Gender and Labour Migration in Asia

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Gender and Labour Migration in Asia

Contents

Foreword

Migration is a global phenomenon, deeply affecting the lives of the 200 million migrants around the globe but also the lives of those connected to them, in particular those left behind in the countries of origin. Migration is a multi-facetted experience that encompasses opportunities for personal, social and economic development but also includes risks of violence, abuse and exploitation for men and women alike.

The recognition of the social impacts of migration in countries of origin is the first step toward adopting the measures and policies needed to identify and address men and women's vulnerabilities whether as migrants themselves, or as members of migrant households.

The different scenarios examined through the six case studies in this volume, present situations in which women migrate independently, others in which men migrate and examples of migration of the parental couple. The far-reaching impact these patterns have on family dynamics, gender roles and the whole community, calls for a holistic approach to migration.

This research study provides extremely valuable examples to better grasp the economic and social impacts of migration and I am confident that the policy recommendations drawn from these six case studies will enhance the debate on migration in Asia and in the rest of the world. I also hope that the very rich findings of this work will help countries experiencing high migration pressures to work toward lessening the negative social effects of migration and enable migrant men and women and their families to benefit from the highest level of safety and well-being.

Therefore, this study must be seen as the starting point of a more comprehensive effort to enhance the positive effects migration can have on gender roles and children's welfare in the communities of origin and at the same time decrease its negative consequences. Only with a

stronger understanding of the social dynamics involved in migration can the international community rightly address the needs of migrants and enhance their contribution to their host and home communities.

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Introduction

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1.   Gender and migration

Gender is a cross-cutting migration issue and perhaps one of, if not the single most important factor shaping the migratory experience. Major steps have been taken in migration research resulting in a wealth of literature as well as field research, which clearly establishes gender as a crucial factor in our understanding of the causes and consequences of international and internal migration, and that gender is relevant to most, if not all, aspects of migration.

Globally, international migration has become increasingly diversified as a result of recent global economic and geo-political changes, in addition to policy shifts. These changes may affect men and women differently, resulting in gendered patterns of migration. Laws and regulations ruling geographic mobility often have gendered outcomes; migrants are positioned differently within labour markets and the labour demand is often gendered according to different economic sectors. Furthermore, migration implies economic and social costs and benefits for either men or women migrants, which adds to gendered migration patterns and outcomes.

Moreover, policies that affect the migration, the integration or the re-integration process of migrants into societies or communities may also affect men and women differently. This has implications for male and female migrants' livelihoods and entitlements (Piper 2007). Gender-blind policies run the risk of proposing inappropriate responses and solutions to problems. For instance, research on diasporas shows that expectations differ within households; thus, programmes aiming to facilitate migrants' return to their home countries should feature an array of financial and professional incentives, as well as encouragements for children education, health provision and housing (IOM, MRS 26, 2006).

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2.   Gender - A key analytical tool

Gender means socially constructed characteristics variously attributed to men and women, and is relational and culturally defined. It interacts with many other norms - ethnic, religious, cultural, social, educational and professional, among others. In addition, the gender analysis allows to study the interactions and power relations among men and women and highlights how power dynamics among men and women play out and are shared and institutionalized in family, community and government structures (IOM 2005a).

It is important to highlight that gender specificities change over time and are significantly influenced by the migration experience. Thus, 'gender' is a dynamic notion which not only defines the difference between men and women, but also points to how these differences are created, evolve and play out throughout migration.

Gender investigation explores the differences between men and women in a given social and economic context so that policies, programmes and projects can identify and meet their particular needs to respond to gender-specific equity objectives. The gender analysis is necessary to inform migration policy and programming.

The gender analysis contributes to the understanding of the whole migration process and the linkages with development. The access to information about migration, the costs and opportunities of migration, the access to support services during the emigration and the return experience are all gender specific.

Gender-specific investigation in migration studies:

• defines the differences and similarities between the respective migration behaviours of men and women, as well as the impact of cultural, social, economic and political environments on gender specificities and how these specificities influence migration experiences;

• allows a better understanding of the respective motivations and constraints of men and women to migrate in various contexts and the resulting migration trends, thus offering a better understanding of migratory flows;

• provides insights on the individual and collective level regarding the effect of migration and the departure of one or more persons of different sex on children, couples, families and communities and helps to explain the costs and benefits of migration;

- draws attention to the issue of migrant rights and the potential vulnerability of women and men as migrants; for instance, categories such as female domestic workers subject to abuse at work and their residence, or male construction workers exposed to difficult living and working conditions;

- facilitates a better understanding of labour dynamics, in particular that gender-segregated labour markets create specific demands for women and men migrant workers and that occupational gender segregation evolves over time;

- draws attention to the links between migration and the informal economy (depending on local economic and social realities, migrants will tend to be drawn towards the informal labour sector);

- explains migration and development dynamics, such as the different contributions that can be made by male or female migrants to the home country through knowledge transfers or remittances, or diverse incentives to encourage migrants to return and start a business upon their return;

- draws attention to the role of social networks throughout the migration process (the appeal of certain destinations, access to labour markets in the destination country, integration dynamics, length of the stay in the new location);

- highlights qualitative factors such as personal and emotional disposition, expectations and relationships, that are otherwise difficult to assess; raises issues of short, mid and long-term impacts of migration: for instance if women seem to be empowered through the migration process in the short term (better jobs, more decision-making power), this might not be sustainable in the long term if, for instance, they return home to an unchanged society;

- raises questions about the inclusion/integration process in the host regions (for example, men may find it more difficult to integrate or to be accepted in the new environment, than women) and the social benefits of migration.

It is important to highlight that gender is not another word for "women". Gender analysis deals with men and women and how their roles are defined or perceived.

The feminization of migration is a term widely used, though the actual scale of the phenomenon is disputed. IOM defines the feminization of migration as: "the growing participation of women in migration. Women

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now move around more independently and no longer in relation to their family position or under a man's authority (roughly 48%of all migrants are women)" (IOM Glossary, 2005). Thus, the term feminization of migration requires both quantitative and qualitative analyses. While the flows of male to female migrants may be higher from Africa or South Asia, for instance, flows from other regions such as East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean tend to have a higher proportion of women. The impact of such flows on both men and women in home and host countries also requires analysis.

3.   Background

In response to calls from several Asian labour sending countries, a Ministerial Consultation for Asian Labour Sending Countries was held in 2003 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, launching the so-called Colombo Process. The ten initial participating states - Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam - made recommendations for the effective management of overseas employment programmes and agreed to regular follow-up meetings.

In December 2006, IOM launched a policy oriented research project aiming to place gender on the labour migration and development agenda in Asia, through innovative primary and secondary research: *Gender and Labour Migration: Policy-oriented research on linkages and impacts - an Asian perspective*. This initiative aims to share experiences, lessons learned and best practices on overseas employment; consult on issues faced by overseas workers, labour sending and receiving countries and proposes practical solutions for the well-being of vulnerable overseas workers. It also seeks to optimize development benefits from organized overseas employment and enhance the dialogue with countries of destination, as well as to review and monitor the implementation of the recommendations and identify further steps for action.

Four policy-oriented research studies were conducted by the IOM offices in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam on linkages and impacts between gender and labour migration. The report was enriched by an additional study conducted in the Philippines on the Filipino migrant family and a paper related to gender and migration in China produced as a follow-up to the Conference on Migration, Poverty Reduction and Development in Asia, organized under the auspices of IOM, UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Government of China, and convened in Lanzhou, China (March 2005).

In addition to these six country chapters, IOM has also invited an expert on gender and migration in Asia, Nicola Piper, to produce an overview and a conclusion to this publication.

4.   Facets of gender and migration in Asia in this publication

This publication brings together six country case studies dealing with different facets of migration and using different methodologies. If the publication focuses on understanding migration and its impacts from a gender angle, it highlights many other factors that interact and influence gender relations such as education, kin relations, land ownership, native place, networks, marriage, societal values or professional occupation. The studies show that no generalization is possible on the impact of migration on gender roles and that many other factors will influence the role played by migration in gender social divisions.

The gender focus this publication provides original insights on specific migration issues in the Asian countries and their international (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand) and internal dimensions (Viet Nam and China).

The Sri Lankan case study explores gender roles and the support networks of spouses of migrant workers in Sri Lanka, in particular it analyses resources available and strategies adopted to adjust to the absence of the migrant spouse and how they differ between spouses of male or female migrant workers. The study also looks at how the spouses' strategies challenge and change gender roles and norms. It also provides an insight into different stages of the migration process, such as at departure and upon return.

The research is based on a questionnaire administered in 2006 to 300 households consisting of 200 households of female migrant workers and 100 households of male migrant workers in selected field locations in Sri Lanka (Colombo district and in Kurunegala District) that are areas of high labour migration.

The Bangladesh case study investigates the impacts of short-term labour migration on the gender roles and dynamics in the country of origin and, in particular, the changes occurring in the socio-economic conditions of women when husbands migrate and the altered context upon their return.

The research is based on primary data collected from 34 in-depth interviews with wives of migrant workers, complemented with results of focus group discussions and with interviews with return migrants. The interviews were conducted in two areas of Savar district, a suburban area close to Dhaka city.

The Philippines case study analyses the impact of migration to Italy on the overseas Filipino workers and on their families left behind, their resources of social support and the prospects for return. The gender analysis focuses on understanding different sources of social support,

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the impact of separation on family relationships and changes in gender roles. It points out to gender specific coping and integration strategies. The paper also touches on the gender dimension of professional "de-qualification" or "de-skilling" of migrant Filipino women.

The qualitative research is based on interviews undertaken in 2005 with 179 overseas Filipino workers, based in Italy, with almost 70 per cent of the sample being women and a sample of 62 spouses in the Philippines (41 men and 21 women). In addition, a sample of 50 caregivers (86% women) in charge of children both of whose parents migrated abroad for work, were interviewed. Finally, 325 children with parents working in Italy were surveyed, of whom 43 per cent had both parents abroad.

The Thai case study assesses similarities and differences between male and female migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Thailand in terms of migration process, family dynamics, employment, remittances and gender-based violence.

In addition to secondary literature, the research draws on three quantitative datasets, the first concerns an individual-level and provincial-level dataset provided by the Thai Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Interior, the second one is developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) on working conditions and migration to Thailand, and the third is developed by the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System, a census of 100 villages and urban communities throughout 13 districts of the Kanchanaburi province in Thailand.

The Vietnamese case study provides a gender-specific analysis of the rights of migrants through the investigation of gender-based violence situations among migrant women. It explores whether the physical environment of migrant life places women at an increased risk of gender-based violence and whether migrant women who are assaulted or abused have access to support services and also use available services. The study shows that the lack of better employment options for poor migrant women makes them more vulnerable to violence and less able to defend themselves against or escape from violence.

The research is based on interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions undertaken in 2006 with a total of 155 internal migrant women working as factory workers in Viet Nam in selected industrial and export processing zones (Dong Nai, Binh Duong and Ho Chi Minh City).

The Chinese case study explores the differences in the patterns and experiences of internal migration between men and women, and seeks to explain these differences in terms of gender relations. The analysis shows

how gendered social norms, institutions and policies affect household decisions, the type of work an individual can do when migrating, the experience of migration and the benefits of migration at household level. In particular, how the gender based occupational divisions in the region of origin directly influences the migration experience.

The research is based on a literature review and ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the author in Beijing between 1995 and 2002 among two groups: female, unmarried members of the Migrant Women's Club, and a group of married migrant women and their spouses living in a large migrant community northwest of Beijing.

The case studies focus on specific country issues, draw on diverse migration aspects and use different methodologies and, therefore, present varied results. However, a few thematic trends stand out and pinpoint the significance of the gender factor in understanding migration.

Gendered labour demands and impacts on migration patterns

Over the last 30 years, Asia has experienced increasing mobility within and beyond national borders, initially to the Gulf countries in the 1970s or to the booming economic centres in Asia such as Singapore in the 1980s. However, especially since the 1990s, movements have increasingly assumed a "gendered migration process", in which men tend to migrate to work in construction and women often to fill gaps in domestic work or in specific industries, such as the garment industries.

The Philippine case study shows that, despite their qualifications and even often higher qualified than their male counterparts, women still move to work in the domestic sector. The paper on immigration to Thailand indicates that depending on the different kinds of work for which they migrated, men and women migrants in Thailand are likely to live and work in different places. Districts with agriculture, fishing and trade industries attract a larger proportion of male migrants, while districts characterized by a high demand for domestic workers will attract more female migrants. As a result, there is a strong negative relationship between the wealth of the district and the proportion of female migrants, regardless of their nationality. In addition from the Thai case study it appears that some nationalities are specialized in specific industrial sectors, e.g. Cambodians in male-dominated industries such as construction and fishing, and Laotian in female-dominated sectors, such as domestic services. This result raises many questions about the pull and push factors specific to each country and impacts on gendered migration flows.

Yet, the traditional gender segregation in certain professions also evolves in line with the changes in migration patterns. For instance, traditional

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male sectors, such as agriculture in China, become feminized, while men begin to enter traditional female sectors, such as nursing, for instance in the Philippines. Moreover, the Thai case study shows that differences in work conditions, pay and the respect for labour migrants rights differ in relation to occupations rather than gender; yet, as occupations are often gender segregated, a thorough gender analysis is required.

Varied impacts of migration on gender roles within households and communities

The temporary absence of men or women migrants has gender implications and impacts. The Sri Lankan case study shows the impact of migration on culturally perceived gender roles and relations underpinning gender norms in the country. Migration appears as a key factor in changing traditional gender roles and this change leads to positive and negative consequences in the lives of men and women.

All studies show that migration brings with it changes in the division of economic roles in households, with women earning sometimes more money than men. If this situation can be identified as empowering women, the Vietnamese case study also shows that this change in gender roles can also be a major source of conflict and violence. The Sri Lankan case study reveals that in spite of the migration of a spouse, the gap between male and female roles remains, in particular in families where the wife migrates, given that other female family members take over the responsibilities of the wife and mother, whereby the male role in the household is maintained. However, it appears that when it is the husband who migrates, the decision-making power of the female spouse increases sharply. The Filipino case study draws attention on gendered impacts of migration on children and how boys and girls deal differently with the absence of their parents.

The Philippines and Sri Lanka case studies provide interesting insights on the impact of migration on the couples. For instance, among the Filipino migrant workers working in Italy, there was no deterioration or dissolution of the marital relationship. For most of the overseas Filipino workers who are currently separated, their relationships with their spouses were problematic even before they left the Philippines for Italy. In the Sri Lankan case, migration seems to affect couples in different ways, depending also on the importance of such factors as the cultural and social norms and particular background.

The Sri Lankan study pinpoints differences between households with male or female migrants and shows that households of migrant males seemed to cope better with the absence of the husband/father, than households of female migrants. In addition, female migrants were

disadvantaged because of poorer earnings. All studies show that besides the impact through the migration of male or female household members on gender roles, many other factors will influence these changes, such as the presence of other family members. Subject to who takes over the responsibilities of an absent migrant, for instance an adult female parent in the Philippines) or who, if not the spouse, receives the remittances, e.g. parents of the male migrant in Bangladesh, the impacts on gender roles will be diverse.

The role of gender-specific motivations as determinants of migration

The Sri Lankan study revealed differences in the reasons for migration among female and male migrants, with women more likely to migrate with the objective of building a house or buying land upon their return, while male migration was more in response to unemployment or the absence of regular wage. The Chinese case study also highlights the differences in terms of migration goals, with male migrants perceiving migration as a way to fulfil family obligations as a breadwinner, and female migrants, in particular single women, to free themselves to pursue more individual economic and non-economic goals. These two examples draw attention to the contextual differences according to countries and regions, and rural versus urban settings. Hence, the gender analysis calls for careful investigation of the expectations of women and men and cautions against any generalization.

Gender-specific risks - perceived or real - throughout the migration process and risks for families left behind

The perceptions of the risks of migration are heavily influenced by gender aspects. The Vietnamese case study, for instance, shows that young single migrant women are perceived as particularly vulnerable because of the lack of family protection, lack of experience, loneliness and need to save money and send it back home. These perceptions in turn have an impact on the migration choices (reluctance to let young women migrate) and the perception of the migration experience (negative images of young women migrants). Moreover, the Bangladesh case study showed that the wives left behind by male migrants are and feel more vulnerable to harassment and abuse because of the absence of the spouse, which points to the need to include in "safe migration" programmes provisions for those left behind.

Gender-specific discrimination of migrants

The Chinese case study presents evidence concerning the issue of gender-specific migrant discrimination. It shows how discrimination is often already entrenched in conditions before the migration tales place, such

as existing rural gender divisions of labour which results in a gender segregated migrant labour force that is further enforced by employers in urban areas.

Gender-specific aspects of return migration

In terms of gender aspects of return migration, the Sri Lankan case study shows that for female migrants a single migratory cycle often does not suffice to enable them to achieve their objectives. This, combined with the difficulty to readapt to the traditional family life they find upon return, creates a self-reinforcing mechanism of repeat migration cycles. The Chinese study shows that for migrant men return can be difficult as they are more easily perceived as having failed, while women who have enjoyed the autonomy in the city find the country life particularly hard to readjust to.

Gendered remittance sending and receiving patterns and their role in the empowerment of those left behind

In terms of gendered remittance sending patterns, the Sri Lankan case study provides a very interesting insight: whereas 90 per cent of male migrants sent remittances to their spouse, only 62 per cent of female migrants do so, with the remaining 38 per cent going to other family members. This finding reflects mistrust between spouses and the empowerment of female migrants, in terms of resource control. The Bangladesh case study shows that wives of male migrants are empowered during the migration of the spouse only if they directly receive the remittances. The study shows that remittance earnings play a pivotal role in determining household dynamics while the husbands are abroad. However, the Bangladesh and Philippines case studies show that the women left behind fully depend on remittances for their daily subsistence and cannot aspire to any economic activity outside the domestic sphere.

5.   IOM Gender-specific work and acknowledgements

This publication has been coordinated by IOM's Research and Publication Division, by Dina Ionesco and Christine Aghazarm, Research Officers. The studies were supported by IOM's Gender Coordinator and IOM's Working Group in Gender Issues (WGGI).

The Gender Coordination function is responsible for the development and implementation of IOM staff and programme policy strategies on gender issues, and the promotion of positive awareness and gender sensitivity throughout the Organization. Established in 1995, the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI) evaluates and assists in institutionalising IOM's efforts to mainstream gender into IOM's planning and actions, and has

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been instrumental in formulating IOM's gender policy, its mainstreaming strategy and a five-year plan of action. A network of Gender Focal Points was set up throughout the Organization and currently numbers over 102 persons.

IOM is committed to conducting gendered research on the various dimensions of migration. The Research and Publications Department produces gender-specific research tools and promotes gender-specific migration research.

In 2008, IOM conducted research studies on various gender-related aspects of migration issues, including: gender-specific cross-border migration (Ghana); gender and remittances (Colombia); gender aspects of international marriages leading to migration (South Korea, Viet Nam, the Philippines); impacts of migration on the community, family and household arrangements, gender and intergenerational relations (the Philippines); gender aspects of migrant family separation (Lithuania); impacts of ageing societies on the demand for female immigrants (Poland); gender equality and different opportunities related to mobility in recruitment, retention and progression in scientific careers (IOM Warsaw, European Programme MOBEX2), and gender aspects of the links between HIV/AIDS and population mobility (Southern Africa).

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We also thank the research teams who supported the authors at country level and helped to undertake the work, often in harsh conditions and confronted with incomplete or lacking data, limited accessibility to migrant populations and the difficulty of capturing information relevant to gender relations from the responses of interviewees. Each study individually acknowledges other individuals or organizations which collaborated on country case studies.

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Overview

Gender and Labour Migration in Asia

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Contents

I.   Introduction

Globally, the landscape of international migration has become increasingly diversified as a result of broader changes in the global economy and geopolitics, in addition to policy shifts in recent years. These changes in politics and policies may affect men and women differently, resulting in gendered patterns of migration; laws and regulations ruling geographic mobility often have gendered outcomes; migrants are positioned differently within labour markets according to gender, and policies that affect the integration, or reintegration, of migrants into societies or communities may also affect men and women differently. This has implications for male and female migrants' livelihoods and entitlements.

In migration research, major advances have been made over the last few decades resulting in an abundance of data in the literature on gendered aspects of cross-border movements. It is now well established that gender is a crucial factor in our understanding of the causes and consequences of international migrations and it has been amply shown that gender is relevant to most, if not all, aspects of migration (Carling 2005; Piper 2005; Gabaccia et al. 2006).

More sophisticated insights into gender aspects of migration, however, does not mean that there are no further gaps in knowledge or loopholes in policy making – especially when considering the rapidly changing landscape of migration in general, and its impact on family or social relations more specifically. In particular, there is still a great need for comparative perspectives and an outlook on gender which highlights its relational dimension (i.e. women-to-women, men-to-men, as well as men-to-women).

Also, what is usually missing from scholarship on migration in general and also on gendered migration, is the discussion of two traditions in migration research and policy alongside of each other: *internal* and *international* migration. These two strands are largely treated as separate by scholars and policy makers alike. Except for China, studies on migration of Asians and in Asia have focused on the international dimension of human mobility alone (with the exception of Skeldon 2006[1]) and "those working on international migration seldom consider internal migration to be relevant to their interests, and vice versa" (ibid., p. 17). By discussing these two strands in parallel, this book highlights the link between gender and *labour* migration which in policy terms also means that it is not only immigration and emigration policies that matter, but also other fields of policy that affect migrants.

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[1]   In the 1960s and 70s, attention was directed primarily at internal migration and urbanization by scholars and policy makers and only since the 1980s did international migration enter centre stage (Skeldon 2006; Asis and Piper 2008).

Apart from the statistical significance of increasing numbers of women participating in both types of migration, the key difference in Asia between international and internal migration is that internationally, temporary contract migration (especially for the lower skilled who constitute numerically the bulk of migrants) is the predominant mode of legal migration.[2] As a result, entire families rarely migrate whereas, when migrating internally, couples can migrate together or reunite soon after the migration of one spouse. What both types of migration have in common is that children are often left behind. Yet, Asians also move beyond Asia such as to Europe, where family unification policies exist. This adds to the complexity of contemporary family arrangements we can witness today and, thus, international migration challenges the traditional image (and discursive construct) of tightly knit families. Moreover, the new configurations that have emerged pose specific opportunities and challenges to gender and family relations which have not yet been sufficiently explored.

The objective of this collection is to address some of these lacunae. From a broad perspective, the chapters in this volume are concerned with outlining recent trends and shifts in migration patterns and policies from a gender as well as comparative perspective by, (1) treating gender as a relational phenomenon and not solely a 'woman's issue' and (2) discussing internal and international migratory flows with focus on *labour* migration. The main sites where the relations between men and women are played out are, in fact, the workplace and the family.

The key theme in all chapters that constitutes the crucial overarching aspect in the discussions that follow is, therefore, the consideration of the various *social* dimensions of migration, especially in terms of family relations. 'Social' is thereby understood in a broad sense, including economic, cultural and social aspects. Families and the workplace are essentially gendered sites and can function as mirrors of macro-societal shifts and struggles between the sexes. A gender analysis, thus, raises awareness about broader social factors that influence women's and men's roles and their access to resources, facilities and services. A closer examination of families as units of analysis also allows us to establish a bridge between those who physically migrate and those who are left behind – and the gender dynamics and differences depending on who the migrants and the non-migrants are. This reminds us of the argument made by proponents of a 'transnational perspective' for the need to conceptualize migration as a phenomenon taking place within social fields extended beyond those who actually move to those who do not necessarily move but are connected to migrants through networks of social relations across borders. In other

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2   Although it could be argued that this is similar for urban-rural migration within China and Viet Nam. But family dynamics differ in both scenarios.

words, transnational communities consist of those who migrate and those who stay behind (Levitt and Nyberg-Sørensen 2004).

The following section summarizes the major trends and patterns of migratory movements in Asia and the last section relates them to the main issues and themes that emerge from the contributions to this collection of papers.

II.   Changing migration landscape in Asia

2.1. Gender and international migration

The scale, scope and complexity of international migration have grown considerably. Of the worldwide estimated 185 to 192 million international migrants, nearly 50 million (or 29%) were in Asia as of 2000 (UN 2004 cited in IOM 2005a:1). The ILO estimates that about 22.1 million were economically active in Asia from among the 86 million migrant workers globally (excluding refugees) (ILO 2004:7). In Southeast and East Asian countries that admit migrants exclusively for temporary labour purposes, the share of independent women compared to men in the labour migration flows has increased sharply since the late 1970s (ILO 2003: 9). By 2000, 50.1 per cent of all migrants in Southeast and East Asia were women (UN 2002) and in some cases women clearly outnumbered their male counterparts.

Reflecting these statistical changes, since the 1980s academic studies on contemporary migration flows have increasingly acknowledged and highlighted a wide range of issues related to the rising numbers of women involved in all migration streams. This has led commentators to coin the phrase 'feminization of migration'. The feminization of migration from certain countries is often an indicator for rising male un- or underemployment in the origin communities and also overseas related to changing demand structures in labour markets (Sassen 2003). Furthermore, the feminization of migration is also a signifier of the social acceptance of women's presence in the workforce due to certain historical processes, such as women's involvement into plantation work under colonialism or as part of specific economic development processes, such as export-led industrialization and/or focus on investment in the tourism industry (Oishi 2005).

The feminization of migration is also a phenomenon which has been highlighted by United Nation (UN) agencies and the global policy-making community (UNFPA 2006; UNRISD 2005; UN 2004; ILO 2004). In summary, the feminization of migration emerges as connected to at least four phenomena: 1. improved statistical visibility, partly related to a changed perception of women-dominated migration as 'work migration' in its own

right; 2. the increasing participation of women in most, if not all, migration streams; 3. the increasing inability of men to find full-time employment in the origin countries, and 4. the growing demand for feminized jobs in destination countries.

According to the 2006 UNFPA report on women and international migration, Asia as a whole is one of the two regions in theworld[3] where there were still slightly more male than female migrants by the year 2005. The number of women migrating from some countries in Asia, however, has clearly surpassed that of men (2006:23). Another UN report states that "female migrants are particularly underrepresented in Asia" (2006:33). Men, by contrast, migrate from almost all developing countries in Asia, whereas there are only three sources of countries from which the bulk of female migrants originate: the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

These sub-regional or country specific differences are partly a reflection of distinct socio-cultural norms and partly of specific demand structures in the various destination countries. In West Asia, many jobs are in the construction sector and security services, or in specific service jobs such as drivers; in Southeast Asia, demand is mostly in the construction, plantation or shipyard sectors, and in East Asia it is the construction and manufacturing sector of small to medium-sized companies which experience labour shortages. Those are fairly male dominated sectors. The relatively low numbers of South Asian women (with the exception of Sri Lanka)[4] who migrate as domestic or factory workers has largely to do with the strict social norms imposed on lower and unskilled women restricting their mobility (Dannecker 2005; Oishi 2005). Another reason is that statistics often capture only formalized jobs under temporary contract schemes. Women are mainly represented in these as domestic workers, although they also migrate in other informal streams which are not captured by official statistics. Furthermore, socio-economic policies aimed at improved literacy and educational levels for women and the wider participation by women in formal and informal economic activities, as in the case of Sri Lanka, has advanced the socio-economic status of women such that this has "given rise to a tendency for women to migrate in large numbers both internally and internationally" (Ukwatta, in: IOM 2005b: 183).

Overall, the feminization of migration in Asia is in fact usually associated with outflows from Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, where women make up 62-75 per cent of workers who are deployed legally on an annual basis (Asis 2005). If, however, irregular migrants were factored

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3   The other region is Africa.

4   See Nana Oishi (2005) and Petra Dannecker (2005) for a more detailed discussion on women's restricted mobility in South Asia.

in, the feminization of migration would involve more countries. Thai women, for example, are underrepresented in statistics of legal migration, but they predominate among irregular migrants or those presumed to be trafficked. Thailand has also been the destination for irregular migrant women, such as Burmese and Lao women working as domestic workers.

There are, however, important gender variations with regard to irregular migration. In the context of Indonesia, most irregular migrants are men going to neighbouring Malaysia to work on plantations and in the construction sector. In the Philippines, men and women are more or less equally represented in irregular migration streams (Asis 2005). In addition, if the increasing numbers of international marriages between Asians were added, the gendered landscape of migration within Asia would take on a different dimension. It might appear odd to include foreign wives into the discussion of economic migration, but as argued by Piper & Roces (2003), the two streams are interrelated in that marriage can be the result of female labour migration or its cause (as wives may want to enter the labour market after marriage). But international spouses are excluded in statistics (and studies) on economic migration (as also observed in the chapter on Thailand in this volume).

The demand for domestic workers and so-called 'entertainers' in E/SE Asia has been an important driving force behind the feminization of migration and, to a lesser extent, in the health sector (which constitutes an important source for employment in the North). Changes are gradually becoming evident not only with regard to the increased volume of female migrants, but also the diversified patterns of their migration, including source, destinations, working conditions and skill levels. The largest proportion of these women, documented and undocumented, continue to work in job categories characteristically assigned to female migrants such as live-in maids, care givers, entertainers, sex workers and other service employees (e.g., *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 2003). A smaller but substantial proportion of women work in the garment sector and as agricultural and fish farm hands. It seems as if women from South Asia in particular – Sri Lanka and to a lesser extend Bangladesh – have been deployed in Malaysia and the Middle East as garment workers (Dannecker 2005; Dias & Wanasundera 2002; INSTRAW & IOM 2000).

Viet Nam has become a source country of male and female factory workers in Korea and Taiwan and, more recently, also of a small number of domestic workers to Taiwan (Dang 2000). Relatively little is known about Cambodian emigrants who seem to be mainly destined for Thailand. Their flows are divided into short-term close-range border crossing (typically seasonal agricultural workers, the majority of whom are women) and longer-term and wider-range movements (mainly by construction workers,

porters, factory and food processing workers, most of whom men) (Sophal & Sovannarith 1999; chapter on Thailand this volume).

South Asian emigration is on the whole dominated by men who initially went mostly to West Asia and subsequently also to Southeast and East Asia. Cultural restrictions and even official bans on the emigration of women limit their mobility to seek overseas employment. There are signs, however, of increasing (albeit slowly) numbers of e.g. Bangladeshi women taking up temporary contract employment in Malaysia (Dannecker 2005). However, whether the increasing international movement of women from these areas leads to any sustained changes in the direction of more liberal attitudes towards future female emigration remains to be seen (Skeldon 2006).

Despite the relatively small numbers, skilled and professional women have begun to migrate within Asia in response to expanding employment opportunities in business, health, education and services (Raghuram 2000; Willis & Yeoh 2000; Thang et al. 2002). Foreign nurses in West and Southeast Asia are not a new phenomenon, but in other types of professions foreign women are fairly new on the scene.

Recent studies suggest that international migration of skilled women is growing in frequency and is diversified in the attendant patterns of motivation and experience, legal status and entitlements, and coping strategies with which to confront the barriers they face in foreign countries (Yeoh & Khoo 1998; Sakai 2000; Willis & Yeoh 2000; Yeoh & Willis 2004; Thang, MacLachlan & Goda 2002; Lee & Piper 2003; Ono & Piper 2004). Commonly, these studies reveal that Asia's regional migration of skilled workers is highly gender-segregated (as elsewhere) and is also characterized by institutional barriers based on nationality, ethnicity, language, religion and class.

The literature indicates that despite governmental encouragement for skilled foreigners to relocate, immigration and labour policies are inexplicably intertwined with traditional gender ideologies that view and treat most women as 'dependants' of expatriate men who cross borders for career and business. Such a policy, in turn, significantly reduces women's chances of obtaining residence and working visas and of being employed as professionals. As a result, they confront far greater obstacles than their male counterparts in pursuit of careers abroad. Men are able to upgrade their careers through foreign employment, while their skilled wives often experience unemployment and underemployment at their destinations. Eventually, they are likely to give up their aspirations for employment to concentrate on housekeeping, child rearing and community service (Yeoh & Khoo 1998).

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2.2   Gender and internal migration

Internal migration is typically related to urbanization processes and the availability of work in certain industries located in cities, such as textile and garment factories. With the decline in women's participation in agriculture, in countries such as Sri Lanka for isntance, women's out-migration has been on the increase (Ukwatta, in: IOM 2005b). At the same time, we can observe the 'feminization of agriculture' in other countries such as China (chapter in this volume) as the result of male out-migration where agricultural work used to be a 'man's job'.

Similar to international migration, migrant women are typically found in low-income and labour-intensive activities. But internal migration does not only involve rural-to-urban migration, but can take on many forms such as rural-to-rural (in association with, e.g. ,population redistribution policies, investments in agricultural programmes, and marriage) and also circular migration (Skeldon 2006, IOM 2005b).

Some studies have shown that the majority of internally migrating women are married, but this very much depends on destination and the original reason for migration (Ukwatta, in: IOM 2005b). More women who had never married seem to migrate to urban areas where they fill jobs typically given to young, single women, as domestic workers in household of the urban rich – or in jobs which require "nimble fingers", such as in factories, especially those located in export processing zones (Viet Nam in this collection). The textile and garment industries have drawn in female workers in particularly high numbers. In this scenario, gender relations are seen as part of increasing competition within labour markets, as pointed out by Skeldon (2006): women, as lower paid labour, enter into direct competition with men, which could result in increased male unemployment. Likewise, these women may face dismissal after a few years when younger, less experienced women become available to replace them. This might lead to a direct link between internal and international migration as "both processes lead to a pool of unemployed with both the aspirations and the wherewithal to leave to seek work overseas" (ibid., page 21).

2.3   Links between internal and external migration and gender aspects

Another phenomenon that seems to have given rise to increasing internal and international migration is the intensified hunt for skilled migrants. Quite a few studies exist on migrating health workers, especially in the Philippines where more and more schools are being set up to train nurses for overseas employment (Osteria 2006). This leads to internal student migration and thus potentially to further migration. Rural areas seem to

suffer a serious loss of health personnel with many migrating to urban centres as the conditions there are better.

To what extent internal and international migration is directly linked is still being debated in the literature. There is contrasting evidence about whether women migrate internally to urban centres before securing overseas employment, or whether they migrate directly from their villages (Skeldon 2006). When migrating internationally directly from rural areas, this seems to be related to existing networks of previous migrants or traditions of overseas migration and also to the existence of brokers or recruiters. According to Oishi (2005), most of the domestic workers from Sri Lanka she interviewed did not have prior working experience before they migrated to Hong Kong or Singapore. This leads her to argue that it is not so much internal migration or previous work experience which leads to increasing female out-migration, but rather the level of socio-cultural acceptance of 'women as workers' generally.

But internal migration also occurs in its 'own right', i.e. separate from international migration. China is a country about which there is almost as much research on internal flows as on its overseas diasporas. It is often pointed out that the internal dynamics, with the stringent registration system and stark discrimination of rural migrants that pose serious internal boundaries, function in a very similar manner as international migration (Solinger 1999).

III.   Gender and migration in Asia - Some key trends

3.1   Migration, gender roles and changing family patterns

The social dimensions and implications of migration are well illustrated through changing family patterns and relations – a theme most chapters in this book discuss in great detail. The growing trend of female and male migration can have positive effects for family life and result in changing gender patterns, but the impact can sometimes also be negative for the family and, in particular, for children. Studies and policy makers' discourse tend to highlight women's migration as more problematic in this regard than men's which, in turn, reflects a gendered understanding of the proper roles of men and women (Carling 2005). More sophisticated insights into what and who exactly is being referred to when assessing the relationship between migration and family life are called for.

There are also regional differences. As mentioned above, in South Asia, initial migratory movement – both internal and international – were dominated by men. As a result, the issue of women left behind and of the changing roles of women in the absence of men has been a recurrent theme in research on India (especially Kerala) and Bangladesh. In countries

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such as the Philippines, women have dominated the international labour migration scene for quite a while now and thus the issue is more of husbands left behind, the role of the extended family and also the potential for family dissolution (Asis 2004; Skeldon 2006).

Much of this also depends on the specific stage in the migrant's life cycle. Migration of unmarried daughters is said to have a minor effect on a family's daily routine, whereas the departure of a parent or spouse – especially long term – has more serious consequences. Emotional strain caused by separation left aside, domestic and childrearing tasks have to be reassigned, especially if the migrant is the mother of young children. In a nuclear family, finding someone to take care of the children is likely to pose greater problems than in the context of an extended family, where it is typically other adult women who assume the tasks of the absent mother (Ukwatta, in: IOM 2005b). More recent research has shown that the 'freedoms gained' by the migrating woman can result in 'freedoms lost' by female family members who are now responsible for the children left behind (Avuncula-Lopez 2006) and larger impacts on family relations, such as pressure on family members to take care of children left behind.

Thus, there is an increasing diversification occurring with regard to changing family relations based on whether it is the female spouse/ mother who migrates and the male spouse/father is left behind or vice versa. Likewise, in the Philippines it is not rare to find that both parents are abroad for work, but in different countries (SMC et. al., 2004) or both are in the same country but the women took the lead as it is often easier for women to find legal employment as domestic workers than for men (as in Italy, see chapter in this volume). The common result is confrontation with different roles and responsibilities for couples and family members which, over time, may lead to changing gender attitudes and identities. In the short term, this could entail new problems, the worst of which is domestic violence (see chapters on Viet Nam and China).

Whether or not entire families can migrate together depends on immigration policies. Asia is conspicuous in this regard in its absence of family unification policies. This means that in the rare incidences where entire families migrate together (such as Mongolians in Korea, Filipinos in Sabah, Indonesians in Japan), it is largely in an undocumented manner. This entails problems for migrant children to access educational services. So far, there is mainly anecdotal evidence and hardly any detailed studies have been carried out on this topic.

Short-term contract work (and it has to be noted that such contract work is both a characteristic of lesser skilled sectors, such as domestic work, as well as highly skilled workers) leads women to migrate and remigrate

repeatedly in order to remain in employment and to secure an income. Likewise, a considerable number of women manage to obtain extensions on their contracts adding up to a period of many years, if not decades, abroad. As pointed out above, in the absence of family reunification policies in Asia, the predominant family life for married migrants who work in Asian destination countries is that of transnationally "split households". The migrant mothers, while working abroad, experience a phenomenon referred to as "transnational motherhood" (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Hochschild 2002). The reversed gender roles in which a wife becomes the family's breadwinner while her husband attends to the children and household, have frequently resulted in marital conflict. Such role reversal has often challenged the masculinity of men, especially those who experience long-term unemployment in a stagnant economy (Gamburd 2001; Parreñas 2001).

3.2 Spousal relations and changing gender identities

Research has shown that migration of a spouse usually entails certain pressures on marital relations. But, likewise, pre-existing marital problems can be the original reason for out-migration in the first place. Married women's out-migration in the Sri Lankan context is a case in point, where migrant women were blamed for having driven their husbands into drinking and gambling in their absence. Gamburd (2001), however, has shown that these problems largely existed prior to the wives' migration. Thus, the decision to migrate is not purely an economic decision, but for many women also a strategy to escape from 'bad' husbands and 'bad' relationships (see also Oishi 2005; Piper 1997).

In countries outside of Asia where family unification policies exist, such as in Italy, this does not automatically result in a 'happy family' life either. A study by Pe-Pua, for instance, compares Filipino women who are separated from their families with those whose husbands and families joined them later on in the migration process. Among respondents of the latter group, there was a feeling of being "reinvented as a maid three times over: I am a maid to my employer, a maid to my husband and a maid to my children" (Pe-Pua 2003:176).

Women's new status as main or sole income provider affects gender relations within a family's everyday life. Because men have more difficulty in obtaining employment these days, this has important ramifications in the marriage dynamics as both definitions of masculinity and femininity have to be altered to accommodate these new changes. When husbands follow their wives, but do not immediately - or ever - find employment and are faced with a new role as being a "house-band", this has serious implications for men's sense of masculinity. In families, where the

husbands alongside their wives manage to find work, families are unlikely to return to the country of origin but rather consider permanent settlement abroad (see chapter on Philippines in this volume) These scenarios do not automatically entail a gender role swap or equal sharing of domestic duties, but rather a triple burden for the women in their role as breadwinner and household keeper (Pe-Pua 2003).

Women's increasing out-migration in recent years has implications for the reconstruction of their husband's sense of masculinity. In the early waves of labour migration it was the men who left the family to work overseas and, thus, maintained their roles as main income earner. When left behind, however, there are new challenges to men's sense of masculinity. The traditional perception of men can be shaken when wives are absent. There are basically two types of men: those who try to adapt and make the best of the new situation and those who cannot cope and burden other (usually female) members of the family with responsibilities previously taken care of by their now absent wives. The latter type of men are also those who often end up engaging in adulterous relationships, neglect work and their children and develop certain vices (Pingol 2000). It has to be pointed out, though, that the tendency to engage in these vices often existed before the wives' migration (Gamburd 2001).

One of the worries of migrant women with regard to marital relationship when separated is in fact the prospects of their husbands' infidelity. However, there is also evidence of women engaging in extra-marital affairs, as reported in the case of Filipino domestic workers who start intimate relationships with mostly other Filipino men (some of whom are also married with their families left behind) in the host country (Pe Pua 2003). More recent research into 'socialising behaviour' by temporary migrant workers in Singapore also shows that relationships are formed between domestic workers and other foreign workers across nationalities (Kitiarsa 2005). Some women contemplate not ever going back to their home country except to visit and some think about bringing their children over and leaving their husbands behind. In this sense, migration can also be an escape route from bad marriages, especially in countries where legal divorce is not possible, as in the Philippines, or where it is still highly stigmatized.

One of the worst results of martial problems is, without doubt, domestic violence – when pressure on men as migrants is compensated by taking it out on their wives (as discussed in the Viet Nam chapter) or when they cannot cope with the new independence of their wives. Domestic violence can also be the push for women to seek migration on their own.

3.3 Children of migrants

The impact of temporary or undocumented labour migration on children is a totally under-researched topic. Among the few studies that do exist, the focus has been on children left behind (and always in the absence of the mother, never the father) but next to no data exist on children's experience in migration in Asia (when accompanying their parents or as unaccompanied migrants).

The issue of migration and children has been captured by academics in studies on 'transnationally split families' in their role as 'the left behind', highlighting especially the 'absentee mother'. Researchers and policy makers obviously did not consider absent fathers worthy of investigation, which reflects the dominant assumption of women's 'natural' role as housekeeper and nurturer. Studies on so-called 'parachute children' or 'astronaut families' (Ho et al., 2002) and studies on 'study mothers' (a phenomenon describing middle-class Chinese mothers who migrate to Singapore for the education of their children, see Yeoh and Huang – 2004) have also emerged. The last two scenarios are cases where the fathers are 'left behind' in the country of origin, but maintain their role as main income earner, and it is the mother and children who migrate (mostly to give children the chance for a 'better' education).

Interestingly enough, the focus of the research has been on the mothers and not on 'absentee fathers' and their (lacking) role in the children's lives. A case in point is the study conducted by Battistella and Conaco (1998) among elementary school children of Filipino migrants. Comparing children from families where one parent is absent to those where both parents are working overseas, they found that the most disruptive impacts occur when the mother is absent. Fathers were found to be unable to take on the mothering role effectively. Thus, the degree of involvement of other women in the extended family is an important determinant of the guidance that children can get. A newer study headed by the Scalabrini Migration Centre (2004), however, shows a more complex picture of the so far purely negatively portrayed impact of absentee mothers on their children. What seems to be required here is a more detailed study looking into dominant socio-cultural discourses, including religious ones, in addition to looking at changing parental dynamics *over time*. There seems to be evidence that more and more men are taking on a stronger parental role. Specific policies supporting left-behind parents might also determine the outcome of a parent's migration on children. This seems to be a key area for social and public policy intervention.

The issue of migrant children has recently been picked up in responses by non-governmental organizations to a consultative pre-meeting for the UN High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held in September 2006 under the larger heading of 'social consequences of migration'. More specifically,

In this respect, the prospects of **migrant children** and young persons in the country of destination were of particular concern. The impact of separation on families and children resulting from migration also deserved more attention, as did the changes of family structures induced by migration in societies with high rates of emigration. The integration of migrants in the receiving countries was considered a fundamental issue involving the responsibility of all parties…The **integration of young people in countries of destination**, including via access to education, health care and information about disease prevention, would increase their positive contributions to receiving societies. (Paragraph 15, website UN High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development).

For Asia, however, this raises the question as to why issues such as 'integration' are absent from national and academic debates. As pointed out above, host governments primarily practice temporary labour schemes for lower-skilled migrant workers (who constitute the majority of economic migrants) or tacitly approve of undocumented migration in the absence of official migration policies. For this group of migrants, family unification and formation (in the sense of marriage with local citizens not being permitted), let alone obtaining citizenship, is out of reach. At the official policy level, this means long-term migration or settlement is denied to a large number of foreign workers. As a result, there are no integration policies of the kind as they exist in Europe, North America and Australia. However, existing research shows that substantial numbers of migrants defy these official policies and manage to stay in overseas employment in Asian destination countries for prolonged periods of time – and increasingly even with their families (Rahman 2006). Where family migration takes place, however, it commonly occurs in an undocumented manner. The implications this has on migrant children are largely unknown.

Migrant children, who live with their families are part of the undocumented or irregular migration stream so characteristic for Asia, encounter serious obstacles to their socialization and integration into the host society. How to ensure they have equal opportunities as other children with regard to access to education and other public services? Are they entitled to partake of free primary education?

From a human rights perspective, it would be interesting in this regard, to know how the widely ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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could intersect, or be invoked in place of the under-ratified UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families.

3.4 Remittances

One of the main concerns in the debate on the relationship between migration and development has been the issue of remittances, usually understood to refer to international monetary transfers between individuals. Scholars have distinguished between two broad 'types' of remittance usage, that is "productive" and "unproductive" use of remittances.[5] Gendered studies have shown that migrant women tend to spend their remittances on children's education and health care – which are typically classified as "unproductive" by macro economic approaches which have dominated this debate. There is also evidence of women using parts of their remittances to pay for care services to elderly and children left behind in a context where public services are non-existent and husbands/fathers withdraw from such tasks. These paid carers are often family members – an aunt, cousin, grandmother (Piper 2005; Kofman 2006).

Gendered analyses of the remittance issue have concluded that gender affects the volume of remittances, with women sending more than men, but this highly general statement depends on other elements such as the migrants' marital status, migration status as well as age (UN 2004). The percentage of income remitted by temporary migrants is higher than that of permanent migrants who typically bring their families with them. This means that lower skilled migrants tend to generate more remittances than highly skilled whose numbers are smaller (Ramamurthy 2003). As women and girls predominate in temporary and lower skilled migration flows, their capacity to remit is linked to their lower earning and thus tends to be less than that of the average male migrant in absolute figures, even so women tend to send a higher percentage of their income than men. As temporary contract migration also means being tied to one employer in one specific area of employment, women who work as household workers are highly exposed to abusive practices by employers. Under-payment or non-payment of wages is a widespread problem and affects women's ability to generate higher remittances. Not being able to acquire better skills which would allow them to move into better paid jobs has the same effect (Piper and Yamanaka 2008).

This collection calls for further research in the following areas of work:

• Transnational perspectives on migrant families that include the 'left behind'.

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[5]   This is a controversial classification and critical analyses of this exist (e.g. Taylor 1999).

- Impacts of migration on gender and family relations in the context of extended families.

- Long-term gendered impacts of migration on economic and social inclusion and need for longitudinal data.

- Impacts of migration on the types of family relations that might be subject to change due to increasing out-migration and in particular generational changes.

- Unravelling of the "myth of no settlement" in Asian destination countries by investigating the effects the absence of integration and family unification policies have on children in international migration who accompany their parents is overdue.

- Gender-based violence related to internal and international migration

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Sri Lanka

Gender roles and support networks of spouses of migrant workers

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Contents

I. Introduction

1.1 The framework

Migration for overseas employment acquired a new dimension in the 1970s and 1980s with the escalating demand for relatively low-cost male and female labour in oil rich countries. The rapid feminization of this transitory labour force was the outcome of the demand for women domestic workers and subsequently factory labour in the Middle East as well as other countries in Asia and Europe, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Cyprus, Mauritius, Italy and Greece.

There has been much documentation in theoretical and empirical studies of the dynamics of the international movement of labour, such as migrant labour, and capital (mushrooming 'world market factories') and the use of the 'comparative advantage' of low-cost female labour (Eelens and Speckmann, n.d.; Elson and Pearson, 1981). The issues of economic gains and social costs and the impact of the outflow of migrant women workers on families have been discussed in the context of the changing scenario in labour sending and labour receiving countries.

This study on the gender roles and support networks of spouses of migrant workers examines the gendered implications of the temporary absence of women and men migrant workers from their families, and particularly the impact of culturally perceived gender roles and relations and underpinning gender norms in Sri Lanka.

1.2 Gender roles and relations

Gender roles are social constructs and not immutable as they are manifestations of learned behaviour or the process of socialization. They have been observed to change through developments and the specific situation in which women and men find themselves. Neither women nor men constitute homogenous groups, and gender roles may vary according to age or social class within the same environment. External pressures such as macro-economic developments and globalization can accelerate changes. At the same time, long established perceptions of gender differences in ascribed gender roles may generate resistance and conflict and impede change.

Women have been culturally assigned a disproportionate share of contribution to the reproduction of society through childbearing and rearing and the inequitable distribution of household labour. Men are perceived to be economic producers and heads of households, irrespective of the fact that women may actually be the primary income earners in these families. The perceived dominance of men in the public

sphere in a hierarchic gender demarcated labour market and in political and community life has impeded women to fully participate in economic and community activities. There is no evidence that women's expanding economic roles, as evidenced in their strong presence among migrant workers or factory workers, has had a corrective effect on the gender division of household tasks and made them more equitable.

As patriarchal social norms, traditions and customs are a cogent ideological basis of the social construction of gender, they have fostered asymmetrical gender relations that are reflected in normative gender roles. The family, labour market and society are clearly locations of such gender inequalities. Within family structures and internal relationships these gender differences are reflected in access to and the control of resources, the division of household labour, the extent of participation in decision-making, and control of sexuality. Unequal gender relations are reflected in the horizontal and vertical structures in the labour market and in the 'glass ceiling' impeding the access of women to the highest decision-making positions.

Patriarchy implies a 'monolithic conception of male dominance' (Kandiyotti, 1988), but experiences in different societies indicate that there are deviations. It has been claimed that the impact of market forces and globalization have increased women's access to economic resources and decision-making power, thereby weakening patriarchal power relations in families. Nevertheless, the assumption that the increase in women's participation in the labour force will reduce substantially male dominance in the family has been questioned (Beneria and Sen, 1997). On the other hand, it has been argued that gender stereotypes carried over from the family have created forms of subordination in new employment opportunities (Elson and Pearson, 1981). Studies elsewhere have shown that employment outside the home can reinforce or change existing gender relations in the family according to the specific context in different societies.

It is within this framework of gender ideology, power structures, gender roles and relations that the present study of spouses of male and female migrant workers is situated.

1.3   The Sri Lankan context[2]

The Sri Lankan cultural milieu from time immemorial permitted women to be mobile, whether to carry the message of the Dhamma to distant lands, or to join a spouse, most often a pioneering businessman in South Asia or Africa. This liberal ideology in respect of a majority of Sri Lankan women

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[2]   Please note that in 2007 a new Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare was created.

and family life continued into the 20th century and influenced immigration and emigration policies of successive governments. By the late 1960s migration for employment by single or married women was accepted as a socially accepted means to accumulate wealth and reduce poverty, as employment and family tensions also arose from economic hardship.

International labour migration in the late 1990s overshadowed the early migrant moves by Sri Lankan men and women. The early studies of the Manpower Planning Division of the Ministry of Plan Implementation not only enumerated the personal characteristics of migrants, but also analysed the factors leading to international labour migration from Sri Lanka (Korale and Karunawathie, 1981) with special focus on the reasons for a large number of women from poverty groups to seek employment in the Middle East as housemaids (Dias, 1984; Eelens and Schampers, 1988; Gunatilleke, 1986).

By the mid 1990s, it was estimated that over 500,000 adult men and women were working overseas, a majority in the Middle East. Many of the men as skilled workers (drivers, carpenters and mechanics) found themselves residing in labour camps while the housemaids, categorized as unskilled workers, were employed in private residences. As regards the nature of work, repetitive hard labour often described as dirty and dangerous, there were few complaints. Men and women believed that work rules were an extension of their economic roles at home. Poor men and women are known to engage in hard labouring tasks, despite their poor physique and low nutritional status. Considering the nature of women's work and the doctrinaire notions of the sexual division of labour, a comprehensive insight is provided by the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) study, which concluded:

> There does not appear to be a dichotomy between the different domains of women or between their productive and reproductive roles, and economic activities and childcare are not seen as alternatives. For the majority of Sri Lankan women there were no such options (CENWOR, 1987: 35).

It is in this context that the early studies originated to:

• look at the complex issues of international labour migration from the labour sending to labour receiving countries,

• analyse the motivational factors which induced men and women to leave their country of residence for temporary employment, and

• assess the impact of migration on the Sri Lankan economy, on the individual migrant and the family left behind.

1.4   Gendered dimensions of migration

The gender dimension of the early studies was identified mainly for manpower needs of both the sending and the receiving country (Korale, 1978; Gunatilleke, 1986). The first initiative to enumerate labour migration flow by sex was taken by the Manpower Division of the Ministry of Plan Implementation. This was followed by studies on the demographic characteristics of migration with information gathered at the airport and from the Employment Agencies by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE, 1993). A major objective of the newly established Bureau was to collect data on migrant workers, which was considered imperative for policies on labour migration. The more sociologically oriented micro studies on migration (Dias, 1984, 1986; Gunatilleke, 1986; CENWOR, 1987; Fernando, 1989; Hettige, 1990; Jayaweera, Dias and Wanasundera, 2002; Dias and Wanasundera, 2002) saw migration primarily as a human phenomenon which went beyond the push/pull theories or centre-periphery, city-village theories. It was apparent that a more holistic approach was required to understand the distinct features of the Sri Lankan migratory movements in which women constituted a majority, motivated to travel to unknown destinations not only in search of the proverbial pot of gold but to achieve certain specific goals to enhance their own as their family's status. There were also some unusual patterns in the migratory movements, such as the predominance of young Muslim women from conservative families with a tradition of limited physical mobility migrating from the Eastern Province, and the more unobtrusive movements of women to European destinations, as non-domestic workers, often through non-regulated channels, raising concerns regarding trafficking (Hettige, 1990; Wanasundera, 2001).

The share of women migrants continued to increase from the early to the late 1990s to around 75 per cent of total migrants. With the predominance of married women in the migratory movements, gender issues became important. There was a need to analyse the migration process, i.e. from pre-migration to return and the different experiences of women and men in the context of ascribed gender roles as prevalent in low-income households.

The feminization of migration has been accelerated by factors promoting foreign employment at the macro and micro levels in Sri Lanka. State policies, too, actively encouraged women to seek employment abroad, as seen from the state's perspective to overcome problems of female unemployment and economic deprivation on account of rising costs of living and the weakening of the state sponsored safety nets and social services. Protective support in terms of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with agents and contracts with employers in labour receiving

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countries, insurance and training schemes and even ratification of International Labour Conventions became a reality with intense lobbying from NGO groups and the presentation of research findings at the highest levels of government. Male migrant workers received less attention in terms of protective support on the grounds of more secure job offers at higher skill evels and better earning capacity. Men were also deemed to have better negotiating abilities and the only safeguard necessary was to protect prospective male migrants from stiff competition from workers from other countries in the region (Dias and Jayasundere, 2004).

1.5 Gender roles

In the context of gendered norms, housework and childcare were defined as 'women's work'. The migration of married women with children no doubt challenged the norm of the man as the exclusive breadwinner and the woman as the housewife and mother. With the role reversal resulting from female migration, it was assumed that family structures and functions would change and, most likely, with adverse consequences. In the available literature the social cost of migration was mainly measured in terms of children being left behind. According to official statistics, at any given time there were approximately 400,000 children with an absent mother or father, the majority under 15 years of age (SLBFE, 1994).

There is no social discourse on the impact of the absence of a husband/ father on the family left behind. Even though husbands/fathers had a role in family maintenance and even the care of older children, their absence was not considered to lead to major family upheavals. The conclusion reached by most researchers of the 1980s and 1990s was that children were affected by the absence of a mother, manifesting itself in behavioural problems. Infants were particularly vulnerable to psychological trauma and health problems and adolescents to delinquency, and substance and sexual abuse (Fernando, 1989; Athauda, Fernando and Nikapotha, 2000).

A different viewpoint was adopted by Samarasinghe (1989), who maintains that the effects of separation on the development of the child were not clearly visible and that, rather than being associated with emotional disturbances, long-term separations from the mother seemed to have enabled the child to adapt to the absence of the mother and to form emotional ties with the surrogate mother.

As Dias (1982) explained, child rearing in Sri Lanka must be understood in the context of family structures, where often a nuclear family shares its residence with one or more close relatives and interpersonal relationships extend beyond those between parents and children. There are ample opportunities for a child to develop stable, warm relationships with other family members. However, she maintains that the child's relationship

with the mother remains a very special one and that long separations from the mother could result in some emotional deprivation. To what extent a surrogate can take over childcare responsibilities adequately and satisfactorily is uncertain. No longitudinal study has been conducted yet to measure the psychological effects on the children left behind, with control groups to match the migrant families. Gamburd (2002) introduced the concept "fragmentation of motherhood" when she examined closely the family relationships of migrant families in a village in the south of Sri Lanka. Her conclusions arrived at through periods of observation were that long periods of separation had no major effects on children or adolescents and that the children themselves missed the mothers less and less as years passed, growing fonder of their more immediate caregivers, the men and women who looked after them on a daily basis.

The most recent study by Save the Children in Sri Lanka (2006) concludes that husbands are often the key to a successful migration experience.

When the men are employed and comfortable with the role reversal of wives being the major breadwinner and their own role as caregiver for their children, the goals for overseas work can be achieved without huge social costs to children (p.17).

As women became primary earners they were seen to have even more control over the disbursement of family income and other family matters, such as the education of children, marriage of children and even savings and investments (CENWOR, 1987; Wanasundera, 2001). What was most revealing was that migrant women rarely expressed feelings of guilt on becoming the primary earner and some studies found that there was no evidence that their new role led to any serious family tensions. However, Gamburd notes that many men felt loss of respect and dignity when the wife takes on the breadwinner role (Gamburd, 2002).

Another area of research interest considered whether female labour migration would result in the dismantling of the traditional gender hierarchies, where the man was considered the head of household and the woman his subordinate partner. There was always a question as to whether the men in the households of migrants ever exerted absolute authority over the women. In the poverty-stricken households of migrant workers it was seen that women combined many roles and contributed significantly to family income. There were no visible barriers to mobility, and even in conservative Muslim households the men, both husbands and fathers, in no way opposed a woman's decision to migrate for employment (CENWOR, 1987; Hettige, 1990). A different view point is presented by Gamburd in her study of a southern coastal Sinhalese village. She states that where there was a change in gender roles and family power

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structures, men were adversely affected regarding issues of manhood and masculinity (Gamburd, 2002).

The capacity of women to fulfil many roles is evident in the study dealing with male migration (Dias, 1982). As Dias concludes, a remarkable change was noted in the status of women as the wife/mother was now assuming a dual role of chief householder and caretaker of home and family. It was the woman who had taken control of the household, especially the financial transactions, which had traditionally been a task for the males in the household. In fact, it was the woman left behind who attended to duties within and outside the home, even moving out of the village to meet agency personnel, bank managers and government officers. On the other hand, many of the researchers have noted the reluctance of men to take over 'women's work' and the delegation of 'domestic' tasks to female relatives (CENWOR, 1987; Fernando, 1989; Wanasundera, 2001; Gamburd, 2002).

Working abroad, often for periods exceeding two years, no doubt presented a variety of personal and job related experiences for both men and women. Research studies have focused on the returnees and attempted to discern whether the foreign sojourn had in fact had a psychological impact on women or empowered them. Some of the field studies indicated that a few women had succeeded in asserting themselves with regard to key family decisions, including negotiating a separation from an unfaithful spouse or opposing parental views on marriage. For many, foreign employment was a transitory experience and, on their return, the women assumed their traditional subservient role (Dias and Weerakoon-Goonewardene, 1991; Jayaweera, Dias and Wanasundera, 2002; Gamburd, 2002).

1.6   Support networks

At every stage of the migratory process, both men and women migrant workers found support through a number of informal networks, some more advantageous than others. At the pre-migration stage, the role of personal contacts was seen to be important, especially in securing a job placement (Wanasundera, 2001). As quoted in the CENWOR study, Fifty per cent of the migrant workers in Cyprus, 56.5 per cent of workers in Greece and all except one in Italy had obtained information on the availability of jobs through informal networks (p. 66).

The informal networks consisted mainly of relatives' friends or neighbours who had secured employment in these countries.

