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### Impact of Internal and International Migration: Country Study Sri Lanka



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## Section I: Internal Migration

### 1.1 : Introduction

Internal migration, or population movement within a national boundary, impacts a country's population in many ways. It is also related to various facets of critical social changes such as urbanisation, industrialisation, government land settlement policies, agricultural innovations, and evolving family structures. The recent history of Sri Lanka reveals documented evidence that internal migration—both voluntary and forced—has been a prominent feature of the country's history (Abhayaratne and Jayewardene 1965; Dias 1978; Gunatilaka 2003; Kearney and Miller 1985; Kuruppu and Ganepola 2005; Muggah 2008; Wong 1981).

Internal migration in Sri Lanka is a historical event which moved by political and socio-economic factors (De Silva and Perera 2007). According to *Mahawamsa* from the advent of the first kingdom in Sri Lanka in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to the fall of the last kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the British, the administrative capital of the country had continued to shift away from the Dry Zone. The abandonment of the Dry Zone happened in the 13<sup>th</sup> century due to new invasions, administrative collapse, malaria, and perhaps climatic change (Indrapala 1971). This systematic movement/shift of the capital city from the dry zone to the wet zone undoubtedly speaks of a population that had been extremely mobile within the country throughout its early history.

With the arrival of the Portuguese in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century started the era of European colonial interventions in the country and with that too the internal migration dynamics would have changed. Portuguese role in the development of trading activities related to spices, *etc.* had made coastal areas more populous (De Silva 1981: 113). but also to defend against internal and external security threats. These cities had since then developed as urban centres and the trend continues to date. The Portuguese were usurped by the Dutch and the Dutch by the British as colonial masters. Though limited inference could be made about internal migration, as we have done here, from the historical accounts of this period, no study had methodically looked specifically at the phenomenon.

The literature is saturated with works that looks at migration flows from South India in form of gang workers and the impact these have had on the migrants themselves and also on social and economic fabric of the country. But much less attention has been paid to the impact of plantation economy on internal migration in the country.

### 1.2 Trends and Patterns of Internal Migration

#### Scale and Flows of Migration:

Internal migration in Sri Lanka is a historical event influenced by Political and Socio-economic factors. During 1815-1914 period, some important developments in the areas of irrigation, communications, and land policy in colonised Sri Lanka contributed to a large floating population as seasonal workers during the paddy harvesting. . (Farmer 1957: 102). *The impact of Malaria on internal migration in early 1970s was significant (Abeysondere 1974).* In the post independence (1948) period the dry zone colonization schemes of the

government led to the outflow of people from the overcrowded wet zone to the dry zone. (Abeysekera 1981; Abhayaratne and Jayewardene 1965; Dias 1978; Farmer 1952; Farmer 1954; Farmer 1957; The Department of National Planning 1962; Vamathevan 1960).

The Mahaveli development project related to the dry zone colonisation schemes resulted in two forms of internal migration flows: (1) forced displacement of people from their habitual residences (many villages went underwater when the mega dams of the project were filled) and (2) the people who were allocated land to move into the new Mahaveli settlements. (Kuruppu and Ganepola 2005; Moore 1985; Muggah 2008; Peebles 1990; Sørensen 1996; Wanasinghe 1992). Over the years, other development projects e.g. Noraichcholai power plant, Southern highway, upper Kotmale hydro power plant also displaced a large number of people from their places of origin.

The development of Colombo as the primate city has also led to much in-migration from all over the country. According to the Demographic Survey of 1994, the city had a population of 721,449 in addition to which there were approximately 350,000 temporary residents and about 1.5 million daily commuters (Wanasinghe 2002: 137).

The escalation of the ethnic conflict led to mass internal migration in the form of displacement, multiple displacement, long term displacement, circular forced migration, and return/relocation. Later, the ethnic riots in 1983 drove about a 100,000 Tamils away from Colombo either to foreign destinations or to the North East of the country. Muslims displaced from Jaffna (Brun 2000; Brun 2003; Brun 2005). Migration also took place from the conflict ridden districts in Northern and Eastern Provinces. Over the last 25 years over 1.4 million people are thought have been forcibly displaced within the country by the conflict (Collyer and Wimalasena 2007: 26; Muggah 2008).

In addition to the above, after the Tsunami 2004, the significant out-migration from southern coastal belt was recorded. In early 2011 nearly 500,000 people from different part of the country including Colombo city and suburbs were displaced due to rain related disasters (De Silva and Perera 2007).

### **Destination**

Under the colonial rule the coastal cities of Colombo, Galle, Trincomalee, and Jaffna had developed due mainly to commercial interests. Under the British rule, the advent of the plantation economy (coffee which was later replaced with tea, rubber and coconut) pulls a large number of people to the areas where plantations were located/developed. De Silva (1981: 296), for instance, refers to movement of people from the Central Province to the North-Western Province when land was opened to coconut cultivation in the later, specially the Chilaw district. Between 1946-1953 the Anuradhapura and Pollonnaruwa districts reported highest net in-migrants in the country as a result of the dryzone colonisation schemes (De Silva and Perera 2007). Many studies based on census data show that Colombo district has absorbed large numbers of migrants in all periods (Abhayaratne and Jayewardene 1965; Vamathevan 1960; Wilson 1976). The livelihoods are the main reason for such migration and the flow was encouraged/strengthened by 1945 free education policy (Vamathevan 1960). Since 1977 the development of the Western Province and especially Colombo city (industrial zones, Export Processing Zone (EPZ), commercial centres) were all centered around Colombo.

However, the 2001 census results show that internal migration to Colombo and suburban centres continue to develop (Abeysekera 1983; Perera and Ukwatta 2000; Siddhisena, Indrasiri and Edirisinghe 1994; Wanasinghe 1985; Wanasinghe 2002). De Silva and Perera (2007: 5) showed that Colombo, Gampha, Kalutara and Puttalam districts demonstrate an

increasing trend in net in-migration. Gampaha is the most popular migration destination during this period. The rate of net migration (5 percent) reported for Colombo in 1981 had tripled (14.4 percent) by 2001. Colombo district received the highest volume of in migration (667764) in 2001 followed by Gampaha (576777). Wanasinghe (2002) highlights that population growth rates of Colombo after 1980s have been surpassed by those of the suburbs. During the inter censal period 1971-1981 while Colombo grew at the rate of 0.4 % per annum, the majority of its suburbs experienced growth rates that exceeded 2 percent (Wanasinghe 2002: 137).

