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**Improvement in socio-economic status and internal migration
of females in Sri Lanka***

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1. Introduction

Most of the socio-cultural norms persisting in Sri Lanka usually limit women's activities to the home. Traditionally, housewives have played a vital role in maintaining the home, sustaining the family's general health and well-being and taking care of the children. Despite their contributions, the role of women in society has often been devalued, ignored, misunderstood and under-appreciated. Historically, Sri Lankan women in many respects, were unrecognized as a target group in the preparation of plans and programmes and had few legal rights prior to 1970. However, by 1970, equal access to education and increasing participation in the labour force brought significant numbers of women to the public arena. In the International Women's Year in 1975, participation by Sri Lankan women in international conferences and accelerated activity by women's non-governmental organizations gave momentum to interest in women's issues. The establishment of the Women's Bureau in 1978, the creation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Teaching Hospitals in 1983, an emphasis on women's issues in the Population and Reproductive Health policy of 1998, and many other significant events have helped promote the integration of women in development. Although much attention has been paid to women's issues in Sri Lanka since the 1970s, many significant activities have also taken place since the 1920s.

The government of Sri Lanka has paid much attention to improve the status of women in many aspects. Compared to most Asian and Pacific countries, the overall status of women in Sri Lanka is found to be more advanced. The extensive social welfare programmes implemented by the Government of Sri Lanka during the post independence decades did result in creating many favourable conditions which promoted greater participation of women in the development process (Ministry of Health and Social Sciences, 1994). As a result, the invisible contribution of women to the family, society and economy is gradually being recognized while the depiction of women as a passive and dependent lot is gradually fading away (Department of Census and Statistics, 1995). Improvement in the socio-economic status of women on the one hand influences internal and international mobility and on the other hand influences development of the country. Thus, there is an interrelationship between improvements in socio-economic status, internal mobility of females and development in Sri Lanka. This interrelation has not been studied so far and therefore, an

attempt has been made in this paper to illustrate the improvement in the socio-economic status of women. Next, it exemplifies patterns and trends of inter-district migration of females, migration streams, characteristics of female migrants, determinants and consequences of female migration in Sri Lanka. Finally, policy issues are highlighted. Existing literature was used to illustrate the improvement in socio-economic status. The 1981 Census of Population and Housing and the 1994 Demographic survey were used to study inter-district migration patterns of females and other aspects of female migration using the Place of birth method.

2. Demographic scenario

While the population of Sri Lanka has increased from 2.4 million in 1871 to 18.7 million in 2001, the average annual rate of population growth has decreased from 1.4 per cent during the period 1871-1881 to 1.1 per cent during the period 1981-2001 with fluctuations in between (Table 1). There has been a steady increase in the share of female population to the total population from 46.7 in 1871 to 50.5 in 2001. At the beginning, males outnumbered females but the male to female difference has narrowed over the years. As a result, the sex ratio has gone down from 114.3 in 1871 to 97.9 in 2001.

The population of Sri Lanka has become relatively older with declining fertility and an increasing life span. Since 1940, mortality has been decreasing and this decline has benefited females more than males. The well-known significant reduction achieved in maternal and infant mortality of both sexes has resulted in a dramatic increase in life expectancy for both sexes but more for females. Between 1920-1922 and 1952, the life expectancy at birth for males exceeded that of females by about two years. In 1962-1964, for the first time, the female life expectancy at birth exceeded that of males by 0.4 years. This increased to 4.4 years in between 1980-1982 (Department of Census and Statistics, 1991). According to the estimates, life expectancy of males and females was expected to increase to 71.4 years and 76.1 years respectively by the year 2000 with a difference of 4.7 years (UNFPA, 2001).

Table 1. Population, average annual rate of growth, proportion of females and sex ratio, 1871-2001

Year	Population ('000)	Average annual rate of growth	Proportion of females	Sex ratio
1871	2,400	-	46.7	114.3
1881	2,760	1.4	46.7	113.9
1891	3,007	0.9	47.0	112.7
1901	3,566	1.7	46.8	113.6
1911	4,106	1.4	47.0	112.6
1921	4,499	0.9	47.1	112.5
1931	5,307	1.7	47.0	112.7
1946	6,657	1.5	46.9	113.0
1953	8,098	2.8	47.3	111.5
1963	10,582	2.7	48.0	108.2
1971	12,690	2.2	48.5	106.1
1981	14,846	1.7	49.0	104.0
2001	18,732	1.1	50.5	97.9

Source: Department of Census and Statistics (1997b), *Changing Role Women in Sri Lanka and*
 Department of Census and Statistics (2002), *Summary information of the Census of Population and Housing 2001*.

Observed sex imbalance in the past was mainly due to the higher sex ratio at birth and the predominant male immigration observed during the 19th century (United Nations, 1976). The dramatic change in mortality favoring women, caused the sex ratio to reverse its direction with an increasing likelihood of women outnumbering men in the population composition by the dawn of the 21st century (Department of Census and Statistics, 1997b). A high proportion of women also face widowhood as a result of increasing differentials in spousal ages at marriage and the gap in the life expectancy between men and women. These factors have contributed to the growing number of women who head and maintain single or single-parent households. Furthermore, the overseas migration of men has left women to tend to the family. According to the Demographic Health Survey 2000, one fifth of Sri Lankan households are headed by females. The singulate age at marriage for women has risen from 20.7 years in 1946 to 24.6 years in 2000 indicating the motivation of women for higher education.

This demographic scenario emphasizes that there is a decreasing trend of gender imbalance so that attention has to be paid to the improvement of the status of women and to get them involved in the development process. With these dramatic changes, women's role and status have undergone many phases.