The ability to bypass recruitment agents and village level sub-agents indicated a certain degree of resistance to a corrupt formal system

of foreign employment, where the SLBFE had instituted a scheme for appointing recruitment agents, a majority of whom were known to be exploitative. Relying on family and friends, the women had developed an alternative mechanism to reach a pre-arranged destination.

An informal network of friends also provided solace to the women migrant workers at the site of employment. This was evident from interviews with returnees as well as from site visits to high concentrations of migrant workers, as in the study of Sri Lankan migrant garment workers in Mauritius and the Sultanate of Oman (Dias and Wanasundera, 2002). It is in the context of tight work schedules and feelings of isolation and loneliness that some women formed liaisons with male co-workers in factories or with male domestic workers, often with tragic outcomes for both individuals.

The issue of whether trade unions have been effective as a support network for migrant workers was the focus of an ILO study on migrant workers and human rights (Ahn, 2004). The conclusion of the Sri Lankan researchers was that, while several trade unions in Sri Lanka have recognized female migrant domestic workers as an active and important labour group, there has been little attempt to organize them. The All Ceylon Federation of Free Trade Unions (ACFFTU) has started work on training and family support services. However, this is considered inadequate considering the need to organize the migrant work force to enable workers to advocate for their rights. The ACFFTU lobby for voting rights for migrant workers and a pension scheme for returnees is yet to be accepted at policy level.

At grassroots level the trade union movement and organizations such as the Migrant Services Centre have facilitated the establishment of migrant workers associations first in Matugama and then in Kegalle. These are voluntary bodies that provide a forum for migrant returnees to meet and discuss problems and to provide information and to articulate grievances. Currently there are five such associations.

A number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have concerned themselves with issues of migrant workers and in 2000 these organizations combined to form the Migrant Workers Action Network (ACTFORM). The aims of ACTFORM are to: collect and disseminate information; monitor the implementation of state policy; lobby and advocate on policy and policy reform; offer counselling and outreach programmes to migrant workers; to conduct research and to offer legal assistance (Dias and Jayasundere, 2004). Unfortunately, no organization has initiated an advocacy programme for unskilled male workers who continue to face problems of exploitative work situations in many Middle Eastern countries.

The ineffectiveness of NGOs both at national and community level was highlighted in the CENWOR study (Jayaweera, Dias and Wanasundera, 2002) on returned migrant women, when it was observed that community based organizations funded through international donors, such as the Asian Development Bank, Care International and Child Vision have failed to provide a sustainable income generating programme for returnee migrants at Kalpitiya, where ten such organizations were in existence. Interventions had either failed to attract the returnee migrant women or they had no mandate to provide the type of economic relief that would enable the household to engage in a profitable economic venture.

It is indisputable from the conclusions of microstudies carried out during the last three decades that the family as a social institution remains the most significant and important support network for migrant workers. The successful outcome of migration for employment as mentioned earlier depended on the stability of the family prior to migration, especially if the role of the father/husband conformed to societal expectations of good parenting. Even in the poorest segments of the population, strong extended family ties cushioned the impact of an absent mother/wife or father/husband and provided basic comforts to the family members left behind. Studies on Muslim villages with a high proportion of women migrant workers revealed the strength of family ties in supporting young women to undertake a hazardous journey from their homes in the Eastern Province to destinations in the Middle East (Hettige, 1990). There was a spirit of cooperation, a feature promoted by Islam, a religion which promotes helping the needy in one's own community, even if it was to assist in the departure of a young female for overseas employment. For the family left behind, whether of a male or female migrant, the departure of the family member was for family betterment, a vision which they subjectively interpreted as a search for enrichment of family life.

II.   The Macroscenario and current issues

In the context of the present study, reference needs to be made to the macroscenario of labour migration from Sri Lanka, as it reflects recent changes in trends, policy and family dynamics. The latest available records reveal that 1.5 million people were employed overseas as at the end of 2006, of whom 60 per cent were women working as housemaids, over 90 per cent of them in the Middle East. Over 53 per cent of the women were married with children. According to SLBFE estimates, at any given time there are 400,000 children in migrant families, the majority – around 80 per cent - under 15 years of age. The most recent microstudy of selected communities found that nearly half the children left behind by migrant women were less than six years of age at the time of the departure of the parent, whether mother or father (Save the Children in Sri Lanka,

2006). Thus, a large number of families assume a single parent status for at least three to four years. There is an evident contradiction in the main reason mentioned by both men and women to migrate, namely family betterment, and the apparent negative effects on children of a single parent-headed household, especially if it is the mother who is absent.

Another significant observation in the migratory trends (2005 – 2006) is a drop of about 20,000 in the number of women migrating for employment. The authorities at the SLBFE give two major reasons, namely the war situation in Lebanon and the adverse publicity in the local media on female labour migration. The print media, especially the Sinhala newspapers, have made a concerted effort to expose the adverse working conditions for housemaids and the abuse and harassment to which many women are subjected. The most recent news item copied from the Gulf Daily News records the story of a housemaid in Bahrain, who was forced to eat pet cat food to appease her hunger (Ceylon Daily News, June 19, 2007). She has been identified as a resident of Maho, with a 13-year old daughter.

As conveyed by the Research Division of the SLBFE, the interventions to discourage female labour migration achieved their objectives, as during the first quarter of 2007, 30 per cent of approximately 1,750 women who left the country were remigrating. It is apparent that a substantive proportion of returnee housemaids were returning to their former place of employment or had been successful in negotiating for a return visa, a creditable achievement in the context of new visa restrictions in Middle Eastern countries. At the same time, the share of male employment, which stood at 25 per cent in the mid-1990s, increased to 41 per cent in 2005 and 44 per cent in 2006. The increase in the number of male migrants finding employment in skilled or semi-skilled jobs in countries such as Korea and Malaysia was partly a result of government and private sector initiatives to negotiate at the highest levels for such job opportunities and partly a demand for skilled workers from countries such as Qatar, where the high oil prices had led to a boom in the construction industry. The onus of maintaining the family is once again placed upon the women left behind and it is expected that the present study would reveal the coping strategies employed (Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3).

Table 2.1
Foreign Employment

Employment	2004		2005		2006(a)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total placements	214,709	100.0	231,290	100.0	201,143	100.0
By source						
Licensed agents	156,146	72.7	165,707	71.6	142,883	71.0
Other	58,563	27.3	65,583	28.4	58,260	29.0
By gender						
Male	80,699	37.6	93,896	40.6	88,747	44.1
Female	134,010	62.4	137,394	59.4	112,396	55.9
By manpower category						
Housemaid	110,512	51.5	125,493	54.3	100,326	49.9
Other						
Skilled labour	45,946	21.4	46,688	20.2	44,464	22.1
Unskilled labour	43,204	20.1	41,904	18.1	40,518	20.1
Other	15,047	7.0	17,205	7.4	15,835	7.9
* Provisional						

Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report, 2006

Table 2.2
Foreign Employment – Departures by Destination

Country	2005		2006(a)		Change (a)	
	No.	Share	No.	Share	No.	%
Qatar	35,953	15.5	31,177	15.5	-4,776	-13.3
Saudi Arabia	76,210	33.0	61,385	30.5	-14,825	-19.5
U.A.E.	36,371	15.7	33,386	16.6	-2,985	-8.2
Kuwait	36,157	15.6	34,526	17.2	-1,631	-4.5
Other	46,599	20.2	40,669	20.2	-5,930	-12.7
Total	231,290	100.0	201,143	100.0	-30,147	-13.0
* Provisional						

Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report 2006

Table 2.3
Departure for Foreign Employment

	2003	2004	2005
Departure for professional, middle and clerical level jobs %			
Male	76.03	85.88	90.02
Female	23.97	14.12	9.98
Departure for skilled level jobs %			
Male	66.27	73.92	85.18
Female	33.73	26.08	14.82
Departure for unskilled level jobs %			
Male	47.07	78.26	92.01
Female	30.33	21.74	7.99
Departure for housemaid jobs			
Female	102,011	110,512	125,154

Departure for all occupations %			
Male	35.51	37.59	40.67
Female	64.49	62.41	59.33

Source: Sunday Island, May 6, 2007, Business, p.11.

Since the establishment of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment in 1984, policy makers have adopted many measures to protect migrant workers at every stage of the migratory process, giving priority to welfare measures to ensure the safety of housemaids. Reports in the media as well as complaints to the SLBFE reveal that such regulations have had little success at the implementation stage and that exploitative practices in both the host country and the home country persist (Table 2.4). An examination of complaints received by the SLBFE during the last five years shows that both male and female workers continued to face diverse forms of harassment, some of which were employment related, such as non-payment of salaries and breach of contract, while others concerned personal abuse. Women workers, especially housemaids, were most at risk of physical and mental abuse as, once inside an employer's home and deprived of their travel documents, they were vulnerable to physical assault and sexual abuse and their only means of escape was to flee and seek assistance at the Sri Lanka embassy or go to one of the safe houses in Kuwait, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. A leading activist and popular film star, Ranjan Ramanayake, who had visited the safe houses in Kuwait and Lebanon, described the deplorable conditions in such places due to overcrowding and lack of facilities.

Table 2.4
Complaints Received by Nature and Sex

Nature of Complaints	2004			2005*		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Non-payments of agreed wages	150	1,476	1,626	132	1,575	1,707
Lack of communication	87	2,078	2,165	78	1,677	1,755
Sickness	51	559	610	78	575	653
Harassment (physical and sexual)	78	1,675	1,753	142	1,807	1,949
Death – natural	73	80	153	55	60	115
Death – accidental	43	32	75	38	24	62
Death – homicide	3	5	8	1	3	4
Death – suicide	3	6	9	5	17	22
Not sent back after completion of contract	15	191	206	44	667	711
Stranded – lack of reception on arrival	-	13	13	1	29	30
Problems at home (Sri Lanka)	13	330	343	33	483	516
Breach of employment contract	695	449	1,144	1,136	657	1,793
Stranded without employment	-	13	13	112	429	541
Premature termination	-	-	-	1	-	1

Illegal money transaction	5	76	81	-	1	1
Others (domestic sector)	11	120	131	1	22	23
Others (non-domestic sector)	20	3	23	14	30	44
Total	1,247	7,106	8,353	1,871	8,056	9,927
*Provisional						

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Annual Statistical Report of Foreign Employment: 2005

The other important safeguards, namely pre-departure training, compulsory registration and insurance and the model contracts emanating from MOUs signed by the Sri Lankan government and operative in ten countries (Bahrain, Cyprus, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and the UAE) have had little or no impact, as revealed by the lists of complaints. As the Director of Training, SLBFE, explained, the training certificate issued had no recognition in the receiving countries and has not contributed to negotiations for a fair wage for a housemaid. The compulsory registration scheme had loopholes that result in fraud. A recent study of 1,079 Embarkation Cards revealed that only 597 had registered for employment abroad. There were housemaids in this group and only 140 were registered. However, these persons had left the country independently, thus creating a risky situation for themselves as well as posing numerous problems for the SLBFE in their record keeping. The model contracts, even those signed recently, are known to have certain deficiencies, the main one being their non-binding nature on the employer.

When regulations fail to achieve intended results government authorities feel justified to impose bans or legal enactments to safeguard the interests of an individual assumed to be in need of protection. A cabinet decision taken on the eve of International Women's Day in March 2007 to ban the migration of mothers with children under the age of five, reflects this thinking. In the case of mothers with children over five years of age, they are required to provide proof that appropriate childcare arrangements are made to leave the child in the custody of the father or close relatives, such as elders or grandparents to guarantee the child's welfare. The ban reflects the concerns over the lack of proper childcare in the absence of the mother, highlighted by researchers for over two decades. The ban is yet to become law.

The two lead agencies expressing views and opinions on this controversial directive have been the Human Rights Watch (HRW), based in New York, and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRC), an independent body established in 1996. The HRW highlights the value of the USD 2.2 billion sent in remittance by foreign workers in 2006, representing nine per cent of gross domestic product. In their view, a ban on overseas travel would be tantamount to a gross violation of the migrants' human rights

and personal freedom. Activists in women's groups opposing the ban have also highlighted the contribution made by female migrants to family survival and betterment.

The HRC takes the view that the remittances received by the country or the family have not contributed to the welfare of the children left behind and that social costs have outweighed the gains, if any. The Commission has presented their case based on a recent study on inmates of 20 State Children's Homes, where they found that the majority of the children had mothers working abroad, and that they suffered from major physical and psychological problems. The gravity of the lack of proper childcare is also reflected in the recent study of Save the Children in Sri Lanka (2006), where the children of the sampled families were seen to have poor educational records and subject to adverse behavioural changes after the departure of the mother.

The question remains whether, by dismantling traditional gender roles and hierarchies international labour migration has created a social upheaval in low-income families already burdened with economic difficulties. The assumption is that men/fathers are generally inapt to manage the household and attend to childcare without the help of the wife/mother. However, when economic opportunities arise in low-income families to earn money, both men and women will resort to their own processes of rationalization to resolve role conflicts, even if it means giving up their socially prescribed duties. As to their true feelings, no researcher would know.

III.   The study

The overall objective of the study was to understand the gender roles and the support networks of spouses of migrant workers of Sri Lanka, based on six research questions:

i.   What are the resources available and the strategies adopted by their family members to adjust to the absence of the migrant workers?

ii. How do these resources and strategies differ concerning the spouses of male or female migrant workers?

iii. Do these strategies challenge culturally perceived gender roles and norms?

iv. How do family dynamics change when the migrant workers depart, and when they return?

v.   How can best practices be replicated at family level?

vi. How can the needs of family members be incorporated into policy development and programme interventions?

The expected outcome was to understand the impact of labour migration on gender dynamics and family relations. As mentioned earlier, research on the subject of international labour migration from Sri Lanka has not given adequate priority to the issue of gender. Past studies had focused mainly on the migration process of male workers and female workers, thus a need to analyse family dynamics in the absence of a spouse in the context of gender roles and relations is relevant to Sri Lankan society.

3.1 Methodology

In consultation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) a research design was formulated whereby the main research instrument was a semi-structured questionnaire (Annex I). The questionnaire was to be administered to 300 households consisting of 200 households of female migrant workers and 100 households of male migrant workers in selected field locations. The considerations at the time of formulating the questionnaire were:

• to select two field locations with 100 households of female migrant workers and 50   households of male migrant workers per location;

• the respondents had to be married with children and be out of the country for a minimum period of one year at the time of the interview;

• the role of the father in the households with a migrant mother as an important area of concern, and

• the field locations are areas of high labour migration.

A comprehensive literature survey was completed and presented to IOM. In consultation with the sociologist, SLBFE, the two field locations were identified in the Divisional Secretary's (DS) Divisions in the Colombo District, namely Colombo City and Maharagama, and in the Divisional Secretary's Division of the Kurunegala District, namely Kurunegala City and Alawwa. The decision to extend the study to four rather than the two locations identified in the original proposal was taken after the preliminary visits to the District Secretary's offices in Kurunegala and Colombo, the District office of the SLBFE in Colombo, and the Divisional Secretary's offices in Maharagama, Colombo City and Alawwa. Discussions were held with the Grama Niladharies in the four locations and Human Resource Development officers attached to the respective Divisional Secretary's offices. Such time-consuming visits, discussions with key government officials and numerous visits to the SLBFE became necessary in the major

task of finding a suitable sample from a list or lists providing information on name and address of migrant, sex of migrant, marital status and date of departure.

The research team, consisting of six field researchers and the coordinator of the research project, had to face innumerable problems in selecting the sample and locating the households owing to the poor quality of the data sheets provided by the SLBFE as well as by the local offices. Despite appeals made during the last two decades by researchers to policy makers to make available accurate and sex disaggregated data on Sri Lankan migrant workers, it is clear that such data and information are not available at the key policymaking body on migration, namely the SLBFE. Data gathering is compartmentalized and there is no system or effort to cross-check the information.

For example, the Computer Division of the SLBFE has data only on persons who registered for employment; the Insurance Division on persons who have paid the insurance, and the Training Division only on the number of persons who participated in the training programmes. There has been no effort to check on the validity of the information provided by the prospective migrants despite glaring inaccuracies. The weakest link in the data collection procedures of the SLBFE was the failure to cross-check with the Department of Immigration and Emigration as to whether the registered prospective migrant actually left the country as intended.

There was no information concerning returnees. A fair proportion of both men and women were known to return within three to four months after departure due to work-related problems. A sophisticated computer system has been installed at the International Airport, Colombo, funded by IOM. However, to date, cross-checking on registration and departure is done manually, with the Research Unit of the SLBFE manually sorting the embarkation cards.

The inaccuracies in official lists of migrant workers entailed severe hardships in adopting the random sampling technique decided upon to identify and locate the households for the interviews. With pressure to complete the study within a strict time limit of three months and a limited budget, the research team had no option but to snowball from one known household of a migrant to another. When a maximum of five visits to the research location by a researcher failed to find a household of a migrant with the prescribed characteristics, the researcher replaced these households with similar households in the second location of the Divisional Secretariat. Table 3.1 indicates the differences between the number selected from each Divisional Secretariat and the number interviewed. However, the

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totals were in accordance with the original selection of 100 households where the men were the migrants, and 200 households where the women were the migrants.

Table 3.1
Gender Roles and Support Networks of Spouses of Migrant Workers

District	DS Division	Number selected		Number interviewed	
		F	M	F	M
	Colombo	30	70	30	74
Colombo	Maharagama	20	30	20	26
	Total	50	100	50	100
	Kurunegala	30	70	30	70
Kurunegala	Alawwa	20	30	20	30
	Total	50	100	50	100
Total		**100**	**200**	**100**	**200**

While the intricacies relating to the sample were being sorted out, all six researchers engaged in a pilot study to test the questionnaire. According to their feedback, minor amendments were made to the questionnaire which was to be administered in Sinhala. The training of the field researchers was conducted at CENWOR, followed by regular debriefing sessions. At the end of the field work, each researcher was requested to submit observations and two case studies.

It is appropriate to highlight some of their observations as it relates to the field work.

• All researchers found it difficult to locate the sampled households on account of inaccuracies relating to postal addresses. In many instances, the address provided was false. The City lists in Colombo and Kurunegala were the most inaccurate.

• Inaccessibility of identified households by virtue of location in the interior of the division necessitated long hours of walking or travel by three-wheeler. The budgetary allocation for travel and subsistence was found to be grossly inadequate.

• Interviewing men in the households was difficult on account of their absence during the day, their hostility to the research undertaking because of the questions regarding their coping mechanisms, and their lack of interest to carry on a conversation when they were under the influence of liquor. The interviews were conducted under trying conditions, sometimes seated inside a three wheeler, and were completed successfully due to the tact and skill of experienced field investigators.

• The Divisional field officers were scheduled to be in the office on the days assigned as public days. However, meeting these officers even by

prior appointment was difficult as, in many instances, they were called away on "important official duties" when visits were made by members of the research team.

• As some responses to questions could not be quantified, to analyse available data becomes difficult and time-consuming; whereas to expedite and hasten such tasks could result in the loss of valuable information.

In view of the time constraints, meeting with key informants was restricted to senior officials of the SLBFE. The Chairman was unable to keep the appointment made by the research coordinator. Contact was also made with the Provincial Commissioners of the Department of Probation and Child Care Services in the Western Province and the North Western Province (NWP). Though records of cases relating to children of migrant workers were not available in their respective offices, cooperation was extended to the research coordinator and efforts made to obtain information from the Grama Niladhari Division. Contact was also made with the Family Health Workers (FHWs)/midwives in the research locations, and their observations incorporated in the report. The FHW remains a key informant as she is the only field officer to visit the homes of migrant workers who have left young children behind. It is also to the FHW that the husbands of female migrant workers come for advice on contraceptives while the wife is overseas.

In the NGO sector, the informant was the Director of the Migrant Services Centre. Time did not permit the research team to meet other representatives of NGOs, currently working with migrant women. One case study was conducted at the Angoda Mental Hospital to get an insight into manifestations of family breakdown. An interview was also conducted with a woman returnee migrant, who had had a mental breakdown on account of a family problem, but was again enjoying better mental health and was gainfully employed.

Processing of the data from the questionnaire was done by the CENWOR Statistics Division. The quantitative data are supplemented by field observation reports, case studies and information provided by the key informants, which call for qualitative/content analysis.

IV.   Households of migrant workers

4.1   Research locations

Four research locations were identified in the Colombo and Kurunegala Districts in accordance with the IOM directive. The locations Colombo City, Maharagama, Kurunegala City and Alawwa were areas of high migration

and were seen to represent different segments of the population in terms of urban/rural characteristics, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Colombo City and Kurunegala City were within the jurisdiction of Municipal Council and a Divisional Secretariat, while Maharagama and Alawwa were under the Divisional Secretariat and Urban Councils. Each Administrative Division had a number of Grama Niladhari (GN) divisions with a Principal Town. At the last Population Census in 2001 (Sri Lanka. Department of Census and Statistics, 2005) the population of Colombo DS Division was 380,946 with 206,932 males and 174,014 females.

In Maharagama DS Division the population numbered 185,193, 91,744 males and 93,449 females, respectively; in Kurunegala DS Division the population stood at 88,944 with 44,657 males and 44,287 females, and in Alawwa DS Division, the population count was 59,082 with 29,587 males and 29,769 females. It needs to be recorded that the research locations in Colombo City were the 15 Municipal Wards, and in Kurunegala 11 Wards. It may be assumed that since 2001 the population in all four locations would have increased causing population congestion in the two urban locations, as well as land degradation in the rural locations and resulting housing problems for the poorer residents.

The recent road development programmes in Colombo City and Kurunegala City have dislodged many urban squatters, who were now seen to be residing in unauthorized housing structures or in *Wattes* (tenement gardens), where the poorest found shelter in rented rooms or other types of temporary housing structures. Maharagama Division had more varied geographical settings with 42 Grama Niladhari Divisions, some located in areas which could be described as rural. However, the lists of migrants obtained from the Divisional Secretariats as well as the SLBFE had addresses from GN Divisions in and around Maharagama West and Maharagama East, of which many were incorrect. Therefore, the researchers moved into the interior to more suburban locations. Alawwa was more rural, extending into the interior from the main Colombo – Kurunegala highway. There were 22 Grama Niladhari Divisions. The population was scattered with a majority in and around Alawwa town. The residents in the selected locations showed a propensity to migrate owing to such factors as poverty and lack of employment opportunities.

Recruitment agents, well aware of the demand for foreign job placements, had opened many recruitment agencies in these major cities. According to the 2005 records of the SLBFE, more than 75 per cent of licensed foreign employment agencies are located in Colombo and Kurunegala Districts. Of the 26 Training Centres maintained by the SLBFE, three were located in the Colombo District. Kurunegala District had one Training Centre maintained by the SLBFE and one by an Agency. The Kurunegala agencies had built

a reputation as reliable foreign job placement centres with at least one reputed for recruitment for Cyprus and Singapore. The recent closure of a major industrial venture, namely Kabool Lanka at Thulhiriya in close proximity to Alawwa and Kurunegala, had resulted in many skilled male workers registering for foreign employment. Some had been successful in obtaining jobs in Korea and Qatar as machine operators.

Finding the scattered migrant population and identifying and visiting 300 households of migrant families in a vast area was no easy task. Invariably, the addresses led the team to low income settlements or shanty towns. In Colombo City, the households were located mainly in the Municipal Wards of Maradana, Borella and Narahenpita. In Kurunegala City, the Bazzar and Central Wards were areas of high migration. In Maharagama and Alawwa, the settlement pattern varied, some houses located in the urban fringe and others in the interior. Alawwa was rural in outlook with interior settlements dependent on agriculture. As such the migrant population was scattered. Further, on account of sampling from available lists the researchers could not focus on a particular village or residential area.

Local administrators, namely the Divisional Secretaries and the Grama Niladharies were well aware that the research locations were recognized as centres for international migration since the late 1970s. However, the Divisional Secretary of Colombo was cautious in providing numbers of male and female migrants in view of the propensity of many potential migrants to register from a Colombo address when their actual residence was in another district or division. This was especially a practice of persons seeking foreign jobs from the north and the east of the country. Colombo was considered an intermediate location in a two-step process from the home country to the host country.

According to the District Secretary the large numbers seeking foreign employment from the Kurunegala District was a result of poverty and lack of employment. There had been no major development programmes in the District. Chronic unemployment had resulted in many men seeking jobs in the armed forces and women in the international labour market, resulting in many family problems. The closure of the Thulhiriya Textile Mill has had disastrous consequences for a large number of families that were dependent on the wage of factory workers. The ban on sand mining in and around the Maha Oya was another blow for many who depended on this occupation.

4.2 The structure of the family

In households of male migrants, the majority of the families were nuclear in all four locations. However, in families where the male was a respondent, extended families were more common, as for instance in Colombo (60.8%), in Maharagama (53.8%), in Kurunegala (60%) and in Alawwa (36.7%). One family in the male migrant group and five in the female migrant families were living as a joint family, but with separate cooking facilities. To share childcare responsibility was the main motive for such arrangements. The inability to link up with family members from either the woman's or the man's side presented major problems, especially for male respondents (Table 4.1).

> *C, a respondent from Alawwa, is a 25-year old man living with his 4-year old daughter in a dilapidated hut constructed on a plot of land belonging to his father. His wife had left four years earlier to work as a housemaid in Kuwait. Though C had seven brothers and sisters living in the same village, due to initial parental opposition to his marriage, he could not find any relative to help him with the household duties. His in-laws lived in Polonnaruwa and were too poor to leave their agricultural land where they were squatters. C is a painter and needs to travel for work. For five days of the week he leaves his little daughter in a daycare facility close to Alawwa town.*

Table 4.1
The Structure of Households of Migrant Workers

Sex of migrant worker	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male												
Nuclear	16	53.3	17	85.0	33	66.0	16	53.3	13	65.0	29	58.0
Extended	13	43.3	3	15.0	16	32.0	14	46.7	7	35.0	21	42.0
Joint family with separate hearth	1	3.4			1	2.0						
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0
Female												
Nuclear	26	35.1	10	38.5	36	36.0	28	40.0	19	63.3	47	47.0
Extended	45	60.8	14	53.8	59	59.0	42	60.0	11	36.7	53	53.0
Joint family with separate hearth	3	4.1	2	7.7	5	5.0						
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0

4.3 Household composition

In a nuclear family the spouse lived with the children, both sons and daughters, while parents, in-laws and other close relations composed the extended families. The households of male respondents were larger than those of female respondents. In one such household, there were 11 persons. In all locations, the average household consisted of four to five persons. The age range of the residents ranged from under one to 75–85 years of age (Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

Despite the elderly groups being economically dependent on the wage earners in the household, they were seen to be performing a number of valuable household chores. An 80-year old grandmother was the primary carer of a four year old grandson in a Colombo female migrant's home. She was feeble physically but determined to hold on to the responsibility entrusted to her.

Table 4.2

Household Size

Household size	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female households interviewed												
3	1	3.3	4	20.0	5	10.0	5	16.7	3	15.0	8	16.0
4	6	20.0	10	50.0	16	32.0	6	20.0	7	35.0	13	26.0
5	10	33.3	5	25.0	15	30.0	11	36.7	5	25.0	16	32.0
6	5	16.7	1	5.0	6	12.0	2	6.7	4	20.0	6	12.0
7	7	23.3			7	14.0	3	10.0	1	5.0	4	8.0
8							1	3.3			1	2.0
9	1	3.3			1	2.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
10							1	3.3			1	2.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0
Male households interviewed												
3	5	6.8	3	11.5	8	8.0	7	10.0	7	23.3	14	14.0
4	14	18.9	4	15.4	18	18.0	19	27.1	13	43.3	32	32.0
5	27	36.5	8	30.8	35	35.0	21	30.0	8	26.7	29	29.0
6	13	17.6	7	26.9	20	20.0	9	12.9	1	3.3	10	10.0
7	9	12.2	1	3.8	10	10.0	8	11.4	1	3.3	9	9.0
8	4	5.4			4	4.0	3	4.3			3	3.0
9	1	1.4	1	3.8	2	2.0	3	4.3			3	3.0
10	1	1.4	1	3.8	2	2.0						
11			1	3.8	1	1.0						
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0

Average household size: Colombo: Females 4.96, Males 5.42; Kurunegala: Females 4.94, Males 4.89. All households: Colombo 5.27; Kurunegala 4.91.

Table 4.3
Household Population by Age

Years	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Under 1 year	8	1.4	2	0.9	10	1.3	6	1.2	1	0.5	7	1.0
1 – 4	32	5.7	7	3.1	39	4.9	32	6.2	7	3.2	39	5.3
5 – 9	61	10.8	19	8.4	80	10.1	50	9.7	20	9.1	70	9.5
10 – 17	103	18.3	39	17.2	142	18.0	93	18.0	36	16.4	129	17.5
18	7	1.2	6	2.6	13	1.6	6	1.2	7	3.2	13	1.8
19	5	0.9	3	1.3	8	1.0	6	1.2	6	2.7	12	1.6
20 – 24	32	5.7	12	5.3	44	5.6	42	8.1	16	7.3	58	7.9
25 – 34	86	15.3	37	16.3	123	15.6	86	16.6	37	16.9	123	16.7
35 – 44	111	19.7	40	17.6	151	19.1	81	15.7	41	18.7	122	16.6
45 – 59	74	13.1	42	18.5	116	14.7	95	18.4	34	15.5	129	17.5
60 – 64	17	3.0	4	1.8	21	2.7	9	1.7	3	1.4	12	1.6
65 – 74	21	3.7	11	4.8	32	4.1	9	1.7	7	3.2	16	2.2
75 – 85	6	1.1	5	2.2	11	1.4	2	0.4	4	1.8	6	0.8
Total	563	100.0	227	100.0	790	100.0	517	100.0	219	100.0	736	100.0

4.4   Ethnicity

The residents in both urban locations were a mixed population consisting of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. The majority were Sinhalese. A fair proportion of Tamils were living amidst the Sinhala population in the particular Municipal Wards selected for the study. Some of them were long-term residents while others had moved to the city having been displaced from the North and East. The Muslim segments of the population were found in tenement gardens in the city of Colombo. Many of the women migrants from these gardens were second-generation migrants, encouraged by their mothers to seek employment abroad. Among the sampled households were a Malay family and three Burgher male respondents. Maharagama was a predominantly Sinhala Buddhist population with only one Muslim male respondent. In Alawwa there was one Tamil family in the sample. The rest were Sinhalese (Tables 4.4a and 4.4b).

The mixed population in these predominantly low-income residential areas had lived amicably over the years. They were all proficient in Sinhala. The communities living in close proximity to each other had resulted in a few mixed marriages.

> *L, a Sinhala Buddhist male respondent from Maharagama, had married Y, a Burgher Catholic. The marriage had failed with the departure of the wife to the Middle East. L was keen to obtain a divorce, but realized it was not possible due to religious restrictions of the Catholic church which upheld the legality of the marriage. However, it had not prevented L from bringing a mistress to the house, ostensibly to care for their infant daughter. The girl is now a teenager. He also has a son by his mistress. L feels that marrying an attractive Burgher girl had been a mistake. He recalled that even his wife's parents had divorced, as that too was an unsuccessful mixed marriage.*

Table 4.4a
Ethnicity of Spouse by Ethnicity of Respondent – Colombo and Maharagama

		Ethnicity of spouse										Total	
		Sinhala		Tamil		Muslim		Burgher*		Malay		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Female													
Ethnicity of respondent	Sinhala	28	93.3			1	3.3	1	3.3			30	100.0
	Tamil			9	100.0							9	100.0
	Muslim			1	11.1	8	88.9					9	100.0
	Burgher							1	100.0			1	100.0
	Malay									1	100.0	1	100.0
	Total	**28**	**56.0**	**10**	**20.0**	**9**	**18.0**	**2**	**4.0**	**1**	**2.0**	**50**	**100.0**
Male													
Ethnicity of respondent	Sinhala	66	98.5					1	1.5			67	100.0
	Tamil	1	5.6	17	94.4							18	100.0
	Muslim	3	25.0			9	75.0					12	100.0
	Burgher	1	33.3					2	66.7			3	100.0
	Total	71	71.0	17	17.0	9	9.0	3	3.0			100	100.0
Total													
Ethnicity of respondent	Sinhala	94	96.9			1	1.0	2	2.1			97	100.0
	Tamil	1	3.7	26	96.3							27	100.0
	Muslim	3	14.3	1	4.8	17	81.0					21	100.0
	Burgher	1	25.0					3	75.0			4	100.0
	Malay									1	100.0	1	100.0
	Total	**99**	**66.0**	**27**	**18.0**	**18**	**12.0**	**5**	**3.3**	**1**	**0.7**	**150**	**100.0**

* Burghers are the descendants of mixed marriages between the local population and Dutch settlers.

Table 4.4b
Ethnicity of Spouse by Ethnicity of Respondent – Kurunegala and Alawwa

		Ethnicity of spouse											
		Sinhala		Tamil		Muslim		Burgher		Malay		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female													
	Sinhala	32	100.0									32	100.0
	Tamil			3	100.0							3	100.0
Ethnicity of respondent	Muslim					15	100.0					15	100.0
	Burgher												
	Malay												
	Total	32	64.0	3	6.0	15	30.0					50	100.0
Male													
	Sinhala	70	94.6			3	4.1	1	1.4			74	100.0
Ethnicity of respondent	Tamil	1	7.1	12	85.7	1	7.1					14	100.0
	Muslim					11	91.7			1	8.3	12	100.0
	Burgher												
	Total	71	71.0	12	12.0	15	15.0	1	1.0	1	1.0	100	100.0
Total													
	Sinhala	102	96.2			3	2.8	1	.9			106	100.0
	Tamil	1	5.9	15	88.2	1	5.9					17	100.0
Ethnicity of respondent	Muslim					26	96.3			1	3.7	27	100.0
	Burgher												
	Malay												
	Total	103	68.7	15	10.0	30	20.0	1	.7	1	.7	150	100.0

4.5 Religion

As a mixed population, the respondents were of different religions with the majority among both the male and female groups being Buddhist. The Muslims adhered to the Islamic faith. There were also Catholics and other Christians, and Hindus. There was no evidence of any religious group being supportive of the migrant families. Even in the rural location of Alawwa there was no link between the village temple and the migrant communities. Despite the presence of a strong catholic diocese in the city of Colombo and an Anglican one in Kurunegala, migrants from these two locations had no contact with the church (Tables 4.5a and 4.5b).

4.6 Age

The majority of the females interviewed were in the 30–39 years age group, with the youngest 23 years of age. The Maharagama sample consisted of older females with the oldest in the 55–59 years age group.

In Kurunegala the majority of the females were between 45–49 years of age, with four in the 23–24 years age group. At Alawwa, around 40 per cent of the females were in the 30 – 34 years age group, with three in the 45–49 years age group.

The majority of males in the Colombo City sample were in older age groups (35–39 and 40–44 years). Only one was in the younger group of 23–24 years, while four were over 60 years. The Maharagama males were younger, except for one in the 60–68 years age group. In Kurunegala and Alawwa the age profiles were similar. Kurunegala City had two in the age group of 60–68 years and at Alawwa three were in the 55–59 years age group (Table 4.6).

The older respondents were persons who had witnessed repeated migratory cycles of their spouse. In fact, many of the older respondents in both groups had resigned themselves to a family life as a single parent. When questioned as to why his wife had left on her fourth migratory cycle, an elderly man replied "it is due to force of habit".

Table 4.5a
Religion of Spouse by Religion of Respondent – Colombo and Maharagama

		Religion of spouse										
		Buddhist		Hindu		Christian		Catholic		Islam		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female													
	Buddhist	28	96.6							1	3.4	29	100.0
	Hindu			7	100.0							7	100.0
Religion of	Christian	1	50.0			1	50.0					2	100.0
respondent	Catholic							2	100.0			2	100.0
	Islam			1	10.0					9	90.0	10	100.0
	Total	**29**	**58.0**	**8**	**16.0**	**1**	**2.0**	**2**	**4.0**	**10**	**20.0**	**50**	**100.0**
Male													
	Buddhist	66	98.5							1	1.5	67	100.0
	Hindu	1	6.7	13	86.7	1	6.7					15	100.0
Religion of	Christian					1	100.0					1	100.0
respondent	Catholic	1	20.0					4	80.0			5	100.0
	Islam	3	25.0							9	75.0	12	100.0
	Total	**71**	**71.0**	**13**	**13.0**	**2**	**2.0**	**5**	**5.0**	**9**	**9.0**	**100**	**100.0**
Total													
	Buddhist	94	97.9					1	1.0	1	1.0	96	100.0
	Hindu	1	4.5	20	90.9	1	4.5					22	100.0
Religion of	Christian	1	33.3			2	66.7					3	100.0
respondent	Catholic	1	14.3					6	85.7			7	100.0
	Islam	3	13.6	1	4.5					18	81.8	22	100.0
	Total	**100**	**66.7**	**21**	**14.0**	**3**	**2.0**	**7**	**4.7**	**19**	**12.7**	**150**	**100.0**

Table 4.5b
Religion of Spouse by Religion of Respondent – Kurunegala and Alawwa

		Religion of spouse											
		Buddhist		Hindu		Christian		Catholic		Islam		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female													
Religion of respondent	Buddhist	31	100.0									31	100.0
	Hindu			2	100.0							2	100.0
	Christian												
	Catholic							2	100.0			2	100.0
	Islam									15	100.0	15	100.0
	Total	**31**	**62.0**	**2**	**4.0**			**2**	**4.0**	**15**	**30.0**	**50**	**100.0**
Male													
Religion of respondent	Buddhist	69	94.5			1	1.4			3	4.1	73	100.0
	Hindu	1	7.7	11	84.6					1	7.7	13	100.0
	Christian	1	50.0			1	50.0					2	100.0
	Catholic												
	Islam									12	100.0	12	100.0
	Total	**71**	**71.0**	**11**	**11.0**	**2**	**2.0**			**16**	**16.0**	**100**	**100.0**
Total													
Religion of respondent	Buddhist	100	96.2			1	1.0			3	2.9	104	100.0
	Hindu	1	6.7	13	86.7					1	6.7	15	100.0
	Christian	1	50.0			1	50.0					2	100.0
	Catholic							2	100.0			2	100.0
	Islam									27	100.0	27	100.0
	Total	**102**	**68.0**	**13**	**8.7**	**2**	**1.3**	**2**	**1.3**	**31**	**20.7**	**150**	**100.0**

Table 4.6
Respondents Interviewed by Sex and Age

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
Sex/age	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
23 – 24	1	3.3	1	5.0	2	4.0	4	13.3			4	8.0
25 – 29	5	16.7	1	5.0	6	12.0	8	26.7	2	10.0	10	20.0
30 – 34	8	26.7	4	20.0	12	24.0	3	10.0	8	40.0	11	22.0
35 – 39	6	20.0	3	15.0	9	18.0	5	16.7	3	15.0	8	16.0
40 – 44	7	23.3	6	30.0	13	26.0	1	3.3	4	20.0	5	10.0
45 – 49	2	6.7	4	20.0	6	12.0	9	30.0	3	15.0	12	24.0
50 – 54			1	5.0	1	2.0						
55 – 59	1	3.3			1	2.0						
Total	**30**	**100.0**	**20**	**100.0**	**50**	**100.0**	**30**	**100.0**	**20**	**100.0**	**50**	**100.0**

Male

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
23 – 24	1	1.4			1	1.0	3	4.3			3	3.0
25 – 29	6	8.1	2	7.7	8	8.0	5	7.1	4	13.3	9	9.0
30 – 34	10	13.5	3	11.5	13	13.0	12	17.1	3	10.0	15	15.0
35 – 39	15	20.3	5	19.2	20	20.0	18	25.7	4	13.3	22	22.0
40 – 44	16	21.6	7	26.9	23	23.0	9	12.9	9	30.0	18	18.0
45 – 49	12	16.2	6	23.1	18	18.0	14	20.0	4	13.3	18	18.0
50 – 54	9	12.2	2	7.7	11	11.0	5	7.1	3	10.0	8	8.0
55 – 59	1	1.4			1	1.0	2	2.9	3	10.0	5	5.0
60 – 68	4	5.4	1	3.8	5	5.0	2	2.9			2	2.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0

4.7 Marital status

Interviews were conducted only in households of married migrants. As such, the majority of respondents indicated that their marriage was registered. In Colombo City two respondents were recorded as living together with their partners and one in Kurunegala. One could not fathom what the institution of marriage meant to these persons, as a majority was accustomed to living without their spouse. It was apparent that married males were most distressed over the long periods of absence of their wives, especially when there was no communication for two to three years (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7
Household Population by Marital Status

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
Unmarried	41	18.7	20	21.3	61	19.5	35	17.9	19	21.6	54	19.0
Married	139	63.5	60	63.8	199	63.6	132	67.3	61	69.3	193	68.0
Living together	1	0.5	1	1.1	2	0.6						
Widowed	36	16.4	12	12.8	48	15.3	28	14.3	8	9.1	36	12.7
Divorced	1	0.5			1	0.3						
Separated	1	0.5			1	0.3	1	0.5			1	0.4
Not reported			1	1.1	1	0.3						
Total	219	100.0	94	100.0	313	100.0	196	100.0	88	100.0	284	100.0
Male												
Unmarried	38	21.1	20	24.7	58	22.2	41	24.3	18	23.1	59	23.9
Married	134	74.4	59	72.8	193	73.9	128	75.7	57	73.1	185	74.9
Living together	1	0.6			1	0.4						
Widowed	6	3.3	1	1.2	7	2.7			3	3.8	3	1.2
Divorced	1	0.6			1	0.4						
Separated			1	1.2	1	0.4						
Total	180	100.0	81	100.0	261	100.0	169	100.0	78	100.0	247	100.0

For population 15 years and over

M, a resident of Alawwa aged 45 years has had no communication with his wife since she left for Kuwait to work as a housemaid in 2001. M has visited the SLBFE on seven occasions and exchanged innumerable letters regarding his missing wife, with no results. M is in a depressed state of mind drowning his sorrow in alcohol. He lives with his two teenage daughters.

4.8 Educational level of household population

The educational levels of both men and women were low. Colombo households had the largest number of school drop-outs – 76.3 per cent females and 63.7 per cent males – despite access to a large number of schools in the vicinity, and the lowest percentage to have reached G.C.E. A/L grades – 3.9 per cent females and 5.3 per cent males. Maharagama households had the highest education levels – 9.9 per cent females and 9.2 per cent males at G.C.E. A/L – and the lowest percentage of drop-outs – 39.5 per cent females and 39.4 per cent males. In the two locations in the Kurunegala district, household members had higher education levels than the Colombo households, and the only two graduates, both women, were in Kurunegala households. As in the macroscenario, illiteracy levels were higher among the females than among males in three locations, while there was no illiteracy in Maharagama households (Table 4.8).

The education levels of both men and women migrant workers were similar to those at household levels, indicating that they came from educationally disadvantaged homes and that their low education levels disqualified them from accessing better jobs (Table 4.9).

4.9 House ownership

To build a home and to upgrade existing housing remain important reasons for labour migration. In all four locations around half of the householders owned their houses. A fair proportion lived in rented houses or houses owned by parents or other family members. In all locations a few families were still living in rented houses despite repeated migratory cycles.

In a majority of the houses living conditions were poor and it was apparent that there has been insufficient money to renovate or upgrade the homes. There were a few exceptions, such as the house of R in Maharagama, a comfortable and spacious single storey house with modern amenities. R has been in Italy since 1986 and spent his earnings on constructing three commercial buildings and purchasing two vehicles. R remains in Italy where he is a domestic worker.

Table 4.8
Educational Level of Respondents

| | Colombo | | | | | | Kurunegala | | | | | |
| | Colombo | | Maharagama | | Total | | Kurunegala | | Alawwa | | Total | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
No schooling -cannot read or write	1	3.3			1	2.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Grade 1-5	2	6.7			2	4.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Grade 6 - 10	14	46.7	3	15.0	17	34.0	14	46.7	7	35.0	21	42.0
Sat for GCE (O/L)	7	23.3	8	40.0	15	30.0	7	23.3	8	40.0	15	30.0
Passed GCE (O/L)	2	6.7	5	25.0	7	14.0	3	10.0	2	10.0	5	10.0
Sat for GCE (A/L)	1	3.3	4	20.0	5	10.0	2	6.7	1	5.0	3	6.0
Passed GCE (A/L)	3	10.0			3	6.0	1	3.3	2	10.0	3	6.0
Degree							1	3.3			1	2.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0
Male												
No schooling -cannot read or write	2	2.7			2	2.0	2	2.9	3	10.0	5	5.0
No schooling - can read and write	3	4.1			3	3.0	2	2.9			2	2.0
Grade 1-5	20	27.0	4	15.4	24	24.0	18	25.7	7	23.3	25	25.0
Grade 6 - 10	34	45.9	10	38.5	44	44.0	36	51.4	12	40.0	48	48.0
Sat for GCE (O/L)	13	17.6	9	34.6	22	22.0	11	15.7	5	16.7	16	16.0
Passed GCE (O/L)			2	7.7	2	2.0			2	6.7	2	2.0
Sat for GCE (A/L)							1	1.4	1	3.3	2	2.0
Passed GCE (A/L)	2	2.7	1	3.8	3	3.0						
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0

Table 4.9
Educational Level of Migrant Worker

| | Colombo | | | | | | Kurunegala | | | | | |
| | Colombo | | Maharagama | | Total | | Kurunegala | | Alawwa | | Total | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
No schooling – cannot read or write	4	5.4			4	4.0	2	2.9			2	2.0
No schooling – can read and write	5	6.8			5	5.0	2	2.9	1	3.3	3	3.0
Grade 1-5	19	25.7			19	19.0	17	24.3	9	30.0	26	26.0
Grade 6 – 10	37	50.0	13	50.0	50	50.0	33	47.1	9	30.0	42	42.0
Sat for GCE (O/L)	9	12.2	10	38.5	19	19.0	11	15.7	8	26.7	19	19.0
Passed GCE (O/L)			2	7.7	2	2.0	3	4.3	3	10.0	6	6.0
Sat for GCE (A/L)			1	3.8	1	1.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
Passed GCE (A/L)							1	1.4			1	1.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0
Male												
Grade 1-5	1	3.3			1	2.0	2	6.7			2	4.0
Grade 6 – 10	11	36.7	2	10.0	13	26.0	12	40.0	7	35.0	19	38.0
Sat for GCE (O/L)	11	36.7	7	35.0	18	36.0	9	30.0	5	25.0	14	28.0
Passed GCE (O/L)	2	6.7	7	35.0	9	18.0	3	10.0	3	15.0	6	12.0
Sat for GCE (A/L)	2	6.7	4	20.0	6	12.0	2	6.7	3	15.0	5	10.0
Passed GCE (A/L)	3	10.0			3	6.0	2	6.7	2	10.0	4	8.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

Whatever the quality of the housing, one visible household facility was ownership of a mobile phone, and even some of the humblest homes admitted to owning a phone which had facilitated communication with the spouse. There was no evidence of ostentatious spending on housing. At least ten of the houses visited lacked basic amenities and, in one instance, the interviewer had to sit on a plastic bin to speak to a male respondent (Table 4.10).

4.10 Household economic activity

The economic activities of the migrant households in both the urban and rural locations conformed to employment patterns of low-income and poverty groups. Among the interviewed males in the urban locations, 29.6 per cent were salaried workers (Colombo 26.6%, Maharagama 25.2%, Kurunegala 28.6% and Alawwa 31.8%), employed in electrical, technical and sales jobs (Table 4.11). Others were mainly in the categories of casual wage workers. Among the males, one in Maharagama and two at Alawwa worked as unpaid family labourers in agriculture. A large number of women in the households were engaged in household work (33.8% in Colombo, 32.8% in Maharagama, 33.9% in Kurunegala and 22.2% in Alawwa). During the course of the interviews it was apparent that the majority of the males in the younger able-bodied group left the house in the mornings in search of casual work. In contrast, the females were housebound and engaged in household work. In all locations, there were both males (one in Colombo, four in Maharagama, 11 in Kurunegala and one in Alawwa) and females (five in Colombo, one in Maharagama, two in Kurunegala and four in Alawwa) unemployed but seeking employment. Twenty-two persons were found to be unable to work due to old age (8), illness (3), mental disability (2) and physical disability (9) (Table 4.11a and 4.11b).

Table 4.10
Ownership of House of Migrant Workers

Sex of migrant worker	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male												
Own	17	56.7	15	75.0	32	64.0	15	50.0	13	65.0	28	56.0
Rented	3	10.0	3	15.0	6	12.0	3	10.0	3	15.0	6	12.0
Other - not specified	1	3.3			1	2.0						
Jointly owned with father			1	5.0	1	2.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Parents own	5	16.7			5	10.0	6	20.0	4	20.0	10	20.0
Uncle/aunt owns			1	5.0	1	2.0	2	6.7			2	4.0

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parents-in- law own	3	10.0			3	6.0	2	6.7			2	4.0
Brother-in-law owns	1	3.3			1	2.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0
Female												
Own	38	51.4	11	42.3	49	49.0	40	57.1	25	83.3	65	65.0
Rented	5	6.8	1	3.8	6	6.0	2	2.9			2	2.0
Other - not specified	11	14.9	2	7.7	13	13.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
Jointly owned with father							1	1.4			1	1.0
Parents own	9	12.2	4	15.4	13	13.0	8	11.4	2	6.7	10	10.0
Uncle/aunt owns	5	6.8	5	19.2	10	10.0	7	10.0	1	3.3	8	8.0
Parents-in- law own	4	5.4	2	7.7	6	6.0	7	10.0	2	6.7	9	9.0
Brother owns	1	1.4			1	1.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
Grandfather/- mother owns	1	1.4			1	1.0						
Outsider owns			1	3.8	1	1.0						
Brother-in-law owns							1	1.4			1	1.0
Not reported							2	2.9			2	2.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0

Table 4.11a

Household Population by Activity

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
Female	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Self-employed	7	2.5	6	5.0	13	3.2	8	3.2	8	7.4	16	4.5
Salaried worker	79	27.8	30	25.2	109	27.0	75	29.9	39	36.1	114	31.8
Wage worker - piece rate							1	0.4			1	0.3
Wage worker - monthly	4	1.4	1	0.8	5	1.2						
Wage worker -weekly	2	0.7			2	0.5						
Wage worker -daily	1	0.4			1	0.2						
Wage worker – occasionally	3	1.1			3	0.7	3	1.2			3	0.8
Unpaid family worker - trade							2	0.8	1	0.9	3	0.8
Unemployed -seeking work	5	1.8	1	0.8	6	1.5	2	0.8	4	3.7	6	1.7
Unemployed - not seeking work	3	1.1	1	0.8	4	1.0	3	1.2			3	0.8
Engaged in household work	96	33.8	39	32.8	135	33.5	85	33.9	24	22.2	109	30.4

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Student	79	27.8	38	31.9	117	29.0	62	24.7	27	25.0	89	24.8
Child not attending school	1	0.4			1	0.2	3	1.2			3	0.8
Retired	1	0.4	2	1.7	3	0.7	1	0.4			1	0.3
Other - not specified									1	0.9	1	0.3
Old age			1	0.8	1	0.2	2	0.8			2	0.6
Illness	1	0.4			1	0.2			1	0.9	1	0.3
Mental disability	1	0.4			1	0.2						
Physical disability									3	2.8	3	0.8
Not reported	1	0.4			1	0.2	4	1.6			4	1.1
Total	284	100.0	119	100.0	403	100.0	251	100.0	108	100.0	359	100.0

Table 4.11b
Household Population by Activity

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
Male	Colombo		Maharagama		Colombo		Maharagama		Colombo		Maharagama	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Employer			2	2.0	2	.6						
Self-employed	17	7.1	10	10.1	27	8.0	32	14.0	11	10.7	43	13.0
Salaried worker	60	25.1	25	25.3	85	25.1	62	27.2	28	27.2	90	27.2
Wage worker -piece rate	8	3.3	2	2.0	10	3.0	3	1.3	2	1.9	5	1.5
Wage worker - monthly	6	2.5	5	5.1	11	3.3	4	1.8	1	1.0	5	1.5
Wage worker -weekly	1	0.4			1	0.3	2	0.9	1	1.0	3	0.9
Wage worker -daily	24	10.0	9	9.1	33	9.8	12	5.3	5	4.9	17	5.1
Wage worker -occasionally	22	9.2	11	11.1	33	9.8	23	10.1	13	12.6	36	10.9
Unpaid family worker -agriculture			1	1.0	1	0.3			2	1.9	2	0.6
Unpaid family worker - trade	2	0.8			2	.6	2	0.9	3	2.9	5	1.5
Unemployed -seeking work	1	0.4	4	4.0	5	1.5	11	4.8	1	1.0	12	3.6
Unemployed - not seeking work	1	0.4			1	0.3						
Engaged in household work	9	3.8	2	2.0	11	3.3	3	1.3	1	1.0	4	1.2
Student	68	28.5	23	23.2	91	26.9	70	30.7	33	32.0	103	31.1
Child not attending school	6	2.5	1	1.0	7	2.1	2	0.9			2	0.6

Retired	6	2.5	2	2.0	8	2.4	1	0.4	1	1.0	2	0.6
Other - not specified	1	0.4			1	0.3						
Student attending other educational institution			1	1.0	1	0.3						
Old age	2	0.8			2	0.6			1	1.0	1	0.3
Illness	1	0.4			1	0.3						
Mental disability	1	0.4			1	0.3						
Physical disability	2	0.8	1	1.0	3	0.9	1	0.4			1	0.3
Not reported	1	0.4			1	0.3						
Total	239	100.0	99	100.0	338	100.0	228	100.0	103	100.0	331	100.0

4.11 Household income

Obtaining information on household income is difficult. Respondents are reluctant to divulge information fearing that such information may be used to deny various government benefits, such as Samurdhi, or to be subject to taxation. As such, the information on family income remains unreliable.

If a spouse was abroad, the remittances sent by the migrant worker were the primary source of family income. With a housemaid earning an average monthly wage of USD 125 and a skilled worker, whether male or female, around USD 225 and above, the household income of a majority of the households in all locations was within the range of Rs.20,000 to 30,000 a month (Colombo 43.2%, Maharagma 38.5%, Kurunegala 35.7% and Alawwa 53.3%). At the upper income levels of Rs.50,000 - 100,000 were households with male spouses working as skilled machine operators or technicians remitting higher amounts to the family from countries such as Italy and Korea. Among the female migrant households, one in Colombo and four in Kurunegala had an income of less than Rs.10,000 a month.

> *K, a Sinhala Buddhist married male aged 34 from Alawwa is currently employed in a Korean industry as a machine operator. His monthly income is Rs.130,000. His wife, aged 28 years cares for their infant daughter aged two and lives in her natal village in a house bought with the earnings of K. According to the wife, they had cleared all their debts on account of K's migration arrangements and have managed to buy the house and property within 1½ years of K's departure.*
>
> *K and his wife have G.C.E. A-level qualifications. Both had five years work experience at Kabool Lanka, Thulhiriya. Living among kinsmen has been advantageous to K's wife who takes care of her child with the assistance of her in–laws and attends to all other household tasks. She is knowledgeable on investments and deals with the local banks. She communicates with her husband almost daily but admits that she takes the major decisions on investments since she is more familiar with the investment schemes.*

At the other end of the income scale were a few poverty stricken households struggling to sustain the family on meagre incomes generated from casual work by the male or female left behind. The money sent by the migrant worker was insufficient for clearing debts and for day to day expenses. Two migrant workers had not received any income according to the respondents. Among the male migrant households, 21 households had an income of less than Rs.20,000 a month, 15 of them female migrant households. These households were found mainly in the tenement gardens of Colombo and Kurunegala. One household in Colombo City, where the female migrant was on her fourth migrant cycle as a housemaid had an income between Rs.100,000 and 130,000. The spouse had managed to increase the value of her remittances through investments (Table 4.12).

The overall economic benefits of international labour migration assessed in terms of better housing, adequate family income, better nutrition, especially for the children, had been achieved by repeated cycles of migration on the part of both men and women. However, as expressed by many male respondents, the money sent by a spouse working as a housemaid was insufficient for daily sustenance. With increasing living costs, managing household expenses was difficult. It was apparent from the household visits and case studies that there was a certain degree of misuse of the remittances sent by the female migrants. The FHW in the Kurunegala City location disclosed that weight charts revealed under-nourishment among the infants and pre-schoolers of migrant mothers.

4.12 Indebtedness

The majority in all locations were free of debts (Colombo 57.7%, Maharagama 63%, Kurunegala 78% and Alawwa 86%). The other households were seen to be indebted to varying degrees, ranging from Rs.15,000 to 200,000. There were 22 households which owed sums ranging from Rs.100,000 to 200,000 with another nine owing up to Rs.300,000 in all locations. One household of a woman migrant in the Alawwa sample was in debt for over one million rupees. In this case indebtedness had originated in the pre-migration stage and the debts carried over to the following years (Table 4.13).

Table 4.12
Household Income

Sex of migrant worker	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
Less than Rs.10,000	1	1.4			1	1.0	4	5.7			4	4.0
Rs.10,000 - < 15,000	2	2.7	2	7.7	4	4.0	4	5.7	2	6.7	6	6.0
Rs.15,000 - < 20,000	19	25.7	2	7.7	21	21.0	23	32.9	7	23.3	30	30.0
Rs.20,000 -< 30,000	32	43.2	10	38.5	42	42.0	25	35.7	16	53.3	41	41.0
Rs.30,000 - < 50,000	15	20.3	8	30.8	23	23.0	14	20.0	3	10.0	17	17.0
Rs.50,000 - <100,000	5	6.8	4	15.4	9	9.0			2	6.7	2	2.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0
Male												
No income reported for the household							1	3.3			1	2.0
Rs.10,000 - < 15,000	3	10.0			3	6.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Rs.15,000 - < 20,000	3	10.0	3	15.0	6	12.0	7	23.3	6	30.0	13	26.0
Rs.20,000 -< 30,000	11	36.7	6	30.0	17	34.0	11	36.7	7	35.0	18	36.0
Rs.30,000 - < 50,000	10	33.3	7	35.0	17	34.0	8	26.7	4	20.0	12	24.0
Rs.50,000 - <100,000	2	6.7	3	15.0	5	10.0	2	6.7	1	5.0	3	6.0
Rs.100,000 - 130,000	1	3.3	1	5.0	2	4.0			2	10.0	2	4.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0
Overall Total												
No income reported for the household							1	1.0			1	0.7
Less than Rs.10,000	1	1.0			1	0.7	4	4.0			4	2.7
Rs.10,000 - < 15,000	5	4.8	2	4.3	7	4.7	5	5.0	2	4.0	7	4.7
Rs.15,000 - < 20,000	22	21.2	5	10.9	27	18.0	30	30.0	13	26.0	43	28.7
Rs.20,000 -< 30,000	43	41.3	16	34.8	59	39.3	36	36.0	23	46.0	59	39.3
Rs.30,000 - < 50,000	25	24.0	15	32.6	40	26.7	22	22.0	7	14.0	29	19.3
Rs.50,000 - <100,000	7	6.7	7	15.2	14	9.3	2	2.0	3	6.0	5	3.3
Rs.100,000 - 130,000	1	1.0	1	2.2	2	1.3			2	4.0	2	1.3
Total	104	100.0	46	100.0	150	100.0	100	100.0	50	100.0	150	100.0

Two migrant workers reported that they had not been paid. Six migrant workers reported that they did not know their income, while one migrant worker reported to have no earnings and where the entire household did not have an income. Two family members also reported no income.

Table 4.13
Amount of Indebtedness

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No debts	60	57.7	29	63.0	89	59.3	78	78.0	43	86.0	121	80.7
Less than Rs.15,000	2	1.9	1	2.2	3	2.0	2	2.0	1	2.0	3	2.0
Rs.15,000 - < 30,000	7	6.7			7	4.7	3	3.0			3	2.0
Rs.30,000 - <50,000	7	6.7	1	2.2	8	5.3	3	3.0	2	4.0	5	3.3
Rs.50,000 - <75,000	4	3.8	4	8.7	8	5.3	5	5.0			5	3.3
Rs.75,000 - < 100,000	5	4.8	5	10.9	10	6.7	3	3.0	1	2.0	4	2.7
Rs.100,000 - <200,000	13	12.5	2	4.3	15	10.0	5	5.0	2	4.0	7	4.7
Rs.200,000	4	3.8	3	6.5	7	4.7						
Rs.300,000	1	1.0			1	0.7	1	1.0			1	0.7
Rs.425,000			1	2.2	1	0.7						
Rs.450,000	1	1.0			1	0.7						
Rs.1,200,000									1	2.0	1	0.7
Total	104	100.0	46	100.0	150	100.0	100	100.0	50	100.0	150	100.0

Considering the indicators of economic activity, house ownership, family income and indebtedness the conclusion is that labour migration has improved the living conditions of some families in all locations, and has made no difference in the lives of other families.

