only by telling you that?

"Oh, not really."

Since when had you been boiling prunes?

"I started doing it by myself when I was 7-8 years old."

Another new duty is to meet the **demands of the parent who is at home and who abuses alcohol**: "After my mom left it became worse. I became the elder one... My father was continuously away and when he was at home, he was talking on the phone a lot with someone, but it was not my mom... We found that telephone number and together with my sister decided to call... A woman answered the phone... We told our mother about it. When he found out what we did, **he slapped me**. I cried a lot. **He slapped me for another woman**. I felt betrayed and alone" (III_C_19); "It is very difficult, especially when my dad drinks and comes home beating us for no reason, it's hard"

(III_C_22). Daily risks that children have to face when living with a parent who abuses alcohol are obvious: abuse, deficiencies in mental development, the risk of alcohol addiction and other substances, deviant behaviour, etc.

There are **differences between the “responsibilities” of children without parental care and those whose parents are home**. Some children with both of their parents mentioned that *“our biggest task is to get good marks; our parents take care of everything else”* (FG_C_2_rural).

It can be concluded that the range of new responsibilities is **diverse and corresponds more to a parental status rather than a child’s one**: taking care of other family members, daily cooking, farm works, cleaning the house and the yard, chopping firewood, paying the bills, feeding domestic animals, etc.

- **Communication with migrated family members and subjects they discuss**

The study shows that there are children who regularly communicate with their parents, children who communicate rarely with them and children who do not talk to them at all.

Children communicate with their parents by telephone, Internet and Skype: *“We talk a lot on Skype about school; they support me and encourage me”* (FG_C_1_urban).

Many children claim they talk frequently with their parents and they satisfy their communication needs. Those who assert this refer to the frequency: from several times per day to several times per month: *„We talk every day, for 2-3 hours. We talk a lot, my sister and me. And on the Internet, too”*(FG_C_2_rural); *„For example, I talk everyday with my mother. She calls me. Or if there’s something I need or I just want to talk to her I call her. We talk a lot on the phone”* (FG_C_2_rural); *„My parents call me almost everyday. The telephone is the one that unites us. If I need I just beep my mom and she returns my call. But she’s the one who calls more often”* (III_C_27). We need to specify that this is not valid for the institutionalized children; they are rarely called by their parents.

In the majority of cases, the initiative to communicate **comes totally from parents**: *„They call me quite often. Through Internet”* (FG_C_2_rural); *„I call them rarely, they call me more often to find out how things are going at home, how I am doing”* (III_C_1).

Some children do not manage to talk to their mother as often as they would like to. Frequently their need to communicate remains unfulfilled: *„She used to call us but now I call her and she doesn’t pick up, the number is wrong. She changed her SIM card and we do not have her cell phone number.*

Before we used to call her on her cell phone but now, only my father has a cell phone. I had one too but it's out of order" (III_C_10).

The length of discussion with the parents varies from 2-5 minutes on average a day to several hours: *"We talk with our father less, up to 5 minutes but with our mom we talk over 10 minutes because we always have what to talk about" (III_C_1); „It depends, sometimes little as she just asks me if everything's ok and then she tells me she will call me back because she has work to do and asks me if I need anything. Sometimes she calls me at night or in the evening and we talk for about 15-30 minutes" (III_C_4).*

The subject of discussion with parents is diverse. Some children told us that their parents want to know every **detail of their life:** *"She asks me everyday how I have spent my day, she is very receptive and wants to know what is happening to me" (FG_C_2_rural); „we talk about how I spent my day, if I have any activities at school, she asks me if I need something. She asks me about my father but she talks to him, too" (III_C_6).*

Some children asserted that their mother **gives them indications on phone regarding works** they need to perform: *"She calls me and tells me to dry the prunes. Of course, this is not all she tells me... she only asks me to take care of everything" (III_C_9).* The results of the study show that, although they are away, parents **talk to their children about their school results and failures:** *"How things go at school, about my life, about what I am going to do next, where I would like to study, about my future" (III_C_1).*

Sometimes children **deliberately hide the truth**, saying they do not want to worry their parents: *"He asks me how is at school and of course I cannot tell him that it is not so good, it is actually not bad, but if it would have been bad I wouldn't tell him that anyways as I don't want him to worry; he has left abroad for us to live better and we have to pay him back" (III_C_4).*

Still, the survey shows that a lot of **children do not discuss their school issues with their parents**, or the discussions related to this topic are sporadic: *"Not really, she does not really ask about it... I tell her only things that she asks me. If she asks me about school I answer but if she does not I do not bring this subject to discussion" (III_C_9).*

One of the topics that is rarely discussed with parents refers to children's health condition. The study reveals that children rarely tackle or do not tackle at all their health issues: *"Sometimes they call me and only ask me if everything is ok, but we do not use to talk about this" (FG_C_1_urban).*

Positive interaction with parents is generally maintained: *"I have a good relationship with my parents, I can say that my mom is not only a mother for me but she is also my friend, they always support me to build my future, they are near whenever it is hard for me, they always help me" (III_C_1).*

The results show that communication with the parent who is working abroad is sometimes interrupted on a long-term basis: *“I haven’t seen my mom for 2 years... She does not come home. She could not come for 4 years, then she returned and there were 2 years since I have not seen her. She said she is in Smolensk. We talked this summer but I don’t know where she is now.”*

Some parents ask for their children’s opinion: *“She asks me sometimes: “What do think? Do you think I am okay when I am not near you?” and tell her “no”, because she is all alone there. We are with our father and we are not so lonely. She tells me that it is hard for her... For example it happened that she did something long ago and she keeps asking me: “what do you think, what I did was right or not?” (III_C_16).*

The research highlighted the fact of complete loss of any relations between children and their migrant parents. *“My brother is small and he has two twins at the kindergarten who were left with their grandparents and both their parents are abroad. Their parents don’t even call; they do not provide them financial or moral support. Taken into consideration that they grow up with their grandparents, it’s really difficult for them” (FG_C_2_rural).*

According to collected data, there are also children who have the tendency not to reproduce in their future families the model of communication deprivation that they experience now: *“I will try to be always close to my children, because I know how it feels like when your mother is not with you. I will do my best to offer them any support they will need” (FG_C_2_rural).*

Research data prove that the degree parents show their emotions is different. Some parents are very reticent during their communication and their children feel that: *“They don’t want to open up” (FG_C_3_rural).* The interviewed children think that parents are reserved in communication because they protect them: *“Sometimes parents do not say anything. They probably think that it is enough for us to be alone and to suffer and they do not tell us about their problems” (FG_C_3_rural).* Parents who strongly express their feelings while communicating to their children make them feel useful, close and co-partners in solving their problems: *“Their problems are mine, too” (FG_C_3_rural); “Yes, they tell me where they work, how everything is there, how difficult it is. They tell me about their living conditions” (III_C_1).*

A cold relationship between parents and children can estrange them. Children use **compensatory mechanisms**, finding other sources and they **emotionally distance themselves from their parents** when they do not meet their communication and security needs, needs of kinship and a stable emotional connection. One of the experts brought an example that reflects this phenomenon: *“I worked on a case of a boy who is in the 8th grade at the moment and he experiences problems. He does not attend school at all. Both his parents are*

abroad, his mother is in Italy and his father is in France. When the child was 6 months old their parents divorced, his mother immediately left for Italy where she married again and set another family and his father did the same in France. The child is cared for by his aunt who is also married and has a little child but she does not manage to keep up with him. Now the real trouble has started as he does not go to school at all. **He says that he doesn't want to live neither with his mother nor his father because they both are very cold with him**, although they provide all the financial support he needs he still lacks their attention. I think he found a circle of friends where he regained himself even if the core he is searching for is not there and this is why he decided "to go his way" and to abandon school" (FG_EC_urban). Another expert said: "I know a case when a father remained with his daughter and I remember that I had to work a lot with that girl as she took the side of her mother, she was sending her money, she was waiting for her. At a certain moment, her mother **stopped calling systematically and they lost the spiritual connection they had before**; her father brought another woman [into the family]... I really tried to do my best, but you know what the first thing she always said was? "**Why my mother does not call me as she did before, every week or every day?**" (FG_EC_urban). Children cannot accept the lie and betrayal of their relations with parents. It has a strong impact on them and they adopt a deviant behaviour.

Communication between children and parents is extremely important for their mental development. This process does not imply only a periodical oral exchange of information but also affection, presence and constant emotional tenderness. Sometimes a child's need to communicate with their parents remains unfulfilled. The study shows that there are cases when children rarely communicate with their parents and children who do not do it at all. Complete absence of communication is explained, in some cases, by the fact that labour migrant parents do not prove any intention or in other cases by the fact that children refuse themselves to talk to their parents. The main condition for a normal development of a child is to communicate with an adult and especially with their parents. This communication is based on the system of personal relation that is created during the first months of a child's life and develops according to some specific laws. Ignoring these laws will affect in a negative way the psychological development of a child. The lack of communication with their parents generates emotional conflicts that will influence the mental condition of a child and his/her relationship within the social environment: the fear of punishment, including physical punishment, conflicting relations with his peers, lack of self-confident behaviour, etc.

- **The relationship with family members/caregivers of the child**

Many children left behind as a consequence of their parents' migration have a **tense relation** with family members or caregivers. Some children

confess that they can accept the fact that their parents left abroad more readily than the presence of some caregivers. A girl describes the situation of her daily emotional stress, frustration and guilt that she and her brother experienced in their relationship with their aunt-caregiver: *“I lived for a long period with my aunt and **me and my brother, we suffered a lot because of her.** She used to say that it was our fault, but it was not true. We were not doing what she wanted and she was blaming us. I was obedient, but I could fail sometimes, still it did not happen often, but she used to blame us for her mistakes. So, one day when my mother called us, my brother told her everything... She found **my brother’s diary where he used to write everything** and it got worse. **She even lost her consciousness.** Mother said it would be better for us to get back home. I moved with my brother for a year, then I moved alone. My aunt was always shouting at us without a reason and I do not think it was right because my mom was paying her to take care of us, which she did not do, she used to buy her daughter everything she wanted and I think this is bad. It is difficult to live both with your aunt and with grandparents as our grandparents suffer and worry for us even more”* (FG_C_3_rural). In these cases children are deprived of their need of security and affection.

Sometimes caregivers even deprive children of basic physiological needs. Thus, some children starve: *“There are cases when people who take care of them hide the food”* (FG_C_3_rural); *“I remember I was coming back from school and she (aunt’s child) was walking along and eating a cookie and I asked her where did she have it from and she said that her mother gave her the cookie to take it to school. I got upset in a way, because for my mother we were equal but for my aunt we were not. She was always taking more care of her own daughter, while my mother took care of all three of us”* (FG_C_3_rural).

Another problem unveiled within the study is the caregivers’ neglect or lack of interest about the child’s school situation. Caregivers are more concerned with financial values rather than spiritual ones. An expert teacher mentioned: *“Everything depends on the person who takes care of the child. I remember that during winter holidays all the parents decided to make some presents for their children, bunny-shaped presents because it was the year of the rabbit, and when one person came on the second day he just asked me “How much?” and I said “But, don’t you want to know what we talked about?” which says a lot about his intelligence. His only aim is making more money and he doesn’t care about social integration”* (FG_EC_urban).

Children often feel that caregivers do not understand them in their day-to-day situations that are not characterized by bad behaviour. Some children told us about situations where the caregiver blamed them undeservedly: *“When I washed the dog she didn’t believe me. I also washed the kitty and it*

died. It was very little and my grandmother shouted at me that I cannot do something like this, that the kitty also wanted to live, but I washed it and I killed it” (III_C_10).

Beating, as a disciplinary measure is also used by some caregivers. Thus, some children said they were beaten unjustly by their grandparents: “When I was in the 2nd grade she told me that I cannot even imagine what I have done.... She used to have a fowl and he used to rush at me and I threw something at him and my grandmother told me that I cannot do something like this and she took a stick and she hit me on my back with it, but since then she hasn’t beaten me anymore” (III_C_10).

Annoyance, an emotional imbalance of the caregivers, their ignorance of needs and age peculiarities of children they look after cause conflicts and daily frustrations: “It happens sometimes that when we work and suddenly I feel thirsty and I go to drink water she is getting upset “Stop wondering around!”. She is just upset” (III_C_11).

Caregivers morally abuse some children. This emotional abuse is strongly felt by children as well as other types of abuse; they sharply feel the emotional stress: “We don’t get along very well, so there’s no way to confess to her. No...I’m not going to do that. She does not understand me, she’s always screaming at me and she’s always watching me whatever I do...I’ve never been punished physically, but she often says that she doesn’t want me anymore in her house” (III_C_17).

Paradoxically, some interviewed children did not confess to have a **positive emotional relationship and a favourable climate**, although considered as **morally secure** when their own **father** cared for **them**: “We cannot talk openly to our father. He stays less with us. We talk about things... But I cannot tell him what bothers me, my problems. Of course, I cannot blame mom for scolding me, because they will fight even harder... it might get worse. I cannot talk to my aunts, too because they have their own families, children and problems” (III_C_19). Some children experience stressful situations conditioned by their presence to domestic violence scenes: “He doesn’t understand me, I even fear him, when I was little I used to love him a lot, but he did a lot of bad things to my mother, he used to beat her and I have hated him since then and I will never forgive him for that, I don’t want to see him!” (III_C_22).

Some of the respondents live alone and have to take care of small children: “There are two houses in the same yard, and our grandparents live not far away... So, they stay more with my grandparents, and me and my sister stay at home but they don’t come to visit us...” (III_C_21). Even if they live close to their grandparents, these children are neglected, which they strongly feel since their parents migrated for work: “Very difficult, I was crying and

my mom told my grandmother that it is hard for me here. During the first 3 months, my little sister used to disobey me... I had to come from school and to cook and I was hungry... it was so difficult... We did not have time to talk, but it got better when spring came, as I did not have so many things to do. When I would come from school there was only the cleaning, cooking that I had to do, and to take care of my little sister, whereas in winter I have a lot of work to do... It is also harder because during winter I have to light the fire and do the laundry. It's easier during summer because I take the laundry outside and let it dry there but in winter it is very tough." A total transfer of home tasks can be observed as well as parental roles on the shoulders of an adolescent who in addition is trying to explain her grandparents' emotional coldness and indifference by saying *"I'm not the one they love most"*. The girl explains her grandparents' indifference and anger by the fact that she does not fulfill their expectancies to get help from their granddaughter: *"I didn't fight, they are old and they need our help, but there's no way for me to manage it"*. We can notice a **role reversal between children and caregivers** as an effect of distorted perception of the reality. Caregivers refuse to get involved in their grandchildren's help saying they are old and children avoid accusations by totally and independently minding their own business: *"I would prefer to do it by myself than to ask her. When I asked her to take my sister to the kindergarten she had reminded me about that for a long time saying that she is old and so on and so forth, that's why I try not to ask her anything. She helps me, but she always reminds me about that and I don't like it"* (III_C_21).

The results of the study prove that a lot of children left behind are in a difficult relation with their family members/caregivers, are partially or totally deprived of moral security, some of them in risk situations of becoming vulnerable.

• The relationship with their peers

Relationship with their peers is a dominant activity in psychological and personality development. The study reveals the absence of strong friendships among children left behind which constitutes a problem. Some children show their lack of interest for friendships, as they prefer a lonely and quiet life: *"I don't really have friends. They are not the old ones, but I did not make any new ones. There is only my boyfriend. I knew him since we have been both little and my parents have left"* (III_C_17).

Some children did not establish **any friendship relations** since their parents have left abroad. As a consequence of their separation from the parents they extrapolate their negative emotions after they changed their residence: *"When I lived in Nisporeni I liked my school, it was interesting, I got along well with my classmates but since we have moved to the village I*

experience problems. I don't like my new classmates as they are rude, they talk dirty and they are aggressive..." (III_C_19).

When they manage to make friendships, it does not depend on child's gender or status: *"Most of them are from my school and they're all from the village, mainly. They are all my age, a year elder than me. There are an equal number of boys and girls and they are all from school. We go to the club and we have fun. We also play soccer during holidays but usually we play volleyball during school. That's all we do"* (III_C_9).

Experts described experiences that denote children's inhibition, their isolation from other people and social shyness as a consequence of the separation from their parents: *"They can sharply feel that there is no one coming after them, there is no one that cares about them. I am acquainted with a girl who comes to see me every week and she always cries because her parents divorced and they're both away. And her mother promises her that she'll take her abroad, and she never even comes to school, the girl lives with her aunt who she didn't get along with before, she likes to take care of her own life... Every time I try to get into contact with her, she just refuses to work with me. I asked the girl to tell her mother that she needs her more than she needs her father; I gave her my Skype ID so that we could talk at least on Skype. And her mother told the girl never to go to a psychologist and that I, as a psychologist, have no right to get involved in her private life, and that was it"* (FG_EC_urban).

It is extremely important which of the parents stays with the child. In most cases, the woman is the one who is away from the house. The absence of the mother represents a strong decay generating children's bad school results as well as mutual emotional detachment between the mother and her children. The ones who are emotionally smart can stand the stress better than the ones who are less emotionally smart. Boys, even if looking more indifferent towards the separation are even more stressed than the girls, becoming more vulnerable towards destructive influences. This is accentuated during some critical development periods or during existential crisis.

During school age, **children set sporadic, short-term friendships, changing frequently their friends:** *"At the first level, friendship is unstable, they have friends, but we are the ones trying to unite them by communicating with them, we talk after lunch on the playground, still their friendship is unstable, just like if you'd have a cute penholder I'll be you friend and I'll talk to you today, but they break up quite fast"* (FG_EC_urban).

The results of the study denote that children deprived of parental care **avoid detailed discussions about their family, including with their friends.** Respondents enlisted the following reasons:

- **Unwillingness to divulge family secrets:** *"I don't want them to know what happens in my family"*(FG_C_1_urban);

- **Fear to be misunderstood:** *“I’m not sharing anything to my classmates... when his parents will leave he’ll understand me”* (FG_C_1_urban); *“Those who have both parents at home will not understand us”* (FG_C_1_urban);
- **The certainty that family problems are a private subject:** *“I don’t think my classmates really want to know why my parents left, this is not their problem, it’s only ours”* (FG_C_1_urban);
- **Fights caused by the disclosure of family secrets:** *“Yes, it happens. I tell her something and then she goes and tells everybody what we have talked about. We discussed it and she promised she will not do so again and I believe her”*(III_C_8).

Although some children left behind talk to their friends about their family, **they do it selectively:** *“I talk about it because they want to know, I tell them that it’s beautiful, I describe them the sea, and that it’s more beautiful there and that’s all we talk about”* (FG_C_1_urban).

The interviewed did not mention anything about facing traumatic experiences that resulted of the tense relations with their colleagues. Conflicts occur rarely and are insignificant.

It can be deduced that children left behind make friends with their colleagues, neighbours, peers, although the feeling of loneliness and the lack of affection estrange them from others. A low emotional tone makes them avoid crowds and to strive for intimacy. The lack of emotional models with their peers helps them not feel their parent’s absence. Besides their constant care for the house, for their brothers and sisters, the possibility some of them have to communicate with their parents through the Internet reduces the frequency of their relationships with their peers outside school.

• Leisure time

The study also approached the way children left behind spend their free time. The **places** children spend their free time are: school, neighbourhood, public places. *“We spend our time mostly at school as where we study, we have parties and we make projects. We spend our time in the neighbourhood only during summer. During school we have a lot of homework to do and I have to do things at home and we don’t have so much time for playing”* (III_C_27); *“I love to play at the school or I read something at the library and if I have only four lessons a day I like to go to the library and read there. I read English books”* (III_C_16).

Speaking about **toys** they use during their free time the respondents said: *“There were more of them when we were little, now there are less”* (III_C_26), *“I play with my dog”* (FG_C_1_urban).

Among leisure time activities participants of the research mentioned: walking, playing soccer, the PC, track and field events, **writing poems but not about parents.**

The way children spend their time depends on their interests: *“I like sports, I have practiced them since I was little, I also like to paint and to spend my free time with my friends, to have fun”* (III_C_1).

The length of children’s free time is supervised by the caregiver: *“We play as much as my grandmother allows me. If I am not back on time, she does not allow me anymore to go and play. We like to play the “Hot Potato” game, or rubber-band jumping and to skip the rope, and during summer we walk in the park every Sunday. I play only with the girls as we don’t like to play with boys because they’re bad and they fool around, we better play without them”* (III_C_10).

It can be observed that the time children with migrant parents spend to play is insufficient because of their new responsibilities that appeared as a consequence of their parents’ migration. The organization of children’s free time has gaps leading to children being deprived of activities that would correspond to their needs and interests. There are no specially equipped spaces that would promote leisure activities, spaces that would be adjusted to children’s age and there are no field specialists.

• Support networks

Support networks for children whose parents are abroad are represented by their family members and specialists of different institutions. Some respondents said their family members are their source of support: *“I tell everything to my **mom**, well... not everything, but most of my problems. There are children who tell their friend’s problems, but I do not think it is right because friends are not forever there. Everybody can show you that he or she is a good friend but in the end everybody will betray you”* (FG_C_3_rural); *“I share everything with my **brother**, he understands me and I understand him. He already went through this and that’s why he understands me”* (FG_C_3_rural).

Sometimes children refuse to trust anyone and prefer to write their thoughts in order to satisfy their need for communication on one hand, and the need to be understood and to keep confidentiality on the other hand: *“It’s like I fear that they will not understand me and this is why I prefer writing. It happened that somebody **read my diary and since then I write and burn the pages immediately**”* (FG_C_2_rural).

People interviewed during this study were asked for categories of specialists as part of their **professional support network** where children left be-

hind can find help: social workers, psychologists, the employees of Child and Family Protection Departments, police officers and members of the Local Council for Children Rights Protection.

According to them **social workers** have: *“To support them, to identify their needs: clothing, nourishment, a shelter if they don’t have one... If children are alone they are offered the possibility to call their parents, to ask them why they do not come”* (FG_C_2_rural).

A number of respondents referred to **services provided by a psychologist**, stressing their importance for children whose parents are working abroad: *“I’d like to talk to a psychologist, but a foreign one”* (FG_C_2_rural). Experts confirmed that children left behind address to psychologists: *“Children whose parents are abroad address psychologists when they experience difficulties with their interpersonal relations, if they have conflicting situations or if they have problems”* (FG_EC_urban). Interviewed children aspire towards **quality psychologist’s services**, they appreciate confidentiality and the feeling of security: *“We have a teacher of psychology and it is true that she knows things and she can provide support but it depends on the kind of problem. For example, I can’t talk to her if I have an intimate problem”* (FG_C_2). Some children even dream to become psychologists: *“I want to become a psychologist. I like studying people, their way of being, of thinking and talking... We are all so different! These specialists are required in a lot of schools as they have to help children...”* (III_C_18).

Experts justified the need to expand **psychological support networks** saying that *“The psychologist could work with these children, providing them with training, to help them avoid stressful situations and to see what their daily problems are, to see what worry’s them; and if there’s a 3rd grade child who is already smoking that means there is someone who negatively influences him”* (FG_EC_rural); *“I think in every school there should exist a psychologist who should work in an out-of-school room where the child would be able to visit him. Because if I go to a psychologist and he helps me I can visit him tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and so on and I can tell other people that there a person who is ready to provide help”* (FG_EC_urban).

According to the study, children find support **in their teachers**: *“My teacher from the music school is the person who I trust the most and I’m sure she will never betray me. She understands my situation and she told me that she never met somebody like me”* (FG_C_2).

The collected data shows that parents contact **Inspectorates for Children and the Police** when they have a dilemma: *“There are cases when parents come to the **Inspectorate for Children** and share their intentions to migrate and when a mother is leaving her adolescent girl and her husband drinks,*

*the girl cannot always have the power to stand living with her father and she may try to run away from home, the person who takes care of the child calls the mother and when she comes back she comes to **the police** and asks them to arrange the situation with the father” (FG_EC_urban); “They address **the police** only when they have problems, only when school is not able to take care of the child or of his parent, that’s when the police gets involved” (FG_EC_urban). Experts also claim that services provided by Child and Family Protection Departments are not sufficiently used: “Parents are aware of the existence of the Municipal Directorate for Child Rights Protection, but they do not address it” (FG_EC_urban).*

The Local Council for Children Rights Protection represents another important element of a child support network. According to experts, it works more efficiently in the urban area: “We talk monthly or when it is necessary. In Chisinau the situation is rather different because every district has sector meetings, there’s the council for child rights protection and a municipal directorate” (FG_EC_urban).

In conclusion it can be mentioned that the support network for children whose parents migrated are less developed. Children as well as experts mentioned the necessity to extend services provided by psychologists, due to the harmful effects of the children’s separation from their parents on the children’s psychological condition. The children face multiple psychological issues and there is a necessity to meet their need for communication and empathic relationships. Institutions that are part of the support network do not have well established directions of working with children left behind as a consequence of parental migration and it is necessary to harmonize the targeting of their activities to ensure parents and children’s protection.

- **Deviant behaviour**

Deviance and juvenile delinquency represents the expression of a number of actions and behaviour that strongly oppose the norms of living in a family, institution or society. Information on factors that favours juvenile delinquency is extremely valuable for the success of prevention activities as well as in the psychological intervention of children. Things revealed by a teenager who lives with his grandmother after his mother migrated abroad for work, denote the impact that parents’ migration has on a child’s deviant behaviour. Analyzing from a psychological point of view the behaviour and facts revealed by this teenager and his grandmother’s stories it can be deduced that the situation represents an absolutely logical and negative consequence of the conflict between the forces and factors that determined it.

Taking care of her grandson became more complicated during his adolescence, when the grandmother qualified his behaviour as being deviant: *“I have to constantly fight with him”*. When specifying her grandson’s problem, the caregiver lists a set of various **behaviour difficulties** that emerged because of a **lack of surveillance**: *“I was hospitalized 3 times last year... he started to skip school. Since last year, **he skips school, he talks bad things... He took money from the house and he spent the money with his friends. We had problems at school... I just had to hold him on a leash... maybe it is my fault, but I admit it on one had and refuse to admit it on the other.** I couldn’t do anything; I had to recover for 10 months after a surgery”* (III_E_8).

The 13 year old adolescent (III_C_11) confesses he **behaves sometimes in a deviant manner or in a delinquent way: stealing** (*“I had some issues with police, but I’m good now”*); **deliberately lying** (*“When I was asked at school who I wanted to be in life I just **didn’t want to tell them honestly** that I want to become a carpenter or a cook, because that’s what I want to be. You see, I do not want everybody in school to know who I want to be... I didn’t tell them the truth, **I just said something for them not to ask me anything else”***); **violent conflicts with teachers and physical abuse towards his classmates** (*“It happened a lot of time, we had a test at French Language and Miss Stela stepped out and there was this guy, Radu, who was dabbing my chair with his shoes and, you see, I wasn’t able to write because I was thinking and all I would hear was his toc-toc-toc... And I told him **“Could you please stop dabbing!”** and as he didn’t **I hit him and I hit him again** and then we were taken to the school principal”*).

The grandmother is aware of her grandson’s delinquent behaviour saying: *“I had problems with him this summer with police when he took some money and he got placed in an institution for minors, at the child centre and afterwards he behaved well... **I had problems and I’m pretty sure I’ll have more...**”* We can see that the grandmother foresees long-term delinquent behaviour, although she contradicts herself by opposite affirmations.

The collected data allowed us to find that the evolution of juvenile delinquency of children in difficulty as a consequence of parents’ migration is favoured by the following **categories of factors**:

- **Family** represents an essential factor in a child’s development. Family is the strongest factor that can affect harmonious development. The process of socialization, of incorporating social norms and values, transforming them into behaviour models starts when a child is born. The most **typical errors in educational strategies practiced by caregivers** in families with migrant parents that are felt by the child are:

- **Accusation and blaming:** *“My grandmother will always give me advice, you see... so that I always feel guilty and of course I don’t like it! She knows that it’s not my fault, I can see it, but she always does things so that I am the guilty one”*; *“My grandmother will always tell me that it’s my fault... that I am the one who started the fight, that I call names or I answer back...”*;
- **Too high expectancies:** *“She wants me to be the best... She wants to make me be the best in everything, but I cannot do all this, I cannot be the best at mathematics... I just cannot...”*;
- **Physical abuse, violent disciplinary measures:** *“It happened when she told me to do something and I didn’t do it and she got mad”*. The grandmother confesses she beats her grandchild in order to stop his delinquent behaviour: *“Yes, I had to punish him... I even beat him..., I couldn’t believe he took this money from the house...”*;
- **The child undertakes too many domestic tasks, he is set strict rules:** *“She thinks I’m too slow and then she gives a second thing to do before I had even finished the first one...”* ;
- **Depriving the child of his decision-making initiative and freedom:** *“Yes, as usual... I like it one way and my grandmother likes it the other”*;
- **Underestimating and/or neglecting child’s abilities:** *“I like to listen to music... English music... and she says “What’s the point in listening to it if you don’t understand anything?” , but you see I understand a bit... ”*

Mistakes in a child’s education are caused by their parents’ migration determining a mental imbalance of a family and tense relations between grandparents-parents-grandchildren.

- **Neuro-psychological factors conditioned by adolescence as an age marked by internal and external conflicts are of utmost importance.** We can mention communication difficulties with peers, acceleration of sexual development specific for modern adolescents causing inappropriate affection, reactivity, emotional imbalance, and other manifestations leading to latent or manifested conflicts against the environment. Most importance, in the cases of children in difficulties as a result of parental migration, is attributed to **emotional development, the insufficiency** of which can cause emotional instability, inadequate evaluation of him/herself and the environment he/she lives, emotional immaturity as well as character disorder. These can result in insufficient behaviour control, opposition and denial of social regulations, egocentrism, aggression, needs distortion and the wish to be reprieved without taking any adequate efforts. Children learn to behave within the environment they grow-up, and this environment is deprived of parental affection and education patterns. Some adolescents included in the study associate the leaving

of their mother abroad with **betrayal, running from home**: “When she had to leave I told her that **I have to go to school...** and I asked her: “mom, **if you want to leave wait for me, because I finish school at 2 and I’ll come...** And you’ll make up your mind then if you want to leave or not.” But **when I came my mom was not at home.** And I felt so bad... I cried...” (III_C_11). An adolescent current aggressiveness, behaviour distortion can be also explained by **his internal protest against the departure of his mother** and is being caused by the lack of maternal affectivity and warmth and continuous communication deprivation. While looking for answers to the cause of parental leaving and an eventual returning back, children express their severe need to communicate with their mother: “I wanted to talk to my mom so many times and I call her but she doesn’t pick up the phone. I still keep asking her why she left and she tells me that she cannot tell me why because I’m too small to understand it, and she also told me that there are things that I should find out in man-to-man talks...” (III_C_11). A mother’s departure is sharply felt through **regret and anger**.

Emotional deficiencies caused by parental migration explains the deviant behaviour of the adolescent: “You see, it’s much better when my mom is at home, there is somebody to talk to and to support you”, “I always miss her, when I’m doing nothing too, even today, even at school. I just don’t show it, but I always miss her, even when I play PC games, I miss her and I want to see her” (III_C_11). His grandmother finds an explanation for the psychological self-harm, severe pain with aggressive outbursts of her grandchild oriented towards other people is caused by him missing his mother and painful separation: “I do understand him, it’s not totally his fault, life made him this way. **His mother left him when he was only 4, and he didn’t have...** I mean he had everything, he went to kindergarten and then to school and everything, but he **didn’t have the maternal warmth and he wants to revenge now**” (III_E_8). Besides, the grandmother accuses her daughter that she abandoned her child, mentioning how much the child misses his mom: “It’s not that I hate her, but she just left this child alone **he has no support... he’s looking for comfort...** We dig in the garden and then **I run after him to catch him, well... we play once in a while,** if somebody we’ll see us would think “That old lady is crazy!” But he says “Grandma, let’s play!” We just sit for an hour or so **and we talk,** and he asks me to tell him stories of my life and I tell him stories...” (III_E_8). The adolescent has the same contradictory attitude. When his mother comes home “**he just sticks to her, but afterwards “I do not want to hear anything about her and I do not want to see her!”** (III_E_8).

- **School is another important educational factor** that favours children’s learning and internalizing the norms and regulations of a behaviour approved by the society. The feminization of the teaching staff, the lack

of differentiation of educational methods, the weakening of the relation between school and family represent negative dimensions of the modern school that are being aggravated by the crisis and by the specific character of the actual society: financial and social differences, poverty, abandonment, neglecting child problems, unemployment, etc.

The stress the adolescent experience caused by **school deviance** regards:

- **The conflict with school teachers:** *“I can fight with the teacher...”*;
- **Teachers’ physical violence towards their students:** *“... the teacher will never be on a student side, but rather on another teacher’s side...”*;
- **Threats:** *“You can be punished and to move you in the back of the class, but I tell Mrs. Eugenia “If you’ll ask me again to sit in the back of the class, I’ll stop coming to school” and there’s nothing she can do and she lets me stay at the desk in front of the class as I like it”* ;
- **Power abuse:** *“You see, she’s an ex-principal, but she still thinks she’s a principal now...”*;
- **Unjustified punishment:** *“It happened only once, there is this guy who likes to talk this way and then he says that he didn’t say anything and that somebody else talked this way and he laughs, you see, he’s lying and he’s laughing...”*;
- **Labelling, verbal abuse:** *“Well... they call me names sometimes... Well, and ass and stupid...”*

Elderly caregivers explain their grandchildren’s delinquency through the violent educational environment. The conflicts with their teachers are conditioned by **verbal and emotional abuse** produced by the children: *“Not only the teacher, but the whole class... But, you see, they are grown-up persons, and the ones who are younger refuse to work with “them”, and there were several conflicts”* (III_E_8).

- **Peers groups** represent a relevant socialization source for minors. Delinquency is learnt there. Groups and group relations allow them to express and identify themselves, to learn plausible models and values. Still, minor groups can become **an environment for promoting asocial values**, virtue to the incompetence of its members as well as the infiltration in these groups of some persons with intentions or even criminal past. The collected data denotes that the deviance perceived in relation with their peers is manifested through:

- **Verbal violence:** *“My friends call me names”*;
- **Offensive and dangerous jokes:** *“Well, they have their own jokes and it’s them who laugh at them... just like my cousins. I have bronchial asthma and I cannot run a long distance and before I used to run a little*

and I was choking but now I can run a lot and I am ok. But he likes to play jokes and he just think it's funny to take my inhaler from me... but I feel bad...;

- **Joining the “gang” and running away from home:** *“We had problems with these guys, he entered their “gang”... he can stay out for a whole night... and I sit and worry...”.*

The adolescent with a deviant behaviour feels the need to **communicate with the psychologist** in certain situations, when he feels that he lacks moral security: *“Maybe with the psychologist, I can talk to him sometimes. There is one in our school. It's just there are guys who beat me, call me names...”* (III_C_11). Moreover, he **asked for mayor's help:** *“I went home to the mayor and I talked to him. I just had to. Nobody asked me to, I went there by myself. I asked for my grandmother to have full official right to take care of me and now she has all documents”.*

We can conclude that it should be taken into consideration the fact that children left behind can behave differently (in a positive or negative way, that is in a simulative or inhibitive way), adhering or neutralizing themselves, developing the so-called “determinant complexes” of the criminal action. Thus, one can see the difficulty of designing human behaviour from a psychological point of view when the child is given different socialization models. The factors determining deviance and delinquency in the behaviour of children whose parents are abroad have to be systematically approached. Deprivation of maternal care is visible and can be identified in extreme behaviour of the adolescent with an unidentified self-image.

Besides, there is severe need of psychological support that confirms our hypothesis regarding adolescents' frustrations, affect and internal conflicts. The absence of parents makes children feel unhappy and they say that being happy means *“Not to fight with my grandmother, and my mom is near... I do not need anything else...”* (III_C_11).

A child's psychological trauma is obvious. The child lives the pain of separation by going through several levels of affective shock, anger, puzzlement, accusation and self-blaming, etc. while looking for and finding mechanisms to redress their situation.

Elderly

• Emotional condition of the elderly

Ageing represents a set of transformations affecting the last period of life which is marked by a decline process and pessimist attitude of elderly. The elderly in difficulty are those persons who when they were young had a full life, filled with possibilities. The elderly have relatives, grown-

up children and grandchildren, but as a result of their children's migration and/or behaviour particularities they don't have contact with them. The resentments felt by the elderly for their relatives make them difficult to communicate with, hostile, depressed, insensitive to others problems while adopting an infantile and stubborn behaviour.

Old people's affective background is dominated by depression, apathy and coldness which lead to an unstable and irritable behaviour. The symptoms of involuntary depression and melancholy are expressed by somatic suffering, sleep disorder, guilt, uselessness, self-blaming. The elderly become apathetic, sad, and pessimistic and the wish to die is a specific one for a lot of them.

The migration of children elicits a various range of emotions, feelings and affective states based on the loneliness and helplessness felt by the elderly they have left behind. The intensity of the affective processes experienced by many of the elderly with children abroad differs in compliance with the risk degree of their own situation as seen by themselves, and the fact that they have been left alone with the husband/wife or grandchildren. When they feel protected, useful and "together with somebody" the elderly prove to have a healthy emotional balance.

The survey denotes that **the main source of happiness** for elderly with children abroad constitutes the **communication with their children**. "*We're happy when we talk to our children. Why? Because I don't need anything else! I just need to talk to him and to hear his voice. It's my child and they're the sweetest!*" (III_E_24).

Elderly with children abroad mentioned the happiness they feel when communicating with their children, this feeling being fed by: the identification of the fact that the family members are "*healthy*" (III_E_1); the observation that "*families are whole again*" (FG_E_1_rural); their grandchildren's performances: "*We're happy that our grandchildren are healthy - one of my grandchildren studies in a high school in the country but she's going to Venice to enter a university; another one who studied in Romania, in Giurgiu, then graduated from a university in Iasi and got married to a Romanian and she's now in England, in London*" (III_E_1); direct communication with children: "*We're happy that at least they call us*" (FG_E_1_rural).

According to the study both institutionalized elderly as well as those living in their homes are happy when receiving calls from their children and are happy even when their migrant children call them rarely and the conversation does not last long. Their easiness and well-being is ensured by their children's attention and the observation that their children are doing well. Still, the institutionalized elderly are sadder and more pessimistic regarding the fact that they rarely if ever communicate with their children.

Both the elderly who have children and grandchildren abroad and some of them who live together with them, perceive **the good health and success at school of their grandchildren** as a source/object of **happiness**. *“I am happy when my grandchildren are obedient and have good marks”* (III_E_17).

The elderly are aware of the responsibility they have related to growing up and educating their grandchildren, they confess that this situation makes them happy and compensates for their feeling of loneliness and uselessness: *“I nursed children all my life but I feel that the responsibility is greater with these ones. However, I got used so much to them that I feel like I would not be able to live without them, without caring for them... It is a great happiness for a grandmother to nurse her grandchildren. Anyway, it's better this way, rather than living alone and having no one by your side...”* (III_E_14).

The results of the study highlight that **sadness** derives (as well as happiness) from the communication of elderly with their migrant children. The elderly mentioned that when they talk to their children they feel sad for the following reasons:

- Regret that the family is temporarily separated: *“We feel that we got separated from them”* (FG_E_1_rural);
- Insecurity: *“I feel sad because he's not here and I wonder what I would do when I feel I just can't go on”* (III_E_20);
- Observing that their leaving didn't solve their issue of unemployment: *“I don't feel happy because they didn't find a job”* (III_E_25);
- Longing for their children and grandchildren: *“I'd like them to be here, I miss them, even those who are already big but most of all I miss the little ones”* (III_E_1).

Some respondents described their own behaviour manifestations that express the intensity of their feelings related to their children's leaving: *“I cry when they come and I cry when they leave”* (FG_E_1_rural); *“I just look through the window and I look at people and it's like I see her, and I miss her so much that I cannot even describe it”* (III_E_11).

The separation trauma is sharply felt by some elderly respondents: *“Separating from your child hurts mentally and even physically”* (III_E_5), still, this does not lead them to accusing their children: *“I miss him so much but I cannot blame him”* (III_E_5). Some elderly told us that they overcome the pain of the separation from their children by **drinking alcohol**.

The elderly who participated in the study claim that although they experience the sadness and longing for their children and grandchildren, they **do not accept the idea of moving to the country their children work in**. Sometimes uncertainty and/or the refusal to go to their children is con-

ditioned by the sense of duty and responsibility of some elderly towards their dead parents. *“How am I supposed to go there? I really don’t know... if I don’t die until then... maybe I’ll go... but when I miss my own parents I go to the cemetery, I miss our land, and these are the things that give us a lot – who would go there if I leave?”* (III_E_11), on the other hand the **powerful origin community attachment** can manifest: *“I was born there, I grew-up there and I always look at the picture I have and my heart is full of pain”* (III_E_19).

According to the collected data, the events that can produce **pleasure and satisfaction** to the elderly with children abroad focuses mainly on **activities that include the children’s presence**: *“We’re all together like a big family, when our son comes home for Christmas and for Easter...Everybody’s there!”* (III_E_2); *“I like holidays, when we gather together because we have a big family, we’re cheerful and we like to talk. We never fight like other big families do...”* (III_E_4).

Some respondents find their comfort in **going to church**: *“The church brings me pleasure, it’s so calm in there and I like the attitude they have in there, I like it a lot...”* (III_E_21) and in the relations they have with other people: *“Now I like going to church, to serve and to pray and it feels like all my troubles go away. And I feel happy when the phone rings and I hear my child’s voice asking me how I am doing. I’m happy when there is somebody at the door bringing me treats and I like to matter...”* (III_E_5).

The study proves that some elderly feel **pleased by benefiting from primary social services**, such as a social canteen: *“We are invited three times for dinner, and we get presents during holidays and we get exactly what we need – green beans that we need for our table”* (III_E_21). This conclusion is valid for the **institutionalized elderly** who claim that specialized services totally ensure their needs compared to the lonely environment they have at home: *“Whenever we have a problem or a question we can talk to our director”* (FG_E_urban_asylum); *“I suppose that I feel good here because I don’t have to do the laundry or cook and if I’d live at home I’d lack a lot of things, but I’m taken care of in here...”* (FG_E_rural_asylum). These stories denote the elderly’s need of support in personal care and the fact they get this support from the institution’s employees.

Due to the importance of work in our culture, old age provides to the majority of people a **substantial feeling of loss**. According to the collected data, the following problems causing **inconvenience and dissatisfaction** to the elderly are mentioned:

- **The decrease of their own physical capacities**: *“What can I do? I have to dig in the garden but I can’t. I dug yesterday with my boys, but they left today and I’m alone with my daughter-in-law”* (III_E_16);

- **Poor health:** *“...more health, I pray to God to give me health so that I’d be able to educate these two kids for them to be able to earn their bread...”* (III_E_2);
- **Poor financial situation:** *“The pension is little, it’s not enough, it helps that my daughter sends us some money, she gets her salary once a month and that’s when she sends us money. I got my pension on the 13th, not even a week has passed and already there’s nothing left of it”* (III_E_16);
- **The lack of effective communication:** *“It’s sad and boring, now that my husband is dead. My boy is a boy, and he is also alone. I can understand him – he needs to talk to his friends. I don’t expect him to stay with me”* (III_E_21);
- **The lack of community services for elderly:** *“I like it when I can go somewhere. There was a place for elderly where I used to go to tell stories of my life since I was five but now, but the place is not functioning...”* (III_E_6);
- **Addictions and human weaknesses:** *“I don’t like people who drink or smoke, I don’t like immorality and greed, pride, I don’t like people who talk in vain or who use words with no meaning and there are a lot of persons like this in our village...”*(III_E_5).
- The collected data allowed us to highlight the events that make the **institutionalized elderly** feel inconvenient and dissatisfied:
- **The absence of their family:** *“I’m not as wealthy as I used to be before, and this goes first. The family goes second. And the children – whether you want them or not – they’re yours. But that was before and I cannot compare it with my present situation. I’m calm and balanced, I don’t drink, I don’t smoke and I can stay clean”*(FG_E_3_urban_asylum);
- **The existence of some problems within the institution that cause the elderly discomfort and insecurity:** *“I’d like to have more friends here, for there to be less alcoholism and fewer people who should not be here...”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

The feeling of loneliness has a strong impact on their affective life. The absence of a supportive person causes feelings of isolation, loneliness, abandonment and a lack of affection. *“When I am alone my head hums and I need to be comforted. Loneliness is killing us and we feel so lonely. Now I have my wife besides me and there is somebody who I can talk to but there’s nobody else besides her”* (III_E_5).

