

**Presentation on 'Natural Disasters and Forced Migration: the case of tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka', at the International Conference on 'Changing Natural of Forced Migration: Vulnerabilities and responsibilities in South and South-east Asia, held during 22-24th September 2011, Asian University for Women, Chittagong, Bangladesh.**

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**Abstract:**

Migration has always been a traditional response or survival strategy of people confronting the prospect, impact or aftermath of disasters but it is quite interesting to understand how natural disasters such as Asian tsunami affect the social, economic and cultural pattern of the mobility of displaced population. Therefore, the present study attempted to examine whether the massive displacement took place due to tsunami has made any significant impact on the physical and social mobility pattern of the affected people in Sri Lanka by carrying out a micro-level study among displaced population of Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat Division in Galle district which was regarded as one the worst tsunami hit areas in Sri Lanka. Our investigation suggested that the displaced people who were forced to migrate to designated resettlement schemes are not satisfied with the new destination due to lack of public utilities, limited sources of earnings and high cost of living. This suggests, (unlike in normal situation where migrants are attracted to a particular destination) that 'push' factors at the place of origin operate in the opposite direction. We also witnessed a substantial minority of the affected people are not moving into resettlement schemes. In addition, those who have migrated have lost income at the place of destination as the majority had to change their original occupations. Another major problem that the migrants encountered at the place of destination was the non-receptiveness of the host community since the host community is socially dissimilar and poorer and socially dissimilar than the migrants. This has led to several social conflicts including violence against women. Therefore, it is quite clear that this type of forced-migration significantly influence the migrants' socio-economic mobility pattern in a very unfavourable manner if appropriate strategies for social integration at the place of destination are not adopted.