

## **Social impact of migration Italy on families left behind in Sri Lanka**

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The contribution of remittances earned by international labour migrants to the Gross National Income has become significant in Sri Lanka. In the 1970s, destination countries for the majority of Sri Lankans were the Gulf Region countries. Since the 1990s, the situation has changed due to the increasing demand for labour from developed countries. Consequently, many Sri Lankans prefer to migrate to Newly Industrialized Economies (NIEs) and European countries. Italy has become one of the popular destinations for Sri Lankan migrant workers. During the period 2010-2014, migration to Italy has increased remarkably. With this rapid increase, the remittances sent by migrants have helped not only to improve the country's economic growth, but also to improve their family economy. Although the economic condition of families has improved due to migration, different sub cultures have emerged in the Sri Lankan society creating several social problems among migrant families. These problems have become severe due to the problems they face at different stages of the migration process – before migration, at the destination countries and upon return. Therefore, this study examines the impact of migration to Italy on families left behind and addresses policy implications. The study is based on a survey conducted in Mahawawa Divisional Secretariat (DS) Division in Puttlam district which is known as “Punchi Italiya”, and “Milano Nagara”. Three Grama Niladari divisions were selected from this DS Division as the study area. Mixed methodological approach was used in this study to collect data. Quantitative data was collected from 150 households using an interviewer administered questionnaire and the households were selected using snowball sampling method. Qualitative data were collected using in-depth interviews. According to the study, 31 percent of the migrant women and men are reported as divorced. This is largely connected to the ‘Family R visa system’. Forty six percent of migrants reported as having extra marital unions at the destination countries. Another 10 percent reported that their spouses are having such unions. It has also been reported by the family members that 5 spouses committed suicide due to these unions. Drug addiction was reported by 21 percent. It is interesting to state the children who are looked after by their mothers appeared to be shoddy and disheveled, and children who lived with their fathers are violent. Early marriages of 15 children were reported in this area. This is also mainly due to “Family R visa system”. Elderly people were unhappy about the migration of their children. About 21 percent of elders reported that they cannot maintain household activities alone, 37 percent wanted physical rest and 43 percent suffered from psychical solitariness. Only 42.5percent of the respondents are satisfied with migration. While the economic development appears to be the only reason for satisfaction of respondents for migration, declining human capital is the main reason for the dissatisfaction of the respondents.

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