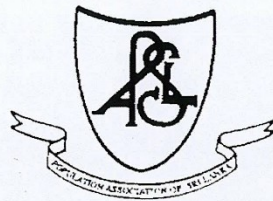


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PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

Internal migration patterns in post-war Sri Lanka: challenges and policy implications

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Introduction

Internal migration is defined as a form of geographic or spatial mobility involving a permanent or semi-permanent change of usual residence within the boundaries of a given country. Lee (1966) in his theory of migration, identified migration as a process influenced by four factors associated with the area of origin, the area of destination, intervening obstacles, and the personal characteristics of the migrant. Today, internal mobility has become a global phenomenon and it is an important demographic component affecting change in size, growth, distribution and structure of the population in an area. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that more than 740 million of the world population consists of internal migrants and more than half of them (54%) live in urban areas (IOM, 2015). In many developing contexts, research revealed that internal migration has extensively contributed in shaping their demographic, economic and social positions on which they stand today (Castaldo et al., 2012; McKay and Deshingkar, 2014; De Silva, 2015; Perera, 2005; Perera and Ukwatta, 2000; Wong 2003; Zhu et al., 2013). Internal migration in many countries of East Asia and South Asia has been driven by economic and labour market differentials between origin and destination areas involving movement of people from rural areas to urban locations (IOM, 2005; 2015). Apart from trends and patterns, the impact of internal migration on national economies as well as family income was also evident in the literature (Riester, 2013; Lakshman et al., 2014). In those literature, both positive and negative impacts of migration have been discussed in relation to remittances, family and children, employment, housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, household assets and living standards focusing on both the origin and destination areas. Sri Lanka is one of the countries in South Asia, which has experienced diverse patterns of internal migration since its independence. These migration dynamics were linked with various socio-economic programmes, government policies, and political environment which had been experienced by the country in different periods.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to explore the question of how the internal migration pattern has changed in the context of post-war Sri Lanka and discuss its challenges and policy implications.

Data and methods

The analysis used in this paper was based on the Census Data Method which makes use of information from population censuses on place of usual residence and place of previous residence or place of birth. The most reliable data on internal migration in Sri Lanka comes from population censuses. The post-war patterns of inter-district migration were examined mainly with the use of Sri Lanka Population and Housing Census, 2012 (SLPHC). The 2012 population census is a landmark in the history of censuses as it collected information of population covering the entire country after 31 years. The information collected by the population census 2012, including place of birth, place of usual residence, place of previous

residence, duration at usual residence and reasons for moving to current residence are useful to capture post-war internal migration dynamics in Sri Lanka. In this analysis, internal migrants were identified by using data on district of usual residence and district of previous residence. Data were analyzed using migration rates, migration effectiveness ratio, and maps of migration flows.

Results and discussion

Results revealed that migration patterns have changed significantly during the period of 1981 and 2012. Significant flows of in-migration in terms of both volume and rates have been observed in the districts such as of Western Province, especially to Colombo and Gampaha.

Table 1: Migration indicators for districts of Sri Lanka-2012

	Out-Migration Rate (OMR)	In-Migration Rate (IMR)	Net Migration Rate (NMR)	Migration Effectiveness Ratio (MER)
Colombo	20.91	27.62	6.71	13.83
Gampaha	7.57	26.60	19.02	55.67
Kalutara	12.86	18.52	5.66	18.03
Kandy	25.80	16.26	-9.54	-22.69
Matale	24.74	19.86	-4.88	-10.94
Nuwara Eliya	26.84	12.42	-14.42	-36.73
Galle	21.31	11.06	-10.25	-31.67
Matara	31.46	11.59	-19.87	-46.16
Hambantota	20.80	15.80	-5.00	-13.66
Jaffna	16.82	19.22	2.40	6.65
Mannar	43.24	39.63	-3.61	-4.36
Vavuniya	121.86	52.09	-69.77	-40.11
Mullaitivu	76.45	90.84	14.39	8.60
Kilinochchi	52.08	93.64	41.56	28.52
Batticaloa	9.79	5.36	-4.43	-29.23
Ampara	10.09	14.08	4.00	16.54
Trincomalee	13.73	20.31	6.58	19.32
Kurunegala	15.84	13.78	-2.06	-6.96
Puttalam	13.52	18.74	5.22	16.19
Anuradhapura	15.61	21.09	5.47	14.91
Polonnaruwa	16.98	31.23	14.25	29.56
Badulla	23.53	12.61	-10.92	-30.23
Moneragala	16.48	22.30	5.82	15.02
Ratnapura	16.48	12.06	-4.42	-15.49
Kegalle	24.47	14.46	-10.01	-25.72

Source: Author's calculations based on Population and Census, 2012

The migration effectiveness ratio was high in Gampaha district (55.67) while it was relatively low in Kalutara (18.03) and Colombo (13.83) districts. A large majority of in-migrants were originated from agricultural and plantation-based districts of Southern, Northern, Central and Uva Provinces. Even though the Vavuniya District was reported as a positive net migrant district (26.4) in 1981, it was reported as the highest net out-migrant (negative) district (-69.8) in 2012. The migration effectiveness ratio for the same district was reported as (-40.58) in 2012. This pattern may be observed due to people who have fled from conflict areas returning to their places of origin at the end of the civil war. Internal migration characterizes of female dominance and largely youth and adult migrants. Approximately one third of migrants have migrated due to marriage and one fifth of migrants migrated to seek employment. Post-war resettlement, education and accompanied by the family were the other significant reasons for internal migration. The different patterns of migration were observed between previous-residence and life-time migration data.

Conclusion

Findings suggest that the post-war internal migration patterns are needed to be considered by policy planners in planning housing schemes for displaced population, infrastructure development in war-affected areas and when preparing activities and socio-economic policies and programmes, in the country. It is important to highlight the data limitations in SLPHCs for capturing internal migration from rural to urban, and urban to urban migration in Sri Lanka. These data limitations are needed to be addressed in future censuses and surveys.

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