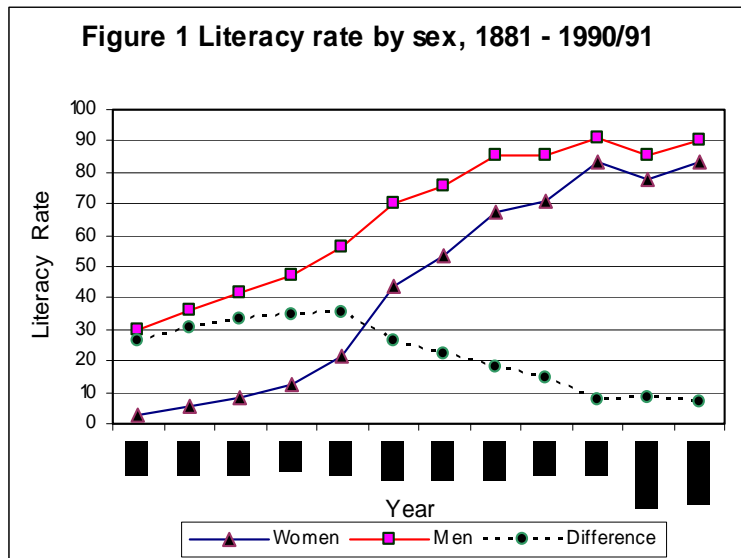
3. Socio-economic status of females

3.1 Education of females

Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate in the development process. It is therefore crucial to the status of women in their multiple roles in the family, in society, in the labour market and in the community (Jayaweera, 1979). With the Universal Adult Franchise grant in 1931, and the availability of free education since 1945 in Sri Lanka, a tremendous change has taken place transforming the status of women and encouraging more women to receive education at all levels. The literacy rate of men has always been higher to that of women (Figure 1). However, the rise in female literacy has been faster and dramatic. In 1881, the literacy rate for women was 3.1 per cent and the rate for men was 29.8 per cent with a difference of 26.7 percentage points. By 1946, it increased to 43.8 per cent for women and 70.1 per cent for men with more or less the same gap (26.3 per cent) between males and females. But, the recorded growth was lower for men during the period. By the year 1994, the literacy rate stood at 87.9 per cent for women and 92.5 per cent for men with a significantly reduced gap of 4.6 percentage points. The introduction of free education, the expansion of the school system and other facilities provided by the government irrespective of sex may have contributed largely in narrowing the gender gap in literacy levels.

Despite the sharp increases in literacy levels of females, participation at higher levels of education from G.C.E (Ordinary Level) and above, both men and women have shown favourable increases over time while women have surpassed men in their achievements. More girls qualify for university admission, but a greater imbalance exists in the actual enrollment indicating that a higher concentration of women students are at the borderline. Even though the gender gap in enrolment is narrowing over the years, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, under representation of females in certain fields is still visible (Department of Census and Statistics, 1997b). Women outnumber men as school teachers at all levels as this profession is deemed to be more socially acceptable by society and suitable for women. An under representation of females among university academic staff, indicates that the proportion of professionally top level females is still minimal. This information

emphasizes that the contribution of females to the socio-economic development in Sri Lanka is important as their education levels are increasing.



Source: Department of Census and Statistics (1997b), Changing role of women in Sri Lanka, page 115.

3.2 Female participation in the labour market

In Sri Lanka, women have entered the labour force at a faster rate than men during the past two decades. The female labour force participation rate (number in the labour force to 100 household population 10 years and over) has increased from about 23 per cent in 1981 to about 36 per cent in 1990s. Nearly one third (32.9 per cent) of the working age (aged 10 years and over) females are economically active according to the 3rd quarter of 2000 Labour Force Survey. Women’s labour force participation is more evident in the informal sector, which constitutes 26.5 per cent of the female labour force. In this sector women are found working as casual labourers, agricultural workers and as workers attached to home based industries. While women’s participation in agriculture has declined in the recent past, women’s out-migration as housemaids and in employment in the Free Trade Zone indicate an upward trend.

Among the unemployed population of Sri Lanka in 2000, 50.6 per cent are females and their unemployment rate is 11.8 per cent, that is about half of the rate recorded in 1993 (21.7 per cent). Percentage of employed females with qualifications of G.C.E (A/L) and above has increased from 9.3 per cent to about 16 per cent in 2000. The percentage of no schooling has decreased over the period implying that females are getting more qualifications. More females are engaged in the economic activities of the agricultural sector and they play an important role in the plantation sector too. However, because of occupational sex segregation of the country, the majority of females are confined to low income, time consuming and labour intensive activities mainly in the service sector, garment industry and formal sector.

Women's participation in manufacturing industries has increased visibly in recent years. Women have been employed in increasing numbers in export oriented modern industry such as garment, lapidary and electronic industries because of increasing employment opportunities provided by them and the degree of freedom of economic independence given to them. Because of increasing employment opportunities for females, the government has taken steps to strengthen the rights and privileges of working women to prevent any exploitation and harassment at work.

The most significant development found in the service sector is the emigration of women from low-income families for employment as housemaids to the Middle East and Asian countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong, China. These female workers make a major contribution to increase family income as well as to increase the country's foreign exchange earnings.

Women however, frequently have the less prestigious jobs and in many occupational groups, significant gender imbalances exist. It is important to recognize women's role in productivity as their contribution to development is extremely important. Even though women are increasingly getting themselves equipped with the necessary qualifications to take up professional and managerial jobs, the economic and political decision making machineries continue to be mainly in the hands of men. Advancement of the socio-economic status of

women results in motivation for them to migrate internally or internationally to find better employment.

3.3 Women in decision making and in public life

Although several women have shown their capabilities in the political arena in very positive terms and gained prominence, women's political participation is very low and reflects gender inequality in society (Department of Census and Statistics, 1997b). At present, women's representation in national and sub-national politics is low: 4.8 per cent in Parliament, 4.7 per cent in Provincial Councils, 2.3 per cent in Municipal Councils and 1 per cent in Pradeshiya Sabhas (UNFPA, 2001). Women's participation in politics is impeded by socio-cultural norms, which still tend to reinforce male supremacy.

