

2022 / 23
paper

Expatriate Children

and their role in successful
global mobility

III

SIRVA | BGRS

Harmony
Relocation
Network

EXPAT
VALLEY

RES FORUM

Written by Professor Michael Dickmann and Dr. Benjamin Bader



“Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.”

- Neil Postman, American author

If it weren't for my husband's boss to step in and resolve the issue with our landlord, we would have repatriated over a washing machine that caught fire. It was never about the cost of the washing machine though. We had just found out we were pregnant, and we needed a sense of security and the feeling that we had people to support us if something bad would happen.

Our experience touches on one of the reasons employers benefit from recognizing the impact family life has on assignment success. Your internationally mobile colleague and their spouse are raising their children in an unfamiliar environment, without friends and family to share experiences and worries with. Fortunately for us, my husband's employer recognized our need for community and secured another extension to our assignment.

Ten years later, my husband still works for that company, which touches on another important effect of extending care to the children of your global workforce: talent management. In a recent Inspiration Session, we spoke to a multinational that recruits a lot of international talent. They involve their Family Support Team early in the Talent Acquisition process, and they reported that it has improved their offer acceptance rate. It also significantly improved their International Talent Retention, as their new colleagues express a greater sense of connection and belonging than before.

It's time for child friendly global mobility

Written by Karlijn Jacobs,
Ombudsperson for
International Children,
Expatriate Valley

It's time for child friendly global mobility

This aligns with the motivation of an organization that we recently helped incorporate support for children and parents in their global mobility program. They strived to make their policies 'family friendly,' recognizing that their employees would appreciate their support when navigating the impact of their decision to work abroad. Their international assignees and transfers now receive a toolbox for their children, which contains materials designed to build resilience during the different stages of international migration.

When these parents sit their children down to tell them they are moving abroad for work, they can give them a children's book that explains the organization's activities, and why it is important that their parent fulfils this role.

Not every global mobility team has budget for such solutions, but that doesn't mean that you can't make a difference for the benefit of your international colleagues and the success of your organization's international relocations. By recognizing the impact of international relocations on children's lives, and vice versa, you are better placed to provide your colleagues with information that helps them make informed decisions about raising their children abroad. This also makes it easier for them to seek support when their children are struggling to adapt.

While I have heard many reasons and considerations when implementing care for children in mobility programs and offerings - money and time often playing a role - three things were shared by everyone who did it successfully:

1. they saw how they were able to contribute to the systemic change needed in recognizing children's needs,
2. they believed that extending their care was the right thing to do,
3. and they saw how doing so would benefit all stakeholders involved.

From that understanding you can create child friendly policies and select child friendly partners for the benefits provided by your global mobility program.

Harmony Relocation Network is a great example of an organization that recognizes how their members' DSP and Moving services touch on children's lives. And they understand how successfully supporting children can benefit their clients. Now, Harmony members from all over the world contribute by sharing knowledge and best practice, and in turn they receive the tools and training needed to become the most child friendly version of themselves. That way, they create a moving experience that recognizes children's needs and supports their wellbeing, every step of the way.



Introduction

We could have chosen numerous other quotes to open this report. “Children as our most valuable resource,” “Children as the most important thing in ones’ life,” or “The future belongs to the children.”

So, why this, perhaps unexpected, quote? In his 1982 book, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, Postman wrote about communication and about sending messages to a receiver through a channel. If we take this sentence literally, it means that our children are the channel for messages to some, currently unknown, person from the future. In other words, via our children, we communicate with generations that we will never meet.

It is a great opener for this report because, if we believe that children carry our message into the future, it makes sense that a child with parents on international assignment or transfer, being exposed to different cultures, languages, values, and norms, will surely transmit a different message than the child growing up in only one place. (Note, we say this without judgement or evaluation, just as an observation.)

Therefore, each step of a child's global mobility journey will form part of the message that that child passes onto future generations.

The children of international assignees are key to many global mobility outcomes. For instance, various reports argue that many early returns are attributed to children feeling unhappy, unadjusted or, simply, homesick. Other studies have found that children are often the main consideration when it comes to parents extending an international assignment. Moreover, many parents living overseas claim that their adjustment to the local culture, as well as their own happiness, ability to concentrate on their work and ultimate performance depends to various degrees on the wellbeing and integration of their children. It is surprising, then, that many multinational corporations (MNCs) have only few provisions for expatriate children, and do not seem to treat this subject with the importance it deserves.

