



**SRI LANKA JOURNAL**  
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**VOLUME 10**  
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**Abstracts**

# SRI LANKA JOURNAL OF POPULATION STUDIES



## Introduction

Transnational migration has become increasingly prominent (Parrenas, 1995; Tyner, 2002) and is one of the most distinctive features of the massive expansion of international migration in Asia over the last two decades (Hugo, 2005a; ILO, 2007).

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Among studies on transnational migration, some researchers have focused on families left behind. But, little is known about the multi-dimensional impacts on left-behind children of migrant mothers. Some aspects have been investigated by researchers in the Philippines (Asis et al., 2004; Scalabrini Migration Centre (SMC), 2004; Hochschild, 2002, 2000; Parrenas, 2000). However, the extent of the vulnerability of left-behind children, and in what ways, when and under what circumstances they benefit and/or suffer from the absence of mothers in countries like Sri Lanka are absent. This article delves into existing studies of the experiences of children left behind in Asia, especially in the Philippines, to explore how women are mothering their children from

## **International contract migration in Sri Lanka: Dynamics, Issues And Policy Implications**

**Sunethra Perera**

### **Introduction**

A contract labour migrant is a person who migrates to a foreign country for a limited period of time, for employment on a contract basis. International contract migration has become a timeless global phenomenon. Changing demographic and labour market scenario has been responsible for pull and push dynamics of migration in many developed and developing countries of the globe. The magnitude and characteristics vary between countries. Since mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid decline in fertility, increased level of urbanization, technological advancement, rapid industrialization, global economic integration and political stability recently occurring in middle eastern countries have created an increased demand for foreign labour. Such labour market situations have opened doors for contract migrants migrating for employment from developing countries. This is a good opportunity to utilize the unused labour and reduce poverty and unemployment of many developing countries. Thus international labour migration has been identified as an important element of economic development of both sending and receiving countries.

### **Global Dynamics**

The rate of growth of the world's migrant population more than doubled between the 1960s and the 1990s, reaching 2.6 percent in 1985-1990 period. In 2005, there was around 191 million international migrants worldwide (3 percent of the total population), nearly two and a half times the figure 75 million in 1965, and it is likely to be in excess of 250 million by 2050 (Huguet & Punpuing, 2005; IOM, 2008). According to IOM (2008) "approximately one-third of the world's migrant workers live in Europe, with slightly fewer residing in Asia and North America. Africa hosts approximately eight per cent of migrant workers, while Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean are each home to three per cent of migrant workers ... The majority of migrants move from one developing country to another rather than from a developing country to a developed one. Almost half of all migrants are women (49.6%), with only slightly more living in developed than in developing countries.

More women are migrants than men in every region of the world, except in Africa and Asia. It is also notable that more women are now migrating on their own as the primary bread earners for their families" (IOM, 2008, P.32).

<sup>1</sup> International migrant is defined as persons residing in a country other than their country of birth for a period of 12 months or more, both in regular and irregular situations.

The volume of international migration for contract employment from and within the Asian region expanded rapidly during the last 30 years due to economic globalization and it will further continue in future. According to the International Organization for Migration, during 1995-1999 about 2 million Asian workers left their country every year for contract employment. Another 600,000 went overseas for employment without reporting to their national authorities. Approximately 1.2 million labour migrants were from South Asia, 1.3 million from South-East Asia and 100,000 from China (Huguet & Punpuing, 2005). During late 1970s to 1990s more and more governments in developing countries of Asia liberalized their economic policies to recognize, establish and improve their laws, policies, practices and administrative structures encouraging contract migration. Today different categories of migrant manpower such as semi-skilled and un-skilled and high skilled labour from less developed countries are sent to oil producing countries as well as industrializing and industrialized countries. The migrants' earnings; remittances represent the second largest international monetary trade flows, that exceed only that of petroleum. In addition, Asian countries are receiving a considerable proportion of remittances. In 2006, the region received the over \$60 billion. Some of the largest recipients included India \$30 billion; the Philippines, \$12 billion, and Pakistan \$4 billion (ILO, 2008).