Some elderly live with the **fear and anxiety of being immobilized by a disease**, the need of an eventual palliative care burdens them: *“I’m praying for my health and I’m doing my best to stay healthy as I don’t want **to be somebody’s burden** or to lay in bed, God forbid, and not to have anybody to care of you, but even if there is somebody you’re still a burden as there always should be somebody who would take care of you”* (III_E_8).

Fear and anxiety are specific problems for the elderly who are **beneficiaries of residential care institutions**. The study's results prove that the institutionalized elderly fear:

- **Beneficiaries with mental issues:** *“There are a lot of **madmen** here, and I mean it... **We live in fear**. And you can see that during the day a lot of rooms are closed. **People are afraid**, and after dinner all the doors are locked. **People live in fear** because of these madmen”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum);
- **Employees' alcohol abuse:** *“The biggest issue that we have is the **alcohol**, both the **administration** and the **employees** drink too much”* (FG_3_urban_asylum);
- **Beneficiaries' insecurity:** *“I can tell you a story that happened here two months ago. A beneficiary was not offered any help and the poor guy burned and died two days later. There are 200 persons in here and during our last meeting, nobody asked the administration about punishing anyone. But they talked about the reason... We wanted to know why the staff didn't provide this poor guy with any help”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

Another emotional problem the elderly with children abroad have is the fear of **definitive separation from their children**, that their children will never come back. One of the experts in elderly care mentioned that *“they fear they will be forgotten, **their children will leave and will not return**, even children fear that their mothers will leave and will never return back home”*. Because in our culture the idea that **“children should support their parents when they get old”** is strongly emphasized, there are cases when the separation from the children causes the sense of loss. When children leave home on a long-term basis, the weakening and/or loss of any contact with their own children implies the transition from a predefined status – **“I have children who would take care of me when I'm old”** – to an ambiguous and unknown one – **“I don't know anything about my children”** and **“what I'll do when I'm old”**. The unknown scares and it is heightened by discussions with other community persons who tell them stories about their own children who disappeared. The fact that labour migrant children do not contact their parents for a long period of time causes negative representations in the elderly regarding their children. Anxiety, fear and their long wait for any communication from their migrant children conditions the feeling of loneliness, stigmatization and isolation: *“There are cases when parents simply disappear abroad and grandparents take care of their grandchildren as they would take care of their children and there are two grandmothers who find themselves in the same situation – they take care of their grandchildren, the grandmother takes care of her granddaughter – she stands for both a mother and a father for her. I know a story about a labour migrant mother, she left her two kids in 1999, and in*

2000 she was given a family home, she repaired it and then she called home and said that she was coming back to take her kids to Moscow. She got lost on her way back home and there has been no news about her since then, she is neither in Moldova nor in Moscow. She was a good and caring woman, but she simply got lost on her way to Moldova” (FG_EE_urban). The state of uncertainty regarding their migrant children can be associated, in this context, with the loss of identity and with a confusion of their parental role, their financial security and that they are in need of significant psychological adjustment. The impact of a long-term loss of contact with their children can be associated with the loss of psychological well-being.

The intense fear of losing their children who are abroad is being confirmed by a lot of the elderly: *“I wake up at night and I think “My God, just don’t let them bring her in a coffin, I always fear she will get killed, or beaten to death as she’s always so sick and I fear her coming back ill or worse...”*(III_E_12).

Another source of negative emotions constitutes the **risk situation** the elderly with their children abroad have to face which **increases their vulnerability**. The study revealed that communication and relations the elderly have with their biological or extended family members is often marked by **violence and feeds the negative emotions existence**. According to the collected data, **negative emotions produced by abusive situations** are accompanied by frustrations the elderly experience, which are caused by the fact that their **aggressors are close people**.

Thefts, robberies and swindles cause long-term psycho-traumatism for the elderly left alone as a consequence of their children’s migration. These experiences feed a **state of stress, heightened emotions, frustration** and a variety of resentments related to these crimes being committed by their **family members**: *“When I was going out, to a store or anywhere else, she simply used to come in and take my shampoos and other things. I was not at home and she just took them! There is no one else who could do it. I am sure it is her, Catalina, my granddaughter. She used to steal small things”* (III_E_13). The elderly aged 76 says that her granddaughter’s delinquent behaviour is directed by the suggestions of other extended family members: *“Go to your grandma, she’s richer and she has a lot of things”* (III_E_13).

When these events are being reproduced, the trauma is being externalized and sharply experienced by the elderly left behind as a consequence of children’s migration. The fact that the situation is tolerated is explained by the elderly in the following manner *“The son-in-law... who else? I know his hands were not clean, but he was one of ours, what could I say..? I didn’t want my girl and grandchildren to be defamed...”* (III_E_9).

In order to avoid the feeling of **collective shame**, some elderly conceal the delinquent behaviour of their family members on purpose, silently suffer-

ing: *“My husband and my son were taking him out of trouble so that he would not defame all of us”* (III_E_9).

Negative affective feelings of the elderly whose children migrated abroad caused by abusive situations are expressed during a spiritual counselling process that is part of religious rituals. A community priest confirmed that confesses of his parishioners denote that **old people’s close relatives** commit crimes, causing financial and emotional damages: *“There are stories in our village that I have heard where peoples own grandparents, not strangers had stolen their poultry, another stole a yearling and another one just entered their house and stole around 2000 lei”* (III_E_5); *“They’ve taken my poultry. And I know that it was one of these lads who knew... as he has taken two of them... the most beautiful chicken that I had... and then he took the cock... and then he went on taking two, three of my chickens”* (III_E_10).

One of the problems highlighted by the results of the study is the acute feeling of **anxiety and fear of an eventual abuse** the elderly with migrant children experience. The data proves that the level of vulnerability at the hands of community persons positively correlates with the **gender** of the elderly (more women) and **the decrease of self-defence capacities due to age**: *“Another woman had a problem. She said that somebody entered her house and took something away and that happened when she was alone, her children were gone. These thieves go to the persons who cannot defend themselves, that’s where they go”* (III_E_5).

The stressful state is experienced by the elderly with labour migrant children and who were victims of an abuse, as well as by people who have only witnessed these abusive practices. The emotional shock, physical abuse fed by pain, insecurity, humiliation and the total lack of protection are specific for the elderly who are home alone as a consequence of their children’s migration. One of the elderly asserted that *“There are a lot of problems and I feel the need to be helped at every move I take, I don’t know how to say to anyone, is there any help! Even at home I don’t feel secure... I step aside as I don’t see well, I hit my head on the wall, there are elderly who have a good eyesight, but I... you see, I was robbed in 2002 by some thieves from Hincesti, they entered my house, I was alone in the house and they tied my hands and feet and wrapped my mouth so that I would not be able to scream, but I screamed so hard that I thought I’d break into pieces. I was alone then and my children were away”* (III_E_5). The sudden loss of eyesight as a consequence of head traumas caused by the abusers is sharply felt by the elderly. The memories that cause posttraumatic stress are still vivid, and poor eyesight makes people being of acute need of help.

The insecurity connected to relatives represents another source of anxiety and fear. According to the experts from Balti some lonely elderly with labour migrant children and some of the elderly who returned home from

working abroad are deprived of their houses by their relatives or are declared as “missing”. These marginalization practices, abusive deprivation of property, their abandonment and isolation has a direct impact on their moral degradation and a new lifestyle, the one that leads to homelessness due to the impossibility to legally regain their dwelling. *“This is something that usually happens to the elderly, when the husband or the wife is abroad. One of them stays here, something goes wrong, other family interests appear and they sell the apartment and they declare the person missing. When the other person returns home there is no place for him/her to go, such cases are quite frequent. This happens more often when men are coming back from abroad”* (FG_EE_urban). Another problem mentioned by the experts refers to the direct involvement of relatives in frauds and the impossibility to legally defend the elderly. *“Relatives are mostly the ones doing these kind of things, they do everything officially and afterwards nothing can be restored”* (FG_EE_urban). The impact of these destructive practices has caused depression and suicide attempts by the elderly.

The institutionalized elderly have no negative emotions caused by abusive situations in the institutions. On the contrary, some of the elderly mentioned that within the institution they feel *“a thousand times better”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum) and that they feel no control or power specific to domestic violence: *“We do not depend on anybody, at home you will be told what to do but here it is different, you live the way you want to”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

This study proves the **nostalgia and homesickness** felt by some of the institutionalized elderly: *“Home is the best place”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). The emotional disadvantage and affective imbalance of elderly is conditioned by the acute wish to satisfy their need to live and/or die in their own house: *“I want to leave; I want to get home to die in my house”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

The experts told us: *“The elderly are **shy, fearful, sick, depressive** I mean they are not open because they have so many problems and they don’t know what to start with and they lost their trust... they get used to the situation they find themselves in but along the way they become more open and they want to change, and every person is in search for quietness and calmness”* (FG_EE_urban). The results of the study also unveil other differences between the elderly left behind and those whose children are at home.

The experts participating in the research showed that the elderly with labour migrant children in comparison with those whose children are at home, experience the following problems: (i) **the immense longing of children who left**; (ii) **the care for children who are abroad**; (iii) **health issues**; (iv) **depression**; (v) **the responsibility of taking care of their grandchildren**; (vi) **marginalization**; (vii) **the loss of property**; (viii) **addictions as an escape**

source; (ix) **the lack of a place to go:** “I met people who when were depressed sold their apartment, began drinking, ended up on the streets and then there are even bigger problems: what do you do with them, where do you place them and their children don’t even pick up the phone...” (FG_EE_urban); (x) **emotional stress:** “The durability of the life of the elderly decreases in the period their children go abroad... still this emotional stress shortens their lives, even they say it...” (FG_EE_urban); (xi) **personality changes, distrust in other people:** “We keep the record only of people whose children are not in the Republic of Moldova but are abroad for work. When they address us for financial help we go to their homes and assess their situation, their living conditions and... I try to see if I can work with them or not, or to transfer the case to my colleagues who would take care of those elderly, because it’s pretty hard to work with them, they lack confidence” (FG_EE_urban).

Some of the elderly who take care of their grandchildren require specialized psychological support for their own grandchildren who are emotionally deprived: “I’ve been in the field and there is this six year old girl who lives with her grandmother, her grandmother is a disabled person and when we asked her what she needs... and she says she needs no parcels, but maybe we could organize a group or talk with my daughter together with a **psychologist**, because she’s not even listening to me. She stays **on the computer 24/24**, there’s nothing I can tell her... **maybe together with the social worker or a psychologist you will meet at least once a week...**” (FG_EE_urban_rural).

Another problem the elderly left behind have is their self-destructive tendency. Suicidal thoughts represent the consequence of their depressive states, the condition of emotional instability, pain, the feeling of endless trouble, etc. “When you feel bad you just say “God, let me die!” and the second day you realize how stupid you are thinking like that, everybody wants to live...” (III_E_8); “There were times when it was hard to go on, I had nothing to eat and I wanted to kill myself on two occasions” (III_E_12).

Emotional support is minimal and is actually weaker between close people: “I didn’t have a lot of happiness. I share my secrets with my granddaughter who lives next to me, we get along well” (III_E_3); “The closest person who I have now is Vasile... my cohabitant. He supports me whenever I feel angry or sad... He always finds the right words to say and he helps me” (III_E_15). Sometimes, an emotional support is intentionally rejected, because they lack confidentiality: “I’m rather a closed person. I do not like to be mean. I just stay and wait. If you go and talk to somebody and you’re looking for an advice, or help... they can tell everything to someone else...” (III_E_12).

The research gives us the possibility to conclude that:

- If the elderly are depressed the despair increases and there can appear depressive reactions or thoughts about uselessness and suicide;

- Aesthetic elderly can be distinguished by their feeling of self-esteem, the sense of a social prestige crash that leads to the fall in value of feelings and lack of respect making them prone to depressive reactions;
- Schizoid elderly can accumulate isolation tendencies, the refrain from any contacts, preference for maintaining the stereotypes about the house and its role, accompanied by indifference for the things going on around them after their immediate needs are satisfied;
- Feelings of jealousy and anger caused by the degrees of his social prestige that lead to the increase of his depressive and anxious state.
- Besides, it can be concluded that old people's **emotional disadvantage has several explanations**, such as:
 - the fact that the financial situation of the elderly does not create a "suitable" state;
 - the fact that ageing is usually associated with disease, loneliness, stigmatization, isolation;
 - the problem of chronic income insufficiency which can lead to frustration and indignation, considering the pension they have as a lack of respect from the state for their work;
 - real cases of "loneliness and separation neurosis" can appear that can accelerate the stress of getting old.

At the same time, the situation of the institutionalized elderly is more secure about satisfying **fundamental needs** (food, clothing, adequate temperature), **their need for protection** (dwelling, security), **the need to communicate and to have relations (to be together with somebody)**. **We emphasize the existence of the institutionalized elderly who miss their house, regret their situation and want to die at home.** The presence of a relative reduces the feeling of being an "abandoned" and "forgotten" person and ensures the maintenance of the connection with the past experiences and memories.

• Self-image and self-assessment

Psychological changes that the elderly undergo are the result of transformations that occurred in their lives, based on internal factors such as heredity and hormonal changes, and external factors such as retirement, the decrease of biological potential its' associated pathology and a decrease in the number of family members as well as the decease of some relatives or friends of close age. The normal functioning of the elderly comprises the physical, moral and social balance. The most signifi-

cant psychological changes refer to the *attention change* or the decrease of the capacity to concentrate, the decrease of voluntary attention, *changes of the memory capacity*, especially short-term, *changes of thinking* that are being characterized by the decrease of spontaneity, flexibility, the presence of rapid adjustment disorders and of stereotypes.

The self-image of the elderly left behind is strongly affected by the **feeling of loneliness and abandonment**: “*They don’t just feel but they see themselves this way. Lonely and with no help*” (FG_E_2_rural); “*There is nobody to help us, we are so lonely*” (III_E_5); “*My husband left me long ago and lives with another. I educated two girls by myself. But now they left me too. I retired long ago, I do not remember how many years ago. When I could work no more*” (III_E_18); “*It is so hard, very hard. I go out all the time to check the mailbox. You come home from somewhere and you look at the threshold in search of a pair of shoes, you know... When the telephone rings I always hope that it’s them*” (III_E_18); “*Moreover, we’re waiting for our children, we don’t go on visits because that’s the way it works for us – parents have to wait for their children*” (III_E_17).

Institutionalized elderly draw their self-image as a link to their situation of being under the care of somebody else. The results denote that a lot of institutionalized elderly feel good in the institutions, saying that their vital needs are being satisfied: “*It is better in here, you can be a millionaire at home, but you will not have the same conditions*” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum); “*It’s better in here, the food is served on time, everything’s on time*” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum). Self-assessment of some elderly increases because of the fact that the institution destroys their feeling of being a burden: “*It is better in here, because my daughter has a husband and children and I don’t want to bother her*” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

Experts of the elderly’s problems claim that for some elderly residential care institutions are the only solution they have as social support: “*There is nowhere for them to go, they’re closed inside their homes with their problems, nobody hears them and nobody knows them*” (FG_EE_urban).

Some elderly, beneficiaries of residential care services are missing their homes, relatives and daily routine. “*I want to go home to see my relatives*” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum); “*I do whatever I want when I’m home, but what can do in here? I can repair some things, maybe not the whole day but still... I can do it whenever I want to*” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

The results highlight the self-image some of the elderly have – an **abandoned and lonely** person.

The results prove that most of the elderly are resigned to the situation and do not want to make any changes that are essential for their situation, except for the maintenance or improvement of their health. “*I don’t want to*

change anything, I want to be healthy. That is all I want. No more pain in my feet" (III_E_13). The majority of the elderly included in the research accept the inevitable; they easily talk about death, some of them claiming they are even waiting for it. *"What kind of changes? That I would like to live? No..."* (III_E_10); *"I'm waiting for the holly death, what else I can wait for when I'll be 77 years old this summer"* (III_ELB_16). Psychologically speaking the acceptance of the inevitable by the elderly denotes the presence of a normal psychosocial development of humans.

According to them, the elderly left behind see themselves as:

- **Helped by their children:** *"I had a heart surgery and I paid for it 15 thousand lei. My children told me: mom, we want to see you"* (FG_E_1_rural); *"My son paid for my teeth, I had to go to a dentist in Chisinau and he paid 12800"* (FG_E_1_rural);
- **Abandoned, lonely:** *"I have no one, no brothers, no sisters... They might as well find me dead one night"* (FG_E_1_rural);
- **Discriminated:** *"The young ones stay at home but we have to work"* (FG-ELB 1);
- **Poor:** *"There were five of us, without parents, our father died on the battlefield and our mother left us and got married and we grew-up with our grandparents... we went through everything, and the hunger of 1947 and poverty and so on... and now is the same"* (FG_E_1_rural);
- **Helpless and insecure:** *"There is nobody to call us, we cannot even get out of bed"* (FG_E_1_rural); *"I thought I'm done, the door is closed, nobody is coming, my wife is not at home, my children don't know anything"* (FG_E_1_rural).
- The experts also revealed other peculiarities of the elderly:
- **The exaggerated tendency of the elderly to save money:** *"She keeps everything, in order not to spend too much, if I send her something to wear if she sees that that thing is too good she just puts it back"* (FG_EE_urban_rural);
- **To keep certain goods for funeral rituals:** *"They keep collecting things for their funerals"* (FG_EE_urban_rural);
- **The feeling that they belong to no one.** Some elderly categorically refuse to see a doctor for a consultation, and some of them say: *"I don't need anything, my children left and nobody needs me."* Thus, they just stay in and do not see anyone;
- **Left without care:** *"They are just like children who have no parental care, exactly like those children who are left alone..."* (FG_EE_urban_rural);

- **Left alone, abandoned without moral support.**

Insecurity is strongly felt by the elderly left behind. According to the collected data, the elderly assess themselves as **people with a high fear of victimization**, bringing multiple examples of abuse situations they and/or their peers experienced: “Yes, a couple of years ago a young pal received a parcel from Italy that his wife sent. She was working there. Another two guys followed him and killed him on that hill and took his parcel and 200 Euros” (III_E_1); “On July 22 they stole my bag. I was in a train and I put it next to my chair and when I looked again the bag was gone. And they also tried to rob me, they forced the door of my house” (III_E_3); “I know cases when people lose their houses. There were some women who were alone, and they rented their apartment and one day he did whatever he could to steal their apartment from them. They had to sweep the streets to earn their living, poor girls” (III_E_4).

The high risk of victimization of the elderly left behind was confirmed by experts in the field: “They live in fear, because people think that if there is a family where one of the members migrated for work that means that there’s money in there, there are expensive things and that’s why they tell no one that their children are abroad. They are afraid of it” (FG_EE_urban).

The self-image of some elderly is fed by the conviction that they performed their parental role the best they could and as a consequence they can be proud of their children. The relevant characteristics of their children in their opinion are:

- **Higher education:** “He graduated from the University and worked for an enterprise and the other graduated the Sankt Petersburg University” (FG_E_1_rural);
- **Character features:** “They are good children, they never talked bad things, and they always defended me” (III_E_2_rural);
- **Their children’s competences and performances:** “They are busy, they’re always working in Spain, America, Romania... One of my grandsons got married and lives in the US now, and another one lives in Romania. They went there because they are smart guys and they had the capacity to study English and they’re fine” (III_E_5).

Their house represents a valuable good for the elderly and it influences their identity. A lot of elderly who benefit from residential services say that the house will be passed over to their children: “I left the house to my girls, one of them is in Moscow”; is in the state’s care: “My house is in the care of the Mayoralty of Ghindesti”; was sold: “I sold it and I gave my son the money, because it’s his house. But my son died and now I have no money and no house”; “She’s left alone, her daughter sold the house as she has a lot of children”.

A problem highlighted by the experts shows the need to change the national legislation in order to leave the property of elderly under state care in exchange for long-term residential care services. *“Abroad this right exists, in order for a person to be taken care of, he gives his house to the state, he gives something, but in here we take care of him but he gives the house to his grandchild or...”* (FG_EE_urban_rural); *“The ones who are alone hide the house, at the will at a grandchild and he says that he has no children and there is no one to take care of him, and it is obvious that his children are not there but that there is somebody behind all this”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

Thus the elderly develop their image depending on their situation. The majority of them feels lonely, abandoned, estranged and poor. The image they have decreases their respect and makes them see themselves as unprotected and helpless. As a rule the elderly do not cope with the situation, they resign from it and don't want any significant changes in their life, they just want to be healthy.

- **“New worries”, taking care of grandchildren**

Taking care of their grandchildren constitutes a series of **“new worries”** that affect the majority of the elderly left behind. Satisfying their grandchildren's fundamental needs, taking care of them, ensuring their security and a “good education” represent the daily activities of the elderly left behind. The responsibilities of taking care of their grandchildren are sometimes partially performed. This is explained by **the poor health condition of the elderly**: *“I am alone and my grandson comes to me to feed me and to help me. His mother is abroad and it is very difficult for me, I am sick, I have a heart condition, high blood pressure, I don't see well, I don't hear well...”*(FG_E_2_rural) or **through conflicting family relations**: *“Within the families that children are cared for by their grandparents there may appear conflicts among the elderly families, grandparents... there are conflicts based on money, on who is educating the child or who receives the benefits sent by their parents who work abroad... there can also emerge conflicts based on “I take care of the child, and you're not doing anything”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

The decrease of physical and moral capacities specific to their age generates serious difficulties in looking after their grandchildren: *“It would have been much more difficult if she would have been disobedient, from a moral point of view it's actually easy, **physically it is really hard**, it's really hard to carry things”* (III_E_3).

The experts specify that taking care of their grandchildren represents for the elderly *“a huge effort, to check their homework, to cook, to do the laundry... Still, the children are the ones who suffer because they don't get the education they need, the grandmother does not have the same forces to take care of them,*

she's losing her temper, they live in a state of tension and so on" (FG_EE_urban). Children who are under the care of their grandparents expect to receive the same care as their mother would provide them. Grandchildren compare actions, behaviours and attitudes of the elderly with mothers. The elderly interviewed within this study mentioned that grandchildren strongly feel the absence of their mother, and experience strong feelings when they see other children with their mothers and they perceive the differences. An old woman who takes care of her two granddaughters tells that even if she is making a lot of effort, the results do not correspond to children's expectancies. The mother's presence at the events the children participate in is important for their personal and social affirmation. They feel the absence of their mother, because they do not look as tidy, appreciated, valued or encouraged as children whose mothers are at home. Grandchildren take part in activities that are important for them without experiencing any positive emotion: they have no one to share their happiness, they feel deprived compared to children whose mothers are at home, and they have no one to take pictures and no one to watch them. These situations lead to negative emotions even during the long-desired holidays that stress their mother's absence. *"Last year my daughter and son-in-law told me that they'll send us some money and they didn't. We cannot buy even some sweets. They could not come even for Christmas, they didn't have enough money to buy food for themselves. All the children were gathering near the Christmas tree with their moms, but my granddaughters were with me. I didn't prepare them the way their mother does, she knows better, she's young, and they were crying and saying that their mother was talking pictures, and was doing this and that and I know that their mother would do the same things, but she's not here now"* (III_E_24).

Fluctuating affective states of the elderly and their emotional liability pointed out by experts as **distinct peculiarities are reflected in stories told by the elderly who look after their grandchildren**. *"I educated my daughter because she was mine, but my grandson is even sweeter. I had much patience in the past, but now I lose my temper quickly even if I don't want to... I always try to speak well to them, I don't want them to hear bad things"* (III_E_4); *"Sometimes I tell him he's selfish and it's not good, and if he does something wrong I punish him by turning off his Play station and the TV and he gets mad and cries and he's upset that I punished him... but I really have to do it. I have to because he has to understand. He doesn't like to be punished or when I shout at him or just raise my voice at him... he likes me to speak calmly"* (III_E_11).

Taking care of grandchildren requires the elderly left behind to have linguistic and mathematical competences and speak an international language in order to meet their grandchildren's expectancies: *"I take her to school... then I meet her... then I go to English classes with her... and then we do together the homework. She's doing almost everything*

by herself but I help her with the Romanian language because we have to look up for a lot of words in the dictionary” (III_E_3); “When he was in the first grade it was quite difficult, I used to help him with his math until now, but it’s getting rather difficult. He is also studying English and now he is the one correcting me when I make mistakes. I like the way we get along!” (III_E_4).

A problem highlighted by the elderly refers to the **deviant behaviour of grandchildren and the fact they blame themselves for this and experience the fear** that their grandchildren will adopt a deviant behaviour: “He hasn’t been to school since Christmas last year, he talks badly... **he took some money from the house and he spent it with his friends...** it’s probably my fault on the one hand but on the other I couldn’t do anything I’d had surgery and I was recovering for ten months” (III_E_8).

A 82 year old woman who takes care of her three grandchildren says that she has been taking care of them since they were very small: “Now I have 11 grandchildren. I only take care of these three who their mother abandoned, **the girl was seven months old, the boy was one and a half years old and after a year she brought another little girl from abroad.** And these three guys are killing me! Until now I did everything for them but now they realized that their parents are alive. But where’s their mother? Their mother got married 100 times and she’s not living with anybody and their father is disabled and he works only one day per week” (III_E_19).

Experts involved in the study note that although the elderly take care of their grandchildren, **they are worried about their labour migrant children**: “They worry, whether they want to or not, they want to know how their child is doing” (FG_EE_urban_rural).

A “**new worry**” of the elderly left behind is related to their resistance to the discriminatory attitudes and practices of their neighbours: “Neighbours’ behaviour can sometimes be discriminatory, they say you are alone, her children left her and so on... they discriminate them in a way” (FG_EE_urban). Social labelling of “lonely elderly”, “left alone by their own children” makes them feel different from the others whose children are at home. Besides, the elderly who look after their grandchildren have to wisely manage their money, as they have to meet their grandchildren’s demands as well as their own needs: “It is often that the elderly lack money because their pension is small and their children cannot send them money for the first period, and with a pension of 600, 800 lei you can’t do a lot, the prices keep rising every day and the most important for an elderly person is to have enough money to buy food and medicine” (FG_EE_urban).

Meeting their grandchildren’s basic needs, providing care, ensuring their security and “good-education” are among the daily duties of the elderly left behind. The care for their grandchildren is supplemented by the concern

for their migrant children. Their obligation to take care of their grandchildren is sometimes only partially fulfilled because a lot of elderly suffer from poor health conditions, reduced physical and moral capacities, and depressive affective states.

- **Communication with their migrant family members and subjects they discuss**

The elderly communicate with their labour migrant children on the phone and sometimes by cell phone or Internet. The data collected allowed us to identify **the frequency of communication with their children** who are working abroad. Many of the elderly state that they communicate with their children “once, twice a week – once a month”.

Sometimes the communication is directly accompanied by children’s return home: *“We talk on the phone and they come home sometimes and that’s how we talk.... I wait for him to come back; there are three years since I have seen him last time. He calls me every week and my grandchildren call me less often”* (III_E_5).

The collected data revealed some particular situations such as **the long-term rupture with their migrant children because of their disappearance**: *“For ten months I have known nothing about her... she just went out and disappeared...”* (III_E_8). The break with their migrant children was also revealed by the institutionalized elderly. Some of them saying that they do not know anything about their children for periods spanning years *“I haven’t heard of her for a year”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum); *“She didn’t visit me even once since the institution has opened and I’ve been here for ten years”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum); *“I’ve been here for five years and he has never visited me”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

Some of the interviewed elderly mentioned that their grandchildren they take care of don’t want to communicate with their mother as a protest of her absence (see Box 11).

BOX 11
Case Study. Children’s unwillingness to communicate with their mother (III_E_12)

“They don’t want to talk to her when she calls. I don’t know why they act like this... We sit with other women and children keep calling their parents while mine were sitting there like two strangers gazing at each other. And you know, I’ll never forget that day, after they played outside they came home sad and they said “Can we call you “mom?” And since then I’m their mom as they will have somebody to call this way. The elder one is more shy, but the small one, a seventh grade pupil said: “She has no heart and when she comes back I’ll not be able to call her mom. Since she left us and she didn’t take care of us.” And sometimes he says: “What does she think?”

It is to be mentioned that institutionalized elderly are called less often by their children at the public phone in the institution. Some institutionalized elderly told us that their children visit them: *“He visited me just the other day. He’s visiting me. I sit alone and I get bored, it’s good that I have a TV at least”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

The initiative of contact/communication comes completely from the children. Some elderly know the telephone number of their children abroad and call them in certain circumstances: *“We just buzz them so that they’ll call us back”* (FG_E_1_rural).

The length of phone discussions between the elderly and their migrant children is short and varies from one to ten minutes: *“We talk once a month and little, because he uses somebody else’s phone”* (III_E_12); *“We’ll call a little later but... how are you? Do you eat okay? Well, ok, take care!”* (III_E_17).

Subjects of the discussions between the elderly left behind and labour migrant children are various. Some elderly told us that their migrant children prove detailed interest for **their life**: *“How’s your health?”* (FG_E_2_rural); *“What’s the weather, who died, who’s alive? Who’s about to die?”* (FG_E_2_rural); *“How we’re doing, what news we have, how we live and that’s it, we don’t talk a lot, minutes cost”* (FG_E_1_rural); *“I tell her how the girls are doing in school, the way they behave, I tell her about her boy, I ask her how she’s doing. She told me that she was unemployed for half a year, the person who she worked for died, and it’s hard in there, that the salary at her new place is lower”* (FG_E_1_rural).

BOX 12**Case Study. An example of communication between a labour migrant parent and his family (III_E_11)**

“We start with school. How is Mihai doing, if he behaves, and if he does not talk bad to me? They tell him not to stay out long... And immediately afterwards she asks me how I feel? If there are any medicines that I need... She urges me to tell her every trouble that I have so that she would be able to send me anything I might need for me to be okay... She sends me pills. She tells me a thousand times to take care, to eat on time, not to worry for her because she’s doing fine, and even if she’s not – it will pass. That is probably the way it should be, every family has some hard times but they all go away with time... And she tells me not to worry because one day they fight and the next day they’re okay, and she tells me to take care of myself and Mihai... And then she asks me what I want her to send us, how can she help us... And she tells me to go and buy all the vitamins and to buy whatever I need... She takes good care of me...”

Children – labour migrants talk to their parents about their children’s school results and failures: *“My daughter wants to know all the details about our life. She wants to know everything. Sometimes I do not want to tell*

her everything so that she would not worry, I mean children get sick sometimes or start coughing... But she manages to find out everything... and she gets upset if I hide something from her..." (III_E_14). Some elderly who take care of their grandchildren after their children migrated are displeased by the fact that their children are not interested in their grandparents' situation: "Well, to be honest she doesn't even ask about her children or my health. She just asks me if everything's good and that's it. It's like these kids are not even her own" (III_E_12).

Some of the elderly mentioned that they are also curious about the school performance of their grandchildren who live together with their parents in the country they work: "about school, she said that it's harder than in here, besides she studies in a foreign language, it's one thing to talk with them in their language and it's another thing to study all objects in a foreign language. She took him there for 2 months to learn the language... She wanted to know his opinion because she did not want to drag him there by force. His other grandparents live there and he often visits them..." (III_E_9).

The data of the study show that some of the elderly are pleased with the life of their children abroad: "They live easier than we do" (FG_E_2_rural), other elderly **say the contrary**: "They say it's hard... and the other one... is a fugitive" (III_E_10).

Sometimes adult migrants **intentionally disguise some situations**, in order not to worry their parents: "When they talk to us I can feel it when they are not saying the whole truth because when they feel bad and they don't say it so that we'll not worry I can hear it in their voice" (III_E_5). The survey proves that some adult migrants **interrupt for good the communication** with their parents: "The little one is not answering the phone. We have not known anything about her for about three years. She used to live in Soroca. She left. And it's her children who live in that house now" (III_E_19).

In the communication process some of the institutionalized elderly beg their children to take them home: "That is the only thing I talk to her about. I want to go home, I just need to go home. I built it" (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

The need for communication and socialization with other people is stronger in old age. The communication with labour migrant children is the essential need of the elderly. The total lack of communication with their own migrant children or rare communication does not ensure a satisfactory level of emotional saturation and negatively influences the elderly. In conclusion it can be mentioned that migrant children communicate less with their parents who are at home, while some of them do not communicate at all with them. Subjects they approach in most cases refer to the state of things, weather, and health. Only a few of migrant parents want to know details of their child performances at school, their characteristic features or

behaviour. This state of things leads to an estrangement between migrants and children as well as between migrants and parents.

- **The relationship with family members/caregivers of the elderly**

Children who are abroad help their parents with **financial resources** “*with money most of all*” and **parcels**: “*most of all clothing, food*”. They rarely send medicine as parcels are checked at the Customs. The institutionalized elderly and those who live in families do not have exaggerated expectancies regarding financial support from their family members/caregivers: “*I’m sure they would help more but they don’t have enough themselves, maybe with the occasion of mom’s or dad’s birthday they may send a couple of Euros, so that they are not left without anything*” (FG_E_1_rural); “*They send us for holidays a parcel with a cake, a holiday card*” (FG_E_1_rural). We assert that elderly do not want to burden their children, they do not want to give their families problems: “*I have to cook separately for them, and I eat something else... I do not want to make them angry... my son-in-law is a Romanian and I do not want to spoil their lives... I am ready to help them the best way I can, but whenever I’ll see that I’m not able to do it anymore I’ll go live with one of my children, I guess with my daughter – a girl is a girl and I am closer to her and we have no secrets between us, so...*” (III_E_11).

Some institutionalized elderly claim that their relationship with their children became colder. This rupture is a serious problem for the elderly. They confess that children do not visit them anymore and do not call them “*My brother visits me sometimes. My children – never...*” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

Experts in this field emphasize the issue of **interfamilial violence** that severely affects the relations of elderly with their family members. “*There are cases when grandchildren are violent with their grandparents especially when they are adolescents, when it’s rather difficult for them to get along; they’re more aggressive, impulsive*” (FG_EE_urban).

Among **forms of violence frequently showed towards the elderly** the experts mentioned:

- **Verbal violence**: “*Some of the children who live with their grandparents don’t go to school and they don’t tell it to their grandparents. Some of the grandparents feel obliged to take them back to school; we had to restore a girl because they wanted to expel her as she wasn’t going to school. They can talk bad to their grandparents saying: you cannot give me this or that, the other kids have it and I don’t*”
- **Physical and economic abuse**: “*They abuse them by giving them pills so that the elderly would be more sleepy, or to sign a will in order to get*

the property or to manipulate them when they receive money for taking care of the child”

- **Emotional violence, neglect:** *“The majority leave abroad, come home, send money, repair their house but forget about their parents, about their mother... If you forget your mother then your own children will forget you, there are certain things that you have to do and it’s better to refuse a repair than to forget about your parents”.*

BOX 13**Case Study. The abuse on the elderly by their grandchildren (FG_EE_urban)**

“I know an old lady who was in need of financial support, when I was filing her social benefit sheet for financial support she started crying saying that one night her grandsons came to her... She lived in a one room apartment and her grandsons who were living in a two-room apartment that she gave to her daughter, came at about 12 am, tied her to the bed and took her last 1000 lei, then they took the money, untied her and left. The old woman kept that money for her medicine. They told her not to tell anyone about it, not even her daughter or son-in-law, because something might happen to her”.

The elderly are mistreated by their own children or close relatives and are totally helpless. Sometimes the victimization of the elderly is shown through neglect, emotional, physical and economic abuse. There are cases when lonely elderly help each other compensating for some unsatisfied needs. For example, an old woman told us that her present spouse was sent to her by the representatives of local public administration, because he had no place to live. “Oh well, now that I’m old I have a spouse... Vasile. He has been here for over a year. His daughter **chased him away because he sold his house and he went to live with her in Cahul. But she **sent him to a grandchild who chased him away... Nobody wants an old man... He returned to Hincesti because he was born here... and he wants to die here” (III_E_5).****

In conclusion it can be stated that the relations of the elderly with their children who are abroad are maintained sometimes through communication and financial support. Still there are cases when their relationship is dropped. The elderly do not have exaggerated expectancies towards the financial support provided by their migrant children and frequently rely on their common sense. Still, the study highlights the existence of family violence as the elderly are abused by their grandchildren, relatives, neighbours or strangers.

- **Relations with their peers**

The old age can lead to a decrease of social relations as the elderly are more suspicious when they make new friendships and more cautious in coming

into contact with their old friends. Old age is an important phenomenon in human life that can mark a terminus for their social dynamism or, on the contrary, a starting point for a life dedicated to relaxation and all the activities they could not perform before, as they did not have time or the financial resources. Inter-individual peculiarities as different personalities and age differences influence their relations with their peers.

According to the survey, some elderly people maintain positive interpersonal relations with their peers, saying: *“I have friends of my age and ones who are a little younger... I get along very well with the priest and the priestess... They visit me... I visit them for advice... They also ask for my advice and I visit them when I need. We talk a lot...”* (III_E_8).

Besides, the results prove that the problem of poor communication with their peers in many communities is caused by:

- **Migration:** *“Some of us still have neighbours, some don’t... There are almost no neighbours left. All the young people left... and the old ones are also gone”* (FG_E_2_rural);
- **Work schedule:** *“I don’t talk a lot to people because all of them are busy with their jobs and all around there are helpless women, widows and everybody has their problems and needs”* (III_E_5);
- **The lack of friends:** *“I don’t even know my neighbours, we just greet them and that’s it. We don’t have many elderly in here. My neighbours are young, there is only one person my age who lives one floor down and that is all. I talk more to my colleagues at work, to her – she is in the same situation as me, her daughter is also abroad. We have known each other for so long and that’s why”* (III_E_4).

The collected data shows that the problem of poor communication of the elderly with their peers is more severe in the urban area than in the countryside. The elderly from rural areas are better acquainted with their community members, can communicate sometimes with other villagers they see on the street, with a neighbour who digs in the garden or with domestic animals they feed. In the urban area the elderly are deprived of these possibilities.

Some of the elderly are pleased with the relationship they have with their partner or neighbours, providing a satisfaction: *“My husband lights the fire in the morning. We eat something... We watch some TV... If the weather is good we take a walk to the store... but most of all we stay in... Where could I go? I talk to my neighbour when I see her, as we’re the same age... but only when it’s warm outside, if not – I’m staying close to the stove”* (III_E_15); *“My neighbours always visit me, and I visit them so I’m never lonely or bored”* (III_E_16).

There are cases when the lack of social relations with their peers caused by their impossibility to move is reset by another elderly person to live with them. Moreover, some representatives of local public authorities perceive this “fusion” as a solution for the necessities of both elderly people. An elderly who was chased away from home by his children and grandchildren has no place to live and is presently involved in a free communion with an old lady as suggested by the employees of the local Mayoralty. **“He asked the Mayoralty to help him, as he had no place to go to. The ladies from the Mayoralty sent him to me because I’m alone too, and I need help...”** (III_E_15). **Chased away from his home by his children and grandchildren, the old man found a shelter and the old woman is pleased by the way the situation has changed because she feels supported and she is satisfying her communication need:** *“That’s how we started to live together. I cannot walk; I’m crawling with the help of a stick... He helps me a lot; he’s bringing firewood, buying the bread, bringing water from the well... And you see, I talk to him and it’s a lot! I’m not alone!”* **The elderly quickly attach to people who save them from loneliness, who are near, communicating with them and meeting their vital needs.** *“My closest person now is Vasile... He supports me; he always tries to calm me down when I’m angry or upset... He always finds the right words to say and he helps me a lot...”* (III_E_15).

The institutionalized elderly have a more dynamical communication with their peers: *“For me everybody in this institution is a friend. I have a friend in almost every room”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum); *“We talk to the ones who are in the room, but I don’t see my villagers anymore, when I was at home they used to visit me, but now my friends are here”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

It can be noticed that social relations with their peers decrease in old age because of the decrease of their social network and because of the fact that the elderly participate less in community events. The lack of communication and loneliness is strongly felt by the elderly living within an active community. Some elderly proved to be satisfied by their relationship with their peers, although they discuss most often with their partners or neighbours. They accept the situation by saying that there is no one else to talk to. The elderly sharply feel the lack of communication with other people and that it has a negative impact on their mental health. Institutionalized elderly feel that they “are with somebody”, but they are not with “a family member”.

- **Relations with other community members**

The relations with other members of the community are perceived by the elderly through the help they receive from the community. The study

shows that some elderly who have children abroad think that the **community helps them**. The help to which the elderly refer is a general support for the elderly, regardless if their children are working abroad or not: *“They gave me 100 lei and my wife 100 lei and they have given us other things before like pasta. At the church, we got a ring of bread... But they don’t do it every year, just this one. The postman was here and he told us that we have to go to mayoralty but we told her that we cannot come because we’re old and we do not have a car”* (III_E_5). Besides, some elderly are sure that when they will find themselves in a **difficult situation their neighbours will help them**: *“Of course, the priest – we live close to each other...”* (III_E_6).

The collected data proves the existence of pessimistic opinions that elderly have regarding the way the **community supports the elderly left behind**: *“Complaining is not a good idea nowadays. There are people who take pleasure in your loneliness, some of them discuss your situation. I try to stay in the house. I have a small garden in front of my window and I sit there sometimes. Otherwise, I go nowhere”* (III_E_12); *“I heard that there is humanitarian aid sent to our mayoralty by other countries. I did not receive anything. I was called once and given...hmm... some pasta (she smiles) and nothing else. I did not want it...! Let them give it to somebody who is... poorer than me. I do not count! I feel ashamed because I worked my entire life to give to somebody who is in need”* (III_E_13).

Sometimes the elderly claim that children who left their parents should be punished: *“I think that first of all you should find those children who left their old parents as these heartless people should be punished..., they should pay”* (III_E_14).

The support they receive from their community makes their communication with its members easier. The elderly left behind by children who migrated abroad to work differently perceive the help provided by the mayoralty. Some elderly think that they are deprived of any help because of their migrant children, others do not think this way. The research shows the existence of optimistic visions the elderly have regarding support and help they will get from their neighbours whenever they will need it. This conviction denotes that the elderly had these kinds of experience previously. Some of the elderly are suspicious and pessimistic about the sincerity of their relations with other community members trying to avoid social contacts.

- **Free time**

The collected data show the absence of any diversity in the way the elderly left behind by children who migrated abroad spend their free time. Some elderly who live in a family watch TV or listen to the radio during their

free time: *"I turn on the radio "Dor" (Longing), and I place the phone next to me"* (III_E_6). Other elderly mentioned that during their free time they knit and bake: *"I am ordered to bake bread, cakes. That is what I do. Just for us to be able to live"*(III_E_18). Lonely elderly have a monotonous lifestyle, that depresses them and they perceive time spent as having no use. Relieving the effect of loneliness is facilitated by communicating with their domestic animals and crying. This situation sharpens their feeling of uselessness and incapacity: *"I don't do almost anything from morning till dawn... I wake up in the morning at around 8 am and I sit here, I cried this morning and then I listened to the radio... watched the TV... Then I wash the dishes, I feed the dog and I talk to it... But sometimes I can't do anything but sit here at the table..."* (III_E_10). The study also revealed that some elderly just sit on their chair, they have no radio, no TV and they can't do anything else because of their poor physical and moral condition: the impossibility to move, disease, poor eyesight, etc.