### **Age and Sex Distribution:**

In 1981 males dominated internal migration in Sri Lanka: 14.3 percent (12.6 percent) of Sri Lankan males (females) internally migrated. However the pattern had reversed by 2001 with 18.1 percent (19 percent) of males (females) internally migrating (De Silva and Perera 2007, Ukwatta 2004).

### **Sectors of employment**

There are two new developments that can be identified in the case of Sri Lanka in terms of employment: (1) seasonal agricultural migration, especially in fisheries sector, which is reawakening after the end of war. (2) Short-term migration seeking job and educational opportunities in Colombo. (3) Climate change related disasters in the city of Colombo and the suburban areas are acting as a push factor.

## **1.3: Impact of Internal Migration**

### **Impact of internal migration on the migrant**

A critical technical issue that is apparent in the literature on internal migration in Sri Lanka, as in other countries, concerns the long standing problem of data for migration analysis. The country's internal migration literature, specially the more recent ones, show a distinct shift from systematic national analysis based on census sources to more specific or localised survey based studies. Studies analysing census data mainly look at district level evidence of life time migration. These studies, due to data limitations, do not venture to say much about the impact of internal migration. A rare exception would be Kearney and Miller (1985) who links the migration patterns with other socio-cultural variables. There are two broad categories of sample surveys that offer information about the impact of internal migration in Sri Lanka: (1) those with a specific migration focus which are rare, and (2) those with no migration focus but which look at groups that are significant for internal migration such as workers at export processing zones and slum/shanty dwellers. Apart from these there are no island-wide migration surveys that could be very useful for analysing internal migration impacts.

Ranabahu (2004) offers evidence from a rare migration survey carried out in six urban areas in Gampaha District (Negambo, Gampaha, Seeduwa, Katunayaka, Kelaniya, Biyagama). The survey carried out in 2001 included 600 households from those urban areas. In order to assess the effect of migration on well-being of people, five key areas of human development were addressed by this paper *i.e.* economic status, state of employment, accessibility to services, living environment, attitudes. Nearly 73% of the in-migrants surveyed have been able to obtain a higher monthly income after their migration. The majority of the employed in-migrants (56.9 percent) have obtained higher status employment opportunities than before migration. The survey assessed the accessibility to services by using distances travelled and three quarter of in-migrants reported that they travelled shorter distance to

access services after their migration. A similar number compared their post migration living environment as equal as or better than their pre-migration living environment. The majority of these in-migrants (88.3 percent) have a positive attitude towards their selected places of destination. Ranabahu (2004: 86) summarises these finding thus:

‘In a low income country such as Sri Lanka, rampant with high levels of chronic unemployment getting employed is important in achieving a better quality of life. A majority of in-migrant investigated in this study were able to achieve a higher monthly income, after they migrated to an urban centre, while a substantial proportion of in-migrants who were non-earners prior to migration were able to find remunerative employment after they migrated’

In a similar study Stanbury and Moragoda (1989: 27) discuss the impact on migrants of having migrated to settlement areas and report that 44 percent of the interviewees thought that they are better off than before migrating. This satisfaction has a lot to do with the fulfilment of their primary aim of migration—owning paddy land. It is interesting as well as intriguing that the same issue—ownership of paddy land—is seen to have a negative impact on the women folk interviewed by Kearney and Miller (1987). The issue there is that the paddy land is owned/worked by men which practice had alienated the women who traditionally engaged in chena cultivation. In other words in settlement areas women’s economic status and opportunities have been undermined by the tendency for males to receive titles to land and access to credit. Women’s traditional work in the Dry Zone chena cultivation has been curtailed by the nature of the agriculture promoted in government-settlements. This is a very pertinent point which is highlighted elsewhere (Lund 1981; Schrijvers 1983; Vandsemb 1995) and which emphasises the need for gender sensitive research methods in analysing internal migration.

Kearney and Miller (1987) highlight other costs of government sponsored migration and settlement. The very nature of migration, a move from a known and predictable environment to one that is unfamiliar, places stress on the migrant. Migrants to new areas exhibit a variety of coping responses which result in outcomes ranging from what could be termed successful integration into new destination to maladapted behaviours such as depression and hypertension. Kearney and Miller (1987) show that the high suicide rates of both sexes in rapidly growing Dry Zone districts raise the possibility of association between the disruptions of family and social bonds attendant on migration and suicide resulting from a sense of isolation and loneliness in the new area of residence, difficulties in adjustments and disappointment of earlier expectations about life in the migrant settlement felt by males migrants unaccompanied by their families and women who accompany or join their husbands. Migration as a factor in undermining village social patterns and authority structures and promoting competition, conflict, and crime was noted by Obeysekera (1983).

Kearney and Miller (1987) also alleges that males in Sri Lanka who migrating for work to districts in which their ethnic community is a small minority more frequently leave their families behind than those who are migrating to districts in which their community constitutes a majority. Eruption of communal violence had obviously add a new and formidable constraint to family migration into districts in which their community is a minority which was predicted in Kearney and Miller (1987: 33).

Female migration is heavily influenced by factors such as employment and education. It is apparent that in general women were far more likely than men to move because of non-economic reasons to accompany or join their family members or because of marriage. Sexual violence against working girls, particularly factory girls, are also rapidly increasing.

The end result of this situation that the majority of these girls have to live as unmarried women or unmarried women with children (Ukwatta 2004).

Siddhisena and Boyagoda (2007) tried to ascertain the determinants and consequences of Sexual behaviour among the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) workers. Data was collected from Katunayaka and Koggala through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Most of the case studies have recognized that FTZ workers as a “high risk population” with regard to sexuality. The reason for that is “Most of the FTZ workers are young unmarried adults” (Siddhisena and Boyagoda 2007: 69). This study revealed that 74 percent of the FTZ workers in Katunayake, 95 in Koggala are female. It was also revealed that 80 percent of them were below 30 years in age and a similar proportion was unmarried. (Siddhisena and Boyagoda 2007) identify seven reasons why girls look for FTZ work: (1) economic difficulties, (2) illness of parents, (3) freedom, (4) parental disapproval of boy friend, (5) desire to get independent income, (6) inability to find another job, and (7) relatives and friends working in FTZ areas. In this backdrop the cultural impacts on these groups of having moved to the FTZ is very significant. This cultural impact is elucidated by two observations by Siddhisena and Boyagoda (2007): (1) sexual relationship with personal in the management are common among FTZ girls, (2) love affairs of the Katunayake are very temporary and instant (also known as “AC love”, meaning that the love affairs last only a short time like travel in an air conditioned bus. Others also have identified similar phenomena in the FTZ (Hettiarachchi 2001; Perera 2004).