### Sri Lankan context

International migration has been a contributory factor to the population growth in Sri Lanka during the colonial era due to the immigration of South Indian labour to work in the plantation sector. It is important to highlight that 67 percent of the population increase during inter-censal period 1871-1881 was due to these South Indian immigration. The migration to foreign destinations had been negligible (United Nations 1976). The net migration rate indicated positive figure up to 1953. However since the late 1950s, the contribution of immigration has declined while emigration has been increasing which causes negative effect of international migration on the population growth of the country. That was mainly due to two reasons first, repatriation of Indian labour migration under the Sirima-Shasthri Pact in 1964 and second, the rising foreign employment demand for Sri Lankan skill manpower from developed countries (De Silva & Perera 2007; United Nations, 1976). During the 1950s, 1960s and early half of 1970s, the key feature of emigration was country's skilled manpower moving to developed countries, (e.g. Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States) as a result of removal of emigration barriers for Asian citizens (Gamburd, 2000). Thus situation caused outflow of country's professional and technical manpower that brought the 'brain drain' experience to the country, since 1960s (De Silva & Perera, 2007).

High population growth that country experienced during 1950s and 1960s coupled with an unplanned educational output from the free education system created problems of labour absorption particularly among the educated, due to a stagnant economy. International labour migration was good solution for country's unemployment. The contract labour migration from Sri Lanka started in 1976, with first major rise in oil prices in Middle Eastern countries. Initially high demand created for males to work in construction sites and later largely female domestic workers were absorbed (housemaids). As a result, annual number of emigrants (out-migrants) exceeded the number of immigrants (in-migrants) and country's the net migration rate has become negative since 1970s.

### **Objectives**

The main objective of this paper is to examine recent dynamics and trends of contract migration in Sri Lanka and to addresses issues and policy implications of such migration.

### **Data & Limitations**

The study uses the data collected by Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE). The SLBFE is a public cooperation established in 1985 with the aims of promoting foreign employment in Sri Lanka, regulation of licensed foreign employment agents and to ensure protection for contract migrant workers and their families. The people who migrate for contract migration through registered licensed recruiting agencies and migrants who find foreign employments directly by themselves should register with the SLBFE. However the data collected are subject to certain limitations. The data base thus collected contains only limited information about migrants. Socio-demographic data are limited to age, sex, country of destination and manpower level. The data base does not include information about contract workers those who did not register with the SLBFE. However the available SLBFE data can be used to some extent to explore the recent dynamics of patterns of demand and supply of contract labour migrants in Sri Lanka. The study also uses available empirical evidence from other sources of literature in order to highlight issues relating to contract migration. Such investigation is useful to address the policy implications regarding contract labour migration in Sri Lanka.

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<sup>1</sup> International migrant is defined as persons residing in a country other than their country of birth for a period of 12 months or more, both in regular and irregular situations.

## Theoretical aspects

The existing macro theories of international labour migration are aimed at explaining the flow of migrants, macro level determinants and directions of migration between countries. Neo-classical economic theory (equilibrium models), dual labour market theory, world system theory based on the geographical disparities in distribution of capital, income and employment provide key potentials for migration (Lewis 1957 cited by Karunaratne, 2007; Todaro 1985; Massay D. et al., 1993; Massay D. et al., 1994). In examining international labour migration flows Stahl (2001) argues that changes in the economic structure of Asian labour markets and the rise of global integration has increased demand for international labour flows.

In early micro theories the migration differentials, characteristics, reasons for migration considering an individual migrant's economic decisions are explained. Such theories explain migration on the assumption that migration is driven by individual level economic choices. Individual follows rational economic behaviour as decision maker and try to maximize income calculating cost and benefits of migration and the event of migration occur when benefits exceeds the cost (Todaro 1985). But later theories tried to establish a wider explanation of migration by including social and psychological costs and benefits (Haberkorn 1981; DaVanzo 1981).

