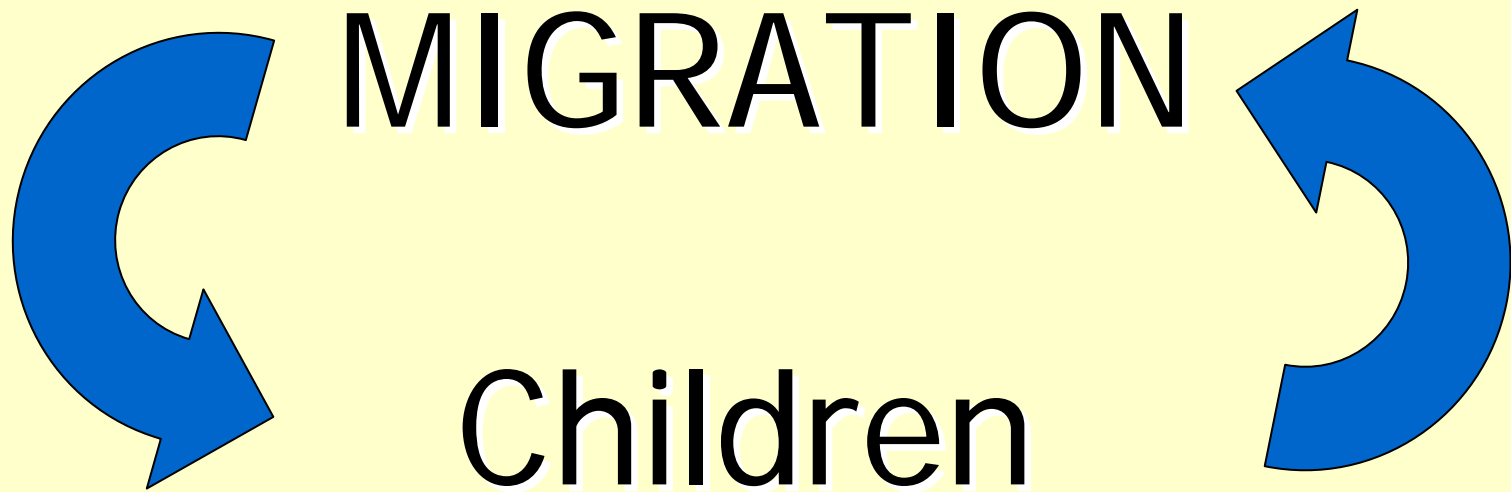


The Impact of Migration on Children Left Behind in Developing Countries

Andrea Rossi

Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government



Children and migration

Migration can affect children in different forms
“Affected children” is used to refer to children
and young people under 18 years of age:

- Migrating (alone, with their parents, foster children)
- Left behind by one or both migrating parents
- Living in context affected by migration

Well being outcomes

From assumptions
To evidence

Health

Economic
Activities

Child

Psycho
social

Education

Positive contribution of migration to infant mortality reduction (Kanaiaupuni and Donato 1999)

Children in households with migrant members are less likely to be underweight.

Mexico a 1 percent increase in the share of recipient households reduces the infant mortality rate by 1.2 per thousand (López-Córdova (2006)

Mini-epidemiological paradox" (Mexico)

Positive effects of remittances are confined to the households in the poorest quintile of the income distribution.

"although women in migrant households are characterized by a riskier socio-demographic profile, their infants have favourable birth outcomes as compared to infants born into nonmigrant household"

(Frank and Hummer 2002: 755).

“Social Remittances” (Levitt 1998)

Household income does not present a significant effect on low birth weight, whereas receiving remittances always has a significant effect, reducing low birth weight. (Frank and Hummer (2002)

Migrant members of the household bring back not only financial remittances but also new information, and values that may have a positive effect on children. This positive effect depends, however, on the possibility of existing means of contact between migrants and the household.

Education

Reduce drop out: because remittances relieve some of the pressure on household budgets, families can afford to have their children spend more time in school. (Cox-Edwards and Ureta (2003)

Higher demand for **institutionalized child care** in families where one of the parents is migrating

Children in left behind households have a higher probability of attending **private schools** (Bryant (2005)

Extra income a household gains from remittances may allow children to **delay entering the workforce** in order to further their studies, increasing the final level of education.

(Hanson and Woodruff 2003).