V.   Emigration

While most of the females found jobs as housemaids in the Middle East, the men as skilled workers had a wider choice of destinations. Korea and Italy were favoured destinations for men, and Cyprus for women. The majority of the women had found employment in Kuwait (35.1% from Colombo, 30.8% from Maharagama, 25.7% from Kurunegala and 50.0% from Alawwa) and Saudi Arabia (21.6% from Colombo, 11.5% from Maharagama, 28.6% from Kurunegala and 20% from Alawwa). Dubai and Lebanon were other favoured destinations. Employment in Cyprus was obtained by payment of higher recruitment fees and, as disclosed by an agency in Kurunegala, women with better educational qualifications and experience in nursing were given preference. The men who had found

their way to countries such as Korea (3.3% from Colombo and 15% from Alawwa) and Italy (6.7% from Colombo and 25% from Maharagama) had been sponsored by either local politicians or relatives. The majority of migrants had obtained employment through recruitment agencies (Table 5.1).

For most migrants, both male and female, it was their first migratory cycle (males: 36.7% in Colombo, 30% in Maharagama, 40% in Kurunegala and 45% in Alawwa; females: 39.2% in Colombo, 34.6% in Maharagama, 37.1% in Kurunegala and 23.2% in Alawwa). However, for a significant number at all locations there were up to five movements. One man from Maharagama had migrated 18 times (Table 5.2).

> *J, a male migrant from Kurunegala, was an electrician specialising in repairing lifts and was currently working in the Maldives. His migratory cycles began before his marriage and, according to wife, pregnant with their second child, J has no intention of giving up his work as his income has been beneficial for family life. They now owned a house and led a comfortable life even though they lived quite a distance from the town. J communicates with his wife daily and had taken her and their elder son, aged four, for a vacation in the Maldives. J's wife seemed a capable woman, managing the home in an efficient manner.*

Table 5.1
Country of Migrant Worker by Sex of Migrant Worker

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
Kuwait	26	35.1	8	30.8	34	34.0	18	25.7	15	50.0	33	33.0
Italy			1	3.8	1	1.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
Saudi Arabia	16	21.6	3	11.5	19	19.0	20	28.6	6	20.0	26	26.0
Dubai	8	10.8	1	3.8	9	9.0	14	20.0	4	13.3	18	18.0
Qatar	1	1.4			1	1.0	2	2.9			2	2.0
Lebanon	4	5.4	2	7.7	6	6.0	1	1.4	1	3.3	2	2.0
Jordan	5	6.8			5	5.0			1	3.3	1	1.0
Bahrain	3	4.1			3	3.0	3	4.3			3	3.0
Cyprus	3	4.1	4	15.4	7	7.0	7	10.0	1	3.3	8	8.0
Oman	3	4.1	2	7.7	5	5.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
UAR	3	4.1	1	3.8	4	4.0						
Other	2	2.7	4	15.4	6	6.0	3	4.3	2	6.7	5	5.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0
Male												
Kuwait	5	16.7	2	10.0	7	14.0	5	16.7	3	15.0	8	16.0

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Italy	2	6.7	5	25.0	7	14.0						
Saudi Arabia	5	16.7	6	30.0	11	22.0	8	26.7	3	15.0	11	22.0
Dubai	6	20.0	2	10.0	8	16.0	4	13.3	2	10.0	6	12.0
Qatar	5	16.7	2	10.0	7	14.0	5	16.7	4	20.0	9	18.0
Lebanon									1	5.0	1	2.0
Jordan	1	3.3			1	2.0						
Bahrain	1	3.3			1	2.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Cyprus			1	5.0	1	2.0						
Oman	1	3.3			1	2.0	3	10.0	1	5.0	4	8.0
Korea	1	3.3			1	2.0			3	15.0	3	6.0
Other	3	10.0	2	10.0	5	10.0	4	13.3	3	15.0	7	14.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

Around 50 per cent of the female migrants had left Sri Lanka on their first migration when they were under 30 years of age (59.4% in Colombo, 61.5% in Maharagama, 48.5% in Kurunegala and 50% in Alawwa). In Kurunegala City, three had left when they were 19 years old. The desire to seek employment after the age of 35 years decreased on account of the reluctance of recruitment agencies to register women around or over 40 years. However, a few women in all four locations had managed to leave after the age of 40 years.

Table 5.2
Number of Migrations

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
1	29	39.2	9	34.6	38	38.0	26	37.1	7	23.3	33	33.0
2	18	24.3	6	23.1	24	24.0	23	32.9	12	40.0	35	35.0
3	13	17.6	6	23.1	19	19.0	11	15.7	3	10.0	14	14.0
4	7	9.5	2	7.7	9	9.0	7	10.0	7	23.3	14	14.0
5	7	9.5	1	3.8	8	8.0	3	4.3	1	3.3	4	4.0
6			1	3.8	1	1.0						
7			1	3.8	1	1.0						
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0
Male												
1	11	36.7	6	30.0	17	34.0	12	40.0	9	45.0	21	42.0
2	8	26.7	3	15.0	11	22.0	8	26.7	5	25.0	13	26.0
3	7	23.3	4	20.0	11	22.0	7	23.3	3	15.0	10	20.0
4	3	10.0	2	10.0	5	10.0	1	3.3	3	15.0	4	8.0
5	1	3.3	3	15.0	4	8.0	2	6.7			2	4.0
6			1	5.0	1	2.0						
18			1	5.0	1	2.0						
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

The majority of the male migrants in Kurunegala (70.1%) and Alawwa (65%) undertook their first migratory cycle when they were below the age of 34, while in Colombo and in Maharagama it was 40 and 50 per cent, respectively. It was easier for older men than for older women to find foreign employment, as their specialized skills and experience were assets to obtain employment on construction sites in countries such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

> *DJ from Kurunegala, a spouse of a female teacher aged 52 was successful in obtaining employment in the Middle East as a site supervisor. A father of two grown children, he felt that the opportunity to earn extra money for their education was not to be missed. With his wife's consent he left Sri Lanka in 2006, a decision taken in consultation with his wife and two children.*

5.1 Reasons for migration

The study revealed that women and men migrated for different reasons. The primary motive for women in all four locations was to build a house or to buy land (Colombo 32.4%; Maharagama 26.9%; Kurunegala 51.4%, and Alawwa 26.7%), while men migrated mainly because of unemployment and the absence of a regular wage (Colombo 10%; Maharagama 40%; Kurunegala 23.3% and Alawwa 30%). Reasons broadly described as economic problems were significant factors for both men and women to seek employment abroad. One male in Kurunegala wanted to migrate for a specific reason, namely to earn enough money to buy a three-wheeler. With many migrant families being indebted, finding money to settle loans was another important reason mentioned by both groups.

For over three decades, research on the subject of labour migration from Sri Lanka has revealed that the overriding reason for migration was the desire for family betterment, which often required the individual to migrate several times to achieve that goal. Observations from case studies of female migrants reveal that a repeat migration was necessary to escape poverty and to reach a broader goal such as family betterment. Purchasing land or building a house was not possible otherwise.

The reasons for remigration were similar for each location. Observations from case studies of female migrants revealed that a majority of the women migrants found it difficult to readjust to family life on their return after three to four years abroad; yet a single migratory cycle had not enabled them to reach their intended goal. Their level of aspiration was frequently higher than their level of achievement. Furthermore, many women found

family life intolerable with an alcoholic or unfaithful husband. Therefore, the subsequent migratory cycle was often a unilateral decision of the wife who wished to get away from a distressing family situation. Such women felt that their children were well looked after and their absence for a few more years would not be detrimental.

A female migrant at the research location in Kurunegala City had been away from the family for over eight years. The repeated requests from her daughter for her to return home had been of no avail. In early 2007, the teenage daughter who had sat for her G.C.E. Ordinary Level (O/L) examination committed suicide. The mother came home for the funeral and returned to Cyprus soon after.

The presence of children, whether they were infants, of pre-school age or adolescents was not a barrier to migration. The recent media reports on the ban on mothers with children under five years of age to leave the country was viewed with concern by some of the female householders. Reluctance to participate in the interviews was also related to this issue (Tables 5.3a and 5.3b).

5.2   Making the decision to migrate

During marriage, the decision to migrate was generally taken jointly by the husband and wife in a majority of households in all four research locations (62.5% in Colombo, 60.9% in Maharagama, 81% in Kurunegala and 82% in Alawwa). However, a fair proportion of male and female migrants had taken the decision on their own (Table 5.4). Individual decisions were common among remigrants, as many of them had an obligation to return to their employers. They had valid visas and their stay in Sri Lanka was the vacation they were entitled to after two years of service. For the female migrant, the mechanisms of migration were too complex to deal with by herself. Family support was necessary for preliminary arrangements such as obtaining a passport, visiting recruitment agencies, raising money for expenses such as registration and insurance and travelling to the SLBFE located in Battaramulla, away from the city transport system. If the woman had young or school-going children, arrangements had to be made for their care during the numerous visits she had to make to the city centres. Further, attendance in a training programme conducted by the SLBFE or an agency was compulsory and required 100 per cent attendance for certification. Residential facilities were available for those from distant villages.

Where the primary decision maker was the spouse, as was the case in two households in Maharagama, it was absolute poverty and desperation that motivated either a husband or wife to consider the idea of securing

a job abroad. Foreign employment is an escape mechanism from poverty. There were a number of recruitment agencies offering free placements as housemaids as an incentive for registration. However, deductions were made from the migrant's salary, leaving the person without any money for up to five or six months, incurring untold hardship to the family left behind.

Table 5.3a
Reasons for Migration - Women

Female	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
To build a house/buy land	24	32.4	7	26.9	31	31.0	36	51.4	8	26.7	44	44.0
Economic problems	13	17.6	7	26.9	20	20.0	13	18.6	9	30.0	22	22.0
No income/ poverty	3	4.1	3	11.5	6	6.0	3	4.3	1	3.3	4	4.0
Improve economic situation	10	13.5	2	7.7	12	12.0	9	12.9	4	13.3	13	13.0
To settle a loan	10	13.5	1	3.8	11	11.0	3	4.3			3	3.0
Migrant worker/ husband lost job	5	6.8			5	5.0			1	3.3	1	1.0
Illness of .husband	1	1.4			1	1.0	1	1.4	1	3.3	2	2.0
No permanent job	4	5.4	2	7.7	6	6.0	2	2.9	4	13.3	6	6.0
Employer in Sri Lanka secured overseas employment for migrant			1	3.8	1	1.0						
For the betterment of children/family	4	5.4	2	7.7	6	6.0	2	2.9	2	6.7	4	4.0
A relation found a job for migrant			1	3.8	1	1.0						
To buy a three-wheeler							1	1.4			1	1.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0

Table 5.3b
Reasons for Migration - Men

Male	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No permanent job	3	10.0	8	40.0	22	22.0	7	23.3	6	30.0	13	26.0
Economic problems	5	16.7	3	15.0	8	16.0	3	10.0	2	10.0	5	10.0
No income/poverty	4	13.3			4	8.0						
Improve economic situation	5	16.7	1	5.0	6	12.0	4	13.3	4	20.0	8	16.0
Better job/salary	4	13.3	2	10.0	6	12.0						
To build a house/ buy land	4	13.3	4	20.0	8	16.0	9	30.0	6	30.0	15	30.0
To settle a loan	4	13.3	1	5.0	5	10.0	2	6.7			2	4.0
Migrant worker/ husband lost job			1	5.0	1	2.0	1	3.3	1	5.0	2	4.0
Employer in Sri Lanka secured employment abroad for migrant							1	3.3			1	2.0
For the betterment of children/family							1	3.3	1	5.0	2	4.0
A relation found a job for migrant	1	3.3			1	2.0						
To buy a three-wheeler							1	3.3			1	2.0
Not reported							1	3.3			1	2.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

Table 5.4
Making the Decision to Migrate

	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
Spouse			1	3.8	1	1.0						
Migrant	23	31.1	10	38.5	33	33.0	14	20.0	6	20.0	20	20.0
Both	51	68.9	15	57.7	66	66.0	56	80.0	24	80.0	80	80.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0
Male												
Spouse			1	5.0	1	2.0						
Migrant	16	53.3	5	25.0	21	42.0	5	16.7	3	15.0	8	16.0
Both	14	46.7	13	65.0	27	54.0	25	83.3	17	85.0	42	84.0
Father			1	5.0	1	2.0						
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

5.3   Length of stay since the last departure

A majority of the migrants in all locations had been away for up to two years: women: 64.9 per cent in Colombo, 53.8 per cent in Maharagama, 61.3 per cent in Kurunegala and 33.3 per cent in Alawwa; men: 76.8 per cent in Colombo, 70 per cent in Maharagama, 66.7 per cent in Kurunegala and 45 per cent in Alawwa.

It could be assumed that these persons were still employed under the initial contract with their employers, requiring a period of service of up to three years. More significant was the number of female migrants who had been away for between three and seven years (12.3% in Colombo, 19.1% in Maharagama, 12.8% in Kurunegala and 13.3% in Alawwa) with one of them from Kurunegala away for 15 years (Table 5.5). Two men from Kurunegala had been away for five years and one for seven years.

Periods of absence without communication with the spouse are stressful for the family, especially the children.

Table 5.5
Length of Stay Since Last Departure

| | Colombo | | | | | | Kurunegala | | | | | |
| | Colombo | | Maharagama | | Total | | Kurunegala | | Alawwa | | Total | |
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
< 6 months	1	1.4			1	1.0	4	5.7			4	4.0
6 months - < 1 year	4	5.4	1	3.8	5	5.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
1 - < 1.5 years	33	44.6	10	38.5	43	43.0	33	47.1	7	23.3	40	40.0
1.5 - < 2 years	10	13.5	3	11.5	13	13.0	5	7.1	3	10.0	8	8.0
2 - < 3 years	15	20.3	7	26.9	22	22.0	16	22.9	12	40.0	28	28.0
3 years - < 4 years	7	9.5	3	11.5	10	10.0	5	7.1	4	13.3	9	9.0
4 years	1	1.4	1	3.8	2	2.0	3	4.3	1	3.3	4	4.0
5 years			1	3.8	1	1.0			2	6.7	2	2.0
6 years	1	1.4			1	1.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
7 years									1	3.3	1	1.0
15 years							1	1.4			1	1.0
Not reported	2	2.7			2	2.0	1	1.4			1	1.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0
Male												
< 6 months	2	6.7	2	10.0	4	8.0	2	6.7			2	4.0
6 months - < 1 year	2	6.7	1	5.0	3	6.0						
1 - < 1.5 years	14	46.7	9	45.0	23	46.0	15	50.0	5	25.0	20	40.0
1.5 - <2 years	5	16.7	2	10.0	7	14.0	3	10.0	4	20.0	7	14.0
2 - < 3 years	7	23.3	3	15.0	10	20.0	6	20.0	7	35.0	13	26.0
3 - < 4 years			3	15.0	3	6.0	1	3.3	4	20.0	5	10.0
5 years							2	6.7			2	4.0
7 years							1	3.3			1	2.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

F, from Kurunegala City, had left to work in Kuwait in 2002, leaving behind a wife and two sons aged nine and seven years. Initially, F sent part of his salary as a driver to the family, but of late his contact with the family had been limited to an occasional telephone call. His wife B has not received any money for the last four years and depends on her mother, a migrant, for money for her daily needs. B has heard that her husband is living with a Pakistani woman. B feels that their initial decision to secure a foreign job was a foolish one and the family could have lived happily with F's local salary as a lorry driver.

There is no accurate information on the reasons for extending the stay at the place of employment. From newspaper reports on visits by SLBFE officials and their efforts to repatriate many Sri Lankan workers stranded without valid visas, confined to safe houses or jailed highlights some of the risk factors associated with long periods of absence. It is not unusual for both female and male migrants to simply disappear. In such cases, the spouse left behind becomes reconciled to the situation and continues family life with the initial arrangements made for childcare or alternative arrangement, such as obtaining help from an immediate family member such as a grandparent on a more permanent basis or, in the case of men left behind, taking a mistress.

5.4   Frequency of contact

Modern communication technologies, such as mobile phones and e-mail had facilitated communication with the migrants and their families. Generally, contacts took place about once a month for women (54.1% in Colombo, 57.7% in Maharagama, 58.6% in Kurunegala and 43.3% in Alawwa) and men (26.7% in Colombo, 5% in Maharagama, 36.7% in Kurunegala and 30% in Alawwa). The availability of easy communication between the migrant and the spouse has facilitated decision-making on matters such as investments and family welfare, and being able to speak to a mother or father over the phone was beneficial for the children left behind.   Families who had no contact with the migrants were in the minority (women: 9.5% in Colombo, 5.7% in Kurunegala and 6.6% in Alawwa; men: 10% in Maharagama and 3.3% in Kurunrgala). It was a matter of concern to those left behind in such situations and to seek assistance from the SLBFE was the only one remedial measure available (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6
Frequency of Contact with Migrant Worker

	Colombo						Kurunegala					
	Colombo		Maharagama		Total		Kurunegala		Alawwa		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female												
Once a week	9	12.2	4	15.4	13	13.0	6	8.6	6	20.0	12	12.0
Every 2 weeks	13	17.6	8	30.8	21	21.0	12	17.1	7	23.3	19	19.0
Once a month	40	54.1	15	57.7	55	55.0	41	58.6	13	43.3	54	54.0
Once or twice in 3 months	3	4.1	1	3.8	4	4.0	6	8.6	1	3.3	7	7.0
Every day	2	2.7	1	3.8	3	3.0						
Every other day							1	1.4			1	1.0
2 - 3 times a week									1	3.3	1	1.0
Occasionally	7	9.5			7	7.0						
None							3	4.3	1	3.3	4	4.0
Once in 5 or 6 months							1	1.4	1	3.3	2	2.0
Not reported	3	4.1			3	3.0	5	7.1			5	5.0
Total	74	100.0	26	100.0	100	100.0	70	100.0	30	100.0	100	100.0
Male												
Once a week	9	30.0	6	30.0	15	30.0	7	23.3	5	25.0	12	24.0
Every 2 weeks	8	26.7	8	40.0	16	32.0	5	16.7	7	35.0	12	24.0
Once a month	8	26.7	1	5.0	9	18.0	11	36.7	6	30.0	17	34.0
Once or twice in 3 months							1	3.3			1	2.0
Every day	2	6.7	1	5.0	3	6.0	2	6.7	2	10.0	4	8.0
Every other day	1	3.3	2	10.0	3	6.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
2 - 3 times a week	1	3.3	1	5.0	2	4.0	3	10.0	2	10.0	5	10.0
Occasionally			2	10.0	2	4.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Not reported	2	6.7			2	4.0	1	3.3			1	2.0
Total	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0	30	100.0	20	100.0	50	100.0

5.6   Remittances

The study focused more on the decision-making processes for the sending and receiving of money from abroad rather than the amount received by the family left behind. Previous research has shown that the average wages earned by either male or female migrants during the first cycle of migration of approximately two years, was insufficient to cover pre-migration debts; hence the need for repeated migratory movements (Ahn (ed.) 2004; Dias, 1986).

General observations on the basis of case studies on remittances received from overseas indicate that though they supplemented available family resources they only covered daily expenses. Further, only a few households

received remittances regularly and sufficient for investments. Female migrants generally collected the salary and allowances and remitted it home. Males were more regular in their remittances since they realized that the family left behind was dependent on this income .

There was a certain degree of ignorance among both groups concerning the actual earnings of the migrant. As such, there was not much discussion on the arrangements for sending/receiving money. It was only an understanding that money earned abroad would be sent to the family.

5.7   Migratory outcome

Field observations and discussions with a few key informants reveal that the households of migrant males were coping with the absence of a husband/father better than the households of female migrants. The female migrants were more disadvantaged by virtue of their poor earnings abroad and unsatisfactory domestic arrangements. Though the study was unable to investigate incidences of school drop-outs, behavioural problems, malnutrition or other childcare issues, data obtained from the Provincial Commissioner of Probation and Child Care Services, NWP, revealed that during the period 2004 – May 2007, seven cases involving children of female migrant workers were presented to the Courts in two Divisional Secretary's areas. Four of the children were victims of sex abuse and in two instances the suspect was the father.

A woman managing the household with the remittances sent by a male migrant had to a great extent succeeded in raising the family's living standards. She had better coping mechanisms than men and her ability to perform many roles was evident in the gender role analyses.

VI.   Gender roles in families of migrant workers

According to traditional social norms women are largely or even exclusively responsible for household tasks and childcare-related activities, and men are the breadwinners and 'managers' of their families. The study sought to examine evidence of changes in these gender roles in families as a consequence of the migration of men and women to distant lands for a continuous period of one or more years. The study was confined to four locations of concentration of migrant workers from low-income families, but its findings have validated many of the conclusions drawn by previous researchers in this field.

Men and women migrant workers have had access to employment opportunities and to increased economic resources that have contributed to family survival, maintenance or, in some families, to a degree of upward

socio-economic mobility. As part of this process, the family structure has changed temporarily to a single parent family with, however, expected financial inputs from the absent spouse. It is pertinent to examine how this situation affected the gender division of labour in the household and whether it resulted in a role reversal or created alternative patterns of division of labour and responsibilities, or lacunae, tensions and conflict in meeting the needs of families.

In a study which perhaps for the first time examines and compares the changes in the families of male migrant workers and female migrant workers, respectively, a major outcome has been the evidence of clear differences in the reallocation of gender roles in the two groups of families.

6.1   Families of male migrant workers

As seen in Table 6.1, in the families of the one hundred male migrant workers, the wife /partner had had to cope almost alone - with the assistance of a female member of the family and, in two households, a domestic aide - with household chores such as cooking, washing cooking utensils and clothes, cleaning toilets and sweeping the house and even tending to the garden (90% to 95%). The vast majority of those whose task it was to also collect water for the household were women, with male spouses accounting for only around one tenth. The major participation of men was to collect fuel (55%). After the departure of the male migrant, the tasks of the wives did not change, except that there was slightly more participation by female members of the family and that the task of the male spouse of collecting fuel was now distributed among the wife (her participation increasing from 39% to 68%), other male members of the family (16%) and female members of the family (9%). Hence the wife's work load increased considerably.

Table 6.1
Performance of Household Tasks
Gender Roles Before and After Departure of Male Migrant Workers (%)

Tasks	Wife/ Partner		Husband/ Partner		Female members of family and extended family		Male members of family and extended family		Others		Not applicable/ not reported	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Household chores												
Cooking	95.0	92.0	-	-	5.0	7.0	-	-	-	1.0	-	-
Cleaning cooking utensils	95.0	91.0	-	-	5.0	7.0	-	-	-	1.0	-	1.0
Washing clothes	96.0	92.0	1.0	-	3.0	7.0	-	-	-	1.0	-	-

Cleaning toilets	93.0	90.0	3.0	-	2.0	7.0	-	-	-	-	2.0	3.0
Cleaning the house	92.0	91.0	4.0	-	4.0	9.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweeping the garden	89.0	88.0	4.0	-	5.0	9.0	-	-	-	-	2.0	3.0
Collecting fuel	39.0	68.0	55.0	-	4.0	8.0	1.0	16.0	1.0	2.0	-	6.0
Collecting water	49.0	44.0	12.0	-	2.0	5.0	-	4.0	-	1.0	37.0	46.0
Child and family care												
Bathing children	66.0	61.0	1.0	-	1.0	4.0	-	-	-	-	32.0	35.0
Taking care of infants	42.0	40.0	-	-	-	3.0	-	-	-	-	58.0	57.0
Taking care of older children	86.0	83.0	-	-	-	2.0	-	-	1.0	-	13.0	15.0
Taking children to school	29.0	52.0	37.0	-	-	5.0	-	3.0	-	-	34.0	40.0
Attending parents' meeting of school	53.0	74.0	25.0	-	-	3.0	-	3.0	1.0	-	21.0	20.0
Taking care of the sick	88.0	86.0	-	-	2.0	4.0	-	-	3.0	-	7.0	10.0
Taking care of elders	66.0	66.0	2.0	-	2.0	4.0	-	-	2.0	-	28.0	30.0
Taking sick persons to doctor/hospital	60.0	83.0	34.0	-	2.0	5.0	-	8.0	3.0	-	1.0	4.0
Financial transaction												
Marketing	34.0	84.0	58.0	-	5.0	8.0	-	7.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0
Attending to bank matters	34.0	88.0	62.0	-	2.0	4.0	-	7.0	1.0	-	1.0	1.0
Paying bills	31.0	86.0	62.0	-	1.0	5.0	3.0	7.0	-	-	3.0	2.0
Other financial matters	32.0	86.0	62.0	-	2.0	5.0	1.0	6.0	-	-	3.0	3.0

Total number of households - 100
BD – Before departure
AD – After departure

Similarly, the care activities within the household were almost exclusively allocated to the female spouse - bathing children, taking care of infants and older children, and taking care of the sick and the elderly – both before and after the departure of the male migrant workers. Overall, male spouses participated in only three activities – taking children to school, attending parents' meetings in school and taking sick person to the doctor or the hospital – albeit to a lesser extent than their wives/parents. After the departure of the spouses, women assumed virtually full responsibility for these tasks, further increasing their workload and responsibilities.

External household-related activities - marketing, attending to bank matters, paying bills and other financial matters - are usually perceived as male responsibilities. Nevertheless, the responses from participants in this study indicate that around 60 per cent of these tasks were undertaken

by male spouses and 30 - 35 per cent by female spouses. Significantly, the women assumed the major share (85% - 88%) of such financial transactions on the departure of the male migrant workers, with some also depending on the assistance of other male members of family.

It is clear, therefore, that most spouses of male migrant workers have taken over the tasks of the men without undue strain or stress and that there has been some element of even temporary change in gender roles. As the case studies indicated, these women have stepped into the role of managers of their families and have made optimal use of the remittances received to improve the quality of life of their families in terms of housing and other assets and the education and welfare of their children.

Happy and competent wife of a male migrant worker

S, 35 years old with one child of 16 years, lives in Kurunegala. Her husband, 39 years old, is in Kuwait employed as a driver. With the remittances sent by her husband she has renovated her house and purchased furniture and household utensils. She rents out part of her house to get additional income and to relieve her loneliness. She helps their son with his schoolwork. She has regular contact with her husband and lives happily with her son.

6.2   Families of female migrant workers

As in the families of male migrant workers, women in the families of female migrant workers had had exclusive responsibility for the household chores such as cooking, washing, cleaning and sweeping, while male participation was mainly to collect fuel. With the departure of the female migrant workers, however, there was no change in gender roles. Few male spouses had taken over the tasks previously performed by the women and they were speedily relegated to the female members of the family such as the mother, mother-in-law, sisters, sisters-in-law, daughters, daughters-in-law and grandmothers, as seen in Table 6.2. Overall, around 70-80 per cent of the tasks were accepted by female members of the family or extended family, providing crucial support to the families of the female migrants.

Assistance from extended family

L, 28 years old, is from Alawwa. S, her husband, is a three-wheeler driver. They have three children. Her husband is addicted to alcohol resulting in family problems and domestic violence. L migrated to Kuwait as a housemaid in 2000 with the consent of her husband, as they had many financial problems. She returned in 2002 and remigrated in 2006 without her husband's permission as there were continuous conflicts.

Now she sends money to her mother who does all the household work - cooking, caring for the children, washing clothes, cleaning the house – previously performed b L. The mother takes decisions when necessary.

Table 6.2
Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles before and after Departure of Female Migrant Workers (%)

Tasks	Wife/ Partner		Husband/ Partner		Female members of family and extended family		Male members of family and extended family		Others		Not applicable/ not reported	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Household chores												
Cooking	87.0	0.5	0.5	17.5	12.5	79.5	-	0.5	-	2.0	-	-
Cleaning cooking utensils	87.0	0.5	0.5	17.5	12.0	79.5	-	0.5	-	0.5	0.5	1.5
Washing clothes	87.5	0.5	-	18.5	11.5	75.5	-	1.5	-	-	1.0	4.0
Cleaning toilets	81.5	0.5	2.5	18.0	10.5	69.5	-	3.5	-	0.5	5.5	8.0
Cleaning the house	86.5	0.5	1.5	20.0	11.5	75.5	-	3.0	-	-	0.5	1.5
Sweeping the garden	84.0	0.5	1.5	19.0	10.5	73.5	-	2.5	-	-	4.0	4.5
Collecting fuel	41.0	0.5	48.0	49.5	8.0	39.0	2.0	8.5	0.5	-	0.5	2.5
Collecting water	53.0	27.5	18.0	-	9.0	45.0	1.0	2.5	0.5	0.5	18.5	24.5
Child and family care												
Bathing children	54.0	0.5	-	8.0	7.0	42.0	-	-	-	-	39.0	49.5
Taking care of infants	27.5	-	-	-	3.5	21.0	-	-	-	-	69.0	76.0
Taking care of older children	75.0	0.5	2.0	31.0	10.0	49.5	0.5	1.0	-	-	12.5	17.5
Taking children to school	32.0	-	27.0	32.5	4.5	16.5	-	1.5	-	-	36.5	49.5
Attending parents' meeting of school	45.5	0.5	26.0	45.0	9.5	29.5	-	3.0	-		19.0	22.0

Taking care of the sick	81.0	-	1.5	29.5	10.0	56.5	-	0.5	-	-	13.5	7.5
Taking care of elders	63.5	-	1.5	22.5	9.0	43.5	-	0.5	-	-	26.0	33.5
Taking sick persons to doctor/hospital	46.5	0.5	40.5	52.0	10.0	41.0	0.5	4.0	-	-	2.5	2.5
Financial transaction												
Marketing	38.0	-	51.5	54.5	7.5	37.0	2.0	6.5	0.5	-	2.0	0.5
Attending to bank matters	34.5	0.5	52.0	57.5	8.5	32.5	2.5	7.5	1.0	-	1.5	2.0
Paying bills	31.5	0.5	54.5	57.0	8.5	31.0	3.0	7.5	1.0	-	1.5	4.0
Other financial matters	33.5	0.5	54.0	60.0	8.0	31.0	2.5	6.0	0.5	-	1.5	2.0

Total households 200
BD – Before departure
AD – After departure

There was little change in the role of caring for infants and young children, but the participation of spouses in looking after older children, taking them to school and attending parents' meetings, taking care of the sick and the elderly, and taking the to sick to hospitals increased. However, much of the care domain was taken over by another group of women, reinforcing existing gender roles.

More significantly, even the contribution of the male spouse to household-related financial transactions does not appear to have increased, compelling other women in the family and a few male members to take over these tasks.

The case studies provide telling information regarding the reasons for the continuing gap between male and female roles. A few exceptions were reported of male spouses taking over their spouse's role even in difficult circumstances with the assistance of older daughters. More male participation was seen in rural households in Alawwa in Kurunegala. On the other hand, many men were reported to have succumbed to alcoholism, liaisons with other women and the concomitant misuse of the remittances sent by their wives, who often endured great hardship in the overseas employment to help their families. The absence of the female spouse, therefore, did not result in a change in gender roles, as "women's work" was largely taken over by other women in the family and, in a few instances, by other female relatives.

The role of the mother has been central in the discussions pertaining to migrant workers. Female migrant workers and wives of male migrant workers who are employed abroad have entrusted their children to the care of mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters and sisters–in–law. Both the wives of male migrant workers (95%) and the male spouses of female migrant

workers (91%) expressed a high degree of satisfaction with these childcare arrangements. The majority, 84 per cent and 73 per cent respectively, claim that they have not encountered problems. However, both groups (8% and 14%, respectively) had some concerns regarding the protection of the girl child. The few men who had taken over childcare responsibilities in the absence of their wives stated that they experienced difficulties in continuing their jobs and domestic responsibilities and that the care of young children presented problems (Table 6.3).

The father taking over the mother's role

N lives in Colombo and is active in petty trade for a livelihood. He is married to K, who had been working as a housemaid in the Middle East for eight years before their marriage. After the marriage, they did not have the resources to either build a house or to meet their daily needs. Therefore, they took a joint decision that K should again seek employment in the Middle East. K left N in 2003 with their two children – a seven-year old son and a nine-month old daughter - to work as a housemaid in Kuwait.

N has to assume both the father's and mother's role looking after the children and using the money sent by K as effectively as possible. He gets up at 6 am in the morning, prepares the meals, helps the children to dress and feeds them, and takes the son to school and the daughter to pre-school. He then starts his business with his fruit cart. He then goes to the pre-school to pick up his daughter, feeds her and takes her to his sister's house for the afternoon. He waits at home till his son comes from school, feeds him, sends him to tuition class and returns to his trading business. Around 4 p.m. he returns home with his daughter and with the household goods he has purchased. The son too returns home after the tuition class. He prepares tea for them, washes their clothes and assists the son with his school homework while preparing dinner for the family.

He provides affection, security and education for his children while their mother is away.

Table 6.3

Childcare arrangements

	Male Migrant Workers			Female Migrant Workers		
	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total
Spouse	58.0	56.0	57.0	18.0	17.0	17.5
Parents	40.0	28.0	34.0	25.0	29.0	27.0
Sisters/Brothers	16.0	14.0	15.0	19.0	10.0	14.5
In-laws	14.0	14.0	14.0	40.0	36.0	38.0
Relations	10.0	12.0	11.0	18.0	10.0	1
Satisfied with arrangements	96.0	94.0	95.0	91.0	91.0	91.0

VII. Gender relations in migrant families

Gender relations within the family are dynamic and cannot be captured easily through overt responses. This, like many other household studies, has shown that 50-60 per cent of decisions affecting the household and family such as expenditure on food and clothing, utilization of health care facilities, meeting educational needs of children, leisure and organising ceremonies as well as decisions on household assets and employment were taken jointly (Tables 7.1 and 7.2).

In families of male migrant workers, 60-70 per cent of decisions had been taken jointly before outmigration transformed families temporarily into single parent families. After the departure of the male migrant worker, the decision-making power of the female spouse increased sharply concerning expenditure on food and clothing, education and health care, employment, ceremonies and leisure as the immediate figure of authority in the family. While these spouses participated more overtly in the selling and purchase of assets and investments, a large measure of joint decision-making continued, facilitated by increasing access to mobile telephones. Older children, too, began to participate in this process. The case studies did not show conflictual issues and family harmony conducive to the welfare of the family prevailed (Table 7.1).

In the families of female migrant workers, the same pattern of joint decision-making as well as decision-making by each spouse individually prevailed before outmigration for employment became the pivot around which family life revolved. This pattern gave place to a new set of power relations. The female migrant workers provided new financial resources and had 'remote control' over these inputs, but were invisible on the family scene. Male spouses appear to have increased their share in decision-making in all areas of household activities, but a new element emerged regarding the role of other female members of the family –

mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters and sisters-in-law, older daughters and also, though on a smaller scale, fathers and fathers–in-law and sons, in managing routine household activities and childcare (Table 7.2). However, many female members of the immediate or extended family do not appear to have intervened in major financial transactions such as the sale or purchase of assets and investments. It was seen in the case studies that this division of power and responsibility was conducive to lead to the misuse of remittances sent by female migrant workers on alcohol, illicit alliances and other vices with apparent impunity, and to the continued immiserization of the affected families, despite the availability of additional family resources.

Table 7.1
Decision-making in Families of Male Migrant Workers (%)

Areas of decision-making	Male migrant workers		Spouse		Both		Both spouses and children		Children		Both spouses and other family members		Other family members		Not applicable/ not reported	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Food	20.0	1.0	18.0	82.0	61.0	5.0	1.0	6.0	-	1.0	-	1.0	-	4.0	-	-
Clothing	12.0	1.0	27.0	76.0	59.0	5.0	1.0	6.0	-	1.0	-	2.0	1.0	9.0	-	-
Education of children	12.0	1.0	12.0	63.0	63.0	18.0	-	5.0	-	-	-	1.0	-	2.0	13.0	10.0
Health care	11.0	1.0	27.0	78.0	62.0	10.0	-	6.0	-	-	-	4.0	-	1.0	-	-
Marriage of children	-	-	-	1.0	5.0	4.0	1.0	2.0	-	-	-	-	3.0	3.0	91.0	90.0
Self-employment	16.0	2.0	8.0	30.0	29.0	5.0	1.0	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	46.0	58.0
Sale of assets	7.0	-	1.0	9.0	25.0	16.0	-	2.0	-	-	-	-	1.0	1.0	66.0	72.0
Purchase of assets	10.0	4.0	2.0	22.0	55.0	37.0	3.0	8.0	-	-	1.0	-	1.0	2.0	28.0	27.0
Investments	13.0	3.0	6.0	27.0	54.0	43.0	3.0	5.0	-	-	-	-	1.0	2.0	23.0	20.0
Ceremonies	23.0	2.0	4.0	54.0	65.0	19.0	5.0	8.0	-	-	-	3.0	-	2.0	3.0	12.0
Leisure	22.0	2.0	5.0	63.0	70.0	17.0	3.0	6.0	-	-	-	1.0	-	2.0	-	9.0

Total Number of Households - 100
BD – Before departure; AD - After departure

Table 7.2
Decision-making in Families of Female Migrant Workers (%)

Areas of decision-making	Male migrant workers		Spouse		Both		Both spouses and children		Children		Both spouses and other family members		Other family members		Not applicable/not reported	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Food	32.0	7.5	11.0	42.0	53.0	2.5	1.5	8.5	0.5	5.5	-	13.0	1.5	26.5	0.5	0.5
Clothing	33.5	2.5	11.0	47.0	50.0	1.5	-	7.5	1.0	6.0	-	8.5	4.0	27.0	-	-
Education of children	25.0	0.5	9.0	41.5	53.5	6.0	-	8.0	0.5	3.0	0.5	11.0	1.0	18.0	10.5	12.0
Health care	30.5	1.0	10.0	46.0	58.0	2.5	-	8.0	0.5	4.5	-	14.0	0.5	23.0	0.5	1.0
Marriage of children	1.5	-	0.5	3.5	10.0	5.0	0.5	1.5	2.0	4.0	-	1.5	2.0	2.5	83.5	82.0
Self employment	4.0	-	30.5	48.0	35.0	4.5	-	2.5	0.5	1.0	-	4.0	-	4.0	30.0	36.0
Sale of assets	3.0	0.5	1.5	11.0	21.5	6.0	1.5	2.0	0.5	1.5	-	1.0	0.5	1.5	71.5	76.5
Purchase of assets	6.5	4.5	4.5	19.0	47.5	22.5	2.0	5.0	0.5	1.5	0.5	4.5	-	2.5	38.5	40.5
Investments	6.5	7.0	5.5	20.5	53.5	23.5	1.0	7.0	0.5	2.0	0.5	6.5	-	6.5	32.5	27.0
Ceremonies	8.5	0.5	12.5	39.5	66.0	10.0	4.5	11.5	1.0	5.5	0.5	9.5	-	13.5	7.0	10.0
Leisure	10.5	-	12.0	45.0	67.0	4.5	3.5	11.5	1.0	5.5	-	8.5	-	15.0	6.0	10.0

Total Number of Households - 200
BD – Before departure; AD- After departure

The migratory process had its own dynamics in changing gender relations. At the outset or initial stage in the migration process, decision-making concerning the acceptance of employment overseas had been largely a smooth and harmonious process in accordance with the prevailing inclination for joint decision-making in families of male and female migrant workers. Both spouses appear to have made the decision in about three-quarters of the families of male migrant workers and in just under two-thirds of families of female migrant workers. The migrant workers had made individual decisions in 27 per cent of the former group and in 29 per cent of the latter group of families (Table 5.4). Joint decision-making was more prevalent in families in Kurunegala district than in Colombo with its longer history of out migration.

As the process unfolded, differences surfaced between the two groups of families, reflecting new facets in gender relations. For instance, arrangements regarding sending/receiving remittances had been discussed in nearly all families of male migrant workers and in 76 per cent of the families of female migrant workers. Male and female spouses claimed to have access to each others income in 94 per cent of the families of male migrant workers and in 81 per cent of the families of female migrant workers.

After the departure of migrant workers to their destinations, remittances to spouses were sent by 90 per cent of the male migrant workers and by only 62 per cent of female migrant workers. The fact that 38 per cent of female migrant workers sent their remittance to other members of the family or to 'others' reflects both the degree of mistrust between spouses in these families, as well as the empowerment of these women as their migratory experience had enabled them to make independent decisions on the basis of feed-back from the domestic scene, and to control the resources they generated. Over the years, 4 per cent of male migrant workers and 28 per cent of female migrant workers changed the person to whom they sent remittances (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3
Migration and Decision-making in Families (%)

	Male Migrant Workers			Female Migrant Workers		
	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total
Decision to migrate for work taken by: - both spouses - migrant workers	66.0 33.0	80.0 20.0	73.0 26.5	54.0 42.0	84.0 16.0	69.0 29.0
Arrangements to send/ receive money discussed	94.0	98.0	96.0	70.0	81.0	75.5
Access of spouses to each others' income	96.0	92.0	94.0	86.0	75.0	80.5
Remittances sent to - spouse - others	92.0 8.0	87.8 8.2	89.9 8.1	61.1 38.9	61.1 37.9	61.1 38.4
Change of persons to whom remittance are sent	4.0	4.1	4.0	29.5	27.4	28.4

The case studies in this report and the experiences of female migrant workers recorded in others, provide evidence explaining such changing relations. They are replete with accounts of male spouses spending remittances on drink, gambling and extra-marital relations, resulting in the breakdown of marriages and the increasing dependence of the migrant workers on their family networks.

Spouse of a female migrant worker addicted to alcohol

T, 49 years old, has a 17-year old daughter and a 9-year old son and lives in Colombo. His wife M, 39 years old, has been working as a housemaid overseas for 15 years, though not continuously.

They still live in a rented house with the two children and his mother. He has become addicted to alcohol and his health has deteriorated. His mother, 79 years old, looks after the children. M has sent money to T, but he has spent the money on alcohol and has done nothing for the family.

On return to the country, the tensions generated between spouses resulted in conflict in power relations. Some male spouses resented their demotion from the position of main breadwinner and their perceived loss of self-respect. Others were enraged by the threat to their patriarchal authority and their masculinity. Female migrant workers had been empowered by their experience as primary earners in difficult circumstances in alien lands and frustrated by the wastage of hard-earned resources and failure to achieve their objective of upward mobility through acquisition of a brick and tile house and other assets characteristic of a life style they had aspired to for their families. Negotiation of authority and power were fraught with dissonance, culminating in domestic violence, even by both spouses.

Empowerment and conflict

V, 34 years old and father of three children lives in Colombo and works as a three-wheeler diver. His wife, G, 34 years old, is employed abroad as a housemaid. G had worked abroad before her marriage.

V and G lived happily for about three months until conflicts emerged within the family. According to V, G was looking for a life with more freedom. She gave birth to a girl. Even though V and his mother helped her with her household chores she was not satisfied and wanted to go abroad again. She left in 1998 without the consent of the family members, leaving her four-month old daughter behind.

V and his mother looked after the child during her stay abroad. She came back in 2000 and had her second baby, but was in conflict with her spouse and mother-in-law. She decided alone to go abroad again in 2001. V had a very difficult life with two children. He requested G to come back but she did not comply with his request. His mother was ill, the children's health deteriorated and V became addicted to alcohol.

G came back in 2003.They lived happily for a short period, but conflicts erupted again. V's mother moved to another house and he resorted to domestic violence. When G wanted to go abroad again, V objected and G became violent resulting in V leaving the house. G went abroad again in 2006 without informing anyone but has telephoned her family from abroad.

V is very frustrated and plans to divorce her on her return.

In contrast, many wives of male migrant workers are reported to have used their new financial resources carefully and to have improved housing, promoted the health needs, education and employment prospects of their children, and to have been empowered by their experience.

Other facets of the impact of the migration process on individuals and families emerged from the study. In the stressful condition of long-term absence of a spouse abroad, it is not surprising that the gendered process of socialization initially caused a lack of self-confidence in the wives of male migrant workers, and helplessness in coping with household and childcare responsibilities without their spouse among the spouses of female migrant workers. For many, the move towards more equitable gender relations has not been a smooth process and 81 per cent of the wives of male migrant workers and 84 per cent of male spouses of female migrant workers claimed to have experienced stress.

The strategies both groups adopted to seek relief were: (i) watching TV/films, (ii) talking to relatives and friends and (iii) spending time with children. The spouses of male migrant workers sought relief through participation in religious activities. The spouses of female migrant workers were engaged in economic activities, but these men also sought to relieve stress through drinking alcohol and smoking, thereby exacerbating conflict by a propensity to violence as well as by wasting resources.

The study examined only the gender relations reflected in the decision-making process in migrant families, and the changing power relations within the families as a consequence of the migration of the male or female spouse. It did not explore other more intimate and subjective aspects of gender relations that require more in-depth studies.

VIII. Support networks of migrant families

Support networks can be very helpful in assisting women and men seeking new experiences, responding to challenges and overcoming constraints. The study found a lack of support mechanisms available to most migrant workers outside their immediate family networks.

In their responses, 65 per cent of the wives of male migrant workers and 75 per cent of the spouses of female migrant workers reported to be unaware of organizations to assist migrant workers. Of those who were aware of such organizations, 71 per cent of the wives of male migrant workers and 67 per cent of the spouses of female migrant workers had not received any assistance from these organizations. The organizations mentioned by the respondents were chiefly the state Foreign Employment Bureau and its units and, in addition, two international and one local NGO (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1
Organizational Support Networks

	Male Migrant Workers			Female Migrant Workers		
	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total
Aware of organizations providing support services (%)	44.0	26.0	35.0	28.0	27.0	27.5
Organizations assisting migrant workers (% of above)	22.7	38.5	28.1	28.6	37.0	32.7
Organizations helping workers	1 local NGO; 3 government agencies	5 government agencies	1 local NGO; 8 government agencies	1 local NGO; 6 government agencies	2 int'l NGOs; 7 government agencies	3 NGOs; 13 government agencies

Trade unions in Sri Lanka have not organized migrant women workers or taken up their issues for advocacy or negotiation. The associations of migrant workers organized by a few NGOs have minimal outreach.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the family has been the most important support network for migrant workers. The wives of male migrant workers have had the support of parents and in-laws, and appear to have been able to cope satisfactorily with the assistance of the sustained and steady inflow of remittances. As seen earlier, female migrant workers have had a high degree of support from their own families and their relations. In fact, it is unlikely that they could have accepted employment overseas unless family members had come to their rescue and taken over their household and childcare responsibilities. Such family support and assistance have been extended from the pre-migration phase of seeking a job and making the necessary preparations through the years of employment overseas. More importantly, they have been care givers to children who might otherwise have been adrift and exposed to abuse.

The dependence on family networks is seen in Tables 8.2 and 8.3 in the support extended on specific occasions such as illness of children and for ceremonies, such as the legacy of traditional ceremonies in the social milieu. The three major sources of support have been parents, female family members and female members of the extended family, and the network of relations. In low-income neighbourhood in both Colombo and its suburbs and in the rural environment of these migrant workers, strong elements of social cohesion that provide practical and psychological support were clearly visible, mobilizing family networks and even friends and neighbours, though less extensively.

Table 8.2
Persons Providing Support During Illness of Children (%)

	Male Migrant Workers			Female Migrant Workers		
	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total
Parents	44.0	42.0	43.0	48.0	36.0	42.0
Female members of family	30.0	20.0	25.0	13.0	18.0	15.5
Relations	22.0	24.0	23.0	49.0	46.0	47.5
Female members of extended family	2.0	8.0	5.0	7.0	5.0	6.0
Male members of family	8.0	2.0	5.0	2.0	1.0	1.5
Family members	8.0	6.0	7.0	5.0	3.0	4.0
Friends/ neighbours	4.0	4.0	4.0	6.0	3.0	4.5
No one	6.0	10.0	8.0	-	1.0	0.5

Table 8.3
Persons Providing Support during Specific Ceremonies

	Male Migrant Workers			Female Migrant Workers		
	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total	Colombo	Kurunegala	Total
Parents	36.0	42.0	39.0	35.0	26.0	30.5
Female members of family	32.0	12.0	22.0	9.0	8.0	8.5
Relations	16.0	22.0	19.0	34.0	31.0	32.5
Female members of extended family	18.0	10.0	14.0	11.0	4.0	7.5
Male members of family	14.0	4.0	9.0	1.0	2.0	1.5
Family members	10.0	8.0	9.0	5.0	1.0	3.0
Friends/neighbours	2.0	2.0	2.0	4.0	2.0	3.0
No one	2.0	-	1.0	-	1.0	0.5

Some interesting differences can also be seen. Male migrant workers have received more support from male members of families than female migrant workers, reflecting nuances of gender solidarity. The wives of male migrant workers appear to have needed less support, while the families of female migrant workers have had to provide extensive support to female migrant workers in a context in which many male spouses gave preference to their own desires and interests rather than to family needs.

IX. Conclusions and way forward

9.1 Conclusions

This study on the gender roles and support networks of migrant workers was located in urban and suburban Colombo and in urban and rural neighbourhoods in the Kurunegala Divisional Secretary's Divisions. The

context in which emigration for employment took place did not differ from the conditions documented in other studies of migrant workers over nearly three decades. Men with diverse skills, but without access to remunerative employment, responded to the demand for skilled labour in West Asian countries and in recent years in East and South-East Asia. The outflow of women without access to employment in low-income families was in response to the demand for low-cost domestic labour in West Asia, South-East Asia and some western countries. The push factor was economic deprivation and the goals were chiefly to escape from poverty and secure a better quality of life and upward mobility for their families. Often, repeat migration became necessary to approach or reach these goals, triggering changes in gender roles and in the social climate in the family.

Gender roles and relations are not static despite culturally determined patriarchal norms that women and men tend to internalize. This study sought to examine the impact of migration of men and women for employment on gender roles and relations in the families of migrant workers and their access to supportive networks. The study focused on the gender division of labour within the household, the relative access to and control of resources and the relations of male and female spouses in the decision-making process that is apt to reflect power relations between spouses or partners.

The study confirmed that the gender division of labour in the household had been inequitable prior to migration. Women bore a disproportionate share of the burden of household chores and the major responsibility for the care of children, the sick and the elderly, relegated to them as 'women's work', and tended to have less visibility in critical financial transactions pertaining to assets and investments.

Two different trajectories of responses to the absence of a spouse overseas and temporary structural transformation into single parent families were found in the families of male migrant workers and female migrant workers, reflecting gender differences in adjustment to the new context.

Wives of the male migrant workers extended their gender roles to take over the previous tasks of their spouses with respect to activities outside the household, including a strong presence in major financial transactions. To women's work, therefore, were added household management and the consequent increase in workload. As the case studies indicated they undertook new tasks and responsibilities with success even in difficult circumstances, acquiring self-confidence in the process. While family members were forthcoming in their support, the women appear to have been largely self-reliant.

The departure of the female migrant workers left an enormous gap in household and childcare activities. It was clear also that, with few exceptions, male spouses were reluctant or unwilling to take over 'women's work', relegating these tasks to female members of the families or extended families. The gender division of labour in the household pertaining to domestic chores and childcare continued unchanged. Male spouses, however, increased their involvement in financial matters in view of the influx of new resources, creating problems, tensions and disruption in the family owing to the misuse of these resources, alcohol addiction and extra-marital affairs.

The nexus between nuclear and extended families in Sri Lanka implied that, traditionally, children had multiple caregivers. The crucial role played by female members of the family in childcare in the families of the female migrant workers replicates the 'fragmentation of motherhood', discussed by Gamburd (2002) in her study in a village in the South. There does not appear to be a disjuncture in relationships as both female migrant workers and the working wives of male migrant workers were clearly satisfied with their childcare arrangements. An inquiry into the reaction of the children was outside the scope of this study.

A facet of change surfacing from the study was the change in gender relations in the families of female migrant workers. Prior to the departure of migrant workers there was no evidence of strong patriarchal control, as the practice of joint decision-making prevailed in more than half of the families, at least concerning routine household decisions and child welfare. Migration introduced a new dimension into these established relations.

The transfer of decision-making 'on the spot' to wives was effected relatively smoothly in the families of male migrant workers. They acquired more control of resources and more space in decision-making, often together with mutual trust and a sense of responsibility and increased capabilities on the part of the women. The pattern of joint decision-making, however continued with the advent of more rapid communication methods, such as mobile telephones, buttressed by the fact that the male migrant workers continued to be the 'breadwinners' and main providers of financial resources.

The female migrant workers became the primary income earners in their families, thus effecting a role reversal. The female migrant worker had control of resources and the study found that in families with dissolute spouses, unilateral decision-making increased through successive phases of absence abroad. Decision-making power was sometimes delegated to the large number of female members of families and extended families, and to a

lesser degree to a few male members. Women became decision-makers and this new manifestation of asymmetrical gender relations created tensions and conflictual relations. The challenge to male perceptions of supremacy and masculinity associated with the social norm of a male head of household that defined authority even nominally was seen in this study, as in other studies, to create tensions, conflictual relations, domestic violence and family disruption. It was noted that there were gender differences in the strategies used to relieve stress created by the long-term absence of a spouse with some women seeking support in religious practices and some men, on their own admission, resorting to alcohol and smoking.

Migration undoubtedly increased access to financial resources in many families. The majority of the migrant workers were first-time migrants, but some had migrated as many as five times and, exceptionally, 15 to 18 times. It was found that the contribution from the earnings of migrant workers increased from 12 per cent to 98 per cent of family income in the families of male migrant workers, and from 7 per cent to 82 per cent in the families of female migrant workers.

As in other studies, it was seen that women's access to and control of resources in the absence of their husbands, created far less upheaval than expected, because the classic model of patriarchal control did not have such a strong standing in Sri Lankan society. Women in the Sinhalese and Tamil communities had always enjoyed a degree of physical mobility, particularly in seeking employment in urban centres, as reflected in labour force statistics in Census Reports in the 19th and the 20th centuries. The absence of a male spouse working outside the immediate locality of the home was not an uncommon feature in family life. Adjustment to such situations was not fraught with disaster nor did it inevitably lead to the collapse of family relations.

Moreover, migrant women workers, in particular, used the strategy of mobilising their main social capital, the support of family networks. It was the nuclear plus extended family structure that filled the gap in the household throughout the migration process, providing indispensable support in household maintenance, childcare and, on critical occasions such as children's illnesses and the social legacy of family ceremonies. The social cohesion underpinning family networks and community neighbourhoods in urban low-income locations and in the rural environment has provided the strongest support to the families of overseas migrant workers.

As seen in the study, the overwhelming majority of these families have had little support from non-governmental organizations and none from trade unions, and were compelled to depend on state services provided for families with limited outreach. The study raises the critical issue of

the difference between the support provided by powerful trade unions to workers in the formal sector and that given to these workers in the marginalized informal sector whose remittances are the second-highest contribution to national revenue.

9.2 Way forward

The study has raised issues that call for support or resolution at policy and action levels.

1. The support structures available to migrant workers, especially at the Divisional and village levels, need to be increased and strengthened. This calls for more pro-active state agencies dealing with migrant workers, trade unions and community-based organizations which can offer specific support mechanisms to meet the needs of both migrant workers and their families.

2. Specific interventions are called for to strengthen families of migrant workers, protect the girl child from sexual abuse, improve nutritional levels, provide support for elderly caregivers in these families, and ensure better management of financial resources and equitable benefits to all members of families.

3. Gender sensitization programmes should be organized at community level to promote the equitable gender division of labour and gender roles and relations among members of families of migrant workers. The present programme of inviting the husband of potential migrants for one day to the Training Programme for Housemaids, conducted by the SLBFE, is of little value on account of its short duration.

4. Support should be provided for women migrant workers to organize themselves in associations/groups to promote solidarity, safeguard their interests and negotiate effectively for remunerative employment and a better quality of life.

5. It is suggested that organizations engaged in the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse should be invited to hold discussions with male spouses of female migrant workers and to promote more positive alternative strategies to relieve stress.

6. There should be awareness-raising programmes for potential migrant workers and for state officials and civil society at national and local level to ensure that migrant workers are protected at every stage of the migratory process.

7. State intervention is necessary to provide user-friendly mechanisms for sending and receiving remittances through the banking system and for social security through insurance or pension schemes.

8. Immediate action is necessary to make available comprehensive sex disaggregated data pertaining to migrant workers at local and national levels as a prerequisite for policy, research, advocacy and action. The SLBFE needs to collaborate with recruitment agents, medical institutions and the Department of Immigration and Emigration to ensure reliable data from the time a woman or a man registers for foreign employment until their return to Sri Lanka.

9. Steps should be taken to provide quality training programmes for migrant domestic workers as well as male skilled workers to ensure better adjustment to labour demand in labour receiving countries.

10. In the Sri Lankan context it is necessary to provide opportunities for high levels of skills training for women migrant workers such as care of children, the elderly and the sick, as well as in 'non-traditional' skills that will ensure better remunerative employment and less economic exploitation.

11. Bilateral agreements are necessary at the highest level to provide adequate protection and remuneration to workers. The so-called MOUs with recruitment agents and contracts with employers have been found in this research to be ineffective in safeguarding workers right.

