LABOUR MIGRATION TO THE MIDDLE EAST

From Sri Lanka to the Gulf

Edited by

F. EELENS, T. SCHAMPERS and J.D. SPECKMANN

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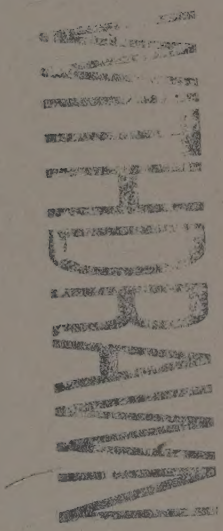
During the recent Gulf War, the extent of the migrant worker phenomenon in the Middle East was highlighted by the plight of tens of thousands of Asian and North African men and women fleeing from Kuwait and Iraq. The harrowing images and reports spreading across the world from the hastily constructed refugee camps demonstrated the vulnerability of the economic and social position of this floating labour force, whose living conditions are the subject of this wide-ranging study.

The authors of *Labour Migration to the Middle East* have mainly based their work on labour migrants from Sri Lanka, which shows a number of interesting characteristics when compared to other labour-exporting countries. No less than 1.3% of the Sri Lankan population work in the Middle East, of which 70% are women working mainly in the domestic sector.

Solid sociological and anthropological research is the basis for a detailed examination of various social, economic and demographic aspects of the processes of labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Gulf States. The book opens with an introduction to the topic of labour migration, and presents the concept of survival migration, which is considered a main characteristic of the Sri Lankan case. The work goes on to describe the recruiting process and the level of fees which migrants have to pay for a job abroad; the policy of the Gulf States with regard to labour migration; the socio-economic conditions of the Sri Lankan migrant workers; the socio-economic position and religious status of Sri Lankan Muslim women migrating to the Gulf; the impact of labour migration on Sri Lankan society – specifically on social stratification, social mobility, household structure, marriage stability and the well-being of children – and conditions which lead to the early return of migrants.

Labour Migration to the Middle East makes an important contribution to the scientific and social reflection on the global phenomenon of labour migration.



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Dedicated to the memory of the late
Professor Stanley Wijesundera
Vice-chancellor of Colombo University.
Sri Lanka.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

During the Gulf crisis in the summer of 1990 the extent of the migrant worker phenomenon in the Middle East was highlighted by the plight of tens of thousands of refugees from Kuwait and Iraq, most of whom ended up in the neighbouring country of Jordan. Men, women and even children, mainly from North Africa and South and South-East Asia. The harrowing images and reports spreading across the world from the hastily constructed refugee camps demonstrated the vulnerability of the economic and social position of this floating labour force. These migrant workers seemed to be largely dependent on international help for their repatriation, while in their countries of origin, because of widespread unemployment, their return was regarded with no little concern.

This book deals with the living conditions of the labour migrants.
The authors have mainly based their work on a wide-ranging study of labour migrants from Sri Lanka. That country was chosen as a result of the links established between the University of Colombo and the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies of the University of Leiden in The Netherlands between 1980 and 1988. These links, financed by the Netherlands University Foundation for International Cooperation, focused on the social sciences and were especially aimed at upgrading the teaching and research capacity of the Colombo Sociology Department. Within this framework, exchange of staff members was encouraged, and a common area of research - that of labour migration - was defined because of its social significance. In addition, labour migration from Sri Lanka, when compared with other labour-exporting countries, has a number of specific characteristics which make Sri Lanka a particularly interesting case to study. For instance, the extent of Sri Lankan labour migration is much greater than that of other South and South-East Asian countries: no less than 1.3% of the population work in the Middle East. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is exceptional in that a large percentage (approximately 70%) of its migrant workers are women, working mainly in the domestic sector.

The study was carried out from 1985 to 1988 by Dutch staff members in Sri lanka, who worked together with the departments of sociology and demography of Colombo University.
Apart from these, a number of students of anthropology, engaged in practical work for their studies, were sent out from Leiden University and were involved in the

research. They contributed mainly by carrying out community studies and detailing a number of aspects of the labour migration phenomenon.
It proved somewhat difficult to obtain permission for a group of on-the-spot researchers to study the living conditions of labour migrants in the Gulf States. Mr. D. D. K. Senanayake, member of the Sri Lankan research team, was prepared to spend a number of months in the Middle East and, thanks to his cooperation, participant observations and interviews provided us with some insight into the position of Sri Lankan labour migrants in the Gulf. Film producer Louk Vreeswijk was brought in by the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies to make the video "Birds of Passage" about Sri Lankan labour migration. His stay in the Middle East too, provided the researchers with a great deal of information on living conditions in the region.
The University of Colombo, particularly in the person of the late vice chancellor, Professor Stanley Wijesundera, provided invaluable assistance to the project in Sri Lanka. For this reason we decided to dedicate this publication to his memory.

It would be impossible for us to mention all the organisations and individuals who were involved directly or indirectly in the project. An exception must, however, be made for the Dutch project leader, Dr Frank Eelens, who played a decisive role in both the organisation and the implementation of the study. Partly thanks to him, the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographical Institute in The Hague made a valuable contribution to the project during a later phase, that of analyzing the data.

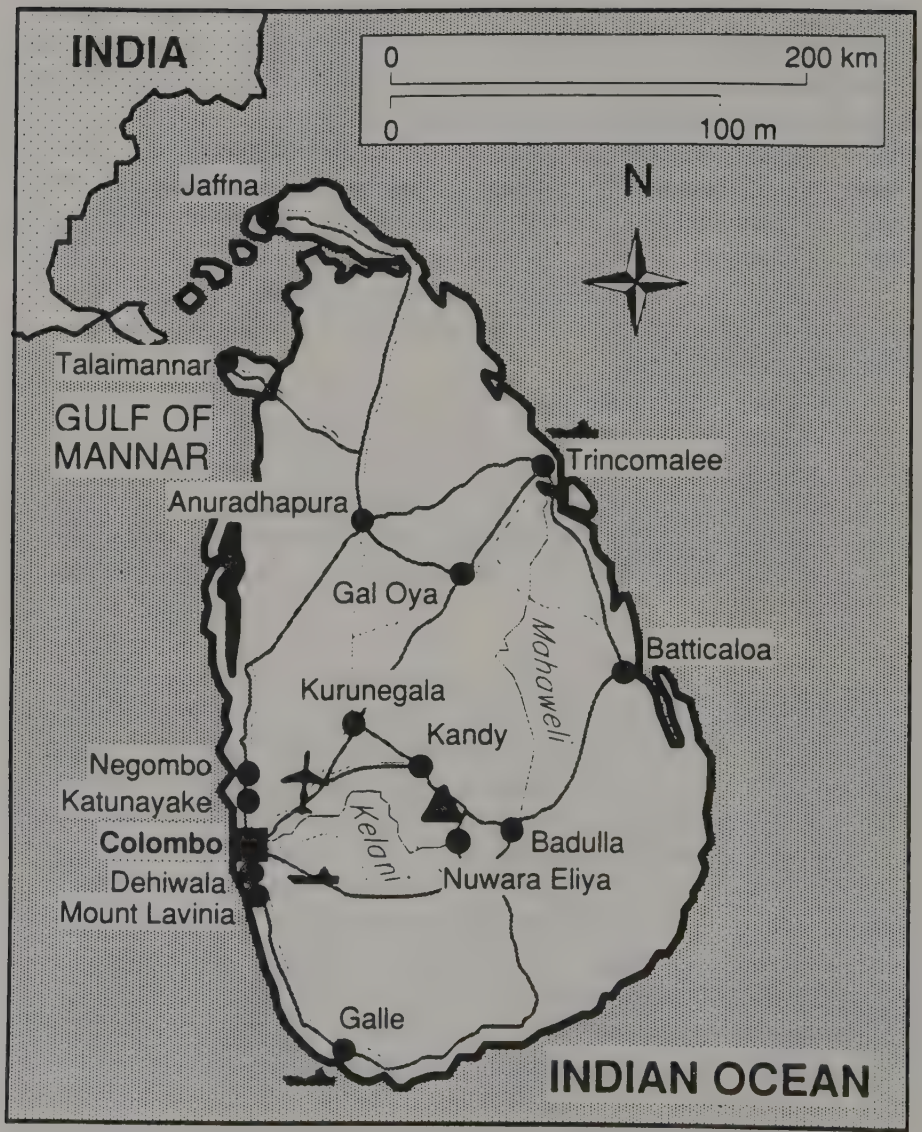
In this volume a number of authors have contributed to the analysis of the process of labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Gulf States. Each chapter deals with one aspect and in the given sequence of contributions the editors have tried to cover the most significant components of the migration process. At the same time the various chapters reflect the different approaches used in the research project. Demographic analyses are followed by essays based on the results of anthropological fieldwork. The book opens with an introduction to the topic of labour migration, followed by a description of the design of the research and the methods used. Chapter two introduces the concept of survival migration, which is considered to be a distinctive characteristic of the Sri Lankan setting. Following a flow chart of the migration process the analysis starts with a description of the recruitment process together with a presentation of the research data on the level of fees which potential migrants have to pay for a job abroad. Subsequently the policy of the Gulf States with regard to labour migration and the socio-economic conditions of the Sri Lankan migrant workers is dealt with in chapters four and five respectively.
The impact of labour migration on Sri Lankan society has also been researched by the team. First the outcome of an extensive community study is presented in

chapter six, followed by the implications of labour migration for social stratification and social mobility in three local communities. Chapter eight analyses the impact of labour migration on household structure, marriage stability and the well-being of children, while in chapter nine describes the conditions leading to the early return of migrants.

Last but not least two team members researched the socio-economic position and the religious status of Sri Lankan Muslim women migrating to the Gulf. This research was carried out in the Kandy area and the results are reported in chapter ten, while the question whether the substantial numbers of women in the labour migration population could provide an avenue for the social and economic improvement of the position of women in Sri Lanka is discussed in chapter eleven. Finally, the main conclusions of the research project are presented in the last chapter of the book.

Leiden, September 1990. J.D. Speckmann.

SRI LANKA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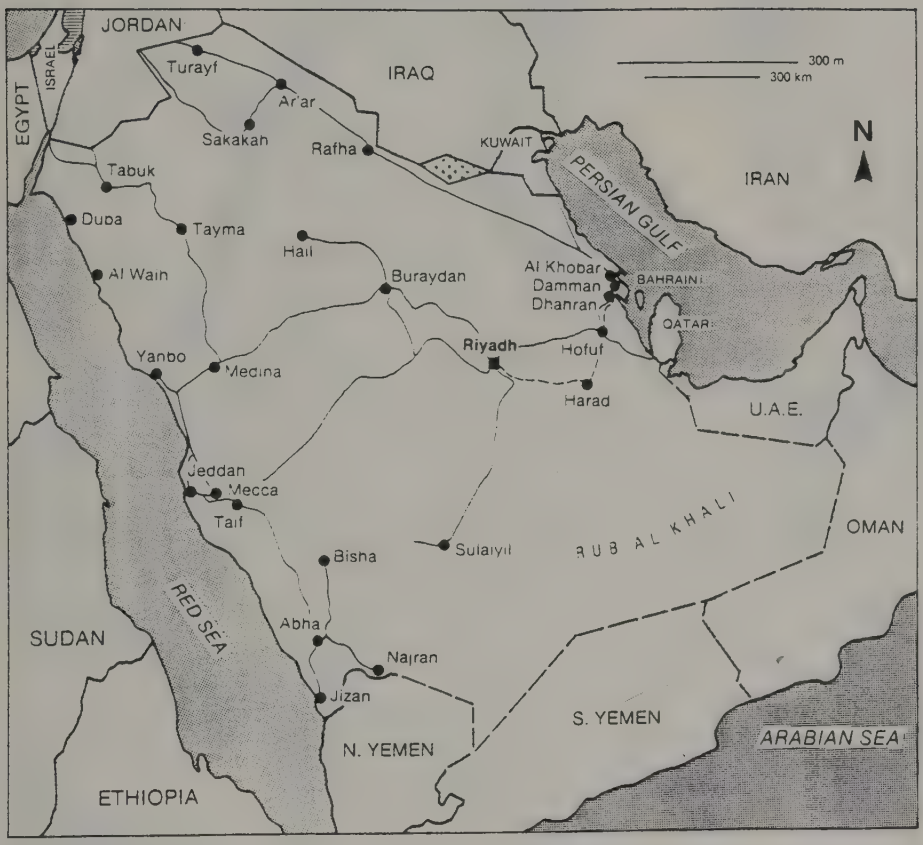

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INTRODUCTION

F. Eelens, T. Mook and T. Schampers

The historical context of migration

Since the economic exploitation of oil began, most of the underpopulated Gulf States of the Middle East countries had to contend with increasing problems of labour shortages. During the 1960's and especially in the early 1970's the oil exporting countries in West Asia attracted manpower from the surrounding Arab countries. However, with the enormous influx of petrodollars, after the oil crisis of 1973, inducing capital and labour intensive programmes aimed at the development of the infrastructure and the diversification of the economies, more and more manpower was needed. The local labour markets could not meet the increased demand neither in a qualitative nor in a quantitative sense. Because of their small populations, inadequate vocational and educational structures, the oil producing countries of the Gulf region had to look for other sources of manpower. At the same time, due to a number of political and economic factors, some of the neighbouring Arab countries could no longer supply sufficient additional labour. Since the early 1970's the bulk of expatriate manpower has therefore been recruited from South and Southeast Asia's almost inexhaustible pool of cheap labour.

Sri Lanka was one of these new sources of manpower but, unlike most other South and Southeast Asian nations, it entered the Middle Eastern labour market rather late. It was only at the end of the 1970's that large groups of Sri Lankan migrants started to leave for the Middle East. The reason that Sri Lanka entered the overseas labour market relatively late can be found in the country's specific economic and political history.

Sri Lanka inherited a classical import-export economy from the British. The estate sector, which provided the country with large balance of payment surpluses, was dependent on labour of migrants from Tamil Nadu (India) under conditions controlled by the estate management and the colonial government. These economic conditions allowed welfare subsidies such as free education and a food stamp system. After independence the lower prices of export products (such as tea)

and the subsequent rising prices of import goods created the need to diversify the economy, especially through policies aimed at upgrading the traditional agricultural sector, which had been relatively neglected.
The terms of trade continued to deteriorate from the mid-fifties onwards. Together with the growth of the population, the rising unemployment as well as the country's inability to be self-sufficient in food production resulted in an increasing dependency on foreign aid. As a consequence of the deteriorating situation, the socialist alternative presented at the 1970 elections received mass support. Under Mr. and Mrs. Bandaranaika's regime, import substitution policies characterized by increased state control over exchange and trade resulted in scarcities which encouraged corruption and the institutionalization of preferential treatment of political supporters. With the international oil and the national food crises in the early seventies, the effects of structural dependencies on the world market became abundantly clear. Large recurrent expenditure on welfare politics was nevertheless retained because of its crucial role in the political patronage system. Although many countries in Asia started sending labour migrants to the Middle East, the Sri Lankan government, because of the 'closed economy' idea, strongly discouraged international labour migration. In the seventies the international community praised Sri Lanka's high scores of important socio-economic indicators such as literacy, infant and child mortality rates and life expectancy. However, Sri Lankans themselves put the blame for their deteriorating position and the recurrent shortages on the ineffective and restrictive economic policy. This resulted in the 1977 landslide victory of the opposition, the United National Party.

Liberalization was the key word for the new government. Very soon import and exchange restrictions were lifted. This policy, however, did not lead to the expected rise in the quality of life of the average Sri Lankan. The earlier food subsidy and rationing programme affecting almost the entire population was in subsequent steps converted into a food stamp scheme depending on the income, size and composition of the household (Edirisinghe 1987). The value of the food stamps, however, did not keep pace with rising inflation; the real value of the food support has declined constantly since 1977. Consequently, the new economic policy of the government has significantly worsened the food situation of the lowest income group and has swelled the ranks of the poorest stratum of society (Edirisinghe 1987; Sahn 1987).
Real wages in agriculture and industry have also declined since 1977 (Sahn 1987; Ponnambalan 1980). Fuelled by government repression of militant trade union activities, the wage issue led to the 1980 general strike. Many of the tens of thousands of private and public sector employees were subsequently dismissed (Fernando 1983).

Meanwhile, the liberal policy of the government allowed modern goods to flood the country, enabling the better-off to display a luxury previously unknown. The deteriorating situation of the poor, together with the demonstration of modern wealth exhibited by the rich, led the 'have-nots' to search for new avenues to improve their economic situation. As the UNP-government allowed, and even encouraged, Sri Lankans to seek employment in West Asia, contract migration became a means to economic improvement.

Sri Lankans in the Middle East

The number of Sri Lankans employed in the Middle East has been estimated at 185,000 to 215,000 in the mid 1980's (ILO-ARTEP 1985). If we take 200,000 as the mid value this is over 3% of the country's domestic workforce for that period (Rodrigo et al. 1989:256). Compared to countries such as India and Pakistan, which at that time had about 930,000 and 800,000 labourers in the Gulf respectively (Expert Group 1985:9), the number of Sri Lankans is rather low. However, another picture emerges when the number of migrants is related to the total population of various Asian countries. As can be seen in Table 1, the migration density in Sri Lanka with 1.3% of its population working in the Middle East, is much higher than in any other country in South and Southeast Asia. Sri Lanka is also unique in other respects. For instance, it is the only country from which more females than males leave for overseas employment. About 70% of all migrants are women.

Table 1

Migration from Asian Migrant Labour Countries to the Middle East (1983)

Country	Population (million) (1)	Migrants (1000) (2)	Migrants as % of 2 (3)	Remittances ($) migrant/year (4)	4 as % of exports (5)	4 as % of GNP (6)
India	746.7	930	.12	2810	19.9	1.1
Pakistan	88.2	800	.91	3610	69.9	8.8
Philippines	53.6	500	.93	1880	13.5	3.1
Bangladesh	94.4	300	.32	2090	50.0	3.4
South Korea	40.0	213	.53	5127	7.0	2.3
Thailand	50.7	230	.39	3380	7.2	1.2
Sri Lanka	15.2	200	1.32	1360	27.6	3.6

Source: ESCAP 1985; Korale 1985; Stahl 1985; World Bank 1986

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Sri Lankan economy has become more and more dependent on the export of labour. The advantages of labour migration for the economy of the country are undeniable. Labour migrants from Sri Lanka equal the number of new entrants to the labour market. Consequently, there will be less economic and political pressure on the government to create more jobs, and financial resources can be directed to other objectives. It is of similar importance that the remittances of migrants have become one of the principal foreign exchange earners, surpassed only by tea exports. These foreign exchange earnings are urgently needed to sustain the economic policies of the UNP government. Table 2 shows the remittances from the Middle East to Sri Lanka over the period 1980 to 1986.

Table 2

Remittances of Migrant Workers from the Middle East to the Major Asian Labour Exporting Countries (Million U.S. $)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Sri Lanka	112	190	283	279	288	265	264

Sources: Based on country studies and figures collected from the Central Bank of each respective country under the Asian Regional Migration Project.
Rashid Amjad 1989.

Important though they are, the average yearly remittances of Sri Lankan migrant workers in the Middle East are, however, by far the lowest in comparison to those of migrants from other South and Southeast Asian nations (see Table 1). This is due to the unique composition of the Sri Lankan migrant work workforce in terms of occupational level and sex ratio, namely the predominance of unskilled female workers, and who subsequently receiving relatively low salaries in the Middle East.

Whereas in the late 1970's more skilled than unskilled workers from Sri Lanka migrated to the Middle East, in the 1980's the unskilled outnumbered the skilled. Although in absolute terms the number of professionals and skilled workers going abroad stabilized, the number of unskilled workers increased significantly. As it was a latecomer Sri Lanka had to find a niche in the Middle Eastern labour market that had not yet been occupied by the Asian countries which had reacted

more promptly to the greatly increased demand for labour since the early 1970's. A gap yet to be filled was the domestic service sector.

For many centuries the upper class in the Arab world was waited upon by servants. However, it was only after the increase and spread of wealth following the exploitation of oil that large segments of Arab society could afford a servant. For the Arabs, hiring domestic servants from abroad meant a rise in status for it freed their own women from menial household tasks. However, this does not imply that the participation rate of indigenous Arab women have suddenly increased considerably on the Middle Eastern labour markets. Although this process has been set in motion and higher female participation rates are desired by several Gulf governments, the process is a slow one and is inhibited mainly by socio-cultural factors (see Nath 1980; Azzam et al. 1985; Shaw 1983).

Initially women from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines were recruited on a small scale as domestic servants. However before this new labour market could be fully developed, the governments of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh formally prohibited the recruitment of housemaids. Pakistan and Bangladesh banned the outflow of female domestic personnel mainly because it is in contravention of the Koran for women to be away from home for long periods of time without a male escort. India restricted the free movement of housemaids to the Middle East after a number of cases of malpractice had been reported in the national newspapers. Recently the Philippine government has attempted to take similar measures (1988). In this situation the Sri Lankan UNP government, by adopting a highly liberalized policy on the (international) movement of people and by fixing a relatively low minimum wage for domestic servants (U.S. $ 100), took advantage of the void in the Middle Eastern labour market. This policy provided the basis for an impressive exodus of women recruited as housemaids. The job opportunities for Sri Lankan men, on the other hand, were rather meagre in the already established highly competitive Middle Eastern labour market and male migration was in general restricted to those who were willing and able to pay the high recruitment costs involved.

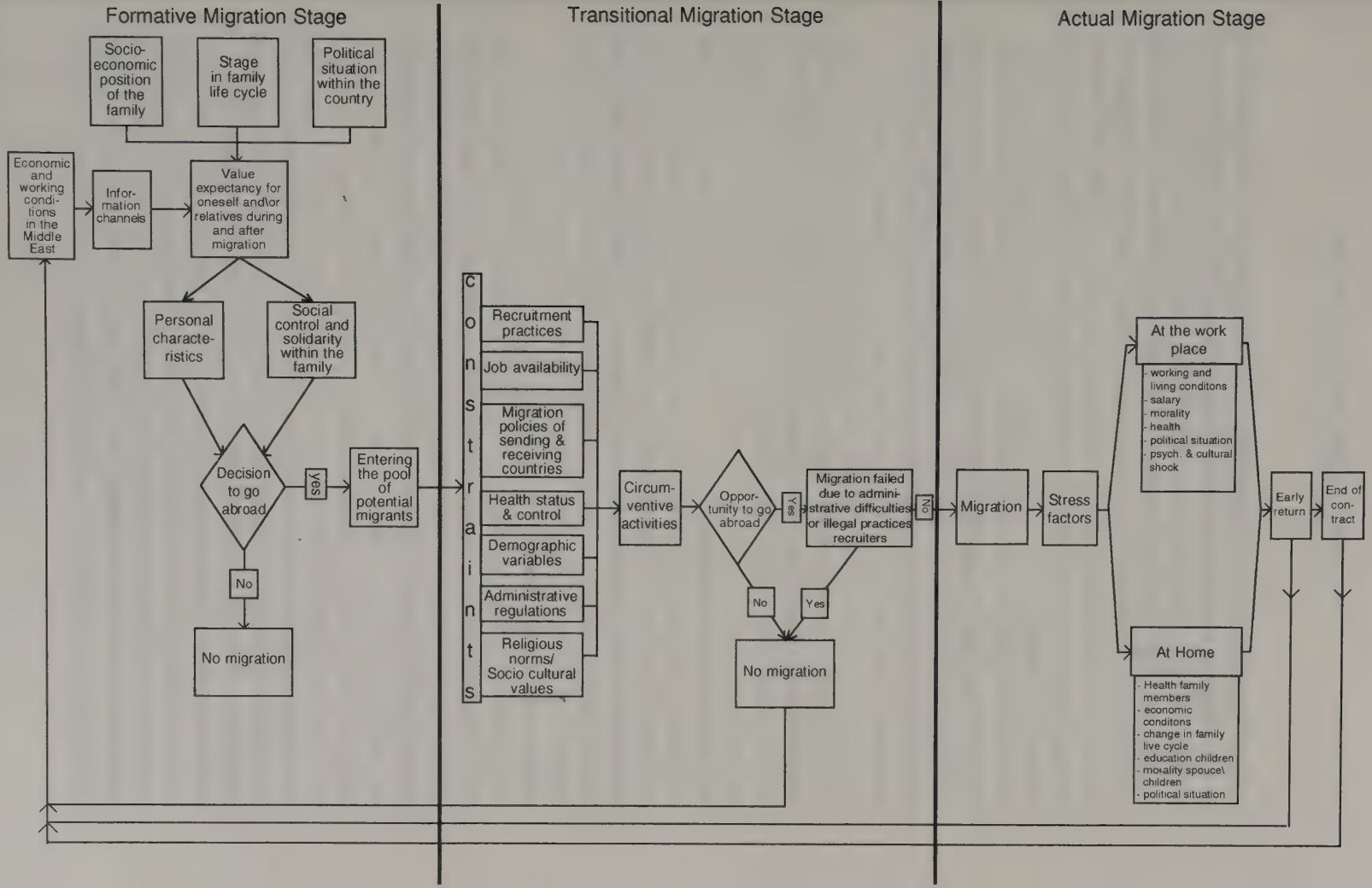
Thus, unlike the characteristic Asian migrant in the Middle East mentioned by Arnold & Shah (1986), namely the young married male of rural origin with an above-average educational attainment and mainly employed in the Middle East in construction and production (ibid:298), Sri Lanka's Middle Eastern migrant work force consists mainly of women (around 70%) employed as domestic servants. In terms of educational attainment and of residence the Sri Lankan migrant work force also deviates from the characteristics described by Arnold & Shah: the

educational level of Sri Lankan migrants does not differ much from that of the rest of the Sri Lankan population. Furthermore, Sri Lankan migrants predominantly originate from the Colombo metropolitan area.
It is also interesting to note that a considerable number of migrant labourers are married. In a survey conducted by the Sri Lankan Ministry of Plan Implementation (1984) it was found that 69% of males and 75.5% of females were in the married state at the moment of departure for foreign employment. The same survey found the average family size of the migrant to be 5.7 persons. Among the married women, only 10% did not leave any children behind. About 20% of the children left behind were less than five years old when they saw their mother leaving for an extended period of two or three years.

An analytic framework

Before starting with the research activities an analytic framework was designed. It shows the process of labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Gulf States in three main stages. The model presented in Figure 1 is basically micro-oriented, i.e. it describes the migration experience of individuals within their social context. Because Sri Lankan labour migration mainly involves skilled and unskilled labour categories, most of the material used to describe the migration process was gathered from these groups. Figure 1 can be interpreted as a flow chart with individual data entries pertaining to socio-economic background variables, conditional functions and feedback mechanisms.

In general, three stages can be discerned within the process of labour migration. Firstly, during the **formative migration stage** the individual (or his/her family) evaluates the possibility of going abroad to work. The decision to go abroad depends on the individual's (family's) actual living conditions and his/her perception of how migration could improve these conditions. The first stage in the model is confined to the decision making process, a well-documented topic in migration literature. If a positive decision about migration is made, the individual enters the vast pool of prospective migrants. The period up to the candidate migrant's departure is called the **transitional migration stage**. This stage may take no more than a week, but may also be extended for several years. During this stage the perspective migrant may have to cope with a number of constraints which may prevent him or her from making the actual move. In some instances the migrant manages to get round these constraints and still secure a job abroad. Those who are unsuccessful and are prevented from going abroad by one or more constraints, are pushed back into stage one and have to reconsider the idea of going overseas for work. A feedback mechanism operates constantly, i.e. the factors underlying


Formative Migration Stage
Transitional Migration Stage
Actual Migration Stage
Socio-economic position of the family
Stage in family life cycle
Political situation within the country
Economic and working condi-tions in the Middle East
Infor-mation channels
Value expectancy for oneself and\or relatives during and after migration
Personal characte-ristics
Social control and solidarity within the family
Decision to go abroad
yes
No
Entering the pool of potential migrants
No migration
constraints
Recruitment practices
Job availability
Migration policies of sending & receiving countries
Health status & control
Demographic variables
Administrative regulations
Religious norms/ Socio cultural values
Circum-ventive activities
Oppor-tunity to go abroad
Yes
No
Migration failed due to admini-strative difficulties or illegal practices recruiters
No
Yes
No migration
Migration
Stress factors
At the work place
- working and living conditons
- salary
- morality
- health
- political situation
- psych. & cultural shook
At Home
- Health family members
- economic conditons
- change in family live cycle
- education children
- morality spouce\ children
- political situation
Early return
End of con-tract

the candidate's failure at any one time may discourage him or her from trying to find other ways of going abroad subsequently. Those who reach the **actual migration stage** are not certain of arriving at their destination. A fair number of migrants are stranded along the way or encounter administrative difficulties which prevent them from reaching their place of work. Among those who do start working abroad, some do not finish their term of contract and return home prematurely. This early return may be due to circumstances arising at the place of work or at home in Sri Lanka.
As soon as the migrant returns home after a successful or failed migration, he or she enters stage one again, which means that the returned migrant can use previous experience and contacts in the Middle East together with the socio-economic conditions at home as a basis for a fresh decision whether or not to re-migrate.

In the next sections each of the three stages will be discussed in greater detail, concentrating on the Sri Lankan context, and - where appropriate - with reference to the situation in other Asian countries.

a. Formative migration stage

In Figure 1 a number of micro-level variables have been differentiated influencing Sri Lanka individuals (and their households) to undertake Middle East bound labour migration and which to a large extent determine their values and goals and their expectations of improving their future by means of labour migration. These variables can be summarized as follows:
a) the socio-economic position of the family, b) the stage in the family life-cycle and c) information about economic and working conditions in the Middle East. The first two variables can be termed as 'traditional' push factors, whereas the economic conditions in the oil exporting Arab countries constitute an obvious 'pull'.

- Socio-economic position of the family

Without any doubt the most important drive for people to find employment in the Middle East is the economic position of the family. Throughout Asia, the fact of having a relative in the Middle East may lead to significant economic upgrading. In the case of Sri Lanka, contract workers in the Middle East are often able to earn as much as ten times more than their domestic counterparts. Such an immense difference in salary is obviously a strong incentive for the poor to put up with all the misery and hardship of migration labour in the Middle East. At the moment, labour migration alleviates the very difficult living conditions of tens of thousands

of families in Sri Lanka. For them, a regular flow of remittances means that the bare necessities of life become available and that they may gain access to better housing, education, health care, hygiene and recreation.

- The stage in the family life-cycle

'The idea of the family life-cycle is that of a journey or process from a starting point (birth) to a termination point (death) with an underlying universal pattern on which there are endless individual and group variations. The underlying pattern consists of alternating periods of transition' (Willekens 1985). The life cycle can be conceptualized as a cluster of interdependent careers, such as: marriage history, professional and family building. Each of these careers is characterized by alternating periods of transition and stability. Many authors have shown that migration is directly linked to transitional stages in the life-cycle careers. In the case of Sri Lanka it is better to study migration from a family, rather than from an individual life-cycle perspective. Transitions in the family life-cycle are for instance: the birth of children, the entry of a new member of the family into the labour force, entry and exit of family members as a result of birth and death and change of residence. As said before, motives for Middle Eastern migration are often linked with transitions in the family life-cycle. For instance, people may migrate in order to improve the housing conditions at home, widows may migrate in order to overcome the disastrous economic consequences of the husband's death and a brother may have to earn his sister's dowry in the Middle East.

- Information about the economic and working conditions in the Middle East.

The expectations for realizing valued goals are strongly influenced by the information on economic and working conditions in the Middle East, which filters through such sources as newspapers, job-agents, friends and relatives. The study conducted by the Marga institute indicates that by far the most important source is the information (especially for women) provided by friends or relatives who have been in the Middle East or have returned (50%); it is followed by the local intermediaries (recruitment agents, brokers, or businessmen with Middle East connections) and the newspapers (Marga 1986:44). On the basis of this information, which is often inadequate or even misleading (see Marga 1986:54-74), the individual and/or the family evaluates the chances of improving his or their economic position, taking into account the often harsh working conditions in the Middle East. As soon as a evaluation is reached, a further two factors become important in clarifying why the person and the family decide to undertake migration: 1) personality traits such as efficacy and willingness, the ability to take risks and the adaptability

to change (Fawcett 1980) and 2) social control and cohesion within the household. As to social control, it can be said that in a patriarchal family structure such as in Sri Lanka, where the elder male has the power to take all important familial decisions and can impose his will upon the other members, the result could be that the less powerful (the younger members and the females) migrate.

b. Transitional migration stage

Migration behaviour is a compromise between subjective preferences and objective constraints (Willekens 1985). Once a person and his or her family have taken the decision to make use of the opportunity of Middle East labour migration, a number of hurdles have to be cleared before migration becomes a reality. In the Sri Lankan case, seven clusters of constraints have been listed:
1) job availability; 2) the migration policies of Sri Lanka and the countries of destination; 3) recruitment practices; 4) health status and control; 5) demographic variables; 6) administrative regulations; 7) religious norms and socio-cultural values. Each of these factors can actually prevent a prospective migrant from going abroad. However, prospective migrants still have some room for manoeuvre.
By using legal and illegal channels and mobilizing social networks, the candidate migrant sometimes has a chance to circumvent constraining conditions. These constraints and possible circumventing activities are considered as follows:

- Job availability

The chance of obtaining a job which fits the qualifications of the prospective migrant depends on the availability of jobs in the Gulf States. For instance, the demand for construction labour has significantly decreased owing to the fall in oil prices, in 1983 and to the near completion of infrastructural development projects. Whereas construction will continue to a much lesser extent, there will be a growing demand for labour to operate and maintain the infrastructure already established (Impact 1985). And despite the much discussed replacement of South Asians by local personnel and the official 'Arabization' policies of the Gulf governments, there are indications that there will be a continuing demand for domestic servants, labourers in agriculture and the service sectors, army personnel and teachers (Impact 1985; Birks et al. 1986). Because Sri Lanka sends so many women as domestic servants, the end of the boom years in the Gulf can be expected to make a less impact there than for instance in such Asian countries as South Korea, Thailand and Pakistan, which send large number of male (construction) workers.

The candidate migrant is able to bypass the possible unfavourable demand for his skill by adopting a flexible attitude and accepting employment outside his specialization, a tendency which can be expected to increase now competition for jobs is becoming keener. Sri Lankan skilled workers who were employed in the Middle East in jobs far below their qualifications were no exceptions, according to the survey data.

- Migration policies of Sri Lanka and the countries of destination

One of the most difficult problems facing policy makers in the sending countries is the built-in instability of export labour (Richards et al. 1983). Not only are these countries dependent on job availability in the labour-importing countries in the Middle East, but also on the willingness on the part of the Gulf States to import labour from their particular country. The Asian labour-exporting countries see each other as competitors and the labour-importing Gulf States, while living in a 'buyers market', can easily use labour as political pressure. For instance, when the Saudi Arabian government learned that Israeli instructors had been recruited by Sri Lanka to help train the army, it expressed its concern by expelling several hundred Sri Lankan labourers. Around 1984, Saudi Arabia, also temporarily stopped issuing visas to Sri Lankan housemaids because officials believed too many problems had been created as a result of their importation. Weiner (1982) cites an example in which a number of Indian workers were expelled after a strike in a Cypriot firm in Oman, after which the Indian government took firm action by prohibiting the export of labour to Oman. However, the Indian government was quick to see that it was cutting off its own nose to spite its face and a few months later, after a mild apology by the Omani government, migration to Oman resumed.

In general, the migration policy of the Sri Lankan government imposes no serious restrictions on those wanting to go abroad. On the contrary, Sri Lankan policy actively stimulates labour migration and includes such measures as the establishment of foreign missions in Middle Eastern countries in order to solve the problems of Sri Lankan nationals there, the granting of two-year leave for foreign employment for those in government service, liberalizing the export of foreign currency and subsidizing of migrants' air fares to the Middle East (also see Zar 1984; Spaan 1989).

- Recruitment practices

The prospective migrant from Sri Lanka has at least five alternative means of securing a job in the Middle East, each with its own idiosyncracies in terms of advantages and hazards. The basic list of alternatives is as follows:

a) the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (BFE);
b) the authorized recruitment agencies;
c) unauthorized job agents or sub-agents;
d) friends or relatives residing in the Middle East or Sri Lanka;
e) the (former) employer in the Middle East.

A great number of Sri Lankan migrants find employment by means of recruitment agencies. These agencies sprang up during the first years of the migration boom. Most of them are located in Colombo. In 1977 about 100 agencies were operating in Sri Lanka. In 1979 the number of legal recruitment agents already exceeded 300, and in 1985 their number had increased to 544 ('Island' 1985). Besides these legal, authorized brokers, many illegal mediators 'offer their services' to arrange employment in the Middle East. Despite the firm actions of the Sri Lankan government against fraudulent agents many candidate migrants have been duped by these unscrupulous middlemen.

- Health status and control

Every migrant leaving Sri Lanka for employment in the Middle East has to undergo a medical examination, which consists of a physical examination chest X-rays and blood, urine and pregnancy tests. In Sri Lanka, as anywhere else, migrants are inventive in circumventing rules and regulations which prevent them from achieving their goals. On several occasions during our research we observed people who were physically unfit trying to secure jobs in the Middle East. For instance one housemaid was caught in Saudi Arabia while attempting to enter the country with a forged visa: the visa in her former passport had been cancelled because she had TB. Other ways of evading tests, noted by a job agent, were to send the husband's urine for the pregnancy test or, as one woman did, have sent a sister undergo the examination.

- Demographic variables

Age, sex, professional status and place of residence are variables which directly determine a person's chance of finding employment abroad. For instance, the Middle East labour importing countries set age limits for labour migrants. The

minimum ages vary for the different receiving countries. The maximum age is determined by the employer and is normally around 40 years for women and 45 years for men. An obvious way to circumvent these age restrictions, is to change the age stated in the passport. In fact, in Sri Lanka these restrictions inherent in Middle East migration, have given rise to a whole racket in forged passport and birth certificate procedures.
At the moment unskilled females have better chances of finding employment than males because: a) the demand for Sri Lankan females is greater, and b) the recruitment fees are considerably lower for female. A number of job agents express a preference for unmarried girls from rural areas as they are thought to work harder and complain less. Others, however, prefer married women because of their experience with household work and child care.

- Administrative regulations

Administrative regulations, such as the requirement that migrants need valid passports and visas, can form an obstacle to migration, for instance in the case of Indian Tamils who are 'stateless' or for people unregistered at birth. Unless these people resort to illegal and irregular methods, they will not be able to meet migration requirements.

- Religious norms and socio-cultural values

Despite the fact that general Asian governments have introduced restrictions on female labour because of Islamic rules against women travelling alone, the Sri Lankan government has not followed suit. However, it is quite possible that within a Muslim family and a smaller community strict observance of these rules may prevent women from migrating.
It is interesting to note that religion does not necessarily impose restrictions on migration, but that it can also be used as an expediency to find a job abroad. For instance, Siddiqui (1983) states how in Bangladesh young prospective migrants use '*Umrah*' and '*Ziarat*'[1] as an excuse to go to the Middle East to look for work. The same can to some extent be said about other socio-cultural norms regarding the behaviour of women. Generally speaking, the family resorts the female migration only when economic pressure becomes so great that it sees no other solution. As has become clear in the foregoing discussion it was not coincidental that female labour migration took place at a time when the poorer sections of Sri Lankan society came under pressure following the economic policies of the post-1977 government, which led to higher inflation rates and a disintegration of existing social welfare schemes (Sahn 1987).

c. Actual migration stage

Once the migrant has managed to overcome all possible constraints on migration and has been able to finalize all necessary arrangements (with or without the help of job agents or others), he or she enters the actual migration stage.

To make a success of the migration, i.e. to work and live abroad under the conditions stipulated in the employment agreement, a number of other problems may have to be dealt with. In addition to the hazards and problems the migrant may encounter on the way to the country of destination, these could be summarized under the headings 'unsatisfactory working and living condition in the Middle East' and 'domestic problems at home'. These problems are often quite considerable and compel many migrants to return home prematurely.

Finally, after the migrant completes his or her term of employment in the Middle East, or is compelled to leave prematurely because of an unsatisfactory experience, he or she returns to Sri Lanka and has to reintegrate into Sri Lankan society and (possibly) the labour force, processes that are not always without difficulties. Especially migrants who have returned prematurely can find themselves and their family to be in a very problematic situation.

Methodology

Although labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East is of such economic, social and political importance relatively little research has been done in this field. It is the general aim of this book to provide more information, both for the academic world and the policymakers, about the various aspects of this phenomenon.

The contributions to this volume are based on the results of an extensive research project carried out in the period 1985 -1988[2]. Three broad fields of interest have been explored in this study, namely the demographic, the social and the economic aspects of labour migration from Sri Lanka. In doing so the project applied demographic as well as sociological and anthropological research methods. An attempt was made to combine both approaches.

The research activities of the project can be divided into six main components:

a. A large-scale survey, covering 899 return migrants, 858 family members of current migrants and 409 non-migrants.
b. Supplementary activities within the framework of the survey.
c. Community studies.

d. The use of a number of key informants.
e. Systematic analysis of secondary resources.
f. The making of an anthropological film.

a. The survey

Various authors have emphasized the importance of surveys in studies of migration processes (Goldstein et al. 1981; Findley 1982; Fawcett et al. 1987). Typical advantages of surveys are: the possibilities of quantifying and statistically testing hypotheses, of drawing up and automatically processing family and social networks and of relating contextual and community variables to migrants. Surveys also have a number of practical advantages: an average-sized survey can be managed by one person, and the quality of data collected in a sample survey is generally higher than that of data collected by means of a larger-scale method. From the perspective of research design, surveys have much to offer in the study of international migration (Fawcett et al. 1987).

However, surveys also have a number of shortcomings and disadvantages for migration studies. First of all, this approach is often too superficial. The experiences and decision-making processes of migrants are in many ways too unique and complex to be dealt with adequately in a structured questionnaire. For example, the migration decision-making process within a household is too complicated to answer the simple question 'Who took the decision to migrate?'. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to broach sensitive subjects in a short, structured interview. Interviewees are often reluctant to talk openly about the way they spend their remittances. Similarly, painful experiences endured or unlawful activities engaged in during the migration period are difficult to discuss in a survey. In such cases, an anthropological approach with repeated in-depth interviews and participant observation would be preferable.

One of the most difficult aspects of the survey method in migration studies is that of drawing up a suitable sample frame. International migration is a process which implies two geographical locations, the country of departure and the country of destination. Ideally, the survey would have to be conducted in both the home country and the host country. If migrants are interviewed only in the host country this, for instance, may lead to a bias, as migrants who have failed to build a new life for themselves and who have returned home prematurely are not included in such surveys. Consequently successful migrants would be overrepresented. On the other hand, surveys held among return migrants in the country of origin would give rise to an overrepresentation of failed migrants. However, in the case of labour

migration from Asia to the Middle East it is impossible to carry out a survey in both the host country and the country of origin. First of all, contract workers migrate to many different countries; this would make such a study extremely expensive. Secondly, it is almost impossible to receive official permission from the authorities in the Gulf States to carry out research on the situation of Asian migrants in their country.

Another problem researchers face in the attempt to draw up a sample frame for migration studies is how to make a good selection of migrants. When trying to design a representative sample of a total population, a number of problems arise. The proportion of migrants in a population is normally small and to find them is not an easy thing. To increase the efficiency of the survey in obtaining information on migrants, it is necessary to use special techniques to increase their probability of selection.

In view of the above problems, the following sample frame was chosen. In order to avoid the bias which arises when return migrants only are questioned, family members of current migrants were also interviewed. Since practically all migrants who go to the Middle East go alone, interviewing members of their family did not present a problem. If the migrants were married, their spouses were interviewed. In all other cases, another family member of the same household was interviewed; in order of preference: the parents, a brother or sister, one of their children (over 16 years) and, finally, any other member of the family. In the case of Sri Lanka, the information received from family members was more than satisfactory.

For financial reasons the main survey of the migration study was geographically restricted to the Colombo and Gampaha districts. Moreover, the political situation in a number of regions in the North and East of the country was too unstable at the time to do research there. Although it was therefore not possible to extrapolate to the entire migrant population of Sri Lanka, it may be assumed that the survey gives a fairly accurate picture of the phenomenon of labour migration from Sri Lanka. First, because about 70% of the Sri Lankan migrants come from the Colombo and Gampaha districts (Korale et al. 1985), and secondly because the population in both districts is very varied with respect to religion, ethnic origin and occupation. The shortage of traditional rural regions in the survey is partially compensated for by the fact that part of the sociological and anthropological research was carried out in the south and centre of the country.
The following approach to the study was adopted. The first step was to determine the areas within the Colombo and Gampaha districts from where large numbers of people migrate to the Middle East. These regions were then divided into census

blocks on the basis of information from the census bureau. One out of every five census blocks was then selected at random for further research. Next, each household in the census blocks selected was visited and current and return migrants were noted on special household forms. A few days later, the households with one or more (current or return) migrants were again visited and extensively interviewed. In households with more than one migrant, one of them was chosen at random. A separate questionnaire was used for current and return migrants. Since one of the aims of the study was to analyse the social and economic effects of labour migration, a control group of non-migrants had to be included in the survey. This group was also used to establish the views of non-migrants on migration, and to determine the extent to which its members would have liked to migrate to the Middle East themselves. The non-migrants were selected in the following way. After each fifth interview with a return migrant or with a family member of a migrant, the neighbouring household on the right-hand side was visited.
Here someone of the same sex, if possible, was selected and whose marital status and age were the most similar to that of the last respondent in the migrant survey. In this manner, it was possible to compile a non-migrant population whose demographic characteristics were more or less the same as those of the respondents in the migrant household.
For the groups of return migrants, current migrants and non-migrants different questionnaires were used. Table 3 gives the modules used for these different groups. Return migrants were also asked questions about their experiences in the Middle East. The information on recruitment, the living and working conditions in the Middle East and the spending patterns of the remittances referred to their last migration.

Table 3

Modules Used in the Migration Survey by Migrant Category

1. Return Migrants:

- Background characteristics
- Migration history
- Economic aspects
- Social aspects
- Effect on children
- Recruitment
- Living conditions in the Middle East
- Fertility history of migrant

2. Family members of migrants:

- Background characteristics
- Migration history current migrants
- Economic aspects
- Social aspects
- Effect on children
- Recruitment of current migrants
- Fertility history of informant

3. Non-migrants:

- Background characteristics
- Ideas and opinions about migration
- Economic condition
- Social condition
- Well-being of children
- Fertility history of informant

b. Supplementary survey activities

In addition to the information provided by the structured survey questionnaire used, specific and more detailed information was collected. First of all, there were some open-ended questions in the survey. For example, in the recruitment module the return migrants were asked whether they had ever been swindled by a recruitment agent while looking for a job in the Middle East. If their answer was 'yes', they were then asked under what circumstances this had taken place. The question about their living conditions in the Middle East also requested a detailed description of their experiences. On the basis of the answers to the survey, in-depth interviews with migrants as well as a number of case studies were conducted. Various respondents in the non-migrant group were also interviewed extensively about their ideas regarding labour migration. In general, the cooperation of the migrants during these interviews was optimum. It was clear that migration had been an overwhelming experience for the respondents, and that they were keen to tell their story to someone interested in what they had to say.

One of the drawbacks of a survey is that the respondents are not always the most suitable people to put certain questions to. For example, some migration

surveys include questions about the effect of the absence of one of the parents on the well-being of the children. In general parents often present too positive a picture of their children. For example, on the basis of a question in which Sri Lankan return migrants were asked about the effect of migration on the children they left behind, the Marga study (1986) concludes that migration does not have a significant effect on the well-being of such children. However, in the study reported here, the outcome shows a different picture. The research methods used are undoubtedly responsible for this difference. During the survey the interviewers also asked which school the migrant's children had gone to, which grade they were in at the time of the interview and who their teacher was. In the second phase of the survey, all the children who were in the second, sixth and tenth grades were selected. The interviewers visited the teachers of these children and interviewed them on the basis of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was designed to find out the teachers' opinions on the effect of labour migration on children in general. In this interview teachers were given the opportunity to expand on the observed effects of labour migration on the well-being of the children left behind. The second questionnaire was designed to determine the effect of migration on a specific child, identified in the main survey, in the teacher's class. In this more structuralized questionnaire there were questions on their general behaviour, school results, overall health of the child, etc..

c. Anthropological community studies

The most important additions to the statistical data of the survey were obtained by means of community studies conducted in some locations. The locations were chosen for their socio-economic and ethnic diversity. For example, one slum area in Colombo where a large proportion of the inhabitants were unemployed was chosen; the population was mixed Sinhalese and Tamil. Near Matale, in central Sri Lanka, the community selected included a traditional farming village of Sinhalese farmers and a new neighbourhood where a mixed Sinhalese and Muslim population (Moor and Malay) had settled. Two villages in Southern Sri Lanka were also studied. Both were primarily agricultural, but one was almost entirely Sinhalese whereas the other was a mixture of Sinhali, Moors and Malays. These community studies were conducted in order to gain deeper insight, through anthropological methods, into the effects of migration at the individual, family and community level.

The research period varied from place to place (between 4 and 12 months). In each location a small-scale census was conducted in which every household with return migrants or family of current migrants were identified. Next, all migrant

families were questioned several times and every aspect of migration was extensively discussed in long, unstructured interviews. Life histories of a number of migrants were drawn up. Non-migrants were also interviewed in order to assess their views on migration, and to find out why some people do and others do not use migration as a means of working for a better future. A number of aspects were observed more effectively thanks to the use of participant observation; for example, the way in which remittances are spent, the status of female migrants and the attempts of prospective migrants to find a job in the Middle East.
It proved to be true that a number of aspects of the migration process could be studied more effectively by means of the anthropological approach.

d. Key informants

From the outset of the research project, the researchers contacted people who had experience in one or several aspects of labour migration, and in-depth interviews with them were conducted. In this manner it was possible to collect important information on various aspects of labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East from a series of informants with different backgrounds. For example, school principals and education officers were interviewed about the effect of migration on children who stayed behind. The Sri Lankan ambassador to Kuwait and an ex-labour officer of the embassy in Saudi Arabia were interviewed about the protection of migrants in the Middle East, recruitment agents about their ways of approaching people, the elder village informants about the effect of migration on their village.

e. Systematic analysis of secondary sources

An important socio-economic phenomenon such as labour migration is always reflected in the media, in popular music and art. During the research these channels were studied and relevant data collected. Three local English-language papers and one Sinhalese newspaper were examined every day, and all articles, announcements or advertisements related to migration were collected and analyzed. Articles about labour migration appeared in one or more local papers almost daily. The advertisements in local newspapers proved to be an interesting source of information on the changes in the types of jobs offered and the conditions.

A very interesting source of information, and one often neglected in migration studies, is provided by diaries. Since labour migration is an impressive and unique experience for those involved, some migrants have the habit of writing their experiences in a diary. It was possible to collect a few of these diaries during the

research. One turned out to be an exceptional source of information on the daily life of a housemaid in the Middle East, as well as on the emotional and psychological difficulties caused by the separation from family and children. This diary was translated into English, annotated, and will be published in the near future. Some migrants also provided the researchers with cassette-letters. In these 'letters', migrants - often illiterate - talk about their experience as housemaids in the Middle East.

Finally, folk and popular art forms related to labour migration, such as songs which effectively reflect the illusions and disillusions surrounding the phenomenon of migration were selected. These songs were later used as background music in the anthropological film.

f. The anthropological film

With a view to making the phenomenon of labour migration known to a large number of people, it was decided to make a documentary about the subject[3]. The film was shot in Sri Lanka as well as in the Middle East over a period of two months. In contrast to the scientific reports, the film gives a more impressionistic and emotional picture of labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Gulf States. Emphasis was placed, among other things, on how migrants experienced their stay in the Middle East. A number of respondents who had given interesting information during the anthropological studies were willing to cooperate on this project.
A documentary film proved to be an effective tool for making research results known to the general public. Unfortunately, social scientists have made little use of this medium in the past.

NOTES

1. *Umiah* is a pilgrimage to Mekka outside the '*Haj*'-season. *Ziarat* is a pilgrimage to another holy place.

2. The project was carried out jointly by the University of Colombo (Sri Lanka) and the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies of the University of Leiden (the Netherlands). The Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) was called in to assist with processing and analysing the data. The project was financed by the Netherlands University Foundation for International Cooperation, the University of Leiden and the NIDI.

3. Video-tape 'Birds of Passage', made by Louk Vreeswijk, issued by the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies of Leiden University.

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2

SURVIVAL MIGRATION: THE SRI LANKAN CASE

F. Eelens and T. Schampers

Introduction

This chapter describes the socio-economic background characteristics of Sri Lankan labour migration to the Middle East, and the type of employment these migrants find there. The central research question is whether, in the case of Sri Lanka, migration has become a survival strategy for the poorest strata of society. And, if so, to what extent migration leads to a long-term improvement in the living conditions of these people. The analysis is based on a survey among 899 return migrants which was conducted in the Colombo and Gampaha districts.

Migration, a survival strategy?