Under representation in the decision making process is one of the disadvantages of women and it was well emphasized at the 1994 Cairo Conference. Participation at higher levels in leadership is minimal in Sri Lanka although women are entering the labour force at a faster rate than men. With the achievement of educational success, women were able to take up some prestigious positions in the decision-making machinery of the government sector and private sector. Since most government policies are male dominated, women have to achieve their status by breaking down the barriers of male domain.

Gender bias and imbalance exists in the occupational structure of the country. One of the main reasons for this is the family responsibility of women that is not counted. Nevertheless, women have entered public life at different levels. Available statistics reveal that there is an increasing trend of women employees in the public and private sector.

3.4 Vulnerable segments of the female population

Population ageing has become one of the serious issues in the 21st century in Sri Lanka and the increase is more pronounced for women. An increasing trend in female headed households is mainly due to the longer lifespan of women and widowhood caused by a heavy death toll of the country's male population due to political conflicts that have prevailed in many parts of the country. Therefore, quite a number of these women have become dependents of the state.

An increasing number of women suffer due to increasing financial and economic hardships. This is a direct consequence of unequal economic opportunities. This has been exacerbated by increasing migration. If the man migrates, the woman is left to provide care and protection for several dependants. If the woman migrates, she has to take care of two households: the original household and the one she sets up in the place of destination. As a result, a double burden of economic and domestic responsibility will exist.

Among the poor and illiterate, higher rates of violence against women is prominent which occurs not only at home but also in the work place and community. Domestic violence is the most common but also the least reported due to the social stigma associated with it. Women who are victims of gender violence are deprived of their human rights and other fundamental freedoms such as the right to their own lives and bodies and will suffer the likely consequence of being unable to participate fully in the development process (United Nations, 1998).

Female migrant workers working in other countries are another vulnerable group whom are often prone to violence. Although both male and female migrant worker populations have increased, female labour migration has increased rapidly from 55 per cent in 1988 to 80 per cent in 1995 (Department of Census and Statistics, 1995). This data suggests a greater willingness and more opportunities to migrate in search of better employment despite cultural constraints and family commitments. Most women migrate as housemaids or factory workers and they are another vulnerable group with special concerns. With the establishment of FTZs (Free Trade Zone) in 1978, an overwhelming majority of

young women 18-30 years of age migrated to the FTZ areas. Most of the women drawn to this environment are from the poorest sectors of rural villages. These migrant women work in factories that are overcrowded, poorly ventilated and with limited resources. They live in dormitories with poor living conditions. While there have been accounts of considerable financial benefits for these migrant women and their families, the lack of protection has opened them to various abuses and exploitation.

In addition to these groups is, there is an increasing number of women prisoners and female drug users. Further, the higher incidence of suicides and female accident victims are indicators of the degree of harassment faced by women and constraints that hinder women's ability to improve their status.

Even though, it is obvious that there are areas where improvements need to be made to improve their status, the data above indicates that the increased numbers in women's economic participation is helping to improve the status of women and their participation in the development activities of Sri Lanka. It is important to identify the gaps first and then decide what needs to be done.

Why do gender inequalities persist? One of the most important reasons for this is that the causes of inequality between men and women are not fully understood and that inequality has been ingrained in societies from a long time ago (United Nations, 1998). Prevailing social norms in the country have an impact on this and they are hard and slow to change. According to the United Nations (1998), the vicious cycle of non-investment of women and their inability to participate fully in the labour market on equal terms with men have to be broken through public policy. Legal aspects of equality will also have to be addressed in a more holistic and realistic manner. More target oriented programmes have to be implemented. Finally, violence against women needs to be increasingly addressed as a public health and social issue.

To overcome problems related to women's issue, in the past, the government of Sri Lanka presented the Women's Charter in 1993 which is a statement of national policy.

According to the Ministry of Health, Highways and Social Services (1995), it provided guidelines for future plans and activities that concern women in Sri Lanka. Political and civil rights; rights within the family; the right to education and training; the right to economic activity and benefits; the right to health care and nutrition; the right to protection from social discrimination amid the right to protection from gender based violence are major areas identified to achieve fair and equal rights for women.

Even though much effort has been made to enhance the role and status of women by the government, much remains to be done. The Population and Reproductive Health Policy of 1998 in Sri Lanka included the goal “Achieving gender equality” and set various strategies to achieve it. It is possible to improve the status of women in the future if these strategies could be achieved.

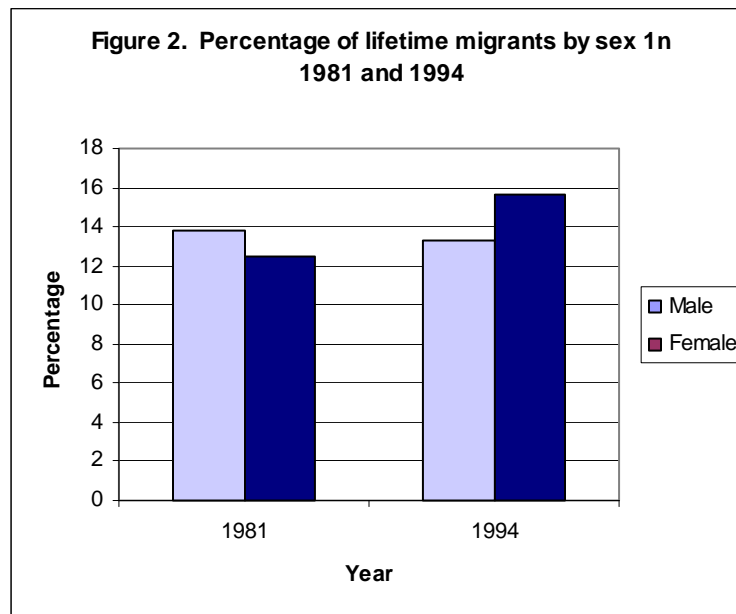
4. Internal migration of females

According to the United Nations (1993a), a general examination of both internal and international migration for employment reveals that women are making use of every opportunity, irrespective of its quality, to achieve better economic status and also assist in improving the quality of life in the family. Since the most remunerative employment opportunities are found in urban areas, female migration streams to urban areas are most visible.