The institutionalized elderly mention that they have to fight over the same problem of the poor organization of their free time, nobody pays attention to what the beneficiaries need: *"Before, there were special rooms where we could play chess and domino but now we do not have these. There are no more games or events for us. They organize concerts and take us there with force"* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum). At the same time, those who provide residential care services for the elderly mentioned: *"I took them to the theatre, to all theatres and to the National Opera and Ballet Theatre"* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

Organization of the elderly's free time remains to be a big problem. This is frequently valid for the institutionalized elderly also. The family and the community do not get involved in solving this problem. The elderly left behind by children who migrated abroad to work spend their free time in different ways: (i) those who have the possibility to move or live with somebody watch the TV, listen to the radio, knit, etc.; (ii) others just sit, they have no radio, no TV and because of their reduced physical and mental capacities they have no other options of spending their time.

1.3. Children's education

- **Access to education (equal opportunities)**

Limited access to education services leads to a decrease in social inclusion capacities by reducing the possibilities to get a basic education, a profession and finally a job. Thus, these persons become candidates for a life of poverty and potential beneficiaries of social assistance services.

The study highlights that **migration for work becomes an income source that in most cases allows providing the child with all necessary school supplies**. Remittances substantially contribute to **preparing the child for the new school year**: *"In August we bought clothing and footwear. I spent over 600 lei"* (III_C_16); *"We spend money on clothing, we need to buy books at school"* (FG_C_2_rural), and for **daily school activities**: *"For lunch, school supplies"* (FG_C_2_rural); *"She gives me money for school... for copybooks, textbooks, pens"* (III_C_1); *"I have to buy copybooks and other things necessary for tests"* (III_C_5); *"Sometimes I ask for more money as I need to buy textbooks for school"* (III_C_6).

The interviewees consider **the possibility to continue their education at higher levels** as an existing opportunity determined by external financial resources sent by parents working abroad: *"My sister is studying at a Romanian university"* (FG_C_2_rural); also as a future opportunity: *"To go to a Romanian high school"* (FG_C_2_rural); *"I have good results at the university, I have a good scholarship"* (III_C_2); *"I want to study at a university in Chisinau"* (III_C_6); *"I want to study at the Polytechnic University"* (III_C_13); *"I want to enter the Department of Psychology"* (III_C_18). Children are aware of the importance of remittances and the effort their parents take in this regard: *"I want to become a doctor, to help sick people. I talked to my parents about that. My mother said that she is happy that I want to be a doctor, but I have to study a lot. I have to do my best. I know I will need a lot of money for studying medicine. That is what my parents work for"* (III_C_27). The interviewed experts revealed the tendency to choose between the increase of living standards as a result of parental migration and the option to continue their education: *"Children whose parents are abroad aim to get to the university and they won't accept other professions, just those of an economist, a lawyer or a doctor"* (FG_EC_rural).

The interviewed experts mentioned that **parents' migration is beneficial as remittances contribute to increased access to education for families with low income**: *"The positive aspect is the financial situation, for instance if their parents are abroad they can take some private lessons"*; *"A small number do it, they help with the reparation but just a little"*; *"Only for repairing the classroom"* (FG_EC_rural), which is seen as a positive thing by

interviewed children too: *“To have decent clothing so that we would not feel ashamed to go to school”* (FG_C_1_urban); *“For windows, for reparation. It was so beautiful when they hang the curtains for the first time”* (III_C_12). The situation is more difficult when the remittances are very little or are not forthcoming at all.

As an example we can take the case of an old woman aged 62 who takes care of her two grandsons and where the support from abroad is very modest: *“The boys are already going to the high school, and I have to pay for it. I wrote a Demand to the high school saying that I cannot pay for their education. Sometimes I also need to give money for presents for teachers and when I have it I give it, when I don’t... I don’t.”* In the same context, the old woman says that students with a poor financial situation are treated differently by their teacher: *“If you are not like everybody they notice that. They needed 30 lei each for making New Year presents for their teacher. I had to find some money, it’s only once a year but I don’t give it every time, because I don’t have so much”* (III_E_12).

The collected data unveiled aspects related to more difficult conditions of organizing the educational process and preparing the child for life: *“Because pupils from two high schools study here we have to begin classes earlier and we cannot have any private lessons afterwards, because all the classrooms are busy, that’s what is making me discontent”* (III_C_1). The re-dimensioning of the educational network, especially in the rural areas, is not always seen as being appropriate and beneficial for children. The dilemma is determined by the demographic factor that is the decrease of the number of children and respectively the number of classes in the schools: *“It is painful... There are three parallel classes in our school, but there is only one class of 1st grade pupils. Why? The children leave, so there are fewer children who are born and people who leave never come back, they have to wait to graduate from university. They may be back when they’re old, but again, if their children will be there – they won’t come back here”* (FG_EC_rural). There is also the phenomenon of improving the educational system with the respective consequences – there are fewer classes, fewer lessons, and the number of teaching staff drops: *“They closed the school in the neighbouring village, they have no primary school, all the children were brought here but no additional classes were created, they just spread us out over the classes that already existed. So, there are 34, 35 and 38 pupils in a class. This year they brought another class from Ciutesti. We already had a 4th year class and they brought us another 16 children. They didn’t create another class, they just added them to the existing one”* (FG_EC_rural).

The analysis of legislation and of the secondary education structure reveals the presence of political and judicial efforts and the necessary infrastruc-

ture offering access to quality education for every child, including children left behind by parents who migrated abroad. However, even an official acknowledgement and warranty by law of equal chances to education and social protection is not sufficient to remove all the inequities existing in this sphere. The study pointed out that there has been a decrease in the school's role in the life of children left behind, which in the future will reduce their chances of economic and social integration.

The migration of parents becomes an income source that contributes to improve the access to education for children left behind, especially in universities. Remittances create the possibility to provide children with everything they need to start the school year as well as for their daily needs.

In this context, the situation for children, whose parents do not send any remittances or whose parents are both missing, is very difficult.

Keeping a record of children whose parents are working abroad is very important. Educational institutions keep a record of these children, although means to better supervise these children and their family situation should be identified.

- **School results, changes in school results**

The development process of a human personality takes place in the framework of systematic activities, organized and institutionalized by education that together with the learning process creates a whole entity. It should be mentioned that this should not generate only the assimilation of information but also the development of orientation capacities, of divergent thinking, creativity, etc., that allows children optimal adaptation to social conditions. Their school performance involves complex intellectual abilities, knowledge, skills with which to use it, non-cognitive personality features, as well as involvement in extra-curricular activities. Good school results (adequate performance) are taken by the pupil as a success while poor ones (low performance) are felt as a failure.

The data collected during this research proves that the family factor is extremely relevant in getting good school results. Parents' involvement in organizing the school schedule is very important as parents have a monitoring role and an orientating one. **The lack of control and support leads to low or occasional attendance:** *"I can't wake up in the morning, I don't go to bed very late, but there are cases when I don't manage to come to the first lesson"* (FG_C_1_urban); *"It's hard to wake up in the morning when you are alone, even if you wake up, you just turn on over... I only get to the second lesson ..."* (FG_C_3_rural) or they even **drop out:** *"When they are alone at home they get good marks at the beginning but a little later they just stop coming to school"* (FG_C_2_ru-

ral); *“I don’t go to school... because my parents wouldn’t let me... I need to take care of the household”* (III_C_22). There are cases in the rural area when school **does not represent a priority in comparison with other activities**. This is tolerated by parents, legal guardians or other people taking care of the children: *“I have to help on the fields and in the vinery and I have to skip school”* (FG_C_1_urban); *“Usually it is all on the child’s shoulders who already has to decide for his/her parents, he/she is the one who works in the household”* (FG_EC_rural); *“I have to take care of animals, to cook, to wash the dishes, to clean the house and the yard so that everything would be in order”* (III_C_1).

Caring for their little brothers/sisters is another aspect highlighted by the collected data that takes a lot of the children’s time and influences their school results: *“I sit with my little sister... and when I stay with her I cannot work, she’s capricious and she cries after me* (III_C_6); *“I started to have other duties... the house, my sister, cooking... I have a lot of absences, I just don’t have time”* (III_C_19); *“When my sister got sick, she had a fever of 39 degrees, I had to stay home for a week, and I didn’t go to school, I took care of her, I gave her medicine, I took her to the doctor”* (III_C_21). Thus, elder children become mother and father for their little sisters and brothers.

The experts revealed that all **new responsibilities have an impact on the way children attend school and on their arrival time at school**: *“He sleeps until 10am and comes to the third lesson”* (FG_EC_rural).

A form master of an 11th grade class told us during a focus group with experts the story of a boy left behind as a consequence of his parents’ migration: *“He’s facing difficult times, he’s cooking, he’s taking care of the household. He told me that he came late to school because he had to press the grapes”* (FG_EC_rural).

A teacher noticed during focus-group discussions that children ask permission not to go to class because they have additional tasks, parental ones: *“Some people came to clean the vinery and I had to bring them food”* (FG_EC_rural).

In these situations children do not manage to do their homework in the evening or at night, they adopt a superficial attitude towards some subjects or they totally ignore them: *“I do my homework in the evening, but I don’t manage to do all of it...”* (III_C_6).

Parents should go to school in order to be informed about their children’s education, by the teacher or class teacher and the child has to know that they are checked up on. The children whose parents are abroad are not always sure that their parents are aware of their school situation: *“The parent goes abroad for a better life for his child but the*

child is not proud of them, he/she is not motivated, and is not doing as well as before" (FG_C_2_rural). The child **does not feel the parental authority and their protective presence**: "Parents should not abandon their children. Even if they did it they have to return home once or twice a year, while children should not lose their confidence, and continue studying they way they did before" (FG_C_2_rural); "There is no one to tell me: come on, study!" (FG_C_4_rural). **The lack of control favours liberty**: "If the parent is abroad the child doesn't do his homework... when the parent is at home they want to know if the child did his/her homework... whereas when they are gone they call you in the evening to ask you if you did your homework you cannot be truthful, but say "yes, mom, I did my homework" and she is not there to see it" (FG_C_3_rural) **this** leads to the development of **behavioural disturbance**: "There are children who are causing troubles whenever they are with friends, in the class, to their teachers; they are not attentive at lessons, they talk badly even to their teachers, which also affects the class" (FG_C_3_rural). The lack of parents' interest towards their children leads to the fact that when they discover that they can spend their time differently rather than staying at school, children stop going to the educational institution, certain that there is no one to control them.

The study underlines that some elderly, who take care of their grandchildren, have the competence and experience to contribute to children's intelligence: "My grandfather helps me, he was a good pupil and he helps me at every subject and he's always right" (FG_C_4_rural). The case of a 63 year old elderly woman who takes care of her grandson whose mother is working abroad for four years is quite eloquent. The child went to the first grade: "When it was the most difficult". The grandmother helped her grandchild for three years. Today the child goes to the 4th grade and the grandmother told us that she cannot keep up with the school programme: "I cannot help him with mathematics anymore, it's rather difficult... He studies English.... he corrects me and he tells me that I do not speak it correctly" (III_E_4).

The caregiver's role does not always correspond to the expectancies induced by modern educational requirements: "They cannot explain (grandparents). If there is something that we do not understand mom will always make it clear. But my grandmother, it would be impossible for her to explain something to me, she doesn't remember mathematics anymore" (FG_C_4_rural). Besides this, there is also a physical disability characteristic to the age and daily tasks of the elderly: "The elderly have preoccupations of their own and they spend too little time with their grandchildren so they come unprepared, "my grandmother didn't want to help me", "my grandmother forgot" (FG_EC_rural).

The parents of children of this age category do not get involved in guiding their children in extra-curricular activities *“We cannot get them to participate in extra-curricular activities, it is very difficult”* (FG_EC_rural), which deprives them of development and communication activities. Grandparents actively participate in the extra-curricular development of their grandchildren when they still can do it and there are appropriate resources: *“He has some..., we take him to “Speranta” to gymnastics... and then to Zimbru to soccer...”* (III_E_9). Low involvement of children left behind in extra curricular activities is determined by a lack of time as they have to perform many home tasks.

Children get to choose their sphere of interests under the influence of their friends and classmates. A case that was identified during the study proves that these choices are not always the most suitable and inoffensive: *“At school she met a child who was providing sexual services and that showed her the possibility to make easy money, the tariffs and where she can find potential clients. There is also an Internet advertisement about this. A potential client called the Centre and looked for the possibility to talk to the minor under the pretext that he was her classmate”* (III_C_25).

Cultural consumption is an important factor that determines the development of a certain lifestyle for a child, which influences his/her school results. This research proves that **TV** (a cheap and accessible means) and the **PC** are the main resources in obtaining cultural information: *“I watch TV... I watch cartoons”* (III_C_14); *“I find out a lot of things from TV shows. I watched one yesterday “Sex before and after marriage”. It was very interesting, I found out a lot of new things”* (III_C_1); *“Through the PC... you just write the question and you get the answer”* (III_C_23). Although children do not spend remittances on buying books, developmental toys, newspapers and journals, they still mentioned these sources: *“I buy only story books. I don’t know which ones are the best, they’re all so beautiful”* (III_C_5). The children’s **intention and concern to go to a library or to read is seldom met**: *“I like to read books... I go to the library and stay there alone; I read a lot in English”* (III_C_16). Only the parents who have an active cultural life and insist on their child reading by providing an example and investing in books, useful toys, etc., will encourage their children to understand that culture is important for their development.

Children’s school results are influenced by **individual traits of pupils**: the level of aspiration, motivation, their attitude towards school and confidence in their educational institution. A child’s **emotional maturity** (will and capacity to adapt oneself) is decisive in outlining the level of their development of personality throughout the whole school activity: *“I want to have a good mark at the end of the semester and I have to study hard for that”*

(III_C_24); *“We are doing well but we have to work more, to do additional exercises. Our mother is satisfied with our school results”* (III_C_26).

The assessment of school efficiency develops in the pupil's **self-assessment capacity, self-confidence and determines his/her aspirations**: *“We spend quite a lot of time with the homework..., but when we go to school we're not asked... and I don't like it, and then I say to myself that maybe the teacher will ask us at the second lesson, but again we're not asked and I feel that there's no point in doing the homework”* (III_C_11). In this regard teaching technologies have to be applied quite **selectively** without cutting down children's confidence and desire to learn.

The development of attitude towards school activity, is a determinant for school results and is generated by an efficient motivation: *“I have to study anyway because I wouldn't be able to do anything afterwards”* (III_C_4); *“My mom left when I was five years old and I am trying to do everything by myself and I know that everything depends on me and I'm doing my best”* (FG_C_3_rural). The study identified that migrants' children sometimes have a hostile attitude towards school, they are not sufficiently motivated to adjust to its requirements: *“They're not doing their homework; they are not coming to school and are more liberal”* (FG_C_2_rural). At the origin of this approach lies an inadequate family education: *“Everybody tells me to get good marks as I'll have everything, but this is not important for me”* (FG_C_3_rural) or pedagogic mistakes of the teacher: *“Teachers give us low marks when we talk during lessons and whenever we ask them questions the teacher tells us that there's no need to repeat it twice, and if we ask her again she just gives us low marks and makes us leave the classroom. When my mom was home she used to come to school and talk to her, but now...”* (III_C_5).

The importance of **support and motivation of small pupils needs to be highlighted**. Teachers mention the difficulties that they face during their school adjustment process and highlight the necessity and importance of parents' support. *“There's psychological stress and an adjustment period for 1st grade pupils. Children whose parents migrated abroad are cared for by their grandparents or relatives, elder sisters and brothers. During their adjustment period they take them to and from school. Most children left behind suffer because their mother or father does not come to take them home”* (FG_EC_urban).

Physical and intellectual efforts that the child has to take during the education process have to be joined by an adequate demand from teachers as well as from parents. Only this equilibrium can provide satisfaction: *“I am happy when I get high marks”* (III_C_8) and the feeling of success: *“I like school. I am pre-eminent and I always have been. My sister also has the best marks. It's only that my sister is not as bright as me”* (III_C_18). Any lacks

of this equilibrium would lead to failure of children left behind by parents as a consequence of migration: *“I have average marks and I am not very content”* (III_C_9).

The study unveiled that self-confidence in facing all tasks and school will determine the behaviour of the child whose parents are abroad. Values that guide a pupil's behaviour are developed in the family and afterwards at school. **The level of acceptance, encouragement and a positive environment will decide the educational success** of these children: *“I believe that if their parents are with them when they are little, they teach them what they have to learn and that's how they know that they have to study and get good marks every day and when their parents leave they continue studying”* (FG_C_3_rural); *“If I don't understand something I always ask the teacher to help me, and she's guiding me”* (III_C_16). **An ambiguous and frustrating environment fraught with distrust and deception leads to school failure:** *“I think that if a parent is at home they are always there to see that you are going to school, and when you come back, they check the marks and ask you why you got such marks and you explain that you didn't understand the topic. A mother is always checking your notebook. If she is not there who is to check it? The grandmother? She doesn't understand”* (FG_C_4_rural).

There is an interdependence between school results and the level of aspiration (the need of self-fulfillment and self-awareness) of the pupil with migrant parents, often reflected in their prospects for the future: *“I want to open a huge school where all children will come and study so that they would be smart and intelligent”* (III_C_12); *“All I want for now is to study because I want to become a judge”* (E_18_15years old_female_family).

The collected data indicates that **school results of a lonely child are influenced by the aspirations of the social group** (the family or school group) he is a member of. The children cannot be “isolated” from the social environment in which they operate and under the influence of which their consciousness is developing, without which there is no way to talk about their aspiration level: *“It is important for us to go to school to get more knowledge. That is what my mom says”* (III_C_26). **Problems with adults** in this regard can be noticed especially when children's school results are under the level of expectancies: *“When I get low marks, under seven-eight... we fight but anyway it's ok”* (III_C_3). Thus, no one asks children who are alone daily about their physical and emotional condition encountered through school or about their daily problems. **They get in a desperate situation and sometimes fail or even abandon school.** Parents' failure to participate in their children's school life is significant.

The aspirations of children left behind by parents working abroad **increases** in relation with the aspirations of members of their group of ref-

erence (groups as “the class”, “the school”): *“I am being encouraged to study in order to have a decent, senior level job in my country, and that’s what I aspire to”* (FG_C_3_rural); *“There are children who think that if my parents didn’t study I won’t do it either and I’ll go to Moscow just like them but it’s not true! Because they say: learn to win, because all this knowledge will contribute to your development within society”* (FG_C_3_rural).

Good school results, for children who suffer from loneliness because of their parents’ absence, depend on a **friendly atmosphere** in the school environment: *“I feel better at school, I’m happy”* (III_C_3); *“I don’t like to be punished at school”* (III_C_10); *“I want the school to become better”* (III_C_24).

Solving educational issues can be effective and positive in these situations only if it is based on pupils’ individualized approaches, taking into consideration a pupil’s personality, his/her relationship with the educator and his/her attitude towards any applied pedagogical procedure. Continuous collaboration with the family (both with the members who are abroad and the people who take care of the child) leads to discovery of the mistakes existing in the relationship with the child and helps the family, through communication and positive interaction, to stop the failure going further, so to be successful and improve the child’s school results. The case of a 15 year old boy, whose mother has been abroad for eight years and who stays with his 20 year old aunt is quite eloquent. The person who supports him has no authority and no experience, the permanent absence of his mother who comes home once a year, or every two years, leads to a decrease of sincerity in relationships and increases the difficulty of adjusting the reality to his requirements and to the distortion of his situation: *“I have a lot of bad marks but I don’t say it because she is on at me”* (III_C_29). Not all parents can guide their children in a correct manner, especially when they are not near. This is why **teachers have to possess information concerning these families in order to support parents to become positive factors in the development of their children**, as well as for children to be motivated and to feel the need of their parents to return home. Children have their own solution for these problems that have to be correctly approached: *“To listen to several opinions and to come to a conclusion. When our parents call us we ask them and we ask our friends and teachers who we get along with the best and that is how we solve the problems”* (FG_C_2_rural).

The importance of an **efficient partnership** in education, especially of the school-family partnership, is undeniable. In this context the experts of the Ministry of Education revealed obstacles that can appear in this partnership: *“It can be of a financial and behavioural character. The barriers that appear refer to the incorrect or partial perception of responsibilities*

related to the child's education (who is responsible: the school or the family?); the freedom to choose the educational institution; connection between the family environment and pupil's school results; the process of parents participating in school life." The factors that could contribute to stability should be analyzed: "Psychological, pedagogical and managerial readiness of teachers and educational institutions' principals; openness of the teachers, the perception of parents' role in the educational process; the time dedicated to be acquainted with children and activities conducted together with parents" (III_EC_6).

The study establishes **impediments affecting the school results** of children left behind by labour migrant parents:

- **The lack of surveillance and control, the lack of parents' interest towards their own children:** "A lot of children whose parents are abroad refuse to study, skip school" (FG_C_2_rural); "Well, the mother is not home, the father is also absent, who's checking them? I just mark them, whether with a four or with a five but there is no one to check their notebooks" (FG_EC_rural); "She asks me (the mother who is abroad) how is school and I tell her that everything is good, but I have got two at civic education and I didn't tell her about it, I didn't tell anybody and I don't allow my dad or my brother to check my notebook" (III_C_6);
- **The inadequacy of duties the child had and the new responsibilities that do not correspond to his/her age:** "My biggest concern is the household. For instance I have to clean, to do the laundry together with my brothers, there is more, I can cook sometimes. But they understand and they don't give me a lot of work, I need to study, I take private classes of French, and sometimes of English..." (FG_C_3);
- **The decrease in relations between children and parents:** "They see each other on the Internet but there's always this distance between them" (FG_EC_rural) and the lack of adequate communication with them: "I actually think that I don't have a family... I cannot tell this to anybody... I would like to tell it to somebody close but I have nobody and I do not know who that might be... I have no one to talk to, and I don't know whether the things that I do are right or wrong" (III_C_17);
- **The reversed role when parents try to fulfill their emotional needs through their children:** "They offer money to buy back their love through things" (FG_EC_rural); "The lack of love and spiritual warmth is compensated by phones, expensive clothing, jewels, equipment and I want to say that those parents who compensate for their absence, they often transform their children into the victims of crime" (FG_EC_urban);
- **The lack of partnership between family and school:** "When there is a connection between the family and school everything goes better, but now

everything depends on school and on the class teacher"; *"It is quite hard to work with them"* (FG_EC_rural).

The opinion of the representatives of the Ministry of Education in this context is relevant in assigning the decisive role to parents in educating and ensuring the child's right to education: *"It is important not to forget that the first educator of the child is their own family, and the law guarantees the observance of the absolute role of the parent, depending on the possibility to provide their children with moral, intellectual, physical, social and religious education"* (III_EC_6).

The study suggests that family factors are important to get good school results and the family has a monitoring and orientating role. Labour migrant parents provide reduced control and support to their children on their school path. This generates low and occasional attendance or even abandonment and the development of deviant behaviour. Grandparents who take care of grandchildren are not always good advisers in school matters as they lack competence and experience to face the modern curriculum. They may also be physically helpless and already have their daily tasks.

Extra-curricular activities are a vulnerable feature for children left behind. They involve themselves less in extra-curricular activities and are influenced by other groups, often in a harmful way.

Cultural consumption of children whose parents are abroad is mostly limited to watching TV and playing on the PC. Books, developmental toys, newspapers and journals are rarely listed as priorities on which they spend remittances.

The attitude towards school children with migrant parents is sometimes characterized by hostility and low motivation to adjust to the lifestyle requirements as a result of inadequate family education. This ambiguous and frustrating environment also leads to a lack of confidence and deceptive behaviour.

The impediments that influence the school results of children deprived of parental care can be outlined as: the lack of surveillance and control, and the lack of parents' interest towards their own children; the child's uncertainty that the parent is acquainted with the child's school results; the lack of an authoritative and protective parental presence; an inadequate relationship between the responsibilities the child has and new responsibilities that do not correspond to his age (especially in the rural area); the care for little brothers/sisters, etc.; the decrease in relations between children and parents and the lack of adequate communication between them; the reversed role when parents seek to find the fulfillment of their own emotional needs in their children; the lack a partnership between family and school.

- **The relationship with pupils and teachers at school**

The school environment (the quality of school equipment and the programmes, labs, teaching materials, textbooks) and the teachers' characteristics (education, experience, qualification) do not significantly influence the school results of children left behind as long as all community children attend the same educational institution. This process is affected by a teacher's attitude and involvement as well as that of these children's classmates: *"If speaking about schools, there are differences in child-to-child, child-to-teacher, parent-to-teacher relationships"*.

Significant problems were identified during the study that refer to their relationship with classmates. At first sight, there are no changes occurring in the relations between migrants' children and their classmates: *"We are still the same good friends since the 1st grade"* (III_C_2); *"We are all good friends, it doesn't matter that our parents left abroad"* (III_C_5). Still, at the same time, **children whose parents are abroad for work are particularly distant** in the communication with their peers on their situation at home: *"What do my classmates have to do with my life at home? At school things are different, but my home is my home"*; *"I don't want them to know what is happening in my family"*; *"I don't think they want to know why my parents left, this is not their problem, it's ours and it has nothing to do with them"* (FG_C_1_urban). In this context, **distance, inhibition and frustration** towards the peers whose parents are at home become apparent: *"Those whose parents are at home think that living without parents is not good and they don't understand us"* (FG_C_1_urban); *"I don't have a lot of friends because not everybody understands me, many of them are envious and they think that if my parents are abroad I have everything I want, but it's not true"* (III_C_28). These children are aware that this situation is not normal, they are affected by it and try to protect themselves by adopting reticent behaviour: *"I don't talk to my classmates about it... when their parents will leave too they will understand me"* (FG_C_1_urban) and some examples of some positive and successful stories of life abroad: *"I tell them because they want to know what it is like abroad, it is beautiful, I describe the sea and that it is beautiful there, we don't talk about anything else"* (FG_C_1_urban).

The groups of peers with whom children discuss aspects about their parents' life abroad are those who face similar problems: *"Sometimes we talk about my parents. We talk about school and about parents. Their relatives are also abroad, not their parents but his mother's sister is abroad"* (III_C_5).

There are cases when children whose parents are abroad neglect their schoolmates and change their group of friends and *"They gather with elder pupils and forget about school as those pupils are more free for entertainment"* (FG_C_2_rural); *"I have some friends outside school, elder than me"* (III_C_4) or create specific groups within the class: *"There are new groups*

in the class, instead of living in a big group they make their own groups taking into account their financial situations"; *"They have better cell phones, they have Internet at home, and when they talk it feels like the others are left out"* (FG_EC_rural). There are cases when migrants' children become leaders in the class solely due to their financial position: *"The one who has good marks is ignored by the one who has poor results but more money"* (FG_EC_rural).

As a result of the study it was established that if changing the place of living and consequently the school because of parents' migration, there is a difficult integration of the child in a new group of pupils, and the lack of any support in this regard stimulates their unwillingness to study: *"When I was in Nisporeni I liked going to school, it was interesting, I was getting along with my classmates. Since we moved to the village I have problems. I don't like my new classmates as they are rude, they talk badly, they are aggressive"* (III_C_19); *"I don't like the school I attend because there are problematic children"* (III_C_24).

Although it was established that children are aware of the reasons their parents left abroad, **the communication and the lack of affection persist as unsolved and determinant factors in their relationships with other people** (especially with schoolmates, teachers) and in their behaviour in general, even if they value the fact they can buy more things and they are more free: *"They are reticent, it depends on their character, some of them are more talkative, and others just say nothing, you can only imagine what is happening inside the child's soul, to understand him, others are even cheeky, brutal, I mean they think money rules the world and they can look down on you"* (FG_EC_rural).

Research shows that sometimes **teachers are on friendly terms with parents** and assume the role of a family consultant in solving children's school problems. Their involvement in this case begins with the **exchange of information on a pupil's behaviour**: *"Whether she's neatly combed, well-dressed, whether she has all the text books she needs, if there is anything that she lacks"* (FG_EC_rural); *"When parents come back they want to collaborate and they want to find out as much information as possible about their child, sometimes they even attend lessons"* (FG_EC_urban) and continues with **methodological indications**: *"He's coming with an exercise that he couldn't solve and his grandmother couldn't help him, and his mother calls me from Italy and says "Can you please explain it to me?", but how can I explain it on the phone?"* (FG_EC_rural).

Meanwhile data collected within the study indicates that only a few parents before leaving abroad come to talk to the class teacher about their migration and problems that may appear in their relationship with the child: *"You don't know exactly when they leave, they come to school after they re-*

turn” (FG_EC_rural) and those who are frequently concerned about their child’s school life: *“There were only three parents who called me this year, one called from Russia, the other two – from Italy, they called only once”* (FG_EC_rural); *“When the mother came back her child already had a behavioural problem and she never came to school to talk to me, at least to ask what her child was doing. He is a 12th grade pupil now and he has to take Bachelor exams but he has difficulties and she doesn’t even want to know”* (FG_EC_urban).

When migrant parents are abroad, teachers have to work closely with the guardian or the person who takes care of the child. Their intervention in a child’s educational life depends a lot on their educational and cultural levels: *“I met a guardian who was even more informed than the parents, but also another guardian who was constantly drunk”* (FG_EC_urban).

BOX 14

Case study. Model of communication of a class teacher and migrant parents (physics teacher and deputy principal of primary classes, experience–21 years)

“Some parents who are abroad still keep in touch with the class teachers. For instance, I receive calls from them whenever they have the possibility to call, not from everybody, but the ones who are interested, the ones who send their child to high school and want to take him/her to university. They call me and ask about their results. They ask me to show them their children’s marks and I do it. Their mothers cry when the results are bad and it is difficult for them as they are away and suffer. When her child is hurt a mother feels it and vice versa. I tell them: “If I hear you crying then I’ll have to lie to you! If you want me to tell you everything the way it is then you’ll have to accept things the way they are...”

If parents have education they apply good tactics and send them things. I tell them: “Remunerate your children for their success, if you want something from them then tell them! You want them to have good marks and he/she wants a PC? Let the child show you their marks at the end of the semester and if you are satisfied then buy them one, if you’re not – postpone the purchase”.

Teachers, especially **class teachers**, highlight the fact that they are also the **pupil’s adviser observing the child’s behaviour**: *“teachers are good advisors”* (FG_C_2_rural). The study indicates that some **teachers are receptive** to the impediments children have, providing support and understanding: *“... Maybe sometimes teachers who know that a certain child has no support at home, I mean no parents, try to get closer to the child, to talk more to them, to see if there are any problems and help the child solve them”*; *“If we have any problems at school we can talk to a certain teacher to help us”* (FG_C_2_rural). The confidence in teachers in a friendly school environment helps children left behind to integrate in the school group and to successfully continue their education: *“I feel that I understood the topic while at school, but when I’m*

already home I forget some things that I understood. My teacher helps me with mathematics. She listens to me and when I get angry and nervous she tells me not to because I destroy my nerves like this” (III_C_10). Still, sometimes teachers are not perceived this way and the child has to solve his/her problems all by him/herself, being bounded to the support of his/her migrant parents: “If there is a conflict between us, we cannot ask our parents to solve it, we have to do it on our own” (FG_C_2_rural); “You see, almost all our teachers are from the village and the ones who came here from the city have worked here long enough to know everybody and I fear that if I will talk to them they will betray me and tell everybody” (FG_C_3_rural).

The study highlights **problems the children left behind** experience with **teachers**; especially regarding the way children fulfill school requirements: *“The problem is more specific to adolescents especially when at school. I teach Universal Literature and French and pupils have to read novels and there is this girl who tells me that in a novel life is not described the right way and that nowadays money rules the world and those novels do not teach us how to live. I was surprised that this was said by a young lady whose parents are abroad. This is her point of view. They get all their information from the computer, they don't go to the library or if they do, they do it rarely” (FG_EC_rural),* but also regarding teachers' conduct and intervention level.

The problems a child whose parents are abroad has within the school life are complex. Every party involved is looking for a solution to improve their relations. In this context, the school psychologist is not always the option children choose. Many schools **do not provide psychological counseling**, or children left behind do not know about its existence and what these services mean and even that they could talk to a specialist: *“I don't know;... I don't what he's doing; the psychologist helps us a little” (FG_C_1_urban)* or, they do not trust them: *“We do tests, and we answer questions and the psychologist can see what we think about and what our attitude is towards certain things and I think that a psychologist should be in every school, but I didn't talk to one because I don't discuss my problems with a person I don't know” (FG_C_1_urban); “There is a teacher of psychology in our school and she is really good, she can advise you. It depends on the type of problems you have. If I have a personal issue I cannot talk to her about it... No one says “Miss Tatiana, let me tell you my problem”... she is a psychologist, but I would like to talk to a stranger” (FG_C_3_rural). A few interviewed children accept and recognize the value of psychological intervention: “I talk once in a while to the psychologist” (III_C_11); “When I was in Nisporeni I used to talk to the school psychologist. We were getting along well and she was providing support and advice” (III_C_19).*

The importance of psychological services and its value are stated specialists in the sphere from the rural and urban areas:

- **The support provided to teachers** during their school life: *“to help the class teacher to know more, not all class teachers know about these services”; “that would calm the spirits, those conflicts with the teachers, even with the pupils, a vacancy for a psychologist would be useful”* (FG_EC_rural);
- **Assistance provided to children left behind:** *“Children whose parents are abroad generally go to a psychologist. They usually address us with interpersonal issues, with conflict situations, when they are oppressed or have misunderstandings. They want to talk and we try to work with them”* (FG_EC_urban); *“I believe that there is a need for psychological services for primary classes. Most of the problems arise when children attend primary school. Do you know what a school psychologist should do? Take care of groups of children at risk. What do I mean by “a group at risk”? A disorder that is there for less than 6 months but if it is there for over 6 months this is already a disorder. In high schools most of them have issues which have lasted over 6 months and we have to work with them, but we are not experts”* (FG_EC_urban);
- **Qualified specialists** who would provide all types of psychological assistance: *“I believe that having a psychologist would be a good thing, but one for every domain, for example one of them is correcting, the other is working on prevention”* (FG_EC_urban);
- **Placing a psychologist’s room** outside the school and providing **anonymity**: *“I think that every school should have a psychologist, but their rooms should be outside school, so that the child would go there”* (FG_EC_urban).

The role of the class teacher cannot be reduced to class education but also implies interacting with children and their family. Thus, it is necessary to assume more responsibility regarding behavioural and educational interventions. **Teachers’ continuous training** becomes a challenge in this context: *“This process has to be determined by changes produced at school levels but also by the new category of children who come to school. Teachers’ professional competences are extremely necessary in psychology and social pedagogy. There should be some changes made regarding school management and continuous training”* (III_EC_6).

Modern educational tendencies encourage teachers to respond to children’s particularities, to establish cooperation and partnerships with all involved actors. Interviewed experts list the following solutions **for working with families** with members abroad:

- **Organizing parents meetings** in order to raise awareness: *“We organize meetings where we talk and give parents the possibility to talk”* (FG_EC_rural);
- **Organizing educational measures for pupils:** *“We study their behaviour, we try to find people who would talk to them such as a priest or someone else”* (FG_EC_rural);

- **Facilitating continuous communication of children with their parents** by providing educational institutions with **information and communication technologies**: *“A lot of schools have Internet access and we could plan a day when they would be able to talk to their parents – call it the Communication Day or Love Day so that their mom and dad would see them, I think parents would find a couple of hours to talk to their children. To introduce their parents to their classmates and the class teacher”* (FG_EC_urban);
- **Organizing socializing activities** between children in order to ease their children's loneliness: *“We encourage these children to visit others classmates for a day or two during holidays and then we have the possibility to take those kids who are alone during holidays to other families”* (FG_EC_urban);
- **Developing additional specialized services**: *“I think some additional services should be created especially to take children on trips, etc. Maybe social centres and teachers should provide more activities”; “Legal and social assistance, a psychologist”* (FG_EC_urban); *“Development of educational services, including psychological services, that are both viable and rentable, to expand and diversify the range of quality educational services for children/pupils and parents”* (III_EC_6);
- **Developing and spreading information for parents**: *“Some steps have been taken in this field by developing and distributing the Guide for professionals who work with migrants' children (together with the Child Rights Information and Documentation Centre and support from donor organizations), a series of regional lectures that were held for deputy principals on the educational process within the projects “The impact of parental migration on a child's personality” and “School communities in action: creating conditions for children of socially vulnerable families to remain in school (Centre PRO DIDACTICA). It would be beneficial for the society to be more informed about the advantages, which are rarely illustrated and unknown, and disadvantages, sometimes irreversible of the separation between children and parents”* (III_EC_6);
- **Motivating teachers**: *“The class teacher has to be more motivated; he has a plan and has to follow it. I tried to conduct seminars to get closer to class teachers, because I think that the class teacher is the main helper as he sees the child every day and gets involved in the child's activities. The class teacher knows everything, even the results of the medical tests”* (FG_EC_urban).

Thus, the study revealed all the specific peculiarities of children left behind regarding their relationship with schoolmates. So, on a relatively neutral background that at the first sight does not reveal any changes regarding communication with their classmates, there is a distance that can be seen in the communication with other children regarding their home situation; there is discus-

sion of some successful aspects from the life of migrant parents; a distance and frustration towards their peers whose parents are home by presenting a type of protection through adopting distant behaviour. Migrants' children change their group of friends and/or form specific groups within the class.

As a consequence of migration there are cases when children change their residence and consequently their school. The lack of parents' support during their adaptation to their new school class makes the integration of children and the education difficult and therefore unattractive.

Teachers keep in touch with parents, consulting them and sharing information regarding the pupil's behaviour and also providing the family with methodical indications that will help them solve problems. Although a few parents before leaving abroad come to school and discuss their migration with the class teachers, as well as parents who are interested in their child's school life, the number of migrant parents who frequently and effectively communicate with teachers/class teachers and try to find solutions for their child's problems is small.

When parents are abroad, guardians or people who take care of children are the ones who interact with teachers/class teacher. Their intervention in a child's school life depends a lot on the parents' cultural and education level. Teachers are mostly receptive to the impediments children left behind experience and offer them support and understanding. Often the child loses confidence in teachers and has to take the opportunity to solve problems on his/her own, lacking the support of migrant parents.

The collected data highlights complex problems existing in the relationships children left behind have at school. Every involved party is looking to improve relations. In this context the school psychologist does not always represent the option that the child is looking for. A few children accept and recognize the value of psychological intervention. Many schools do not provide psychological services, and the ones who do, rarely inform children on the existence of a psychologist or of the fact that they could approach this specialist. The value of psychological services is perceived by specialists as existing within rural and urban spheres. They stress its importance by the support provided to teachers and children left behind.

Modern educational tendencies encourage teachers to adjust to children's peculiarities, to establish cooperation and partnerships with all the actors involved. As solutions to family activities for children left behind, parent meetings are organized in order to raise awareness and facilitate the continuous communication of children with their parents. This is done by providing schools with informational technologies and motivating teachers to work with these categories of children.

1.4. The health of family members involved in the migration process

The World Health Organization defines good health not only as an absence of diseases but as the complete physical, mental and social well-being of a person. Thus, the health analysis of the population involves a wide assessment from the perspective of the following three dimensions: biological (or physical), psychological and social. Respectively, the health as a multi-factorial concept is conditioned by a set of determinant factors:

- Biological (genetics, demographical characteristics of population),
- Environmental (physical, chemical, social and cultural – water access, hygiene, habitat, etc.),
- Behaviour (attitude, customs, lifestyle),
- Health services (prevention, curative and rehabilitation).

From a biological point of view, health can be defined as the state of a body that is not touched by any disease, where all organs and systems are functioning normally. Even if genetics determine somebody to be prone to many diseases it has been proven that lifestyle and environmental factors can condition their activation. Thus, the biological dimension of health directly depends upon the activities the person conducts (avoiding stress, fatigue, etc.), healthy eating, avoiding risky behaviour (smoking, alcohol and drugs), access to medical care services, personal hygiene, etc.

The health of children and elderly left behind by family members who migrated abroad was analyzed in this respect, with the intention to **identify non-biological factors** that influence (or can affect) their health and adequate psychological and psychical development.

Children

• Assessing the effects of the environmental factors and living conditions

Parents going abroad do this for financial benefit, leaving children in the care of their grandparents, relatives, friends, or even on their own (alone). Still **parental departure results in most cases in a radical change of the environment and living conditions of children left behind**. This situation involves interrupting the life that they got used to and changing their comfortable environment, making children suffer from the absence of their home and family that induces a strong emotional problem. All children involved in the study **mentioned that they experienced a psychological and emotional imbalance that appeared once their parents had left**.

It is known that the physical condition of every person is strongly influenced by their psychical state. When people suffer from psycho-emotional

fatigue, the body's adjusting capacities are slowly worn-out, generating states of de-compensation or even diseases. Specialty literature proves that there is a direct link between continuous exposure to intense stressful events and the appearance of organic disorders such as:

Disease of the digestive tract – changes of appetite (anorexia or neurotic bulimia), dyspeptic disorders, gastritis, gastric or duodenal ulcer, ulcerative colitis and irritable colon;

- Dysfunction of reproductive organs – hormonal and menstrual disorders;
- Bladder pathology–irritability, incontinence, enuresis;
- Central nervous system disorders – mental and emotional problems, fatigue, anxiety, psychosis, depression, mood disorders, headache, dizziness;
- Respiratory diseases–asthma exacerbations during periods of acute stress;
- Issues related to muscle – painful muscle tension, nervous tics and tremors, muscle contractions in the trunk, spine, limbs, causing pain or cervical limbo-sciatic crisis;
- Disorders of heart function–cardiac arrhythmias, angina crisis.

From the interviews held with children left behind as a consequence of their parents' migration it was noticed that many of them mentioned the presence of symptoms listed above and confirmed that these started after their separation. **In many cases children themselves come to the conclusion that the cause of their disease is conditioned by their parents' departure.** For example, a 13 year old girl who was left alone, together with her nine year old sister in the care of a neighbour after both parents went abroad to work said: *“I have a heart condition. I go to the doctor about once a month with my neighbour. I take medicines when it hurts. It started aching when my mom left, that is 6 years ago”* (III_C_15).

The case of a 15 year old girl who looks after her 11 year old sister is telling when speaking about serious health problems related to the tense psycho-emotional condition that children go through. At first her mother left and then their father began to drink, leaving them alone for indefinite periods of time. These girls' mother was in a coma for 9 days after being in a car accident and she is physically disabled. The girl recalled: *“My dad was leaving for several weeks or for months to work, we never knew when he was going to come back, how long he would stay... When mom called she used to criticize me. I was crying a lot and my head started aching. Then I feared that my mom would die after she got into that accident... I had headaches more often but I did not tell anybody. I was frequently feeling tingling in my heart. Two years later, my left hand started shaking, and then shortly after the right one. I thought it would pass but when my right foot started shaking too I got scared and I went to see a doctor in Nisporeni. I was hospitalized for investigations and underwent a treatment”* (III_C_19).

Lack of parental affection and psycho-emotional pressure predispose children to neurotic breakdowns. In this context, the case of a young girl aged 17 is telling when describing her situation living for 6 years with her aunt's family in a state of permanent conflict. The girl said: *"She (the aunt) is always shouting at me and calls me names. She may even start from the smallest things... My head aches a lot, but I do not tell to anyone about it, only my boyfriend knows about it, but he's also abroad most of the time"* (III_C_17).

