

## **1. Reasons for study**

Rapid urbanization involves the flows of migration from rural areas to the big cities and newly industrial zones like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh Cities. These flows cause overloading population, while infrastructural facilities and social services are not able to respond with these changes<sup>1, 5, 6, 12</sup>. The reports of Vietnam Commission for Population Family and Children (VCPFC) in Vietnam show that a lot of children accompany their parents or sponsors to migrate to the cities. Some of these children became street children or probably get risk of taking part in social evils<sup>18, 26</sup>. Realizing if these children are not educated and managed, they may cause a lot of problems for society<sup>16, 18, 26</sup>. Up to date, there are only few research studies on the children who follow their parents to migrate the cities. Therefore the Minister of VCPFC decided to carry out a research study on these children to understand the living conditions and get solutions for child rights in poor migrant families in Ho Chi Minh City.

## **2. Methodology**

This paper is based on finding of a research study “Facts and Solutions for Children who are following poor parents to immigrate into Ho Chi Minh City”, conducted by Commissions for Population Family and Children in Vietnam from 2005-2006. The aims of this research are to find out the factor that impact on living condition of children, and then to recommend for policy reform and legal frame to protect the appreciate rights for these children<sup>10, 24</sup>.

### **2.1. The conceptual framework**

The framework of this study is based on the principles of Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>23, 24</sup>. The selected indicators are as following:

- Informal and formal education enrolment
- Health services utilization
- The responsibilities of parents
- Rest and relaxation, and play
- Violence, exploitation and abuse
- Voluntary or non voluntary working
- Economic well-being

### **2.2. Sample Size and participant’s recruitment**

This research study investigated 360 children aged 10 – 15 year old by questionnaires, in-depth interviews of the street children, the parents, teachers and legal officials, two focus group discussions for public servants related migration and policy makers on child care and protection in local areas, and a seminar for the researchers and population management staff in Ho Chi Minh City. The selection of participants for quantitative survey were based on WHO definition of the adolescent the current law on child protection, care and education, labour law, other related grounds and regulations in Vietnam, and its aims of this research. Snow ball method was applied for Recruitment of these participants.

### **2.3 Places of the study**

The research study was carried out in two wards of two districts where population is the most mobility in Ho Chi Minh City 14. These wards concentrated poor migrants due to cheap rental accommodations.

- Ward No 12 of Govap district is 4.59 square kilometers in area. At the period of the survey, formal registered population was 46,716 persons. In fact population was estimated about 120,000 persons, including short term registration (KT4).
- Binh Tri Dong ward of Binh Tan district is 3.46 square kilometers in area. At the period of the survey, formal registered population was 24,214 persons. In fact population was accounted up to 59,559 persons, including short term registration (KT 4).

## **3. The findings**

### **3.1 Household registration – the barriers is out of the living harmony in new residence**

Population management system is the division into different categories of residential status 5, 14, 15, 17. There are four nation-wide categories as following:

- Household registration is regarded as “formal residents”. All family member in a household have to be informed their name, age, gender, occupation, relations with head of household in a household book, including new born children. They are so-called KT1 and KT2.
- Temporary residents are for adult who are ages of 16 and over only. These residents are divided into two kinds of registration as long term registration (KT3), and short term registration (KT4).

Before 1985, rural persons were difficult to get household registration in the cities. Therefore population developed slowly 2. Since 1986 it has been changing due to new policies for urbanization, resulting in rapid population growth in the Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh cities 13, 27, 28, 29. Up to date, the conditions for household registration have been changing for migrants to be easier to get household registration in the big cities.

One of the main conditions for long term residents as 1) be a formal owner of house or flat (Legal approval), or 2) The owners or landlords have to guarantee for his/her residents to rent house in long term. (Governmental Degree No 108/2005/ND-CP on opened widely for household registration in big cities). In fact, poor and temporary migrants are not able to own house, because no owners or landlords guarantee for their long term rents since security reasons.

Beside the children are 15 year old and lower will not appear in temporary resident’s registration (KT3 and KT4). Therefore these children were not counted toward the number of migrants and they should be more disadvantage than their peers in new settlement 18.

### **3.2 Registration status of child families**

Viet Nam was the first country in Asia and the second country in the world to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990. Since its ratification of CRC, Government of Viet Nam has issued and amended a number of laws and policies to

implement the CRC in Viet Nam such as law on child protection, care and education, law on primary education for all children, and labour law etc 10, 11, 19, 21.

Quantitative data shows that there are 62.5 percent of the children who state that their families are temporary registration, and 26.1 percent do not know their family registration status, and 3.9 percent declared that their family had household registration (Table 1). Observation of most accommodation of these migrants concentrated in the boarding houses with the room from 4 to 10 squared meters, uncertainty, and lower standard living than other “formal” residents. Furthermore the information from in depth interviews and focus group discussions prove that living environment in these accommodations are very complex, and it impacts strongly on the behavior and life style of these children.