With modernization and changes in the socio-economic conditions in Sri Lanka, female migrants were attracted to urban areas where textile and garment industries are located. In the past, women migrated to urban areas not to find employment but to be with their husbands (United Nations, 1993a). Today, females are migrating within the country not only to find employment and to be with their families, but also for education, family formation, civil disturbances etc. Investigation of the patterns and trends of internal migration of females in Sri Lanka will emphasize the link between the improvement of socio-economic status and internal migration of females.

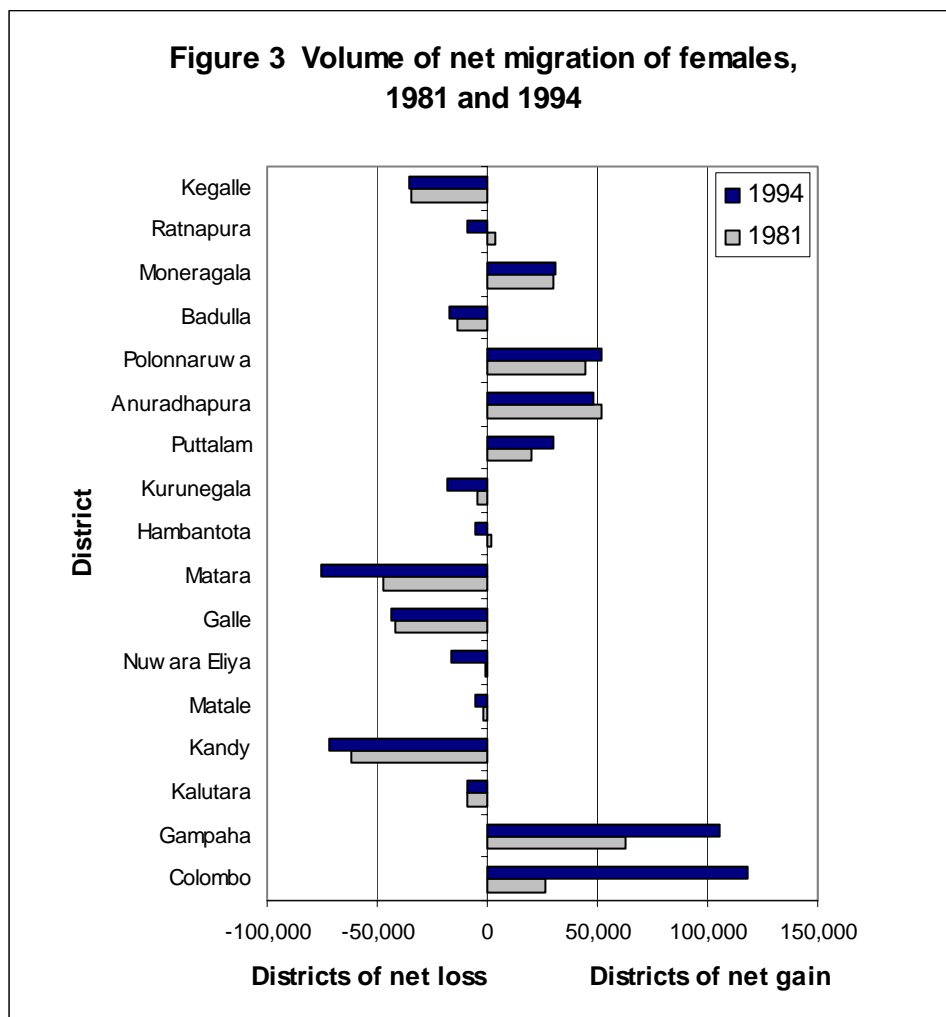
4.1 Patterns of female migration

According to the 1994 Demographic Survey (excluding the districts of Northern and Eastern provinces), 13.3 per cent are lifetime male migrants out of Sri Lanka born male population of 7,326,678 and 15.6 per cent are lifetime female migrants out of Sri Lanka born female population of 7,523,009 (Figure 2). In 1981, it was 13.8 percent for males and 12.5 per cent for females (excluding the districts of Northern and Eastern provinces). This highlights the fact that in Sri Lanka, internal migratory movements of males have decreased (decrease of .5 percentage points) and of females have increased (increase of 3.1 percentage points) during the period 1981 and 1994. The decreasing trend of male migration may partly be due to the higher percentage of undocumented male international migration. The increasing trend of female migration may be due to an improvement in the socio-economic status of women.



Not only the percentage of female migrants but also the in-migration rates of females in almost all the districts, out-migration rates of females in all the districts and the volume of net migration of females in almost all the districts (Figure 3) had increased during the period 1981 to 1994. Using this information, six districts namely Colombo and Gampaha districts

which are located in the wet zone and Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Moneragala districts which are located in the dry zone have been identified as the popular destinations (popular districts) of female migrants in 1994. In all other districts of net gain except the district of Anuradhapura, volume of migration of females had increased by the year 1994 and the increase is further pronounced in the districts of Colombo and Gampaha. The decline is very insignificant in Anuradhapura district and it is very slow when compared with the decline of males. All other districts have been designated as districts of net loss because of heavy out-migration from those districts than in-migration to the districts.



4.2 Migration streams

The two largest recipient districts (Colombo and Gampaha) of female migrants are located in the wet zone. Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka where most of the industrial and service centers are located, is the most populous district in the country with high economic growth that is especially attractive for migrants. The average annual rate of growth of the population (1.3 per cent) is more or less equal to the national rate (1.2 per cent) during the period 1981-2001 and the sex ratio is favourable for men (103.3) according to the Population and Housing Census of 2001. With the socio-economic development of the country, not only males but also females migrated to the district of Colombo as they have become more educated and more economically active. As shown in table 2, nearly half (48.66 percent) of the female migrants (256,775) who moved to the district of Colombo originated from the South Western coastal districts of Kalutara, Galle and Matara and the adjoining district of Gampaha. The proportions of each district are more or less equal. Migration flows to Colombo from the South Western coastal belt was the well established flow since 1946. Because of heavy out-migration, the rate of growth of the two districts Galle and Matara are low during the period 1981-2001 i.e. 1.0 per cent and 0.8 per cent respectively. During the period 1981 and 1994, female out-migration had increased in these two districts and as a result, the unemployment rate of females of the districts had declined from 27.6 per cent in 1992 to 18.3 per cent in 1997 in Galle and 32.5 per cent in 1992 to 24.8 per cent in 1997 in Matara. The sex ratios in 2001 are more favourable for females in these two districts Galle (93.8) and Matara (93.3). Female migration from these two districts to Colombo may possibly be due to a search for employment. This may be true for the district of Kalutara also. About 8 per cent of the migrants of Colombo district originated from Jaffna district and very little movement had taken place from the districts of East coast.