Negative effects

Parental migration can have negative impact on education if it **increases the migration decision** of young males or increases the need for young females to engage in housework (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2006).

Remittances lead to **changes on consumption patterns**, reduce labour supply, and increase need for additional remittances in the future. (Coronel & Unterreiner, 2005).

The reduction in the number of adult role models in the home, may **increase the child-rearing responsibilities** of resident household members, placing greater demands on older children to assist in running and supporting the household (Hanson and Woodruff 2003; Acosta 2006)

Education and remittances

The income effect brought about by remittances;

the direct effect of adult migration on the demand for child work;

the impact of the prospect to migrate upon the incentives to invest in education.

Education

The effect of migration on school grades completed will be equal to the sum of:

the impact of external migration on a child's educational attainment through its impact on family income (expected to be positive)

and the impact of external migration on a child's education attainment through its impact on family structure (expected to be negative).

Education

The effect of remittances on schooling may vary with the **educational level of migrating parents**.

Results from Latin America shows that migration's positive effect on school attendance is usually limited to children with parents with a low level of education

(Acosta 2007; Hanson and Woodruff 2003; McKenzie and Rapoport 2006).

Economic Activity

A result of impact of education

Remittances may replace the income obtained from child work, thereby **reducing the need for economic activity of children** regardless of the effect on return of education (Acosta 2006).

Economic Activity

within the household:

the migration of an adult member may produce two distinct direct effects on the household demand for child work:

- it **increases the marginal productivity of the child**, who is required to substitute for the foregone adult labour;
- can influence the productivity of child work if the remittances are used to finance productive investments, such as the purchase of land or of productive equipment

Economic Activity

Outside the household:

Migration of an adult member and the transfer of remittances do not directly influence their productivity. Therefore, expected and predominant income effects of remittances can potentially contribute to reducing the incidence of child work.

Economic Activity

Increase in remittances received has two effects:

- it **lowers** the amount of time children devote to wage **employment outside the household,**
- it **increases** the time children work and receive a wage **within family-run economic activities.**

On balance, the effects of remittances are positive, as this latter increase (of time spent within family-run economic activities) is smaller than the reduction in the time worked outside the household. (Yang (2004))

Psycho social

The social cost of migration can be very high, particularly due to the lack of parental care

More relevant for very young children

Negative effects can be exacerbated if long term migration of one of the parents may lead to permanent disruption of family unity (Coronel and Unterreiner 2005).

The impact of the absence of one of the parents on children can be mediated by an extended family safety net, which is an effective response to economic and social crises, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Foster 2004).

Psycho social

Difficult to measure

Using well being outcomes as proxies the final effect (positive or negative) is the result of two different components:

- lack of parental care produces a potentially adverse effect,
- remittances can compensate for maternal absenteeism due their positive contribution to the household income and to the household's potential to access and provide better health, education, and work opportunities.