Emotional strain and chronic stress greatly increase the body's need for nutrients and vitamins, especially a child's body that is developing. **With an insufficient or incorrect diet, some children develop deficiency syndromes** which will lead to serious illnesses. A girl aged 15 who lives with her disabled mother tells us: *"I recently had anaemia, but now the problem is solved and I hope that everything will be fine. It was fatigue, I had to increase my marks and I was studying hard, I wasn't eating and I also had to work in the garden and I was very tired"* (III_C_2).

Many children have reported an enormous range of responsibilities given to them after their parents left. Minors assume household chores, are forced to take care of their little siblings or of their grandparents. **Chronic stress causes physical fatigue,** which is manifested by the appearance of specific symptoms, such as **emotional instability, anxiety, lack of vitality, depression, excessive tiredness, etc.** Of course, while the child is constantly in a state of physical strain, negative consequences are inevitable. *"As a class teacher in the 11th grade I know well the case of a boy. He is taking care of the household by himself. He can tell me that he'll be late for lessons because he has to press the grapes, he couldn't wake up in the morning and he slept until 10 am"* (FG_EC_rural).

An example of the impact of stale work on children left behind is the story of a boy aged 16 who lives with his grandmother of 73 years of age, while his mother has been abroad for work for 14 years: *"Besides home responsibilities I am busy with the prunes, we dry them, we use a special technology, we place them in packages and then let them swell and send them abroad to my mom. We have a huge boiler of 300 liters and I have to bring water from the well to boil it, about 200 liters of water..."* (III_C_9).

The interviewee has done this work at night over the last 7-8 years. The burnout experienced by the child becomes a logical explanation of serious neurological problems about which he told us: *"I have cranial pressure and every half a year I have to go to the hospital in Chisinau. I have all the medicines and whenever I feel the need I take it"* (III_C_9).

A direct connection between children's overworking and their poor health condition was mentioned by some experts of the education system. For instance, here is the case of a 4th grade girl whose mother has been abroad for 6 years: *"She lives with her old grandmother. The girl has very good results at school"*

but is regularly sick. She stays in the hospital for 2-3 weeks with a cold and chest infection and when she comes back she has to work hard" (FG_EC_rural).

Environmental conditions that some children left behind have to face are strongly influenced by improper practices of people who take care of them. Unfortunately, in our society the **cases of adults abusing children physically, mentally or sexually are frequent.** It is indubitable that such situations have a significant impact on a child's health. Besides the cases that have been reported recently in the mass media, the research disclosed other tragic stories. One of the experts involved in the focus-group discussion stated: *"The mother was abroad for 14 years and left a girl and a boy with her co-habitant who was regularly abusing her sexually. The girl was in the 12th grade. Everybody in school knew about it, the priest, the community but everybody was keeping their mouths shut – "maybe somebody else will say it, not me" ... While the child continued to suffer"* (FG_EC_urban).

There are obvious physical and mental consequences in the case of another 12 year old girl sexually abused by her stepfather half a year after her mother left to work abroad (III_C_24).

The state of physical exhaustion and permanent physical abuse from the father caused serious health problems for another 17 year old girl: *"It is very hard especially when my father comes late and he's drunk and he beats me, it's hard... I am very tired, I always feel sick. I have headaches and my kidney hurts. I work a lot in the yard, I pick up buckets, I do not have time to rest."* According to a friend, the teenager made two suicide attempts because of her exhausting lifestyle (III_C_22).

In addition to unfavourable psycho-emotional conditions that children face after their parents' departure to work they often have to live in **unsanitary conditions with poor levels of hygiene.** The study unveils three causal groups that, once parents are gone, threaten the proper development of children in a healthy environment:

1. When leaving, parents place their children in families with poor material and unsanitary conditions or people with reduced capacity to take care of children (elderly, alcoholics, ill persons). Such conditions may endanger the health of lonely children.

This situation is determined in the case of a 15 year old boy who lives only with his grandmother and he says: *"My grandmother gets drunk once in a while... about 2-3 times a month"* (III_C_20).

In this context, we mention the case of an 11-year-old girl, who together with two younger brothers was left in the care of their father and grandfather aged 74. The interviewer describes the living conditions of these

children: *“Their living conditions are extremely poor, 3 people and the grandmother’s sister live in a 3x3 meters room. The walls are encircled with low-quality beds. There are traditional carpets on the wall. In the back of the room there is a traditional stove that has no protection for children. The floor is in bad condition and in the yard there are many old cars that with time have deteriorated. They serve as toys for the children”* (III_C_10).

Unsanitary living conditions, limited space and poor ventilation of the rooms significantly increase the risk of developing respiratory diseases, infections and parasitic diseases. Additionally, lack of parental vigilance increases the risk of injuries for children during their play.

2. Once the mother is gone, the father is unable to cope with all additional responsibilities assigned to him (usually performed by his wife), which influences the living conditions and the children’s health.

According to the traditions of Moldovan society, there is a specific allocation of responsibilities in family life. The local culture says that the woman is responsible for the laundry, cleaning the house, taking care of the children, cooking. Since the mother goes to work abroad, in most cases, these activities are delegated to the father who is not ready for these additional responsibilities. Unfortunately, as stated by some of the interviewed children, **their mother’s leaving motivates their father to start abusing alcohol and instead of taking on new responsibilities, they estrange even more from their children leaving them in their own care.** Thus, children lose both maternal care and paternal vigilance, which has a significant impact on the organization of their living conditions and development (hygiene, food, etc.).

The man’s incapacity to cope with child care responsibilities may affect the child’s health condition. As an example: *“There was this girl (she’s now in the 4th grade) whose mother was abroad, she was very sick because of the cold in the house. There was no one to make the fire, to cook... and her father used to say: “I don’t know what to do with a small baby!” He was making the fire once a day, she was left alone, abandoned, watching TV, choosing herself which TV shows to watch... and that lasted for a couple of years... She had an aunt who used to help her with her medicines... But she was very often sick”* (FG_EC_rural).

Another relevant case that was discovered during the study involves one of two sisters, who for 2 years along with her sister remained in the care of their father while their mother was abroad. The 12 year old girl complained that she has to clean the house daily, which she does not like. The father shared the responsibilities among him and his 2 minor daughters, as the child tells us: *“I can cook some meals, and the others are prepared by*

dad. It is only me and my sister who clean the house, my father does it rarely. He bakes bread... When dad is not home I have to feed the poultry, clean the house, heat it, and cook everything I can. When dad is not home we eat fried potatoes, eggs. My sister can light the fire” (III_C_16). It can be noticed that the child at the age of 12 years is forced to light the fire, to cook, which implies **an increased risk for incendiary security, the threat of trauma and injury in the absence of parental supervision.**

When sanitation is left solely in the care of the child, its quality may be questioned. This emerges from the story from the grandmother of these girls: *“I know they bathe, I see them drying their laundry, but they have lice anyway. The girl is very smart, she has good marks, but when she returns from school she plays with all those dirty children who have lice and skin sores and everything you can think of, and it may be from them that she took the lice”*. Their neighbour says: *“I see her playing with their neighbours’ kids. Especially in the summer I see her running along. You may say she is happy but the children are a little dirty, their hair is all a mess. Oh well... if mom is not at home”* (III_C_16). **Sanitary education and bodily hygiene are part of parental responsibilities, especially of the mother who needs to familiarize children with this starting in early childhood.** The lack of maternal care in the adopting of hygiene habits leave a negative impact on children’s way of living that respectively constitutes an important determinant of their future health.

3. When leaving parents entrust the organization of living conditions to children who are left alone without permanent supervision from an adult, this can lead to certain risks and dangers for their security and their benefit.

In many cases analyzed during the study, domestic concerns are left on the shoulders of children who live alone and organize their own living conditions with the baggage of knowledge and skills that a child can have at 14-16 years. Children are independently shopping (including sanitary items), keeping the house clean, washing their own clothes, etc.

The quality of these activities may be questioned, taking into consideration, first of all, the fact that they are children, with responsibilities that are specific for their biological age.

In this context should be presented the case of two sisters aged 15 and 11 respectively, who live alone, while the father is at home only on weekends and the mother has been away for 5 years. The interviewer describes the scene: *“I conducted the interview in the house where the children live. The house is messy; there are dirty dishes on the table, with dry food on them. There were rotten pieces of apples on the floor, a lot*

of garbage, a thick layer of dust on the furniture.” And the interviewed child says: “I’ve had enough of this work, of cooking, of taking permanent care of my sister...” (III_C_19).

The unsanitary conditions that these children live in increase the danger of developing diseases as diarrhoea, food poisoning, infections and parasitic diseases, which unfortunately, little children don’t know about.

Thus, it should be concluded that:

the psycho-emotional state of tension experienced by children left behind can generate states of de-compensation of the body with the development of organic disorders and diseases;

- the great amount of responsibilities that are entrusted to the children after their parents leave increases the risk of developing states of physical exhaustion and psychological deficiencies, having negative consequences on the health of these children and subsequently developing pathologies;
- abusive behaviours (physical, mental, sexual) of those who take care of children after parental migration have serious consequences on the physical and mental health of these children;
- in the absence of parental care and vigilance, the risk that these children would live in poor hygienic and unsanitary conditions, with the danger of developing infections, parasitic diseases and poisoning increases. Some of these children have insufficient knowledge and poor hygiene habits. There is a high risk for trauma and injuries while playing without any supervision from adults.

• **Food habits of children left behind**

Many interviewees said that the **improved financial situation of families, including better nutrition, is among the main benefits parental migration has.** *“My mom left because there was no money to raise us. We needed money for clothing, food, for school. We lived in a house that we never paid for. Now she sent money and we bought it... My mom sent money and my dad bought a washing machine, a microwave, a TV, a PC. He also bought 2 cars – a big and a small one. He drives them both, with the big one he delivers firewood in the village” (III_C_6).* It is obvious that the life of this family has significantly improved.

Still, **there were cases identified of children starving** due to the lack of parental care. *“My best friend lives without parents. They are both abroad. We see each other every day, and she’s starving...” (FG_C_3_rural).*

Another case is of a 10 year old girl whose mother has been abroad for 3 years, the girl is cared for by her grandparents who live on their pension: *“My mom is in Moscow. I have not seen her since she left... There were periods when there was no food, we could not cook anything. It happened twice. My grandfather took a pot with salad that we prepared for the winter, but we ate it in autumn. My mom sent a parcel once, but I do not remember exactly – I think it was when she left, she sent some sweets. She never sent anything else, no money to my grandmother. There were cases when I told her that there was no food and I asked her to help us, she said she would, but she never did”* (III_C_8).

It is not difficult to assume that, in the conditions of the small pensions that the elderly receive in this country, this child's grandparents can only provide for a minimum existence, while the healthy food necessary for proper development (meat, butter, milk, fruits, etc.), becomes an unobtainable wish for this family.

Nutrient deficiency, especially during physical and mental development of the organism is one of many determinants of serious diseases (digestive, skeletal and muscular system, nervous system, blood and eye diseases, etc.) which may develop later during these children's life.

Another problem identified here is that **providing food becomes one of the responsibilities the child has to bear once his/her parents have left.** It should be noted that an **enormous responsibility is placed on the shoulders of minors**, especially in cases when they have to **take care of their little brothers or sisters**, to do a set of household chores. This is the case of a girl aged 15 who takes care of her 5 year old sister. *“Sometimes I come from school very hungry and I have to cook and do all the work in the house. It is so hard for me... the cleaning, the cooking and babysitting my sister and also feeding the animals... It's even more difficult during winter – I have to make the fire, it's so hard”* (III_C_21).

The household responsibilities take up a big part of children's time, especially in the morning when they have to prepare their breakfast. Children have to feed their domestic animals, to make the fire during winters, to take care of their little brother or sister. The child has no time to eat in the morning and go to school: *“After my mom left, everything is so hard. I am the biggest one... We have many animals – 7 sheep, 2 goats, a cow and poultry. My dad is coming home drunk regularly, he just goes to bed and he does not care about anything else... In the morning I have to feed the animals, to dress my sister, to take her to the kindergarten, and then I go to school. I did not have time to drink my morning tea. After school I had to make the fire in the winter and to take care of the animals”* (III_C_19).

It is doubtful that these children eat according to the frequency recommended for their age (4-5 times a day) and that the **quality of the meals** that a 15 year old minor can cook **corresponds to the nutritional need of a growing child.**

The lack of parental care in a healthy diet of a child has a negative impact on his health. *“These children don’t drink their morning tea with a piece of bread; all they eat are chocolates and sweets from Italy... There was a boy who fainted during one of my lessons. When the nurse asked him about his breakfast he said he didn’t eat anything... To the question why he did not drink at least a cup of tea, he replied that there was nobody to make it for him”* (FG_EC_rural).

The problem of children’s nutrition whose parents are abroad is also confirmed by the specialists of the primary education system that participated in the study. *“Children come with various products, in sachets (things sent by their parents from abroad), they open them and start to crunch, afterwards they get headaches, there are frequent cases when they vomit, they have nausea”* (FG_EC_rural).

It is obvious that parents send products from abroad with an increased storage period, so that these products would be good for use when these packages go long distances. Accordingly, these products **contain preservatives**. When children **excessively** ingest these ingredients, without being supervised by an adult, the consumption of these products can be **harmful to the child.**

Children tell us that they receive money from abroad to feed themselves and to buy products for their home. However, many of these children, having no guidance from an adult and no knowledge of healthy eating, do not give importance to the quality of products they buy nor the danger they are exposed to. Thus, **the lack of parental surveillance makes children to decide on the type of food they prefer and this is not necessarily the healthiest choice.** *“I am given 200 lei per month for school. I spend it on food. If we pay 60 lei per month we are fed at school, but we don’t pay and I eat at the store, I eat hot-dogs and potato chips everyday”* (III_C_9). The experts of focus groups discussions told us unanimously: *“Having some pocket money, children from primary classes buy potato chips and Mivina (one minute soup), and the bigger ones – beer and crackers, gin tonic, potato chips... Many of them have gastritis”* (FG_EC_urban).

Some interviewed children shared their gastric problems: *“I regularly have issues with my stomach, I eat something and it hurts. My father takes me to the hospital. My mom is acquainted with my health problems and she sends pills from Italy because they’re better there”* (III_C_6).

For children's proper physical and psychological development, it is necessary to maintain a proper diet with nutritional balance adequate to their age. This is crucial for ensuring a child's health. As children are deprived of parental care and monitoring, malnutrition represents a real threat to the development of serious diseases in the future.

The study revealed that very many children do not eat an adequate or balanced diet in accordance to the necessary nutrition needs vitally important for a growing child. Even when they get money from their parents, children do not possess sufficient knowledge of healthy food and they choose to consume low-quality products that can harm their health. A disordered diet and nutrient deficiency may lead to the development of many diseases.

- **Behaviour of risk to health. Developing skills in sexual education of children left behind**

During the development and socialization period, children may be at risk of being influenced in adopting behaviours harmful to their health such as drinking alcohol, smoking, using drugs, etc., especially **when there is poor contact between the children and the persons who are looking after them.** Such situations can have different causes: children are cared for by the elderly; the parent who remained in the country does not have time; children live with persons who show no affection or interest in them.

Therefore, the **harmful behaviour developed by children** providing **can be avoided through vigilant monitoring by adults.** The absence of parental control makes children prone to vicious behaviour that, in their opinion, gets them closer to adult life. *"I smoke occasionally. When my parents were home I didn't smoke. I decided to smoke for fun. I didn't tell my parents, I will quit anyway"* (FG_C_1_urban).

While conducting the study we were surprised by the opinion of a 15 year old boy whose parents work abroad and who has been living with his mother's and father's brothers for a year and a half—two young people of 20 years old. The child told us shamefully: *"We may have some wine at our table in absolutely normal quantities"* (FG_C_1_urban). Unfortunately, we could not assess the quantities of wine that would be "absolutely normal" according to the minor. It has been scientifically proven however that even the smallest quantities have a serious harmful effect on the health of a growing child.

The specialists employed within the education system confirmed that a **lack of parental control over children's lifestyle and behaviour induces a high risk of and increases their vulnerability to adopt behaviours**

harmful for their health. *“I am an 11th grade class teacher and there is a boy who is studying very well. Since his mother left, he has everything he needs, but he lacks parental care. There is no one to look after him, to guide him. I can see how he is changing. He has started going to bars and even if he does not cause me any troubles now, I’m almost sure he will do it later”* (FG_EC_rural).

Parents often go abroad being confident (sometimes even too confident) that their children will share their ideas and faith. But, unfortunately, when children receive money they start manipulating the adults trust, being tempted to use it for their own interests which often prove to be harmful. *“His mother was abroad and was sending him money to take private French language classes, because she was living and working in France. The boy does not go to French classes but he goes to bars and other places; he is only in the 11th grade and he dates girls who are much older than him. His mother doesn’t even know about it, she is convinced that he is studying French”* (FG_EC_urban).

Similar cases were told by other children: *“There’s a boy in our class, whose parents left when he was 10 or 11 years old. He was a great boy, had good marks, but since his parents left he has started wandering with his friends and drinking. He has changed a lot, he is not as good at school, he is disobedient”* (III_C_1).

The initiation of health risk behaviours in children while the young body is still growing induces an enormous danger for many diseases and the mental and physical retardation of children. **Continuous education on a healthy lifestyle and on health determinants is required for children.** The interviews have shown that the main information sources for the children are media sources, classmates and friends. Unfortunately, there is no methodical approach for these children to be informed on risks for health.

Life skills and health education should be provided by the parents who know the specifics of the child’s psychology and health issues; they can provide credible and convincing arguments for not adopting dangerous behaviours and addictions.

The role of parents is of major importance in sexual education of their children. Sexual education of young people should include adequate information about intimacy, and an overview of what the reproductive system, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases are. Moreover, given the cultural specificity of our society, children should be informed about sexual identity, the gender roles in a family and society, perception of the body, same-sex relationships and opposite sex relationships. **Children who are well-informed about male and female anatomy will undergo physical and emotional changes during puberty more easily, which will signifi-**

cantly help avoiding further problems and pathologies that can be ultimately developed.

There were cases identified when **children lacking adequate information about the changes that occur during puberty** were overreacting, living stressful moments when **entering the period of sexual maturation**. A primary school teacher from a rural school, participating in the focus group discussions, recalls the case of a girl aged 9 or 10, whose mother left when she was only 4 years old: *“The girl had her first menstrual cycle... The child was not ready, she got scarred, and she thought she was going to die. She called me and I could not understand what was happening to her, I did not know how to help her... She ran to her aunt in Nisporeni”* (FG_EC_rural). It is obvious that the girl did not receive the necessary knowledge about hygiene norms and proper behaviour of women during these particular physiological situations, which may have a negative influence on the reproductive system.

Another problem in the sexual education of girls arises when they remain in the care of their father, who is not always ready to talk about intimate topics with his daughter. Here is the example of an 11 year old girl whose mother has been abroad for 5 years. The girl together with her younger brother is cared for by their father: *“I saw my mother last time in March. I am getting along with my father. When he tells me to do something, I do it, if I cannot – I do it later and he does not mind. I talk to him, but I cannot tell him all my secrets, I feel embarrassed. He asks me if everything’s good and I do not tell him... One evening I was crying and he asked me what was wrong, and I did not tell him because I felt embarrassed. He told me that we should go to a doctor but I did not want. Then he called my mom and I talked to her and I told her that my breast hurt. She told me that it was something normal because I am growing and my breast hurts because it is growing too. She also told me to be careful but I didn’t understand why...”* (III_C_6).

The mother’s absence during the process of sexual education of a young woman can be perceived in the following case: *“We cannot talk to our father openly. He stays less at home. We talk about the house... I cannot tell him about the problems that bother me... I cannot talk to my aunts either. They have their own families, children and their problems...”* (IIL_C_19).

It is very important to talk to children about sexual maturity at least when puberty comes. Adolescents should receive accurate information according to their age and ability to understand. This can spare them many sexual problems. The main questions related to sexuality begin to appear around the age of 12, sometimes even earlier. Appropriate sexual education has an extremely important role in the reduction of risks of having

unprotected sexual contacts. Such cases are encountered in the study: *“I met a girl who started having sexual contacts at the age of 14, and when she was 16 years old she gave birth. Her mother was in Israel, whereas the father was drinking and was coming home rarely. The girl abandoned her baby...”* (FG_EC_urban).

The case of a 17 year old girl is a demonstrative one as her mother has been abroad for six years. During this period the child was in need of proper sexual education, communication and advice from an adult. Unfortunately, the girl was left with her aunt with whom she was in permanent conflict. At her young age, she already has a complicated gynaecological anamnesis (2 abortions) and an obvious psycho-emotional liability: *“I suffer a lot, I have to take decisions on my own and I’m afraid. I have no one to talk to; I don’t know whether I am doing good or bad things...”* (III_C_17).

Lack of knowledge about a risk-free sexual behaviour is the main cause of sexually transmitted diseases with a significant negative impact on the reproductive health of the population.

The study proved that while away, many parents are reserved to discuss the sexual problems their teenagers may have, considering this a “taboo” topic. Most children got the information about sexual maturation from mass media, friends and less so from school: *“We talk at school about this, but we are not waiting and we start to look for information by ourselves. Where? From our parents? No! I do not think this should be discussed with the parents. I have a doctor cousin and I talk to her. Moreover, I use the computer and the Internet to search for this kind of information. It is not absolutely necessary to talk to somebody... Yes, I talk to my mom sometimes but because of the embarrassment it’s not that simple either for me or for them to discuss these subjects”* (FG_C_1_urban).

A significant obstacle in sexual education of children is the communication conflict between generations. Children who live with their grandparents usually do not discuss these kind of issues, which traditionally are considered by the older generation a shameful and closed topic: *“Children whose parents are abroad are helpless because nobody can tell them things that their parents could, not even their grandparents”* (FG_C_3_rural); *“I asked my grandmother what it is like to be grown-up and she said that I would see it myself, and that was it... I didn’t ask my friends because I feel embarrassed”* (III_C_10).

However, **physical distance between parents who are abroad and children who remain at home create an emotional distance, which makes sincere and open communication even more problematic.** Although the large majority reported that they frequently communicate by phone or

Skype, some stated that issues they discuss are common ones and do not have any intimate aspect thus lacking any sexual education matters: “We generally talk about other people... No...they don’t understand me because I don’t tell them all my problems” (III_C_17).

It is difficult to have open intimate discussions by phone: “I don’t know a lot of things about sexual maturation. I do not talk to anybody about this, not even my mother, I feel embarrassed” (III_C_6).

The lack of communication can be seen in another interview with an adolescent whose mother has been abroad for 14 years: “I have learnt a lot about the changes that take place while growing-up... I have no questions about this so far. If I do, I think I will talk to my friends... I am not embarrassed to talk to them about these things; I just think it’s very personal. I cannot ask my mom because... I don’t know why” (III_C_9). Without being able to explain the psychological barrier that was built over the years between him and his parents, **the child**, at a more intuitive level, **does not feel comfortable to discuss intimate issues with his mother.**

To get effective results, **communication with a child on sexual education should be a continuous process.** Adolescents may have additional questions, which cannot be explained in a single way by default and, moreover, without eye contact. **It requires continuous interaction, adaptation, change and availability of both parties.**

Lack of the parent-child dialogue in families with parents working abroad is observed by the majority of teachers. They indicate that it is difficult to establish a trustful and respectful relationship at school, when such a relationship is not cultivated in the family as it happens in most cases that were analyzed: “Grandparents cannot control their grandchildren-adolescents. A girl who does not obey her grandparents says: “You’re not my mother!” But her mother does not know anything about their reality. The girl tells her mother that she comes home at 11pm-12am, although she comes home at 4-5am in the morning from the club... Her grandparents say that the parents call only once in a while, and there’s no way to find out what she’s doing at night...” (FG_EC_rural).

A successful parent-child relationship requires a real partnership, effective communication, and adequate teamwork (along with the education system, medical assistance, cultural institutions, etc.). **The effort that parents should make** in this respect is very important, perhaps even **more important than financial well-being.** This fact is understood by children themselves. A boy aged 14, whose parents have been working abroad for many years told us: “When my father left I gained a scooter, when my mother left I gained a cell phone... I lost their love, support,

tenderness, communication, happiness” (FG_C_3_rural). This phrase is much more than a child’s observation. It recounts the spiritual deep suffering these children are going through as a result of being deprived of parental care and support.

The absence of permanent monitoring from parents may motivate minors to adopt harmful behaviours such as using alcohol, tobacco, etc. As they receive money from their parents and are not controlled by them, children are tempted to use it in their own interests, which may be harmful to their health.

In the absence of close and constant contact with their parents who are abroad, many children accumulate knowledge about health and sex education from mass media sources, from their classmates, and on the street, which is insufficient towards adopting healthy behaviour. There is no methodical approach to special information on health risks for these children, which increases the likelihood of developing many diseases (caused by alcohol, tobacco, unhealthy diet, etc.) and, in particular, of sexually transmitted diseases and premature pregnancies.

- **The access to health care services and monitoring of children left behind**

In the Republic of Moldova, as required by law, all children are provided **with free of charge medical assistance, covered by the government.** The study revealed that many children left behind, **independently seek medical help** whenever they have a health issue. Some interviewed children affirm going to hospitals or being hospitalized independently. The study shows the case of a 10 year boy who lives with his grandmother: *“I usually go to the doctor with my grandmother, but once I went there alone. My grandmother had to stay in bed – her back hurt. Both of us had problems... She had back ache and I had an angina. Thus I went to the doctor alone, wearing winter clothing..”* (III_C_3). The same fact is confirmed by a young lady aged 16: *“I used to go with my mom to the doctor. But since she left for Moscow, I have had some issues with my head and stomach due to the anxiety and nervousness when I had to see the doctor by myself”* (III_C_4).

Unfortunately, we cannot be sure that a minor will always understand the severity of health problems that may arise to be able to react promptly: *“I thought it would pass and that it was nothing serious, but...”*. A girl aged 15 who lives with her little sister and suffers from a kidney disease told us: *“They said that I had kidney “gravel”. I received treatment. I had to go again in 3 months for another examination but I didn’t... I started to have frequent headaches so I couldn’t go”* (III_C_19).

In the absence of parental monitoring and vigilance, the child may address the doctor too late, when the disease has become too severe. If acute diseases are not treated on time or do not meet the necessary continuity in treatment, unfortunately, they gain a chronic form, which becomes even more difficult to treat and develops complications in time. A child left behind on his own cannot assess the risk by him/herself. The parent who sees the child every day observes all health changes and consequently reacts in time in order to stop the development of a disease or any complications.

It is alarming that children, who take care of their brothers and sisters, must respond appropriately to health changes of the smaller siblings. A girl aged 15, who takes care of her 11 year old sister said: *“Last year my sister had a bad allergy... I took her to a doctor and they hospitalized her... I was scared (the girl had swelling and rashes)”* (III_C_19). The development of allergic reactions can have severe forms, which require urgent medical care. Unfortunately, due to the **lack of adequate medical aid, some allergic reactions can end up causing serious complications, even a patient’s death.** Thus, the life of the child can be in danger if these reactions develop in the absence of an adult.

A similar threat may be seized on in the story told by a 15 year old minor, who takes care of her younger sister, aged only 5. The child recalls: *“Last winter when my parents were abroad, my sister got sick, her temperature rose to 39 degrees, I had to stay home for a week, I didn’t go to school, I took care of her, I gave her medicine and was taking her to the doctor”* (III_C_21). High temperature in the case of little children can cause various complications, among which are convulsions. It is doubtful that a minor will be able to provide adequate support in such cases that pose real danger to the life of a sick child.

Sometimes, even if an adult is taking care of a child but the contact between them is poor, **the child refrains from telling the caregiver about his/her health problems.** This was mentioned by an 11 year old girl who is cared for by her aunt: *“When my parents were at home we used to go to the doctor, not only when something hurt. We used to go often. My mom thought that it was good to go to the doctor regularly... But now, I go with my aunt to the doctor only when something hurts.... I am embarrassed to ask her to visit the doctor more often”* (FG_C_1_urban). The same situation applies to a 13 year old boy who lives with his grandmother and who has been suffering from asthma for many years. The boy says: *“I don’t always tell to my grandmother when I feel bad... She’s always asking me how I feel and I say that I feel better”* (III_C_11). **The child may not always understand the seriousness of the problem that he has.** If an adult does not notice his/her child’s health problems and changes that occur over time (the fre-

quency of symptoms, severity, duration and extent of their manifestation), the disease can evolve to a much more serious form and sometimes the consequences can be irreversible.

Premature maturation of the children who are assigned multiple responsibilities by their parents who migrated, hyperbolize somehow their self-confidence. We encountered situations where minors, relying only on their own experience, try to “treat” their little brother/sister or to **self-treat**. The danger of this may be felt in the firm belief of a girl aged 14 who takes care of her sister aged 7 and her sick grandmother: *“I already know what to do... and I know what pills to buy, I’m doing fine”* (III_C_28). A similar confidence can be noticed in a boy aged only 13: *“I live with my elder sister and brother... I usually have headaches. I have intracranial pressure and I need a treatment. I buy magnesium and other things and my brother and sister help me observe all symptoms”* (III_C_5). **The possibility of poisoning, adverse reactions or complications due to the misuse of drugs, without parental monitoring can have very serious consequences for these children’s health.**

The migration of parents, without them making the tutelage responsibilities official for the person they leave their child with, can create dangers for their children in the case of medical emergencies. According to the legislation, any intervention should be undertaken only with the parent’s/guardian’s consent. In the absence of parents, if there is no legal guardianship act, no person can assume responsibility for that decision. **The absence of parents and lack of any guardianship documents complicates the procedure of granting medical care for the child, especially when there is need for invasive intervention.** Such cases have been reported during focus groups discussions: *“The mother went abroad and left two children... One of them got sick and needed to have a complicated surgery and the doctors could not do it until they had the signature of his mother agreeing on that surgery. Now that was a real problem! She finally made the documents from Italy for assigning guardianship to some elderly, they signed the documents and the child was saved”* (FG_EC_rural).

A gynaecologist, working in a municipal medical institution told us a case where a teenager of 16 years old came in for an examination. It was determined that she had a 5-6 weeks pregnancy. The young woman requested an abortion. She was a student at a municipal school, living at home and her financial situation was precarious. The teenager’s parents had been working abroad for many years and she was living with her old and sick aunt who lived in a village in southern Moldova. There were no guardianship documents for this relative. According to Moldovan law, the teenager is considered a minor and the gynaecolo-

gist has no right to perform an abortion without the permission of her parent/guardian. Because this authorization was impossible to get, the girl said when leaving the doctor: “*It looks like I’ll have to solve my problems by myself.*” Unfortunately, these situations increase the risk of illegal abortions and maternal mortality.

Thus, there is a **major need for the mandatory introduction of a guardianship system** for the children whose parents migrate abroad, in order to make officially responsible those who have assumed care of these children and to avoid any legal impediments that hinder medical assistance services.

The data of the study allows concluding the following:

- if there is no monitoring from an adult who could observe at an early stage the development of diseases and complications, children left behind address the doctor independently, with the danger of being too late or the disease being too advanced;
- when children are left with a younger sibling, they do not know how to promptly and adequately react to health changes of the small ones, risking development of serious complications and acute disease evolution;
- exaggeration of children’s self-confidence whose parents work abroad makes them initiate the treatment of small children who they take care of or self-treatment, which increases the risk of poisoning by medicine, risks of drug side effects or complications due to misuse of the preparations, unless supervised by adults;
- the migration of parents abroad without appointing a legal representative can generate dangers for children left behind in case the child may require medical interventions. The absence of the child’s parents, as well as guardianship documents, complicates the procedure of rendering medical services to a child, especially when there is a need for invasive interventions.

The elderly

Old age is the ultimate part of the life cycle of a person, implying, firstly, a set of biological changes.

The period of old age is studied under three aspects:

1. *Primary aging*, following adulthood without necessarily being encumbered with an affected health condition.
2. *Secondary aging*, which brings changes—illnesses, lifestyle, etc., especially under the influence of an inadequate environment.
3. *Tertiary ageing* with rapid losses (de-compensation) preceded by death.

Understanding aging requires a multidisciplinary approach. A bio-psycho-socio-cultural vision, coupled with lifecycles, highlights the most significant aspects of aging. Changes occur in the following factors:

- interpersonal (social environment in which the individual lives and the behaviour and interpersonal communication customs);
- intrapersonal (nervous system, personality, intelligence, motility, sensory-motor system etc.);
- biological and physical (the influences of chronic illness, disability, organ failure, etc.).

Longevity depends directly on the concept of quality of life. However, the aging body's vital functions undergo considerable changes, which progressively decrease the quality of life of the elderly. The cardiovascular system is affected by changes in blood, heart muscle, elasticity of blood vessels, and deposited fat. The vital capacity of the respiratory system decreases and specific diseases develop. The reproductive system involutes. There are changes in the bone and muscle structures.

The structure of the nervous system undergoes significant changes. Specific diseases may occur such as: Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Huntington's. When the function of the psychological, neurological and immunological systems decreases, the person's vulnerability to diseases increases. The sensory acuity changes both in terms of sensation, and the speed and efficiency of information processing. While advancing in age, the ability of speech recognition and discrimination decreases. Memory impairment affects the daily functioning of older people. It diminishes the sense of touch, decreases thermal regulation; there are states of dizziness, falls, and walking changes.

Thus, when the degenerative processes characteristic to old age begin, elderly feel the need to receive special care. When the elderly remains alone, without the support and help of his/her loved ones, the quality of life for this elderly significantly decreases, accelerating his/her aging and triggering irreversible organic changes. In this category there are some elderly left alone after their children have gone to work abroad.

- **Organizing living conditions**

Many of those working abroad financially support their families left behind, including their parents. The money received is mostly spent on maintaining their water supplies (dig wells in the yards, connect to the centralized water system), **connection to the gas system, repairing their houses** (replace the roof, the windows, etc.), **buying home**

appliances (washing machine, microwave oven etc). Some of the interviewed elderly have confirmed this fact. A lady aged 58 tells about the help she receives from her daughter working abroad: *“She has helped me a lot. I have replaced the windows and water pipes... As the house is old, I had to replace them... We have dug a well, and have built our yard”* (III_E_8).

An elderly man living with his wife whose daughters both work abroad for over 10 years, says: *“My daughters helped me this summer, they bought me a water pump for the house, I have an automated washing machine. I am very glad, this is a great help... you open the tap and there is water!”* (FG_E_1_rural). Of course, in such conditions it is much easier for the elderly to maintain their body hygiene and to be able to do their laundry whenever necessary.

Some elderly believe that due to the migration of their children abroad, the need to help them has decreased, which facilitates their lives because they have got their own source of living. Here’s how an elderly woman aged 75 sees her life when all her children were in the country: *“I had to help them because they didn’t have everything they needed so I had to support them with everything I could”* (III_E_1).

The living conditions of the elderly are improving when children send parcels with everything they need. An example is that of a lady aged 71 whose daughter regularly sends her parcels from abroad: *“Clothing, footwear, she always buys it there... She sends other things for the household: shampoo, soap, dish washing items, everything is foreign”* (III_E_7).

Unfortunately **there are frequent cases when migrant children cease all contact with their parents, as they are in dire financial circumstances and they can’t help those who they left behind.** This is the case of a lady aged 68 included in the study. Both daughters, along with their families have been abroad for many years, but she doesn’t know a lot about them. One winter, when feeling very sick, she could not get out of bed to make the fire. She remembers: *“I stayed in bed for three days, I couldn’t get up to make the fire... It was very cold... I felt that the soles of my feet started aching. I saw that they darkened and I got scared. I crawled to my neighbour and she called the ambulance and then I was taken to Chisinau and they amputated my toes. They told me they were frostbitten”* (III_E_15). The elderly woman is moving slowly and is taking care of herself and the household the best way she can, receiving help only from strangers. **There are cases when elderly who were forgotten by their own children, barely survive on the pension they are given, lacking food and having difficulties taking care of themselves and their household.**

Even if the community, neighbours, social workers provide support to these people, it is not enough for the lonely elderly to have adequate living conditions. The example of a lady aged 61 who lives alone in rural area shows this. The woman mentions that she receives the most help from her neighbours: *“There are these women... who are my neighbours and I pay them 5 or 10 lei and I ask them to buy and bring products from stores... and there is another women who does my laundry... The social worker sweeps sometimes... She also helped me to gather some spices for my soups to pickle them... She weeded my garden... and then she brought us cherries... And the nurse comes to take my pressure”* (III_E_10). We found out during our discussion that the old woman suffers from urinary system problems, needs constant care and treatment, but this is not being done in the absence of a close person. The aid she receives is provided more for altruistic reasons from those surrounding her, but it is insufficient for a sick person who is unable to take care of herself.

A serious problem for older people is to provide heating during the cold season. Many of the interviewed elderly say it is very difficult to provide heating during winter with their pension. This is what a pensioner aged 77 told us: *“I’d need more firewood but there is no one to give it. Nobody gives anything... I received my pension and a 260 lei social allowance... I bought some coal, but I almost have no firewood... I use a little coal, what else could I do? How do I stay warm?”* (III_E_16). No heating and low temperatures in the room can cause the elderly, who are already suffering from temperature disorders, severe health issues (inflammatory diseases, infections, etc.). In this context it should be noted that lonely elderly who are sick, have low mobility, lay more in bed, but need constant care (hygiene, bed linen changed, etc.) The lack of support from close persons, even with the existence of social assistance services (obviously inadequate for such cases), **makes these people live in poor, unsanitary and cruel conditions.** This is confirmed by the experts participating in the focus group discussions.

Due to the poor socio-economic context of the Republic of Moldova it is impossible to ensure decent living conditions for all the elderly who remained left behind, especially during the cold season. Some experts have proposed to open more centres (shelters) for the elderly, where these people could live in a satisfactory environment: *“To open centres, shelters for elderly, where they would be temporarily placed, they can be free of charge (state) or there may be a fee for it because the state cannot cover these expenditures! Children should pay for their stay...”* (FG_EE_urban).

The elderly who live in a shelter tell us: *“If we are at home we need coal, firewood to live... but the prices are way too high... There is a washing machine in here, it washes the laundry, it dries it, and they ply it and you just have to go to change”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). There are similar

opinions in the discussions with other elderly from the Chisinau shelter: *“At home nobody took care of us as well as they do it here... We have all the necessary conditions to live; there is not anything that we dislike here”* (FG_3_urban_asylum).

When advancing in age, the elderly need more help in order to take care of themselves and to ensure adequate living conditions. Living in solitude, diseases that occur in old age, the decrease of physical strength, lack of aid and support from the family – are all factors that make many elderly live their last phase of life in suffering and with a reduced quality of existence. Placing these persons in specialized institutions where they are offered proper living conditions, with proper sanitation and spaces, with constant care from the staff, represents the best solution to help them to live in decent conditions, which will positively influence the longevity and quality of their life.

There are cases when children help to maintain the necessary living expenses of their parents who remained in the country. However, many elderly who lack their children’s support can hardly provide for their basic living conditions. The health problems, lack of physical force, shortage of money, problems with providing heat during winter, water supply, hygiene maintenance, etc. negatively impact the quality of life and health state of the elderly. If they provide independently for their living, the risk of injuries and accidents is increased.

- **The attitude towards their own health and behaviour of the elderly left behind**

A significant number of elderly left alone suffer from long-term depression. This depression is caused by the separation from their children as well as other losses that are frequent during old age (death of relatives, friends, etc.). During old age, depression occurs in short episodes of sadness.

Melancholy or a sudden loss of power can develop into a serious and prolonged depressive condition. Its characteristics include continuous pain, lack of interest, hopelessness, reduced self-esteem, and a distorted assessment of present and future. Some depressed elderly often face difficulties in taking decisions and become slower in the thinking process, the way of speaking and moving. All these events have an impact on the general health of the elderly.

Psychiatric symptoms of depression include loss of appetite and weight, severe fatigue, lack of sleep, constipation or diarrhoea. This tension and anxiety increase may contribute to the development of agitation. Severe depression is often accompanied by feelings of worthlessness and suicidal thoughts. This is described in detail by the experts in the elderly

care who participated in the group discussions.

One of the experts told us: *“There are elderly who categorically refuse to go to the doctor, to have a test, some of them say: I don’t need anything, my children left, nobody needs me! They will never see me again”* (FG_EE_urban).

Depression, negative emotions and sadness weakens the cardiovascular system and significantly increases the blood pressure and the probability of strokes and heart attacks.

A poor physical condition can have serious effects on how the elderly take care of themselves. A worrying sign of their state is that the elderly begin to pay less attention to their hygiene and household cleaning. However, the weakening of age-related senses can prevent some elderly from maintaining their own hygiene, even if they want to.

Depression and sadness may still influence the attitude the elderly have towards treatment and medical prescriptions. Some elderly may express confusion regarding the way they should take medicines, which requires constant surveillance. Large amounts of unused or expired medicines are another sign proving that some elderly can no longer take care of themselves and need help.

Due to reduced mobility and coordination problems that come with age, the risk of accidents and injuries increase. They have to perform all the household activities, especially in rural areas. Here’s what an elderly person aged 86 tells: *“We still need firewood, water from the well, and I have to take a little bucket to go after water and sometimes I stumble and I fall”* (III_E_5).

The loss of the ability to judge correctly, as a result of mental and neurological changes, make the elderly, especially those who live alone and cannot seek advice from a close person, more **vulnerable to criminals.** This increases the risk that some persons may take advantage of these elderly, leaving them homeless or with no living sources. In this context it is important that a practitioner would timely evaluate the ability of the elderly to take care of himself and to make rational decisions.

In many cases, these people take care of their grandchildren. When there is financial support from their children abroad, it is noted that **taking care of their grandchildren motivates the elderly, increasing their interest in life and responsibility to maintain adequate living conditions, cooking meals, etc.** Here’s what a grandmother aged 60, who takes care of her two granddaughters (aged 5 and 4) said: *“I got used so much to them... I couldn’t live without them, without taking care of them... It is a great pleasure for every grandmother to raise her grandchildren. It’s much better this way, rather than living alone”* (III_E_14). She is happily talking about the household chores that she is doing for her granddaughters,

and the interviewer describes the house as being clean and warm. The children of this old lady who are abroad, are regularly sending money in order to cover all the living expenses for the family who has been left behind at home

Another similar example is the case of a lady aged 71 who takes care of her student-granddaughter. The grandmother lives with the life and the interests of her granddaughter, which motivates her a lot to provide her with adequate living conditions: *"I wake up, I prepare her the breakfast, I boil the water, we brush the teeth, she gets dressed, I prepare the food – sometimes cornflakes with milk, sometimes semolina, and I take her to school and after I get back I wash the dishes and cook the lunch and then go to take her from school. Then I take her to English classes and in the end we do her homework together. We watch some cartoons and shows in English"* (III_E_3). The same lady says: *"We do the laundry very often, for instance we change our underwear every day because that's what my daughter told me to do"*. This indicates that the grandmother is doing her best to ensure adequate living conditions for her granddaughter to reduce as much as possible the impact of her mother's absence.

Conversely, **placing the care of minors on the shoulders of the elderly who suffer from many diseases, represents an enormous load for them and this keeps them in a constant state of stress and agitation.** Here is the case of a lady aged 62, who has been taking care of her two grandchildren for 13 years: *"I feel very bad and this diabetes is killing me, the arthritis – my foot has swollen and I have hepatitis C... My liver hurts so bad... and my kidney – I think that my sugar is destroying everything. And it's so hard. I almost never go out because I cannot walk, or I feel dizzy from the pressure and my feet start hurting"* (III_E_12). Being very ill, she continued to work, because it would be impossible to raise two children with the pension she receives. Her daughter, the mother of the children, is abroad, and she's not involved in the raising of her children. *"I have no force to work. I worked because I have two grandchildren to bring up... When I was still working things were better but now it's really hard – they're so big now... They're like two grown-up men and they eat like 7 persons!"* The woman is concerned for her grandchildren: *"It's the time when you have to be very careful, not to let them do stupid things, as they're boys"*.

