

# RETHINKING PARENTING FOR ECONOMIC MIGRANTS IN EAST AFRICA

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PERSPECTIVES

April 2015



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**Our mission** is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

Published by:  
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With financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

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# FOREWORD

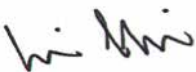
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The expansive opportunities created by the private sector in East Africa are a source of employment and livelihoods for millions of workers in the region. Invariably, because of the nature of business, individuals are often necessitated to migrate in order to attain employment. Economic migration in itself is not a new phenomenon and several studies have highlighted its prevalence as an important strategy for improving household livelihoods.

What however is distinct about this study is the emphasis on the impacts of migration on parents and children. Most studies in this regards have tended to focus on the impacts of parental migration on children. Many studies have shown that in certain cases and condition, migration improves the wellbeing of children particularly in terms of health and education while other studies have shown detrimental impacts arising from parental migration. Few studies have delved on the psycho social impacts of parental migration on children, particularly left-behind children. Even fewer studies have delved on the impact of parental migration on the parents themselves.

This study explores these issues and underlies the child protection challenges that result due to parental migration. But it also dares to go further and identify whether there is a business case for companies to concern themselves with issues that pertain to parenting, employee migration and children's rights. Increasingly, the private sector finds itself addressing emerging issues that are preeminently social in nature. In the new business realm where stakeholders and share value are the theme words, companies can hardly ignore social and environmental issues that are of concern to their stakeholders. This creates a poignant case for the consideration of workers, who are critical stakeholders, and the challenges and responsibilities that they face, even privately.

With this study, Ufadhili Trust hopes to create dialogue and debate on the role of the private sector in society focusing on children, parent and economic migrants.



**Mumo Kivuitu**  
**Executive Director**  
**Ufadhili Trust**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the contribution made by many people to make this study possible. Without their input, it would have been difficult, if not impossible to collect and compile this report. The great support from Save the Children team: John Njoka, Anthony Njoroge, Farida Bascha, Susan Mbugua, Rebecca Theuri, Phyllis Karanja, Elizabeth Wangui, Ambreen Jamal and Dismus Obegi, is highly appreciated.

Thanks to all respondents from Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. It may not be possible to mention you by name but we appreciate the information you provided. The research assistants namely; Katamba James, Mugoya Taddeo, Bukyangana Richard, Mbabazi Prosy, Barongo Angela, Tugezeeku Kefa, Turikumwe Daniel, Mujiyambere Methodius, Ntaweera Felix, Atuhairu Martha, Nakafeero Sylvia, Nantongo Catherine, Charity Auma Okumu, Kennedy Onyango, Ezekiel Kiago and Annie Wangui Njoroge. Your work is appreciated.

Special thanks to the team leaders from Uganda; Mboijana Bills and Hannington Wako. The lead research team for the regional work led by Stephen Odiambo Juma and Mbugua Kamau. Sincere thanks go to Ufadhili Trust team led by Mumo Kivuitu the executive director, Stephen Irungu, Maina Wambugu, Elizabeth Mutua and Evelyn Kemunto for working hard to accomplish the study. In particular, Ufadhili acknowledges the exceptional input of Stephen Irungu who tirelessly led this process in entirety.

Finally, our gratitude to all who contributed in one way or another in the completion of the study. Ufadhili Trust acknowledge the financial support from Save the Children. The study would not have been possible without your support.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Economic migration continues to be a key livelihood strategy for households in East Africa. Despite the financial benefits through remittances, economic migration has had social costs on the Migrant Parents<sup>1</sup> and the affected children. With specific focus on the private sector in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda this report presents four key issues namely, the characteristics of Migrant Parents; child support strategies and mechanisms; the impact of migration on the migrant parent and left-behind children; and finally, child support expectations for the migrant parents.

Across the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, migrant parents comprise a heterogeneous population made up of mostly fairly educated, married parents that migrate with all their children; others that leave behind all their children; and finally, parents that migrate with some children and leave some children behind. Invariably, most migrant parents migrate with all their children notably female parents and young migrant parents. The most important reason for migrating with children was to provide better parental care. Despite this, many migrant parents still have to leave their children behind with Uganda emerging as the most affected country. The most important reason for leaving children behind was the high cost of living at the place of current residence of the parent. .

Most migrant parents are from different administrative regions other than their current residence. This implies that migration is still predominantly rural to urban. Social capital (friends and relatives) tend to motivate migration through sharing information on economic opportunities. Reliance on the local media for job information is higher in Uganda and Rwanda compared to Kenya while reliance on the company notice board was higher in Rwanda compared to Kenya and Uganda.

Most migrant parents noted financial pressure as the most pressing child raising challenge. Majority earn below US\$ 235 on average per month from their current job which is the main source of their household income. Other notable child raising challenges include difficulty in accessing better health services, difficulty in accessing better educational opportunities for children, and diminishing parental responsibility. The most common broad child-support strategies adopted by parents include migrating with children or leaving children behind complemented with specific mechanisms for child care. Most migrant parents who migrated with their children expressed satisfaction with the decision to migrate with all their children. Most migrant parents, especially in Kenya and Uganda, expressed dissatisfaction with the decision to leave their children behind.

<sup>1</sup> A contracted working parent in the private sector who migrated with all children, or left behind all children or migrated with some children and left some behind.

Female parents were particularly dissatisfied with this decision. e. However, many migrant parents in Rwanda and Kenya expressed satisfaction with the decision to leave their children behind particularly female parents in Rwanda.

The most popular child-support mechanisms for migrant parents with left-behind children include alternate parenting, maintaining contact with left-behind children, and sending remittance. Spouses as the alternate caregiver, is the most popular arrangement followed by the use of relatives. The latter was most popular in Uganda and moderately in Kenya but less popular in Rwanda. Older siblings as alternate care was the least popular approach among migrant parents across the three countries. Making telephone calls, travelling back home, or bringing children to visit are the most popular mechanisms for maintaining contact with left behind children. Sending mails on the other hand was the least popular. Most migrant parents send between US\$ 11 and US\$ 58 in remittance per month with Rwanda reporting the highest amounts. However, across the countries non-statutory parental benefits policy is still at infancy for most employers in the private sector with the most common benefits being financial allowances, medical cover and day off.

The most common impact of migration on the migrant parents across the countries include financial pressure, diminishing parental responsibility, loss of attachment with children, feeling worried about children, feeling inadequate and feeling stressed. Specific impacts on work include feeling unhappy and unenthusiastic at the workplace, feeling distracted at work, lack of commitment at work and frequent errors. Impact of parental migration on left-behind children comprise limited parental care, lack of quality education and health facilities, loneliness and financial constraints.

The left-behind children affirmed feeling worried and insecure, helplessness, having a low self-esteem, lacking in parental guidance, participation in child labour, exposure to harm and vulnerability to peer pressure. Across countries left-behind children are more likely to suffer health, education, psychosocial-related problems. Notably, health-related emergencies were more frequent across countries. However, psychosocial-related problems were most common in Rwanda compared to Kenya and Uganda.

Finally, in terms of child-support expectations, migrant parents across the three countries demonstrated an overwhelming support for non-statutory parental benefit policies at the workplace. The three most important specific child-support expectations include access to educational opportunities, access to health services, and access to housing subsidies.

In light of the findings, the study recommends:

- The development of tools to promote a child friendly private sector
- Campaigns to encourage the private sector to invest in non-statutory parental benefits that enhances accessibility to affordable health services, schools and housing.
- There is a need to create awareness and training on child rights and sustainable business principles at workplace to improve child rights and protection systems
- Financial pressure emerged as the major pressing need in parenting. There thus there is need to work with the governments to develop national guidelines for a living wage.
- The private sector can benefit greatly from the development of a comprehensive profile of their human resource to understand them better and efficiently address their needs and challenges.
- The need to explore underlying explanations for satisfaction with leaving children behind as expressed by female migrant parents in Kenya and Rwanda.
- The need to conduct baseline survey in other countries of the East Africa region to obtain further insights on the impacts of economic migration and child protection perspectives for the private sector in East Africa.
- Enhanced cooperation with NGO's on child rights and wellbeing: Specialized NGO assistance can provide effective support towards workers' community integration, parenting education and child protection mechanisms

# INTRODUCTION

Economic migration continues to be a key livelihood strategy for households in East Africa. Despite the financial benefits that accrue from remittances, economic migration has social costs on the Migrant Parents<sup>2</sup> and the affected children. With a specific focus on Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, this report presents findings on the impact of economic migration on the migrant parents and the left-behind children. The first section presents the background to the study, the study objectives, scope and limitations of the study, and finally, the study methodology. Section two discusses cross-country summary findings with specific focus on: characteristics of migrant parents; child support strategies and mechanisms; the impacts of migration on the migrant parent and left-behind children; and finally, child support expectations for migrant parents. The final section presents conclusions and recommendations.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Scholarship on human migration shows that economic migration continues to be a major livelihood strategy for many households in East Africa. Within the region, internal migration is notably a key feature of human mobility. It is also observed that rural-urban migration that is mostly circular<sup>3</sup> has been on the increase particularly for employment and livelihoods.<sup>4</sup>

The potential of economic migration to improve the household economy through remittances is hardly contested. Consequently, economic migration has in turn not only involved parents but drawn in children, migrating with parents, and children as independent migrants.<sup>5</sup> More crucially nonetheless, are the left-behind children as a result of parental migration. However, despite the financial returns in remittance, the flipside involves social costs that individuals directly involved and affected incur as a result of economic migration.

Studies have reported mixed results on the impacts of parental migration on children's schooling, health, psychosocial wellbeing, and involvement in child labour.<sup>6</sup> Findings show that the left-behind children are the most affected in case of parental migration. Notably though, the continued focus on children as the exclusive recipients

of the social costs of migration has instead masked the social costs and impacts on the migrant parents. Indeed, the World Migration Report 2013 sought to renew the focus on the migrant's well-being demonstrating a paradigm shift.

