

The GROW Program Overview

In rural China, about 270 million laborers have left their villages to look for work in cities. (1) It is likely the largest voluntary migration in the history of the world. Many of those workers have children, and most do not take them along. In China, these children are called liushou ertong, or 'left-behind children'. The number of left-behind children in China has now reached over 61 million, meaning that 1 in every 5 children in China is 'left-behind'. (2)

In 2014, the Chinese NGO "Road to School" (上学路上) conducted a survey of 2131 left-behind children in the rural areas of six cities and provinces. The results showed that 15% of left-behind children – around 10 million in total – are unable to meet their parents even once a year, not even on family holidays such as the Lunar New Year. (3)

Another study in 2010 showed that on average, the absence of one or both parents has a tendency to substantially worsen left-behind children's psychological development, emotional well-being, social functioning, and school performance, as compared to children living with both parents. (4)

Sources:

(1) Economist, Little match children (2015)

<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21674712-children-bear-disproportionate-share-hidden-cost-chinas-growth-little-match-children>

(2) All-China Women's Federation & UNICEF (2010)

(3) "Road to School" (上学路上), "White Paper on Chinese Left-behind Children's Mental Condition" (留守儿童心灵白皮书) (2015)

(4) Second Military Medical University, Shanghai (2010)