### **Impact on Family and Extended Family**

The impact of conflict induced displacement (CID) in Sri Lanka has been measured which has quantified the obvious and drastic decline in incomes of households after displacement (Amirthalingam and Lakshman 2009; Amirthalingam and Lakshman 2010). Other studies show that IDPs sometimes migrate for contract employment and reason for the migration is upwards social mobility at home (Brun 2003). The impact of conflict displacement on men and women in these families have also been looked into (Brun 2000; Brun 2005).

Grote, Engel et al. (2006) had analysed impact of tsunami on standard of living and income. Regarding the income before and after the tsunami event, almost 15% of the households in their study indicated that they have now more income available compared with the situation before, while around 20% of the households have the same amount, and the remaining 65% have less income now available. Interestingly, most of the households with now higher income availability are also those who returned to the tsunami area. The study used data from 500 households surveyed in 2005, eight months after the tsunami.

There is a distinct lack of studies that examine the impact on extended family of internal migration in Sri Lanka. Vandsemb (1995) is an exception which includes a detailed description of how a sons migration decision passively affects his mother. Evidence on the impact on immediate family other than through household income, is also rare. Some incidental evidence such as in the instance where evidence is presented that shanty/slum dwellers find it difficult to find schooling for their children because of their social class (Fernando 2005: 692). Moreover, Gansner (1985) identify that the fertility of settled families in the Dry Zone consistently declined during the period under the study (1946-1971), average age of marriage steadily increased and it is risen more rapidly for females than males (Gansner 1985: 14).

### **Impact on Community and Local Economy**

The literature on the impact of internal migration in Sri Lanka has predominantly focused on the immediate household with rare excursions towards the impact on extended family.



Studies that look at its impact on community development are also rare. The presence or absence of kinship networks in the destination point, expectations regarding the new situation compared to what actually is encountered, employment patterns, the separation of spouses and the degree of sociocultural difference between the migrants and the indigenous residents of the area are important issues that impacts community development of migrant destinations (Speare 1983).

Evidence on the impact of community development is compiled in research into agricultural settlement migration. For instance part-time settlement, where settlers just cultivate their land and live elsewhere, is said to retard community-development process and affects corporation among settlers (Stanbury and Moragoda 1989). Also having been socially uprooted with and then transplanted in the destination area deprives a household of all the social links need to cultivate and contribute to community development. In fact as Kearney and Miller (1985; 1987) notes at the extreme these missing links could well lead to suicidal tendencies. The district of Gampaha had grown rapidly mainly as a result of the expansion of industrial and service sectors developed in the free trade zone (Ukwatta 2004: 9). Local economy

### **Impact on National Economy**

National economy has clearly impacted the flow of internal migration in the country. Sri Lanka changes in the industrial policy, in which, production for import substitution changed to production for export promotion. The private sector driven industrialization process has had an enormous influence on the internal migratory pattern in the country. The objective of the 1977 policy was to create an open economy. Opening of the export processing zones became one of the main sources of employment creation for educated skilled as well as unskilled young, unemployed rural females in the country (Perera 2004). However, the reverse, which looks at the impact on the national economy of internal migration is a grossly neglected subject in the literature. De Silva and Perera (2007: 08) puts forth an impressionistic view on these aspects without substantiating them. They argue that (1) Rural-Urban migration helps to improve the overall efficiency of the economy of the country (2) Also increase migrant labour in urban areas play a significant role in promoting the use of labour intensive technology. (3) Engaging industrial employment & it leads to enhance economic growth

### **Identification of research gaps**

The present analysis of the literature on internal migration in Sri Lanka leads us to identify several areas of where more research is needed. Needless to say that 2011 census should be keenly awaited by any researcher who aspires to analyse internal migration in Sri Lanka. However, as is usual for the Sri Lankan case, this data, or the tabulations thereof will not be available for the research community at least 3-4 years from census data. Nevertheless when available, this census data, which enumerates the whole country after 30 years will, answer many questions, as well as pose new ones.

In the mean time there is much that needs to be done using survey data. In this regard a dedicated migration survey of the country, implemented at regular intervals, is a long felt research need. Such a data set would enable the researchers to quantitatively pin down the impacts of migration. Another deficiency in the literature is the lack of longitudinal analysis of migration impacts, which can be addressed through a carefully planned panel dataset.



Aside from these data gaps, the study of internal migration in Sri Lanka, at this juncture, needs to look at specific phenomena/groups.

It was noted earlier that Colombo centric migration and the related suburbanisation are distinct patterns that continues to shape internal migration flows of Sri Lanka. It was also noted that end of war might re-invigorate these flows. The research on this group thus far had narrowly focussed on the slum/shanty dwellers. While this group remains to be of interest to post war urban planners in Sri Lanka we also think that the middle income classes which propel suburbanisation is of interest. The cost-benefit picture of their migration decision, the impact on the families, the pressure on service providers such as the provincial/local governments, *etc.* are very important research issues. Short term migrants seeking educational/job opportunities fall into this category. Those seeking education from secondary school to University including various course offered by government and private institutions also an important category here. The group also includes the daily commuters.

Seasonal short-term labour migrants have also been an elusive group for the researchers. However, if the subjects are narrowly defined and identified some very productive research is possible with these groups. For example research can be done on (1) fishing sites (*wadi*) in Trincomalee which had attracted Sinhalese fishermen for generations (this opportunity has expanded rapidly in the post war setting). (2) gem mines in Ratnapura district which attracts labourers from all over the country. (3) construction workers in new construction and reconstruction areas.

The most urgent among areas of research is to look at the resettlement process of conflict displaced persons. The end of war in 2009 and the resettlement process that followed offers a never to be repeated opportunity to collect information on the return/resettlement/relocation process. This is urgent as the resettlement process is already going ahead full steam the implementation of a baseline survey must be done at this stage. Several categories of returnees are of interest here: (1) those who return after short/medium term displacement. (2) those who return after a long term displacement. (3) those who are waiting to return. Impact of migration on the smooth social integration of these groups is directly linked with the livelihoods and housing restoration, and upholding of land and other rights.

Another group that had been neglected by researchers is the 2004 Tsunami victims who fled the coastal areas. Clearly their immediate humanitarian needs and requirements had been adequately, if not over, researched. This research was on the communities that had remained close to their coastal homes and is easily identified. However with the lapse of the humanitarian phase the interest of the researcher seem to have waned off even through the victims are still haunted by medium/long term impacts of their colossal losses as well as forced movement. In a similar token internal migrants fleeing other natural disaster (floods, landslides, *etc.*) in Sri Lanka are also relatively under researched. How rain related disasters caused forced migration in the present context of growing extreme weather events as a part of global climate change need to be addressed. To continue with theme of forced migration, the development induced displaced (DID) from ongoing development projects such as the Southern highway, Colombo-Katunayake highway, various reservoir projects and coal power plants are important subjects of research.