The background paper<sup>7</sup> to this study noted that within the parent-children nexus, economic migration impacts on both individuals involved. The competing demands of work and parenting affect the migrant parent's workplace productivity and parenting responsibilities. Nevertheless, limited information exists on the social cost of economic migration on the migrant parents in East Africa. Therefore, a deliberate focus on the migrant parents deepens understanding on child-care dynamics for migrant parents given their crucial role in the child's well-being. Additionally, limited information exists on the role of the private sector in child protection and child rights. It is against this background that this study examined the social costs of economic migration on Left-Behind Children and the Migrant Parents in the private sector in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda with the aim to ascertain perspectives for Child protection.

## 1.2 SPECIFIC STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study sought to:

- Describe Migrant Parents in private sector in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda.
- Determine the child-support strategies and mechanisms for Migrant Parents.
- Establish the impacts of migration on the migrant parent's and the left-behind children.
- Establish the child support expectations for migrant parents.

## 1.3 SCOPE OF STUDY

The study surveyed a total of 491 respondents across three countries in East Africa namely; Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. In Kenya, the study surveyed 183 Migrant Parents (M=53.6%, F=46.4%) from private sector organisations within Nairobi County and its environs. In Uganda, the study surveyed 157 migrant parents (M=56.7%, F=43.3%) from private sector organisations within Kampala metropolis and its environs, while in Rwanda, the study surveyed 151 migrant parents (M=64.2%, F=35.8%) from private sector organisations in Kigali and its environs.

The participants drawn from the private sector across the three countries comprised: the following sectors - Agriculture/Agribusiness (Flower, Fishing), Construction, Education, Finance (Banking, Sacco), Health, Manufacturing, Non-profit, Petroleum (Oil and Gas),

<sup>7</sup> Ufadhili (2013) Impacts of Parental Migration on Affected Children: Empirical Gaps within the Eastern Africa Region: Background Paper.

<sup>2</sup> A contracted working parent in the private sector who migrated with all children, or left behind all children or migrated with some children and left some behind.

<sup>3</sup> Temporary and usually repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host areas, typically for the purpose of employment. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circular\\_migration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circular_migration)

<sup>4</sup> See Black et al. (2004)

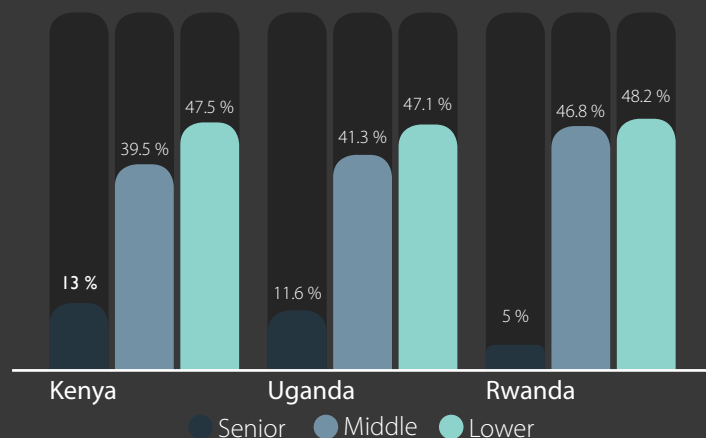
<sup>5</sup> See Shaw, 2007; Kinuthia, 2013; De la Garza, 2010; Hashim, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> See Rossi, 2008. Antman, 2012a; Onyango, 2011; Antai, 2010.



Service Industry (Accounting, Insurance, Hairdressing, and Security), Telecommunication, Tourism and Hospitality, Trade (Supermarket and Hardware), Transport/ Clearing and Forwarding. See Annex I for respondent distribution across sectors. Majority of the respondent were of perceived middle and lower cadre. Few were from perceived senior positions as shown in *Figure 1*.

**Figure 1:** Respondents perceived Job Cadre



Source: **Baseline survey**

The study conducted Focus Group Discussions with left-behind children and with Migrant Parents. Key Informant Interviews were conducted with teachers, labour union officials and management staff in selected organizations across the three countries.

#### 1.4 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

- Limited sample size per country hence less external validity within the respective country.
- Lack of sampling frame for migrant working parents at organisational level
- Inconsistent criteria for categorisation of private sector organisations across the countries
- Difficulty achieving a balanced gender distribution across the countries
- Limited availability by private sector organisations to participate in the study

#### 1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a Case Study strategy specifically targeting migrant parents employed in the private sector organisations in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. The screening criterion comprised the migration status, job cadre and the nature of employment contract targeting only salaried migrant parents. The study also specifically targeted the Left-Behind children in the respective countries.

The participating organizations were purposively sampled based on availability of migrant parents as defined in the study, the sector category in order to achieve variance and availability of the organisation to participate in the study. The unit of analysis was the individual migrant parent identified through purposive sampling at the workplace. Where applicable the study used snowballing method to reach other potential respondents within the respective organisation in order to establish a feasible sample.

The Left-Behind children were identified and purposively sampled through rural schools, within the outskirts of the capital cities of respective countries. The school administration supported the identification of the left-behind children and accessing their alternate caregivers. The study team explained the objectives of the study to the caregivers and the child participants including their rights in participating in the study. Consent forms that assured confidentiality were signed by both the alternate caregivers and the child participants.

The study surveyed 491 migrant parents through interviewer-administered structured questionnaire. Qualitative data was obtained through Focus Group Discussion with left-behind children, Migrant Parents and through Key Informant Interviews. Interview schedules used were tailored appropriately to the respondents. The research teams across the countries were trained and using the same study tools that were piloted and reviewed as appropriate to acknowledge specific country dynamics.

The study used Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) program Version 20 and Ms Excel to analyse quantitative data based on the study objectives. Thematic Analysis was the key analytic method for qualitative data. The voices of the children were also captured both electronically and non-electronically to complement the emerging themes.

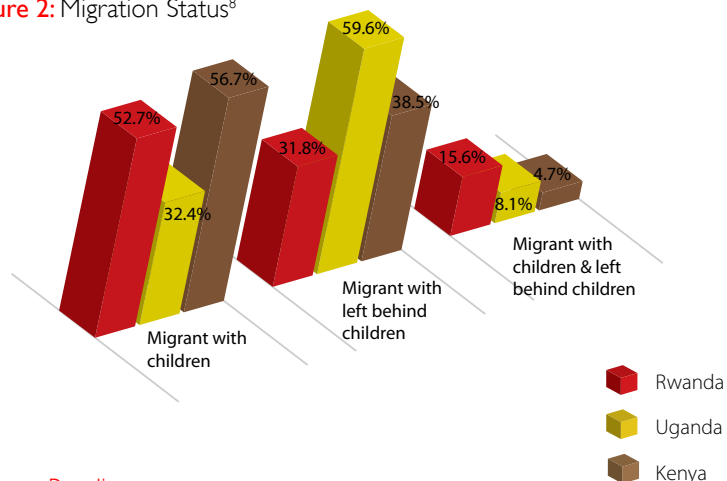


## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### I. MIGRANT PARENTS IN EAST AFRICA

The study established three categories of migrant parents across the countries. Migrant with children comprised 52.7% in Kenya, 32.4% in Uganda, and 56.7% in Rwanda. Migrant with all children left behind comprised 31.8% in Kenya, 59.6% in Uganda, and 38.5% in Rwanda. Migrant with some children and some left-behind children comprised 15.6% in Kenya, 8.1% in Uganda, and 4.7% in Rwanda as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Migration Status<sup>8</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

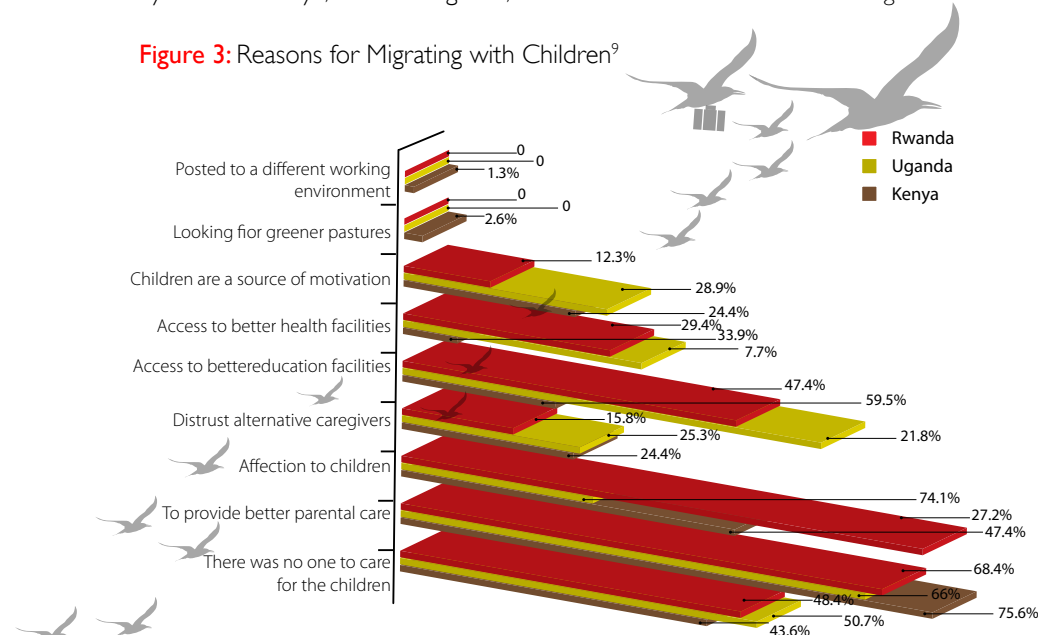
The findings show that migrant parents in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda comprise a heterogeneous population comprised of parents that migrate with all their children; parents that leave behind all their children; and finally, parents that migrate with some children and leave some behind.

Increasingly, most migrant parents in Kenya and Rwanda prefer to migrate with their children with majority being female. This finding underscores the importance of parental presence in the child's development. The most important reason was to provide better parental care as reported by 75.6% in Kenya and 66% in Uganda. Affection to the children was the most important reason in Rwanda as reported by

<sup>8</sup> Question: Which situation best describes your migration status?