Human capital approach see migration is an investment in human capital. It assumes that all individuals have the same opportunity to invest in human capital and individuals make the choices to maximize the returns to human capital. It is not the immediate benefits but the long-term benefits that often are measured as discounted life-time earnings. DaVanzo (1981) expands the model to explain other types of migration, such as return migration (location specific capital), repeat migration (accumulating capital – or learning by doing) which is useful to address the implication of repeat and return process of contract migration.

Household economic theory examines the migration, in taking household as a decision making unit. Households try to minimize risk in avoiding imperfect labour market conditions. Relative income is more important than absolute income in motivating migration. The household collectively decides who should migrate? Usually the household decides to send its surplus labour considering those who are not necessary for household economic activities and which member will send more remittances back to the household (Bloom & Odged, 1985).

Social theories of migration such as social network, social capital and cumulative causation describe the social processes and linkages associated with individual migration behaviour. The network theory argues that migrants establish interpersonal ties that “connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin” (Massay et al 1993; Massay et al., 1994).

The theory of cumulative causation discuss that each act of migration changes the likelihood of subsequent decisions about migration because migration has an impact on the social environments in both the sending and receiving regions. In the sending countries, the sending back of remittances increase the income levels of migrants' families relative to others in the community, and in this way may contribute to an increase in the motivation of other households to send migrants. Migrants themselves may become part of a culture of migration and be more likely to move again, increasing the overall volume of migration (Weeks 2005). These macro and micro theoretical understanding provide valuable pathways to explore dynamics, issues and implications of international contract migration in any country.

### Review of existing knowledge

Several scholars have been contributed to existing knowledge of contract labour migration in Sri Lanka in different aspects which can be reviewed under three major categories such as (1) macro level determinants of contract migration and effects of remittances to the national economy of Sri Lanka, (2) individual determinants that has been focused on migrants themselves and (3) the effect of migration on left-behind families and children.

Researchers reveal that local unemployment and poverty act as 'push' factors that motivate labour migration to Middle Eastern countries (Gamburd, 2000; Dias and Gunawardene 1991). Unemployment in Sri Lanka has been a problem since the 1960s and the rate of unemployment increased from 12 percent to 24 percent from early 1960s to mid 1970s. In 1977 the country under went economic liberalization policies which encouraged the contract migration as a means of employment creation and stimulation of remittances. Since the late 1970s, in terms of provision of employment opportunities, generation of foreign exchange, stimulation of local demand and accumulation of investment funds, the contract migration and the remittances thus sent has played a significant role in the national economy of Sri Lanka (De Silva at et. al., 1993; Rodrigo and Jayatissa 1989; Amjad 1989; Gunethilake 1989; Dias 1986). Remittances as a percentage of export earnings have risen from 2.5 percent in 1977 to around 20 percent in the early 1990s and that had a positive effect on the balance of payments. As a large number of contract migrants in Sri Lanka are from the low income groups these remittances produce perhaps favourable impacts on income distribution as well (De Silva at et. al.1993). Foreign employment has played an important role in determining country's national savings (Gunathilake 1995).

Various scholars have emphasised that there is a vacuum of data on magnitude and socio-economic characteristics of contract migrants (De Silva at et. al.,1993; Athukorala and Wickramasekara 1996; Korale 1985). Therefore small scale research studies about migrants themselves are equally important. These research studies disclose some individual characteristics and household level determinants of female migration. Many of such studies claim that reasons for female out migration

are largely due to low income, poverty and large family size. Majority of contract migrants are poor, and their household income is low (Herath 1993; Dias and Gunawardene 1991). The migrant population had larger households and more children above the national average and household structure has a significant role in influencing migration (Gumburd 2000; Dias and Gunawardena 1991; Brochmann, 1990). A large proportion of women who went abroad as housemaids were "housewives" and were not "actively seeking employment" in the domestic labour market; majority did not engage in post migration employment (Gunethilaka 1995). However such empirical evidence implies that the macro economic theories can give supportive explanations for Sri Lankan contract labour migration.