Similar situations were mentioned by the experts, identified as a result of the focus-groups: *"The old lady doesn't have the same forces to take care of her grandchildren; she's always angry and tense"* (FG_EE_urban).

The care for their grandchildren requires both financial resources and energy from the elderly. It is important to note that in many cases they lack them, especially when afflicted by greater deficiencies and serious

health problems. To avoid such situations, it is very important for the family doctor to be more actively involved in assessing the health status and capacity of the elderly who are taking care of children. Continuous fatigue suffered by the elderly can seriously affect their health. Such conditions are not beneficial for an adequate development of a child who is left in the care of a sick elderly. If the doctor thinks that the old person's health does not allow him/her to take enough care of the children, he/she should notify the responsible social assistance unit to get involved in resolving such situations.

To conclude, it should be said that in the cases when the elderly have to take care of their grandchildren lacking sufficient financial resources, this can aggravate the health problems and burden their lives, keeping them in a permanent state of stress and agitation. Sometimes, however, when the elderly receive financial support from abroad, it keeps them motivated to take good care of their grandchildren, to look after the house, to regularly cook and take more care of their own health.

• **The diet and food quality of the elderly**

Some elderly who participated in the study regularly receive nutritional support from their children living abroad. A woman aged 79 who lives alone, talked about the parcels that she received from her children: *"She sends me clothing, food, canned fish, sweets"* (III_E_6).

In some cases, when the old person has to **cook for the grandchildren, this may motivate him/her to eat better and regularly**. Here is what a lady aged 71, taking care of her grandchildren said: *"I bought some meat but my grandson didn't want to eat it... And now I bought some drumsticks and I see that he likes them... I also buy chopped meat and cook various dishes... But now he's sick and I cannot give him anything fried, fatty... and that's how I also keep a diet, I also have some health issues... We have everything... honey and cheese, sausages... there's always butter, milk and sour crème in the fridge"* (III_E_9).

Healthy nourishment implies the total number of calories and balanced eating that would comply with the dietary requirements of a person depending on his gender, age, health and the level of activity. Specialty literature states that **frequent nourishment disorders in elderly are related to both the food quantity and quality**. Among them should be listed:

- *Hunger*. The states of hunger in elderly may be caused by failing to respect a diet, psycho-somatic suffering related to a difficult regime, on their own initiate *"because of the bowels, stomach, liver, etc."* In case of depression the elderly may adopt an indifferent attitude towards food

and his/her diet quality. Self-neglect and loss of appetite, motivated by loneliness and sorrow, can lead to hunger of elderly. The weight loss of the elderly is the clearest warning of inadequate nutrition. Here's what one of the experts of a focus-group says: *"A lot of elderly do not take care of themselves, do not cook, they wait for somebody to come to visit them... that's when they'll cook. They lack any motivation and have no interest in cooking"* (FG_ EE_urban).

- *Malnutrition.* After the age of 50 it is recommended to reduce caloric intake by 7-10% every 10 years. The elderly should have a correct diet and observe the balance between protein, fat and carbohydrates and reduce the amount of animal fat intake. Minerals and fluid intakes are very important. The use of low diversity food, the lack of protein, vitamins and other nutrients that are necessary for the human body, may trigger the development of serious diseases, accelerate aging and aggravate existing chronic diseases.

The interviews conducted with the elderly have revealed that only a **few have a proper diet and nutrition**. A 63 year old lady living with a minor grandson says: *"There were cases when there was no food and I had no money to buy anything and I borrowed 50 lei and I bought 0.5 liters of oil and potatoes"* (III_E_4).

A similar case was told by a 68 year old retired person who lives only on her pension. Her daughters have been abroad for many years, without providing any support. When asked about the quality of her food (meat, eggs, butter), the woman answered: *"Oh well... I already forgot the way they taste and look like... We buy sometimes a piece of sausage, cheese... We also buy sometimes fish, one of the cheapest, and fry it... We actually buy pork bard because it's cheaper, but not meat.... We buy margarine because it's cheaper than butter..."* It has been proven that the elderly should significantly reduce their intake of animal fats to reduce cholesterol in blood, which is a determining factor for many diseases.

When the interviewer asked them why the wine glass was on the table, the old lady said: *"We drink because we're sad"* (III_E_15). The persons left behind tend to use alcohol frequently, as some focus-group experts claim. **The feeling of uselessness and abandonment from their children, the desire to escape loneliness makes the elderly seek relief in alcohol.** However, improper nourishment by the elderly, and especially the use of alcohol, can seriously affect the health of these people, triggering serious pathologies of all organs (cardio-vascular, nervous, digestive systems, etc.).

Some of the elderly who participated in the study confessed that they would prefer to **receive parcels with products rather than money, because they know that most persons living alone prefer to buy alco-**

hol instead of food. This is confirmed during an interview with a lady aged 76, when she was asked about the need to offer support to the elderly: *“Of course they have to help them! With food, with anything but not with money! No need to give them money... maybe firewood, or coal... food, anything but not money because a lot of them spend it on alcohol”* (III_E_13).

Based on the results of the focus groups, the experts also have confirmed that **supplying the elderly with food is more recommended than providing money for food.** The reason for this preference is supported by the fact that **many elderly** have gone through difficult economic and political periods and they **tend to save money instead of buying food for themselves.** They save it for a rainy day. One of the participants of the discussion was abroad for work for a certain period of time and tells us the story she experienced with her mother: *“She continued eating the way she did before... We assumed that she would save the money so we sent her food. And now, whether she wanted it or not she had to use it. My husband was giving her food instead of money”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

The interviewed elderly acknowledge that the food they receive from various sources is of great help: from the church, the City Hall, etc. A lady aged 62 who takes care of her two grandchildren, is facing financial difficulties, and has a poor health condition, says: *“Once a month we receive various parcels with oats, oil from an evangelist church... and we live somehow”* (III_E_12).

It has been mentioned by the elderly who live in shelters that the diet level has increased. The elderly tell us: *“Of course we eat better! Three times per day! At home we ate twice per day... Sometimes only once a day if there was no time and there was a lot of work”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). Besides the fact that food is provided regularly under the supervision of specialists, the elderly can “sit with someone at the table”, which is no less important for the appetite.

Being in the shelter, the elderly are served food, which is very important, especially for those with reduced mobility, that can hardly help themselves, or for those suffering from depression and cases when they don't feel motivated to eat. The provision of freshly cooked meals, hot and regular food significantly increases the quality of the elderly life and reduces the risk of developing many diseases, including the avoidance of hunger and malnutrition.

The data collected during the study allows us to conclude that:

- the failure to have a good diet and self-neglect, the loss of appetite, motivated by loneliness, depression and sadness, somatic sufferings and lack of money—are the causes that induce the risk of developing hunger and

malnutrition states, linked to significant reduction in food quality and quantity of elderly deprived of their family members' care;

- both the elderly and experts support the initiative to provide food to needy families (including the lonely elderly) instead of financial compensation, in order to avoid the possibility of purchasing alcohol, or misdirecting the money (useless savings, criminal extortion, etc.).
- **Access to medical services**

All the elderly have confirmed that they are familiar with the emergency services and that they have access to medical services that are being offered by the family doctors in their community. **The elderly reported that they often go to the doctor and receive compensation or free drugs.** When a man, aged 86, was asked about how often he goes to the doctor, he replied: *“Every month, but if I have pills at home I don’t go. I go to be given pills and to pass some tests, to take my pressure”* (III_E_5). The same thing can be noticed during the discussions with other elderly left behind: *“I am hospitalized every spring and autumn for treatment. And I’m not spending any money because I use my medical insurance. I have discounts every month for my tension pills and I buy them”* (III_E_7); *“I go often to the doctor, about 2 – 3 times a month, when the term of my pills expires, they also check me and I tell them how things are going”* (III_E_1)

However, **it is often that the treatment the elderly need exceeds the possibilities covered by the medical insurance, while their financial sources are too poor to pay for such costs.** Here is what a 75 year old woman, living with her three grandchildren, with no support from her children says: *“It’s very hard to buy medicines, I cannot afford to buy them from my pension, and nobody helps me... I am given 200 lei for my grandson and my pension, that’s all I have...”* (III_E_25). The elderly woman complains about having a lot of diseases, and that one of her grandsons is disabled and needs permanent treatment and care.

Due to the shortage of money but also the lack of encouragement and support from their children, the elderly become more indifferent of their health and avoid undergoing surgeries or expensive treatments, which shortens their lives. Relevant is the case of a 78 year old woman. The woman says: *“I have something stiff growing in my breast area and the doctor told me that I should have a surgery, but I need money for that and I don’t know how to find some. I have an 800 lei pension! Where do I get more? I spend my entire pension on pills and injections”* (III_E_26). The same attitude is mentioned by the experts who participated in the focus group discussions: *“Our people just stay like this, they don’t do anything until they just cannot stand up and they continue thinking: I am strong, I*

will resist, I don't need anything, I don't have money so I cannot address anybody" (FG_EE_urban). **The fact that these persons address the doctor late and ignore medical prescriptions significantly increases the risk of complications, developing malignancies and other serious diseases.**

There are cases when the elderly address and receive help from their children abroad. When a woman, aged 71, was asked if she received help from her children to buy medicines, she replied: *"Of course I do, I have no other money! Nothing besides 900 lei (her pension)... I spend 2-3 thousand lei on my pills... sometimes I get a 50% discount, the ones that are for diabetics are for free... but the other ones need to be bought and they are very expensive"* (III_E_9).

Some old people said that **financial aid provided by their children for expensive treatments significantly improved their life quality.** A lady received 15 thousand lei from her son from abroad for a heart surgery; a man repaired his teeth for 12 thousand 800 lei with the help of his son (FG_E_1_rural).

A lady aged 61 told that the procurement of drugs depends a lot on the money received from her children who are abroad: *"I experienced difficulties with my pills, because my son is being paid when he returns home, so, until then I have to borrow from my neighbours and when my son comes back I just pay my debts"* (III_E_2). However, it can be considered a good situation, because the old woman can still have her treatment done.

Sometimes, medicines are purchased altruistically by third persons, supported for example, by the funds of religious groups, relatives, former colleagues, friends, etc.

There are cases when some of the elderly receive medicines from their children from abroad. There is a lady who takes care of her minor grandchildren. Her daughters work in Germany: *"She translates everything for me. She sent me a little machine that takes the pressure... and suppositories because I have some issues with my large intestine... She also sent me calcium, magnesium, and she sends coughing syrup for the child especially during winter... and some ointments for my joints"* (III_E_11).

In most cases, the medicines that the children send to the elderly from abroad are very useful for them, especially when they require expensive treatments. However, it is necessary to note that **the person receiving the drugs from abroad must inform his family doctor about this, in order to avoid overlapping of active substances leading to overdose, or negative interactions between medicines prescribed by a family doctor and the ones received independently by the patient.**

When advancing in age, the risk of developing **medical emergencies** increases (sudden increase in blood pressure, heart and brain diseases, etc.). In some cases, grandchildren who are left in the care of grandparents are

the ones providing the necessary help to sick old people. Here's what a woman (73) who lives with her granddaughters (18 and 14 years) says: *"It happened twice that I felt very bad at night. But my granddaughters woke up and quickly gave me whatever I asked them to. I have a heart condition but they help me a lot"* (III_E_23).

Here is the case of a very sick woman who takes care of two grandchildren: *"They (the grandchildren) call the ambulance, I just tell them the number but already know it and they call it whenever there's a need for it. They also call the hospital, and call the doctor"* (III_E_12). Of course, her grandchildren's help is a positive thing, but the living conditions of these two minors who must permanently take care of their sick grandmother threatens their adequate development.

Major risk situations for the elderly are the cases of medical emergencies when they are alone and are not able to call for help. *"I felt so bad! When I wanted to get up there was a thunder in my head and it's good that I had a cup of water and the telephone near me... I called several times, but no one would pick up – everybody was out celebrating and I just put a wet towel on my head and I've waited until I could get up and I went to my nurse and I told her about what had happened"* (III_E_6).

A similar situation was told by an old man who participated in the focus-group discussions: *"I was home alone and I had some heart attack symptoms, like I couldn't get out of the bed, I couldn't go out... And it was late at night... I wanted to call the doctor, but the doctor would not have been able to come in as the door was locked! You see, when you can't get out of the bed there is no one who would take care of you! Your own child is not in to help you. He takes care of the Italian elderly but there is no one to take care of his own mother and father"* (FG_E_1_rural). Unfortunately, many of the focus group participants said they **experienced similar situations, when they were seriously ill and had to stay in bed for several days without being visited or helped by anybody.**

We can see that this problem can be solved in the case of the institutionalized elderly. They tell us that in case of any emergency, even at night, there is a nurse on duty, who will provide them with the necessary help (FG_E_4_rural_asylum and FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

Many of the elderly confirmed that they are frequently visited by their family doctor. An old lady from a rural region that participated in the study told us: *"The doctor comes here to visit us whenever we tell him to, he already knows about it"* (III_E_24).

However, **the elderly, especially those who move with difficulty, told us that they would like the doctor to visit them more often.** *"He doesn't*

come to see me, ever...” (III_E_10, a very ill old lady with a strong movement deficiency, aged 61); *“The doctors should see the elderly at least once a month, or better twice a month, but they never come by themselves – you have to call them... They also need transportation, whenever I call the doctor he says: come by car, but I cannot do it – I don’t have one and I couldn’t even get into one”* (III_E_26, an old lady, aged 78, who has movement difficulties).

Of course, a doctor frequently visiting the ill elderly is a must. Because of poor health, these patients would need daily monitoring of their health, and prescription and various medical procedures. However, under the current list of health services, covered by the medical insurance, the family doctor is not motivated enough to assist these patients on a daily basis. This is confirmed by the experts: *“Family doctors are overloaded! They are working as paediatricians, too – with mothers with little children and with the elderly. They are not keeping any records – whether they are abroad, lonely elderly, the elderly with children... They just do their job as they would with every other patient”* (FG_EE_urban).

Other elderly complain that they would like to have a doctor of their own who would deal only with the problems of the elderly and would always be available to give advice, because **having to book a medical appointment for a family doctor in advance, decreases their access to medical services, especially when their health worsens.** *“I have to go and get an appointment to be able to visit the doctor for a consultation in a week. Why should I go to the doctor in a week, if I’m sick now?”* (III_E_2).

International expertise demonstrates the importance and need for **geriatric medical care** to be provided to the elderly. Unfortunately, this service is less developed in Moldova. Moreover, in many rural areas there is a big shortage of medical personnel, and sometimes one doctor has to work in two sectors or a few villages. This significantly reduces the time available to provide home care services for old people.

Both the elderly and experts mentioned the benefit of home care service within some projects: *“You cannot even imagine how happy they were... They maintained their health condition... They were encouraged, you could see the change! But now, we cannot influence them through social support”* (FG_EE_urban).

A more frequent medical monitoring (*“once a week, sometimes twice”*) is requested by institutionalized people. The elderly mention: *“The doctor comes whenever he can and walks through the shelter asking us if there’s something that hurts, we tell him – whether it’s the heart or a foot and we are getting medicine or shots...”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). Here’s what a

lady from the shelter says: *“The doctor sees us every Tuesday – she already knows all our diseases and gives us prescriptions. There is a drugstore in here and the doctor orders all medicines that we need and the nurses give them to us on Thursday. Every person knows his medicine...”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

It is indisputable that, under constant monitoring from the medical personnel, the elderly receive the regular treatment they need, they live in adequate conditions and are safe especially when their health condition can worsen or various medical emergencies may arise. This significantly improves their quality of life, extending it.

Regarding the access to medical services for the elderly left behind as a consequence of their children’s migration it should be concluded:

- Medical insurance: the services of family doctors and the Emergency Service are provided free of charge for the elderly from the state medical insurance fund. Whenever needed, the elderly receive medicine and residential services. If the access to high quality services is restricted, one has to go to regional centres or cities for that. For some elderly people the distance, trip costs and lack of someone who could accompany them to the town, restrain them from consulting medical specialists. This reduces the possibility of an early diagnosis of diseases, which would decrease the cost of treatment and prevent development of serious, irreversible diseases.
- The elderly with reduced mobility would prefer more frequent home care services. However, under the current list of health services covered by the medical insurance, the family doctor is not motivated enough to assist these patients on a daily basis. In many rural areas there is a severe shortage of health professionals, sometimes a single doctor works on two sectors or a few villages, which significantly reduces the time available to provide home care services for the elderly.
- A major risk for the life of the lonely elderly represents the high probability of developing states of medical emergencies with no opportunity to call for help. This risk increases with age and requires the need of continuous monitoring of the elderly who were left alone.
- The loss of the ability to judge correctly, linked to mental and neurological changes, makes the elderly, especially those who live alone and cannot seek advice from a close person, more vulnerable to criminals. Thus, the risk that some people may take advantage of these old people increases, leaving them homeless or with no living sources. In this context it is important that the practitioner would timely assess the elder’s ability to take care of him/herself and to make rational decisions.

- Some elderly, due to financial support from their children living abroad, can afford paying for the costly treatments that are not covered by the state medical insurance. In many cases, however, it was noticed that the lack of support from children (both moral and financial) induces a state of indifference to the elderly and they refuse to comply with medical prescriptions or extensive treatment, invasive ones (e.g. surgeries). Such a careless attitude increases the risk of developing complications, malignancies, incurable diseases, respectively, reduced the quality and length of the elder's life.
- The elderly living in shelters mention that the living conditions, the diet and sanitation have significantly improved compared to the conditions since they were first placed in the institution. They are satisfied with receiving regular medical care and whenever needed, and that the medical assistant is monitoring them and can provide help in cases of emergencies.

1.5. The integrity of migrant families

Children

- **Families and generation changes**

The results of the study denote changes in the relationship between children and parents living abroad, referring especially to the quantity and quality of communication, which deters family cohesion and integrity. Some children (especially those who have both parents working abroad) mentioned that they **feel deprived from the family support, and that their social support network has been affected**. For instance, an interviewee concluded that she became *“more mature, I’m doing things on my own, I have learnt to do everything by myself, to solve my problems”* (III_C_1). The changes within the family are mostly highlighted by the **status and role changes** that children left behind are being exposed to. At such an early age they have to take over their parents responsibilities: *“I kind of feel like a mother”* (III_C_4). Usually, the child has to become mature at an early stage, therefore to **assume serious responsibilities**.

Sometimes there is **an improvement in the relationship between the migrant parents and the children left behind at home**: *“Lately I have started to get along with my mom much better, we’re always together, we laugh more”* (III_C_2); *“I get along very well with my father and I can talk to him whenever I need to”* (III_C_28), and sometimes – **these relationships worsen**: *“I talk to my mother (the mother is abroad) quite well, I can pour my soul out to her... my father doesn’t understand me, I even fear him... I hate him”* (III_C_22). It should be mentioned that such situations do not appear over night, they **follow the relationship patterns that are specific for these families during the pre-migration period**, making it more severe and complicated.

During the study, the situations that **disturbed the family functionality** were identified: **when children had to learn to build relationships in totally different conditions** that they got used to. The experts we interviewed brought, as an example, the case of a divorce as a result of migration, where both parents built a new family and the child replied to this situation through *“not wanting to live with my mom or dad”*, which can be explained by the change of the interactions with his parents – *“they are very cold”* (FG_C_4_rural).

The changes within the family disturb the communicational area, the learning of new social roles and forced assumption of new responsibilities. All these generate subsequent changes at the generation level. Thus, the modern family within the society massively affected by migration poses a risk to the maintenance of traditional values and integrity of the family.

- **The lack of care**

The study shows that the lack of parental care, manifested by the tasks performed by children, affect their harmonious development by reducing

the number of individuals that children can address; the consequences of which are seen in the training and health processes, etc.

There are cases when migrating parents have the opportunity to show they care, primarily, through communicating by various means (phone, email, Skype) with their children. Although most interviewed children noted that they communicate frequently with their parents, they usually do not discuss their psycho-emotional status or any sensitive moments.

As the children say, it can be concluded that they **would prefer to feel the care of their parents even if it was manifested through various prohibitions or financial lacks**: *“Still, it is easier for a child to ask their parent’s permission if they can go somewhere”* (III_C_21); *“I think that money has no value. No matter how much they would work, there will always be the need to have them. Children need to be happy close to their parents. Children need their parents and parents need their children!”* (FG_C_3_rural).

Despite the difficulties they encounter, some children strive to meet the expectations of parents. They do their best to be responsible, have good academic results, and to succeed in performing their daily activities, trying to enunciate only their positive moments: *“We tell our mother only about positive things, we don’t want to frustrate her...”* (III_C_13). Through such actions children **express their reciprocal care for their parents** abroad.

The study unveiled the following correlation: the more frequent the parent-child communication, the more obvious the reciprocal care children have for their parents: *“We send our mom parcels with apples, letters...”* (III_C_26). A participant of the focus group discussion even mentioned that he is worried about his parents’ health who take a considerable toll for his well-being. The collected data indicates a reversal of roles between parents and children. Thus, in their perception, the children have become “parents” for their parents who left.

Even the most complicated tasks can become normal ones for children, if they perform them frequently. In this context, it should be mentioned that the **risk of child labour exploitation appears, especially** towards the child who manifests tolerance and compliance. Another risk that persists due to parental migration is the risk of a new generation growing up with health problems when the children are being involved in difficult activities from early childhood. For instance, the tasks that seemed impossible at the beginning and inadequate for a child’s life, have begun to be perceived as habitual during a certain period of time. An interviewed child told us that since he was 7-8 years old he had been involved in production of prunes, a process which requires time and effort, being a difficult task. The child concluded: *“Now I cannot imagine living without drying prunes”* (III_C_9).

The interviewed experts state that the effects of the lack of the parental care will be felt after a certain period of time. Today they are not that obvious

yet: “I think that in a little while there will be great difficulties between generations” (FG_EC_rural).

Reciprocal care is a determining characteristic feature of a family, and the lack of it denotes significant conflicts in the parent-child relationship. In the case of families with migrant parents, the lack of care is conditioned by the absence of parents in day-to-day life, which generates multiple risks, including that of child labour exploitation. The study highlighted the fact that children want to feel their parents’ care, even if it would be manifested through various prohibitions or restrictions, which are part of the children’s vision of parental care.

- **The problem of divorces and separation of family members as a consequence of labour migration**

Parental migration makes children feel **anxious and scared of an eventual divorce of their parents**: „When your parents live separately – one at home and the other abroad – I fear that my father would find another woman or will divorce” (FG_C_2_rural); „I fear that when my mom returns home she will file for a divorce... I don’t want this... I want us to be a united family again... I wrote a poem about this last year:

You’re gone for four year now,
You’re living now with strangers,
You went away to make some money,
To make our lives better..
You should come home,
Come back for good,
As if you come once in a while
The longing’s like a wound.
Oh, won’t you please come back
And stay with us for good,
You know how much I miss you
And you know that I need you...
My sweet and beloved mother,
We won’t forget you ever,
Even you far away from us,
I love you more than ever (III_C_19).

The fears of children are justified. The research presents several **situations of separation and/or the divorce of parents** as a result of labour migration: “They separated because they went abroad” (III_C_9). The interviewed experts confirm the high rate of divorces among migrants: “There are many divorces” (FG_EC_rural). Moreover, one of the experts said that in his professional experience there is “no example of a family that remained united after parental migration”. This consequence of migration has disturbed many children (see Case Study Box 15 below).

BOX 15**Case Study. Migration – the cause for divorce**
(III_C_15)

Dorina is a 13 year old girl who has a 9 year old sister. At the moment they are under the care of their neighbour. Their parents left for Italy about 6 years ago. Until then the relations they had in their family had been normal. In time, the parents estranged, and currently they intend to divorce: *“Since they left, mom and dad are not together, they only talk... and that bothers me”*. The father (who comes home more often) blames his wife: *“My father says that since mom left for Italy they haven’t been getting along”*. The biggest wish Dorina has is for her parents to be together and not to divorce.

Some children even worry whether the relationship of their parents would last in time: *“Another thing is that when your parents live separately – one at home and the other abroad – I fear that my father would find another woman or will divorce”* (FG_C_3_rural).

It should be mentioned that **geographical distance affects the relationship between parents and children**, which tends to cool in time. Rather than compensating their absence by the care when they return home, some parents display unreasonable behaviour: *“During those 8 days that I was in the hospital neither mom nor dad called me, even though both of them knew I was hospitalized...”* (III_C_19).

The study showed that an improved financial situation of the family as a result of migration does not solve the problems between spouses, so **any action can grow into a fight and conflict**. The children we interviewed tried to explain in detail the reason of the conflict situations in their families: *“They had a fight because my mom bought me a lot of toys and he said that she should have bought some food instead of spending money on toys, but my mom said that I’m little and I don’t eat a lot and the toys were cheap – only 1 Euro, which is 16 Moldovan lei”* (III_C_3).

In some cases, divorced parents **trying to rebuild their life by having short-term relationships or marriages with other persons usually are not accepted by their children**: *“She wanted to marry him... and she asked me if I agreed, I told her “not really... no, I don’t want that”. He was a grown-up but behaved like a child...”* (III_C_11).

Some interviewees unveiled **shocking cases in the context of the deterioration of relations between their parents**. The case of a girl aged 11 who has been witnessing **continuous conflict situations** should be mentioned here: *“I missed her a lot, I called her and she started crying... my dad says she should have stayed at home”*. The interviewed child explains that their fights started when her mother decided to leave abroad and the father was against it. Still he made an effort to keep the family and *“wanted to let her come back home”*. The most painful moment is when a mother does not respect her promise to

come back home: “*She didn’t come, I don’t know why*” and the hopeful wait: “*I’ve waited for her at the station but she didn’t show up...*” (III_C_10).

More and more often the separations and/or divorces happen as a consequence of migration. This fact is alarming if it is correlated to the aim migration has: to ensure the family well-being. Children left behind are exposed to a double risk: to live without parents while they are abroad; and to face the divorce of their parents at a later stage. The experiences told by the children are shocking, and the assessment of the risks for their moral state leads to an awareness of the gravity of the situation.

The elderly

- **Family and generation changes**

Every family represents a micro-society with its own mentality, attitudes and specific patterns, its own structure and pace of development, and the way of interacting with each other. The phenomenon of labour migration brings changes at this level of human interaction. **It distorts the traditional model of a family.** The elderly cannot fully enjoy their life without being involved in their children’s life and being continuously worried for them: “*When she comes home she always brings us presents, but she never asks me whether I need money... I don’t want to interfere with their life, I don’t want to ask them too much..., but if she sees that there is something that I need she should help me... She has to think that I’m her mother and I need her to buy me things... I don’t want to force them; I don’t want to use them...*” (III_E_11).

Children, in turn, do not see the point in the advice and experience of an older person. Consequently, the abandonment of an elderly person by the children who left to work abroad is a frequently recorded phenomenon: “*She has been gone for 3 years, she brought me here even if I didn’t want to but she told me “I’ll have to take you to a shelter” and I’m alone now, she brought me here and I haven’t seen her since then...*” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum). **Neglecting the elderly** is mostly conditioned by the necessity of going abroad as well as by the irresponsibility: “*It would be good if she came to see us – we are her parents*” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). Long-lasting physical distance leads to **emotional estrangement**. This phenomenon is often experienced by the institutionalized elderly. At the same time, it is worth mentioning the experience of an elderly person who purchased a cheap cell phone with the saved money hoping to reduce the distance with his relatives. In this way he wanted to express his right to communication: “*...They call me sometimes, I also have a cell phone and I can call them too...*” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

In this situation, the **elderly person no longer finds his place in the traditional family pattern**, even with the necessary adaptations to contemporary life. The obstacles and frustrations caused by the need to migrate may also provoke violent behaviour towards the elderly.

The remittances cannot compensate the lack of affection and care so important for this age category. The emotional discomfort manifests differently from one elder to another depending on the particularities of the personality. *“When she calls me from Moscow, she cries there and I cry here and we both cry, she misses us, we miss her but there’s nothing to be done...”* (III_E_23). This is what one elderly confesses.

At the same time, **the distance in some cases makes people feel closer**: *“Since they left I feel that we get along better, I respect them more, and it’s all about the distance”* (III_E_5). The feelings of the institutionalized elderly are even deeper in this context: *“My boy and my girl are both in Moscow, my boy visited me a month ago and he said that he wanted to pay the contract (for the shelter), and he won’t be able to come for Christmas”*. This highlights the regret of the insufficient communication during holidays, showing that the money has no value (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

The study highlights the sense of duty and family loyalty of the elderly for their own children. Thus, old people often come to sell their dwellings to create an initial capital for their children who want to go abroad to work. Still, some children who migrate don’t even take any responsibilities for their elderly parents left behind. In these conditions, with no emotional and financial support from their children the **elderly lose their independence** and are *“placed into social institutions called “home of veterans”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). Thus, the family for these elderly does not have a support role, but rather a dysfunctional one.

BOX 16**Case Study. Migration – the cause for the institutionalization of the elderly** (FG_E_3_urban_asylum)**Tamara, aged 80, an institutionalized old woman**

“I am here because I lost my house. My husband died and I am alone. My daughter who lived in Kirovograd wanted to take me to live with her. I sold my house and then my daughter and her husband decided to leave for Italy. They wanted to take me with them but I said: “All my relatives are here! I cannot leave!” I refused and they left. I paid for their wedding party with the money I got from selling my house... My daughter has been away for 7 years.”

The study underlines the fact that migration can lead to **redefining the family relations concept**. Thus, children who are left in the care of their grandparents, do not associate with their biological parents but tend to find other models of affection and belonging: *“We were watching others playing and when we entered the house they were sad and said “Granny, we can call you mom, can’t we?” And since then that’s what they call me. They need to have someone to call their mom. And they call me mom...”* (III_E_12); *“The girl cries, the boy is little and he started calling me “mom, you’re my mommy now and when my mom will be back I’ll call her mom and you’ll be my*

grandmother again" (III_E_2). Thus, the grandparents will never replace the parents; although they are the ones who bring up the grandchildren. The grandparents take over the role of the parents which creates situations of exhaustion, both emotionally and physically: *"I'm doing well with the education of my grandchildren, but my forces are not the same and it is hard..., the most difficult is to have patience..., I get mad very fast and I can't cope with that... I'm always trying to talk calmly and use no bad words"* (III_E_4). There are cases when grandparents also have personal problems, addictions that they have to face. In this situation they cannot speak appropriately to their grandchildren. *"Some of them cannot get to the level of the grandchild and talk at the right level. Of course there are wise grandparents who give good advice, but there are grandparents who drink or have other problems"* (FG_EC_rural).

The attempts to reintegrate in the family (parents going to their children who settled abroad) fails because, in some cases, **children cannot bear the costs of family reunification** or the elderly cannot adapt to a new living environment, which is especially difficult for old people: *"How am I supposed to go there? I really don't know... If I don't die until then... maybe I'll go... but when I miss my own parents and I go to the cemetery, I miss our land, and these are things that give us a lot – who would go there if I leave?"* (III_E_11). It is often that this reintegration is not wanted or admitted by the elderly: *"My girl from Turkey was at home this year and bought me a ticket and I spent my summer there but I don't want to move there"* (III_E_18). One of the impediments to going abroad to join their children for the elderly and for the institutionalized elderly is their health state (reduced mobility, lack of members, impaired vision, memory problems, etc.), which requires even more resources for their maintenance abroad.

The emigration of some family members **threatens the idea of the family, its functions, and its role in the society**. The study reveals that families are made of a much lower number of persons: grandparents – grandchildren, persons who live alone, mono-parental families: *"Now I live with my grandchildren and with my ill father"* (III_E_2). Communication, relations and solidarity, the transmission of customs gain other meanings: *"They are old now, they raised 5-6 children and there is no one who would take care of them now. I live nearby and I see that it is very hard for them; I don't even want to think about us and our children. Now that's a problem – the mother and the father die and they don't even come to see them"; "When our children reach our age, if we raise them in a good manner – we'll be happy when we're old, poor education brings unhappiness"* (FG_EC_rural). Marital instability that is regularly determined by migration influences the family structure: *"I live with my mom and grandmother, my father and mom divorced when I was 2... I don't remem-*

ber how it was when they were together, I was too little” (III_C_9). In this context, the family loses its basic role in the society.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that labour migration produces specific changes within generational interconnections. These changes and their effects on future generations should be taken into account. The intensification of migration processes is felt within families, and its structure is ever changing: reduced number of persons, family members living separately, elderly – or other persons taking care of children – taking the role of parents, etc. The need to adapt to the modern requirements affects the internal changes of the family and external behaviours.

- **The lack of care**

The care given to the elderly determines their health, happiness and longevity. The environment and family support constitute the most important factors in caring for the elderly.

The aspect of quality care provided to institutionalized elderly can be approached from the perspective of care services rendered within the institution. The fact that the elderly were institutionalized is conditioned by a **total lack of care and abandonment from their children/grandchildren:** *“I sold my house... I gave the money to my son and he died and I have no son and no house now... my granddaughter doesn’t care” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).* In other cases the presence of the elderly in a shelter is determined by a **respectful and responsible attitude the children/grandchildren have for the fate of the grandparent:** *“My girls talked to her, I was staying in the hospital with my leg issue (her leg was amputated)... lady Vera (the director of the shelter) came by car and I talked to her. She told me to ask the doctors to call her when they would be ready to let me out and she would take me to the shelter. The girls... will pay the fee. If I’d go home there would be no one, the house is empty and after this surgery I’d need to bring water from the well, to cook, and there is no way for me to do that” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).*

The situation varies at the level of care provided to elderly within the residential institution. Partly, as the study highlights, this is being generated not by the residential environment (urban, rural) or available financial sources but by the human factor that is involved in the care process. Thus, elderly living in a shelter are pleased with the care they receive and the environment: *“We feel good in here because I don’t have to wash or cook but if I were at home there would have been more responsibilities, I’m being taken care of” (FG_E_4_rural_asylum),* while the ones from another shelter talk about negligence, insults, harassment: *“They lie and want money. They come and ask (one of the staff) to give them 10-20 lei and then they’re just gone. They lie concerning the phone and everything...” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).*

The study revealed several factors related to elderly **well-being**:

- **The presence of a couple** constitutes a support source and physical and affective care: *“Me and my wife we are alone from the beginning of our lives... we talk a lot... we share everything”* (III_E_5). The loss of a spouse is a hard burden, and the problems that emerge in the daily schedule are the consequences of lack of affection, communication and care: *“I am alone, my husband died in 1985, it feels like I’ve been alone all my life”* (III_E_4);
- **The way of solving problems** and coping with daily difficulties. The potential to solve these impediments at a family level, to offer and receive advice determines the feeling of security and usefulness: *“My neighbours can visit me sometimes but generally they are very busy. If I need firewood, or water and I have to take a small bucket and go to the well, it sometimes happens that I stumble and fall”* (III_E_5);
- **Keeping the elderly at home and encouraging them, making an independent living possible for them.** This is the only way people can maintain a sense of capability and usefulness.

Insufficient care and attention, and an unfavourable social-family climate were identified as the main issues negatively influencing the provision of decent living for the elderly. Children’s responsibility to take care of their parents remains one of the key-solutions that were identified by all parties: *“I think that first of all those children who left their parents with no help have to be punished, as they have no heart, and they need to pay...”* (III_E_17).

The study highlights that the lack of care creates discomfort both to institutionalized elderly and those who are at home. In both cases the situation depends on the child’s attitude towards his/her parents, on his/her involvement in their lives and on his/her social responsibilities.

1.6. The well-being of migrants' households

Children

• Providing for the households

The study revealed that households of migrants are well-equipped due to the efforts of those who left abroad. Several cases that confirm this aspect were recorded, including, the purchase of construction materials and building of the house, the purchase of computers (Internet) and mobile phones; of various household equipment items, perishable and non-perishable goods, etc. *“Before my parents left we had started building a new house. We had some money but it wasn't enough. And because they left we could gather the money that we needed to cover the necessary costs”* (FG_C_2_rural).

However, the improvement of the household is not registered in all cases. There are situations when remittances are spent on food and other necessities considered important by the family: *“We spend a lot on food and on the cell-phone”* (III_C_20).

Although the household equipment should represent the expected result of working abroad, it does not happen in all cases revealed by the research. One of the explanations could address the complexity of needs and severity of problems that the family faces, so that the top priorities are other than household equipment.

• Remittances and their management

Remittances have **an important role in children's well-being, which represents the primary reason for parental migration**. Some interviewed experts ascertained that remittances have a considerable influence on the economical development of our country. *“Today, a big share of remittances is directed towards consumption. In a way, we have to be grateful because they are oriented towards fighting poverty, if talking about the general image of the country and nation”* (III_EC_5). Through remittances it is possible to solve daily problems, paying the bills, school expenses, entertainment, treatments, paying the debts, etc.: *“Since my mom is abroad we never borrowed money, now we have enough”* (III_C_6). If before parental migration the family couldn't provide for their nourishment, to pay their transportation, in 2-3 years most of the families have bought various goods, including for children's play: *“Now I can tell them what I want”* – says a respondent of 9 years old (III_C_7).

Remittances are most often transmitted through **third parties, through bank services or brought by parents when they return home**. The amount of money varies quite a lot from a few dozen to several hundred Euros. In most cases the people in charge with bringing money to the recipient are aware of the amount they transport, however, there were situations when parents use tricks, and do not inform relatives about the type of cargo they send: *“My grandfather received a little duck that was stuffed with money”* (III_C_14).

During the research it was established that in most cases the **caregivers** have a key-role in the management of money received from abroad, giving children a part of the money for various expenses related to school, household and leisure activities. Most often children consult their **parents** regarding the expenditures they are going to make: *“If it is about a bigger purchase we consult our mother”* (III_C_18). Usually, children accept the fact that their caregiver has the money and gives them the necessary sum. But there are cases when this fact bothers them, especially when they are not entitled to participate in the money management process. This is the case of two sisters, aged 11 and 15, whose mother went to work abroad and regularly sends them parcels while the money is sent to their cousin: *“When we need money we have to go to her and ask for it, providing a detailed explanation about the reason we need it for... I don't feel comfortable asking for it, begging for every 20 lei that I need”*. The girls perceive the situation as being embarrassing, especially because their father, who periodically comes home, is also asking them to give detailed explanations on every purchase: *“We keep a good record of our purchases in a special copybook, every bani that we spend even if it is on a matchbox or bag... So we actually have no pocket money”* (III_C_19).

Sometimes **children have a decisive role in the procurement** of the most expensive goods: *“It happened that we wanted to buy a TV set and they wanted to buy a simple one but I wanted to have a modern TV and they bought what I told them to”* (III_C_2).

The ability to spend money is not directly balanced by the child's age, as financial prudence and responsibility are manifested differently at different ages. For instance, a girl of 15 years old mentioned: *“When my parents are not at home I distribute the money because my brother cannot save (the brother is 19 years old), he wants to spend more but I know that there is a limit and we'll have to live tomorrow too”* (III_C_1).

On the other hand, there are situations when parents or children **exaggerate with the purchase of some goods** that have a disputable

necessity: *“For example – shoes, he has a lot of shoes that he’s not wearing.... He just buys clothing that he doesn’t need”* (FG_C_2_rural). This is the way parents try to compensate their absence or the time they do not spend together.

Still, there were situations when **parents cannot transmit any remittances**, and **the family is financially deprived**, together with **moral deprivation**, and, previous deprivations. All these effects of the parental absence cumulate and result in a **double deprivation of children**.

During the focus group discussions with experts, a **secondary effect of the problems** in the community was outlined. On one hand, children left behind are discriminated against because of the parents' absence in their lives; and on the other hand, children whose parents are at home also suffer taking into account that they have no possibilities to provide for them financially: *“It’s not only the parents abroad who suffer, but also the ones who are in the country because parents who are here cannot give the things the neighbour has and they suffer because their child’s classmate has a better cell phone and clothing and he/she feels discriminated against”* (FG_EC_urban).

Finally, it is important to mention the contradictory opinions that children have regarding the **benefits of the remittances**. While some children see things directly: *“When my father left I gained a scooter, when my mom left – I gained a cell phone”* (FG_C_3_rural), others **don’t consider the value of the goods they have as a result of their parents migration**: *“I think that I gained a lot, but money has no value for me; the longing and sadness that I feel for my mother are more important”* (FG_C_3_rural).

The study highlighted the significant role of remittances in ensuring the survival of children left behind and in giving opportunities to purchase goods and products that are necessary for a decent life. There are a variety of situations when children have been told about the allocation of money and the variety of the needs to be covered. In some cases the money is spent on useless goods, which shows the poor management of the resources. However, not all migrant parents send money home to cover the children’s needs.

• Child’s strategies of spending money

In most cases the migration of parents increases the standard of living for the family members who remained at home. Strategies for spending the money mostly focus on current consumption, household maintenance, paying bills, buying food and non-per-

ishable goods: “*I buy food*” (III_C_10); “*For Internet*” (III_C_17); “*Pay the bills and for our house*” (III_C_22); “*School supplies, my brother pays the electricity and gas bills, we buy sweets, potato chips*” (III_C_27), Sometimes the money is used for investing in their house or paying their education fees, etc.: “*My sister left for Romania to study at the university*”.

Another aspect of the research refers to learning a new **social role of managing money**. In this context, the interviewed children showed different abilities to spend the money. Their answers depend on their priorities—spending money for entertainment, for daily necessities, household, school, or trying to save the most of money received from parents. By the way they spend money, children left behind differ from those whose parents are in the country: “*The fact that they have more money, they are better dressed, even when they come to school, when they go in a store they can afford to buy whatever they want, but the ones with parents at home are held on a leash. They are not given all the money they want every day*” (FG_C_3_rural). This situation creates a feeling of discomfort for the children whose parents remained at home. There are also cases when children whose parents are abroad helped the poor ones from their community, being aware of their needs.

Parents themselves have reservations regarding their children’s ability to spend money. Trying to prevent deviant behaviour, some parents prefer to direct money to the caregiver. Children understand and accept such a decision: “*They don’t give it to us because they know we’ll spend it... Anyway we don’t need it and they fear that we would buy cigarettes, drugs and stuff like that*” (III_C_13).

It is important to mention that there are situations when children are “spoiled” by remittances. In such a way parents **wish to compensate for the absence of care and affection, therefore** providing some goods and additional services. “*It is very important that parents, when sending money, know exactly what their children are going to do with it. There should be an official person-in-charge with their children’s care*” said the experts.

Money management strategies are mainly oriented towards allocating resources to provide a decent life. Meanwhile the research highlighted different ways of prioritization in spending the money: from paying the fee for education to spending money on entertainment. Among other social responsibilities children should take is the way of spending the money, as any deviation in the management of remittances will be felt to a certain extent at the community level.

The elderly

• Providing the households

Experience, knowledge and customs acquired by children of the elderly abroad have marked their aesthetic taste, hygiene and remittances value: *“People of different social layers go abroad...those who have an education and those who are less educated but there they learn many good things”*; *“People living in the countryside come across many new things, they did not know about the existence of the washing machine or what good living conditions they may have, as for example, to have heating anytime or a clean house. We do not have such conditions and when you meet a woman who returned from abroad she tells you that before she left she had thought her life was good here in the country. But when she went abroad she saw the difference and now she intends to improve her life at home”* (FG_EC_rural).

The study emphasizes the fact that **remittances influence the consumption of goods and services**. Thus in the majority of cases, even when remittances are not big, people **invest in water supply systems, sewerage, gas supply, building or major overhaul of a dwelling equipping it with household goods and furniture**: *“ Since children have left we began to live better...We have the possibility to buy more products, we made repairs and purchased furniture”* (III_E_14).