74.1%. The second most important reason for migrating with all children in Kenya was affection to children as reported by 47.4%, access to educational facilities for Uganda (59.5%), and to providing for better parental care for Rwanda (68.4%). The third most important reason across all the three countries was lack of alternate care as reported by 43.6% in Kenya, 50.7% in Uganda, and 48.4% in Rwanda as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Reasons for Migrating with Children<sup>9</sup>

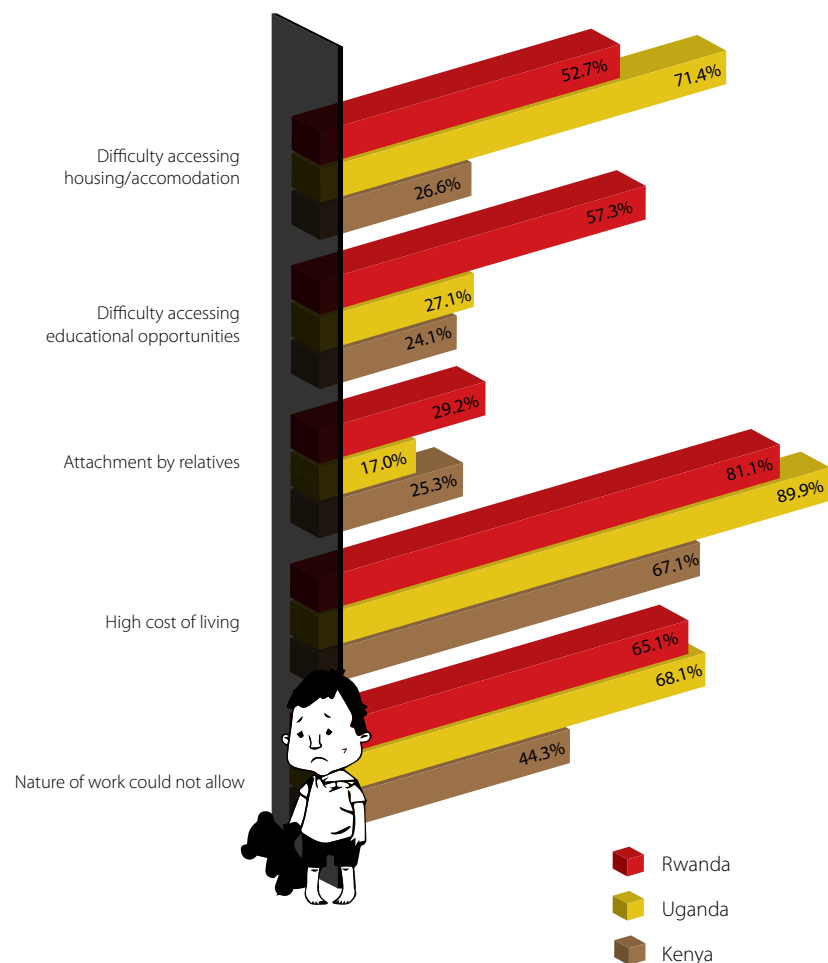


Source: Baseline survey

However, many migrant parents still have to leave their children behind with Uganda emerging as the most affected. Male migrant parents were dominant in this regard across the countries. This suggests that left-behind children phenomenon is likely to remain a critical issue in development debate given the increase in economic activities in the region. The most important reason was high cost of living as reported by 67.1% in Kenya, 89.9% in Uganda, and 81.1% in Rwanda. However, the second and the third most important reasons included nature of work (44.3%) and difficulty in accessing housing and accommodation (26.6%) for Kenya, difficulty in accessing housing and accommodation (71.4%) and nature of the work could not allow (68.1%). In Rwanda, the nature of the work could not allow (65.1%) and difficulty in accessing educational opportunities (57.3%) were the other reasons as shown in Figure 4.

<sup>9</sup> Multi response question: What were your main reasons for migrating with children? (At least three options in order of importance)

**Figure 4:** Reasons for leaving children behind<sup>10</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

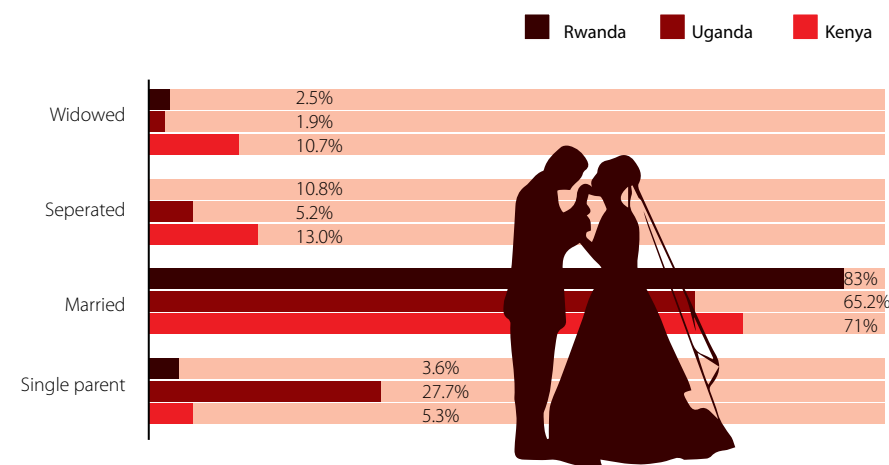
This finding implies that high cost of living, associated difficulties of finding suitable accommodation, and the nature of work continues to be a deterrent to most migrant parents migrating with their children.

<sup>10</sup> Multi-response question: What were your main reasons for leaving children behind? (At least three options in order of importance)

## Marital Status

In terms of marital status, 72.4% of migrant parents in Kenya were married, 65.2% for Uganda, and 83% for Rwanda. Separated parents comprised 12.2% for Kenya, 5.2% for Uganda and 10.8% for Rwanda while single parents comprised 5.5% for Kenya, 27.7% for Uganda, and 3.6% for Rwanda. As shown in Figure 5, 9.9% of migrant parents in Kenya, 1.9% in Uganda, and 2.5% in Rwanda was widowed.

**Figure 5:** Marital Status<sup>11</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

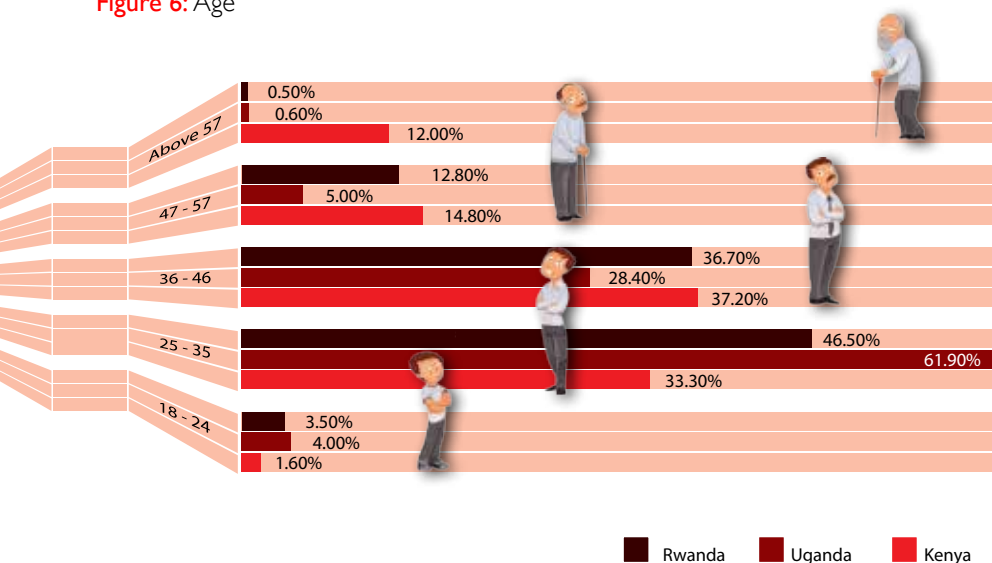
Majority of migrant parents with children as well as migrants with left-behind children were married. This finding implies that marital status had no major influence on the decision to migrate with children or leave children behind.

## Age

Most of the parents interviewed in Kenya were aged between 36 and 46 years (37.2%), while in Uganda and Rwanda most migrant parents were aged between 25 to 35 years comprising 61.9% and 46.5% respectively. As shown in Figure 6, 33.3% of migrant parents in Kenya were aged 25-35 while those aged between 35 to 46 years comprised 28.4% in Uganda and 36.7% in Rwanda.

<sup>11</sup> Question: What is your marital status?

Figure 6: Age



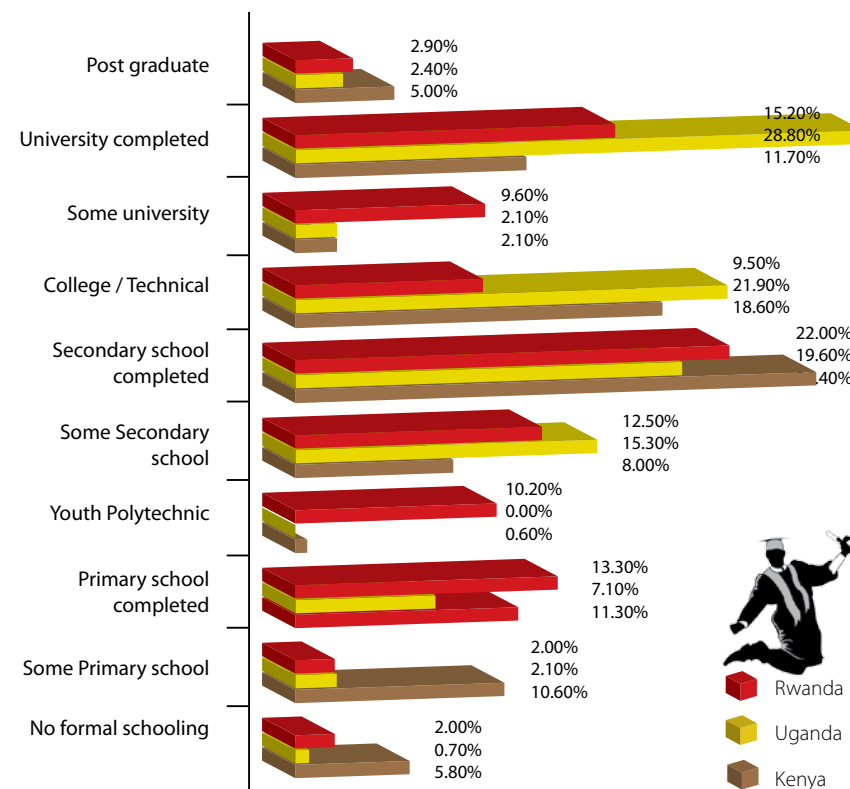
Source: Baseline survey

Most migrant parents across the three countries were aged between 25-35 years and 36-46 years. However, in Kenya most migrant parents were aged 36-46 years compared to 25-35 years for Uganda and Rwanda. Across countries most migrant parent with children were aged between 25-35 years. This could be explained by the young age of the children that require more parental attention.