The district of Gampaha has grown rapidly mainly as a result of the expansion of industrial and service sectors developed in the Free Trade Zone areas since late 1970s and had a stronger bias for female migration. According to the 2001 census, the second highest rate of population growth (excluding the districts of Northern and Eastern provinces) during the period 1981-2001 is found in the district of Gampaha (1.9 per cent) and the sex ratio of the district had declined from 101.2 in 1981 to 94.6 in 2001. While female labour force

participation had increased during the period of 1992 to 1997 from 28.0 to 32.48, unemployment rate had decreased. As identified from the 1994 Demographic Survey, it is the second largest recipient of female migrants and had a total of 188,202 in-migrants, the majority of whom came from Colombo district (32.66 per cent) and another significant proportion (12.37 per cent) came from Kurunegala district. All the other migration flows are very small compared to the migration flows from the districts of Colombo and Kurunegala.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of female migration streams to the six popular migration destinations, 1994

Area of origin	Area of destination					
	Colombo	Gampaha	Puttalam	Anuradhapura	Polonnaruwa	Moneragala
Colombo	-	32.66	8.71	5.40	2.14	2.63
Gampaha	11.53	-	17.42	6.75	4.74	1.74
Kalutara	13.24	4.10	2.99	2.83	2.49	1.53
Kandy	8.87	6.77	2.80	17.41	22.08	2.91
Matale	1.84	1.18	0.98	13.31	10.32	0.37
Nuwara Eliya	4.22	2.24	1.27	7.75	8.75	2.41
Galle	12.10	5.79	2.39	4.29	1.56	5.11
Matara	11.79	6.04	1.52	2.10	1.56	13.99
Hambantota	2.30	1.42	0.39	0.59	0.43	15.32
Jaffna	8.07	1.72	8.08	0.44	0.00	0.00
Kilinochchi	0.21	0.02	0.29	0.15	0.00	0.00
Mannar	0.29	0.14	7.02	0.79	0.00	0.00
Vavuniya	0.18	0.27	0.29	3.76	1.37	0.00
Mullaitivu	0.25	0.11	2.69	0.05	0.00	0.00
Batticaloa	1.06	0.10	0.74	0.34	1.39	0.35
Ampara	0.59	0.37	0.29	0.47	1.04	3.07
Trincomalee	0.75	1.22	0.64	2.29	0.75	0.16
Kurunegala	3.76	12.37	34.48	17.97	11.82	0.69
Puttalam	1.31	5.49	-	1.09	1.70	0.14
Anuradhapura	1.21	2.35	2.23	-	3.00	0.32
Polonnaruwa	0.47	0.87	0.54	2.90	-	0.43
Badulla	4.12	2.80	0.83	1.01	4.73	35.24
Moneragala	0.48	0.49	0.16	0.39	0.24	-
Ratnapura	5.79	3.83	0.72	1.05	2.19	9.49
Kegalle	5.54	7.64	2.53	6.34	18.71	4.12
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Total in-migrants	256,775	188,202	58,878	74,972	66,140	43,485

Note: Demographic Survey 1994 was carried out excluding the districts of Northern and Eastern provinces of the country.

According to Abeyssekera (1981), Puttalam a maritime district was one of the most developed areas of the country having been exposed to Western influence since the early sixteenth century. It is located in the North Western Province and has become one of the centers of attraction of female migrants in 1994. In the recent past, due to civil disturbances of the country, more females have migrated to the district of Puttalam. The growth rate of the population in this district (1.8 per cent) during the period 1981-2001 is significantly higher than the national rate and the sex ratio is favourable for women (97.4). A little more than half of the migrants to Puttalam district came from only two districts (Gampaha and Kurunegala), Kurunegala being the district of sending more migrants (34.48 per cent). It is observed that migration flows containing more females to Gampaha, Puttalam, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa originated from Kurunegala district showing a low rate of growth of population and a low unemployment rate. The salient feature is that about one fifth (20.04 per cent) of the migrants to the district of Puttalam had moved from the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the country mainly from the two districts Jaffna and Mannar.

As pointed out by De Silva (1985), eradication of malaria, population redistribution policies, improvement of infrastructure facilities and the Mahaweli Development Programme influenced the movement of people to the dry zone districts of the country. Furthermore, migration to the districts of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Moneragala is a result of the government's investment in peasant agriculture, the close relationship between the availability of new land and rural development programmes initiated. Even though a decreasing trend of female migratory movements is observed in the districts of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Moneragala, magnitude of the migratory movements are still remarkable. The greater attraction to North Central Province (Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa districts) possibly can be attributed to the Mahaweli Programme which initiated its sponsored settlement schemes in 1976 and migration to the province was more familial in nature than to the other districts of the country (De Silva, 1985). Nearly half of the migratory movements to Anuradhapura district constitutes of the migrants originated from the districts of Kandy and Matale in the Central Province and Kurunegala district in the North Western Province. Anuradhapura district received little less than one tenth of the migrants from the districts of Northern and Eastern Provinces, the majority being migrants from the districts of

Vavuniya. Rate of growth of population is low in Anuradhapura (1.2 per cent) and the sex ratio is 102.9 in 2001.

