



Urban Research Institute

**ALBANIAN MIGRATION AFTER '90-ES AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND**

The purpose of compiling this report is to understand the impact of emigration on children and families left behind. This report is based on many previous studies and researches, but also a survey is undertaken at national level to cover the lack of information regarding the social cost of emigration.

More than 25 of the population has been part of the emigration phenomenon after the '90es and it has been an immediate, vehement and explosive phenomenon after a 45-year ban. Immigration has played an important role in alleviating unemployment and poverty along the difficult years of transition. In 2007, remittances accounted for 12% of the national income and were 3 times higher than net foreign direct investments. In most of the cases, the remittances are mainly used to meet the basic needs of beneficiary families. However, this structure has changed over the years and their usage to improve housing conditions and in business investments is increasing.

In early migratory movements, migration without family was natural. Being massive, illegal and conducted by casual means or by crossing on foot the borderline, has discouraged many Albanians to "adventure" with the whole family. UNICEF study in 2009 identified 4,290 children 0-17 years old with one or both parents in emigration. In the early years of emigration, this number has been higher, but the legalization of emigrant status, approval of family union policies by destination countries, have prominently reduced the number of families and children left behind. Despite this, UNICEF study in 2009, underlined that the number of children to whom is denied the right to live with both parents, due to emigration, is still high. These children are mainly situated in the rural areas and central and coastal areas.

At the family level, emigration and remittances have positively contributed to increased the material welfare. Comparisons between families with and without emigrants, show that poverty is highest in the second group. However, the positive impact on material welfare does not have the same effect on emotional wellbeing. The division of family for a long time and the absence of the father in raising the children, is accompanied by negative effects. There is an increase of divorce rate, although there is no evidence on the main cause. The study in Albania has identified that children left behind, manifest emotional problems, anxiety and depression, of higher levels than children in families with two parents. The substitution of attention of one parent instead of both parents, (mothers in 98 % of cases), makes possible that the effect is softer compared to the cases when both parents would emigrate. The elder children are more sensible, within the group of children with emotional problems. The low level of remittances, destination of their, low level of communication and the rare visits paid by the parents who are emigrants, influence on worsening the emotional situation of children.