The level of education of female migrants is low) found 1.8 percent of migrant women were illiterate, 23.3% had primary education and 74.1% had some secondary education, only 0.8% had a university education. Eighty five percent of migrant women from Sri Lanka were between the ages of 20-40. At the beginning of late 1970s, most migrant came from urbanized districts near the capital, but by the mid 1990s they came from all areas of the island (Gunatilake 1989; Gunathilake 1995; Gumburd 2000).

In the traditional Sri Lankan society, within the prevailing patriarchal system, the women are expected to live under the protection of men. Women's main roles were providing care for the husband and the children. The society did not expect women to engage in income generating occupations or economic activity. In that context men were responsible for being the bread winners of the family. Country's macro-economic transformation made opportunities for women to engage employment in within or outside country. Thus the large flow of female dominated out migration has created important implications on left-behind members of the families and children because such migration flows caused the loss of primary care givers for families; especially, mothers for children left behind. This situation affects the physical emotional and social well being of the children left at the origin. Research has been focused on material well being rather than psychological well being. About Three fourths of Sri Lankan women working abroad were married and had two or more children. Approximately 90 percent of married women left children at home when they went abroad, and 20 percent of these children were under the age of 5 (Save the children, 2006; Eelens et al, 1992 cited in Gamburd, 2000 ).

The families of the contract migrants spent the remitted money mainly for purposes of consumption and for children's education. Some are spent on paying debts, buying lands and building houses. In addition, the migrant persons spend money to buy electrical items to bring back home, for relatives, to preserve social networks by giving gifts, supporting medical costs, and contributing to wedding and other ceremonies. Money set apart for savings and investment are very little (Gunatilake 1995; De Silva et al., 1993; Brochmann 1987). Gamburd (2000), through his longitudinal case study of "Naeaeagma" village discovered that that poor families of female migrants needed a number of years to get out of debt and save enough money to buy land or build houses.



A very few research has been focused on psycho-social wellbeing of families and children left behind by mothers. Many women migrate leaving their children with husband, extended families, other relatives or friends. Children and husbands are emotionally displaced. The long term absence of mothers negatively affects the emotional psychological and social wellbeing of the families left behind. It negatively affects the education of left behind children (Save the Children Sri Lanka, 2006; Samarasinghe, 1989).

The above review of evidences expands our understanding of why do people decide to migrate for foreign employments, their background characteristics, national and household level benefits of overseas labour migration. Some of the evidences support the existing theories of international labour migration. Since migration is continues global process and stock, flow, direction and characteristic of migrants may differ according to labour market responses of destinations and origins from time to time. Thus, subsequent section of this paper presents the recent dynamics of contract labour migration in order to address current issues and policy implications. Such investigation would help to identify existing knowledge gaps and highlight potential research issues related to contract migration.

### **Recent dynamics of international labour migration**

#### **Estimated stock of overseas migrant workers**

In 2007, about 1.64 million migrants of Sri Lanka are working abroad (SLBFE, 2007). About 61 percent are females while 39 percent are males. It indicates a significant volume of current female and male labour force of Sri Lanka, are employed as migrant workers in foreign destinations. According to table 1 major destinations for Sri Lankan labour are Middle Eastern countries which absorb 90 percent of the male and female migrant stock. Rest of the proportion (10 percent) of contract migrants workers are employed in all other countries. Approximately two thirds of Sri Lankan migrant workers depart for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE. These results reveal that supply of Sri Lankan labour largely depend on the demand of a few Middle Eastern countries. The proportions of migrants go for non-Middle Eastern countries were high among males (6%) compared to females.