Bibi is 39 years old, and lives with her husband and five children in a small dwelling in Suduwella, a ward in the northern part of Colombo. As in most households in Suduwella, the economic conditions of Bibi's household are harsh. For years her husband has been unable to find a job. Moreover, the little money he earns casually is often spent on alcohol. Given her deplorable situation, Bibi decided, in 1979, to look for a job as a housemaid in the Middle East. As she is a Moor it was not very difficult for her to find such employment[1]. On February 20, 1980 she left for Kuwait to take on a job which had been arranged for her by a friend who was working there. Bibi was thus able to avoid the sometimes huge recruitment costs to secure employment in Western Asia. Altogether she had to spend about only Rs. 1,000 to arrange the necessary travel documents and to buy some clothes and a suitcase. As she had no money at all she had to borrow it from a private money lender at an interest rate of 10% per month.

For a period of 29 months she worked for an Arab family at a monthly salary of Rs. 2,000 (about U.S. $ 80). She had to work about 15 hours a day for 7 days a week. Every month she sent her whole salary to her husband to support him and the children. Unfortunately, the husband used part of the remittances for his drinking habits. After the end of her two-year contract Bibi stayed another five months with her Arab employer and finally returned home in July 1982.

The months following her return were difficult because no money had been saved by her husband and the family was left without any source of income. After the birth of her fifth child, Razeed she decided to return to the Middle East. The baby was barely three months old when

> Bibi went to work for another employer in Kuwait. Her salary was now Rs. 2,800. However, she was not able to complete the two-year contract. After 15 months she received a letter from her mother saying that her husband was squandering her remittances and mistreating the children. So Bibi decided to return to Colombo and arrived there in December 1984. Since then, the family has been faced with many difficulties. The electricity supply, which had been laid on with money from the Middle East, was cut off for non-payment of bills. The behaviour of her husband has driven the couple further apart. Now Bibi is trying once again to find employment in the Middle East, but it is increasingly difficult because of her age and the high recruitment costs.

In Bibi's case, migration was clearly a strategy to survive. Her circumstances prior to her departure to Kuwait forced her to look for a solution and to take fate into her own hands. Chronic unemployment, the drinking habits of her husband, and the hope of improving the situation of her family by means of an attractive salary in the Middle East drove her to migrate.

Is Bibi an exceptional case or does she represent a substantial group of survival migrants? To answer this question it is necessary to trace the basic characteristics of Bibi's case for the whole sample. This is done by using an overall, descriptive, multivariate technique, known as 'Homogeneity Analysis by Means of Alternating Least Squares' (HOMALS)[2]. In order to make a typology of return migrants according to their socio-economic status, a two-stage HOMALS analysis was carried out.

In the first run a number of variables relating to the migrants' socio-economic condition prior to departure were included in the analysis. Table 1 presents these variables together with the selected categories. Job status of the migrant before migration, average earnings per month and the manner in which the recruitment costs were paid were used as indicators of the economic position of the migrant before departure for the Middle East. Marital status and the number of children were included as they are indicators of extra pressures on the family resources. It was assumed that the more children a family has, the greater the pressure on the resources is. The marital status is important; for if the migrant is separated, divorced or widowed the family is often left without a breadwinner and thus sometimes without any source of income. Finally, the living conditions of the migrant before departure were measured in terms of the availability of electricity, a water supply and toilet facilities in the house in which the migrant was living.

Table 1

Variables and Categories Used in the HOMALS

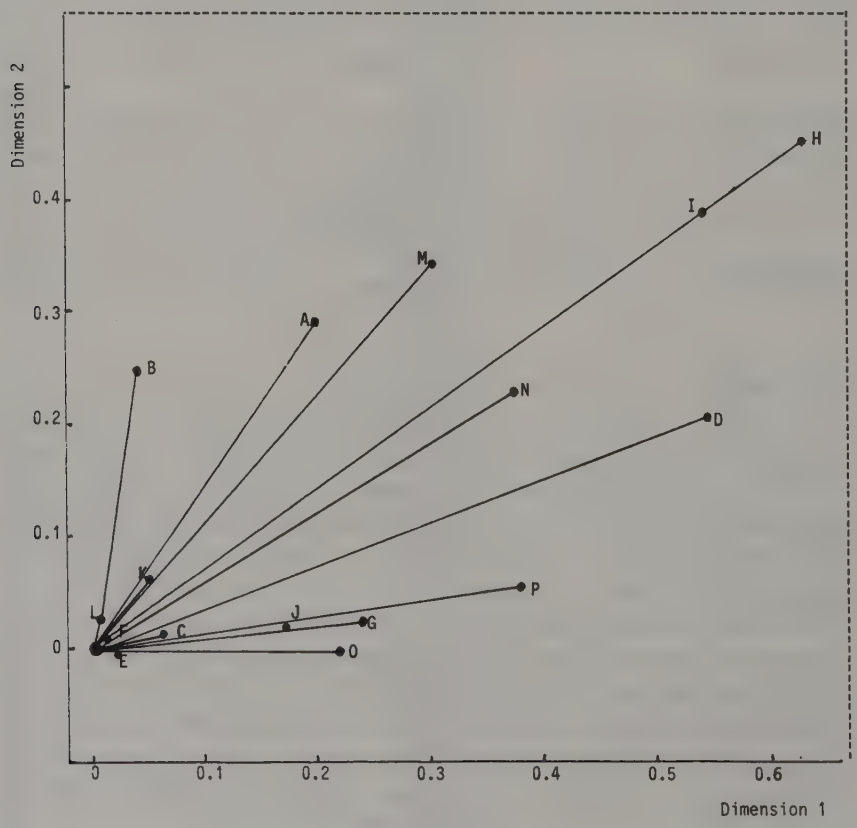
Variable	Code	Category	No. of cases
Place of residence	A	1-rural	52
		2-urban (slum)	95
		3-low-grade attached house	453
		4-low-grade flat	74
		5-low-grade detached house	221
		(missing)	4
Religion	B	1-Buddhist	311
		2-Hindu	37
		3-Muslim	271
		4-Roman Catholic	260
		5-other Christian	20
Number of children	C	1- 4 or more	107
		2- 1-3	499
		3- no children	192
		(missing)	1
Occupational level in the Middle East	D	1-housemaid	676
		2-unskilled	82
		3-skilled	86
		4-middle	54
		(missing)	1
First intention to use the earnings	E	1-survival	419
		2-other intention	479
		(missing)	1
Second intention to use the earnings	F	1-survival	128
		2-other intention	479
		(missing)	1
Saved earnings	G	1-nothing left	647
		2- Rs. 1-9,999	86
		3- Rs. 10,000-19,999	67
		4- Rs. 20,000-29,999	35
		5- more than Rs. 30,000	48
		(missing)	16
Occupation before migration	H	1-no job	679
		2-unskilled level	71
		3-skilled level	81
		4-middle level	64
		(missing)	4
Monthly earnings before migration	I	1-no income	679
		2- Rs. 1-499	56
		3- Rs. 500-1,999	150
		4- more than Rs. 2,000	10
		(missing)	4
Recruitment cost payment	J	1-loan	474
		2-gift	100
		3-own savings	287
		(missing)	38
Marital status before migration	K	1-widowed-divorced-separated	72
		2-married	599
		3-single	224
		(missing)	4
Illness in M.E.	L	1-yes	170
		2-no	726
		(missing)	3
Toilet facilities departure	M	1-common toilet	450
		2-private toilet	433
		(missing)	16
Water supply before departure	N	1-common	495
		2-private	391
		(missing)	13
Electricity before departure	O	1-no	386
		2-yes	502
		(missing)	11
Educational level	P	1-below grade 5	205
		2-grade 6-9	426
		3-grade 10 or higher	267
		(missing)	1

Source: Survey on Social, Economic and Demographic Aspects of Sri Lankan Migration to the Middle East, 1985-1986

In the second run, a number of conditions of the migrant during the migrant's stay in the Middle East and during the period following return were included in the analysis. These conditions, which were also included in Table 1, are: the job status of the migrant during the last migration to the Gulf, salary, for what purposes the migrant intended to spend the money earned in the Middle East, illnesses during the stay, religious denomination and the amount of money left after the last migration.

Graph table 1

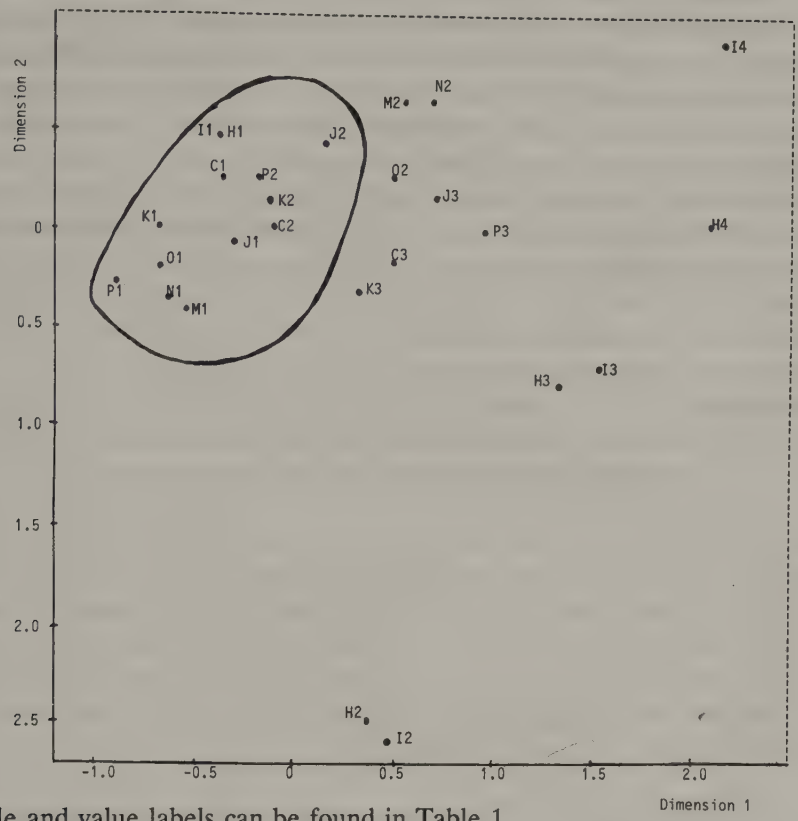
HOMALS Survival Migration Analysis. Plot of the Discriminant Measures (all Variables Included)



Variable and value labels can be found in Table 1

Graph 2

HOMALS Survival Migration Analysis. Category Quantifications. Variables Prior to Migration



Variable and value labels can be found in Table 1

The results of the first analysis are displayed in Graphs 1 and 2[3]. What can we learn from these two Graphs?

a. Category quantifications of occupational level before migration (H) and earnings per month before migration (I) are distributed over Graph 2. This dispersion gives an indication of the wide range of economic backgrounds from which migrants originate.

b. A plot of the individual scores (not displayed) shows that about three-quarters of all migrants fall within the cluster (I) in Graph 2. This shows that the majority of migrants did not have a job (H1), and thus no income, (I1) before migration and that they were living in houses without such basic facilities as electricity (O1), water supply (N1) and toilets (M1). The fact that most of them had to borrow money to finance their trip (J1) to the

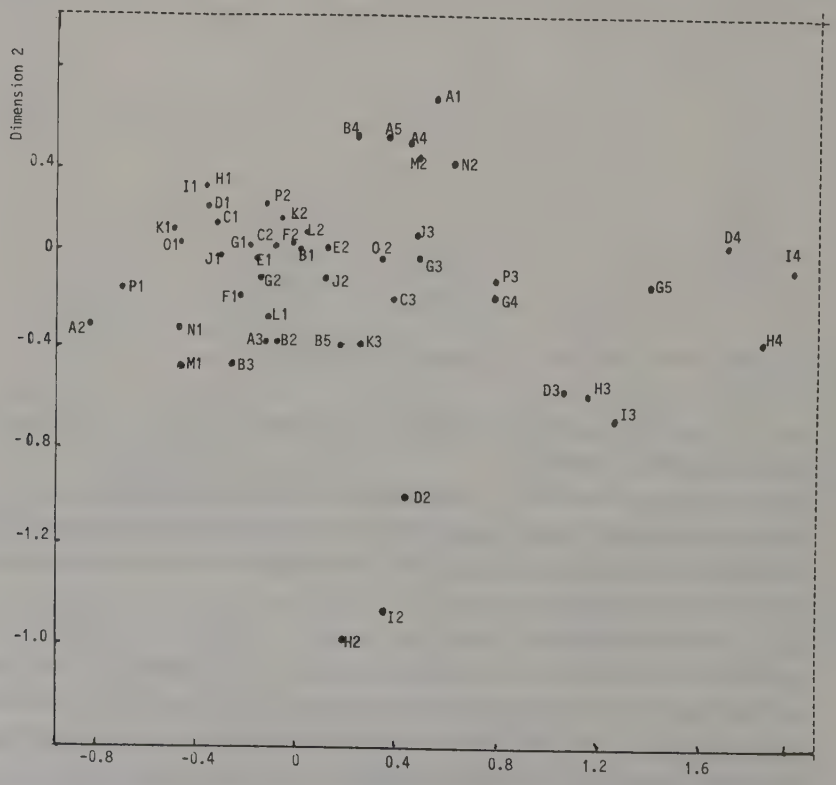
Middle East is a further indicator of their poor economic circumstances. Therefore we can state that for the group, assembled around the origin, migration is a strategy to escape from a deplorable economic situation (also discussed in Eelens et al. 1986 and Brochmann 1986).

It is interesting to note that by sending off so many survival migrants, Sri Lanka occupies an exceptional position in Asia. For, according to Arnold and Shah (1984, 1985), migrants from Asia to the Middle East tend to be better educated and, even though they mostly come from poor rural areas, they are better off economically than the origin population as a whole.

The cases which fall outside cluster (I) showed much more variability in economic status, which ranged from high salaries in the middle level category to a rather poor status of unskilled workers.

Characteristics of Survival Migrants

Graph 3
HOMALS Survival Migration Analysis. Category Quantifications (All Var. Inc.)



Variable and value labels can be found in Table 1

In the first stage of the HOMALS-analysis we were able to show that the main purpose of migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East is to improve the economic circumstances of the family. In the second stage of the analysis we will explore, by again using a HOMALS-analysis, from which social groups these survival migrants are recruited, what sort of jobs they have in the Middle East and what their economic situation is after their return from the Gulf.
After the introduction of the new set of variables in the HOMALS, the same picture basically emerges (Graph 3), i.e. the first dimension can again explain the economic variability, where the variables related to survival migration are centred around the origin.
The Graph permits us to make a number of valuable observations. All variables which are indicators of low economic status score lowest on the first dimension: slum (A2), common toilet (M1), common water supply (N1), no electricity supply (O1) and a low level of schooling (P1). It is also interesting to note that the 'widowed/ divorced/ separated' (K1) and 'more than four children' (C1) categories score very low on the first dimension which, as we assumed earlier on, demonstrates that there is indeed a strong economic pressure on families that have been broken up by death or separation, or that have a large number of children.

The unskilled, skilled and middle levels of occupation in the Middle East (D2,D3,D4) clearly do not form part of the survival migration cluster. The fact that these categories are situated close to the occupation levels prior to migration shows that recruitment is normally within the same job category that in which the migrant was working before his/her departure. The position of the 'unskilled ME' (D2) in between the 'unskilled' and 'skilled before migration' H2, H3) indicates that skilled workers are sometimes employed in unskilled labour in the Middle East, and vice versa.
Except for the Roman Catholic denomination (B4), religion does not seem to discriminate across survival and non-survival migrants. The fact that the Hindu (B2) and Muslim (B3) categories are situated slightly lower down the scale than the Buddhist (B1) may indicate that Muslims and Hindus are recruited as unskilled and skilled labourers somewhat more frequently than Buddhists. In the survey the Roman Catholics (B4) are grouped together with the rural, detached house, flat, private toilet and private water supply categories. Many of these migrants interviewed in the survey were living in the Gampaha district in rural, detached houses or in flats in the city.
Survival migrants appear to save little money. Both the categories 'Rs. 0 left after migration' (G1) and 'less than Rs. 10,000 left' (G2) fall within the cluster of survival migrants.

The fact that the category 'housemaid' (D1) is strongly linked with the cluster of survival migration indicates that the group of survival migrants is predominantly composed of housemaids.

An important observation is that many of the female migrants are married and leave small children behind (Brochmann 1986). Some even have to discontinue because of migration[4]. How can this phenomenon be explained? The first and probably the most important explanation is that the economic pressure is correlated with the number of non-income generating dependents in the family. Moreover, the family often give preference to the migration of married to single women because they fear that the morals of young women will be corrupted after spending some time in the Middle East, that the opportunities for a good marriage will seriously diminish and that 'their beauty will attract the sexual appetite of the employer'. Finally, some countries impose age restrictions that favour married women. For instance, Saudi Arabia only admits domestic servants from Asia between 30 and 43 years stage only, which obviously is an age the group consisting mainly of married women with small children.

Migration: a successful survival strategy?

The HOMALS analysis showed that about three-quarters of all migrants leaving Sri Lanka had serious economic setbacks prior to their departure. Most of these people used migration as a strategy to: a) provide immediately for the basic needs of their family back home, and b) ultimately improve their life style. Therefore it is a paramount importance whether migration can be considered as a successful means to achieve these aims.

There is no doubt that the remittances sent from abroad contribute substantially to the alleviation of the economic problems of the family. No less than 42% of the informants indicated that providing their family with an additional income was the main reason for going to the Middle East. Most housemaids send their whole salary to their family every month, or at least every second month. The greater part of this money was spent on daily needs. Among the 673 families of housemaids in the sample, 64% had saved hardly anything when they returned.
In Colombo, one often hears the comment that people living on remittances from the Gulf States spend lavishly and waste the money on all sorts of unnecessary gadgets. There is evidence that some people indeed squander the remittances on alcohol, drugs or abuse of them otherwise. In general, however, the money is used to improve the family circumstances. Some money is spent on luxury items. For many people, a steady income is an experience they have not had for a very long time, if ever. Under such circumstances they are tempted to buy consumer goods

which are not absolutely necessary - such as radio cassette players, television sets, video recorders - things they have dreamt of for many years. Moreover, these luxury items are symbols of a higher social status (Sahn 1987).

Remittances from abroad often enable a family to improve their housing conditions. This also affects their social position. Among the housemaids 22% invested in the purchase of the building of a house; 15% invested in converting it. Those housemaids who invested money in the building of a house on an average spent Rs. 26,750 (about U.S. $ 1,000), those who improved an existing house spent an average of Rs. 19,570 (about U.S. $ 725).
Another improvement in social position may be made by investing in a dowry or in the education of the children. Those housemaids who succeed in temporarily raising the household's standard of living receive social recognition for their accomplishments within the narrow circle of the family. For many this recognition is a stimulation to migrate for a second or third time.

One of the important questions that should be posed in analysing the success of migration as a survival strategy is whether in the long run migration leads to an improved economic condition of the migrant's family. In other words, can migration be considered as an adequate means to emancipate the urban poor in Colombo (Korale 1985)? In the survey, the informant was asked whether he/she thought that migration could improve his/her living conditions in the long run. In general, the housemaid's answers did not differ from those of the other respondents.
Out of a total of 899 informants, 84% were of the opinion that migration could indeed lead to a permanent improvement. However, when the informants were asked whether they had expected more financial benefits from a trip to the Gulf before migration, 75% stated that the outcome was disappointing.
Very few housemaids invest in commercial undertakings. Their investments are usually small and not for productive purposes. In general, if any remittances are invested at all, it is in the building or converting of a house. Although proper housing is undoubtedly an important improvement in the household's standard of living, with significant effects on social status, health and comfort, it does not generate income. Thus, apart from the improvement in housing conditions of a number of survival migrants, the long-term effects of migration are meagre. This often leads to dependency on Middle Eastern remittances, compelling women to again find employment in the Gulf. Indeed 54% of all housemaids indicated that they were hoping to migrate again. They were faced with the difficult problem that while the household was able to have a higher standard of living during the period of migration, this could not be maintained after the migrant's return.

Conclusion

The previous sections have indicated that a large number of Sri Lankan migrants do indeed leave their country because of economic necessity. Most of those who pursue migration as a survival strategy belong to the category of housemaids. Migration seems to be an adequate strategy to improve the material conditions of the family in the short term, but it's long-term effects are limited. The only long-term effect of migration is represented by better housing for a small section of the poor. Since so many households in Sri Lanka have become entirely dependent on remittances from migration, it is important to examine the possible trends of migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East.

In recent years the demand for expatriate unskilled and skilled men in the Arab world has decreased significantly due to the fall in oil revenues in these countries and the completion of a number of huge development projects. However, during the same period, there was no substantial decrease in the recruitment of housemaids. The reason for this may be that the demand for housemaids is linked directly to the general standard of living of the households in the Middle East and only indirectly to the evolution of the oil price. It is therefore unlikely that the demand for domestic servants will decrease in the coming years. However, there is sufficient reason to believe that in the labour market for domestics in the Middle East, the volume and composition of the flow of housemaids from Sri Lanka will change. It is possible that as a compensation for the heavy losses in foreign exchange, following the decline in job opportunities for men, the stance of some countries on female migration will become more liberal. Moreover, during the past few years some Arab countries been complaining about the effect Sri Lankan housemaids have on the cultural education of Arab children. This may lead to a ban on Sri Lankan housemaids working in one or more of the Arab countries, as happened in 1985 when Sri Lankan housemaids were banned from entering Saudi Arabia. Finally, it is quite likely that in Sri Lanka the ever-increasing costs of recruitment will ultimately make it impossible for poor people to secure a job in the Middle East (see Eelens & Speckmann, this volume).

NOTES

1. In the Middle East preference is generally given to housemaids who are Islamic. Moreover, because the authorities in the Middle East often require that a certain proportion of migrants be Muslim, the (Islamic) Moors have a better chance of finding a job without having to pay a fee to the recruitment agent.

2. HOMALS is a descriptive statistical tool for categorical data, belonging to the family of Factor Analysis. Homals estimates category quantifications for various (normally two) dimensions for the observations in the data set. These observations are then presented graphically. Next, object scores are calculated by adding the category quantifications for each observation separately. Also, a Graph display is made of the object scores. For a better understanding of the Graph presentation of the results some remarks about the output should be made:
   a. The more widely the category quantifications of a certain variable are dispersed over the Graph, the more the categories discriminate among the cases.
   b. Category quantifications situated close to the origin indicate that that category does not contribute significantly to the discrimination among the observations. Consequently, the further away the quantifications are from the origin, the greater the discrimination.
   c. Object scores plotted in a cluster indicate that the observations referring to these scores are members of a group with common characteristics. Furthermore, if the cluster is situated around the origin this signifies that, quantitatively, it is the main group.

3. Graph 1 indicates that the variables in general are more loaded on the first than on the second dimension, a characteristic not uncommon in HOMALS. Graph 1 (and 2) also show(s) that the most discriminating variables in the analysis are the job status of the migrant before migration and the earnings per month before departure for the Middle East. The least discriminating variables are marital status before departure and the number of children the migrant leaves behind. Dimension 1 (x-axis) in Graph 2 can clearly be interpreted as an indicator of the economic status of the migrant before departure for the Middle East. The lower a category scores on dimension 1, the more indicative it is of a poor economic position of the migrant prior to emigration. The analysis shows that the availability of running water, toilet facilities and electricity are adequate indicators of the socio-economic condition of the migrant before migration. It is much harder to find a clear definition

for the second dimension. In general, one could interpret it as a combination of social and economic conditions. By far the most interesting Graph table in this first series is Graph 3.

4. Among the 453 women in the survey who had ever given birth to a child, 22 gave up breastfeeding because they were leaving for the Middle East.

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3

RECRUITMENT OF LABOUR MIGRANTS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST[1]

F. Eelens, J.D. Speckmann

Government policy on labour migration in Sri Lanka

Although overseas migration was not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka, it was not until the advent of Middle East labour migration that a need arose to formulate a number of ordinances, bills or labour codes regulating emigration. The basic objectives of these laws were, and still are, to establish rules for the procedures to be followed in the emigration process and for the protection of workers. Each labour-exporting country took its own measures in this respect in the 1970's and thereafter. As a result quite a number of differences occur in the way in which the various governments have reacted to this new labour market. In addition, there is seldom question of any cooperation among them. Therefore, Arnold and Shah correctly remark that: 'Given the highly competitive nature of labour migration, it is not surprising that there has been little dialogue or cooperation among the sending countries in areas of mutual interest such as the rights of migrant workers.' (Arnold and Shah 1986:66).
The need for intergovernmental cooperation has often been expressed by policymakers in the labour exporting countries. However, considering the increasing competition on the international labour market, such a perspective for the future does not seem likely.

In Sri Lanka, government legislative and administrative arrangements date from 1956. In that year, the so-called 'Fee Charging Employment Agencies Act, no. 37' was passed, in which a number of restrictive measures were included regarding recruitment in the private sector. This law was primarily directed at local recruitment within the higher professional categories. The demand for this type of personnel in the Middle East, however, had little significance for Sri Lanka. After 1977, when labour migration to the Middle East got under way, government policy began to focus on stimulating overseas employment and a free rein was given to private initiative. It did appear necessary, however, to take some administrative measures, among which was the signing by the Foreign Labour Agency of the Labour Department's 'Memorandum of Understanding'. This placed

the agent under an obligation to deliver the contract he had concluded with the organization in the Middle East to the Commissioner of Labour and to give information on the commission paid by the foreign agency for his mediation.
The labour contract also had to meet a number of requirements with regard to its terms which had to be explicitly regulated (Fernando 1981:57-58). Foreign labour agents were furthermore obligated to register at the Department of Labour and to pay the symbolic amount of Rs. 10 a year for their licence.
With the increase in volume of labour migration and, linked to it, the increase in the number of foreign labour agents, it became essential to extend government measures. This led to the so-called 'Foreign Employment Agency Act No. 32' of 1980. This law provided for the supervision of recruiters, and was aimed, more than before, at the protection of migrants' interests. The registration fee at the Department of Labour was raised to Rs. 100 and the recruiter was moreover obligated to have a bank guarantee for possible claims if labour-migration problems arose.

If the 1980 Act implied a reinforcement of government intervention in the process of labour migration, the establishment of a 'Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment' (B.F.E.) on the basis of the 1985 Act no. 21 of the same name was an even greater intervention. This Bureau became an independent unit, dissociated from the Department of Labour, and took over all its foreign employment activities. The 1985 Act also contains a number of radical modifications concerning the foreign labour agent. For instance, he is now obliged to pay Rs. 10,000 a year for his licence and the bank guarantee has been raised to Rs. 100,000 a year for a period of two years. In addition, the recruiter must sign an agreement with the B.F.E. in which he states that he will comply with the official terms laid down in the agreement. The commission which the recruiter can legally charge to the migrant has been fixed at Rs. 2,700 (± U.S. $ 100) and from this amount the recruiter has to contribute 5% in taxes to the B.F.E. (Houben et al. 1987:57). Apart from these obligations, the recruiter has to send in a monthly report to the B.F.E. in which the principal data on the migrants sent abroad are included.
Many of the main objectives of the Bureau of Foreign Employment have, however, only been attained in part. For example, a number of missions have been sent abroad to promote employment opportunities there, but so far little is known about the results. Later in this chapter, it will become apparent that the figures on labour migrants sent abroad by way of the B.F.E. are extremely modest. Furthermore, the model contract which the B.F.E. has drawn up has not yet been put into effect. However, a monthly minimum salary has been fixed for unskilled workers (U.S. $ 150) and housemaids should earn at least U.S. $ 100.

Also a 'Workers' Welfare Fund' has been established. This fund is financed by a contribution from the B.F.E. and by donations and contributions from Sri-Lankan migrants and other interested parties. Its tasks are to set up training and orientation courses for prospective migrants, to give assistance to Sri Lankans working abroad and to their families, and to develop programmes for the care of returning migrants. Quite typical is the information given in the 'Guide for Sri Lankan Women seeking Employment in the Middle East', published by the Seva Vanitha Unit (Department of Foreign Affairs):

> 'It is not always the very rich people in the Middle East who have foreign domestic staff. They have to spend a great deal of money in doing so. Quite apart from the salary paid, the employer pays a fair amount to the Agent as his fees, visa fees to the Government as well as money spent in providing for the passage, etc. All this means that the employer expects the employee to work hard and serve him for the duration laid down in the employment contract. This is why employers demand large sums of money if employees try to terminate contracts prematurely and come home due to various domestic reasons. For households the hours of work are long and hard. Their work will involve cleaning of house, washing clothes, looking after children etc. Although modern electrical appliances are available it still means a lot of work. The day for a housemaid would begin very early in the morning and end late in the night. Most employers may grant a break of a few hours in the afternoon. Very often it is only when the day's work is done in the night that the housemaid will have some time for herself to attend personal matters. Friday is a public holiday in every Middle East country and that is the weekly holiday. Certain employers permit their employees to be free on Friday, they are allowed to get about or go out on their own that day. In certain countries like Saudi Arabia housemaids are not allowed to go out unless accompanied by a female of the household. Since there are no labour laws governing employment of housemaids in these countries it is difficult to insist on an employer granting Friday off if he is not inclined to do so. According to the employment contract, provision of medical facilities is the responsibility of the employer. Here again certain employers may be very particular and prompt while others may be slow in responding to requests for medical treatment.
> It is important that prospective employees to the Middle East should remember that things are not all that rosy in regard to their employment in these countries.'

From the above it may be concluded that the government has not neglected the development of the labour migration process. Numerous steps have been taken and a specific bureau has been created as a controlling and recruiting body. Nevertheless, it must be stated that in comparison with other Asian countries, the

package of government provisions is still modest. In addition, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the Sri Lankan government to come to grips with the informal sector concerning the recruitment of labour migrants for the Middle East, as we will see later. That the recent tensions in Sri Lanka did nothing to heighten the effectiveness of government intervention in general, and in the field of labour migration in particular, is evident.

The recruitment process

1. Types of recruitment

Different types of intermediary linkages exist between the prospective migrants and the labour market in the Middle East. The first type concerns **public sector recruitment** and is covered by the Bureau of Foreign Employment (B.F.E.). The proportion of labour migrants leaving the country through the intermediary of the B.F.E., however, is small in comparison with that of the recruitment in **the private sector**, which is for the most part responsible for the linkage between employers in the Middle East and prospective migrants in Sri Lanka and, as a result, for the extent of labour migration.
The first private foreign employment agencies originated around 1975 and grew rapidly as a result of the increasing demand for manpower in the Middle East. In 1978, the number of registered agencies was 125 and rose to more than 525 up to the end of 1980. In 1983 this number had decreased to 388 (Ministry of Plan Implementation 1985:23). The B.F.E. figures show that it had come down to 128 by the end of 1986 (Summary of Activities, B.F.E. 1986).
Numerous unregistered foreign employment agencies operate in the private sector as well. They have managed to continue their activities in spite of the 1980 Foreign Employment Agency Act. It may be said that the number of migrants who secure employment through these unlicensed agencies is significant. Among these illegal recruiters there are individuals operating with limited means, but also more or less large-scale organizations.

The three groups of actors - the foreign employment agencies in Sri Lanka, the employers in the Middle-East and the labour migrants - are involved in an exchange relationship with capital, labour, information and relations as resources. The last named resource is of particular significance to a succesful strategy on a highly competitive international market. It concerns the establishment of relations with counterpart organizations in the Middle East, the development and maintenance of the relations and the protection of this network against competition. (Houben et al. 1987:102). The principal procedure followed by the Foreign

Labour Agents in Sri Lanka in contacting agents and companies in the Middle East consists in placing advertisements in newspapers and periodicals, combined with applications to the various agencies in the area. Another prevalent formula is that when the Sri Lankan recruiter already has business relations in the Middle East he will endeavour to establish connections through their mediation with local employment agencies or with potential employers of foreign manpower. In building up this network frequent use is also made of already existing friendship relations in the Middle East.
In most cases the task of establishing lasting business relations is not a simple affair. First initiatives often require quite considerable financial investments. That is why many recruiters wait to apply for licences and to register until their contacts have become more enduring.
The government regulations and, in particular, the high investment figures induce a large number of recruiters to avoid official registration because they do not have the necessary capital at their disposal. This is one of the principle causes of illegal recruitment. Registered agents, too, have enough room for financial manipulation within the official framework. Those dealing with housemaids and/or unskilled male workers often do not need to advertise in order to fill the existing vacancies. They reach their clients by using sub-agents and by word of mouth. With this type of operation it is not necessary to submit contracts for approval to the B.F.E. It may also happen that two types of contract are drawn up - one for the Bureau meeting all the legal requirements and a second for the migrant, which in fact is the binding contract. In most cases, the official fee of Rs. 2,700 is not applied either.

Once the recruiter has reached one or more counterparts in the Middle East, he will have to spend much time on and give a great deal of attention to the maintenance of these relations. That is done via telex and/or by means of correspondence, but visits to the Middle East also play a part. From Korale's research it appears that more than 48% of the registered recruiters investigated had made one or more visits to the Middle East (Korale et al. 1985:25). The costs of these trips vary between Rs. 25,000 and Rs. 100,000. The recruiters' visits are of importance not only in maintaining relations, but also in reducing the total time necessary to conclude a contract and implement it. Operating a recruiting office in the receiving country is an advantage, but only a limited number of agencies have such a facility.

There are different ways in which the contract can be set up. In most cases the recruiter in Colombo provides the counterpart agency in the receiving country with the manpower and the latter is then responsible for the connection with the

ultimate employer. Direct supply of manpower to an employer in the Middle East does occur, but is relatively rare.
It is the employer in the Middle East and, in particular, the large company who determine to a large extent how the recruitment process will be carried out. They indicate the professional categories on which the recruitment must be focused and determine the size of the group of employees to be sent abroad. In addition, they make certain demands concerning the selection procedure and the formal obligations which the recruiter and the migrant have to meet.

There are two other types of recruitment within the private sector. They concern mediation based on **sibling and friendship relations** as well as **direct contacts with the future employer**. Here, the principle intermediary is the migrant in the Middle East who intercedes through his or her local contacts for the prospective Sri Lankan migrant looking for a job abroad. This mediating role is, however, not bound to actual residence in the Middle East, but can also be assumed after return to the home country. This type of recruitment began at a later date and to a certain extent originated because results obtained through the intermediary of foreign labour agencies and/or sub-agents were disappointing. The amount of the fee also played an important role.
For the future employer as well as for the prospective migrant in Sri Lanka, it is possible with this type of mediation to mutually obtain direct information. In addition, the subsequent procedure is simpler in comparison with the working method of the foreign employment agent. 'A Middle East employer will base his selection on information supplied by a current migrant who recommends a candidate, a photograph and photocopies of the candidate's passport also generally being provided. These documents are necessary for the acquisition of a visa for which the future employer may enlist the services of a recruitment agency in his country. Such informally arranged jobs generally only become involved in the formal market system when a plane ticket has to be arranged through travel agencies, both in the Middle East and Sri Lanka'. (Mook 1987:7).
The contact with the potential migrant is made by means of correspondence or by telephone where relatives or friends are concerned. When candidates outside that circle are involved, communication is established through the intermediary of a relative or friend and it is possible that this service has to be remunerated. Professionalization of this form of mediation takes place when the migrant or return migrant begins to engage in mediatory activities with the explicit intention of earning money. In that situation the distinction between the foreign labour agents' and the sub-agents' activities becomes obscure (Mook 1987:7-8).

Direct contact with a future employer without mediations by siblings and friends mostly occurs when migrants have already been in the Middle-East and are opting for a second term.

The aforementioned types of mediation were an important item in the survey dealing with the group of 'return migrants'. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Types of Mediation used by Sri Lankans to obtain Employment in the Middle East (Last Migration Only)

Mediation through:	Migrants excluding housemaids		Housemaids		All migrants	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Labour Department; Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment	6	2.7	1	0.1	7	0.8
Authorized Agent	160	72.1	395	58.8	555	62.1
Unauthorized Agent and Agent status not certain	19	8.6	62	9.2	81	9.0
Relatives and friends abroad	23	10.4	167	24.9	190	21.2
Personal contacts with employer	3	1.3	27	4.0	30	3.4
Relatives and friends in Sri Lanka	4	1.8	20	3.0	24	2.7
Others	7	3.1	0	0.0	7	0.8
Missing data	(1)		(4)		(5)	
Total	222	100	672	100	894	100

Source: Survey on Social, Economic and Demographic Aspects of Labour Migration to the Middle East; 1985-1986. (Return Migrants)

The table clearly shows that the Labour Department and, in a later phase, the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment play insignificant roles in the process of recruitment. Only 0.8% of all the return migrants interviewed found a job through their mediation, while housemaid recruitment in the public sector proves to be practically non-existent.

The private sector, however, shows quite a different picture. The so-called authorized agent covers no less than 62.1% of all labour-contracts with the Middle East and this figure rises to 72.1 % when the category of housemaids is excluded. The latter group also makes use of this type of mediation, but to a lesser degree (58.8%); here relatives and friends abroad and/or personal contact with an employer in the Middle East play a significant role in the process of mediation (28.9%).
The figures for the category of unauthorized agents and for the category of agents whose status was not certain are relatively modest. Only 9% of all migrants find their way to the Middle East via these types of mediators. This figure, however, should be considered with some reservation, for it is a well-known fact that the potential migrant often has no idea whether his agent has been registered by the competent Sri Lankan authorities. The recruiter and, in particular, the sub-agent will also mostly allege to belong to an authorized agency. Consequently, it may be assumed that the informal recruitment sector plays a more significant role than suggested by the figures presented in the table. When relating the figures to the labour migrants' year of departure, it became clear that mediation by relatives and friends abroad increased significantly after 1981 and the same can be said of personal contacts with potential employers. The market positions of the authorized agents and the recruiters acting unofficially show some fluctuations over the period 1979 to 1986, but the differences are hardly significant.

2. Recruitment methods

Once negotiations have led to a definitive commission bound by contract, the actual recruitment of workers is started. Four main types of recruitment can be distinguished; the use of the existing register of candidates which the B.F.E. and many agencies have at their disposal; the placing of advertisements in dailies and weeklies; the enlistment of sub-agents; and finally the use of the existing network of personal contacts.
In certain cases recruiters will also visit villages and companies to inform people of the existing vacancies in the Middle East and thus to recruit candidates. The register of prospective migrants is, in most cases, only used when the commission concerns a small number of people. Advertising then becomes too expensive. In general, it can be said that the recruitment method depends to a large extent on the professional category into which the prospective migrant fits. Thus, for the category of household personnel the sub-agents are the principle channel of supply. For more highly qualified professions advertising is mainly used. Sub-agents are understood to be those people who put migrants in touch with a particular recruiter for payment. The use of these intermediaries is not permitted officially and it is

therefore extremely difficult to make a reliable estimate of the number of sub-agents operating in Sri Lanka. It can be established, however, that the recruiters in Colombo often make use of these intermediaries when recruiting outside the city area.
The advantages of working with sub-agents are, according to the recruiters, that they know the background of the potential migrant and the requirements the foreign labour agency has set. If problems arise later with the family the intermediary can often be called in to give appropriate assistance. (Mook 1987; Houben 1987). By no means do all recruiters have good experiences with sub-agents. Sometimes sub-agents use the names of the agencies to wheedle money out of people and let completion of further procedures slide. In addition, there is the risk that when a sub-agent is used, he will discover the names and addresses of the relations in the Middle East by means of his correspondence with migrants. This can result in the sub-agent beginning to work independently - even though he is an illegal recruiter and thus adversely affect the professional relational pattern which his original employer had established.

The remuneration which the sub-agent receives is diverse in character. Some recruiters pay a fixed amount, varying from Rs. 250 to Rs. 500. for each applicant recruited. Others remunerate the sub-agent in accordance with the size of the order and consequently with the commission which the recruiter receives from the Middle East. There are also recruiters who do not offer any remuneration and presume that the sub-agent will approach the prospective migrants for payment of his services. It is extremely difficult to obtain reliable data from the foreign labour agents on the number of sub-agents and on the type of remuneration applied. However, it is an established fact that, despite the ban on the use of intermediaries, this method of recruitment is widespread.

3. Selection procedure and dispatch

When a client has expressed interest in being sent abroad, an interview is held with the recruiter or the sub-agent during which the application form is completed and copies of the client's passport, diplomas and, references as well as passport photographs, are submitted. The agent also frequently takes care of the passport application, the passport is often held until the procedure has been completed. At a later date a police statement is also required, in particular for emigration to Qatar and Saudi Arabia, while a medical examination is obligatory for all Middle East countries. For the dispatch of housemaids it is important to ensure that the migrant is not pregnant. Pregnancy is one reason for her to be sent back home

within three months after arrival - the probationary period fixed by contract - in which case the agent in Sri Lanka must pay all costs.
Depending on the requirements of the employer, the applicants are sometimes also tested for their skills in the function for which they are being sent abroad. In certain cases the services of specific authorities are called in. It is not customary, however, to test housemaids and unskilled workers. There are other criteria which play a part in the final selection. For instance, a first preference is shown for Muslims, and a second for Christians. Age, too, is an important factor. In order to obtain a work visa, a minimum age limit has been set by the Middle East countries. For Saudi Arabia this is 30 years for women and 25 years for men. (Zar 1984:6-11). For Qatar, Oman and Yemen, the minimum age limit is 25 years, whereas for Abu Dhabi it has been fixed at 21 years. Kuwait and Bahrain require a minimum age of 18 years. The maximum age limit is generally 35 to 40 years for women and 40 years for men.
When women are to be sent abroad, recruiters also pay attention to appearance, behaviour and family situation. Research carried out by Houben et al. showed that some foreign labour agents show a preference for applicants from outside the city area of Colombo because they are mostly accustomed to hard work and are supposed to be more disciplined (Houben et al. 1987:105). Experience in the Middle East is considered an advantage, especially when the candidate has some knowledge of Arabic.
During the interview - for housemaids the selection is often limited to one interview - the English language is used. It is a point in the prospective migrant's favour if he or she can express himself/herself in English, although it appears from the research that the standard required is not very high. The final selection is made by the agency or the employer in the Middle East.

After the data on the different candidates have been forwarded by the agency in Sri Lanka, the employer makes his choice. In the selection of housemaids, the photograph plays a significant role. For more highly qualified professions, the agency's representative in the Middle East or the employer himself may come to Sri Lanka for the final stage of the selection procedure.
When the migrants finally come to fetch their passports, visas and air tickets, which is usually on the day of departure, they are given further instructions about procedures at Colombo airport and at the airport of arrival in the Middle East. On that occasion, further information is usually given about customs and practices in the host country, such as the prohibition on the use of alcohol, the restrictions imposed on women in public life and the existing sanctions against theft and other offences. Mook's research shows that some sub-agents also hold informative meetings which at the same time have a recruiting function (Mook 1987).

The labour contract which the migrant has to sign before departure also plays a part in the whole procedure. From research by the Marga Institute in Colombo it appeared that the contracts were drawn up in English in 84% of the cases, whereas nearly 3% were in the Sinhala or Tamil languages (Gunatilleke 1986:52). Few details are usually provided on the contents of the contract. The migrant's interest in it is almost exclusively directed towards the wage level and only very rarely are questions asked about the other terms of employment. Moreover, after signing the employment contract in Colombo, the migrant is sometimes obliged to sign an additional labour agreement in the Middle East. Table 2 shows that in the majority of cases the labour contract is signed in Sri Lanka (60.6%). Furthermore, it is significant that for 28% of the housemaids no contract is signed at all. This concerns, in particular, those labour migrants that make use of mediation via siblings and friends in the Middle East or have a direct contact with a future employer in the region. For the middle-level jobs, it is not uncommon that a contract is signed in Sri Lanka as well as in the Middle East.

Table 2

Contract Signed in Sri Lanka and/or Middle East by Employment Level (Last Migration)

	S.L. and M.E. contract %	S.L. contract only %	M.E. contract only %	No contract at all %
Middle level	35.2	59.3	3.7	1.8
Skilled level	11.8	65.9	16.5	5.8
Unskilled level	17.3	74.0	3.7	4.9
Housemaids	6.1	58.4	6.9	28.5
Total	9.4	60.6	7.4	22.6

(Frequency missing = 6)

Source: Survey on Social, Economic and Demographic Aspects of Labour Migration to the Middle East; 1985-1986. (Return Migrants)

Economic aspects of recruitment

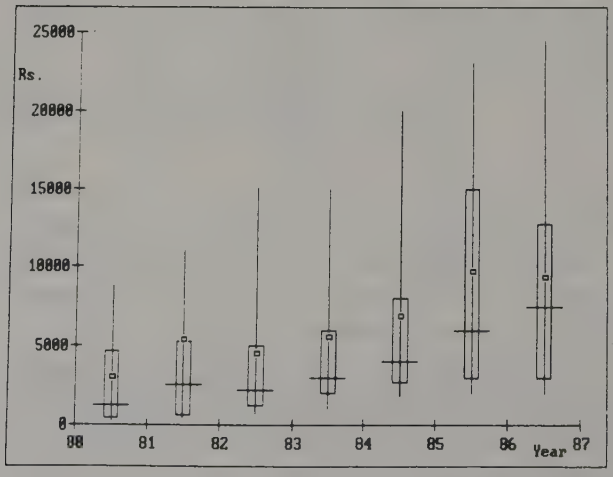
In Asia there are high costs involved in securing a job in the Middle East. As most migrants in Asia find employment through recruitment agencies, the main cost involved is the agency fee. In Thailand and the Philippines, the average cost

of obtaining a job in the Middle East has been estimated at about U.S. $ 900 (Arnold & Shah 1986:155-162). Many migrants to the Gulf have to work for months to repay the agency fee and the interest charges they have incurred by borrowing money to pay this fee. There is no doubt that the level of the fee has a direct influence on the flow and the composition of labour migration. Fees which are too high may prevent certain segments of society from participating in the migration process.

1. Recruitment costs

Obviously, the extent of the recruitment costs is dependent on the means of recruitment. In general, recruitment through professional agents is most expensive, while recruitment through relatives and friends is normally the least costly. According to the results of this study, it is becoming increasingly difficult to go to the Middle East without having to pay a considerable recruitment fee. In 1980, some 64% of migrants were able to leave for overseas employment without having to spend money on fees. In 1985, this had dropped to 45%.

Figure 1
Recruitment Fees by Year of Departure (Sri Lanka, 1986)



Source: Survey on Social, Economic and Demographic Aspects of Labour Migration to the Middle East; 1985-1986. (Return Migrants)

For those who cannot find employment in the Middle East through relatives or friends and have to go through an employment agent (legal or illegal), recruitment costs are considerable. Nowadays few employment agents still charge the legal amount of Rs. 2700 and many demand exorbitant recruitment fees. Figure 1 shows that not only has it become much more difficult to find a job without having to pay for it, but also that the fees have gone up tremendously during the past few years. Because of this trend the poorest strata in Sri Lankan society nowadays find it much harder to participate in the migration process.

There are several reasons why recruitment fees have soared in recent times. First because in Sri Lanka there is a great demand for jobs in the Middle East. Especially among the lower classes migration is considered to be the most important strategy to overcome economic deprivation. Because the local supply of cheap labour is much higher than the demand abroad, recruitment for foreign employment has become a buyers' market in which the recruitment agent sets the price. Consequently, the agents select those candidates who are able and willing to pay the highest fees. Second, there is evidence that the relationship between the Sri Lankan and the Middle Eastern agent is changing. While in the past the Sri Lankan agent received a commission from his Arab counterpart, nowadays - with the general slowdown in Middle Eastern economies - he often has to pay a considerable fee to be allowed to send a batch of migrant workers. Therefore, the Sri Lankan agents themselves are victims of an internationally oriented buyers' market in which the Arab middlemen pull the strings. Most governments in the Asian region are well aware of their vulnerability in this highly competitive market. Despite various recommendations made at international meetings to cooperate in the protection of migrants' rights, various Asian countries are now considering a reduction of the minimum salaries for migrants to improve their positions as labour-sending countries.

A generalised linear model was used to investigate the differentials in recruitment fees paid in Sri Lanka to secure jobs in the Middle East. Because fees have increased exponentially in the last decade an appropriate model of the form was fitted to the data.

$$Y = A.e^{BX}$$

In this equation, a growth function formula, Y is the amount of fee paid, A is the level of fees paid at a certain (starting) point, C is the base of natural logarithm (2.71), B is the amount of increase in time and X represents the independent variables.

Those migrants who were able to find jobs abroad without having to pay recruitment fees were excluded from the analysis. The dependent variable (Y) in the analysis was taken as the amount of fee paid to secure the last employment in the Middle East. Time of migration, job status of the migrant in the Middle East, country of destination and ethnicity of the migrant were selected as independent variables. The data were drawn from the survey on social, economic and demographic consequences of labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East. Information on both current and return migrants was used.

Table 3 displays the results of this analysis. The interpretation of the regression coefficients in the model is hampered by the fact that these coefficients do not indicate the change in Y for a unit change in X, but in the logarithm of Y. Therefore, wherever possible we prefered to calculate cost ratios. These ratios indicate the proportion of the fee the average migrant belonging to a particular group must pay, compared to the migrant in the reference category. According to the results, recruitment fees have increased over the last years at an average rate of about 2% per month. It is interesting to see that Moors and Malays can leave for the Gulf under better conditions. On the average they pay 13% and 32% less, respectively, than the reference group of Sinhalese. The reason again may be found in the greater demand for and the smaller supply of Muslim migrants in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, for one reason or another, Sri Lankan Tamils have to pay more (20% -significant at the 5% level) than the Sinhalese. The costs for employment in Saudi Arabia and Qatar are significantly higher than for Kuwait. Prospective migrants pay, respectively 38% and 49% more than if they find jobs in Kuwait. This is probably because many of the visas for Saudi Arabia and Qatar must be arranged in Bombay or Karachi, which increases the costs. Visas for the other countries are most often sent from the Middle East, or can be arranged on the way in Bahrain. None of the labour importing countries in the Middle East have an embassy in Sri Lanka.

By far the most important differences in recruitment fees may be observed between the various occupational levels. The fact that interactions with time of departure and membership of the middle or unskilled levels are highly significant indicates that the recruitment fees for these occupational categories did not evolve in parallel with the fees for the housemaids. Table 4 exhibits the fitted values for recruitment fees for the four occupational levels at three different points in time: January 1980, January 1983 and January 1986.

Table 3

Regression Coefficient for Analysis of Agency Fees (Sri Lankan Return Migrants from the Middle East)

Variable name	Parameter estimate		Cost ratio
Intercept	5.551258	***	-
Month1Dep [1)]	0.022959	***	-
Middle	3.625595	***	-
Skilled	1.212898	***	-
Unskilled	2.158093	***	-
Bahrain	0.070994		1.073574
Jordan	-0.04815		0.952988
Lebanon	0.193384		1.213348
Oman	0.230988		1.259844
Qatar	0.397681	**	1.488369
Saudi	0.322097	***	1.380019
U.A.E.	0.040073		1.040886
Other M.E.	0.220484		1.246681
Tamil	0.199102	**	1.220306
Moor	-0.15966	*	0.852426
Malay	-0.39750	**	0.671996
Other Ethnic	0.278392		1.321005
Middle*Month1Dep	-0.02240	***	-
Skilled*Month1Dep	0.001067		-
Unskilled*Month1Dep	-0.01144	***	-

[1)] Indicates the number of months between the date of departure of a migrant in the study compared with the date of departure of the earliest migrant in our survey.

R-square: .5033
No. of cases: 738

Significance level
*** significance 1%
** significance 5%
* significance 10%

Source: Survey on Social, Economic and Demographic Aspects of Labour Migration to the Middle East; 1985-1986. (Return Migrants)

Table 4

Fitted Values for Recruitment Fees: Employment Level by Time of Departure

	Jan.1980	Jan.1983	Jan.1986
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Housemaid	826	1888	4314
Unskilled	4271	6466	9788
Skilled	2914	6922	16439
Middle	11316	11515	11778

U.S. $ 1 = ± Rs. 27

Source: Survey on Social, Economic and Demographic Aspects of Sri Lankan Labour Migration to the Middle East; 1985-1986. (Return Migrants)

On the average, housemaids had to pay only Rs. 826 in the early eighties; however, in 1986 this amount had already increased to Rs. 4,314. Fees for skilled labourers increased almost as rapidly and had reached an average of over Rs. 16,000 in 1986, an even higher amount than for middle-level personnel. The increase in recruitment fees was less pronounced for unskilled labourers. However, for many people an average of Rs. 9,788 is a huge amount and for unskilled labourers and represents a Sri Lankan salary of six months or more. Recruitment fees for middle personnel have not significantly risen in the recent past, because compared to the number of jobs available, the number of suitable candidates is limited. On the other hand, there is an enormous supply of would-be migrants in the unskilled and skilled catagories.

2. Financing Foreign Employment

One of the most serious problems facing prospective migrants is to find the financial means to secure a job abroad. Especially among the poor, people cannot get jobs in the Middle-East because they were incapable of arranging the money for fees and other costs. Those who succeed in finding employment abroad finance their trips in various ways.

Table 5 presents the first and second most important ways in which the return migrants in the survey had funded their last trip to the Middle East. A distinction was made between housemaids and the other occupational categories.