This report concentrates on the myriad issues, as well as the strategic and operational choices that Global Mobility (GM) departments face when designing corporate approaches that consider the whole family. We conducted several interviews, as well as focus group research to understand pertinent the issues. We also explored relevant literature to investigate children and GM in depth. Moreover, we cross-checked our interim findings with various GM experts to broaden our understanding of the status quo regarding the role of international assignees' children.

Based on how our respondents' organizations manage international assignees with children, we structure our findings around the expatriation cycle. It distinguishes pre-departure, on assignment and post-return GM strategies, policies and practices, and provides an excellent framework for presenting our results. In so doing, we outline best practices that some of our respondents successfully use, and we develop recommendations on how best to implement these learnings in your organization.

The wellbeing of relocating children is more important than ever

Written by Brenda Bellon,
Director of Intercultural
services for SIRVA BGRS

The COVID-19 pandemic showed the world just how vulnerable children are. The pandemic caused a tremendous amount of stress for everyone, but rates of depression and anxiety among young people rose even more dramatically than for adults. We know that international moves are one of the most stressful life events one can experience. Coupled with the stress brought on by COVID-19, the need to ensure the wellbeing of relocating children as the world opens up is more critical than ever.

It is customary to provide employees and their spouses or partners with international assignment benefits, but the wellbeing of children on assignment is often under-resourced. The irony is that children are typically the most important concern for relocating employees who are parents. An assignment can and will fail if parents don't feel as though their family is adequately supported.

The concerns children have about an international transfer have not changed since the pandemic: missing friends and family in the home country, making new friends, fitting in at a new school, perhaps leaving a beloved pet behind, and even the "fear of missing out" when they see friends and family in their home country engaging in activities without them. Now, however, children also find themselves preoccupied with the possibility of school lockdowns, public safety, quarantines, and a myriad of other issues presented by the current social and political climate. The proliferation of social media intensifies the very real sense of loss and anxiety already felt by young people moving to a new country.

The wellbeing of relocating children is more important than ever

Providing children with targeted, customized intercultural training prior to or at the beginning of an assignment is critical to equip them with the resources, information, and skills they need to make the transition to a new country successfully.

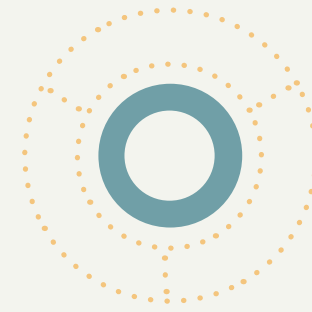
Young people experience international moves in a more emotionally intense way than adults, and they sometimes lack the verbal skills needed to discuss their feelings and reactions. Certified intercultural youth trainers use a variety of learning and coaching modalities to draw out and work with the feelings children are experiencing. Age-appropriate materials and activities allow young people to learn about the new culture in a judgement-free environment where concerns and emotions can be acknowledged and addressed. Intercultural training can help young people build the positive attitudes and realistic expectations necessary for a successful transition.

While intercultural training cannot guarantee that a child will avoid anxiety or depression in the assignment location, it can provide an opportunity for parents to better understand what their children are going through and how they can help support their

children throughout the assignment. Ideally, youth trainers will have the opportunity to share and debrief the child(ren)'s feelings with their parents and work with them to develop family adjustment strategies to support their children. When parents feel better prepared to support their children, they will also feel more positive about their own adjustment and that of the whole family.

It is just as important to support repatriating families with proper intercultural training that includes their children. Nearly all those who repatriate, regardless of age, report that they thought "coming home would be the easiest part of the assignment." However, repatriation means saying goodbye yet again – this time to an international lifestyle, new friends and colleagues, and their "home away from home."

International assignments have a long-lasting impact on young people. Providing them with robust and high-quality relocation support is invaluable to their mental health in today's challenging environment. And for an organization, including specific measures to support children as part of their relocation policy demonstrates to their employees that they and their family members are valued, respected, and appreciated.



GM strategy

Formulate a strategy that addresses the concerns of the whole family, including children.

Research shows that assignee families largely feel that MNCs do not understand family requirements and, more importantly, that many families feel let down by the lack of consideration for assignee partners and children (Lazarova, McNulty & Semeniuk, 2015). This is a shocking observation, given that most international assignees in most organizations have at least a significant other and, in many cases, dependent children.