## Education

Migrant parents who had completed secondary education comprised 26.4% for Kenya, 19.6% for Uganda, and 22% for Rwanda. Those who had completed college education for Kenya comprised 18.6%, 21.9% for Uganda, and 9.5% for Rwanda. Findings show that migrant parents are educated and as shown in Figure 7, 11.7% had attained university education for Kenya, 28.8% for Uganda, and 16.2% for Rwanda.

Figure 7: Highest Level of Education Attained



Source: Baseline survey

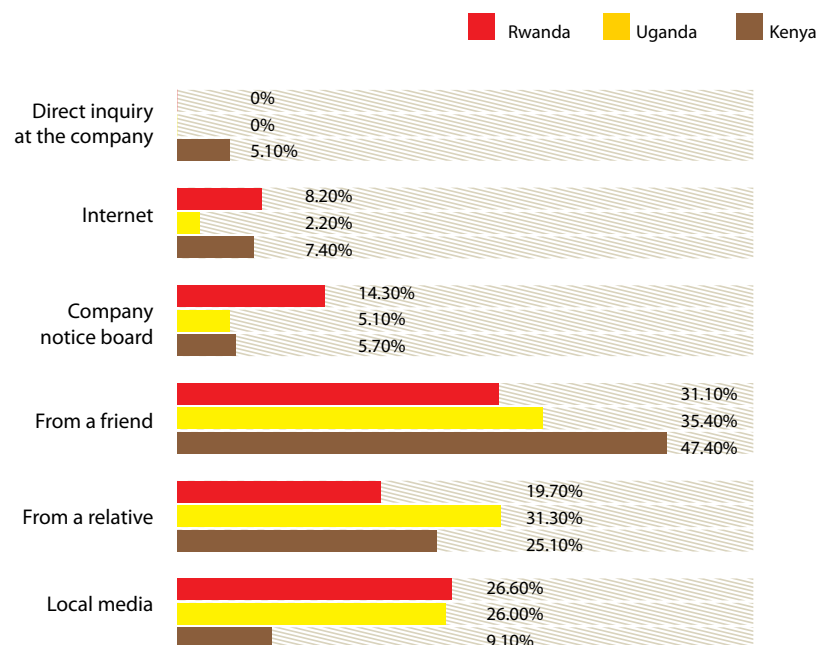
In regard to highest level of education attained, findings show that migrant parents across the three countries are fairly well educated with majority having attained at least secondary and tertiary level education. More migrant parents in Kenya and Rwanda had completed secondary compared to Uganda. However, more migrant parents in Uganda had completed university education compared to Kenya and Rwanda. Across countries country analysis shows that education is positively correlated to migration. Most migrant parents who had completed at least secondary education migrated with children. This could be as a result of better income comparatively and awareness on the importance of parental presence in child upbringing. However, in Uganda most migrant parents with similar education attainment had left-behind their children. This implies disparities across countries in terms of average income and cost of living.

## Origin

The study found that majority of migrant parents across the three countries were from their home regions in their countries other than the capital where they work. This indicates that migration remains largely rural-urban with perceived availability of livelihood opportunities associated with the urban areas. Local networks of friends and relatives seem to be key motivators to migrate.

Study findings show that migrant parents relied more on friends as a source of information for their current jobs. These comprised 47.4% in Kenya, 35.4% in Uganda, and 31.1% in Rwanda. Those that relied on relatives for job information comprised 25.1% in Kenya, 31.3% in Uganda, and 19.7% in Rwanda. Use of local media for job information comprised 9.1% for Kenya, 26% in Uganda, and 26.6% in Rwanda. Other key sources for job information included use of company notice board as reported by 5.7% for Kenya, 5.1 for Uganda, and 14.3% in Rwanda. Use of the internet for job information comprised 7.4% for Kenya, 2.2% for Uganda, and 8.2% for Rwanda. As shown in Figure 8, 5.1% in Kenya were noted to have inquired for the job in person from the employing company.

**Figure 8:** Source of Job Information

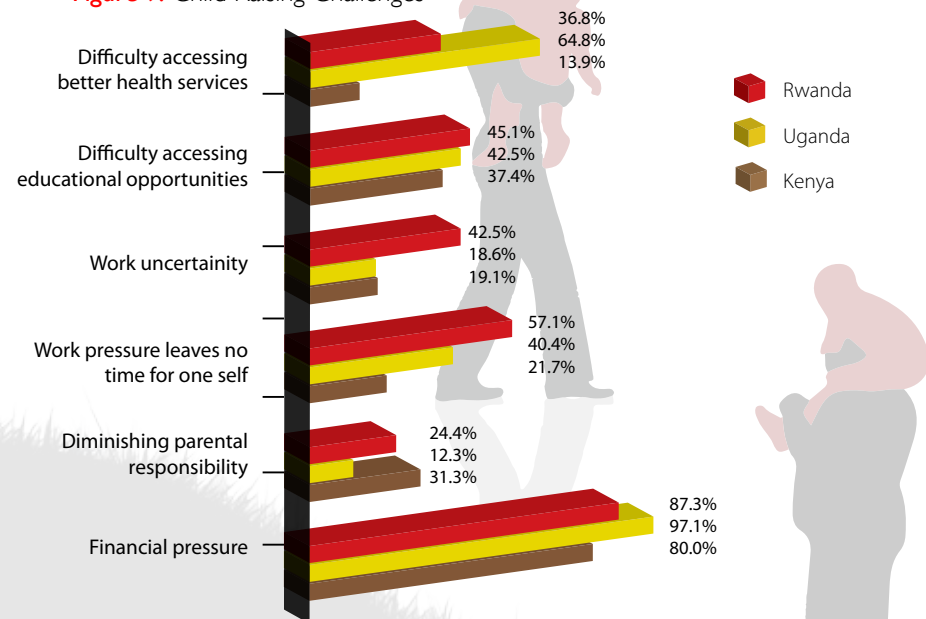


Source: Baseline survey

Across the countries, most migrant parents rely on friends for job information compared to relatives. However, migrant parents in Uganda and Rwanda are more likely to rely on the local media for information of job compared to Kenya. Majority of migrant parents in Rwanda are likely to use company notice boards for job information compared to Kenya and Uganda while most migrant parents in Kenya and Rwanda are more likely to use the internet for job information compared to Uganda.

In terms of child raising challenges, the most common child raising challenge for migrant parents was financial pressure as reported by 80% of migrant parents in Kenya, 97.1% in Uganda, and 87.3% in Rwanda. However, the second and third most important child raising challenges included difficulty in accessing educational opportunities (37.4%) and diminishing parental responsibility (31.3%) for Kenya, difficulty in accessing better health services (64.8%) and difficulty in accessing educational opportunities (42.5%) for Uganda, Work pressure (57.1%) and difficulty in accessing educational opportunities (45.1%) were other notable challenges for Rwanda as shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9:** Child Raising Challenges<sup>12</sup>



<sup>12</sup> Multi-response question: If living with your children, what child-raising challenges do you experience as a migrant parent? (At least three options in order of importance).

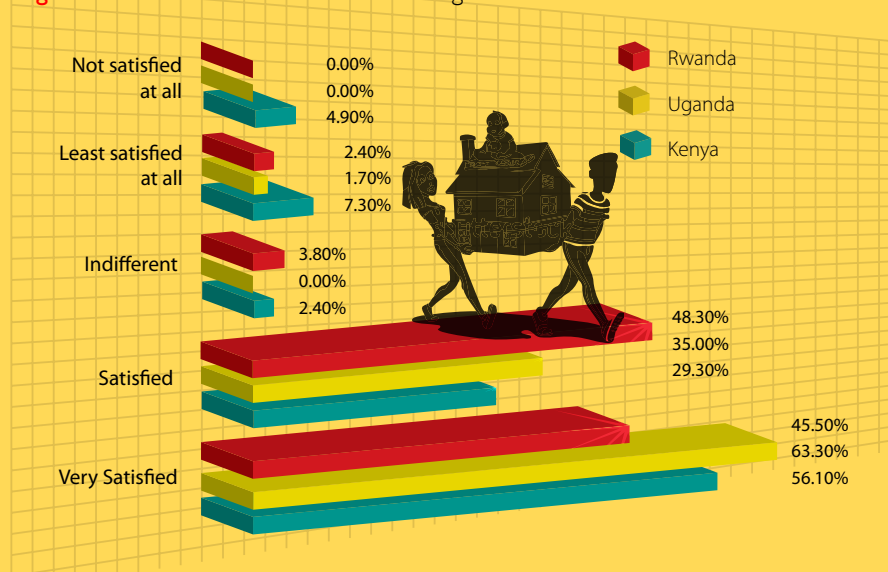
Source: Baseline survey

Migrant parents demonstrated outright concern for the well-being of their children despite limited resources among other child raising challenges. Although financial pressure emerged the major child raising challenge across the countries, variations existed in terms of second and third most important challenges. Migrant parents in Uganda ranked difficulty in accessing better health services as second most pressing compared to difficulty in accessing better educational opportunities reported in Kenya and work pressure in Rwanda. Uganda and Rwanda ranked difficulty in accessing better educational opportunities as third most pressing challenge compared to Kenya's diminishing parental responsibility.