About 63 per cent of females migrating to the district of Polonnaruwa are only from four districts – Kandy, Matale, Kurunegala and Kegalle. Central Province was considered as the major supplier of manpower to the dry zone districts (Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa). Because of rural land shortages due to the expropriations which were initiated in 1840 when the government began to establish the plantations in the province, people of the rural areas have been attracted by the colonization and land settlement schemes in the dry zone. About 65 per cent of the female migrants of Moneragala district originated from the following three districts – Matara, Hambantota and Badulla. Share of migrants from the districts of Northern and Eastern Provinces to Gampaha, Polonnaruwa and Moneragala are smaller than the migrants to the other three districts. The population growth rates of these two districts are higher than the national average and the sex ratio is favourable for men. Polonnaruwa district has the highest sex ratio (108.8) in Sri Lanka according to the 2001 census. Remaining migratory movements to these districts have been small, short distance streams across the boundary from one district to its neighbour.

De Silva (1985) pointed out that the number of in-migrants received by North Central Province in 1976-81 periods was almost double the figure for 1966-71, while in the same period in-migrants to Colombo increased by only 21 per cent. During these two periods, out-migration from North Central Province also increased more than that of Colombo region. Possible explanation given by him for this declining trend was the slow pace of urbanization and lack of industrialization of North Central Province which the Mahaweli Programme is not emphasized. This declining trend is further proved by the analysis of 1994 survey data.

4.3 Characteristics of female migrants

The impact of migration on areas of origin and destination depends not only on the magnitude of the flows involved but also the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of migrants. Most of the studies indicate that migrant women differ in many respects from non-migrant women in both the areas of origin and destination. Therefore,

characteristics of the female migrants as well as the female non-migrants at the areas of destination are investigated. Two sets of variables are used as females are highly selected in terms of some variables. The first includes demographic variables such as age, relationship to head of household and marital status and the second consists of several socio-economic variables such as ethnicity, education, activity status, labour force participation and occupation.

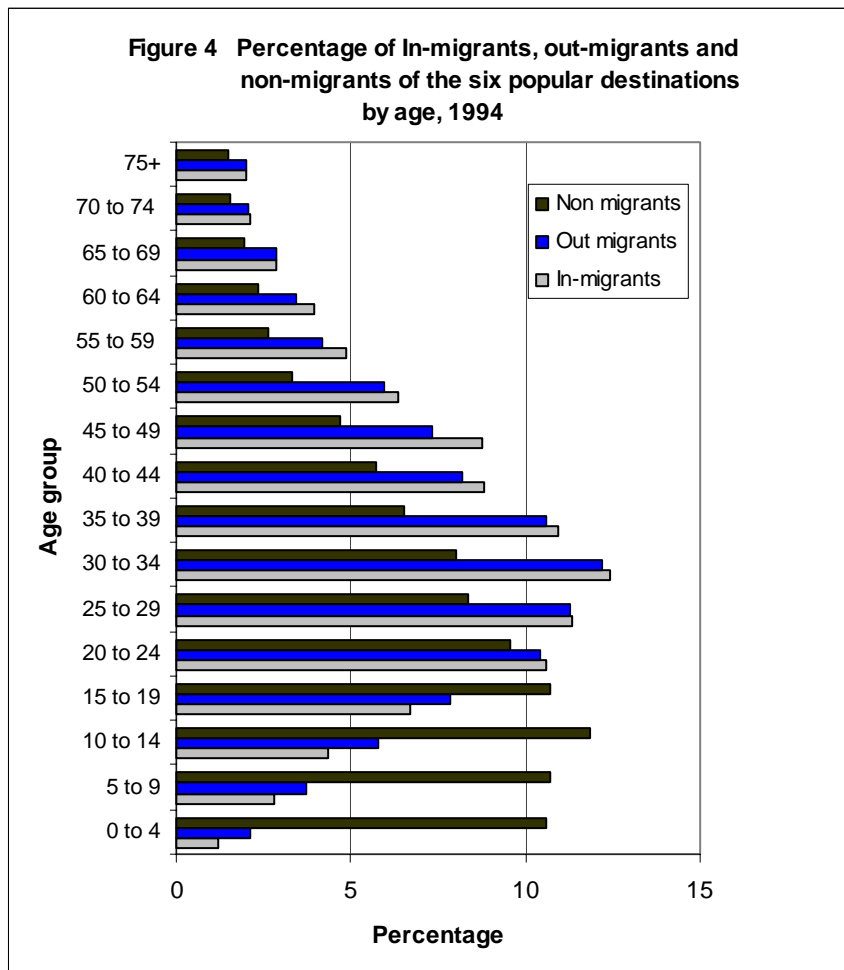
Before analyzing the characteristics of migrants, it is important to get an idea about the in-migrants, out-migrants and non-migrants of the six districts designated as popular female migration destinations. Percentage distribution of female in-migrants, out-migrants and non-migrants in relation to the female resident population is shown in table 3. Exactly one fourth of the population of the two districts Colombo and Moneragala are in-migrants. In-migrants are nearly half in Polonnaruwa district and little more than one fifth in Gampaha and Moneragala districts. The lowest percentage is found in Puttalam district. Percentages of out-migrants in these districts are less than 10 per cent except the district of Colombo. Among these districts, population of the Puttalam district is less mobile and the population of the district of Polonnaruwa is more mobile compared with other districts.

Table 3 Percentage distribution of female in-migrants, out-migrants and non-migrants to the resident population of the six popular destinations, 1994

District	Resident female population	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Non-migrants
Colombo	1,042,719	24.63	13.30	75.37
Gampaha	868,953	21.66	9.57	78.36
Puttalam	304,778	19.32	9.45	80.68
Anuradhapura	338,631	22.14	8.00	77.86
Polonnaruwa	160,678	41.16	8.66	58.84
Moneragala	177,019	24.56	7.08	76.56

Note: Based on a special tabulation.