Interestingly, our research confirmed that there were no major positive developments, with many GM leaders still considering that their approaches fall well short of “excellence.” Although our sample is not representative, we argue that it still reflects the reality in many organizations.





One starting point to addressing this challenge is to incorporate partner and children issues more explicitly into the GM strategy, especially with regard to the risk of assignment failure. Addressing one particular concern, this should start from an approach that does not assume a traditional family. For instance, interviewed families complained about GM policy provisions not being geared to single parent families or to neuro-diverse or physically disabled children. This group often struggles with the changes involved in moving abroad, as well as the loss of a familiar environment and support system.

Overall, the GM strategy should acknowledge that assignees' children are an important factor in a range of positive outcomes, such as avoiding an early return or increasing of the assignees' perceived happiness in their new role.

The GM strategy could review the status quo of the organization, then develop KPIs that assess whether progress is being made. Given that children's adjustment and happiness have a direct, significant impact on the duration of assignee stays, enhances assignee engagement and family happiness, and results in an improved willingness to re-expatriate, there are measures that organizations might want to develop and use to assess their success.

Aligned to strategy considerations, some GM principles are worth applying. It would be wonderful for families to have more say in the decisions surrounding assignments. This requires a mindset shift from one that predominantly concentrates on the adults to one that involves the entire family. Obviously, this is more difficult for families with small children, but the principle should be to consider their interests as well. Where there are children that can be involved in a meaningful way, it is recommended to allow the family to be pro-active in planning the stay.

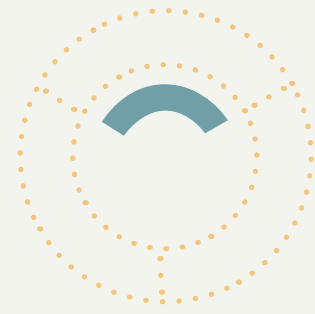


Ideally, MNCs would have a (small) budget for family-driven, potentially unusual interests and hobbies. Further recommendations include finding families with an 'adventurous spirit'. Moreover, it is advisable to create clear communications regarding anxieties, expectations and special needs of the families identified and selected to work abroad. Encourage parents to involve their children as early as possible and allow their children to talk about the move (rather than to keep it a secret) as this is seen to be good for the mental wellbeing of these 'international kids'.

Clearly, many of these suggestions come with a price-tag and involve substantial organizational effort. We are fully aware of this, and our respondents did not tire of pointing out that budget constraints, especially post COVID, may make things more difficult.

Then again, perhaps it would be helpful to make a business case including all assignments and their costs- including the failed ones. In a short-sighted discussion of budgets and costs, there is often a lack of strategic foresight by, for instance, not including some assessment of opportunity costs in the calculation.

Drawing from our rich data, we outline the possibilities for MNCs that want to act in this field – the actual cost-benefit analysis will have to be undertaken by the individual organizations, taking account of the specific context.



Pre-departure

Decisions and activities.

Our research resulted in several pre-departure decisions and activities that would benefit assignees' families. For example, within the selection process for a foreign posting, decide whether the whole family goes abroad or whether a temporary separation is more advisable. The latter may be better for school-aged children whose parent is going on an assignments shorter than one year, or where the family context requires special attention (e.g., a neurodiverse child with an established school and support network) or the partner prefers to stay for their career or other priorities. At any rate, explaining to kids the reasons for the foreign sojourn and their role in it (in a child-friendly way) is a good way to start the conversation. A letter by the company that covers such reasons and is addressed to the children themselves can be a nice touch. In addition, look-see pre-assignment visits are clearly beneficial to gaining more realistic expectations.

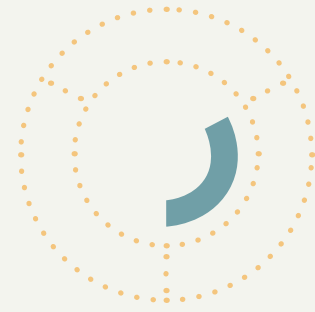


Our conversations, however, moderated this generalisation in a significant way. The respondents suggested incorporating children's interests into those visits more strongly. The research also stressed the importance of family engagement through looking at the physical and social aspects of the destination country. This can be done by providing guides about the location and by involving the family in deciding which places they want to visit.

