

Reproductive Health of Katunayake FTZ Migrant Female Workers: A Study of Their Intimate Relationships, Contraceptive Knowledge and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

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Free Trade Zones (FTZ) of Sri Lanka, a byproduct of economic policy reforms initiated in 1977, not only gave leadership to an industrialization process in the country but also promoted large scale worker migration and congruence of young working age population in and around industrial establishments. A majority (74%) of such workers, who had migrated from rural areas, are young (17-24 age group) unmarried females in the primarily reproductive age group. The peer group culture of youth and young adults (17 - 24, 25-32) together with other changing agents such as the transitional socio-economic and cultural values of the society have introduced new behavioural facets in the traditional life styles of young people specially in the sphere of sexuality of youth and adults. Hence, it is surmised that the target population is at risk of being exposed to reproductive ill-health through unhealthy sexual experimentations and that they face unhealthy consequences such as induced abortion, sexually transmitted diseases due to such behaviour. Several projects have identified and highlighted reproductive health needs of FTZ working population, but their needs have not been adequately assessed and addressed especially in the sphere of implications of attitudinal changes and social settings on reproductive health of young people. The paper investigates some selected reproductive health determinants such as intimate relationships, knowledge on sex education, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, of FTZ migrant female workers, in-order to assess, the contraceptive use service gap amongst unmarried adolescents and young adults and address their current unmet needs. The data for the study has been obtained from a sample survey of female migrant workers in the FTZ-Katunayake, conducted in September 2002. The sample consisted of 400 migrant females randomly selected from the Katunayake FTZ.

Key words: Industrialization, Working population , youth, Sexuality, Reproductive health

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