**Table 1: Estimated Stock of Sri Lankan Overseas Contract Workers by Sex Country of Destination -2007**

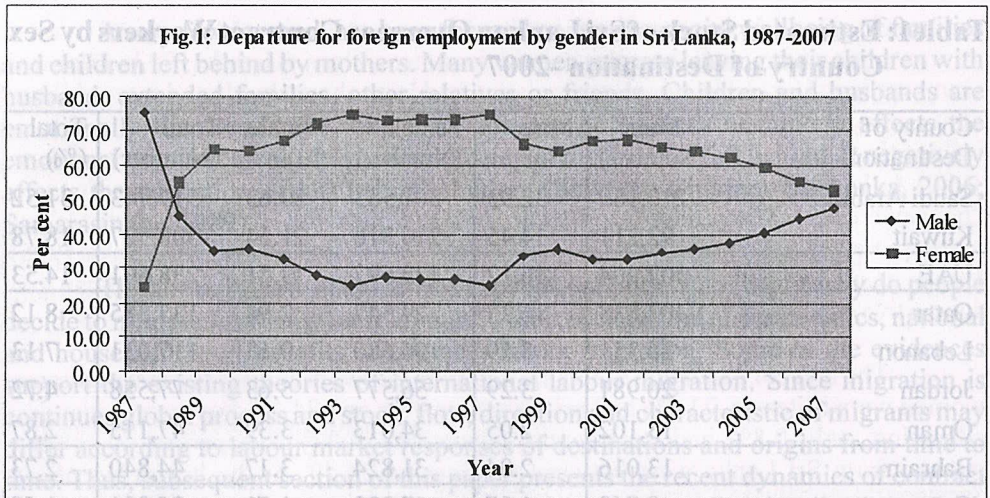
County of Destination	Male (Number)	Male (%)	Female (Number)	Female (%)	Total (Number)	Total (%)
Saudi Arabia	210,160	32.93	307,583	30.63	517,743	31.52
Kuwait	92,211	14.45	216,316	21.54	308,527	18.78
UAE	102,904	16.12	135,697	13.51	238,601	14.53
Qatar	103,838	16.27	29,547	2.94	133,385	8.12
Lebanon	20,351	3.19	96,680	9.63	117,031	7.13
Jordan	20,981	3.29	56,577	5.63	77,558	4.72
Oman	13,102	2.05	34,013	3.39	47,115	2.87
Bahrain	13,016	2.04	31,824	3.17	44,840	2.73
Cyprus	8,769	1.37	17,222	1.71	25,991	1.58
Italy	15,018	2.35	45,209	4.50	60,227	3.67
All other countries	37906	5.94	33531	3.34	71437	4.35
Total Stock	638,256	100.00	1,004,199	100.00	1,642,455	100.00
Total stock (%)	<b>38.9</b>	-	<b>61.1</b>	-	100.00	-

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE, 2008)

### Trends of annual departure

The current annual departure for foreign contract employment is slightly greater than 200,000 (SLBFE, 2007). The annual departure for international contract migration has increased over the last two decades. The volume of male international labour migration increased from 10,647 to 102,629 during 1987-2007. At the same time, female contract migration also rose from 5,480 to 114,677, for the same period, with some fluctuations in some years responding to political and economic changes in the Middle East. Figure 1 presents, the percentage distribution of departure for foreign employment by gender. It depicts that, over the period of last two decades there has been decreasing the gap between male and female departure. It is noticeable that in mid 1980s males were dominant in the flow of contract labour migration. Since late 1980s the female image has become dominant. The fluctuations represent the effect of oil price changes, political crises and war situations at the destination countries and its effect on labour market.

The skilled categories included technicians, machine operators, computer operators, drivers, etc. These skilled workers are recruited according to their previous experiences. The unskilled level consists of cleaners, helpers, janitors and other labours. These variations may affect on wage differentials of gender specific labour.



Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, (SLBFE, 2007)

In 1970s the price hike in oil in the Gulf countries brought the experience of contract labour migration to Sri Lanka and many other developing countries. At first, men were largely absorbed by the Middle East labour market in order to fill the labour shortage of fast developing infrastructure and construction sector. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman were some of the labour receiving countries of the Gulf. Since late 1980s labour markets of such countries created bulk of employments for women especially in the domestic sector, demarcating feminization international migration. However, in recent years overseas migration of males in Sri Lanka has also been increasing due to industrial development, second construction boom in South East Asia and the Gulf.

### Characteristics of contract work force

It is very difficult to examine demographic and socio-economic characteristics due to lack of data. Available research literature which had been reviewed in this paper, provide valuable evidence regarding migrants' socio-economic characteristics. The SLBFE data provide limited range of characteristics such as age, gender and manpower level.

## Age

Age selectivity of migrants is shown in Table 2 and it is evident that about 82% of females who migrated for foreign employment in 2007 were between the age of 20 and 44. Male age distribution confirms that both young and middle age adult tend more to migrate than other age groups. There are about 81% of males who were in age group of 20-44 years, had migrated for foreign employment. In addition, approximately 16% of males and females who were in ages 45 and above had migrated in 2007, reveals that a considerable proportion of migrants tend to emigrate at their later ages too.

**Table2: Departure for Foreign Employment by Age & Sex - 2007**

Age group	Male (Number)	Male (%)	Female (Number)	Female (%)	Total (Number)	Total (%)
19 & below	2,514	2.45	2,516	2.19	5,030	2.31
20 - 24	19,522	19.02	15,616	13.62	35,138	16.17
25 - 29	24,978	24.34	21,604	18.84	46,582	21.44
30 - 34	17,073	16.64	18,455	16.09	35,528	16.35
35 - 39	12,666	12.34	20,021	17.46	32,687	15.04
40 - 44	8,883	8.66	18,435	16.08	27,318	12.57
45 - 49	5,995	5.84	10,272	8.96	16,267	7.49
50 & above	10994	10.71	7723	6.73	18717	8.61
Not Identified	4	0.00	35	0.03	39	0.02
Total	102,629	100.00	114,677	100.00	217,306	100.00

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, (SLBFE, 2007)

## Manpower Level

The departure for foreign employments by manpower categories in 2007 are shown in table3. It is very clear that demand for each of the categories consist of gender variations. It depicts gender segregated nature of current labour makets. More female contract labour are recruited for housemaid category (89%) while demand for male labour for skilled (43%) and unskilled categories (46%). Males are more likely to get professional, middle level or clerical related contract jobs compared to females. The skilled categories included technicians, machine operators, computer operators, drivers, etc. These skilled workers are recruited according to their previous experiences. The unskilled level consists of cleaners, helpers, janitors and other labours. These variations may affect on wage differentials of gender specific labour.

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, (SLBFE, 2007)

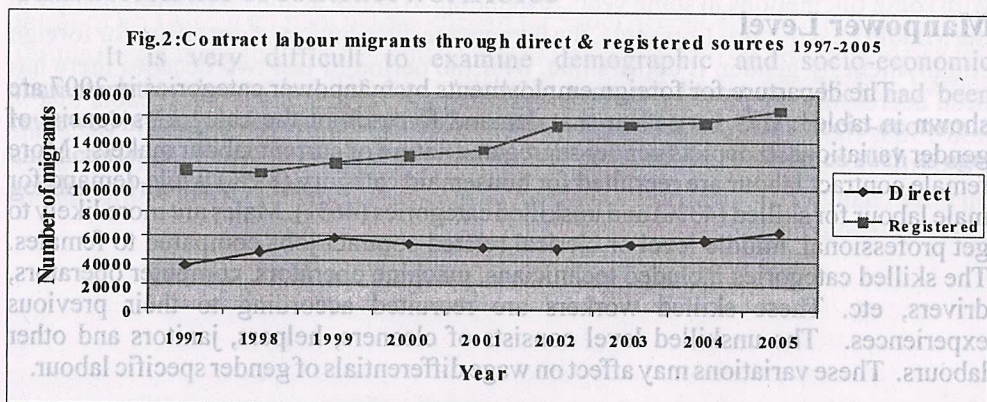
**Table3: International contract migrants by manpower level-2007**

