

Labour Migration of women: Impact on Household Income, Savings and Investment as Integral Component of Economic Development in Sri Lanka

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Women around the world form a mosaic without which no pattern of development could be understood in its totality. Stereotype men have been that of 'bread winners', and the 'natural' role of women is seen as that of 'home makers'. However, in today's world, in addition to the legendary role of home maker, woman is bound to take over the role of bread winner, which is being conventionally performed by man. Hence, in the present day, women have become both 'home makers' and 'bread winners' putting their children's needs at stake.

Accordingly, the search for outside paid-employment by women world over is no more a new phenomenon. However, the movement of women, particularly of LDCs, across-borders in search of temporary employment is reported to be a very topical phenomenon. Today such short-term migration of women has become a lucrative industry, in which Sri Lanka has become an active participant by means of sending semi-skilled and low skilled labour of women abroad. In the same breadth, it has been noted that, it is rural women who tend to be more inclined towards the industry, and the most popular destination has been the Middle East. In effect, this industry is a major source of income, both at micro and macro level, which has the potential of sustaining socio-economic development of the country. However, at the same time, such migration of women is subject to much discussion today due to overwhelming problems faced by them from take up of foreign employment to its premature or mature completion.

Thus, the objective of the study is to identify and analyze whether such temporary labour migration of women essentially brings about positive impacts on socio-economic development of the rural sector in Sri Lanka. The methodology of the study is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods inclusive of a before - after survey, which has applied stratified random sampling method in selecting the sample, that comprised a group of migrant women and their families. The general conclusion of the paper is that migration of women truly raises the average income of their families. However, majority of them are not geared towards investing their increased income, but totally spend on familial consumption, which fails to bring about any significant positive impact on rural economy in the long term.

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