Our investigation also showed the importance for parents to establish strong connections between their kids and their (old) world. Pre-departure training should recognise the benefits to children of maintaining family habits, and putting family events in the calendar for after the moving date. In addition, parents should support kids in selecting what toys to take with them while moving and which to put in storage or the container and they should welcome and encourage their children to use social media to stay in touch with friends and relatives. In turn, psychologists and other relocation specialists could speak to parents to help them identify and address the anxieties of children, so that these can be surfaced and discussed.

One approach to alleviating worries is to incorporate children's interests in the set-up at the destination country. This might involve making the move exciting for kids and providing transition coaching. A key milestone might be to facilitate adequate 'closure' around the time of the move – this may take the shape of a good-bye party but also may consist of 'smaller' things such as taking pictures of the dog of friends or getting a T-shirt signed by the whole class. Clearly, taking the family pet abroad (if there is one) is good for mental wellbeing.

Overall, cultural awareness and cross-cultural behaviour courses can prepare the whole family, allow them to resolve potential challenges and build excitement about engaging with a new culture. This recognizes that children are likely to pick up on the emotions of their parents – thus, it becomes especially pertinent to display positive emotions and optimism around the closure elements before moving abroad and also the beginnings in the new country. Cross-cultural behaviour courses were considered highly important and should be accessible to the whole family, not just the assignee and their partner.

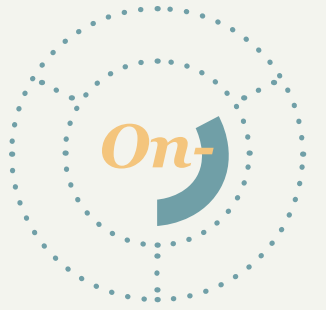


On assignment

Formulating GM activities for the time abroad.

It is not only the different cultural environment that can stress families. When working abroad assignees normally encounter substantially higher work pressures, which filters down to children and their partners. Our interviews showed that organizations should consider coaching and counselling support for assignees and their families. For instance, one interviewee suggested a dedicated GM resource to deal with problems as they arise or in case there is a need for expatriation support transparency. Most people are relationship-oriented, social beings, which means the value of a consistent human point of contact- a person one knows and trusts, rather than a random agent in a call centre- cannot be emphasized enough.



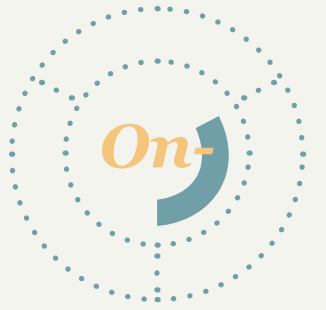


Social support is one of the key requirements for assignees and their families when they first arrive in their host location. We suggest that MNCs cater to that need, for instance facilitating social events that include local and international families.

It is well known in the GM world that families benefit from practical support such as finding schools. It is a good idea to try to get all the children of one family into the same school. There is an argument that international schools generally know more about the children's adjustment struggles and feelings of loss than local schools. However, this may not always be the best option and a case-wise decision that factors in the long-term educational interests of the child in the host and home locations is certainly advisable. In addition, helping families find doctors and health providers or sports clubs is also good. And all this information can be contained in a 'relocation handbook' and 'destination guide' – ideally one that includes children's interests.

All this sounds rather straight forward. However, we emphasize this in direct contrast to the reality in many organizations. When prompted to outline the support for children within their organizations, many respondents confirmed that there are no explicit regulations and policies at such a detailed level. In fact, a (again, not representative) quick check of how many organizations explicitly, in writing, account for children, it was less than fifty percent.

Our focus group results threw a spotlight on issues around assignee children's schooling and after-hours childcare. And these issues present genuine issues for GM departments. For instance, in the majority of companies- even those accounting for children in their policies- babies, infants and toddlers are completely ignored. Where a policy exists, the focus is predominantly on issues around schooling, childcare and playgroups, as well as maternity policies. They also heavily focus on who is taking on the costs.



Primary school age children are more often covered in policies. Here, the challenges relate to childcare outside of school times: breakfast clubs and, potentially, nannies. And again, who pays the costs.