Manpower Level	Male		Female	
	(Number)	(%)	(Number)	(%)
Professional Level	1,543	1.50	66	0.06
Middle level	3,319	3.23	516	0.45
Clerical & Related	3,854	3.76	597	0.52
Skilled	43,613	42.50	5,996	5.23
Semi Skilled	3,194	3.11	241	0.21
Unskilled	47,106	45.90	5,085	4.43
Housemaid	-	-	102,176	89.10
Total	102,629	100.00	114,677	100.00

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, (SLBFE, 2007)

### Sources of getting contract employments

There are two major sources operating in Sri Lanka in getting persons for contract employment such as (1) through registered agency of Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment or registered sources and (2) through their friends and relatives' network or direct source. Usually, migrants those who go abroad for the first time, tend to obtain employment through government registered sources but later on, when they build contact network at destination, they themselves tend to find employment through contacts. Normally repeat migration is largely involved with such sources that create cumulative causation effect. The direct and registered sources of migration during 1997-2005 are given in figure2. It is clear that registered source are more popular among migrants in obtaining jobs in Sri Lanka and these migrants are registered and insured under SLFEB before the move take place, thus they are secured at foreign destinations.



Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, (SLBFE, 2005)

However the category of direct sources which involves migrant networking has been increasing over the period. Migrants who obtained foreign employment through friends and relatives and other information sources are included in this category. Gamburd (2000) in her study revealed that friends and relatives at destination help find employment and sent air ticket and visa to relative and friend at origin. This method reduces the cost of employment to recruiting agencies and other types of cost associated with finding foreign employment. Such networking can reduce the cost of migration by U.S \$ 60 to US\$440. These results affirm that networking theory can supportive explanation to Sri Lankan contract migration to a certain extent and networking and cumulative causation effect play a considerable role in increasing international contract migration in Sri Lanka.

### Remittances

Remittances are important for the government as a key source foreign exchange, macro economic instrument and investment funding. At family level, remittances provide family income for the left-behind at the origin. According to Table 4 it is clear that private remittances have been increasing for the last 16 years. The data confirms that contract migrant workers in Middle East countries contribute more than half of the remittances received in each year.

**Table 4: Private remittances received from labour migration 1991-2007**

Year	Private Remittances (Rs. Million)		Middle East as a % of total Remittance
	Middle East	Total	
1991	9,515	18,311	51.96
1992	13,816	24,037	57.48
1993	16,932	30,592	55.35
1994	20,196	34,992	57.72
1995	23,567	40,482	58.22
1996	26,728	46,003	58.10
1997	33,202	54,445	60.98
1998	39,466	64,517	61.17
1999	45,851	74,356	61.66
2000	55,252	87,697	63.00
2001	62,680	103,180	60.75
2002	75,579	123,183	61.36
2003	77,579	136,475	56.84
2004	87,871	158,291	55.51
2005	111,179	197,968	56.16
2006	128,282	224,678	57.10
2007*	160,502	276,814	57.98

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, (SLBFE, 2007)