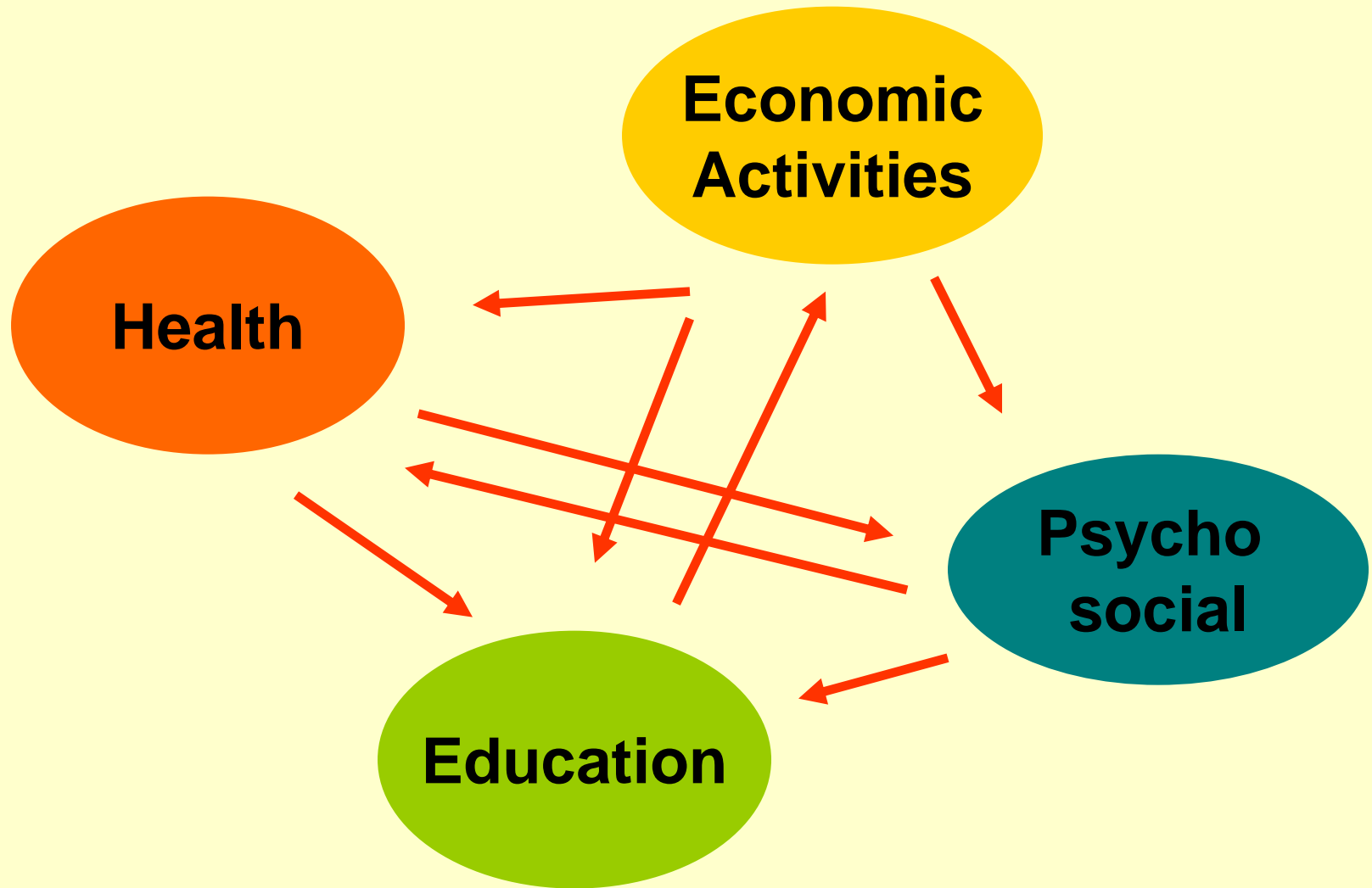
Need direct measurement

Remittances

The income and livelihood effects on household members left behind depend on

- ***The level of income that migrants earn,***
- ***The extent to which they can and do send remittances back and***
- ***How is used in the household***

Empirical challenges



Empirical challenges

ENDOGENEITY

migrant and non migrant household are not similar and **remittances are not a randomly assigned transfer**

external event may have a direct impact on children well being and at the same time determine the decision of migration or increase the level of remittances sent by migrating parents

Empirical challenges

Household / family decision making (not 0-1) (broad definition)

The decision of one or both parents to migrate and consequently, to leave children behind, may be the result of an individual altruistic decision to send remittances in order to improve the lives of family members, or the result of household utility maximization that may take into consideration also the risks and perils of travel

(Funkhouser 1995; Stark 1995; Becker 1974, 1991)

Empirical challenges

Counterfactual

- Other children in the country
- Children of returnees
- Children migrating
- Children in destination countries

Empirical challenges

$M = \text{Advantages (utility)} - \text{disadvantages (threat)}$

Including risks of moving

Income
Non-income

Income
Non-income

The sign of the total effect cannot be defined theoretically

Knowledge gap

- Although children adolescents are most affected by the impact of migration, they are absent from the migration and remittances debate.
- There is an urgent need to increase awareness of children and young people's rights and to include their voices
- Impact of remittances and migration on MDG
- Qual > Quant > Qual > Quant

Policy implications

- Effects of migration and remittances depend on the social, cultural, political and economic context which will have to be taken into account to minimize social costs and maximize social benefits
- Remittances by themselves cannot guarantee the realization of the right to quality education and health care, nor surmount gender discrimination
- Remittances should not replace public social investments

Thank you!



andrea_rossi@ksg.harvard.edu