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Appendix

Table 6.4

Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles Before and After Departure of Male Migrant Workers

Tasks	Colombo (n = 30)										Maharagama (n = 20)									
	Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other		Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Household chores																				
Cooking	100.0	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80.0	85.0	-	-	15.0	15.0	-	-	5.0*	5.0*
Washing cooking utensils	100.0	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	85.0	85.0	-	-	10.0	10.0	-	-	5.0	-
Washing clothes	100.0	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	90.0	85.0	-	-	10.0	10.0	-	-	-	5.0
Cleaning toilets	100.0	96.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.3	90.0	85.0	5.0	-	-	10.0	-	-	5.0	5.0
Sweeping the house	100.0	93.3	-	-	-	6.7	-	-	-	-	90.0	90.0	5.0	-	5.0	10.0	-	-	-	-
Sweeping the garden	86.7	86.7	-	-	6.7	6.7	3.3	16.7	6.7	6.7	95.0	90.0	5.0	-	-	10.0	-	-	-	-
Collecting fuel	36.7	76.7	60.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.7	25.0	70.0	55.0	-	15.0	15.0	-	10.0	5.0*	5.0
Collecting Water	43.3	43.7	10.0	-	-	-	-	6.7	46.7	56.7	50.0	30.0	5.0	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	40.0	65.0
Child and family care																				
Bathing children	83.3	80.0	3.3	-	-	-	-	-	13.3	20.0	60.0	50.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	40.0	50.0
Taking care of infants	56.7	56.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	43.3	43.3	25.0	20.0	-	-	-	5.0	-	-	75.0	75.0
Taking care of older children	90.0	86.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	10.0	13.3	80.0	80.0	5.0	-	-	-	-	-	15.0	20.0

BD – Before departure;   AD - After departure;   * Domestic aid

Table 6.4 (cont'd)
Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles Before and After Departure of Male Migrant Workers

Tasks	Colombo (n = 30)										Maharagama (n = 20)									
	Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other		Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Child and family care (cont'd)																				
Taking children to school	30.0	66.7	50.0	-	-	-	-	10.0	20.0	23.4	35.0	55.0	30.0	-	-	-	-	-	35.0	45.0
Attending parents' meeting of school	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Taking care of the sick	90.0	86.7	6.7	-	-	-	-	-	3.3	13.3	90.0	90.0	5.0	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	-	5.0
Taking care of elders	76.7	73.3	3.3	-	-	-	-	-	20.0	26.7	65.0	75.0	15.0	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	15.0	15.0
Taking sick persons to doctor/ hospital	66.7	90.0	33.3	-	-	-	-	10.0	-	-	70.0	95.0	25.0	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	-	-
Financial transactions																				
Marketing	36.7	90.0	63.3	-	-	3.3	-	6.7	Both 5.0	-	30.0	85.0	40.0	-	15.0	10.0	-	5.0	Both 5.0	-
Attending to Bank matters	33.3	93.3	66.7	-	-	-	-	6.7	-	-	35.0	90.0	50.0	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	Both 5.0	5.0
Paying bills	26.7	90.0	66.7	-	-	-	3.3	6.7	3.3	3.3	35.0	90.0	55.0	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	5.0	5.0
Other financial matters	30.0	93.3	70.0	-	-	-	6.7	-	-	-	40.0	90.0	50.0	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	5.0	5.0

BD – Before departure;   AD - After departure;   Both – Both parents

Table 6.5

Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles Before and After Departure of Female Migrant Workers

Tasks	Colombo (n = 74)										Maharagama (n = 26)									
	Wife/partner		Husband/partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/not reported/other		Wife/partner		Husband/partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/not reported/other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Household chores																				
Cooking	86.5	-	-	10.8	13.5	86.5	-	-	-	2.7+	76.9	-	-	15.4	23.1	80.8	-	-	-	3.8+
Washing cooking utensils	86.5	-	-	10.8	13.5	86.5	-	-	-	-	73.5	-	-	15.4	23.1	80.8	-	-	5.0	3.8
Washing clothes	86.5	-	-	13.5	13.5	85.1	-	-	-	1.4	76.0	-	-	19.2	23.1	80.8	-	-	-	-
Cleaning toilets	79.7	-	2.7	10.8	13.5	75.7	-	4.1	4.1	9.5	73.1	-	3.8	15.4	15.4	76.9	-	-	7.7	7.7
Sweeping the house	81.1	-	1.4	12.2	17.6	83.7	-	2.8	-	1.4	76.9	-	3.8	15.4	15.11	80.8	-	-	3.8	3.8
Sweeping the garden	78.3	-	1.4	13.5	13.5	78.3	-	1.4	6.8	6.8	80.8	-	-	15.4	15.4	80.8	-	-	3.8	3.8
Collecting fuel	31.1	-	58.1	47.3	8.1	40.5	1.4	9.5	-	2.7	34.6	-	53.8	46.2	7.7	46.2	-	3.8	3.8	3.8
Collecting water	48.6	-	16.2	24.3	8.1	40.5	-	1.4	27.0	33.8	34.6	-	26.9	11.5	11.5	50.0	-	-	26.9	38.5
Child and family care																				
Bathing children	50.0	-	-	5.4	10.8	44.6	-	-	39.2	50.0	60.0	-	-	7.6	-	42.3	-	-	40.0	50.0
Taking care of infants	28.4	-	-	1.4	6.8	24.3	-	-	64.9	74.3	15.7	-	-	-	-	15.3	-	-	84.6	84.6
Taking care of older children	71.6	-	2.8	25.7	13.5	54.1	-	3.3	-	18.8	84.6	-	-	30.8	11.5	57.7	-	-	3.8	11.5

BD – Before departure;   AD - After departure;   + Purchase food

Table 6.5 (cont'd)
Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles before and after Departure of Male Migrant Workers

Tasks	Colombo (n = 74)										Maharagama (n = 26)									
	Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other		Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not Applicable/ Not reported/ other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Child and family care (contd.)																				
Taking children to school	29.7	-	28.4	24.3	6.8	20.2	-	2.8	48.6	52.7	34.6	-	26.9	30.8	3.8	30.8	-	-	34.6	38.5
Attending parents' meeting of school	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Taking care of the sick	79.7	-	2.8	24.3	12.3	62.2	-	1.4	5.4	13.5	84.6	-	-	23.1	11.5	61.5	-	-	3.8	15.4
Taking care of elders	62.2	-	2.8	18.9	10.8	45.9	-	1.4	24.3	33.8	73.1	-	-	23.1	15.4	65.4	-	-	11.5	11.5
Taking sick persons to doctor/ hospital	43.2	-	44.6	45.9	9.5	45.9	-	5.4	2.8	2.8	42.3	-	38.5	42.3	15.4	53.8	-	-	3.8	3.8
Financial transactions																				
Marketing	33.8	-	55.4	47.3	8.1	44.6	1.4	6.8	Both 1.4	-	46.2	-	38.5	38.5	11.5	50.0	-	3.8	3.8	7.6
Attending to bank matters	34.2	-	54.1	54.1	9.5	33.8	1.4	8.1	Both.4 NR 1.4	1.4	34.6	-	42.3	42.3	11.5	42.3	-	7.6	Both 3.8 NR 7.6	7.6
Paying bills	28.4	-	59.5	52.7	8.1	35.1	2.8	9.5	Both.4	2.8	34.6	-	46.2	46.2	11.5	42.3	-	3.8	Both 3.8 NR 3.8	7.6
Other financial matters	34.2	-	55.4	52.7	8.1	36.5	1.4	8.1	Both 1.4	2.8	34.6	-	50.0	53.8	11.5	38.5	-	-	3.8	7.7

BD – Before departure;   AD - After departure;   NR – Not reported;   Both – Both parents

Table 6.6
Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles before and after Departure of Male Migrant Workers

Tasks	Colombo (n = 30)										Maharagama (n = 20)									
	Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ Not reported/ other		Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Household chores																				
Cooking	93.3	86.7	-	-	6.7	13.3	-	-	-	-	95.0	95.0	-	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	-	-
Washing cooking utensils	86.7	83.3	-	-	13.3	13.3	-	-	-	1	95.0	95.0	-	-	5.0	5.0	-	-	-	-
Washing clothes	96.7	90.0	-	-	3.3	10.0	-	-	-	-	95.0	90.0	5.0	-	-	10.0	-	-	-	-
Cleaning toilets	90.0	86.7	-	-	6.7	10.0	-	-	3.3	3.3	90.0	90.0	10.0	-	-	10.0	-	-	-	-
Sweeping the house	83.3	90.0	6.7	-	10.0	10.0	-	-	-	-	95.0	90.0	5.0	-	-	10.0	-	-	-	-
Sweeping the garden	83.3	86.7	6.7	-	10.0	10.0	-	-	-	3.3	95.0	90.0	5.0	-	-	10.0	-	-	-	-
Collecting fuel	33.3	46.7	63.3	-	3.3	13.3	-	30.0	-	10.0	65.0	85.0	35.0	-	-	5.0	-	10.0	-	-
Collecting water	46.7	40.6	16.7	-	10.0	10.0	-	10.0	33.3	40.0	60.0	65.0	15.0	-	-	5.0	-	-	25.0	30.0
Child and family care																				
Bathing children	56.7	53.3	-	-	3.3	10.0	-	-	40.0	36.7	60.0	55.0	-	-	-	5.0	-	-	40.0	40.0
Taking care of infants	36.7	36.7	-	-	-	3.3	-	-	63.3	60.0	45.0	40.0	-	-	-	5.0	-	-	55.0	55.0
Taking care of older children	83.3	76.7	-	-	-	3.3	-	-	16.7	20.0	90.0	90.0	-	-	-	5.0	-	-	10.0	5.0

BD – Before departure;   AD - After departure

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Table 6.6 (cont'd)
Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles before and after Departure of Male Migrant Workers

Tasks	Kurunegala (n = 30)										Alawwa (n = 20)									
	Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other		Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Child and family care (contd.)																				
Taking children to school	20.0	36.7	36.7	-	-	6.7	-	6.6	43.3	50.0	35.0	50.0	25.0	-	-	5.0	-	-	40.0	45.0
Attending parents' meeting of school	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Taking care of the sick	86.7	83.3	-	-	3.3	6.6	-	-	10.0	10.0	85.0	85.0	-	-	-	5.0	-	-	15.0	10.0
Taking care of elders	63.3	60.0	-	-	3.3	6.6	-	-	33.3	33.3	55.0	55.0	-	-	-	5.0	-	-	45.0	40.0
Taking sick persons to doctor/ hospital	53.3	63.3	40.0	-	3.3	10.0	-	16.7	3.3	10.0	65.0	90.0	35.0	-	-	5.0	-	-	-	5.0
Financial transaction																				
Marketing	23.3	73.3	73.3	-	3.3	13.3	-	13.3	-	-	50.0	90.0	45.0	-	5.10	5.0	-	5.0	-	-
Attending to Bank matters	26.7	76.7	70.0	-	3.3	6.7	-	16.7	-	-	45.0	95.0	55.0	-	-	5.0	-	-	-	-
Paying bills	26.7	73.3	66.7	-	-	10.0	6.7	16.7	-	-	40.0		55.0	-						
Other financial matters	26.7	73.3	66.7	-	3.3	10.0	3.3	13.3	3.3	3.3	35.0	40.0	55.0	-	-	5.0	-	-	10.0	5.0

BD – Before departure; AD - After departure

Table 6.7

Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles before and after Departure of Female Migrant Workers

Tasks	Kurunegala (n = 30)										Alawwa (n = 20)									
	Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other		Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Household chores																				
Cooking	85.7	-	1.4	21.4	12.9	77.1	-	-	-	1.4[+]	100.0	-	-	30.0	-	66.7	-	3.3	-	-
Washing cooking utensils	87.1	-	-	20.0	12.9	78.6	-	-	-	-	100.0	-	-	33.3	-	63.3	-	3.3	-	-
Washing clothes	88.7	-	-	20.0	10.0	68.2	-	1.4	1.4	1.4	96.7	-	-	26.7	-	66.7	-	3.3	3.3	3.3
Cleaning toilets	81.4	-	1.4	22.9	10.0	70.0	-	-	7.1	-	93.3	-	-	33.3	-	56.7	-	3.3	3.3	6.7
Sweeping the house	90.0	-	1.4	24.3	8.6	72.9	-	1.4	-	1.4	100.0	-	-	36.7	-	60.7	-	3.3	-	-
Sweeping the garden	85.7	-	2.9	20.0	10.0	75.7	-	-	1.4	-	96.7	-	-	36.7	-	56.7	-	3.3	3.3	3.3
Collecting fuel	45.7	-	38.6	44.3	11.4	40.0	4.3	11.4	-	3.3	60.0	-	40.0	70.0	-	26.7	-	3.3	-	-
Collecting water	58.6	-	14.3	25.7	11.4	51.4	2.9	4.3	18.6	18.6	66.7	-	26.7	53.3	3.3	36.7	-	6.7	3.3	3.3
Child and family care																				
Bathing children	60.0	-	-	8.6	7.1	48.6	-	-	32.9	42.9	50.0	-	-	16.7	-	20.0	-	-	50.0	63.3
Taking care of infants	34.2	-	-	4.3	2.9	4.3	-	-	62.9	71.4	20.0	-	-	6.7	-	10.0	-	-	80.0	83.3
Taking care of older children	74.3	-	11.4	35.7	8.6	48.5	-	-	12.7	15.7	76.7	-	3.3	40.0	3.3	33.3	3.3	3.3	13.3	23.3

BD – Before departure;   AD - After departure;   [+] Purchase food

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Table 6.7 (cont'd.)
Performance of Household Tasks - Gender Roles before and after Departure of Male Migrant Workers

Tasks	Kurunegala (n = 70)										Alawwa (n = 30)									
	Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other		Wife/ partner		Husband/ partner		Female members of family and extended family members		Male members of family and extended family members		Not applicable/ not reported/ other	
	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD	BD	AD
Child and family care (cont'd)																				
Taking children to school	32.9	-	27.1	37.1	4.3	11.4	-	1.4	50.0	33.3	-	23.3	43.3	-	6.6	-	-	93.3	50.0	-
Attending parents' meeting of school	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Taking care of the sick	77.1	-	1.4	30.0	10.0	57.1	-	-	11.4	12.9	90.0	-	-	46.7	3.3	40.0	-	-	6.7	13.3
Taking care of elders	58.6	-	1.4	24.3	8.6	38.6	-	-	31.4	37.1	70.0	0	-	26.7	-	30.0	-	-	30.0	43.3
Taking sick persons to doctor/ hospital	48.6	-	38.6	57.1	10.0	38.6	1.4	2.9	1.4	1.4	53.3	-	36.7	70.0	6.7	23.3	-	3.3	-	3.3
Financial transaction																				
Marketing	35.7	-	51.4	62.9	8.6	28.6	4.3	4.3	-	-	46.7	-	53.3	66.7	-	26.7	-	6.7	-	-
Attending to Bank matters	30.0	-	66.7	61.4	8.6	28.6	5.7	10.0	-	-	50.0	-	46.7	73.3	3.3	26.7	-	-	-	-
Paying bills	28.6	1.4	54.3	60.0	8.6	25.7	7.1	10.0	1.4	2.9	43.3	-	50.0	70.0	3.3	20.0	-	3.3	3.3	6.7
Other financial matters	30.0	-	52.9	65.7	8.6	25.7	8.6	8.6	-	-	43.3	73.3	56.7-	-	-	23.3	-	3.3	-	-

BD – Before departure;   AD - After departure

Bangladesh

Impact of short term male migration on their wives left behind: A case study of Bangladesh

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Contents

I.   Introduction

Migration for overseas employment is an important livelihood option. Often migration policies implemented by destination countries are in the form of time-limited contracts and thus, economic migration tends to be more temporary in nature. It is becoming increasingly clear that the temporary economic migration experienced by many in predominantly migrant origin countries has significant impacts. These impacts affect countries of destination and origin both at the macro and micro levels. At an individual level, migration profoundly impacts both the migrant and the family that is left behind.

Migration is increasingly on the development agenda with mounting attention being given to migration policies, migrant rights and coping strategies of families. The benefits of migration in general are well recognized, particularly the economic benefits of remittance. However, migration has many costs associated with it as well. It has significant economic and social impacts. The social impacts have remained largely unvisited. One such impact is the impact of migration on household dynamics as well as potentially changing gender roles in the countries of origin.

Bangladesh is a prominent country of origin for labour migrants. Though migration has been a part of Bangladesh's history since independence, it had initially been for permanent settlement to developed countries of the West. Following the construction boom in the Gulf in the late 1970's and early 1980's, a demand emerged for temporary labour migration from many countries including Bangladesh. Between 2002 and 2006, an average of 275,000 Bangladeshi workers migrated abroad for temporary employment.[1] The number of workers migrating abroad has shown an increasing trend, for instance, in 2006 alone 375,000 Bangladeshi workers migrated abroad for temporary employment. During the period 1979 to 2006, 85% of these migrants went to the Middle East[2] with nearly 50% going to Saudi Arabia. South East Asia has also recently emerged as a major destination.[3] The majority of these migrants work in less-skilled and semi-skilled occupations with a predominance of men from the 15-30 year old age group. .[4] However, recent figures indicate an increase in

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[1]   Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) keeps official records of labour migration outflows from Bangladesh.

[2]   The ter mis inclusive of Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC)

[3]   Ibid

[4]   Siddiqui, T. 2003 "Migration as a livelihood strategy of the poor: the Bangladesh case", paper presented at the Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-poor Policy Choices in Asia, Dhaka, 22-24 June

female migration, especially since the ban on migration of women was lifted in 2005.[5]

The economic impact of this international labour migration is most vividly captured by the remittance inflow figures for Bangladesh. During the financial year 2006-2007, remittance sent by expatriate Bangladeshis hit a record high of USD 4.9 billion.[6] This income alone constituted more than 9.1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Bangladesh.[7] Recent estimates from the Central Bank of Bangladesh suggest that with the current remittance growth rate of 26 per cent, Bangladeshi wage earners' remittances will hit USD 5.0 billion in the coming years.[8] In relation to the outflow of migrants, it is not surprising that the bulk of remittances came from the Middle East; however the USA and the UK also figured high indicating the strong contribution to the remittance inflows.

At the macro level, remittances are indeed playing a key role. In 2006-2007 financial year, along with forming a significant part of the country's GDP, the total amount of remittances was estimated to account for 35 per cent of export earnings and is the single largest source of foreign currency for the country.[9] A steady inflow of remittances to Bangladesh has been helpful to a certain extent in addressing foreign exchange constraints and positively affecting the balance of payments. To illustrate further the economic importance of international labour migration on the national economy of Bangladesh, it is interesting to note that in 2005, remittance figures (USD 2.2 billion) were nearly twice as much as the Official Development Assistance (USD 1.4 billion) received.[10] In terms of remittance multiplier effects, in Bangladesh the estimates indicate a multiplier effect of 3.3 on GNP, 2.8 on consumption and 0.4 on investment.[11] Remittances have significantly impacted many development issues. The impact on poverty has been estimated to be quite significant. According to the World Bank Global Economic Prospects 2006, based on a poverty simulation model, it was estimated that remittance flows in Bangladesh have been successful in reducing the poverty head count ratio by 6 percentage points.[12]

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[5]   It is important to note that eversince the removal of the ban on female migration, there has been a increase in the number of women engaging in international migration. However, this number is strictly lower than the number of men engaged in international migration from Bangladesh.

[6]   Bangladesh Bank

[7]   World Bank, Migration and Remittances Fact book 2006

[8]   People's Daily Online < http://english.people.com.cn/200705/22/eng20070522_376604.html>

[9]   Ibid

[10] Department for International Development (DFID) Policy Paper 2007, "Moving out of poverty— Making Migration Work Better for Poor People."

[11] Ghosh, 2006(quoting Doorn, 2003), "Migrants' Remittances and Development: Myths, Rhetoric and Realities", Geneva: International Organization for Migration.

[12] World Bank, Global Economic Prospects 2006

The economic and development dimensions of international labour migration in Bangladesh have become apparent and have impacted the country at the policy level. Taking into consideration the increase in the share of remittances in household incomes rising from 3.7 per cent in 1987-88 to 18.5 per cent in 2002, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper highlights how migration and remittances have emerged as a dominant factor in household dynamics. With an acknowledgement of the benefit of international migration towards the country's development, in 2006 the Government of Bangladesh adopted the Bangladesh Overseas Employment Policy (BOEP).

The preceding paragraphs have highlighted some of the impacts of international labour migration on the economy of Bangladesh. However, to fully understand the influence of migration on the economy as well as the society of Bangladesh, one cannot ignore the importance of exploring at the micro-level (individual level), the impact of the absence of these migrant workers on the families they leave behind. In South Asia, several studies have been conducted in India to analyse the impact of male migration on the wives left behind. In the case of Bangladesh, the impact of this absence and the coping strategies of the family members left behind has not been widely studied. Apart from one recent study thus far[13], there has been no study conducted in Bangladesh that focuses on the lives of the wives of these international migrant workers. Furthermore, the changes in the gender dynamics of the household as a result of this temporary absence remain largely unexplored and almost never addressed.

Hence, the overall objective of this study is to explore the impact of the temporary absence of male migrants on their wives left behind. Furthermore, this study engages in a comparative analysis of the socio-economic situation of these women during three phases of their husband's migration —pre-migration, during migration and post-migration (once the husband returns). Finally, based on the findings, this study puts forth ideas for a way forward for governmental, international, non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society in general.

II.   Research questions and methodology

The overall objective of this research was to explore the impacts of short-term labour migration on gender roles and dynamics in the country of origin.

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The research aimed to address the following specific questions:

What are the impacts of male migration on the wives left behind?

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[13]   Akram, Shahzada M, et al., 2005, "Security and Empowerment: The Case of Left Behind Wives of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers", Bangladesh Freedom Foundation

Has there been a change in the socio-economic condition of female spouses from the pre-migration period to the post migration period?

Has there been a change in the standard of living of female spouses? Do the female spouses have access to remittances?

Do the female spouses experience a change in their decision making power while their husbands are away? Is this a sustainable change?

To what extent did the family dynamics change once the migrant returned?

This study has been conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study was based mainly on primary data that was collected through in-depth interviews with the left behind wives of the migrant workers using semi-structured questionnaires as well as through focus group discussions. A set of questions were also developed for the focus group discussions. The researchers also engaged in informal discussions with the other family members of the husband's family and the left behind wives' paternal family[14]. The researchers also conducted interviews with the husbands (returnee migrants who were either home for vacation or who had finished their employment contract and were now trying to migrate as labour migrants to the same or a different destination). Some interesting cases were repeatedly visited for more information.

Secondary data gathered from a thorough literature review was also used to better understand the patterns that have been exhibited by the primary data. Secondary information was also gathered after talking with grassroots and national level organizations working with the migrant workers— Bangladesh Ovibashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA) and the Welfare Association of Repatriated Employees of Bangladesh (WARBE).

Study site:

The primary data collection was done in two areas of the Savar district: Sadhapur Village and Gandha Municipality. Savar is a suburban area close to Dhaka City, the capital of Bangladesh. The two main activities of the people from these two areas are agriculture and working in brick factories. Given that the two study sites are not geographically large and the number of people engaging in international migration is quite significant, it could be deduced that migration is also becoming an important livelihood option mainly for the younger generation at these two sites.[15] Most migrants

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[14]   It was found that most of the women stayed with their husband's extended or paternal family while their husbands were away.

[15]   This deduction was drawn after conducting the focus group discussions with the community representatives as well as from the personalized interviews with the migrant workers' wives.

from these areas either go to Middle Eastern countries such as UAE or other South East Asian countries such as Malaysia and Korea.[16]

The transportation system that connects these two study sites with the highway to Dhaka (the capital city) is quite efficient, making it relatively easy for the villagers to travel to the capital. Given this proximity to the capital city, potential migrants from this area can easily access migration related information as well as institutional arrangements facilitating temporary migration. In the two study sites there were no interventions from any NGO or Government in relation to migration. Furthermore, migrant associations were not active in these areas. Therefore, the findings from this study could form the basis for a future study that could compare the impact of migration in areas with and without external interventions.

In addition, the research team visited the Sirajgonj Spouse group[17] to conduct focus group discussions. While these discussions are not part of the main dataset for this study, the information provided by the participating women enriched the team's understanding of some of the underlying issues faced by spouses left behind. This group consists of women whose husbands have migrated on short-term work contracts. The Sirajgong Spouse Group has been identified as one of the few interventions for migrant spouses in Bangladesh. The Sirajgong Spouse Group is an initiative taken on by NGOs in order to create a support network for the wives of migrant workers.

Profile of the study population (respondents)[18]:

The study population[19] (hereinafter, *"the respondents"*) comprises of 34 women who are the wives of international migrant workers from the two areas mentioned in the preceding section. Except for 2 respondents, the remainder had children and often had more than one child. In all the cases, the main source of their income is the remittance sent by their husbands. The research focused on families where the migrant workers have been away for at least 2 years. While some men had migrated before marriage and had married while on holiday, most of the respondents' husbands migrated after marriage. This study excluded families where the migration process was not done using proper legal channels.[20]

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[16]   This information was gathered from the focus group discussions.

[17]   Sirajgonj is not part of the study site for the study. It is situated in central Bangladesh, lying northwest of the capital, Dhaka. It is an area with high outflows of migrants and there have been considerable NGO interventions in the area for migrants and their families.

[18]   Throughout this paper, the term "respondents" will only refer to the wives of the migrant workers who have been interviewed during the course of this study

[19]   Study population refers to the particular segment/portion of the total population of the country that has been used in the study.

[20]   This criterion was selected to remove any sort of preset biases from the data. Illegal migration may mean that the experiences of the migrant workers are negative or different those migrating through legal channels and thus accordingly potentially affecting the relationship dynamics with their family members left behind.

Furthermore, to ensure that the findings are not biased, this study only interviewed those respondents whose husbands have migrated to Middle Eastern countries. This geographical specification was necessary in order to compare potentially similar migration experiences in the destination countries.

Another characteristic of the study population is that it is comprised of – a) women whose husbands are away at the time when the study was conducted, b) women whose husbands came back on vacation, and c) women whose husbands came back from one destination and were trying to migrate a second time to a different country in the Middle Eastern region. This selection helped the researchers undertake a comparative analysis of the gender dynamics within the family for the three main stages: during pre-migration (when the husband was trying to migrate), during migration (the period when the husband is away for years) and during post-migration (when the husband returns home for a period of time). As will be discussed in the following sections, the gender dynamics and roles played by the wives of these migrant workers greatly vary during these three different stages.

a) Age group:

As can be seen in the chart below, the majority of the respondents (47.06%) were in the age group of 25-30 years old. Most of these women's husbands left for overseas employment within a year or two of their marriage. Among them, only four respondents stated that their husbands were already migrants and the marriage occurred during the husband's vacation. In these cases, the husbands left within less than a year.
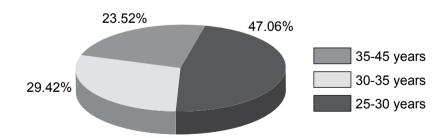
Figure 1: Approximate Age of the Interviewees*

* The age here is an approximation because many of the women were not able to provide their exact date and year of birth. They provided a range for their age as depicted in the pie chart above.

b) Education status:

The data on education levels are important as it was observed that the level of education has a direct effect on the level of empowerment experienced by the respondents. As can be seen in the table below, apart from eight respondents most of them could read and write basic language and numbers in Bengali.

Table 1
Educational Qualification of the Respondents:

Educational Qualification	Number of respondents (Total # 34)
Cannot read or write anything	0
Can only sign their names	8
Have studied up until grade 5	12
Have studied beyond grade 5	11
Completed Secondary School Certificate Examination (S.S.C)*	2
Completed Higher Secondary Certificate Examination (H.S.C.)**	1

*S.S.C. is completed after the completion of grade 10
**H.S.C. is completed after the completion of grade 12

Table 2
Type of Institutions from which the respondents received their education

Institutions	Number of respondents (Total # 34)
Government School	8
Private School	6
Semi Private School	5
NGO School	4
Home schooling	2
College	1

III.   Literature review

Some labour migration studies in Bangladesh, focus on the impacts of international labour migration in general, along with the more recent emphasis on the economic and development dimensions of remittances. There are also studies that have been conducted on female migration separately from that of male migration.[21] However, what is important to note is that all these studies have been mostly skewed towards exploring

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[21]   For detailed information please see, Siddiqui, Tasneem, 2001, "Transcending Boundaries: Labour Migration of Females from Bangladesh", Dhaka: University Press Limited. Also see, Blanchet, Thérèse, 2002, "Beyond Boundaries: A Critical Look at Women Labour Migration and the Trafficking Within".

the economic and human resource development aspects[22] associated with international migration.[23] Studies on the international mobility of the Bangladeshi labour force, consisting both of men and women, have mainly concentrated on barriers to mobility, legal restrictions and regulations both in the destination country as well as the country of origin, recruitment policies, remittances, empowerment of women migrants, etc.[24] Bangladesh country studies that have focused on male migration have hardly taken into account the impact of their absence on their wives left behind. As mentioned earlier, apart from one study conducted by Akram and Karim in 2005,[25] there has been so far no other detailed study in Bangladesh to explore the effects of short-term male migration on wives left behind.[26]

Traditional gender dynamics within Bangladeshi households consist of men controlling most of the household's material resources.[27] Traditional society views women as mostly passive recipients in the households whereas men are perceived to be the active decision makers. This view stems from the ideology that women are economic dependents, first in their paternal homes (dependent on their fathers or brothers) and then in their in-laws home (dependent on their husbands). However, this gender dynamic within the household can be completely changed depending on the economic empowerment of the women. If women, become financially independent, then their level of dependency and consequently, their reluctant compliance with the household decisions slowly decreases. This economic empowerment often raises their status within the household as well. For instance, remittances sent by the migrant workers directly to their wives, makes them economically independent from the rest of the family members (mainly from their in-laws). However, the gender dynamic remains mostly unchanged if the remittance is instead received by the other household members (often times it is the father-in-law, brother-in-law or mother-in law of the wife). Along with remittances there are also other factors that influence the changes in the gender dynamics within the families while the husbands are abroad. Thus, this study will focus on

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[22] This includes the improvement in skills and technical know how of the migrant workers. In effect, this also refers to the social capital that is gained by the migrant workers as a result of being exposed to a new technologies and production functions.

[23] Ibid. Also see, Akram, Shahzada M, et al., 2005, "Security and Empowerment: The Case of Left Behind Wives of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers", Bangladesh Freedom Foundation

[24] Please see, Akram, Shahzada M, et al., 2005, "Security and Empowerment: The Case of Left Behind Wives of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers", Bangladesh Freedom Foundation

[25] Ibid

[26] Please note, another study by Siddiqui, T. 2001 (mentioned in footnote 17), briefly mentions and acknowledges the issue that due to absence of male partners, the wives responsibility increases immensely.

[27] Kabeer, Naila, 1994/1995 , "Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought", published by London: Verso

the overall effects of the absence of the migrant workers on their wives left behind.

In other countries, such as India there have been several studies which examine the effect of the absence of male migrants on their wives. One of the first regions in India where the impact of male migration on women was studied was Kerala, South India.[28] Further studies have also been conducted in Kerala to examine the current gender dimensions stemming from male out migration particularly to the Gulf countries. Another study by Roy and Nangia (2005) examined the impact of male out-migration on the health status of their left behind wives in Bihar, India.[29] More recently, in 2007, a different study exploring the managerial problems encountered by the wives of the male migrants was carried out in the Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh in India.[30]

One of the cross-cutting findings of the Indian studies is that in the absence of their husbands, the roles and responsibilities of the wives in the family often increased as they frequently had to perform the duties of both a mother and a father. Further, the physical separation from the husband often resulted in the wife experiencing loneliness.[31] In several cases, especially that of Kerala, remittances from the husbands often led to an improvement of the women's economic and social status, which in turn, often had a permanent empowering effect on these women.[32]

The next sections of this paper will discuss the research findings from the Bangladesh context. Though in both country cases, case examples are relied upon, there are some general similarities as well as differences which can be acknowledged between the Bangladeshi and the Indian context. However, the nature of the paper does not allow for an extensive comparative analysis.

IV.   Research findings, the case of Bangladesh

The process of migration of the respondent's husbands in most cases included social networks, with an exception of few cases where the migrants went through an agency or middlemen. Usually in cases of recent migration, the migrant had gone through recruitment agencies. However, the general trend is to migrate through a brother or uncle who is already

[28]   Gulati, L., 1993, "In the Absence of Men: The Impact of Male Migration on Women", New Delhi, Sage Publications.

[29]   Roy, Archana K, et al., "Impact of Male Out-migration on Health Status of Left behind Wives – A Study of Bihar, India".

[30]   Kishtwaria, Jatinder, et. al., 2007, "Migration-Its Multidimensional Impact on Mountain Women", Studies of Tribes and Tribals, 5(1): pp. 25-28

[31]   Zachariah, K.C, et al., 2001, "Gender Dimensions of Migration in Kerala: Micro and Macro Evidence", Asia-Pacific Population Journal, pp.-47-70

[32]   Ibid.

a migrant. In two cases, this informal connection was set up through the family members of the respondents (wives). In cases of social networks, the migrants paid a lesser amount as service charge to the brother or uncle who facilitated their migration. The cost of migration ranged from Taka 1 lakh to Taka 2.5 lakhs (approximately USD 1,500 to USD 3,700).

In most cases, the families sold land and other valuable assets (gold jewelry, livestock etc.) supplementing it with loans from wealthier relatives or informal money lenders (usually at a higher interest rate than the prevailing market interest rate) to pay for the expenses. Many of the families stated that they were reluctant to take loans from the bank or informal lenders as the interest rates were high and the repayment period was short. Furthermore, the loan conditions were strictly enforced. Most of the migrants went to work as drivers, unskilled labourers, and construction workers in the destination countries. An exception to these trades was the case of a respondent's husband who went to Saudi Arabia to work as a domestic worker.

4.1 Migration and changing household dynamics:

Bangladesh is a patriarchal, patrilineal[33], patrilocal[34] society where socio-cultural values promote the segregation of the sexes, impose a strict division of labour, and foster a systematic bias of male supremacy.[35] At the same time, strong religious beliefs that stem out fundamentally from this patriarchal nature of Bangladeshi society also add to the prevalent restrictions on women's mobility and empowerment in general.[36] A typical Bangladeshi household consists of a male head of household in charge of all the resources available to the family and therefore, makes most of the household's decisions. Among the respondents of this study, this was in fact the case for all the women in the pre-migration stage (before their husbands migrated). Although before marriage these women also had little say in the decision making process in their paternal households, occasionally, they were consulted when the decisions directly concerned them. Nevertheless, this was not the case when they were living with their husbands and their in-laws after marriage. Often the husband sought advice from his own father or mother. This study did not come across any case where the wife was consulted before any household decisions were made in the pre-migration stage. Furthermore, another important household phenomenon that was observed among the respondents was that as soon as they were married they moved in with the families of

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[33]   Descent and inheritance counted through the male line.

[34]   After a woman is married she will reside with the husband's family/ or in the husband's village.

[35]   Jahan, Rounaq, 1995, "The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming women in development", New Jersey: Zed Books

[36]   This view was expressed by approximately over 50% of the respondents of this study.

their husbands (in-laws) [37] not just with their husbands. However, what is interesting to note is that given this background, when the husband migrates, often times the entire household dynamics changes. Among the study's respondents, 65 per cent lived with their in-laws after their husbands departed while others went back to their paternal homes. This latter arrangement seems to be quite acceptable to both the husbands and their wives since they believe that this will help protect the woman from any sexual or inappropriate behaviour from other males including the male members of the husband's family. This arrangement is also quite popular among some of the respondents especially in cases where the husband has either borrowed money from external money lenders or a family member. By living away from the husband's home, these women could avoid being hassled by different lenders.

During the migration stage (the period the husband is away), the decision-making structure often changes. In the section on economic benefits and costs, this study will explore in detail a very important factor, remittances that directly contribute to the upward mobility of women's decision-making power as well as control over the household resources.

As found during this study, the household dynamics and the social networks within the family and the larger community play an important role in the well-being of the spouse left behind. Migration has been found to restructure the pre-migration household dynamics and temporarily shift the gender roles (as will be discussed in the next section). The intensity and longevity of this change on household dynamics often depends on the pattern of migration and the length of the husband's absence. For instance, the respondents often move back with their in-laws when their husband comes home for vacation.

4.2 Changes in the empowerment & decision making power of the wives left behind

During the migration phase while the husbands are abroad, the spouses left behind frequently become the *de facto* head of household and as a result experience an increase in their decision-making power. They have to not only make everyday decisions but crucial decisions as well, such as where to send the children for schooling or which doctor to go to when they are ill. However, it is important to note that the wife becomes the *de facto* head of the household only when she is economically empowered. In the context of this study, this phenomenon was mainly observed when the remittance money is directly sent to the wife in her name. Pursuant to this, the wife gains comparative economic power with respect to

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[37] The in-laws family often times include the husband's mother, father, grand-mother, grand-father, younger sisters, elder and younger brothers and their families

members of the husband's family. In certain cases, the respondents stated that their husbands sent money only in their name. As a result, they became in charge of the husband's family and as such took care of the in-laws as well as their children. The respondents experienced a steep rise in their decision making power whereby they went from a situation of "no voice" to "some voice." However, a small fraction of the respondents who directly received the remittance sometimes were dependent on other male guardians (father or brothers), during times when they took major decisions such as buying land or engaging in household construction. On occasion, the remittances enabled the wife to move out of her in-laws house into her paternal home and in one case helped the wife to build a separate house for herself and her children. Hence, this study showed that within the study sample remittance earnings played a pivotal role in determining the household dynamics while the husbands were abroad.

In cases where remittances were received by the in-laws (for instance, by the respondent's father-in-law or mother-in-law), the left behind wife's situation within the household (if she is living with her in-laws) did not change most of the time. In fact, some of the respondents reported that it made their situation worse as their husbands were not there and they were financially dependent on their in-laws completely to satisfy their basic needs. In some instances,, when the respondents asked their in-laws for money they were not given any and occasionally fought with them (typically with their mother-in-laws).

Interestingly, in certain cases even when the respondents themselves are receiving remittance and are the de facto household head, the migrant (husband) himself still remains the primary decision maker for major decisions such as the purchase of land or productive assets, or major house repairs. However, unlike the pre-migration stage where the woman is seen as only a passive recipient, in this phase the wife becomes an active part of the decision-making body. In other words, during the migration stage when the husband is abroad, he communicates with his wife through cellular telephones and discusses the matter with her before finalizing the decisions. In almost all these cases, the wife plays a significant role in implementing the decisions.

Nevertheless, the study has found that this increase in decision making power and empowerment in general is often temporary in nature. It is a result of a compromise with circumstances. The husband is away and is not comfortable about sending money to his other relatives. Hence, he views sending money to the wife as a safer option.[38] Furthermore, the shift in

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[38]   This information was gathered during personal interviews conducted with the returnee husbands. Among the interviewees, those who sent money directly to their wives invariably mentioned this as one of the reasons why they sent it to them.

the woman's position (to the head of the household) may not necessarily translate into greater decision-making power (as discussed above), but simply mean a heavier workload and more responsibilities within the household. The woman's decision-making power often goes back to its original level (pre-migration stage) when her husband returns home even for a short vacation. For some respondents however this was not the case. They reported that once their husbands returned they became joint decision-makers in the family. For these select women, the empowerment and change in their decision-making structure became permanent.

Another important phenomenon that this study found was the positive relationship between the level of education and the level of empowerment and its sustainability. It was noticed that as the wife's education level increased, her participation in decision-making in the absence of her husband increased as well. Among the respondents, it was observed that the relatively more educated respondents were among those that received the remittances directly in their names.[39] These respondents stated that they made the daily household decisions even when their husbands came home for holidays. Further, their husbands took into consideration their opinions when investing the money in land, the house or business acquisition decisions. Hence, for the sample of this study, educational attainment is one of the key indicators determining "empowerment sustainability." The more educated the respondent was, the more she was confident about maintaining the change in the household dynamics especially in terms of the increased decision-making power she experienced while her husband was away.

"F. was proud of being the primary decision maker in her family"

F. is an independent and dynamic woman who has considerable influence in family matters. She and her husband jointly decide on major issues such as expansion of the house, sending her younger daughter to the *Madrassa* etc. As F. explained, *"I came up with the idea of sending her (younger daughter) to the Madrassa and talked to my husband about it. We both thought it would be good for her to be in a more disciplined environment."*

F. also has plans for the future. She has a clear idea of where she sees her family in a few years. Her husband plans to come back next year for good and set up a small shop. F.herself plans to raise livestock and buy a small piece of land for vegetable farming. Between the

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39   It is important to note that given that the sample for this study is not too large, this correlation between education level and empowerment cannot be fully confirmed for all similar cases. Research with a wider sample size will be able to fully confirm or reject such a correlation.

rent from the stores, the profit from their own business and the livestock/vegetables, she hopes to make good money and give her children a better life. Unlike most other families, she is well informed and very involved in the major household decisions. Her older brother in-law is the male head in the absence of F's husband, but F is the one who makes the decisions for the well-being of the family.

4.3 Changes in the standard of living: Access to remittance by the wives left behind

Most of the respondent's husbands sent money back home every two to three months. The amount varied between Taka 10,000 to Taka 25,000 (approximately USD 150 USD to USD 370) depending on their earnings and their occupation. Most of the family members stated that the migrants have always sent the remittance through the banks. In most cases, the remittances were used to finance everyday consumption expenditures, paying off debts (the money the migrant borrowed to finance his migration process) to relatives and money lenders. Remittances were also used in economic investments such as buying land, opening a store, and repairing/expanding the homestead. In these latter investment decisions, the migrants remained the primary decision-maker or an equal partner in the decision-making if his wife was purchasing on his behalf.

The respondents in this study included those who received remittances directly in their names and also those whose husbands sent the remittance in the names of their (husband's) father, mother or brother. Those respondents who lived with their in-laws after their husbands migrated were often among the ones who did not receive the money in their own name. Out of 34 respondents, only two cases were reported where the respondents were not living with their in-laws and did not receive regular remittance from their husband. As one of the two respondents told us, *"while he was away, he did not send me money at all. He said that as I was living with my parents, why would I need any money? If I needed anything I could ask them for it. After I argued with him for a long time, he sent me Taka. 1500 (approximately USD 22.5) once through my mother in-law. And I always have to hear about it from them now that I have moved back in."*

During the focus group discussions the research team asked the family members (other than the spouse) as to why some migrant workers prefer sending remittance to their other family members instead of sending it to their wives despite the fact that the wife is responsible of taking care of herself along with their children. One explanation identified by the family members was that there have been considerable incidents in their locality

and other neighbourhoods where the wife took the remittances and ran off with another man. Since, according to the focus group members, there is always a possibility that the wife could be lured by 'men with bad intentions' when she is lonely and vulnerable without her husband, it is safer to keep the account with someone who is the migrant's own flesh and blood. The other commonly recited explanation was that even if the wife is trustworthy and capable of managing the finances, it would be disrespectful to send the money to her instead of sending it to the remaining male head of household or even to his own mother. This would be a sign of disregard for his parents and the elderly in the family. Given the cultural context of Bangladeshi families, the norm is not to violate the family hierarchical boundaries. As one respondent explained, *"he could never propose to transfer the account from my mother in-law's name to mine. After all this time taking such a step would be an insult to the family."*

It is interesting to note that in almost all the cases where the husband married after he had migrated (married during his holidays), the account was never under the control of the wife. As new brides, the women had no power within their husband's family to transfer the remittance account to her name from her in-laws' name. As discussed earlier, in cases where the remittances are not sent to the wife directly, often the wife does not know when and how much remittance money their husbands sent. In most cases, the in-laws buy the woman the necessities she needs as opposed to giving her cash in hand.

Overall, from the sample of this study, it has been observed that all the respondents have experienced a change in their standard of living (in almost all cases an upward movement), as a result of their husbands working abroad. However, the increase has not been equal for all the respondents. It was found that those who received the money in their name, experienced the greatest increase in their standard of living. Most were able to invest in areas that they felt were important such as their children's education, medical expenses and consumption goods (televisions, household appliances, gold jewellery, etc). Those women who did not have direct access to the remittance money and lived with their in-laws still experienced an increase in their standard of living in terms of better consumption of food by them and their children, better education for their children, better clothing, medical treatment, etc. For this latter group of women, there were no instances where part of the remittance money was given to them to buy other consumption goods for themselves. The two women who lived with their parents and did not receive any remittance are the only ones who did not experience much change in their standard of living.

One important phenomenon that has been observed in all the respondents is "housewifization". This term coined by Maria Mies signifies a level of household income that is enough to enable the woman to stay at home without having to engage in any economic activities. All 34 respondents of this study reported that they themselves are not engaged in any economic activities. Their sole source of income is the remittances from their husband. There are several reasons why one observes this "housewifization" phenomenon among these women. First, as mentioned above, the money they receive is often enough for their subsistence and hence, there is no incentive for them to engage in income generating activities. Second, even when the remittance earnings are not enough, women still do not go outside to work. This is because of the "taboo" that is associated with women whose husbands are away as mentioned in the previous section. They are most vulnerable to inappropriate advances by other men. This will be explored in detail in the following section. Third, most of these women have young children and thus devote their time taking care of them and the household. Fourth, those women who live in joint families are often engaged in taking care of elderly in-laws and thus stay at home.[40]

4.4   Economic vulnerabilities of the wives left behind

The respondents also highlighted the economic aspect of vulnerabilities associated with times when the migrants are not able to send remittances regularly. Since none of the respondents are engaged in economic activities and are completely dependent on their husband or their families, they are financially vulnerable in times of irregular remittance inflows. While they may have had money one month, they never knew whether they will still have money in the coming months. Another issue related to economic vulnerability is the difficulty in paying off debts and loans after their husband has migrated. While the migrant himself had taken the loan to pay for the process of migration, the wife is often left the responsibility of paying it off. As the remittance money can be irregular and is often not sent to the wife directly, she does not have control over paying off debts on time. In such cases she is often harassed by the lenders, relatives who had given money to her husband and/or also by her in-laws. She may be blamed by her husband's family for not paying off the loans through other means (for instance, by asking for money from her natal home) and this adds more strain on the marital relationship between the couple. As one respondent stated, *"every time he calls, my mother-in-law complains to him that the lenders harass the family and this has brought disgrace on the family. And when he asks me about it, I can't tell him that his parents don't give me any money because even if I told him, he wouldn't believe*

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40   Mies, Maria. 1986, "Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour", Zed Books Limited, London, UK

me. Or if he demanded that his parents give me the money, they would be angrier with me. I can't do anything about it."

4.5 Socio-economic vulnerabilities faced by the women left behind: Restriction to mobility

From the perspective of physical security as well as social security, all of the respondents unanimously stated that due to the absence of their husband they felt that they were more susceptible to "losing their honor" or getting labeled as "fallen women" or "easily available women." Hence, the sense of security among these women becomes volatile and goes through periods of high security (when their husbands are with them) and periods of low security (when their husbands are abroad). Most of the women who would normally be willing to go out after sunset with their husbands or even alone themselves when their husbands are in town are not willing to do so when their husbands are abroad. The reasons for this are two fold. First, they are scared that someone might target them and make indecent comments or advances towards them as those men know that while the husband is away the respondent will not have anyone to whom she can turn to for help without being humiliated. Furthermore, the respondents who are living with their in-laws are particularly scared that if "inappropriate" gossip is brought to their in-laws attention then they will be in trouble with them as well as their husband. Second, in the absence of the husband, women living with their in-laws are reportedly forbidden to go out alone especially after sunset. The respondents reported that in the presence of their husbands, they experience less restriction on their movements.

Another important impact of male migration could be seen in the increase in the incidence of using *purdah*. Most of our respondent's husbands started adopting a more stringent form of *purdah* and honour for women (presumably as a result of being exposed to the different gender roles constructed in destination countries and wanting to see their wives as they are used to seeing women in destination countries), and had imposed greater control on their wives mobility sometimes using other male relatives to do so during their absence. There are other indicators of this as well, such as leaving the wife under the charge of another older female relative. As one respondent said, her husband had explicitly told his older sister in-law to keep an eye on his wife and if anything happened then the sister would be responsible and would have to answer to her brother upon his return.

The issue of observance of *purdah* and restriction on mobility of the women were universally adhered to regardless of higher or lower income families. Two of the respondents were from an elite family, where they

are completely forbidden to leave the house without wearing *purdah* during the absence of their husband. Most women stated that they do not necessarily feel obliged to wear purdah when they went out with their husband. However, during their absence they often felt that it might be safer if they adopted *purdah.*

In terms of mobility, most of the respondents did not prefer to go out alone. Those who lived with their in-laws were always accompanied by male relatives or their older female relatives suggesting a restrictive environment. It is important to mention that the respondents living with their in-laws were considerably less mobile than the respondents living in their natal homes. The one exception to this was a very young wife living with her parents. As her mother explained, her son in-law had left his wife in her care and she couldn't risk anything *'bad'* happening. Apart from this exception, the other women who lived with their parents had much more liberty in terms of movement. When need arose they often went to the markets or banks alone and did errands alone.

4.6   Increase in the workload of the wives left behind:

All the respondents of this study, especially those who do not live with their in-laws reported that during the period that their husbands are away they experience an increase in their work load. Often times, they have to take care of chores that their husbands would normally look after when they are in the country. These include buying food, going to the market place, taking children to the doctor, taking care of other household logistics, etc. However, those women who are living with their in-laws and have rather restricted mobility do not necessarily experience the same level of increase in their workload. This is because during the absence of their husband it is often their father-in-law or brother-in-law who takes care of these activities. Given this situation, these women (living with their in-laws) have to remain more attentive in taking care of their in-laws as they are now fully dependent on them for majority of the things.

So, regardless of whether the woman's decision-making power or her control over economic resources increases or decreases as a result of male migration, her work burden and responsibilities for the family still intensify. In many cases, the woman becomes the primary care giver not only for her children but for the entire household. Furthermore, during the absence of the migrant workers, their wives perform the role of both mother and father to the children. As a consequence, the traditional division of labour based on gender has occasionally been broken.[41]

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[41]   This finding is also confirmed by Siddiqui, Tasneem, 2001, "Transcending Boundaries: Labour Migration of Females from Bangladesh", Dhaka: University Press Limited.

An important concern voiced by spouses left behind is the sense of insecurity they experience in their uncertain circumstances. Many of the women complained of not having a male role model for their younger children, especially the boys. In some cases, the boys go astray and become involved in anti-social activities and start mixing with the local boys who may behave inappropriately. The mothers often have a hard time controlling their sons or keeping an eye on them. Some of the women told us how they felt miserable thinking that their husband was working hard abroad to make money so that they can give their children a better life than they themselves had and that the children were wasting it away. Most of these women felt that the situation would have been positively different if the father was present.

Furthermore, in relation to the children, the study found that there is an increasing trend of sending migrant children to *Madrassas*. This trend can be a result of a few reasons. First, in the case of young girls, the absence of a father figure in the household might have pushed the mother to place their daughters in *Madrassas* (which are perceived to be safer for women than other public spaces). Second, it could be a cultural influence adopted from the Middle East (the primary destination country for the area studied). Third, given that several respondents reported difficulty in 'managing their boys', *Madrassas* might have appeared to be a place where the children could be sent for a holistic education and also *Madrassas* offered room and board thus making it easier on the family members. There were cases where the child used to go to a public school before migration and later was transferred to the *Madrassa* for "better learning and discipline."

4.7   Changes in the health status of the wives left behind:

Many of the respondents reported suffering from health problems. In several cases the ailments were developed after their husbands had left. One of the respondents reported that after her husband left she began worrying extensively about her husband's well-being. She fell seriously ill and was taken to the hospital by her son in-law. There she was diagnosed with high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and heart problems. Her husband had sent them money for the medical expenses and now she spends a substantial amount on medication. While this is a drastic case, most of the women complained of loneliness (due to the absence of their husbands) leading to depression at times. Several women also complained about tiredness and headaches and they attributed these to the increased workload and to the constant worry over their husband's, as well as, their children's well-being.

One of the more sensitive issues that the study came across was the issue of sexual insecurity. It was a difficult area to explore given that the societal structure is such that it is not a practice to discuss such things in public. However, one respondent narrated her experience about how her brother-in-law made indecent passes at her and as she was a new bride in the house she felt helpless and very vulnerable. She could not speak to her mother-in-law about it, because she was her husband's stepmother and the brother-in-law was her own son. Her husband was more understanding than expected (as described by the respondent) and he asked her to go and stay with her parents. But as she herself said, *"not all women are that lucky."* During the focus group discussions, the respondents shared anecdotes about women who not only suffer at the hands of their husband's male relatives, but sometimes they are abused by their husband's friends as well. Another respondent informed us that for a long time her younger brother-in-law took advantage of her and she endured his sexual advances as she had no option. "*I was so scared to tell my husband that I thought that the harassment was more bearable than the pain that I would face from my husband if he ever finds out about this. He might misunderstand me."*

The research team asked the respondents individually if they were aware of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Apart from two respondents all of them informed us that they have some preliminary knowledge about what these diseases are. However, they never discuss this topic among themselves or with their husbands. They are scared to mention this topic, which revolves around a trust issue, to their husband thinking that this will trigger anger on their part.

Overall, the spouses left behind felt that they were vulnerable to not only physical but also psychological threats. They had to be extra cautious about their behaviour in public, had to maintain a good relationship with their in-laws and maintain a respectable distance from all other male members in the family and outside the family.

4.8   Incidence of violence/abandonment:

The study did not come across any case of physical violence between the husband and the wife during the pre-migration stage. However, there were a few cases of violence toward the wives once the migrant worker had returned. In most cases the violence was spurred as result of the returnee migrant becoming involved in extra-marital affairs. When some of the respondents were asked why their husbands were drawn to other women upon return, they alluded to fears that while they were abroad their husbands might have become used to being with other women apart from their own wives. Another explanation for this behaviour was

put forward by the mother-in-law of a returnee migrant. She said that once the migrant returns often there is no work for him in the village. In many cases, out of boredom, the migrant may become involved with the wrong crowd identified by this woman as a 'bunch of good for nothings who have nothing to do and no family to look after' and with "bad women," (sex workers). One of the respondents stated that she had been going through some marital problems since her husband returned to the country. It seems that her husband has been seeing another woman in Savar town since his return. According to his wife, he has been negatively influenced by his unemployed friends who had acquired many vices such as frequently visiting prostitutes, gambling, etc. This has gone as far as him declaring the affair to his wife and his parents. He is determined to continue the relationship and as she said, *"all he talks about is getting married to this woman. He will hear of no reason. As soon as it is nightfall, he goes off to town to meet her."* Her husband is abusive and if she raises questions about where he is going, he reacts violently. *"Sometimes he goes crazy and behaves like an animal. He will beat me up and verbally abuse me as well. I don't know what to do."*

The other factor the study found that contributes to violence among families with returnee migrants is the inability of the husband to accept the new role the wife has adopted in his absence. One of the respondents shared that her husband has been very abusive towards her because since his return he has seen her go out to the market and make decisions regarding daily regular household expenditures without consulting him. As one respondent said, *"I am used to making the decisions about when to buy the monthly rations. And I don't always ask him about it. If I don't, he gets mad and beats me. He also gets mad that I go out in the late afternoon to chat with other women who have become my good friends while he was away. I don't understand why I have to stop doing this. I am not doing anything wrong."*

According to the respondents the worst form of violence is abandonment. One of respondents, J., was abandoned by her husband for another woman after almost 11 years of marriage.

"J. feels unfairly abandoned and does not know why her husband left her"

J. had been married for 11 years. Her husband had been in Saudi Arabia even before they were married (for 5 years). After marriage, he used to come home every two years for three month holidays. Last year he came back in November for holidays. They have a daughter who is in grade three. Usually he is very affectionate

towards his daughter and spends a lot of time with her during his holidays. This time he ignored her completely and "barely said two words to her since he has been back." Then on the day of Eid (religious festival), he left the house in the evening after having a fight with J. about his affair with another woman in town. He verbally abused her and even slapped her a few times. He hasn't returned since then. They found out that he was living in town with another woman and when confronted by J.'s brother, he told her brother that he married the other woman. Now he is trying to get the papers for the house and is pressuring J. into handing them over. The community leaders had conducted a *shalish* (informal system for justice) to resolve the matter, but he has not conceded. She is thinking of going to the police to submit a case against him for remarrying without her consent.

From anecdotes gathered from other respondents, it could be commented that cases like above are perhaps not seldom. Given that, like J., many of these women are dependent on their husbands financially, so it is quite difficult for them to fight against their husbands for their own rights. Furthermore, the women's social networks with their natal family are often not too strong. Thus, as J. explained even if she wanted to leave, she had no place to go, as her parents are poor and they cannot afford to feed her. Her only hope is that her husband will change his mind, think of their daughter and come back to her.

Violence against women is not limited to physical violence. Some of the spouses, especially the younger women talked about emotional abuse at the hands of their in-laws. Some respondents narrated how their mother-in-laws did not let them talk to their husband privately when he called. *"Whenever he calls, she (mother-in-law) hovers around and tries to listen to everything I say. She barely lets me talk to him saying that he shouldn't spend his money on phone calls. The only time I get to talk to him in peace is when I am at my parents and he calls on my uncle's phone. Even that is rare, because my mother- in-law doesn't like me going to my father's place too often."*

4.9   Communication of the wives left behind with their husbands living abroad

Most spouses interviewed said they were able to talk to their husband quite regularly and frequently. However, in most cases it wasn't until the husband sent a cell phone for them that they had access to phones. Except for one respondent, none of the spouses had gone to the market and bought a phone. The most common practice was for the husband to

buy and send a phone from the destination country with someone who was coming back. In a few cases, the husband bought the phone when he was visiting the family.

Most of the women felt that with the cell phones they were better able to keep in touch with their husband and unlike previously when it was difficult to trace their husband's whereabouts, now they were better linked. This has been beneficial for them as now with regular contact they think their husband has less chance of *"forgetting them."* The respondents also alluded to the fact that with better communication they also had a clearer picture of their husband's life abroad and the kind of struggles he has to face. Furthermore, this has raised awareness about the working conditions and living standards in the destination countries, which in turn has helped other men planning to migrate be more aware of the situation of a migrant worker. However, some respondents stated that the cell phones also meant increased communication with the extended family (in-laws) which sometimes had a negative impact on their marital relationship especially in cases where the mother-in-law and the respondent did not have a good relationship.

In general, having regular communication with the husband meant that both sides were able to communicate their concerns and feelings to each other. This helped reduce loneliness, depression and anxiety among the left behind wives. On the other hand, this also meant that the husband has more of an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, in effect reducing the wives decision-making power and flexibility at times.

V.   Conclusions and way forward

5.1   Conclusions

This study has made an attempt to explore all the questions posed in the beginning of the report. This paper examined the socio-economic and cultural changes that the wives of migrant workers encounter. Specifically, the study tried to engage in a comparative analysis among the pre-migration, during migration and the post-migration stages. Migration appears as a "mixed blessing" for the wives who are left behind. The study sample showed that apart from one exception most of the women have experienced an increase in their standard of living as a result of their migrant husbands. However, the level of the increase varied significantly from one woman to another. Those who lived with their in-laws and did not receive the remittances directly had a lesser increase in their standard of living compared to those who received the remittances in their names. Overall, all these women experienced an increase in the quantity and quality of their food intake.

The study also examined the issue of empowerment faced by the women while their husbands were abroad. Particularly, whether the empowerment is temporary, that is a compromise given the circumstances, or permanent resulting from a better understanding of the changed gender roles. The general situation that the study found was that women experienced an increase in their decision-making power and hence, improved their empowerment status in the absence of their husbands. However, in the majority of the cases, it was found that once the husbands returned they assumed the previous role of being the head of the household (similar to that of the pre-migration stage). Nevertheless, this study also came across respondents for whom the empowerment has been sustainable and now forms an integral part of the decision-making process of the household. In addition they have remained engaged in all types of activities which they undertook while their husbands were abroad.

From the sample studied it was also found that most of the women who did not live with their in-laws while their husbands were away and received the remittances in their name experienced the greatest upward mobility in their empowerment status among all the respondents. Furthermore, there seemed to be a positive relationship between the level of education and the sustainability of this empowerment. The more educated the respondent the higher the likelihood that the empowerment would continue in the long term. Those women who lived with their in-laws, experienced no change in their decision-making power or empowerment status.

Another important feature that was explored in this study was the socio-economic change that these women undergo when their husband is living abroad. In terms of mobility, most of the respondents in the study reported a reduction in their mobility when their husband is abroad. On the other hand, their mobility is high during the period when their husband is home. This effect again is varied by women who stay with their paternal families and women who stay with their in-laws. Those who stay with their in-laws experience a more severely imposed restriction on their freedom to move while those who live with their paternal family do not face similar restrictions. The same could be said about maintaining purdah. Overall, during the absence of their husbands, the incidence of using purdah increases for both security reasons and family (in-laws) rules.

 Increased workload is a potent socio-economic cost borne by the wives as they now have to play the dual roles of father and mother. Many of the respondents fear that due to the extended absence of their father the children will not grow up the way they have dreamt. Another issue of grave concern to these women is the fall in their level of personal and social security while their husbands are abroad. They are most vulnerable

to harassment by men who believe that while their husbands are away these women do not have any protection.

Furthermore, the issue of violence and verbal abuse from husbands that have returned is of concern to the respondents. The fear of abandonment is especially high among these women. Specifically, the thought that their husband will find another woman and will abandon them as a consequence, although the sample for this study only showed one such case.

In general migration is financially beneficial for most of the wives of the migrant workers. However, the overall socio-economic impact faced by these women is mixed and varies greatly depending on their personal circumstances.

As already mentioned in the literature review section of this paper, some of the findings in the context of Bangladesh are similar to the findings of the Indian studies. The increase in the daily workload of the wives along with their feelings of loneliness as a result of the absence of their husbands are common features in both the countries. However, the issue of decreased mobility as well as the maintenance of *purdah* as a security concern appear to be relatively unique to the Bangladeshi context based on the results of the sample studied for this paper.

5.2 Way forward

There has been a lot of focus on safe migration for both men and women in recent years on the national and international agenda. Initiatives from different sectors of society—government, civil society and the international community promote the rights of migrants workers. However, an important group, the family left behind remains often ignored by the policy makers and civil society actors. Though the recently adopted Overseas Employment Policy highlights the need for providing migrant families with social protection and working on important areas such as return etc., these need to be translated into programmes. It is crucial to ensure the safety and well-being of the family left behind, especially the spouse and children. After conducting the field survey and engaging in in-depth interviews with the wives of the migrant workers, the following set of policy recommendations have been highlighted:

• Specific programmes should be undertaken for human resource development including raising awareness about financial management for these groups of women. These programmes may include development of skills in sectors like cattle rearing, poultry, fisheries, plantation and small enterprise management. It is important to target not only small short-term income generating activities but also medium-term to long

term sustainable employment opportunities. These programmes could be undertaken by both government union level work units as well as NGOs working at the grassroots level. Almost all the 34 respondents of this study mentioned that after their husband left, they were not sure what they could do financially. They are currently engaged in only domestic activities and completely financially dependent on remittance income. These programmes could make them financially viable on their own, give them more economic independence and free the remittance income so that it can be used for capital investment as opposed to daily consumption goods.

• Among the group interviewed, none of respondents mentioned investing the remittances, mainly due to two reasons: a) the banks do not provide lucrative investment schemes for these women/families, b) even if the banks provide such services, these women are not aware of them. Local banks should be encouraged to open new easily understandable investment schemes for these women/families. They will help generate more income for the families of the migrant workers as well as benefit the national economy in general because remittance earnings by Bangladeshis is reaching close to USD 5 billion a year. [42]

• Migrant workers support groups should be initiated in areas with high incidences of migration. One example of such a support group is the Sirajgonj migrant support group. Formation of this sort of network/ groups should be encouraged as wives of migrant workers are often viewed differently by other men and their respective wives even if they live in the same community. From the study population it was felt that the wives of migrant workers were more in touch with one another than with other women groups within their community. There is a certain level of comfort and understanding shared by these women which works as a bonding source. Thus, having support groups gives these women a collective voice and helps them both socially and psychologically to deal with personal stress and any community problem that is targeted towards them as their husbands work abroad.

• Another concern often raised by the women is in relation to parenting. They often worry about what they would do with their children in the absence of their husbands. One way to deal with this problem is by developing proper parenting institutional support system within the communities. The local community could be engaged in these activities and the lead role could be taken up by the Union Parishad Member or the local NGOs.

• Mass media could be used to design programmes targeting these groups within the population. For instance, drama and talk shows may

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[42]   Bangladesh Bank

be designed on how single mothers can take care of their children or where these women can go when they have a problem, etc.

• There needs to be more focused interventions on schooling for migrant children. It would be beneficial to have committees within schools where there are high rates of migration, to monitor the behaviour of migrant children and provide guidance/counseling for these children. Some of our respondents expressed their fears that without a male figurehead present many of the young boys are being negatively influenced by local delinquent peers into doing drugs and becoming involved in crime. The above mentioned intervention and other such efforts can help alleviate some of these fears.

• The Wage Earners Welfare Fund in 2005 undertook a program to provide scholarships to some of the children of migrant workers. The initiative provided 100 scholarships worth Taka 1000 each (USD 15) to 100 students. However, 2005 was the only year when this initiative took place. Since 2005 this initiative has been stopped. It is important to explore further the lessons learned from this initiative.