Table 5

Means by which Sri Lankan Migrants financed Recruitment Costs for Employment in the Middle East (Housemaids and Non-Housemaids)

Means of Financing	Housemaids (%)		Non-Housemaids (%)	
	1st means	2nd means	1st means	2nd means
Own savings	179 (26.6)	29 (4.3)	108 (54.6)	9 (4.1)
Gifts parents	42 (6.2)	8 (1.2)	21 (10.6)	4 (1.8)
Gifts other relative	28 (4.2)	3 (0.5)	5 (2.5)	0 (0.0)
Gifts friends	2 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	2 (1.0)	1 (0.5)
Loans parents	6 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.0)	2 (0.9)
Loans other relatives	119 (17.7)	11 (1.6)	2 (1.0)	4 (1.8)
Loans friends	108 (16.1)	8 (1.2)	19 (9.6)	7 (3.2)
Loans moneylenders	117 (17.4)	7 (1.0)	9 (4.5)	2 (0.9)
Mortgaging/pawning	53 (7.9)	8 (1.2)	13 (6.6)	1 (0.5)
Other means	14 (2.1)	3 (0.5)	13 (6.6)	2 (0.9)
Not applicable [1]	4 (0.6)	592 (88.4)	2 (1.0)	189 (85.4)

[1] Not applicable indicates that no costs were involved in migration (everything paid by employer) or, in the case of second means of financing trip, that only one way was used to pay for the recruitment costs.

Source: Survey on Social, Economic and Demographic Aspects of Labour Migration to the Middle East; 1985-1986. (Return Migrants)

Among the housemaids in the survey 26.6% financed their migration out of their own pockets, as against 54.6% among the other categories. Because most housemaids belong to the very poor strata of society, only about one fourth of them can pay for recruitment costs from their own savings. Sixty percent have to borrow, mortgage or pawn. Migrants from the other occupational categories seem to have less difficulty in financing work abroad. Only 23.7% of these migrants have to rely on loans, mortgaging or pawning. Both for housemaids and other occupational groups, gifts from the family only account for about 10% to 13%.

An aspect of recruitment among the poor in Sri Lanka which is often overlooked is that many have to depend on private moneylenders to finance employment abroad. Almost 18% of housemaids have to borrow money 'in the streets'. The interest rates vary from 15% to 30% a month. Serious disadvantages are attached to this form of financing migration. First, because of the exorbitant interest rates migrants often have to work for several months in the Middle East just to pay back the interest. This hinders the migrants' economic progress and in some cases - when the migrant has to come home prematurely - leads to severe economic problems. Second, many of the private moneylenders are underworld figures and the profits made from the migrants are often used for various types of illegal activities. It would be a significant improvement if the government of Sri Lanka established an easy credit scheme for prospective migrants. At the macroeconomic level such a scheme would be beneficial as well, because it would drain 'easy money' away from the illegal money market and, for the government, it would lead to easy exchange of local rupees against hard foreign currency, which is badly needed for the economy of the country.

3. Recruitment and illegal activities

The enormous demand for foreign employment in Sri Lanka has not only led to a thriving recruitment sector, but also to numerous illegal activities. Even most of the authorized employment agents now use illegal recruitment methods. First, hardly any of the agents respect the maximum fee of Rs. 2,700 set by the Foreign Employment Bureau. Second, most agents make use of a network of sub-agents to attract prospective migrants, which is illegal. It is our opinion, however, that at the present time only those agents who deal exclusively with the recruitment of professionals are economically able to respect legal procedures. The overseas labour market has changed so drastically during the past few years that a majority of private employment agents cannot cover their costs (administration, communication with the Middle East, travel and promotion, insurance, surety bond, bank guarantee, etc.) with the Rs. 2,700 fee.

A harmful practice for prospective migrants is that many agents collect their passports the moment the agents promise employment and ask for advance payment of the fee. This practice prevents candidates from applying for employment with other agents. If the agent fails to find a job for the applicant, he returns the fee in most cases. However, the prospective migrant will often have lost a considerable amount of money because of the monthly interest he has been paying

(15%-30%) on the money borrowed. It appears that illegal agents use this system to provide for their necessary 'cash flow'.

Serious cases of fraud by bogus agents are reported almost weekly in the local newspapers. Frequently, these types of agents promise the prospective migrants foreign employment, collect the fee and then disappear. Cases are known in which a single fraudulent agent cheated several hundreds of would-be migrants. Although the Sri Lanka Fraud Bureau has taken action against such malpractices, many poor people are victims of these unscrupulous individuals.
In addition to the aforementioned malpractices, birth certificates and passports are also frequently forged. Birth certificates are necessary to obtain a passport. However, some 25 to 30 years ago birth was not always formally registered, particularly in remote rural areas. Passports are falsified for various reasons; for instance, by changing the date of birth in order to meet age restrictions imposed by several Middle Eastern countries. Furthermore, the name of a person who has previously been expelled from a particular country is often changed.

One of the worst cases of cheating results in migrants getting stranded abroad. Since none of the Gulf countries have embassies in Sri Lanka, visas must be acquired elsewhere. Usually the visa is arranged by the employment agents, but some illegal agents continue to send people via Bombay, Karachi or Manama to obtain the necessary documents. Some unscrupulous agents have sent people to these places and then abandoned them there. Thus hundreds of migrants have been stranded over the past few years. Because most migrants leave with little or no money, it is extremely difficult for them to get back home. Cases were reported in which women were forced into prostitution or into heroin smuggling in order to get the money for the fare home. The Sri Lankan Foreign Employment Bureau now strives to repatriate stranded migrants.

Conclusion

Although labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East has many drawbacks, the remittances sent from the host country are vital both to the government and the families involved. For this reason it is of great importance that the consequences of the present trends and measures to combat the proliferation of the recruitment sector are evaluated critically.
In passing the Foreign Employment Act a commendable attempt was made to regulate the whole recruitment process legally. From the very beginning, however, the F.E.A. had a number of shortcomings. The principal one is probably that legal recruitment agents may only ask for a fee of Rs. 2.700 (about U.S. $ 100) for their

services. This amount applies for the posting of a housemaid as well as for that of a doctor, earning ten times as much. Under the present circumstances, the recruitment agent often has to pay his counterpart in the Middle East. Furthermore, he is involved in heavy administrative expenses and bears a financial risk, because there is always the chance that the migrant may return home prematurely. An amount of Rs. 2.700 is not enough to break even. Thus, most agents are practically forced to sidestep the law. The result is that it is difficult to draw the line between legal and illegal agents. Since even the legal agent is compelled to engage in illegal activities, the illegal agent is provided with an additional argument to back out of registration and thus avoid the high financial investments (guarantee fee, office, etc.).

Therefore, the government should take a more flexible position with regard to the maximum chargeable fee. At the same time it would be useful if the government established a system in which less well-off migrants would have the possibility of contracting low interest loans to finance migration. If such loans were granted on condition that the migration contracts be conducted at a legal agents' offices, this would be an effective weapon in the fight against illegal recruitment agents. At the moment part of the remittance from the Middle East is pouring out of the official pool of foreign exchange earnings.
As has already been mentioned, recruitment fees have increased enormously during the past few years. If this trend continues in the coming years, the result will no doubt be that the number of families who can afford to send someone abroad will be drastically reduced. In combination with the fairly high rate of inflation, migration would become less and less financially profitable. At the moment it is difficult to estimate whether such a trend will actually persist, and whether the laws of supply and demand will then make the fees come down. In fact, supply and demand already strongly influence the case of middle level personnel. In contrast with the other categories, in which there is a surplus supply of would-be migrants, the shortage of good middle level personnel who want to migrate has kept the recruitment fees at a constant level.

NOTE

1. The data presented in this chapter have been published earlier in: Eelens, F. and J.D. Speckmann (eds) 'Recruitment of Labor Migrants for the Middle East: The Sri Lankan Case. International Migration Review, Vol. XXIV-2, pp.297-321.

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4

LABOUR MIGRATION AND THE POLICY OF THE GULF STATES

W.A. Shadid, E.J.A.M. Spaan, J.D. Speckmann

Introduction

Several authors writing on the state of the art in migration research and theory, have criticized the omission by functionalistic micro- and macro-analytic structural approaches of the political dimension of migration processes. By placing emphasis on individualistic decision-making processes or on uneven economic exchanges under the ever-expanding capitalist system, these theoretical perspectives fail to recognize that migratory movements are often influenced by political considerations and are largely determined by deliberate manipulation on the part of labour-importing and labour-exporting countries.
Zolberg (1981), for instance, commenting on such theoretical orientations, points to the importance of the process of nation-state formation, which has a determining influence on the form and nature of contemporary migration processes. Sassen (1988:36) in addition, sees the strengthening of the nation-state and, more specifically, of the nation's borders as mechanisms for forming a category of labour with distinct advantageous characteristics for the employers in the labour-importing countries, viz. a labour force which is cheap and powerless, mainly because of the foreign status of imported labour.
In other words, economic explanations alone are not sufficient when analyzing migratory flows: policy and political considerations should be taken into account. In this perspective national boundaries perform a specific function in that they can serve either as barriers to unrestricted population movements or as a means in determining the selectivity, direction and volume of migratory movements. Because migrant labour is characterized by its foreign status, the state has the power to determine the conditions under which migrant labour is imported. In Cohen's (1987:41) words:

> '(...) for modern migratory movements are policed by a more pervasive set of institutionalized actors, amongst which the labour importing state is the most important. The state both legislates immigration policy and seeks to regulate the terms and conditions under which migrants can live, work and reproduce.'

While in Cohen's study the emphasis is on the European, North-American and South African situation, his statement also applies to contemporary migration processes in other parts of the world.

This chapter will focus on the policies of the Arab Gulf States in the field of labour importation. The most salient features of the migration policies of these countries as regards admittance, employment and repatriation of labour migrants will be described as well as the rationale for these policy measures. As will become clear, both economic and political considerations have played an important role in shaping migration policies in the Gulf region and since the early 1970's there has been a trend away from the so-called 'laissez-faire policies', implying the relatively uninhibited inflow and outflow of people (Richards et al. 1983; Birks et al. 1980:23). Due to the present competition on the Middle East labour markets among labour exporting nations, Gulf governments are in a position to freely determine the ethnic and national composition of their expatriate labour forces according to their domestic socio-economic circumstances, and at the same time to exclude undesirable groups for political or other reasons. This implies that labour importation can, as a side-effect, promote commercial, political, cultural or religious relations with labour supplying countries, an observable fact in some present-day links between certain Arab Gulf States and Asian labour suppliers (e.g. financial inputs from Islamic religious institutions into the construction of mosques, observable in Sri Lanka).

Volume and development of labour importation in the Gulf States

The collective term Gulf States refers to the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE[1]. Migration to and within the countries of the Arabian peninsula is a phenomenon with a history going back to antiquity. Trade links among the ancient civilizations of Dilmun (Bahrain) and Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley existed as early as the third millennium B.C. In those days Bahrain was an important commercial centre linking Mesopotamia with the Arabian Peninsula and with the Indian sub-continent (Weiner 1982:16). In the absence of clearly defined borders, the movement of human groups went on for centuries within the Arabian peninsula. Nomadic Bedouin tribes wandered relatively freely throughout the area in search of greener pastures for their herds or when embarking on raiding expeditions. After the spread of Islam, members of the religious bureaucracy (*Ulama*), together with pilgrims performing the *Haj* or *Umra*, joined the merchants in crossing the deserts along age-old trade routes. The

'openness' of the region was reinforced by the Islamic ideal of *Umma*[2] (Abu-Lughod 1983:239), the absence of well defined borders, a common language and culture and, to a lesser extent, by ideologies such as Pan-Arabism.
In the colonial period this 'migratory tradition' continued to exist. Due to the British influence in the Gulf, which placed political responsibility for the region in the hands of the colonial government residing in India, many Indian officials were stationed in Muscat (Oman) and Kuwait as representatives of the British government. In addition, as shown by Seccombe (1988b), the influx of Indian (and Persian) labour needed for the oil industry has been going on since the 1930's and was disproportionally high in those areas where British influence was strong (viz. Kuwait and Qatar). In addition to their employment in the oil industry, Indians became predominant in trade. Al-Tamimi (1983:290), dismissing the view that during the British period migration to and from the Gulf became restricted, is of the opinion that the British stimulated migration to the area in order to counter latent Arab nationalistic tendencies.

After the discovery and exploitation of oil in the region a new situation in socio-economic terms emerged. However, socio-economic development occurred at different points in time in the various Gulf States, depending upon the time of oil discovery and exploitation (see Table 1).

Table 1

Dates of Oil Discovery, Start of Oil Production/Exports and the Beginning of Major Industrial Diversification Projects

	Oil discovery	Oil production/ exports	Major diversification projects[3]
Bahrain	1932	1935	1965
Kuwait	1938	1946	1962
Oman	1962	1967	1980
Qatar	1939	1949	1972
Saudi Arabia	1933	1939	1975
UAE: Abu-Dhabi	1953	1963	1973
Dubai	1966	1969	1980
Sharjah	1972	1974	1980
Other	[4]	[4]	[4]

As is clear from table 1, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia were the first to develop into oil economies; the UAE and Oman were relatively late. This economic development based on oil production and exports caused a gradually increasing influx of foreign labour. When in 1973 oil prices quadrupled a capital build-up of unprecedented magnitude occurred, which subsequently fuelled the rapid economic development of the Gulf economies (Table 2).

Table 2

Oil Revenues of Selected Gulf States in mln. U.S. $, 1973-1985

	1973	1975	1980	1985
Kuwait	1735	6393	18016	9000
Qatar	463	1685	5377	3000
Saudi Arabia	4340	30755	102212	28000
UAE	900	6000	19344	12000

Source: Coeck 1989: table 1

All oil exporting Gulf States sooner or later opted for a rapid build-up of the physical and socio-economic infrastructure, after which their main aim became economic diversification, in an attempt to diminish a heavy dependence on oil exports. The Gulf States' achievement in terms of the latter objective has been relatively disappointing up to the present (with the exception of Bahrain); the new industries still depend on oil or oil income[5], whereas for instance the agricultural sector still remains underdeveloped, making the Gulf States major importers of foodstuffs (with the exception of Saudi Arabia) (Coeck 1989:63).

In order to realize this economic development, and due to the inability of the indigenous population to meet the increased demand for labour in a qualitative or quantitative sense, large-scale labour importation of all skill levels became a necessity. Not only were the national populations of the Gulf States small, but the educational infrastructure was inadequate and the (female) labour participation rates were low. This situation was exacerbated by the loss of highly qualified manpower due to a 'brain drain' problem (Shaw 1983:172; UN 1985:435) and by the tendency of the indigenous population to seek employment in the rapidly expanding bureaucracies and in commerce.

The massive influx of foreign labour resulted in the ethnic composition of the Gulf population changing rapidly (Ansari et al. 1983:61), transforming these countries from relatively homogeneous[6] into plural societies harbouring a vast array of nationalities and ethnic groups.

It is a well-known fact that exact figures for the amount of foreign labour in the Gulf States are hardly available, the result of both inadequate registration and deliberate inflation or deflation of the figures by government authorities due to the sensitivity of the ethnic issue. As a result the different estimates found in the literature vary considerably. For instance, a publication by the 'Center of Arab Unity Studies' (1983:543) estimated the number of foreign workers in the oil rich Gulf States at 1.6 million in 1975 and expected this figure to rise to 4.3 million in 1985. Recent estimates by Birks (1988:147), based on ESCWA-figures are much higher, namely approximately 2.8 million in 1975 and about 5.5 million in 1985. Other estimates are found in Serageldin et al. (1983), Shaw (1983) and Owen (1985).

Table 3

Migrant Population in GCC Gulf States, 1975, 1980, 1985

	1975	1980	1985
Bahrian	62.800	104.400	149.952
Kuwait	533.300	806.800	1.015.527
Oman	105.500	177.900	340.170
Qatar	101.500	167.300	173.791
Saudi Arabia	894.900	1.977.000	2.605.554
UAE	313.900	605.500	1.258.430
Total	2.011.900	3.838.900	5.543.424

Source: Center of Arab Unity Studies 1983 (for 1975 & 1980 figures); Birks 1988 (for 1985 figures)

As is evident from Table 3, the number of migrant workers is still large in the Gulf States, although the rate of growth is declining due to the economic recession in Europe and the US and the decline in oil prices in the 1980's.

Simultaneously with the development in the Gulf States, a gradual shift in the sources of foreign labour took place. Whereas during the 1960's and early 1970's the bulk of skilled and unskilled labour originated from neighbouring Middle Eastern countries, the last two decades, until the mid eighties, have shown a steady increase in labour from South and Southeast Asia, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Annual Outflow of Contract Migrant Workers to the Middle East from Major Asian Labour Exporting Countries, 1977-1987

Country of Origin	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
South Asia											
Bangladesh	15,932 (98.2)	22,739 (99.7)	24,209 (98.9)	32,514 (96.4)	53,839 (96.5)	62,186 (99.0)	58,229 (98.3)	55,921 (98.5)	76,785 (98.8)	68,004 (99.0)	54,50 (99.1)
India[a]	22,900	69,000	171,800	268,200	272,000	224,257 (93.6)	217,971 (96.9)	198,520 (96.4)	160,396 (98.4)	109,234 (96.1)	121,8 (97.2)
Pakistan	74,589 (53.1)	75,966 (58.2)	82,195 (65.5)	117,187 (90.3)	151,849 (90.2)	141,416 (98.9)	127,616 (99.5)	99,654 (99.3)	87,523 (98.9)	62,390 (99.6)	69,34 (99.6)
Sri Lanka[b]	n.a	n.a.	20,980	24,053 (84.0)	47,394 (82.6)	63,522 (90.0)	68,905 (95.0)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
South and East Asia											
Indonesia	–	–	7,651 (73.7)	11,501 (71.1)	11,484 (64.1)	9,595 (45.4)	17,899 (61.8)	28,702 (75.8)	48,280 (85.2)	42,142 (90.9)	n.a
Republic of Korea	52,247 (94.0)	81,987 (97.8)	99,141 (98.7)	120,535 (96.6)	138,310 (93.7)	151,583 (91.5)	130,776 (83.5)	100,765 (85.0)	72,907 (90.0)	44,753 (85.2)	n.a
Philippines	25,721 (70.1)	34,441 (67.6)	73,210 (79.1)	132,044 (83.9)	183,582 (87.0)	211,033 (84.4)	323,414 (85.1)	311,517 (84.0)	266,617 (78.9)	262,758 (73.5)	306,75 (72.0)
Thailand	3,870 (100.0)	14,215 (96.6)	8,282 (85.5)	20,761 (96.6)	24,638 (92.1)	105,163 (96.9)	64,405 (94.1)	67,430 (89.9)	61,659 (88.5)	74,046 (86.4)	74,921 (87.8)

Note: a. Breakdown to the Middle East not available for 1977-81.
b. ARTEP estimates.
Figures in parentheses give percentage of migrant workers to the Middle East out of total migrants to all countries in the world.

Source: Data collected under the Asian Regional Migration Project from the Ministries of Labour in various countries.

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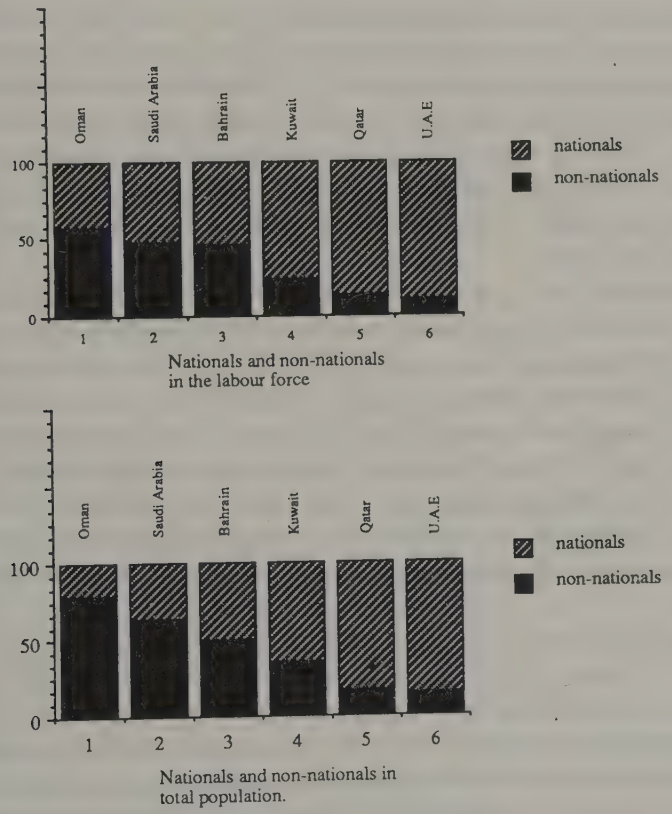
Although in the pre-1973 period (i.e. before the oil price boom) the attitude of the Arab Gulf governments towards labour importation were characterized as 'laissez-faire' (Richards et al. 1983; Birks et al. 1980), in reality these governments have always been sensitive to the immigration of certain categories of labour, due to the political instability of the region. Groups which were seen as a potential threat to internal security or were associated with regimes which threatened the territorial integrity of the labour importing country were kept out. An obvious example is the fear of Arab Gulf governments for Iranian Shia fundamentalism exacerbated by Iranian claims to particular territories (Tumb islands, Abu Musa island, Bahrain etc). Palestinians, too, have been stigmatized as a politically active group, viewed with some suspicion, and consequently they have only been able to settle in large numbers in Kuwait only. Other Gulf States have relied more on South and Southeast Asian groups to supplement their labour force. Migrants from South Yemen (PDRY), Oman's Dhofar province and the Indian state of Kerala are regarded with the same suspicion due to their association with communism

and the leftist militancy (Anthony 1975:140). Nevertheless many Iranians, Yemenis, Omanis and Palestinians (in addition to many other Arab groups) still found their way to the Arab Gulf States and, as has already been stated, so did increasing numbers of South and Southeast Asians in recent years. This massive influx of foreigners has resulted in the numerical domination of the indigenous population by foreigners in some Gulf States, even more so when one examines their labour force participation rates (Graph table 1).

Graph Table 1

Proportion of Nationals and Non-Nationals in Total Population and Labour Force in Gulf States (Estimates for 1985)



Source: Centre of Arab Unity Studies 1983:542

Graph Table 1 clearly illustrates the unique position of the Gulf States in comparison with other labour importing countries. When comparing the situation in the Gulf with that in Europe a number of aspects are highlighted. First, whereas the absolute number of labour migrants in the Gulf[7] is smaller than those in a selected number of countries in Europe (in 1985 approx. 5.5 million and 12 million respectively (Seccombe 1988a:155 and 1988b:198; Papademetrios 1988:344)) their share in the labour force is much higher in the Gulf States (in 1980 the total share was around 70% (Seccombe 1988a:154), varying from 49% in Oman, 59% in Bahrain to 78% in Kuwait, 85% in Qatar and 89% in the UAE (ibid:155). The 1980 figure for Saudi Arabia is approximately 53% (Sherbiny 1984:648). In Europe the rates for non-nationals over the late 1980's were much lower, varying from 4.0% in the Netherlands to 29.1% in Luxemburg. Figures for other European countries are[8]: Belgium (8.6%), France (6.8%), Germany (7.6%), Sweden (4.8%), Switzerland (15.0%), United Kingdom (4.4%).

Secondly, non-national workers in Europe are mainly recruited for unskilled occupations, whereas the Gulf economies rely on imported labour in all sectors and at all skill levels. Nationals can only be found in large numbers in the government bureaucracies and in traditional fishing and agriculture (Seccombe 1988b:202). The oil industries, construction, health and education sectors all rely heavily on migrant labour. The reliance on foreigners is greatest in professional/technical occupations.

Thirdly, the aim of the Gulf governments is to preserve their oligarchic political structures and the national population's dominant position in society, leading them to adopt firm, intolerant attitudes towards political and labour activism and to reserve all kinds of welfare state benefits for nationals only. In the early years of the influx of guest workers into Europe the primary responsibility for their reception, accommodation and employment was assigned to the employers, who thus relieved the government of the task of drawing up detailed policy guidelines. In the present European situation, however, labour migrants are seen as a permanent population segment for which the government also bears responsibility.

Policies of the Gulf States in the field of labour migration

For the purposes of this paper, 'labour migration policy' is defined as all official measures and guidelines influencing the entry, employment, and repatriation of migrant workers as well as those influencing their socio-economic position in the receiving society. Based on citizenship and labour laws (and numerous decrees) it is possible to give a general picture of the labour migration policies.

In general, the policies, of the Gulf States can be characterized by the following principles:

a. Preservation of the existing political structure and dominant position of the national population

An important strategy with which the Gulf nationals have endeavoured to protect themselves against social and political domination by foreigners has been the adoption and enforcement of strict citizenship and naturalization laws. Stated briefly, the laws grant the privilege of citizenship on the combined basis of the blood-bond principle (i.e. born to a Gulf parent in or outside the country) and the territorial principle (i.e. having resided continuously within the country for a specified number of years. (See for a Review of Specific Citizenship Laws: Russell 1989.) For instance, in Bahrain a minimum residence of 25 years is required. In addition, naturalized citizens are denied full political rights for a specified number of years, depending on the country of origin, but generally with the exclusion of South- and Southeast Asians. In order to maintain political support Gulf governments have reserved a variety of special privileges and state provisions to their citizens, such as the ownership of real estate, business ventures and rights to state subsidies for housing etc..

b. Strict laws and regulations pertaining to the entry and employment of foreigners

Policies in this field are generally restrictive and aim at minimizing the number of migrants entering the country and at limiting their period of residence. The specific rules and regulations stating conditions of entry and employment of foreign workers can be found in the different Labour codes[9] and amendments. Generally they require all visitors to present an entry visa on arrival. In the case of a social or commercial visit, a resident should apply to the Ministry of the Interior for an entry visa. When the purpose of entry is employment, the application has to be made by the future employer or sponsor (*kafeel*) of the migrant, in which case residence (*iqama*) and work permits, issued by the Ministries of the Interior and Labour & Social Affairs are also required (Dib 1988:172). Work permits and entry visas are issued on the basis of specific conditions such as age, health, competence and qualification for the job in question and good reputation and behaviour (Eelens et al. 1990). Work permits have to be renewed annually and, when cancelled, residence permits become invalid. The right of a sponsor/employer to recruit a foreign worker is conditional in the sense that permission has to be given by the authorities, whether he requires an individual, block or government contract, and only when a national is not available for the job in question.
In all Gulf countries the primary responsibility is taken by the sponsor; the so-called *kafeel* is liable for the conduct of the employee and is obligated to ensure

that he or she is employed in accordance with local legislation. Employees are generally required to cede their passport (sometimes also other travel documents) to the employer (Eelens et al. 1990). It is returned on completion of the worker's term of employment or when he/she is repatriated.

All migration from Asian countries is contract migration, i.e. migrants are hired for a specific job and are attached to a specific employer for a specified duration. Work permits and contracts are generally valid for relatively short periods; for Sri Lankans this is two years. In order to control and monitor the labour market effectively several Gulf governments forbid migrants to change employer without the prior consent of their first sponsor and of the authorities. If a migrant does take up work without approval, the consequence could be immediate expulsion. Also migrant workers who change employer and/or reapply for new work and residence permits are often required to spend a certain period outside the country before being granted new contracts and permits (Saudi Arabia two years; UAE one year; Weiner 1982; Owen 1985). However, it has been reported recently that these rules are being amended, making the transfer of sponsorship possible at short notice (Seccombe 1988a:175). Migrants' work permits are cancelled if they lose their job and are unemployed for a certain period (e.g. one month in Bahrain; three months in the UAE)[10] or when a national becomes available for the job in question, or simply when the migrant is considered an undesirable person by the authorities.

Particularly vulnerable are the undocumented, irregular migrants, who, by entering the country illegally or changing their employment without the prior consent of the authorities, can easily be exploited and be put to work on sub-standard terms. El-Shagi & Raschen (1984:50) note in this connection that this category of migrant workers form a very advantageous and strategic workforce in that they can be hired and fired without any repercussions for the employers. This point has not remained unnoticed by the authorities in labour importing countries. Figures on the number of illegal workers in the Gulf are obviously scarce and unreliable. However, several reports point out that there are considerable a number of illegal workers and that Gulf governments have recently shown greater concern for this category of labour (El-Shagi et al. 1984; Owen 1985; Nagi 1986). A recent source (Seccombe 1988b:199) mentions the eviction of 88.000 illegal residents by Saudi Arabia during a three month period in 1979, of whom many had entered the country to perform the *Haj* or *Umra* and afterwards had tried to find employment. Kuwait also reacted to the presence of illegal residents in the country by expelling about 18.000 of them in 1980. Birks & Sinclair (1980:222) even estimates the undocumented non-national work force in Kuwait at 10 to 15% of the total non-

national work force (376.000 in 1980). The fact that several countries (e.g. the UAE, Saudi Arabia) require that certain categories of expatriates have to leave the country for a specified period of time before reapplying for new residence and work permits can be seen as an attempt to clamp down on illegal workers.

Gulf policy regulation on the admission of dependents are also restrictive. For instance, under Kuwaiti law only migrant workers earning U.S. $ 1,500 or more are allowed to bring in their dependents. Similar restrictions are applied in other Gulf States, which means that only highly qualified migrants can do this and that most South and Southeast Asian workers are excluded. In addition, some countries (Saudi Arabia, Oman) require that employers provide accommodation for the dependents of employees, a measure which discourages employers from hiring those categories of migrant workers who are most likely to bring in dependents (thereby establishing a preference for 'single' Asian migrants). Notwithstanding such rules, certain categories of low and middle income migrants have managed to bring in their families, notably well-established migrant communities such as Indians and Pakistanis (Weiner 1982:28). It has been observed that Philippinos move out of work camps into shared private dwellings and attempt to bring in their wives and sisters by finding jobs for them. Furthermore this compensates for the present drop in income rates.

All employees are subject to a probationary period (generally 3 months) during which the employer can dismiss the worker without prior notice and without having to pay benefits other than the salary. Of course, specific work conditions offered to migrant workers differ per employer and economic sector and it would require too much space to review them here. In general, however, differences in the conditions offered are determined by whether the worker is employed by a national or transnational company, or by a national or foreign employer in the private sector. Work conditions in a work camp differ from those in an urban environment, and personal characteristics, qualifications and occupational status of the migrant also play a role. Due to the stratified and segmented labour markets in the Gulf, occupational status and qualifications, with concomitant working conditions offered, link up with ethnicity and nationality. Migrant workers employed in small business ventures (i.e. with no more than five employees) are less protected than workers employed by large companies, as the former are often exempted from the local labour laws and are harder to control by the authorities.

A migrant worker can be expelled simply by administrative order, without any prior legal proceedings. If the authorities consider a specific person to be 'undesirable', generally because of participation in strikes and manifestations of protest, or

because of illegal entry, expulsion could follow without any right of appeal. Generally, governments prohibit all overt criticism of the authorities, its policies, criticism of the employer, public demonstrations and strikes and also labour organizations (legal only in Kuwait). As already stated the prime responsibility for the repatriation of the migrant worker rests with the sponsor and normally a return airfare is negotiated in the employment agreement.

It should be noted here that the Gulf labour laws do not generally apply to the category of domestic servants[11]. This is of particular relevance here as Sri Lanka is a major exporter of (female) domestic personnel. Therefore this category of labour is virtually unprotected by law and totally dependent on the goodwill of the employer. Because these workers usually work alone in the employer's home and their freedom of movement is limited, they are socially isolated and therefore vulnerable and easily exploited (Spaan, this volume).

c. Minimization and rotation of the migrant workforce

Gulf governments have expressed a desire in recent years to decrease their dependence on foreign workers, which clearly reflects their concern (and that of the indigenous populations) about the large numbers of foreigners in crucial economic sectors and the possible negative impacts on the national cultural heritage and political security. Many fear an adverse impact on the youth owing to the preponderance of foreigners in education and services. Foreign nannies are also suspect because of their day-today contact with children. Others point to possible social unrest, arising from the large heterogeneous foreign population, that could lead to social conflict between nationals and non-nationals but also among the different non-national ethnic groups who compete with each other on the labour market, in the housing sector and in trade. Furthermore, movements for autonomy could develop sooner or later a situation observable in Singapore at present (Weiner 1982:30; Al Tamimi 1983:300; Sad El-dien 1983:329). Therefore, the restriction of migrant labour seems to be a a necessity.
In order to achieve this goal, Gulf governments have opted for policies that aim to control and monitor the migrant workforce more strictly, and, at the same time, reduce its numbers as much as possible. This has lead to a preference for 'project-tied' migration, which facilitates the monitoring of the migrant workers and minimizes contact between migrants and nationals. In addition, drives against illegal migrants have intensified and new laws have been enforced restricting the issue of new work permits (Seccombe 1988a)[12] and the maximum stay of foreign workers[13]. There are signs that the tighter immigration guidelines have led to

increased restriction of foreign labour (Birks et al. 1986:799; Seccombe 1988a:176). Nagi (1986:60) sees as its consequence an increased turnover of Asian labour.

Gulf governments have also given priority to human resource development in their national development plans. The main aims are to increase the labour force participation rates of nationals, especially of women, and to spread the indigenous labour force over all economic sectors, a prerequisite for reducing dependence on foreign labour. This is done by offering more and better education to nationals, including women, with an emphasis on vocational training, and, at the same time, trying to change the nationals' preference for lucrative employment in the public sector, banking and oil. Although some progress has been made in this respect, the process is difficult and slow and the sectoral distribution is still very unbalanced. A large proportion of the national labour forces is still found in the public sector, in trade and in services. For instance, only 14% of Kuwait nationals work in production, transport and unskilled jobs according to one report (Arab Times 1986:23-7). In Saudi Arabia more than two-thirds of the nationals were employed in the service sector in 1985 (South 1986:59). Qatar has recently managed to reduce the amount of non-nationals in its civil service, in accordance with its 'Qatarization policy', but, at the same time, this runs counter to the objective of national labour force dispersion (Seccombe 1988a:183).

d. Preference for Arab migrants and 'Arabization/localization' policies

The results of the so-called 'Arabization policies' of the oil exporting Gulf countries, which prefer Arabs to Asian or other non-national migrants[14], - a preference stated in local labour codes, with the exception of Oman (Jalal El-dien 1983:405; Iz El-dien 1983:52; Arab Times 1986, 23-7) -, is rather mixed. Due to the fact that the authorities have not been able to monitor and control the private sector effectively, which is understandable in the light of the prevailing sponsorship system, employers have been able to continue hiring Asians, whom they prefer because they can offer them less favourable working conditions. In the public sector it is probably easier for Gulf governments to realize their 'Arabization' policies and, in particular, to achieve their aim to employ more nationals. Measures based on quota systems are being taken in this field. One source mentions the fact that in a time span of 10 years the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) managed to recruit about 50% of its staff from the national workforce (Kuwait Digest 1985:29). Be that as it may, it is evident that the proportion of Asians in the Gulf work forces remains large and that the trend to move from Arab to Asian labour, which prevailed on a large scale since the mid 1970's, will be very difficult to reverse. Several explanations for this trend towards hiring Asian labour have been offered. Some observers point

to factors on the supply side (Birks et al. 1986) such as exhaustion of Arab labour supplies. Others, e.g. Abu-Lughod (1983), Keely (1980), and Hill (1981) stress factors on the demand side, such as the desire of the Gulf governments to diversify their labour supply and mainly for economical reasons their preference for Asians (Nagi 1986:50).

In our opinion the reason for this shift to Asian labour is mainly due to factors on the demand side. Both from the point of view of foreign corporations in the Gulf and from that of local employers in the public and private sectors, hiring Asians is more advantageous. According to one inquiry, the preference for Asians is motivated in the following order: they are cheaper, more obedient, more suitable for heavy work and are less liable to become a political nuisance. An additional advantage is that Asians are better educated and more proficient in English which is useful in international exchanges. This state of affairs has frequently led to pressure on national and Arab workers in the private sector to resign and be replaced by Asians (Abd Al-Moti 1983:216-219).

Living conditions of migrant workers in the Gulf

The policies implemented by Gulf governments in the field of the entry, employment and repatriation of migrant workers and indeed the absence of policy guidelines and legislation in specific fields (domestic servants) have made the position of migrant workers in general difficult and precarious. Migrants are faced with an inferior social and legal status vis à vis the indigenous population, which is not only reflected in wage levels, but also for, instance in their housing situation and in the facilities provided by the state. The system of recruitment and sponsorship are factors contributing to this state of affairs. There is more personal than structural control over migrant workers, increasing the opportunities for arbitrary measures against them and exploitation. According to Al-Tamimi (1983:291), the difficult social position of migrants is a result of a deliberate policy aimed at preserving the social and political stability of the region. However, the author stresses that these aims could be more easily realized when the interests of migrants are enshrined in legislation.

As noted before, social policy in the Gulf is generally aims to promote the welfare of the national population. In the field of housing, state subsidies are reserved for nationals only and because non-nationals are not allowed to own real estate they are either dependent on housing provided by the employer (work camps) or on rented accomodation. In the 1976-80 housing plan of Kuwait no mention is made of the housing situation of migrants. Housing in the private sector is usually

scarce and expensive, which leads to overcrowding. It is not exceptional to find three to eight persons living in one room, a situation comparable to that of migrant workers in Europe in the sixties.
Migrant workers in the Gulf live in three types of accommodation: apartments, shared lodging and individual housing (units) for single migrants. The distribution of migrants over these types of accomodation corresponds to some extent to their occupational status, nationality and ethnicity[15]. The apartments are the most luxurious but can probably be afforded only by migrants with a high occupational status. Shared lodging is generally the most unfavourable form of housing; often these lodgings are in abandoned buildings in the old quarters of the cities with a deprived infrastructure. In Bahrain 12.5% of migrants live in such buildings. These houses contain about 8 to 10 rooms in which around 100 people are accommodated. Consequently hygiene is very poor. The units for single migrants consist of shanties in the suburbs of major cities, and are mainly the domain of Asians. In addition, work camps are provided by corporations involved in development projects (Spaan, this volume).
Another characteristic of the housing situation of migrants is ethnic segregation. The different groups and nationalities tend to live in separate parts of the cities, and it is not clear whether this situation is the result of a deliberate policy[16].

In the field of education and medical care, too, Gulf policy gives preference to nationals. Non-Arab migrant children can only make use of educational facilities provided by the state under certain conditions: for instance, in Kuwait free education is provided but the maximum quota for non-nationals with regard to university education is only 10% (Russell 1987). In all cases of scarcity preference is given to nationals. Therefore, migrant children are in general dependent on educational facilities in the private sector, some of which are organized on a commercial basis and others subsidized by the country of origin, as is the case for India and Iran (Al-Najjar 1983:93).
Segregation is also a characteristic feature of inter-ethnic relations; there is very little interaction between the different ethnic groups, which is not surprising in the light of the considerable culture and language barriers and the official policies countering integration or assimilation. The clear division between the different ethnic groups, however, is not a new phenomenon in Gulf society; in a sense it is a continuation of the clear-cut social stratification that existed in traditional Gulf society which, in Kuwait at least, was based on tribal affiliation and economic considerations. This clear-cut distinctions were drawn between the superordinate group, i.e. the royal family and the merchant communities who were interrelated, and the subordinate groups, i.e. the working population, consisting of craftsmen, artisans, shopkeepers, sailors, domestic servants (Al-Haddad 1985:108). In

connection with inter-ethnic relations in Kuwait, Al-Haddad (1985:118) distinguishes between 'primary groups', consisting of non-national Arabs and 'secondary groups', i.e. non-Arab Muslims and non-Muslims from Asian countries. Both groups have in common that they 'are considered a subordinate segment to the superordinate Kuwaitis. They have cultural traits which are held in low esteem, they are self-conscious units bound together through the distinct traits which their members share and by the special liabilities which they feel by choice or necessity. They tend to interact and marry within their group' (Al-Haddad 1985:118). He goes on to say that 'being Kuwaiti is the sole determinant of power in Kuwait. To keep their superiority over other ethnic groups, Kuwaitis maintain their social distance. Very few marriages with them have taken place; no social interaction and no close relations exist. Being Kuwaiti is utilized as assigning a social position with its attendant rewards.' (ibid: 121).

Conclusion

The present state of labour migration in the Gulf cannot be adequately explained without taking the political dimension of the process into account. Several other writers dealing with migration processes, mentioned in the opening section of this chapter, share this view. Labour migration to the Gulf is not determined solely by economic laws, but has been dictated increasingly by political and policy considerations of the main intervening actor, i.e. the authorities of the Gulf States.

Since the discovery of oil and its exploitation in the Arab Gulf States and the ensuing development process transforming these States from underdeveloped to capital-rich 'rentier' economies, the importation of labour has been a necessity, not only for economic development but also for consumption purposes (e.g. domestic servants functioning as status markers). Indeed, the main characteristic of labour importation in the Gulf States is the use of foreign labour in all occupational groups and economic sectors.
This massive influx of foreign labour has led in several countries to the numerical domination of the nationals by foreigners. In an attempt to develop their economies and at the same time minimizing the adverse effects of large scale labour import, Gulf governments have introduced policies aimed at preserving the political structure and privileged position of the national population and at ensuring the most effective use of foreign workers by restricting their numbers and period of residence, which has discouraged any integrationist or assimilationist tendencies. One of the most striking features of the Arab Gulf societies at present is that their heavy dependence on foreign labour in all (crucial) economic sectors is not reflected

in the socio-economic and political position of the migrant population, which has very few or no civil and political rights.

From the above summary of legislation and procedures pertaining to labour importation it is clear that, if effectively used, Arab Gulf governments have a set of powerful instruments with which the inflow, outflow and residence of migrant workers can be controlled and manipulated. The Gulf governments are in a position to manipulate the local labour markets and the extraneous supply of labour in accordance with their socio-economic needs. Certain groups and nationalities can be excluded for economic, political, or religious reasons, simply by the state's refusal to grant work and residence permits or by expulsion. The Gulf States operate in a 'buyer's market', in which they are able to pull the strings and dictate the conditions under which migrant labour from particular countries is imported. The government's advantageous position is guaranteed by an almost inexhaustible supply of labour from Asian, and to a lesser extent, Middle Eastern countries who are, in competition with each other for a share in the lucrative Gulf labour markets and, indeed, in the present situation of economic recession and slowdown in development, for an ever-declining share. This situation forces labour-sending countries to reduce the 'price' of their labour.
The present-day measures against irregular (i.e. overstaying) migrants, the 'Arabization policies' and restrictions pertaining to dependents, all indicate the Gulf authorities' desire to intensify their control over migrant labour within their countries and to enhance the effectiveness of their restrictive policies, in reaction to economic pressures and the native populations' increasingly negative reactions to large foreign populations.

Notwithstanding these policies, which signify a trend away from the 'laissez-faire' attitudes of the early years of labour importation, the wish to drastically reduce the dependence on migrant labour could prove to be largely illusory. Without foreign labour the costly infrastructure, welfare provisions and new industrial bases of the Gulf economies would surely deteriorate and fail to function properly and the present-day consumption patterns, including the use of domestic servants at all levels of society, would be unsustainable. Too rigorous cuts in the number of foreign workers could also damage those economic sectors that benefit from large foreign populations such as the housing sector, trade and banking. In the present circumstances, employers are urged to look for the cheapest categories of labour within the migrant labour supply, probably to sustain the present preference for single workers from low-income countries.
It remains to be seen whether the migrant population will continue to be compliant, that is in public, to their present status in Gulf society, when the only

benefit they seem to reap from their labour is a monetary one and when their future remains insecure. Although there have been instances of collective bargaining and strikes by migrants, the highly competitive labour market, the absence of worker unions and the great diversity of nationalities imply a low degree of solidarity. Furthermore, the continuous threat of expulsion created a relatively mute and powerless migrant work force having hardly any other option than to comply with the conditions offered. However, the main consideration to migrate to the Gulf, i.e. the comparatively high wage levels, could outweight the objections against the present-day policies of the Gulf States and the migrant's second-rate position in these countries.

NOTES

1. The UAE is a federation of seven sheikdoms consisting of Dubai, Abu-Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al-Khaimah, Umm al Qawain and Fujairah of which the first three are wealthiest due to their oil reserves.

2. Meaning the totality of the Islamic community.

3. Dates are approximate and refer to the start of planned important diversification projects, e.g. Shuaiba (Kuwait), Umm Said (Qatar), Ruwais (Abu-Dhabi), Jebel Ali (Dubai) etc.

4. The other small sheikdoms of the UAE lack commercially exploitable oil reserves and therefore depend on more traditional economic activities (agriculture, livestock, fisheries) and financial inputs from the richer UAE sheikdoms.

5. Bahrain and also Dubai are noted for their thriving banking and trade sectors.

6. By 1957, 47% of the population of Kuwait was already non-Kuwaiti (Russell 1989).

7. Figures for the GCC states only.

8. Figures apply for December 1987, except for France (1985). Source: SOPEMI, 1989 and NCB, 1989.

9. Relevant articles can be found in Labour Laws of Saudi Arabia (1947), Kuwait (1964 and subsequently amended), Bahrain (1958;1976), UAE (1980).

10. See Labour Laws of Bahrain 1976, art. 6; UAE 1980 art. 15.

11. See for instance UAE Labour Laws 1980, art. 3; Bahrain Labour Laws 1976, art. 2.

12. With the exception of Oman, due to its present high levels of government expenditure and its ability to offset the declining oil prices by increased exports as a non-OPEC country.

13. E.g. the UAE 1980 law restricts the maximum stay of new entrants to five years (UN 1985:55).

14. In hiring, the order of preference is: a national, an Arab non-national and other. In dismissing, the order is reversed.

15. Field observations in Bahrain (Senanayake 1987) support this proposition.

16. Weiner, (1982:25), however, notes that ethnic segregation in housing is actively stimulated by Gulf authorities.

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5

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF SRI LANKAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE GULF STATES

E.J.A.M. Spaan

Introduction

A field of inquiry that has been relatively neglected by the Sri Lankan and other governments involved in Middle East labour migration is that of the circumstances in which migrant workers have to work and live. However, scarce reports coming from the Middle East have made several governments of labour exporting Asian nations turn to policies aimed at greater protection of the migrant workers. These policies include for instance the negotiating of minimum standards for employment agreements, measures to control and monitor the private recruitment sector and pre-departure briefing of migrant workers (Zar 1984; Eelens et al. 1990). Several South and Southeast Asian countries have even officially restricted the export of female workers because of stories about ill-treatment and some for religious reasons (Brochmann 1986; Eelens et al. 1986), although sometimes such measures are of a temporary nature, as is the case with the Philippines.

Even if governments have become more aware of the often precarious circumstances in which the migrants find themselves while in the Middle East, hardly any systematic research has been done on this topic and subsequently hardly any data exist which can help form a good picture of the migrant's life in the host countries. This is also true in the case of Sri Lanka. As unsatisfactory working and living conditions are a major factor in inducing Sri Lankan migrants to return home prematurely - generally a costly move for employers, migrants and the migrant's family at home - acquiring more knowledge on this subject has become highly desirable.

This contribution is intended to help fill the void in the knowledge of Sri Lankan labour migration to the Middle East and to present some data on the socio-economic conditions of Sri Lankan contract migrants in several oil producing countries of the Gulf region. It is based on research conducted among Sri Lankan labour migrants who migrated to the Gulf States between 1979 and 1986 for periods ranging from a few weeks to several years[1].

For reasons of clarity we have divided the presentation of the material into three sections: the first deals with the working environment of the migrants, the second with their living environment and the third focuses on the magnitude and nature of problems experienced by the migrants while residing in the Middle East. It should be noted that the distinction between working and living environment is often somewhat artificial: for the purposes of analysis, as also for certain categories of workers (e.g. domestic servants and workers in enclave type 'work camp' situations), the two spheres are roughly the same in a spatial sense.

Working environment

The principal destinations of Sri Lankan migrant workers are Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), followed by countries such as Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. Sri Lankans ventured to a lesser extent to states such as Iraq, Iran and Lebanon and, when they do, are often unaware of the precarious political situation in those countries. Bahrain also performs the function of transfer and distribution point of migrant workers heading for other Middle Eastern countries. In these cases they often leave for Bahrain on so-called 'open visas', generally in groups (block migration) and are selected and assigned a job on the spot by recruitment agents and future employers, after which they are provided with transport to country and place of work.

A main determining factor of the socio-economic conditions of migrant workers is constituted by the official policies implemented by Gulf authorities in the field of labour importation. As these policies have been adequately dealt with in the relevant chapter, there is no need to reiterate them here. Suffice it to say that these policies, characterized by strict regulations in the field of entry, employment and repatriation and aimed at the minimisation, maximum rotation and segregation of the migrant population, not only restrict the freedom of movement and action of the migrant workers, but also place considerable power in the hands of the employers responsible for the migrant worker.

As we have seen, due to the absence or inadequacy of labour laws in particular fields (e.g.domestic servants, small enterprises), the sponsorship system and the very limited bargaining power of migrant workers vis-à-vis employers and authorities, the system leaves room for arbitrary arrangements in the field of employment. Nowadays the economic slowdown in the Gulf is creating a tendency to economise on labour costs and thus these arrangements are often unfavourable to the migrant workers.

The majority of migrants from Sri Lanka belong to the unskilled and (semi)skilled categories. Skill-level proportions of migrants leaving for the Middle East between 1979 and 1982 fluctuated around 10% for the high and middle level categories,

20% for the skilled level category and between 50% and 70% for the unskilled category (Kodithuwakku 1983:12; Korale 1986:221). The 'unskilled' category consists very largely of female domestic personnel working as housemaids, cooks and nannies.

Most male labour migrants from Sri Lanka are employed in the construction sector or find jobs in the service and maintenance sectors. Generally they are put to work as labourers, (street) cleaners, general assistants, machine operators, shop and hotel personnel and cashiers or in skilled occupations (i.e. electricians, plumbers, carpenters etc.). In the research sample (Spaan 1989) only very few had found employment in middle or high level occupations, a result agreeing with findings from other studies (Gunatilleke et al. 1986; Korale 1986; Balasooriya 1985).

The female migrants from Sri Lanka are hired almost exclusively as domestic servants: the specific tasks they are assigned range from cleaning and washing (clothes, carpets, cars) to cooking, tailoring, serving meals and taking care of children and of aged and disabled people. Some women are responsible for only one or two of these tasks as wealthy Gulf households often have more than one domestic aid so that the work can be shared. However, domestic servants have become more and more a status symbol and even less affluent Gulf households are able to afford one. Of the female domestic servants in the sample (N=87) 20% had found employment with employers of high occupational status. A majority of 61% worked for employers of middle level occupational status, while for the skilled, unskilled and pensioner categories the figures were 14%, 2% and 3% respectively. In the majority of cases, however, there is only one domestic servant per household unit. As a result most housemaids have to perform all tasks and sometimes even have to work for two households at the same time. Because of the often large households due to high fertility rates and the joint family system, the work is generally arduous. The research revealed that around 45% of the domestic servants had to work an area ranging from nine to twenty rooms with a large majority (66%) having to serve, cook and wash for households of between five and twenty people (25% containing between nine and twenty). When one considers the climate and environment (hot and dusty, implying the frequent cleaning of clothes and houses) in addition to the often abundant rugs and carpets in Arab homes, it is clear that it is physically demanding work. The mental strain is also exacerbated by cultural and language barriers and initially by not being familiar with modern electrical household appliances.

Due to the fact that domestic servants live in with their employers they can generally be called to service at all times. As a result the daily working hours of this category of workers proved to be very long: the data revealed that 75% of the domestic servants worked between eleven and twenty hours a day and almost half had to work between sixteen and twenty hours a day. In general they had to

work all week, including Friday (the weekly holiday in the Gulf). Only a minority (10%) worked a six-day week. Clearly these workers had little time for rest and leisure activities. This situation can eventually result in physical exhaustion and mental stress.

The male migrants in the sample were generally in a more favourable position in this respect. The men in work camp situations usually worked on a shift-system basis (eight hours daily excluding overtime). Others were subject to a more flexible daily routine depending on their specific employment. The majority of males (60%) worked for six days a week (Fridays off) and work in excess of the prescribed eight hours a day was generally on a voluntary basis.
Sri Lankan labour migrants can be termed 'target savers' in that they try to earn as much money as possible in short periods of time in order to realise their goals, implying a preference for working overtime. Due to better legislation and regulations pertaining to male workers they are less likely to be exposed to excessive work-loads and long working hours and are less likely be denied overtime compensation than female workers. Local and small enterprises are the most difficult to monitor and therefore could more easily offer sub-standard working conditions. However, the extent to which this occurs cannot be ascertained due to lack of data (Zar 1984).

Salaries and fringe benefits

When looking at the monthly earnings of Sri Lankan migrants in the Gulf it is evident that migrants in all categories can earn much more in the Gulf than at home: this is often as much as five to fifteen times more depending on the specific occupational level (Korale 1986:218). The table below provides some data on wage levels of Sri Lankan migrants in the Middle East differentiated to a number of occupations. The data revealed that the male migrants earned between 2,000 Sri Lankan Rupees (Rs.) and Rs. 5,000 monthly (overtime excluded) as against the Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 3,000 of the women who, in addition, when working as domestic servants were not entitled to overtime payment (Rs. 27 = ± U.S. $ 1.00). Lowest on the scale are housemaids (Rs. 2,000-3,000) and labourers (Rs. 2,000-4,000). Migrants who accepted an additional term of employment (after two years) were sometimes granted an increment. Only a minority of migrants enjoy this privilege, as it is not easy to find a job with the same employer due to strict legislation and the often high recruitment costs. For female domestics the situation seems more favourable; however the data indicated that only a minority was so satisfied with working and living conditions offered by their employer that they were willing to return to the same household.

