

INTERNATIONAL CONTRACT MIGRATION IN SRI LANKA; DYNAMICS, ISSUES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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This paper examines recent dynamics and trends of contract labour migration in Sri Lanka. It applies existing theoretical perspectives in previous literature and available information from Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau. The findings from the study indicate that the international contract migration is a development tool. Economic globalization, information flows and migrant networks are key factors contributing to overseas migration, apart from economic disparities and unemployment prevailing in the country. The proportion of female departure for foreign employment reduced by 22 percent from 1997 (75%) to 2007 (53%). More than half of male overseas migrants are employed in professional, middle level, clerical related and skilled occupations, while 89 percent of females are employed as housemaids. The feminization of international labour migration has increased the social cost for both migrants themselves and left behind families. Gender gap of overseas contract migration has also reduced during the last two decades. This paper argue that the enhancing opportunities for male migrants could reduce feminization effect of migration on both left behind population and on female migrants themselves in terms of social cost and risk.