Table 1. Registration status of child families and place of investigation (%)

Status of registration	Place of investigation		Total
	Ward No 12	Ward Bình Trị Đông	
No registration	5,6	7,8	6,7
Temporary registration	66,7	58,3	62,5
Household registration	6,7	1,1	3,9
Others	1,7		0,8
Do not know	19,4	32,8	26,1
Total respondents	100,0	100,0	100,0

### 3.3 Education attainment

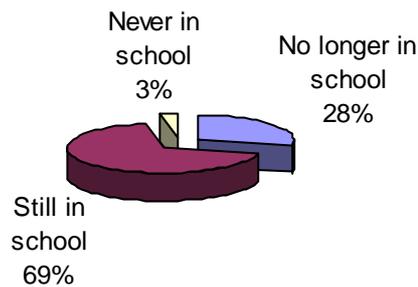
Among the children of the temporary migrant’s family, 69 percent of children are still in the school, while 28 percent drop out of the school, and 3 percent have never enroll school. (Figure 1). The city has had the new policy to grant the scholarships for poor children<sup>1</sup>; however this support was given for the children of KT1 and KT2 families only, whereas the children in the temporary migrants were oriented to “*return their home land or resettles in the new economic areas*” (in rural areas).

Reasons of school dropping out are that their parents and sponsors do not enough financial support for their study. The public school enrolment was priority for children who are household registration status (KT1 and KT2), then those in long term temporary registration (KT3), after that short term migrants. Because over loading in public school, the children in short term migrants family had to attend private school or stay at home.

Because of highly mobility, these children are get risk of missing school in certain ages. Therefore they are older than enrolment ages and can not enroll public school. (For example enrolment age is at 5, but child age at 8 can not attend public school). Among these children, some states that they are lost birth certificates when family moving, resulting it is difficult to be admitted studying in universal school. Other reasons are that they are bullied by peers, are lacked to pay attention on study from the parents and sponsors, even some young girls claim that their parent do not like to give the daughters go to school.

<sup>1</sup> Document No 210/2003 QĐUB from People Committee of the Ho Chi Minh city, dated 25 September, 2003

**Figure 1. Educational status of the children**



Up to 76.4 percent of children say that their parents and sponsors pay attention in their studies, while 21.9 percent do not receive any concern from them. There is significant difference on attitude toward child education among parents of different regions ( $P < 0.001$ ). The parents and sponsors of the families which come from Red Rive Delta, Central North regions are interested in child study than parents who migrate from Mekong Rive Delta and Central South regions. In contract, these parents often violate their children than the parents from other regions. In depth interview these parents state that their actions should be a good manner to educate their children.

On the other hands, the needs of pre-schools are very high. But public pre-schools are not enough places for all formal its registration residents. Therefore most of the children in migrant's family have to send their children in private and poor school or small group for child care, or leave their children for elder child or grandmother to take care at home. Many of young mothers have to give up their job to stay at home to look after their babies.

### **3.4 Access to public health services**

The data of this study prove that half of children report that their parents have to buy drug for their self treatment when they get sick, because their parents are impossible to afford doctor for their children. Otherwise their parents are reluctant to access community health services; because they thing that they have not any right to use public services.

Current health policy in Vietnam offers free health insurance for children under 6 years old. This insurance is delivered by household registration. It is available in the original home of registration. But they can not use it in new settlement. If children want to use this kind of insurance, they have to return to where they have formal registration household. In addition there were existing health examination wards with free of charge for poor families in the city, but none of these parents know about these wards 26.

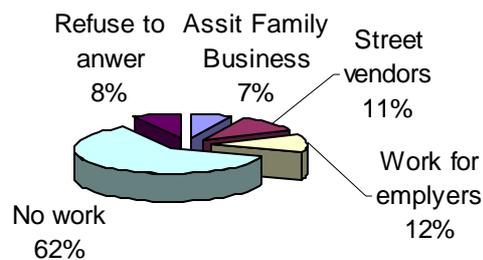
### **3.5. Working by children**

According the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all government has to protect the children under 18 years old from serious economic activities 19. And the issue number 138 of ILO convention defines that no child below the age of 15 can be employed in any economic sector 11. Vietnamese Labour Law forbids using the worker under 16 years old. And the serious art, ground and regulation protect children from working abuses 27, 28, 30. But quantitative data shows that at least 30 percent of the children from 10 to 15 year old have to work for earning money.