Table 1

Monthly Salaries in Rupees from Sri Lankans in the Middle East, by Occupation and Country (Rs. 27 = ± U.S. $ 1.00)

Occupation	Minimum Rs.	Maximum Rs.	Country
Accountants	7,000	25,000	Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait
Administrators/ managers	7,000	19,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia
Computer programmers	19,000	29,000	UAE
Doctors	17,000	31,000	Saudi Arabia
Engineers	10,000	38,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman
Clerks	4,200	14,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq
Draftsmen	10,000	18,000	Saudi Arabia, Oman
Engineering/ construction	7,000	20,000	Saudi Arabia, Kuwait
Hotel supervisory grades	7,000	13,000	UAE
Nurses	6,000	17,000	Saudi Arabia, Oman
Storekeepers	4,200	14,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Lebanon
Surveyors	8,000	18,000	Oman, Iraq
Technicians/ foremen	6,000	22,000	Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Iraq
Typists/secretaries/ stenographers	5,000	18,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq
Carpenters	3,000	12,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon
Cooks and chefs	3,500	13,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia
Drivers	4,000	10,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait
Electricians	3,000	11,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia
Fitters	4,000	11,500	Saudi Arabia, Lebanon
Heavy vehicle operators	4,500	10,000	Saudi Arabia, Oman
Machinists	6,500	12,000	Saudi Arabia
Masons	3,000	12,000	Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Oman
Mechanics	3,000	12,000	Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan
Painters	2,600	10,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon
Welders	3,000	9,000	Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Oman
Housemaids/ nannies	3,000	6,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia
Housekeepers	3,000	14,000	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq
Labourers	2,200	4,500	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain
Security guards	4,300	4,900	UAE, Saudi Arabia

Source: Ministry of Plan Implementation, Colombo (In: Korale 1986:223)

Although wage levels for Sri Lankans in the Gulf are generally very high in comparison to salaries in their home country, they are one of the lowest paid groups in the Gulf together with Bangladeshis. This is due to the highly segmented and ethnically organized labour market correlating to skill levels, the highly competitive character of the Middle East labour market urging labour sending countries to promote and 'sell' their labour at the cheapest possible price and to certain preferences based on prejudice and religion (Islam) therefore increasing the demand for particular nationalities and ethnic groups (Owen 1985).
Differences in wage levels between the various groups and nationalities within the migrant population can easily become a source of irritation, especially when these discrepancies occur within the same occupational groups.
Due to the fact that the majority of migrants in the sample either lived in with their employers (domestic servants) or had found employment in an 'enclave type' project, they were generally able to economise on expenses and save a large part of their earnings. Ming-Ling (1984) notes that one of the great advantages of enclave type projects for labour exporting countries is their high rate of remittances. These two categories of workers are generally provided with free housing, free food and free medical care. This does not imply that these facilities are always satisfactory. The data also indicated that many migrants received clothing (for work) free of charge (75%). As it is official policy that migrants who have completed their term of employment are obliged to leave the country of work immediately, since residence permits expire with work permits, a return airfare is generally negotiated in the employment agreement. The large majority of male and female migrants in the sample received this benefit (92% and 87% respectively). However, there were some instances in which the employer had succeeded in circumventing this obligation - or had at least attempted to, for instance by firing the worker(s) before expiry of contract, in which case the employee is responsible for the costs of returning to Sri Lanka.

Living environment

The male migrants either found themselves in a 'work camp' environment (generally the labourers) or were employed within or in the vicinity of an urban centre, when employed, for instance, in service occupations or as drivers and municipal labourers. Gulf authorities currently prefer project-centred 'work camps' due to their being extremely efficient, neat and economical; and also because the control over the expatriate workers and the restrictions on their freedom of movement are greatly facilitated by the system. Characteristic of these enclave type projects is that the corporation is not only responsible for providing the whole staff required for the execution of the work, ranging from managerial staff and medical personnel to cooks, janitors and labourers, but also provides all the required

facilities. These are often specifically adapted to the needs and nationality of the staff and consist of catering services, medical, recreational and religious facilities etc.. Of course the specific 'package' offered to the workers varies from country to country and from company to company. The case cited below provides an example of a Sri Lankan migrant who was fortunate in getting a job on a project in Saudi Arabia with a company which provided good facilities for personnel.

The Case Hassan

Hassan, a Muslim, married and father of two children, migrated to Saudi Arabia in 1982 and returned permanently in 1985. He secured a job with an American/Saudi oil company through a Colombo recruitment agency for which no fee was charged. Before he left he had been a government employee in the Health Department, but because he had debts (Rs. 40,000) at the time and was able to earn much more in the Gulf he decided to make use of the officially approved 'migration leave' for people in government service and applied for a job abroad. He thought it a gift from Allah when he heard he had been selected from a great number of applicants for a job as housekeeper in the oil company's hospital.

He earned about Rs. 10,000 monthly and every year his salary was raised (in the last year he received Rs. 11,000). Hassan was content with the working and living conditions in the company's compound. He shared an air-conditioned room with one other worker in a barracks block. Further facilities included recreation halls, launderettes, a swimming pool, canteens, a mosque and a medical centre. The different nationalities working for the company were unsegregated in the living quarters. Because of the culinary preferences of the different nationalities a separate canteen was provided for the different groups (Indian, Korean, Sri Lankan, Philippino, European/American). It was not, however, compulsory for the workers to eat in their own canteen. On arrival Hassan was given 500 Saudi Riyal pocket money and had to attend instruction classes for three days. He worked eight hours a day (with overtime compensation) and with part of the Thursday and Friday as weekend. On these days he often went into town to shop using transportation provided by the company. During the month of Ramadan (Muslim fasting month) he only had to work for six hours a day and received an extra month's pay.

After 3 years Hassan resigned due to family problems at home. He bought the house he is now living in for Rs. 60,000 and spent about Rs. 15,000 on renovation. He also spent a great deal of money on his poorer family ('as a good Muslim', he said) and on his sister's marriage. Hassan tried to invest his money sensibly by buying a lorry for Rs. 80,000, part of which was financed by a bank. He planned to run a transport business in the Mannar and Batticaloa provinces but discovered that this was not very lucrative and too dangerous due to Tamil guerilla activity. He was eventually forced to sell the lorry and had to pay back the bank loan. He lost a great deal of money on this business venture.

As already suggested, not all expatriate workers are fortunate enough to be offered such good facilities. Generally companies provide only the most basic facilities, and those which are provided are often sub-standard and inadequate. During the research, several cases were reported of workers who had been accommodated in tents in a desert environment (without electricity), who were not provided with AC or fans in their living quarters or who were housed in overcrowded barracks. Some workers also complained about inadequate medical facilities and of severely restricted freedom of movement due to being situated in remote areas and to lack of transport. Systematic research on these issues is lacking and the extent, to which these situations occur can only be guessed at (Zar 1984; Owen 1985).

Inter-ethnic relations in construction camps are susceptible to tension and rivalry, particularly in cases where wages and facilities provided by the company differ for the different nationalities and ethnic groups working on the project (sometimes for the same jobs). The organizational structure of many 'enclave type' projects is defined by ethnicity: the hierarchy in job levels, with concomitant wages and facilities provided, corresponds to a hierarchy in nationalities and ethnic groups. Thus in many cases Europeans, Americans and Arabs find themselves at the top of the pyramid, filling top executive and high professional positions, followed by (expatriate) Arabs and certain groups of educated Asians (notably Indians and Pakistanis) in middle level positions. Lowest on the scale are South and Southeast Asian groups hired for skilled and unskilled occupations, among which one finds such nationalities as Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis, Indonesians, Thais and Filipinos. A survey among Filipino workers (Smart et al. 1983) revealed that in a large majority of cases (80%) the direct supervisors of the workers were of Arab, American or European nationality. In 10% of cases they were supervised by a fellow countryman. Among the most frequently cited problems in this survey were supervisor and co-worker problems and racial discrimination.
In the sample several workers who had been in construction camps corroborated the observations made above. They also noted a certain hierarchy in benefits enjoyed by the different groups on the projects. Whereas the differences in facilities and benefits provided to Arab and Western personnel on the one hand and South and Southeast Asians on the other can be largely explained by differences in educational and occupational level, the differences between the various South and Southeast Asian groups can largely be ascribed to the highly competitive character of the Middle East labour market. Due to the large pools of available labour in many South and Southeast Asian nations, together with declining prospects for renewal of contracts, companies economise on costs by choosing employees from among the labour supplying countries which compete with each

other by lowering minimum standards governing employment of their nationals in the Gulf. Recent Korean company policy in the Gulf shows a tendency to hire workers from low wage South and Southeast Asian countries instead of their own countrymen, enabling them to cut wage costs (Owen 1985). The different nationalities can be played off against each other in other ways, for instance in the resolving of labour disputes. The research (Spaan 1989) revealed a case in which Jordanian workers, employed by a Western company in Iraq, were on strike in protest against unsatisfactory working conditions and were finally forced to comply with these conditions as the company had hired a batch of Sri Lankan workers to replace them. The Jordanians, whose position would have been even more precarious if fired, were left no option other than to resume work. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan workers, already in the country, consequently suffered either because they were sent back without any compensation and subsequently gained nothing from their migration or were stranded in the country without any means of subsistence.

In any case, the advantages of enclave type camps from the point of view of the Gulf authorities are obvious: they are a means of minimising contacts between foreign workers and indigenous population and of restricting the workers almost completely to their working role, making the whole venture very efficient.

Many other male Sri Lankan workers find employment in the service sector as hotel and shop personnel, municipal workers and drivers. They are, therefore, less restricted in their movements and can more easily mix with the indigenous population. They find accommodation in boarding houses or rent an apartment. Housing is often very expensive and hard to come by in the Gulf States. Owen (1985) quotes a survey done in Kuwait which revealed that over 50% of local expenditure of migrant workers was on housing costs. Many can only find housing in suburbs with a poor infrastructure and facilities such as in Jarnia Fur, a shanty town near Abu-Dhabi city (Ahmed 1981:270). Similar cases were observed for Sri Lankan migrants in Bahrain (Senanayake 1987).

A large majority of male migrants in the sample were satisfied with their accommodation (75%). This is not surprising as most migrants originate from the poorest strata of Sri Lankan society (Korale 1986; Gunatilleke et al. 1986; Spaan 1989), which has led to the suggestion that labour flow from Sri Lanka could be termed 'survival migration' (Eelens et al. 1987). The labour migrants from Sri Lanka are not used to the many luxuries provided in the Gulf such as air conditioning, running water, electricity and electrical appliances. Table 2 below gives the scores on the facilities provided to the Sri Lankan migrants who participated in the research.

Table 2

Housing Facilities Provided for Migrant Workers (%)

	Male	Female
Airconditioning	80	86
Electric fan	60	78
Electricity	92	96
Running water	36	36
Bath/shower	24	28
Television	32	48
Radio	20	52

Note: Figures apply to facilities provided in the living/sleeping quarters of the worker and only shared by up to four people. N=25 (men) and N=94 (women).

Because the male migrants were employed in 'work camp' situations or in the service sector they generally had ample opportunities of meeting other Sri Lankans or migrants of other nationalities. The men were able to socialize in recreation halls, canteens, swimming pools or while doing sport. Some even find the time to join (sport) clubs, but as Weiner (1982:6) notes with reference to Indian migrants in the Gulf, these are mostly middle and high class migrants residing there for long periods. In connection with a similar sports club in Bahrain, Senanayake (1987) also notes that it is mainly for the Sri Lankan 'upper class'.
Contacts between the various migrant groups are, of course, inhibited by cultural and language barriers so that the migrants tend to group according to nationality and ethnicity. The data indicated that the majority of migrants considered contact with other migrants as instrumental or solely for the purpose of passing the time during their leisure hours. Of course, due to the fact that the migrants are generally in the Middle East for relatively short periods (up to two or three years) making socializing with a stable group of people less likely, friendships would generally not strike deep roots. It is significant that a survey of the MARGA Institute conducted among Sri Lankan return migrants revealed that while in the Middle East, only very few migrants participated in social events such as sport competitions and that the most popular forms of recreation were listening to the radio and watching television (Gunatilleke et al. 1986:99).

The female migrants found themselves in a completely different environment due to their employment as domestic servants. As the women resided in the

household for which they worked, their accommodation was generally luxurious, especially when one considers their circumstances in Sri Lanka. As with the male migrants the large majority of female domestic servants enjoyed luxuries such as AC, electrical fans, running water, television, video etc., although not necessarily in their living quarters, as table 2 indicates. Not all domestic servants enjoyed the luxury of a separate room for themselves; in the sample 43% of domestic servants had to share their living/sleeping quarters with other members of the household (often the children being looked after). However, it appeared that only a minority (13%) were dissatisfied with their accommodation as was the case with the male migrants.

The social life of the female domestic servants is far less favourable than that of the men. In addition to the long working hours, their contact with other migrants is severely restricted by socio-cultural factors. Firstly, the physical surroundings in which the women work, i.e. Arab homes often with high walls and small windows, discourage contact with people outside the premises. In addition Arab/Islamic behaviour codes result in the majority of domestic aids only leaving the house on certain (infrequent) occasions, and then only when they are accompanied by one of the household members. As is the custom among the more traditional populace in the Gulf region women must, when leaving the house and appearing in public, wear an overgarment (*abba*) together with a veil (*petula*) making them virtually unrecognizable. These rules also often apply to foreign housemaids who, when they are allowed to go shopping with the 'madam' of the house, hardly have any possibility of socialising with other migrants. When asked about their contacts with friends and relatives in the host country only 46% of the female domestic servants in the sample stated that they had contact once or twice a week and this included telephone. As much as one third stated that they had no contact at all during their stay in the Gulf. Clearly, the group of 'lucky ones' congregating on Fridays at such places as the Christian church in Kuwait City is very small. During the research, we came across employment agreements stating that it is forbidden to ask the employer for permission to go out (for instance to church). For the majority of female domestic servants the only opportunities for going out were the occasional visits and outings of the family, in which case they had to accompany them and serve the meals or look after the children. The few options left to many housemaids for maintaining contact with the outside world are constituted by letters, cassettes or telephone. However, as a number of migrants stated, even these possibilities did not exist. Being denied such forms of contact in a situation of relative isolation can easily lead to mental stress.

Before we turn to the problems experienced by Sri Lankan migrant workers in the Gulf, we must say something about the religious life of the migrants. As the

indigenous populations of the Gulf States are almost exclusively followers of Islam - either belonging to the Sunni, Shi'ite or Wahhabi sects - there are ample possibilities for migrants of Islamic faith to perform the rites connected to their religion, provided their employers allow them to attend services in the mosques. Muslim employers would generally not hinder migrants in their performance of religious duties such as *salat* (daily prayers) or even *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). Even in the case of construction camps situated away from urban centres there is often a mosque for the benefit of the employees. Sri Lankan Moors and Malays, generally Muslims, meet few barriers inhibiting formal religious duties.

The situation for Christians is different but not too problematic. Several Gulf governments have permitted the functioning of Christian institutions within their country, so for the relatively small group of Christian Sri Lankan migrants (in 1981 around 7% of Sri Lanka's population was Christian, mainly Sinhalese, Tamils and Dutch Burghers) there are facilities for formal religious life. The Christian church in Kuwait is a well-known meeting place for expatriate workers (Weiner 1982:6).

The situation for other religious groups from Sri Lanka, i.c. Hindus and Buddhists, is more difficult. Weiner (1982) notes that there are no Hindu temples in the Gulf with the exception of two *Kovils* in Manama (Bahrain) and Muscat (Oman). For most Hindus who form a minority in the stream of labour migrants from Sri Lanka, the only possibility is to perform religious rites in private, in so far as this is permitted by employers who, in many cases, are offended by it.

There is a growing preference in the Gulf States for migrant workers of Islamic faith. Many Gulf citizens, in several states (Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE) outnumbered by foreigners, fear the adverse impact of the presence of so many expatriates on their cultural and religious heritage. These anxieties have been increasingly voiced in the local newspapers. Foreign nannies and teachers are of particular concern to many Gulf citizens as they make a substantial contribution to their childrens' upbringing.

A distinct group from Sri Lanka with hardly any possibilities of performing religious rites are the Buddhists (mainly Sinhalese). Orthodox Buddhists (*Theravada*, the dominant form in Sri Lanka) are particularly 'threatening' as they do not, strictly speaking, venerate an omnipotent deity capable of 'intervening' in one's life. The Buddha himself is not considered a deity but an enlightened person who has shown mankind the path to salvation. These elements in the faith of Sri Lankan Buddhists, supplemented with certain influences from Hinduism and animism, make their beliefs opaque and hard to understand for large segments of the Islamic population in the Gulf. Generally, Buddhists are considered as *kafirs* (heathens) and treated with less tolerance than, for instance, Christians, who share several traits with Islam such as monotheism. About 50% of the Buddhists in the sample were forbidden to perform rites connected with Buddhism. Almost all of these were female

domestic servants who were subject to much greater control than the male migrants.

Problems experienced by Sri Lankan migrants

Our data indicated that a majority of migrants were satisfied with their working and living conditions. About a quarter of respondents overtly expressed their dissatisfaction with their work and about 10% of the total sample had tried, or had actually succeeded, in changing their employers while in the Gulf. It is generally very difficult to change jobs in the Gulf States. Firstly, because it is simply forbidden (without prior consent by the authorities) or restricted by law, and secondly because any expatriate who is unemployed is obliged to leave the country at short notice. In addition, the fact that the employer almost always retains the migrant's passport makes it easier for employers to force workers to stay. The possibilities of female domestic servants finding new employment are limited due to their social isolation. Another indication as to the degree of satisfaction of the migrants with conditions offered by employers, is the fact that only 38% of the migrants in the sample stated that they would like to return to the same employer when accepting a further term in the Gulf.

Whereas a majority of Sri Lankan labour migrants in the sample stated that they were, on the whole, satisfied with conditions in the Gulf, many still experienced problems, ranging from withheld payment to ill-treatment. About half of the respondents were confronted with problems in the country of work. These problems (minor illness and homesickness excluded) could be attributed to their employer, recruitment agent or other related persons, climate, social and cultural factors and political instability.

The first category of problems experienced by Sri Lankan migrants consisted of difficulties connected with their employment agreements. Of the total sample, about one third had accepted work in the Gulf without having signed and received an employment agreement stating conditions of work. Of the migrants that did receive an employment agreement, a large group received an inadequate contract, either because conditions stated were substandard, or because it was drawn up in a foreign language, or because the migrant was forced to sign without actually reading the contract. As Sri Lankan migrants are often ignorant of all kinds of bureaucratic procedures and are not aware of their rights and duties, they can easily fall victim to malpractice on the part of recruitment agencies (Gunatilleke et al. 1986:83; Zar 1984). Not only are the migrants forced to pay excessive recruitment fees (especially when going through irregular agencies) but they sometimes also have their original employment agreements (acquired in Sri Lanka) replaced by inferior ones on arrival in the country of work. In the sample, 13% of migrants who had

migrated on the basis of formal arrangements had been confronted with different contracts on arrival. These individuals were all female domestic servants. Many migrants complained that they had been confronted with different employment conditions than stated in their contracts (33%). In these cases, the changes involved a different kind of work, lower pay, longer working hours or heavier work-loads. In several cases, female domestic aids had to work for considerably larger households than was initially stated by their agent or employer. One male stated that he was put to work as a labourer after having been promised a job as an office clerk and subsequently received less pay. Luckily, however, these cases are more or less exceptional.

Another set of problems migrants frequently ran into were difficulties relating to payment. Due to conflicts with their employer - resulting from poor performance, misunderstandings or pure ill-will - some migrants have their salary cut or simply withheld (16% in the sample). Sometimes employers withhold pay as compensation for costs incurred when the worker returns home before expiry of contract. Owen (1985:12) reports similar cases.

Health problems also occurred frequently, resulting from harsh climatic conditions, heavy work-loads and ill-treatment. The incentive to work overtime is generally high among workers in construction camps, due to few recreational facilities and attractive bonuses. This inevitably leads to greater strain, ill health and a higher rate of work-related accidents. In the sample, as many as 60% of respondents stated that they had problems with their health while in the Middle East. However, 13% of migrants had experienced serious illness or accidents, the majority being female domestic servants.

Another related category of problems is that of physical punishment and sexual harassment. As is well-known, official punishment for criminal offences is often severe in the more orthodox Islamic countries of the Gulf region (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Iran) and range from public floggings to death sentences. Contravention of religious laws in particular, such as *zina* (unlawful intercourse), are considered serious and are severely punished. There has been growing concern about rising crime rates (real or alleged) among expatriate workers reported by the media. Attention has been drawn to labour exporting countries as death penalties passed on expatriate workers in the Gulf are not exceptional. It is imperative that migrant workers be properly informed about local customs, behaviour codes and legislation of the Gulf States before actually migrating. In the sample, none of the respondents had experienced any official punishment but many had witnessed public punishments or had heard about them.

Unofficial punishments and ill-treatment of migrants in the sample scored higher, namely 13%; in these cases, respondents had been beaten, locked up without food or water or sexually harassed. Almost all these cases were reported by female domestic servants who, due to their social isolation, were much more vulnerable than male migrants. One woman had been deliberately burned and beaten for neglecting a child for whom she was responsible. As rape and sexual harassment are delicate subjects, exact figures on their frequency are hard to come by. In the sample, two women stated that they had been subjected to near rapings. Other reports are even more alarming (Cumaranatunge 1985; Womens Bureau of Sri Lanka 1986). The Sri Lankan daily 'The Sun' (27-8-1986) reported that in the first seven months of 1986, the Sri Lankan authorities received 400 complaints from Sri Lankan labour migrants in the Middle East, of which 243 were related to physical or sexual harassment (183 were from housemaids). The fact that the Philippine government has only recently temporarily banned the export of female domestic servants, following countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (the last two also for religious reasons) indicates that there is a growing concern (Brochmann 1986; Eelens et al. 1986).

A problem experienced by female domestic workers was lack of contact with family and friends in Sri Lanka. When one considers their general isolation and their feelings of alienation due to cultural and language barriers, denial of this kind of contact is very serious. In the sample, 28% of all domestic aids had met with difficulties of this kind. In all cases this was due to their employers, who either refused to post letters, destroyed them or would not allow the persons in question to post them themselves. Cumaranatunge (1985) notes that there are two main reasons why employers in the Middle East withhold letters. In the first place, they fear that the domestic servants, by receiving letters from home, could become lonely and depressed and secondly, the housemaids might arrange an early return by arranging fake telegrams requesting their immediate return due to family problems. Several female respondents in the sample had found a solution to the problem of contacting Sri Lanka, either by giving the letters (or cassettes) to housemaids in a neighbouring house or even giving them to local street cleaners who posted them. Some even had to resort to leaving their letters in the dustbin with a note for the refuse collector so as to avoid detection.

As the procedure of finding a new employee is often costly in terms of time and money, some employers try to postpone the return of their employee. Some employers do not hesitate to use 'force': 13% of Sri Lankans in the sample had met with employers who refused to return their passport, refused to pay the return air-fare or even threatened to withhold part of the salary; all in order to prevent the employee returning home after completion of the term of employment.

Some migrants run into difficulties due to political upheavals in the country of work, such as in Iraq, Iran or Lebanon. Beirut in particular is known for the deplorable circumstances in which expatriate workers have to work, jeopardising their physical and mental well-being. Stories of murder, rape and serious injuries suffered as a result of the fighting, as well as of stranded housemaids being forced into prostitution, have led the Sri Lankan authorities to ban the export of females to this city.

Reviewing the list of difficulties cited above, which could easily be supplemented (Zar 1984; Owen 1985), one may safely conclude that migrating to the Middle East can be hazardous.
As already stated in the introduction to this chapter, one of the possible consequences of unsatisfactory working and living conditions is that migrants voluntarily or forcibly fail to complete their term of employment in the Middle East. This often causes (financial) difficulties for employers, recruitment agents and the migrant's family at home, as a great deal of time and money has been invested in order to realize the migration of the worker. Elsewhere in this volume the occurence of early return will be dealt with. Suffice it here to say that this problem alone warrants more attention being given by government authorities to the working and living conditions of migrant workers in the Gulf States.

When viewing the general situation of the Sri Lankan migrant workers in the Middle East, it is clear that the migrants have few possibilities of manipulating the circumstances to their own advantage. Indeed, one of the most characteristic features of their socio-economic position is their powerlessness and vulnerability vis-à-vis employers and authorities. They are subject to strict legislation and control (there is always the risk of forced repatriation), formal regulations and duties in connection with employment (camp regulations) and informal arbitrary arrangements made by employers (especially for domestic servants). In cases of conflict, the employers are in a far better bargaining position as they hold the worker's passport and can threaten the withholding of wages or dismissal, which inevitably leads to forced return to the home country. Pressures from the home front such as poverty and debt will make the workers tend to put up with less favourable circumstances. Even in cases where migrants are prepared to complain to the authorities (either Sri Lankan or Gulf) or to protest against unfavourable conditions, it is generally very difficult due to their relative isolation, their ignorance of local procedures and legislation, language barriers and organizational difficulties resulting from the absence of workers' organizations and the lack of solidarity (between the indigenous population and the expatriates and also between the different ethnic groups within the migrant population). There have been reports, however, of collective bargaining and strikes, generally in construction camps (Owen 1985;

Weiner 1982; Spaan 1989). As Owen notes, on the one hand, the workers in the construction camps are vulnerable as they are often very isolated and can only contact the appropriate authorities with great difficulty; but on the other hand, the presence of large numbers of workers in a spatially restricted area facilitates the organizing of strikes. Even so, strikes and large scale protests are still exceptional in the Gulf States.

Sri Lankans generally give voice to their grievances through the Diplomatic Missions (in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq and Lebanon). Between 1978 and 1982 the authorities received 2,400 complaints about unsatisfactory working and living conditions in the Middle East, most of which, according to one report (Voice of Women 1982), came from female domestic personnel. Even so, the Labour attachés at the Embassies cannot always provide satisfactory solutions, as they have to consider the political repercussions of their actions because they cannot afford to lose footing on the highly competitive Middle East labour market.

Conclusion

The Sri Lankan migrant workers in the Gulf States find themselves at the lowest end of the social spectrum in the Gulf States. They are generally recruited for the lowest paid jobs with low social prestige. Characteristic of the Gulf States are the highly stratified social systems and labour markets organized along ethnic and racial lines, in which there are limited possibilities for social and labour mobility. The strict legislation and segmented labour markets are partly responsible for this. It is, therefore, virtually impossible for migrant workers to become integrated in Gulf society. Government policies are specifically aimed at establishing a transient, tractable and efficient expatriate work force, confining them to their economic role as much as possible. This also effects a maximum rotation and segregation of migrants. In addition, language and cultural barriers enhance this process and together with growing nativistic and xenophobic tendencies in the Gulf region, misunderstandings between ethnic groups and social conflict are becoming more manifest. Despite the fact that many Sri Lankans are able to improve their economic status (albeit temporarily) by migrating to the Middle East for work and that the living and working conditions are satisfactory for the majority, the process is often hazardous and may involve many hardships. The most frequent problems experienced by Sri Lankan migrants in the Gulf States are: altered conditions of employment (contracts); health problems due to climate, hard work and ill-treatment; excessive work-loads; social isolation and difficulties in contacting friends or relatives. For this group of migrants it is imperative that the governments involved in the labour migration process try to improve their conditions of employment through policy measures and legislation, together with programmes for the guidance of migrant workers. It is particulary important for the most

vulnerable group, the female domestic servants, that labour laws be drawn up circumscribing their legal rights and duties, guaranteeing minimum standards for working and living conditions and creating easy and accessible possibilities for appeal in case of conflict with employers.

NOTE

1. The present chapter is based on research carried out among returned migrants in Sri Lanka in 1986. The sample consisted of 120 migrants (95 women and 25 men), from three different communities in Sri Lanka. For several reasons, research in one or more of the Gulf States was not possible. Therefore research on the basis of retrospection was the only possibility. The data presented on working and living conditions of Sri Lankan migrants in the Gulf States are mainly derived from the resultant MA-thesis (Spaan 1989).

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6

MIDDLE EAST MIGRATION AT THE MICRO-LEVEL: A VILLAGE CASE-STUDY

T. Mook

This chapter presents and examines data on labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East in a village context[1], concentrating on basic socio-economic processes which are the outcome of Middle East migration open particularly to women as domestic workers. First, the broader context of structural constraints in a stagnating agricultural environment and the severely limited options for women is explored. Against this background, the response to Middle East migration opportunities is examined - both as a strategy employed by households and by individuals - as well as the additional issue of expenditure of remittances. Finally, the role of social networks in mediation for Middle East jobs is analysed. The focus here is on the prospective migrants' understanding of their changing opportunities and strategies for migration and the migrants' view of mediation for kin and friends.

The village studied is one of many experiencing the structural constraints of land shortage, unemployment and underemployment common to the rural periphery of Sri Lanka. For the purpose of this study a Sinhalese village with a relatively large number of migrants was selected. Middle East migration here, as elsewhere in the region, is almost exclusively female and for domestic labour. The case study method employed provides intensive contact between researcher and villagers, enabling more detailed and careful observations on the rather sensitive subject of independent Middle East migration of women.

The fieldwork was carried out over a period of nine months in 1986 and 1987. A basic household survey of the entire village on population and income characteristics was conducted and also served as a screening device to identify migrants. Semi-structured interviews with all return migrants identified prospective migrants, and close relatives of current migrants provided the main body of data on migration collected during fieldwork[2]. In order to supplement and check data, additional information on new arrivals of Middle East migrants in and departures from the village were collected in the latter part of 1987.

Waadiyagoda and the relative decline in living standards

The village, here referred to as Waadiyagoda, is situated in the western division of Hambantota District, a peripheral area of Sri Lanka and one of the driest regions in the country[3]. The western division lies on the fringe of the Sri Lankan wet zone and has the densest population since the climate is more conducive to coconut and paddy cultivation than the east. However, in contrast to the wet zone proper the rainfall is erratic.

At the beginning of this century, Hambantota District was underpopulated, inaccessible and malaria infested. Much of the western division, including Waadiyagoda, was then under *chena* cultivation (slash and burn cultivation). Paddy was cultivated below small village reservoirs which were, however, often dry or waterlogged. Stable agricultural yields could only be achieved in areas situated further to the east, where irrigation facilities had been made available by the British colonial government from the 1850's (Farmer 1976). Oral history relates that land pressure in the west initiated increased settlement of the village at the turn of the century. British references to the village show that in 1911 Waadiyagoda numbered 76 households, consisting of Sinhalese Buddhists of the *Govigama* (farmers), *Navandanna* (artisan) and *Rada* (washermen) castes. The chief produce of Waadiyagoda consisted of *chena* crops, of which considerable quantities were traded. Numerous pocket-sized water reservoirs provided for irrigated cultivation operated by smallholders but paddy was of secondary importance[4].
The increase in the village population since the thirties was mainly caused by natural growth. The village has increased almost threefold, numbering 151 households of which three are *Rade* and nine *Navandanna* households. Unlike the dominant *Govigama*, the households of these minority castes have no access to paddy land or coconut groves. In most of the households there are members still carrying on the traditional caste occupations, but others perform various kinds of casual labour including farm labour. Although caste prohibitions no longer obstruct social contacts to the same extent as in former times, day to day contacts between members of the three groups are limited. The natural borders which divide the different parts of the villages according to caste reinforces this social feature.

The village lies inland and away from the main coastal road, seven hours by public transport from the capital of Colombo and two hours from Hambantota town, which is the capital of the District. The village is divided by a metalled road served by buses and thus has relatively good access to information and to the outside world. Facilities include a secondary school up to 'O. Level' grade (eleventh year) built in the fifties and, of more recent date, a sub-post office.

Recently electricity has been provided, but the connection to the main supply is expensive and limited to a small number of houses by the road. With the rise in population newcomers generally settled away from the roadside, their houses being set wide apart in separate gardens. There is a striking difference between the roadside houses and homesteads and those in the less accessible interior. Most of the wealthier houses are situated along the road; the poor population is located in the interior. The most common type of house is built of cheap materials: mud walls, earthen floor and a roof of plaited coconut leaves. Concrete floors and roof tiles generally constitute the first alterations when houses are improved. The outlook of Waadiyagoda has significantly changed over the last six years, which is, as many of the villagers observe, a consequence of the new income flowing in from Middle East migration. All the modern houses which have since appeared or which are in various stages of building, belong to Middle East migrants, apart from one house which belongs to a textile trader.

In Sri Lanka access to civil service employment outside the central bureaucracy is controlled by the local Members of Parliament. This feature of patronage politics now ensures an almost total restriction of such jobs to government supporters. Waadiyagoda villagers are for the most part avid supporters of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), currently the main opposition party. Consequently, these families have little access to the already scarce jobs in the civil service and to other state distributed benefits. Early United National Party (UNP) supporting households have seen some of their educated children moving into the teaching profession and other civil service jobs as a reward for their membership and canvassing at election time. In Waadiyagoda, the reaction of the SLFP sympathizers is rather one of resentment than of the general resignation noted elsewhere (Gunasekera 1989). Hambantota is the heartland of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) anti-government activity which stems from popular discontent among educated and unemployed youth and has been channelled into political violence since the end of 1986[5]. Village politicization hampers co-operation in community activities and creates conflicts surrounding the use of vital resources. This enmity has caused severe problems in communal well construction or denial of access to 'private' wells, as expressed in: 'Don't you come and wash your blue clothes at our green well' in which the colours refer to the opposing political parties.

The rural institutions providing access to governmental benefits are dominated by UNP members from the neighbouring and more prosperous village which, together with Waadiyagoda, constitutes a single *grama sevaka* division, the lowest level of government administration. Unsuccessful competition with this village has strengthened the feeling of relative deprivation in Waadiyagoda.

Land pressure in Waadiyagoda is apparent in the increase of the - formally registered - extent of paddy area to little over one and half times the 1911 area, whereas the population has almost tripled. Most of the former *chena* areas in the village have been converted to coconut groves and homesteads. Coconut and paddy are now the main agricultural subsistence crops. The extensive coconut groves cover most of the village and are sometimes interplanted with pepper and, more recently, coffee. The importance of coconut palm products can hardly be overestimated since they are essential for the diet, cash income and basic materials for most of the marketable products processed by women. Although the distribution of ownership of the palms is very skewed, many of the poorer families live on hilly Crown Land planted with coconuts and leased for a small annual rent. Though illegal, mortgaging of this land is fairly widespread (Moore 1989).

Assessment of the size and viability of paddy smallholdings is complicated due to the differences in access to water, the multitude of tenurial arrangements and rotational tenure in which different cultivators work the land in alternating seasons. For the bulk of the cultivating households farm income is insufficient to cover food requirements throughout the year. According to a number of cultivators, one acre providing two harvests per year is needed to cover the food requirements of a household of six when the land is cultivated and owned by this household. However, one and a half acres is needed if the land is held in *ande* (share cropping). Less than a quarter of all households have access to 1 acre of paddy land under the various conditions and land rights. Included here, however, are a number of civil servants who acquired paddy land in land development schemes in the east of the district. Due to the rapidly rising cost of living, rice and a number of *chena* crops fetch prices that fail to keep pace with the rising retail prices of essential food stuffs. Wages for farm labour are particularly low in the area due to a large labour surplus. This is aggravated by the widespread availability of two-wheel tractors for ploughing and threshing (Harriss 1977).

In a study on the use of high yielding paddy varieties in Hambantota District, the area in which Waadiyagoda is situated is characterized as a 'high risk - low potential' area because of climatic and soil conditions, and the fragmented land holdings (Dias 1977). The 1981 land register of the village attests to the degree of subdivision and fragmentation of paddy land; one holding may consist of scattered and uneconomic shares, many not larger than 0.25 acres. To counter the further subdivision of paddy land holdings - which would otherwise be the norm because of the proportional inheritance system - one son generally becomes the de facto owner-cultivator.
Much of the main tract of paddy land as well as the smaller ones depend on rainfall. In the year of fieldwork, much of the fields lay fallow in the minor cultivation

season due to lack of rain. The recent droughts - particularly severe in 1981 -, seriously affected harvests. However, the scarcity of water is also of a more structural nature because the reservoir providing for the main tract fell into disrepair about fifteen years ago. Most of the bed of the former reservoir was then taken into possession by a number of households who cultivate the fields in seasons with sufficient rainfall. For the farm labourers comprising a large number of men and women, the climatic conditions and the broken tank have meant great hardship. The villagers attribute the unfulfilled promises of restoration made by visiting representatives of government and donor agencies to a lack of political patronage[6]. However, in the wake of the 1986 drought, in which the harvests of the minor cultivation season were completely lost, drought relief in the form of rice rations was given in return for work on the rehabilitation of a number of tanks. Most of the villagers who applied turned up to join the work parties; two thirds of these were women.

Migration - as an outcome of the combination of the structural factors causing lack of cultivable land - is a vital strategy of survival for Waadiyagoda villagers. Most seasonal and permanent out-migration from the village is intra-rural and mainly within the same district. It involves mainly young men with relatively low educational attainments from land poor or landless households. Most of them leave the village to cultivate *chena* on the semi-arid Crown Lands in the less populated east of the district. This is often combined with casual labour in the irrigation schemes of the area. According to current residence patterns of out-living sons of Waadiyagoda households, more than a third moved to the *chena* areas in the east of the district. The degree of permanency of this migration varies. Several families return to their village of origin when the children attain school age.
Chena cultivation in the east also provides seasonal labour and income for many of the landless and land poor households who remain in the village. Finger millet, corn, cow pea, green gram, chillies and various vegetables are among the crops grown for consumption and sale. As these areas fall under the Crown Land Act, the cultivators have no tenure rights to the land.
Some migrants from the village who settled in the east of the district to cultivate *chena*, have lost 'their' lots in areas where land reclamation projects have been established. A number of temporary seasonal migrants from Waadiyagoda households also claimed residence in order to qualify for land distribution by staying on beyond the season. However, much of the land is allotted according to political affiliation and also, as in Waadiyagoda, by bribing Land Development Officers. In all but one case the villagers returned disillusioned after some years. The ambitious and costly colonization schemes attract many migrants who can never be catered for. The number of *chena* cultivators has increased, an effect much deplored by the authorities.

Fifty percent of Waadiyagoda households is indebted. Many of the smaller loans, often only for consumption purposes, are from relatives who do not charge interest. Larger debts are mainly incurred for cultivation, ceremonial and medical expenses. The most recent and rapidly growing share of loans, however, is needed for Middle East migration[7]. The interest rates of money lenders generally amount to 20% per month. Middle East remittances have increased the number of petty moneylenders in the village whereas an increase in the interest rate over recent years is the result of the greater demand for credit by migrants.

In the perception of the villagers the economic situation has certainly deteriorated. The structural scarcity of water appears to have become the focus of the discontent of those dependent on agriculture. Furthermore, newly available opportunities such as employment in the civil service and land in the colonization schemes have passed them by. The demonstration effect of the rise in consumption among the better off in a decade of economic liberalization further exacerbates a feeling of relative deprivation. This is certainly experienced as such, also in relation to the outwardly prosperous migrant households.

The socio-economic position of Waadiyagoda women

The new migration opportunities are virtually restricted to women as a consequence of the specific demand in the Middle East for domestic labour. That women may now become major income earners by selling their labour constitutes a remarkable departure from the traditional division of labour. In order to understand this recent change, women's general position in the community demands attention.
Women's contribution to the household consists mainly of non-wage labour. In Waadiyagoda's stagnating agricultural environment, women's earning capacity is limited. The cash income of all women except for the few employed in government service, is invariably low and the sources difficult to distinguish or measure. In general women are excluded from many types of production for reasons which reinforce each other. Women's first responsibility is housekeeping and child-raising, which limits the possibility of earning independent cash income. In Waadiyagoda, as elsewhere, domestic work also includes many productive activities which extend into farming activities. Women's part in this is regarded as subsidiary. The sexual division of labour and gender ideologies restrict women to certain activities. As observed in general for Sri Lanka, the highly valued cultivation of rice is exclusively managed and mainly carried out by men. Only reaping and collection are carried out by labour groups consisting of women. Payment for these activities in Waadiyagoda is one third to one half less than what men receive for the more diverse labour tasks of cultivation. In *chena* and home garden cultivation

which is generally small-scale and outside government control, women may carry out a wider range of tasks along with their husbands. In the village itself a number of women are engaged in *chena* cultivation on small fields near the homesteads or on fallow land elsewhere in the village. Some of the produce is sold.
However, in contrast to men, women contribute almost all their earnings to the household's common income while often the men by smoking, gambling and drinking illicit alcohol, substantially drain the cash income. Women's general responsibility for the household funds is evident in their handling of the government food stamps, which provide for an important though diminishing part of the food requirements of many households.
It was observed in Waadiyagoda that education and medical services were certainly not without costs but most complaints concern the food stamp provision. Nowadays the food stamps, issued every three months, supply a household of five with staple food for one week to ten days and a certain quantity of kerosene. Just prior to the field work, the eligibility for food stamps of all households in the division was re-established, according to land ownership and income from other sources, Rs. 300 (U.S. $ 11) per month being the dividing line. From that time, 76% of the families in the village received food stamps, which gives an idea of the poverty within the village. Virtually all households dependent on *chena* cultivation and farm labour are entitled to food stamps.

Government policy on household targeted subsidies fails to recognise that in practice women are responsible for making ends meet. Institutionally structured access to crucial resources, ranging from housing loans to the introduction and distribution of new inputs and crops, is as a rule, however, extended to men. This restricts women's ability to contribute to the household income. In Waadiyagoda for instance, coffee plants were distributed to men, whereas much of the general work in the homesteads, e.g. the processing of coconuts, is done by women. Here too a division of labour is visible. The picking of nuts and the sale of larger quantities of nuts and copra to the mill are men's jobs. Women and also some disabled men process the many by-products of the coconut palm often used as barter or they tend one or two cows owned by others.
Apart from this, very few options exist between production for household consumption, exchange or sale and - at the other end of the status scale - employment in government service as teacher or nurse. Some women contribute vital assistance to men who are self-employed as bakers or shopkeepers. Only the local stone quarry, exploited by an outside contractor, provides hazardous and ill-paid employment to six girls of poor households. Illegal alcohol appears to be produced by women and retailed by men from a few poor households.
One feature of the village is the hand loom centre which formerly provided employment to an appreciable number of women, but now stands empty and

neglected. Set up in the early seventies when the official policy was directed to import substitution, the Ministry of Rural Industries established weaving centres in a large number of villages thus creating female rural employment opportunities. Trained women could acquire a hand loom for home production. In the village ten to fifteen women still have one. A power loom in a nearby market town also provided employment for village women. The programme was, however, discontinued because of a lack of materials such as imported yarn, inefficient distribution and marketing channels and the drop in demand for hand woven cloth (Postel et al. 1980). In the late seventies, with the opening up of the economy to imports and the boom in the private sector, the protectionism operative in these industries was lifted and consequently the private and co-operative centres were closed.

In relation to Middle East migration it is significant that domestic service in households other than one's own is considered demeaning in Sri Lanka. None of the women in the village worked as a domestic servant. Only one household had employed a servant while the 'lady of the house', married to a teacher, worked in the Middle East as a housemaid herself. One destitute widow with three young children once tried to get a position as a domestic servant in town, following family quarrels with her in-laws. Domestic work in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere, is generally carried out by children and young women. They normally live in with the employer. Through this strategy the natal household can lower the costs of living. Although in the sixties Sri Lankan law protected these workers well compared to other countries, at least on paper, bad conditions and physical abuse are still rife (International Labour Organization 1970).

Education is considered the main springboard to social mobility. The majority of children attend school. Most often the 'O'-Level (Ordinary Level) certificate (eleventh year) is the goal or continued study to 'A'-Level (Advanced Level), which qualifies for a white collar job. As elsewhere in the Southern Province educational qualifications are high among the women. In Waadiyagoda, women are better educated than men in the 18 to 40 age group. Aspirations run high, but for the various reasons mentioned above these are frustrated in most cases. Among the women seen in the fields cutting rice in season there are only a few young women, invariably from poor households.

The structural conditions detailed above cause both internal and Middle East migration. The latter is one of the few possibilities open to women wanting to change their standards of living and satisfy personal ambitions. As a rule, a migrant becomes the major breadwinner of the household. Middle East migration

thus provides an attractive escape route for those who have become victims of the policy of economic liberalization since the late seventies.

The village migrants: who migrates?

In the Hambantota District as in the rest of Sri Lanka, Middle East migration of Muslims is relatively high compared to that of other ethnic groups, due to the greater demand for Muslim workers in the Middle East. In Colombo, the proportion of Muslim migrants is more than four times their share in the total Sri Lankan population[8]. In the western divisions of Hambantota, Muslim communities in the villages show the greatest building activity, a sign of Middle East migration. The preference for Muslims results in less access to migration opportunities for Sinhalese - such as Waadiyagoda villagers - and also in higher fees if a recruitment agent is involved. The general survey shows that whereas 71% of the Muslim migrants were channeled through private agents free of charge, this was the case in only 27% of the Buddhist and Roman Catholic migrants.
This female migration stream following the Middle East demand for Asian domestics is the rule in poor agricultural villages like Waadiyagoda. In 1984, in Hambantota District as a whole, 95% of all Middle East migrants were housemaids, compared to 75% in the more central Galle District and 71% in Colombo[9]. Men would migrate if there was a specific demand for their labour, as there is for female domestic labour. However, a combination of factors limits their numbers considerably: their lack of skills, the great reservoir of unemployed in and around Colombo and the reduced overall demand for male labour in the Gulf since 1982-1983. Middle East migration first became known to Waadiyagoda villagers as an opportunity specifically open to women. In the current situation, the escalation of fees demanded by private recruiters is a primary factor in keeping down the numbers of male migrants. Unskilled male labour fees are at least twice the amount paid by housemaids. Therefore the obvious strategy for households is to seek out opportunities for women. The disadvantages of female migrant employment - lower salaries and greater risks in terms of abuse and exploitation - are the reverse side of the comparative advantages in terms of migration opportunities open to women.
Middle East salaries do not fail to keep attracting men in the village though, even when their wives or other close kin have migrated. Five men, some of better-off families, have acquired passports in the hope of finding a job through their relatives in the Middle East. The first male migrant, whose two sisters had migrated, was successful almost ten years after the first female migrant left. Another was trying to get an unskilled job through an agent, but was still in the process of raising the Rs. 30,000 (U.S. $ 1,110) for his fee, the whole sum to be paid in advance.

Waadiyagoda village has a remarkably large number of Middle East migrants: 23% of the households have one or more migrants. Sinhalese villages in the surrounding area have no more than 10%[10]. Only women aged 18 to 40 years are eligible for Middle East domestic service. In Waadiyagoda 27% or 44 women of this age group are migrants. This refers to returned migrants and those residing in the Gulf during the time of fieldwork. Ten return migrants are looking for a way to go back to the Middle East for the second or third time. Another thirty women in the eligible age group have been identified as prospective migrants (18%)[11], that is women who made definite efforts to acquire a job for the first time. Lack of funds against the background of increased fees and scarcity of jobs relative to supply are the most important reasons why those eager to go have not yet been successful in attaining their goal.

Migrants are predominantly from the *Govigama* caste. Four migrants from three related *Navandanna* households repeatedly went to the Middle East. The *Govigama* and *Navandanna* caste communities maintain their own distinct social networks with regard to possible vacancies. Both communities saw their first migrants leave in 1979 and it was not until after their return, at the end of 1981, that a fairly regular pattern of departures to the Middle East began. Since then, nine to seventeen migrants (in the boom year of 1982) have departed each year, most for the first, and an increasing number for a second, and even a third time. In the tiny self-contained *Rada* community on the fringe of the Waadiyagoda paddy fields no households had a migrant.

Two-thirds of the migrants are married and most have children (90%), a proportion also found among the prospective migrants. The latter category includes three women who are separated or widowed. They are dependent on other households for donations and the care of their children to supplement their own wage labour. On account of their weak economic situation, their chances of migrating are particularly slight.

On the basis of this number of migrants, migration was not observed to have led to a rise in the age at marriage of women. However, there is an impression among villagers that women do postpone marriage.

Three newly-wed couples decided to postpone having children so that the wife could migrate. Women who became pregnant did not necessarily forego their opportunity to migrate, as women in the village opted for abortion. One married woman who was found to be pregnant at the medical examination was sent to an illicit abortion clinic. She had an abortion and then went to the Middle East. The medical test in Kuwait, however, revealed she was still pregnant, and she was sent back to Sri Lanka. Another woman in the village followed her agent's admonition to have an abortion when she found herself pregnant during her long wait for a vacancy. She had already paid the Rs. 6,000 fee (U.S. $ 222), and as a result of

a long series of optimistic letters from the agent, had been under the impression that she would be leaving any day. After waiting for months she went to the agent to find that he could not send her nor would he return the money. Since job opportunities in the Middle East have decreased relative to the number of applicants, the pressure to take such risky emergency measures is very strong, especially for economically weak households.

Women are well educated relative to men and many aspire to employment. The data for the different categories show that the educational attainments of migrants are relatively high. There are no migrants, however, among the most highly educated. Those who achieved the 'A-Level' certificate (thirteenth year) or higher, are either trying to gain admission to university or are employed as teachers. All the younger migrants between the ages of 18 to 25 who had reached secondary schooling before departure, were all without a job prior to migration. This fate is anticipated, as some girls discontinued schooling in the tenth grade in order to leave for the Middle East. Some regretted their decision when they later returned from the Middle East. A persuasive teacher who acted as a broker for an agent was instrumental in causing a few to drop out. The data on migrant status and educational level are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Migrant Status by Educational Level of Women aged 18-40, Waadiyagoda (1987) in Percentages

Grades	Non-Migrants %	Prospective Migrants %	Migrants %	Total %
0-6	43	46	27	39
7-12	45	50	71	53
12+	12	4	2	8
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)
Total	91 (55%)	30 (18%)	44 (27%)	165 (100%)

Field data (non response: 7)

The data in Table 1 suggest that education is a vital factor in obtaining a Middle East job. This is borne out by the fact that both current and prospective migrants with little education have to cope with more problems in their attempts to get

a job. They are more often victims of bogus recruitment agents or lack birth certificates needed for passport application which, together with a lack of resources, are problems characteristic of the poor.

Table 2

Main Income Source by Migration Status of Waadiyagoda Households (1987)

	MIGRATION STATUS									
Main Income Source	(1) Non-Migrant		(2) Migrant		(3) Prospective Migrant		(4) Total		(5) Migrant (at departure)	
Civil Service	9	(10%)	7	(19%)	4	(14%)	20	(13%)	5	(14%)
Agriculture										
(owner/)cultivator	18		8		4				6	
chena cultivator	7		2		4				6	
farm/casual labour	34		5		11				12	
	59	(67%)	15	(41%)	19	(65%)	93	(60%)	24	(64%)
Misc.[12]										
Trade, crafts	5		5		2				3	
Others	4		2						2	
Dependent	11		8		4				3	
	20	(23%)	15	(40%)	6	(21%)	41	(27%)	8	(22%)
Total	88	(100%)	37	(100%)	29	(100%)	154	(100%)	37	(100%)

Source: Field Data

The complexity of multiple and seasonal income sources, particularly from agriculture, precludes an adequate measure of relative income of migrant and non-migrant households. However the occupation of the main breadwinner offers a basis for comparison of socio-economic status[13]. For the purposes of comparison, the migration remittances which, as a rule, become the main income source are left out of consideration, e.g. the migrant wife of a *chena* cultivator is included under '*chena* cultivator'. The main income source of migrant households at the time of departure to the Middle East is shown in column 5.

As can be seen, migrant status before departure is not significantly associated with particular socio-economic status categories. Because of the small numbers involved, there would seem to be justification for drawing the cautious conclusion that Middle East migration incidence runs across household economic status. Even women from relatively economically secure households are opting for migration. Within the main categories, however, lower income households, especially those dependent on agriculture and trade, are more likely to have migrants or prospective migrants.

The pattern of major income source of households with migrant status before migration compared with their 1987 situation (respectively column 5 and 2) is markedly different. The increase in dependent households and the reduction in the number of households involved in farm and casual labour is the most striking one. In six cases the former breadwinners had stopped working (or trying to find work) because of the wife's migration. In the absence of a female relation to take over the household tasks, a small number of migrant households are run by men. Some households with return migrants changed their income source utilizing remittances, as will be discussed in the section on remittance spending.

Reasons and aims of migration

If the labour migration stream from Sri Lanka is both a cause and outcome of increasing dependence within the world economic system, how are we to view the projects of migration of individuals and households? As shown above, the stagnating agricultural environment of Waadiyagoda precludes stable and sufficient household income for the majority of households, thus necessitating multiple income strategies. At the micro level, Middle East migration is the major new means of augmenting income, although it is known to carry high risks and costs. Under such conditions the dictum of neo-classical migration theory that persons are free to choose - whether to migrate or not - becomes rather questionable. The following section describes how migrants evaluate their opting for migration and how this reflects on migrants from households with secure incomes, such as civil service or farming.