## 2. STRATEGIES FOR CHILD SUPPORT

The study sought to establish the child-support strategies for migrant parents. The first broad strategy was to migrate with all children. This comprised 52.7% in Kenya, 32.4% in Uganda, and 56.7% in Rwanda. Majority of migrant parents across the countries were very satisfied with the decision to migrate with children as reported by 63.3% in Uganda, 56.1% in Kenya, and 45.5% in Rwanda. While 48.3% in Rwanda, 35% in Uganda, and 29.3% in Kenya migrant parents reported they were satisfied. However, compared to Rwanda and Uganda migrant parents in Kenya reported the highest percentage of those who were least satisfied (7.3%) and not satisfied at all (4.9%) as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with decision to migrate with children<sup>13</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

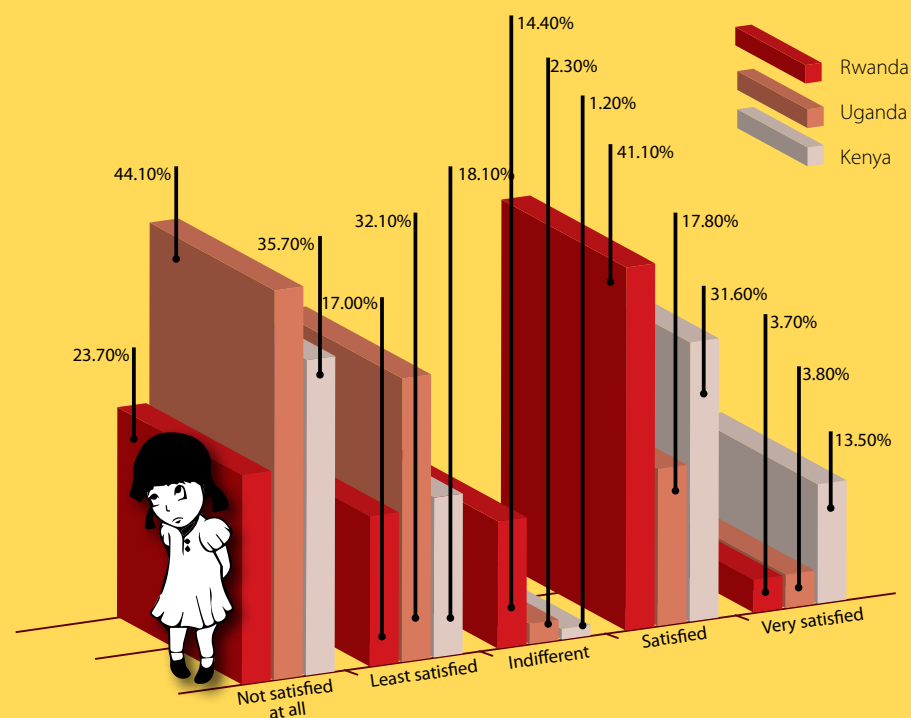
Across countries, this finding implies that most migrant parents with children were either satisfied or very satisfied with the decision to migrate with all children, despite child raising challenges experienced. This could be explained as an opportunity to provide better parental care especially emotional support.

The second broad strategy entailed leaving all children behind. This comprised 31.8% of migrant parents in Kenya, 59.6% in Uganda, and 38.5% in Rwanda. Majority of the respondents in Kenya (63.8%) and Uganda (76.2%) were either not satisfied at all or

<sup>13</sup> Question: To what extent are you satisfied with your decision to migrate with children?

least satisfied with the decision to leave their children behind. About 40.7% migrant parents expressed dissatisfaction with the decision and notably, more males than females. In both countries more males were either satisfied or very satisfied with decision to leave children behind compared to female. However, as shown in *Figure 11*, most of the migrant parents (41.1%) in Rwanda were satisfied with the decision to leave their children behind compared to Kenya (31.6%) and Uganda (17.8%). Particularly, more female were satisfied with the decision compared to male.

**Figure 11:** Satisfaction with decision to leave children behind<sup>14</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

However, most migrant parents with left-behind children across the countries expressed dissatisfaction with the decision to leave children behind with most being female. Most migrant parents in Kenya and Rwanda expressed satisfaction with the decision most of whom are female for Rwanda.

<sup>14</sup> To what extent are you satisfied with your decision to leave children behind?

### 3. SPECIFIC MECHANISMS FOR CHILD SUPPORT

#### Alternate Parenting

The study further established the specific child-support mechanisms instituted by migrant parents across the three countries. Alternate parenting emerged as a key mechanism for migrant parents with left-behind children. Migrant parents with left-behind children who had their children looked after by their spouses comprised 59.1% in Kenya, 45.6% in Uganda, and 70.5% in Rwanda. Approval of the mechanism as effective or very effective was reported by a combined 42.9% in Kenya, 89.4% in Uganda, and 90.3% in Rwanda. The left-behind children looked after by a relative was reported by 39% migrant parents in Kenya, 50.2% in Uganda, and 21.5% in Rwanda. Approval of the mechanism as effective or very effective was reported by a combined 59.6% in Kenya, 86.9% in Uganda, and 35.7% in Rwanda. Lastly, as shown in Table 1, left-behind children looked after by older siblings comprised 6.5% in Kenya, 4.1% in Uganda, and 8% in Rwanda.

**Table 1:** Alternate Parenting

| If living separately from your children, under whose care are your children? |  | Country |        |        |
|--|--|---------|--------|--------|
|  | How effective would you consider your child care support mechanism | Kenya   | Uganda | Rwanda |
| Looked after by spouse   |  | 59.1%   | 45.6%  | 70.5%  |
|  | Not effective  | 0.0%    | 2.9%   | 1.9%   |
|  | Somewhat effective   | 57.1%   | 7.7%   | 7.7%   |
|  | Effective  | 12.9%   | 22.1%  | 60.0%  |
|  | Very effective   | 30.0%   | 67.3%  | 30.3%  |
| Looked after by relative   |  | 39%     | 50.2%  | 21.5%  |
|  | Not effective  | 3.8%    | 0.0%   | 7.1%   |
|  | Somewhat effective   | 36.5%   | 13.1%  | 57.1%  |
|  | Effective  | 35.6%   | 66.7%  | 35.7%  |
|  | Very effective   | 24.0%   | 20.2%  | 0.0%   |



|                                |                    |       |        |       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Looked after by older siblings |                    | 6.5%  | 4.1%   | 8%    |
|                                | Not effective      | 41.7% | 0.0%   | 0.0%  |
|                                | Somewhat effective | 25.0% | 0.0%   | 50.0% |
|                                | Effective          | 16.7% | 100.0% | 50.0% |
|                                | Very effective     | 16.7% | 0.0%   | 0.0%  |

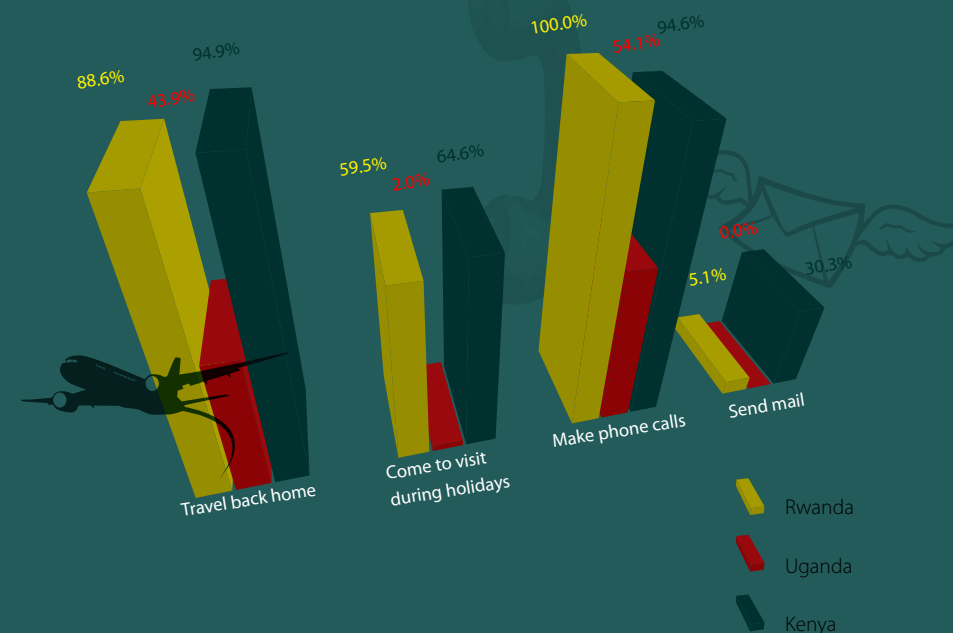
Source: Baseline survey

This finding implies that social capital is not only valuable in sharing information on economic opportunities but also child-support mechanism such as alternate parenting. Across the countries, most migrant parents with left-behind children prefer spouses as alternate parents. On evaluation by perception of effectiveness of the mechanism, most migrant parents in Rwanda and Uganda approved the choice of the spouse as effective compared to Kenya. An aggregated total of 57.1% migrant parents in Kenya perceived the mechanism as just somewhat effective majority of who were female. This implies that female migrants whose children are under the care of the spouse do not consider male counterparts as adequate caregivers given that culturally and in most households they also double as breadwinners and hardly spend quality time to understand emotional needs of the children.

However, migrant parents in Uganda were more likely to leave their left-behind children under the care of a relative compared to Kenya and Rwanda. More migrant parents in Uganda and Kenya approved the choice of looked after by relative as effective compared to Rwanda. Older siblings as alternate parenting option was apparently unpopular across the three countries.

Another mechanism was maintaining contact with the left-behind children. This was manifested through making phone calls as reported by 100% in Kenya, 54.1% in Uganda and 94.6% in Rwanda. Travelling back home emerged as the second most preferred as reported by 88.6% in Kenya, 43.9% in Uganda, and 94.9% in Rwanda. Bringing children to visit during the holidays was the third most popular as reported by 59.5% in Kenya, 2% in Uganda, and 64.6% in Rwanda. Sending mails comprised 30.3% in Rwanda, 5.1% in Kenya. None reported sending mails in Uganda as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Maintaining contact with children<sup>15</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

Migrant parents across the countries maintained contact with the left-behind children through telephone, travelling home and bringing children for visit during school holidays. In Kenya and Rwanda more migrant parents were likely to make phone calls and travel back home to keep in touch with left-behind children compared to Uganda. Sending mails remain the most unpopular way to maintain contact with left-behind children across the countries but more popular in Rwanda compared to Kenya and Uganda.