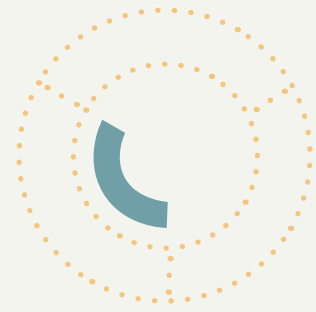
Middle school / high school age children and teenagers also present some unique challenges for GM. While many companies take on the actual costs of schools, the challenges typically relate to the different content and timing of school curricula (home and host), or the lead up to university. Mental health poses another potential challenge for middle and high school age children, as these are particularly prominent during teenage years.

Additionally, one respondent pointed out the risk that MNCs might overpay where boarding school costs would otherwise have been borne by the parents.

Language training is often suggested to help assignees and their families adjust more successfully. Research clearly indicates that, in most cases, the time between assignee selection and their actual posting is too short to have a meaningful language impact. Nevertheless, in situ language classes are beneficial to assignee and family integration, as well as understanding their local environment and cultural adjustment.

To encourage wellbeing and the continued link to the families' home country, one interviewee suggested GM consider a budget to sponsor visitors from their country-of-destination.

Lastly, the literature argues that firms should find ways to praise partners and children in terms of coping with the drastic changes in their lives as they bear most of the adjustment burden.



Post-assignment

The way back – repatriation, re-adjustment and international networks.

The day comes for most assignees and their families when they repatriate or move on to a new posting. Research has indicated that assignees would like to discuss repatriation planning well in advance – sometimes as much as one year or more^D. This rarely happens as the process often starts one to three months before the move.

Families benefit from early clarity in terms of school searches, health registration and other move arrangements. This provides a good level of planning security and “peace of mind”, especially for the children who have more time to prepare for the transition. Also, even though many families return to their country and location of origin, they still appreciate help searching for a new position for the repatriate, as well as with finding the right school for the children. After all, many assignments are long and might be extended, meaning repatriating children may require a change of school from the one they left before the initial assignment.



We know that assignees and their families go through a process of cultural adjustment. Successfully overcoming cultural differences comes from three distinct, yet interrelated, adjustment processes that persons experience both in their host location but also upon return (the so-called reverse culture shock).

During intellectual adjustment – be it the assignees, their partners or their children – people cognitively understand the differences between their home and the host culture.

Based on such insights, behavioural adjustment includes a variation to the way they do things in their host location. For example, if they move from a highly time-centred, ‘punctual’ society to a host country that is characterized by a much more flexible, ‘rubber time’ the assignee may adjust not only their own behaviour – such as not to be as punctual as they were in the home location – but also their expectations of others – not expecting people to turn up on time. Additionally, their views and judgements of such behaviour might change accordingly.

Emotional adjustment is the third component of successful cultural adjustment.

This would happen where they see and feel the positive aspects of this ‘rubber time’ approach. It can take the stress out of striving to be (clock) punctual.

It may even feel liberating to adapt to this behaviour.

Living abroad leads to various identity changes in people. When assignees and their families repatriate, they go through a process of re-adjustment, involving the cultural adjustments – intellectual, behavioural, emotional – to successfully cope with living ‘at home’ again. Companies are advised to help families (including children) understand this process and to prepare better when moving back to their country-of-origin. This will help to prevent, or at least mitigate, a reverse culture shock, especially since these experiences are normally much stronger and more difficult for children. While there are obvious benefits for children to live in another culture – such as experiencing and understanding different artifacts, values, norms and basic assumptions of the host culture – resulting in an identity change, a sense of not belonging in the host context and even upon return (as a changed person) needs to be acknowledged and managed by organizations, parents but also the wider social cycle of friends.

Factoring in the issues that concern the children and partners of assignees, including their wellbeing and adjustment, can contribute positively to the climate and happiness of assignees’ families. Beyond the positives for their employees and families, MNCs can expect benefits, such as lower early-return figures, a stronger assignee performance in situ and a higher willingness to extend the assignment if needed. Our research yielded the recommendation to formulate key performance indicators (KPIs) to gather, track and evaluate such benefits to help MNCs refine their approach over time.

The first, somewhat bold, statement I'd like to make is that many organisations are out-of-touch with what constitutes a family. Most now acknowledge that the married couple cliché, the 2.4 children, etc. are no longer to be assumed. But experience shows that many haven't got their heads around the patchwork family – the separated and the divorced. Sadly, there still isn't universal acceptance that families come in different shapes and sizes.