Some consistency has been seen in the case of age selectivity in different contexts over a long period of time. That is persons in their late teens, twenties and early thirties are more migratory than their counterparts (Shaw, 1985). Figure 4 depicts total in-migrants, out-migrants and non-migrants of the six popular destinations of female migrants by five year age groups. According to this figure, not only the late teens, twenties and early thirties but also the late thirties, forties and early fifties are also migrating. In general, migratory movements are prominent in the labour force age groups and reach the peak in the age group 30-34. Out-migrants from these districts are higher than in-migrants in the younger age groups less than 20 years and older age groups over 65. In the other age groups, in-migrants are higher. Higher percentage of non-migrants in the age groups of infants and children indicates lesser mobility of younger people. It is interesting to know that these six districts are considered, female non-migrants are less than the female in-migrants and out-migrants in all the age groups more than 20 years of age.



Migratory movements of the females in the six popular destinations are prominent in the labour force age groups and reach the peak in the age range 25-34 with the median age of 35 years. Higher percentage of 0-14 age group is in Puttalam district and of 65 and over is found in Colombo district. Non-migrants are mostly concentrated in the younger age groups with the median age of 23 years.

Only about one tenth of the female migrants are the heads of the households and the majority belongs to the category of spouse in these districts. While female headed households are more in the districts of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, more than one fifth comprises of boarders, servants and others in Colombo district. The majority of female migrants in Sri Lanka as well as in the six popular destinations are currently married. Difference between the never married and married categories is highly significant for in-migrants and less significant for non-migrants in these districts. Marriage dissolution is higher among in-migrants than non-migrants. More never married females have migrated to the districts of Colombo and Gampaha.

The majority of female in-migrants and non-migrants are Sinhalese in all the districts. The highest percentage of Tamil in-migrants and the second highest percentage of Moors are found in Colombo district. The highest percentage of Moors and the second highest percentage of Tamils are found in Puttalam district. The general level of education of female migrants is higher than the non-migrants. Nearly half of the migrants had more than a secondary education and it is more significant in the districts of Colombo and Gampaha. Economically active female migrants aged 10 years and above are generally low. The majority of these economically active females are employed. Higher percentage of female migrants engaged in household work. Migrant women are more likely to be employed and engaged in household work than the non-migrant women and non-migrant women are more likely to be students than in-migrant women in all the districts. Labour force participation of the in-migrants is more than that of the non-migrants and the unemployment rate is lower for in-migrants than the non-migrants in all the districts.

For the country as a whole, the majority of female migrants are engaged in agriculture, production-related and elementary occupations. This holds true for the six districts as a whole. Variations exist among in-migrants and non-migrants. Female migrants engaged in managerial, professional and technical occupations are higher in Colombo, Gampaha and Moneragala districts. It is low in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa districts. Female migrants are more likely to be engaged in agricultural occupations in Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Moneragala districts. Production related occupations are higher in the district of Colombo followed by the district of Gampaha which includes the occupations related to garment industry.

4.4 Determinants and consequences of female migration

Internal migration in developing countries is closely associated to the status of socio-economic development. Internal migration is influenced by social and economic changes and in turn it influences those changes (United Nations, 2001). It is also possible to argue that the improvement of socio-economic status of women leads to higher internal mobility of women and in turn internal migration influences the improvement of the status of women. According to the United Nations (1993b), socio-economic factors such as employment and education determine internal mobility of women and are conducive to an improvement in the status of women. However, socio-cultural factors of migration generally do not improve women's status. As they stated in Southern Asia, a patriarchal system led to very high levels of rural to rural migration among women who had to move to the husband's home at the time of marriage. These practices were not conducive to the improvement of the status of women. This is not true for all South Asian countries since the relaxation of social restrictions on women's mobility does influence migration. Although this custom is still practiced in India and Sri Lanka, female status has improved. However, in Sri Lanka female migration is heavily influenced by factors such as employment and education. It is apparent that in general, women were far more likely than men to move because of non-economic reasons - to accompany or join their family members or because of marriage. Men, on the other hand, predominated among migrants moving for economic reasons - to find a job or because of transfers.

Why do some women in Sri Lanka decide to make a move and others do not? The answer to this question is not easy because of the complex nature of migration processes and the paucity of data on the determinants of migration. In Sri Lanka for the first time, the question 'Reasons for migration' has been included in the 1994 Demographic Survey to envisage the determining factors of migration. A major limitation of this data is that only three categories have been specially listed as reasons for migration – for employment, to live in own house and due to civil disturbances. All the other possible and important reasons were included under 'other' category and therefore, not possible to identify separately.

Female migration itself is determined by demographic, socio-economic and politico-cultural forces and the consequences of migration has a bearing on the individual, the family and the society. For the individual it may bring prosperity, happiness and organized life or distress, mental illness and disorganization of everyday life (Nabi and Krishnan, 1993). Since the impact of migration on the demographic, economic and socio-cultural structure ultimately leads to the individual, it is important first to investigate the consequences on society. In many studies, the importance of distinguishing the effects of female migration on women from their families was stressed. It was found that when the migration was motivated by economic factors, income of the family had increased but did not entail an improved economic status for the women concerned (United Nations, 1993b).

However, the outcome of migration for women varied considerably according to the economic, socio-cultural and family contexts in which migration takes place. According to a study done in the United States (1993b), in some contexts, migration contributed to the emancipation of women from patriarchal control but in others migration did not seem to free women from patriarchal control. For women engaged in low-paid economic activities and poor working conditions with little prospects of upward mobility, it was unlikely to lead to an improvement of the status of women within the household and in the society. In some instances, women managed to acquire greater decision making powers as a result of migration. But, their position in the family has not changed significantly. However, the consequences of migration could not be isolated from the determinants of migration.

It has to be noted that migration involves two areas – the area of origin and the area of destination. The effects may be negative in the area of origin and positive in the area of destination or the other way around or similar in direction for both areas (Nabi and Krishnan, 1993). Magnitude of the study, socio-economic and politico-cultural conditions of the areas and characteristics of the migrants decide the direction of the consequences. In this study, only the popular destinations are considered in the investigation of the characteristics of the migrants and the determinants for migration.