In rural localities there exist households that have all utilities: *“I have a bathroom, automatic washing machine and I also have central heating”* (III_E_1); *“We have a bathroom and hot water... We also have autonomous gas heating...there is not a problem anymore to take a shower anytime... We have an automatic washing machine and access to the Internet and also a web camera”* (III_E_14). This fact contributes to the improvement of the family well-being and living conditions.

The ways households are provided for depend on the relationship between parents and their children. There were some cases identified when living conditions of the elderly practically had not changed: *“I have the same living conditions as before my children went abroad”* (FG_EE_urban_rural) most often when the elderly live separately. In cases when children live with their parents they are obliged to make some reparation: *“There are people who invested in the house reparation”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). It also happens that **the elderly practically supervise construction or complete renovation of their children's house**: *“My father was in charge with building the house and my mum returned in a new house”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

For some institutionalized elderly their children try to provide **additional comfort in the asylum**: *“He bought a TV set and a tape recorder*

for my birthday” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum), contributing to the creation of an atmosphere closer to that which they had at home.

The need for communication had an essential role in **the appearance of fixed telephone lines as well as buying mobile cell phones, computers and providing access to the Internet**: *“That is what me and Tonia made him buy in order to communicate (shows to the notebook on the table)”* (III_E_21). The elderly who have to look after their grandchildren are more often spending remittances on providing the household with appliances. When having only the elderly left behind it implies a reduced investment in providing technological devices for the household.

The situation is still difficult for the elderly who were abandoned or in the cases when the child who went to work abroad disappeared. In these circumstances there are no remittances at all and the elderly have to manage with their own modest financial resources and they do not invest money in building or providing convenience.

Therefore remittances, regardless of their amount, are spent by the elderly firstly on providing for themselves and their grandchildren and afterwards on equipping the households.

Remittances and ways of spending it

Remittances remain the **only source of increasing the income** to ensure the survival of the families left behind: *“They improve their financial situation and also help their parents, as some of them receive a small pension and they get money from children to support both themselves and their grandchildren”* (FG_EC_rural).

The research highlights substantial differences in the amount of the remittances, the way and frequency they are sent according to the social status of the elderly, their interfamily relations, their autonomy, the existence of grandchildren to be cared for and the place the elderly stay (at home or in a residential institution).

The existence of some deep emotional family connections, authoritative social status of the elderly, and the correct assessment of responsibilities they have towards parents, contribute to periodically sent consistent remittances: *“My daughter sent 100-150 USD once in 2 months in parcels with clothing and food”* (III_E_20).

The capacity of the elderly to live by themselves and have their own incomes influence the children’s form of support. It is seldom that those elderly who have strength abuse their children’s help: *“When-*

ever I will have strength I will do everything I need...I do not ask them for money as I told them once that the washing machine ran out of order and they sent me money without asking for it” (III_E_1).

A determinant in sending remittances is the presence of grandchildren who are cared for by the elderly. In this case remittances are sent frequently in different amounts: *“He used to send us 100 USD anytime, he sent parcels by train or if someone else was coming home...he sent clothing for children and food” (III_E_2).* The fact that institutionalization of the elderly was agreed upon with his children determines the obligatory transfer to the institutions that take care of the elderly.

A number of institutionalized people, regardless of whether they pay a fee or not, **benefit from additional support from their children:** *“I was calling them when I needed money... I was not asking for a specific sum but just what they could send. Or they rather send medicine as it is better and cheaper abroad” (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).*

This study revealed that the volume and frequency of remittances are conditioned also by the situation and status of the person who works abroad (salary, job, time of the year, etc.): *“She isn’t working now and I live on my pension. She used to send me 50 or 100 Euros every month when she had the possibility. But it has already been 3 months since she sent me the money last time, as she does not have anything to give” (III_E_4); “Never... I tell you as it is... He bought a car there and needs to pay for it... His house... He is not employed now and is registered at the Employment Agency in search for work... He borrowed money to pay for his apartment” (III_E_11).*

Bank transfers are not always approved by the elderly as it implies going to the post office or to the bank and also to know what sum was sent.

In the majority of cases, financial resources are saved and managed by the elderly including when they have to take care of grandchildren: *“We spend the money after consulting each other what we should buy... If we need something for the girls I call her, or we discuss it with my daughter when she calls and she immediately sends us what we need, we take decisions together” (III_E_15); “I do not give them (the grandchildren) money in their hands” (III_E_17).*

A specific feature revealed in spending money by the elderly refers to **their capacity to save money and be satisfied with little:** *“He keeps everything in order not to be forced to spend too much”; “It will be of use for the funerals”.* This can be explained by difficulties this generation underwent (Second World War, starvation), as well as by con-

tinuing to ask of them to perform the role of the supportive parent: *“Another child will come to see me and how will I treat him?”*

In the case of the institutionalized elderly money management is the responsibility of caregiver or residential institution according to the contract: *“My girl said that now the manager (of the asylum) will receive my money...”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

The situation of elderly who were abandoned or whose children disappeared, while not having any other relatives, is extremely difficult. They are forced to **survive on their pension, other forms of social protection or charity**: *“I do not know where my daughter is now... I take care of my granddaughter and I can say that from the financial aspect it is just harder to live”* (III_E_3).

The study indicates there is a chance that **conflicts may appear within the family because of remittances**. For example when children send remittances to their own parents and the grandchildren are cared for by the husband or parents-in-law: *“When mother was abroad she used to send parcels to her parents but her husband who looked after the children did not receive anything...He was fighting with her parents... and as a result of this conflict they are divorcing now as he asks to deprive his wife of parental rights...The father’s relatives are quarrelling with the mother’s relatives...”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). Respectively, tense situations caused by the difficulties in spending remittances can cause the family to break up.

In conclusion it should be said that remittances significantly contribute to improving the quality of life of the elderly regardless of where they are staying, their autonomy, health condition or whether they are taking care of grandchildren.

- **Strategies of spending money used by the elderly**

Within the study it has been discovered that the elderly often minimize their needs: *“I learned to save money since my youth and I always spend it only on what we need, but not in vain. You see I have been wearing this blouse for 10 years”* (III_E_5). However, the children’s demands prevail: *“I had never told her to send anything and when she came home she bought a lot of things and it is important for us. She bought more for my granddaughter, but I do not need anything. She asked me if I need anything and I said I had everything including clothes”* (III_E_3).

Life experiences combined with tough reality makes them apply **very pragmatic strategies to save money**, paying for utilities, food, medi-

cine, clothing for school or kindergarten and footwear: *“Now I spend more on services but in summer more on food... Last month I paid only 370 lei...,but anyway...about 100 lei for building maintenance...and then for Cable TV- 60 lei, then cold water, hot water ...the price for electricity has increased and that is how I spend the money...”* (III_E_9); *“It is enough but whenever it is not enough we spend little and save the rest. What would happen if you do not save money...”* (III_E_17). The number of elderly who always **save money** is rather big: *“I observe a rule: I use only my goods and that’s it. I receive a pension but I would never spend it all. I save it for the rainy days as we can have large costs especially when you get to the hospital”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

Grandchildren are a priority for the elderly and they spend consistent sums to provide for them: *“Almost all the money sent from abroad is spent on my granddaughters’ needs (clothing for school, notebooks, etc.)”* (III_E_20), including the money taken from their own incomes.

When the elderly take care of their grandchildren, the sources of income are **the benefits** they get when they are appointed as a legal guardian: *“I get from the mayoralty 500 lei per each child as I am their guardian. It means 1000 lei”* (III_E_2).

Often **conflicts are attested in appointing the person who will ensure the guardianship** of the child left behind: *“It is easier if the parent placed his child in guardianship in time because when a legal representative is not appointed, conflicts may appear within the family regarding the person who will benefit from the money parents send from abroad and who takes care of the child”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). There are frequent cases when parents do not apply the legal form of protection, this may result in a situation where the documents are urgently needed: *“They would not appoint a guardian. They did it only when they had to leave for Romania with the dancing troupe and they were asked to do this at the customs... Still there are many cases when parents avoid registering unless they need something”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). To avoid a similar situation, the interviewed experts think that parents: *“Should be requested to provide a document to prove in whose care the child remains and to specify the period and the date of leaving abroad, regardless of the time they will stay away, the parent should appoint a guardian”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

In the situations where remittances lack entirely or are insignificant, the elderly find other forms of support for themselves as well as for their grandchildren by **performing different domestic or agricultural jobs and by getting other jobs**: *“I help myself in summer I go to Tirnova. I have many acquaintances there, not relatives but good friends and I help them from the spring until the winter to dig, to clean.*

I go there with my granddaughter every summer. It's their land but I go and help them work this land and every week they give me milk, eggs, wheat flour, and corn" (III_E_3).

In residential institutions the elderly get only 25% of their pension. The other 75% are spent by the institution on providing for the elderly. Managing the money they have is problematic for those who stay in an asylum where the whole situation, from their food to their care is not of quality. The study reveals specific circumstances when the elderly have to pay the staff for many types of services provided: *"I can't take my clothing to the laundry, I give them 10 lei and they do it for me"; "If you pay-they help, if not-they don't" (FG_E_3_urban).* **The management of small financial resources for an institutionalized elderly of 75 years old is relevant in this regard:** *"If they would give us tasty food...this is the problem. It is not enough but also badly cooked. That is why we often buy food if we have the possibility. They also take our pensions and give us only 25% of it... and we often have to buy our medicine as it is not enough...this is the most painful issue" (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).*

Thus, appreciating the importance of remittances in providing a decent life, the elderly are very grateful for the support they get from their children, but remain passive in asking for their children's help.

1.7. Values and life plans

Children

- Children's values

The most important values enlisted by children refer to their family, health, money, education, work, economic and political stability, etc. Generally speaking, for children it is not important whether their parents will come home or they will have to go abroad to be with their parents, the **most essential thing is to reunite the family**: *“To live with my parents...I would like them to stay home or to live all together abroad”* (III_C_3). Most of children expressed their wish to live with parents, although some of them had experienced horrible situations.

The model of the future family is sometimes in direct opposition to the model of the nuclear family: *“Not like my family...”* (III_C_9).

If they had the possibility to change something, children said they would provide their parents with jobs at home, thus giving them the possibility to stay with them: *“I would do everything to have my parents here in the country, to work here at home”* (III_C_21).

Speaking about their remote future, children whose parents are working abroad associate **it mostly with the departure abroad**: *“My mother tells me she wants to take me abroad and I would like to go too”* (III_C_6), motivating it by the lack of and drop in opportunities to be employed in the Republic of Moldova for parents and young people. According to children's affirmations their parents think the same. Most children would like their parents to leave for such countries as Germany, Italy, USA, England or any other European country, as according to them the Republic of Moldova *“Lacks stability and balance... people are bad and there is a lot of suffering, there is no justice but corruption and only people who have money have power”* (FG_C_3_rural). But there are children who asserted their **future is in the Republic of Moldova**: *“You can also find a job here in the country and not die of hunger”* (FG_C_3_rural).

Some of them intend to go abroad to continue their education or to get a better qualification while the others want to get a job.

Parents' migration and other problems connected with providing a decent living affected some of children to such a great extent that for some of them the most important value is **money**. It is a very important motivator for them not to be deprived of something: *“I have many dreams but the most important is to always have money as not to miss anything”* (III_C_2).

Some of the interviewed children mentioned that in general they are not disturbed with their situation but the only thing to change is the unstable political situation in the Republic of Moldova: *“If I had the possibility I would change this situation”* (III_C_2). The interviewed person lives in the village Dorotcaia, in the district of Dubasari, located in the conflict zone affected by the political and social instability of our country.

Amongst children’s aspirations should be mentioned the **desire to make the world better, more sensitive and to reduce aggressiveness**: *“I would do something to make people less boasting and mean”* (III_C_27).

As a conclusion it should be stressed that in the interviewed people’s opinion the family and its integrity ranks as the top among their value priorities. Nevertheless, the difficult situation that not only these children face at the moment, but also the society’s pragmatism encourage the prioritization of money, a well-paid job, etc. It is alarming that many of the interviewed children think their future is abroad and only a few of them consider the Republic of Moldova an appropriate environment for their future.

• Choice of education and profession

The study’s results show that children left behind as a consequence of migration have strong **aspirations towards their professional development**. The choice of profession is like an attempt to develop their personality. **The wish to study and to have a good profession depends**, to a certain extent, on the self-image that in turn is influenced by the family situation. The reliance on the fact that their parents will pay for their education, gives the children self-confidence and nourishes their professional aspirations. This fact was proven by some experts from the rural areas: *„Children whose parents are working abroad aim to get a university degree and they do not accept other lower qualified education”* (FG_EC_rural).

Career aspirations of some children left behind are nourished also by the desire to express **gratitude for the parents’ care and to justify their efforts**: *„To finish school, to find a job and get what I’ve wanted and by doing this to thank my mother for everything she has done for me and to make her feel proud. She has such a good girl and maybe someday I will have the possibility to help her too”* (III_C_4).

The study revealed professional ambitions of the children left behind as a consequence of migration and **their motivation**: *„I want to become a **cop**. As a cop I should fine drivers for speeding and to*

arrest shoplifters” (III_C_7); „I want to be a cop to enforce justice. To protect innocent people and to find the guilty ones...” (III_C_19); „I want to become a **doctor** to cure ill people. We’ve discussed it with my parents. My mother thinks it is very good that I want to be a doctor but I have to work hard and to do my best. At school I get grades from 7 to 9. I have to try harder and I know it requires a lot of money to take up medicine. My parents work to earn this money” (III_C_27); „I want to study **psychology**. I like very much to observe people, to study their behaviour, their way of thinking; talking...they are very different! My mother likes my idea with the only difference she says it is a low-paid job in Moldova. Maybe it will be better paid when I get my diploma as these specialists are very required in schools as they help children...” (III_C_18).

Some children build their career aspirations in conjunction with their self-esteem and own skills: “I wanted to be a programmer but I quit this idea as I saw informatics is a very difficult subject and it does not provide such a bright future” (III_C_9). At the same time, professional ambitions are influenced by **children’s adequate assessment of their own situation**: “I want to be a masseuse. My mother wants me to take up medicine but I don’t think we’ll have the possibility...Besides, I have to take care of my sister and I can’t afford to spend much time on learning...I will have to work”; “I want to take up foreign languages, I am fond of translating but I don’t like teaching. I also want to become a photographer or wedding planner”.

Amongst professional aspirations of the children left behind should be enlisted: singer, teacher, football player, driver, dancer, hairdresser, ballet dancer, cook, pastry cook.

A trend has been observed of some parents and grandparents taking decisions for their children. Some parents even resort to threats: “In the future I want to be a hairdresser as I like it very much; I even cut my sister’s fringe... But my father wants me to work at the customs as he has a friend whose daughter also took up this profession but I’m not sure I will do this” (III_C_10).

The study also revealed cases when adults try to impose their own life style as a professional model upon their children: “My granny does not agree and says she has worked the land all her life” (III_C_10).

Still there were some respondents who were **puzzled** speaking about their education and future job saying they take a decision later.

It should be mentioned that the large majority of respondents (some of them are only 10-12 years old) want to continue their education, enlisting quiet a large range of professions. As a rule, those children

who have not yet made a decision regarding their education are quite young.

- **Social representation of future family and values that lie at its bedrock**

Children of a tender age usually referred to their future in the nuclear family saying they want to live together with all members: *“Together with my mother, my father and my brother”* (III_C_19). **Elder children** described the family they would have speaking about **the relationship between members, the number and the sex of the children, and the importance of material welfare and providing a decent living.**

Children interviewed during the research **refer to the family frequently, speaking about their plans for the future**, stressing its importance, the values it promotes and the social security that the family should ensure. This can be explained by the sad experience of separation from their parents that made them **think about the role of family and assess its’ role for a child.** The large majority of children stress that they see their future family as a solid union where all will work together and under no circumstances will separate *“I will not go abroad”* (IIA_C_1). Some of them are fully convinced that: *“I will never leave my children as I know how difficult it is. I will always say how much I love them; I will try to help them solve their problems”* (III_C_19).

The focus-group participants mentioned that they would set up a family only when: *“I will finish my education and will have a permanent job”* (FG_C_2_rural), in order to reduce the risk of an eventual separation they experienced in their childhood.

Some of the respondents would accept to live modestly but **together with the family**: *“better less money but with my family”* (III_C_15). These statements are important especially in the case of parents who left abroad just to make provision for their children.

The study revealed also some specific situations amongst which we present the case of a 17 year old girl living in the countryside with both parents abroad and left in her aunt’s care. For this child the effects of her parents’ migration were extremely harsh: her relationship with her parents worsened and she had poor communication with her aunt. Being asked about the social representation of her future family, it is unsurprising that she mentioned: *“I don’t think it will be a happy one...only conflicts and misunderstanding...I would mend the faults I’ve made because of my boyfriend...I would oppose my parents’ departure*

abroad as I don't like the life I have and I can't solve the problems by myself" (III_C_17).

For most of the interviewed children the family sets examples of communication and behaviour. Although social representations of the family differ depending on the children's age (for younger children – as an example is the nuclear family and for the elder ones – the family they will create themselves), the family is perceived as a unit that supports everybody, even in difficult situations. It is important that some of the children would like to live with their family although there is a risk to live plainly.

The elderly

• Values of the elderly people

The elderly people appreciate the **traditional family**, where grandparents and parents express their love, concern and support for their children and the children should feel their parents' loving union and all the responsibilities they have towards their children. *"I was considering myself so rich when I was coming home from work, I was working in 5 villages...I was longing to see all my children sound and happy jumping around me and searching my pockets for candies or sweets" (III_E_5).*

The respondents sketch **the model of the traditional family** and not the model of "the family at distance": *"if all my children come back home we would have a dinner together. I hope to feel well and to see them safe and sound" (IIA_E_6); "I would like to have them all together here in the town, nearby" (III_E_8)*, an understanding of the traditional family responsibilities: to raise children, to take care of old people, are more often neglected. These are shared among other social institutions that do not give them love and affection.

The study stresses the fact that **most often the remittances do not have a significant value** for the elderly. The desire to have their family near and to reach the old age taking care of grandchildren is a real option for the elderly: *"Although children have good jobs, and send them parcels and money monthly, they don't need all this but want to be supported and to have the child near" (FG_EE_urban_rural).*

The importance of the native home, so valued in our tradition is stressed especially by institutionalized old people: *"no where is like home"; "it is better at home"*, as their stay in an asylum and the absence of everything they inherited or worked for all their life is painful. The fact of becoming aware of this situation is veiled with accept-

ance and a formal excuse: *“If we could work..., but since we cannot”; “Who will come to you if they don’t want any more”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). The importance of the “home” and the necessity to take care of it remains the concern the elderly placed in residential institutions: *“My house is empty since I came here... My neighbours knew about this and took everything, my TV antenna, the stove from my kiln, my tools, shovel, pitchfork, everything. Certain things are locked in the house but the yard is deserted”; “My son told me that everything was stolen from my yard but what could I do”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). Emotions in such cases are extremely heartbreaking.

Speaking about the values, the elderly tend to stress the support children could offer their parents by taking the responsibility to take care of them when it is necessary. To give financial support and to live with them in case the elderly are not able to provide for themselves: *“They should be ashamed to work abroad and not help their parents...”* (III_E_1). It should be specified that this orientation towards traditional values and the adoption of some **conservative conducts** is specific to all the respondents: *“I would say a few words that cannot become true as we cannot turn back the time, but I would like to have a happy and quiet existence without foes. People should till the land, but not to let their land lie fallow as it longs for worker’s hands. I’d rather have my children living with me till my dying day”* (III_E_5).

The elderly especially value **the good mood of their children and grandchildren**. The fact that they feel good where they are makes the absence of communication and the distance less painful and also justifies the children’s migration: *“I visit my son in Soci once a year and stay there for a month. He feels good there but here in the country God knows how his life could be. Every time I visit them I am happy they are ok. If they do not call this means everything is ok, they will call me if they have troubles.”* (FG_EE_urban).

Therefore, the values of the elderly people bear a traditional shade and the nostalgia of a traditional family. Remittances are far more insignificant in comparison with the desire to reunite the family in the native house and the good mood of their children and grandchildren. The conservative attitude in these values is characteristic to all categories of the elderly whose children are working abroad.

- **Plans for the future**

The opinion of the elderly about possibilities for the future are focused on the values they tend to preserve: *“At this age I have no possibility to change anything, but my daughter does and I want to see her married and be happy. As for the rest we will do it”* (III_E_4).

Extremely marked is the hope of the elderly regarding the **return of their children and bringing back the normal life they had lead before the departure**: *“I would like them to stay there for 2-3 more years and to come back home for good... She wants to earn money for her children...at least 5000 Euros for every child in order to have the possibility to pay for their education or medicine and to feel safe”* (III_E_9); *“I would like my children to live in the village and to see my grandchildren married, to have an easy life and then I’ll be good too”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum). For the institutionalized elderly placed it is extremely important to be able to come back home: *“...I’m thinking of going home, to die in my house”*, although there is no possibility.

The study unveils **the pessimistic attitude** of the elderly dominated by fatal thoughts: *“I wait for the holy death what should I desire more if I am 77 years old in summer”* (III_E_16); *“I am ill, I can’t see and it grieves me deeply”*; *“I wish to die soon as I cannot accept at all the fact that I am old”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

At the same time, the elderly look at **free movement across the borders and they believe in change and in the economical development of the country**: *“To live at peace and to tell the truth and to make order in this Bassarabian country as only then we will receive big pensions and salaries”* (III_E_19); *“To have free political access and to have the possibility to visit them and to make a surprise for them”* (III_E_1); *“I think those who left abroad would come back if the government provides them with jobs”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

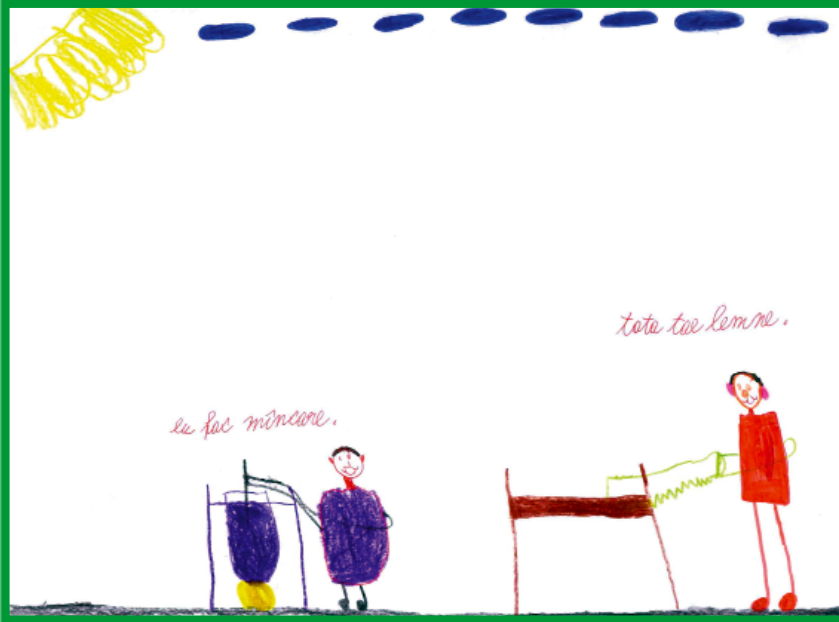
BOX 17**The opinion about the future of an old person whose children migrated abroad for work (III_E_23)**

“I’ve said it many times... If I had to choose again my way in life I would have become a teacher because I like working with children... First of all, I would do everything to have a beautiful village and to provide conditions for people to live better, to have jobs and not to be forced to go abroad, but to work all together in the native village... We are confronted with many obstacles, deficiency, the roads are bad and people also are meaner when the situation is difficult, everyone becomes nervous, greedy... It’s a continuous struggle for us to heap up riches but we can’t be all billionaires as we’ll be all equal... The society is divided into the rich and the poor and everyone should have a limit...those who have money should give it to the others as Jesus Christ said...But everyone provides for oneself... Those who have migrated are young and had just got married...many of those remaining in the country can’t even afford basic necessities...and they compare their condition with those who migrated abroad and bought a car or a house, some of them are repairing their houses...If I were young I would also go to work abroad to provide for my family...”

Future expectations referring to the implementation of a “**social justice system**” are especially characteristic to the elderly placed in institutions who place the blame for this on the small pensions and wages: *“It would be ok to provide pensions but only to those who deserve it and to take into account the work experience. I have relatives whose daughter is working in Italy and she told me she is thinking of coming back as she doesn’t have money to cover all the expenses. If they had a big pension all the elderly would stay home, even in the village, only to have everything necessary for daily living, to have the possibility to plough the land”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum).

To conclude, the main expectations of the elderly are to have their children back at home, to see their children and grandchildren healthy and happy, and to live in their own house. But all this is outlined in a pessimistic state, experienced by the elderly left behind due to labour migration of their children.

Chapter II



Some children whose parents are working abroad exclude migrants from their description and perception of the family. This drawing shows that the child undertakes the responsibilities of the mother who left abroad for work and “excludes” her from the family.

**Social policies mitigating
the negative consequences of migration:
achievements and prospects**

2.1. Normative aspects referring to children and elderly left behind

- **The existing legal framework and problems in ensuring the legal guardianship of children left behind as a consequence of migration**

Legislation of the Republic of Moldova addressing the issue of children left behind as a consequence of migration **came about in 2008**. Till that period there were no normative documents relating to the protection of migrants' children and there were no services oriented towards this category of children.

The “**law on labour migration**” no.180/10.07.2008 (published in the Official Monitor no.162-164/598 of 29.08.2008) for the first time referred to the category of children left behind as a consequence of migration. **Article 16, letter d**, establishes the conditions to be met by citizens of the Republic of Moldova for temporary employment abroad. Among these is the necessity to submit to the National Employment Agency (NAE) a certificate, issued by the official child protection authority from the place of residence, to confirm the legal guardian of children who remain in the country. **Article 22, paragraph (3), letter D**, stipulates the migrant's obligation to submit to the National Employment Agency a copy of the certificate that confirms the guardianship of children who remain in the country issued by the official child protection authority from the place of residence.

To fulfill these provisions, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved on 15.04.2009 the Decision no.290 “**on the approval of rules of issuing the certificate for the guardianship of a child who remains in the country but whose parent/guardian, citizen of the Republic of Moldova, is working abroad temporarily**” (published in the Official Monitor nr.80-81/341 of 24.04.2009). The Decision specifies the institutions that have the right to issue the certificate for registration of the child who remains in the country; namely the Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments and the Municipal Directorate for Child Rights Protection in Chisinau that exercise the functions of the guardianship authority. The Decision refers also to **the situation where the child remains in the care of one of the parents**, in this case the applicant should attach to the application **a certificate to confirm parental capability** that is issued by the local guardianship authority of the territorial administrative unit and in the municipality of Chisinau the certificate is issued by the Child Rights' Protection Directorate.

If a child remains without a legal guardian as a consequence of migration, the guardianship authority has to specify the form of social pro-

tection the child requires (in accordance with the Family Code of the Republic of Moldova no.1316-XIV of 26.10.2000). In these 2 different cases (if the child remains in the care of one of the parents or receives a form of protection) 2 types of certificates are issued (see Annex 7 and Annex 8). It should be mentioned that this certificate is valid for 3 months from the date of issue.

In the context of analysing the legal framework and appointing a legal guardian for children left behind as a consequence of migration we will refer to the “**National Action Plan regarding the protection of children left without parental care for 2010-2011**”, approved through the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova no.450 of 02.06.2010 (published in the Official Monitor no.87-90/519 of 04.06.2010). This document stipulates the **actions for the protection of all categories of children left behind, including those as a consequence of migration that should be followed in order to ensure the observance of children’s rights**. These actions refer to: (i) the necessity to adjust the regulatory, institutional and legal framework of the Republic of Moldova; (ii) the conduct of methodological activities for the continuous training and consolidation of involved specialists’ abilities; (iii) the organization of activities for sensitizing the public opinion about the importance of the support necessary to raise children left behind, the existence of the available social services within the community, institutions and parents’ responsibilities; (iv) providing medical care and ensuring measures for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and last but not the least, (v) the development of a comprehensive qualitative research to identify the specific and essential needs of children left behind as a consequence of migration in order to ensure evidence based policy development.

The interviewed experts from the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family underlined the quality of the Action Plan asserting that *“the Action Plan identifies 2 main objectives. First of all, to establish the contact with every child left behind as a consequence of migration in order to know where the child is and who is responsible to take care of him/her. This implies a thorough evaluation of the situation of these children. The second objective refers to the adjustment of child protection responsibilities at the local level as the local institutions are those that come into direct contact with the beneficiary”* (III_EC_1).

In the end we should stress that the provisions of some existing legal documents can be applied also in the case of children left behind as a result of migration, amongst which we enlist:

- “**Civil Code**”, no.1107 of 6.06.2002 (published in the Official Monitor no.82-86/661 of 22.06.2002), that establishes in **article 31**

the residence of the minor under 14 years old; and the **articles 32-47** insist on all the aspects related to guardianship;

- **“Family Code”, no. 1316-XIV of 26.10.2000** (published in the Official Monitor no.47-48/210 of 26.04.2001), specifies the rights of children left without parental care for different reasons as well as parents and guardianship authorities’ duties.

Speaking about laws, the experts concluded: *“as the phenomenon is progressing and is not a latent one, we think that the most important is to take proactive action that will include immediate changes at the local level”* (III_EC_1).

Another aspect addressed in the research refers to **issues connected to the appointment of a legal guardian for children left behind**. In this context, the experts indicated that **at present the guardianship establishment for children left behind as a consequence of migration does not function**: *“many say they are the guardian but do not have any legal document to prove this fact”* (FG_EC_urban). The number of people who appoint a legal guardian is extremely small: *“people appoint a legal guardian but not in all cases; in 119 cases of a total of 1800 cases in the municipality Chisinau a guardian was legally appointed”* (FG_EC_urban) and this is usually done in the case of parents who go abroad on an official employment contract (for example, to Israel).

The experts pointed out the fact that **appointing a legal guardian requires much time**, leading parents to abandon the idea of this form of protection as they do not have enough time: *“they ask us to do this quickly but we inform them it is necessary to submit an application, to present documents, certificates and they give up saying they will leave the child with someone they know. We cannot dictate”* (FG_EC_urban). The experts in the social sphere also mentioned the **parents’ ignorance of the guardianship institution and the advantages for children and parents**, which represents an obstacle in appointing a legal guardian in case of the parents’ absence: *“Many do not know what guardianship means, what are the responsibilities, they do not understand what it represents”* (FG_EC_urban); *“they are not acquainted with laws”* (FG_EC_rural).

Often **children come into conflict with guardians**, as the latter do not have a parent’s authority in the relationship with the child: *“most often conflicts between children and guardians appear when they are teenagers as guardians are reproached by children for telling them what to do* (FG_EC_urban), *“grandparents cannot control elder children”* (FG_EC_rural).

The legislation of the Republic of Moldova partially tackles the issue of children left behind as a consequence of migration but many aspects remain uncovered or have unclear implementation mechanisms.

The interviewed experts proposed the following recommendations to the **legal framework to guarantee children's legal guardianship**:

- **To revise the laws in force** in order to protect the child by monitoring thoroughly people who take care of children: *“a law should probably be introduced to stipulate the verification of persons appointed to take care of children”* (FG_EC_urban);
- **Local authorities should supervise children left in others' care**: *“it is necessary to monitor these cases at least two times a year”* (FG_EC_urban);
- **To reorganize guardianship authorities and to entitle them to charge parents who neglect their children while working abroad**: *“in fact we analyze now certain ways of making parents more responsible and here we have mentioned the reform of guardianship authority. By empowering local public authorities with greater competence they will have the possibility to interfere and in some cases penalize families for the bad treatment of children”* (III_EC_1);
- **To make parents more responsible**: *“we should have a law to make parents take greater responsibility for their children”* (FG_EC_rural);
- **To introduce control measures at the border**: *“there should be a legal document to certify who takes care of child”* (III_EC_3), etc.

On the other hand, the experts submitted a number of **complementary suggestions** for amendments of the legal framework which include the following:

- **Sensitizing parents about the appointment of a legal guardian**, in this respect parents should be informed about the legal documents in force: *“people who leave abroad should meet certain requirements in order to be more responsible”* (FG_EC_urban); *“a legal guardian should be appointed from the moment one of the parents leave the country but the institution is not informed about it thus it is a very big problem”* (FG_EC_rural); *“they should be acquainted with the necessary documents before going abroad”* (III_EC_3);
- **Sensitizing parents about the risks family may face in case they leave abroad**: *“it is obvious that we should discuss with this family and explain them clearly the risks that may appear”* (III_EC_1);

- **Sensitizing parents about the necessity to communicate on a regular basis with their children**, the experts suggest even disciplining parents who do not call their children: *“parents should be obliged to call, otherwise they should be fined”* (FG_EC_urban);
 - **Developing and implementing programmes on parental education**: *“programme on parental education should start in school”* (III_EC_2);
 - **Making public through mass media the difficult cases/situations** experienced by children whose parents are abroad, the so-called shock-therapy for parents: *“mass-media does a great job by promoting sad and dramatic stories and unveiling the extreme situations that one can face”* (III_EC_1);
 - **The NGO-s active in the family and child protection field should organize information campaigns**: *“The NGO-s that are active in this field should promote information campaigns”* (III_EC_1);
 - **Involving all social actors in supervising and rendering support to children left behind as a consequence of migration.**
 - Certainly, the multidisciplinary initiatives addressing children left behind as a consequence of migration have better chances to succeed and to cover a larger area if law amendments will be accompanied by media, social and psychological changes and if it would be possible to conduct a complex intervention in the case of a multilateral phenomenon.
- **Issues related to the appointment of a legal guardian for the elderly left behind by children – migrants and their patrimonial relationship**

The Republic of Moldova lacks any legal documents ensuring the legal guardian of the elderly left behind by their children who are abroad. **Law no. 180-XVI on Labour Migration** specifies restraints only upon labour migration of persons who are not registered at the relevant bodies (mayorality, community social assistance service, etc.) and who did not appoint a temporary guardian for their **children** whereas it does not refer to the unprotected elderly left behind as a consequence of migration.

In this context, **labour migrants should be motivated by law to register their helpless parents at the respective authorities** (mayorality, community social assistance service, etc.), as it is done in the case of children.

Amongst the other laws related to legal guardianship for helpless elderly left behind we enlist:

- **Family Code** No. 1316 of 26.10.2000 (Published: 26.04.2001 in the Official Monitor No. 47-48 art. No: 210) and;
- **Civil Code** No. 1107 of 06.06.2002 (Published: 22.06.2002 in the Official Monitor No. 82-86 art. No: 661).

The Family Code has the aim to regulate the relationship between family members, their rights and duties regardless of the age. Thus article 82 of this code stipulates the obligation of children who reached the age of maturity to support their parents. In some cases, the code sets down also the payment of living allowance for parents. Speaking about the Civil Code, it refers to the elderly by regulating the issues related to succession between family members, the procedures and conditions of appointing a guardian but also to patrimonial relationships that can occur between people who do not have similar origins.

Although the above-mentioned laws have the capacity to cover any situation within their jurisdiction, **there are cases, especially related to the legal guardian for helpless elderly people whose children are abroad when these laws are not applicable.** In this regard, the study highlighted a well accepted phenomenon of **labour migrants leaving children with their elderly parents (grandparents)**. Although the elderly because of age are not able to offer the appropriate education and support to children, they also are appointed as guardians (to correspond to the law provisions on labour migration and to make their children's departure abroad easier). **This fact is inadmissible**, because the elderly themselves frequently require social assistance from community social services. Nevertheless, the legislation in force allows this. In this context it should be mentioned that many countries specify an age limit for the guardian. Therefore, **in the case of appointing a guardian for children an age limit should be established for the grandparents as guardians.** In this regard, the existing laws need to be amended.

Other problems revealed by the study are related to **patrimonial relationships between helpless elderly and some persons who should pledge to take care of them until their death in return for the inheritance of the house the elderly own.** There are cases when helpless elderly are cheated by indifferent swindlers and deprived of their personal estate thus pushing them to begging. The laws in force, in such cases, do not stipulate any restraint if the person signs the contract, the person is thus considered responsible for his/her actions. In some cases, children swindle parents out of their houses by transforming the

will into donation and afterwards they sell or mortgage the house thus reducing their parents to destitution.

In order to avoid such situations it is time for **community social workers to monitor such deals and “transfer of goods” and the social services provided to the elderly should include legal advice.** The other way is to oblige Territorial Cadastral Offices **to contact territorial social assistance departments** when issuing certificates of ownership transfer to the elderly. If the elderly risk to be deprived of their house, the transaction or the contract should be cancelled.

Increasing labour migration outflow over the last years lead to the increase in number of elderly left behind by family members. This situation determined the **increase of requests of the elderly for social assistance thus this system is not capable anymore to cope with this situation,** being over solicited.

The research revealed an increase in the number of helpless elderly people as a socially vulnerable group left behind by migrant family members thus arousing **the necessity to implement additional legal support that will ensure the necessary and appropriate social protection through a number of *specialized social services* for this category of vulnerable group.** In this case, their problems will not refer to income insufficiency as they receive remittances from their children (although there are cases when the elderly are left without care and means of living) but to the necessity **of an adequate legal guardian, of some home-care social services, psychological services or services intended to find a solution to their insufficient communication,** otherwise so important for them. *“They probably have money, but they do not have anyone to take care of them, to offer moral support”* (III_EE_10).

The issue of providing social services to this category of people is determined also by **lack of necessary institutional, financial and human resources** within community social assistance that would meet the demand. Such social services for the moment are provided only in state institutions (social community assistants) and by a few representatives of civil society.

In these circumstances, **the opening of similar private organizations** that will render social services against payment to the elderly would be welcomed thus providing for the possibility to request for private social services. This practice already exists in developed countries. *“In our country people also employ certain persons to take care of the elderly, for example a neighbour or someone else. They are paid to look after them but not everyone in our country accepts to take care of someone else”* (III_EE_10).

Still providing private social services represents a problem as **it is not covered by a necessary legal framework**. Additionally, **people's attitude towards such kind of services is for the moment negative**. Thus, even if Moldovan citizens are ready to provide such services abroad they are not prepared to do this at home in the Republic of Moldova.

Therefore, **ensuring a legal framework for providing private social services to the elderly left behind** would solve problems related to the accessibility of these social services and their quality.

Recommendations for amendments to the Law mentioned above would lead to **the change of status of community social workers** in charge of social policy implementation at the community level. Hence, **the social worker becomes the main decision-maker in the community** in coordinating the social services provision for helpless elderly people and by other social partners as private organizations, representatives of civil society and volunteers.

2.2. Policies and mechanisms existing on the protection of children and elderly left behind by family members

Children

- Policy objectives

Migration is an extremely complex process that has developed within our society as a result of economic, social and political changes that took place during the last decades in the Republic of Moldova and as a result of world globalization. Migration represents a challenge for ensuring the social cohesion and family integrity thus **the policies centred around ensuring the welfare of children left behind as a consequence of migration should be paid more attention within social policies.** The assessment of the existing situation says that *“today we – the fruits of 15 years of migration from the Republic of Moldova. There are many risks beginning with the distortion of family ties and of family in general, ensuring adequate care and education thus leading to bad school results, problems related to children’s behaviour, their preparation for life, psychological development, physical and moral integrity of children. As a result of this phenomenon, social services, educational process and the social protection system have to adjust its form and content. On the other hand, our society also changes. We encounter more cases speaking about violence among children; we face more situations when children are objects of community transformation”* (III_EC_1). At the same time, **the existing forms will have consequences that should be anticipated:** *“the essential effects will be seen when these children will set up their own families, will bring up their own children”* (III_EC_2).

The experts of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family said that within their institution functions the **Directorate for Child Rights Protection** that has set as objective **to take actions, measures and to develop policies on child rights protection, to strengthen local public authorities’ capacity as a guardianship authority thus the local public authorities will assume a greater responsibility towards children left behind and will have the possibility to act more efficiently.** Among other objectives of the Directorate’s activity can be enlisted the following: to submit recommendations on the improvement of the existing situation and of the access of children and family to quality social care services; to offer methodological support in community actions targeted to placement of children into residential institutions but keeping them within a family; to supervise the compliance with minimum quality standards per types of services designed to children in difficulty; to coordinate activities related to guardianship and protection of child rights and of children left behind,

etc. The Directorate comprises 2 subdivisions: child rights protection division and social assistance for children.

Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family promotes child rights observance, social protection and the addressing of negative consequences of parents' migration. *"A topical concern lies in the elaboration of some effective mechanisms for monitoring and raising awareness among migrants of their parental duties towards children left behind in the country. In this regard we refer to the Family Code that stipulates that every child should be applied a form of protection"* (III_EC_2).

The **Ministry of Education** lacks a subdivision that will deal directly with issues relevant to children left behind as a consequence of migration.. The interviewed experts within the Ministry of Education promote the idea, that *"all children have the right to education and the access to schooling is the same for everyone. Children whose parents are working abroad have the same rights to education as others. The school is one for all children"* (III_EC_5). At the same time we note that *"almost all Minister's subdivisions deal with this category of children, implement and monitor educational policies within their competence"*, but especially: **Pre-school, Primary and General Secondary Education Department, Vocational and Non-tertiary Education Department, Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department, Economic Policy, Heritage and Finance Department.**

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance with the support of UNICEF and in partnership with Local Public Administration and non-governmental organizations implement **the National Strategy and the Action Plan related to the residential child care system reform and the Framework-Plan for Transformation of residential child care system.**⁵ Due to policies and the legal framework related to the de-institutionalization promoted by the above-mentioned ministries and the partnerships between national and international specialised organizations, the number of children placed in residential institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Education dropped down by 40%.

Recently, in November 2010, the monitoring framework of education policies and the list of indicators on education was developed and approved⁶, that has the aim to consolidate the Ministry of Education's capacity and of other authorities of local and central public administration as well as of educational institutions on strategic planning, monitoring and assessment of educational policies implemented. The specialists of the Ministry of Education stated that the monitoring framework of educational policies is administrated by this Ministry through its subdivisions: *Informational Technologies and Didactic Assurance Department and Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department* that supervise the processes related to

NOTE

⁵ Government Decision no.784 of July the 9th 2007.

NOTE

⁶ Order of the Ministry of Education no. 861 of December the 3rd 2010.

data collection, calculating the indicators and submitting the final report to the interested parties etc.

The data and indicators are collected and calculated by the Centre of Information and Communication Technologies in Education that comprises a structure specialized in: data collection and data processing, calculating the indicators; update and administration of calculated indicators' base; the dissemination of calculated indicators to interested parties. The Ministry of Education uses different information sources plus the mapping of educational institutions and collecting information about *“pupils with special needs that include pupils who have one parent working abroad and pupils with both parents abroad in search for work”* (III_EC_5).

The experts of the Ministry of Education informed us about the creation of a **mapping system in the country** *“that has an element – children with parents working abroad. In one component we have included all categories: pupils with special needs including two other categories – pupils with one parent who has left abroad to work and pupils with both parents working abroad. We have to get this information in every community. According to the data presented by the Ministry of Education on October 28, 2010, the educational system comprised 70.028 pupils who have one of their parents working abroad and 38.399 with both parents abroad, overall–108.427”* (IIA_EC_5). Other interviewed experts' think that educational institutions, police, medical institutions should take a more active part in supervising children left behind as a consequence of migration: *“we want a better participation of these specialists”* (III_EC_1).