The research into internal migration in Sri Lanka needs also to have a special policy focus. At the moment the country seem to be on a policy angle that discourages Colombo centric urbanisation. This may be similar to how rural urban migration was discouraged by the

government in the 1960s (The Department of National Planning 1962). Present policy stance become obvious as one looks at the mega development work that is going on in and around Hambanthota in the Southern Province. What is not obvious is whether the internal migration implications of such a policy have been clearly thought out. Therefore research into managing internal migration through a policy framework, support internal migrants in terms of protection of worker rights and wellbeing, *etc.* need attention.

## **Section II: Short term Contract Migration**

### **2.1: Trends and Patterns of Short term Migration**

#### **Scale and Flows of Migration**

The involvement of Sri Lankans in modern day labour migration process seemed to have begun in 1960s, when the exodus of technically, professionally and academically qualified personnel began to migrate for overseas employment in the more developed western as well as oceanic and African countries. According to available data, the total stock of Sri Lankan migrant workers employed under the status of contract workers is estimated to be 1.6 million or 8% of the total Sri Lankan population of 20 million. A Cabinet, Sub – Committee in 1974 published a report on the outflow of migration. It revealed that the reasons for migration of qualified personnel particularly Tamils were due to ethnic complexities and the declaration of “Sinhala only” policy in 1956 followed by communal violence in 1957. The United Nations institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) analyzed that, 15% of Sri Lankan migrants termed unfavourable political conditions as push factor for their migration, while 20% declared the country’s language policy as the reason for their decision.

The most significant arena in recent history of international labour migration of Sri Lankans marked with the emergence of employment avenues in the Middle East in 1970s. The much popularized concept of “migration on contract basis” became a practice under the Middle East migration phenomenon. The recruitment trend can be divided in three phases. In the first phase (1974-79), the first batch (2, 551) of Sri Lankan workers under government sponsorship was sent to Iraq by the Department of Labour in 1977.

The second phase (1980-84) could be identified as a turning period of labour migration flow into a more developed industrial activity in the national economy. Along with the increased number of registered migrants, the number of recruitment agents increased from 116 in 1978 to 556 in 1980. The table I shows the migration trends in respect of 1980 – 1984 as reported by the Department of Labour.

In the third phase, the Foreign Employment Bureau under the provisions of new Act No. 21 in 1985 in order to regulate the industry, providing protection and welfare to migrant worker and promotion and securing more employment avenues for Sri Lankans. The impact of the Act has been well evident by the healthy outflow trends experienced annually by the country which has now reached to an average 250,000 workers both male and female.( Please see table V for the annual trends of labour migration for last 25 years).

#### **Recruitment Trend -3<sup>rd</sup> phase**

Year	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1985	6,788	55	5,586	45	12,374
1986	11,023	67	5,433	33	16,456
1987	10,647	66	5,480	34	16,127
1988	8,309	45	10,119	55	18,428
1989	8,680	35	16,044	65	24,724
1990	15,377	36	27,248	64	42,625
1991	21,423	33	43,560	67	64,983
1992	34,858	28	89,636	72	124,494
1993	32,269	25	96,807	75	129,076
1994	16,377	27	43,791	73	60,168
1995	46,021	63	26,468	36	72,489
1996	43,112	26	119,464	74	162,576
1997	37,552	25	112,731	75	150,283
1998	53,867	34	105,949	66	159,816
1999	63,720	35	116,015	64	179,735
2000	59,793	33	122,395	67	182,188
2001	59,807	32	124,200	68	184,007
2002	70,522	35	133,251	65	203,773
2003	74,508	36	135,338	64	209,846
2004	80,699	37	134,010	63	214,709
2005	93,896	41	137,394	59	231,290
2006	90,170	45	111,778	55	201,948
2007	103,476	47	114,983	53	218,459
2008	128,232	51	122,267	49	250,499
2009	119,276	48	127,843	52	247,119
2010	135,502	51	130,943	49	266,445

SLBFE  
airport surv

Source : SLBFE, \* Airport Survey – SLBFE

### Destination

The dominance of the Middle East Sector in labour absorption from Sri Lanka during last decade is clearly evident where nearly 90% of Sri Lankan migrants destined to Middle East. While Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE top the list, the state of Qatar has fast become a promising labour market for Sri Lankan contract migrant workers, where the share of Qatar recruitment (20%) seconds only to Saudi Arabia (26.6%) in 2010.

**Table II**  
**Migrants for foreign Employment by country 2008 and 2009**

Region and Country Destination	Year 2008			Year 2009		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Asia Total</b>	<b>12,841</b>	<b>2,559</b>	<b>15,400</b>	<b>9,274</b>	<b>2,764</b>	<b>12,038</b>
1.Maldives	3,811	434	4,245	3,425	479	3,904

2. S. Korea	6,765	227	6,992	3,864	127	3,991
3. Singapore	236	836	1,072	210	816	1,026
4. Malaysia	824	476	1,300	476	574	1,050
5. Hong kong	26	272	298	31	321	352
6. Japan	58	21	79	165	19	184
7. Bangladesh	19	-	19	45	4	49
8. Other Asia Total	1,102	293	1,395	1,058	424	1,482
<b>Gulf States &amp; Middle East</b>	<b>114,947</b>	<b>118,134</b>	<b>233,081</b>	<b>108,928</b>	<b>122,293</b>	<b>231,221</b>
1. Saudi Arabia	31,065	36,741	67,806	33,097	44,729	77,826
2. U.A.E	33,190	18,650	51,840	23,197	16,389	39,586
3. Kuwait	10,715	36,453	47,168	10,328	32,072	42,400
4. Qatar	34,000	5,543	39,543	36,534	7,210	43,744
5. Jordan	1248	9,239	10,487	863	8,169	9,032
6. Lebanon	306	4690	4996	384	5523	5907
7. Bahrain	1,565	3,123	4,688	1,761	4,168	5,929
8. Oman	2,313	2,435	4,748	2,224	3,102	5,326
9. Israel	176	1,080	1,256	138	801	939
10. Other M/E	369	180	549	402	130	532
<b>Others total</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Africa Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>412</b>
<b>Europe Total</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>2,448</b>	<b>3,014</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>2,745</b>	<b>3,375</b>
<b>Oceania Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>N. America Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>L. America Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>128,821</b>	<b>123,200</b>	<b>252,021</b>	<b>119,276</b>	<b>127,843</b>	<b>247,119</b>

Source: SLBFE

As figures show emergence of new market such as South Korea, Israel and Libya can be cited as results of successful attempts of SLBFE in diversifying the foreign job markets from traditional gulf countries to non- traditional regions.