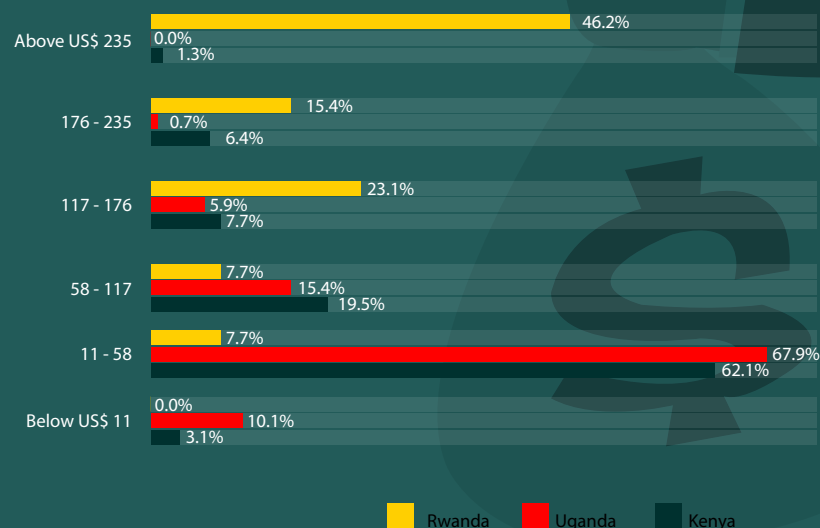
Finally, sending remittance emerged as another popular mechanism. Majority of the respondents in Kenya (62.1%) and Uganda (67.9%) reported sending an average of between US\$<sup>16</sup> 11 and US\$ 58 monthly. In Rwanda an aggregate 46.2% send above US\$ 235 per month compared to 1.3% in Kenya while none reported sending the same amount for Uganda as shown in Figure 13.

<sup>15</sup> Multi-response question: If living separately from your children, how do you maintain contact with your children? (At least three options in order of importance).

<sup>16</sup> 1 US \$=KES 85 Exchange rate (Kenya Shilling used as base rate)



Figure 13: Remittance sent to family



Source: Baseline survey

These findings show that migrant parents directly support the left-behind children through remittance both in kind and in monetary form mostly from the current jobs which forms the household main source of income. Majority of the respondents in Kenya (89.8%), Uganda (93.2%) and Rwanda (100%), the current job was the main source of household income as shown in Figure 14.

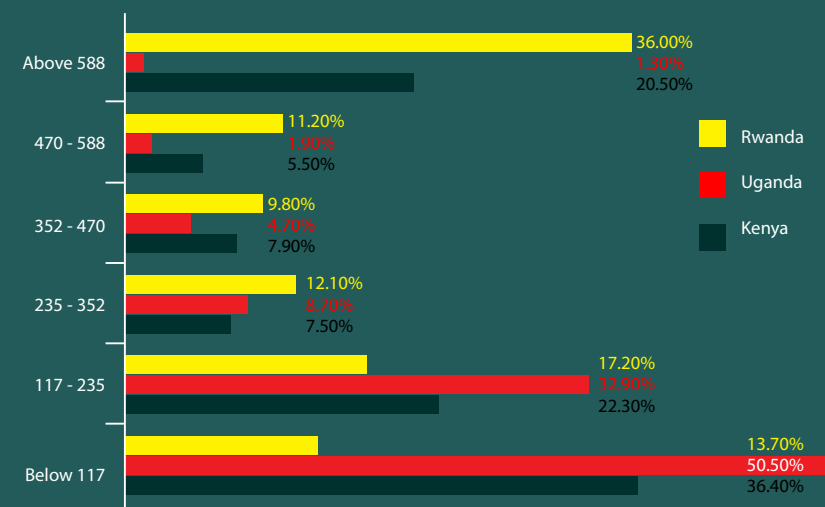
Figure 14: Main source of income stated as current job



Source: Baseline survey

However, for majority migrant parents, the amount remitted suffers limitations of low income. Despite the minimum wage where applicable, most migrant parents indicated that they earn less than US\$ 3.9 per day, with findings showing an average income below US\$ 117 standing at 36.4% in Kenya, 50.5% in Uganda, and 13.7% in Rwanda. Those earning a monthly average between US\$ 117 and 235 comprised 22.3% in Kenya, 32.9% in Uganda, and 17.2% in Rwanda. Migrant parents earning a monthly average of above US\$ 588 comprised 20.5% in Kenya, 1.3% in Uganda, and 36% in Rwanda as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Average Monthly Income from Main Source



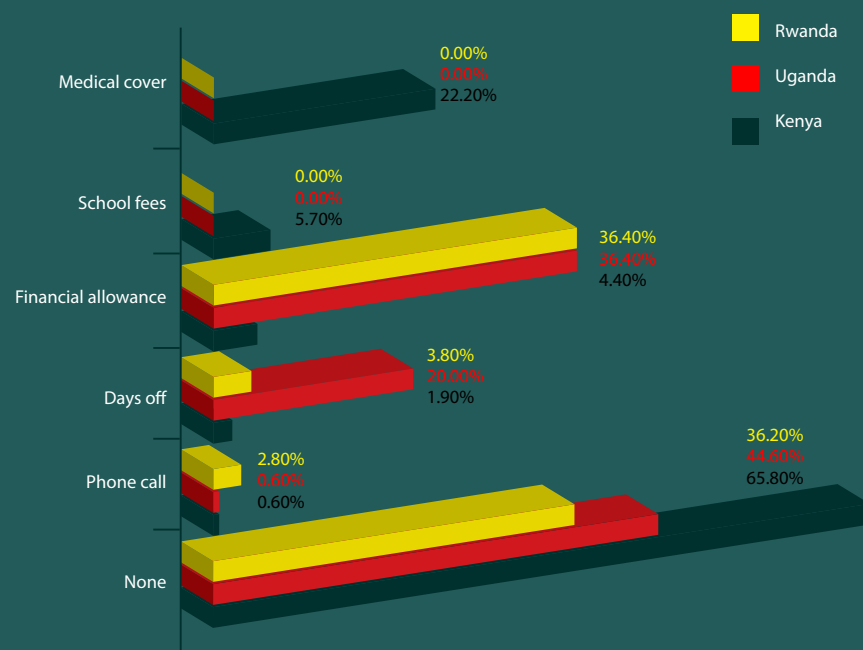
Source: Baseline survey

Across the countries, most migrant parents earn between US\$ 117 and US\$ 235 per month and send back remittance of between US\$ 11 and US\$ 58 over the same period. Further analysis show a positive correlation between education level and income from current job and remittance sent. Across countries male earn higher income than female and therefore send more remittance than female.

In terms of parenting support mechanisms by the employers, findings indicated that majority of migrant parents across the countries were not aware of any non statutory parental benefits provided by employers. This was reported by 65.8% in Kenya, 44.6% in Uganda, and 36.2% in Rwanda. However, non statutory parental

benefits by employers included assistance with school fees and medical cover as reported by 5.7% and 22.2% respectively in Kenya, financial allowance as reported by 36.4% in both Uganda and Rwanda, and days off as reported by 20% in Uganda as shown in Figure 16.

**Figure 16: Non-statutory Parental Benefit by Employer<sup>17</sup>**



**Source:** Baseline survey

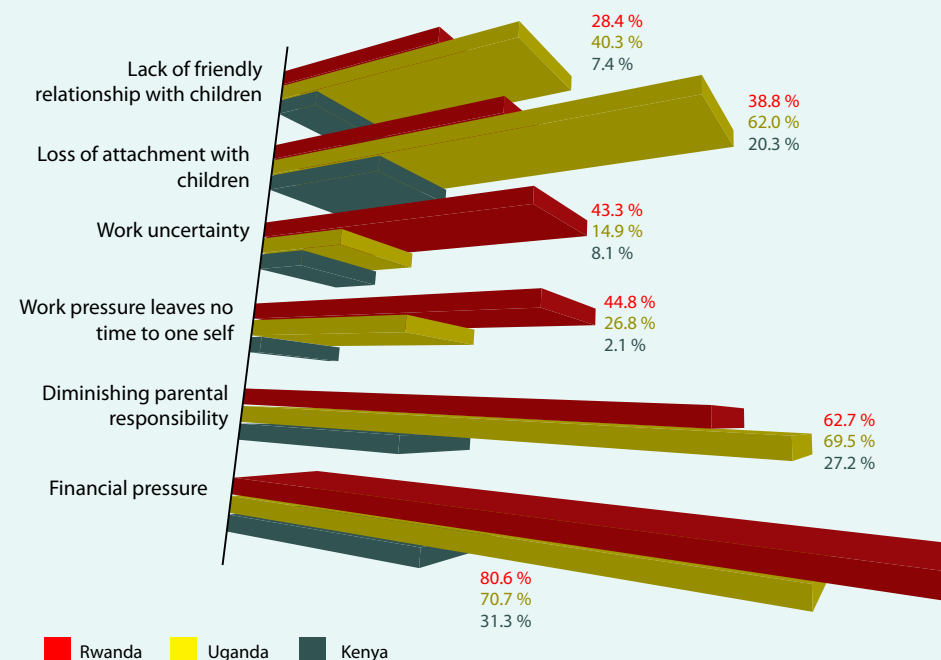
Whereas most employers provide statutory benefits such as the contributory national social insurance scheme, paternity and maternity leaves, study findings show that across the countries non-statutory parental benefits for migrant parents seem to be at infancy.

<sup>17</sup> Multi-response question: What kind of non statutory parental benefits does your employer provide to migrant parents?

#### 4. IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON THE MIGRANT PARENT

The third study objective was to establish the impact of migration on the migrant parent and left-behind children. Three most pressing challenges were reported as follows. The first was financial pressure as reported by 31.3% of migrant parents (F=54.3%, M=14.7%) in Kenya, 70.7% (F=73.2%, M=68.2%) in Uganda, and 80.6% (M=83%, F=75%) in Rwanda. The second pressing challenge was diminishing parental responsibility reported by 27.2% (F=28.6%, M=26.5%) in Kenya, 69.5% (F=70.7%, M=68.2%) in Uganda and 62.7% (M=59.6%, F=70%) in Rwanda. While the third pressing challenge was loss of attachment with children reported by 20.3% (F=8.9%, M=29.4) in Kenya, 62% (F=63.4%, M=60.6%) in Uganda and 38.8% in Rwanda. Among other challenges work pressure was also reported and ranked high at 44.8% in Rwanda followed by 26.8% in Uganda and 2.1% in Kenya as shown in Figure 17.