The economic situation of the household was the central theme in most of the explanations - or rationalizations - of migration. It is striking that the wives of the shopkeepers of the three roadside shops were all trying to find a Middle East job in 1986, partly a consequence of increased credit extended in order to lose customers. Some migrants expressed disillusion with their husbands, whom they accused of contributing an insufficient part of their income to the common household. As a result, the women themselves seized the opportunity to bring about

improvement. The motivation of married women is often the improvement of their children's future. Some migrants or their relatives refer to their many daughters, for whom dowries had to be raised.
Migration for economic reasons is the norm. The loss of earning power due to physical incapacity and calamities like business failure or desertion by the breadwinner, as well as social demands such as funerals cannot be met by economically vulnerable households. Such contingencies and the resultant indebtedness were put forward as primary reasons for migration among both migrants (23%) and prospective migrants (36%). The general aim of the improvement of household income often means sparing the household further impoverishment.

Constraints common to the household are not the only factors motivating migration. Daughters or wives of the better-off cultivators, teachers and other middle level civil servants show a desire to migrate, partly because of their frustrated aspirations to white collar jobs. Among the poor families, the younger and well educated members also state clearly their personal ambition to create a better future for themselves. A number of single prospective migrants do not want to follow in the footsteps of their sisters or friends married to poor *chena* cultivators or farm labourers. It is felt that the probable outcome of remaining in the village will be a continuing lack of prospects of material and social status.

Household members do not always play an encouraging role in the decision-making process surrounding migration, especially in the case of single women. The fact that a person is available who qualifies for the jobs on offer in the Middle East and who could vastly increase the household's income does not necessarily mean all the household members support the member's emigration. Gender ideologies constrain the movement of young women and Middle East female migration has a specific stigma attached to it. Migration to the Middle East is believed to jeopardize female modesty so that female return migrants are sexually suspect. These attitudes to migrants are frequently expressed by non-migrants as 'economically they have come up, but morally down'. It is therefore not surprising that strong opposition was met from parents and brothers, especially by the early migrants. Passports and jobs were applied for in secret, and even when Middle East earnings were accepted by the family, some migrants still had to cope with their family's ill-feeling on this count. Concomitant with this also is that mothers of single migrants strongly emphasize the strict and religious upbringing they have given their daughters.

Even on the individual level, the economic prospects of migration whether for survival or personal ambition are not the only immediate main reasons for

migration. The economic independence associated with migration allows for the possibility of escape from parents' or husband's authority. Physical distance and economic independence is at least ensured during the period spent working in the Middle East. Moreover, some prospective migrants planned to secure economic independence for a longer period to bring about a permanent solution to the specific problems they faced in the village. Although a touchy subject, it was nevertheless mentioned by four returned migrants and two prospective migrants as their main object in migration. These women opted for migration in order to flee a husband's physical abuse and misbehaviour or to marry against the family's wishes.

To give an example, a twenty-year-old daughter of a family of cultivators was scolded and beaten because of the love affair she had with a farm labourer's son. She persuaded her family that she would forget about him if she could leave for a while and work in the Middle East. Wishing her to be rid of the boy, her kin supplied her with the finances for the agent's fee. She kept her plans from her boyfriend who disapproved of migration because of the risks involved. During her two year stay in Kuwait she supported both parties financially, enabling her parents to cover expenses for cultivation, medical treatment and, finally, her father's funeral. After her return she lived at home with her mother for two months, during which period the house the family had tried to build was completed with her earnings. With two friends as witnesses, she married her boyfriend, and lived in the new house allowing her mother to join them. Because her financial sacrifice was acknowledged and her independent household a fait accompli, she was able to realize her ambitions. Migration should therefore be regarded as a possible avenue to greater personal 'self-determination' for women. It represents - in intention if not always in practice - a possibility of freedom from some gender specific constraints.

The above brings us to a number of general observations. Individuals and households largely regard migration as being the only way out. Migration takes place under the pressure of circumstances - which on a higher level are related to specific structural constraints, whether economic or social - rather than being the better of several alternatives. There is an expectation that Middle East migration will change the odds once and for all. With migration an increasing phenomenon in Waadiyagoda, village women cannot escape considering the migration option. Insufficient income and contacts are principal factors keeping prospective migrants from their goal. On the other hand, gender specific constraints combined with the great risks and emotional costs involved in female migration, but also the presence or hope of alternative possibilities are factors in deciding against migration.

The spending of Middle East earnings

The amount a Middle East migrant can earn depends first of all on the duration of employment in the Middle East. Notwithstanding the standard two-year contract, the actual length of time is quite variable. In Waadiyagoda, 40% of the return migrants have been employed for a period up to 18 months; 15% for less than half a year. On the other hand, there are women who have stayed for as long as three years (20%), some of them having worked in various households during that time.

Remittances are usually sent through the international banking system to bank accounts in Sri Lanka. The proportion of the earnings sent back is high, at least half but more often 75% or more. Very few women make use of an account of their own, even if they have opened one. A migrant's disillusionment with the family's use of remittances rarely changes this even upon a second migration.

Table 3

Major Expenditure Items by Return Migrants, Last Migration (N=33)

Item of expenditure	nr. of migrants	Average amount spent in Rs.
Daily household needs	30	16.620
Housing	28	23.250
Middle East Consumer goods	28	10.820
Debt repayments	17	6.260
Consumer goods Sri Lanka	15	7.120
Productive investment, farming	7	8.500
Productive investment, non farming	7	8.280
Ceremonies (funerals)	5	4.700
Purchase of land for homesteads	4	6.050
Electricity extension	4	7.500

Building or renovation of a house is the most common specific aim besides daily livelihood. The latter is often left unmentioned since it is thought to be self-evident. The use of remittances - including savings in cash and goods brought back - also reflects this preference. It is important to note at this point that women earn much less in the Middle East than men, the effect of which is apparently overlooked in policy studies lamenting the disappointing degree to which remittances are put to productive use (Athukorale 1985; Kodithuwakku et al. 1983).

Education, medical treatment and cash contributions to relatives, are other important expenditure items, although more difficult for the respondents to quantify since this type of expenditure was spread over a longer period. In a few cases the transport of Middle East consumer goods and expenses for litigation in Sri Lanka have taken up remarkable sums of money earned in the Middle East. Most of the remittances and savings are thus spent on housing. Only in rare cases is one migration sufficient to complete the construction of the house because a host of other expenses quickly deplete the earnings. As a result of a general lack of experience in managing large amounts of money this widely encountered underestimation of future expenditure can be attributed to a number of specific unforeseen items. Salary earned in the first one to five months generally disappears as a consequence of debts incurred before or because of migration. Unexpected expenses for daily needs also result in migrants' disappointment at the small amount in the account when they return. For instance, a poor household will immediately allow itself three meals rather than two. Another effect is the increase of social obligations confronting a migrant household. Finally, there might be an appreciable loss of income of the former main breadwinner if he takes over the household tasks or refrains from looking for work since the earnings seem negligible in comparison.

Moreover, a general phenomenon - admitted to by migrants but less so by their family members - is the expenditure on small luxuries not within reach before migration, which quickly drain the bank accounts. When a man, in the absence of his wife, carries out tasks normally done by women, status considerations on the part of men will also mean greater expenditure on household consumption. Return migrants themselves often showed surprise at how quickly the money flowed through their hands. Some, however, did not regret having had this possibility once in their lives.

The last six months' salary is generally not remitted. Most of it is used for the purchase of consumer goods and the rest is taken home in cash. Jewellery, cassette radios and wrist watches as well as great lengths of cloth for home consumption are favourite items. Jewellery is generally bought as an investment, while cassette radios and wrist watches may be put to one of several uses: to be given to relatives or to be enjoyed and sold if the need for cash arises. Many of the migrant women complained that they were not allowed sufficient opportunity to compare and select goods when they were in the Middle East. Others had bought many goods over the period of their stay when joining their madam on shopping outings.

The assistance given by migrants to households other than their own should not be underestimated, both in the way of warding of others' financial indebtedness,

by paying for medical treatment and gifts. However, the hopeful visits of neighbours and distant relatives to return migrants are not always appreciated as expressed in the remark 'the bats only come to trees with fruit' made by one husband. Households with two migrants or with a migrant who has been working in the Middle East repeatedly, tend to isolate themselves to discourage claims from villagers.

The above mentioned expenses deplete most of the savings of migrants. As a consequence, the migrant may leave for a second term in order to complete the house of which rarely more than foundation or walls have been put up. However, there is considerable expense on the furnishings of the house.
The recurrence of a number of luxury items in migrant houses suggests a uniform style to display wealth: stylish cupboards containing expensive toys and items particularly meant for display; wall clocks; frills along the top of door posts and curtains of colourful embroidered material; and many well-made wooden chairs. The pervasive public disapproval regarding female Middle East migration, however, dampens the possibilities of public display, particularly outside the home. Migrants who have returned, very quickly return to everyday village life in their attitudes and appearance to prevent being scorned for showing-off. At public events or trips to larger towns, when formal dress is required, the display of expensive sarees is however striking.

The remittances of wealthier households are less susceptible to the rapid depletion caused by daily contingencies. Such households are typically in a position to save, invest and manage larger amounts of money. Significantly, those migrants who invested part of their Middle East earnings in productive uses generally did not have to spend their remittances on daily livelihood. The investments made by Waadiyagoda migrants and their families include the acquisition of rights to paddy land by temporary lease; the establishment of a small tailoring shop and materials for a carpentry workshop owned by a migrant husband. This generally meant an additional source of income rather than a change in major income source as in the case of poor households. Three households of former land labourers acquired temporary tenant status, although none of them acquired secure land rights. Two households formerly dependent on farm labour set up small businesses (e.g. a copra drying business) by investing part of the migrant earnings. However, some of the capital goods acquired, such as a second hand car and a two wheel tractor, were sold again when the households fell upon hard times. In some cases this leads to repeat migration, an increasingly costly investment.
A second change in major income source that occurred as a consequence of migration is noticed among women in female headed households who were formerly without job or land and whose households were supported by kin. Now

they belong to the category of migrant housemaids, for whom repeated migration is the only option for an independent income. Also totally dependent on migrant earnings are those households in which the former male breadwinner has stopped working following the wife's migration.
Although few tangible results for the migrants from poor households may be directly observed, the migration earnings have often meant the difference in securing a livelihood and an irreversible downward slide into poverty. As the earnings only stem the tide for some years, repeat migration may remain the only option for households. As compared with a decade ago, however, the migration opportunities of those without resources have progressively decreased.

Job mediation: a view from below

In order to consider how individual migrants understand the way in which recruiting institutions and social networks organize the movement and constrain options, a general point should first be made about the costs of migration.
The fact that migrants themselves bear all or most of the transport costs and other expenses can be understood in a historical structural approach to migration: in relation to the changes in the world division of labour. Earlier labour migration through coercion or persuasion was costly to employers, whereas the contemporary migration may be characterized as 'self-initiated' and self-transported. This change occurred as a result of the increasing 'boundedness' of developing countries to capitalist core countries (Portes et al. 1981). High and increasing unemployment and exposure of the population to economic opportunities in the centre have caused an oversupply of migrants. This results in the devolution of costs from the employers and agents to the migrants.
Obviously the move to the Middle East is self-initiated in the sense that the migrants are anxious to supply their labour to firms and - in the case of women - families in another country. Households and individual women face structural constraints as regards alternative ways of securing a livelihood, which leads to oversupply of prospective migrants, who must compete through private enterprises. This pushes up the costs for migrants.
The discussion by Speckmann and Eelens in this volume covers the complexities of the institutional organization of recruitment. Here recruitment will be discussed in terms of 'mediation'. The concept of mediation refers to the process that involves both recruitment - for employers and of labour - and also the channels by which prospective migrants gain access to employment. The mediators restrict and facilitate migration opportunities. Access to migration opportunities can be acquired solely through mediators who channel job placements, except when migrants return to their former employer[14]. For the prospective migrant, the main problem is thus

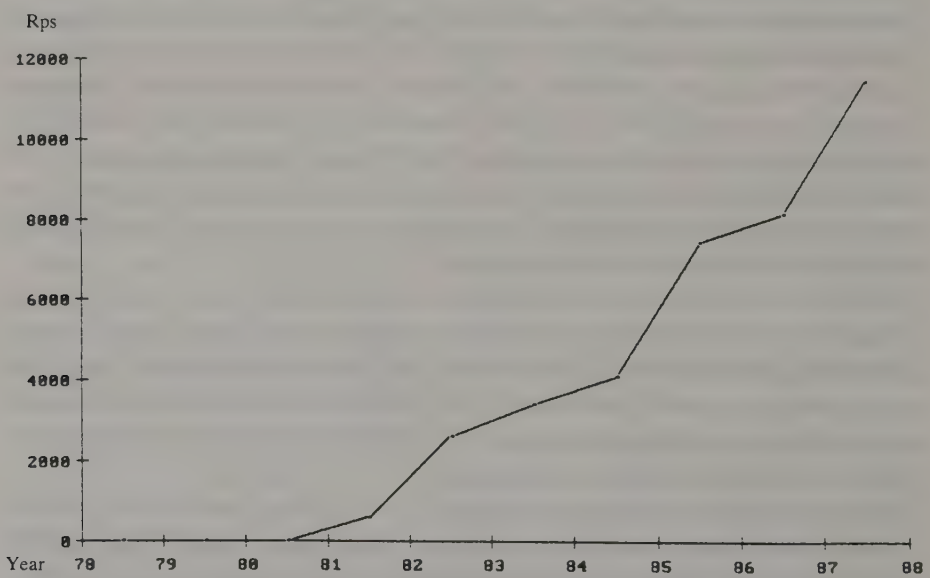
contact with the right person, whether a professional mediator or someone from her own social network.

Mediation by agents and sub-agents

The high fees charged nowadays are not the direct result of the actual transport costs migrants must pay. The cause has to be found in the operation of the market principle: a growing demand for Middle East jobs pushes up fees by organizations for the service of mediation. By and large these organizations control institutional access to Middle East jobs. Migrants have proved capable of raising the required amounts. Nevertheless, the amount individuals are prepared to pay increasingly reach the maximum. More and more frequently, agents in the region are confronted with applicants who, once they have been selected, are unable to raise the amounts required.

Figure 1

Average of Fees Paid to Agents by Year of Departure, Waadiyagoda



Source: field data

In Waadiyagoda, the increase of fees paid to agents is well illustrated by the average fee paid over the years since 1979 when mediation was still free.
An annual income of Rs. 3,600 (U.S. $ 130), above which a household no longer qualifies for food stamps, is an adequate basis for comparison with the costs

incurred in migration via the normal channel, i.e. the private agencies. Taking the average fee paid in 1986 as a basis, the fee (Rs. 8,000) amounts to more than twice the annual household income (excluding the value of the food stamps). Of the households with prospective migrants, 85% received food stamps. Neither the remaining expenses nor the interest to be paid on the loans needed for migration are taken into account here. On average Rs. 1,750 was spent on items such as passport, travel and stay in Colombo, photos for use of the agencies, and the medical examination which may result in referral for paid treatment or abortion.

The majority of Waadiyagoda migrants who used mediation by private agents (N=39) had to borrow money to raise the fee (77%). On average 84% of the total amount needed was borrowed, consisting of the fee and the preparatory expenses. These large sums are typically raised by a number of small loans from kin and friends, and are supplemented by loans from money lenders, *mudalali* (traders) and other people, often outside the village. Personal and kinship links with migrants provide a number of advantages. Even if they may not be instrumental in arranging a job, close migrant kin will often be a source of money needed for mediation through other channels. Quite a few migrants have received loans from their sisters or aunts who agreed to send money from the Middle East, while return migrants may use their own savings for further migration. Prospective migrants, however, may already have incurred debts for preparation costs, like passports, acquired as long as five years ago. Because the agent's telegram - the first and only message announcing that one has been selected - arrives only three to four days prior to the date of departure, the time in which to raise the money is extremely limited. This necessitates borrowing at the rate of 20% per month[15]. 'Only those who can run the risk of borrowing money can still go to the Middle East' is the bitter remark of a prospective migrant who has been trying to go for many years.

The fees recorded here have been paid to agents, concentrated in Colombo, and their sub agents who recruit people in the rural areas. For villages away from the centre such as Waadiyagoda, most contacts are with these sub-agents. Because of the current oversupply of prospective migrants, the brokers can simply sit back and wait for the women to come and apply. They perform an important function for the rural migrants who would otherwise have to travel to Colombo, although they certainly charge for these services. One of the more successful sub-agents in Hambantota district maintains a night coach service to the Colombo agency and to the airport two to four times a week. Migrants and the leave-taking party are required to use this coach and pay for it. For Colombo agents, sub-agents provide an important extension of their business in the rural areas, where they can make use of the prevalent ignorance of institutional organization of migration. As a key informant, a local broker specialized in passport applications, put it:

'Sending rural women is more profitable, because they are more easily cheated than urban girls. The rural people will agree to pay vast sums, Rs. 10,000 and more.' Few villagers know about any of the government requirements imposed on recruitment agencies such as the required contract and the maximum fee allowed. Many do not dare to ask what their working conditions will be and generally only know the wages promised. The villagers feel powerless when confronted with the paternalistic and superior attitude of sub-agents and Colombo agents.

A comparison with the data on fees paid to agents by female Sinhalese return migrants residing in Colombo who had worked as domestics, shows that Waadiyagoda migrants paid 20 to 40% more between 1982 to 1985, and more than double this amount in 1985[16]. Although the sub-agent pockets some of the difference, this does not explain all. In 1985, for instance, when Sinhalese migrants from Colombo paid Rs. 6,000 (U.S. $ 222) at the maximum, three Waadiyagoda migrants who went directly through Colombo agents paid Rs. 7,500, as high as the fees demanded by sub-agents in Hambantota in the same year.

Rural migrants then make up both for the devolution of costs from the Middle East to the Sri Lankan private agencies and for the increased competition among Sri Lankan recruitment agents. The combination of continued oversupply, the exorbitant fees charged and the frequent occurrence of cheating by agents has allowed scope for other mediation channels (see Eelens et al. this volume).

Mediation through social networks

An important contemporary issue in international migration is to understand how, at the micro-level, migrants develop and use family and social networks that are transnational. In the Waadiyagoda context, social networks involving migrants in the Middle East interconnect with institutional mediation.

The high fees and the many incidents of cheating in (sub-) agent mediation have increased the demand for job positions mediated through personal and kinship links. Many prospective migrants have applied to a sub-agent but not been selected. This is occurring more frequently. Applicants who have not been selected for the Middle East within six months are generally notified to come and take back their passports. Family and social networks are increasingly relied upon. A sub-agent interviewed complained that trade volume has dropped over the last four years because of increased mediation through migrant networks.

The vacancies that are channeled through migrants in the Middle East to kin or friends in Sri Lanka are normally provided by relatives or neighbours of the migrant's own employer. The initiative for mediation often comes from a housemaid herself, as a migrant from Waadiyagoda has many relatives and friends asking her to arrange a job. The expected trustworthiness of the potential employer and his family as well as the accessibility of help and advice of the

experienced migrant herself, play an important role in the value attached to the mediation of a migrant known to her. Moreover, the prospective employer also expects a better performance from a relative or friend of a good housemaid known to them than from a complete stranger[17].

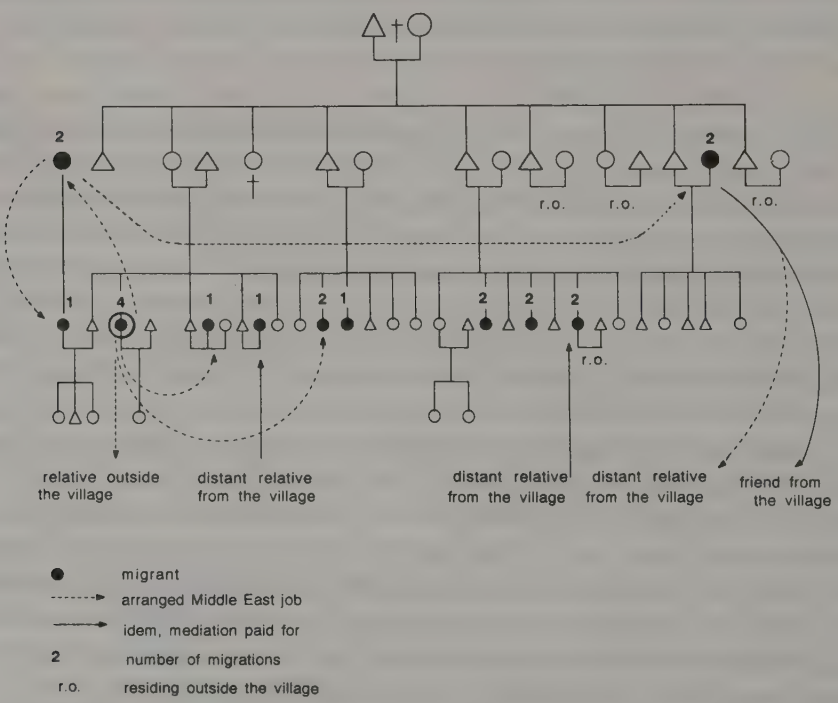
The mediation by migrants in the Middle East is known in the village as 'ticket sending'. This pattern of mediation can be described as informal and, as it is outside the institutional sphere, semi-legal or a-legal, it is distinguished from the formally arranged recruitment services of licensed agents and the informal and illegal transactions of sub-agents. For the migrants themselves, the more important difference is that in this type of informal mediation the mediator might not demand a monetary reward or, when he does, the sum is always lower than in the case of agent-mediation. If a remuneration is asked for by the migrant, the sum does not generally have to be paid in advance so that a large financial outlay prior to migration can be prevented. This arrangement also leaves the prospective migrant with more options for mediation. An agent or sub-agent will always collect the applicant's passport, thereby acquiring a claim which is considered necessary to be assured of the woman's availability when selected. In the case of a migrant mediator only passport copies are needed on the basis of which the visa can be issued in the country of destination.
However, the chance that one may get a job through migrant mediation is quite small as it depends on the migrant's contacts in the Middle East, contacts which are often very limited. Many Middle East migrants were unsuccessful in their attempts to arrange jobs as they were restricted to their employer's house and had employers who were not interested. However, most migrants and their husbands increasingly face pleas for help from prospective migrants, both fellow villagers and kin living elsewhere. The term 'chain migration' may well be applied here as the migrants who depart leave with a number of passport copies to try and arrange a job for their relatives (Bilsborrow et. al. 1984). An example of the importance of 'ticket-sending' for kin relations is depicted in a genealogy of a family with a great number of migrants. This is presented in Figure 2 on the next page.

The central (encircled) person, called Kamela, is a woman who departed for the Middle East in 1979 for the first time and who is now in the Middle East for her fourth term. The *Govigama* villagers will generally point her out as the first migrant in the village. The fact that another women went earlier does not detract from the fact that this migrant was instrumental in the 1982 migration boom in Waadiyagoda. Because of her ability to 'send tickets' with the help of her employer, a Kuwait Immigration officer, she is still a very central figure. One of the first tickets Kamela was successful in acquiring benefited Leilawathie (her elder brother's mother-in-law). Leilawathie has since arranged a job for her daughter to join her

in the same household, the members of which are related to Kamela's employer. Before this however, in 1983, Leilawathie returned the compliment to Kamela by 'sending a ticket' to Kamela's aunt. In 1985, during her second term with the same employer, this aunt was able to secure two jobs for fellow villagers, one of whom voluntarily sent her one month's salary by way of thanks. These two migrants and their husbands have not as yet been able to find vacancies for others although both families are eager to mediate. One of the husbands has been writing his wife that she should try to arrange 'tickets' but she replied that she was not in a position being treated as a prisoner. The husband's worry was that 'some people may think that I do not like to help them to migrate, but, on the contrary, the one or two month's salary we may get out of it is very welcome.' The other migrant's husband is thinking in the same way but he expects to be able to mediate as his wife wrote that her madam is willing to help to find some good places.

Figure 2

Genealogy of Mediation Relations between Migrants



This example shows how over time a more calculated attitude develops as migrants react to the increased fees agents are demanding for access to jobs.

One way or another they want to recover the sums for mediation they themselves paid from prospective migrants. Since 1983 price tags have been attached to migrant mediation, particularly as migrant husbands see a nice profit in the offing if they sell the 'tickets' to the highest bidder (type 4b) which may even include sub-agents[18]. Whether or not a remuneration is asked for by a migrant-mediator depends on the relation between the mediator and the beneficiary. Those prospective migrants who have few close relations in the village are therefore at a disadvantage and reinforce the trend by offering an advance payment in order to get access. However, the risks involved in mediation by migrants should not be underestimated. The migrant may be faced with complaints both by the newcomer she mediated for and by her employers. This strengthens the tendency to make mediation available to an interested party who is neither kin nor fellow-villager.

The escalation of fees has therefore created the situation in which a number of migrants' husbands have become small brokers if their wives or other family members can repeatedly provide vacancies. Prospective migrants must pay the fee in advance or borrow the money, with interest, from the migrant husband. These husbands also lend money to other prospective migrants who need to pay their agents. As money lenders they can make a very handsome profit. In one case, a migrant channeled a number of vacancies to her husband, buying vacancies from other migrants, who had been asked to fill them by their Middle East employers. It is not generally known that this migrant's husband, a former farm labourer, is mediating and money-lending to this extent, as he keeps a low profile to escape criticism. Tickets sold to 'outsiders' at a price are generally kept secret to avoid condemnation.

Capitalizing on the desire of others to migrate and the desperation of people waiting for an opportunity to go, is thus not limited to outside agents; in fact the dividing line is very thin. Prospective migrants and their relatives alike condemn these recent developments and view them as excesses. The high sums demanded by agents, the sub-agent's 'cheating' in trying to buy off migrant 'tickets', and the increasing tendency of migrants and particularly migrant husbands to make a profit by selling vacancies to outsiders, are all much resented as they obviously reduce the villagers' own opportunities to migrate.

Vacancies in the Middle East have also become a commodity within the village, except for kin. Indeed, even though very close family (e.g. mother and sister) are freely given vacancies, the mediation by migrants has systematically developed according to the type of instrumental mediation employed by rural sub-agents.

Conclusions

The structural factors reflected in motivations to migrate in Waadiyagoda originate in landlessness, the uneconomic size of holdings, the lack of agricultural and

non-agricultural employment opportunities for men and women and the decline in real wages. The lack of political patronage for a large section of the village population aggravates this situation. The disillusion of young single women with formal education and yet unable to obtain white collar employment plays an important role. More so because of the virtual absence, both in general and in the country-side in particular, of paid employment open to women. There is little hope of any improvement. New aspirations, probably less pronounced in more isolated villages, cannot be fulfilled. Another factor influencing especially the decision for women to migrate, is the quest to free themselves, at least for the duration of migration, from parental or marital authority.

The constant water scarcity and the drought in the specific year the village initially received first-hand information about the opportunity of Middle East migration, triggered the 1982 boom, which set the pace. The accessibility of the various district centres, the fact that the village is on the roadside and the mobility occasioned by seasonal labour, have contributed to a greater awareness of the possibilities of migration and mediation.

Because they are oriented towards their own region, Waadiyagoda migrants have seen the fees for mediation rise comparatively rapidly. The alternative mediation channels, through kinship and social networks, have subsequently evolved into transactions involving rising monetary rewards. These have affected kin and non-kin relations in the village which have become more competitive as an outcome of limited access to Middle East jobs. Middle East migration has generated its own brokers in the village, who like the agents, capitalize on the oversupply of prospective migrants. These processes have given rise to a situation in which migration is hardly an option for poorer households anymore. The number of 'long term' prospective migrants is rising and consists mainly of women of economically very depressed households, who have been trying to gain access for years.

The migrants, all employed as domestic workers, remit most of their wages. The standard of living of migrant families is in general much improved but this also constitutes a drain on earnings often not reckoned with by the migrant household. The common aim of building a new house for the nuclear family is rarely achieved after one migration period. Though not having provided a structural solution for economically weak households, migration has nevertheless stemmed the tide for households sliding down into further impoverishment. Short term contract migration has not resulted in long term security of livelihood; at the most in additional income sources for the not so poor. Income generating investments are few, also because of the lack of investment possibilities in a stagnating agricultural environment.

NOTES

1. I would like to acknowledge here the helpful and friendly cooperation of the villagers, as well as the enthusiastic support and research assistance of Ms. Somalatha and particularly A.P. Chandralal de Silva. I further owe thanks to Nancy Russell for comments and assistance in clarifying some of the issues covered.

2. In total approximately 100 respondents, including a number of sub-agents and village brokers.

3. Waadiyagoda is a village in the Mulkirigalle electorate of Hambantota district. Pseudonyms for the village and persons are used because of the sensitive nature of some of the information.

4. Source: the 1925 final settlement report on the village. The 1911 census was carried out under the administration of the writer Leonard Woolf, Assistant Government Agent of Hambantota from 1908 to 1911, whose diaries maintained during his administration testify to the agricultural situation of the District.

5. Janatha Vimukhti Peramuna, a radical left movement - and political party from 1977 to 1983 - mainly supported by youth. Since the Peace Accord with India signed in July 1987, the JVP has presented itself as a patriotic (Sinhalese) people's movement for liberation of the "mother country" (from the Indian army) and for taking over of state power. The JVP has seriously destabilised public life and is continuing its militant policy despite the mid 1988 lifting of the government ban on its participation in the electoral process.

6. The NORAD Integrated Rural Development Project concentrates on the arid eastern divisions of the District. In Waadiyagoda, activities included loans of building materials for the improvement of toilet facilities and the distribution of coffee plants.

7. Of the Waadiyagoda households 13% had accumulated debts between Rs. 2,000 and Rs. 4,000 and 12% had still larger debts.

8. General survey of the research project (7% of total population and 30% of Colombo migrants).

9. Ministry of Plan Implementation, Dimensions of Sri Lanka returned migration, Colombo, 1985.

10. As assessed on the basis of interviews with informants in these villages.

11. Identified through key informants and direct interviews. Possession of a passport is taken as a sufficient indication of serious intention to migrate. However, this number is probably larger as some women keep their plans to migrate secret until they succeed in getting a job. The term 'prospective migrants', when used subsequently to this includes neither returned migrants trying to get another job in the Middle East nor the men who constitute a separate case.

12. Included under trade and crafts are only own account workers; 'others' includes those employed as assistants and apprentices.

13. The civil service category includes government employees, mostly teachers and low-grade government officials, some of whom have farming interests. Households with paddy land and highland holdings who do not engage in *chena* cultivation or farm labour are included under (owner) cultivator. This category also incudes households holding land in *ande* (share cropping). Marginal farmers who receive most of their income from *chena* cultivation or part-time labour are included under the *chena* and labour categories. Dependent households are economically weak households lacking members engaged in productive work and include a number of female headed households. I have taken the second income source when the largest single income earner did not contribute to the common household, e.g. an unmarried son in military service.

14. In most countries of the Gulf migrants are only allowed entry as domestic workers for a period of two years. Upon their departure or afterwards almost 40% of the returned migrants were invited by their former employers to work for a second term of two years. Only ten migrants did so, whereas a somewhat larger number were eager to go but did not obtain a ticket.

15. Over the total amount borrowed in 18% of all moves.

16. Colombo survey, return migrants (N=258); for Waadiyagoda both current and return migrants are included.

17. The arrangement is as follows: the employer provides the visa and the one-way ticket, but in this case there is no question of a contract. The prospective migrant simply collects the ticket from a travel agency when she receives word that everything has been arranged in the Middle East and that she will be collected at the airport by her new employers.

18. The highest sum yet offered was to Rs. 8,000, i.e. four-fifths of the average fee demanded by agents in the same year.

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7

MIGRATION TO THE MIDDLE EAST, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY: THREE CASE STUDIES

S.T. Hettige

Introduction

Recent history of human society has witnessed numerous instances where people in different parts of the world have resorted to migration, both temporary and permanent, as a way of improving their material and social conditions. The process has involved both international and intra-national mobility.

In many third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, rural people have migrated to urban centres in search of better opportunities when the living conditions in the rural hinterland have become unattractive or intolerable due to landlessness, unemployment and poverty. In Sri Lanka, rural-urban migration has taken place only to a limited extent and this has resulted in a more balanced population distribution between rural and urban areas. This phenomenon has been attributed to at least two factors, namely, intra-rural migration and relatively more favourable conditions found in the rural areas, the latter largely owing to a comprehensive social welfare programme involving food and other subsidies, particularly after independence. Moreover, living and working conditions which the urban economy could offer to the unskilled, unemployed people were no more favourable than those in the rural areas.

In Sri Lanka, therefore, migration was more an intra-rural movement of people than a rural-urban one. This has been true for both pre-independence and post-independence periods alike. Dry-zone peasant settlements irrigated by the renovated and newly constructed reservoirs attracted many landless peasants from the densely populated wet-zone districts, both hill-country and low lying coastal areas (Farmer 1957). Apart from this migration, in recent years there has emerged a new seasonal migratory flow involving a large mass of agricultural workers who migrate temporarily from the hill-country districts to the North Central Province, particularly to Polonnaruwa District for wage labour during the peak months of the agricultural cycle in the latter. These workers, who are mostly members of poor peasant families from Kandyan villages, stay in the host villages and settlements for several weeks

and return home when the demand for additional labour is exhausted in the area. Minor migratory flows of the same type can also be observed in the south and south-eastern parts of the country as well (for details see Hettige 1988).

Unlike intra-national migration, inter-national migration in Sri Lanka remained a prerogative of the affluent social strata until recently. The people involved in this process were mostly professionally qualified persons who migrated to developed, Western countries. When Sinhalese was made the official language in the late 1950's more and more people, particularly Tamils and Burghers, migrated abroad, the former mainly to Malaysia and the latter to Australia. This migration from Sri Lanka was characterized by the relatively small numbers involved and the fact that it concerned whole families, who settled permanently in the country of destination.

The most recent international migratory movement, however, is fundamentally different from former ones in terms of direction, duration and magnitude. Labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East, involving individual workers of both sexes, who migrate for a temporary employment, is of a circulatory nature. The sheer numbers of Middle-East-bound labour migrants leaving the country since 1975 themselves suggest the significance of the phenomenon for Sri Lankan society. Direct and immediate impact of this migration flow on Sri Lankan society emanates from its cyclical nature.

According to available statistics, during the short period between 1979 and 1981 at least 12,000 workers migrated abroad on temporary employment. It has also been estimated that there have been about 200,000 Sri Lankan workers in different Middle East countries at any given point in time in recent years. Even though the flow of migration seems to have slowed down in the last few years, it is estimated that at least 26,000 men and women still migrate annually to different Middle East destinations. This figure is more than one-fifths of the annual addition to the country's labour force (Census Report 1981).

At the beginning, migrants were mostly from urban areas, mainly from the capital and its environs. Later, migrants originated from the rural hinterland as well. While urban migrants were mostly from overcrowded slums and shanties, their rural counterparts were not randomly drawn from the countryside, as certain rural areas and certain communities sent more migrants than others.

The impact of temporary labour migration on a sending country can be examined at different levels: i.e. national, regional, community, family and individual. The impact can also be examined in different terms: i.e. economic, political, demographic, social, cultural and psychological. Though some studies have already been conducted in Sri Lanka dealing with several of the above aspects (Korale

1983; Dias 1983; Brochmann 1986; Wignaraya 1987; Sarath 1984; Spaan 1989; e.a.), certain issues have not received sufficient attention. This chapter is an attempt to deal with some of these neglected aspects, namely, the implications of migration for the existing patterns of social stratification and social mobility. This topic is particularly significant in view of the fact that the avowed motive of migration is the improvement of the living conditions of the migrants.

This chapter is based on fieldwork conducted in three localities in Sri Lanka: a squatter settlement in the city of Colombo, an agricultural village in the central hills and a low-income housing scheme located close to the above village. After an initial household survey aimed at gathering basic socio-economic data from a purposive sample of migrant and non-migrant families, more detailed data were gathered through key informant interviews, in-depth interviews with migrants and non-migrants, case studies, and direct observations. The main purpose of the field studies, carried out in 1986-87, has been to ascertain whether the process of migration has had any significant impact on the existing systems of social inequality in the communities surveyed. A particular concern of the study, therefore, was to enquire into the issue of how migrants returning from the Middle East fit into their own society. Given the circulatory nature of the migration process, this can be considered a highly significant issue.

Migration from three Sri Lankan communities

A. Bogollagama

The first village selected as a field location for the present study is a Sinhalese community with a handful of Tamils and Muslims (Moors and Malays). The village has been under urban influences in recent years from the nearby town of Matale, and has also witnessed a steady influx of newcomers, who through marital relationships and the purchase of land and residential property have entered the village during the last 20 years or so.
Even though a significant percentage of families (± 30%) have access to paddy land, most of the paddy parcels are small (see Table 1) and do not produce a marketable surplus. The majority of farmers keeps the rice for their own consumption.

Although the residents of Bogollagama derive a major part of their income from sources outside the village, the local agrarian resources are still considerable, at least for some of the *purana* (traditional Sri Lankan village) families. Its homestead gardens, even when they are small, constitute a significant source of subsistence.

Table 1

Size of Paddy Land Parcels in Bogollagama

Extent	No of parcels	%
Less than ¼ acre	9	29,0
> ¼ - 1 acre	13	42,0
1 acre	2	6,5
over 1 acre	5	16,0
2 acres and above	2	6,5
Total	31	100,0

Table 2

Size of Home Gardens (Highland) Plots Owned by Respondent Families in Bogollagama

Extent	number of plots	%
Less than ¼ acre	53	41
> ¼ - 1 acre	57	44
1 acre	16	12
Over 1 acre	4	3
Total	130	100

The owners of larger homestead gardens grow cash crops such as pepper, coffee, cocoa and cloves. In the past, these crops provided the villagers with a cash income, while paddy cultivation was the main source of food for them. But, with population growth due to both natural increase and influx of 'outsiders' and the subsequent fragmentation of land holdings, many villagers were forced to look for other sources of income in the form of white collar jobs, wage labour, business and even gemming. Doing so, many villagers acquired an outward-looking orientation and became involved in wider economic, social and political processes in order to secure resources.

As a result of the diverse attempts of villagers to broaden and strengthen their economic base the social-economic differentiation in the community intensified. While more and more families could adopt modern lifestyles characterized by

modern housing, electricity, television and modern forms of transportation, families with a weaker economic base were gradually marginalized. For these, Middle East migration provided an opportunity to catch up with the more affluent and afforded an escape from poverty and stagnation.

Table 3

Caste Composition in Bogollagama

Major caste	Sub caste	Number of families	%
Govigama (cultivators)			
	Brahmin (upcountry)	5	4
	Govigama aristocratic (*Radala*)	5	4
	Ranpatti	42	32
	Ridi Patti	3	2
	Low country *Govigama*	23	18
Dhobi (Washers)		16	12
Navandanna (Goldsmith)		8	6
Panna		3	2
Karawa (Fishers)	Up country	4	3
	Low country	5	4
Vellala (Tamil farmer caste)		1	1
Maravetti (Tamil)		2	2
Durawa (Toddy Tappers)		3	2
Berawa (Tom Beaters)		1	1
Kasavar (Tamil Potters)		3	2
Padu (Palanquin Bearers)		1	1
Not known		5	4
Total		130	100

Note: Traditionally most common names of castes are given between brackets

What is evident from the available sources of information is that, as late as two decades ago, there had been a close correspondence between the local caste structure and the distribution of landed property. Though this has changed substantially over the years, even today some congruence between the two is

evident. The vast majority of the paddy land-owing families come from the *Govigama* caste.

Bogollagama, being a multi-caste village, is stratified in terms of caste. Most of the villagers have some relationship to *purana* families and their caste identities are widely known. Since the residents in the village in general are conscious of the caste system, there has been a constant attempt to trace the caste origins of new comers. Even when the caste position of a family is ambiguous, the villagers have tended to assign it a position within the local system.

While the majority of the villagers belong to different *Govigama* sub-castes, the others belong to a number of other low and up-country castes such as *Dhobi* (washer), *Karawa*, both Kandyan and low country, *Berawa* (tom beaters), *Navandanna* (goldsmith) and *Padu* (palanquin bearers).

As Table 3 indicates, the *Govigama* caste is segmented into numerous sub-castes. Most of these families belong to two sub-castes, namely *Ranpatti* and low country *Govigama*, which are considered by *Govigama* '*Brahmin*' and aristocratic families as inferior to them. Nevertheless, families belonging to *Govigama* sub-castes look down on villagers belonging to other castes. This claim to superiority is disputed only by those belonging to *Karava* caste, particularly its Kandyan sub-caste; they believe that they descend from the Kandyan aristocratic ruling elite (*Shastriya*) and therefore are superior to all the others.

In spite of the fact that the village population is segmented into different caste groups, caste does not interfere in the day-to-day affairs of the village. This is largely due to the fact that the actual roles and functions of most villagers have very little to do with their caste position. It is only when the whole village is involved in major events such as weddings, funerals, new year celebrations or religious ceremonies at the village temple that major caste divisions become manifest in some form or another. Even on such occasions, minor caste differences rarely come to the surface.

Caste affiliations are, however, carefully determined at the time of the selection of a marital partner. Even in this case, minor caste differences are often ignored in favour of more tangible gains such as wealth and prestige derived from sources other than caste such as bureaucratic power, political influence and modern life styles. Such compromises, however, are rarely made when the gap between the castes involved is perceived to be great. In a very recent incident, a girl belonging to a higher aristocratic family who eloped with a young migrant with whom she fell in love was expelled from the family and, in order to completely shut the door to her, religious rituals normally performed at funerals were conducted as if she

were dead and gone. This kind of extreme intolerance is rarely found among poor villagers in spite of the existence of caste divisions among them.

Villagers in Bogollagama have been receptive to new opportunities in the past as well. Many village families have sent their children to good schools at Matale and Kandy and, today, many of them are employed outside the village as teachers, technical officers, clerks, electricians, etc. Some have small businesses in Matale town. In the late sixties, some villagers had gone out 'gemming' in an area in the adjoining District of Polonnaruwa. They continued to engage in this lucrative activity for several years till they could no longer find gems frequently enough. During this short period of time, some villagers amassed sufficient wealth not only to build better houses but also to invest in other ventures such as trade and agriculture.
In this process socio-economic differentiation in the village became more visible. While more and more families could adopt modern lifestyles characterized by modern housing, electric lighting and the ownership of television sets, motor bikes and cars, etc. poor families became marginalized.

In the late seventies, some villagers perceived migration to the Middle East as a way of escaping from poverty and stagnation in the face of new wealth acquired by more affluent villagers. They could already observe a flow of migration to the Middle East from a nearby, low income housing settlement located just a few hundred yards away from their own place of residence.
Since the early 1980's, 26 persons from 19 families have migrated to the Middle East. Of these 14 were females and 12 were males. Since there are certain significant differences between the two categories their background data are given in two separate tables (table 4 and 5) below.

All the women who went to the Middle East had gone as housemaids; one girl had managed to secure employment as a mechanic in the Maldives. Almost all the female migrants had been either unemployed or housewives before they migrated and originated from poor non-farming households. As can be seen in Table 5 the breadwinners in most families came from the lower ranks of village society and performed occupations such as casual labour, artisanry and minor employment in the state bureaucracy. Their low position in society is only partly reflected in their caste background. The poor economic position, however, makes even the *Govigama* families in the sample a group avoided by the more affluent in the village.
When we look at the male migrants from Bogollagama (Table 5) it appears that they generally come from more affluent backgrounds and have gone to the

Table 4

Social backgrounds of female migrants in Bogollagama

Case No.	Occupation prior to migration	Marital status	Father/Husbrands' main source of income	Paddy land ownership	Caste
F 1	unemployed	single	retired hotel worker/now tenant farmer	no	*Dhobi*
F 2	home gardening	married	carpenter/ agricultural labourer	no	*Dhobi*
F 3	unemployed	single	agricultural labourer	no	*Dhobi*
F 4	unemployed	single	retired lorry driver	no	*Navandanna*
F 5	unemployed	single	survey dept. labourer	no	Kandyan-*karawa*
F 6	unemployed	single	mason/farm labourer	no	Kandyan-*karawa*
F 7	unemployed	separated now married to case M11 (see table 5)	Katcheri Peon's daughter	no	mixed, *Karawa/ Govigama*
F 8	housewife	married	poor farmer	yes (¼ acre)	*Govigama*
F 9	housewife	remarried	carpenter	no	*Govigama*
F10	housewife	married	postman	no	*Govigama*
F11	unemployed	single	pavement hawker	no	*Govigama*
F12	unemployed	separated	retired driver	no	mixed, *Padu/ Govigama*
F13	unemployed	single	retired driver	no	mixed, *Padu/ Govigama*
F14	unemployed	single	retired driver	no	mixed, *Padu/ Govigama*

Table 5

Social Backgrounds of Male Migrants in Bogollagama

Case No.	Marital status	Occupation prior to migration	Fathers/spouse + occupation	Paddy-land owner-ship	Caste	Job in M.E.
M 1	single	unemployed	cycle shop-owner	no	not clear	house driver
M 2	married	administra-tive officer	housewife	yes	*Govigama*	not known
M 3	married	plumber	farmer	no	*Govigama*	plumber
M 4	married	unemployed*	housewife	no	*Govigama*	driver
M 5	single	unemployed*	mechanic	no	*Govigama*	driver
M 6	single	unemployed*	mechanic	no	*Govigama*	mechanic
M 7	single	unemployed*	mechanic	no	*Govigama*	heavy vehicle driver
M 8	single	business	retired driver	no	not clear	not known
M 9	married	asst.prod. manager	housewife	no	mixed *G/K*	production manager
M10	single	hotel worker	business	no	not known	hotel steward
M11	married	unemployed	ME migrant (case F7)	no	*Karawa*	cleaner
M12	single	driver	hire car driver	no	*Karawa*	driver

* all from the same family
\+ In cases of married migrants, spouses occupation is given

Middle East for skilled occupations. It is, however, significant to note that except in one case (M3) all the migrants came from non-farming households. Many male migrants were unemployed prior to their migration and, of the others, only two had held permanent positions in the formal sector. Both of them had gone to the Middle East on unpaid leave, retaining their jobs while they were away. Given their background the male migrants can be said to belong to the lower middle or middle layers of the social hierarchy of the community. The fact that they come in majority from higher castes (*Govigama* and *Karawa*) supports this view.

Middle East migration in Bogollagama had no doubt become an important and sensitive social issue. The villagers cannot have failed to notice the new phenomenon thanks to the absence of many young men and women, the display

of newly acquired wealth by returned migrants and the gossip about the position and behaviour of female migrants in the Middle East. Also, some families have experienced the upsetting of family life due to the migration of one of the spouses and the subsequent deterioration of marital relationships.
However it has not resulted in an altogether negative attitude to migration: when asked whether they wished to have a family member in the Middle East 94% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. The outcome was different when asked about whether they preferred to have a male or female relative in the Middle East, the vast majority wanted a male. Only 27% were indifferent as to the sex of the migrant; significantly almost all these came from poor families. As we have seen, migrant statistics from the village are in keeping with these attitudes.

Is social mobility possible in the context of migration? If so, for whom? Several migrant families in Bogollagama have actually put together sufficient resources to open up new avenues of income. They have bought agricultural land, opened retail shops, bought commercial vehicles such as motor coaches, etc. They also have long term savings deposits which generate a regular income. These families, however, are the exception rather than the rule. In almost all these cases, they have been repeat migrants, multiple migrants from the same family and migrants with skills which could be marketed for higher salaries and wages. They have in fact not only improved their present material circumstances but have also established sources of income within the local system of production and exchange relations so as to be able to sustain their newly acquired life chances independent of the external source from which they derived their working capital. It should be noted that most of these migrants are skilled male migrants. Many of them also come from relatively well-to-do families.

Since the social hierarchy in this region is rather flexible, the chances for individuals and families to move up or down are greater here. It should be noted that there have been many intercaste marriages among them. Almost all the male migrants also occupy different positions in this middle zone of the social stratification. Unlike the female migrants coming from the lower end, some of these migrants have been so dynamic and aggressive in terms of adopting new life styles, venturing into new areas of economic activity and asserting themselves, that they seem to pose a threat to the existing hierarchy, at least in the long run. This is particularly significant in view of the fact that the local upper class families in general have not been able to consolidate their economic position in the face of the diversification of sources of wealth. Some of them have already realized that they have no time to lose. One family has already sent a son to the Middle East. No doubt the others are seriously considering following suit. Such

families may worry about the threat posed when a migrant family of lowly origins, which has become affluent in the recent past owing to the migration of some of its members to the Middle East, virtually asserts that it is now on par with them. Even though these moves were strongly countered by the latter, it indicates the general trend.

B. Matale housing settlement

The second research location is a housing settlement near Matale town and the village of Bogollagama. Though located in a rural environment the settlement displays many urban features. The settlement was originally established to accommodate low income families from Matale who lived in temporary shelters or rented housing; the houses in the settlement were leased on a long term basis. After a prescribed period of continuous occupation the houses were given in ownership to the occupants.
Due to the fact that the inhabitants, while having lived in the settlement for decades, originally come from different areas and villages, they have not been able to piece together their diverse primordial affiliations. As they do not share a common history, 'origins' by and large have little relevance in the sphere of social interaction between individuals and families. It is a heterogeneous community in terms of ethnicity (Table 6) and socio-economic standing.

Table 6

Ethnic Composition of the Interviewed Population in Matale

Ethnicity of informant	Number	%
Sinhalese	39	58,0
Tamil	5	7,5
Moor/Malay	22	33,0
Burgher	1	1,5
Total	67	100,0

While the Muslims in the settlement form a more closely knit group due to the presence of a mosque functioning as a religious, counselling and welfare centre, status stratification is more a product of consumption patterns and lifestyles than of caste structure, as in Bogollagama, and is dependent on the extent and sources of income and occupational gradations. In 1986 the settlement consisted of 235

housing units with a population of around 2,000 (Spaan 1989:124). For the present study 67 household units were surveyed.

Table 7

Employment Status of the Interviewed Population in Matale

Employment status	Number	%
Teacher	3	4,5
Business	5	7,5
Supervisor	1	1,5
Nurse	1	1,5
Administrative officer	3	4,5
Mason	2	3,0
Driver	1	1,5
Tailor/dressmaker	1	1,5
Farm labour	2	3,0
Other skilled labour	1	1,5
Other unskilled labour	1	1,5
Unemployed/housewife	41	61,0
Not stated	5	7,5
Total	67	100,0

An important feature that emerges from the above data is the fact that the housing settlement has no rural economic base; the inhabitants are dependent on income sources that lie outside their locality. Apart from a few families engaged in business ventures, almost all the others are dependent on wage employment. Except for some small scale home-gardening and some farm labour no income is derived from agriculture.

Whereas many parents aspired to give their children higher education in order to secure more lucrative and prestigious employment such as white collar jobs (teaching, clerical work), due to severe competition many have failed. A substantial number of second generation children have thus remained unemployed despite having received higher education, and are, in addition, unprepared to take up blue collar jobs.

When opportunities for migrating to the Middle East were opened up in the late 1970's, the housing settlement became a fertile ground for recruitment of both male and female workers. Moreover, many of those who were employed, were also available for migration as they were not linked to the local economy through

strong structural relationships owing to the 'nature' of their employment: they were either self-employed in the informal economy of Matale town or engaged in irregular wage labour in the area.

Table 8

Age and Marital Status of Migrants in Matale Housing Settlement

Age	Number	%	Marital status	Number	%
18-30	14	54	Single	6	23
31-40	10	38	Married	12	46
over 40	2	8	Separated	1	4
	—	—	Other (divorced etc.)	7	27
Total	26	100	Total	26	100

Table 9

Education and Employment of Migrants in Matale Housing Settlement

Educational attainment	Number	%	Employment prior to migration	Number	
				Male	Female
No schooling	2	7,5	Teaching	1	-
Grade 5 or less	4	15,0	Business	-	2
Grade 6-9	2	7,5	Supervisor	1	-
Grade 10	2	7,5	Adm. officer	-	1
O.L. passes	13	50,0	Driver	-	1
A.L. passes	2	7,5	Labourer	-	2
Other	1	5,0	Casual labour	1	-
			Skilled labour	-	1
	—	—	Unemployed/housewife	4	12
Total	26	100,0	Total	7	19

Typical for the housing settlement is that female migrants far outnumber the male migrants: while there were 26 migrants from 16 families out of the 67 households covered for the present study, 73% were female. The tables 8 and 9 give some basic information on the migrant population in the housing settlement.

From those data the following general profile can be drawn up: the migrants were young, educated, had been or were married and the majority were not engaged in income-generating activity prior to migration. Also, as in Bogollagama, the migrants were (wholly or partially) not dependent on agricultural sources but on monetary incomes. As with the migrants in Bogollagama the migrants in the housing settlement were not strongly tied down by structural relationships and this made Middle East migration all the more attractive to the families involved.

Living in the housing settlement was not prestigious; quite the contrary, since those who live outside it, such as villagers of Bogollagama, consider the inhabitants there as 'lowly', from unknown backgrounds and with less respect for local traditions. This in spite of the fact that many families have moved up in terms of educational and occupational achievement. The fact that Middle East migration had led to far more widespread 'consumerism' than in Bogollagama and in addition to (real or alleged) deviant behaviour such as adultery, alcoholism and neglect of children while the female spouses are away, has only corroborated this opinion. Pointing to these incidents many outside the settlement tend to conclude that there has been a general 'moral decline' in the settlement.