### Age, Sex and Sectors of Employment

The recent data related to age composition of migrant shows that majority of them fall within the age bracket of 25 – 29 years followed by age group of 30 – 34 years for both years of 2009 and 2010. Accordingly, the ratio stood for both age groups was 39% signifying participation of a young population in the labour migration flow.

**Table III**  
**Age Group**

Age Group	2009						2010					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
19&below	2,446	2.05	2,546	1.99	4,992	2.02	2,903	2.1	3,054	2.3	5,957	2.2
20-24	18,904	15.85	14,977	11.71	33,881	13.71	22,856	17.0	15,436	11.8	38,292	14.4

25-29	28,991	24.3 0	22,904	17.9 2	51,895	21.0 0	32,714	24.1	21,923	16.7	54,637	20.5
30-34	23,414	19.6 3	23,248	18.1 8	46,662	18.9 0	27,355	20.2	23,148	17.7	50,503	19.0
35-39	17,172	14.4 0	21,154	16.5 5	38,326	15.5 1	18,644	13.8	20,951	16.0	39,595	14.9
40-44	12,481	10.4 6	21,627	16.9 2	34,108	13.8 0	13,594	10.0	22,625	17.3	36,219	13.6
45-49	8,741	7.33	14,621	11.4 4	23,362	9.45	9,875	7.2	16,344	12.5	26,219	9.8
50 & above	7,050	5.91	6,708	5.25	13,758	5.56	7,562	5.6	7,460	5.7	15,022	5.6
Not Identified	77	0.07	58	0.04	135	0.05	03	0.0	2	0.0	5	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>119,276</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>127,843</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>247,119</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>135,502</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>130,943</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>266,445</b>	<b>100</b>

Source - SLBFE

One of a key feature in the labour migratory movements of Sri Lankans has been the high ratio of female participation in the flow. An analysis of out flow data for last 25 years clearly justified the high dominance of female share in the flow since latter part of 1980s. As disclosed by table III, the female first outnumbered males in 1988 by a share of 55% and maintained the status for almost ten years until male outnumbered females in the flow by a very narrow margin of 51% to 49% in 2008, which repeats in 2010 except in 2009 where female held the majority share by 52% to 48% males. (Please see table III)

When analyzing of occupational breakdown of female migrants, it can be realized that majority of them constitutes with domestic workers followed by unskilled categories and thirdly with skilled categories. The professional female group consists with an average 0.1% from the female composition of migration throughout the past 05 years. (Please see table IV)

**Table IV**  
**Female migrants by manpower category**

Year	Total (Females)	Professional	%	Middle level	%	Skilled	%	Unskilled	%	Domestic	%
2006	111,778	96	0.1	1,658	1.4	6,326	6.0	3,987	3.5	99,711	89.0
2007	114,983	68	0.1	1,136	1.0	6,024	5.2	5,400	4.7	102,355	89.0
2008	122,267	153	0.1	2,372	2.0	5,180	4.2	6,637	5.4	107,923	88.0
2009	127,843	133	0.1	1,822	1.4	5,384	4.2	6,727	5.3	113,777	89.0
2010	130,943	124	0.1	1,814	1.5	6,429	5.0	9,489	7.3	113,087	86.1

Source: SLBFE (Annual statistical Book)

As revealed by table IV, the major segment of female migrants throughout the years reported from domestic sector which was almost 89% until 2009 but in 2010 only a 3% drop is evident compared to previous years. An increased trend related to unskilled female migration could also be viewed in table VI, where it has risen from 5.3% in 2009 to 7.3% in 2010. The demand for large number of job vacancies reported in the service sector for female cleaners and helpers in 2010 may have resulted for this upward trend.

### Migrants by marital status

Review of marital status of migrant workers is important in relation to demographic planning in a country as migration of married people on single basis within the frame of contract employment should definitely have a negative impact on population growth. Thus an analysis of marital status of migrant workers in the years of 1985, 1994 and 2010 were considered for academic purpose and the results are given in table VIII.

**Table V**  
**Labour Migration- Migrants by Marital Status**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>1985(1)</b>			<b>1994(2)</b>			<b>2010(3)</b>		
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>
Unmarried	42.6	33.5	37.4	31.7	21.9	22.8	20.2	17.0	19.0
Married	57.4	66.5	62.6	68.3	78.1	77.1	79.8	83.0	81.0
Undeclared	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** 1. Korale R.B.M. et.al. – (1985) Foreign Employment Sri Lanka Experience M/PI (sample =920)  
2. SLBFE – (1994) – Airport Survey (1994) (June- Dec.)- (Population = 150027)  
3. SLBFE – Sample Survey in Kaduwela- Colombo AGM Division

As figures shows, in the early phase of labour migration, the involvement of married people was in the range of 63% but over the years the scenario changed dramatically in an upward trend to reach 77% in 1994 to 81% in 2010. Further classification on the basis of gender has revealed that among the females, the married ratio was 67% in 1985, while it was 79% in 1994 and 83% in 2010 respectively.

#### **Migrants by manpower level**

Early stage of labour migrants' profiles revealed that in the pre – Middle East era, the flow enriched with more professionals. But the situation has drastically changed during Middle East session, where the unskilled category of manpower emerged as the top runners in the flow. The high demand for female domestic workers and other unskilled categories in the service sector of the Middle East countries has reasoned for this situation.

**Table VI**  
**Migrants by Manpower Category**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Middle level</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Unskilled</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Domestic Worker</b>	<b>%</b>
2005	1,421	0.61	15,784	6.83	46,688	20.19	41,904	18.12	125,493	54.6
2006	1,713	0.85	14,549	7.21	45,063	22.31	40,912	20.26	99,711	49.7
2007	1,653	0.76	8,513	3.89	50,263	23.01	55,675	25.49	102,355	46.5
2008	2,835	1.13	15,458	6.17	59,718	23.84	64,565	25.77	107,923	43.8
2009	2,820	1.14	13,098	5.30	61,230	24.78	56,194	22.74	113,777	46.4

2010	2,974	1.12	14,515	5.45	7,1114	26.69	64,755	24.30	113,087	42.4
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Source: SLBFE

## 2.2: Impact of Short term Contract Migration

### Impact on Individual Migrant

Through migration abroad around 25% women got employment in the catering services and other unskilled job as cleaners, helpers, attendants and general labourers. This in turn contributed to relieve unemployment problem of largely school dropouts and unskilled segment of labour force (Ariyawansa – 1989, Perera -1991). Sociologists point out that migrant workers often brings back social values that he or she has not practiced before migration. Improved behavioral and habitual patterns are cited as common social features of a return migrant.