The relationship between migrants and the consequences depends on the characteristics and determinants of the migrants. More than 90 per cent of in-migrants of the six popular destinations were more than 15 years of age (labour force age groups). One third of the non-migrants were concentrated in the age below 15. As a result, each district would gain females in the labour force age groups. Due to migration the age structure of all the districts would change. In the districts where the proportion of non-migrant children less than 15 years of age is very high, the impact seems noticeable.

How do these migrants influence and change the activity status of females of the area of destination? One third of the females aged over 15 years in the six popular destinations are economically active and out of them, the majority (about 30 per cent) are employed. This employed category includes females who were employed before and after migration. Those who are employed after migration could influence more positively the individuals and the family than those employed before migration. There may be adverse effects depending on the type of economic activity they engage in within the socio-cultural set up of the area. Unemployment rates of the migrants are lower than the non-migrants in each district. Educational attainment of the migrants is also very low in the district where the highest rate of unemployment is found. An increase in more unemployed females with lower educational qualifications may function as a negative factor for socio-economic development. The majority of migrants of these six destinations are older than 15 years, are engaged in household work and therefore, it is difficult to describe their influence on the individual, the family as well as to area with the available data.

Employed females are highly engaged in production related occupations especially in the district of Gampaha followed by Colombo district. The majority of these women work in the garment industry and about 30 per cent never marry. It is expected that these women and their families economically benefit after their return to origin. However, it is beneficial only during the time they work at these industries. Once they returned to their origin there will not be much economic benefits. In such situations, negative effects are greater than the positive effects. Among the adverse effects, reproductive health problems are prominent. As pointed out by De Silva (2000), premarital sex and partaking in risk behaviors leads to a high incidence of induced abortions and prevalence of STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) among “Free Trade Zone” women who have migrated from other areas of the country. Sexual violence against working girls, particular factory girls, is also rapidly increasing. The result of this situation is that the majority of these girls remain unmarried or unmarried women with children. Only a small proportion may end-up with long lasting marriages. This is an effect for them, for their families and for the society as a whole and especially an unexpected burden for the family.

Females who migrate as students will gain more in the future. The migration of an unmarried daughter has small effect on a family’s daily routine, whereas the long departure of a parent or spouse has more important consequences. Apart from the emotional toll of separation, domestic tasks have to be reassigned, especially if the migrant is the mother of young children. In a nuclear family, the problem of finding someone who will take care of the children left behind is likely to be more difficult to solve than in an extended family where other adult women may undertake the tasks of the absent mother.

5. Conclusions

As previously summarized, the socio-economic status of women in Sri Lanka is improving and female migration is on the increase. An inadequacy of data is the major limitation associated with the analysis of determinants and consequences of female migration in Sri Lanka and therefore, it is not possible to analyse all the reasons for migration and the consequences of migration in detail. However, available information provides an

understanding about the improvement in socio-economic status and internal migration patterns of females in Sri Lanka.

The sex ratio continues to decrease and women in the marriageable ages will face a problem of finding a suitable partner. Aged females will continue to live longer than males and as a result, female headed households will continue to increase due to the longer life span of females, widowhood and the increasing numbers of never married females.

The educational attainment of females is increasing and women are entering the labour force as soon as they complete their education. However, if occupational sex segregation continues, the unemployment rate of females with higher education will continue to increase. Although the gender gap in educational enrolment is narrowing at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, under representation in certain fields is apparent. Therefore, identification of the possibilities to improve women's ability to earn income beyond traditional occupations, to achieve economic dependence and to ensure women's equal access to the labour market are very important at this stage.

Occupational sex segregation in Sri Lanka has resulted in low income, time consuming and labour intensive jobs primarily in the service sector, garment industry and formal sector. Women are becoming more highly qualified but the economic and political machinery are mainly in the hands of men. Male supremacy in the field of decision making and public life and some of the policies are still male dominated. Domestic violence is a major barrier for females for participation in development.

Studies on female migration have been neglected even though women constitute a significantly larger proportion of internal migration. More research is recommended to study the interrelationships between women's status, internal female migration and development of the country. Since the popular destinations of female migration have been identified in this study as an initial approach, it is possible to do more research in these identified areas.

Even though many women in Sri Lanka are economically active, most of them are involved in low-paying occupations with little prestige. Women's education still lags behind even though there is an increasing trend. Few women are entrepreneurs, investors, lawyers, journalists, high level government officials or politicians. Although the situation is improving, women still lack a voice in decision making, especially in the most important areas of economic and political life.

Many of the females in Sri Lanka are involved in household activities which do not provide monetary remuneration. Thus, the time and effort that women put into such activities generally go unrecognized and unrecorded. Therefore, these women may migrate internally or internationally because they want to improve their family socio-economic conditions. Whatever the reason they migrate, much attention should be paid to the adverse effects of female migration by policy makers. Especially issues related to female migrant workers in Free Trade Zone areas have to be addressed.

Programmes that provide women with viable income-generating activities in rural areas, such as craft production and other non-agricultural activities are urgently required. It is also necessary to provide agricultural extension services directed specifically to the needs of women and to increase their access to both formal education and vocational training.

Many basic features of female migration patterns will change in coming years. Because of the decline in fertility, a decline in the growth rate of the labour market entrants is apparent. There is a possibility for unemployed women to take advantage of this opportunity. More direct policy measures, such as raising the level of education, providing them with equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work, ensuring their equality of rights with regard to property ownership, marriage, and divorce are judged more effective means to enhance women's status. Policies that would improve women's access to employment and other resources would undoubtedly have important implications for female migration.

To date, both population research and the attention of policy makers has focused on the interrelationship between fertility or mortality and the changing status of women.

Consideration of the third component (migration) has been largely neglected. This is regrettable, not only because of the large number of women involved in internal migration, but also because of the interrelationship between internal migration of women and socio-economic development. Therefore, more research needs to be done in this field to persuade policy makers of the importance of the consequences of female migration in the country.

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