The fact that the families in the settlement are much more independent of each other than in Bogollagama, suggesting less social control through kinship and neighbourhood ties, means that socio-cultural restrictions are less effective in this location. So unlike in Bogollagama, female migrants in the housing settlement did not necessarily come from poorer families; in fact they came from a variety of social backgrounds.

This all contributed to the fact that many prospective migrants could follow relatively easily the growing social current of Middle East migration, greatly facilitated by the close proximity of the settlement to Matale town. The absence of traditional criteria for social stratification increased even more the urge to join the ranks of Middle East migrants in order to achieve some prestige through investments in housing and aggressive consumption patterns.

Even though the housing scheme originally accommodated low income, working class families, over the years a certain degree of social differentiation has emerged there for a number of reasons. Firstly, some residents who had small businesses have expanded their operations over the years so that they now have higher incomes and a better standard of living than many others in the settlement. Secondly, the second generation children belonging to some working class families have acquired educational qualifications making them eligible for white collar employment. Though only a few have managed to obtain public sector employment,

many others have found employment in the private sector: these jobs are obviously more prestigious than those held by their parents. These young people have also adopted modern life styles. Thirdly, in recent years, a few lower middle class families have moved into the housing scheme. While some of them have purchased housing units from original allottees, others are living in rented houses. These people consider themselves as 'middle class' and do not freely associate with other residents. And finally many families who have returned or current migrants in the Middle East also assert themselves by adopting more aggressive consumption patterns which most non-migrants families are unable to follow; the old transistor radios possessed by the latter can hardly match the vibrating sounds emanating from the stereo sound systems installed in some migrant houses. Also non-migrant women can rarely compete with their migrant counterparts who move about in the neighbourhood in most glamourous costumes wearing tantalizing imported cosmetics!

As such Middle East migration has contributed to the process of social differentiation that was already under way in the housing settlement; however, it has not contributed to an alteration of the structural relationships in the majority of cases, due to the fact that migrant families either do not have sufficient funds (beforehand or after migrating) to invest in productive ventures or spend their savings on consumption and on renovation of their houses. It was noted here that many migrants had to pawn jewelry, borrow money against interest or mortgage their houses in order to cover the costs of migration; several could not even pay back before set deadlines and thus became tenants in their own houses. Moreover, because status upgrading could best be effected here through adopting more lavish consumption and bettering of one's housing condition, in the absence of more traditional inhibiting status criteria, many followed these vehicles of status upgrading.

Yet even if migration has helped in upgrading the material circumstances of many inhabitants, it is often of a temporary nature as many fail to sustain this level of consumption and living, and sometimes even have to resort to disposing of their newly earned status symbols. One way to counter this is by migrating repeatedly, which, because of all kinds of infrastructural obstacles, is not always possible. The urge to migrate has increased, however, especially among the poor unemployed men and women, of which the latter especially have little to lose in terms of their reputation.

C. Siduhath Lane squatter settlement

The growth-oriented liberalized economic policies of the post-1977 Government of Sri Lanka substantially contributed to the expansion of the 'informal' sector

of the country's urban economy (Hettige 1986). This was the direct result of increased private sector commercial activity in the urban areas involving both imported and locally produced consumer goods. The high rate of inflation and increased money supply (partly owing to the devaluation of the rupee), the growth of service activities such as tourism and private passenger transport and the increased availability of foreign capital through official and private transfers increased the demand for consumer goods and services, creating more opportunities for those who were dependent on the urban informal economy for their sustenance. The urban slums and shanties, particularly those in and around Colombo, were directly affected by this expansionary process because most of those who 'belonged' to the informal urban economy happened to live in slums and shanties. This new expansionary process had at least two consequences. On the one hand, it substantially contributed to social differentiation in the seemingly homogeneous communities of the urban poor, widening the gap between those who gained from the expansion of the urban informal economy and those who did not because of their structural position within the urban economy. The latter included marginally employed men and women such as casual labourers, those engaged in personal services such as domestic workers and persons engaged in some cottage industries which were virtually wiped out by cheap imported substitutes, i.e. paper bag making. Their living conditions deteriorated as their earnings, despite increased wages, could buy very little in the open market due to a high rate of inflation.

The Siduhath Lane squatter settlement in the south-western part of Colombo is strategically situated alongside a canal and in close proximity to a large roadside market which caters to a large lower middle and middle class population in the vicinity. The residents of the settlement have easy access to formal and informal employment in the city as well as to work providing personal services to the affluent locals.

The settlement, originally founded in the late 1950's, has grown into a large shanty community consisting of over 200 families (1985) from all kinds of locations in and out of Colombo. It is a ethnically mixed community, with a majority of Sinhalese and large groups of Tamils, Moors and Malays.

As with the former location the inhabitants do not share a common history which could serve as a basis for social cohesion. However, as with several other shanty communities in Colombo, this settlement accommodates one of the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the urban population. Even if there is a certain socio-economic differentiation in the community based on income levels, subsistence sources and period of residence, it is often reduced to a secondary position as the common lifestyle of the inhabitants, characterized by poor housing and poor amenities together with an inadequate infrastructure, tends to produce a feeling

of community and egalitarianism particularly vis à vis the outside population. This is evident not only in quasi-kinship terminology used in addressing each other but also in informal forms of cooperation and exchange relations between families and households; this is not to say, however, that there is no competition and conflict in the community.

Table 10

Ethnic Composition in Siduhath Lane

Ethnicity	Number	%
Sinhalese	47	55
Tamil	24	28
Moor	11	13
Malay	3	4
Total	85	100

The part of the shanty settlement that was surveyed for the purpose of this study consisted of 85 families or household units. Educational attainment levels are low; this is common for the urban residents in shanties, as they are often prevented by many factors from using urban educational facilities. Few children from poor urban families appear to escape poverty through 'formal' channels (i.e. through education leading to higher employment); the majority enter the labour force early, generally in the informal sector, in order to supplement the meagre family income. If they find work at all, it is manual work or in highly competitive trade in the urban commodity sector, as is reflected in table 11.

Of the 85 households covered in the study of this location, 30 (or 35%) reported as having migrants, either currently in the Middle East or already returned to Sri Lanka. Most of the migrants were young (80% aged between 20 and 39), were married or separated (together 83%) and were female (75%). Only 6% of migrants had passed secondary school examinations such as GCE ordinary level and 10% had no formal schooling. Not surprisingly, as can be seen in Table 12, the migrants were either unemployed or in unskilled or marginal occupations.

Table 11

Employment of Informants in Siduhath Lane, Colombo (N=85)

Employment	Number	%
White collar	2	2,5
Skilled labour	5	6,0
Unskilled labour	13	15,0
Female domestic	3	3,5
Petty trade	12	14,0
Unemployed	48	56,5
Other	2	2,5
Total	85	100,0

Table 12

Occupation of Migrants Prior to Migration in Siduhath Lane

Occupation	Number		
	Male	Female	Total
Business	-	1	1
Casual labour	-	1	1
Petty trade	2	3	5
Skilled labour	-	1	1
Other unskilled labour	-	1	1
Unemployed	6	15	21
Total	8	22	30

As is clear, the migrants in general were marginal to the mainstream of the urban economy. If self-employed as street-vendors, shoe-repairers etc. their earnings are unstable and inadequate, due to severe competition for a minute share of the market, meaning that illness or injury can cause serious disruption of their precarious existence. The situation of the unemployed is even worse if they resort to irregular practices such as theft or prostitution.

As such, the migrants from Siduhath Lane were not strongly tied down by structural relationships in the urban economy and consequently labour migration to the Middle

East offers an attractive prospect. Moreover, for many it was seen as a way out of a life of poverty and near-starvation.

The vast majority of migrants from Siduhath Lane were young married females who went to the Middle East as housemaids. As was said earlier, it is less costly to secure employment for women than for males due to greater demand and lower recruitment fees. This, together with the fact that females are not very often main breadwinners, makes the sending of women a more attractive alternative for poorer families. Also, unlike in traditional rural settings, poor families in the urban slums are not constrained by socio-cultural restrictions emanating from their own communities or from society at large. Family life is fluid, unstable and more flexible than in traditional villages, due to precarious economic circumstances and a lack of group pressure on and support to individual families during turbulent times. So in shanty settlements, adultery, separation and divorce are more common.

Traditional views of women's role, centred on household and children, is generally untenable in practice for inhabitants of shanty settlements; the women are often forced to supplement the meagre and unstable incomes of their spouses, making the idea of women as breadwinners more easily acceptable. Most of the husbands express some anxiety over the possibility of their wives becoming sexually involved in the Middle East but they do not lose face for 'selling their wives for money' as their neighbours, unlike their rural counterparts, perceive it in different terms. Finally the stereotyped view that outsiders have of shanty inhabitants, i.e. prone to immoral and deviant behaviour, gives the women the idea that they have virtually no social esteem to lose by migrating to the Middle East, thus greatly facilitating the process.
Consumerism and Middle East migration reinforce each other in the Siduhath Lane shanty settlement; while higher income groups could adopt modern consumption patterns and lifestyles through their money earned locally, the poorer segments of the population could do so only through migration. These circumstances persuaded more and more people to migrate and the fact that, unlike in rural areas, migrants no longer constitute an insignificant minority in the slums, plus the close proximity of the shanty inhabitants to information centres and recruiters, means that their propensity to follow the social current of migration is even greater.

When focussing on the implications of labour migration on social differentiation and mobility in the shanty settlement, it should be recalled that the social distance between the disadvantaged shanty dwellers and the more affluent people outside the community is far more significant than the intra-community social differentiation. Given the poor living circumstances and often appalling

infrastructure in the shanties, together with certain handicaps such as inadequate access to education and to stable, prestigious employment, individual social mobility is virtually impossible while remaining in the community. Recently there have been some developments pointing to attempts on the part of the community to achieve infrastructural upgrading; development councils have been set up in order to obtain basic services, such as sewerage and water supply and the ownership of the land on which the shanties are built. This has been greatly stimulated by the government's policy of legitimizing shanty settlements through housing projects together with development activities of non-governmental organizations working in the area.

The main vehicle for upgrading social status is improvement of housing facilities and consumption pattern through an increase in income. Many from Siduhath Lane have tried to achieve this through Middle East migration; however, it is only effective when the migrants (families) have managed to turn remittances and savings into productive investments, thereby maybe even managing to leave the community altogether and settling in a neighbourhood of greater social standing. However, as we also observed in the other communities examined in this study, only a minority of migrant families are able to do this. This is also true for Siduhath Lane; the vast majority of migrants from this settlement are females who go to the Middle East as housemaids, who are paid relatively little in comparison to skilled male migrants. They are unable to save large sums of money because of the high demand for remittances on the part of the family left behind and a general absence of other sources of subsistence, a situation exacerbated when family members are unemployed or when the migrant fails to complete her term of employment in the Middle East. Many migrant families are dependent on incoming remittances, which together with changed consumption patterns and sometimes wastage of money (alcoholism, gambling, drug abuse) makes the propensity to save very slight. One effect is that many try to remigrate to the Middle East when resources have been exhausted.

Because of the proposed physical upgrading programme at Siduhath Lane initiated by the government, many migrants, if they have any savings, can also be expected to invest in housing and other amenities in the next few years, thereby changing the physical appearance of their neighbourhood and hoping to change the negative stigma attached to the shanty settlement, in the knowledge that moving out of the settlement in favour of better surroundings is hardly possible.

Conclusions

Migration to the Middle East is essentially an attempt to improve life chances. This is exactly why people in the lower rungs of society are more interested in labour migration. Their immediate goal is to better their material circumstances, thinking that in the long run this would pave the way for improved social status.

While it is not denied that there has been a general improvement in the living conditions of the returned migrants and their families, albeit often temporaly, migration has brought about hardly any significant structural change. The instances of returned migrants getting themselves 'established' in terms of a steady new source of subsistence independent of migration are few and far between. Those who have done so have in fact moved up on the social ladder; they are few because mostly only male skilled workers succeed in accomplishing this, a minority in the stream of migrants from Sri Lanka.

As far as the implications for status stratification are concerned, there is a fundamental difference on the one hand between male and female migrants and, on the other, between rural and urban settings. Even if male migrants did not gain any social esteem by migrating, there is certainly no devaluation of their social status. As far as female migrants are concerned, however, there is a difference between urban and rural settings. In an urban situation, since the female migrants come primarily from slums and shanties, migration does not bring about any significant change in their social status within the wider social context since their social status is usually low prior to migration; even in their own neighbourhood hardly any significant change in perceptions can be observed.
In traditional rural settings female migrants sometimes pay a heavy price in social esteem. In the case of unmarried girls parents are also confronted with the social consequences because migration has become a significant handicap in the marriage market; due to the alleged loss of virginity, the requirement to pay larger dowries in compensation has become more frequent. Some prospective partners flatly refuse to marry.

On the other hand, the general improvement in the material circumstances of many migrant families has certainly brought some relief. Improved housing and possession of an array of household goods, functioning as status symbols, often placed these families 'above' their impoverished neighbours, in both rural and urban settings. Temporarily at least, the deprivation of the migrant vis à vis the more affluent social strata is certainly a relative one because they have won some envy from those who are lower down the scale!

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8

LABOUR MIGRATION, HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

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Introduction

Although some recent studies on migration (Seck 1986; Siddiqui 1983; Gilani 1983; Dias 1983; Bilqueez, Faiz and Hamid 1981; e.d.) suggest a certain degree of interaction between migration and household structure, these accounts are rather vague and sometimes even contradictory. So far no empirical research into this topic has been conducted for Sri Lankan labour migration. In this chapter the particular nature of the relationship between labour migration and household structure, as well as the impact on the children left behind are examined more closely.

The results are part of the research project dealing with the social, economic and demographic consequences of Sri Lankan labour migration to the Middle East. The research data are mainly based on a survey covering 891 migrants and 866 family members of current migrants, as well as a total of 407 non-migrants who were interviewed as a control group.

Table 1

Household Structure of Returned, Current and Non-Migrant Households

Household structure	Non-migrants (N=365) %	Current migrants (N=695) %	Returned migrants (N=753) %
Incomplete nuclear	8.5	7.6	9.3
Complete nuclear	75.1	51.4	59.4
Extended	16.4	41.0	31.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey revealed some remarkable data on the household structure of the three populations under study (Table 1). The differences in the distribution of household types among returned, current and non-migrant families, strongly support the notion of some interrelation between household composition and migration.

We define a household as a domestic unit in which the same residence is shared and in which incomes are pooled for common spending. It was not possible in the classification of household types to depart from the relationship of each family member with the head of the household, as these data had not been included in the survey. Therefore the division was based on an analysis of all relationships in the household, regardless of who was considered to be its head. In doing so, we departed from the two following dyadic relationships:

a. Husband and wife, with or without children.
b. One-parent family with children (as a result of being single, widowed, divorced or separated).

We speak of a nuclear household when there is only one of these dyadic relationships in a household. However, when more than one of these types of relationships occurs within one household it is classified as an extended household. When the one-parentwithchildren is the only relationship or when it is the only type of relationship but occurs more than once within the household group, we refer to them respectively as incomplete-nuclear and incomplete-extended. The total absence of a relationship in the aforementioned sense classifies a household as single.

Before making any further analysis, one should be aware of the pitfalls of a one-way interpretation of the basic data in Table 1, that is by explaining the change in household structure as a result of the process of migration only. The opposite - migration as a consequence of a change in household structure - should also be taken into consideration. Here the actual migrational move is the dependent variable and the structure of the household group is one of the conditional aspects of labour migration. In the analysis these distinctive relations between household structure and migration will be considered. First, we will deal with the effect of household composition and related aspects on the motivation of potential migrants to find a job overseas. Second we will focus on the consequences of migration for the structure of the migrant's family. Some data concerning the effects of migration on children will also be presented.

Household structure and migration

When considering household structure as one of the independent variables in the choice for labour migration, the specific nature of labour migration from Sri Lanka involved should be taken into account. The Arab-Islamic Gulf States in the Middle East prefer labour migrants of the Islamic faith. Consequently, Muslims and ethnic Moors - whose cultural backgrounds correspond to those of the populations of the Gulf States - make up a disproportionately large part of the labour force recruited for the Middle East. As the Muslim population has a distinctive family structure this may have an impact on the decision to migrate. Obviously economic factors should be taken into consideration as well. An increase of economic pressure on the household could make the motivation to apply for a job in the Middle East stronger. Households with many children, especially those with children at the unproductive ages under 15, and broken families lacking a steady source of income, are likely to find themselves under such great economic pressure that they will be more induced to seek a Middle East labour contract. This demonstrates that the stage reached in the marital life cycle influences the considerations to migrate.

The structure of the household itself can also be conceived as a means to ease economic pressure on the household. A large body of literature (Desai 1956; Kapadia 1958; Thomas n.d.; Zinkin 1958; et al.) stresses the options of extended families to share incomes and spread risks.

The extent to which alternative household structures and labour migration interfere with each other is, however, difficult to determine because arguments point in different directions. On the one hand, it can be argued that because of the spreading effect, the need for labour migration is not felt as urgently by extended households as by nuclear families when economic pressure increases. On the other, it could be easier for a household with an extended structure to save for the migration costs of one of its members than for a small nuclear unit. The step to leave spouse and children behind will also be easier to take if the latter can be taken care of by other household members. Again the marital life cycle-stage comes into the picture because the aforementioned considerations may differ according to whether prospective migrants are single, married, have lost their partner or have young children.

A last variable, which can be expected to influence the decision to migrate, is the sex of the potential migrant. It seems reasonable to expect a stronger resistance to the migration of women. In Sri Lanka there are some reservations about women travelling unaccompanied. However one looks at it the family left behind will be more profoundly affected when the mother leaves for two years than when the father does, especially when young children are involved.

The primary aim of this section is to reveal the relevance of such family-related factors as the marital life cycle, household structure and the cultural background variables.

Methodology

In the analysis we made use of a control group of non-migrants in those household groups in which members had a positive attitude towards labour migration or were even planning to find employment abroad.
The survey gives two relevant sources of information on the propensity to migrate. One deals with the total number of household members in the control group trying to find employment in the Middle East and the other with the eagerness of the non-migrant respondent to find employment in the Middle East.

Table 2

Logistic Regression on the Propensity to Migrate among Non-Migrants

Category	Beta	Relative propensity	Significance level	Control category
3 or more children	0.285	1.04	*	Less then 3 children
Extended household	0.147	1.02		Nuclear household
Female	-0.332	0.95	**	Male
Aged under 31	-0.643	0.92	**	Aged 45 or over
Aged 31-35	-0.038	0.99		Aged 45 or over
Aged 36-45	0.951	1.13	***	Aged 45 or over

N=407, Y=0.165
Significance level: *** < 0.01, ** < 0.05, * < 0.1

The data on this last variable are processed in a two-level analysis. First the available information on variables having a probable significant effect on the attitude towards migration was scanned, including all the aforementioned elements of family characteristics. This was done by means of an exploratory regression analysis. Based on the resulting model a selection was made of those variables which include categories showing significant results. This selection was entered into a second, logistic regression analysis which had a greater statistical reliability. The outcome, presented in Table 2, shows the effect per category on attitude

towards migration (beta), the relative propensity, the significance level and the matching control category. The relative propensity expresses the ratio of the chance of any member of the mentioned category of belonging to the group with a positive attitude towards Middle East migration and that of a member of the control group, all other variable effects remaining constant.

Analysis of the data on the total number of potential migrants in the household was confined to a normal regression model (Table 3). The outcome shows that of the average number of prospective migrants per category compared to the control category and controlled for other variable effects.

Table 3

Linear Regression on the Number of Potential Migrants in Non-Migrant Households

Category	Beta	Relative number	Significance level	Control category
3 or more children	0.243	1.49	**	Less then 3 children
Incomplete nuclear household	0.241	1.15	**	Complete nuclear household
Extended household	0.269	1.57	**	Complete nuclear household
Tamil	0.265	1.56	*	Sinhalese
Moor	0.417	1.88	***	Sinhalese
Other ethnicity	0.093	1.20		Sinhalese
Intercept	0.327		***	

N=404
Significance level: *** < 0.01, ** < 0.05, * < 0.1

An additional analysis was made of the attitude towards repeated migration among returned migrants. The same two-level procedure was followed as described for the respondent variable in the non-migrant population (Table 4).
Migration usually takes place within the supportive framework of kinship. In this context a distinction was made between a nuclear and an extended household group. As has already been said, a nuclear unit consists of a married couple or of one parent and his/her children, sharing a common residence. An extended household group refers to a kinship group ideally consisting of a married couple, their children

and a number of other relatives who share a common system of normative control and socio-economic cooperation. Furthermore, it proved useful to break down the nuclear and the extended household into complete and incomplete household groups. In the latter case a man or woman heads the household alone.

Table 4

Logistic Regression on the Propensity to Repeated Migration among Returned Migrants

Category	Beta	Relative number	Significance level	Control category
3 or more children	0.219	1.05	***	Less then 3 children
Incomplete nuclear household	-0.213	0.94	**	Complete nuclear household
Extended household	0.256	1.06	**	Complete nuclear household
Moor	-0.082	0.98		Sinhalese
Tamil (et al.)	-0.104	0.97		Sinhalese
Female	-0.276	0.93	***	Male
Married	-0.256	0.94	*	Single
Divorced, separ., widow.	0.713	1.18	***	Single

N=897, Y=0.571
Significance level: *** < 0.01, ** < 0.05, * < 0.1

Results

Table 3 focuses on the general family characteristics of the family background. All the elements included in the model have some significant effect on the number of potential migrants in a household, except for the rest category of ethnicity.
The analysis gives statistical evidence that households with at least 3 children or those with an incomplete composition provide around 50% more potential migrants than the respective control category households with less than 3 children. Extended households and Tamil families compared to Sinhalese score even higher and the Moor population shows a difference of no less than 88%.

The respondent variable (Table 2) provides a better entry into a more individually oriented analysis and allows the inclusion of such factors as age, sex and marital status besides general background variables.
The preliminary scanning analysis selected the variables of the number of children and of sex and age. Furthermore, a broadly divided variable of the type of household group was added which, however, failed to give any significant results in this model. Although the significance of the results is statistically sufficient, again the actual effects measured are far less than in Table 3. Statistical evidence of the determining effect of sex, age and, again, the number of children was found. The relative propensity to Middle East migration of non-migrants leaving at least 3 children behind is 4% higher than that of non-migrants with less than 3 children. The tendency of women to migrate to the Middle East is 5% less than that of men, and people in the 36-45 age group show a 13% higher propensity than those in the 45+group.
A similar analysis among returned migrants, measuring the attitude towards repeated migration (Table 4) provides a picture that is more or less identical to that of the two previous analyses. Again differences between subgroups are statistically significant, but not very great. Households with an extended household structure and those with 3 or more children show a more positive attitude towards migration than the respective control categories, respectively 6% and 5% more. Women tend to be less eager than men to make another migrational move (7% less). On the other hand, the attitudes of respondents from incomplete nuclear households differ from those in the previous analyses. These are now less positive than in the complete nuclear control group. The marital status variable showed some significant results as respondents with a broken marital relationship were more willing (18%) and married respondents less willing (6%) to accept another Middle East contract in comparison with the group of single returned migrants. We will refer to the relation between migration and marital dissolution in more detail later.

However, the attitude towards migration, clarified by these analyses, refers to the supply side only of the 'market' for Middle East migration labour. The requirements of labour demand do not necessarily correspond with those of the potential labour force, represented here by the subgroup of non-migrants showing a positive attitude towards migration. Labour demand, probably in combination with social and economic barriers, provides a second filter in the possible labour migrant profile.
Table 5 gives some information on the profile of the total district population, the total control group of non-migrants, the selected subgroup of non-migrants willing to migrate and the group of actual labour migrants.

Table 5

Ethnic and Religious Profile of Different Populations

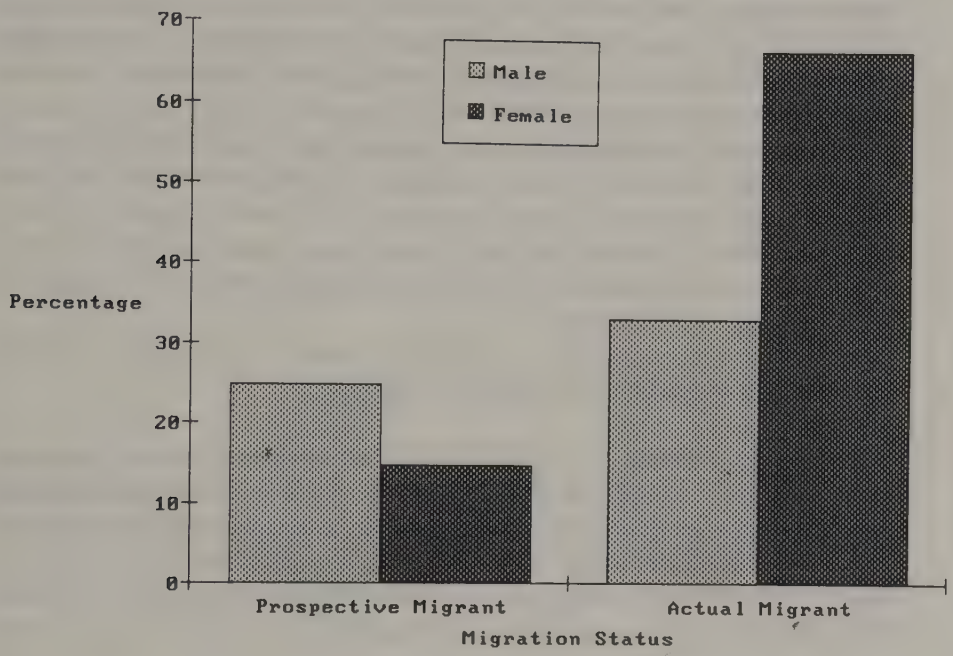
Ethnicity	Urban Colombo District*	Non migrants	Prospective migrants	Actual migrants
		(N=407)	(N=67)	(N=1757)
	%	%	%	%
Sinhalese	71.2	72.7	67.1	59.1
Tamil	14.2	10.8	12.9	9.1
Moor	10.9	13.5	16.8	24.6
Malay	1.7	2.0	1.9	5.8
Other	2.0	1.0	1.3	1.4
Religion				
Buddhist	62.4	41.8	32.9	34.2
Hindu	9.7	5.6	8.4	5.2
Muslim	13.2	15.5	18.7	30.8
Christian	14.7	37.1	40.0	29.8

* Source: Colombo District Report

The difference between the total non-migrant population and the subgroup with a positive attitude towards migration in the Table, gives an indication of this attitude per category (not controlled for other variables). This largely corresponds with the preceeding regression analyses: Tamils and Moors score higher than Sinhalese (respectively +2.1% and +3.3%). Religion more or less matches that of ethnicity, with a proportionately high score for Christians (+2.9%).
When the subgroup of prospective migrants is compared with the possible migrant population another picture emerges. The propensity shown towards migration by Sinhalese and Moors is strongly influenced by effects of demand and other probable filtering effects, the Sinhalese scoring 8.0% less and the Moors 7.8% more. Malays (predominantly Muslim) are in great demand, but Tamils mostly fail in their ambition to be recruited for labour in the Middle East (3.8% less). Religion again follows this profile with relatively little demand for Hindus and a great demand for Muslims. Christians scores surprisingly low, in comparison with the profile on the supply side.

Histogram 1

Propensity to Labour Migration and the Profile of the Actual Migrant by Sex in Percentages



The data in the histogram strongly support the results of the preceeding analyses, in that they show a significantly lower percentage of women willing to leave for the Middle East. In the actual migrant profile, however, the number of women is twice that of men, probably because the recruitment fees for males are much higher. Again this underscores the notion of selectivity in respects other than labour supply. Summarizing it may be said that the large group of migrants in the Middle East cannot be viewed as a fair representation of the Sri Lankan population. In terms of family-related aspects there is some selectivity both on the side of supply and on the side of demand.

The higher income of male migrants in the Middle East and the reservations in Sri Lankan society about migration of women leads one to expect that the majority of migrants are male if one thinks exclusively in term of labour supply. However, in Sri Lanka the majority of migrants selected for employment in the Middle East are women as a result of financial restrictions and selective demand.

Furthermore the research results give some evidence of economic pressure on the household. Incomplete nuclear families, who for some reason lack a potential source of income, and families burdened with a large number of children at the unproductive ages under 15, are more ready to face the risks of Middle East labour migration.
This also seems to be the case for families who have completed certain stages of their marital life-cycle. Notably people aged between 36 and 45 are quite eager to migrate; their children who are near to the age of 15 are more or less able to cope without one of their parents.
The marital status itself also affects the attitude towards migration to some extent. Single, widowed, separated or divorced people, not involved in family life are more inclined to labour migration. Furthermore, an extended household structure seems to be favourable to migration, probably because such households can pay more easily for the recruitment costs. They also have more options to provide for child-care within the household.

Migration and the structure of the household group

The second line of thought in the analysis concerns the consequences of migration for the structure of the migrant household group. We should distinguish between the long-term and the short-term consequences - the latter referring to the migration itself, of a household-member's absence for the household left behind. We will deal with the short-term consequences in the following discussion and then proceed with the implications of migration in the long term.

a. The short-term effects of migration on the household group left behind

The departure of a migrant to the Middle East will probably radically change the household routine of the family left behind. We expected, however, that these changes would differ considerably among migrant families, depending on gender and marital status of the migrant as well as on the household composition of the family the migrant was leaving.
The departure of an unmarried son or daughter from a family does not necessarily seriously affect the daily routine, although an absence of two years may not always be easy to cope with. On the other hand, if the departure concerns a parent or spouse, the family left behind will have to face a very different situation. Apart from having to cope with the emotional aspects of the migrant's absence, the family has to re-assign a wide range of household tasks. Especially when a wife and mother, - who is the main responsible actor in family affairs, leaves her husband and children, the everyday routine will be greatly disturbed and the responsibility

for such activities as cooking, washing and child care will have to be taken by somebody else. The alternative is severe neglect of the essential household activities.

For a nuclear household this problem seems to be of greater urgency than for an extended household in which more members share the daily tasks. At the migrant's departure a nuclear household group will often turn to its relatives from other households for assistance. The migrant household may become more extended, either by a move to another household or by being joined by relatives. It is this group of families of married migrants on which we will focus our attention, because it is the most affected by a split-up in the household group.

Table 6

Household Structure of Married Migrants Before and During Migration

Household structure	Before migration %	During migration %	Difference %
Nuclear family	69.0	67.2	-1.8
Extended family	31.0	32.8	1.8
	100.0	100.0	

N=323. Current migrant data only.

Table 6 shows the change in household structure at the time of the migrant's departure to the Middle East.
The shift towards an extended household structure can be considered negligible, but this may very well be due to the definition we used to determine nuclear and extended households, as well as to a combination of smaller-scale processes neutralising the end result. The more detailed data in Tables 7a to 7c reveal a much greater change than the 1.8% shift towards an extended family which Table 6 suggests.
In Tables 7a to c we leave the strictly nuclear-extended classification and refer to the situation during migration.
The migrant families are grouped into residential location categories and subdivided by sex of the spouse left behind. The main categories involve families living independently in either an owned or a rented house (Table 7a) and families living in with parents or parents-in-law (Table 7b). The third, small rest-category comprises families in which both spouses went to the Middle East, families living

together with various relatives and friends, and other possible arrangements (Table 7c). In the tables the households units are split column-wise into those joined by relatives from other households and those exchanging the original habitat for another. Furthermore, each column distinguishes the sex of the spouse left behind. The last column gives the total percentage of households affected by a change in household composition.

Table 7a

Changes in Household Composition at the Time of Departure of Married Migrants, who were Living in Independent Households by Housing States and Sex*)

Housing status	% Joined by relatives			% Leaving household			Total % with household change		
	F	M	All	F	M	All	F	M	All
Renting	17.2	8.5	13.3	23.5	14.3	17.4	40.7	22.8	30.7
Owning	11.4	8.3	9.7	4.1	4.2	4.1	15.5	12.5	13.8
Total	13.9	8.4	11.1	11.0	7.5	8.6	24.9	15.9	19.7

*) Returned and Current Migrants N = 993
'Joined by relatives', Current Migrants only N = 410.

As the independent households of Table 7a are very similar to a nuclear household, the overall impression from the last column supports the previously mentioned idea that nuclear units are affected more by the departure of one of the spouses than extended households. Nearly 20% of the families from independent households had changed their composition at the time the migrant left for the Middle East. For migrant families living in with the parents of one of the spouses (Table 7b) this percentage is only 13.7. The last residential category (Table 7c) shows a much higher percentage than even the independent households, but this category is too small and too heterogeneous to underpin a meaningful interpretation.

Table 7b

Changes in Household Composition at the Time of Departure of Married Migrants, who were Living in with Parents (Parents-in-Law) by Sex*)

Parent	% Joined by relatives			% Leaving household			Total % with household change		
	F	M	All	F	M	All	F	M	All
Own parents	2.4	(0.0)	1.9	13.6	7.4	10.6	16.0	7.4	12.5
Parents-in-Law	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	15.2	14.0	14.4	15.2	14.0	14.4
Total	1.4	0.0	1.0	14.3	11.6	12.7	15.7	11.6	13.7

*) Returned and Current Migrants N = 993
'Joined by relatives', Current Migrants only N = 410.

Table 7c

Changes in Household Composition of the Rest Category at the Time of Departure of Married Migrants by Sex*)

% Joined by relatives			% Leaving household			Total % with household change		
F	M	All	F	M	All	F	M	All
10.0	22.2	17.0	25.0	20.0	21.3	35.0	42.2	38.3

*) Returned and Current Migrants N = 993
'Joined by relatives', Current Migrants only N = 410.

The information given about relatives joining the migrant family is easy to understand. A significant part of the independent households is supplemented by one or more relatives to replace the person who has left. On the other hand, a migrant family already living in with the parents of one of the spouses before the migrant's departure is virtually never joined by another relative after the migrant's departure. Here the departing migrant leaves a more or less intact household core

behind, which is relatively capable of filling the gap created by the absent family member.

The situation of families which adapt to the migration of one of the spouses by moving out of the original house to another living environment is much more complex. Against all expectations the percentage of independent households leaving their own house is even lower than that of families who were living in with one of the spouse's parents (8.6% against 12.7%).

Obviously, there are certain considerations which either undermine the motivation to exchange the split-up independent household for a more extended one with a greater problem-solving ability, or which stimulate the family left behind to leave the supposedly favourable and caring environment of the parent's home.

House ownership proves to be a very important aspect among the independent household units (Table 7a). Families who own the house they live in are not inclined to give up their property in order to bridge a two-year period. The percentage of home-owner families moving is very small (4.1%) and this strongly reduces the total percentage of families moving from independent households. However, families not restrained by the ownership of a house do move out much more frequently (17.4%). Here the original notion of a temporary change as a consequence of labour migration to a more extended household structure finds strong support.

A further differentiation of the category of families already living in with parents contributes to an explanation of the unexpected frequency of migrant families leaving the parental home. The question whether the spouse left behind was living with his (or her) own parents or with the migrant's parents is important. The former social environment is more favourable so that a higher percentage of spouses living with parents-in-law move out. In the latter situation there is the prospect of remaining with one's family-in-law, a construction especially liable to social strain because the migrant's spouse not only lacks the support of her or his own family, but also misses the solidarity of the partner. This social tension is, of course, not restricted to the relationship with in-laws, but also occurs in the relationship with the spouse's own parents.

Furthermore, it seems reasonable to expect that women left behind are affected more seriously by this loss of status than men, as they tend to be more involved in confined household activities and are therefore more vulnerable to the influence of parents. This largely explains the frequent departure of migrant families from the parental household group (Table 7b) (12.7%), in particular the departure of those living with their parents-in-law (14.4%), and the fact more women (14.3%) than men (11.6%) move out of the parental house.

A last remark with regard to Table 7a concerns the marked difference between the number of men and the number of women, in the category of independent

households, affected by a household change at the time of the migrant's departure. Besides the practical reasons to adapt to the absence of an important household member, the idea prevails that a woman should not be left on her own. This explains why the total percentage of women affected by a household change is almost 25 whereas that of men is only 16. This difference is expressed both in the figures for families leaving the home (11.0% against 7.5%) and in those for families joined by relatives (13.9% against 8.4%). In the case of families living in rented houses the total proportion of women affected by a household change even rises above 40%.

The short-term effects of migration on the structure of the household group can be summarized as follows.
Migration of one of the marital partners has an immediate and significant effect on the family left behind. This is expressed by the large number of migrant families who adjust their household composition and living environment in response to the migrant's departure, either by leaving the original household or by introducing one or more relatives into their own household group.
An extended household can be considered a favourable environment for coping with the problems posed by the absence of the migrant. The need to find a substitute who participates in the daily household routine is a principle reason for independent migrant families to change the structure of the household in either of the aforementioned ways. On the other hand, an approach in terms of an extended household entailing an inherent social conflict, is able to explain the significant proportion of migrant families leaving the parental home at the time of departure of the migrant. A change in household for this reason often limits the tendency towards an extended household.
Furthermore, social status within an extended household, house ownership, gender and social norms concerning women living alone, seem to be relevant aspects in this matter, each having a different impact on distinct household categories.
The results of these processes are in opposition to one another: uniting and dividing households. The overall outcome is almost in balance with the original situation and the departure of a partner does not produce a significant tendency towards an extended household structure, at least not by the classification standards. However, the effect of labour migration on household structure in the short term should be supplemented by an analysis of long-term effects.

b. The long-term effects of migration on the structure of the household group

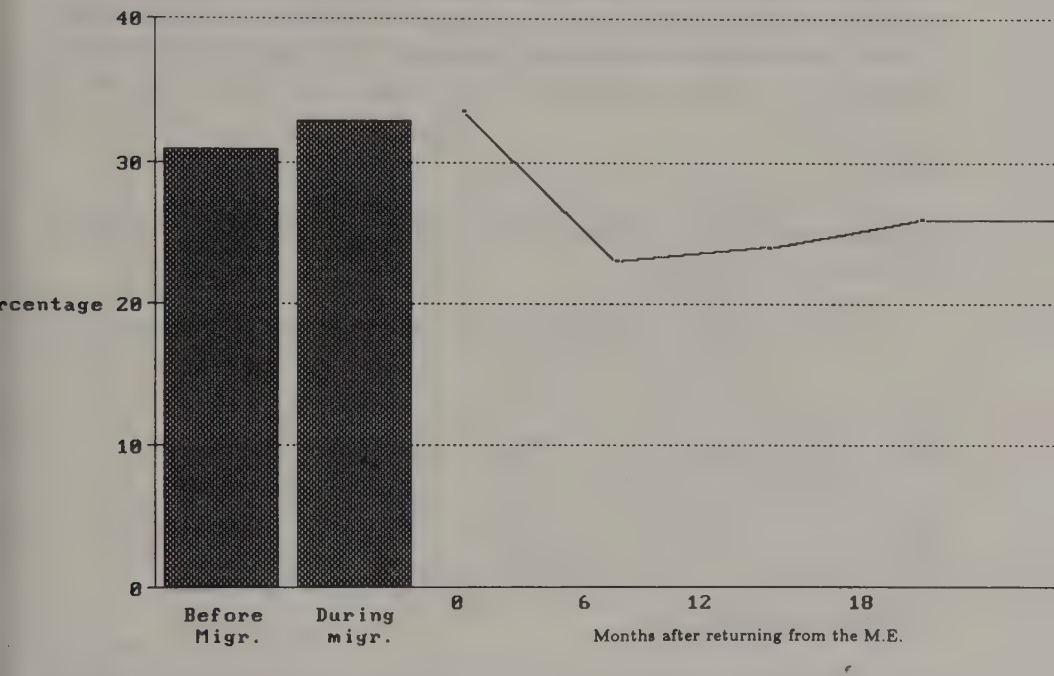
The effects of labour migration on the household group felt not only during the period of absence of the migrant but afterwards as well. The consequences of

migration distinguish the families of returned migrants from those that lack the experience of being split up for a prolonged period.
The household structure before migration will probably still have some effect when the migrant returns and the original household composition is restored. Various implications of migration can add new arguments and contribute to the decision about the structure of the future household.
One such argument is the potential social conflict within a larger family context mentioned earlier. Another concerns the aim to buy or build a house of one's own, one of the main reasons for labour migration. Although the survey data showed that only a minority of the migrant population succeeded in achieving this aim it often implied the setting-up of an independent nuclear household.
A third argument is whether migrant families decide to share any economic benefits of Middle East labour with the members of an extended household or to consume it within a smaller nuclear unit. All in all, the social and economic implications of labour migration could very well induce a tendency towards a more nuclear type of household.
The scope of the present study does not allow an insight into the effects of labour migration on the household structure over a long period of time because the majority of the returned migrants had been back for only three years. However, if any change occurs in household structure as a result of terminated migration, the main effects will be revealed within a limited period of time after the migrant's return.

Graph 1 is based on the classification used for nuclear and extended household structures. It shows a composite picture of the percentages of married migrants' families living in extended households. The corresponding percentages of nuclear units reveal a complementary and inverse picture, but have not been presented here.
The first two colums show the percentage of extended household groups before migration and during migration. At the time of departure a slight increase took place. Further to the right, the level is differentiated by the period of time passed after the return of the migrant. Thirty-three per cent of the group of recently returned migrants start again with an extended household structure. This percentage almost equals that of current migrant families. Within half a year, however, it drops by 10% and finally stabilizes at about 25%. This latter figure is reached about a year after the migrant's return and remains stable for up to 36 months. Changes occurring after that period cannot be supported by reliable data, but there is nor real reason to expect them.

Graph 1

Percentages of Extended Household Groups Before and During Migration, and after the Migrant's Return from the Middle East



Before and during migration: current migrant data, N=323
After migration: returned migrant data, N=513

The overall effect of migration on family structure is expressed by the difference between the percentages of extended household structures before and after migration. This difference amounts to about 5%, and represents a tendency towards a nuclear household type. This can be explained by a propensity to a more independent life-style which is furthermore backed by increased economic potential.

This inclination to independence could be reinforced by the experience of migration, especially by the experience of being left behind in a broader family context, as and furthermore by the desire to use possible benefits of migration for one's own smaller family. It is more likely that the migrant household group will satisfy this urge for independence if by means of labour migration, it can at least save money to invest in its own house.

Labour migration and marital stability

A last remark, concerning migration and the composition of the household, has to be made with respect to the impact on marital stability. This is a very popular topic in the Sri Lankan dailies but the information they give is rather unreliable and refers to a few individual cases only. The survey is able to provide more reliable quantitative information on the relation between migration and marital break-up.

Table 8

Percentage Divorced or Separated among Ever-Married at different Periods in the Process of Migration

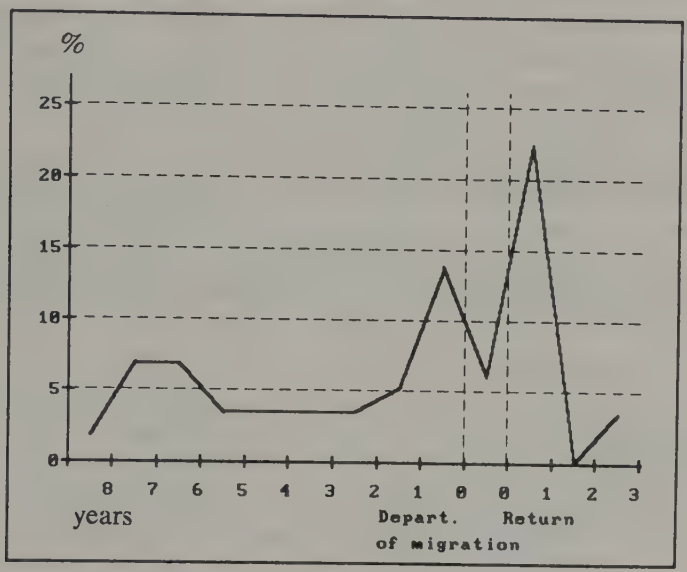
	Urban Colombo District*	Returned migrants Before departure N=671	Returned migrants Actual situation N=671	Current migrants N=538
All	0.9	7.2	13.7	11.2
Male	0.7	1.6	1.6	1.3
Female	1.0	8.4	16.5	18.6

* Colombo District Report

Table 8 presents the percentages of marital break-ups (divorced or separated) among ever-married people in the various research populations and at different periods in the process of migration.
Compared with the very low percentage of broken marriages among ever-married people in the Colombo District (0.9%), the figures for migrants are very high at every point in time. A breakdown in sex categories gives a relatively normal percentage for male migrants, but the corresponding figures for female migrants are very high indeed.
When considering the rapid increase in the percentage of separations or divorces during the period after the migrant's departure, it can be concluded that migration has a negative effect on marital stability, at least where female migrants are concerned. On the other hand, the figures for current migrants, and those returned migrants at the time of departure show that being divorced or separated is a rather common situation for people, especially for women, who are bound for the Middle East and it can therefore be considered as a condition favourable to migration. When these two arguments are combined, a broken marriage can be conceived as both the cause and the effect of migration.

Graph 2

Percentage Distribution of Marital Break-Ups Before, During and After Migration (Time Sequence in Years)



Returned migrants, N=58

Graph 2 gives a more detailed insight into the evident relation between marital break-ups and migration. The graph gives the percentage distribution of marital break-ups in time, with the period of migration as the starting point. Although the research population concerned is quite small and no even distribution emerges, the resulting picture is clear enough.

Up to a year before the migrant's departure, each year claims a relatively equal part of all marital break-ups, meaning a relatively steady occurrence of separation and divorce in those years. About 18 months before migration the number of marital break-ups rises sharply, which again could be explained as the cause as well as the effect of migration.

The experience of separation or divorce is accompanied by social and economic pressure, especially when women are concerned. In these circumstances the propensity to migrate is strong and departure follows soon after the break-up. On the other hand, if one of the spouses is negotiating for a job in the Middle East, that the prospect of migration could put the relationship under such a strain that the possibility of a conjugal break-up increases. We should bear in mind that

labour migration is usually induced by economic need, which itself puts a marital relationship under great pressure. The sharp rise of marital break-ups during the year before departure is probably due to an interlocking combination of these two factors, but the exact effect of each cannot be demonstrated.
During the migration itself separation and divorce remain fairly frequent. In the Sri Lankan newspapers infidelity of one of the spouses is often reported to be the main cause of the divorce of a migrant couple. At the very best one can conclude that the temporary separation of the spouses can weaken the marital ties and give rise to a termination of the relationship.
In the first year after return the incidence of divorce and separation is even higher. This again can often be explained by infidelity but there are also many cases in which the returned spouse is disappointed about the way the money earned in the Middle East has been used. Quite frequently the returned migrant finds that the money sent home during two years of migration has been spent on alcohol or drugs.
After the first hazardous year of return the percentage of marital break-ups drops to zero. This could be due to the size of the population under study, but a reasonable explanation is that a couple that has survived the years that many break-ups occur, will not separate the year after return because of normal relational strain. However, in the third year the percentage increases again, but this will probably be the onset of another rather steady period of separation and divorce.

In summary it may be said that an important aspect concerning long-term effects of labour migration on household composition is the evident relation between migration and marital break-up. The irony of this relation is poignant. On the one hand, migration is a relief and tackles the problems created by separation and divorce. On the other, the prospect of migration, migration itself, the aftermath of migration and the absence of the migrant can all be considered as threats to marital stability, often leading to separation and divorce. In the limited period of migration itself and one year before and after, the risk of marital break-up is very much higher than in any other year preceding or following migration. No less than 34.5% of all divorces and separations take place in this less-than--four-year period centred around the absence of a migrant. The fact that break-ups nearly always concern female migrants is rather alarming. However, at the same time this reveals the weak social and economic position of women in Sri Lankan society.

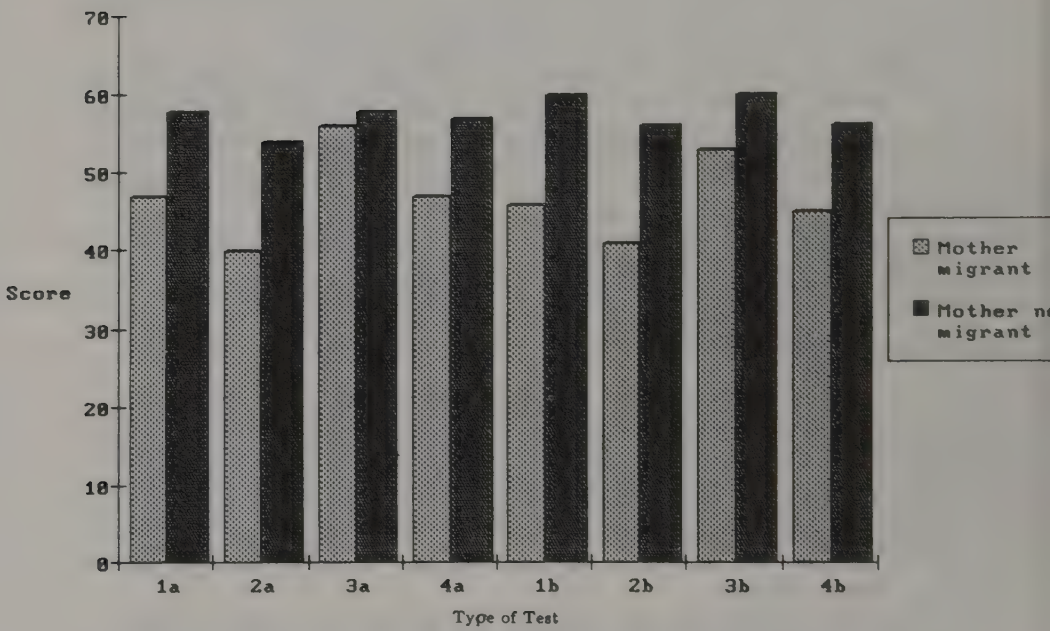
Labour migration and the effect on children's performance at school

A rough estimate shows that in 1983 there were about 100,000 children in Sri Lanka whose fathers were working in the Middle East and about 260,000 whose mothers had left them for a job in one of the Gulf States. According to the calculations around 200,000 of these children were under the age of 10 and about 19,000 less than 12 months old. (Schampers et al. 1986:2)
In the survey we found that for all ever-married migrants - returned and current - with children (n=1.056) the guardians for the youngest child during their absence were the spouse (in 66.2% of the cases), the parents of one of the spouses (21%), a brother or sister (6.5%), other children of the parents (3%), in-laws (2%) and other relatives or friends (1.2%).
Of these migrants 88.1% kept their children at home during the migration period, while 11.9% moved them to another place. If the mother had migrated, the chance that the children had to change their residence was greater than when the father had left for the Middle East: 13.7% against 8.3% respectively.

The labour migration research project also included a survey among 127 teachers who were asked to their opinion about the possible relation between labour migration and the performance and behaviour at school of children left behind. The survey, which was conducted in the period between July 1986 and January 1987, focused on the actual school results of migrant and non-migrant children (Schampers et al. 1986:4).
A first significant conclusion with respect to the opinion of school teachers is that no less than 89% think that labour migration has a negative effect on the school performance of migrant children. Nearly 45% are of the opinion that the behaviour of migrant children also creates more problems.
On the other hand, some positive effects of labour migration did emerge, in particular with regard to the attitude of migrant parents towards school education for their children. Almost half of the teachers indicate that migrant children are better provided with such school materials as books, pens, pencils etc.. In general, migrant-parents seem to spend more money on education than non-migrants, they send their children to more expensive schools, pay for facilities and services regularly and dress their children better.
Although the material effects of migration are mainly positive, the socio-psychological effects are clearly not. No less than 20 schoolteachers complain that a lack of love and affection has a negative effect on the performance of migrant children at school. In addition, they frequently mentioned that the guardians are not really interested in the mental and educational well-being of the children (Schampers et al. 1986:5)

Histogram 2

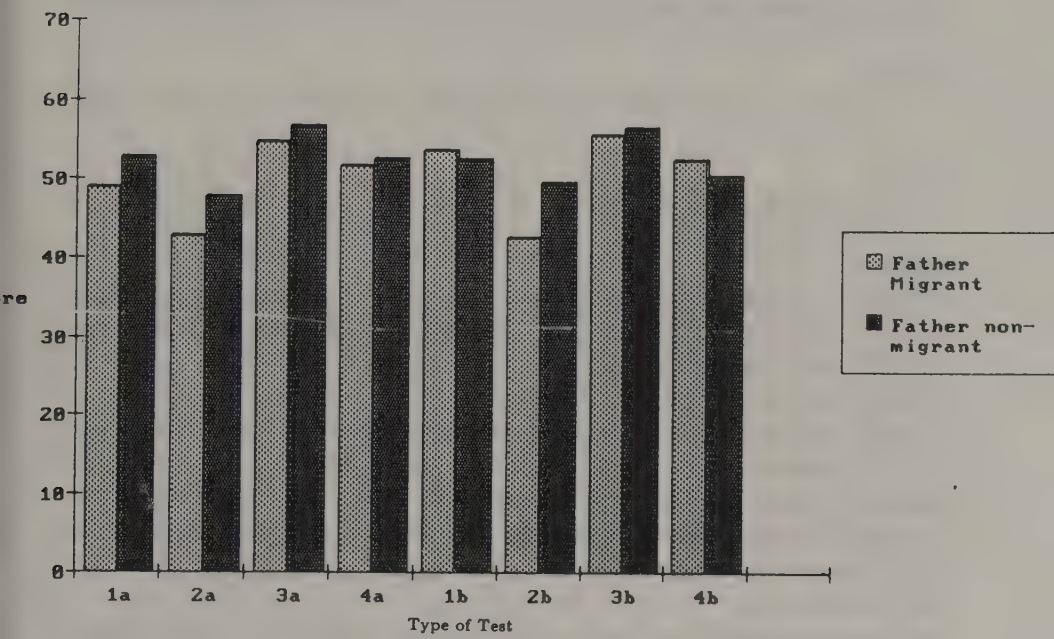
Exam Results Migrant's Children whose Mother is Absent Compared with those of Non-Migrant's Children



With regard to the actual school results of migrants' and non-migrants' children eight tests taken by 145 children were analyzed. The exams dealt with two language, two mathematics, two religion and two aesthetics tests. Besides the distinction made between the results of migrants' and non-migrants' children, a differentiation between female and male migration was also made. In the first category the mother was a migrant (Histogram 2), in the second the father was absent (Histogram 3).