Female migration leads to generate a new order in the family in terms of women participation in the decision making process. This new situation has significantly increased the economic role of woman in the traditional family structure of Sri Lanka. Subsequently, the status of “house wife” who has not been counted for computation of labour force has now become an economically active gainful employee. In keeping with the phase, the role of the male spouse of the female migrant worker has also changed comparatively where he has now become an active partner in family management and compelled to bear additional responsibilities on child caring, schooling of children, attending family reception and marketing etc, while some have to take care of newly building or renovating housing units, investments and savings etc, on behalf of his family partner employed abroad.

Negative impacts associated with labour migration have also been highlighted by many studies. The negative social impact begins with the migration decision itself as cited by researchers considering the high cost of labour migration which brings migrant worker into indebtedness. Irrespective of various efforts being taken by industry administrators, the cost factor remains an unchanged character in the system basically related to male recruitments. Loss of money to fraudulent job agents and sub agents who act in between the legal recruiter and the migrant worker is another social predicament reported. Despite high publicity and awareness building programme the numbers become victimized by illegal operators are on increase. According, to statistics maintained by the Investigation Division of Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), 196 raids were conducted in 2010 against illegal operators in the industry.

The social impacts of return migration also depict most often negative results in the area of readjustment and re-integration to the domestic society. The more recent data maintained by the SLBFE on the basis of training programme of first time departing female domestic workers show that only 42987 or 38% received such training against the total number of 113,087 departures of female domestic workers in 2010, revealing that nearly 60% of the process were re- migrants. Social adjustment also a criteria which leads to social complication in the returnee migrant stage with the exposure of modern day behaviours and material consumption. In the case of returnee female migrant worker the scenario claimed to be more serious where the regards towards her under employed or unemployed husband beginning to fade away resulting family conflicts.

The comment made by researchers at early stage of labour migration that “due to unorganized home front and possible consequences thereof, a substantial number of women migrant return home exhausted rather than liberated” (Brochmann – 1990) seems to be still valid to some extent. In the destination areas, migrants are also subject to various



forms of maltreatment and abuse. According to the statistics maintained by Sri Lankan missions overseas, it is reported that at any given time around 900 runaway domestic workers are sheltering at the safe houses maintained by the Missions. Majority of them complaints physical harassments, torture, overwork, non- payment of wages, forced labour and sexual abuses. The weak dispute settlement mechanism of most of the labour receiving countries and absence of proper legal protection coverage for domestic workers who are most vulnerable for abuses result for this unhealthy development.

**Table VII**  
**Sri Lankan female domestic workers sheltering at the safe houses maintained by Sri Lanka diplomatic Missions -December 2010**

<b>Country</b>	<b>No. of inmates</b>
Abu Dhabi	11
Kuwait	399
Lebanon	20
United Arab Emirates	42
Jordan	95
Oman	31
Qatar	2
Jeddah	47
Riyadh	291
Malaysia	20
Singapore	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>960</b>

**Source: SLBFE**

The negative social repercussion of labour migration is further evident by the data maintained by the airport unit of SLBFE, where in 2010, the unit is said to have received 12,719 destitute workers of which 75% were females returned due to various forms of abuses as textured in table VIII.

**Table VIII**  
**Returned destitute migrant workers – 2010**

No. returned with pregnancies	<b>30</b>
No. returned with disabilities	<b>81</b>
No. returned with mental disorders	<b>89</b>
No. returned with children/child	<b>33</b>
No. returned with illness	<b>251</b>
No. returned prematurely	<b>12235</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>3,227 (25%)</b>
		<b>Female</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>9,471 (75%)</b>
		<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>12,719</b>

**Source: SLBFE**

A substantial number of death cases were reported of migrant workers while residing overseas. As evident by table IX, the number of overseas deaths of migrant workers for 2009 and 2010 were 333 and 330 respectively. It is also important to understand that the number of deaths reported under the label of “suicide” and “accident” has raised great doubts or suspicion among family members at many occasions.

**Table IX**  
**Deaths of migrant workers overseas 2009- 2010**

Year	T	M	F	Nature of Death				
				1	2	3	4	5
2006	262	161	101	169	08	01	49	35
2007	278	164	114	199	08	07	41	23
2008	285	174	111	197	11	06	38	33
2009	333	208	125	249	14	07	46	17
2010	330	221	109	224	19	03	45	39

**(1) – Natural (2) Suicide (3) Homicide (4) Road Accident (5) Other Accidents**  
**(Source – SLBFE)**

The complaints reported to the SLBFE during the period of 2009 by family members and migrant workers amounted to 12061 of which 78% were related to female workers employed overseas which signifies the gravity of female migration to some extent. Out of the complaints of females, it must be noted that 15.7% were related to physical harassment and sexual abuses. Non -payment of agreed wages amounted to 17% while lack of communication factor between the migrant worker and the family members has resulted for 16% complaints of female of 2009.

**Table X**  
**No. of complaints registered by SLBFE on migrants' issues -2009**

Nature of Complaints	2009					
	M	%	F	%	T	%
<b>Nonpayment of agreed wages</b>	399	14.9	1,654	17.6	2,053	17.0
<b>Lack of Communications</b>	90	3.4	1,526	16.3	1,616	13.4
<b>Sickness</b>	114	4.4	941	10.0	1,055	8.7
<b>Harassment - Physical &amp; Sexual</b>	59	2.2	1,480	15.8	1,539	12.8
<b>Forceful employment after contract period</b>	36	1.1	440	4.7	476	3.9
<b>Stranded</b>	77	2.9	47	0.5	124	1.0
<b>Problem at home</b>	04	0.1	79	0.8	83	0.7
<b>Breach of contract</b>	1,109	41.5	1,817	19.5	2,926	24.3

<b>Premature termination</b>	150	5.6	25	0.3	175	1.5
<b>Others</b>	635	23.9	1379	14.5	2014	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,673</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9,388</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12,061</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: SLBFE

### **Impact on family and extended family**

Migration in the Sri Lanka society has been considered as a great measure of alleviating poverty and relieving family distress. In this respect there is no argument of the influence of private remittances in uplifting quality of life of the migrant families. Research findings show their access to better food, clothing and shelter, purchase of furniture, home appliances and other durable consumption items. Invest in real state development has also been found a key concentration of the migrant workers. The MARGA report of 1985 indicated that 55% of Sri Lankan migrants invest in house development while in a more recent survey found the rate as 58% (Ariyawansa – 1989). Several studies found that migration benefits education of children of migrant families. The expenses for education has been found comparatively increased in the post migration session over the pre-migration stage. (Korale 1985). It must be important to note that most of the average Sri Lankan migrant worker considers providing a better education is a key task in his /her assignment in the overseas job. (Korale – 1985)

Researchers have also found that migration has greatly affected migrant family on inter-dependency on close family members or friends to cover up the vacuum generated in the absence of the male or female spouse of the family (Korale – 1985). Reallocation of responsibilities to relatives which were held by the migrated partner earlier, is also another social development cited by researches. (Marga study – 1986).

