Commentary: *The Impact of Migration on Children in Developing Countries* by Andrea Rossi

This paper by Andrea Rossi is thoughtful, well organized and well written. The paper lays out a number of the issues that are faced by the impact of migration on children. Rather than commenting on what is there (which as I say is well done) let me comment on what is not there.

It is evident from this paper and the other by Harttgen and Klasen, there is a paucity of data on the impact of migration on children. Yet, there are other data sets that might be extremely useful for understanding or at least for generating hypotheses that could lead to understanding of these issues.

In the section on “The effects of migration on children left behind”, I was left wondering how these young people differ from children where a parent dies, where they are separated by divorce or where one parent is in the military and is stationed overseas for an extended period of time. Might there be lessons learned and hypotheses generated? For example, what we have found in US children who have a parent in the military, the impact of that separation on the children is directly proportional to how much the young people believe in “the cause” that their parents are fighting for. Might there be an analog for future exploration such that the impact of separation as a function of migration might be proportional to the impact that a child knowingly benefits from her or his parents migration and separation? In truth, living for extended periods of time, separated from at least one parent is a normative experience not just in the developing world, but in the industrialized world as well. What do we know about those situations and the factors that buffer those situations for children and how does it apply? That should be interesting to compare among those various groups for the purposes of generating possible future research.

The section on “Forced migration and trafficking”, as the author notes, has been widely published. It would be interesting to see what the long term outcomes are for young people who are unwillingly relocated. For example, The World Bank has done a fair amount of research on child soldiers, repatriation and outcomes over time. Looking at some of that literature, I think would be worthwhile. What do we know about young girls who trafficked so as to participate in the sex trade? Specifically, what do we know 5 and ten years later? What are their outcomes, education attainment, etc.?

A third set of issues that would be interesting to explore relates to interventions that have been developed within countries to mitigate the impact of migration on children. For example, in Israel a program for Ethiopian Jews – Parents And Children Together (PACT) – involves nearly 10,000 Ethiopian-Israeli children and is set up to minimize the educational, health and social disparities that arise from migration. What other models exist either in South-South or South-North migration?

Finally, the various elements identified in this paper do lend themselves to the development of a child impact scale that could be used to empirically explore the impact of migration on children.