**Figure 17: Challenges Due to Living Separately from Children<sup>18</sup>**

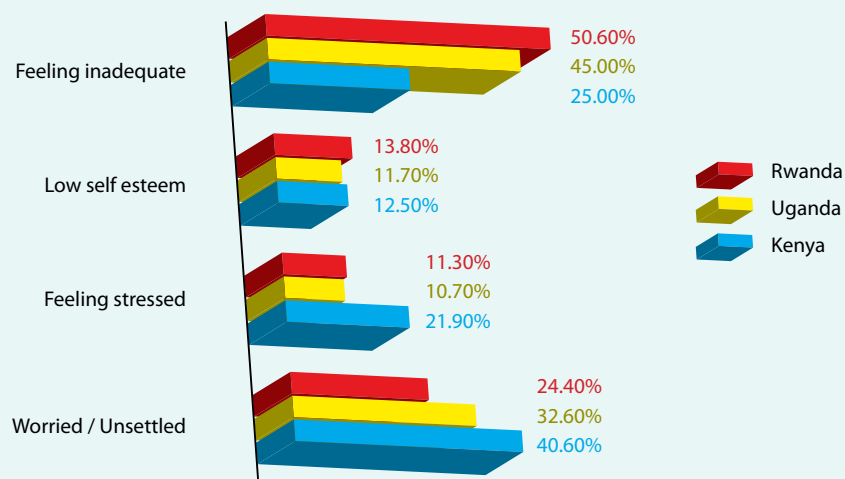


<sup>18</sup> Multi-response Question: What challenges do you as a migrant parent experience due to living separately from your children? (At least three options in order of importance)

Source: Baseline survey

Generally, across the countries Migrant Parents with left-behind children face such challenges as financial pressure, diminishing parental responsibility, and loss of attachment with children. However, comparatively, migrant parents with left-behind children adversely suffer the consequences of migration. They experience psychological challenges such as feeling worried and unsettled, inadequate and stressed. These results confirm CCR CSR (2013) findings.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, migrant parents with left-behind children reported psychosocial impacts. Most migrant parents across the countries expressed feeling inadequate as reported by 25% in Kenya, 45% in Uganda, and 50.6% in Rwanda. About 40.6% in Kenya reported feeling worried/unsettled about the wellbeing of their children compared to 32.6% and 24.4% in Uganda and Rwanda respectively. About 21.9% in Kenya expressed feeling stressed compared to 10.7% in Uganda and 11.3% in Rwanda. As shown in Figure 18, expressions of low self-esteem were also reported by 12.5% of migrant parents in Kenya, 11.7% in Uganda, and 13.8% in Rwanda.

Figure 18: Effect on psychosocial wellbeing due to living separately from children<sup>20</sup>



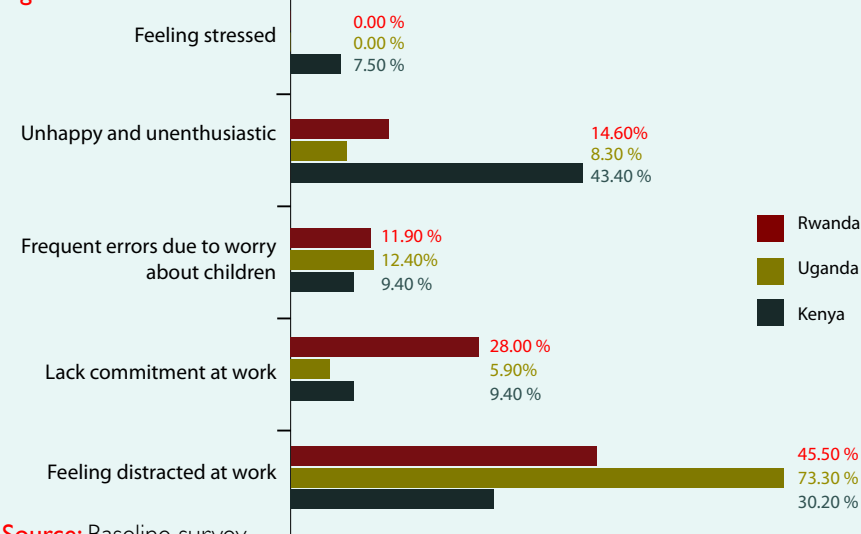
Findings across countries show that most migrant parents feel inadequate as parents due to separation from their children. This finding was more prevalent in Rwanda and Uganda compared to Kenya. However, most migrant parents in Kenya report feeling worried and unsettled about the wellbeing of their left-behind children compared to Uganda and Rwanda. Feeling stressed was prevalent among migrant parents in Kenya

<sup>19</sup> Study of migrant parents with left-behind in China.

<sup>20</sup> Multi-response Question: How is your psychosocial wellbeing affected due to living separately from your children?

compared to Uganda and Rwanda but expressions of low self-esteem held steady across the countries. Study findings show that migration had an effect on work. The three most important effects for migrant parents in Kenya comprised feeling unhappy and unenthusiastic at work (43.4%), feeling distracted at work (30.2%), and frequent errors (9.4%) and loss of commitment at work (9.4%). In Uganda, majority (73.3%) of the migrant parents felt distracted at work, 12.4% occasioned frequent errors due to worry about children while 8.3% reported being unhappy and unenthusiastic. In Rwanda, findings show that majority of the migrant parents (45.5%) feel distracted at work, 28% lack commitment at work while 14.6% felt unhappy and unenthusiastic at work as shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Effect on Work



Source: Baseline survey

Majority of the Migrant Parents with left-behind children affirmed that migration affects their productivity at work. Across the countries, majority of migrants parents felt that work performance would be better if they lived with their children. Uganda and Rwanda emerged strongly in this regard compared to Kenya. Comparatively, migrant parents in Uganda were more frequently affected at work than in Kenya and Rwanda. Feeling unhappy and unenthusiastic at work was common in Kenya compared to Uganda and Rwanda while feeling distracted at work was prevalent in Rwanda and Uganda. Lack of commitment at work and frequent errors due to thinking about children are the other impacts. This situation could undermine the potential of employees to achieve their workplace targets. The findings corroborate with CCR CSR (2013) findings.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Study of migrant parents with left-behind in China.

## 5. IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN

Parental migration similarly affected children in several ways. From the migrant parents' perspectives in Kenya, majority (57.5%) indicated that their children lack enough parental care, love and guidance. Other effects of migration included; loneliness (10%), financial constraints, lack of quality education and good health facilities as reported by 7.5% respectively and language barrier (6.3%). In Uganda, migrant parents' perspectives showed that parental migration impacts on the education, health and psychosocial well-being of the left-behind children.

In Rwanda, migrant parents' perspectives acknowledge lack of parental love and care, health and educational challenges, and limited access to basic needs as key concerns the left-behind children experience. The Left-behind children discussants in the Focus Group Discussion in Kenya reported effects such as; feeling worried and insecure, helplessness and low self-esteem. Additionally, lack of a mentor and Limited quality time with the parent were reported as other effects resulting from parental migration. In Uganda, the left-behind children discussants reported lack of parental guide/mentor, emotional challenges, limited access to basic needs, and exposure to child labour. In Rwanda, the left-behind children discussants reported other challenges such as; more exposure to harm, vulnerability to peer pressure, and lack of guidance and adequate support.

### Box 1: The Voices of the Left-Behind Children

"Most times I feel worried about my parents who are away. I am fearful sometimes that something bad would happen to them. This sometimes even affects my concentration in school. Since both of them are away, sometimes I find it difficult to ask my aunt for some things such as school stationery and when she cannot provide I just stay like that." (14 years old girl FGD discussant-Kenya)

"For me as a girl I feel bad when I cannot afford personal basic needs and items. Because I cannot tell my peers about it, I find myself keeping to myself most times and lacking confidence to socialize well with other girls" (17 years old girl FGD discussant-Kenya).

"One of the challenges I face as a boy is that I lack somebody who can guide or mentor me in my educational needs, health matters and harmful effects of drugs. Most times I have to rely on teachers in school and my friends who are not reliable because they face the same challenge." (16 years old boy FGD discussant-Kenya).

"At school our mates call our mother a slut or even call you names like "bastard" (R2, FGD discussant-Uganda).

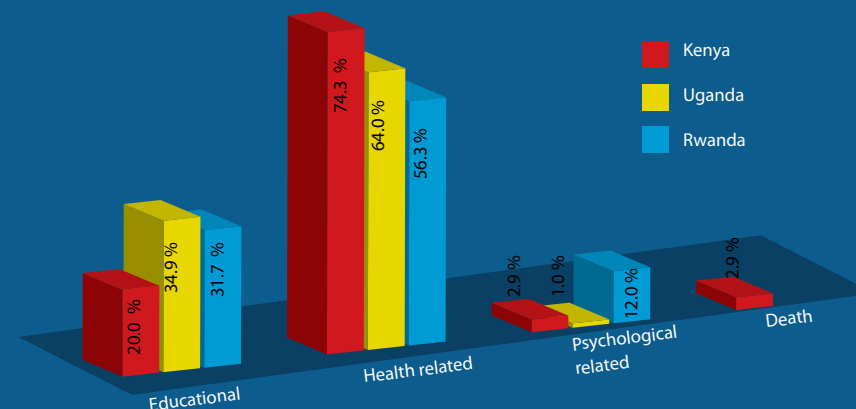
"There is a challenge of road accidents. We walk so many miles to get to school and in the process get exposed to many road accidents." (R5, FGD discussant-Rwanda).

"The girls experience teenage pregnancy which in most cases is not good but also others end up as prostitutes on the streets of Kigali (R4, FGD discussant-Rwanda).