The children earn money by different ways that depend on each local situation and their ages like selling raffle or lottery ticket or collecting waste materials by younger children, assisted family business or work for private business employers by elder children (Figure 2). Up to 75

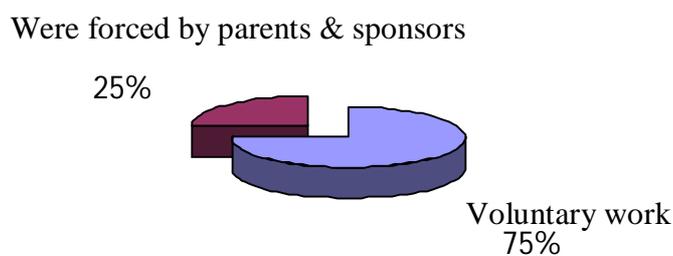
percent of child labors state that they work voluntarily, while 25 percent complain that they were forced to work by their parents or sponsors (Figure 3). Although 57 percent of the children who sell raffle or lottery ticket say that these kinds of works are too hard to them, and even 20 percent of them like these job, only 18 percent say that these kinds of jobs are rather hard. In fact trampling in the streets is very dangerous, many of them said they are abused and beaten by adults. *“I think this it is not hardy job, but I often is abused and sometime beaten ruthlessly by adults. I do not know why that, but I got on with that”* (boy 12 year old in Ward No 12).

**Figure 2. The ways to work from children**



Currently, child are abused and exploited to earn money for adults have been rising in public attention on Vietnamese mass organization. Many of children became the victim of adults and were forced to the streets to beg money for the adults, including their parents. Earn money and then give back to adults. It is sad that there is not any sanction of the law to convict the parents or sponsors who sponge on child labour 4, 32, 33.

**Figure 3: feeling of work by children**



### 3.6. Community supports

In depth interviews and FGD show that beside many “formal residents” understand and sympathize with migrant’s situation, some still do not realize the contribution to economic development for the cities from migrants , resulting in looking down and discriminating the poor migrants 10, 13, 14.

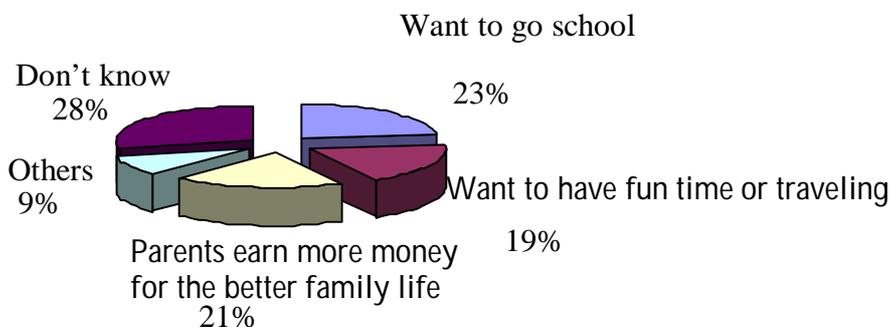
In migrant’s aspect, most of them are shortage workers and they think they have no right, due to their temporary registration status. These factors lead they feel inferiority complex, and self isolation with local residents. Therefore they have trend to live in small groups which they are the same situation, living conditions and jobs and reluctant to take part in the local community activities 13, 14, 16 .

In contrast with their parents, the children say that they do not recognize the different treatment from new neighbors as 72 percent of children state that new neighbors have goodwill with them, willing to help each other. The children get quickly and easily in harmony with others than the adults.

### 3.7. Desires of the children

Although the family life is below the poverty line compare with formal resident’s family, most children like to live in the city and do not turn back their home land. In the question “what do you desire in the future”, 23 percent of children want to go school, 21 percent expect their parents should earn more money for the better life, 19 percent like to have fun time and traveling. It is sad that 28 percent do not give any answer (figure 4). These figures demonstrate the very small desire, and the difficult life of the children in the temporary migrant’s family in the big city.

**Figure 4. Desires of the children**



## 4. Conclusions

The children from the poor migrant’s family are disadvantage in term of social welfare in Ho Chi Minh City, particular in using public services such as school and health care services. Household registration is one of the barriers for migrants to access social services in big city and newly industrial zones. Although new policies advance opportunity for immigrant’s family to get long term registration, they still have difficult for poor family. On the other hands, since immigrant management only focuses on the adult in working ages lead to a large number children under ages of 16 from poor migrants were “forgotten” in the migration management system.

One third of these children have to work to ear money for family living and their study. Among of them, many children suffered from being abused and exploited their labor by their parents and sponsor, and deal with the risk of being social evils. But the legal grounds and arts do not enough strong to punish these kinds of parents and sponsors. Furthermore, information of social services is limited with the feeling of self isolation and low educational degree of the parents, resulting in limitation the rights to access social services for these children. Cultural differences among the regions of original location also impact on child development.

Actually there is not any fully and comprehensive policy to manage migration for whole country as well as a typical character for Ho Chi Minh City. Even many of them are strongly biased policies against migrants. To server for strategies of urbanization, policy and law makers need to build up a legal frame and to create a friendly environment for migrants and

their family and children to stay and have stable lives in urban areas and have the rights to access equally social services like other their peer in the city.

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