Rossi’s paper is well organized and generally clear. The most complete and useful part is that relating to children left behind (chapter 2). The impact of migration on those children has been the focus of considerable attention by the research community. Rossi does a good job of detailing the main findings of the research literature. His review shows that there are few findings that could be translated into policy advice. In a revised version of the paper, it would be useful for the author to indicate whether the findings documented have more than descriptive relevance.

The paper shows that there is a dearth of research on migrant children in developing countries (chapter 4). With respect to this group, studies seem to focus only on those migrant children that are likely to be worse off, such as those who are employed at young ages or are exploited. When studies exist, they tend to focus on internal migrants rather than on those who have changed countries of residence. The situation in China has become the focus of research, partly because Chinese regulations hinder internal migration and promote the separation of families. In a revision of the paper, it would be useful to separate in chapter 4 the review of research on children who have migrated internationally from that on children who are internal migrants.

Chapter 1 of the report sets the stage of what is to come, but does so by considering disparate issues. The discussion on “south-to-south” migration does not present clearly that the component of “south-to-south” migration that is increasing most rapidly is the flow of contract workers to countries in the Middle East. Since those workers are barred from having their families with them, the widespread phenomenon of “children left behind” arises. This point should be made in the report.

The definition of children on the basis of the Convention of the Rights of the Child is fine but it is not useful analytically. My “position paper” offers an alternative way of considering different groups of children. Also, I would suggest that the focus be maintained on children under 18 and that youth (18-24) be considered only if the aim is to study the current situation of youth in relation to their childhood experiences.

The section on the definition of migration is not very helpful. Initially, the focus is on the definition provided by the United Nations for the identification of migration flows. Yet, most studies of migrant children are based on stocks and the section does not mention the use of place of birth or citizenship to characterize migrants. There is also no mention of the “second generation” or of how to define “children left behind”, a major focus of the report.
Chapter 3 is weak but mainly because, despite the importance of forced migration or trafficking in policy terms, serious studies on children affected by these types of movement are few.

Chapter 5 does not hang together well. The discussion on the endogeneity of the decision to migrate is interesting but it should be complemented by a discussion of the appropriate reference groups for analysis and the reference date of the information needed to build appropriate comparison groups for households with migrants. Such discussion can be found in International Migration Statistics (Bilsborrow et al, 1997).

The discussion of the meaning of household is interesting and makes an important point: according to the usual definition of household used in data collection, once a migrant leaves, he or she does not belong to the household any more. To be consistent with this concept, the term “household” should be dropped and the focus should be on particular family relationships. In discussing children, for instance, what matters is who the parents are and whether they cohabit with the child or not.

The discussion on “recipient households” is interesting but does not seem to bear much relation to children. It might be better if this section would consider whether it is feasible to obtain reasonably good retrospective data on certain processes that would permit the analyst to control for the longer-term effects of migration. For instance, if a survey were focusing on children and not on migrants only, it could ask whether the father and mother of each child in a household is also living in the household. If not, the cause could be ascertained as: death, desertion, divorce or separation, temporary internal migration, temporary emigration, long-term emigration. Discussing concrete examples of this type would be useful to start building a child-centred perspective in migration research.