• Within the communities where the respondents live, they often have to fight certain myths and misconceptions about their sexuality/ health problems etc. Migrant men and their wives are often broadly equated with having extra-marital relationships in the absence of their spouse. Community level awareness raising programmes need to be undertaken to counter such myths.

• The present health awareness raising advertisements (HIV/AIDS/STDs advertisement) on television do not provide enough information. The television advertisements need to be redesigned to make them more viewer-friendly and appropriately highlight the prevention procedures in an easy to understand format. The restructuring of the advertisement will not only help the migrant community but the Bangladeshi population in general.

• Counseling services on stress management for both the migrant workers as well as their wives needs to be easily available especially in areas where the incidence of migration is high. The local government hospitals could be equipped to provide such services targeted especially towards this community.

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• As seen in the literature review section of this paper, there are not many studies conducted so far in Bangladesh targeting the problems and overall situation of the wives of the migrant workers. Further research needs to be undertaken also in order to assess the health risks and present health conditions of these women.

• It is also important to have positive campaigns to make people aware of how important migrants are to the national economy and how they are contributing to the GDP of the country. This will enhance the status of the migrants and thus, positively affect the perception of those they leave behind. This may also help reduce the vulnerability and insecurity faced by the respondents.

• There is an acute need for developing reintegration programmes for returnee migrants. This is important on multiple levels: first, upon retuning, the migrant needs reintegration assistance, i.e., into employment that is related to his specific skills. The migrant should be able to use the skills learned abroad to generate income for the family. Second, without proper reintegration and no employment prospects, the migrant may become frustrated and in some instances may manifest itself in violent behavior. This in turn may result in post-migration violence against the wife as some cases in this study have shown. Thus, proper reintegration is absolutely crucial for the well-being of not only the migrant himself but also for his wife and children.

• The government should initiate dialogues with destination countries with regard to negotiating bilateral and multilateral agreements to protect the rights of the migrant workers. It is important that migrants are ensured protection upon arrival to destination countries, because their well-being abroad directly impacts the well-being of their family in the country of origin.

• Despite efforts by the government and other organizations working with migrants, there is still a prevalence of middlemen and irregular channels of migration. Though the rates have decreased, this study has come across several cases (although these were not part of the study sample) where the workers migrated through an irregular channels, spent twice the amount needed for visas and work permits and yet, once they arrived in the destination country did not have legal jobs and became irregular workers. It also important that the government is aware of recruitment agencies which may have ties with illegal middleman and continue to vigorously screen those agencies.

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Philippines

Working in Italy: The experience of Filipino migrant workers and their families

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Contents

I.   Introduction and background to Italy-Philippines migration framework

1.1   Introduction

Over the last thirty years millions of Filipinos have left the Philippines to work abroad in pursuit of a better life for them and their families. Census data from 2000 revealed that 5.24 per cent (or 800,051) of Filipino households have at least one family member who migrated abroad to work. Owing to poor economic conditions in the country, women have also begun to migrate in large numbers and by now outnumber male labour migrants in certain countries and economic sectors. The migration of women means that children and other family members remain at home, in particular because of the temporary nature of their work permits and the difficulty of achieving permanent resident status in European countries. This contrasts with other countries such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where workers may apply for permits that will allow them to bring their families with them. However, emerging patterns in some European countries like Italy, Spain, England, Germany and Greece, have permitted overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to extend their stay almost indefinitely and to bring their families under the family reunification procedures. In 2003, the number of Filipino migrant workers in Italy was estimated at 124,188, accounting for 16.2 per cent of all OFW, the highest concentration in any country. Temporary workers in Italy were estimated at 56.5 per cent, irregular migrants at 40.2 per cent and permanent immigrants account for 3.2 per cent. Over the last thirty years, the number of OFWs in Italy has increased sharply from 1,589 in 1975 to 103,565 by 2004. Data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) confirm this trend and rank Italy in seventh place among countries with the highest number of Filipino workers. It is also important to note that outside Asia and the Middle East Italy is among the top ten destinations for OFWs.

Focusing the research on the OFWs in Italy is important for various reasons. For one, as was seen, Italy has the largest concentration of Filipino labour migrants in Europe and outside Asia and the Middle East. Second, Italian immigration laws foresee long-term residence and family reunification, which contrasts with destination countries in Asia and the Middle East. Because of this, migration impacts on family dynamics may also differ. Moreover, the possibility of family reunification and permanent residence in Italy may also influence the migrant worker's decision to return to the Philippines. It also raises issues about the reintegration process should the Filipino worker decide to go back to the Philippines after a prolonged stay in Italy. Third, no study has been conducted to date that simultaneously looks at the impact of labour migration to Italy from the

perspective of both the Filipino workers there and the families left behind in the Philippines. This study attempts to fill that gap.

In the study of labour migration, female migration must also be taken into account. The family, being the functional context which determines an individual's status, shapes migration values and motivations, and the decision to migrate. The propensity to migrate and to work and live abroad is very high in the Philippines and, in general, there is a positive attitude to the migration of women, mainly because of the prevailing economic concerns

Migration is also a means of survival and to improve the individual's and the family's socio-economic prospects in that it generates additional resources in form of remittances sent home. Owing to economic globalization and widespread labour migration, the Filipino family has been transmuted into a transnational family. Although separated by distance and time from their families in the Philippines, migrant and household ties are maintained through the remittances sent home and by modern communication technologies. These family ties are also connected to the extended family through family solidarity and mutual assistance, for instance in caring for children during their mother's absence, and the elderly left behind. In a study conducted among 709 children in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Quezon and Rizal, the results revealed the positive role of extended families in relation to children. Even when both parents are presents, it is common in about 25 per cent of families for relatives to live in the same household; this percentage rises to 39 per cent if the father is abroad and to 62 per cent if the mother is abroad, and further to 89 per cent if both parents are abroad.

Other motivations have also led Filipinos to seek overseas employment. These include the desire to explore a foreign land as well as the need for change and different experiences. A further motive for women migrants is a desire for more independence, while it also constitutes an opening for some married woman to escape from an unhappy marriage.

More importantly, labour migration has offered Filipino families higher economic gains and households to improve their lives in terms of their basic needs, homes, education and even to start small businesses. However, these household earnings depend on the skill level of the migrant. Skilled professionals receive higher wages than domestic helpers, although this will vary with the country of destination, where domestic helpers in Europe receive higher wages than those in the Middle East, and Hong Kong pays higher wages than Singapore and Malaysia. The economic gains for the migrant have to be judged against the social costs of migration, which may be in terms of marriage and family well-being. Moreover, the

mother's absence is seen to have more negative effects than the father's absence, especially in regards child-rearing and nurturing as younger children are more affected than older children. Also, study results reveal that for each spouse, labour migration results in distress from loneliness, marital infidelity, and even mismanagement of remittances.

Although the emergence of alternative arrangements for the care and nurturing of children and household management can be viewed as an erosion of the family as an institution, it can also be seen as indicative of the resilience and adaptability of the Filipino family in the midst of change. Perhaps as Asis (1996) suggests, what is needed is a more accurate account of the changes affecting the Filipino family by "specifying the aspect that is changing, the form it is taking, and the actors or institutions in transition vis-à-vis the larger milieu". This study aims to analyse the impact of migration to Italy on OFWs and the families they left behind, their sources of social support and the prospects for return and reintegration.

Specifically, it aims to:

1. describe the profile of the OFWs in Italy and their families left behind;

2. document the situation of OFWs in Italy in terms of their employment, socio-cultural adjustment and sources of social support;

3. analyse the impact of the separation on the OFWs, their families in the Philippines and their family relations;

4. determine the level of awareness and perceived adequacy and effectiveness of existing support mechanisms among OFWs and their families, and

5. assess the intent to return to the Philippines among OFWs, their level of preparedness and awareness of existing reintegration strategies offered by their government.

1.2   Italy-Philippines migration framework

Italy has traditionally been a country of emigration. More than 25 million Italians left the country to work abroad between 1865 and 1973 (Chaloff and Piperno, 2004); however, in recent years, Italy has become a country of immigration. Taking advantage of Italy's economic growth and the virtual absence of immigration controls, foreign labour started to flow into Italy in the 1980s from Africa, Asia, Latin America and eastern Europe. It was also during this period that the deployment of Filipino workers to Italy began.

Between 1986 and 2001, the foreign population increased threefold from 450,200 in 1986 to 1.3 million in 2001 (Levinson, 2005). Data from

the Italian National Institute for Industrial Accident Insurance (INAIL) revealed that of the 4,743,650 new hires in Italy in 2001, 467,304 were from outside of the European Union (Caritas Roma, 2002). Moreover, of the 227,249 domestic helpers in Italy registered with the Italian National Social Security Institute (INPS) in 1999, half were non-EU workers with 16.1 per cent coming from the Philippines (Caritas Roma, 2002).

As of December 2004, the Italian Ministry of the Interior estimates that a total of **147,000 Filipinos are living and working** in Italy. Of this, 96,000 (65.3%) are in Rome and 51,000 (34.7%) in Milan. Of the 96,000 Filipinos in Rome, 77.1 per cent are temporary migrants (holders of a *permesso di soggiorno*), just a little over one-tenth are permanent migrants (holders of *carta di soggiono*) and 7,500 are irregular migrants.

Italy's strategic geographic location has made it both a transit and destination country for migrants escaping from political and economic crises in eastern Europe, Africa and elsewhere, including the Philippines. Moreover, the demographic decline and low fertility rate in Italy has stimulated demand for foreign labour, and economic migrants have been increasingly attracted to certain growth sectors in the Italian economy, even if the jobs are in the underground or parallel economy.

Over the years, a majority of migrants in Italy entered without a residence or work permit (Reyneri, 2003, 2001). Consequently, immigration has become a priority in Italian foreign policy with most of the attention focused on combating irregular migration into the country. The Italian government has responded to the influx of migrants by enacting restrictive legislation. Italy's migration policy, therefore, addresses two objectives: (1) allow the entry of foreign nationals into Italy to meet the demands of the domestic labour market, and (2) prevent irregular migration on the grounds of security and public order (Bertozzi, 2002).

(a) Legal channels for economic migration to Italy

Italian migration legislation is embodied in the Bossi-Fini Law (Law 30 July 2002, no. 189), which modified the 1998 Immigration Act. Under this law, admission of foreign nationals into Italy for employment purposes is allowed when there is a specific labour demand based on an economic needs test or, in the case of self-employed individuals, if they can demonstrate sufficient resources and the necessary qualifications. There are two ways for migrants to be legally admitted into Italy for economic purposes: (a) the work permit (*nulla osta al lavoro*) and (b) the long-term residence card (*carta di soggiorno*) (Chaloff, 2003).

Work permits are issued for periods of nine months (seasonal work), one year (short-term contract work) and two years (unlimited contract work or

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self-employment) based on a quota system limiting the maximum number of foreign workers to be admitted annually. However, work permits can be renewed for the same period up to six years.

The application process requires the employer to make a request for a worker with the Immigration Office (*Sportello Unico d'Immigrazione*) which forwards it to the local Provincial Italian Labour Ministry (*Ufficio del Lavoro*) for approval. The employer can name a specific individual from a third country or can ask for a third-country national registered on a list of applicants in the country of origin.

Once the work permit has been approved by the *Ufficio del Lavoro*, the *Sportello Unico* requests police clearance (*nulla osta*) from the local Aliens Bureau of the Italian Police (*questura*). Once the approved work permit has received police clearance (*nulla osta al lavoro*) it is forwarded to the prospective employee in the third country and he can now apply for an entry visa at the Italian Embassy or consulate in the country of origin. Under the Bossi-Fini law, therefore, unless the foreign national is invited by an employer to come to Italy to meet a specific labour demand, he/she cannot obtain a visa from the Italian embassy or consulate in his/her home country.

Within eight working days after arrival in Italy, the foreign worker is required to secure a temporary permit to stay (*permesso di soggiorno*) to be filed by the employer who must pay mandatory social security contributions. To get the residence permit, a "residence contract" with the employers is required which guarantees housing for the migrant worker and the cost of repatriation in the event of unemployment or failure to renew the permit. This means that the residence permit is linked to a specific employer and job contract. The self-employed, on the other hand, receive visas and permits within the annual quota for self-employment. They must likewise guarantee adequate housing and income.

The second way for foreigners to legitimately work in Italy is through the long-term residence card (*carta di soggiorno*) which allows unlimited renewal. This is issued to a foreigner who has been in Italy legally for six years on any type of work permit and with no criminal record. It grants a visa exemption to the holder for entry in and exit from   Italy and allows any type of work or study.

(b) Right to family reunification

A provision in the Bossi-Fini Law of 2002 originally contained in the 1998 Comprehensive Act on Immigration, allows foreigners with a residence permit of more than a year to apply for the admission of family members into Italy under the provisions of the law related to family reunification

and residency permits for family reasons, subject to available housing that conforms with the standards of public housing and an annual income equivalent to the minimum set by social services for the number of family members petitioned for reunification. Family members are defined under Italian law as:

a.   spouses;

b.   unmarried children under 18 years of age, with the consent of the other parent;

c.   adult children who are unable to take care of themselves (because of complete disability), and

d.   parents with no other children in the country of origin, or who are 65 years old and whose other children are unable to take care of them because of serious and documented health reasons.

Exercising the right to family reunification, however, is not an easy process because of the large number of documents that are required and the rigidity of the case evaluation conducted by the *questura*.

II.   Profile of Filipino workers in Italy and their families left behind

2.1   Overseas Filipino workers in Italy

A total of 179 overseas Filipino workers participated in this study, a majority of whom were women (69.3%). On the whole, the OFWs are middle-aged (mean age: 41.5 years); with the youngest 22 years and the oldest is 72 years old. Most of them are married, married males outnumbering married females (72.7% and 52.4%, respectively). Between one-fifth and a quarter of the migrant workers are single (22.3%), with single females outnumbering single males by 24.2 per cent to 18.2 per cent, respectively.

The workers are highly educated. Seven out of ten OFWs have had some or a complete college education. A large majority (84.3%) were employed as professionals (19%), sales staff (19%), clerical staff (16.6%) and production and transport equipment operators (14.7%) prior to leaving for Italy.

Slightly more than half (51.4%) of OFWs come from Calabarzon[1], particularly Batangas and Laguna; others are from Central Luzon (14.1%), the Ilocos Region (10.7%) and the National Capital Region (9%).

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[1]   Calabarzon is one of the regions of the Philippines. It is also designated as Region IV-A and its regional capital is Calamba City in Laguna. The region is composed of five provinces: Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon. The region's name is an acronym of the names of these provinces.

2.2 Spouses left behind

The sample of spouses of OFWs left behind consisted of 41 husbands and 21 wives. The average age of the wives was 37 years, with the youngest 24 years and the oldest 57 years old. The husbands were on average 10 years older, with a mean age of 47 years, the youngest aged 30 and the oldest aged 67 years.

The wives are more highly educated than the husbands. A majority of the wives have some or a complete college education (66.7%) while a majority of the husbands (61%) had some or a complete high-school education. Their higher educational achievements notwithstanding, a majority of the wives are unemployed (78.9%) while the husbands are employed in various occupations.

Each OFW household in the study has an average of two children, generally in their teens. The average age of the children is 14 years old, with the youngest aged two and the oldest 25 years. On average, the size of the OFW household left behind has four household members which include the spouse left behind, two children and one relative (e.g. a sibling of the spouse left behind, his/her parent or parent-in-law). Apart from their husbands or wives working in Italy, a few spouses left behind have some of their children in Italy with their spouses.

The OFW spouses in Italy are generally middle-aged. The average age is 42 years with the female OFWs generally older (44 years old) than male OFWs (40 years old). A majority work as domestic helpers (77.2%); however, a much larger proportion of women (85%) relative to men (58.8%) are domestic helpers. On average, OFWs have been in Italy for some nine years. Relative to the men, women have been working in Italy longer (mean = 10 years vs. mean = 7 years, respectively).

2.3 Caregivers of OFW children left behind

In cases where both the father and mother have gone to Italy to work, the children are left in the care of others. A total of 50 caregivers were surveyed in the study. A majority of the caregivers are women (86%). Generally, they are grandparents (64%), other siblings or uncles and aunts (24%).

The age of grandparents caring for their migrant family members' children is on average 66 years, with the youngest grandparent caregiver 49 years old and the oldest 80 years. The majority are married (68.8%) and the rest widowed (31.3%). Most have a modest level of education, mainly elementary education (46.9%) or less (34.4%). Given their age, most of them are unemployed (81.3%).

On the other hand, the average age of the uncle or aunt caregivers is 34.3 years, with the youngest 23 years and the oldest 53 years old. Almost all of them are female (11 out of 12) and half of them are married and the rest single. Unlike the grandparent caregivers, they are more highly educated. One half have a college degree and 16.7 per cent have some college education. In contrast to the grandparent caregivers, only one-third of them are unemployed. A majority are self-employed as small variety (*sari-sari)* store owners (3 out 12), vendors (2 out of 12) and the like.

On average, the relative/caregivers take care of two children. Generally, the children left behind live in the caregivers' households (72%). The average age of the children is 11.5 years, with the youngest less than one year and the oldest 25 years old. Almost all OFW parents of the children are domestic helpers (94.9%) working in either Rome (48.5%) or Milan (38.4%). They have been working in Italy for 12.5 years. The shortest length of stay in Italy was two years and the longest 24 years. Four out of ten OFW parents left for Italy between 1980 and 1990, while five out of ten left the country between 1991 and 2000.

Interestingly, at least one other family member in the caregiver's own household also works in Italy, usually a son or daughter (45%), a sibling (21.7%), a son-/daughter-in-law (11.7%) or a brother-/sister-in-law (11.7%). Almost all are either domestic helpers (93.3%) or caregivers (3.3%). They have been in Italy for an average of 11 years.

2.4 OFW children left behind

Out of 325 children of OFW parents working in Italy were surveyed for this study, 44.9 per cent were male and 55.1 per cent female, and the average age was 14 years. The youngest in the sample was eight years and the oldest 19 years old. The pre-teens (8-12 years old) constitute 35.4 per cent of the sample, while the teenagers (13-19 years old) make up 64.6 per cent.

Among these children, 43.0 per cent had both parents working in Italy, 42.1 per cent had only their mother working in Italy and 14.9 per cent had only their father working in Italy. Among the pre-teens, more than half (53.1%) had both parents abroad in contrast to the teenagers where only 37.6 per cent had both parents in Italy.

When their parents first went to Italy, these children were generally very young. However, on average the pre-teens in the study were much younger than the teenagers at the time their parents first left for Italy, aged four and six, respectively. For both groups, the youngest was less than a year old when the parents went to Italy. Among the pre-teens the oldest was 11 years old, and 17 among the teenagers. More than half

(55.5%) of all children were below the age of six when their parents first left for Italy. Among the pre-teens, a much larger proportion (65.7%) was below the age of six than among the adolescents (50.3%).

III. Migration experience of Filipino workers in Italy and the economic dimension of migration

3.1 Migration experience

Motivations for migration

As also shown in previous studies, the main motivation for working in Italy is economic (57.4%),and the desire to help the family, including providing for the education of children (33.3%). Other personal reasons, such as curiosity and the desire for adventure and independence (5.7%) as well as the desire to improve their lifestyle (3.4%) have also played a role in the decision to work in Italy. Others went to Italy because it provided an opportunity for employment (5.7%) and for reunification with spouses or other family members in Italy (2.3%). A large majority (81.5%) the workers interviewed affirmed that they had been able to achieve the goals they had set for themselves.

Cost of migration and migrant status

On average, the OFWs had been in Italy for 12 years, 60 per cent had arrived between 1980 and 1995, and the cost of migrating `had been paid for either by family members and/or their relatives (54.1%) or the workers themselves (39%).

Like the experience of OFWs in other countries, the cost of migrating to Italy was considerable. On average, PHP 100,000 (at PHP 46.00 to one USD)) had to be paid, with the smallest amount paid amounting to PHP 4,000 and the highest to PHP 500,000 Although these are considerable amounts, almost all of the workers (93.1%) **)** stated that they hade been able to recover the initial outlay.

It would appear that a majority of the OFWs left the Philippines through legal channels as indicated by the fact that most of them (65.7%) registered with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) before leaving. Most of them were also members of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA)[2] (83.6%).

At the time of the survey, four out of five OFWs in the sample had legal status in Italy and were properly documented. Over half of them were in

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[2] The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), an attached agency of the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), is the lead government agency tasked to protect and promote the welfare and well-being of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and their dependants.

the process of having their work permits renewed (53.4%), and almost all of them were registered with the Philippine Embassy in Italy (96%). However, only four out of 10 workers were registered with the Job Center. Although only a small proportion of the workers (15.6%) were members of a union, considerably more were members of an organization (36.7%), particularly a religious or community organization.

Employment situation

Irrespective of sex, the majority of Filipino workers in Italy are service workers (83.7%) particularly domestic helpers (70.3%). As expected, many more women than men work as domestic helpers (78.2% and 52.8%, respectively). Though both males and females work about 38 hours a week, males earn higher wages with monthly median incomes of EUR 800 and 1,000, respectively. Most of them (83%) do not have any other source of income; while those who have generally earn an extra EUR 500. The contracts of about three-quarters of OFWs correspond to the work they in fact perform; however, a substantial proportion have no contracts.

Living arrangements for domestic helpers

Unlike domestic helpers in the Middle East or Asia, a majority of domestic helpers interviewed for this study live on their own outside their employers' residences (74.4%), and generally in a building they share with four to eight persons (62.2%). Male domestic helpers live in more crowded conditions than their female counterparts.

Skills training

Close to half of the workers (48.4%) affirmed having acquired new skills while working in Italy (see Table 4.6). Among the skills cited were cooking and baking (53.8%) and computer skills (20%). A large majority (85.4%) had not attended any business or production-related training; however, considerable over half of the workers (57.6%) were interested to learn a skill when they returned to the Philippines. Among the skills mentioned were setting up or managing a business (33.8%) with a larger percentage of males (45%) interested in learning this skill than females (29.2%). Women, on the other hand, were interested in learning culinary arts, particularly Italian cuisine (25%) and driving (16.7%). A substantial proportion of workers (42.4%) are not interested in learning any skill because they either feel that they are too old (46.7%) or have no time to do so (13.3%).

3.1 The economic dimension of migration

The economic benefits of labour migration are the most tangible positive consequences of working abroad. To assess the economic impact of working in Italy on the workers and their families left behind, the study

looks into the socio-economic status of the OFW households left behind and the remittances sent by the migrant worker from Italy. The results of the study reveal that the OFW families left behind have benefited economically from labour migration to Italy.

Socio-economic status of the families left behind

OFW Families. The OFW families left behind generally own the house they live in and the residential lot on which it stands. What is significant to note is that almost half of the OFW families acquired their houses through earnings from Italy, while slightly over half of the households acquired them through local earnings. Moreover, although the residential lots were primarily obtained from local earnings and through inheritance, some of the households acquired them from earnings in Italy. On the other hand, a majority of the OFW families do not own agricultural land, livestock, houses or apartments for rent, or vehicles for hire.

Caregivers' Families. Because at least one other member of the caregivers' own family works in Italy, it comes as no surprise to find that the families have likewise benefited economically from labour migration. Most of the caregivers own the houses they and their families live in, most of which were acquired with overseas earnings. Others were acquired through local earnings or inheritance. They also own the lot on which their houses are standing, which were likewise acquired through earnings overseas, inheritance or local earnings. On the other hand, most of the caregivers do not own agricultural land, livestock, or houses/apartments for rent. Close to half, however, own a vehicle, which was generally purchased with overseas earnings.

Remittances and their use

Almost all OFWs in Italy affirmed sending money to their families in the Philippines on a monthly basis, normally an average of PHP 173,599 (about USD 3,724) a year or an average of PHP 14,467 (about USD 310) a month. Although the majority of the interviewees said that such amounts were sufficient to meet the family's needs, for some that was not the case. Nine out of ten OFWs stated that the remittances were spent wisely by their families back home. The husbands and wives left behind also said that their spouses in Italy sent an average of PHP 17,161.5 (about USD 369) to their families. The bulk of the remittances went towards household and school expenditures, while the rest was being set aside for savings, or debt reimbursements and entertainment. Similar to the OFWs themselves, 82.3 per cent of the spouses left behind say that the remittances sent were sufficient to meet the family's needs.

According to the caregivers at home, almost all OFW parents sent money every month to their families left behind and in most cases both parents did so (usually an average of PHP 16,915 (about USD 363), the smallest amount being PHP 5,000 (about USD 102) and the largest PHP 57,500 (about USD 1,234). Most of the money went towards household expenses and school-related expenditures, the rest was spent on entertainment, debt repayment and other miscellaneous expenditures.

A majority of caregivers at home affirmed that the remittances received were sufficient for the family's needs, although many also felt that the money sent was insufficient in the event of unforeseen outlays, such as medical costs due to illness, payment of debts, or the extravagance of children. The majority stated that they were unable to save anything from the remittances received and that it was just enough to cover daily expenses.

Although a majority stated that they did not receive remittances from the OFW parents in compensation for taking care of their children left behind, some caregivers did. The money was sent by either both or one of the parents, who was often either the son or daughter of the caregiver.

Investments

Eight out ten OFWs in Italy had plans to invest their money, either in real estate, a restaurant or retail trade such as a sari-sari store, or a grocery store. They said that to ensure the success of their plans, they needed financial or other support, such as seminar-workshops or assistance from government and non-governmental agencies. At the time of the survey, a majority of the workers did not have any actual investments because of lack of capital, although close to half of the workers did have existing investments, either in real estate and agricultural land, or savings in the bank and investment in other businesses. Close to 90 per cent said that their investments were doing well.

Among the spouses left behind, most did not have any actual investments at the time of the survey, though four out of ten did. For a majority their investments consisted of bank savings or time deposits, and livestock. While lack of capital prevented others from investing, most of the spouses plan to invest at some time in the future. Interviewed community leaders also reported that OFW households generally did not set up businesses but invested their money in real estate, particularly residential lots.

IV. The social and psychological dimensions of migration: impact on the Filipino workers in Italy

4.1 Impacts on workers

Feelings upon leaving the Philippines, adjustment and coping strategies

The reactions of the OFWs on leaving the Philippines were varied. While some were happy and excited, others felt sad and lonely, were homesick or experienced a culture shock.

It is interesting to note the different coping strategies adopted to overcome the feelings of sadness and loneliness. Among the male migrants, the most common strategy was to pour their energy into their work, followed by drinking and calling home. The women, on the other hand, adopted a variety of ways to cope, and more women migrants than men had recourse to calling home, praying or reading the bible, concentrating on their work or listening to music.

The most widely adopted strategy by OFW was to concentrate on their work, followed by socializing with others, and familiarising themselves with the language and culture of their new environment.

Current problems

At the time of the survey, over half of the Filipino workers affirmed not having any problems in Italy, though a substantial proportion did face difficulties. Among the problems cited by the workers were financial difficulties, status problems, including difficulties in renewing their work permits, and problems related to salary and benefits, such as the lack of salary increase and of other benefits. Among the problems cited by women were health and marital problems.

Social support

The presence of a network of family and friends in Italy to provide social support was important to the overall well-being and adjustment of the migrant workers. For the married workers, the presence of the spouse and/or children was especially important. Of the 105 married OFWs in Italy, 62.1 per cent had their spouses with them and also one or two children.

The average age of accompanying wives was 35 years, and that of accompanying husbands 42 years. Most of the wives had completed high-school, compared to only 24.1 per cent of the husbands. Regardless of their respective educational attainment, a majority of the husbands and wives also work in the services sector, mostly as domestic helpers like their OFW spouses and have on average been in Italy for 12 years.

The accompanying children were generally in their early teens, on average about 14 years old, though the range of the children's ages was fairly wide, with the youngest less than one-year and the oldest 25 years old. A large majority were unmarried and the largest proportion had some elementary or high-school education. On the other hand, almost all Filipino workers in Italy have other OFW friends with whom they maintained good relations, went on trips and outings together, attended social activities and socialized with them, participated in community and cultural activities, went to church and participated in church activities.

Social integration

The extent to which migrants had become integrated into the host society has implications for their adjustment. Eight out of ten OFWs in Italy felt that they had fully integrated into Italian society. Although there are various dimensions and indicators of social integration, familiarity with the language of the host country and having friends among the locals are two important indicators in the social integration process. Almost all the workers could speak Italian, mainly only on a casual conversational level. While some learned the language from their employers or in the work setting, others took language classes, read Italian dictionaries, newspapers and books, and watched Italian television.

Most of them were also able to read and write Italian. In the same manner that they learned to speak Italian, the Filipino workers learned to read and write Italian in the course of their work or from their employers, through self-study, reading Italian dictionaries, newspapers and books, and from friends. A majority of the workers also had Italian friends. However, because their free time is limited, only a little over half of them are able to meet and go out with their Italian friends.

Social activities

Filipino workers in Italy pursued various leisure activities. One-fifth, the majority women, spent their free time going to church, mass or bible study sessions. They also visited the local sites, watched movies or television, went dancing and karaoke singing, read and participated in sports. More men than women also took part in social and cultural activities; though many stated being unable to do so because of lack of free time.

4.2   Communication and home visits

Communication

Of the married OFWs whose husbands or wives had been left behind, all communicated with their spouses in the Philippines. According to 84.6 per cent of the OFWs, during their first year in Italy, communication with their

spouses was frequent and regular. At the time of the survey, 51.3 per cent said that communication with their spouses was even more frequent than in the first year of their separation, while for one-third it had remained just as frequent and regular as in the first year.

Of those with children or family members in the Philippines, almost all stated communicating with them on a regular basis, some even more frequently now than during their first year in Italy. Similarly, almost all the spouses left behind confirmed that they communicated with their spouses in Italy, primarily via mobile or fixed-line telephones and expressed themselves as satisfied with the frequency of such communication, and the interest expressed in their and the children's well-being, their success at school and daily activities.

A majority of the children left behind confirmed that communication between them and their parents had remained the same or become even more frequent, which was also so for those for whom initial contact had been scarce or almost nonexistent. Generally, communication was via the telephone, whereby the cell phone in particular proved to be an invaluable means of communication, either by voice or by SMS.

Home visits

Around 90 per cent of Filipino workers in the study, confirmed visiting the Philippines in the course of their stay in Italy, with around one-third returning every two years and another 16.6 per cent every year for between one and two months, spending their time with their families, sightseeing or simply resting and relaxing. This was also confirmed by the spouses left behind, though some caregivers stated that the OFW parents visited about every two or three years and usually stayed for one or two months, spending time at home with the family, on leisure activities such as shopping and going out, and visiting other family members or relatives.

V.   The social and psychological dimensions of migration: Impact on family and marital relations and relations with other relatives and the community

5.1   Impact on family relations and the community

Perception of OFWs in Italy

A majority of the OFWs believe that their family relations had improved since they left the Philippines to work in Italy, one-third felt that their family relations had not changed since they left, while six per cent said that their family relations had deteriorated.

Perception of spouses left behind

According to the spouses, family relations within their households were good prior to the migration of their husbands or the wives for Italy and over half said that their families were happy. However, at the time of the survey only one-third of the spouses left behind said that their families were "still happy". When asked to compare their current family relations to the situation before their spouse's migration to Italy, half of the husbands and wives said that their family relations were either better or at their best now, while 44.8 per cent indicated that they had not changed. Only 5.2 per cent felt that their relations had become worse.

Perception of children

To judge from the responses of the children it would seem that their parents' absence had not affected their family relations adversely. A majority of the children described their families as happy and as doing well before their parent(s) had left for Italy. When asked about their families at the time of the survey, their responses were still largely positive, although a lower proportion described their families as happy, with the rest still stating that their families were all right and doing well.

When asked to compare their family relations before their parents left for Italy and at the time of the survey, about half said that they had remained the same, while 42.0 per cent felt that their relations had improved, while for some they were even at their best now. However, the largest proportion of the children stated that they wanted their families to be physically together again.

By and large, the relations between the children of OFWs and their mothers prior to one or both parents' moving to Italy had been positive. The children described their maternal relationships as happy (40.9%), all right (22.1%), close (18.8%) and good (9.1%). Only a small proportion of the children described their relations in negative terms. The pattern remains the same for both male and female children and for pre-teens and teenagers. The maternal relations remained positive overall at the time of the survey, although the proportions describing them as such had declined slightly.

As with the maternal relations, the paternal relations between the children and their fathers prior to one or both parents' departure for Italy had been positive. The children described their relations with their fathers as all right (30.9%), happy (28.3%), close (18.5%) and good (6.4%). Only small proportions qualified their relations with their fathers was negative. The pattern remains the same for both males and females as well as among

pre-teens and teens. At the time of the survey, the relations between the children and their fathers remained positive.

As cited earlier, most of the caregivers are members of the extended family of the worker and members of the OFW's kinship network. Because they have been given the responsibility of taking care of the well-being of the OFWs' children, their relations with the parents of the children in their care prior to the parents' departure for Italy were positive. Some qualified them as good, others as a "close family" or a "happy family", or had "no problems". At the time of the survey that was still the case for, most of them, while for others relations had become even "much closer" or "much better" than before.

5.2 Impact on marital relations

Perception of OFWs in Italy

For an indication of the impact of working in Italy on the marital relations of the migrant workers, the OFWs in Italy were asked to describe their marital relations before they had left for Italy and at the time of the survey. Because of the large proportion of no response, the data presented here should be interpreted with care and taken as indicative rather than definitive. One cannot disregard the possibility that the marital situation of the workers who did not respond to the questions may be diametrically opposed to those who did answer.

On the whole, it would seem that working in Italy had not resulted in the deterioration or dissolution of the marital relations among Filipino migrant workers in the study who responded to the survey. For a majority of those whose relationships with their husbands or wives had been good or very good prior to working in Italy they had become even better/stronger since. The pattern is even more pronounced among the OFWs whose spouses are with them in Italy. Although, by and large, marital relations remained unchanged or had become better/stronger among OFWs whose spouses had remained in the Philippines, there appears to be a higher incidence of troubled marriages compared to workers whose spouses joined them in Italy. Data from the survey also reveal that migration was not necessarily the principal cause of marital breakdowns. For most of the currently separated OFW, their marital relations were problematic even before they left the Philippines for Italy. Of the 12 OFWs currently separated, eight had troubled marriages prior to working in Italy, all of them women. Of these, six stated that they had not been on good terms with their husbands, while two others said that their husbands had been either physically abusive or unfaithful. On the other hand, four OFWs who are now separated from their spouses reported that their marital relations were good or very good prior to their move to Italy.

Perception of the spouses left behind

Almost all the husbands and wives left behind also said that before their spouses had left for Italy, their marital relations had been either good or very good. Of these, a large majority indicated that their marital relations had remained unchanged at the time of the survey, and still remained good (76.7%) or very good (63%).

Perception of OFW children left behind

Prior to the move to Italy of one or both parents, the children, whether pre-teens or teens, described the marital relations between their parents as largely positive, indicating that their parents' were happy (32.5%) and had a good (14%) and close relationship (11.8%).

At the time of the survey, the children's perception of their parents' relationship remained largely positive. However, the proportion of children who felt that their parents' relationship had become more troubled increased markedly from 2.8 per cent prior to the migration of one or both parents to Italy, to 13.9 per cent at the time of the survey.

5.3 Impact on relations with relatives and the community

For a majority of married OFWs in Italy working abroad had not changed their relationship with their in-laws, and for just below half of them their relations had even improved. Similarly, the relations of a majority of OFWs with other relatives, neighbours and persons from their home towns, had also remained stable or improved.

A similar picture emerges regarding spouses and caregivers left behind, where relations had remained stable or even improved among the persons concerned. This seemed to be mainly attributable to a greater readiness to assist each other, including financially, and their improved status owing to the money received.

By and large, their relations with their neighbours and the community had likewise either remained stable or even improved markedly, and they were now more highly regarded since their financial situation had improved also.

In the opinion of the caregivers, the perception of the community of the OFWs in Italy is largely positive. They are perceived to have a lot of money and are highly regarded. According to some caregivers, the community also views them as heroes who are full of courage and self-sacrifice. In contrast, there are some who believe that OFWs are perceived negatively in the community and that they are not well regarded on account of their work, while they are also perceived as conceited or lacking in regard for their poor relatives.

5.4 Community involvement of migrant households

A little over half of the spouses left behind are involved in community work. With about a third participating in all activities or projects in their community, and about a quarter active in projects (*Operation Linis)* and *barangay* (community) activities, including *barangay* meetings, *barangay* solicitations, day-care centres and cooperatives, among others.

A majority of the spouses left behind are neither members nor leaders of any formal community organization, pleading lack of time and lack of interest. Those who are members or leaders are involved in homeowners associations, rural waterworks and sanitation associations or cooperatives.

A majority of the spouses believed that they are influential in the *barangay*, in particular the men, who feel that their participation in *barangay* activities and projects and their good relations with the community are among their principal sources of influence there. While most of the spouses are not members of any religious organization, a majority stated being close to the leaders of their religious congregations and feel that the church is able to help them and their families through guidance and advice, and the prayers and inspiration offered. They also state being close to local officials and able to ask them for any help needed.

Key interviews with various community and religious leaders also revealed the positive contributions of the OFWs in the community. They cited that OFWs made donations to the local church in the form of chairs/benches, microphones, ceiling fans and other items needed. Another key informant also pointed to financial contributions received from OFWs for the renovation of the church in the community.

Similarly, the migrant workers contribute money for the annual *fiesta* in the community. They have also donated money to the *barangay* hall for a garbage truck, a computer and an ambulance, and local teachers and principals interviewed also confirmed being able to solicit donations from the OFW households for various projects, such as putting up school perimeter fences. OFW households also assist with the purchase of other needed items that the government cannot provide such as television sets, book shelves, musical instruments and the maintenance of the school grounds.

VI. The social and psychological dimensions of migration: child care and household management

The important role of mothers in their children's lives is evident in households where both parents are present. Generally, it is the mother who takes the children to school, attends school activities that require the presence of parents, and accompanies children to medical appointments.

Though the fathers are present, their participation is more limited compared to the mothers. In the absence of one or both parents from the household as a result of employment in Italy, the role of the extended family in the care and rearing of the children left behind is evident from the data obtained from the OFW children. However, it is even more pronounced among the pre-teens where both parents are in Italy. In most cases, the grandmother of the younger children or their aunts or uncles assume the role of surrogate parents, accompany them to and from school, attending school activities and help them with their homework.

When only one parent is abroad, the remaining parent generally assumes the above responsibilities, in particular the mothers. In cases where the mother is working in Italy, the proportion of grandmothers undertaking the above tasks is much higher than when it is the father who is working abroad. This indicates that in households where the mothers are abroad, fathers need more social support to carry out the tasks traditionally undertaken by the mothers

Among the teenagers, the grandmother and the aunts or uncles also play the role of surrogate parents by carrying out school-related responsibilities normally undertaken by parents. When they are sick grandparents, aunts or uncles or siblings accompany them to the doctor or dentist. However, because they are older, a significant proportion of the teenagers are more autonomous. Many of them are no longer accompanied to and from school, a pattern that is also evident among teenagers from non-OFW households.

When the spouses left behind were asked about child care and household management, their responses reflected the pattern above. Among those with children below 21 years of age, a majority of the spouses left behind said that they themselves took on the responsibility of taking care of them. In the absence of the husbands the wives fulfilled all these tasks, whereas when the husbands had been left behind, other family members, such as the grandparents, helped or assumed the task of child care.

The spouses left behind also said that they managed the households themselves, with a larger proportion of wives doing so than the husbands. As with child care, the management of the household was undertaken by relatives in a small proportion of OFW households. The findings from the OFWs in Italy reinforce the results obtained from the children above. In a situation where one of the parents is working in Italy, the workers said that the spouse left behind generally took on the responsibility of caring for the children and the management of the household. However, the role of the extended family in the rearing of OFW children and the management of the household becomes more evident when both parents are working in Italy. The workers said that their parents and in-laws primarily take on the

parental tasks of caring for the children left behind as well as managing the household.

A majority of the OFWs believed that such responsibilities were carried out effectively and that the children grew up well and did not complain, and no problems regarding household management were reported. However, when the caregivers of the children left behind were interviewed, they reported that they themselves took on the responsibility of rearing the children left with them, though in other cases, both the caregivers and the spouse shared the childrearing task.

A little over half of the caregivers referred to problems in taking care of their wards. For half of them, the illness of children always posed a problem. Other difficulties were the children's negative attitudes and undesirable characteristics. Fortunately for most of the caregivers, other family members or relatives were available to help them with such problems. When asked to rate the effectiveness of their childrearing on a scale of 1 to 10, the average rating was 8.6.

As with childrearing, a majority of the caregivers also managed the household. About one-third shared the task with the spouse. When asked to rate the effectiveness of their household management on a scale of 1 to 10, the average rating was 8.7.

VII. The social and psychological dimensions of migration: schooling and aspirations of children left behind

7.1 Schooling

Like the children in non-OFW households, almost all of the pre-teens and most of the teenagers attended school. However, in contrast to most of the pre-teens and the teenagers from OFW households who went to private schools, the majority of children from non-OFW households study in the public schools. Most of the pre-teens in OFW households are in elementary schools and the teenagers in high-school or college.

The available data show that the pre teens from OFW households are doing better in school than the children from non-OFW households, with a larger proportion not having to repeat a grade or year in school. They are also more regular in their school attendance.

Regardless of whether the pre-teen children came from OFW or non-OFW households, there were a number of things that they liked about going to school that were both academic and non-academic in nature. Both groups liked going to school to gain new knowledge. However, among those from OFW households, meeting and having a lot of friends was cited by a much larger proportion of pre-teens compared to those from non-

OFW households as another reason for liking school. Interesting subjects, nice teachers, having an allowance were also among the reasons given. Among the teenagers from both OFW and non-OFW households, gaining more knowledge or skills and meeting or having many friends were also cited by the largest proportion of respondents as among the things they liked about school.

While four out of ten pre-teens in both OFW and non-OFW households did not dislike anything about going to school, other young children cited among the things they disliked about school teachers they felt to be boring or strict and the heavy and difficult workload in school, particularly the many assignments. However, a larger proportion of young children among the pre-teens from non-OFW households than from OFW households cited bullies in school among the things that they disliked about school.

Similarly, a large proportion of teenagers from both OFW and non-OFW households stated that there was nothing that they disliked about school. As with the younger children, teachers felt to be difficult and the heavy and difficult workload in school were disliked by some. Bullies in school remained an unpleasant thing for a larger proportion of teenagers from non-OFW families than for those in OFW families.

Problems in school

As a whole, a majority of the children from OFW and non-OFW households said that they had no problems in school; in particular children from OFW families.

Aspirations

A majority of children (pre-teens and teens) from OFW or non-OFW families want to finish a college degree and to be able to work later. Only a small proportion among the pre-teens and the teenagers in OFW households specifically said that they wanted to go to Italy or work abroad. The main reasons cited by the children from OFW families for wanting to work after college was to help their parents and to earn more. Children from non-OFW families gave similar reasons for wanting to work after earning a college degree. Like their counterparts from OFW households, they also wanted to help their parents and to earn more money, to escape poverty and have a better life.

The largest proportion of the preteens and the teenagers from OFW households want to pursue a career in the professional, technical and related fields, such as doctors, nurses, engineers or teachers. Their professional aspirations, by and large, did not differ from those of the children from non-OFW families who also wanted careers in

the professional, technical, and related fields, although a significant proportion was still undecided what profession they wanted to pursue in the future.

When asked about their ultimate ambition in life, the top three answers given by the children from OFW households were:

a. for them and their siblings to finish their studies (pre-teens: 25.7%, teens: 28.6%);

b. to be successful/famous in their chosen careers (pre-teens: 26.6%, teens: 19.7%) and

c. to go abroad or to Italy specifically (pre-teens: 11.9%, teens: 10.8%).

Among children from non-OFW families, the following were the top answers given regarding their ultimate ambitions in life:

a. to become rich (own a car, house, land, etc.) (pre-teens: 26%, teens: 27.8%);

b. to be successful in their chosen profession (pre-teens: 30.5%, teens: 20.4%);

c. to help their family out of poverty (pre-teens: 10%, teens: 18.5%) and

d. to go abroad (pre-teens: 6%, teens: 7.4%).

What is interesting to note, are the reasons given by the children from OFW-and non-OFW households for their ambitions in life. When asked to explain why they wanted to achieve the above, the primary reason given by the children from non-OFW households for each one of them was to help the family and to ease their poverty.

In contrast, the main reasons given by the children from OFW households for their ultimate ambition in life varied. Like the counterparts in the non-OFW households, they wanted to finish their studies in order to help their families and to improve their families' economic situation, as well as become successful in their chosen careers.

On the other hand, they wanted to be successful in their chosen careers primarily because they want to be of service to others and to achieve self-fulfilment. Interestingly, the primary reason cited by the pre-teens to go abroad, particularly to Italy, is to be to be reunited with their parents, with the desire to help the family a close second. For the teenagers, the major reason given for wanting to go abroad is to earn a higher income. The second reason was to be reunited with their parents.

Plans for working abroad

According to the children left behind, their parents went abroad primarily to earn a higher income and to send them to school. When asked whether they wanted to work abroad like their parents, a majority of the pre-teens and teenagers answered in the affirmative. However, 15.0 per cent of all the children were uncertain about whether they wanted to work abroad or not.

Among those wanting to work abroad it was in the professional, technical and related fields and in the services sector. The females would like to work as nurses, doctors, caregivers and domestic helpers and the males as doctors, seamen, engineers and office workers. However, at this point in their lives, a substantial proportion was still undecided about the kind of work they wanted to do in the future.

VIII. The social and psychological dimensions of migration: psychological and emotional effects on family members

8.1 Effects on spouses left behind

When their spouses first left for Italy, the husbands and wives left behind generally felt sad. Others said that they had difficulties in adjusting, missed their spouses and worried about them. At the time of the survey, however, most of them said that they had already adjusted to the absence, although a substantial proportion still felt sad. Those who still felt sad coped by entertaining themselves through watching television or singing, doing physical work to get tired, or calling their spouses in Italy, among others. Among the coping mechanisms reported only by the husbands left behind is going out and drinking.

8.2 Effects on children

When asked how they felt about their parents working in Italy, a larger proportion of the older children (aged 13 to 19 years) compared to the younger children (aged 8 to 12 years) said that they were now used to, or had accepted their parents absence. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of these children felt sad and missed their parents, in particular the younger children.

Of those who felt sad and missed their parents, the older children coped with their feelings by entertaining themselves, playing and watching television or listening to the radio. Others read or wrote letters or poetry or called their parents, among other things. It is interesting to note that the females were more likely than the males to withdraw into themselves and engage in more solitary activities such as watching television or listening to the radio, reading or writing letters or poetry, crying, or studying. The

males, on the other hand, coped with their emotions by playing, going out with their *barkada* or friends, or entertaining themselves.

The coping mechanisms of younger children were similar to those among teenagers. A larger proportion of younger boys compared to younger girls said that they would play or entertain themselves whenever they felt sad and missed their parents. In contrast to the older girls, the younger girls not only engaged in solitary activities such as crying, reading and writing letters or poetry, watching television and listening to the radio, but also felt the need to be with others. Consequently, when they felt sad or missed their parents, they also went out with their *barkada* or friends or talked to friends and relatives.

While this is so, social support is available to most of the children left behind in the form of people to whom the children are able to confide in about how they truly felt, such as family members and relatives to whom they can go and confide their feelings. For others, it is their friends or classmates. However, it should be pointed out that a significant proportion of the children said that no one knows that they sometimes felt sad and missed their parents. This may be so because there is no one around to listen to them or they themselves are unwilling to open up and to trust others with their feelings. It is these children who are especially vulnerable and should receive due attention.

The drawings of the young children during the focus group discussion sessions best reflect and clarify what they think and feel about their separation from their parents who are working in Italy. One theme that surfaced in the discussions was the feeling of ambivalence regarding their parents working abroad. When asked how she felt about her parents working in Italy, one child said that she was both happy and sad (*masaya na may malungkot*).

On the one hand, the children were glad that their parents were in Italy because there is money for the family (*may pera*), they are able to go to school (*makakapag-aral*) and prepare for a better future (*para sa kinabukasan*). However, they also said that they still felt sad (*malungkot pa rin*) because the family was not complete (*di sama-sama*). The children thought that life would still be happier if the family were together (*masaya nang buo*). These feelings of ambivalence are reflected in the drawings of Giovanni, eight years old, whose father is working in Italy and Krizzle, 11 years old, whose parents are also in Italy (Figure 1). (Note how the faces of the family members are both smiling and crying at the same time.)

Another theme that ran through the discussions and is evident in the children's illustrations was the feeling of sadness and yearning for the absent parent(s) (Figure 2). Even if the children are in the care of their

grandparents and other relatives, as in the case of Royce, 11 years old, whose father and mother are in Italy, it appears that the extended family cannot fully replace the absent parent(s).

Figure 1. Drawings of children of OFWs in Italy reflecting feelings of ambivalence

Giovanni, 8 years old, grade 2, father in Italy

Krizzle, 11 years old, grade 6, both parents in Italy

Figure 2. Drawings of children of OFWs in Italy reflecting feelings of sadness

Kryzta Mara, 8 years old, grade 2, both parents in Italy

Evan, 11 years old, grade 5, mother in Italy

Royce, 11 years old, grade 6, both parents in Italy

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In the perception of the caregivers, working in Italy by the parents of the children left behind has brought about positive consequences for the children. By doing so, the children's needs have been provided for, they are able to have a good education or to finish their studies and have a secure future. The children also developed positive character traits such as frugality, independence, respect and more openness with their parents.

When asked what negative effects on the children resulted from the parents working in Italy, four out of ten caregivers said that there were none. However, among the negative consequences on the children cited by other caregivers were that the children missed their parents, that they were deprived of their parents' care and attention, that they were not close to their parents abroad and that they envied other children in school whose parents were present.

IX.   Perceived positive and negative consequences of working in Italy

Working in Italy has brought about both positive and negative consequences for the workers and their families. Both economic and non-economic gains accrued to the workers and their families; however, the negative consequences were largely social and psychological in nature.

9.1   Positive consequences of working in Italy

The OFWs cited both economic and non-economic benefits from working in Italy. They are now able to buy things, build a beautiful house, increase their income and establish a business or improve their livelihood. Family-related reasons were also among the positive effects cited, for instance, working in Italy had enabled them to send their children to exclusive schools as well as help their siblings and other family members.

It has also brought about positive changes at the personal level for the male and female OFWs. They said that they have become more independent, responsible and/or hardworking (10.5%) and more spiritual. Others said that they were able to get married (3.3%) and improve their social status.

Concerning the positive effects of their spouses' employment in Italy most husbands and wives cited economic benefits, in particular that their family needs and expenses were now provided for and life had become comfortable, that they were better off financially and could afford to buy things and support their children's studies.

Similarly, the caregivers attested to the positive consequences through labour migration to Italy for them, citing the joy that the children under their care bring to their families as well as the material support and financial security provided by the OFWs. Others also cited the sense of accomplishment and pride at being able to raise the children well.

As to OFW children, most of them reported being able to go to school as the main positive consequence, followed by economic effects such that their parents' employment abroad had enabled them to get what they needed and wanted, to be financially stable and have a better and more comfortable life.

9.2 Negative consequences of working in Italy

Although almost one quarter of Filipino workers reported no negative effects as a result of working in Italy, others, in particular women migrants, referred to the separation from friends and family, and family-related problems, such as jealousy in the family, family members dropping out of school, family break-ups and similar negative consequences. Work-related problems were also mentioned, such as discrimination and ill treatment by employer and dismissal from work, as well as health problems for some Filipino workers.

Although about a third of the workers were satisfied regarding their families, some wished to improve their family relationships, have their families reunited and be taken care of by their children.

Close to one-third of the husbands and wives left behind also expressed themselves as satisfied with the situation, though others felt the separation of the family to be negative and the cause of sadness, and created difficulties caring for It the children and the household.

About forty per cent of the spouses left behind, the one thing they wished they could change is for their families to live together again, although a similar percentage was satisfied with their situation.

As for caregivers, having to take care of the children left with them had not caused any difficulties, some caregivers mentioned that the difficulty of looking after children due to their old age, the added work and responsibility, having less time for themselves and missing those abroad.

9.3 Problems in OFW household

At the time of the survey, a majority of spouses left behind reported having no problems in their families, though some experienced financial problems, missed their husbands or wives abroad and had problems with the children.

Although children did not pose any problems for a majority of the spouses left behind, for one-fourth of the mothers left behind, difficulties arose for the mothers whenever the children became ill. Some wives also cited the lack of motivation of the children as a problem. Among the husbands left behind, the problems mentioned were lack of motivation of children in general and in their studies, in particular.

These findings among the OFW spouses left behind were also echoed by the OFWs in Italy. Although a majority of them had no problems with their children in the Philippines, about one-third of the workers referred to such problems as their children dropping out of school, looking for a mother/father figure, taking drugs and having relationships at an early age.

X.   Migrant return and reintegration

The distinct possibility that overseas Filipinos could be returning to the Philippines was brought into sharp focus in 2002 with the US – Iraq war and the tightening of immigration policies in many destination countries such as Malaysia, Italy and Israel. The deportation of thousands of undocumented Filipinos from Sabah highlighted the importance of a truly responsive reintegration programme for returning workers. Moreover, in view of the fact that many overseas Filipino workers have worked abroad for 15 to 20 years and are either approaching retirement or are no longer physically or psychologically fit to continue working abroad, returning home is becoming an imminent option or an inevitability.

Currently, the Philippines reintegration programme consists of two parts: one undertaken abroad where the workers are located and one conducted in the workers' places of origin in the Philippines.

The concern regarding the *reintegration of overseas Filipino workers* is spelled out in the Migrant Workers Act of 1995 (R.A. 8042). It mandates the creation of a Replacement and Monitoring Center within the Department of Labour and Employment to:

• develop livelihood programmes and projects for returning workers;

• create a computerized information system on skilled Filipino workers accessible to local recruiting agencies and employers;

• conduct a periodic study on job opportunities for migrant worker returnees and

• provide incentives for professionals abroad.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) mandated to promote the welfare of overseas Filipino workers organized programmes for the reintegration of overseas Filipino workers. These include livelihood loans, social reintegration to cope with psychological difficulties, and scholarships to acquire skills for employment and community organizing.

In the host country, OWWA runs a Reintegration Preparedness Program for business and psycho-social counselling services, training schemes on livelihood activities, conducting a project feasibility study, business planning and group discussion on reintegration concerns.

In the Philippines, OWWA has an Expanded Livelihood Development Program (ELDP), a lending programme for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and their dependents, which extends capital to returning OFWs and/or their families who plan to open up small businesses or improve their own existing businesses.

The social integration of these workers into their families, communities and Philippine society as a whole is an equally important aspect of return migration, which, however, has received even less attention. Needless to say, the impact of labour migration extends beyond the economic into the social and the psychological spheres. Working abroad affects the individual migrant's value system and marital and family relationships.

It has yet to be demonstrated that the economic gains from overseas employment indeed outweigh the concomitant social costs. Thus, giving attention to the social reintegration of returning workers is important. The Social Reintegration Program Development of OWWA is supposed to assist returning OFWs to cope with psychological problems or difficulties encountered upon their return to the Philippines. This programme includes the Social Counselling for Women in response to the government agency's gender sensitivity approach. The OWWA Regional Offices are supposed to coordinate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civic groups and other members of the community in providing assistance to OFWs to assist with their social life. OWWA focuses its attention also on strengthening the morale of the families of the OFWs left behind, including the lone parents.

10.1 Permanent return of Filipino migrant workers

It is significant to note that a majority of the Filipino workers in Italy have made no attempt to return permanently to the Philippines. While this is so, most of them plan to return to the Philippines permanently in about 8.5 years. A majority of the workers, however, foresee problems in returning to the Philippines. Among the difficulties cited were the unstable economic conditions in the Philippines and the lack of job opportunities.

Perhaps because most of them have never attempted to return permanently to the Philippines, a majority are not aware of any livelihood programmes for returning OFWs and for families of OFWs. However, if they were to start a business or a livelihood project, a majority would prefer to engage in a single proprietorship either in trading, services or agriculture. More than half said that they knew of current investment opportunities and a majority of them intended to pursue them. On the other hand, 29 per cent indicated that they did not want to pursue these opportunities because they considered them as risky or because they had no surplus earnings to serve as seed capital.

10.2 Awareness of government reintegration programmes

It is significant that a majority of the Filipino workers in Italy were not aware of any type of assistance provided by the Philippine government for returning OFWs. When asked about the form of assistance that could be expected from the Philippine government upon their return to the country, only 53 per cent of the OFWs in the sample responded saying that the government could provide capital or a loan and skills training, as well as lessen red tape in the processing of papers, while some seven per cent indicated that the government ought to provide security and protection. A small proportion also voiced their distrust in the government's ability to follow through with the implementation of programmes. On the other hand, a majority indicated that the Italian government could assist returning OFWs by providing them with a pension.

Almost all of the caregivers were also ignorant of any reintegration programme for OFWs and did not know of any government agency to assist returning OFWs and their families left behind. Only seven out of the 50 caregivers said that they knew that OWWA assisted in particular with hospitalization and medical insurance. Nor did they know of any non-government organization providing assistance to returning OFWs and their families.

10.3 Return of OFW spouse and reintegration

Most of the spouses left behind hoped that their spouses would return to the Philippines for good. Although slightly more than half did not foresee any problems if their spouses returned permanently to the country, 43.5 per cent thought otherwise. Among the problems cited were the lack of money, the lack of work opportunities and the hard life in the Philippines. Like the OFWs, a majority of the spouses left behind were not aware of any reintegration programmes for OFWs.

XI.   Conclusions and way forward

The experience of Filipino migrant workers in Italy and their families in the Philippines highlights a number of important elements regarding labour migration to Italy:

Motivations for migration

Consistent with the migration literature, the primary motivations for Filipinos to work in Italy are economic improvement and the desire to provide a better life for their families. Although the cost of going to Italy was considerable, almost all of the workers had recovered the initial outlay.

Employment situation and migrant status of Filipino workers

By and large, the Italian migration experience of Filipino workers had been positive. The working conditions were generally good. A majority of the workers had contracts that correspond to their actual jobs. They had reasonable working hours and were paid higher wages compared to other host countries. Unlike domestic helpers in other destination countries, Filipino workers in Italy lived outside their employers' residences, mainly in a flat they shared with other workers.

A majority left the Philippines for Italy legally; however, at the time of the survey only 40 per cent of the Filipino workers had legal status or were properly documented. A majority of the workers were in the process of having their work permits renewed, an undertaking that posed problems for a substantial number among them. .

Adjustment and doping strategies

Filipino migrant workers had adjusted to life in Italy and to being away from home. However, male and female migrant workers varied in their coping responses to feelings of sadness and loneliness. The men primarily used avoidant coping strategies in the form of work and alcohol to lessen their feelings of sadness and loneliness. Women migrant workers, on the other hand, used both active and avoidant coping strategies. Calling home, an active coping strategy designed to directly address the problem of loneliness, was the primary coping strategy used. However, they also used avoidant strategies such as prayer or bible reading, work, music or television to keep them from directly confronting their loneliness.

Similarly, the migrant workers used a combination of coping strategies to adapt to the new society and culture. These included avoidance strategies, particularly concentrating on their work, seeking social support through socializing with others or actively dealing with the problem by familiarising themselves with the Italian language and culture.

Migration and economic benefits

The economic benefits are the most tangible positive effects of working in Italy. Almost half of the OFW families were able to buy a house from the earnings abroad and a majority of their children go to exclusive schools. According to the spouses and children left behind, they were better off financially, life had become more comfortable and they were able to satisfy both their needs and wants.

While this is so, the sustainability of the economic gains is uncertain. Apart from investments in real estate, particularly residential houses, migrant workers and their families made no productive investments in the

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Philippines or in Italy. Moreover, they lacked the necessary entrepreneurial and business skills to ensure the success of any business endeavour should they decide to invest in one. Although many workers expressed a preference for putting up a single proprietorship in trading, services, or agriculture if they were to start a business or a livelihood project in the Philippines, a large majority had no business or production-related training

Job fit, skills erosion and brain waste

There is a mismatch between the Filipino migrant workers' qualifications and the jobs they perform. The Filipino workers in Italy are mostly women who are married, middle-aged and college educated. Although a majority of them are college graduates or undergraduates, they have worked as domestic helpers in Italy for an average of 13 years. They arrived at the prime of their working lives; however, for a higher income, they have willingly taken on lower status jobs resulting in skill erosion and brain waste.

Although close to half said that they had acquired some skills while working in Italy, particularly culinary and improved computer skills, these cannot offset the skill erosion and brain waste brought about by the inability to fully utilize their educational training in a more appropriate occupation.