Histogram 3

Exam Results of Migrants' Children whose Father is Absent Compared with those of Non-Migrants' Children



The histograms clearly indicate that the children of migrant mothers scored lower in all the tests than the children of non-migrant mothers, but particularly in the language and mathematics test (2a and 2b). With regard to the children whose fathers were migrant workers no statistically significant differences with the non-migrant group could be found.

However, on the basis of these data it is still uncertain whether the absence of the mother is responsible for the differences in school performance. A number of intervening variables are possible, among which the socio-economic status of the parents and the time lapse between the departure of the mother and the school performance tests seem to be obvious ones. Unfortunately, however, the socio-economic status could not be traced properly from the available survey data and the same can be said for the period of absence of the mother. Consequently, the causal inference is uncertain. Nonetheless, it may be said that the results, although of a descriptive nature, are interesting and could well be an appropriate starting point for further research into this subject.

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9

EARLY RETURN OF SRI LANKAN MIGRANTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

F. Eelens

Introduction

The process of contract migration holds many risks, and can lead to severe stress, especially in its early phases. Due to loneliness, unfavourable working conditions, or economic and family problems, migrants may give up their hope of building up a new and better life in another country, and return prematurely. This may have important economic and social consequences for the migrant and his family. In contrast to the abundant literature on the situation of migrants in receiving countries all over the world, scientific literature about 'failed migration' and early return migration is sadly lacking. In this chapter we will attempt partially to bridge this gap by looking at early return migration of Sri Lankan contract workers to the Middle East. We will pay particular attention to the reasons why a considerable number of migrants return prematurely to their country of origin. We will also deal with differentials in the duration of stay in the host country, as well as some of the consequences of early return migration for the migrant and his family.

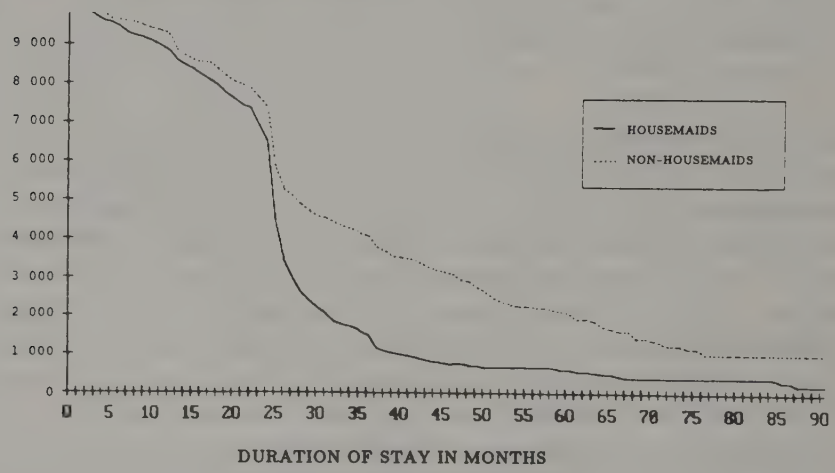
The data used for this chapter are based primarily on the survey held among 899 return migrants, 858 family members of current migrants and 409 non-migrants. As already mentioned (see chapter I), the survey was held in the districts of Colombo and neighbouring Gampaha in the period December 1985 to July 1986.

Duration of stay in the Middle East

The first important step in any analysis of return migration is to determine how long migrants stay in the receiving country and which migrants return prematurely to their home country. When trying to do this in a statistically sound manner, the researcher is faced with several methodological problems. First of all, when calculating the average duration of stay, one should not only deal with return migrants but also with current migrants. After all, when applying such a selection, early return migrants are overrepresented in the sample. This would lead to a considerable underestimation of the average duration of stay in the Middle East.

Even if the information were to be restricted to the last completed migration, as is the case in most migration studies, there would still be a significant bias. In such samples, migrants with a longer duration of stay are strongly under-represented for they have not had the opportunity of finding another job abroad once they have returned to their home country. This is a well-known problem among demographers and has been described, inter alia, for post-partum variables (Page et al. 1982). In order to avoid such an important bias, we must apply a life-table method in which migration - not the migrant - is taken as the unit of analysis, and in which all instances of migration - not only the last completed one - are incorporated in the analysis.

Graph table 1: Duration of Stay of Sri Lankan Migrants in the Middle East by Occupational Category



The results of the life-table analysis are given in Graph table 1. The survival function {l(x) in Graph table 1} gives the number of migrants who, for every 1,000 initial departures, are still in the Middle East at the beginning of period x. The probability of remaining in the country of emigration is calculated both for housemaids and for non-housemaids. As can be seen, the proportion of housemaids who return prematurely is far higher than the proportion of non-housemaids. About 12% of the housemaids return home within the first year of their stay in the Middle East; 20.6% come home before having served 18 months, while another 6% return home between 18 and 22 months after their arrival in the Middle East[1]. In the case of non-housemaids, this is only 8.3%, 14.6% and 5%, respectively. The average duration of stay was found to be 24.4 months for housemaids and 37.85 months for non-housemaids. It is interesting to note that the average duration abroad is only 22.55 months for housemaids and 25.86 months

Table 1

Reasons of Early Return for Sri Lankan Migrants: Housemaids and Non-Housemaids

	Housemaids	Non-housemaids
No. of cases who returned prematurely	353	131
Main Reason for Return	Percentage Housemaids	Percentage Non-housemaids
Reasons related to work situation		
Contract	6.0	24.4
Work-load too heavy	17.3	3.8
Wage	0.0	3.1
Physical assaulted by employer	2.8	0.0
Political instability ME country	0.9	2.3
Sexual harassment by employer	2.8	0.0
Psychological problems	2.2	0.8
Sent back by employer	2.6	5.3
Sent back by authorities	0.0	1.5
Pregnant	2.3	0.8
Sick-wounded	17.9	13.0
No more work	7.0	15.3
Goals attained	0.3	0.0
Salary not paid	2.7	1.5
Salary not enough	1.4	6.9
Unsatisfactory living conditions	2.0	2.3
Breach in contract	0.6	5.3
Subtotal	68.8	86.3
Reasons related to situation in Sri Lanka		
Child sick	3.4	0.8
Other child problem	2.6	0.8
Health problems spouse	2.6	0.0
Health problems other relative	3.6	0.0
Infidelity spouse	1.0	0.0
Relative died	2.0	1.5
No one to take care of children	3.7	0.0
Political instability Sri Lanka	0.9	0.0
Subtotal	19.8	3.1
Other reasons		
To join the family	2.0	0.0
Stayed home after holiday	0.9	2.3
Other reason	8.5	8.4
Subtotal	11.4	10.7
Total	100.0	100.1

for non-housemaids, if we restrict the analysis to return migrants[2]. In the case of premature return migration, the median value is undoubtedly a better index of central tendency, because this measure is not influenced by outlying values caused by the small group of migrants who remain in the Middle East for many years. Median values of stay in the Middle East were 24.7 and 27.3 months for housemaids and non-housemaids respectively.

Reasons for premature return migration

Although, throughout Asia, the motives for migrating to the Middle East are primarily economic, the reasons for return migration are disparate and strongly personal. Reasons for returning prematurely can generally be separated into two main categories: a) problems arising at work; and b) problems related to the family left behind in the country of origin. Table 1 lists the major reasons for return migration, as given during the survey by return migrants who had worked in the Middle East for less than 22 months. The reasons have been specified for housemaids and non-housemaids. Note that the figures refer only to those who returned prematurely.

As shown in table 1, the main reasons for return migration among both housemaids and non-housemaids were related to the employment situation in the Middle East. In the case of housemaids, 69% of the early returns were induced by factors related to working or living conditions. In the case of non-housemaids, this percentage was even as high as 86%. The table also shows that early returns due to family circumstances were much more common among housemaids than among non-housemaids. Almost 20% of all housemaids who return prematurely do so because of problems at home; of these returns, 9.7% are linked to the welfare of the children left behind in Sri Lanka. Among the non-housemaid migrant group, consisting almost exclusively of men, family reasons do not play such an important role in their departure from the Middle East. No more than 3.1% of early returns among non-housemaids were due to family problems in Sri Lanka.

The most important reason for premature return migration among housemaids is illness or injury (17.9%). Note that most early returns among housemaids for reasons of health take place during the first months of their stay in the Middle East. During this early phase the psychological pressure on housemaids is greatest. They are confronted with a culture which is totally alien to them, they suffer from loneliness and miss their children, they must get used to a life in which they are entirely at the service of a strange family, and they become overworked by working days which may be as long as 15 hours or more. Psychosomatic complaints such as chronic headaches and intestinal problems are therefore often

the reason why they prematurely breach their contract in the Middle East. Although housemaids who find work in the Middle East via private recruitment agents undergo a medical check-up prior to their departure, part of which is a pregnancy test[3], 2.3% of the return migrants still go back because of pregnancy.

Difficult working conditions and instances of malpractice are reflected in the pattern of early return from the Gulf: 19.3% of the housemaids return because of harsh working or living conditions; 2.8% leave because of sexual harassment at work and another 2.8% go back because of physical maltreatment by the employer or his family.

Reasons for return migration among non-housemaids are, besides illness, factors primarily related to the employment contract and working conditions: 24.4% go back because the contract expires (prematurely); 15.3% are dismissed because there is no longer any work for them; 6.8% leave because they are not paid, or because the employer breaches the contract otherwise. Almost 7% of the early return migrants said that the salary did not suffice.

Although cross-national comparisons of length of stay in the Middle East are almost impossible due to the lack of adequate data and the use of inadequate methodologies, it is clear that a significant proportion of contract workers from other Asian countries also return home prematurely. For instance, in a study on the situation of Korean migration to the Gulf, Kim (1982) suggests a very high rate of turnover, with the equivalent of 65% of the outmigration stream returning each year. In a case study of a Korean company, Ro (1986) found a 12% annual drop-out rate. Personal motives were the most important drive for Korean workers to return home (46.6%). Illness and accidents, and family problems also accounted for 12.3% and 24.7% of early returns respectively. In addition, 16.4% of those who came home before their contract expired were recalled by the company for disciplinary reasons. Among return migrants from the Philippines in 1981, 24.4% had stayed in the Middle East for less than one year (Arnold et al. 1986), a figure which is virtually as high as the one provided by Korale for Sri Lanka (1985). In a survey of Philippino return migrants, Go (1986) found that the respondents had worked abroad an average of 2.4 times. The mean duration of their last contract was 18.8 months, but an average duration of stay of 14.7 months indicates a significant proportion of early, involuntary returns. Also, one third of Pakistani return migrants had not completed one full year in Middle Eastern employment (Arnold et al. 1986).

The Heterogeneity of Early Return Migration

Migrants often have to invest heavily to be able to make a trip to the Middle East, and many thousands of families who stay behind in Sri Lanka depend exclusively on remittances for their livelihood. Premature return migration thus often leads to serious economic and social problems for the family of the return migrant. For this reason it is of the utmost importance to determine which groups are more likely to terminate their contract prematurely. In order to be able to identify these groups in Sri Lanka, we use a proportional hazard model[4], in which the migration - not the migrant - is the unit of analysis. As the pattern of return migration differs strongly between housemaids and non-housemaids, these two groups are analyzed separately. Since we intend to throw light on the differentials of early return migration, all returns which take place after 22 months are considered to be right-censored. The following variables were incorporated in the analysis: place of residence, marital status, ethnicity, age at departure, country of work, time of departure, income level in the Middle East, migration order and, in the case of non-housemaids, level of skill. Each variable was split up into a number of dummy variables. In the case of place of residence, 'slums' was taken as the base category with which migrants from other residential environments were compared. For marital status, married women were taken as the base category, the other subcategories being 'single', and 'divorced/separated/-widowed'. In the case of ethnicity, the control group was formed by the Sinhalese, and for age at departure those under-25 were the control group, the other age group being the 25-and-older. The major host countries in the Middle East were included in the analysis; Kuwait, where between 50,000 and 60,000 Sri Lankan housemaids are employed, was chosen as the base category. As for time of departure, 1983 was taken as the cut-off point. This year was chosen for two reasons: 1. 1983 marks the beginning of the slowdown in oil revenues for countries in the Middle East; this slowdown resulted in a serious decline in jobs for skilled and unskilled labour and could well have led to early return migration; and 2. in 1983, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka flared up; some migrants may have returned to Sri Lanka to stand by their family. The monthly income in the Middle East was split up into three categories: less than Rs. 2,500 (the base category), Rs. 2,500-3,000 , and more than Rs. 3,000[5]. The base category for migration order was the group of first-time migrants, and unskilled workers were taken as the base group in the case of level of skill for non-housemaids.

Table 2 gives the results of the proportional hazard analysis. Relative risk ratios have been calculated in addition to the beta-coefficients and significance levels. These ratios, which are the exponentiated beta-coefficients, give the hazard of

Table 2

Proportional Hazards Parameter Estimation: Early Return from Middle Eastern Migration for Housemaids and Non-Housemaids

	Housemaids			Non-Housemaids		
Variable	Beta	(signif-icance)	Relative Risk	Beta	(signif-icance)	Relative Risk
Resid. non slum	-0.3479	**	0.71	0.1792		1.20
Single	-1.0112	***	0.36	-0.4024		0.67
Sep. div. wid.	-0.1363		0.87	-0.8750		0.42
Tamil	-0.1191		0.89	-0.5095		0.60
Malay	0.0660		1.07	-0.1765		0.84
Moor	0.1514		1.16	-0.3954		0.67
Other ethnic	0.3824		1.47	-0.1540		0.86
Age departure >25	0.2762	*	1.32	-0.1604		0.85
Saudi	0.6330	***	1.88	0.5034		1.65
UAR	0.8371	***	2.31	0.6708		1.96
Bahrain	0.4653		1.59	0.1433		1.15
Jordan	-0.1867		0.83	1.8216	***	6.18
Lebanon	-0.2762		0.76	-0.5284		0.59
Other country	1.0218	***	2.78	0.6257		1.87
Dep. after 83	0.4415	***	1.56	0.0365		1.04
Inc. 2,500-3,000 Rs.	-0.1458		0.86	0.4059		1.50
Inc. +3,000 Rs.	-0.5631	***	0.57	-0.3289		0.72
2nd migration	0.4753	***	1.61	0.7100	***	2.03
3rd migration	0.6496	**	1.91	-0.0862		0.92
Middle				-0.3366		0.71
Skilled				-0.1668		0.85
N of cases		1535			798	
N of uncensored observation		355			135	

* significance level 5 per cent
** significance level 1 per cent
*** significance level 1 per thousand

the ratios belonging to the particular category relative to the base category, controlling for other intervening factors. For instance, the coefficient for the dummy variable 'residence, non-slum', which has a value of 0.71, indicates that the hazard for early return for migrants from a non-slum environment, at each moment between departure and 22 months, is 71% of those of slum dwellers. Table 2 shows clearly that although the differentials between the various groups are considerable for both housemaids and non-housemaids, the significance levels are much more pronounced for the analysis of housemaids than for the analysis of non-housemaids (partly as a result of the greater number of cases in this analysis). On the basis of the significance levels for housemaids, we may conclude that:

a. housemaids from slums remain in the Middle East for shorter periods of time than housemaids from other residential environments,
b. the probability of early return migration per unit of time is about three times higher for married migrants than for unmarried migrants at the time of departure,
c. the probability of early return is about 32% higher for women who are 25 years or older than for women under the age of 25,
d. countries characterised by early return are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates,
e. the likelihood that housemaids who left Sri Lanka after 1983 will return prematurely is 56% higher than for those who left for the Middle East prior to this date,
f. migrants who earn more than Rs. 3,000 per month are two times less likely to return than those who earn less than Rs. 2,500 per month,
g. a second or third migration leads to a significantly greater chance of returning prematurely.

As for non-housemaids, we can only say, with a less than 5% chance of drawing an erroneous conclusion, that a second migration results in a considerably higher probability of early return migration, and that the small group of migrants who go to work in Jordan are more likely to return before their contract has expired than those who work in Kuwait. A possible explanation for the fact that the remigration behaviour of housemaids (excluding two ratios, all relative risk ratios are, in absolute terms, larger for housemaids than for non-housemaids) is more differentiated, is that in general the living conditions of workers in the Middle East are less variable than the living and working conditions of housemaids. Non-housemaids usually live in working camps which provide the necessary facilities. These men share a room, they have ample social contacts and in case of need they can appeal to local employment legislation. Housemaids, on the other hand, may end up in households where they are relatively free to do as

they please, or else in households in which they have to abide by strict rules; they may either be treated as part of the family, or else be maltreated, or even suffer sexual harassment. Since they are not subject to local employment legislation, they are more or less unprotected against all forms of maltreatment. The situation of the family staying behind in Sri Lanka is also more variable among migrant housemaids than among migrant non-housemaids. This is particularly true for migrants who leave their children behind, for it makes a big difference whether it is the mother or the father who stays behind to bring up the children (Gunatileke 1987). Child abandonment and other forms of maltreatment are much less common when the mother rather than the father remains in Sri Lanka to look after the children. The number of early returns for the sake of the family is thus much larger among housemaids than among non-housemaids: 23% versus 6% respectively.

It is important to find an answer to the question why certain groups in society are more likely to experience a failed migration than other groups, and also, of course, to determine whether the patterns observed in the analysis are as could be expected. For example, it is hardly surprising that the hazard of early return migration is three times lower among unmarried female migrants than among married female migrants. For as we saw in the previous section, family problems play an important role in premature returns. And it goes without saying that family problems (illness, misconduct, squandering...) are much more frequent among wives/mothers than among unmarried young women. Although the reason for early return may be less straightforward than in the case of marital status, the reason why women from a slum environment are more likely to return prematurely is similar. Due to a number of characteristics of slum-dwellers such as less cohesion within families, the central role of the mother, greater poverty, more widespread social vices such as alcoholism and drug abuse, family problems are greater among these migrants than among other groups. This is clearly reflected in the reasons for early return migration: 21% of female migrants from non-slum environments return early because of family problems; among female migrants from slums, this percentage is more than 10% higher (32%).

Female migrants in Kuwait have greater freedom than in most other Middle Eastern countries. In Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, treatment of Sri Lankan housemaids is said to be stricter. Working hours are long, the housemaids are often not allowed to leave the house, and they hardly have any contact with other migrants. This leads to extra tension among Sri Lankan housemaids in these countries, and it is probably the reason why the likelihood of early return is high. The time of departure to the Middle East - prior to or after early 1983 - also significantly affects early return migration. One important aspect of this is that quite a large number of housemaids were employed by other,

highly qualified expatriates working in the Gulf, who lost their jobs following the slump of oil revenues. As a result, their household staff were forced to return to Sri Lanka.

The fact that housemaids with a higher monthly income are less likely to return prematurely may be attributed to two factors: first of all, they will not easily give up a salary which, in their eyes, is very high; secondly, it is to be expected that employers who pay the highest salaries also provide better non-financial facilities.

Finally, the study has revealed that second- and third-time migrants are more likely to return prematurely. One would expect such 'veteran migrants' to stay in the host country for prolonged periods of time. After all, they know what life is like in the Middle East, having experienced it all before. However, a selection process is probably the reason why repeat migrants have a higher probability of early return. First of all, housemaids who had a good experience during their first migration, are the ones who decide to do it again. But as no more than 25% of these housemaids go back to the same employer, they are often unpleasantly surprised upon their return to the Middle East. Dissatisfaction with the new position often leads to the decision to return to Sri Lanka before the contract expires.

The situation of early return migrants

In cases where the family remaining in Sri Lanka is entirely dependent on remittances from the Middle East, the early return of the migrant can have serious financial consequences. Many migrants incur large debts to be able to send a member of their family to the Middle East. Male migrants in particular give up their jobs in Sri Lanka in order to earn more money overseas. In cases of early return migration, the family is often left without any money, and on top of that, is usually still saddled with debts.

Table 3 gives a number of indicators which reflect the economic and social position of the family of the return migrant. In the case of housemaids, 19.5% of the migrants who return to Sri Lanka within the first year following departure had not yet been able to pay back the recruitment fees at the time of the interview. On average, the amount still due per migrant was Rs. 7,650 (about U.S. $ 283), which is equivalent to more than six months' pay for a Sri Lankan worker. Moreover, this amount quickly increases because prospective migrants usually borrow money from private money-lenders in the streets of Colombo at an interest rate of 15 to 25% per month. Table 3 shows that among non-housemaids, 50%

Table 3

Situation of Return Migrants by Duration of Stay in the Middle East (Housemaids/ Non-Housemaids)

Social Economic Indicator		0-11 months	12-21 months	22+ months
Housemaids = H (No. of cases: 676)				
Non-housemaids = NH (No. of cases: 223)				
Migrant thinks that labour migration can improve one's life permanently	H	76.67	90.48	90.73
	NH	74.56	82.81	84.99
Migrant expected before migrating that more could be gained from work in the Middle East	H	83.33	78.13	71.36
	NH	83.33	71.43	75.50
Migrant has the impression that people respect him/her more now than before migration	H	7.89	12.50	15.31
	NH	13.33	21.43	28.48
Return migrant thinks his/her lifestyle improved after coming back from the Middle East	H	6.14	10.16	15.28
	NH	3.45	16.67	16.33
Migrant earned enough in ME to realize the plans he/she set forward before migration	H	8.77	13.39	26.79
	NH	13.33	16.67	41.72
Migrant was able to invest some of the money earned in the Middle East in small enterprise, housing, land...	H	22.81	37.50	46.19
	NH	10.00	38.10	61.59
Migrant invested money earned in the Middle East in housing	H	21.93	35.16	41.94
	NH	6.67	33.33	50.99
At the time of interview migrant still had some of the money earned in the Middle East in his/her possession	H	7.89	21.09	27.40
	NH	14.29	31.71	45.52
Return migrant was not able to pay back all the money borrowed to finance ME-trip (only for those who borrowed money)	H	19.51	5.56	0.83
	NH	50.00	5.26	4.08

of early return migrants have not yet been able to pay back their debts at the time of the interview. However, this figure is based on a small number of cases.

The possibility of effecting permanent improvements in the living standard of the family is, of course, smaller if the migrant remains in the Middle East for less than two years. The number of migrants who are able to invest - both generally and in housing - is considerably smaller among migrants who have not worked abroad for a prolonged period of time, and the amount of money they are able to invest is also much lower. Among housemaids the average amount is Rs. 9,850 for total investments and Rs.8,950 for investments in housing. Among non-housemaids, similar figures apply: Rs. 34,200 and Rs. 23,600, respectively. Other indicators of the financial strains of early return migrants are: the larger number who have not been able to save any money by migrating to the Middle East, a smaller number who say that their living conditions have improved considerably, and a smaller number who say that they earned enough to be able to bring to fruition the plans they had made prior to migration.

There are also indications that a lower social status is linked to early return migration. So, the return migrant was asked whether he/she had the impression that he/she was now more highly respected than prior to migration. Note that only a small number of migrants believe that their status has indeed improved. In absolute terms, these figures are higher for non-housemaids than for housemaids. The figures also show that the number of return migrants who say they are now treated with more respect is higher among migrants who have spent a longer period in the Middle East.

Conclusions

Millions of people in the Third World migrate with a view to improve their economic position. As shown in this chapter, this strategy has some deficiencies. For example, about 20% of Sri Lankan housemaids who go to work in the Middle East return within 18 months of their departure, thus ending prematurely their 2-year contract. In other Asian countries, premature return migration is also considerable.

The early phases of migration seem to be particularly strenuous. Living and working conditions are very difficult, the migrant is troubled by feelings of loneliness, and the host country does not turn out to be the paradise dreamt of. Migrants must be mentally and physically strong to be able to survive the first few months. We saw that in the case of labour migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East, a large number of migrants return within the first months. The reasons for

their premature return seem to be health problems, or the difficult living and working conditions. In general, we can say that for both housemaids and non-housemaids in the study, problems in the host country are more important determinants of early return migration than problems arising within the family in the country of origin. Improved training and information for prospective migrants would undoubtedly lead to a higher success rate. After all, migrants often leave totally unprepared, both technically and mentally, and it is not until they are in the Middle East that they realise that they are not able to use migration as a means towards social and economic emancipation.

The proportional hazard analysis has shown that the social and demographic characteristics of the migrant, as well as the host country to which they migrate, exert a considerable influence on the probability that the migrant will return home prematurely. Since the number of early returns has risen in the past few years, it would be beneficial if the Sri Lankan government were to take measures in this field. In our opinion, the following measures would contribute to a reduction of early return migration: a. stricter control of the contract stipulations of the migrant prior to departure, and ensuring that the minimum wage be paid; b. the establishment of care centres for the children of migrants in Sri Lanka.

In the host countries, the protection of household personnel is more or less non-existent. Housemaids are not considered to be workers, and are thus not protected by any form of employment legislation. And so they are only protected in cases of serious criminal offences committed against them. In view of the fact that many appear to return prematurely because of the difficult living and working conditions and malpractices in the Middle East, we recommend that the local authorities introduce measures to protect foreign domestic personnel. One of the first measures to be taken would be the institution of a minimum wage for household personnel. Only too often, housemaids are entirely at the mercy of their employer's discretion. Other forms of malpractice could be prevented if the governments in the Middle East were to introduce certain regulations which would improve the living and working conditions of the migrant, such as: minimum requirements for housing; a maximum number of working hours per day, holiday arrangements, and the like. Finally, the host countries could set up institutions to which migrants could turn for assistance in the event of serious problems with their employers.

NOTES

1. The cut-off period was taken to be 22 months instead of 24 months since some migrants are allowed to spend their paid holidays in Sri Lanka at the end of their 2-year contract. They thus return home 2 months earlier. The representation of the true circumstances would of course be biased if we were to include these privileged migrants in the group of early return migrants. The housemaids/non-housemaids division was taken and not the seemingly more appropriate sex division, because the living conditions of female non-housemaid workers, their legal status in the Middle East and their background characteristics resemble much more those of the male workers than those of the housemaids.
   The number of female non-housemaids is extremely small, amounting to only 5 cases in the survey.

2. This figure is somewhat higher than the one found for Sri Lankan migration by Korale (1985), who estimates the average duration of stay abroad to be 20.2 months for housemaids. The difference may be attributed to a different definition of what migration is. In his analysis, Korale also includes housemaids who returned for a holiday. This obviously leads to a downward bias. Moreover, his calculations are based on the last completed migration which, as we explained in the text, creates another downward bias.

3. A number of recruitment agents even had their housemaids injected to prevent pregnancy during the period between the medical check-up and departure. The migrants are often not informed about the true purpose of the injection. It is in the interest of the recruitment agent that the migrants do not become pregnant in the Middle East. After all, if the women are dismissed within three months following departure, whatever the reason, the agent must pay for the return journey to Sri Lanka.

4. For an introduction, the interested reader could consult the original article by Cox (1972) or, for instance, Allison (1984), who gives an overview of various regression techniques for longitudinal event data.

5. At the time of the survey U.S. $ 1 was about Rs. 27.

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10

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION AND RELIGIOUS STATUS OF SRI LANKAN MUSLIM WOMEN MIGRATING TO THE GULF

E.J.J. Jacobs & A. Papma

Introduction

By the end of the seventies, Sri Lanka was in the grip of a deep economic crisis and an increasing ethnic conflict. Apart from a negative trade balance, foreign debts, inflation and high unemployment, the country had to cope with intensifying tensions between the Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils, the major ethnic groups. Both the deteriorating economic situation and the escalating communal violence clearly marked Sri Lankan society.

One consequence of the impoverishment of low-income households in particular was a mass emigration of Sri Lankan workers to the oil-producing Gulf States where the development programmes for infrastructure and industry were facing acute labour shortages, both as regards quality and quantity.

The ethnic conflict led to a growth in religious revivalism and a development of ethnic awareness in the distinct communities. The communities tried to safeguard both their economic and political interests as well as their religious identity by forming pressure groups and establishing religious organizations.

These developments did not leave unaffected the Muslim community of Ceylon Moors and Indian Moors, comprising 7.6% of the total population. In response to repeated clashes with Sinhalese Buddhists and their obscure position within the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, the Muslims no longer define themselves as a Tamil-speaking population group, but simply stress their identity as a Muslim community of Arab origin. According to Ali (1984) Islamic revivalism in Sri Lanka is conservative in character; since the Sri Lankan Muslim community is rather small it can never hope to convert the whole society to the Islamic ideal and can thus merely try to safeguard its own religious and cultural identity. This results in revivalism of the *iman*(faith)-centered kind[1]. The ideal of *iman*-centered revivalism is the self-purification of the Muslim believers in order to build up a stronger *iman* or faith.

In the light of this development, the participation of Sri Lankan Muslims in labour migration to the Middle East is an interesting phenomenon. For Muslim

women who, under normal circumstances, would seldom be allowed to travel to Mecca, it provides an opportunity to stay in the 'heart of Islam', which is supposed to strengthen their religious awareness and identity. The numbers of Sri Lankan Muslims migrating to the Gulf are impressive. As much as 21% of the Sri Lankan labour force bound for countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait originates from the Muslim community (thus around three times their share in the total population). Approximately 70% of these Muslim migrants are women.
When assessing the influence of female labour migration and Islamic revivalism on the position of Muslim women, it is assumed that their entering wage labour will foster access to economic resources and contribute to their decision-making power. At the same time, however, it can harm their social and religious status within the community (Moore 1988). Islamic revivalism could have exactly the opposite effects; strict observance of Islamic rules of conduct would fuel economic dependency of women and restrict their decision-making power, rewarded by high prestige within the community.

In this chapter we focus on the impact of these contradictory trends on the socio-economic position and religious status of Sri Lankan Muslim women, who migrated to the Gulf to take up employment as domestic servants. The data presented here are based on 5 months of fieldwork in the Kandy district, Central Sri Lanka. The research was conducted among sixty-eight Muslim women, both migrants and non-migrants from eight entirely Muslim villages.

The socio-economic and religious factors acting upon the participation of Sri Lankan Muslim women in the labour migration flow are highlighted first. Secondly we concentrate on the living and working conditions of the Sri Lankan Muslim domestic servants in the sample, while working in the Middle East. Finally, as already indicated above, we discuss to what extent and how labour migration on the one hand and Islamic revivalism on the other, act upon the socio-economic position and religious status of Muslim migrant women.

Why Sri Lankan Muslim women migrate

As said elsewhere, (Brochmann 1986; Eelens & Schampers 1986), in 1977 the newly elected Sri Lankan government adopted an open economy policy, implying an export oriented industrialization and a liberal import strategy. This policy stimulated consumerism and had an impact on the rate of inflation. In general it may be said that the economic position of the poor sections of the population deteriorated. The average monthly income of the Muslim migrant households included in the sample amounted to Rs. 250, that is Rs. 50 below the official subsistence level[2].

In general this income was earned by the male household members who worked as small shopkeepers, salesmen and day labourers. Given an average household size of seven members, this income was not sufficient to cover the costs of food, clothing, housing, medical care and education.
In order to maintain their purchasing power, or in the worst cases merely to ensure survival, these low-income households tried to reduce their expenditure. Many stopped their eldest children (often daughters) from going to school. Other measures included negotiating loans or turning to the government and/or relatives for financial support.

> 'I was in great difficulties before I went (to the Middle East). When we ate, we didn't have money to buy clothes. When we bought clothes, we couldn't eat. If my relatives had not helped me, we would have starved. I am telling you the truth.'

> 'Our daily income at that time (before migration) was only 12 to 15 Rupees. My husband was just a shop assistant and received the money when going home. We also had ration cards, so we could get free dahl (lentils) and rice from the government shop, and one way or another we managed without showing our difficulties to others.'

Some households tried to solve their cash constraints by adjusting their labour supply. To increase the ratio of wage earners to dependents, female household members had to be incorporated into wage labour as well. But because of high unemployment rates, labour selectivity in terms of sex, the low educational attainments of women and their lack of specifically demanded marketable skills, employment opportunities for women were scarce. The few jobs available varied from indoor piecework, like folding paper bags or making sweets, to outdoor work like pounding rice or chopping firewood.

> 'We, my children and I used to cut joss sticks; small, fine sticks of bamboo. But during the rainy season, and on very hot days you can't do it, so I looked for other work. I went from village to village as a day labourer. I did work like pounding rice and chopping firewood, for which I received one coconut, a pound of flour, or one measure of rice in return. But after a while I couldn't do any hard work anymore. Here, look, my hands are swollen and aching. For a while I have been making cigars at home, but since these cigars are no longer smoked, I had to give that up too. Nowadays, I am cutting joss sticks again, but I hardly earn anything.'

Although not being regular employed with a fixed salary, such additional income generated by the female household members was just sufficient to save their households from starvation. Nevertheless, the temporary or permanent loss of the

male bread-winner(s) due to illness or death, the birth of a child or unexpected, high expenditures eventually caused an acute threat to survival. In other cases sudden unemployment or the loss of access to traditional means of production meant the financial death-blow.

> 'In 1983 there were riots in the country and some men robbed my husband's shop and set it on fire. We were desperate. And then my husband fell ill, so he couldn't set up a new business or go and ask for labour work. We could not tolerate that situation anymore, (...). We didn't have any food to eat or clothes to wear.'

> 'I used to grow cloves, peppers and all kinds of fruit in our garden, for our own use and to sell to other people in the village. But then they dug a pond to irrigate the paddyfields and the climate changed a little. That's why the cloves and peppers didn't grow as before. In the end there was nothing left to sell, and we got poorer and poorer.'

Apart from economic crisis, a few households faced a situation of social disorder related to repudiation and/or divorce. Having lost access to the husband's earnings while at the same time having become completely responsible for the children's well-being, plus being stereotyped by the villagers as households run by a 'bad mother and wife', these female-headed families were placed in a difficult position.

Confronted with the lack of employment and income opportunities, many households opted for labour migration of one or more of its members. The decision whether to send a male or female member is based on economic considerations primarily. A crucial role is played by the perceived job and wage differentials (or employment and income opportunities), and the costs involved in obtaining work in the Gulf.

As shown elsewhere (Eelens & Speckmann 1990), securing a job for a male member involves huge amounts of money. Furthermore, male employment is becoming scarcer in the Middle East. At the same time, the investment required to secure a job for a woman is relatively low as a result of the high demand for female domestic servants. Thus, most migrant women interviewed pointed first of all to costs when explaining why they had gone to the Middle East instead of their husband, brother or son. Other reasons mentioned were illness or absence of male household members, or the fact that the husband already had a job.

> 'If I want to send my husband (to the Middle East) I have to pay a lot of money; about 20,000 or 25,000 Rupees. So,... where can I get the money from? If I borrow money from someone I have to return it one day, and you never know whether you will be able to. If I went to the Middle East, we wouldn't have to do that.'

'My husband didn't have a birth certificate and at that time they (the employment agencies) were asking for 21,000 Rupees. We didn't know anybody who could spend that amount of money for us and we ourselves didn't even have 21 Rupees! If I went, everything would be paid for by the agency: the passport and the photographs. So that is why I went.'

'I live with my mother and son, since my husband left me. My mother is an old lady, so I went.'

'My husband didn't want to go. He was not really interested in going (abroad) because he was working here. And it is easier for women to go than for men.'

Whereas men's employment opportunities are generally evaluated only in terms of comparison with other waged occupations, women's work is evaluated and approved of on socio-cultural grounds (Sharma 1986). Defining Muslim women's roles in terms of wife- and motherhood, jobs considered suitable for women are those that can be regarded as an extension of their 'natural' tasks: child-rearing and domestic work. In addition, since sex-segregation and seclusion are important aspects of the lives of Sri Lankan Muslims much more so than with the Sinhalese, jobs are preferred where intermingling of men and women is avoided.Consequently, paid domestic service would under normal circumstances be rejected as an occupation for Muslim women. Still, when compared to other employment opportunities open to women such as working in Free Trade Zone factories, domestic service in the Middle East is perceived as an attractive alternative. The fact that women will have to leave home to travel on their own to the Middle East, is outweighed by other factors. No high educational level is demanded, it involves 'real women's work', the salaries are ten to fifteen times the local Sri Lankan wages, and the work is performed indoors in the homes of Muslim families. Besides, as some women remarked, their male relatives will not have to see them working 'in front of other Sri Lankan men's eyes' for this would imply a personal defeat, implying the official breadwinner's incapacity to provide for his wife and children. Moreover, it is relatively easy for Muslim women from Sri Lanka to find employment as domestic servants in the Middle East, which will be explained below.

The demand in the Middle East for Muslim housemaids

During the years that the employment of domestic servants became a widespread phenomenon in the Gulf region, it was first and foremost related to the growing affluence of the dominant classes. Their increased economic prosperity resulted both in the adoption of a clearly consumer life-style and also in a trend towards

the nuclear family as the preferred form of cohabitation. This led to a more extensive and heavier work-load for well-to-do Arab housewives. Cleaning the newly-built, large houses, preparing lavish meals and organizing extravagant parties are labour intensive activities, which could no longer be shared by a group of female household members such as sisters-in-law, mothers and daughters (Sharma 1986).
By employing servants the domestic pressure on women could be alleviated: a strategy that was not only considered acceptable, but for various reasons even desirable. In addition to bringing about the (partial) freeing of Middle Eastern women from housework, the presence of servants also contributed to the economic and social status of the household since the servants not only took over the menial and demeaning tasks previously performed by the women but also symbolized the households' financial capacities. Furthermore, by performing a bridging function between the opposite sexes in the households, servants provided for opportunities of putting the Islamic ideal of sex-segregation into practice.

In addition to the new lifestyle of the dominant classes, the growing involvement of Middle Eastern women in the wage labour force, be it slow, may also have stimulated the demand for domestic servants. As few official attempts were made to provide creches, playgrounds and other daycare facilities for pre-school children (Hijab 1988), employed Arab women proceeded to engage servants who could take over the responsibility for their children at home.
Unlike demand, the supply of domestic servants is very limited in the Middle East itself. Firstly, ideological considerations restrain Arab women from taking up service-type occupations. Since it involves regular and uncontrollable intermingling of the sexes (generally perceived as suspect and condemnable), and is considered low-status work, entering domestic service is socially stigmatized as inappropriate for women. Consequently the female ratio in service occupations in Middle Eastern countries is low when compared, for example, to Latin America (Youssef 1974).
Secondly, following the expanding employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled Arabs, the employed as well as unemployed male servants moved into other sectors of employment, thus leaving to Asian migrant women one of the most insecure and lowest paid jobs - that of domestic servant.
Recruited by local foreign employment agencies, thousands of women from countries such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Korea, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka left their families behind in order to take up employment in the Middle East. Also Sri Lanka has become one of the sources of women working in the Middle East.

Muslim women in particular are sought by the Middle Eastern employers. As Middle Eastern employers fear that non-Muslim foreign servants may have an undesirable influence on their children, Muslim servants are thought to be least threatening to the existing religious and social order because of their familiarity with Islamic beliefs and rules of conduct.

Living and working conditions of Sri Lankan Muslim domestic servants in the Middle East

Sri Lankan domestic servants are mostly employed in Kuwait (33.6%), the United Arab Emirates (23.7%), and in Saudi Arabia (13.4%) (Cumaranatunge 1985). When we consider the group of Muslim women, however, the picture looks quite different. The study revealed that about 40% of the interviewees had been employed in Saudi Arabia, 31% in the United Arab Emirates, and 24% in Kuwait (Jacobs & Papma 1989). In general Sri Lankan female servants stay in the Middle East on the basis of a two-year contract, but due to various reasons such as illness, bad treatment on the part of the employer, etc., they may return home prematurely. The average duration of stay of Sri Lankan female servants in the Middle East is 22.5 months (Eelens & Schampers 1988). However, within the sample of Muslim women the average duration of stay was 27.5 months (Jacobs & Papma 1989). The fact that Muslim women stay longer is most probably related to their having the Islamic religion in common with their employers, which facilitates their adaptation to the new situation. As said earlier, Middle Eastern households show a clear preference for female Muslim servants (reflected in the policy of the recruiting agencies) and, bound by a moral code towards fellow believers, possibly treat them better than servants professing other religions.

Like most Sri Lankan female migrants working in the Middle East, all migrant women in the sample had been employed as housemaids; 'women performing domestic labour in private households for pay' (Katzman 1978:45). Whereas other types of domestic servants such as butlers, cooks, washerwomen, etc., have to perform clearly defined tasks, housemaids can be considered some kind of 'Jack-of-all-trades', performing all the tasks usually done by the housewife/mother without compensation (Moore 1988).
Since domestic labour is performed in the private sphere, it is regarded as informal and non-productive. The law is therefore more likely to consider domestic servants as 'members of the household' - though lacking the rights and freedoms usually enjoyed by the latter - rather than as workers (Schellekens & Van der Schoot 1983). As a general trend therefore, labour laws governing domestic service are either non-existent or very badly controlled, and the case of the Sri

Lankan housemaids in the Middle East proves to be far from exceptional. These servants have to sign a contract by which they commit themselves to their employers for a period of two years. For the employers however, there are no fixed obligations with regard to the activities, working hours and leisure time of their servants (Cumaranatunge 1985). The only provision for housemaids is a monthly minimum wage of U.S. $ 100, fixed by the Bureau of Foreign Employment in Sri Lanka (Eelens & Speckmann 1990).
The Sri Lankan housemaids in the Middle East all live in with their employers. In general this particular kind of domestic service is characterized by a highly personalized relationship between the employer and the servant with almost complete control exercised by the former, and a certain measure of isolation from the outside world of the latter. In this context, Cock (1980:58) speaks of domestic service as a 'quasi total institution' i.e. 'a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating the individual's sleeping, working and leisure time. All aspects of it are conducted in the same place and under the same authority'.
These factors combined result in a large measure of dependence of the housemaids on the norms and benevolence of their individual employer. Therefore, the working and living experiences of the servants interviewed often show considerable variation.

Due to the atomization of the work place and the isolated position of the domestic servants, the personal relationship between a housemaid and her employers is of crucial importance for her working and living situation (Cock 1980; Katzman 1978; Rollins 1985).
Domestic service of Sri Lankans in the Middle East can be classified as a predominantly female institution; because of the nature of the work both the servant and her employer are women. The research showed that most migrants had intensive and frequent contact with their female employer, whereas contacts with the male employer were very limited, partly as result of the sex-segregation in the Middle Eastern household, partly based on fear for undesirable overtures.

> 'I used to cover my head inside the house because my madam told me not to show my hair to the boss, because he would like that very much, since I have very long hair. So I was afraid and used to cover all the hairs on my head very well. I would never go in front of him. I would let him call me ten times before going, because I was afraid of him.'

The fact that the housemaids had frequent contacts with their female employer does not imply that their relationship can be characterized as intimate. Most conversations were restricted to the nature of the work, the duties of and lines of conduct for the servant.

> 'My madam was the one to give me advice: she told me not to think of home and not to be homesick, and that I should work well. She showed me how to wash, clean and cook. And with regard to my dress, she gave me 'maxies' to wear, she did not allow me to wear sarees. She told me not to wear the shawl, because it would be difficult to work with, and anyway there were no men in the house, except for the boss, who was ill and in bed.'

Apart from such contacts with the employers, housemaids have the opportunity to develop other relationships (albeit limited) that can be seen as compensating for the temporary loss of their loved ones in Sri Lanka. The most important contacts were either with other housemaids, or with the children or other family members of the employers. Migrants who had been able to make friends with other Sri Lankan housemaids stressed how much support it had given them to be able to talk to compatriots.

> 'Whenever possible, we housemaids would sit together and chat, and I would feel happy.'

Likewise, the sometimes strong bond that developed between the housemaid and the employers' children helped the former to cope with feelings of loneliness. One migrant, when telling us about her experiences in the Middle East, showed us photographs of the family she had worked for, broke down in tears and said that she missed her employer's children deeply. Having said all this, one should note that all relations with others, as well as contacts with relatives in Sri Lanka were to a large extent controlled by the employers.

> 'I saw some Sri Lankan women when my madam and I went shopping, but my madam didn't want me to talk to them. She said that there were a lot of bad girls among the Sri Lankan housemaids.'

> 'I used to write letters to my husband, and there came a time when I started to wonder whether he ever received them. I then discovered that my letters were kept by my employers. They also didn't give me the letters I received from home. After five months without any news I asked a friend to write to my husband. He wrote back to her address and she gave the letter to me. My husband said that he hadn't received any letters. I went to my boss to complain, but he said he knew nothing about it.'

In summary, we can state that Sri Lankan female migrants are a very isolated and exploitable work force whose world is almost completely controlled by their employers. In this respect the situation of Muslim housemaids does not differ much from that of housemaids of other religious groups. Although the Middle

Eastern employers prefer their housemaids to be Muslims, this in general does not result in shorter working hours, lighter tasks or better wages.
Then why is it, as we mentioned earlier, that Muslim housemaids remain longer in the Middle East than the average Sri Lankan housemaid? We suggest that the answer should be sought in their religious familiarity. Muslim housemaids believe themselves to be better treated than housemaids professing other religions, as a result of the fact that they are fellow-believers. The data show that having the Islamic religion in common created some sense of familiarity between the housemaid and the employers.

> 'They gave me a Musalla so I prayed. They gave a Quran and I recited. Then they knew I could recite, since some Sinhalese (Buddhist) girls go as Muslims, so they wanted to check that.'

> 'At first they suspected me because they didn't understand my language, but when they saw me praying and reciting the Quran they were satisfied.'

> 'If I had been a Sinhalese (Buddhist) woman, they would not have allowed me to sit and eat with them. They don't like Sinhalese people since they do not wash after using the toilet. And they won't pray and fast.'

Although deprived of all means of resistance where their subordinate position is concerned, the religious life of the migrants was not completely dominated by the employers. The servants were given freedom to perform their religious duties and this proved to be a source of strength and self-esteem.
Almost all migrants stated that they had spoken about their religion with their employers, either in response to a television or radio programme, or following interaction between the employer and the servant while performing religious duties. The most important topics for discussion were fasting and praying or reciting, these being the main religious tasks performed by Muslim women. Although in some cases it seems to have been a rather one-way communication, during which 'the boss spoke about Islam and I used to listen', in most instances the migrants were able to give their personal opinion.

> 'While watching TV programmes on my religion, I used to explain to them about it, and they explained things to me too. So we talked about Islam, about prayers and fasting.'

Most migrants expressed a strong sense of appreciation of their own (Sri Lankan) variant of Islam, and although some described the Middle Eastern Muslims as good, strict Muslims, and acknowledged the fact that the system of sex-segregation

is more effectively implemented in the Middle East, others were not afraid to pass a negative judgment on the religious behaviour of their employers.

> 'When my madam was praying and something interesting was on television, she would watch that. And during the fasting days they would keep on eating. While having dinner they would not cover their heads. No, they are not religious at all!'

> 'In the way of praying I did not find many differences but in the way of fasting I did. They kept on eating until dawn and I just couldn't find out whether they were fasting or not. In Sri Lanka we finish eating around 2.30 or 3 o'clock, and we fast with intention, we concentrate on it.'

> 'I think the Muslims of Sri Lanka are better Muslims. The Muslims there are just Muslims because it's a Muslim country.'

Strictly performing their religious duties, having a clear conscience before God, and thus being a good believer helped the migrants to cope with their difficult and isolated life in the Middle East. Their religion, the part of their life which was least controlled, proved to be a source of strength and self-esteem. Some migrants claimed to have become more pious while in the Middle East.

Back in Sri Lanka: socio-economic and religious effects of migration on the position of Sri Lankan Muslim women

In the introduction to this chapter we referred to two trends influencing the position of women: engagement in wage labour through labour migration, and religious revivalism. It is alleged that these trends have opposite, or even counteracting effects, but is this indeed the case?

It is clear that labour migration of Sri Lankan Muslim women to the Middle East involves a temporary break-through in the existing sexual division of labour. Women who formerly performed either domestic labour or generated a supplementary income within the confines of their homes, have taken over the 'male role' by taking up paid labour outside the home and becoming the main breadwinners of their households.

As said earlier, women's engagement in paid labour, implying some degree of economic independence, is often believed to be a prerequisite for changing their position. We want to show here that the matter is much more complicated; apart from economical aspects ideological factors will also have to be considered.

In an article on migration and the position of women Lim (1988) states the three most important indicators of women's position vis-à-vis men: possession of and

control over resources; ability or power to take decisions and exercise control over other people; prestige in terms of respect or esteem accorded to women. These three aspects are of course closely interrelated and cannot be studied in isolation. We would, however, like to make some tentative remarks about the possible consequences of labour migration on these factors.

The research revealed that labour migration does not seem to have any direct, far-reaching consequences on the economic independence of the women interviewed. Although in most cases the remittances of the migrants formed the only income, this did not imply that women had direct control over the money, nor over the decision-making process with regard to financial matters. The money earned in the Middle East was sent home and either put into a bank account (in most cases the husband's) or spent on housing and daily expenses. Either the husband or the couple together would decide what expenditures would be given priority over others. In households where prior to the period of migration the husband had never consulted his wife on money affairs, this continued to be the case. Only two migrants were very assertive about their share in the decision-making process, none of the others claimed to take any financial decisions alone. Considering these aspects, however, one has to keep in mind that the migrant women should not be viewed in isolation. The migration of these women to the Middle East was intended as a strategy for alleviating economic pressures on the household as a whole. The initial purpose was not to gain economic independence for the women as individuals, but to generate an income that would be communally used.

We would suggest that cases of women migrating in order to earn money for a dowry have to be interpreted within this context as well. Through marriage not only two individuals but two entire families are bound together, and consequently girls who migrate to earn a dowry do not invest in their own future but in that of the entire household. For most households it is very difficult to raise sufficient funds to provide the daughters with a dowry. Labour migration to the Middle East with the prospect of a high salary seems to offer an attractive solution to this problem. In this respect Brochmann (1986:12) stresses the economic value of migrants, stating: 'Having daughters has now become an asset: more daughters means more potential migrants, whereas earlier daughters were mainly an expense, someone one ought to supply with dowry'.

However, the matter seems to be more complicated if taking into account socio-cultural aspects. Two considerations may refute the assumption of an increased economic value of female labour migrants, especially with regard to the dowry system.

Firstly, we found that many women, migrants as well as non-migrants hesitate to send their daughters to the Middle East. This is related to the negative image of female labour migrants. In a community where control over women and their behaviour is a crucial factor, it is hardly surprising that women arouse distrust when they negate their traditional role and are withdrawn from the control of their male family members. Many allegations are made about the misbehaviour of Sri Lankan migrants in the Middle East. Migrants as well as non-migrants claimed that since many people are suspicious of girls who have been to the Middle East, their chances of marriage may decrease.
Secondly, either related to this moral degradation of migrant women, or simply through a principle of supply and demand, dowry prices may rise. One migrant who married after she had returned from the Middle East said she had had to bring Rs. 30,000 as dowry, a very large amount. Thus, migration in itself does not seem to offer a solution to the dowry problem.

During the fieldwork we found that although it is acknowledged that migrant households have a higher economic status than non-migrant ones, it proves to be that in the case of female migrants this economic gain is neutralized by a decline of social esteem.
Much of the suspicion towards female migrants is related to their behaviour after migration, which is regarded by the community as not-Islamic. Whereas good Muslim women are supposed to adhere to the system of *purdah*, i.e. 'the system of secluding women and forcing high standards of female modesty' (Papanek & Minault 1982:1), symbolized by covering the head, not speaking to males other than family, and not going out unaccompanied. Migrant women, however, do not seem to be bothered by this. They can be seen moving around freely, covering less frequently and less carefully than non-migrant women, are less shy towards strangers and are often beautifully dressed. Since attractive women are regarded by Muslims as creating chaos and threatening the unity of the community of believers (Mernissi 1975, 1986), migrant women are said to be 'walking away from their religion'. Viewed in the light of the current religious revivalism this is a direction exactly opposite to the ideal one for women, who are - just like men - supposed to return to strict religious practice, implying a stricter observance of sex-segregation, decent behaviour, and so on.
Instead of stressing these outward signs of being a good believer however, migrant women make use of the more inwardly oriented side of revivalism. They stress spiritual purity; a good *iman* (faith) as the essence of religious life, thus paying more attention to prayer, reciting and fasting than to the more visible aspects of religion, such as veiling and covering. It is difficult to assess why female migrants concern themselves with this pure *iman*, but we want to suggest that it is their

most effective way of defending themselves against the negative judgments passed on them as believers on the basis of visible behavioural changes. Most returned migrants claim to have become more pious in the Middle East and as such have experienced an individual revival of their religious ideas, but not so much because they really feel the Middle East to be the true heart of pure Islam. Instead, they innovatively make use of specific ideas concerning Islamic revivalism as a strategy to overcome the social drawbacks that result from their stepping out of the traditional women's role by migrating to the Middle East.