The magnitude of dependency rate of the total population reads as 6.4 million people or 30.5% proving the migration a key demographic factor in the country.<sup>1</sup>

### **Impact on Local Economy**

Return migration of skilled workers back to the domestic labour market can be considered a positive factor as the worker returns with an enhanced knowledge in the vocation he/she was engaged with after familiarizing with modern technologies, machineries and work practices received from the foreign work site by interpreting the blessings of labour migration on the economy.

### **Impact on National Economy**

One of the significant positive factors attributed with labour migration experienced by Sri Lanka over the years has been, the receipt of remittances from its nationals employed overseas. The financial transfers they generate from the receiving countries have become a vital economic indicator in the settlement of country's balance of payment problems at present. As stands today the private remittances amounted to 8% of G.D.P and became the top net foreign exchange earning source of the country, surpassing the country's traditional exchange earnings of tea, rubber and coconut. As revealed by table XVIII the remittance income increased sharply over the last five years by striking rate of 90% from US \$ M. 1,918 in 2005 to US \$ M. in 3,330 in 2009 and reached to US \$ M. 4,100 in 2010.

#### **Private Remittances**

**Table XI**

	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total in US \$ M.</b>	<b>As a % of Export</b>
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<sup>1</sup> The household income and expenditure survey 2006/2007 of Department of Census

The	2005	1918	31%	<b>Source: Central Bank</b>
	2006	2161	33%	
	2007	2502	33%	
	2008	2918	36%	
	2009	3330	47%	
	2010	4100	46%	

importance of private remittances in the country's economy could be further judged by comparing with some other characters of the economy. When compared with total export earnings as table XIX reveals, private remittances share 22% of total value of exports earnings in 2005, where it has equaled to almost 34% of total value of exports 2010.

**Table XII**  
**Impact of remittances on country's imports bill – 2005 – 2010 In US \$ million**

Year	Total remittances	Total imports expenditure	As a % of imports expenditure
2005	1,918	8,863	22%
2006	2,161	10,254	21%
2007	2,502	11,296	22%
2008	2,918	14,091	21%
2009	3,330	10,207	33%
2010	4,100	12,083	34%

**Source: Central Bank**

The above table also indicates the importance of remittances on the basis of covering countries imports bill. In year 2005 remittances could cover 22% of the imports bill while it has reached to 34 % in 2010 signifying the impact towards the country's economy. Central Bank has revealed that bulk of remittances come from the Middle East region where the ratio stands at 52% in early 1990s and gradually reached to a level of 60% by 2009.

The importance of private remittances on the national budget can be further witnessed by the fact that the income so generated is sufficient enough to cover the national education bill along with national health bill or total cost of import of petrol. The implications of private remittances bear a great value in deciding national savings ratio as well. As Central Bank report 2009 pointed out the improvement in national savings can be attributed to the favourable performance of both net factor income from abroad and net private transfers. Though, NFIT remained negative in 2009, net private transfers which rose to US \$ billion 3.3 in 2009 reported a steady growth of 25% implying heavily on country's healthy savings ratio from 17.8% in 2008 to 23.9 % in 2009.

**Table XIII**  
**National saving's ratio**

Year	Savings Ratio
2005	23.8
2006	22.3
2007	23.3

2008	17.8
2009	23.9

**Source: Central Bank**

Though some policy planners in the developing countries do much prefer to use the word of “generation of income” instead of poverty alleviation, the final result of the syndrome is that migrant worker brings an additional wealth to the family resulting upper living standards which lead them to escape from so-called poverty line. As shown in table XI the declining trend of population underneath of Sri Lankans poverty line from 26.1 % in 1990 / 1995 to 15.2 in 2006/ 2007 may definitely bear a reasonable influence towards lowering the country’s poverty of the population. The policy of scrapping names of migrant workers from the country’s most popular social welfare programmes which benefits nearly 4.6m. Community in Sri Lanka called “Saumurdi programme” can be cited here as a clear evidence in this respect.

**Table XIV**  
**Declining trends of population underneath official poverty line (OPL)**

<b>1990 / 1991</b>	<b>1995/ 1996</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2006 / 2007</b>
26.1	28.8	22.7	15.2

**Source: Household Income & Expenditure Survey – 2006 / 2007**  
**Department Census & Statistics – Sri Lanka**

It is estimated that 1.6 million Sri Lankan overseas workers constituted almost 20% of the total labour force of 8 Million in the country. This situation outlines the importance of migration as a means of thinning down the country’s un- employment problem. When compared with the employed population in the labour force, the impact of labour migration is so evident that the annual out flow equals to almost 28% of the country’s employed population during last decade or so.

**Table XV**  
**Foreign Employment as % of Total local employment**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Employment (LE/FE)</b>	<b>F/E</b>	<b>FE as % of LE</b>
2009	6,491,515	182,188	28
2004	7,654,935	214,709	28
2009	7,849,533	247,119	31
2010(3q)	7,371,201(3q)	206,973(3q)	28

**(Source: Labour Force Surveys-Dept. of Census and Statistics)**

Economists believe that these trends have contributed drastically in softening unemployment problem of the country throughout the years. As shown in table XV the dropping down of unemployment rate from 8.8 in 2000 to 4.9 in 2010 in the country, should have reasonable bearings of labour migration although no recent scientific evaluation to scale the real values are available.

**Table XVI**  
**Declining of unemployment rate**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
2000	8.8	6.6	12.9
2004	8.3	6.0	12.8
2009	5.8	4.3	8.6
2010(3q)	4.9	3.6	7.7

**Source: Department of Census & Statistics**

As illustrated in the above table it can be further viewed that the male unemployment rate has dropped from 6.6 in 2000 to 3.6 in 2010 while female unemployment has declined from 12.9 in 2000 to 7.7 in 2010. In the absence of more recent research data, still the impact of overseas employment as a pressure receiving mechanism in the internal labour market cannot be under estimated.