Social networks as social capital

There is enough evidence in the migration literature showing that social networks are a source of social capital and that prospective migrants draw upon them to migrate (Espinosa and Massey, 1997). Evidence from this study points to the important role of social networks, of kinship, friendship and shared community origins in fostering labour migration to Italy. By providing information, financial assistance and social support, these networks, both in the Philippines and in Italy, help to minimize the risks and uncertainties of migration, decrease the cost and increase the likelihood of continued migration to Italy. From a few individuals who first left to work in Italy in the early eighties, there has been a steady outflow of workers over the years to the virtual exclusion of other countries of destination; positive feedback from friends and relatives who were already in Italy encouraged others to try their luck as well.

The presence of friends and family in Italy is an important source of social support that helps to foster the overall well-being and adjustment of the migrant worker. For the married worker, having one's spouse and/or children is especially important. Moreover, having OFW friends with whom they have good relations and can socialize helps to mitigate depression and other psychological difficulties.

In the Philippines, the extended family lends the much needed support to OFW families by acting as caregivers to the children left behind. In the absence of one or both parents from the household the role of the extended family in the care and rearing of the children left behind takes on added importance.

Filipino migrant families left behind

The average OFW household in the Philippines consists of four members, including the spouse left behind, two children and one relative (e.g. a sibling of the spouse left behind, his/her parent or parent-in-law). Among the spouses left behind, the wives are more highly educated than the husbands. While this is so, a majority of the husbands are employed in various occupations in contrast to a majority of the wives who are unemployed.

In cases where both the father and the mother have gone to Italy to work, the children are left in the care of relatives. Most of the caregivers are women who are either the mothers of the OFWs or their siblings. On average, the parent caregivers are elderly, unemployed and with only an elementary education or less. In contrast, the sibling caregivers are younger, more highly educated and employed.

Role of mother in the family

The study revealed the important role of mothers in the care of children and in the management of the household. The mother generally takes the children to school, attends school activities that require the parents' presence and accompanies them to the dentist and the doctor. Although the remaining parent generally takes on the above responsibilities when the other parent is in Italy, a much larger percentage of mothers left behind personally carry out the above tasks compared to the fathers left behind. In households where the mothers are abroad, fathers need more social support to carry out the tasks traditionally assumed by the mothers.

Impact of parental absence on children

Out of every ten OFW children in the study, four had both parents working in Italy, four had their mothers working in Italy and two had their fathers working in Italy. Despite the absence of one or both parents, the data suggest that, on the whole, the children of migrant families are managing fairly well despite their parents' absence. They are doing better in school than their non-migrant counterparts and have generally learned to accept and cope with their parents' absence. Despite parental absence, the children still described their family relationships, including their relationship with their parents, in positive terms.

While this is so, there is a feeling of ambivalence, especially among the younger children regarding their parents' working abroad. Although cognitively they know that the separation from their parents is for their and the good of their families, they still feel sad and long for their missing parents. The desire to be with their parents, especially among the pre-teens, is reflected in the children's wanting to go to Italy not for economic reasons but simply to be reunited with their parents.

Even if the children are in the care of their grandparents and other relatives who provide them with the much-needed social support, it appears that the extended family cannot fully replace the absent parent(s). If there is one thing that they would change about their families today, both pre-teens and teenagers said that they wanted their families to be together again.

Coping strategies of children

Because there is nothing they can do to change their family situation, the children's coping strategies are largely focused on their emotions or designed simply to avoid painful or difficult feelings and to feel better. They involve entertaining themselves, playing, watching television or listening to music, and similar occupations. Whereas girls are more likely to engage in solitary activities such as watching television or listening to the radio, reading or writing poetry or crying, boys are more likely to seek the company of others, particularly their friends, either to go out or to play.

Moreover, social support is available to them in the form of family members or friends in whom they can confide their true feelings. However, a significant proportion of children either have no one to confide in or are unwilling to open up and to trust others with their feelings, and they may be especially vulnerable and in need of special attention.

Aspirations of OFW children

OFW children have high aspirations for themselves. The largest share among the pre-teens and teenagers want to pursue a career in the professional, technical and related fields as doctors, nurses, engineers or teachers. Their ultimate ambition in life is for them and their siblings to finish their studies, to be successful in their chosen careers and to go abroad.

Working abroad remains an attractive option for OFW children. A majority have expressed their desire to work abroad like their parents. However, unlike their parents, most of whom are domestic helpers, more than one-third of OFW children want to work in the professional, technical and

related fields, although a substantial proportion are still undecided about the kind of work they want to do abroad.

Impact on spouses left behind

On the other hand, the results of the study indicate that working in Italy has not resulted in the deterioration or dissolution of the marital relations among Filipino migrant workers. Working abroad is not necessarily the cause of marital break-up. For most of the OFWs who are currently separated, their relationships with their spouses were problematic already before they left the Philippines for Italy. This confirms an earlier study by Parrenas (2001) that revealed that married Filipino women went to Italy to work in order to escape an abusive, unfaithful or irresponsible husband.

However, although by and large marital relations had remained good or become better/stronger among OFWs whose spouses were left in the Philippines, there appears to be a higher incidence of troubled marriages compared to those whose spouses have joined them in Italy.

Communication and family ties

Frequent communication maintains the ties that bind family members. In the physical absence of parents and spouses, constant communication makes their presence felt in the lives of their family members left behind. For migrant families, the advent of technology, particularly the cellular phone and its text messaging capability, has played a key role in helping to nurture the relationships among family members.

Migrant return and reintegration

In view of the fact that many of these Filipinos have been working in Italy for an average of 13 years, permanent return is a distinct possibility in the not too distant future. Despite the fact that a large majority of the Filipino workers have made no attempt to return to the Philippines for good during their years of working in Italy, most of them plan to eventually return permanently to the country.

While this is so, these migrant Filipinos have made no concrete preparations to ensure the sustainability of their economic gains resulting from working abroad in the event of their return to the Philippines. Although a majority of the workers said that they had plans of investing, they lacked the necessary business and entrepreneurial skills that are important prerequisites to the success of their plans.

Permanent settlement and social integration

On the other hand, the provisions of the Italian immigration law providing for family reunification make the permanent settlement of significant numbers of migrant workers and their families a distinct possibility. In this study, six out of ten married overseas Filipino workers either had their spouses and/or one or two children with them. Moreover, perceptual and objective indicators point to successful integration by a majority of overseas Filipino workers into Italian society which further reinforces this possibility.

11.2 Way forward

The results of the study have implications for policies and programmes for migrant workers and their families left behind:

Given that the Filipino workers can settle in Italy and bring their family members, it may be assumed that a number may in fact not return to the Philippines permanently. Moreover, the fact that a majority of migrants foresee problems in returning to the Philippines because of the unstable economic conditions and the lack of job opportunities may lead some who are contemplating a return to postpone their plans. In view of this, livelihood development as well as training programmes for entrepreneurial and business skills should focus on: (1) Filipino workers who intend to return to the Philippines and (2) Filipino workers who intend to remain in Italy or whose plans to return remain in the distant future.

The Philippine government, particularly the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), needs to ensure the a more effective means of dissemination of information concerning the government programmes designed to benefit the migrant workers and their family in the Philippines, such as:

a. Expanded Livelihood or Enterprise Development Loans of OWWA enabling the OFW and any dependants to obtain a loan of between 200,000 and 1 million pesos to for the establishment of a small business or to improve existing businesses.

b. Reintegration Preparedness Program which includes business counselling services as well as training on livelihood activities and community organising.

c. Social Reintegration Program to assist returning OFWs to cope with psychological difficulties they may encounter upon return.

The Philippine government should continue to vigorously pursue bilateral agreements and other alternative arrangements with Italy aimed at improving the well-being of Filipino workers. Particular reference is made

to the proposed RP-Italy Social Security Agreement to grant additional benefits to OFWs in Italy by extending the portability of the Philippines Social Security System benefits to Filipinos working in Milan and elsewhere in Italy and the Agreement on Assisted Return and Readmission of Persons, finalized in 2001.

The government should also push for the recognition of credentials of Filipino professionals (e.g. teachers, nurses) to allow them to practice the profession for which they were trained in the Philippines and to avoid being relegated to domestic services.

The Philippine government, in partnership with church groups and other NGOs, should continue their skills upgrading programmes for Filipino workers onsite to provide them with the opportunity for professional advancement outside the domestic service.

In view of the importance of communication to maintain their family ties, the government in partnership with the private sector and NGOs should embark on training programmes designed to train OFW families in the use of computer-mediated communication, especially the internet and e-mail. Moreover, computer literacy training programmes should be conducted to develop computer skills among OFWs and their dependants both in the Philippines and in Italy. The Tulay (meaning "bridge") programme of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) of the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), in partnership with Microsoft, which provides IT training and access to technology to OFWs and their families, should be expanded to include Italy and the regions of origin in the Philippines of OFWs in Italy.

Programmes for migrants' children should be encouraged, including for children who are with their migrant parents in Italy and who were either born and raised there or who recently joined their parents. The programmes should deal with such issues as identity, cultural adjustment and similar concerns.

Schools could also develop programmes for OFW children, their parents and caregivers on subjects such as effective parenting and coping. Research indicates that children and adults with a wider range of coping strategies at their disposal experience fewer negative consequences in the short and long term, after experiencing stressful life situations. Migration issues might also be included in existing school curricula to provide children with a better understanding of the phenomenon.

OWWA, in partnership with NGOs, can also provide programmes, including counselling services, for married OFWs in Italy and their spouses in the Philippines to help them to better cope with the separation.

Thailand

Gender and migration from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to Thailand

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Contents

I.   Introduction

By the time the mass migration from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar to Thailand began in the 1990s, social scientists had already recognized and begun correcting the neglect of women in mainstream migration scholarship. Despite occasional claims to the contrary, women have not been invisible or overlooked in recent research on immigration to Thailand. Almost all research has included both men and women (e.g., Caoutte, Archavanitkul, Pyne 2000; Huguet and Punpuing 2005; TRACE 2004; Pungpuing et al. 2006) or focused entirely on women (e.g. Belak 2002; Panam et al. 2004).

What has been missing is attention to gender. As feminist scholars have made clear, the study of migration and gender is not the same thing as the study of female migrants. At a minimum, a gender analysis entails sustained comparisons of male and female experiences. More sophisticated analyses relate differences or similarities between male and female experiences to features of the origin or destination societies, such as kinship systems, labour market structures, or political programmes; they look at changing definitions of male and female or compare gender systems in different countries (Donato et al. 2006).

Applying gender analyses to migration issues has yielded important insights. Scholars have, for instance, related otherwise puzzling differences in migration propensities between Latin American countries to differences in gender relations (Massey, Fischer, and Capoferro 2006), and shown how Thai migrants' remittance behaviour varies with gender and birth order (Curran and Saguy 2001). In Canada, all proposed changes to immigration regulations must, by law, be submitted to gender analyses (United Nations 2004: 12).

Greater attention to questions of gender is likely to be similarly productive in the case of mass migration to Thailand. Any attempt to do so, however, runs immediately into the problem of lack of information. As discussed below, almost all labour migrants in Thailand are in violation of the country's immigration laws. Migrants and their employers are therefore often anxious to avoid researchers or survey interviewers. Even in the origin countries, people are sometimes reluctant to provide information about family members who have migrated illegally because they fear punishment from local officials (TRACE 2004: 15). Although research on irregular migration to Thailand has been rapidly accumulating, the primary goal of most research has been to document the most egregious abuses, or to provide data for policy interventions among particular target groups.

Such difficulties notwithstanding, this paper makes a start on the analysis of gender and migration in Thailand, by compiling existing information on

similarities and differences between male and female migrants. Assessing similarities and differences falls short of a full gender analysis, but it is nevertheless an essential first step and something that has received surprisingly little attention in the existing literature on Thailand. In many cases, we discovered gender differences that had previously been overlooked or not documented, but, even given available information, are not able to explain these differences. The paper is therefore largely descriptive.

In addition to the secondary literature, we draw on three quantitative datasets. The first primary dataset consists of data at the level of the individual and some on provincial level, provided by the Thai Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Interior to the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University. The second dataset (henceforth the IPSR/ILO dataset) is based on a study of young migrants in agriculture, domestic service, fisheries and manufacturing undertaken by the Institute on Policy and Social Research (IPSR) and the International Labour Organization (Pearson et al. 2006). This dataset contains detailed information on work conditions and migration to Thailand, and some information on family status. The third dataset comes from the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System (KDSS), a census of 100 villages and urban communities throughout 13 districts of Kanchanaburi Province. Five of the 13 districts surveyed are on the Myanmar border, and 12 per cent of the surveyed population aged 15 and over report that they are not of Thai ethnicity. Among these, slightly over half were born outside Thailand, almost all in Myanmar. Although questions on nationality and registration were not asked in Kanchanaburi surveys, qualitative research has shown that many people of non-Thai ethnicity born in Kanchanaburi do not have Thai nationality, and therefore face many of the same problems as people born in Myanmar. The data used in this paper come from the 2004 data collection round.

Section 2 of the paper gives a brief overview of migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar in Thailand; Section 3 looks at the migration process; Section 4 concerns families; Section 5 work; Section 6 remittances, and Section 7 violence. The paper concludes with a summary of findings and some priorities for future research.

II.   Basic data on immigrants in Thailand

People have always migrated across Thailand's current borders with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, but there was a marked increase in migration to Thailand during the 1990s, attracted by Thailand's economic boom and pushed by poverty and widespread violence in Myanmar. Virtually all migration was irregular in that migrants entered the country

without passing through immigration checkpoints, or entered legally and then overstayed their permits. There are also smaller numbers of irregular migrants in Thailand from other countries such as China, Viet Nam and Bangladesh, in addition to relatively privileged legal migrants from many other places (Huguet and Punpuing 2005).

To estimate total numbers of migrants in Thailand it is necessary to start with government statistics and then adjust for under-reporting. A 2004 registration campaign for irregular migrants from Cambodian, Lao PDR and Myanmar identified 1.28 million migrants of all ages. The registration provided migrants with relatively favourable terms, including the right to stay in Thailand for one year at no initial fee, so it is likely that a significant share of migrants in Thailand registered. In 2005, the government instructed village heads to estimate the number of registered and non-registered migrants living in their communities. This led to a national estimate of 1.52 million migrants. Taking the registration and village head statistics and rounding up to allow for under-reporting, a figure of 2 million is probably a reasonable approximation of the total number of migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar in Thailand, representing around three per cent of Thailand's total population.

The position of migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar in Thailand is precarious. Even migrants who have completed the registration formalities are still technically in violation of the Immigration Act. Moreover, registration only provides partial protection from police harassment. The Thai government is endeavouring to work with neighbouring governments to set up a new system whereby migrants apply for work in Thailand in their home countries. However, the government of Myanmar, origin of the majority of migrants, is offering only limited cooperation, and many commentators fear that the proposed system is in any case too complicated and expensive for most migrants (Pearson et al. 2006; World Bank 2006).

Relatively large and permanent settlements of migrants have formed in districts near the Myanmar border, including areas sampled by the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System. Concentrations of migrants are found in other parts of Thailand, such as in Samut Sakhon, a major centre for seafood processing, but, in general, migrants at a distance from the Myanmar border form smaller communities or are scattered across workplaces.

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of migrants who received work permits in 2004, arranged by nationality, calculated from raw data provided by the Ministry of Labour. Only 0.83 million migrants completed the steps necessary to obtain a work permit. Migrants with who did presumably

differ in systemic ways from migrants who did not. It is therefore important to be careful when extrapolating from estimates like those shown in Table 1 to the whole population of migrants. However, registration rates are likely to be sufficiently similar by gender and nationality that the estimates in Table 1 should give a reasonably accurate picture of the distribution of migrants by gender and nationality. Women reportedly represent about 44 per cent of all migrants, though the female share is somewhat higher among Laotians and much lower among Cambodians. Even allowing for errors in the data, it is unlikely that women form the majority of migrants in Thailand. The United Nations estimates that women made up 50.1 per cent of international migrants in East and Southeast Asia in 2000 (Zlotnick 2002, cited in Piper 2005: Box 1), a slightly higher percentage than for migration to Thailand.

Table 1
Distribution of migrants by gender, 2004

	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Total
Female (%)	30	56	45	44
Male (%)	70	44	55	56
Total (%)	100	100	100	100
Numbers	111,391	106,706	611,476	829,573

Source: Calculated from raw data provided to the Institute for Population and Social Research by the Thai Ministry of Labour.

III.   The Process of migrating to Thailand

A migrant coming to Thailand from Cambodia, Lao PDR or Myanmar must travel to the Thai border, avoid getting into trouble with the authorities while crossing the border, travel within Thailand and find a job. Travel within Myanmar can be particularly difficult for women. In response to international publicity of sexual violence against Myanmar migrants, the Myanmar government has introduced measures to restrict women's movement. In Shan State, women aged between 16 and 25 are prohibited from travelling, except with a legal guardian. Elsewhere, women have to carry special permits or cannot obtain passports. As in other countries where similar procedures have been introduced, the main effect is to open up new possibilities for officials to extort bribes rather than to assist women (Belak 2002: 195, 198-9).

Every step in the migration process is easier and safer if the migrant can draw on an established network of migrants, and hence benefit from the experience of others who have migrated previously. Research in the United States and Latin America has found that men and women, even within the same household, do not necessarily draw on the same networks. Moreover, the extent to which migrants rely on networks varies

by gender, with gender differences depending on factors such as the distance travelled and the degree of autonomy experienced by women (Curran and Rivero-Fuentes 2003; Mahler and Pessar 2006:33; Massey, Fischer and Capoferro 2006).

Researchers in Laos have shown that networks are specific to particular employers. Since, as further discussed below, employment is often heavily segregated by gender, employment-specific networks tend to be gender-specific. The researchers describe, for instance, a village where most women migrate to Bangkok to work as gold cutters, while men, lacking equivalent networks, migrate to many places across Thailand for a wide variety of work. Women from this village are more confident about migrating than men. In a second village, most men work in tobacco plantations in Nong Khai, while women work in a wider variety of jobs and must take greater risks (TRACE 2004: 48-51).

Table 2
People who assisted migration to Thailand,
migrants aged 12-25 in Northern and Central Thailand (%)

People who assisted	Male (169)	Female (206)	Total (375)
No one, came alone	4.1	1.0	2.4
Parents	11.2	20.9	16.5
Friends	23.1	21.4	22.1
Agent	61.0	52.9	56.5
Other	0.6	3.9	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated by the authors from the IPSR/ILO dataset.

Although gender differences in networks within each community appear to depend mainly on accidents of history or geography, pooling results for many communities may reveal some general tendency for men and women to use different types of networks. We could identify only data from the IPSR/ILO dataset which show the identity of people who assisted migration to Thailand. The migrants are aged between 12 and 25 and come from diverse communities in Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia, with the majority originating in Myanmar. Qualitative research as part of the study suggested that the categories 'friends' and 'agents' blur into one another. The results hint at the existence of a possible male-female difference: females are somewhat more likely than males to be assisted by family members.

Males and females are likely to go to different places within Thailand because of differences in the type of work they go to and presumably other factors as well. The Ministry of Labour data on migrants with work permits provide information on the district of registration and can therefore be used to investigate differences in the destinations of men and women.

We constructed statistical models that use geographic and economic data on each district to try to predict the percentage of migrants in that district who are female. We constructed separate models for Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar (see Table 3).

Table 3
Results from a model predicting the percentage of registered migrants in a given district who are female

	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Myanmar
Distance to border (km)	-0.020*	-0.014**	-0.012***
(Log) Gross Provincial Product per capita	-8.594***	-9.578***	-7.862***
Per cent of district population that is urban	0.181	-0.144	0.017
District is in Bangkok	13.859*	19.659***	17.396***
Per cent of Thai employees in district who work in indicated industry			
Agriculture	0.172	-0.442***	-0.187*
Construction	1.227	-0.895	-0.243
Fishing	-1.018***	-0.865**	-0.966***
Hotels and restaurants	1.145	-0.131	0.171
Manufacturing	0.169	-0.053	0.048
Private households	2.105	3.119*	2.779**
Trade	-0.466	-0.666*	-0.446*
Transport	-2.013*	-0.400	-1.058*
(Constant)	67.590***	132.147***	73.306***
Adjusted R-squared	0.123	0.135	0.110
Number of districts	622	840	840

*Significant at 5% level; **significant at 1% level; ***significant at 0.1% level.
All statistical tests are heteroskedasticity-robust.

As can be seen in the first row of Table 3, the proportion of female migrants is smaller for districts that are farther away from the country's border. However, this effect is relatively small. Based on the model, if two districts are equal in all respects except that one district is on the Cambodian border and the other 250 kilometres from the border, the proportion of migrants who are female is predicted to be five percentage points higher in the border district.[1] In other words, there is, albeit a weak tendency for women to stay nearer the border.

There is a strong negative relationship between the wealth of a district (as measured by Gross Provincial Product per capita) and the proportion of migrants in the province who are female, regardless of their nationality. Equally striking are the results for Bangkok: the proportion of female migrants in Bangkok is 14-20 percentage points higher than would be expected based on other geographic and economic variables.

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[1]   The median distance from a district containing Cambodian migrants to the Cambodian border is 244 km.
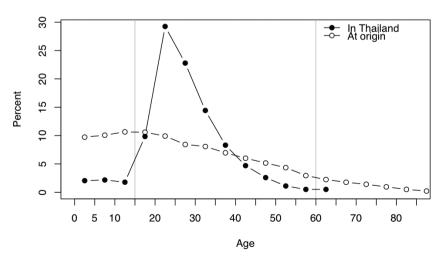
The results for employment structure suggest that districts with large numbers of Thais working in agriculture, fishing and trade disproportionately attract male migrants, while districts with unusually high numbers of domestic workers disproportionately attract female migrants. The geographical distribution of male and female migrants evidently differs for reasons including, but not limited to, employment patterns.

IV. Families, household structures, child and elderly care, presence of other adult females in the household

4.1 Household structure

No national data exist on the numbers of migrants living with other members of their families (Huguet and Punpuing 2005). However, registration data provide a few clues on family structure. Figure 1 shows the age distribution of migrants based on tabulations supplied by the Ministry of Interior that include registered migrants outside the working age. Also shown, for comparison, is the combined age distribution of the origin countries. Relative to the origin population, migrants are highly concentrated in the young working ages, with almost 30 per cent belonging to the 20-24 years age group, and almost 25 per cent belonging to the 25-29 years age group. This suggests that most migrants in Thailand are labour migrants, without dependent family members. The number of dependants is not trivial, however, suggesting that a significant minority of migrants do live in families of two or three generations.

Figure 1: Age distribution of the migrant population in Thailand and of the combined population in origin countries

Sources: Age structure in Thailand calculated from unpublished tabulations provided by the Ministry of Interior. Age structure in origin countries (Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar) calculated from data obtained from the UN Population *World Population Prospects 2004 Revision* online database.

One population of migrants for which we do have detailed data on family structure are migrants living in Kanchanaburi. Table 4 shows some summary data on the population. The foreign-born population has a higher proportion of the population in the working age range, suggesting the presence of many labour migrants. In contrast to the rest of Thailand, in Kanchanaburi the majority of migrants from Myanmar are female.

More than two-thirds of female migrants are spouses of the household head, compared to only about a half for the non-Thais born in Thailand and less than half of Thais. Female-headed households are less common among people of non-Thai ethnicity, foreign-born or Thai-born, than among people of Thai ethnicity.

Non-Thai women are more likely to be married than Thais. The proportion of single migrant women is less than a third of Thai women. Almost all married persons, both men and women, currently live with their spouse, though the percentage of men currently living with their wife is higher than women living with their husband. This suggests that migration is higher among married men than women. The proportion of married persons living with their spouse is highest among migrants.

Table 4
Age group, status in the household and marital status by gender and migrant status (%)

	Foreign-born non-Thai ethnicity		Thai-born non-Thai ethnicity		Thai ethnicity	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age group						
15-19	5.8	7.2	14.9	16.9	8.7	9.6
20-39	52.1	43.1	41.5	36.3	39.1	39.3
40-59	32.9	37.1	28.6	33.7	36.4	35.5
60+	9.3	12.7	16.6	13.1	15.8	15.6
Status in the household						
Household head	14.9	71.0	24.7	61.5	26.8	60.5
Spouse of household head	71.2	4.2	50.7	4.5	42.7	7.0
Marital status						
Single	4.8	15.5	11.3	25.7	16.2	20.2
Married	86.4	79.1	75.1	68.9	67.4	73.2
Widowed	6.0	3.1	11.3	2.6	11.0	2.8
Divorced/separated	2.9	2.3	2.4	2.9	5.5	3.7
N	1,005	962	718	581	13,723	11,265
Currently living with spouse (%)	97.3	97.9	91.9	97.5	92.5	96.4
N	864	859	538	400	9,219	8,260

Source: Calculated from KDSS data, 2004

The family status of migrants living in other parts of Thailand, away from migrant communities, may be very different from those in Kanchanaburi. For instance, only 35 per cent of the female domestic workers interviewed by Panam et al. (2004: Table 4) were married. One likely reason for this is that the respondents in their study were young: 60 per cent were under 25 years old (Ibid, Table 2), while in the KDSS, there was a high percentage of married persons and the age range was 15 years and over.

4.2 Childcare and elderly care and presence of other adult females in the household

In addition to stress outside the home owing to language barriers, cultural differences, legal status and other factors, migrant women are more likely to experience more stress also inside the home compared to men. In Myanmar, women are likely to shoulder the double burden of work outside and inside the home including housework, household management, care for the children and the elderly (Belak 2002: 44).

While having young children present at home presumably adds to women's responsibility within the household, having other adult females in the household may help to lessen the responsibility (Short et al. 2006: 617). Therefore, one aspect to look for is whether there are other female adults in the household. Childcare is probably the most important domestic task. The fertility rate among female migrants is higher than for Thai women. As can be seen in Table 5, among women aged 15-59, 59 per cent of the foreign-born migrants and 51 per cent of Thai-born migrants have more than two children, compared to 30 per cent for Thai women of the same age group. This implies that female migrants may have to assume the duty of childcare to a greater extent compared to Thai women. Moreover, as can be seen in Table 5, non-Thai women are much more likely than Thai women to have children aged 0-5.

The results in Table 5 suggest that, compared to the local Thai women, migrant women shoulder a heavier burden of home duties in Thailand. The proportion of female migrants aged 15-59 who live in the households where there are no other women aged 15-59 to help them with domestic work is substantially higher than for Thai women. Almost three in five foreign-born female migrants are taking care of small children without help from other females in the household.

Table 5
Need for childcare, elderly care and presence of other adult females in the same household among women aged 15-59 by migration status (%)

	Foreign-born, non-Thai ethnicity	Thai-born, non-Thai ethnicity	Thai	Total
Has at least 3 children	59.3	50.9	30.3	33.8
N	765	462	7,821	9,048
Respondent is sole female in the household	59.5	52.5	42.4	44.1
At least one child aged 0-5 in the household	58.8	54.2	36.9	39.2
At least two children aged 0-5 in the household	21.2	14.5	7.9	9.2
N	912	554	11,550	13,056
At least one child aged 0-5 and no other female aged 15-59 in the household	57.5	52.5	38.0	40.9
N	536	322	4,263	5,121
At least one elderly person in the household	14.0	21.7	26.4	25.3
N	912	554	11,550	13,056
At least one elderly person and no other female aged 15-59 in the household	43.8	45.0	34.6	35.3
N	*128*	*129*	*3,048*	*3,305*

Source: Calculated from KDSS data, 2004.

The proportion of female migrants who live in the household where there is at least one elderly person aged 60 or older is smaller than for Thai women. However, when looking at women who live in households with at least one elderly person, the number of those with no other adult females to help is higher among female migrants compared to Thai women. Although a smaller proportion of female migrants care for elderly persons, when they do, they have less help than local Thai women.

Table 6 shows data on women who combine childcare with full-time work. Almost half of foreign-born female migrants who are working full time have at least one child aged 0-5 at home. The proportions are smaller among Thai-born migrant women and smallest among Thai women. Moreover, given that female migrants have less help from other adult females at home, they experience greater stress.

Table 6
**Proportion of migrant women aged 15-59 who are working full time,
with at least one child aged 0-5**

	Foreign-born, non-Thai ethnicity	Thai-born, non-Thai ethnicity	Thai	Total
Working full time with at least one child aged 0-5	47.9	43.9	34.6	35.7
Working full time with at least one child aged 0-5 and no other adult females	25.9	21.8	13.4	14.4
N	537	376	8,704	9,617

Sources: Calculated from KDSS data, 2004

IPSR/ILO data which surveyed young migrants below the age of 25 working in agriculture, fishing and manufacturing, reveals that young women are more likely than men to live with their parents (23% vs. 18%). While living with parents might imply having a safer place to live and stronger protection from exploitative conditions, daughters will still be expected to complete all house chores and fulfil other responsibilities and obligations (Huguet and Punpuing 2005).

In principle, community organizations are an alternative to families as a source of support for migrants. We have no data indicating the extent of accessibility to community support among migrants compared to Thai women. However, information from the IPSR/ILO study suggests that few migrants in fact receive such support. Only 13 per cent of respondents belonged to any community groups, formal or informal, with no difference between males and females.

Although we provide evidence of the pressure on women from work and housework, we do not mean to overlook the place of men. Ideally, it is possible that family life in destination countries could have an indirect effect of redistributing family responsibility to male family members. Research in developed countries suggests an increase in men's participation in domestic work over recent decades (Bianchi et al. 2000). However, we have no evidence to support that the same is true for migrants in developing countries. Even in developed countries, researchers note that women, particularly mothers, continue to assume most of the housework and childcare (Short et al. 2006). This is an area for social scientists need to look at more closely to understand the change caused by migration in gender relations outside and within the household

It should also be noted that the information presented does not indicate any worse conditions than those faced by migrant women at home. Many women who migrated to Thailand had experienced difficult family

conditions. Respondents reported family problems and high pressure and responsibilities before migrating (Panam, et al, 2004). In fact, migration and participating in the labour force at the place of destination may lead to more independence and freedom for many female migrants. To our knowledge no study has attempted to compare family conditions of female migrants at places of origin and places of destination, which would allow a comparison of gender relations before and after migration.

V.   Work status, occupations, conditions and remittances

5.1   Work status

As we only had data on the work status of migrants for Kanchanaburi, but not at the national level, our analysis is confined to Kanchanaburi. The findings are probably similar to what would be found in other border communities with large concentrations of migrants, but not elsewhere in Thailand, where more migrants are temporary labour migrants.

The top row of Table 7 shows very high labour force participation rates among non-Thai males, whether born in Thailand or in Myanmar, non-Thai females have relatively low participation rates as compared with Thais. However, as cab e seen from the table below, the relatively low rates are characteristic only of married women. Marriage, therefore, seems to have a greater effect on the work status of migrant women than on Thai women.

Table 7
Proportion of persons aged 15-59 who work full time, by gender, migrant status and marriage statu

	Foreign-born, non-Thai ethnicity		Thai-born, non-Thai ethnicity		Thai	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
All respondents	58.9	97.5	63.3	90.7	75.4	89.4
N	912	839	594	505	11,550	9,508
Single	91.5	94.6	65.3	74.3	56.0	65.5
N	47	148	72	148	2115	2251
Ever married	57.1	98.1	63.0	97.5	79.7	96.9
N	865	691	522	357	9435	7257

Source: Calculated from KDSS data, 2004

5.2   Occupations

Similar to Thais, male and female migrants are distributed unequally across different occupations, as can be seen in Table 8. Aside from the percentage column for females, all data in Table 8 are from Huguet and

Punpuing (2005: Table 13).[2] Data on females as a percentage of migrant workers are not available for some industries. The gender balance among migrants is unlikely to differ substantially from those among Thais, and some of the gaps have been filled using Labour Force Survey data for Thais. The Labour Force Survey data are not sufficiently detailed to permit estimates for fishing boats, but studies of the Thai and migrant fishing industry suggest that the number of females on the boats is very low. Though it might appear surprising that there are any male domestic workers at all; their work is different and includes such tasks as gardening, for instance, rather than childcare (Piper 2005: fn4).

An industry conspicuously absent from in Table 8 is sex work. Some sex workers may be included in the large residual category 'Other', but presumably many more did not register. Most of these workers are likely to be female.

Consistent with the gender distributions shown in Table 1 above, Cambodians are overrepresented in the male-dominated industries of construction and fishing, while Laotians are over-represented in domestic service.

Table 8
Distribution of migrant workers by nationality, gender & occupation - 2004

Percentage distribution of migrants by sector				
	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Total	Per cent female
Agriculture	18	17	24	22	46
Private household	8	32	14	16	87
Construction	23	8	13	14	15*
Fishery & Processing	4	1	10	8	69*
Fishing boats	22	3	5	7	0?
Other	24	39	33	33	-
Total	100	100	100	100	44
N	104,789	99,352	610,106	814,247	

*Refers to Thai workers in these industries

Source: Figures on country of origin calculated from data on migrants with work permits in 2004 presented in Huguet and Punpuing (2005: Table 13).

The estimate for females as a percentage of migrants working in agriculture was calculated from the 2003 Agricultural Census data, which included a question on use of migrant labour (Bryant 2006: 5). The estimate for females as a percentage of migrants working in private households and

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[2]   Our individual-level data only distinguish between those working in private households and those working elsewhere.

the estimate for females as a percentage of all migrants were calculated from individual-level data from the Ministry of Labour. The estimates for Thai workers were calculated by the authors from data for four rounds of the 2004 Labour Force Survey, which is conducted by the National Statistical Office.

5.3 Working conditions

While many migrants moved to Thailand to earn money, migrants often have scant information of employment opportunities and average wages in destination countries or on the migration process or jobs available, which increases the risk of abuse (World Bank 2006). Among respondents in the IPSR/ILO study, 27 per cent had faulty or no information about type of work or working conditions. None of the domestic workers interviewed for the IPSR/ILO study, all them female, knew about working conditions before arrival at the employer's house. Among industries with both male and female workers, there were no clear gender differences in information about the job (Punpuing et al. 2006).

According to IPSR/ILO data shown in Table 9, gender differences in work conditions vary depending on the occupation, with no clear pattern. For instance, in fish processing factories, women are somewhat more likely to work excessive hours with no holidays than men, but are more likely to have a written contract, whereas the reverse is true in agriculture.

Table 9
Working conditions by gender and sector

	Fishing			Agriculture		Manufacture		Domestic
	Fishing boat – male	Fish processing – male	Fish processing -female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Receive 3,000 or less	17.7	5.7	22.5	49.1	29.7	17.0	14.6	88.9
Working >12 hours	61.0	36.2	40.8	1.8	1.3	14.9	8.6	82.4
Start work no later than 6am	14.3	63.0	60.4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Excessive working hours	71.4	28.3	40.4	16.4	12.2	14.9	41.0	NA
No monthly regular days off	63.2	74.5	73.5	63.6	70.3	NA	NA	62.1
No paid leave	70.9	93.5	97.9	86.5	81.8	73.8	80.0	NA
No written contract	100.0	95.7	87.0	85.5	97.3	97.9	94.0	NA
N	21	47	49	55	74	47	83	320

Source - IPSR/ILO dataset
Note – NA - not available.

Most previous research has found that female migrants earn consistently less than men, regardless of occupation or study site (e.g. Caouette, Archavanitkul and Pyne 2000; MAP Foundation 2006). Findings from the

IPSR/ILO were less definite. As can be seen in Table 10, in agriculture and fishing women actually earned more than men, but less than men in fish processing. The main female-dominated occupation, domestic work, was also the worst paid, though the figures do not take into account board and lodging, which are normally provided free.

Table 10
Wages by gender and sector

	Fishing			Agriculture		Manufacture		
	Fishing boat -male	Fish processing - males -	Fish processing - females	Male	Female	Male	Female	Domestic
3,000 or less	17.7	5.7	22.5	49.1	29.7	17.0	14.5	88.9
3001-4000	64.7	22.9	25.0	38.2	51.4	17.0	24.1	
4001-5000	11.8	42.9	22.5	10.9	14.9	42.6	34.9	11.1
5001+	5.9	28.6	30.0	1.8	4.1	23.4	26.5	
N	21	47	49	55	74	47	83	320

Data source: IPSR/ILO study

5.4 Remittances

Migrants who are not fleeing persecution or war often cite the need to earn money for their families as the main motive for coming to Thailand. For instance, the most common reason for domestic workers to come to Chiang Mai and Mae Sot, most of whom are from Myanmar, was to support their families at home, and most did in fact send money to their families (Panam, et al. 2004: 66, 190).

Thai and international studies suggest that women remit more, or more frequently, than men, even when they receive lower wages (Osaki 2003; Curran and Saguy 2001; VanWey 2004; Piper 2005). The IPSR/ILO study found higher remittance rates among women, but the difference is tiny (Table 11). The most popular method used to send money is through informal agents. Qualitative data from the same study reveal that these agents are usually those who originally helped them to find a job in Thailand and asked the migrants to use their remittance sending service in return (Punpuing, et al. 2006). Female migrants are less likely to rely on informal agents and more likely to rely on employers than males.

Table 11
Proportions remitted and method of sending money, by gender

	Male	Female	Total
Proportion remitted	82.9	85.4	84.3
N	170	206	376
Method of sending money			
Agent	60.6	51.9	55.9
Relative	16.5	20.4	18.6
Bank	8.8	7.8	8.2
Friend	2.9	1.5	2.1
Employer	2.9	9.2	6.4
N	170	206	376

Source: Calculated from IPSR/ILO data

VI.   Gender-based violence and migration

6.1   Violence in country of origin

Many women from Myanmar cite state-sponsored violence as a reason for leaving the country (Belak 2002: 64, 66). Some of the domestic workers from Myanmar interviewed by Panam et al. (2004: 65) also cited domestic violence as a motive for migrating.

Non-governmental organizations have provided extensive evidence of rape and other sexual violence against women by the Myanmar military, with military personnel enjoying almost complete impunity from prosecution (SHRF and SWAN 2002, KWAT 2005, KWO 2004, Apple 1998, United Nations 2006). Women from ethnic minorities have been particular targets (Belak 2002, Apple 1998). These allegations have been supported by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar (United Nations 2006).

Researchers in Laos and Cambodia have linked domestic violence to the lingering effects of war and the stresses created by changing gender roles (Phothong 2005: 15; UNIFEM et al. 2004: 10-11, 114). Phothong (2005: 15) argues that under-employment and loss of economic power by men, accompanied by a perceived relative increase in women's economic power, is seen by some men as a violation of gender norms. This emerging frustration is revealed by increased reports of domestic violence (UNIFEM, et al. 2004: 25). The increased number of reports does not necessarily mean that the incidence of domestic violence is increasing; rather it is people's awareness of women's rights being violated that is increasing.

6.2 Violence at destination

Perhaps not surprisingly, no reliable data exist comparing violence against men with violence against women during migration to Thailand, or at migrants' homes in Thailand. Most authors nevertheless argue that women are the principal victims, and there is certainly abundant evidence of violence against women (e.g. Belak 2002, Caoutte et al. 2000). For instance, a study at the Mae Tao Clinic, serving migrants near the Thai-Myanmar border, cited numerous cases of migrant men verbally and physically abusing their wives; the main precipitating factors named by men and women were alcohol and disputes over money (Maung and Belton 2005: 57-61). In 2002 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began monitoring cases of sexual and gender-based violence among refugees from Myanmar living in camps on the Thai side of the border. By the end of 2003, a total of 93 incidents had been reported, ten of which occurred in the country of origin. While the perpetrator was most often another refugee, in more than one-fifth of the cases it was a Thai national, including Thai authorities and Thai villagers (Huguet and Punpuing 2005).

Table 12
Percentage of migrants reporting violence at work, by gender and sector

	Fishing boats	Seafood processing		Agriculture		Manufacturing	
	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Verbally abused by employer /senior worker	81.0	53.2	67.4	12.7	18.9	24.1	36.2
Verbally harassed by others	33.3	25.5	10.2	10.9	1.4	8.5	7.2
Physically abused by employer/senior worker	14.3	6.4	4.1	0.0	0.0	6.4	7.2
Physically abused by others	9.5	10.6	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4
N	21	47	49	55	74	47	83

Source – Calculated from IPSR/ILO dataset.

Using the IPSR/ILO dataset, it is possible to compare the incidence of violence at the workplace for men and women in fishing, agriculture and manufacturing (see Table 12, above). Men in the fishing industry report the most frequent physical abuse. Women are more likely to be victims of verbal abuse by employers or senior employees. When similar questions were addressed to female domestic workers (not shown) half indicated that they had been threatened by their employer, on-tenth had been subjected to physical abuse, eight per cent had been subjected to sexual advances and 1.3 per cent had been raped by employers (Panam, et al, 2004: Table 3.7).

VII. Summary and way forward

Thailand is host to around two million irregular migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Overall, almost 50 per cent of migrants are female, though they are a clear majority among Lao migrants and a clear minority among Cambodians. Most migrants are labour migrants, though there are also significant settled communities near the Myanmar border. All migrants are in a precarious legal position.

Because migration networks are often employer-specific and, depending on the sectors, employers often prefer either women or men, networks are also often gender-specific. Available data hint at the possibility that women are more likely than men to rely on kin for assistance when migrating. Women from all three countries tend to travel shorter distances into Thailand than men, though this tendency is weak. At the same time, there is a heavy concentration of female migrants in Bangkok.

In the settled migrant community for which data are available, migrant women are more likely to be married and less likely to be heading a household than ethnic-Thai women living in the same area. Migrant women also appear to have heavier childcare responsibilities than local women; they are more likely to have children aged 0-5, and less likely to have another adult woman in the household to assist them. Migrant women are much more likely than Thai women to face a double burden of caring for young children while working full time. Few migrants receive significant assistance from community-based organizations.

Although some of the evidence is indirect, gender ratios seem to vary sharply by sector of employment. Domestic work in Thailand, as elsewhere, is dominated by female migrants, while fishing is dominated by males. Seafood processing, agriculture and manufacturing are more evenly distributed.

Many authors have claimed or implied that women experience worse working conditions and receive lower wages than males. However, the relatively systematic and comprehensive data from the IPSR/ILO study defy simple generalizations. Of the industries studied, the one with the highest incidence of physical abuse is fishing, though in other industries women are more likely to suffer verbal abuse than men. Female domestic workers are often subject to sexual advances from employers, and sometimes outright abuse or rape. Women appear to earn more than men in some industries, but less in others.

Both males and females cite supporting relatives at home as an important reason for migrating, and most migrants remit, with females marginally more likely to remit than males.

Gender-based violence is a particular problem to be considered as a trigger for migration and as an abuse of migrant rights.

Despite the limitations in current knowledge about gender and migration in Thailand, and despite some unexpected similarities between male and female migrants, there is clear evidence that for many important aspects of migration, gender matters. As Donato, et al. (2006: 19) states for migration studies in general, researchers need to ensure that they include gender as a category in their data collection and analysis. This is true for qualitative and quantitative research, even when gender is not the main focus of the research. This means collecting data on men as well as women, and from male-dominated industries or communities as well as female-dominated ones. Researchers should routinely present results disaggregated by gender. When no sex differences are found, this should be noted, since an absence of difference is also a finding.

Of all the gaps in information about gender and migration in Thailand, perhaps the most important is the almost complete lack of gender-specific information about the legal status of migrants. It is plausible, for instance, that the registration process has been more accessible for one gender group than the other. This in turn would lead to gender differences in legal status and hence vulnerability to exploitation or affect the duration of stay in Thailand.

As the basic facts about gender and migration in Thailand become better established, researchers will have increasing scope to shift from description to explanation. There is no shortage of issues with substantial academic or practical significance. Why, for instance, are there such large differences in the gender composition of migration from Laos and migration from Cambodia? Are the risk factors - and hence the targets for policy intervention - for violence at work the same for men and women? Are migrants in settled communities near the Myanmar border better or worse off than migrants elsewhere in Thailand, and does this vary with gender and family status?

Access to community support may be an important aspect for further attempts in improving migrants' well-being in places of destination. For example, to what extent can migrants access community support compared with Thais? As participation in community groups among migrants is still far from common, encouraging them to be more integrated into a community might be worth further efforts.

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Viet Nam

The context of gender-based violence for Vietnamese women migrant factory workers in southern Viet Nam

By **Erika Steibelt**

Contents

I.   Introduction

This paper reviews the context of gender-based violence among Vietnamese women who migrated to Ho Chi Minh City and the surrounding economic zones from other provinces in Viet Nam to work in factories. A qualitative research approach was used to elucidate migrant women's perception of the causes of violence against women, the particular risk factors and their personal experiences and coping strategies. It furthermore looks into the social consequences of migration for women, the characteristics of their new environment and the factors they perceive as putting them at risk of violence. Migrant women hesitate to confide in their families who live far away, or to report their experiences to the local authorities in their host communities, thus limiting their access to any support. Finally, drawing on women's experience and other evidence the implications for policy and programme are examined.

1.1   Gender-based violence

Interpersonal violence can be divided into two subcategories: intimate partner and family violence, and community violence. This report uses the term intimate partner violence for the range of sexual, psychological and physical coercion against women exerted by current or former intimate partners, boyfriends and husbands, which is one of the most common forms of violence against women.[1] The United Nations General Assembly first presented a definition of violence against women in its 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, as follows:

> Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

The World Health Organization (WHO) provides the following examples of what constitutes physical, sexual and psychological/emotional violence and controlling behaviours from an intimate partner:

• Physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking, beating.

• Sexual violence, such as rape, forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion.

• Psychological violence, such as intimidation, humiliation and belittling

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[1]   Krug, E G., et al. (eds) (2002) World Report on Violence. Geneva: World Health Organization. Accessed on 23/4/2007 at http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/full_en.pdf

- Controlling behaviour, such as isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring the person's movements and restricting access to information and services.[2]

A WHO report on violence and health and review global studies indicate that gender-based violence has a profound impact on women's mental, physical and reproductive health.[3] The belief of harm and the susceptibility to harm, play an important role in determining protection efforts.[4] Although studies have shown that women are statistically at greater risk of violence from current and former intimate partners and people they know compared to strangers,[5] studies on sexual assault conducted in the U.S.[6] suggest that women are more afraid of and tend to perceive the risk of being violated by a stranger to be higher than the risk posed by an intimate partner or acquaintance. As a result, women may be less prepared to prevent or protect themselves against the threat emanating from within their intimate and personal environment. [7] On a different level, gender-based violence also has an impact on the economy through lost productivity and increased recourse to social services.[8] Moreover, children who are witness of intimate partner violence bear a higher risk of experiencing themselves a range of behavioural and emotional problems in their lives.[9]

Research conducted in the U.S. indicates that immigration-related social and personal isolation in the host country and community and the lack of support for and awareness by victims of intimate partner violence of intimate-partner violence (IPV) services, prevent immigrant women who suffer such abuse from seeking and obtaining help.[10] Social isolation experienced by immigrants has been found to be associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing severe physical intimate-partner violence.[11]

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[2]   Ibid.

[3]   Ibid.

[4]   Weinstein, N.D. (1984). Why it won't happen to me: Perceptions of risk factors and susceptibility. *Health Psychology*, 3, 431-457.

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[8]   Krug, E G. et al., op. cit.

[9]   Ibid.

[10]   Raj, A. and Silverman, J. (2002) and Patel, S.P. and Gaw, A.C. (1996) cited in Raj, A. and Silverman, J. (2003). Immigrant South Asian Women at Greater Risk for Injury from Intimate Partner Violence. *American Journal of Public Health*, March; 93(3): 435–437.

[11]   Ibid.

Though a growing body of research shows that women involved in international migration are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, there is little information regarding their situation in the context of internal migration. The experience of migrant women who are exposed to domestic violence are often exacerbated by their lack of local language skills, their inadequate access to appropriate jobs, uncertain legal status and earlier experiences in their home communities, which all combine to reduce their capacity to protect themselves against abusive situations. Research has shown that as such factors make it difficult for appropriate institutions to intervene to prevent such abuse from occurring or continuing, they also make it easier for violent partners and abusers to keep migrant women under their control.[12]

In their literature review, Menjivar and Salcido[13] noted various elements of domestic violence experienced by immigrant women. Based on Vietnamese internal migrant women's experiences, we might expect the following factors from their list to be relevant: isolation from and diminished contact with family and community; changes in economic status, and changes in legal status.

1.2   A review of gender-based violence literature in Viet Nam

Any research to quantify the magnitude of violence against women in Viet Nam has been limited until fairly recently. The Viet Nam delegation to the 37th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reported that statistical data on violence against women are limited as relevant authorities had no periodic reporting systems (according to the 2005 report by the General Statistics Office.)[14, 15] Most research on violence against women in Viet Nam focuses on violence within marriages and a few examine the physical, verbal and emotional impact of sexual violence.

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[12]   Menjivar, C. & Salcido, O. (2002). Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence: Common experiences in different countries. *Gender & Society*, 16(6) December: 898-920.

[13]   Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence 2002, in *Gender & Society*, Vol. 16, No. 6, 898-920.

[14]   Currently the following statistics are collected regularly by most levels of the Vietnamese government:
-   Marriage and family cases
-   Child abuses and gender-specific abuses
-   Women practising prostitution under official records who are given access to education, training and medical treatment
-   Newly discovered cases of sex workers
-   Trials of cases related to women and child trafficking.

[15]   Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (Viet Nam). Presented to the CEDAW Pre-Session Working Group, 37th session, 15 January-2 February, 2007. CEDAW/C/VNM/Q/6/Add.1. Accessed at: http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/534/17/PDF/N0653417.pdf?OpenElement on February 19, 2007.

Preliminary findings from a population-based study of intimate-partner violence against women in northern, rural Viet Nam were recently presented.[16] Based on interviews with married women, lifetime prevalence rates were as follows: 55 per cent reported being the victims of psychological violence, 31 per cent experienced physical violence and seven per cent sexual violence. Fourteen per cent of the women had experienced severe physical violence, such as being kicked or dragged, choked or burnt or threatened with a knife. The authors noted that while they feel that these figures are reliable for physical and psychological violence, they believe that sexual violence was underreported because of the sensitivity of discussing marital rape in Viet Nam.

One recent study found that 37 per cent of married women reported being hit by their husbands, 18 per cent of whom severely enough to cause injury.[17] Another study surveyed men (married or previously married) in Ho Chi Minh City and found that 47 per cent of the sample were current physical abusers, and 68 per cent were past abusers (measurements were made through participants self-reporting violent acts through responding to the Vietnamese version of the Conflict Tactics Scale-2).

There were no studies describing the scope of sexual violence by non-intimate partners. "The reported incidence of rape has increased by more than 40 per cent over the last decade, and Supreme Court statistics collected between 1994 and 1996 show that between 600 and 800 cases of rape were reported annually during that period".[18] As the report explains, the crime of rape and other forms of sexual violence in Viet Nam remain largely underreported. A likely explanation is that victims are afraid to speak out. Recent government reports to CEDAW do not mention rape.

Hierarchy, gender and filial piety

As described by Le Thi Phuong Mai, "Vietnamese culture is influenced by a traditional ideology that promotes gender inequality and while women's status is formally equal both in society and the family, the underlying Confucian ideology, which reinforces inequality, remains."[19] For centuries,

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[16]   Nguyen Van Dung, Ostergren, P-0 and Krantz, G. (2006). *Intimate partner violence against women in rural Viet Nam: Delineating the different forms, exposure and risks.* Abstract presented at the Ninth International Congress of Behavioral Medicine, Bangkok, Thailand, Nov 29-Dec. 2, 2006.

[17]   Luke, N., Schuler, S.R., Mai, B.T.T., Thien, P.V. and Minh, T.H. (2007). Exploring Couple Attributes and Attitudes and Marital Violence in Viet Nam. *Violence Against Women*, 13(1): 5-27.

[18]   Bourke-Martignoni, J. (2001). *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by Vietnam*. Presented to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 25th session, 2-20 June 2001. World Organization Against Torture (pp. 22-23).

[19]   Le Thi Phuong Mai (1998). *Violence and its consequences for reproductive health: The Viet Nam Case*. South and East Asia Working Paper Series. Hanoi: Population Council.

Viet Nam was dominated by a Confucian tradition, which included a feudal and patrilineal organization of society. Le Thi Quy argues that patriarchy combines with Confucianism with its emphasis on hierarchy and duty, resulting in domestic violence, as well as the general inferiority of women.[20] Girls are brought up to learn and follow the Confucian Three Subjections of a woman: daughter to her father, wife to her husband, and widow to her son.[21] They are also taught to demonstrate the Confucian Four Virtues: housework, appearance, speech and behaviour.[22] Girls are socialized from an early age to develop a sense of how to behave in different social situations, and to adjust themselves to preserve calm, harmony and happiness in the household and they are taught to "endure" household conflict. [23]

In the traditional Vietnamese family structure the man is the head of the household and makes all important decisions.[24] Traditional beliefs about men being the pillar of the family and main income earner for the whole family persist today.[25] In one study, the researchers found evidence of some husbands who were not as successful as their wives in their work and/or social life, beating them as a way to maintain the dominant family head position.[26] Children learn that when men display anger it is a typical male way of emphasising their superior position within a patrilineal hierarchy.[27]

Qualitative studies conducted in Viet Nam have shown that community members, local officials and even counsellors believe that there is justification for a man to beat his wife, and that husbands can "teach their

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[20] Le Thi Quy (2000). *Domestic Violence in Vietnam: Context, forms, causes and recommendations for action*. Chiangmai: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

[21] Rydstrom, H. (2003). *Embodying morality: Growing up in rural northern Vietnam*. Honolulu: Univeristy of Hawaii Press.

[22] Ngo Thi Ngan Binh (2004). The Confucian Four Feminine Virtues (tu duc): The Old Versus the New Ke thua Versus Phat huy. In: Rydstrom, H. and Drummond, L. (eds.), *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam*. Singapore: Singapore University Press (pp. 47-73).

[23] Rydstrom, H. (2003). *Embodying morality: Growing up in rural northern Vietnam*. Honolulu: Univeristy of Hawaii Press.

[24] Rydstrom, H. (2003). Encountering "Hot" Anger: Domestic violence in contemporary Vietnam. *Violence Against Women*, 9(6), June., pp. 676-697.

[25] Le Thi Quy (2004). *Gender-Based Violence in the Family: Study of Cases in Thai Binh, Phu Tho and Ha Noi.* Hanoi: Research Center for Gender and Development (RCGAD) & University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

[26] Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished manuscript.

[27] Rydstrom, H. (2003). Encountering "Hot" Anger: Domestic violence in contemporary Vietnam. *Violence Against Women*, 9(6), pp. 676-697.

wives" by using physical violence.[28, 29, 30, 31, 32] Therefore, in Vietnamese society, the occurrence of violence within a household is often attributed to the woman's inability to preserve the harmony and calm when her husband has an "uncontrolled temper"[33]. Similarly, in the event of a divorce it is the women who are often blamed and stigmatized in their communities.

Filial obligation or piety is also particularly relevant to women's perceptions, experiences and coping strategies related to gender-based violence. This involves a sense of duty to one's parents and elders, and commitment to one's family, which can affect choices about when and whom to marry and whether to stay married.[34] Thus, some men and women who are in unhappy intimate relationships may stay in such situations if they perceive that it would make their parents happy.

Sexual norms and sexual violence

Qualitative studies indicate that maintaining female virginity before marriage is still a key cultural concern among men and women.[35, 36] A virtuous woman should be ignorant of sex before marriage and the less she knows about sex before marriage, the purer and more virginal and of high moral standards she will be considered to be.[37]

In marriage, wives are not supposed to express interest in sex and doing so would indicate a lack of morality and femininity.[38] Women are supposed

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[28]   Le Thi Quy (2004). *Gender-Based Violence in the Family: Study of Cases in Thai Binh, Phu Tho and Ha Noi.* Hanoi: Research Center for Gender and Development (RCGAD) & University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

[29]   Phan Thu, Hien (2004). Sexual Coercion Within Marriage in a Rural Area of Quang Tri, Vietnam. Masters Thesis, Amsterdam University, unpublished. Also: Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health Monograph, Vol. 9. ENCOURAGES Project – CIHP.

[30]   Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished manuscript.

[31]   Le Thi Phuong Mai and Lucinda Willshire (2000). *Report on an intervention project: training on domestic violence, sexual abuse and reproductive health counseling for the Hanoi hotline.*

[32]   Women's Union study 2001, as cited in Nguyen Huu Minh, Le Ngoc Lan, Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa. (2006). *Research on gender-based domestic violence in Vietnam.* Institute of Family and Gender. Unpublished report.

[33]   Rydstrom, H. (2003), loc.cit.

[34]   National Healthy Marriages Resource Center. Frequently Asked Questions about: Asian Americans and Mariage. Accessed on 4/23/2007 at: http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/aboutmarriage/?d=$7BD5B7A7DB-D8CF-4C9B-BB31-9AB3D-1EE2EB4%7D

[35]   Phan Thu, Hien (2004). *Sexual Coercion Within Marriage in a Rural Area of Quang Tri, Vietnam.* Masters Thesis, Amsterdam University, unpublished. Also: Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health Monograph, Vol. 9. ENCOURAGES Project – CIHP.

[36]   Cuong Manh La (2005). *How virginity enhances masculinity: an exploratory study in Hanoi, Vietnam.* Unpublished thesis: San Francisco State University.

[37]   Phan Thu, Hien (2004). Sexual Coercion Within Marriage in a Rural Area of Quang Tri, Vietnam. Masters Thesis, Amsterdam University, unpublished. Also: Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health Monograph, Vol. 9. ENCOURAGES Project – CIHP, pp. 7-8.

[38]   Phan Thu, Hien, op.cit, supra, note 35.

to obey their husband's every request, including his sexual needs.[39] Male participants in a study viewed their wives' unenthusiastic responses to sex as normal because they think of women as being naturally passive. Sexual coercion, therefore, particularly within marriage tends to go unrecognized because patriarchal gender roles dictate that women are subordinate to their husbands and need to maintain harmony in the family.

Intimate-partner violence

While studies have shown that domestic violence occurs at all socio-economic levels, there is evidence that women who live in poverty are more likely to experience violence than women of higher status.[40] What is unclear, however, is why poverty increases the risk of violence, and whether violence is due to the low income itself or to other factors associated with poverty, such as crowded living conditions and despair. Living in poverty is likely to create stress and frustration for both men and women, as well as a sense of inadequacy for some men to have failed to live up to a culturally defined role of breadwinner.[41]

The results of several qualitative studies conducted in Viet Nam show that women have blamed their husbands' habits (alcohol, gambling and extra-marital affairs) for the violence they experienced.[42, 43] Strong links have been found between alcohol abuse and intimate-partner violence in many countries, and evidence suggests that in some cases alcohol can increase the occurrence and severity of domestic violence[44, 45] as well as affect one's risk of being either a perpetrator or a victim of violence.[46] However, while some people may conclude that alcohol consumption is a "direct factor leading to domestic violence",[47] it is not the cause.

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Heise, L., Ellsber, M. and Gottemoeller, M. Ending Violence Against Women (1999). Population Reports, Series L, No. 11. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program, December.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished manuscript.

[43] Le Thi Quy (2004). *Gender-Based Violence in the Family: Study of Cases in Thai Binh, Phu Tho and Ha Noi.* Hanoi: Research Center for Gender and Development (RCGAD) & University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

[44] Testa, M. Quigley, B.M. Leonard, K.E. (2003). Does alcohol make a difference? Within-participants comparison of incidents of partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 18: 735-743.

[45] Brecklin, L.R. (2002). The role of perpetrator alcohol use in the injury outcomes of intimate assaults. *Journal of Family Violence*, 17: 185:197.

[46] World Health Organization. (n.d.). Interpersonal Violence and Alcohol Policy Briefing. Accessed at:http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/pb_violencealcohol.pdf on February 23, 2007.

[47] Responses to the list of issues and questions for consideration of the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (Viet Nam) (2007). Presented to the CEDAW Pre-Session Working Group, 37th session, 15 January-2 February. CEDAW/C/VNM/Q/6/Add.1. Accessed at: http://daccessdds.

Alcohol consumption "has often been contested either on the presence of additional factors (low socio-economic status, impulsive personality) accounting for the presence of both, or because frequent heavy drinking can create an unhappy, stressful partnership that increases the risk of conflict and violence."[48] There are men who do not drink and are yet violent against their partners, just as there are men who drink heavily and do not abuse their partners. Banning drinking, as some women in the study recommended, will not make violence go away.[49]

Policy and legal environment

Viet Nam has developed a strong system of institutional structures that reach down to the community level. Many of these governmental community groups, such as the reconciliation groups, the Women's Union, residents' units and local authorities (e.g., People's Committees and the police) intervene in household issues. However, the responses from these various institutions to domestic violence appear to come more from their concern with maintaining harmony in the community, than a concern for the individual rights of victims, and thus they are reported to only intervene in serious cases.[50]

Recent reports to CEDAW recognize that women are especially discriminated against in private companies, factories and joint ventures. The Vietnamese delegation assured the CEDAW Committee that, "Labour unions, female workers' unions and women's unions at the grassroots level will be more proactive and active in assuming the role of supervising law implementation and protecting the legitimate and lawful interests of female workers."[51] According to Viet Nam's official legal documents and its ratification of international instruments promoting women's rights, the country has a very strong commitment to equality between women and men in society. In late 2006, the government passed a gender equality law.

