

## **Irregular Migration in and across Sri Lanka**

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### **Introduction**

Irregular migration is a global issue inter related with human smuggling and human trafficking where it results a greater depletion of human rights. Irregular migration occurs due to individual interests as well as due to government policy implications where it has social, cultural, economical and political impacts on societies of both source and host countries. Sri Lanka is becoming significant as host, source and transit country of global irregular migration process. As such study of trends and motives of irregular migration in and across Sri Lanka is an important concern of the country.

### **Problem Statement**

The lack of knowledge on factors leading to irregular migration in relation to nationalities, religions, and gender, its trends and motives of these who migrate is a challenge for planners as well as policy makers. Further absence of knowledge on the current stock of irregular migrants in Sri Lanka in relation to nationalities is an important issue.

### **Objective**

The overall objectives of the study are to evaluate the magnitude, review the effects, study the trend and understand the motives of irregular migration in and across the Sri Lankan borders. Objective is further specified to gather and provide critical appraisal of existing empirical data on irregular migration, evaluate and analyze the available data on irregular migration, investigate the relevance of gender, age, educational back ground, and ethnic racial groups in irregular migration

### **Theoretical implications of the study**

Relative deprivation theory describes the relationship between migration and information dissemination which could use in explaining the irregular migration as it triggered by informal information dissemination. Network and institutional theories explain better the trends and motives of the irregular migration process as it mainly depends on networks and present institutional setup.

### **Methodology**

Study uses both primary and secondary data in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The main source of secondary data is the data bases available under the Department of Immigration and Emigration. Real-time data was collected on the refused entry passengers at the Bandaranayke

International Airport. Data on refused foreign nationals and investigated foreign national were gathered during the study period from Department of Immigration and Emigration.

Study conducts a detailed interview of 250 victims of irregular migration as a sample purposely selected in representing all concerned variables. Detailed interview method was used to get the actual motives of the irregular migration.

Uni-variate analysis was conducted to understand the relationships of variables involved in the study. Study gathers the empirical data through detailed interviews of boarder officials, victims of irregular migration both local and foreign, and interest group over a long period of time on Sri Lankan boarders

### **Findings**

There were 400 total refused entry passengers from 34 destinations around the world from 15.06.2014 to 20.07.2014. There were about 36percent refusals from Middle Eastern countries where 90% of foreign employment departures were for these destinations. Male passengers were the highest contributors to the refused entries resulting 77percent out of total. The main reason for the refusal was irregularity in migration which was about 69 percent.

Indian irregular migrants were contributed about 44 percent out of all investigated foreign nationals where 19 percent are Pakistanis. Asian were about 57 percent of reported irregular migrants where Africans and Europeans were about 29 and 14 percents consecutively.

Majority of the Sri Lankans resulting 76 percent out of the study were migrate due to economic reasons where all other matters were remain minor. Intended economic reason was found as looking for better employment opportunity which was about 62 percent of the total survey. Sixty eight percent of the respondents were GCE Advance Level qualified and 38 percent of them were have chosen illegal channels of migration due to trust of smugglers on the information provided by them.

### **07. Conclusion**

Motives of irregular migration not differ from the regular migration in most of the times such as looking for prosperous economic level with better employment. Most of the irregular victims are educated up to about GCE (A/L) showing less participation in higher educated and non educated levels in the irregular migration process. Migration policies should focus to facilitate skilled and educated people to find better economic opportunities in abroad. Tertiary education and employment development of youth should be done in accordance with the international levels which lead to direct to legal channels of migration. Educational and economic measures should be taken in order to prevent the vulnerabilities if irregular migration. Information and knowledge sharing would decrease

the potential of being a victim of human smuggling or trafficking through irregular immigration process.

Highest irregular emigrant nationals in Sri Lanka are Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Afghans and Chinese. Indians are the largest stock of irregular migrants where most of them are involved in illegal employment and business activities. Chinese becoming the second largest in this sector with the up surge of Chinese funded projects in Sri Lanka. Pakistanis have become the largest stock of asylum seekers registered under UNHCR office in Colombo. These irregular migrant stocks of Sri Lanka lead to many socio economic issues in Sri Lanka. Shortfalls in immigration policies and boarder control procedures are the main causes of the increasing irregular migrant stock where policy reforms should take place in order to control the issue.

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