The same applies to governments and organisations responsible for childrens' rights and welfare. Especially when navigating different systems, one can encounter all manner of conflict and unanticipated complexity. One example is the German court who I had to remind that their place is not to judge the fact that I am a committed and loving father to two boys, who happen to reside in different countries. Or there's the UK child support agency who told me, before quickly taking it back, that I should consider seeing my children less (so unburdening myself of travel costs), to allow me to pay more in child support.

Navigating the choppy waters of international parenting

Written by David Enser,
Director, The RES Forum

Navigating the choppy waters of international parenting

There is also the fact that the calculation of child support differs from country to country. In one, the calculation is based on net income. Another uses gross income. Then you add the assertion that, if one of your children lives in another country, maintenance costs and the cost of travelling to be involved in their life cannot be taken into account before a calculation of child support is done in your country of residence.

The list really does go on. Trust me, I've ridden a tsunami of challenges 'on the job,' so to speak. Among other things, I've discovered organisations that I simply would not want to work for. For example, the one that questioned why I took a call from my 11-year-old during a virtual interview. He had tried to call repeatedly and I clearly and politely asked if 'I may take an urgent call from my child?' The request was a point of criticism post-interview. There's also the company that urged me to choose between a highly paid 'career accelerating' Head of Reward position in Asia Pacific, or continuing to see my infant child as often as I could, as if that was a rational thing to ask.

There are, of course, the opposites. My current employer showed their support and understanding right away. 'Need to work remotely overseas for a week here or there?' Not a problem. 'You're running out of holiday due to conflicting school schedules?' I'm sure we can find a solution. Understanding, empathy and compassion count for a lot.

Now, you may consider this a rant. Or, you might find parallels with your own circumstances. All I would add is that child-centricity can be a powerful lever for an employer. While there could be more, there are organisations such as Expat Valley who can advise you on this topic. The RES Forum can help you get started.

We've accepted that family norms have changed. We've also added the needs of spouses and partners into our GM policies. Isn't it time to cast a net around the needs of the children, as well as the parents who are navigating these oh so choppy waters?

I believe so.

The RES Forum

International Children Checklist

We conclude by coming back to our initial quote. When managing international assignments of people with children, it is not only the parents who shape the message that will be sent “to the future”, but also the organization.

Although perhaps not having a direct say, children of all ages observe everything going on around them. If the whole assignment experience is poorly managed, there is a high risk that their experience (and message) of being abroad and internationally mobile is a negative one. Rather than seeing all the great opportunities and benefits connected with living away from their home country for a few years, they will see the downsides and struggles and, consequently, carry this message forward into their own futures, as well as for subsequent generations. And this completely ignores the fact that a bad family experience will, thanks to spill-over effects between the private and work domain, negatively affect the assignees’ performance as well.

We, therefore, conclude our report with a “message checklist”.





The **RES Forum International Children Checklist** helps you evaluate the needs of international assignees' children and understand how well your organization accommodates these needs.

Answer the following questions, then follow the next step accordingly:

- 1. My organization explicitly accounts for children in our global mobility policy. YES / NO

- 2. My organization explicitly differentiates between age of children (e.g., in years, or in groups such as babies / infants; toddlers; primary school children; etc.) in our global mobility policy. YES / NO

- 3. Each assignment where children are involved is handled by a trained / certified expert who specializes in family assignments. YES / NO

If you answered "YES" for at least two questions, proceed with [Path A](#).

If you answered "NO" for at least two questions, proceed with [Path B](#).

Path A

Congratulations, your organization is one of the few that has a great base to work from.

In the following, we provide a few calibration questions. Please respond as openly and honestly as possible. They are intended to be reflective and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Just write down your thoughts, either as bullet points or text.

When you are done, use your notes as the basis for a discussion with your colleagues in the GM and HR functions. Invite them to think about what you still can improve and how to place this important topic on the corporate agenda. You may also want to use this list as a starting point with any external support, such as consultancies.

A1: When did you last revise your policies relating to support for assignees’ children? What changes were made and for what reason? Does your organization make sure the policy(s) are successful and, if so, against which KPIs?

A2: Do you regularly include (former) assignees in the process of designing support for assignees’ children? If so, how often and how is this managed? If not, why not and how would doing so be a potential improvement?

A3: Based on the best practices and examples provided in this report, how do your policies and practices compare? What do you do well? What are you not doing yet? And what could you implement to become even better?