"There is lack of guidance and support since the parents are gone to look for money the children are left to decide on their own" (R5, FGD Discussant-Rwanda).

For migrant parents who have had to address an emergency concerning their left-behind children, an aggregated majority (74.3%) stated health-related incident for Kenya, 64% for Uganda, and 56.3% for Rwanda. Education-related emergency comprised 20% for Kenya, 34.9% for Uganda, and 31.7% for Rwanda. Psychosocial-related comprised 2.9% for Kenya, 1% for Uganda, and 12% for Rwanda as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: State nature of incident/emergency addressed<sup>22</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

Across the countries left-behind children are more likely to suffer health, education, psychosocial-related problems. Notably, health-related emergencies were frequent across countries. However, the findings indicated a low level of psychosocial related problems although Rwanda reported a relatively high level compared to Kenya and Uganda. The multiple dimensions of the impacts on education, health and psychosocial wellbeing confirm findings in several other studies.<sup>23</sup>

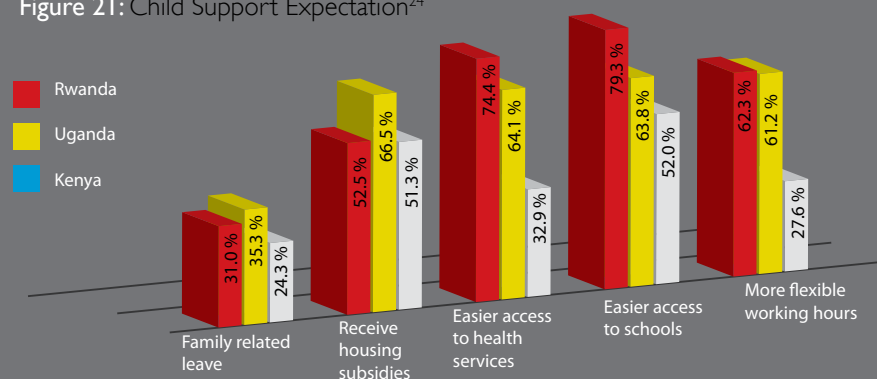
<sup>22</sup> Multi-response question: In the last 12 months have you had to address an incident/emergency concerning your left-behind children? If Yes, state nature of incident/emergency.

<sup>23</sup> Yeoh and Lam (2007), Rossi (2008), De la Garza; (2010) and Bakker et al. (2009).

## 6. CHILD SUPPORT EXPECTATIONS FOR MIGRANT PARENTS

Finally, the study sought to establish the child-support expectations by migrant working parent. Findings across Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda show great support for non statutory parental benefit policies at workplace. In Kenya, the three most important child support expectations included easier access to schools (52%), access to housing subsidies (51.3%) and health services (32.9%). In Uganda, majority of migrant parents (66.5%) stated that they would wish to receive housing subsidies while 64.1% would prefer easier access to health services. 63.8% expected easier access to school while 61.2% expected more flexible working hours. In Rwanda, majority of migrant parents (79.3%) stated that they would wish to receive easier access to schools and easier access to health services (74.4%). Another 62.3% expected more flexible working hours as shown in *Figure 21*.

Figure 21: Child Support Expectation<sup>24</sup>



Source: Baseline survey

Finally, conscious to the impacts of economic migration, migrant parents across the countries overwhelmingly support need for non-statutory parental benefit policy. For most migrant parents, such a policy would enable better care for families; create financial stability, and an outright motivation at work. Despite financial pressure being the main pressing challenge experienced by most migrant parents, the main expectations for child support includes; easier access to schools, access to health services, access to housing subsidies, and more flexible working hours. These results support CCR CSR (2013) findings. However, in Kenya and Rwanda the most popular child support expectation among migrant parents was access to school compared to Uganda's access to housing subsidies.

<sup>24</sup> Multi-response Question: What kind of child support mechanisms would you wish to see for migrant parents, for both fathers and mothers, and their families? (At least three options in order of importance)

## CONCLUSIONS

Across the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, migrant parents comprise a heterogeneous population made up of mostly fairly educated, married parents that migrate with all their children; parents that leave behind all their children; and finally, parents that migrate with some of their children and leave some of their children behind. Invariably, most migrant parents migrate with all their children particularly female parents and young migrant parents. The most important reason for migrating with children is to provide better parental care for them. Despite this, many migrant parents still have to leave their children behind with Uganda emerging as the most affected country. The most important reason for leaving children behind was the high cost of living at the place of current residence of the parent.

Most migrant parents originated from different administrative regions other than their current residence. This implies that migration is still predominantly rural to urban. Social capital comprised of friends and relatives tend to motivate migration through sharing information on economic opportunities. Reliance on the local media for job information is higher in Uganda and Rwanda compared to Kenya while reliance on the company notice board was higher in Rwanda compared to Kenya and Uganda.

Most migrant parents noted financial pressure as the most critical child raising challenge. Majority earn below US\$ 235 on average per month from current job which is the main source of household income. Other notable child raising challenges include; difficulty in accessing better health services, difficulty in accessing better educational opportunities for children and diminishing parental responsibility. The most common broad child-support strategies include migrating with children or leaving children behind complemented with specific mechanisms for child care. Most migrant parents expressed satisfaction with the decision to migrate with all their children. Most migrant parents in especially in Kenya and Uganda expressed dissatisfaction with the decision to leave children behind with most being female. However, many migrant parents in Rwanda and Kenya expressed satisfaction with the decision most of whom are female for the case of Rwanda.

The most popular child-support mechanisms for migrant parents with left-behind children include alternate parenting, maintaining contact with left-behind children, and sending remittance. Spouse as the alternate caregiver is the most popular ahead of relatives. The latter was most popular in Uganda and moderately in Kenya but less popular in Rwanda. Older siblings as alternate care are the least popular among migrant parents across the three countries. Making telephone calls, travelling back home, or bringing children to visit are the most popular mechanisms for maintaining

contact with the left behind children. Sending mails is the least popular. Most migrant parents send only between US\$ 11 and US\$ 58 in remittance per month with Rwanda reporting the highest amounts. However, across the countries non-statutory parental benefits policy is still at infancy for most employers in the private sector the most common being financial allowance ,medical cover and day off. The most common impacts of migration on the migrant parents across the countries include financial pressure, diminishing parental responsibility, loss of attachment with children, feeling worried about children, feeling inadequate and feeling stressed. Specific impacts on work include feeling unhappy and enthusiastic at workplace, feeling distracted at work, lack of commitment at work, and frequent errors. Impacts on left-behind children comprise limited parental care, lack of quality education and health facilities, loneliness and financial constraints.

The left-behind children affirm feeling worried and insecure, helplessness, low self-esteem, lack of a parental guide, participation in child labour, exposure to harm, and vulnerability to peer pressure. Across the countries left-behind children are more likely to suffer health, education, psychosocial-related problems. Notably, health-related emergencies were frequent across the countries. However, the findings indicated a low level of psychosocial related problems with Rwanda reporting a relatively high level compared to Kenya and Uganda. Finally, in terms of child-support expectations, migrant parents across countries demonstrate overwhelming support for non-statutory parental benefit policy at the workplace. The three most important specific child-support expectations includes; access to educational opportunities, access to health services and access to housing subsidies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings on the impact of migration on the migrant parents and left-behind children, this study recommends the following for policy and programming action:

- a) The study findings indicated limited support in form of parenting benefits from employers. Therefore, this study recommends development of tools to promote a child friendly private sector. This is in line with expected acceleration of migration within East Africa Community that is geared towards promoting free movement of labour.
- b) The study identified three key areas that could support parenting. These are; access to health, access to education and access to housing. This study thus, recommends working with companies to broaden their support to include non-statutory parental benefits that enhances accessibility to affordable health services, schools and housing.
- c) The study indicated that most employers and companies were not aware on the impact of their work on child rights. As a recommendation, there is need to roll out the Child Rights and Business Principles in training and capacity building.
- d) Financial pressure emerged as the major pressing need in parenting. Thus there is need to work with the governments to develop national guidelines for a living wage.
- e) The study found that many female migrant parents in Kenya and Rwanda expressed satisfaction with leaving their children behind. While reasons for this finding was beyond the scope of this study, this study recommends need to explore underlying explanations for this observation.
- f) Study findings showed contextual dynamics across the countries in the degree of impact of migration on the migrant parent and the left-behind children. To obtain a comprehensive depiction of the East Africa region, there is need to conduct a similar baseline survey in the East Africa countries of Tanzania and Burundi.
- g) Enhanced cooperation with NGO's on child rights and wellbeing: Specialized NGO assistance can provide effective support towards workers' community integration, parenting education and child protection mechanisms



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## ANNEX I

| Country  | Rwanda    |         | Kenya     |         | Uganda    |         |
|--|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Sector   | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Agriculture/ Agribusiness (Flower, fishing)                | 7         | 4.6     | 60        | 32.8    | 7         | 4.4     |
| Construction   | 11        | 7.3     | 0         | 0       | 6         | 3.8     |
| Education  | 10        | 6.6     | 0         | 0       | 18        | 11.4    |
| Finance (Banking, Sacco)                                   | 17        | 11.3    | 21        | 11.5    | 19        | 12      |
| Health   | 6         | 4       | 9         | 4.9     | 22        | 13.9    |
| Manufacturing  | 23        | 15.2    | 14        | 7.7     | 31        | 19.6    |
| Non Profit   | 0         | 0       | 59        | 32.5    | 0         | 0       |
| Petroleum (Oil and Gas)                                    | 6         | 4       | 0         | 0       | 2         | 1.3     |
| Service Industry (Accounting, Insurance, saloon, security) | 41        | 27.2    | 3         | 1.6     | 38        | 24.1    |
| Telecommunication  | 7         | 4.6     | 0         | 0       | 4         | 2.5     |
| Tourism /hospitality                                       | 1         | 0.7     | 2         | 1.1     | 0         | 0       |
| Trade (Supermarket, hardware)                              | 6         | 4       | 15        | 8.2     | 0         | 0       |
| Transport /clearing and forwarding                         | 16        | 10.6    | 0         | 0       | 11        | 7       |
| Total  | 151       | 100     | 183       | 100     | 158       | 100     |





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*We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.*

*Mother Teresa*

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