Labour migration has also contributed to emerge substantial number of employments in the support services. Employment opportunities newly emerged in these support services like recruitment agencies, Air lines, cargo services, postal units, telecommunication and banks etc, should have paved a great impact in thinning down country's unemployment problem. Apart from the organized sector the self employment ventures surfaced on account of migrants' influence may also have added some values to the domestic labour market.

Labour migration has also resulted for enhancement of technical and vocational education in the country. The social stigma for looking out for white colour jobs has changed to a skilled and craft type occupations due to high demand for such categories overseas. The figures as textured by Central Bank viewed that public sector technical training intake has increased from 63,000 in 2006 to 75,000 in 2008.

Similarly, the expansion of private sector training programmes covering different vocations have also contributed substantially to prepare Sri Lankan manpower with different skills suited for domestic as well as for foreign labour markets. Migration of married persons is argued to be a major factor for thinning down the birth rate of the country, thus limiting the expansion of population growth, as the bulk of the migrants are in the reproductive age range. Postponement of marriages and separation of couples due to migration would definitely effect the birth and fertility rate which will have long term implications on population and labour force growth. The national data reveals that the population growth rate has dropped from 1.3% in 2000 to 1.1 in 2009; migration also delays marriages of unmarried migrant workers especially the females to a substantial level. The unmarried share of female migrant workers is around 20% (table VIII) of female migrants and the bad social repercussions emerged out of delayed marriages of this contingent therefore cannot be ignored.

#### **Enhancement of International Relations**

Movement of nationals across the territorial borders of a country marks the international relationship of both countries of origin and destine. While legal migration flow impacts positively on the foreign relations between the sending and receiving country, the illegal form of migration leads to deteriorating such relations among the countries involved. Thus

the legal migration to the Middle East region seemed to have greatly influenced in deciding the foreign policy of Sri Lanka on the Region. International migration has greatly paved the way for developing different cooperation programmes, with international communities. The close relationship with international bodies like ILO, IOM, UNECEF, UNIFEM and EU etc. may have bare a positive impact of labour migration.

The basis for opening up of most of Sri Lanka's diplomatic missions in the Gulf Region has been the migration of Sri Lankans to the respective countries. Apart from providing consular services and welfare assistance to migrant workers, the missions are entrusted with the task of promotion of manpower and coordinating with foreign parties in procuring manpower from Sri Lanka. Entering into bilateral agreements and MOU<sup>5</sup> are other aspects of escalating international relations noted with receiving countries. Sri Lanka at present has signed such instruments with UAE, Oman, Libya, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain and South Korea and is negotiating such bilateral cooperation avenues with Kuwait, Oman and Lebanon. The linkage of migration and Sri Lanka's international relations was sharply evident during Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990, where nearly 100,000 Sri Lankans were able to bring back to the country within a period of three months, with able support offered by international communities.

More recently the cooperation received from international agencies in evacuating 6,000 Sri Lankans from Lebanon in 2006 due to Lebanon – Israel conflict engulfed in the region, can also be cited as good example for extended relations with foreign communities due to migrations process Engaging in Regional Consultative Processes (RCP<sup>5</sup>) with regional and international level is also considered an avenue of enhancing international relations due to labour migration. In this respect, the Colombo Process can be cited as a good example of regional cooperation of sending countries which was first of convened in Colombo in 2003. The Abu Dhabi dialogue and Global Forum of Migration and Development (GFMD) are other main arrangements under this scope, for which Sri Lanka has actively participated representing interests of migrant workers from a sending country's point of view.

### **2.3: Labour migration and policy development**

Since contractual labour migration has developed to the extent of a manpower export industry in Sri Lanka, the importance of better managing and bringing best practices within the accepted norms is well recognized by policy planners in this country. Creation of a separate Ministry called Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion & Welfare and declaring a National Policy on Labour Migration can be cited as steps taken recently in this direction. The national policy which is treated as the first in this nature in South Asian Region, complied with the consultancy of ILO, envisaged on three objectives as given below.

- a. Better governance and regulating of labour migration.
- b. Providing effective protection and welfare services to migrant workers and their family members.
- c. Mobilizing development contribution of labour migration in terms of better management of remittances and reintegration of returnees.

In keeping with above tasks, the Sri Lanka government and the SLBFE the administrative authority of the migration industry have formulated several new policies on the basis of followings.



- a. Amending Foreign Employment Act No 21 of 1985 by Act No 56 of 2009 by giving more powers to SLBFE in curbing escalating mal-practices in the industry and enlarging legal punishments on violators of the provisions of the Act.
- b. Implementing legal provision as stipulated in the new amended Act in controlling recruitment cost which has risen to be a key negative aspect of the industry. Under such provision, recruitment agents need to obtain prior approval of the SLBFE on the amount of recruitment fee to be charged from the migrant worker. This methodology greatly helps to minimize the migration cost and exploitation as experienced at present.
- c. Instituting bilateral agreements with labour receiving countries as a means of upgrading welfare and protection of Sri Lankan migrant workers. Such bilateral instruments have already been materialized with Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, Libya, UAE and South Korea.
- d. Engaging in regional and international consultative processes such as Colombo process, Abu Dhabi Dialogue, Global Forum etc, to frame more regionally accepted formulas for upgrading the status of migrant workers.

#### **2.4: Future Policy directives**

Based on the principles declared under the “Mahinda Chintana” vision of the future policies of the country, migrant worker welfare and protection has been identified as a major task in the government programmes targeted for next 05 years. Accordingly, a welfare programme has already been announced to provide a Pension scheme for migrant workers by allocating Rs. 1,000 M from the National Treasury. The new Ministry’s action plan also concentrates in establishing a “Welfare Foundation” to address welfare needs of migrant workers and their family members. Converting the present Overseas Welfare Fund operated by the SLBFE to a separate institute is a key objective under this plan. The welfare plan envisaged under Mahinda Chintana vision also consists with a comprehensive housing programme comprising 40,000 housing units for the purpose of migrant communities.

Establishing a migrants’ resource centre focusing on re-integration also in the agenda. More research work especially on national level has also been planned to fill the vacuum generated in the absence of recent research work on labour migration and socio economic impacts. The planned National Census of Population for the year 2011 for the first time in the population surveys history will also carry some questions on migrated family members of the population to gauge a scientific evaluation of the total stock of Sri Lankans abroad and their characteristics for better policy planning purposes.

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