\* Provisional

## Discussion and conclusion

First, studies on international contract migration in Sri Lanka during last three decades have identified that migration is driven by macro level as well as individual and household level determinants such as poverty, unemployment, lack of capital, household survival etc. This paper found that geographical disparities in distribution of capital, income and employment provided key potentials for Sri Lankan people push out of the country of origin to find contract employment in other high income countries. Economic liberalization and global integration made it easy for people to access information find employment at foreign destinations. Government role of encouraging people and regulating employment agencies, formulation of policies and programs, and providing information and services for migrant are important considerations which are not stated in macro-micro theories of migration. Household survival or strategy approaches, segmented labour market theory and network theory are important in explaining initiation of international labour migration in Sri Lanka. Second, the SLBFE data on estimated stock of migrant workers abroad provide information those are useful to understand magnitude of Sri Lankan labour force working abroad in a given year. However, the SLBFE do not provide enough information about how do they estimate the stock of foreign workers and types of migrants that they included (e.g. contract workers, permanent settlers, short term, students or long term migrants etc.). Therefore, little comparisons can be made with the SLBFE data.

Third, Sri Lankan migrant workers largely depend on a few Middle Eastern countries which imply that labour demand and composition depend on political decisions of the Arab world. A Gulf crisis situation in Middle Eastern countries could have adverse effects on the Sri Lankan economy too. So, it is essential to explore non-Middle Eastern labour market for potential migrants in order to reduce such negative effects.

Fourth, an equally important issue is the effects of out migration of females specially mothers, on the left-behind children and families. Majority of contract migrants are married and have children so they tend to migrate leaving their children behind. Separation from children is not an easy task for the parent concerned and psycho-social cost involved is associated with the event of migration. Mother migration and father migration would differently affect the children's well being. Traditionally in Sri Lankan society, the father plays the role of the bread winner while the mother is responsible for child rearing and education of children and caring for the family. Thus in the event of mother migrating, her roles have to be performed by the father or by the care giver, mostly by the members of the extended family. If the father migrated his roles are mostly taken over by the mother. If both migrated the children are cared for by the grand parents, relatives or friends. In situations where commencement or continuity of education of the children is involved, parent's being absent; would have different reactions on the children depending on their age, gender, and household characteristics. Sometimes parents' migration may have positive effect

on enrol in education for younger children rather than older children. At the same time children of poor families may have benefited from parent migration rather than children of wealthier families. On the other hand older children may be neglected and discouraged in enrol in education due to lack of encouragement of care giver. And also children enrol in education may be affected differently whether father or mother migrated. Not only children but also it is necessary to examine effect of migration on spouse and elderly. The available national level data sources could provide little evidences on detail characteristics foreign labour force and determinants and consequences of overseas migration. Thus national level migration survey is needed to capture reliable data for detailed investigation of above issues especially, impacts of left behind population by migrants.

Fifth, one of the key important findings is gender gap of departure for overseas contract migration has been reduced for the last two decades. It may have positive impact on income and social cost of migration. Because, more than half of male overseas migrants employed in professional, middle level, clerical related and skilled occupations while 89 percent of females employed as housemaids. It may have greater variability of wages between male and female overseas migrants. Thus, promoting male migration government can receive more remittance and household can enhance household income compared to female migration. However, issues relating to male contract migration are not surfaced as most of available literature focus only about female migration. Since the male migration has been increasing over the last two decades it is useful to explore effects of such migration. On the other hand, it can be argued that enhancing opportunities for male migration could reduce social cost on children left behind and migrants themselves. At individual level, mostly literature highlights negative impacts are related to female migration and they are at risk of being exploited and being abused as they are working as domestic workers who are often subjected to long working hours and performing excessively difficult tasks. They are frequently the victims of sexual harassment. In addition, exploring international market for females in non-domestic sector is vital for reducing negative impacts of female migration. Lastly, this paper uses existing theoretical and empirical literature and available information from Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau to examine the dynamics of international labour migration in recent years. The findings from the study affirm that the international contract migration is a development tool. Economic globalization, information flows and migrant networks are key factors that continue overseas migration, apart from origin factors. The feminization of international labour market increase the social cost for both migrants themselves and left behind population. The increasing proportion of male migration could reduce feminization effect on origin population and female migrants themselves in terms of social cost and risk. Future research need to address effects of male and female migration on left behind families and children.



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