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un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/534/17/PDF/N0653417.pdf?OpenElement on February 19, 2007.

[48] Leonard, KE. (2005). Alcohol and intimate partner violence: when can we say that heavy drinking is a contributing cause of violence? *Addiction*, 100: 422-425, as cited in *WHO fact sheet on Intimate partner violence and alcohol*. Accessed on 2/27/2007 at: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_intimate.pdf

[49] Casey, S. (2006). *Theories on domestic violence: Understanding the Nature, Causes and Consequences of Domestic Violence*. Paper prepared for the Social Affairs Committee of the National Assembly (the drafting team of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence).

[50] Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished manuscript.

[51] United Nations (2005). Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of states parties, Viet Nam. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW/C/VNM/5-6. (p. 9). Accessed on 10/4/2007 at: http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/399/25/PDF/N0539925.pdf?OpenElement

The current Law on Marriage and Family (enacted in June 2000) includes provisions to ensure equality between men and women in areas such as personal rights, exercising the role of parents, the right to divorce, and the equal division of shared properties.[52] While the law prohibits all acts of maltreating, abusing, infringing upon the honour and dignity of women, there are no specific provisions on consequences for acts of domestic violence. In the criminal code, a case of domestic violence is only prosecuted if damage or injury to a married woman's health is estimated to be more than ten per cent of her overall health and the woman files charges.[53] The Penal Code (revised in 1999) criminalizes rape, allows for imprisonment or capital punishment, and convicted offenders can be banned from holding certain posts for a period of time.[54] To date, there does not appear to be any Vietnamese legislation with provisions against sexual harassment.[55]

Recognising the need to enact policies that more adequately address issues of gender-based violence in Viet Nam, the Social Affairs Committee of the National Assembly (parliament) is drafting a domestic violence law. Input from the international NGO community is being sought to inform the development of the law.

Internal migrant women in Viet Nam

Reports indicate that migration to Ho Chi Ming City (HCMC) and the surrounding industrial areas is increasing dramatically.[56,57] The majority of migrants moving to southern industrial zones are young (less than 30 years of age), female and unmarried.[58] Migrants to HCMC and the industrial zones originate from diverse parts of the country with no dominant region of origin.[59,60] Most migrants state economic reasons

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[52]   Ibid. p.51

[53]   In Viet Nam damage to a woman's health is measured as part of the legal process. Government regulation No. 12/TTLB provides guidelines to qualify the per cent of damage to a woman's health. This assessment can only be done by the Council for Estimation of Health Damage at provincial and central levels.

[54]   Vietnam Penal Code No: 15/1999/QH10. Accessed at: http://vbqppl.moj.gov.vn/law/en/1991_to _2000/2000/200001/200001040005_en/#109 on 4/10/2007.

[55]   Le Thi Phuong Mai (1998). *Violence and its consequences for reproductive health: The Vietnam Case.* South & East Asia Regional Working Paper Series. The Population Council.

[56]   Guest, Philip (1998). *The dynamics of internal migration in Viet Nam*. UNDP Discussion Paper 1, (Hanoi: UNDP).

[57]   General Statistics Office (GSO) (2001). *Census Monograph on Internal Migration and Urbanization in Viet Nam*, Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi. As cited in: GSO and UNFPA. (2005). *The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi.

[58]   GSO and UNFPA (2005). *The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi.

[59]   The classification of the regions of origin in the 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey is as follows: Red River Delta, Northeast, Northwest, North Central, Central Coast, Central Highlands, Southeast and Mekong River Delta.

[60]   GSO and UNFPA (2005). *The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi.

for migration.[61] Reasons for young women to move to the area include more and better job opportunities for young women in the services and industrial sectors, the decline in agricultural employment opportunities, and that possibly parents encourage daughters instead of their sons, to migrate to earn money for the family, because women migrants tend to remit larger amounts than their male counterparts.[62, 63]

Most migrants rent space in dormitories or small rooms and are more likely than non-migrants to live with non-related persons in extended households (as opposed to nuclear families).[64] Such rented accommodations are generally concentrated near factory sites and the housing conditions and safety are often inadequate.[65] Migrant women workers have allegedly been harassed and assaulted on the streets and at their place of residence.[66]

The Vietnamese government has been concerned about controlling migration processes in order to appropriately manage necessary resources for its citizens. It has been suggested that migrants cannot participate fully in society and are blamed for many social and environmental problems in the country.[67, 68] Each household has a 'family census book' or 'residence permit' which lists all the people authorized to live at one address. [69] When people move from one place to another, they are required to inform the local authorities at their place of origin so that they can get an approved and stamped residence permit. They are also supposed to register with the local police once they arrive at their destination. The household registration system foresees four different time entitlements for the migrant to remain in the area.[70] Very few migrants are able to

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[61]   Ibid.

[62]   General Statistics Office (GSO) (2001). *Census Monograph on Internal Migration and Urbanization in Viet Nam*, Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi. As cited in: GSO and UNFPA. (2005). *The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi.

[63]   Guest, Philip (1998). *The dynamics of internal migration in Viet Nam*. UNDP Discussion Paper 1, (Hanoi: UNDP).

[64]   GSO and UNFPA (2005). *The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi

[65]   ActionAid International Vietnam (2005). *Migrant Workers in Vietnam: A Summary Research Report*.

[66]   Ibid.

[67]   Guest, Philip, op.cit.

[68]   Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001). *Female Labour Migration: Rural-Urban*. Hanoi: Women's Publishing House.

[69]   Guest, Philip, op.cit.

[70]   In VietNam, there is a four-tier system of household registration. Increasing numbers refer to the shorter time permitted to remain in the area by that registration. The system, described in the 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey is as follows: KT1 – person registered in the district of residence; KT2 – person not registered in the district of residence, but registered at another district of the same province; KT3 –temporary registration for a period of six months or more; KT4 –temporary registration for a period of less than six months. In HCMC, KT1 registration (or permanent

obtain permanent residence[71] and their inability to afford buying their own homes is a major factor when trying to register.[72] Migrants who lack permanent household registration may face difficulties, with the most commonly cited problem being lack of access to services and credit.[73]

Personal decisions to migrate are influenced and directed by social networks that link the places and the possible available opportunities.[74] Migrant women factory workers are vulnerable to many health and social risks because of their total reliance on new social networks that they may not know too well, as well as their inherent job insecurity.[75] When facing difficulties after their arrival, especially with housing, migrants tend to seek assistance from friends, relatives and people from their hometowns.[76] Only 11 per cent of migrants reported going to the authorities for assistance to solve their difficulties.[77]

Conclusions of the literature review

This literature provided both qualitative and quantitative evidence to suggest that gender-based violence is a problem in Viet Nam. This report refers to qualitative studies that have attempted to explain the causes, forms and the responses to gender-based violence in Viet Nam. Research, mostly on cross-border migration, documents that women who migrate for economic reasons are at risk of gender-based violence. Vietnamese societal expectations of how men and women should behave, in combined with the housing and living conditions in rental housing areas and the shift in social networks as a result of migration, may make Vietnamese internal migrant women vulnerable to gender-based violence. Research is needed to fill the knowledge gaps that still exist concerning the existence

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registration) is only available to those recruited by the City's People Committee or appointed to work in the City by a central ministry. Those who are non-sponsored migrants or who work in other enterprises can have KT3 registration only when they own their accommodation and have stable employment. A high proportion of migrants living in HCMC, even those who have lived in the area for 4-5 years, still have KT4 registration, because they cannot afford to buy their own residences and thus live in rented accommodation.

[71] Reports of household registration status are relevant because in some urban areas a regulation is enforced so that migrants are not able to purchase and own their own homes because they do not have permanent registration. However, this is a problem since owning one's home in the place of residence is one of the conditions to obtaining permanent registration. This keeps migrants from being able to accumulate assets and make more significant strides toward improving their economic security. The other two conditions to be met to obtain permanent registration are: 1) permission from the place of origin, and 2) permanent job in the place of residence.

[72] GSO and UNFPA (2005). *The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ter Bals, E. & Labohm, J. (2002). *Migrant women working in garment factories in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.: Mobility and Vulnerability*. Ho Chi Minh City: Mobility Research and Support Center.

[76] Op.cit, supra at 74.

[77] Ibid.

and context of Vietnamese migrant women's experiences of gender-based violence. There is also a need to examine migrant women's coping strategies and their ability to access services for victims of violence in their host communities. Such information may be used in developing appropriate programmes and policies to improve the quality of life for migrant women.

II. Qualitative study on gender-based violence situation among migrant women

Since economic reforms were initiated in 1986, urban areas and industrial zones have been growing, largely with factories manufacturing products for export. This has led to a growing migration of workers from their rural homes to the cities and recently established industrial/economic zones.[78]

Currently, many single and married women are leaving their rural homes to seek jobs in urban areas to earn money to send back to their families. Many migrant women find jobs at companies near major cities working in the clothing, shoe, and textile sectors; rarely in managerial positions. Various studies have linked migration and mobility with vulnerability in various health and social risks, including HIV and other STIs.[79] Migration is always a stressful experience – involving uprooting, leaving close relatives and social networks behind, and moving into situations where there might be little work or other types of security. Migrants' ability to cope is influenced by a number of factors, including the resources they bring to the destination and those they find when they arrive.[80]

Though there is little research into the risk of gender-based violence among internal migrants and mobile women in Viet Nam, a growing body of research on international migration confirms that women migrants generally run a significant risk of violence.[81] In recent years domestic

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[78]   Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001). *Female Labour Migration: Rural-Urban*. Women's Publishing House, Hanoi.

[79]   Do Thi Nhu Tam (2003). Vulnerability of mobile women factory workers to HIV-AIDS in Vietnam. *Asian Labour Update*, 3, April-June. Accessed on 11/4/2007 at: http://www.amrc.org.hk/4705. htm; Chantavanich, S. (2000). Mobility and HIV/AIDS in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Program. Accessed on 19/4/2007 at: http://www.adb.org/documents/books/hiv_aids/mobility/prelim.pdf

[80]   Menjivar, C. & Salcido, O. (2002). Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence: Common experiences in different countries. *Gender & Society*, 16(6), December: 898-920.

[81]   Revenco, A. (2006). Violence Against Women and Trafficking of Young Women and Girls. In *Female Migrants: Bridging the Gaps Throughout the Life Cycle. Selected Papers of the UNFPA-IOM Expert Group Meeting. New York, 2-3 May 2006.* Accessed at: http://www.un.int/iom/final%20report%20Sept%202006.pdf on 28 February 2007.; UNFPA. (2006).Chapter 3: Selling Hope and Stealing Dreams: Trafficking in Women and the Exploitation of Domestic Workers. In: *A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration. State of the World Population 2006.* Accessed 27/2/2007 at: http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/english/chapter_3/toils_and_tears. html; Menjivar, C. & Salcido, O. (2002). Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence: Common experiences in different countries. *Gender & Society*, 16(6), December: 898-920.

violence in Viet Nam has received increasing interest and a number of intervention projects have been initiated. However, broader gender-based violence has not received similar attention and migrant women's experience of gender-based violence is virtually unknown. With possibly as many as three million migrants currently living in Ho Chi Minh City and up to one million in Hanoi, the internal migrant population of Viet Nam has reached significant proportions. As more migrant women enter Viet Nam's urban areas, difficulties for migrants to access social services, an increasing awareness of gender-based violence and a new law concerning domestic violence currently under consideration by the National Assembly, this is a critical time to provide current and accurate information to policy makers and organizations.

In response to the call issued in 2004 by the United Nations General Assembly to protect and promote the rights of women migrant workers,[82] IOM - Viet Nam conducted a qualitative research study into the context of gender-based violence in Vietnamese migrant women's lives. Due to the large numbers of migrant women working in factories located in and around HCMC, it was decided that the research should focus on migrant women factory workers. It was also felt that factory management and trade unions had a positive influence on workers' lives and were in a position to apply the study's recommendations and intervene, as appropriate.

The main research questions were:

1. What is the gender-based violence situation amongst migrant women?

    a. Does it happen?

    b. What is the context?

    c. Who are the perpetrators?

    d. What is the severity of violence?

    e. What are women's attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about violence?

2. Does the physical environment of migrants' life (where they live, work and rest) place women at risk of gender-based violence? Are they more vulnerable because of their migrant status?

3. Are services available for women who are assaulted or abused?

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[82]   United Nations (2004). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly: 58.143: Violence Against Migrant Workers (A/RES/58/143). New York. Accessed at: http://www.un-instraw.org/en/docs/pressroom/UN_Resolution-Violence_Against_Women_Migrant_Workers.pdf on 28/2/2007.

4.   Are women who have suffered assault and abuse willing and able to access and use available services?

2.1   Methodology of the study

The study is based on a qualitative research approach that was used to gain in-depth understanding of the context of migrant women factory workers. Although the findings do not statistically represent migrant women factory workers, the methodology provides multiple layers of interpretation and meaning of the events migrant women factory workers experience.[83] This level of understanding is particularly important when studying the interaction of human behaviour with people's beliefs and attitudes.[84] The research collected data from 155 migrant women factory workers between October and December 2006 through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FDG) that included mapping exercises. Relevant items included sources of social support, experience of violence and locations experienced as unsafe by women. These items were initially identified and organized into the discussion guides.

For this study, IOM collaborated with the local NGO, Quality of Life Promotion Centre, and the international NGO Marie Stopes International, drawing from their considerable experience concerning research and sexual and reproductive health services. Two foreign-managed factories participated in this study recruiting women participants for interviews. The study was carried out in industrial and export processing zones in Dong Nai, Binh Duong and Ho Chi Minh City.

The textual transcripts from the interviews and FGDs were uploaded to a qualitative text analysis computer programme and coded in accordance with well-recognized phenomena or concepts, such as coping strategies and forms of psychological violence.

Limitations of the study

Given the sensitivity of gender-based violence in Viet Nam, it may be assumed that some interviewees may have been too embarrassed and reluctant to discuss their experiences. The interview guide was designed to gradually lead up to women recounting their personal experiences of violence and to do so using the third person, if that made it easier for them. The interviewees' perception of the purpose of the interview, and their possible desire to give what they thought were the correct answers, may also have influenced their responses.

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[83]   Silverman, D. (1995). *Interpreting qualitative data – Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. 2nd ed. London, Sage Publications.

[84]   Ellsberg M, and Heise L. (2005). Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide forResearchers and Activists. Washington D.C., United States: World Health Organization, PATH.

The recruiters' networks would have influenced the selection process for recruiting women participants. Women were recruited to participate in interviews based on their experience of violence. Although recruiters had been instructed that women might be subject to violence in any context, and not only by intimate partners, intimate-partner violence was most prevalent among the women interviewed.

As the study focused on the needs of women migrant workers, it was determined that considerable information on violence in relation to migrant women was needed, and that only women were to be interviewed, which prevented a broader analysis of the gender dimension related to violence and migrant women including male perspectives of violence. Moreover, the study did not address violence initiated by both partners, or in woman-initiated violence.

2.2   Description of participants

In this study, 80 individual interviews were conducted and 75 women were reached through 14 focus group discussions, with a total of 155 migrant women participating. More information was gathered from women who participated in individual interviews than those participating in focus group discussions.

Age and marital status

The age of the women ranged from 18 to 46 years, with 46 out of 80 women participating in the individual interviews aged 30 or less, and 34 aged 31 or above (see Figure 1).
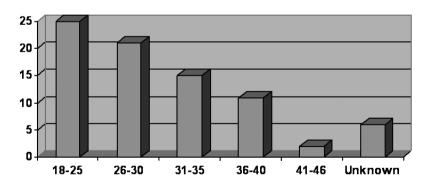
Figure 1: Age range of individual interview participants

Characteristics of the women participating in the interviews:
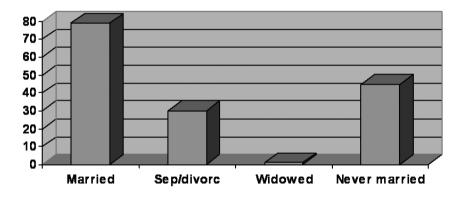
• 111 out of 155, or 74 per cent, were or had been married;

• 80 out of 155, or 52 per cent, were married;

• 30 out of 155, or 19 per cent, were separated or divorced, and one widowed.

Out of the 80 women participating in the individual interviews (see Figure 2):

• 45 had never married;

• 57 had children and 23 did not.

Figure 2: Marital status of all participants

Residence status, duration of stay in the area and place of origin

A four-tiered system of household registration determines the authorized duration of stay in the area.[85] Over half of the 80 women interviewed had temporary residence registration papers authorizing several months of residence. Several women reported that they had not registered, 18 had permanent residence registration papers for their current location, and others did not make their residence status clear. This compares to data from the *Viet Nam Migration Survey* which indicates that approximately three-quarters of migrants to HCMC and the South-East Industrial Zone had short-term housing registration and only very few migrants had permanent residence.[86] Over 100 out of 155 participants had moved from somewhere else and about 70 had lived in the area for three years or less.

Women from the northern and southern regions of Viet Nam were fairly equally represented, while only a few women from the central areas participated.

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[85] See note 70 for registration system. According to the 2004 Migration Survey, only about one per cent of migrants in HCMC have KT1 or KT2 registration and for migrants in the Southeast Industrial Zone, it is about five per cent. From: GSO and UNFPA (2005). *The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey: Major Findings*. Statistical Publishing House, Hanoi.

[86] Op.cit., supra, note 70.

Living situation

Most women lived either with their husbands and children or with their husbands alone. Twenty-four women reported that their children were living with their parents or their in-laws while they worked. Most women did not live with members of their immediate families (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles) and most of those who did were single or no longer living with their husbands, while 15 women reported living with friends, and 2 lived alone.

Educational attainment

Educational attainment varied, with the largest category of educational attainment concerning attendance of a part or completion of junior high school (grades 6-9).

Place of work, earnings and expenditures

Of the 155 women participating, approximately equal numbers worked in factories in the districts of HCMC, Binh Duong and Dong Nai.

Most women earned between 800,000 and two million dong per month (USD 50 to 125), including payment for working overtime. This compares to the guidelines for minimal monthly wages for foreign-invested enterprise workers of January 2006 of 790,000 dong (USD 50) for workers in Dong Nai and Binh Duong and 870,000 dong (USD 55) for workers in HCMC.[87] More than half of the women had been working for the same company for three years or less. Most of the women reported getting a basic salary plus an additional amount for good attendance, working overtime, and for additional responsibilities; while some women working in certain factories reported that they did not receive a basic salary but were paid a piece rate.

III.   General findings

Migration into the areas around Ho Chi Minh City is largely driven by economic factors and the hope to make more money than is possible in poor rural areas. Though the linkages between migration and improved prospects no longer need to be demonstrated, migration is not a simple process, but one that can be fraught with tensions and difficulties, and accompanied with violence. Migrants are considered more vulnerable to various risks, such as violence, sexually transmitted diseases, injury and mental-health issues.[88] Both migrant and non-migrant respondents

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[87]   Vietnam Law and Legal Forum (7/25/2006). Question and Answer on Wage Payment. Accessed on 4/27/2007 at: http://news07.vnanet.vn/vietnamlaw/Service.asp?CATEGORY_ID=12&SUBCATEGORY_ID=4&NEWS_ID=1446

[88]   Chantavanich, S. (2000). Mobility and HIV/AIDS in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Asian

believed young single migrant women to be particularly vulnerable to various forms of violence owing to the lack of family guidance and protection, inexperience, loneliness and the need to save money to send home. Having moved from home and beyond the control and supervision of their parents and relatives, migrant women may be vulnerable to be victimized by the men they loved, as well as acquaintances and strangers in their new communities. Their departure from the confines of watchful parents, tempered by the presence of a landlord, in addition to feeling lonely, is thought by some older women to lead young single women to test their freedom by being more daring in their relationships with suitors, such as living with them before marriage. As stated by migrant women in one focus group, not having any relatives close by may embolden and release men from the social expectation to treat their wives with respect:

I know that most migrant woman workers live in rented accommodation and their families are not with them. If they have siblings or parents living with them, then, when the husband and the wife quarrel, they might think of them and out of regard they would stop quarrelling and avoid fighting each other. Unfortunately, they live on their own. Therefore, they are vulnerable to violence.

Married migrant women were also thought to be at risk of intimate-partner violence since their families were usually not living close enough to know the details of their daughter's married relationship and were not able to offer assistance. Women also suggested that men intentionally seek single migrant women workers living near industrial zones as they are considered too lonely and naïve to detect the less-than-honest intentions of men in their host communities.

Some women who had migrated with their partners indicated that their partners gave them less money than before the move. Household finances were a major concern of migrant women, and money became a source of family contention and violence.

We come here to earn a living. If the work is unstable, we still have to pay the rent, electricity and water bills. When we do not earn enough for those things, everything rests on our shoulders. When things become difficult, violence can occur: the wife often grumbles, the husband becomes angry and he may beat his wife. It

Development Bank and United Nations Development Program. Accessed on 19/4/2007 at http://www.adb.org/documents/books/hiv_aids/mobility/prelim.pdf ; Do Thi Nhu Tam. (2003). Vulnerability of mobile women factory workers to HIV-AIDS in Vietnam. *Asian Labour Update*, 3, April-June. Accessed on 11/4/2007 at: http://www.amrc.org.hk/4705.htm ; UNFPA. (2006). Chapter 3: Selling Hope and Stealing Dreams: Trafficking in Women and the Exploitation of Domestic Workers. In: *A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration. State of the World Population 2006.* Accessed 27/2/2007 at: http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2006/english/chapter_3/toils_and_tears.html

happened in the room next to me - the husband seemed very lazy and he did nothing to earn money. The wife worked very hard to earn money to pay the rent and to buy food for their children, but every evening she also had to give the husband money for alcohol. If she did not give him the money, he would beat her. He drank a lot in the evenings and when he would come home late at night, the husband and wife fought with each other. (Focus group with migrant women, most married.)

Many women reported receiving only a meagre contribution from their husbands, either because their husbands were unemployed or had unstable jobs, because their husbands chose not to work or spent a lot of time and money drinking with friends. Some women recognized that this job insecurity led men to feel a loss of control:

I often witnessed a neighbouring couple quarrelling and fighting with each other. They had children, but their life was not happy. I felt that because the husband was unemployed he was upset about his instability. As a result, he tended to insult or beat his wife. (23-year old single northerner, living in area for four years.)

Several women reported that some men were also unable to contribute to the household income because they used their earnings to pay off gambling debts. Thirteen women reported personal experiences or threats of violence from their partners if they refused to hand over their money to them.

In some circumstances, the combination of financial strain and the feeling that their husband did not care about the family upset many women. This led them to complain to their husbands, which then sometimes led to violence:

When we have a fight, he says I earn money and give it to my parents. He says some things and I reply, and then he beats me. Money is the most important point of contention. We have no savings, and earn less than other people. We see other people buy things and we fight (36-year old married migrant southerner, living in area for more than ten years.)

3.1 Migrant women's experiences and perceptions of gender-based violence

Women migrant factory workers report being exposed to various forms of gender-based violence in their environment. This included violence from intimate partners, men they know, strangers in the community, co-workers and supervisors in the factory.

In this study, migrant women's personal experiences of violence and their stories of other women mainly focused on intimate-partner violence, that is a range of sexual, psychological and physical coercion against adult and adolescent women by current or former male partners, such as boyfriends, lovers and husbands.[89] This is consistent with data from a World Health Organization multi-country study on violence against women (2005) which found that women ran a greater risk of violence from an intimate partner than from strangers or other men they knew.[90]

A range of violent physical acts were reported and classified into moderate and severe. WHO's definition of moderate physical acts of violence from an intimate partner is being slapped, pushed or shoved. The definition of severe acts of violence against women includes being hit with a fist, kicked, dragged, threatened with a weapon, or having a weapon used against her.[91] To this, the researcher added to the definition of severe acts of violence that of being choked or strangled, the throwing of heavy or sharp objects at the woman, and attempted drowning. Of the 47 women who reported being physically abused by their intimate partner, 30 reported severe physical abuse. One married migrant woman related this story of violence:

> When he arrived home, he asked me for the residence registration paper, and I answered that I gave it to my brother some days ago […]. He asked me to get it back, but I said I was too tired and that I would get it back the next day. As a result, he swore at me, then he beat me, and then he burned me with his cigarette. Seeing that, my children cried and pulled him away. He took a knife and threatened to cut me. My children jumped to take it away because they knew that if I died there would be no one to look after them. Then, when he kicked me, I stood up and ran. He sprayed me with mosquito killer spray so I took a blanket to cover myself and the children. He closed the door, so that no one could get out. My little child tip-toed to open the door and then we got out. (Married migrant northerner, living in area for four years.)

In total, 33 of the 80 interviewed women reported having to submit to unwanted sexual intercourse with their current or former partners. Many

[89]   Krug, E G., Dahlberg, L.L., Mercey, JA, Zwi, AB, Lozano, R., (Eds.) (2002) World Report on Violence. Geneva: World Health Organization.

[90]   World Health Organization (2005). *WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: summary report of initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses*. Geneva, World Health Organization.

[91]   Ibid., WHO ranked the severity of a physically violent act according to its likelihood of causing physical injuries. In the 2005 summary report on the WHO multi-country study on IPV, the authors explain: "Ranking such acts by severity is controversial. Clearly, under certain circumstances a shove can cause severe injury, even though it is categorized as "moderate" violence. For the most part, however, this ranking conforms to other measures of severity, such as injury" (p. 6).

women reported not wanting to have sex because they were very tired from their long hours of hard work at the factories. At least 14 women said they were physically forced to have sexual intercourse, as illustrated below:

> *When I went home after long working hours, I was too tired and I refused him. He tore off my clothes. […]He beat me until I agreed to do it. I tried to explain to him that I did not like to do it, but he raped me. At that time I was pregnant. He kicked me so fiercely that I started to bleed and had a miscarriage. (35-year old divorced migrant woman, place of origin unknown, living in area for two years.)*

Often, men were reported to be drunk during such episodes and women expressed feelings such as: "*It would be better if he slept and after waking up he could do everything he wanted.*" Although the scope and extent is not clear, other women reported having unwanted sex with their partners, not because they were physically forced but because they were either afraid of what he might do (such as beat, curse or leave her, or seek sex elsewhere), they felt unable to resist or they felt obligated to satisfy his demands. Comments from respondents such as "*I am a woman so I could not resist; I had to satisfy him.*" were common. Some women indicated that they were often accused by their husbands of having extra-marital affairs (especially when they came home late from working overtime) and they gave in to sexual pressure although they did not want to, to show their loyalty and to avoid physical violence. Women also reported that their husband's family sometimes incited their husband to be jealous by inventing stories about their being unfaithful. One married migrant northerner related how she was accused of infidelity when she got up to use the toilet in the middle of the night and her husband heard a man cough outside their room and accused her of having a midnight date.

Psychological violence and controlling behaviour within intimate relationships were also explored, although it was difficult in this study to determine where violence begins. About 30 women gave personal accounts of their friends, neighbours and relatives being controlled by their partners or ex-partners. Four migrant women expressed their concern during their interviews that their husbands would get angry and use violence toward them because they had been away from home for the duration of the interview. It was rumoured in a few cases that children were being set up to control women. Some husbands were reported to threaten or actually take the couple's child away, such as to their hometowns, after an argument.

After the break-up of an abusive relationship, some women continued to be pursued by their former partners. Thirty women in this study were

divorced or separated. Eight women referred to an abusive situation as their reason for migration (violence from their intimate partner or their in-laws). One young migrant northerner recounted that she had left to escape an abusive husband, but that she was in constant fear because he had found out where she worked and sometimes waited for her outside the factory gates, intercepting her to demand money and sex, and threatening to kill her and burn her house down. By wearing a mask she had recently been able to avoid being recognized in the crowd of workers going home at the end of a shift.

Several women also reported that their partners insulted and threatened them and their relatives. Receiving insults in front of others and threats that he would harm or kill the woman's family members, including her children, siblings and parents, was most distressing. Often these threats were made in relation to the woman's relatives trying to intervene on her behalf. Although it is debatable whether the following should be considered violence, humiliation inflicted on unmarried women was said to occur when men broke off relationships after they had first had sex or she had become pregnant. Three women in this study revealed that their boyfriends had left them when they were pregnant.

For most women in this study, acts of violence were not isolated events but part of a continuing pattern of abusive behaviour, with different forms of intimate-partner violence co-existing. Twenty-seven of the 47 women who reported physical violence from an intimate partner also reported being sexually violated by their partner. This is consistent with studies that show that one-third to over half of cases of physical violence in intimate relationships are accompanied by sexual violence.[92]

Community violence

Community violence means "violence between individuals who are unrelated and who may or may not know each other, generally taking place outside the home."[93] Of relevance to this study is that it includes random acts of violence, rape or sexual assault by persons who were either known to the victim or strangers, and violence in institutional settings such as workplaces.

Many women expressed their fear of being assaulted, robbed, raped or murdered at night after working a late shift at the factory. Women reported being afraid every time they had to work late:

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[92] Ibid., Krug, E G., Dahlberg, L.L., Mercey, JA, Zwi, AB, Lozano, R., (Eds.). (2002) World Report on Violence Chapter 4 Violence by Intimate Partners, Geneva: World Health Organization.

[93] Krug, E G., Dahlberg, L.L., Mercey, JA, Zwi, AB, Lozano, R., (Eds.) (2002) World Report on Violence. Geneva: World Health Organization.

I am most afraid of coming home from work. When I have to return home late at night, I am most afraid of passing through the dark streets, and my mind is dominated by the fear of drug users or people with other diseases such as sexually transmitted diseases, hiding in the dark alleys and who could suddenly pounce on me… Those are things that I am most afraid of. (Focus group of migrant women, most married.)

In 37 of the 94 discussions, women reported being affected by sexual violence in the community (they had experienced violence, witnessed it, or knew of abuse occurring). Sexual violence was thought to happen on the roads home from work, as well as in the rental housing areas. In addition to fearing drug users, drunken men and those with sexually transmitted infections, women named security guards, night-watchmen, male co-workers, construction workers, neighbours and landlords as potential perpetrators of sexual violence.

Rape was the type of sexual violence most often discussed by women, although no woman admitted to being a victim of rape by a non-intimate partner. In many of the stories about rape by strangers, the victim was later murdered and the body thrown into a river or canal. Women also related personal and friends' experiences of men sexually harassing them, such as making lewd comments, attempting to or actually touching their buttocks or breasts and in five focus group discussions it was mentioned that some men exposed their genitals to workers. Migrant women in a FGD reported that, "*it was threatening because we were anxious and afraid that the man might sexually attack us. We were afraid that he might rape us and if he had some sexually transmitted disease, he might infect us.*"

From women's reports of their treatment in the factory it appears that some are concerned over the ways that factory management addresses production problems with women workers. Almost all women reported that they were scolded, insulted, yelled and cursed at by their supervisors and line leaders, either everyday or sometimes. It is not always clear what constitutes actual psychological violence or verbal abuse and what encouragement to do a good job. While some felt that being scolded for production-related mistakes or breaking rules, such as chatting during a shift, were reasonable, more women felt that regardless of whether mistakes were made, the leaders and supervisors were over-zealous in their criticism of their subordinates. In some cases, while hurling insults, supervisors and team leaders also threw objects in the direction of the workers.

Experiences of physical and sexual violence in the factory were reported to a far lesser degree. A few mentioned physical violence by supervisors,

but most suggested this had happened several years ago and was no longer a major issue. Women also reported instances of inappropriate actions towards them or their co-workers by male supervisors, co-workers and maintenance men at their workplaces. Such incidence included touching women's hair, backs, buttocks and hands, pinching their cheeks and slapping their buttocks. Respondents believed that most victims were single young women, and women who were particularly attractive.

Women workers were also known to use violence against their fellow workers. More experienced workers were reported to threaten new workers and fights also occurred between women workers because of jealousy over male workers or affairs.

Environment

Some of the women participating in the study felt that migrant women, most of whom were young, were often victims of violence and at risk virtually anywhere, including their homes, in the streets, rental housing areas and at work. Attacks were most often reported to occur commonly along deserted, tree-lined, poorly lit and sparsely populated roads, when workers returned home late or were starting a night shift. Some women reported seeing other women workers being assaulted at night on their way through the rubber-tree plantations that are used as short-cuts to the factories from women's rental housing areas. There was the perception among the respondents that women were weaker and inferior to men in both physical strength and power, which made them vulnerable to intimate-partner violence, as well as community violence and robbery, as described by a migrant woman:

> I think women are the weaker sex, so they are vulnerable to violence. And men are the strong sex, nobody can attack them. I think that violence or sexual harassment happens not because you are beautiful or charming, but simply because you are a woman. (Focus group with migrant women, most married.)

Housing

According to the respondents, migrants look for quiet and cheap places to live so that they can get a good night's sleep and maximize their savings. Rooms near main roads or markets are more expensive than those in small alleys, and migrants trying to save money often choose accommodation in more remote, isolated areas, sharing rental-housing units with people from their hometowns or with co-workers from their factory. Some women expressed their fear about intruders and using shared toilets late at night when they came home from an over-time shift Single, migrant women felt they were particularly at risk since they had no "male protection". Male

neighbours (often those who drank) were reported by some women to loiter around the housing units of migrant women and to attempt to enter their rooms.

Social networks

Social networks have been shown to be important in the migration process.[94] While many migrants find employment opportunities through fellow migrants from their home villages, some migrants end up living in areas without strong networks. Some women thought that living closely together in rental housing areas increased tensions and violence, especially in housing areas where migrants lacked social cohesion and people failed to look out for each other. This was explained by a 28-year old married northern migrant woman: *People living here do not take an interest in one another as they are not acquainted with one another and come from different provinces of the country.*

Where networks are stronger, the support also seems stronger, as stated by a 22-year old single woman from the north: *In general, being migrant workers who live far from our hometowns, I notice that we all live harmoniously with each other in my rental house and in my factory.*

Landlords

Most migrant women respondents felt that landlords could influence women's safety through the rules they enforced at the rental housing units. Some women stated that the following housing conditions and regulations made them feel safer:

• landlords living in the same housing complex (or who regularly made their presence known);

• verifying the identification papers of lodgers;

• checking the rooms of tenants to ensure that no unauthorized guests were staying there;

• closing the gates at 10pm;

• not permitting male guests to spend the night in women's rooms;

• not allowing noisy, quarrelling couples.

Factory

Migrant women from rural areas where jobs were scarce and wages low, explained that they had few choices but to accept less-than-ideal jobs.

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[94]   Op.cit., supra, note 86.

Migrant women were thought to endure excessive yelling and insults from their supervisors without complaint because there were no better employment options available and they badly needed the money to send home to their needy families. Complaining or talking back at company leaders meant risking one's job and this was an impossible option for migrant women workers.

3.2   Nature of violence affecting migrant women

Household economics and gender roles

Many of the interviewed women with experience of violence mentioned that violence seemed triggered when they complained or grumbled to their husband about him. Some suggested that violence would not occur if the woman endured the husband's negative actions and kept quiet. The women interviewed felt that financial difficulties and women bringing more money into the household than men represented a change in traditional gender roles, which was a major source of conflict and violence in married couples. Twenty-five women reported that their partners did not contribute meaningful amounts of money to the household on a regular basis, and tended to spend whatever money they earned on themselves.

Some men were reported to be paying for the women's rent or other expenses. Migrant women's strong motivation to earn money was reported to make them more tolerant of abuses they endured to be able to send as much money home as possible. Some respondents were sympathetic to migrant women dating married men: "*They put up with everything because of their poverty."*

One woman's story illustrates the vulnerability of young migrant women to gender-based violence:

> *I came here to study, but three years ago my father died and my family was in a difficult situation as I have three young sisters and brothers. I met an older man, more than 50 years old. He approached me when I was a virgin. I thought I should sacrifice my life to help the family and accepted to live with him. Afterwards I couldn't leave him, even when he hit me. He considers me as a bird in a cage and hit me even when my younger sister tried to stop him. I am so miserable, but I have to tolerate the situation so that he gives money to me to support my family. He hits me whenever he wants. He forces me to have sex with him and that makes me depressed. He forced me to have an abortion when I got pregnant. I cry and tell him my health is deteriorating, but he hits me all the same.*

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Relationships and gender roles

Women felt that men and women should treat each other with respect, have a caring attitude towards each other and that intimate relationships should be free from violence. Despite this, and consistent with the findings from other qualitative studies,[95] both married and unmarried women of various ages in the study believed that there were justifiable reasons for a man to use violence. These included situations when women were insolent or rude, talked back at their husband or members of his family, or had an extra-marital relationship.

Most perceptions about the prevalence of gender-based violence centred on violence in intimate relationships both in the areas that women had moved to and at places of origin. Some other women commented that they witnessed many cases of violence where they lived and worked. Some women felt that violence occurred mainly among married couples, and also depended on the man's level of education. A few women felt that a man gained a right to beat his wife once they were married, but violence towards a partner before marriage was totally unacceptable. Although physical violence from an intimate partner towards unmarried women was rarely discussed, these women were reported to be affected after losing their virginity or becoming pregnant.

Regarding sexual relations, several interviewees said that it was the woman's duty to endure her husband's sexual demands, and that they had little choice in the matter, even when they were too tired and did not want to have sex. They feared that if wives did not satisfy them at home their partners would have sex elsewhere. Men were said to become physically violent towards their wives when she knew about her husband's extra-marital affairs and complained about it to him. Other causes of violence included failing to bear a son, which can provoke violence from both the partner and the in-laws, and when the in-laws spoke ill about their daughter-in-law and incited their son to violence to "teach her".

Some husbands were said to beat their wives because they could not control their temper, or when they felt uneasy, irritable or angry about something, especially when the couple had different points of view, or

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[95]   Le Thi Quy (2004). *Gender-Based Violence in the Family: Study of Cases in Thai Binh, Phu Tho and Ha Noi.* Hanoi: Research Center for Gender and Development (RCGAD) & University of Social Sciences and Humanities; Phan Thu, Hien (2004). Sexual Coercion Within Marriage in a Rural Area of Quang Tri, Vietnam. Masters Thesis, Amsterdam University, unpublished. Also: Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health Monograph, Vol. 9. ENCOURAGES Project – CIHP.; Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished manuscript.; Le Thi Phuong Mai and Lucinda Willshire (2000). *Report on an intervention project: training on domestic violence, sexual abuse and reproductive health counselling for the Hanoi hotline.*; Women's Union study 2001, cited in Nguyen Huu Minh, Le Ngoc Lan, Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa. (2006). *Research on gender-based domestic violence in Vietnam.* Institute of Family and Gender. Unpublished.

when the wives had done something to annoy their husbands. The women in this study felt that talking too much could exasperate men and cause violence, while others beat women for no reason at all because "they felt like it". Some women in the study also felt that much violence against women was the result of bad habits or what is referred to as "social evils" in Viet Nam: excessive drinking of alcohol, using drugs, gambling and extra-marital affairs. Most women participants felt that drug abuse was the cause of most of the violence against women, be it IPV or violence perpetrated by non-intimate partners. About one fourth of women in this study reported having been verbally, physically or sexually abused by an intimate partner under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Many others who did not report being abused, reported that their husband's addiction to drink was a major source of their complaints and arguments. Six women claimed that their partners would be good husbands if they did not drink:

> *Without drinking, he is my husband. But as soon as he gets drunk, he threatens to kill me, kill the children. How can he be called a husband at that time? At night, I have to carry the two children to run into the forest, to escape from him.(Married migrant, place of origin and time living in area unknown.)*

Alcohol use is also thought to be the cause of sexual assault by non-intimate partners in the community. When some women discussed attacks against women and rape along the roadside, or in housing areas, they often stated that alcohol and drugs were involved, and the men were not in control of themselves.

Many of the women in this study worked at factories where 80 to 90 per cent of workers were women which made finding boyfriends and husbands difficult. According to the women in the study, this may lead some single women to date married men, which may also lead to violence:

In this industrial zone, there are more women than men, so scrambling for a husband is very common. In many cases, the man has a wife but still can love another woman even if the woman knows he has a wife. As a result, many fights occur between husbands and wives. I feel it to be a pressing issue, especially for the married women. (Focus group of migrant women, mix of married and single.)

3.3 Impact of gender-based violence

The women in this study reported mental-health problems resulting from violence, in addition to physical injuries, and that some women were driven to suicide. Violence also affected women's work performance and was the cause of marriages ending in divorce. The impacts on mental and

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reproductive health are described below, as well as social and economic impacts; such findings are consistent with previous research.[96]

Impact on mental health

Mental health effects were the most frequently reported impacts of violence amongst women in the study. Women talked about feeling depressed, discouraged, anxious, "tired of living", empty, and uneasy as a result of their experience. Some referred to sleeping as a form of escape, while others had trouble sleeping and suffered bad dreams, affecting their work performance. Some who experienced verbal abuse at work worried about losing their job. Poor mental health could lead to poor physical health and well-being, and cause anxiety, weight loss and sleep disturbances.

Respondents referred to women committing suicide when they were faced with serious violence, when they were abandoned by a boyfriend when pregnant, or had been raped by an acquaintance or stranger. At least 11 women who had experienced intimate-partner violence, or whose boyfriend left them when they were pregnant, reported having had suicidal thoughts.

Impact on reproductive health

Three women reported being worried about contracting a sexually transmitted infection from their husbands because they believed they were having extra-marital affairs. More often, though, women reported being afraid of contracting HIV from a stranger during a sexual assault or robbery, or getting stabbed with an infected needle by a drug user. Women were reported to have experienced violence from an intimate partner while they were pregnant resulting in miscarriages.

The reputation of single women who had been raped was said to be ruined if people knew about it. She would be known as a woman who had lost her virginity before marriage and thus her ability to find a marriage partner would be seriously prejudiced, since virginity at marriage is highly valued.

Impact on family

Divorce and family break-ups were also discussed as consequences of intimate partner violence. Eleven women in the study had actually left their husbands permanently, as they could no longer endure the abuse

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[96]   Krug, E G., et al. (eds) (2002). World Report on Violence. Geneva: World Health Organization. Accessed on 23/4/2007 at http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/full_en.pdf ; Le Thi Phuong Mai (1998). *Violence and its consequences for reproductive health: The Vietnam Case*. South and East Asia Working Paper Series. Hanoi: Population Council.

and promises of change had not been kept. The break-up of a marriage was associated with considerable personal shame, as well as embarrassment for parents and relatives. As divorce was perceived as straining the parent-daughter relationship, it was considered only as a last resort. Single migrant women in one focus group said that they did not think that a migrant woman who had decided to end an abusive relationship would dare to move back home without her former husband.

Impact on work performance

Many women reported that their experience with, or the fear of, violence affected their ability to concentrate on their work and might cause industrial accidents. Women reported that experiences of gender-based violence led to anxiety-induced sleep disturbances and low motivation to work, both of which could lead to poor work performance. A few workers reported that their supervisors knew about their situation at home and were sympathetic towards them when they were tired at work and made mistakes.

Women reported having to miss work sometimes because of injuries sustained from violence. Missing work entailed a loss of salary and women therefore avoided staying away from work as much as possible, also as women reported being scolded by their supervisors for taking sick leave. Thus, some women came to work even after sustaining injury from physical violence at home, only to faint on the job and to be taken to the factory clinic:

> *Once, after my husband had beaten me severely, I tried my best to work but fainted from the pain and was taken to the factory clinic. As we have health insurance the company paid all costs, but my salary for the next two weeks was reduced and my husband again shouted at me. My life is unbearable. At the factory, I try to fulfil my responsibilities so that the group leader will not yell at me, and then at home I have to endure another burden. That makes me quite ill and I have a headache all the time and am unable to talk with anyone. (30-year old married migrant southerner, living in area for two years.)*

More recently, however, new workers were known to take leave or even leave their jobs when they could no longer bear the insults and yelling at the workplace.

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3.4 Women's coping strategies and reactions to gender-based violence

Coping strategies refer to the specific behavioural and psychological defence mechanisms used to be able to tolerate, reduce or minimize

stressful events.[97] Women's responses to violence are limited by their social environment and the options available to them.[98] In addition to managing the stress created by the double burden of working in the factory and household responsibilities, women factory workers have developed mechanisms to cope with the violence and fear they experience in their daily lives.

Minimizing exposure to gender-based violence

Respondents reported that women acquired the mechanisms they used to minimize their exposure to gender-based violence through experience and the advice of women in their supportive networks. Women use such coping strategies in relation to violence from partners, supervisors and both known and unknown men in the community by:

• remaining calm and speaking softly;

• keeping silent when their partners were drunk or had become angry;

• preparing favourite meals and keeping the house clean;

• taking care of the children and keeping them quiet so as not to disturb their father;

• not complaining (especially about excessive drinking, gambling and womanizing);

• avoiding to make him suspicious and jealous by coming straight home after work and restricting time with friends and neighbours and not talking with men, even male co-workers;

• having sex when they did not want to.

One woman described protecting herself by hiding the knives in her home when it seemed that her husband would be getting back late, and would probably be drunk and aggressive when he returned.

When conflicts turned violent, at least 14 women reported leaving the home temporarily in order to avoid being further harmed and to let their husbands "cool off". Often they described having to hide with neighbours or relatives or even hiding in the forest or graveyard to avoid continuing assaults. Women also talked about leaving the house in order that their

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[97]   Coping Strategies Summary, prepared by Shelley Taylor in collaboration with the Psychosocial Working Group. Last revised July, 1998. John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Research Network on Socioeconomic Status and Health. Accessed on 4/18/2007 at: http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/Research/Psychosocial/notebook/coping.html#Definition

[98]   Dutton, M.A. (1996) cited in Heise, L., Ellsberg, M. & Gottemoeller, M. (1999). Ending Violence Against Women. *Population Reports*, Series L (11), December. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program.

husbands may reflect on their conduct. Normally women did not leave the house for longer than a few hours or perhaps one night. Staying at other people's homes was shameful for some women and leaving the home sometimes caused more violence.

Few respondents reported that women used physical violence towards their husbands to defend themselves. Only four women referred to instances when they had defended themselves during physically violent episodes with their intimate partners. This concerned mainly situations where the violence had escalated to an unbearable point and women felt they had no other choice but to fight back to stop the abuse.

Viet Nam has strong institutional structures reaching down to community levels. Many of these groups, such as reconciliation committees, the Women's Union, residents' units and local People's Committees and police authorities intervene in household issues. In certain circumstances women called on the police, night-watchmen or the village/hamlet leaders for assistance to stop their husband's physically abusive behaviour or to prevent future episodes of violence. Such accounts concerned mainly women who had lived in the area and were not recent migrants. Many migrant women signalled that their friends or landlord would be the first persons they would turn to if they needed help in relation to gender-based violence.

The intervention by the police or Women's Union officials normally led to men being punished in various ways, ranging from having to give a written guarantee of no further violence; being taken to the police station and advised against any future recourse to violence; being fined; being beaten himself to frighten him, to several days in jail. However, only two of the women, whose husbands had been threatened by the police not to beat them again reported that the violence in their relationships had decreased as a result, and that they now had a strategy to use against their partners whenever there was a risk of renewed aggression against them. Some women felt that the presence of night watch-men and police stations in the vicinity protected women against violence.

For some women a conscious effort to concentrate on their work and the avoiding of mistakes was successful to escape being yelled or sworn at by the supervisors. If despite their efforts they continued to be verbally abused, many women remained silent and continued to do their work, out of fear that they might otherwise lose their job and had no other alternative. Others may talk back or try to explain why mistakes had occurred and to protect themselves against being blamed for the errors made by others. Only few women who suffered verbal abuse or sexual harassment were bold enough to submit a formal complaint to a higher

authority in the factory, which, however, was ignored and remained unanswered.

Seeking support and care

The response by third parties who were aware of the abuses suffered by the women migrant workers differed. Close family members, in-laws or neighbours were known to intervene in the midst of violent intimate-partner disputes or tried to prevent future violence. However, out of shame and the fear of social stigma, women often kept their unhappy experiences to themselves. Alternatively, they would most often confide in friends and co-workers or their neighbours, their own families, in-laws and, though to a lesser degree, their landlords. The advice given by close family members, however, was often to continue to endure an abusive relationship with an intimate partner, while friends, neighbours and co-workers were more likely to encourage and boost the self-esteem of the victims of domestic violence, and to emphasize the inadmissibility of such violence, advise and suggest safe exit strategies. Friends and acquaintances also assisted the victims by accompanying them to medical facilities to check and treat any injuries, and by lending money and helping with childcare.

While some women sought medical care for their injuries, particularly if they were overcome with pain at the workplace, others turned to self-medication with pain relievers, medicinal oils and traditional medicines. Some women hesitated to seek medical care, afraid of having to reveal the cause of their injuries to the healthcare provider. Thus, many women did not share their experiences of violence with others and continued to suffer in silence. This is further examined in the following section on barriers.

3.5   Barriers to seeking help for abuse or leaving an abusive situation

As related by the women in this study, there are many reasons why they do not reach out for help or escape from an abusive situation. Among the main reasons for failing to seek help were feelings of shame; concern over the negative effect on their children's lives; fear of retaliation; lack of awareness of institutions and services able to help; a general feeling of ineffectiveness of local institutions, and perceived legal barriers that prevented their escaping from leaving an abusive situation.

Fate, shame and fear

Many women in the study stated that to disclose the violence they endured would be prejudicial to the reputation of the woman, as well as her husband and parents. Many women were afraid of being ostracized

by their neighbours and the community if they were to disclose their situation, especially if the police had to intervene, and they felt completely isolated, either in fact because they had few close friends, or because the shame of their situation and the abuse they suffered silenced and prevented them from seeking help. Thus, some women described that they consciously restrained themselves from crying out when they were being beaten, or from running away to escape from the violence in order to maintain the violence a secret and very few women actually report cases of sexual assault and rape to the police.

> *I can't describe how ashamed I feel. I have tolerated this for 10 years, as I love my child. Nor can I explain that to my family and so I keep it a secret. When I come home, my mother asks whether my husband still beat me, and I have to say that he has stopped hitting me [she cries].* **(***30-year old migrant married southerner, living in area for two years.*)

The women in the study also stated that they did not leave abusive relationships because a woman divorcee was often severely stigmatized. Nor did they feel that there was any hope that they would be able to meet another man who would be willing to accept their past, and not abuse them and further traumatize their children. Women talked about the widespread belief in their society that domestic violence was a private family issue, not to be interfered with by outsiders. The concern for their children and that they would suffer if the family unit broke up was also said to prevent many women from leaving abusive relationships. Children's development was thought to suffer when they lived separately from their father. Many abused women risked their own safety for the well-being of their children:

> *Sometimes my house is like a hell, I am so depressed. If it was not because of the children, I would have left long ago. I did not want to go home. In the past, I was very afraid when I saw him. But now I feel less afraid because I am used to it [being beaten and forced to have sex]. My life is like a fish on a chopping-board, he wants to chop at any time. (38-year old married migrant southerner, living in area for five years.)*

Fear and pervious experience of retaliation from their abusive partners was reported to prevent some women from seeking help and others from offering assistance. Women spoke frequently of neighbours "not daring to intervene":

> *Many times I wanted to get the police numbers; but while my husband beats me, I cannot run to call the police. I've asked the neighbours to call the police whenever my husband beats me, but*

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nobody dares to do that. They are afraid of revenge. Last week, I was beaten a lot, but nobody called the police to restrain him. I have no cell phone, so how can I call the police? (Married migrant northerner, living in area for six years.)

Very often, people fail to intervene even when they are witness to women being sexually harassed in the streets. Women workers themselves reported feeling unable to help other women victims, as illustrated by one 34-year old migrant woman from the central region:

A young girl had to work overtime until 8 p.m. Her bicycle was broken and she pushed it passed the processing zone later that night. I saw some men following her and they kicked her until she fell down. She was about 15 to16 years old. At that time I heard her scream loudly, but I thought that I could not do anything. At first I thought they were friends, then I heard the girl scream loudly and I went away as I thought I could not do anything. That area is near the industrial area, so there are few houses. The road is quiet - I can only take care of myself and could not do anything. I tell you the truth…

Several migrant women reported that an initial lack of familiarity among neighbours prevented women from obtaining help and that, over time, as neighbours got to know each other better, they would support and assist each other, especially when their husbands were being abusive towards them. However, some migrant women reported that they felt discriminated against and were not well-liked by local community members: "*They think that we are girls from the Mekong Delta coming here to serve in 'escort bars' or to steal other women's husbands. They think we are bad girls. So every time I go out I feel inferior.*"

Community institutions and neighbours

Besides stigma, fear and shame preventing access to support services, migrant women in at least three focus group discussions described that they had not familiarized themselves with the local leaders and authorities in their host communities. They did not know who was the head of their residential unit or the telephone number for the police, nor were they aware of services for victims of violence, such as counselling services. This was because they did not feel that they needed assistance and planned to stay in the area for only a few years to make money.

The local Women's Union was seen as a source of help for victims; however, some women were not sure if the Women's Union only served its own members, or local women with local residence registration. Some women believed that migrant women were at a disadvantage concerning

assistance from local police or heads of residential units. In one focus group women indicated that when migrant women reported a security problem in their areas to the authorities, they would be told that someone would come to investigate, but nobody never came. Other women indicated that the heads of residential units sometimes ignored complaints from women not considered "local".

Regardless of residence registration, some women felt that only serious injury would induce authorities to intervene in a domestic violence case, even if they were directly called. One woman indicated that since her neighbour's husband continued to be abusive even after the police had fined him several times, the police stopped intervening, while some other women indicated that police were encouraged to overlook acts of domestic violence.

When workers became sick and had to take sick leave, they had to produce a certificate from a healthcare provider in order to get paid. However, workers reported that factory clinics could not certify leave for injuries that were sustained off-site, and therefore women had to go to community clinics, which took more of their time. Pay for sick leave is also reported to be delayed because of bureaucratic health insurance procedures. Financial constraints were, therefore, a serious factor hindering some women from seeking assistance or legally ending an abusive relationship. Various women workers said that financial constraints made them hesitate to seek healthcare or to buy medicine for injuries, take time off from work to recover from injuries, or to go to court to settle a divorce. However, few married women stated that finances would prevent them from divorcing.

Sometimes, migrants were prevented from filing for a divorce because they did not have permanent residence registration. According to some respondents, women must return to the location where they have permanent residence and registered their marriage to submit a divorce request. This regulation makes it difficult for migrant women to take the necessary steps to end abusive relationships.

Perceptions about factories' responses to gender-based violence

Women's perceptions about factory and trade union managers helping women with violence and safety issues were mixed. When it came to protecting women from violence during their journeys to and from work, some women reported that factory management had installed street lights, hired security guards, and organized transport. Several women expressed that they did not think trade unions got involved in workers' lives outside the factory gates, but suggested that if there was serious violence they would intervene. Some women got emotional support from their factory's trade union members, and two women mentioned their

factory trade unions' efforts to obtain professional counselling. These women also suggested that young migrant female workers might be too ashamed to seek help from the trade unions regarding violence.

Some women mentioned that the trade unions of their factories played a role in protecting workers from abuse in the factory. However, several mentioned that they wished their unions were more powerful and explained that since the trade union officials were employed by the factory, there could be potential conflicts of interest. One woman felt that it would be difficult to stop verbal abuse in the factory, even though there were strict policies against violence in the factories and disciplinary actions were implemented for such behaviours, often as a result of the involvement of the trade union.

IV.   Conclusions and way forward

For policy makers and programme implementing agencies, the findings of this study provide useful information about migrant women's perceptions, experiences and responses to gender-based violence.

4.1   Beliefs about causes of violence, sources of harm and implications for protective behaviours

Migrant women in this study reported being exposed to violence in their domestic and work environments and had various perceptions about what put them at risk. These perceptions are shaped by their migration experience, the physical and social environments, and their beliefs about the causes of violence. People's beliefs and perceptions of sources of harm, and their personal susceptibility to harm, play an important role in determining the steps they take to protect themselves.[99] "Such beliefs are crucial arbiters of what people do and do not anticipate, take note of, interpret and respond to, as well as how they undertake these threshold steps of self-protection."[100]

Some women in this study felt that their gender made them weaker and more vulnerable to acts of violence than men. Women in this study perceived that living without a male family member, away from the watchful eyes of parents or family, going out or coming home late at night and travelling alone put women at a serious risk of violence.

The reasons and factors behind such perceptions were not explained, but women in this study revealed that they worried about being attacked by non-intimate partners along the roads and in their rental housing areas

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[99]   Weinstein, N.D. (1984). Why it won't happen to me: Perceptions of risk factors and susceptibility. *Health Psychology*, 3, 431-457.

[100]   Nurius, P.S. (2000). Risk perception for acquaintance sexual aggression: a social-cognitive perspective. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 5(1), pp. 63-78. (citation from p. 64)

and, especially when they were working overtime, they worried about returning home later that evening. To minimize any potential risk, women reported using several different strategies such as avoiding poorly lit areas and travelling in groups. Research suggests that women are more afraid of, and tend to perceive their risk of being violated by, a stranger to be higher than by an intimate partner or acquaintance and, as a result, feel less prepared to prevent or protect themselves against intimate-partner violence or the threat thereof.[101]

Consistent with other studies, several women in the study felt that the following actions by women led to violence from an intimate partner:

• not obeying her husband;

• talking back;

• not caring for the family and home adequately (some women were accused of not caring for family when they worked overtime and were not at home to cook the evening meal);

• questioning him about money or girlfriends, going somewhere without his permission;

• refusing him sex.[102]

All of these events constitute what may be considered over-stepping traditional female gender roles[103] and some women reported that, in such cases, violence from the husband to "teach his wife" was justified. This is consistent with other research conducted in Viet Nam.[104] Moreover, most women's reports about their strategies to avoid conflict and passive reaction when violence occurred were consistent with findings from other studies conducted in Viet Nam.[105] Such behaviours may be a result of gender socialization and societal beliefs.

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[101]   Ibid.

[102]   Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished manuscript; Le Thi Quy. (2004). *Gender-Based Violence in the Family: Study of Cases in Thai Binh, Phu Tho and Ha Noi.* Hanoi: Research Center for Gender and Development (RCGAD) & University of Social Sciences and Humanities; Phan Thu, Hien. (2004). Sexual Coercion Within Marriage in a Rural Area of Quang Tri, Vietnam. Masters Thesis, Amsterdam University, unpublished. Also: Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health Monograph, Vol. 9. ENCOURAGES Project – CIHP; Heise, L., Ellsberg, M. & Gottemoeller, M. (1999). Ending Violence Against Women. *Population Reports*, Series L (11), December. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program.

[103]   Heise, L., Ellsberg, M. & Gottemoeller, M. (1999), op.cit., supra.

[104]   Le Thi Quy, op.cit. supra, note 95.

[105]   Rydstrom, H. (2003). Encountering "hot" anger: Domestic violence in contemporary Vietnam. *Violence Against Women*, 9(6): 676-697 ; Phan Thu, Hien. (2004). *Sexual Coercion Within Marriage in a Rural Area of Quang Tri, Vietnam.* Masters Thesis, Amsterdam University, unpublished. Also: Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health Monograph, Vol. 9. ENCOURAGES Project – CIHP. ; Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement. (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished.

Strong links have been found between alcohol use and the occurrence of intimate partner violence in many countries, and evidence suggests that, in some cases, alcohol use can increase the occurrence and severity of domestic violence,[106] and may affect the risk of being either a perpetrator or a victim of violence.[107] However, as a direct cause of violence, alcohol consumption "has often been contested, either on the basis of additional factors accounting for the presence of both, or because frequent heavy drinking can create an unhappy, stressful partnership that increases the risk of conflict and violence."[108] Therefore, while efforts to help men reduce their intake of alcohol (as some women in the study suggested as necessary) may have some benefits in relation to reducing gender-based violence, much more needs to be done.

4.2   Barriers to seeking help

Women in this study face some of the same barriers that keep other women around the world from reaching out for help or leaving an abusive situation: shame, fear of retaliation, and concern for the children.[109] This study indicated that fear of social stigma or shame was a major barrier to seeking help or support.

While it has been shown that Vietnamese women experiencing domestic violence sometimes seek help from friends and relatives, particularly parents, for refuge and advice on how to avoid violence, migrant women may not have the benefit of relatives nearby. [110] This study showed that migrant women make careful decisions about the risks and benefits of reaching out to those in their host community. A sense of filial obligation and the respect owed to one's parents often keep many Vietnamese women from confiding in their parents. Economic strain, combined with the distance from family, may encourage migrant women to keep bad news to themselves and to hide them from their families.

Consistent with findings from other research conducted on violence among migrants, this study suggests that social isolation, an absence of

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[106] Testa, M. Quigley, B.M. Leonard, K.E. (2003). Does alcohol make a difference? Within participants - comparison of incidents of partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 18: 735-743; Brecklin, L.R. (2002). The role of perpetrator alcohol use in the injury outcomes of intimate assaults. *Journal of Family Violence*, 17: 185:197.