A4: Who are the best people in your organization to support you in making any changes or improvements? Write down a few colleagues’ names, including their role and their influence within the organization (i.e., are they key decision makers, can they influence change at a senior level, etc.). Consider what you need to do to convince them to join your efforts. Commit to approaching at least two of them in the next week and get the conversation started.

Path B

Ok, your organization is not as advanced as it could be, but even the longest journey starts with a single step, so let's go! Keep in mind: you are not alone. In fact, based on our initial scoping, most organizations will be in a similar position to you.

In the following, we provide you with a few calibration questions. Please respond as openly and honestly as possible. They are intended to be reflective in nature and there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Just write down your thoughts, either as bullets or text.

When you are done, use your notes as the basis for a discussion with your colleagues in the GM and HR functions. Invite them to think about what you can improve and how to place this important topic on the corporate agenda. You may also want to use this list as a starting point with any external support, such as consultancies.

B1: When was the last time you were actively confronted with an international assignee going abroad with children? How, if at all, did you account for the family situation?

B2: Looking back, is there anything you could have done differently / better, based on the best practices in this report? How would this have benefitted the assignee and their family?

B3: If you wanted to make the support of international assignees' children a bigger priority, what are the biggest roadblocks you expect to face? How can these roadblocks be removed?

B4: Who are the best people in your organization to support you in making any changes or improvements? Write down a few colleagues' names including their role and their influence within the organization (i.e., are they key decision makers, can they influence change at a senior level, etc.) Consider what you need to do to convince them to join your efforts. Commit to approaching at least two of them in the next week and get the conversation started.

In association with



A global leader in relocation and moving services, offering solutions for the employee relocation industry. With 77 locations servicing 190+ countries, we offer an unparalleled global footprint supported by extensive product offerings and robust technology solutions that support organization's global and diverse workforces. From relocation and household goods to commercial moving and storage, our portfolio of Brands provide a superior relocation and moving experience to both corporate and consumer clients.



Linda Smith

Chief Commercial Officer

T +1 800 341 5648

E linda.smith@sirva.com

W bgrs.com | sirva.com



A global cooperative network of moving companies and destination services providers, upholding strong family values through generations of heritage, brought together in one truly global and solid infrastructure, providing the same level of high quality services, local expertise and personal commitment, the world over.



Paul Bernardt

Managing Director

T +31 294 415 012

E p.bernhardt@harmonyrelo.com

W harmonyrelo.com



We are Expatriate Valley. We are the Ombudsperson for International Children. We believe that international children and their families are part of an ecosystem surrounded by various types of organizations. Everyone benefits when these organizations consciously care for them, based on an understanding of how migration impacts these children's lives.



Karlijn Jacobs

Ombudsperson for International Children

T +31 6 1801 0196

E karlijn@expatvalley.com

W expatvalley.com

The RES Forum

The **RES Forum** has the **tools, knowledge** and **community** to help mobility professionals keep pace with changes in the industry, and help the industry keep pace with the needs of mobility professionals

Through research, analytics, eLearning, events, and policy templates & consultancy, we provide support and guidance to help mobility professionals navigate the ever-changing GM landscape.

We enjoy the exhaustive knowledge of our consultants, academics, Strategic Advisory Board and Technical Partners, as well as our international community of senior in-house HR and GM professionals, which includes 1,000 members in over 45 countries.

In conversation with leaders and experts from across the industry, our academics study the most pressing topics within the world of GM and cross-border working. Then we share their collective insight to provide clarity, tools and advice to help our members through the many challenges they face.

The RES Forum is an independent organization. We are not influenced by external parties or third-party vendors.



Written by

Professor Michael F. Dickmann
Professor of International Human Resource Management,
Cranfield University, School of Management United Kingdom
Strategic Advisor to the RES Forum



Dr. Benjamin Bader
Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in International Human Resource Management & Deputy Head of Leadership, Work and Organisation Subject Group, Newcastle University Business School, United Kingdom
Strategic Advisor to the RES Forum

T +44 (0)20 7127 8075

E office@theresforum.com

W theresforum.com

RES FORUM

With thanks to everyone who contributed their insight, knowledge and time. Without you, this report would not have been possible.

Huge thank you to Expat Valley

All of the images in this paper come from their 52 Stories series, which share tales from expat children around the world.

[Read the stories here](#)