Within the **Ministry of Health** functions the **Policy, Medical Care of Women, Child and Vulnerable Groups Department**, that along with other departments deals with **monitoring children's health condition**. Speaking about the legislation in this filed, the experts underlined that *“concern for children's health... is mentioned among priorities of National Health Policy”* (III_EC_3), and to execute the Decision no.450 of 2.06.2010: *“the Ministry issued the Order including a plan of measures ... Children are assured by the government; there are monitoring standards that specify the volume that should be acquired in accordance with age. We can't say that a segment remains uncovered. There are legal and regulatory frameworks, the same standards, the same medical examinations as the unique programme stipulates, if we speak about children under 5 years old, they benefit from 100% compensated medicine if they are treated at home but if they are hospitalized they get free treatment. Rehabilitation services are available for this category of children. Besides specialized health resorts in Sergheevca, Ceadir-Lunga, Chisinau, we also have 3 rehabilitation centres”* (III_EC_3).

The biggest interviewed representatives of these 3 ministries perceive differently the phenomenon of children left behind as a consequence of mi-

gration. Therefore, the ministry that takes the responsibility and addresses the impact is the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family. The other two ministries that deal with concrete aspects of children's life without making a difference between children left behind by migrant parents and children whose parents are home are the Ministry of Education – the access to education and children's school performance and the Ministry of Health – health condition in the context of general monitoring requirements.

- **Forms of support, social services and institutions providing such services**

Having analysed the forms of support and social services provided to children left behind as a consequence of migration, we can mention that these **are under-developed or not available at all**. Some parents when they leave abroad for work refer their children to residential institutions. Although there are forms of support that are not directly relevant to this category of children, they still provide services to **children affected by migration**.

The Institutional framework that stipulates education and development of children in difficulty includes **residential institutions**: *“the Ministry of Education has in its subordination 15 boarding schools for orphans and children left without parental care with a number of 2279 children 35% of which are orphans and children deprived of parental care and 65% of children come from socially vulnerable families whose parents are not employed and do not have basic living conditions for raising children”* (III_EC_6).

Thus, one of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family's experts approaches this issue more generally specifying that: *“at present in our country operate 163 social centres designed for families with children and children in difficulty, among which are 102 day care centres that provide services to about 5125 beneficiaries; 31 temporary placement centres that render services to approximately 1034 beneficiaries; 28 mixed centres providing services to about 1195 beneficiaries; and 2 socio-medical recovery centres that offer services to 217 beneficiaries. The spectrum of social services provided by the above mentioned centres depend on their type. These institutions also offer services to this category of children”* (III_EC_2).

Among the most **functional forms of support** provided at present to children left behind as a consequence of migration we identified the following:

- the **centre for children in difficulty (experts include children left behind in this category) works differently**, still, experts think these services should be expanded and adjusted to the needs of this category of children: *“the existing social services are insufficient, should be expanded”* (III_EC_2). But a few experts **do not agree with the divi-**

sion of social services depending on the category of children: “*why should we divide them, we should asses them all together but not to add the tag that their parents are working abroad. We speak about general notions but if we have a problem with the child we approach it individually*” (FG_EC_urban);

- **Activities conducted by teaching staff** for children within the educational institution, including discussion, counselling, different forms of support, etc: “*the school principal and the class teacher work with these children*” (FG_EC_urban), “*we discuss the problems*” (FG_EC_rural), as well as extra curriculum activities such as debates, thematic workshops, round tables;
- **Providing material and social support:** “*we offer them material support to the extent possible*” (FG_EC_urban); “*there are children who are less provided, children whose parents left abroad and they are looked after by their grandparents, we can’t provide for them all...the mayoralty also offers support*” (FG_EC_rural); “*social allowance...they ask and we give them social benefits*”;
- **Visits paid by the social worker or social educator as part of communication with the child:** “*As a rule, we visit the family twice a year but it happens that we do this more often, sometimes every week*” (FG_EC_urban);
- **Representing the child in (law) courts:** “*When the child gets into trouble, the social worker comes as guardianship authority before the magistrates, to the police and in court*” (FG_EC_urban);
- **Involving children** in the activities organized in **Community Centres and Day Care Centres by social workers:** “*the Child Rights Protection Department also works with these children, it involves them into activities conducted in specialized centres where they are approached by social teachers and afterwards they are referred to our community centres*” (FG_EC_urban);
- **Explaining** to grandparents and people who take care of children **the necessity to place children in guardianship:** “*we advised the grandparents who look after the child...we explained to them what guardianship implies, the rights and obligations...as far as possible we inform them on guardianship and services we provide*” (FG_EC_urban);
- **Psychological assistance**, that constitutes a kind of individual specialized intervention for “*children whose parents are working abroad. They discuss their communication with the peers, conflict situations, if they are aggressive or ask about something they do not understand*” (FG_EC_rural), etc.

- Speaking in this context about **the role of community social workers**, they partially represent the guardianship authority in the community. They hold the instruments that allow legal proceedings regarding children, they are those who can correctly assess the situation and direct different cases to different institutions, they are able to take actions: *“they ring like alarm bells if necessary”* (IIA_EC_1). Unfortunately, the dimension of the phenomenon goes beyond the capacities of the social assistance system. One expert from the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family made a simple arithmetic calculation that proves the truthfulness of what was said above: *“if we take an average number of 60-70 thousand children left without parental care, then they should be cared for by only 1500 social workers. You see the figure is significant. In the community there can be one hundred children left behind and only one social worker who is in-charge of disadvantaged families, social services and so on... they have too many responsibilities...”* (IIA_EC_1).

Although the research highlighted certain forms of support and social services, we underline that they bear a general character and are sporadically provided. In addition, the dimension and the gravity of the phenomenon of children left behind exceed the possibilities of social services provided at present in the Republic of Moldova.

- **Family members addressing the local authorities before migrating abroad**

Following the provisions of national laws, before going abroad, parents have to appeal to a number of institutions (see chapter 2.1.). According to the research data, **parents avoid or reduce to a minimum their contact with local authorities**: *“very rarely, we find them by ourselves”* stated the majority of the interviewed experts. For example, parents quite seldom address the **Child Rights Protection Department** to appoint a legal guardian for children who are left alone: *“No, only a very few children whose parents work abroad are placed in guardianship”* (FG_EC_urban).

The community **police** is called **only if a problem arises related to the child or his/her guardian** (alcohol consumption, violence, etc.): *“They call the police only when they have troubles, when the school can’t handle the child”* (FG_EC_urban).

The **family doctor** is also not informed of the parents’ departure abroad although the interviewed experts said it will study if the doctor is acquainted with the health condition of the family and especially of the child: *“I think it should be done first as the family doctor is acquainted with the family and the child, being informed on record and health issues and he/she could*

discuss with the parents the eventual health effects of their children staying alone” (III_EC_1).

The research concludes that parents refer quite rarely to community social services thus neither the local public administration nor the other social actors have information on children left without parental care except in the cases when it was impossible to avoid contact with these institutions.

- **Problems the school confronts with teaching staff’s competences and identified solutions**

The circumstances of an increased number of children left behind as a consequence of migration also lead to a worsening of problems they are confronted with. The role of the school and of the teaching staff in helping these children is very important. *“Teachers come into contact with the children most often, they understand very well the children’s behaviour and notice any changes and are quite well acquainted with their families”* – asserted the experts of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (III_EC_1).

Investigating the problems educational institution face, we have pointed out, for example, the **fact that children whose parents are working abroad are less prepared for lessons**, and especially those who are cared for by their grandparents: *“it is very serious when speaking about primary classes; children are not prepared for lessons. They ask their granny for help when they don’t know”* (FG_EC_rural). At the same time the interviewed teachers mentioned a lack of **interest from migrant parents to discuss their own child with teaching** when they turn back home: *“No, you practically don’t know them when they leave for abroad”* (FG_EC_rural).

It’s still teachers who are the social actors who would be among the first to notice a **deviant behaviour of a child or other behavioural changes**, among which is attending clubs at an early age: *“it is too early for disco but I found that a girl goes to the disco and she is one of the girls whose mother is not at home”* (FG_EC_rural). Teachers explain this by partial or integral **absence of family’s control**: *“there is no one to check the child’s marks”*.

And not the least, the teaching staff revealed **issues related to the remuneration of the teaching staff**, speaking about the payment they ask for their after-school work with pupils who are behind with their exams that as a rule is accepted by parents but treated with reserve by school’s administration: *“parents agree to pay although we are not allowed to charge”* (FG_EC_rural).

Analysing the level of **the teacher’s skills** to meet the new challenges of time we conclude that **these are rather different**, varying depending on

the **professional and psycho-pedagogical education of the teacher, and the residence, age and his/her availability for actions that exceed his/her competence.** If their education level is lower, then *“they should be trained. This can be achieved through our partners – CRIC (Child Rights Information Centre Moldova), ProDidactica, etc.”* (IIA_EC_6). The representative of the Ministry of Education encourages the idea of a continuous development that will guarantee the development of skills to cope with new social problems: *“Continuous development of staff training is under reform. This process should be determined by changes in school and the category of children who are beneficiaries. Extremely necessary at this moment are professional competences of teaching staff in psychology and social pedagogy”* (IIA_EC_6).

For educational institutions, children left behind represent a challenge that requires new abilities and skills. Unsystematic attendance, lack of a partnership between parents and the school, appearance of children’s deviant conduct, etc. represent some of the behavioural forms teachers have to cope with. At the same time their capacity and availability to deal with this situation is different and even polarized.

- **Keeping record and supervising children at the local level**

The task of supervising children left behind lies with CLB to the **local public authorities** that with the help of various employees have to watch children without parental care as a consequence of migration: *“local public authority is to coordinate and to have a general vision of what is happening in the community”* (III_EC_1). At present this is done by **community social workers and educational institutions**: *“monitoring is mostly the day to day task of community social workers and educational institutions”* (III_EC_1).

Keeping record of children whose parents left abroad to work **is still a problem.** Educational institutions keep the record of all children and their family situation and we can find such information in the register of the class. The interviewed experts referred to the fact that columns do not correspond to the present family situation of children: *“with regards to the register I want to say that the information is not classified...it is written by parents, but it does not specify if the family is incomplete or not”* (FG_EC_urban). We stress that schools and class teachers in particular, take the effort to supervise the situation of children in communities or districts: *“at the beginning of the school year we have analyzed the cases in my class, their family situation, whether the family is complete or incomplete taking into account the number of children”* (FG_EC_urban). The collected information is stocked in data bases: *“the class teachers have a column in the register where they specify the situation of child, and whether his/her parent is abroad or not”* (FG_EC_urban). It is analyzed by the

school administration and teachers' board and sometimes the school principals also keep the record: *"the school principal is acquainted with the situation and wants the teachers to also be acquainted with the real situation of children, whose parents are abroad. I don't speak about other high schools, but in our high school the principal knows in person the children left behind. When I was working in school, the deputy principal was appointed to monitor this situation; there is always someone who monitors the situation"* (FG_EC_urban). A vulnerable aspect in this regard is the validity of collected data: *"at a certain age the child can feel ashamed of the fact that he is left alone, that is why he can say that both parents are not employed but are at home...how can we find the real situation? The most truthful information we can get is when the child is in kindergarten, but growing up they feel shame to tell for example that their parents divorced or migrated abroad; ...my sister is also divorced but in the class register, in her case, both parents are included"* (FG_EC_urban). Quite often the information has to be taken from a number of sources and compared to find out the real situation: *"we apply another kind of census, the mayoralty has its own, but when working out vaccination plans we are acquainted with the information in general"* (FG_EC_rural).

At the end of the year 2009-2010, children underwent a medical examination within **medical institutions** including those children left behind as a consequence of migration: *"firstly we have identified the families, made the list of children and after that they were examined"* (IIA_EC_3). If the child is identified with a disease, he is supervised but if they are healthy we do not keep a record of them anymore. The medical personnel has not set as its priority to visit all the children at home: *"Do you think it is the duty of the doctor to visit them? He pays them visits anytime it is about a disease. In what other cases should he do this?"* (IIA_EC_3), the experts from the Ministry of Health wanted to know.

One of the most important issues is **insufficient monitoring and registration of cases of departure abroad**, because parents do not inform the authorities about their decision to migrate, thus the child is not placed in guardianship: *"if parents inform authorities of their intention to go abroad then it would be possible to place the child in guardianship but as the majority of them migrate illegally, the situation can not be monitored"* (FG_EC_urban). A **good practice** in the municipality of Chisinau was conducting a small **"census" of children left behind as a consequence of migration** in the summer of 2010, involving employees of the Municipal Directorate for Child Rights Protection: *"we have collaborated with high schools, we had the lists, we paid visits to the households and we have identified cases"* (FG_EC_urban). As a result, the Directorate operates a database of children whose parents are abroad, that facilitates the work with these children. At present in some rural localities the social assistants

keep the record of children left behind: *“we even have a list with children of whom one or both parents had left abroad, who take care of them; we also give this information to the police as they also have this list of children whose parents are abroad”* (FG_EC_rural).

The authors of the research bring the attention on the importance of keeping record and monitoring the number of children affected by migration of parents. Ways of keeping the record of these children depends on the institution-in-charge, the information is not always complete and is distorted by an occasional approach.

• Local partnership

Assessing issues related to **development of local partnerships**, we consider that this process **is at its beginning**, especially when referring to children left behind as a consequence of migration. In other words, the local partners act *“separately”* (III_EC_1). The experts interviewed during the research are of the opinion that the capacity of the Local Public Administration should be strengthened in order to provide social services to children left behind and their families: *“LPA’s capacities should be developed by providing social services”* (III_EC_2).

The services that should be developed are to **ensure a viable partnership between children, guardians, mayoralty, school, police, social workers and other institutions**. Research data reveal the following necessities:

At the local level:

- To employ within each mayoralty a **specialist who will concentrate on working with children and youth left without parental care, including as a consequence of migration**: *“a person should be appointed to keep the record of parents who go abroad”* (FG_EC_rural), *“not only to introduce the position but to employ a real specialist to take the responsibility”* (III_EC_3);
- **To strengthen the local partnership between school and the department of social assistance, child and family protection**: *“maybe we have to develop a partnership between school and the Department of family and child protection”* (FG_EC_urban);
- To open a **hot line** children could call for help: *“free hot line for children”* (FG_EC_rural);
- To hold **community meetings** with children and caregivers addressing different subjects, including issues relevant to adolescence: *“we speak about children left behind by migrant parents, maybe we should*

organize some special evenings so that they could share their problems in time and might feel relieved" (FG_EC_urban);

- To organize **trips, cultural events** with the participation of all children in order to avoid stigmatization of children: *"to organize class trips at least in winter holidays"* (FG_EC_urban).

In educational institutions:

- **To train the teaching staff regarding the communication with the child left behind and his/her family:** *"class teachers were asking us for recommendations, to come and show them methods of working with children"; "the teachers and social workers should benefit from continuous training"* (FG_EC_urban);
- **To introduce in all schools the obligatory position of school psychologist,** who will deal directly with these children: *"psychologists work with these children", "I think the school should employ a psychologist but to have separate rooms"* (FG_EC_urban), *"the psychologist should hold training courses with these children on stress management"* (FG_EC_rural), *"children who live alone need counselling and it is necessary to work with them"* (III_EC_3);
- To organize **school workshops, sports, cultural activities,** to fill their free time which could be funded by migrant parents: *"we should create some workshops"* (FG_EC_rural); *"the child could be integrated in a workshop, for example in those created in schools or in the community"* (III_EC_3); *"it would be beneficial to set up self-support groups, especially for children who became reserved or aggressive after their parents' departure"* (III_EE_9);
- **To open some internet-cafes in schools where children will have the possibility to contact their parents:** *"many schools have access to the Internet and maybe we should appoint a day when these children will have the possibility to contact their parents, we can call it communication day or day of love. To introduce their parents to their friends or to the class teacher"* (FG_EC_urban), in this way making possible the communication between parents and children and maybe with the teacher.

Regarding the community services:

- **To diversify the activities of community and day care centres** for children and youth: *"these specialized centres should perform more activities for each school level separately"* (FG_EC_urban);
- To provide **legal assistance** to these children: *"legal assistance", "people's advocate"*, they also referred to the necessity for **social assistance**;

- **Material help for poor children and for those left behind as a consequence of migration:** *“to provide them with school supplies”* (FG_EC_rural).

The Decision no. 450 of 2.06.2010, according to the interviewed experts, **stipulates the development of the local partnership:** *“all segments are covered but it should be implemented at the community level, where the beneficiary is. There we can see the real situation, as on paper all may seem right but once getting there, as a result of discussions and the research we will see exactly”* (III_EC_3).

Only after making common efforts it is possible to identify the best solutions to solve the problems of children left behind as a consequence of migration. A separate approach should be replaced by the exhaustive one as only in this way the child will have the possibility to benefit from a complex support network offered in partnership with institutions/community social actors: mayoralty, social assistance services, school, police, etc.

• Effectiveness of policies

The migration phenomenon will exist as long as there will be circumstances and reasons that will require a certain mobility. At the moment, the reason for labour migration is to provide the family a decent living. In this context, *“institutions should develop certain capacities to act better. Here can be seen the role of every institution, including mass media, institutions of local public administration, not only social assistance departments but also school, medical institutions or to bring to the agenda of these institutions the issue of children left behind, which represents the main philosophy of the entire process. This is important, each official should observe this phenomenon at the local level”* declared the Central Public Administration representative (III_EC_1).

Moreover, **in order to ensure the efficiency of policies it is important not to continue to ignore this issue and its consequences.** For institutional reasons or of intention to get political advantages the phenomenon of migration was quite plainly referred to in social policies, such as, *“our society ignored this phenomenon, including the mass media and civil society institutions who also took no account of this phenomenon. That is why today we face belated reactions for the simple reason that actions should have been taken earlier. It was clear that we are confronted with this phenomenon in circumstances when people were more inclined to go abroad than to return back to the country”* (III_EC_1).

It is important to stress the necessity to develop institutions' capacities to act in new circumstances and to cope with new problems that imply individual intervention. Children affected by labour migration represent a

category that is slowly growing and can not be avoided by social policies anymore. By taking concrete measures we will guarantee the welfare of these children and their social integration; only in this way social policy can prove its effectiveness.

The elderly

• Policy objectives

The main existing guidelines within social policies targeting the elderly are reflected in **legislation** in force of the Republic of Moldova, in the *National Development Strategy for 2008-2011* (Law no. 295 of 21.12.2007, published in Official Monitor no. 18-20 of 29.01.2008), as well as in the *National Plan for creation of integrated social services system for 2008-2012* (Government's Decision no.1512 of 31.12.2008, published in the Official Monitor no.7-9 of 20.01.2009).

National Development Strategy foresees:

- Giving new social and economic opportunities to vulnerable populations including the improvement of efficiency and stability of resources allocated to social assistance;
- Improving social assistance policies and especially the system of pensions.

In other words, the social protection of the elderly refers to **the rights to health care, social and medical security and the right to benefit from social services**.

The National Programme regarding the creation of an integrated social services system for 2008-2012, has set the objective **to develop some quality and effective services for people in difficulty** and consequently for the elderly. This programme has 2 targets: (1) **to ensure the quality of social services**, which should be possible through the management system of integrated social services (institutions, human resources, financial resources and the methodology for working with certain categories of beneficiaries); (2) **to develop and consolidate the system of social services that implies the enlargement of community services**, which at present do not meet the needs of people in difficulty living in the country and therefore to improve residential services.

Social protection policies implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family **do not refer to the elderly left behind by migrants as a separate group**. In this regard the representatives of these institutions underline the fact that *“the phenomenon of the elderly left behind as a consequence of migration is a relevant one especially now when our country faces an ageing population, a poor social situation and also a mass migration of youth”* (IIA_EE_8).

The programme's objective entails the implementation of a comprehensive policy in support of people in difficulty by providing effective and high-quality social services. These services aim **to offer short or long-term support in order to meet social needs, to reduce social exclusion and to improve the quality of life.** Thus, **all beneficiaries are treated as a consolidated group.** This approach requires: the identification and prioritization of individual needs of people in difficulty; solving problems at the community level but also providing specialized social services to beneficiaries according to their needs; the integration of social services is necessary to avoid overlaps or gaps in providing these services; efficient coordination of this process and professional development of human resources employed within the social assistance system; and ensuring the quality and efficiency of social services in accordance with quality standards and streamlined mechanisms.

According to the above mentioned legislation, in the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family there **are no divisions or particular specialists who deal directly with elderly left behind as a consequence of migration.** This function is partially included within the activity of certain subdivisions: **Social Policy Department, Social Insurance Policy Department, Migration Policy Section and Demographic Policy Section.** Specialist intervention fields depend on their duties in their subdivisions.

The social Assistance Policy Department includes 3 divisions: the **division on social assistance reform**, the **social services division** and the **residential services division** all of which coordinate the functioning of the national system of social assistance, develop a coherent system of programmes, measures and activities to support and protect disadvantaged people including the elderly; assess the impact of social assistance policies thus improving social services, increasing the access and the quality of social services; monitor the activity of the social services network and provide methodological support for the development of community alternative social services. In this context, for this category, *“the social insurance policy department submits suggestions for the development and reorganization of the system of social insurances and adjusts it to society's demands; it determines the mechanisms for implementing law provisions related to the establishment of rights to pension, other rights to social allowances stipulated by special laws”* (III_EE_8). In this regard we state that **specialists employed within the department for social assistance policies are members of the working team of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and are informed about existing problems but they are not charged with monitoring the phenomenon of migration.** *“We deal with people who are the potential beneficiaries of social assistance services as well as with assessing their individual needs. Consequently, while working with*

beneficiaries we may identify the elderly left behind by labour migrants although the latter are obliged by code to take care of their parents” (III_EE_7).

Taking into account, the aspect of non-discrimination and de-stigmatization, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family makes no difference between helpless elderly whose children are abroad and those who don't have children abroad. *“They are equally treated according to their individual needs. The elderly whose children have left abroad and who are assessed to be in difficulty are treated as other socially vulnerable people in difficulty and require certain assistance” (III_EE_7).*

At the territorial level the social assistance and family protection department **has a position of a specialist, responsible for disabled elderly**, who is in charge of the implementation of national policies on social assistance of the elderly in difficulty and assures the enforcement of law at the local level. The social worker at this level: (i) promotes the interests of the elderly in difficulty; (ii) works out strategies in the district to support the elderly in difficulty on the basis of results obtained from the evaluation of needs identified in the district; (iii) informs the population on social assistance services designed for the elderly, eligibility requirements, the procedures to apply for social assistance services, rights and the beneficiaries' responsibilities; (iv) helps them conclude the documents necessary for providing social services; (v) develops, consolidates and renders social services designed for the elderly in difficulty; (vi) refers complex cases to specialized services or to highly specialized services provided at the national level; (vii) coordinates the activity of specialists and community social workers who provide social services to the elderly in difficulty and of the state representatives and non-governmental organizations; (viii) ensures intervention in case of the elderly in difficulty in accordance with case management procedures; (ix) assesses the impact of social assistance services for the elderly in difficulty.

Speaking about the **policy on health protection** of the elderly it should be mentioned that **it stipulates the guaranteed and non-discriminatory access to medical care regardless of the material condition of the person.** *“Providing medical services to children and elderly is financially covered by obligatory medical insurance. All children, regardless of their family situation, as well as the elderly, receive the necessary medical care. The concern for the health of children and for the elderly is mentioned among the priorities of National Health Policy” (III_EC_4).*

Taking into account the mission to continuously keep and improve people's health condition by ensuring equal access to quality and cost-effective health services through the promotion of interventions to prevent, protect and promote health, the Ministry of Health, namely, the **Department of Health Care Policy for Women, Children and Vulnerable Groups par-**

tially addresses the issue of the elderly left behind by migrant family members: “within this department we analyse all the documents and suggestions from other relevant institutions dealing with these groups. We do not have special documents for particular services designed to this category of elderly” (III_EC_4).

Hence, we can assert that **both state departments, as well as those operating at the local level** (medical and social assistance), that are relevant to providing services to the elderly left behind, **do not set down services specially designed to cater for this category**. In both cases services are provided to the elderly left behind by children as a consequence of migration alongside other elderly, pensioners and the disabled.

- **Forms of support, social services and institutions providing these services**

The existing system of social services creates opportunities for social inclusion of the elderly whose children are working abroad. Pointing out the fact that there are no social services specifically designed for this category, still they can benefit from social services provided to the elderly, disabled people and pensioners. It is specific that “*the individualized approach of needs is used regardless of the category of the socially vulnerable group*” (III_EE_7). Thus, the types of social services the elderly can apply for are classified in *primary social services (community)*, *specialized social services* and *social services with a high degree of specialization*. Explaining the way of providing these services designed for the elderly, the experts of the relevant ministry emphasize the “*existence of a mechanism of providing social services to these beneficiaries within this system but I stress that we do not develop services specifically for this category of elderly left behind by migrant family members*” (III_EE_7).

The local public authorities of the first level (community and municipality councils) identify social issues, administrate local funds for social assistance, develop and financially support community social services as well as establish the partnership with NGOs in order to expand social services. At this level community social services are developed.

Primary social services represent the support for the elderly left behind by migrant family members. Therefore, we can mention social home-care service (provided by social workers), community social assistance service, social canteen services and services provided by the community.

Social home-care services designed for the elderly are offered by social workers: “*it is more difficult to meet their demands in the private sector as the distance is longer although it is easier as they know each other; we visit*

the beneficiary once every two days but when they have an urgent need for medicine they'll call their neighbour and ask for help. But it is more difficult to find a neighbour when you live in a flat (FG_EE_urban). **The support provided to the elderly by social workers is seen and accepted very differently by migrant children:** *“none of them refused help”, “accept those who have”, “they have been abroad, have received I don't know how much money, returned back to the country trying to look important....that her mother is confined to bed and needs an orthopaedic bed, but we don't have it and she threatens us she will write a petition to the minister in order to solve the situation....they compare the situation in our country with the one existing abroad but there the services are against payment”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). Often children/labour migrants do not realize the fact that **“they work abroad and do not pay taxes in our country but ask for the same services”**, in this way *“the social assistance that does not provide adequate services is considered guilty”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

In their turn, **social assistants and social workers are concerned with obstacles they meet in providing services** *“the access is difficult, the wage is small, we lack even slippers”*, **lack of equipment or misunderstandings in the job description:** *“a social assistant should have a tonometer because when he/she visits the beneficiary, he/she also has to check the blood pressure”, “the social assistant should also be a good doctor and a psychologist”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

Social canteen services offer food to vulnerable people. This service is mostly funded from the local budget, from subsidies given by the Republican Population Fund for Social Support, from private donations as well as by non-governmental organizations: *“we give food to 100 people monthly and they change each month, we have 3 canteens subsidized by the social fund”* (FG_EE_urban). But we have to stress that these services are designed for *“lonely people”, “who receive a pension of 500-600 lei, those who have no relatives since their childhood, socially vulnerable people or families who have 2 children and have nothing to eat. Those who have children abroad don't come”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). **This is explained by the strict functioning rules of this service but also by the nature of the elderly:** *“they come rarely, maybe 1-2 persons...It is also about the pride...Why people in the village would say that my children are abroad but I eat at the canteen? That is why many refuse. We bring them examples that they are not the only people who eat at the canteen but this thought is nagging at them”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). In general the beneficiaries of these services are satisfied with its quality but *“there are people who do not like the food, we have an old woman who always complains, it doesn't matter whether it is in the morning, afternoon or in the evening, she doesn't like the food”* (FG_EE_urban). The interviewed experts think that these kind of people had a good life and now they can't adjust to the changes.

Community social services are within the competence of community social workers. These services include: counselling, providing information and case management: *“if we see their pension is small, they have the possibility to apply for social benefits and for social canteen services; they can get a free travel pass for public transport; we inform them and recommend them services they can benefit from, for example material or humanitarian aid”* (FG_EE_urban); *“the elderly address the social worker when they need help, when they face problems with dividing something, or with children or when they need to place someone under the guardianship or to conclude documents”*, *“sometimes they come for advice, it is most important to be informed in order to help them solve their problems. Most often they address the social worker. While before they were addressing the mayor or the secretary, now they come to us”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). These services are based upon the initial and complex evaluation of the elderly and their individual needs: *“during this process we assess the beneficiary’s needs. Taking into account identified needs, we work out the social assistance plan. The psychologist also participates in the creation of this plan and if it is necessary we involve other members of the multidisciplinary team”* (III_EE_7). The core of this process is to mobilize the efforts of the elderly and to ensure the support of their family and community in solving issues. The case management⁷ determines the practical support the elderly will benefit from. **Belonging to the category of the elderly left behind as a consequence of migration is not always a criterion of vulnerability and vice versa:** *“a person was complaining that in their village parcels with food were distributed for lonely people. A family who has 2 daughters abroad sending them money for living on a monthly basis also received such a parcel as they were included in the category of elderly left behind. While others living only on a pension did not receive anything as their children are in the country and they can not be included in the target group. There is no indicator when the financial condition of children is no better than that of their parents’... **They also have families and face serious problems to live on and they have no possibility to help their parents with money.** Tell me in this case who has a greater need for that parcel with oil and pasta received as a humanitarian aid? **The community is to decide as they are acquainted with the situation”*** (III_EE_4). According to central authorities *“community social workers work a lot with the elderly and they try to involve them in different activities in order to bring them together to share opinions. This also represents a form of support for the elderly”* (III_EE_7).

Local public authorities of the second level (Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments/Sections) implement social policies, and create and develop social services in the district. At this level a number of community services are administered, the majority of specialized services.

NOTE

⁷ “The main methodological instructions for community social workers refer to the case management by which the social worker assesses the needs of beneficiaries and their families, coordinates, supervises and supports the beneficiary to benefit from social services that will meet their needs.” Case management. Handbook of social assistant. Approved by MLSPP’s order no. 71 of October the 3rd 2008.

BOX 18**Model of providing specialized services. Temporary Placement Centre in the municipality (FG_EE_urban)**

"The centre has been working for about 2 years. We have 8 people in placement and 24 people attending the day-care centre. The beneficiaries of the day-care centre attend for a month, but those in placement stay from 1 month to 3 months and they can stay longer if they don't have wood for heating in winter or something else. We collaborate with the mayoralty and if they accept, the beneficiary can stay for 3 months more. The centre has employed 3 social workers and one psychologist. We provide various services. The person comes in the morning, drinks his/her tea and afterwards is involved in activities with the psychologist, social worker and medical nurse. We invite the doctor only if someone needs to be examined. At 13.00 PM they have lunch but those in placement eat 4 times a day: in the morning, in the afternoon, at 14.00 PM and at 18.00. I am in charge within the centre to develop the memory, creative therapy, testing, individual consultation. The social worker deals with different handicrafts activities. The elderly also attend the centre that is located nearby "Socium". There they have computers and sewing machines. We have beneficiaries who attend the centre with great pleasure as they are eager to learn something new although some of them are 70 years old.

Approximately 50% of our beneficiaries are lonely and have children who are labour migrants They are longing to visit the centre because they have no one to socialize with, they watch TV and that's all... they do not need the food as much as they need communication and understanding...."

Specialized social services imply the involvement of multiple specialists to maintain, rehabilitate and develop individual capacities aimed at helping to solve these difficult situations. These include **day-care specialized services and temporary placement centres providing medical and psychological assistance**. Most often these centres combine specialized support with primary care activities. Temporary Placement Centres, as a rule, are set up by representatives of civil society with the support of international organizations: *the centre "Reîntoarcere" ("Return") has for 2 years offered support to homeless people. Many of them do not have documents to prove their identity (Identity Cards). We accept them, try to get new identity cards for them and later on we place them in a boarding home provided by the Republic of Moldova. They benefit from all facilities. They stay in the centre as long as it is necessary to make them a new ID. While obtaining the documents they get a residence at the centre for 6 months. If the centre "Reîntoarcere" doesn't have enough space we appeal to other centres for support. For example, we have a good collaboration with the centre from Rezina" (FG_EE_urban).*

The mobile team is a new type of community service recently developed: *"in the municipalities, a mobile team was formed to identify lonely homeless people" (FG_EE_urban).*

Central public authorities involved in providing social services for the elderly are the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the Ministry of Health. At this level **social services with high specialization** are administered.

The social services with high specialization are the most requested ones due to limited access to other social services. **Residential care services** (24/24 hours) are oriented towards the elderly that face extremely serious problems. **Residential care services demand high costs not reflecting and satisfying entirely beneficiaries' needs.** They could benefit from social services in families or in their communities. There are 4 residential psycho-neurological institutions with high specialization subordinated to the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the health resorts from Vadul lui Voda and Segheevka, Ukraine also provides services to the elderly.

It is important to note that these types of services can be managed by central authorities or by local public administration authorities of the 2nd level (district). *“The institutionalization process of the elderly takes place after assessing their needs. Still, **the goal of the reform of the social assistance system is to avoid institutionalization, finding all solutions to render support to the elderly at their homes as well as in their community. If all resources were already used, the elderly has to pass the stages described by the mechanisms of referring beneficiaries within the social assistance system**” (III_EE_7). **Over the last years an increased demand for this type of services was observed as well as obstacles in accessing these:** “it is very difficult to place an old person in a placement centre, only with the help of MLSPS from Chisinau. To get their permission you have to advance well-founded arguments and it is a great success if a person aged 100 is placed there” (FG_EE_urban).*

The essential feature of residential care services for the elderly lie in the fact **that these services do not treat beneficiaries individually**; in many cases the institution's employees do not have experience and knowledge in working with the elderly; there is no system to re-assess the situation of the elderly for a potential integration in the family or community. Thus, these peculiarities of the residential system bring to a halt all connections of the family with the institutionalized elderly, leading to their social isolation and a chronic dependence upon the residential system.

It is worth mentioning legal actions taken to improve local public authorities' capacity for developing particular services. In this regard a relevant issue **is the potential to develop services at the local level:** *“authorities do not possess enough knowledge to work out functioning regulations of specific services or institutions. They ask for the ministry's support in finding a solution” (III_EE_8).*

Medical care services for the elderly left behind are supported by the social insurance fund and are included in the set of services covered by com-

pulsory medical insurance but without specific provisions for this group of elderly. It is important that all the elderly receive the necessary medical care and the concern for population's health is among the priorities of National Health Policy (Government's Decision no.886 of 06.08.2007, issued in the Official Monitor no.127-130 of 17.08.2007).

In terms of improving the quality of service provision, to identify various diseases and to treat the disease at its incipient stages *“at present **there is a mechanism of financial motivation for family doctors so that they will proactively identify the elderly in the territory and will keep their health under supervision. It is a very good mechanism as the doctor controls the situation and is acquainted with problems the inhabitants are confronted with. Apart from caring for their direct duties, the doctors are interested in keeping the record and supervising all the elderly living in their sector as depending on this they will get bonuses on top of the salary. All are content, the doctor is motivated and the patients receive appropriate care**”* (III_EE_9).

The only problem in providing quality medical care services is the fact that the elderly address the doctor too late: *“speaking about the elderly left behind, **they seem to be more protected as they are mature and realize the danger and they can ask for help themselves when they need it. It does not depend on the system's capacity but on human factors**”* (III_EE_9). At the same time, the experts in the territory call to attention the **limited access to medical services**: *“the medical nurse and doctor visit the beneficiaries only when they are called and then with difficulty”, the explanation reveals the reason: “the number of beneficiaries per medical nurse is too big and he/she can not cope with the situation as he/she has a large number of people to examine...there are certain circumstances that hinder those poor elderly from seeing the doctor”; “neither doctors or social workers have personal means of transport to pay visits to beneficiaries”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). We also specify that **mixed services (medico-social or socio-medical) are more effective in the case of elderly.**

According to the research data, **the development of services is problematic**, as dynamics, needs and living conditions of the elderly are very diverse: *“probably they need social services but they do not entirely depend on these services. Here already, the issues of social canteen services are not relevant. For home-care services they could also employ by themselves a woman or someone to look after them”* (III_EE_7). **The solution in this regard is the strategic planning based on thorough analysis of the situation and identification of needs:** *“when I was involved with the Social Investment Fund of the Republic of Moldova's 2nd programme, we drew up a map of social services with the support of a counselling company. We had defined existing resources and those that are covered and as a result 6 centres and one small centre for the temporary placement of elderly with a capacity of 8 people were opened in the country. From my experience I know this is too lit-*

tle hence this category should develop more services but at that time our team and the commission had a little bit of a split in opinions ” (FG_EE_urban).

The majority of interviewed experts agree with the idea of **the necessity to develop a range of services relating to money for this category of people:** *”there are children who would pay someone to take care of their parents but also elderly who would leave the house to the authorities in order to receive care” (FG_EE_urban_rural).* This is proven by international examples where such services already exist: *”I know that abroad services for the elderly are provided and funded for by the government. Additional payments are also taken from the children. Indeed, when the elderly who are cared for by Moldovan people are not paid it means that the government pays for them depending on how the elderly worked and the rest of the sum is paid by the family or out of a person’s pension. I think this is very good, if children leave easily and have the possibility to take care of elderly they should pay”* and national experience: *”in Straseni “Neohumanistul”, operates and renders services also for money, and many people desire to pay so to benefit from centralized services” (FG_EE_urban_rural).*

On the basis of data collected during the research we **have unveiled a number of issues** about organizing and providing support services to the elderly left behind by children-migrants:

- **Lack of services destined to the elderly left behind:** *“We do not have services specifically created for the elderly left behind. There should be some laundries, special interest clubs for the elderly, psychological recovery services or communication, although in our country volunteering is less developed it should also involve the elderly” (FG_EE_urban_rural);*
- **Insufficient existence of social services for a larger category – the elderly:** *“anyway we don’t have enough services to help them solve certain issues. Even the social canteen...there should be 23 people to provide such services...it is very difficult for the elderly...” (FG_EE_urban_rural);*
- **Limited range of existing social services for a larger category – the elderly:** *“we should focus on creating alternative social services different from residential ones, that are more efficient thus being more cost-effective and that ensure an individualized approach. Therefore home-care services should be developed as well as family based care (one social worker per one beneficiary). At present there are no family-type services in place but it is in the plan” (III_EE_8); “it refers namely to the diversity...as we can not say that these disadvantaged people need only social canteen services, social benefit or only home-care services or specialized services. There is a need to open a multifunctional day care centre where the elderly could spend their time or maybe a recovery centre where they could benefit from a massage if they have fractures and then they will become independent” (III_EE_7);*

- **Passive involvement of local public authorities, of civil society or of community in solving issues the elderly are confronted with:** *“a deficiency of social services provided by the local public administration (III_EE_7).*

In conclusion we could mention that the Republic of Moldova **lacks social or medical services destined to the elderly left behind**. Medical and social policies on providing services insist on a complex approach for all categories. Most often the category of the elderly left behind is referred to in the branch of services provided to the old people. Meanwhile, over the last years, an **intense growth of social services** was observed. In some localities their implementation resulted from the elaboration of particular strategic plans or social maps.

At the community level we identified the existence of a limited number of social services. Specialized social services representing a filter in preventing the institutionalization of the elderly and provided by specialized day care services or temporary placement centres are very few. Social services of high specialization – **residential care services** – **continue to be the most requested ones due to the restraint access to other types of social services.**

The idea of providing services for money for this category of elderly is relevant in cases where it is confirmed that migrant children are able to pay for the services. We still indicate the **low participation of local public authorities in developing community services that will solve the issues the elderly are confronted with.**

- **Family members addressing the local institutions before migrating abroad**

NOTE

⁸ Code no. 1316 of
26.10.2000.

Article 80 of the Family Code⁸ stipulates the obligation of children who reached the age of majority to support their parents: “children who reached the age of majority and are able to work are obliged to support and take care of parents who are unfit to work and require financial support”. Thus, children before leaving abroad should decide where their parents will live and who will look after them. But in reality, **the number of those who decide on a person to take care of the elderly in the future is very small:** *“we had a case when children wanted to give money to the social worker for taking care of the elderly but we don’t do this for money we only can find a person who will look after the elderly for money but this happens seldom....”* (FG_EE_urban_rural), most often the interviewed experts said *“there are no such cases”* or *“children don’t contact social workers before going abroad, very often they delegate this to relatives or acquaintances”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

The representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family mentioned that **duties should be enlarged and penalties should**

be increased in this regard: *“it should be established by law that before going abroad children should delegate a person who will act if necessary and will look after the old person. The law stipulates that children should take care of the old parents but the law is not always obeyed. In this regard law amendments regarding increased responsibility should be operated”* (III_EE_8).

The study unveiled cases when migrant children required social services of high specialization and when the elderly was in an extremely difficult condition (experiencing health problems or issues related to mobility): *“I had problems with my legs for 3 years, they cut one leg at the hospital and brought me to the asylum...I could not go home as I don’t have a wife or anyone to take care of me...”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum); *“my daughter brought me here and left. She talked once with the manager and he gave me this room. I move around in a wheelchair...”* (FG_E_3_urban_asylum), the decease of a spouse or decreased mobility *“my children brought me here when my husband died”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum), impossibility to find a reliable person to look after the elderly *“there is no one to take care of me in the village... We have decided with my daughter to stay in the asylum, as in the village there isn’t anyone who could look after me as they are drinking...”* (FG_E_4_rural_asylum).

The research allows us to conclude that **an extremely small number of children address social services before going abroad in order to explore the possibilities of establishing caregivers for the parents staying behind. More often it happens when parents’ health condition is very poor** (poor health, mobility and limited autonomy) and they look for social services of high specialization. In this regard law amendments would be a solution.

- **Keeping a record and supervising at the local level**

It is well known that a rigorous monitoring and record of the situation in a field allows a proper analysis and strategic planning of actions. **Keeping a record and supervising the elderly left behind is the responsibility of local public authorities⁹ and in particular of community social workers¹⁰** who in fact exist in all communities. Thus, social workers keep the record of old people but to a less extent of the elderly left behind, but when they: *“find out that there is an old man/woman whose children left abroad, we start looking for the relatives he/she has in the territory, we ask about his/her financial situation, what is their source of income”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

The social worker interferes when it is necessary to register the case:

- They receive a call: *“We keep the record of only those whose children are not in Moldova, when they look for financial help. We go home and evalu-*

NOTE

⁹ Law on social assistance (no. 547 of 25.12.2003), the article 14 specifies that the authorities of local public administration analyze social issues, initiate the assessment of the situation in the social sphere of the subordinated territory.

NOTE

¹⁰ The community social worker is an important actor in the community who comes into contact with people in difficulty, identifies their needs and ensures their access to social services existing in the community or in the district. According to the job description (approved by MLSPF order no. 54 of June the 10th 2009), the social worker is in charge for identification and evaluation of the situation the beneficiary and his family face; visiting them at home, identifying the needs of groups of beneficiaries from the community and suggesting solutions to resolve issues.

ate their family situation, living conditions, and character It is hard to work with them because they are very sceptical” (FG_EE_urban);

- There is a situation of vulnerability: “there are many cases when the elderly have lost something and they have made suicide attempts, as, for example, when they lost their child who helped them the most, some of them might even start drinking. In my sector I have neighbours who tell me if children migrated abroad and then we get involved,”; “if they do not ask for our help, their neighbours, relatives, or the police, do. We visit the sector every day and identify the elderly whose children returned home or left abroad, thus we are informed of what happens every day in the sector” (FG_EE_urban).

Factors that lead to inappropriate monitoring and keeping record of the elderly left behind are determined by:

- **Limited professional competence of social workers:** “not all of the community social workers have basic knowledge in this field. The complexity of problems beneficiaries face today, require a wide knowledge basis to deal with them but social workers do not always possess sufficient knowledge ” (III_EE_8);
- **Illegal migration of old people’s children:** “Their children migrate without informing social services that there is an old person living alone. Most of them go abroad illegally and it is very difficult for us unless we trace them by chance or after inquiring with people ” (FG_EE_urban_rural);
- **Barriers related to age peculiarities of the elderly:** “many of them fear that someone will find out that they live alone. They are afraid they can be attacked as thieves might think that their children send them money” (FG_EE_urban_rural) and reported cases of vandalism and abuse: “they heard of cases on TV where families went abroad and the young were robbed and now they fear this. The elderly learn from other people’s mistakes. If they saw it once they will continue to think this way” (FG_EE_urban_rural).

