



The CHAMPSEA study: Preliminary report for Laguna, PHILIPPINES

- A study of the health and well-being of children under 12 years of age
- A comparison of children whose parent/s work abroad and children who live with both parents
- Covering 4,000 households in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam

OUT TO WORK: HOW ARE THE CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS DOING?

BACKGROUND

This research brief presents preliminary findings of the Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia (CHAMPSEA) Study which was conducted in Laguna Province, Philippines in 2008.

CHAMPSEA was a research project which examined the impacts of parental migration on the left-behind children in four Southeast Asian countries – Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The research was carried out between 2008 and 2010.

In 2008, a survey of 1000 transnational and usually resident or non-migrant households was conducted in each participating country. Eligible households referred to two-parent households with children under 12 years of age. Migrant or transnational households (THs) were defined as those where one or both parents were working abroad for at least six months and had not returned home dur-

ing the same period. In this report, we are using the more familiar terms to Filipinos, i.e., OFW (overseas Filipino worker) households and non-OFW households instead of THs and non-migrant households. In the surveyed households, the study focused on two groups of children: older children (9–11 years old) and young children (3–5 years old). Interviews were conducted with the older children while young children were invited to make a drawing of their family.

In 2009, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected households in Laguna. The final year of the project, 2010, was dedicated to data processing, editing and translation of data collected from various local languages into English.

The survey in 2008 was conducted in Laguna and Bulacan. The Scalabrini Migration Center cooperated with San Pablo Colleges in Laguna and Bulacan State University in Bulacan in the conduct of the survey.

Of the 1000 Philippine households surveyed in 2008, 510 or 51 percent were OFW households and 490 or 49 percent were non-OFW households. By location, of the 1000 households, 509 were in Laguna. In the Laguna sample, there were slightly more OFW households than non-OFW households (52.3 percent and 47.7 percent, respectively). Among the OFW households, fathers (170 or 63.9 percent) were the usual migrants. Households where mothers (64 or 24.1 percent) and both parents (32 or 12 percent) were migrants were fewer.

CARING ARRANGEMENTS : Mothers-carers!

Overall, mothers were the primary carers in 75 percent of the surveyed households. For the rest, the alternative carer consisted of fathers (9 percent), grandmothers (10 percent) and other relatives (4 percent), mostly female ones. Only about one percent of households had domestic workers or non-kin as the primary carer of the target child. In other words, the care of children continues to be the primary responsibility of mothers; in general, child care remains a family responsibility.

CHAMPSEA studied four types of households based on which parent was the OFW and who was the carer of the left-behind children. (1) non-OFW households (48 percent) wherein mothers were the typical carers; (2) father OFW-mother carer households (31 percent); (3) mother OFW-father carer households (7 percent), and (4) mother OFW or both parents OFWs-other carer households (14 percent). Where mothers or both parents migrated to work abroad, fathers or grandmothers assumed the responsibility of child care.

HOUSEHOLD WEALTH: OFW households were better off than non-OFW households.

To have some idea about the wealth of households, data on household income were ranked and then households were divided into five groups or quintiles. Based on this measure, about 65 percent fell in the two lowest quintiles (i.e, poor groups); the remaining 35 percent were distributed in the three higher quintiles (i.e., rich groups).

More non-OFW households were poor compared to OFW households, and among the latter, mother-OFW households were the poorest; father-OFW households and those where both parents are OFWs were better off.

EDUCATION: OFWs' kids were doing well in school.

Seventy-three percent of the older children went to public schools. Of those attending private schools, a larger proportion consisted of children from OFW households.

In terms of the older children's school performance, majority of them were reported as "average" by their carers. About 26 percent were rated as "above average" and about 4 percent were considered by their carers to be "below average." Interestingly, more children from OFW households were reported as "above average" by their carers than were children from non-OFW households.

Carers were also asked whether they have received negative school reports about the children under their care. Only 13 percent of carers reported having received a negative school report, of which the high-

est proportion was for the children of non-OFW and mother-carer households.

CHAMPSEA also looked into pace of schooling to know whether a child's grade level is in keeping with his or her age. Overall, 30 percent of the children were considered "ahead" in their schooling; 54 percent were on pace; and 16 percent were lagging behind. Many of the children who were ahead in schooling were from other-carer households (36 percent) followed by mother-carer households (33 percent).

NUTRITION: OFWs' kids had better nutritional status.

About 14 percent of the children had stunting problems; 11 percent were overweight; and 13 percent were considered thin.

Children from non-OFW households had the highest percentage among those with stunting problems (17 percent). In contrast, children in father-carer households were the least likely to be stunted (8 percent).

Overweightness affected the children in other-carer households the most (13 percent) while children in father-carer households were the least affected (8 percent).

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH: OFWs' kids were generally happy, but kids of OFW-mothers needed more support.

Around 86 percent of the children reported that they were happy/very happy (some 28 percent said they were very happy). Roughly nine in ten children in non-OFW and in mother-carer households said they were happy/very happy.

Interestingly, proportionately more children in other-carer households (24 percent) claimed that they were not happy. In terms of family functioning, overall, about 60 percent of the children in the study belonged to well-functioning families. However, proportionately more children from mother-carer households (65 percent) and non-OFW households (61 percent) perceived their families as functioning well compared to those from father-carer and other-carer households (each at 52 percent).

In general, more children in non-OFW households claimed that they had someone to turn to should they need help than children in OFW households. Children in father-carer households were the least likely to say they liked how their family responded to them when they were angry, sad or happy. Meanwhile, more children in other-carer households claimed that their family never or hardly ever talked things over or shared time together compared with children from other types of households.

Different carers had different approaches to discipline when the children misbehaved. All types of carers generally used verbal means to discipline children. However, physical forms of punishment to discipline children were more common in non-OFW households. Among OFW households, mother-carers also tended to use physical punishment.

From the children's reports, across all types of households, the majority – 76 percent – claimed that their carer almost always/always treated them fairly; 21.3 percent said this happens sometimes; and 2 percent said this hardly ever/never happens. Interestingly, children in father-carer households reported the highest percentage among those saying they were

always treated fairly (62.1 percent) and none of the children in this type of household reported they were hardly ever or never treated fairly by their carer.

CONCLUSION

Mothers continue to be the primary carers of children in Filipino families and households. Among transnational or OFW households, changes happen when mothers or both parents migrate to work abroad, with grandmothers and fathers filling in the carer role. CHAMPSEA underscores the fact that the care of children remains a family responsibility.

OFW households definitely had an economic advantage over non-OFW households. This advantage also showed up in several indicators of children's well-being – comparable or better school performance and fewer stunting problems compared with children in non-OFW households.

Although most children reported being happy/very happy, the happiest were those from non-OFW and mother-carer

households and the least happy were children belonging to other-carer households. In general, more children from non-OFW and mother-carer households perceived their family as well-functioning. As suggested in past studies, CHAMPSEA findings also indicate that children of OFW mothers showed some psychological disadvantages compared with other children. It appears that father-carer and other-carer households need to improve communication and have more family activities. Overall, children across all types of households reported that their carer almost always/always treats them well. Forthcoming reports will employ multivariate approaches and will also analyze data from the qualitative phase to shed further light on these issues.

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For further information about the CHAMPSEA study, please visit:

<http://www.populationasia.org/CHAMPSEA.htm>

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