In summary, entering wage labour through migration to the Middle East does not provide Muslim women with the means of gaining economic independence or access to resources, nor of enlarging their decision-making power. Instead, it involves a decline in social status and esteem. Secondly, although one could expect revivalism to have restrictive effects on women, Sri Lankan Muslim migrants proves that this not necessarily have to be the case. By stressing the need to justify themselves directly to God, more than to their fellow believers, certain aspects of revivalism are used by these women to gain more freedom of movement. As one of the migrants remarked:

> 'If you are good, and have an unspotted conscience, you can go anywhere.'

NOTES

1. As opposed to *umma*-centered revivalism, which focuses on the transformation of the entire community (*umma*) rather than on individuals. This type is much more radical and political in nature, and if necessary will also try to bring non-believers to the Islamic faith by means of war. Iran can serve as an example of a country where this type of revivalism has developed, whereas in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates *iman*-centered revivalism is growing (Ali 1984).

2. Personal communication with the Assistant Government Agent in Gampala, Sri Lanka, February 1986.

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11

SRI LANKAN HOUSEMAIDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: AN AVENUE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT?

G. Brochmann

A most significant aspect of current Sri Lankan labour migration is, as we have seen, the role played by women in this international traffic. In an Asian context, particularly where institutionalized contract migration is concerned, it is unique that the majority of the national contingent is constituted by women.
Labour migration is a phenomenon with strong implications for society on different levels. It can be most fruitfully understood in the context of the economic and social development that has made the migration possible, or often advanced it. At the same time, causes and consequences of the move will be contingent on the individual migrant's position in society in a broad sense. The contextual factors should be regarded as prerequisites for action - background conditions that make it rational to migrate. In other words, the factor to be looked for is the relationship between the structural conditions and the motivation of the actors behind the move. Migration should be viewed as a result of both (objective) structural possibilities and/or of constraints on and human (subjective) appraisal of these very possibilities.

The present chapter discusses this social dynamic in the context of female migration. Since women hold different social and economic positions in society, it is likely also to find different implications of the traffic when the gender component is reversed.

There are several aspects of the phenomenon which strike the observer from the outset: It is amazing how thousands of women transcend the boundaries of their communities, challenging structural and traditional limitations attached to their sex and class. Women who not only have barely ventured outside their own region prior to the move to the Gulf, but have almost certainly never travelled by plane. Mainly married women, with children they have to leave behind.

A whole range of questions could be asked on this background. The three groups of questions and problems set out below constitute the principal thrust of the discussion.

- How do the remittances from the Middle East affect the living conditions of the households involved? Is the money used in a productive way - that is, so that it has a lasting positive effect on the household economy, or does it create a new dependence on external assets?
- What are the impacts of female migration on social mobility? If upward mobility is taking place, how lasting is the phenomenon when the women stop migrating? How are migration and social strata correlated in the first place, and what is the impact of migration on patterns of differentiation? Does it re-emphasise an already existing mode of differentiation, or does it contribute to levelling differences?
- On the social and cultural side, how does the Middle East migration affect the lives of the women themselves? How are they looked upon by the community and by society in general? What impact does their experience of a different world have on their environment? How does the exodus of the women affect family life, wellbeing, division of labour and relations within the household? Is the traffic in any sense a step forward in relation to reduced subordination of the women involved?

Data limitations

Not all of these problems and questions can be 'answered' in a strict sense. Unfortunately the available data fail to provide the means of achieving this.
Ideally the study of economic, socio-cultural and gender consequences of labour migration should be performed on a longitudinal basis. This would mean observing the migrants and their communities from before the time of the decision to go abroad, following them through the migration process, and subsequently noting the situation long after the final return. In this way it would be possible to appraise the deeper and more lasting effects of the phenomenon.
However, this has not been possible for practical and more substantial reasons. For one thing female labour migration from Sri Lanka is a newly established activity, making it de facto impossible to study the long term effects at the moment. Practically speaking, most projects (including the present one) do not allow for longitudinal approaches that are time consuming, expensive and demanding as to general use of resources.
Consequently the researcher is limited to synchronous data concerning the actual sample of units investigated. Information regarding the past depends on respondents' memories, on life histories and on material from informants as well as documentation. The future is a matter of no more than qualified speculations. These limitations are further underscored by the fact that we are studying slow processes

of social change, and phenomena like 'reduced subordination' that are difficult to pin down in the first place.
The scope of an individual project is also limited to a very small sample of respondents, with the general problems of representativity that this implies. Any broadening of the scope or attempted enrichment of the field requires referral to secondary sources - in so far as they exist.

This chapter[1] presents a synthesis of various kinds of such secondary sources and primary data collected during a six month period working in the field in Sri Lanka in 1985/86. Around 140 respondents (mostly returned female migrants) were interviewed in slum pockets of Colombo as well as in different communities in the District of Hambantota in the south of the island.
There are many conflicting and contradictory elements accompanying the phenomenon of female labour migration from Sri Lanka. It is the objective of this study to point up some of these elements and to clarify how the women act upon the conflicting situation. Many more aspects of the phenomenon have yet to be fully explored.
The next paragraph provides a brief look into some general tendencies concerning the wage labour structure in parts of the developing world. Then the background to the present situation will be clarified by means of a more detailed look at women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka over the years, before the topic of labour migration is discussed specifically.

Restructured wage labour force

The characteristics of labour demand in third world countries have changed rapidly and fundamentally over the last decades, due to technological innovation and the ever-increasing integration into the world capitalist economy. Men and women are incorporated into this transformed labour market in different ways. The nature of the market incorporation may be changing, but it is not changing in the same way for both men and women. The particular effects of this new employment structure on the economic participation of women will vary according to the concrete economic structure of a society. Generally speaking, two significant patterns have been observed through case studies in Latin America and South- and Southeast Asia: first, women are squeezed out of independent productive activities directed at the market and forced into casual labour or domestic service; secondly, where they are no longer able to contribute to the household economy locally, they can be forced to move in search of employment (Heyzer 1981).

The economic role of women is changing at the same time as opportunities for regular male wage employment are decreasing. In these economies, relatively few men have stable wage employment, and even fewer can be said to earn a 'family wage'. In non-rural areas, where access to land for cultivation is limited or non-existent, and in rural areas suffering from land shortage, multiple income earning strategies are commonplace, involving the entire household (men, women and children).

In poorer sections of Sri Lankan society these multiple income strategies have been widespread over the years. In fact the heavy reliance of Sri Lanka's national economy on female wage work has a long history, not only in agriculture and in the 'informal sector', but as a stable component even of the formal labour force. The use of women as a steady pool of wage labour was first introduced to the island by British colonialism in the nineteenth century. The initiation of a comprehensive plantation economy required large stocks of labour, in which women turned out to constitute the majority. Women have consequently made up the backbone of Sri Lanka's most important foreign income earner for years. After independence women continued to be a source of labour in agriculture, in the informal sector, in industry (textile and food manufacturing) and in the plantation sector.

A central feature of female work force participation in Sri Lanka seems, however, to be that the women systematically are concentrated in the lower levels of the employment pyramid, both in the formal and informal sector. The housemaids in the Middle East constitute a somewhat ambiguous category in this respect, since they are situated in the lower levels of the pyramid and yet at the same time have a relatively high salary.

Despite its long history in Sri Lanka, women's wage labour nonetheless underwent significant changes in the late 1970's. It is mentioned elsewhere that the shift in government in 1977 implied a major economic reorientation of the state in the direction of an 'open economy' with the following consequences: liberalization of imports, initiation of the free trade zone and subsequent encouragement of foreign investment, privatization of many state sector services, devaluation, etc. One of the main features of the new economic policy has been the even stronger absorption of female labour power into economic activities, at the same time as the occupational profile of this labour has undergone important changes. The traditional sectors of employment have been seriously destabilized, while new arenas have been opened up, the three most significant ones being the free trade zone, the tourist sector and the Middle East. The most important of these three, both concerning numbers employed and currency earnings for the state, is the Middle East traffic.

Two basic hypotheses

At the start of this project, two major hypotheses formed the basis for the study:

- Since it is known that the clear majority of the female migrants are recruited from the poorest strata of the population, one could be justified in assuming that (a minimum of) two years earning an income that compares more than favourably to what they are used to would provide them with significant social uplift. In other words it is assumed that the female Middle East migration is used as a vehicle for social mobility.
- The second major hypothesis relates to the potential for 'liberation'[2], or rather reduced subordination. Entry into paid employment is a condition for access to greater independence, and represents a potential for emancipation. Major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments can be eroded, since people are structurally directed into new patterns of socialization and behaviour. Although there is abundant evidence worldwide that there is no simple and direct relationship between the two factors of independent employment and relief from subordination, the migration of females to the Middle East involves such a drastic challenge to traditional norms and values, that some change in this respect would not be surprising.

What the individual woman and her household derive from a Gulf contract depends on a variety of components at different stages of the migration process. We have chosen to single out three major stages: The initial stage - before leaving Sri Lanka; the period in the Gulf; and the post-migration stage back in the home communities. Within each stage there will be a diversity of variables which, in combination, form the total outcome or 'net result' of the work experience of the migrant.

First stage - 'initial resources'

It has already been pointed out that Sri Lankan society has undergone major economic changes in the last ten years, leading in turn to further transformations in other areas of society. The liberalized import policy, followed by a 'consumer ideology', has had an impact right down to the poorest sections of the population, thus giving the poor higher expectations, yet leaving them with limited possibilities of improving their standard of living. In the wake of these changes, money has become increasingly instrumental in achieving a respectable social status (Rupesinghe 1987). Money has also proved to be the unchallenged driving force behind Middle East migration. In fact one study indicates that 'the lure of money would have over-ridden all other considerations in accepting whatever is given'

(Marga 1986:85). The women involved take risks which they would never have taken in their own country, the majority (52%) having no specific advance knowledge of the actual job they will be undertaking for two years abroad (Marga 1986:85). The contract consequently serves as a 'lottery ticket' to which the purchaser pins faith based on the 'demonstration effect' of the relative successes of certain neighbours.

The heavy risks taken must be explained by the very poor 'initial resources' possessed by these people. Hardly any of the female migrants' households boast a stable income. The typical migrant household keeps going through 'mixed employment strategies', leading a hand-to-mouth existence. The number of dependents (young children and the elderly) is often relatively high, leaving the families with few 'producers' and many 'consumers'. For many, 'survival migration' is the only solution.

Many of the households are also heavily in debt for various reasons common among the poor. Over the years the moneylenders have established a strong grip on society, exploiting the vulnerable economic basis of the inhabitants. Most migrants have to borrow considerable sums to pay the agent, who often charges heavy illegal fees to establish the contract.

On top of these basic disadvantages, the female migrant households, situated at the economically lower end of society, usually also score weakly on other social variables: their health may be relatively poor; education is limited as are language skills. Consequently, deprived of basic assets like these, self-esteem is not likely to carry the migrant very far in a conflict situation. Considering the abundant supply of potential 'mobile maids', the bargaining power of the individual migrant is close to nil.

Stage two - 'process conditions'

When all the preliminaries have been completed, and the Sri Lankan woman find herself in an Arab household somewhere in the Gulf, various conditions will determine whether her stay is 'successful' or not.

As has been reflected elsewhere, there is no shortage of horror stories. Some migrants are swindled by the recruitment agencies (apart from the illegal fees that are charged) in the sense that on arrival they may find that there is no job. A considerable number of the maids reported receiving salaries lower than the contracted amount. The salary is often held back as a punishment if the maid fails in some way to satisfy her employer. Some of the women cannot cope with the physical and mental pressure which the jobs often involve. As has been pointed out, in most cases the working conditions are actually both physically hard and

psychologically strenuous. Others may be called home due to illness or other problems in the family. Finally, the women may simply be confronted with 'bad luck' of various kinds.
Generally speaking, this is a shady area of investigation, where information is extremely difficult to check. The women can have various motives for wanting either to hide or actually over-communicate the bad conditions they were working under in the Gulf, depending on the kind of grievances they have suffered.
One indicator of the hardship the women must endure overseas is the question of premature return home. As pointed out elsewhere, this eventuality covers a considerable number of the 'mobile maids' who seem alarmingly susceptible to different types of calamity. This very probably comes as no surprise in view of their low 'initial resources' score. Deprived of important basic resources, the housemaids are easily exploited. On top of this, bad social and health conditions at home may frequently lead to illness and other problems, thus making it impossible for the maid to fulfil her contract. The 'process conditions' for these women are consequently worse than they would be for better-off women.

Despite this grim picture of harsh conditions, the prospects of high earnings and the prevailing 'success stories' explain the continuing 'pull' towards the Gulf.
However the central 'process conditions' are necessary though not sufficient preconditions for a 'successful' end result. An aspect or stage of considerable importance in the whole course of the migration is situated outside the Gulf, and partly after the work has been completed.

Stage three - 'the dispositional effects'

Various factors have to be taken into consideration in looking at the dispositional effects - the cash remittances. The fact that hardly anyone in the migrants' households has a stable income implies that the wages earned in the Middle East often represent the only money worthy of mention in these families. Not infrequently other family members will stop whatever work they have been engaged in because the money arriving from the Middle East every month makes their earnings seem not worth the effort. And thus the number of consumers in the household increases and there is a greater need of leisure activities. It is not unusual (though the extent to which it happens varies considerably) for a woman to find on he return that he Gulf wages have been largely squandered in her absence on alcohol, gambling or other dubious expenses. Lack of financial stability is a general feature in these communities. Most households cite 'various odd jobs' as the family's financial basis. The people are generally unaccustomed to cash-in-hand, whatever money occasionally available being spent immediately. Budgetary planning is

practically non-existent, mainly because there is nothing to plan for. The way these families behave should thus come as no surprise. Indeed, it is rather remarkable that so many manage to save enough to rebuild their houses.

Literature on labour migration often features the concept of 'conspicuous consumption'. This refers to a consumption pattern characteristic of the 'nouveau riche', where cassette players, TV sets, extravagant furniture, bric-a-brac and trinkets dominate. Such visible signs of the Middle East migration are also found in Sri Lanka. Very few of the women have returned without a cassette player, toys for the children, a wristwatch for the husband and/or a number of saris for themselves. Nevertheless such data should be treated with caution, especially when drawing conclusions. The data in this study indicate that the great majority spend the bulk of their wages on (1) repaying debts; (2) daily consumption; (3) improvements in the house; (4) more expensive 'status symbols'[3]. The ranking between (3) and (4) may vary. Relatively more money is needed to improve the housing standard, so that if a woman/household does not see the possibility of passing this threshold, the 'status-symbols' may get higher priority.

'Investment' pattern

The rationale behind this pattern requires some comment. The level of wages is so high in the Middle East that a greater propensity towards investment might have been expected, more 'wise' long term thinking, a tendency that could extricate the actors out of severe poverty. Investment in certain financial activities ('business'), which would in turn provide an income independent of the Gulf traffic, would be an expression of such thinking. That this happens only very rarely has partly to do with the 'initial resources' and the common 'vicious circles' of poverty. The initial standard of living is so low that it is obviously rational to spend money on better food, health, clothing and housing standard. If any money is left after all this, the question is whether it is wise to invest or save under the prevailing circumstances. One limitation is lack of objects for investment at the economic level of the people in question. Niches in the 'informal sector' are already overcrowded, which is one reason why the need to migrate arose in the first place. On the other hand, some of the gadgets that the migrants do spend money on, like TV-sets, gold and houses may at least principally yield an asset that the household can later sell, and as such they represent an 'investment' in economic security.

Education is a long-term investment, traditionally highly valued in Sri Lanka, and education is also a field most people say they want to spend money on. But

the financial return on this investment is out of sight; and indeed, the direct financial value of education has, generally speaking, gone down in recent years. The data from this study imply that fairly small amounts are actually spent to this effect.
There is a rather special type of 'investment', embarked upon to a degree limited by the initial resources: the putting together by the migrant of a dowry for herself if she is unmarried - or for close female family members. The dowry system is still fairly widespread in the country, and marrying above one's status may yield financial returns, even for other family members. According to the present sample, however, this is a form of investment rarely indulged in by the housemaids.

Generally speaking, the concept of 'investment' should probably be broadened somewhat, a distinction being made between investment in the pecuniary meaning of the word - as discussed so far - and investment in local status. It is fairly common among the migrants to spend money on weddings, funerals, age attainment and village festivals in a more 'conspicuous' way than prior to the trip abroad. Symbolic treasures may definitely have value as such, and they may also be transferred into more solid assets. To 'buy symbolic status' may be an economic strategy in itself. 'Village-Sri Lanka' being a fairly egalitarian society, where comparison with the neighbour is a central feature of the communities, people's spending behaviour will tend to follow specific patterns according to local definitions of 'status'. Housing has for years held a significant position in this context. The 'core-family'-concept has acquired considerable status in Sri Lankan society over the years, and the acquisition of a private home for the closest kin seems to be the most prominent aspiration expressed by almost everybody in the villages investigated. It is therefore not surprising that improving or rebuilding the family's house is given such priority once money has become abundantly available[4].

Up to the present time there have been very few 'mobile maids' to actually reach the stage of investing their wages in the narrow, pecuniary way. Many women have made as many as three journeys to the Middle East without breaking out of the 'consumption trap'. A 'family-supporter-logic' has by necessity come to direct the female migrants and their households, while the high levels of consumption have in turn made them dependent on a series of new contracts in the Gulf. As in many other sender economies labour migration and higher aspirations tend to reinforce one another mutually.
Consequently the opportunities offered by the Middle East have had contradictory implications for the maids' household economies. While the spending capacity of most households has been enhanced, and there has been at least a consequent improvement - at least in the short term - in living conditions, the cost of ther

opportunity has greatly increased with reference to the other income generating activities of all members of the household: for the men in particular the relative futility has been demonstrated of engaging in other income generating activities. Their gains will only too easily be seen as not worth the effort in the light of the monthly 'petro-dollar-checks' in the mail.

Effects on different spheres in society

It is difficult to uncover the socio-economic effects which can be attributed exclusively to migration alone, as compared to other on-going processes of change. A single socio-economic phenomenon cannot be investigated easily in isolation from the context. In Sri Lanka this is underscored by the fact that the migration process started and developed at the same time as the society was going through other major transformations. Central aspects of 'modernization' penetrated the remotest corner of the island almost simultaneously with the first wave of migration. The question of a more complete integration into the capitalist market economy and the consequent 'consumerism' cannot therefore be seen as a direct effect of labour migration. The new consumption pattern should rather be viewed as a result of a complex process within the political economy of the country, in which labour migration has been an important part over the last ten years. In this perspective migration can contribute to an acceleration of already existing socio-economic trends.

In consequence it is impossible to delineate any uniform 'total effect' of labour migration. The effects are complex and may vary between different levels of abstraction. As is the case with many socio-economic phenomena, the individual and/or household may act according to a rationale quite different from that inspiring the state. Therefore the sum of the individual strategies may not be structurally desirable to economic planners. People tend to spend their money in areas where they can expect a rapid, personally favourable result, no attention being paid to the long term interest of 'the nation'. The household is not a capitalist enterprise, but rather an entity with value orientation towards consumption and the general well-being of the family. For the majority of the households in question, continued subsistence is the basic aim. This does not principally exclude the possibility of growth within this framework. The subsistence scale may move upwards in the sense that the culturally defined 'necessary living standard' is subject to change. This actually seems to occur, at least during the period of migration. People consume more and better while there is no simultaneous implementation of deeper structural changes. In consequence the socio-economic push - the structural features that generated the migration in the first place - is not basically

changed. Lasting alternatives - in the sense of a change or an increase in production - are not created within the national economy.
Consequently, one hypothesis of this study is that a serious dependency is going to grow out of the female labour migration both in the short and long term perspective, unless the 'consumption trap' is transcended. This dependency will impinge on all levels of society.
The challenge from a strategic point of view would be to make productive investments profitable and realistic for the majority of the migrants. As far as the female contingent is concerned, this is fairly utopian at the moment because of the social composition of the work force. In essence it is a question of coming to grips with the poverty problem of the country.

The social mobility question also presents a complex picture. As we have seen, migration may temporarily enhance the socio-economic position of the individual household. But the community may end up with a reshuffled stratification pattern. Apart from the migrants themselves there may be significant 'winners' and 'losers' in the system. Moneylenders and agents are clear profiteers of the traffic. Other 'winners' could be people whose small businesses benefit from the increased circulation of money. The biggest losers are probably the different non-migrant groups locally: the poor with no chance of earning extra income and who are adversely affected by the steadily increasing inflation, partly caused by the external injection of money.
Theoretically it is possible to find that the remittances are bringing about both more equal distribution and more marked differentiation: the poor may be seen to climb the ladder a few steps and thus reduce the distance to the next higher category; but the fact that there are two groups - the losers (poor non-migrants) and big profiteers (agents and moneylenders) - may lead to a more clearly differentiated picture.
If migration opportunities are kept constant it is also likely that there will be a long term change in the status of the household, due to the transforming demographic composition over time. A household with four young and able daughters who can be sent abroad can avail itself of assets which, by their very nature, will not be available 20 years on[5]. Consequently, the local class composition will vary both between households simultaneously and within households over time.

The dilemma of the middle class

Female migration from Sri Lanka is de facto a lower class phenomenon. However, in view of the relatively high rates of pay in the Middle East (as we have seen elsewhere, even when to fairly high ranking positions among the educated social

strata), it would not have been surprising if even women from the middle classes were to consider the option seriously. The wages could be attractive enough to persuade them to spend a couple of years in the Gulf to accumulate some money, since they too are not particularly favoured by the present labour market.

Compared to the poor, the middle class women belong to a completely different category as regards the resources already discussed in relation to the different stages of the migration process. (This is so even despite recent deterioration in their material basis, depending on which sector they have belonged to.) The interlinked resources consequent on birth, language spoken, education, economic basis, network, self confidence, - in short the resources contributing in varying degrees to causing them to belong to the middle class - would have given these women a start far superior to that enjoyed by the poor villager or slum dweller. In consequence, these powerful initial resources could have inclined them to handle each link in the migration chain more advantageously. And thus they should have a far greater opportunity for economic uplift than is the case for the poor. However, as we know, only very few middle class women actually migrate. The reason for this is mainly cultural or normative, in the sense that housework for others is regarded as clearly inferior in Sri Lankan society. This fact is also reflected in the wage level in this sector within the country. Women with alternatives will try to avoid such work. This cultural imperative seems to function even when the work is outside the island, and remunerated far above what can be achieved at home. The few (lower) middle class migrant women interviewed in this study underscored this point very clearly. The migrants themselves as well as their family were ashamed of the fact that they were going. In all cases a special reason was given to explain the reality, like 'the husband died' or 'an accident ruined the family' etc.

This yields the somewhat paradoxical situation, where those who actually go to the Gulf have such a low social position in the first place, that they rarely manage to escape from poverty, whereas those who really could give the economy a lift upwards, fail for other reasons to utilise the option. Instead it becomes imperative for these middle class women, in fact, to distance themselves from the 'mobile maids', who in some cases can now outrank them in having the finest saris and a greater number of gold armbands.
It is thus hardly surprising that the better-off (women and men) treat these 'nouveaux riches' with contempt or ridicule, attitudes reflected in newspapers and magazines, where cartoons often depict the Middle East women as figures of fun.

Generally speaking, the 'Dubai Women' have slowly penetrated the culture in a broad sense - they now figure in plays, songs, jokes, cartoons and the like - and predominantly in a 'class biased' way.

Impact on gender relations and 'liberation'

The more striking gender aspects of the female migration have already been underlined: women crossing borders in a double sense. Even though the decision to go is gradually becoming less drastic culturally and socially speaking, as more and more women go, the act that the individual woman undertakes, and the experience of her sojourn remain a fundamental step for the woman herself.

The increased use of female labour power in wage employment in the wake of restructured international economy, has naturally engendered discussion as to the potential for 'liberation' of women. The increased participation in the labour market, which could imply stronger economic independence and a life outside the household, could be envisaged as having some 'liberating' potential. This discussion, which dates back to the industrial revolution in Europe, is difficult both conceptually and empirically. Apart from its philosophical bearing it is extremely hard to 'measure' or grasp it concretely. Nevertheless it has been a central preoccupation as a perspective when women's status in various societies has been analyzed. To avoid the pitfall of structuralism, the possibility of improvement should be kept open. While forms of work are directed by economic structures and ideological systems, women are not to be seen only as passive agents of these forces, or victims of circumstances. Action eventually implies choice, however, structurally directed.

As stated earlier, female migration from Sri Lanka to the Gulf is a phenomenon of recent date, which means that it is impossible to make an appraisal of the long term, lasting impact. The problem of appraisal is particularly acute because the transformation of social norms - gender norms in this case - is a very slow process indeed. To really understand these processes a series of long term anthropological studies would be required, where ethnic, religious, caste and class differences would have to be incorporated into the gender issue. At present no such study has been done, a fact that creates some problems of scientific evidence. It is, however, possible to make an assessment of general traits in society, document the short term effects already observed and make an inventory of experiences of comparable cases in other places in order to hypothesize as to the long term effects.

It is usual for major social changes to be accompanied by strains and conflicts. Disturbances in the traditional gender role system are no exception in this respect.

But as we have seen, in the case of the female migration there are certain ambiguities as to the prominence of the substantial changes that are taking place. These ambiguities are related both to the kind of work the women are undertaking, and to the persistence of traditional social organization in the areas of origin. On the one hand the women undertake work that is considered low-grade, and this in a context where they are heavily exploited and often badly treated. On the other hand they are paid rates which are significantly better than anything wither they or their men could dream of receiving at home. They also prove to be geographically mobile to an unprecedented degree. Not least important is the fact that this wage work takes place in a context of simultaneous deterioration of the economic position of their men.

For ages women have contributed to the household economy in the context of poor Sri Lankan communities. The major change in recent years is that this contribution is monetarized to a much larger degree. At the same time money has, on the whole, become increasingly important in the household economy. With this as background, the question is whether the new situation has significantly increased the bargaining power of the women in relation to their immediate surroundings, which in turn would imply an enhancement of their social position. In other words, does female migration serve to undermine patriarchal authority in their household and in the immediate community?

An operationalization of this broad question is necessary. One of the most important indicators of relative power position in the household is budget control. As Deniz Kandiyoti has stated, one cannot conclude that access to income and budget control are one and the same thing (Kandiyoti 1988).

When asked about budget apects and spending priorities quite a number of the women in the study would answer that they themselves took the decisions together with the husband/father[6]. Since the spending pattern often implies that it is not the woman (nor the children) who benefit first, these answers have to be scrutinized more thoroughly. Basically there are two possible interpretations of the situation. One is that the women do participate in the decision, but that they choose to comply with the view of the man because they think he is right. The other is that they are simply overruled directly or subtly. Both alternatives may be present depending on the circumstances. In most cases where the woman actively states that the man has used the money in a wise way while she was abroad, the man will have rebuilt the house and used money for daily maintenance. This is most probably what the woman would have chosen herself had she been in direct comand of the money, although (sometimes important) details may have been handled differently. One aspect of the house-building is, however, that in most cases the deeds of the house are in the husband's name, giving him right of possession in

case of divorce. The clearest cases where the woman is directly overruled, is when she comes home finding that nothing is left of the money, and that most of it has been squandered by her husband on 'leisure activities'.

Accepting the premises of the traditional commmunities, one example of the Middle East money being used in favour of the migrant herself is when money is set aside for her dowry. As we have seen, this does not actually happen to any great extent. On the other hand there are indications that employment as such is slowly coming to replace the old dowry system (De Silva 1985). If this is the case, it is in fact a very significant change indicating a basic revision of the whole dowry concept: the woman is no longer regarded as only 'another mouth to feed'. She is conceptually considered a breadwinner. One should, however, not emphasize this point too strongly in relation to Middle East migration so far. Most communities look upon the traffic as something temporary, at least individually: the same woman cannot be continually sent off for an indefinite number of years, and so far very few Middle East maids have gone into wage work after their return home.

Another indicator of enhanced position in the household would be genuine redistribution of work and responsibilities between the sexes. There are actually hardly any indications that this is taking place in the wake of female migration. During the woman's absence, another woman, usually from the close kin group, takes over responsibility for the housework and daily care of the family. The family would have to be in a desperate situation before the man took over the cooking and the cleaning. When the migrant returns, almost invariably the division of labour reverts to the old pattern.

In general it seems to be true that among the social effects that can be observed are an increase in the interdependence of family members and a strengthening of extended family networks. More important with regard to changes in the family structure in the wake of female migration is probably the impact on the married couple itself. There is obviously a high conflict potential in the system due first of all to the separation and secondly because of the changes in the economic role pattern of the family. The combination 'male unemployment - female breadwinner' does not easily promote harmony in the home. We have seen that this 'domestication of men'[7] may actually generate a tendency to stronger subordination of the woman by her husband, as a reaction to threatened male identity. The relative strength of the woman will subsequently determine the outcome of the struggle. According to Korale (1983) the divorce rate is higher among migrant families than control families. Although it is difficult to establish the direct causal relationship

between migration and divorce, it makes sense intuitively. There is a basic contradictory exigency in the migration system impinging on the conjugal relationship: the economic viability of a conjugal association de facto requires the separation of the spouses, whereas the prolonged separation of the spouses contributes to the undermining of the very relationship. In the Sri Lankan context the family's survival is in fact almost contingent on this temporary family separation.

Under circumstances of this kind the question of 'liberation' may seem rather misplaced, both as regards the working conditions in the Gulf and the socio-economic situation at home. Use of the term in the relative sense introduced earlier will nonetheless indicate some tendencies towards improvement or deterioration (or both) of the general social status of the women in question.

As already stated, an assessment of the 'improved social status' issue should take into consideration both the actor and the surrounding structures, and the interplay between the two. This in turn relates both to the situation in the Gulf and to that in the home communities. The serf-like conditions the woman is usually faced with abroad, with strong hierarchial social relations, may actually reinforce the women's conception of gender roles which they brought with them from home. Even though the move itself reflects a kind of transcendence, the type of experience (the process-conditions, including the psychological aspects) they have gone through in the Gulf will clearly influence the self-confidence of the women. And thus each woman returns home carrying a specific experience, which again influences the way they act in relation to local structures. These structures are, as we have seen, not very conducive to major changes in the role pattern of the sexes. The 'net effect' of the whole migration system on the social status of the women will in this way depend on the complex interplay between structures and actors at both ends of the chain.

What this study shows, (keeping in mind the important limitations) is that a substantial number of the maids return home more exhausted than liberated. There are, however, examples of women who have achieved a new confidence through their stay abroad, and who - at least for the time being - show a firmness that was not there before[8]. Mook's study also reveals examples of women who show a new kind of independence as a result of the Middle East traffic.
Most studies of the effects of female migration, however, seem very reluctant to express hopes of any liberating effect of labour migration. For instance, Marta Tienda and Karen Booth write: 'That migrant women's entry into paid employment usually arises because of dire necessity, and leaves patriarchal authority essentially unaltered puts a brake on the extent to which migration modifies gender relations.....

migration results in 'restructured constants' to the extent that gender asymmetries are left intact while only the content of women's activities changes as a result of migration.' (Tienda et al. 1988:310). Even more pedantically, Morokvasic (1984:129) writes: '...There is nothing emancipatory in bad conditions, low wages, overwork, humiliation and discrimination'. Others stress that new forms of gender subordination arise out of the nature of women's integration into wage labour (Heyzer 1986) or qualify it as 'pseudo-emancipation' (Abadan-Unat 1977).

The vast amount of pessimistic literature in this respect may be right. In fact the data from this study point in the same direction. Nevertheless, it is important to keep a door open for the possibility of slow processes of change that are not easily detected in studies covering a short time span. The changes may be subtle in the way that women may have a greater say in decision-making processes not visible from the outside. The room for manoeuvre within the existing frame of reference may have widened without challenging the basic structure in the first round.

All in all it is difficult to conclude that migration as such promotes a change in women's position, although it opens up an opportunity for change by providing a new set of options in their lives. From this study it is clear that both women's work and their social status are largely directed by wider structural and political systems, which limits the possibilities of emancipation for the women involved. These systems institute rules of behaviour by which men and women are obliged to act and interact, and these rules again are embedded in questions of power and control. Nevertheless migration may act as a long term catalyst for change, both in relation to the labour market and to the private sphere.
At present female labour migration from Sri Lanka has at least contributed to make women's work for remuneration more visible on the social scene. This has happened both because of the relatively high amounts of earnings they are generating, and also because of the character of the work, in the sense that they have to leave the country with heavy social costs involved. Women have, as a result of the economic gains in the Middle East become an asset to their households, both actually and potentially. The traffic to the Gulf as such has also proved that limitations placed on women's physical mobility has been de facto modified.

A final conclusion has yet to be drawn in this question. It actually seems important not to search for one single conclusion, but rather leave room for complex and even contradictory outcomes.

Final remarks

The two major hypotheses have formed the basis for this chapter: (1) The remittances generated in the Middle East were believed to give the households involved a significant socio-economic boost, as salaries of this level are extremely rare among the poorest sections of Sri Lankan society. (2) Some of the extraordinary aspects of female migration - the drastic shake-up of traditional gender norms in terms of daily male control, geographical mobility and breadwinning - were believed to have some impact on 'women's emancipation' or rather on reduced subordination.

As we have seen, on both points the conclusions regarding the main hypotheses are rather negative. This conclusion is reached with account being taken of the basic qualification of the time dimension.

We have seen that the major part of the remittances are used for daily maintenance of the household which the woman leaves. This means that the majority of the sender households need the income from the Middle East to survive. Often, however, this is survival on a level higher than these people are normally accustomed to. On the whole the Middle East households eat more and better than their non-migrating neighbours. They are also usually better clothed. A fairly large number of the migrating community also manage to improve their housing standards. But the overwhelming majority of the migrant households fail to escape what we have called the 'supporter logic', i.e. they do not manage to invest in a lasting asset or activity with potential for promoting social progress.
There are, however, important differences in degree. One of the most important variables when it comes to relative success in handling remittances is whether there is any other stable income in the household. This is important both as a supplementary source of income, and as a disciplining factor regulating the economic behaviour of the family. Households with a history of stable income, however small, usually have some notion of planning.

Although to a certain extent the socio-economic findings reveal a complex picture, the main conclusion is clear: The poor remain poor. This study has suggested that the 'vicious circle of poverty' provides the major explanation for this. The expenditure pattern (usually out of necessity) is such that much of the potential benefit for future development is lost. The poor are poor in the kind of resources that could have helped them pursue some lasting accumulation. The cumulative processes instead work to their detriment along the entire line.

When it comes to the second main hypothesis - the changes in gender structures the prospects that are spelled out are basically no more optimistic. Because of the diverse factors in society that condition and mediate the effects of migration on women's position, there is no direct answer to the question whether female migration improves women's status in society and in their homes. Nevertheless we have discussed possible influences of the Gulf traffic on gender relations in the households and on the sending communities at large.
First and foremost women's wage work has almost without exception become the major economic asset of the families involved. The female migrants represent the breadwinners of their families at a wage rate previously experienced by no-one in the house. In consequence female labour power, actually and potentially, has become more of an asset to Sri Lankan households. Women's labour has become more visible in society. This will possibly contribute to the changing of the traditional dowry system in the longer run.

Another important consideration when discussing gender effects of female labour migration is constituted by the repercussions of the traffic on other female members of the household. As long as the sexual division of labour is clearly defined in the sense that almost all reproductory work is assigned to women, one woman's possibility implies another woman's burden. We have seen that the eldest daughter or the sister of the migrant often has to sacrifice education or possibly other activities to take care of the 'left behinders'.

As we have seen, there are many paradoxes in this field. In the first place it may seem paradoxical that when sold on the international market, female labour power - the cheapest available in society - generates salaries that only a few men can achieve in the home market. In fact the quality of being cheap becomes a valuable asset in a context of heavy unemployment ('The comparative advantage of women's disadvantage' (Charlton 1981))

The increased employment of women in the labour market principally represents an improvement of the position of women in Sri Lankan society. It allows them to leave (at least partially) the confines of the home, and thereby (temporarily) escape the direct, daily control exercised by the male head of household; it allows unmarried women to postpone marriage and childbearing and married women to delay further pregnancies; it increases the de facto economic position of the women and it increases the consumption level of their families.

At the same time the involvement in this international (or, for that matter, national) labour market exposes the woman to a new form of exploitation and

oppression. The working conditions are often much worse than those she is used to, and her feeling of personal dignity may be radically threatened. We have seen that the money she generates in the Gulf very often slips from her grasp when sent home to the family. In other words, her budget control is rather weak, a fact that underscores her subordinate position. In fact many husbands seem to reinforce control of their wives in the wake of migration. This may be a reaction to their that their male identity is being challenged when they are overtaken by their women in income generation. Lucrative female employment in a context of heavy male unemployment is, indeed, an unfavourable combination. In addition, the domestic work in the Gulf by and large represents a 'dead end job' for the women involved. The maids started out as unskilled/unexperienced workers, and there are strong indications that they remain unemployed as returnees.

Conclusions as to the long term effects of female labour migration from Sri Lanka have to be fairly open-ended at present. Nevertheless the main hypothesis of this chapter is that there are few long term gains in terms of status, autonomy, fewer burdens or enduring economic security for the women involved. This is based on the assumption that the migrants do not generate any lasting spin-offs in terms of personal employment in their own country.
On the contrary, we would hypothesize that this labour migration produces dependence, both for the sender state and for the individuals involved. For the state, migration serves as a 'breather' in the export economy, a safety valve in a situation where unemployment and lack of foreign currency represent major obstacles to economic growth. Vulnerability and dependency will increase unless economic linkages can be established between migration traffic and internal production, linkages to serve as buffers when migration possibilites are reduced or ended.

For the households concerned, we have seen something like the same dependence though at a lower level. The poverty syndrome implies that to a large extent, migrant households do not manage to create new economic foundations based on women's labour contracts in the Gulf. And thus when the Middle Eastern opportunities dry up - either because each household no longer has anyone to send or because the recipient countries stop the import - these households will find themselves in a very strenuous situation. Housing standards and child health may have seen some improvement, but the family income situation is back to square one. Psychologically this will probably even feel worse, since the family has had a foot inside another world, and has become accustomed to a daily consumption pattern far beyond realistic levels.

Nevertheless the 'Middle East Avenue' has opened up a new world outside village and home for thousands of Sri Lankan women. It has broadened their conceptual environment and provided their communities with a more concrete understanding of 'abroad'. Not least important, the Middle East migration reflects that the women - and their households - become psychologically ready to accept drastic changes in the patterns of behaviour when circumstances require.

NOTES

1. The current presentation is based on a more comprehensive report.

2. 'Liberation' or 'emancipation' are pretentious words, which in its full meaning probably is out of reach be it in the third - or first world. It therefore has to be understood in a relative way. In this context it is used rather loosely, in terms of making life better, more independent and dignified for the women in question.

3. By 'status symbols' is meant here gadgets that primarily serve the purpose of demonstrating 'success' or 'prosperity'. By this it is not meant to say that some of the other dispositions (like house building e.g.) may not also contain such status aspects.

4. This phenomenon actually seems to be fairly widespread in the context of labour migration. Nermin Abadan-Unat talks about a 'Separate-house-in-the-village-syndrome' in this respect. (Abadan-Unat, 1984). See also Dias, 1983.

5. This is again contingent on the assumption that money is not invested in any accumulative way.

6. The most systematic exception in this respect where the unmarried, young Muslim girls, who by and large placed the responsibility on their fathers.

7. This expression is introduced by Deniz Kandiyoti, although in a slightly different context (Kandiyoti 1986).

8. These few examples have obviously been quite powerful in forming local opinion among men in particular, as to the claimed 'new assertiveness' of the Middle East maids.

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CONCLUSIONS

F. Eelens, T. Mook, T. Schampers, J.D. Speckmann

This final chapter is based on the earlier given framework from which the individual migration process can be described. In other words, the most important findings of the research will be reconsidered, taking the individual contract-emigrant as a point of departure.

From the various contributions to this book, it became apparent that economic necessity was the most significant motive behind every decision to emigrate. In this context, Eelens and Schampers introduced the concept of 'survival migration' indicating that for the majority of households migration is the only solution to escape from the downward spiral of impoverishment. This applies in particular to the low-income groups and among them to the young families with children. Despite the current socio-cultural objections in Sri Lanka to female labour migration, the serious economic situation compels women to seek employment in domestic service in the Gulf States; the more, so because the demand for male workers is limited and mostly requires them to be skilled or semi-skilled.
It is this economic necessity, along with the limited and specific demands in the Middle East, which so greatly restrict the options and negotiating possibilities of the potential migrant. The majority of migrants depends heavely on the mediation offered by recruitment agents to secure an employment contract.
Furthermore, those concerned regard the issue of labour migration to the Middle East as a lottery involving high stakes but, at the same time, with a material profit which is seen as spectacular. This perspective is reinforced by the 'success stories' of return migrants, as a result of which the accounts of negative experiences appearing in the press and in correspondence are easily ignored.

In general Sri Lankan families give priority to male labour migration. The fact that the majority of the migrant population consists of women is mainly because the agency fees for female migrants used to be low. This has now changed although the fees for women are still low compared with those for men. Particularly in very poor families this issue is an important factor in the decision process within the family with regard to male or female migration.

It was also observed that the potential female migrant finds it increasingly difficult to meet the current fees charged by agencies. One solution is to use personal networks by which means employment can be found in the Gulf States outside the agency recruitment channels. In some cases, this process leads to semi-commercial activities.
Towards the end of the 1970's recruitment in Sri Lanka for the Middle East expanded significantly. This resulted in a sharp rise in the number of agents; a development which led the Sri Lankan government to exercise tighter control by stipulating the conditions for entry into the category of registered recruitment agencies. This move, however, also gave rise to the problem of illegal practices. The gradual decline in labour demand from the Gulf States, in particular for male migrant workers, only increased competition on the recruitment market. Consequently, the number of small agencies gradually decreased, also as a result of the government's policy to erect specific bodies for the monitoring of labour migration. In other words, while recruitment has become institutionalised informal channels, such as the already mentioned personal networks are on the increase. The appearance of sub-agents, particularly in the more remote areas, should also be noted here. Although directly or indirectly linked to recruitment agencies in Colombo, they are in a position to act more or less independently, ignoring existing rules and regulations at the expense of the potential migrant. It remains a complex task, particularly in those areas, to curb the activities of these sub-agents.

The fact that the candidate migrant is largely dependent on the recruitment agencies is due to the strict policies upheld by Middle Eastern countries which necessitate compliance with numerous entry and selection criteria (religion, age, state of health etc.) as well as with various formal procedures. The labour migration policies of these countries also imply that virtually no attention is paid to the migrant's legal position. Certain categories of migrants, such as housemaids and employees of small businesses, are to a large extent excluded from any employment legislation. This means that the social services in the Gulf States are hardly available to migrants, which has a negative effect on their well-being, particularly on the well-being of female domestic workers. The work climate of male migrant workers from Sri Lanka has also deteriorated in recent years as an indirect result of fewer work opportunities and declining oil revenues.
The host countries in the Middle East are not aiming for social and cultural integration of large groups of migrant workers. On the contrary, the main objective of government policies seems to be the establishment of a transient, tractable and efficient expatriate workforce. This also permits a maximum rotation and segregation of the migrant workforce. Language and cultural barriers, together with nativistic and xenophobic tendencies in the Gulf region reinforce this process.

Consequently, the adaption of the migrant workers to the local situation is of a purely instrumental nature. The socio-cultural impact of a two or three year stay in the Middle East on the migrant remains limited, even after a second period of migration.

The large proportion of female migrants from Sri Lanka warrants a further analysis. Their situation has been characterised with the terms 'ultra-dependency' and 'ultra-exploitability'. The concept 'ultra-dependency' means that female housemaids are completely dependent on the Middle Eastern employer even for their most basic needs. It is generally prohibited for them to leave the house unaccompanied and the employer usually exercises total control over their social contacts. The term 'ultra-exploitability' implies that the employer may establish the amount and nature of the work without prior consultation. Disciplinary actions such as delaying or withholding monthly earnings are also common. This situation has been described as a 'quasi total institution'. Furthermore, it is virtually impossible for the female migrant to appeal to the local authorities. Defence mechanisms under such working conditions consist mainly in resisting passively in various ways. In view of these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the proportion of early returns among this group is larger than among the population of male migrant workers.
It has been suggested that in particular for this vulnerable group of migrants the governments involved should improve the conditions of employment by means of policy measures and legislation.

Labour migration has repercussions on the family left behind. As the research data show, the departure of a relative often brings about significant changes in the household structure.
An important aspect concerning long term effects of labour migration on household composition is the relation between migration and marital stability. On the one hand, migration is a relief and an answer to problems arising from separation and divorce. On the other hand, the prospect of migration, the aftermath of migration and the absence of the migrant itself, can be considered as a threat to marital stability. In the confined period of migration and one year before and after, the risk of marital dissolvement is much higher than in any other year preceding or following migration. More than 34% of all divorces and separations take place in this period of less than four years around the absence of a migrant. It nearly always concerns female migrants, which reveals the weak social and economic position of women in Sri Lankan society.
The survey data showed that of all ever married migrants - returned and current - the prime caretaker for the youngest child was the spouse in 66% of the cases

and the parents of one of the spouses in 21% of the cases. If it was the mother who migrated the possibility of the children it was changing residence greater than when the father had gone to the Middle East.

With respect to the expenditure of migrant earnings, the overall pattern shows that daily expenses and the repayment of debts consume a large part of the migrant's remittances. For poor households, migration may make the difference between further impoverishment and a standard of living allowing good health, the continuation of the children's education and the relatively cheap luxury of consumer durables. The widely shared aim to build a house for the family is rarely achieved if the migrant is the main or only bread winner as often is the case. Housing together with a lack of alternative sources of income therefore often lead to repeat migration. Income generating investments are made by less vulnerable households only, whose migration earnings can be reserved for that purpose.

The research data reveal significant differences between urban and rural areas. This first comes to light in the recruitment process. Prospective migrants from rural communities who choose to work in the Gulf States, are mostly at a disadvantage. Recruitment costs are higher than in the city because an extra agent is needed to arrange the migration. Moreover information on the advantages and disadvantages of migration is often lacking in the rural areas. A preference among various recruiters for candidates from rural areas has also been observed, partly because they are thought to have a better disposition for life in the Middle East. In any event, early return is less frequent among this category of migrants. The survey shows that this is related to the fact that a breakdown in family relations is less likely to occur in rural communities because of the existing social control. Moreover, the rural family is more able to meet its basic needs. Consequently, migrants from rural communities are called home less frequently because of a household crisis.

The research data also reveal that migrants from rural areas in Sri Lanka whose contracts have expired, generally have bigger savings. Money is spent in proportion to income and, because prices are lower in rural areas, it can be spent more effectively. The construction of new dwellings, for example, illustrates this.

Saving as such, and in particular the transfer of money from the Middle East to Sri Lanka provides an important source of income in foreign currency for the Sri Lankan government. This illustrates the vital importance of labour export to the Sri Lankan state. Following the transition in 1977 to a government which adopted a liberal economic policy, the state stimulated labour migration because extra income from it made it possible to expand international trade and thus win the support of the middle and upper strata of society. For many years, this policy greatly

contributed towards the country's political stability. The same liberalization, however, resulted in a deterioration of the economic situation of the poor. In a climate of growing unemployment labour migration became an increasingly attractive alternative. On the other hand, the dependence on this source of income and the weak position of many labour exporting countries compared to the rich labour importing countries, limited the possibilities of guiding the process internally as well as externally.

This conclusion extends the analysis to a macroperspective. The same basic structural explanation for labour imports in the Gulf States can be given as for advanced industrial labour importing countries: foreign labour is imported because it is relatively cheap (Portes et al. 1981; Sassen-Koob 1981; Sassen 1988). Furthermore, it can be easily manipulated so that when the demand lags, the migrants can be sent home.

However, foreign labour import in the Middle East takes place in a specific socio-economic setting. Firstly, the economies of the countries involved are built on a very small base: oil-producing as the main source of national income together with a strong dependency on the export of it. The government jobs and the big development schemes in which most of the productive migrant labour is employed are financed by the oil revenues, the profits of which generally benefit overseas contractors. The demand for migrant labour to fill the vacancies for skilled personnel originates in an insufficiently educated domestic workforce and, on the other hand in a disinterest in manual labour which can be explained both by the lavish government subsidies and a number of socio-cultural characteristics (Sassen 1988).

Migrant labour were laid off in the eighties as a consequence of shrinking government revenues and - although to a much smaller extent - government policies to 'indigenize' the workforce. What strikes one, however, is that the import of Asian female domestic workers is still the same or even greater than in the heyday of the government development schemes. The significance of this type of labour, in which reproductive work is done, has, however, largely been neglected in socio-economic discussions. Because domestic labour cannot be interpreted in terms of capital accumulation, it does not fit in with the analysis applied to labour migration in the structural (owing to) macro perspective (Portes et al. 1981; Sassen-Koob 1981; Sassen 1988). Owing to the privacy of family homes the contingent of female labour migrants is still an invisible and forgotten category, not least in empirical and theoretical studies on labour migration, which are mainly restricted to more visible, productive labour. Although the migration of housemaids is the result of the same structural forces inducing labour migration in general, and despite the fact that their labour is as much a commodity as that of productively

employed migrants, the reason for the difference in demand and for the very vulnerable living conditions should be looked for in their position in the - informal, unregulated - sphere of the family home. The function of this labour is best understood in terms of the life style of the large strata of affluent families and the sphere of conspicuous consumption. Several socio-economic studies on the Gulf indirectly support this view (Sherbiny 1981; Ibrahim 1982; Bahry 1982; Rumaihi 1986; Taylor 1985). The emotional debates about the predicament of female migrants that occasionally flare up in the sending countries will hopefully contribute towards studying labour migration in a wider perspective than in terms of production and capital accumulation.

The question of the socio-cultural impact of labour migration on the labour exporting societies has been neglected as well. However, in the case of Sri Lanka it is rather difficult to expose the effects produced by the process of migration because migration began when the country exclusively was undergoing other radical social and cultural transformations. What is certain is that labour migration has become a social phenomenon in Sri Lanka which can no longer be ignored. It crops up in day-to-day conversation of the man in the street, it is discussed on the radio, on TV and in the press, it determines the make-up of the passengers waiting at the international airports, it promotes the commercialization of daily life, it leads to changes in the relationships between ethnic groups and in the traditionally stratified cultural pattern and it has an effect on institutions such as education and religion. In short, labour migration influences the process of social change in Sri Lankan society, not only in the cities but also in the rural areas. This summary is by no means exhaustive and it cannot even claim to be systematic. At the same time the question is raised to what extent labour migration has left permanent traces in Sri Lankan society, traces which could remain visible and continue to have an effect even after the extent of labour migration decreases. It is difficult to make any definitive statement in this regard because the effects are complex and may vary.

Some suggest that the labour migration phenomenon is by definition a temporary affair, the social impact of which should not be overestimated. These scholars point out that returned migrants mostly relapse into their former behaviour patterns undisturbed and that repeated migration to the Middle East seems to have no appreciable effect either on the pattern of norms and values of those directly involved.
Furthermore, any improvement in the economic situation of the migrant is merely temporary. It is seldom possible to record that fundamental and (therefore) long-lasting changes have taken place in the work and life situation of the emigrant.

This is also related to the notion of "survival", so characteristic of Sri Lankan migration. On the other hand, some categories of migrants do have the capacity to alter their economic situation more permanently. This can lead to improvement in their social position in the community. In the rural areas, moreover, the husband continues his agricultural activities during his wife's absence, so that much of the earnings can be saved. Last but not least, social control of conspicuous consumption is much stronger in rural regions.

With the fall in oil prices in 1983 various development projects in the Gulf States were suspended. This had immediate repercussions on the demand for male workers. However, the decline in the number of foreign labourers was not apparent in that part of the domestic sector, requiring female workers. Here the demand remained stable and even increased slightly here and there.
As has been said, the demand for housemaids is mainly related to the spending patterns of Arab families. In view of the fact that this behaviour remains more or less stable because of the huge economic reserves of the Gulf States, one may assume that the demand for domestic labour will not decrease for the foreseeable future.
This, however, does not imply that this sector is wholly independent of economic trends in the Gulf States. There are, of course, links with the economic situation at the national level but these links are of an indirect and deferred nature. It seems more likely that the socio-economic policies of the governments involved could influence foreign labour demand. Zolberg (1981) has pointed out that the variance in migration flows between countries can be better explained by the actions of states than by the economic motivations of individuals. In this context it remains to be seen whether the increasing concern among government officials in the Gulf States about the possible negative influence of foreign housemaids on the upbringing of Arab children could eventually lead to a drastic restriction on this type of foreign labour.
However, for various predicting reasons, future labour demand for both productive and domestic workers proves to be a tricky task.

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Cover Illustration:
Migrant women waiting at Colombo Airport to leave for the Middle East.

Photo by Loek Vreeswijk (M.A.).

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From Sri Lanka to the Gulf

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