

Labour Migration from Sri Lanka to Middle East: Evolution and Emerging Challenges

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International labour migration has been growing in an increasing rate during the past three decades. With the rapid increase in the remittance flow influxes to the country, labour migration and remittances have become a center for discussion among researchers and policy makers. Moreover, recent discussions on socio-economic consequences of labour migration have been taking the discussion towards a debate among multiple parties. However, dearth of knowledge on migration has become a limitation for an effective debate over labour migration. In this backdrop, this paper aims to explore trends and structural changes in labour migration from Sri Lanka to Middle East and explore the emerging issues and challenges related to this phenomenon. The study employs descriptive statistical techniques to analyse data collected from secondary sources.

It was found that Sri Lankan labour migration is limited to a few migration corridors. Among them, Middle East is the common destination for a large majority of male and female labour migrants. Labour migration to Middle East has been growing from the end of 1970s. East Asia is gaining the attraction of labour migrants in recent past. Even though the labour migration flow to Middle East has been growing in an increasing rate, recent circumstances have resulted in structural changes in the labour migration flow. Recent changes in the foreign employment policy have been changing the age and gender compositions of the labour migration flow. Present unstable situation in some Middle East countries and the fluctuations in the oil price are identified as emerging issues. Findings show challenges ahead that need to be addressed at the earliest.

Key words: *Labour Migration, Middle East, Remittances.*