[107] World Health Organization (n.d.). Interpersonal Violence and Alcohol Policy Briefing. Accessed on 2/23/2007 at: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/pb_violencealcohol.pdf

[108] Leonard, KE. (2005), as cited in WH. (n.d.). *WHO Facts On... Intimate partner violence and alcohol*. Accessed on 2/27/2007 at: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/fs_intimate.pdf

[109] Heise, L., Ellsberg, M. & Gottemoeller, M., op.cit, supra, note 103

[110] Vu Manh Loi, Vu Tuan Huy, Nguyen Huu Minh, & J. Clement. (1999). *Gender-based violence: The case of Vietnam.* Unpublished.

family and community support and lack of awareness of services, prevents many migrant women from seeking help.[111] Social isolation experienced by migrants has been associated with increased intimate partner violence[112] and women with supportive networks have been found to cope better with experiences of sexual assault and its sequels than women who were alone.[113] Understanding how women cope with violence will better inform the design of interventions that support effective coping efforts of women.

While women's lack of financial independence has been cited in the literature as a barrier to leaving an abusive intimate partner relationship,[114] few women in this study referred to this obstacle. However, filial obligation appeared to be a factor preventing women from leaving abusive relationships, as doing so would prevent them from maximizing savings to remit to their families. The social unacceptability of being single or divorced was highlighted as a factor preventing women leaving destructive relationships.

While friends, co-workers, neighbours and family are a crucial source of support for some women, many others report that their advice would be to endure violence from husbands, or keep silent about experiences of sexual violence. Based on reports from women in the study, the willingness of people to help each other might be lower the less people are familiar with each other.

In this study, migrant women's dissatisfaction with local authorities' responses to gender-based violence appeared to be caused by three main factors: 1) migrant women believing that they did not have the right to ask for or receive help from local institutions because they did not have permanent residence registration; 2) migrant women believing that local authorities were unwilling to help them; 3) their perception that the interventions of local authorities were not effective. Services to assist victims of violence do not appear to be reaching out to migrant women factory workers who work long hours and are unfamiliar with their communities. The government's migration policies and other laws do not appear to be clear enough to ensure equal access to such services. This may represent an area where awareness raising and training could make an important difference.

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[111] Raj, A. and Silverman, J. (2002) and Patel, S.P. and Gaw, A.C. (1996) as cited in Raj, A. and Silverman, J. (2003). Immigrant South Asian Women at Greater Risk for Injury From Intimate Partner Violence. *American Journal of Public Health*, March; 93(3): 435–437.

[112] Raj, A. and Silverman, J. (2003). Immigrant South Asian Women at Greater Risk for Injury From Intimate Partner Violence. *American Journal of Public Health*, March; 93(3): 435–437.

[113] Flannery, R.B. (1990). Social support and psychological trauma: a methodological review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3(4): 593-611.

[114] Heise, L., Ellsberg, M. & Gottemoeller, M., op.cit., supra, note 109.

According to Viet Nam's official legal documents, and its ratification of international instruments, such as the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the country has a very strong commitment to equality between women and men in society. Late in 2006, the government passed a gender equality law. However, as illustrated by this study's findings, there is a gap between the existing laws and the extent to which these laws have been implemented and enforced in Vietnamese society.

Current institutional interventions are perceived to be ineffective in deterring men from committing violent acts against women, suggesting an underlying acceptance of violence. Societal beliefs about men's and women's roles and domestic violence being a private issue may keep authorities and others from intervening. Thus, impunity for violence against women continues and women remain at risk. Society, therefore, needs to examine how its response or lack thereof to violence creates an abject environment of acceptance.

This study has shown that recording the perspectives of Vietnamese women on such sensitive issues as sexual violence and abuse in the workplace can take place when members of the target group are involved in recruiting or referring their peers, and when confidentiality and privacy are ensured during data collection. Research should be conducted in a similar manner to explore men's perspectives on the context and causes of gender-based violence, the consequences of migration for intimate relationships, and their recommendations for action. It is by learning how both men and women understand each other that programmes can be developed to help people interact without recourse to violence.

In this study, when women were asked what should be done to prevent gender-based violence and assist the victims, they shared ideas of what would meet their needs and those of their co-workers. The following recommendations are drawn from the perspectives of the study participants with further elaboration and additions by the researcher.

4.3   Way forward

Conduct comprehensive quantitative and qualitative research

Much more research is required to better understand the scope and nature of gender-based violence and the interventions most appropriate to help women who experienced violence. Research needs to be conducted to learn about men's perceptions of why gender-based violence occurs and what could be done to prevent it. Such information can be used to determine how men might be involved in ending violence against women. UNFPA publications on programmes developed to end violence against

women suggest that men who have influence can become advocates and exert peer pressure on other community members to reject beliefs and practices that are harmful.[115] Research to quantify the magnitude of violence against women and its different forms is also needed.

Educate community and legal institutions about relevant laws and provide training on how to enforce them

A law to prevent domestic violence is currently being drafted. When it and the associated implementing decree are issued, training of police and other associations involved in protecting women, such as the Women's Union, will be necessary to ensure that the law is effectively enforced and people deterred from using violence against others. Training for the representatives of these important community institutions in women's rights and gender issues may be important for improving the effectiveness.

Assist local government and healthcare institutions to provide more migrant-friendly services and outreach

The findings of this study indicated that migrant women were unsure about the effectiveness of reporting their experiences of violence to the police and Women's Union. Representatives of local institutions should examine their responses to migrant women to ensure they are reaching all members of society, including those without a local residence registration. Institutions operating in communities with high concentrations of migrants should be offered training to ensure their effective outreach to migrants to inform them of their services and help to make these more migrant-friendly.

Similarly, women reported barriers to seeking healthcare and counselling regarding violence suffered. While services exist to treat the physical wounds of victims of violence, more is required to render them accessible to all women, not only after the event. Health stations, both within and outside the factory setting, should be structured to provide non-judgmental services that are accessible and available to migrants, especially accounting for the times and places where migrants work. Staff should be trained to provide the necessary medical care and refer women to other professionals for psychological and legal assistance. Previous research has shown that healthcare providers are well placed to identify victims of violence in the community.[116]

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[115] UNFPA (2006). *Ending Violence Against Women: Programming for Prevention, Protection and Care.* Accessed on 4/27/2007 at: http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/679_filename_endingvaw.pdf ; UNFPA. (2006). *Programming to Address Violence Against Women: 10 Case Studies.* Accessed on 4/27/2007 at: http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/678_filename_vaw.pdf

[116] Ramsay, J., Richardson, J., Carter, Y.H., Davidson, L.L. and Feder, G. (2002). Should health professionals screen women for domestic violence? Systematic review. *British Medical Journal*, August 10; 325(7359): 314.

Establish a community help programme

Throughout the study, there was mention of women being supported by neighbours, co-workers and staff from factories and trade unions. Community-based programmes should be established to reduce stigma, elicit community involvement and raise the awareness of communities concerning the right of every person to live in freedom and free of violence, and the enforcement of appropriate laws. This may help deter acts of violence, encourage people to intervene when they witness violence and empower women to assert their rights and seek help when the laws to protect them are flouted. Men should be included in the planning and implementation of such community programmes to ensure their participation and raise and maintain their awareness and recognition of the harmful and often devastating effects of violence on families and communities. Programmes should also be designed to gain support from police and local leaders and provide direct support to women affected by violence. Support could come in the form of establishing safe places for women to stay during manifestations of violence towards them, and setting up support groups where women could come together to share their experiences and coping strategies. Most women recommended that meetings in the evening take place in the community rather than inside the factory gates. They also suggested that outreach was needed to identify victims of violence.

Establish peer education programmes

This study showed that women are more aware of the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections from strangers, than their husbands. Since women in this study reported having sex with their husbands against their will, and their husbands were prone to excessive alcohol use and perhaps also extra-martial relationships, it is necessary to reach women through interactive, participatory peer information, education and outreach on sexually transmitted infections, HIV, the dangers of risky behaviour and how to avoid such risks, as well as awareness and ability to live healthy lives.

Educate children about gender equality and healthy intimate relationships in schools

Children should also be educated from a young age about the equality of men and women in society and before the law. This would help bridge the distance between the government's strong laws supporting gender equality and the realities of every day life, especially in private homes. In order to change harmful conduct in intimate relationships, children should also learn about the characteristics of a healthy intimate partnership and learn to recognize signs of harmful developments and deterioration. Such

an approach would help people to restrain themselves and others from violent conduct and abusive relationships.

Create more job opportunities for men in the areas where women factory workers live and work

Many women in this study reported that their partners were unemployed, underemployed or in insecure and precarious jobs, which contributed to spiralling tensions in the home. It was suggested that increased job opportunities for men would help reduce economic strain on the family and domestic tensions. This would also have the effect of drawing more male migrants to such locations and thereby improve the gender imbalance prevalent in certain industrial zones, and which were felt to be an addition source of stress. Also, increasing credit and loan opportunities for migrants may help them to start new businesses to increase their family income.

Improving the community environment

Appropriate actions to minimize the risk to or victimization of women are called for to reduce the risk of assaults within the community. Cooperation between factories and local authorities is called for to provide better lighting and security on the roads leading to factories and in rental housing neighbourhoods. Subsidized transportation for workers after overtime shifts could be provided to improve their safety on the way home.

Examining and instituting management styles for supervisors and training on the means to motivate workers without abuse or intimidation

Because so many women reported emotional suffering from being yelled and sworn at in their workplace, factory managers and supervisors are urged to examine their style of supervision to motivate workers without verbal abuse. Training in effective supervision techniques should be provided to factory leadership. Female managers should also be sensitized to issues of gender-based violence and trained to respectfully approach women workers they suspect of suffering from abuse and refer them to the appropriate assistance.

China

The impact of gender on rural-to-urban migration in China

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Contents

I. Introduction

In the last two decades, China's efforts to develop a globalized, market economy have resulted in what has been characterized as the most important peacetime internal migration the world has ever seen. Termed the "floating population" (*liudong renkou*), most migrants move from rural areas to urban and industrial centres in search of work, especially in the coastal regions. Currently, their numbers are estimated at around 120 million and to represent between one-fifth and one-third of the total population of most large cities (Jacka 2006, 5).

The "floating population" includes anyone who has either temporarily or longer term moved from their home location but without a corresponding transfer of their household registration (or *hukou*). The household registration system, introduced in the 1950s, classifies all citizens according to their place of residence and as originating from either agricultural or non-agricultural households. For most people it is extremely difficult to transfer this registration from an agricultural to a non-agricultural context, or from a village or small town to a larger city. Until the 1980s, the household registration system, in combination with central planning, severely curtailed rural-to-urban migration, as it was practically impossible to buy grain or find housing in the cities without a local, non-agricultural household registration. However, the emergence of a market economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s had the effect of limiting the impact of household registration on rural-urban migration. No longer having to rely on the state for the provision of basic foodstuffs and other necessities, people with rural household registration could now live in towns and cities for months or even years at a time. Meanwhile, a breakdown of the commune system in rural areas and a return to household farming led to a diversification in the rural economy and, for a time, increased rural incomes. From the mid-1980s, however, rural incomes stagnated and rural/urban income inequalities increased markedly. Rural people started to move to urban centres in large numbers where they were welcomed by employers of both domestic and foreign-owned companies eager to benefit from a cheap, flexible and unskilled labour force (Jacka 2006, 5-6).[1]

In China, as elsewhere, there is an important dialectic relationship between gender, migration and development (Usher 2005, 18). For example, both

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[1]   In the 1990s and 2000s, the household registration system underwent a number of reforms, aimed primarily at making it easier for wealthy, educated and skilled migrants to obtain permanent urban registration in their place of destination. However, it remains extremely difficult for the majority of rural migrants to have their household registration transferred to their new urban place of residence. Therefore, the term "migrants" is used in this paper to refer to rural people who have moved to urban areas and industrial zones without transferring their household registration. It does not include urban-to-urban migrants or those whose household registration has been transferred to their place of residence. In practice, only a small minority of internal migrants in China belong to the last two categories.

rural and urban gender relations have a significant impact on patterns of rural-to-urban migration. They also result in important differences in the experiences, concerns and needs of migrant women and men, and substantially affect the extent to which migration contributes to the welfare and human development of migrant women and men and that of the non-migrating members of their households. These issues are the focus of concern in this paper.[2]

The paper is divided into three parts. Part One provides an introductory outline of the main differences concerning the respective migration patterns and experiences of women and men, and the different ways in which migration affects their long-term welfare and human development and of the women and men left behind in the village. Part Two, the core of the paper, seeks to explain these differences and inequalities in terms of gender relations. It focuses, first of all, on *rural* gender relations and then addresses the impact of *urban* gender relations. Part Three summarizes the impact of gender relations on migration. It then outlines some of the efforts undertaken by governmental and non-governmental bodies in China to address gender inequalities in migration, and puts forward further policy recommendations on how to address the particular gendered needs of migrants and how to improve the impact of migration on the lives of rural men and women.

In addition to the work of other scholars, this paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the author in Beijing between 1995 and 2002. Two groups constituted the subjects of this research: the mainly female, unmarried members of the Migrant Women's Club, one of the few NGOs established for migrants in China, and a group of married migrant women and their spouses who lived in a large migrant community to the northwest of the city (for details, see Jacka 2006).

II.   An Outline of Gender Differences in Migration

2.1   Gender, age, marital status and education of migrants, and frequency and duration of migration

Roughly two-thirds of all rural-to-urban migrants in China are men, but sex ratios vary enormously from one region to another according to

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2   Following UN usage, I use the term "human development" to refer to "the expansion of people's capabilities and choices to lead lives they value", including expansion of the ability to live a long and healthy life; to acquire education, culture and technology and share the benefits of social progress, and to live a life free of poverty (Li and Bai 2005, 5). The primary unit of analysis in this paper is the individual, whether a migrant or a member of a migrant's household. While not strictly the same, for the purpose of this paper, the terms "household" and "family" are interchangeable. Most households in rural China today consist of either a nuclear family, i.e., husband and wife with or without children, or an extended family, i.e., a husband and wife, their children and their parents.

gender norms and employment opportunities in places of origin and destination. In particular, in the Pearl River Delta region, which is one of the most popular destinations for rural migrants, young rural migrant women make up 65 to 70 per cent of the labour force, being favoured by the transnational clothing, textile, toy, electronics and other labour-intensive manufacturing and processing firms that are concentrated there (Jacka and Gaetano 2004, 21). The proportion of women in the migrant population nationally has also been increasing since the mid-1990s. A six-province survey found that between 1995 and 2000 the migration rates for women rose twice as fast as for men (de Brauw et al., 2002, cited in Roberts 2003, 7-8).

On average, rural migrants are younger than rural non-migrants, and migrant women are younger and more likely to be single than men, although there are signs that the number of rural women migrating after marriage has been increasing in recent years.[3] Migrant women also tend to be less educated than rural migrant men, owing to their lower average age and gender inequalities in educational attainment across rural China (discussed below). According to the 2000 national census, among migrants aged 15 and above, 21.7 per cent of men, but 50 per cent of women had only primary school education. Fifty five per cent of men, but only 9.3 per cent of women had junior high school education, and 16.6 per cent of men, but only a tiny 0.5 per cent of women had senior high school education (2000nian Zhongguo nongcun liudongrenkou xin tezheng, 2001).

Most migration is short term and repeated, but migrants' sojourns are increasing in length over time.[4] Some studies indicate that migrant women tend to express greater satisfaction with their stay in the city than men, and to stay away from the village for longer periods. Drawing on a study of return migrants in Anhui and Sichuan conducted in 2000, Kenneth Roberts predicts that China will follow the trend apparent in Mexico-US migration whereby, over time, an increase in the number of married women migrating will lead to longer periods of settlement in the

[3] A 1995 Ministry of Agriculture household survey conducted in Sichuan and Anhui found that among migrants aged 18 or less, women accounted for 65.8 per cent in Sichuan, and 55.6 per cent in Anhui. The same survey found that only 31.7 per cent of female migrants from Sichuan and 35.7 per cent from Anhui were married, compared with 56.3 per cent and 51.1 per cent of male migrants from Sichuan and Anhui, respectively (Du 2000, cited in Jacka and Gaetano 2004, 23). However, drawing on data collected in Sichuan and Anhui in 2000, Kenneth Roberts and associates claim that 64 per cent of returned migrant women were already married on their first migration trip. The authors note that if current migrants were included, the proportion of single women would have been higher, but there would still be a substantial proportion who were married when they first migrated (Roberts et al. 2004, 68).

[4] In Beijing, for example, the 1997 census of the floating population reported that 64 per cent of migrants had been away from home for more than six months. By 2002, the figure had increased to 74 per cent (Poston and Duan 1999, 17 and "Beijing Qunian Wailairenkou..." 2003).

city, married women being more likely to want to stay in the city than men (Roberts 2003).

2.2   Migrant experiences in the city

Occupational distribution, wages, working hours and working conditions

The range of employment opportunities available to migrant women and men varies from one region to another, but in most places they are concentrated in different sectors, migrant men being found primarily in heavy industry, transport, construction and small-scale retail, and migrant women mainly in hotels and catering, services and light manufacturing and processing, as well as small-scale retail. Migrant women are also much less likely to advance to managerial or skilled positions and, on average, they earn significantly less than men (Wuellner 2001, 206; Jacka 2006, 98; Yang 2000, 209; Goldstein, Liang and Goldstein 2000, 223).[5]

At the same time, working hours of migrant women are generally longer than for migrant men. In 1999, the majority of both male (83.8%) and female migrants (72.5%) in Shanghai worked seven days a week. On average, migrant men worked ten hours a day, compared to 11 hours for migrant women. Less than seven per cent of men and only 4.3 per cent of women worked eight hours a day or less. At the other extreme, nearly 30 per cent of men and 43.5 per cent of women worked 12 hours or more (Wuellner 2001, 211). This is probably a result of occupational segregation, with working hours being particularly long in the labour-intensive light manufacturing and processing industries employing predominantly migrant women.

Migrant health and safety in the city

Occupational health and safety

Both male and female migrant workers commonly work in unhealthy and unsafe conditions and experience high levels of stress, depression, illness and injury (Chan 2001, 82-136; Pun 2005, 165-187; Jacka 2006, 111-113). Furthermore, without the local urban household registration, migrants face discrimination in healthcare services and are commonly denied access to affordable, good quality care.

In industry generally, the majority of victims of serious illness, injury or death from work-related causes are migrant workers. The deaths and

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[5]   However, there are considerable gender discrepancies between the income differentials reported between studies – possibly because of regional variations. A study of 1,504 migrants undertaken in the city of Jinan in Shandong in 1995 found that wages of female migrants were only 70 per cent of their male counterparts (Meng 1998, 743), but the 1999 Shanghai study mentioned above found that the average yearly income of migrant women was 85 per cent of that of migrant men (Wuellner 2001, 215. See also, Fan 2004, 184).

injuries occur mainly in foreign-owned as well as private enterprises and village and township enterprises, in the mining and construction industries, and in manufacturing and processing industries that use toxic chemicals (Zhao Tiechui 2005, 5; Tan 2005, 30). The mining industry exacts the highest toll among male migrants. According to the State Administration of Work Safety, from 2001 to 2005, an average of 6,222 workers died in coal mining accidents each year (deconstructing deadly details from China's coal mine safety statistics, 2006). Most victims of such accidents are migrant men, working in small, poorly regulated private or township-run mines. Migrant men working in small, poorly regulated mines also suffer from pneumoconiosis, a lung disease caused by dust inhalation, which accounts for 83 per cent of all occupational disease recorded in China (Ministry of Health figures, cited in Su 2005, 15).

Among migrant women, most work-related illnesses, injuries and deaths occur on the production line in highly labour-intensive light manufacturing and processing industries, located all over the country, but tend to be particularly concentrated in the Pearl River Delta. Violations by the management of occupational health and safety regulations in these industries, resulting in large-scale poisoning, loss of limbs in machine accidents, and deaths and injuries in workplace fires, are distressingly common. In Shenzhen, 90 per cent of 12,000 hospital-certified industrial injuries in 1998 involved maiming (Chan 2001, 82). According to a national survey conducted in 2000, two per cent of migrant workers suffered from chemical poisoning. In a 2002 survey in Guangdong, the figure was ten per cent (Tan 2005, 35). However, these figures grossly underestimate the problem, since they reflect only cases of acute poisoning and do not account for the incidence of poisoning among those who have returned home.

Sexual and reproductive health

Lack of maternal health and family planning education and services, and the poor quality of available medical facilities pose yet another threat to the health of migrant women. As discussed below, local governments impose harsh family planning regulations on migrant women, but these women are usually not included in urban provision of family planning education or services. According to one study, less than 23 per cent of the 604 migrant women surveyed in Beijing received maternal health and family planning education, compared to 100 per cent of urban residents (Wang Y. et al., 1999, cited in Jacka 2006).

Many migrant women who have abortions or give birth in the city do so with the help of unlicensed, illegal medical practitioners and facilities, since they cannot afford to do otherwise, or have not conformed to family

planning rules and therefore fear fines or deportation from the city. This is the most probable explanation for the fact that, in 2000, 77 per cent of maternal mortalities in Guangzhou occurred among migrant women (HRIC 2002, 106-7).

In addition, migrant women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, abuse and rape. This is particularly so for the millions of women in the service and small-scale manufacturing sectors. These include domestic maids and sweatshop workers who live on their employers' premises and whose isolation makes them vulnerable to sexual and other forms of violence from their employers, and women who work as waitresses and sex workers, who are vulnerable to harassment and sexual violence from clients and employers (Jacka 2006, 108-109).

Finally, migrant women as well as men are a "high risk" group for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. This is due to a combination of factors. First of all, there is a lack of understanding of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially HIV, among rural people and migrants, and sex among migrants, including those engaged in sex work and others, is frequently unprotected. Second, rates of intravenous drug use and of premarital and extramarital sex, including commercial sex, are particularly high among migrant men. Third, the vast majority of sex workers in China are rural migrant women.[6] As a result, not only are migrant women working in the sex industry and their male migrant clients exposed to a high risk of HIV infection, so too are the wives and girlfriends of male migrants and returned male migrants. Rural women's vulnerability to HIV and other sexual infections is further compounded by their low status and lack of power in their relationship with men (Hayes 2004).

2.3   The impact of migration in rural areas

Those left behind

Remittances

Migrant remittances are a potentially important means to reduce poverty and contribute to development in rural communities. It is commonly understood that, globally, migrant women remit more money than migrant men (see, for example, Usher 2005, 19). However, several studies indicate that in the case of rural-to-urban migration in China the reverse is true – that migrant men remit more than their female counterparts (Murphy 2002, 107; Cai 2003). The reasons for this are discussed in 2.2 below.

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6   In addition to this, the sale of blood to finance migration is quite common among both women and men in rural China, and the transmission of HIV through the sale and transfer of infected blood is a very serious problem.

Workloads and status

While migrant remittances can improve rural incomes, the migration of household members increases the workloads of rural women. This is particularly the case in poor households, where women cannot afford to hire labour to help with farm work, nor to leave their land uncultivated and fallow. Women in such households may suffer the double burden of having to undertake heavy farming tasks normally considered men's work, as well as damage to their health. Girls in such households may be pulled out of school in order to help with farm work and to look after younger siblings (Murphy 2004, 270-271). We have no data comparing the relative impact of household members' migration on the workloads of women and men. We do know, however, that when there is a labour shortage, girls are more commonly withdrawn from school than boys. Given dominant gender norms and the fact that more women remain in the village than men, we can also surmise that men are less likely to suffer from overwork in the absence of their wife or other female household members as they are more likely to be able to call on female relatives and in-laws for help, for example with childcare and domestic work.

Among rural couples, it is possible that the long absence of the husband might result in greater involvement in decision making and higher social status for the wife. Rachel Murphy notes that husbands become more aware and appreciative of their wives' labour when the women hold the fort at home. But, she suggests, this greater appreciation may not be enough to compensate for the heavy workloads, loneliness and boredom suffered by these women (Murphy 2004, 267). In common with studies conducted elsewhere in the world, Murphy finds that a husband's migration does not necessarily lead to greater decision-making power or control over resources for the wife, as he may continue to direct farming activities via letters and visits home. However, women may be led to take up new responsibilities. Murphy notes, for example, that in two villages she researched women took charge of house-building while their husbands were working away from home (Murphy 2004, 263). Although for some women this may represent more of a burden than a benefit, in more general terms a beneficial shift in gender relations may have occurred, with villagers gaining new appreciation of women's abilities.

The fate of returned migrants

Changing values and expectations

Returning to the village after a sojourn in the city can be emotionally difficult, and many migrants return only reluctantly, having found the difficulties of living in the city overwhelming, because of demands from household members back at home or, in the case of young, single women,

because of pressure from parents and others to marry and "settle down" in the countryside (Lou et al., 2004, 228-232). Returning migrants, both women and men, commonly feel estranged from peers and spouses who have not migrated, while also feeling ashamed at their inability to "make it" in the city and also deeply disaffected and frustrated in their attempts to realize new values and expectations in the village context. As Rachel Murphy suggests, coming home as a "failure" may be a more serious problem for men than for women – gender norms are such that women can justify return to the village for marriage, children or family, but it is harder for men to do so (Murphy 2002, 200). On the other hand, because of the patriarchal nature of rural society and households, rural women who have enjoyed a measure of autonomy and independence in the city may find it particularly hard to return to the demands and limitations of life in the countryside as a wife and mother. They may also suffer a greater sense of frustration and hopelessness than men, knowing that they have fewer chances of personal advancement or repeat migration (Murphy 2002, 207-208. See also, Lou et al., 2004, 236-239).

Socio-economic betterment

Success stories of returned migrants-turned-entrepreneurs are much trumpeted by local governments and the media; but, in fact, most migrants return to agriculture. Thus, according to the 1999 household survey in Sichuan and Anhui conducted by Bai and associates, 75 per cent of returned migrant women and 63 per cent of male returnees worked primarily in agriculture (Bai and Zong 2002, 105-106).

Research conducted in two counties in Jiangxi province between 1996 and 2000 by Rachel Murphy found that while women accounted for 22 per cent of outgoing migrants, only 15 per cent established businesses on their return. Furthermore, most of the businesses established by female returnees were much smaller than those run by men, made lower profits and were concentrated in the service sector, characteristics that, as Murphy notes, are shared by female-run businesses across much of the world (Murphy 2002, 170).

Despite this, Murphy argues, women as well as men generally gain increased status and other resources, such as technical skills, capital, knowledge of the outside world and personal contacts from migration. This may be particularly important for women, given their subordinate status: savings from work in the city, combined with new skills, a greater worldliness and a knowledge of alternative livelihoods and ways of life, give women a higher social status, increase their self-confidence, strengthen their bargaining position in the allocation of household resources and increase their ability to pursue personal goals and negotiate

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more equitable relationships within the household (Murphy 2002, 176 & 204. See also, Lou et al., 2004, 232-236).

III.   The Impact of gender relations on migration

Having sketched the key differences between the migration patterns and experiences of rural men and women, and the main gender variations in the impact of migration on the welfare and human development of migrants and members of their households, the discussion now shifts to broader patterns in gender relations with the aim of gaining a fuller understanding of the reasons for the existence of gender differences in migration. In the following sections the analysis focuses on how gendered social norms, institutions and policies affect decisions concerning which members of a household will migrate and the kind of work they are likely to be involved in when they migrate; the different motivations of men and women to migrate and the different goals pursued; their different migration experiences, and the extent to which they and their households benefit from migration. Proceeding roughly from rural to urban, the discussion first addresses the impact of rural norms and expectations relating to gender divisions of labour, marriage, education and mobility, and the significance of gender inequalities in rural land-use rights and the operation of gendered rural social networks. Next, it considers gender-based occupational segregation in urban industry and the discriminatory practices of urban employers and, finally, it briefly examines the impact of the state's household registration, family planning and other policies.

3.1   Rural gender divisions of labour

In the 1980s a shift occurred in assumptions and values relating to gender and to different types of work rural China. With the diversification of the rural economy and industrialization, agriculture, once regarded primarily as "men's work" and belonging to the "public sphere", was now devalued as "women's work" to be undertaken alongside women's other tasks in the "private" sphere, such as domestic work and childcare. Meanwhile, new and more desirable off-farm work was seen as more suitably undertaken by men and, to a lesser extent, by single women. Married women's domestic responsibilities, combined with the notion that it was improper for women to interact frequently with people outside the household were experienced as preventing them from travel and sojourns away from home – required both for migrant labour and for conducting business (Jacka 1997, 128-196). Consequently, a "feminization" of agriculture occurred, whereby off-farm work, including migrant labour, was taken up disproportionately by men, and farm work was increasingly left to women, especially older married women.

As a result, today across China a higher proportion of women than men are agricultural labourers,[7] the majority of rural business people are men and in both rural industries and in migrant workforces in urban industry the majority of workers are men. The dominant perception of the most appropriate division of labour is one in which opportunities for off-farm work are taken up first by the able-bodied men in a household, while domestic work and agriculture are relegated primarily to married women with children, and grandparents. This is not to say that alternative divisions of labour, including those in which married women become migrant workers in urban industry while their husbands take charge of farm work, domestic work and childcare, do not exist. But such a "reversed" gender division of labour is relatively rare and considered as a "last resort" and households adopt it are commonly stigmatized, the assumption being that men who stay in the village while their wives do migrant work are "useless" (Fan 2004, 201-203). In addition, although perceptions of women migrating are changing, in some areas the morality of single women who migrate is still suspect and many single women who migrate face enormous pressure once they reach their twenties, to return home to marry and raise children. In many, though by no means all areas it is also expected that once they marry and have children, women will not migrate again but remain on the farm and take responsibility for childcare, domestic work and agriculture (Fan 2004, 199-201).

However, rural employment patterns vary enormously among regions, influenced by demands and opportunities in local and urban industry as well as by local rural norms. In particular, the demand for young female labour in the manufacturing and processing factories of the Pearl River Delta has pulled millions of unmarried rural women into industrial work and has meant that in some villages young women are more likely to migrate than men.

There has also been significant change over time. With rapid industrialization in much of rural China agricultural work has become so marginal and undesirable that it falls mainly to the elderly and infirm, while the able bodied – both women and men – work in local industries or businesses, or migrate. Migration itself, combined with other social and cultural changes, such as the spread of television, has also resulted in changes in values concerning gender, sexuality, marriage and women's mobility. Thus, primary interviews conducted in Beijing indicate that in the 1980s and 1990s, the migration of young, unmarried women was rare and

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[7]   In 1990, 76.1 per cent of Chinese women and 69.1 per cent of men were employed in agriculture, accounting for 47.4 per cent and 52.6 per cent of the total agricultural workforce, respectively. In 2000, 68.8 per cent of women and 60.7 per cent of men were employed in agriculture, accounting for 48.5 per cent and 51.5 per cent of the agricultural workforce, respectively (China population census for 1990 and 2000, cited in National Bureau of Statistics 2004: 45).

severely frowned upon. Rural parents worried that the city was dangerous and immoral and that young women who went to work there would damage their reputation and compromise their chances of marriage. By the early 2000s, however, most young women and men were leaving the countryside to become migrant labourers, at least for a short time, and this was no longer considered immoral (Jacka 2006, 170-173).

Drawing upon a sample survey of over 3,000 women from Anhui and Sichuan, Kenneth Roberts and his associates similarly argue that there was a radical shift in women's migration patterns in the late 1990s and that today, neither marriage nor child birth signal the end of rural women's migration; in both Anhui and Sichuan married women migrate either with or without their husbands and children. In Sichuan, "there may even be a preference for migrating after marriage instead of before, since the morals of married migrants are less suspect than those of unmarried women migrants" (Lou et al. 2004, 239; Roberts et al. 2004, 50, 68-69).

3.2 Marriage, education and mobility

The dominance of patrilocal, exogamous marriage in rural China results in a common perception among villagers that educating a daughter is like "watering someone else's garden"– a waste of resources, and that priority should be given to educating sons. In 2000, 71.4 per cent of the illiterate rural population aged 15 and over was female – up from 69.5 per cent in 1990. The national illiteracy rate for rural women aged 15 and above was 16.9 per cent, as compared to 6.5 per cent for rural men (China Population Census in 2000, cited in National Bureau of Statistics 2004, 59). Lower education in turn disadvantages women in the labour market, reinforcing gender divisions of labour and a segmentation of the workforce, such that women form a lower proportion of those in off-farm employment, and are concentrated in the lower paid, less skilled occupations.

Exogamous marriage also means that, following marriage and the move to their husband's village, women are not only more isolated and in a weaker position concerning decisions in the household, but are also disadvantaged in business, as they have fewer local contacts than would have been the case in their natal village (Goodman 2004). In addition to contributing to lower rates of employment in local industry among married women, this means that married women who migrate are less likely to do so as entrepreneurs than men, and women returnees who are already married, and those who marry upon return from migration, are less likely than men to be able to use the skills and resources gained from migrant work in the city to set up a business in the village.

Aside from this, patrilocal exogamous marriage patterns may result in men and women having different goals in migration. A number of studies

suggest that the reason male migrants remit more than female migrants is that, if they are single, they and their parents are under pressure to construct a new house to attract a bride to the family and, more generally, both single and married male migrants (the latter being in the majority) tend to view migration as a way of fulfilling their obligations as a family breadwinner. In comparison, single women (the majority of female migrants) usually do not need to send money home for their forthcoming wedding (although they often do try to save money for their personal use towards a dowry). More generally, migrant women, especially those who are single, are usually under less pressure than men to maintain their family financially, and they may therefore be relatively free to pursue more individual non-economic goals (Jacka 2006, 136; Wang Feng 2000, 238; Murphy 2002, 107; Cai 2003).

From another perspective, migration may be more important for women as a way of escaping or delaying marriage. In a survey of one hundred members of the Migrant Women's Club in Beijing, the most commonly cited reasons for migration were "to develop myself", "to broaden my horizon" and "to exercise independence" (48.9%, 38%, and 32.6%, respectively) (Jacka 2006, 135). Only one respondent said that her migration was motivated by the wish to escape marriage. However, in conversation, Club members time and again confirmed the significance of escaping, or at least of delaying, marriage as a reason for migrating. For these women, the expressed wish for "self-development" and independence through migration was underwritten by an anxiety about marriage in the countryside, which to them meant a rupture from their natal family, a shift to an unfamiliar village and household, and a subsequent life of drudgery and monotony, under the thumb of a rural man and his parents (Jacka 2006, 136-139). Testimonies of migrant women also very commonly explain rural women's migration as a flight from an unhappy marriage or from an impending marriage that they do not want (for translated examples, see Pang 2004; Zhou 2004).

3.3   Inequalities in land-use rights

Legally, women and men have equal rights to land use in rural China. In practice, however, women's rights to land are considerably more tenuous than men's. This has very serious implications for migration patterns and for the experiences of women in migration. Since the return to household farming in the 1980s, land has been allocated to households according to their size, and adjustments made periodically to allow for changes in household composition, including the arrival and departure of women through marriage. In practice, however, villages commonly withdraw women's use-rights to property when they marry out, but often do not accord in-marrying women their rights to a new portion of land, or may

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withdraw those rights if she is absent from the village for an extended period of time (Jacka 2006, 94-95).[8] As a consequence, rural migrant women who marry urbanites lose their entitlement to land. This makes them highly dependent on their husbands and extremely vulnerable should their marriage break down, given how hard it is for rural women to sustain a livelihood in the city for any length of time, and how rare it is for a migrant to obtain permanent residence in the city (especially a major metropolis such as Beijing or Guangzhou) by having their household registration transferred.[9]

Laurel Bossen further argues that the tenuousness of married women's control of land is a major contributor to the feminization of agriculture and lower proportions of married women among migrants. This is because many married women fear that if they leave to work in the city for any length of time, they will lose their entitlement to land in their husband's village. The consequences of this would be the erosion of their economic contribution to their households and a threat to their status and welfare (Bossen 1994, 145-147).

3.4   Rural social networks

It is commonly observed by scholars of migration that gender, kin and native-place ties and networks are crucial for rural migrants seeking work, accommodation and social support in the city. In the case of China, Cindy Fan argues that, first of all, migrant women commonly depend more on kin and native-place networks than men and, secondly, that the gendered nature of migrant networks, whereby women help their "sisters" and men their "brothers", reinforces segmentation in the migrant workforce, increasing the differences between the work experiences of men and women, while simultaneously homogenizing the work experiences of migrants of the same sex and region (Fan 2004, 178). Analysing data from the 1995 Ministry of Agriculture survey conducted in Sichuan and Anhui, Fan found that 92.3 per cent of migrant women and 68.9 per cent of migrant men travelled to their destination in the company of household members, relatives or fellow villagers. In addition, households, relatives or fellow villagers were the chief source of job information for 53.6 per cent of migrant women and 51.5 per cent of migrant men. Relatively few migrant women found their job on their own (17.9%) compared with migrant men (33.6%) (Fan 2004, 189-192). As Fan notes, only a minority of migrants (10.7% of women and 3.6% of men in Fan's study) are formally

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[8]   Men who are absent from the village are much less likely to lose their entitlement to land much than women.

[9]   Until recently, this also left the children of rural migrant women who had married an urbanite highly vulnerable because, as will be discussed below, children's household registration was always inherited from their mother. Only since the 2000s has it been possible for children to inherit household registration from either their mother or father.

recruited. When they are recruited, it is generally by employers and agencies exploiting or imitating the gendered nature of migrant networks. For example, most domestic service agencies, including both private agencies and those run by the All China Women's Federation,[10] pay a small fee to rural county Women's Federations to recruit young local women for work in the city.

In the city, migrants generally interact very little with urbanites and continue to depend on ties with other migrants, especially those of the same sex and from the same region. Self-employed migrant labourers and traders – most of whom are men — rely heavily on networks with kin and others from the same region in order to conduct business. In factories, in addition to the fact that men and women tend to work at different jobs, workshops and dormitories are commonly organized along both sex and regional lines. Ching Kwan Lee and Pun Ngai show that in factories in Shenzhen, native-place ties form the basis for friendships among female migrant workers and sometimes for resistance against management exploitation. However, managers also manipulate both native-place sentiments and gender norms to "divide and rule" migrant workers. Thus, local workers and those who share regional origins with managers tend to be favoured in the allocation of more desirable and better paid work. In addition, managers use stereotypes of both gender and region to criticize workers who do not conform to their demands, referring to young migrant women, for example, as both "unfeminine" and rustic (Lee 1998 116-23; Pun 2005, 109-163).

3.5 Gender occupational segregation and discriminatory employment practices in urban industry

The study results have noted that migrant women and men are highly concentrated in different occupations and trades in urban industry. As suggested above, rural perceptions of "proper" gendered divisions of labour and the operation of gendered social networks contribute to this occupational segregation. Differences in human capital, such as education and other personal attributes, such as age, may also be contributing factors. In addition to this, however, it is clear that there are high levels of gender discrimination at work in urban employers' recruitment practices. Indeed, advertisements for migrant (and other) workers commonly stipulate the sex of prospective employees, and employers are often quite explicit about their preference for one gender over the other. Employers in the construction, mining and heavy industry sectors seek male workers because they are physically stronger than women. On the other hand

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[10] The All China Women's Federation is a "mass organization" affiliated with the Communist Party, with representation at all levels of government. Its dual role is to further the interests of women and to promote Party policy among women.

and as elsewhere around the world, the managers of export-oriented processing factories generally favour young women for their supposed docility, patience and dexterity (Tan 2000, 292-97).

Within the "feminine" sectors – the service and export-oriented manufacturing and processing sectors – other forms of discrimination further restrict migrant women's employment. In particular, employers in these sectors commonly do not hire migrant women over the age of about thirty. Many companies have explicit regulations to this effect. In addition, employers in the service sector commonly demand that young female workers be physically attractive, and fire anyone who visibly ages or otherwise "loses her looks" (Jacka 2006, 153-154).

In a careful analysis of data on 1,504 migrants in Jinan, Shandong, collected in 1995, Meng Xin found that gender occupational segregation among migrants in this city was due primarily to discrimination (which potentially includes both employees' gender-based preference for or prejudice against, certain jobs, and employers' prejudice against one sex). Furthermore, this gender-based segregation was the main cause of income differentials among male and female migrants (Meng 1998). Of the 34 per cent income differential between male and female migrants, Meng found that 80 per cent was due to the differential within occupations (intra-occupation differential), and 20 per cent to the differential between occupations (inter-occupation differential). In both cases, employer discrimination was the main reason: just shy of three-quarters of the intra-occupational differential, and two-thirds of the inter-occupational differential could not be explained in terms of differences in personal characteristics, such as education or level of skill, and must therefore be attributed to gender discrimination. Overall, 73 per cent of the gender income gap was due to discrimination (Meng 1998, 747-49).

Urban gender discrimination by employers, but also by urban fellow workers, customers, officials and others has a major impact on migrant experiences of everyday life in the city. As discussed above, migrant women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence — their sex, lower occupational status and, often, their youth compound their lack of power and inferior status as rural people in the eyes of male urbanites. Migrant men, on the other hand, are more likely to suffer other forms of violence, such as being assaulted on the street or at work, and are more commonly subjected to arbitrary detention by the police than migrant women.

3.6 Government regulations on migrants

Gendered aspects of the household registration system and other government regulations concerning migrants have substantially affected migration patterns and the experiences of migrants and their households.

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First of all, until the late 1990s, a child's household registration was inherited from the mother. This meant that, should a migrant woman with rural registration marry an urbanite, her child would automatically inherit her rural registration and, like herself, would suffer various forms of discrimination, exploitation and exclusion in the city.

Notwithstanding this situation, a significant minority of migrant women did marry and have children with urbanites. However, they suffered stigmatization from their in-laws and others, and commonly endured years of struggle with urban bureaucracies, trying to have their household registration transferred at great financial and emotional cost, and their children's development was severely hampered (for further discussion, see Jacka 2006, 87-93). In 1998, the State Council approved a change in policy, allowing children to inherit household registration from either parent. This was an extremely important policy reform, but local governments, especially in larger cities, have been slow to implement it.

Secondly, because of the government's family planning concerns and the general perception that reproduction is a "women's issue", rural women of childbearing age seeking to migrate to the city face particularly harsh government regulation and surveillance. According to Beijing regulations, incoming migrant women must have documentation from their place of household registration, indicating their marriage and fertility status. Women of childbearing age are further required to obtain a "marriage and reproduction permit" from the local family planning office in the area in Beijing where they are living, and must undergo checks of their contraceptive use and fertility every six months. Migrant women who give birth out of plan can be heavily fined and deported to the countryside (Jacka 2006, 92). In addition, some rural migrant sending areas – in Anhui, for example – require migrant women to return home every few months to have their reproductive status and their compliance with family planning regulations confirmed.

IV.   Conclusions and way forward

4.1   Conclusions

It is clear that gender relations have a substantial impact on migration and that there are significant differences and inequalities in the patterns and experiences of migration of women and men; in the impact of migration on the welfare and human development of migrant women and men, both in the city and upon return to the village, and in the consequences of the migration of household members for the women and men who remain in the village. Among the features of gender relations in rural areas, the most consequential for migration are power differentials between women and men both within and outside the household, gender divisions of labour,

and marriage norms and practices. These are closely interwoven and, in turn, feed into and are themselves reinforced by gender inequalities in education, land-use rights, employment opportunities, workloads, income and the control of resources. Thus, patrilocal exogamous marriage contributes to higher education levels among rural men rather than women, a weaker hold on land-use rights among women than men, and a dominance of men both within the household and in rural government, industry and business. These in turn reinforce gender divisions of labour in which women, especially married women, are concentrated in the least desired, lowest status, most poorly remunerated areas of work – namely agriculture and housework; are less likely than men to be employed in non-agricultural work, and are more likely to be "left behind" with a heavy double burden of domestic work and agricultural labour, while other male household members migrate to the city. As a result of these gender divisions of labour, migrant women are concentrated in the most poorly remunerated trades and occupations available to migrants and consequently are able to earn and remit less than men. In addition, once they return to the village, women's relative lack of education and social connections in the village, and the fact that they are less likely than men to have gained new skills and capital in the city, means that they are likely to benefit less from migration than men in terms of increased status or agency, and the ability to improve their circumstances and that of their households.

Gender relations in urban areas further reinforce the impact of rural gender relations on migration patterns and differences and inequalities in the experiences of migrant women and men. In particular, gender discrimination by employers adds to the effect of rural gender divisions of labour resulting in a highly gender segregated migrant labour force. This in turn leads, first of all, to significant income inequalities between migrant women and men, with women on average earning less than men as a result of both intra-occupational and inter-occupational wage differentials. Secondly, the gender segregation of the labour force, together with other aspects of gender relations, means that migrant women and men differ significantly in their experience of life in the city; their needs and concerns and the particular threats to health and welfare they face in the city.

Finally, official regulations on migration also contribute to differences in the experiences of migrant women and men and the extent to which migration contributes to, or detracts from, their personal welfare and development. In particular, because of the state's family planning concerns and the assumption that family planning is a "women's issue", migrant women of childbearing age tend to face higher levels of state regulation and surveillance. This, combined with the pervasive lack of sexual health and family planning services and education for migrants

leads to enormous pressure on migrant women and threats to the health and welfare of migrant women who become pregnant and who, because they fear penalties, avoid registered medical practitioners and instead turn to illegal, unqualified doctors and facilities for abortions or deliveries.

4.2 Way forward

In recent years, several initiatives have been taken by both governmental and non-governmental bodies in China to address gender inequalities and to increase the benefits of migration for both women and men, including migrants themselves and non-migrating members of their households. The remaining paragraphs briefly point to some of these initiatives. These should be supported and expanded so as to address the specific needs of migrant women and men and those who are left behind when other household members migrate.[11]

The establishment of migrant NGOs

In the last decade, a small number of non-governmental migrant organizations (NGOs) have been established. These include the Migrant Women's Club in Beijing (www.nongjianv.org/club/index.htm). Discussed in Jacka 2006, 59-83), the Chinese Working Women's Network in Shenzhen (www.cwwn.org), and the Returned Migrant Women's Friendly Association in Henan ("First person…" 2004 fix citation). These groups play an important role in China's growing civil society, providing migrants with much needed services, lobbying the state, and enabling migrants to articulate their needs and to be heard. It is to be hoped that in future support for NGOs such as these will be maintained and increased, so as to further develop migrants' agency and self-determination. To date, most migrant NGOs have focused on the needs of single migrants, especially women. Further attention should now be given to addressing the particular needs of single migrant men, as well as to those of married migrants and their households. In the 2000s, the latter groups are growing in number and the particular problems they face, including the care and education of their children, need urgent attention (Jacka 2006, 113-4).

Improvements in rural education

Increasingly, in both urban and rural industries, junior secondary education is the minimum requirement for employment. It is therefore important that rural households be enabled and encouraged to educate both their daughters and their sons to at least that level. In addition, rural people should have greater opportunities to undertake technical training before,

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[11] The focus here is on recommendations that address gender relations or gender differentials. Given the lower status of both rural women and rural women migrants, particular weight is placed on empowering rural women and increasing their opportunities for human development.

during and after migration. Fortunately, both the Chinese government and non-governmental organizations have put a great deal of emphasis on improving rural, especially rural girls', education and expanding rural training opportunities. It is also important that state council decrees promulgated in 2002 and 2003 promised fair pay and on-time payment of wages for migrants (Jacka 2006, 116-117) and that the 11th Five-Year Plan promises a reduction of rural taxes and a rise in rural incomes. If implemented, these policies should make education for girls as well as boys more affordable for rural households.

It is widely recognized that improving women's education is particularly crucial, not only for women's empowerment but development generally. Measures taken to improve the education of rural women are therefore especially important. However, on its own, improving women's education and increasing their skills and self-confidence through training will not suffice to empower rural women nor improve their ability to benefit from migration. First of all, improving migrant women's (and men's) human capital by raising their educational levels will not necessarily enhance their occupational position in the urban workforce. Studies have shown that the disadvantage of migrants in the urban workforce, and their concentration in 3-D jobs, i.e. in jobs that are dirty, dangerous and demeaning, is primarily due to urban discrimination against rural populations and those lacking local, urban household registrations, and that higher levels of education have little effect on migrants' economic status. Similarly, migrant women's lower wages relative to migrant men are primarily due to gender segregation of the workforce, which, in turn, reflects gender discrimination rather than gender inequalities in education or other personal or human capital attributes.

Secondly, there are substantial cultural and institutional constraints on rural and migrant women's ability to make use of education to exercise agency and to further their own and others' human development. Thus, even well-educated rural women may be frustrated in their desire to migrate to the city for work by parents, husbands, in-laws or other villagers who consider it immoral for women to work away from home. On the other hand, rural women, including returned migrants, may be frustrated in their efforts to make use of their education or training to obtain local industrial employment, start a business, or attain a position of social or political leadership in the village, by both rural prejudice against women in the public sphere and the fact that village leadership is dominated by men, as well as by patrilocal, exogamous marriage, which commonly results in women's loss of employment in local industry and in their lack of vital social contacts in the village to which they move (Judd 2002, 55-76). Therefore, to enable rural women to fully benefit from education it is

necessary to overcome the disadvantages they face as a result of patrilocal exogamous marriage, as discussed below.

Protection of equal rights in migration and marriage

According to the law, rural women and men have equal rights to land use, but, as noted above, these rights are not always upheld and women's access to land is often lost upon marriage or migration. In some areas, the Women's Federation and NGOs are already playing a vital role in uncovering and addressing these problems (Yang and Xi, 2004). With increases in rural women's migration and with further reforms to land legislation, there will be greater need for such action on the part of the Women's Federation and others.

With regard to policies and regulations on migration, children should be allowed to follow the household registration of either their father or mother, as stipulated in recent policy, and the burden on migrant women resulting from family planning regulations should be alleviated.

Combating gender and rural/urban segregation and discrimination in the urban labour market

To date, neither the state nor the Women's Federation or NGOs have paid much attention to gender discrimination and segregation in the migrant labour market. Yet, there are some measures that could be taken to address this problem, thereby greatly contributing to gender equality and improved human development for migrant women and men. Opening up a broader range of occupations to migrant employment, including clerical and sales positions that are not traditionally gender exclusive, would reduce the degree of occupational gender segregation among migrants (Meng 1998, 750). Local and national state bodies, including the Women's Federation, could also play an important role in demanding that industries employing migrants, including multinational companies, exclude gender discrimination from their hiring practices, implement equal pay legislation and promote more migrant women to skilled and management positions.

Targeting the health, safety and welfare needs of migrants

There is an urgent need to improve safety standards in the industries employing rural migrants. Regarding male migrants, the very poor safety record in the mining industry requires particular attention, while for female migrants the high rate of injuries and disease in light manufacturing and processing industries is of great concern.

Greater protection of migrant women in domestic service is also urgent. At present, most domestic service introduction agencies require that

workers and their employers sign contracts to protect the rights of both parties. Many, however, have no mechanisms for ensuring that these contracts are adhered to. Such mechanisms, which might include random household checks and a requirement for employers and domestic workers to report regularly to the agency, would help reduce the vulnerability of domestic workers to exploitation, abuse and violence. In addition, both domestic workers and sex workers should be able to turn to the Women's Federation for help. At the moment, migrants working in domestic service claim that the Women's Federation most commonly ignores their requests for help and, if a sex worker were to approach the Women's Federation, she would more likely be reported to the police and arrested than offered help.

In addition to campaigning for improved health and safety for all migrants in urban areas, it is important that governmental and non-governmental bodies focus on preventing sexual abuse and violence against women. In recent years, some NGOs as well as the Women's Federation have begun providing legal education and emergency services to migrant women. For example, since 2002, the Migrant Women's Club in Beijing has run a telephone hotline, as well as a Migrant Women's Rights group that provides legal counselling and other support to victims of sexual (and other) abuse and violence. Provision of such services should be expanded, but this should not be done instead or at the cost of an emphasis on the responsibility of local governments and employers to protect the health and safety of migrant women, as well as men.

In both rural and urban areas there is an urgent need for health services and education relating to HIV and AIDS for prospective migrants, migrants already in the city, and returned migrants. Experience in other countries suggests that, in future, heterosexual sex will become the main mode of transmission of HIV infection in China (UNAIDS 2002, cited in Hayes 2004, 5). This means that infection rates will increase among women and are likely to be higher than among men, because women, especially rural women, "lack the power to determine where, when and how sex takes place" (UNAIDS, cited in Hayes 2004, 5). Rates are likely to be particularly high among migrant women working in the sex trade and among the sexual partners of migrant men, and returned migrant men. Despite this, gender issues have so far received little attention from AIDS activists in China (Hayes 2004, 5). This situation needs to be remedied urgently.

Last, but by no means least, in rural areas there is a need for support for those whose household members have migrated out of the village, as well as returned migrants to participate in local social, economic and political leadership. Such support could take the form of training, microcredit

and social activities and organizing. This is particularly important for women who have married exogamously, and who have relatively few social connections in their husband's village. Building on the initial steps already taken in this direction by some local governments, the Women's Federation and NGOs, such as *Rural Women* and the Returned Migrant Women's Friendly Association in Henan (See, for example, First Person: No soft landing for returned women migrants, 2004), will improve the contribution of migration to human development in rural areas.

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Conclusions

Gender and migration –
Public and social policy interventions
concluding remarks

By **Nicola Piper**

Economic migration within Asia and of Asians is at the forefront of global trends with regard to new developments in terms of the scale and the impact of migration on gender relations. As demonstrated in this book, the various scenarios - depending on who the out-migrants are and whether or not couples migrate together, with or without their children - may result in different dynamics, the long-term effects of which on social development and social change require further research.

One of the main messages delivered by the contributions to this book is that it is vital to analyse the social and economic costs of migration as related to gender. Clear policy recommendations aimed at improving the current situation, such as raising awareness for gender sensitive services and support structures, have emerged from the findings in this book.

Comparative and relational perspectives on gender

The contributions to this book provide an exploratory analysis based on primary research data regarding gender and migration in Asia and of Asians. These studies confirm the finding that gendered analysis of migration is fairly well developed in terms of data and existing studies compared to other regions such as Africa and Latin America (Piper 2007[1]). However, by and large there is still a tendency to focus more on *women* in migration rather than treating 'gender' as a relational concept and incorporating data on men and women into the overall research design and methods – which the chapters in this book do.

This publication has discussed the impact of migration on gender relations in the context of women or men being the out-migrant and the impact on those left behind as well as in the context of migration of couples. The

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[1]   For references please directly refer to the bibliography of the Overview chapter

dynamics and issues that arise from each scenario differ to some extent, which has implications for the appropriate policy responses.

The entry of women into migration streams that used to be dominated by men (i.e. women as independent economic migrants and main income earners) is now well documented (UN General Assembly 2004). The demand in feminized sectors has become so strong that there is some evidence of male migrants attempting to enter feminized streams (especially nursing) because of the legal channels and breadth of destinations 'on offer'. Rapid industrialization and decline of the agricultural sector are among the many factors driving internal migratory flows of which women also make up a large percentage. Aiming to improve their and their families' livelihoods in the face of rising male un- or underemployment, increasing numbers of women seek work in foreign countries or urban centres in different types of occupations.

Migration is not necessarily their first choice, but at times a reflection of changing labour market structures 'at home' and 'abroad' that offer specific job opportunities in adjacent locations in highly gendered job categories. Restrictive migration policies in a domestic or international context as well as the prevalence of temporary contract schemes, in combination with many migrant women's economic and social contributions being undervalued and their work often legally unrecognized, pose serious limitations to women migrants' chances for personal socio-economic empowerment. Moreover, as demonstrated in the chapter on gender-based violence, limitations on men's personal development and inability to find 'decent work' can also impact upon women's well-being and personal security.

The rising participation of women in migration has had significant impact on gender relations and, hence, on broader social dimensions. Male out-migration, being still dominant in certain cases, also affects gender relations, but in a different manner. In the latter case, intergenerational relations appear to be changing as a result of a male family member's out-migration whereby the situation of the 'left behind' wife can take a turn for the worse. This shows that there are no straightforward answers as to the effects of migration on gender dynamics. In fact, we have to differentiate between the various scenarios and how they affect gender relations or outcomes.

There is evidence that when women are the out-migrants (leaving their families behind), their own personal socio-economic development might benefit more than when women are left behind, especially in the case of South Asian male migration to the Middle East.[2] All of these studies,

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[2]   For slightly different findings in case of Bangladeshi men in Southeast Asia please refer to Rahman 2006.

however, suffer from "short-termism"; in addition, they have all been conducted in the context of temporary migration schemes. We do not know the longer-term effects and to what extent out-migration of men or women can contribute to social change, if not social reform processes, over time.

Intersecting policy areas

The findings in this book have identified some key areas for social and public policy intervention – one of which pertains to the support of migrant families (the 'left behind'). Although overall the social dimensions of the impact of migration are still underexplored, scholars have begun to comment especially on the profound changes in family structure and familial or marital relations brought about by split households (when one spouse/parent migrates, or both but to different countries) and the impact of migration on the 'left behind', referring to overburdened extended families and the socio-psychological impact on children (Piper research for UNIFEM, Hall 2005). There is more and more evidence that so-called 'transnationally split families' are becoming a common feature in many origin countries situated in Asia and elsewhere (e.g. Latin America).

Heralding the findings in this book, Hall (2005) identified the following areas requiring policy innovation and action in his study on Ecuador:

• strengthening the legal and regulatory framework for migration;

• promoting local economic development;

• providing social protection through controls on trafficking, counselling and education, while promoting longer-term social development.

This underlines the importance of addressing migration as well as other policy areas. As it stands, given the absence of systematic state policies to provide crucial services and support programmes to migrants and their families, various civil society organizations and the church have largely filled this gap. Despite the important role played by networks of church-based and NGO services, lack of financial resources and staff is a problem for many of these organizations. Moreover, almost nothing has been done to cater for the needs of returning migrants (Bangladesh case study in this volume; Hall 2005); the Philippines are an exception by having some policies, but more research on the actual implementation and 'success' is needed.

As a result, one of the most important informal social security mechanisms is the family itself. According to Hall's study on Ecuador, some 52 per cent of migrant families now qualify as extended families compared with the national figure of 46 per cent, which reflects the greater role

of grandparents and other relatives such as aunts and older children in caring for the younger and the elderly. But to enhance the benefits of migration by addressing the enormous social costs at the micro level, these very families need to be the subject of social welfare programmes and long-term social policy planning.

Female out-migration is often said to produce several distinctive social effects, whereby loss of maternal contact is viewed as causing emotional instability in children resulting in deteriorating school performance and health, as well as a rise in juvenile delinquency. But caution is required in assuming that migration automatically leads to 'social dysfunction' (Hall 2005). Moreover, male migration can be even more problematic for the nuclear family, given that in patriarchal and patrilocal societies remittances tend to be sent to parents rather than wives and/or off-springs, marginalizing women who are members of their husbands' households even more (Bangladesh this volume; Hall 2005). This means that supportive institutional structures in form of a multi-institutional framework are necessary to give the much needed support to family members left behind.

Policy intervention, therefore, must reach beyond migration policy and extend to a number of other policy areas. According to Hall (2005), action is required on two levels: 1) social protection (preventive and short-term remedial care for migrants and their families), and 2) social development, i.e. longer-term investment in building of human and social capital. However, governments have so far taken little or no action in dealing with social impacts. In fact, it has also been suggested that overseas migration actually serves as a continuous 'safety valve' for social tensions and that therefore lasting domestic solutions to economic and political upheaval are less likely to be forthcoming (ibid).

Another area which requires urgent intervention is gender-based violence as a social consequence of migration (Viet Nam in this volume). Though women constitute the majority of victims, this type of violence has to be related to men's socio-economic position and how migration of both can result in, or exacerbate, interpersonal violence. Outreach activities at the local level are vital but, so far, services to migrant women who have been subjected to interpersonal violence are largely missing or limited (due to lack of knowledge of gender-based violence and its mental and physical effects), and there is very little awareness of these services even where they exist.

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An area which requires more research are women-to-women family relations in the event of one woman's out-migration and what this means for the girls and women left behind when men resist taking on a greater role in household tasks.

Way forward

One of the important broad outcomes in this book is that the 'gender and migration' issue needs to be integrated into a larger socio-economic and cultural context of men-women-relations, men-to-men and women-to-women in research as well as social policy or programming.

Men and boys should be treated as agents of change and participants in reform, and thus as potential allies in the search for gender justice, rather than being viewed purely as perpetrators of oppressive practices and violence (Connell 2004). Although woman-focused programmes can enhance women's self-confidence and create solidarity among them, they can also result in tensions between women and men at household and community levels. Men may resent being displaced as provider or they envy what they perceive as women's privileged access to project resources (Molyneux 2007). Where policies and programmes are meant to support women either in their role as migrant or as 'left behind', it is important that this should happen in their own right rather than in their role as mothers only.

With regard to migration and impact on family life, governments have to rethink the temporary character of migration and the reluctance to allow family unification. This is also linked to workplace arrangements and the lack of (at least officially) live-out in addition to live-in domestic work. It needs to be further investigated as to why these options are available in Italy and Spain, but not in Southeast and West Asia. Return migration policies and support programmes are another area of policy which requires developing. All of these issues may be best addressed at regional level through a coordinated policy approach.

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