Training courses were organized to ensure provision of quality social services and to improve skills of social workers “initiated in 2007 and continued in 2010 by the MLSPF approaching all aspects community social workers have to deal with: case management, human rights, etc. Professional abilities of social workers can also be improved through mechanisms of monitoring. Thus, in complicated cases the actions can be coordinated with an experienced social worker-supervisor. This mechanism makes the group work of the social assistant and social worker more effective” (III_EE_8). Significant support in this regard is the methodology developed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family: “**Case management: social worker’s guidebook**” specifies the stages of working with people in difficulty, respectively identifying the case, initial evaluation, case opening, complex evaluation, monitoring, assistance plan revising in case of changes and closing the

case... **“Guidelines for practical implementation: mechanism of referring the case within the social services system”** highlights the stages that the beneficiary passes in the system of social services. The essence is that if the person can not benefit from support at the local level he/she will be directed to the district authorities. If the person requires long term specialized care he/she is oriented to social services of high specialization” (III_EE_8).

Hence, it can be concluded that keeping a record and monitoring the elderly at the local level is the prerogative of the local public administration and especially of the community social workers. This integrated approach is a correct one. Most often people of this category are identified when they address themselves as being in a situation of vulnerability. There are factors that lead to a low record of vulnerable elderly. In the meantime, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family supports this with relevant methodological support for community social workers.

• Local partnership

The research revealed the existence of a local partnership in need of **consolidation**. The experts thought that the *“LPA’s capacity is not adequate and the sources of the local budget are not always enough to develop these services in the district that needs to meet the needs of people in difficulty”* (III_EE_8). The solution in this regard is to strengthen and **“establish the collaboration between local authorities and economic agents and NGO-s in order to attract additional financial sources and to create services that will meet people’s demands”** (III_EE_8).

Collaboration with NGO-s is mostly in the form of partnerships and the representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family mention that this depends on *“geographic zones where these NGO’s operate as there are certain areas where there are more NGO’s working at the local level”* (III_EE_7). The church is also considered to be an active partner: *“we have a good collaboration with the church. In certain projects they brought food and donated it to disadvantaged families. We had such projects last year and this year too. They give people knot-shaped bread on big holidays”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

It should be noted that **volunteering as a form of support and community partnership, is not a tradition in our country**, but it is beginning to develop: *“we have volunteers who help people, sometimes financially, but most of them are from church”* (FG_EE_urban_rural).

The representatives of ministries stated that the most effective partnerships should be established and strengthened at the local level. This implies: *“enhancing the activity of local public authorities involving the structures in charge (health, education and gerontology services, etc.), cooperation with*

civil society, namely with NGO's that deal with issues concerning the elderly and planning joint activities on established terms" (III_EE_9). Certain measures in this direction have been taken, thus "some changes have been made (at the moment these are at the stage of public debates), on improving the coordination at the local level of those who directly deal with health care issues. **The central role of course is of the District Public Health Centres but also with the participation of local public administration, educational institutions, environmental organizations, police, social assistance departments and public associations, etc., thus being an example of involving the society in the decision making process**" (III_EE_9). The complex approach of issues confronted by the community involves **the creation of local multidisciplinary teams**. *If the issue refers to the elderly left behind as a consequence of migration the initiative should come from social workers but when it refers directly to a health condition, for example cleaning the wells, the initiative should be taken by the family doctor working at the community level*" (III_EC_4).

Being aware of the importance of partnership and community involvement in solving social issues faced by vulnerable groups, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family has put into practice "a different mechanism for the social community worker to address in order to find solutions, the **"Practical implementation guidebook"**. This presents various techniques to mobilize the community to be aware of issues existing in the community or actions that should be undertaken to achieve the expected positive results" (III_EE_8).

Collected data indicates the **existence of local partnerships that help in solving issues that the elderly are confronted with**; still it does not refer separately to the group of elderly left behind by children who migrated abroad. Quite efficient in this regard is the collaboration of the local public administration with NGO's and the church. Volunteering is being developed. The importance of these partnerships has been seen from efforts taken by relevant ministries in identifying solutions.

- **Effectiveness of policies**

The existing circumstances make it quite complicated to monitor the effectiveness of social policies related to the elderly left behind by children – labour migrants. Policy effectiveness is as a rule established **by comparing the costs of promoting social policies and the obtained results of activities conducted in this regard. This identifies to what degree policy objectives were accomplished**. It is practically impossible to assess the efficiency if social policies from our country do not include any measures or activities designed exclusively for the elderly whose children migrated

abroad for work. The assessment of effectiveness of social policies dealing with this vulnerable group should be preceded by the identification of their special needs and the resources (financial, human and institutional) needed to promote this social policy as well as to determine the degree of: perceived helplessness, perceived satisfaction and the quality of provided social services. It should also be mentioned that there is some degree of inaccuracy in assessing social policies at every level. Thus, the specific needs of this vulnerable group are often not included in the set of social services provided by law. In this context, the new law on social services would solve this problem by allowing diversification of provided social services and their adaptation to the identified needs. The welfare system is facing a serious shortage of financial and human resources at this time, which sometimes compromises the systems functionality. In this context, the establishment of local partnerships would solve this problem to a certain extent. Certain problems could also occur when assessing how content the beneficiaries are, as previously they had different living standards and now are comparing these with the quality of social services. *“We meet both those people who are content and those who are not. It depends on everyone’s needs and life style they had. Those who had good living conditions but now are in difficulty have certain demands but people who had more modest conditions have a completely different attitude towards the social support they get”* (III_EE_7).

The most important aspect of the social assistance service for the elderly left behind by children labour migrants constitutes **social benefits that do not always contribute to solving the difficulties this category of people face**. In many cases providing social services instead of providing these benefits would increase the effectiveness of the provided support. In this context we underline the necessity for developing social services: *“we still do not have enough services”* (FG_EE_urban_rural). **Insufficient development of primary social services** leads to increased demand for **specialized and highly specialized social services that bear high costs**, as well as having an unfavourable influence on the personality and social inclusion of the elderly.

The research reveals that **the existing social services are not always regulated by a legal framework or implementation mechanisms** thus making their functioning difficult. Also, the absence of viable partnerships makes existing services less durable.

Therefore, to assess the effectiveness of social policies, specific criteria should be developed, adjusted to the terms of existing living standards, flexible, able to adapt to new conditions, able to provide social services according to the assessment criteria, mainly taking into account the place of residence of the beneficiary and under a legal framework regulating these types of activities.

2.3. Mechanisms for coping with difficult situations experienced by children and elderly

Children

• Legal

The complexity of the migration phenomenon and its consequences on children's wellbeing, require **concrete measures to be taken in order to mitigate the negative impact of migration on children left behind:**

- **To ensure constant attention of all institutions in charge of issues related to children left behind as a consequence of migration**, including with the implementation of “**National Action Plan on the protection of children left without parental care for 2010-2011**” (approved by Government Decision of the Republic of Moldova no.450 of 2.06.2010). Although the leadership of “National Action Plan” is ensured by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, each ministry has its duties. Still ministries do not have the possibility to, nor should they interfere in every particular situation. Only **through a viable partnership can good results be ensured**, more than that “...we have particular institutions that have this responsibility. Among the most important ministries' duties we enlist the analysis of the situation, the regulatory framework amendment and its enforcement” (III_EC_1);
- **To improve the legal framework regarding the obligatory appointment of a legal representative for children left behind as a consequence of migration:** “guardianship should be compulsory for these children as should making officially responsible those who accepted to take care and educate these children” (III_EC_2);
- **To improve the framework on legal employment abroad, to sign bilateral agreements** that will facilitate communication between parents and children left behind ensuring parents will have the possibility to see their children without risking to lose their jobs;
- **To continuously develop forms of protection of families and children in difficulty as a consequence of migration:** “at present Moldova allocates about 13% of its GDP to social assistance programmes, so we can't say we lack financial support, but still there is a lot to do regarding the efficient management of these resources. The Law on Social Aid has been operating for 2 years and this benefit is given based on a needs assessment. There are certain problems in management hence we can say that 68% of allocated funds are directed to the poorest of the population. We will continue this system in future. Only in this way can we talk of

family protection programmes intended to prevent family abandonment” (III_EC_1);

- **To complete the national legal and regulatory framework with provisions on the accountability of parents who migrated abroad to work.** The laws of the Republic of Moldova already stipulate quite clearly the main duties of parents regarding the education of their children but these are not widely respected: *“We now actually look for more liable ways of making parents more responsible when they leave their children, and I can mention here the reform of the guardianship authority. Empowering local authorities with greater competence in this area, allows them to intervene and make families responsible for negative practices towards children”* (III_EC_1);
- **To make legal the payment of a financial contribution by migrant parents in order to reform a fund for medical services:** *“Parents leave abroad in search of work, do not pay taxes, but health care remains at the expense of our health insurance system, which is facing so many financial difficulties. There should be a fee or policy contribution – it may be called differently–that would be paid by parents when they go abroad thus, a fund would be created and children will benefit from it, paying for their various medical expenses”* (III_EC_4);
- **To promote legislation on the assessment and accreditation of social services operating in the Republic of Moldova,** taking into account the fact that only quality services can provide efficient support to beneficiaries.
- **Developing forms of support and social services (responsible are the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health; Educational institutions of different levels; Local Public Administration of the 1st and 2nd level, and community social workers):**
 - **To work out mechanisms for identifying children left behind** (eventually through a data base). Lack of a general overview on children left behind represents an obstacle in elaborating and implementing social policies, in this regard: *“...we need a census of children left without parental care and afterwards we’ll be able to implement the reform of guardianship authorities”* (III_EC_1);
 - **To conduct public awareness-raising campaigns** about the issues of children left behind as a consequence of migration, available social services as well as the duties of parents, communities and social institutions. *“Mass media has the leading role in that through publications, radio, television and other means...”* The experts also remarked that it is extremely important: *“...what we intend to accomplish by this study.*

The data collected should be published afterwards so people will get acquainted with the information and it will be available for everyone" (III_EC_3);

- **To work out and disseminate informational materials** that will be **adjusted to children of different ages**, on the prevention of deviant behaviours and on the services they could appeal to; **adjusted to parents** on preparing the child for their departure and **adjusted to guardians and children's caregivers** on the communication with the child and how to keep in touch with parents and the family;
- **To study and replicate at the national level the best practices implemented by other countries regarding children left behind as a consequence of migration.** Experts think the examples of these countries may be of use for us: *"countries of Central and Eastern Europe that faced a wave of migration... Romania, Bulgaria...Ukraine..."* (III_EC_1). An example to be taken by the Republic of Moldova is that of the following *"...In Asia, community partnerships are called Mahala (Neighbourhood) a well known word for us too. It is a powerful actor in implementing programmes on health education. Neighbours are acquainted with all community members and issues they are confronted with and also they decide who needs support and what kind of support. The government strongly supports Mahalas by directly funding these structures"* (III_EE_9);
- **To develop skills for investment of remittances and accumulated know-how in the launch and development of small and medium enterprises for sustainable economical development.** *"These remittances are to be used by parents to start an economic activity here in the country... Some families are already interested in investing in small businesses, and small local producers. We came up with some projects for that..., projects that would involve proportional funding of the investment of a migrant from European and public funds. This is only an initiative, but there are already bilateral relations with various countries, who come up with initiatives to support social and economic reintegration of migrants"* (III_EC_1);
- **To continue conducting sociological research to identify specific needs and issues related to children left behind**, in order to establish some guidelines for social policies;
- **To enhance the capacity of multidisciplinary teams in communities** for identifying, referring and assisting children left behind as a consequence of migration;
- **To expand the network of social assistance and psychological services in communities as well as foster care services (foster family, family-type institutions);**

- **To sensitize migrant parents and their family members by conducting activities that will make parents** who intend to migrate abroad to work assume **the responsibility for their children;**
- **To develop communication channels** for parents and their children left behind;
- **To conduct community and leisure-time activities** (workshops, clubs of interest, etc.) devoted to **the psychosocial integration** of children left behind as a consequence of parents' migration.

The elderly

• Legal

The situation of the elderly left behind by children-migrants requires clarification, thus establishing concrete solutions. In this context interviewed persons stated the need for:

- **Empowering children by law to take care of their parents in difficulty:** *“it would great if laws oblige children as most of them do not assume the responsibility for their parents thus they should be obliged to a certain extent to look after their parents”(FG_EE_urban_rural); “children should open a bank account and save money so the elderly could withdraw the interest on a monthly basis”; “cash benefits”; “money transfers, taxes”; “the person who intends to leave abroad should sign a contract with the state”; “when leaving the country they should have already appointed a person to look after their mother or father” (FG_EE_urban);*
- **Implementing comprehensive strategies to encourage the return and reintegration of Moldovan migrants** *“Let’s help children turn back to their country. Let’s offer young citizens who work abroad, jobs here, so that they could be with their parents” (III_EE_7);*
- **Depriving children who do not take care of their parents’ inheritance:** *“although they were referred by children to the state to take care of them, their entire property should also be inherited by the state” (FG_EE_urban_rural);*
- **Obliging labour migrants to register their elderly parents with competent authorities** (community social worker);
- **Applying new forms of social aid that will guarantee a decent living for the elderly:** *“to develop different types of insurances in the future” (FG_EE_urban);*
- **Improving the legal framework to make non-governmental and volunteer organizations more active in providing social services for disadvantaged people;**

- **Excluding the social assistant's duty to perform agricultural works:** *"it is our responsibility to help them work in the garden, this is part of our job: dig in the garden, you bring them bread, what else, call the doctor," "but it does not mean "meeting their basic needs" (FG_EE_urban_rural).*
- **Developing forms of support and social services (institutions in charge: Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family; Local Public Administration of the 1st and 2nd level):**

The study highlights the necessity to develop and diversify other forms of support for the elderly left behind:

- **To revise criteria of selecting the beneficiaries:** *"criteria of selecting the beneficiaries should be revised to a certain extent as there are people who need to be examined by doctors in order to establish what services they require; there are people who are not registered as having mental disorders but when you visit them..." (FG_EE_urban_rural);*
- **A multidisciplinary team should decide on home-care services for the elderly:** *"when the person was referred to home-care services a multidisciplinary team should examine them and decide if the person needs these kind of services or not as there are people who drink or have mental disorders" (FG_EE_urban_rural);*
- **To increase the number of temporary placement services for money:** *"to open centres, and hostels in which they could be placed temporarily, for a fee. The government can not cover such costs; it should be paid for by migrants-children. The Constitution and other laws stipulate that children should take care of their parents, but it is not quite respected" (FG_EE_urban);*
- **To develop specialized professional care services for the elderly, in the family:** *"it would be beneficial if the elderly were placed in families that are socially able and developed and they would be provided for; for examples foster families for children, such families should exist for the elderly too" (FG_EE_urban);*
- **The mayoralty should provide psychological and legal support for the elderly:** *"it would be beneficial for the elderly if the mayoralty employed a psychologist or a lawyer"; "we had a situation when an old man was cheated and signed papers that deprived him of his property. The old man does not know whom to address for help and we cannot do anything as all lawyers offer services in return for payment but where can we refer him to if he has only 2 lei and saves that for buying bread? A lawyer should be appointed per district that will go to a certain village on a certain day and offer legal advice. Thus we will be able to help by making an appointment for them. Although we know what they need we can*

not help them as we, social workers, do not have such services in place. In each community within the Social Assistance Department should be held a «rehabilitation hour» where one can request to invite a lawyer or a psychologist for advice» (FG_EE_urban_rural);

- **To develop specialized day-care services for the elderly:** *“It would be good to involve them in performing certain works within the day-care centre, or some clubs of interest thus keeping them occupied... It would be beneficial to open a laundry providing services in return for payment thus making the work of the social worker who has to do the laundry for the elderly who benefit from home-care services easier” (FG_EE_urban_rural); “Maybe to open some workshops for dancing, writing poems, singing or embroidering thus making them socialize plus having an occupation” (FG_EE_urban);*
- **To conduct activities that will be socially useful, including volunteer activities involving the elderly:** *“We provide a type of service for the elderly, namely “home volunteers”. They go and help people who experience a more difficult situation”; “The elderly have life experience as they raised their children and there are many young people who are working but do not have anyone to take care of their children and so the elderly can do this for one or two hours, they teach children embroidering, crocheting” (FG_EE_urban);*
- **To provide social assistance services by phone:** *“social assistance by phone for those who can not move, whether the social worker or social assistant does not have the possibility to visit them or the elderly do not need material aid as much as they require communication” (FG_EE_urban);*
- **To offer social services depending on various categories of beneficiaries:** *“those elderly who have children must pay for the service. Free care must be offered only to those who have no children, as children migrated abroad in search of work are able to help their parents, but if the elderly do not have children no one can help them”; “a part of the service must be paid for by children so that if you do not even care for the father you have to pay for a part of the care that he/she gets. Up to 50% of the total fee would be enough to be paid by the children, especially if there are parents who have 5-6 children, it would be quite normal, “requiring to pay for some services, it requires the child to monitor the provided services, he/she is interested if the money they pay is contributing to a quality service, that would be a good reason to make them pay for the services “ (FG_EE_urban_rural), “the elderly who agree to give their apartment to the state, should instead of benefiting from better care be provided with specific high quality services” (FG_EE_urban);*

- **To strengthen and develop social partnerships at a local level** (international experience in this regard should be taken as an example);
- **To sensitize people and to educate them to assume the responsibility for their family:**

“It is human mentality. You should thank your parents, they gave you life, you’re healthy, only this way can you help them, helping them along the way, it is the most important mission in life. We’ll become parents one day and our children will behave exactly the same way we behave with our parents now” (FG_EE_urban_rural); *“Involving mass media in raising public awareness”* (FG_EE_urban).

We note the importance of continuous attention of all institutions-in-charge of protecting children and the elderly left behind as a consequence of migration. The mechanisms of solving difficult situations that were proposed in the study should be followed by concrete actions taken by institutions and social actors active in the field.



Some children protest against the absence of one or both parents. A child left alone for a long time as a consequence of his parents' migration depicts in his drawing the necessity and desire to „lecture parents”, as a “teacher” who gives „life lessons ” to the parents.

Conclusions and recommendations



Children feel entirely and sincerely happy when they grow up in a family together with their parents, brothers and sisters.

The conducted research explains the aspects of the psychological, social and economic impact of migration on children and elderly left behind by migrant family members, presenting the consequences it has at family, community and society levels.

Children and elderly explain the migration of their family members through several reasons: the intention to get rid of poverty or to improve living conditions, the lack of employment opportunities, the impossibility to provide further education for children, etc. Besides these factors the situations of violence and abuse were identified which influenced the decision to migrate. The degree of acceptance or refusal of parental migration by children depends on their age, the means by which parents asked their children's opinion, the person in charge of taking care of them and not least, the frequency of communication between children and parents. Honest discussions with children are more beneficial for their psychological state. In the situation of the elderly the acceptance or non-acceptance of migration depends on the degree of financial autonomy and their capacity for taking care of themselves. The need to look after their grandchildren, in most cases, favours the acceptance of migration, since it is this way that the elderly regain some of their social roles, feeling useful when being old.

The situation of the elderly left behind by family members depends on several factors: the person's age, health, who lives with him/her (alone, with a spouse, grandchildren), where they live (home or day care centre, etc.) Thus, the situation is worse for those who live alone or who are ill as they are affected by loneliness, abandonment, insecurity, while the institutionalized elderly feel more secure as their basic needs of protection and communication are met. The situation of elderly who take care of their grandchildren, in most cases is a positive one as they have new responsibilities that make them feel indispensable.

The psychological impact on children left behind is characterized by feelings of loneliness, lack of affection, emotional deprivation, which are supplemented by early maturity, anxiety and the fear for their parents' eventual divorce. The lack of tenderness and emotional deprivation cannot provide affection, security and protection of children, which affects in a negative way their personality development. Children are frustrated not only because they are unable to receive affection, but also to provide it. These emotional disadvantages leave a mark on the child's mental development by influencing self-perception and impeding the social integration and assimilation of social roles. In addition, the elderly are affected by decreasing ability to cope with everyday tasks, worsening health condition, personal security issues, etc.

However, the study highlights numerous cases of emotional, physical and sexual abuse of children; labour exploitation of both children and elderly

(in the case of children the total of assumed responsibilities: raising and educating their little brothers/sisters; of maternal and/or paternal duties, etc.), that determine psychical and physical exhaustion and lead to suicide attempts in some cases.

The communication of the child with his/her parents through technical means reduces the effects of emotional deprivation. It should be mentioned that most children have the possibility to communicate regularly with their parents, although there are children who know nothing about the fate of their parents abroad, thus being deprived totally of communication. The communication process is more frequent in the case of children than in the elderly, while the elderly who take care of their grandchildren communicate more often than their single peers. Consequently, the need for communication is more acute for the elderly and especially in the case of those who are single.

An important factor in a child's personality development is represented by the parent who remained at home and/or the caregiver. It is frequent that the father, being at home, cannot create a favourable and secure environment for his children (especially young ones). The study shows that some children have a tense relationship with their fathers; despite presence of one of the parents they are still deprived of their needs for affection, understanding and security.

The study reveals that children left behind do not establish friendly relationships with their peers for several reasons: they are not understood, they hesitate to disclose family secrets, lack leisure time, etc. Support networks for these children are less developed, most often consisting only of discussions with class teachers, teachers and psychologists. Migration leads to a decrease in interaction between children with migrant parents and educational institutions due to: (i) the lack of supervision and control from their parents; (ii) multiple «new» responsibilities of these children; (iii) misunderstandings with their teachers, peers; (iv) the lack of any partnership between family and school, etc. The research shows the necessity to undertake new measures within the educational institution in order to reduce the negative impact of migration on children: (i) compulsory introduction of psychological services that would help both, children with migrant parents and teachers to provide them necessary support; (ii) working out and disseminating various information sources for teachers and other professionals; (iii) organizing social activities to reduce loneliness and increase the level of communication, (iv) working out and disseminating information for parents, etc.

The stressful psycho-emotional condition that children and elderly left behind experience leads to deterioration of the physical state of the body, developing organic disorders and diseases. In addition to this, the increased responsibilities cause mental and physical breakdowns and as a result, ap-

pear various diseases, etc. Parents' migration interrupts the children's diet and nutritional balance. Children are poorly and incorrectly fed which causes the development of diseases. It also increases the risk of unsanitary conditions in both children and elderly, which also determines the risk of infections, parasitic diseases, and poisoning. The elderly left behind by migrant family members do not follow a healthy diet because of loneliness, depression, shortage of money, etc. As a result, there appears the risk of developing states of hunger and malnutrition, etc.

Children do not possess the knowledge and there is no one to inform them about behaviours that pose a risk to their health, about life skills and sex education. Under these conditions, they substitute this information gap with discussions with their peers, searching for information on the Internet, etc., which does not always provide them with correct information. Lack of knowledge in this sphere is the main cause of sexually transmitted diseases, undesired pregnancies and abortions that negatively influence children's reproductive health. The study identified situations where children have resorted to surgical abortions without informing and consulting their parents.

The access to medical services, as stipulated by law, is offered for free to all children and elderly. But research data shows that when children are left in the care of a minor, they do not know how to deal with or recognize when their siblings have health problems and consequently cannot act promptly to health changes of the children in their care, which increases the risk of developing serious complications and severe diseases. The treatment of younger sisters/brothers or self-treatment administered by children may have side effects, complications because of misuse of medicine, including being poisoned with medicine. Finally, the lack of guardianship for children makes the access to medical care in case of invasive interventions impossible. The elderly, especially those living in the rural areas, do not ask to be examined by medical specialists, which further increases treatment costs and reduces the possibility of early diagnosis of diseases. The lonely elderly often cannot call emergency services because they require permanent supervision. Moreover, there are cases when the elderly, due to financial support of their children working abroad, have undergone costly treatments that couldn't be covered by the medical insurance.

The migration process affects the integrity of migrant families, causing changes within the family (changes in status and role, lack of care, redefining family relationships) and between generations.

Money earned by migrants abroad contributes, in most cases, to the improvement of the family's financial situation and children's daily school needs, to ensure continuation of the education at secondary school and even onto vocational and university levels. Remittances allow households to be better equipped, often improving living conditions by means of increasing the con-

sumption of goods and services, supplying the household with water, sewerage and gas systems, etc. The situation remains difficult for the abandoned elderly and for those whose children had left to work abroad or who are missing.

The problems and difficulties that children and elderly left behind have to face, make them think of their values and future. Thus, the family and its integrity are on the top of their priorities. Still, more often they mention the money and their desire to leave Moldova, which represents an alarming situation in the conditions of the present demographical crisis that our country is going through.

A large number of Moldovan labour migrants abroad encourage government authorities to take legal measures in order to reduce the negative effects of migration upon children and to a lesser extent on the elderly. Consequently, a provision has been introduced that stipulates that migrants should inform the LPA about their children who are left in the country and are under guardianship. Still, some migrants are not acquainted with these legal provisions especially because the citizens of the Republic of Moldova go to work abroad without any employment contacts. However, those who are informed are not aware of the advantages it has and judge the procedure of appointing a legal guardian as being complicated and time-consuming. For the elderly left behind as a consequence of migration there are no conditions stipulated to ensure legal guardianship.

The adoption of *The National Action Plan on the Protection of Children left without parental care for 2010-2011* included the actions to be taken by public authorities to reduce the negative consequences of migration, still, at the local level there were no changes in the psychological support for these children.

A problem that the state should take into the consideration related to the elderly left behind as a consequence of migration, lies in the patrimonial relations between the helpless or infirm elderly and children. There are cases when these people are swindled out of their property and eventually find themselves solely in the government's care.

Keeping a record of children and elderly left behind as a consequence of migration still represents a problem. The procedure of migrants informing Local Public Authorities or local actors (teachers, doctors, etc.) does not work. Consequently, the exact number of children and elderly deprived of their family members' care as a consequence of migration is unknown. The Ministry of Education counted 108427 children in educational institutions in 2010 (70028 with one migrant parent and 38399 with both parents abroad).

Forms of support and social services provided to children and elderly left behind are less developed and limited to some NGOs initiatives (lectures

with teachers and other specialists who work with children left without parental care, opening placement centres also providing services against payment, services in day care centres, etc.) or of government authorities (residential institutions).

The local social partnerships are underdeveloped, the most widespread partnership form is the collaboration with NGOs, less with religious institutions and there is almost no collaboration with economic agents.

The study highlights the necessity to consider the following recommendation in order to reduce and address the negative impact of migration and to overcome difficult situations experienced by children and elderly left behind¹¹:

NOTE

¹¹ Taking into account the specific needs of children and elderly left behind by their family members, the recommendations will be submitted separately for every category.

General (both for children and elderly)

• **Legal**

- **To sign bilateral agreements on labour migration with key countries of destination** in order to regulate the migration process and allow migrants' free movement across borders that will facilitate their communication with family members who are at home by visiting them regularly without the risk of losing their job;
- **To sign bilateral agreements on social security with key countries of destination for labour migration** to guarantee social protection of migrants working abroad;
- **To introduce the mechanism on the procurement of social services that will make private social service providers more active and will increase the quality of services;**
- **To encourage volunteering activities** involving more citizens and strengthening civic solidarity.

Children

• **Legal**

- **To improve the legal framework on the obligatory appointment of a legal guardian** for children left behind as a consequence of migration;
- **To amend the legal framework with regard to the accountability of migrant parents**, from the perspective of a fulfillment of parental duties.

• **To develop forms of support and social services**

For the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family:

- **To develop mechanisms for identification and evaluation of the situation of children without parental care**, as the lack of concrete

information about the number of children represents an obstacle in developing and implementing social policies;

- **To open a hot line with national coverage that children could call anonymously and receive advice and counselling on psychological and health issues, etc.** To ensure its sustainability, the line should be administered by a public institution that consequently will refer the cases to child protection institutions;
- **To create an automated information system on social assistance;**
- **To conduct awareness-raising campaigns in partnership with mass media organizations and representatives of civil society** on issues related to children left behind as a consequence of migration, on existing social services and on the **accountability** of parents, communities and social institutions;

For the Ministry of Education

- **To work out an Action Plan for the educational institutions to be able to keep a record, monitor and conduct activities with children left behind as a consequence of migration;**
- **To keep a record of children and pupils without parental care as a result of migration within educational institutions and to supervise their situation at a national and district level;**
- **To introduce the position of psychologist in all educational institutions and to assign them clear responsibilities related to monitoring pupils' emotional condition and providing them counselling, therapy, etc.;**

For the Ministry of Health

- **To develop mechanisms that will give family doctors the possibility to identify and supervise young children living without parental care or who are cared for by elder children,** setting performance indicators for the family doctor's activity in this field;
- **To conduct activities providing information on health, hygiene, nutrition and children's behaviour with health risk.** As many of these children are deprived of adults' permanent supervision, it is necessary to hold lectures in schools about the circumstances that pose a risk to their life and health, including first aid in case of emergency;

For the Local Public Administration

- **To keep a record and evaluate the needs of children left behind as a consequence of migration, the living conditions of caregivers** and their capacity to provide adequate and secure conditions necessary for a child's development. To map these needs and **to develop appropriate services;**
- **To provide nutrition for children of all ages in educational institutions**, including money for reducing the risk of malnutrition. To encourage and support educational institutions in providing children with healthy food and to forbid fast-food in schools and in their immediate neighbourhood;
- **To improve the activity of guardianship authorities in identifying, referring and assisting children left behind as a consequence of migration and to establish partnerships at the local level;**
- **To expand the network of social assistance and psychological services in communities as well as foster family services** (*professional parental care, family-type homes for children, etc.*);
- **To inform migrant parents and family members of their duties**, and when parents intend to migrate abroad, **to inform them on the necessity to place the child in a temporary guardianship;**

For social community assistants

- **To keep a record and evaluate the needs of children without parental care as a consequence of migration, the living conditions of caregivers** and their capacity to provide adequate and secure conditions necessary for a child's development;
- **To establish an effective partnership with educational institutions, medical institutions and other community actors in order to prevent children left behind as a consequence of migration experiencing difficult situations;**

For educational institutions for children

- **To supervise children left behind as a consequence of migration;**
- **To ensure within educational institutions, opportunities for communication** between parents and their children left behind as well as with teachers' participation thus increasing the degree of **accountability** of both children and parents;

- **To develop extra curricular activities in schools** (workshops, interest clubs, etc.) in order to facilitate the **social integration** of children left behind as a consequence of migration;

For private service providers

To work out and disseminate information materials that should target **children and be age-adjusted**, on the prevention of deviant behaviours and services they could address to; **parents** on preparing children for their departure; **guardians and children's caregivers** on their communication with the child and the family; **teachers and other specialists** who will deal with this category of children, parents and their caregivers;

- **To organize training on family life, family functioning, preserving family values, etc.** based on a curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education;
- **To organize training on developing children's abilities for correct management of remittances sent by their parents and also looking to develop entrepreneurship abilities** based on a curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education;

For migrant parents or potential labour migrants

- **To place children under temporary guardianship thus avoiding the risks that a child left behind without a legal guardian is exposed to;**
- **To keep in touch with children systematically;**
- **To keep in touch with the educational institution the child/children attend/s** in order to be informed on their school performance.

The elderly

• Legal

- **To amend the regulatory framework on the accountability of children to take care of parents in difficulty** (social aid, to sign contracts with the state, etc.);
- **Development of the National Policies on Ageing in the context of the National Strategy for Demographic Security.**
- **To implement new forms of social insurance that will guarantee a decent old age** (to develop private pensions);
- **To develop forms of support and social services**

For the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family

- **To work out mechanisms for identification of elderly left behind at risk** (collaboration between social community assistants, family doctors, etc.);
- **To promote regulations and standards for home-care services;**
- **To develop a regulatory framework on diversifying services provided at home** that at present focus on housekeeping and nutrition by introducing occupational therapy, psychological counselling, etc. in order to avoid depression, suicide attempts, etc.;
- **To revise the Job description of social workers** who provide home-care services for the elderly (to exclude performing work related to housekeeping);
- **To develop the mechanisms for social services procurement by natural persons;**

For the Ministry of Health

- **To develop mechanisms for medical workers of primary health care to render medical services at home and to supervise the ill elderly;**
- **To conduct campaigns for examining the health condition of the elderly and to ensure the consultation by highly qualified specialists in rural areas** (oncologist, rheumatologist, gastrologist, cardiologist, etc.);
- **To hold trainings for people involved with providing assistance to the elderly** (geriatricians, social assistants, social workers, medical nurses, etc.);
- **In partnership with private service providers and mass media organizations to conduct national campaigns for promoting healthy eating habits and lifestyle in order to prevent diseases;**

For the local public administration

- **To work out mechanisms that will give the possibility to establish some public-private partnerships in developing and providing highly specialized services designed for the elderly;**
- **To diversify home care services** that at present focus on housekeeping and nutrition by introducing occupational therapy, psychological counselling, etc. in order to avoid depression, suicide attempts, etc.;

- **To strengthen and develop local social partnerships** that will initiate and render social services to the elderly in the community;
- **To conduct information campaigns in partnership with private service providers on:** (i) children's duties related to taking care of parents, (ii) the way of appointing a legal guardian for a natural person who because of poor health is not able to exercise and defend its own rights, (iii) address the needs of the infirm elderly to social assistance institutions;
- **To offer information on legal assistance guaranteed by the government and provide legal advice on patrimonial issues;**

For community social workers

- **To keep the record and to supervise the elderly left behind, including their living and health conditions inclusively;**
- **To inform citizens on the procedure to appoint a legal guardian for the person who because of poor health is not able to exercise and defend his/her own rights;**

For private service providers

- **To develop social services, in collaboration with the LPA, according to the community's needs** (Day care Centres, placement centres, foster family for the elderly, psychological services, etc.);
- **To give information about:** (i) children's duties related to taking care of parents, (ii) the procedure of appointing a legal guardian for a natural person who because of poor health is not able to exercise and defend his/her own rights, (iii) address the needs of the infirm elderly to social assistance institutions;
- **To make use of the life experience of the elderly by involving them in activities useful for the society, including volunteering** (communication services, etc.);

For migrant family members or potential labour migrants

- **To oblige the appointment of a legal guardian for a natural person who due to poor health is not able to exercise and defend his/her own rights.**

Annexes

Annex 1. Data on in-depth individual interviews conducted with children

Code	Age	Sex	Residence environment	Basic characteristics
III_C_1	15 years old	Female	Rural	Lives alone, both parents left for Russia, are now divorced
III_C_2	15 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her disabled mother, her father left for Russia
III_C_3	10 years old	Male	Urban	Lives with his grandmother, his parents migrated to Germany
III_C_4	16 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her grandmother and sister, doesn't have a father, her mother migrated to Russia
III_C_5	13 years old	Male	Urban	Lives with his uncle, his father migrated to the Russian Federation while his mother left for Italy
III_C_6	11 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her father, her mother migrated to Italy
III_C_7	9 years old	Male	Rural	Lives with his godmother, both parents migrated to the Russian Federation
III_C_8	10 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her grandparents, her mother left for the Russian Federation and her father lives separately in Moldova
III_C_9	16 years old	Male	Rural	Lives with his grandmother, his mother migrated to Ukraine, his parents divorced
III_C_10	11 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her father and grandmother, her mother left for the Russian Federation
III_C_11	13 years old	Male	Rural	Lives with his grandmother, his mother left for an unknown destination and his father migrated to Poland
III_C_12	8 years old	Female	Urban	Lives with her aunt (mother's sister), her mother is in jail, her father migrated to Romania
III_C_13	16 years old	Male	Rural	Lives with a neighbour, his father died and his mother left for Italy
III_C_14	11 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her aunt, her father works in Chisinau but her mother migrated to Italy
III_C_15	13 years old	Female	Urban	Lives with her neighbour, both parents migrated to Italy
III_C_16	12 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her father, her mother migrated to Israel
III_C_17	17 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her aunt, her father left for Portugal and her mother migrated to Italy
III_C_18	14 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her grandparents, her father died and her mother migrated to Italy
III_C_19	15 years old	Female	Rural	Spends most time alone, her mother migrated to Italy and her father works in Chisinau
III_C_20	15 years old	Male	Rural	Lives with his grandmother, his mother left for the Russian Federation, his parents split up
III_C_21	15 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her sister, both parents migrated for the Russian Federation

Code	Age	Sex	Residence environment	Basic characteristics
III_C_22	18 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her father, her mother migrated to Ireland
III_C_23	18 years old	Male	Rural	Lives with his mother, his father migrated to Italy
III_C_24	12 years old	Female	Urban	Lives in a Placement Centre, her mother migrated to Israel
III_C_25	13 years old	Female	Urban	Lives in a Placement Centre, her mother migrated to Russia, doesn't have a father
III_C_26	11 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her aunt, her mother migrated to Italy, her father lives separately in Moldova
III_C_27	11 years old	Female	Rural	Lives with her 18-year-old brother, both parents migrated to Italy
III_C_28	14 years old	Female	Urban	Lives with her grandmother and her little sister, both parents migrated to Italy
III_C_29	15 years old	Male	Rural	Lives with his aunt and his little sister, doesn't have a father, his mother migrated to Russia

Annex 2. Data on in-depth individual interviews conducted with the elderly

Code	Age	Sex	Residence environment	Basic characteristics
III_E_1	75 years old	Male	Rural	Old person, lives with his wife
III_E_2	61 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her son and 2 granddaughters
III_E_3	71 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her granddaughter
III_E_4	63 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her grandson
III_E_5	86 years old	Male	Rural	Old person, lives with his wife
III_E_6	79 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives alone
III_E_7	71 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives alone
III_E_8	58 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her grandson
III_E_9	71 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her grandson
III_E_10	61 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives alone
III_E_11	57 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her grandson
III_E_12	62 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with 2 grandchildren
III_E_13	76 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives alone
III_E_14	60 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her husband and 2 granddaughters

Code	Age	Sex	Residence environment	Basic characteristics
III_E_15	68 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives in cohabitation
III_E_16	77 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives with 2 grandsons
III_E_17	68 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives with her husband and 4 grandchildren
III_E_18	58 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her son who returned from the Russian Federation with his legs cut and with her granddaughter
III_E_19	82 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives with 3 grandchildren
III_E_20	62 years old	Male	Rural	Old person, lives with her 2 little granddaughters
III_E_21	80 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her son
III_E_22	83 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives alone
III_E_23	73 years old	Female	Urban	Old person, lives with her 3 granddaughters
III_E_24	62 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives with her husband and 2 granddaughters
III_E_25	75 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives with her 3 grandchildren
III_E_26	78 years old	Female	Rural	Old person, lives with her husband

Annex 3. Data on in-depth individual interviews conducted with experts

No.	Code	Institution	Activity field
1.	III_EC_1	Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family	Social Policies
2.	III_EC_2	Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family	Issues related to children
3.	III_EC_3	Ministry of Health	Issues related to vulnerable groups
4.	III_EC_4	Ministry of Health	Issues related to children
5.	III_EC_5	Ministry of Education	Policy analysis, monitoring and assessment
6.	III_EC_6	Ministry of Education	Preschool, primary and secondary education
7.	III_EE_7	Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family	Social assistance policies
8.	III_EE_8	Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family	Social services for the elderly
9.	III_EE_9	Ministry of Health	Issues related to vulnerable groups
10.	III_EE_10	National Employment Agency	Issues related to labour migration

Annex 4. Data on focus group discussions conducted with children

No.	Code	Residence environment	Number of participants	Other
1.	FG_C_1_urban	Urban	10	Children, 11-15 years old, all children have migrant parents
2.	FG_C_2_rural	Rural	10	Children, 14-15 years old, whose parents migrated abroad but also children with both parents staying in Moldova
3.	FG_C_3_rural	Rural	12	Children, 10-15 years old, whose parents migrated abroad but also children with both parents staying in Moldova
4.	FG_C_4_rural	Rural	10	Children, 11-12 years old whose parents migrated abroad but also children with both parents staying in Moldova

Annex 5. Data on focus group discussions conducted with the elderly

No.	Code	Residence environment	Number of participants
1.	FG E 1_rural	Rural	9
2.	FG E 2_rural	Rural	11
3.	FG E 3_urban asylum	Urban, asylum	6
4.	FG E 4_rural asylum	Rural, asylum	7

Annex 6. Data on focus-group discussions conducted with experts

No.	Code	Residence environment	Number of participants
1.	FG_EC_urban	Urban	10
2.	FG_EC_rural	Rural	11
3.	FG_EE_urban	Urban	7
4.	FG_EE_urban_rural	Urban and rural	10

Annex 7. Certificate for the registration of children who remain in the country but whose parents, citizens of the Republic of Moldova, are temporarily employed abroad

<p><i>Heading of Social Work and Family Protection Department/ Child Protection Department from the municipality of Chisinau</i></p>	
ECPAMS-1	
<p>CERTIFICATE for the registration of children who remain in the country but whose parents, citizens of the Republic of Moldova, are temporarily employed abroad</p>	
issued to the citizen _____,	<small>(surname, name)</small>
identity card _____,	<small>(serial number)</small>
residence at _____.	<small>(locality, address)</small>
This certificate confirms that in case of temporary employment abroad of the citizen _____	
child _____,	<small>(surname, name)</small>
born on _____,	<small>(date, month, year)</small>
birth certificate _____,	<small>(serial number)</small>
is left in husband's/wife's care _____,	<small>(surname, name)</small>
identity card _____,	<small>(serial number)</small>
residence at _____.	<small>(locality, address)</small>
<p>Applicant's signature _____</p> <p>Head specialist in Child Rights Protection Signature _____</p> <p>Head of Social Work and Family Protection Department/Signature _____</p> <p>Child Protection Department from the municipality of Chisinau Authority seal</p> <p>Date of issue _____ 200 _____</p> <p>The certificate is valid for 3 months from when it was issued.</p>	

Annex 8. Certificate for the registration of children who remain in the country but whose parents/guardians, citizens of the Republic of Moldova, are temporarily employed abroad

<p><i>Heading of Social Work and Family Protection Department/ Child Protection Department from the municipality of Chisinau</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">ECPAMS-2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CERTIFICATE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">for the registration of children who remain in the country but whose parents/ guardian, citizens of the Republic of Moldova, are temporarily employed abroad</p>	
issued to the citizen _____	
<small>(surname, name)</small>	
identity card _____	<small>(serial number)</small>
residence at _____	<small>(locality, address)</small>
The certificate confirms that, as a result of temporary employment abroad of the citizen:	
child _____	<small>(surname, name)</small>
born on _____	<small>(surname, name)</small>
birth certificate _____	<small>(date, month, year)</small>
Was applied the form of protection: _____	<small>(serial number)</small>
<small>(forms of protection: guardianship, professional parental assistance, placement in family-type care, any type of residential institutions, other legal forms of protection)</small>	
for a term of _____	
Guardian of child is appointed _____	
identity card _____	<small>(surname, name)</small>
residence at _____	<small>(serial number)</small>
<small>(locality, address)</small>	
Note:	
In the case of referring the child to a residential institution, should be indicated the name and surname of institution's manager, institution's name and its juridical address.	
Applicant	Signature _____
Head specialist in Child Rights Protection	Signature _____
Head of Social Work and Family Protection Department/ Child Protection Department from the municipality of Chisinau	Signature _____
Authority seal	
Date of issue _____ 200__	
The certificate is valid for 3 months from when it was issued.	

**Diana CHEIANU-ANDREI, Rodica GRAMMA,
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**SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND ELDERLY LEFT BEHIND
AS A CONSEQUENCE OF MIGRATION**

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