Migration of women and its implications on family well-being

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Workshop to assess ways and means of enhancing family well-being through social protection and effective delivery of social services
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Presentation outline

- Introduction
- Improvement in demographic and socio-economic status of females in Sri Lanka
- Internal migration of women in Sri Lanka
- International migration of women in Sri Lanka
- Migration of women and family well-being
- Contribution to the discipline
- Policy implications
Introduction

- Increasing trend of migration
- Migration for employment
- Movements within the Asian region
- Increasing trend of female migration
- Sri Lankan female migration for employment abroad
- Implications on family well-being
Improvement in demographic and socio-economic status of women in Sri Lanka
While the proportion of females has increased, sex ratio has decreased during the period 1871 - 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proportion of females</th>
<th>Sex ratio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>114.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>113.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>112.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>113.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>112.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>47.1</td>
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<td>1971</td>
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<td>106.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>104.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Dramatic increase in life expectancy for both males and females but, more for females

- 1920-1922 to 1952  - Life expectancy at birth of males exceeded that of females by about 2 years
- 1962-1964  - For the first time, female life expectancy at birth exceeded that of males by 0.4 years
- 1980-1982  - The difference has increased to 4.4 years
- By the year 2000  - Expected to increase
  Male  - 71.4 yrs
  Female  - 76.1 yrs
  Difference  - 4.7 yrs
Rise in literacy level has been faster and dramatic for women
Women have surpassed men in their achievements in education

- More girls qualify for university admissions but, a greater imbalance exists in the actual intakes

- Women outnumber men as school teachers

- Under representation of females among the university academic staff
Women entered labour force at a faster rate than men

- Female labour force participation rate:
  - 23 per cent in 1981
  - 36 per cent in 1990s

- Nearly one third of the working age females are economically active

- Among the unemployed population in Sri Lanka in 2000, 50.6 per cent are females
More women are engaged in the economic activities of the agricultural sector.

Women’s participation in manufacturing industries has increased.

Emigration of women in low income families for employment has increased.
While there is an improvement in the demographic and socioeconomic status of women, increase in the mobility of females was observed.

However, women are almost always having less prestigious jobs and in many occupational groups and unreasonable gender imbalance exists.
Internal migration of women in Sri Lanka

Percentage of lifetime migrants by sex in 1981 and 1994
Characteristics of internal female migrants

- In-migrant women in tend to be over-represented in the labour force age groups and to be under-represented at younger and older age groups with the median age of 35 years.

- Only about one tenth of the female in-migrants are the heads of the households and about 48 per cent belong to the category of ‘spouse’.

- About 69 percent of the migrant women are currently married and only about 21 per cent are never married.

- Marriage dissolution of the migrant women is about 10 per cent.
Characteristics of internal female migrants (contd.)

- Level of education of the female migrants is high, with only 7 per cent of being no schooling.

- About 47 per cent of them had more than secondary education.

- Proportion of the economically active female migrants is generally low i.e. about 33 per cent – due to the male oriented labour market.

- Percentages of migrant women engaged in managerial, professional and technical occupations as well as elementary occupations which includes females engaged in garment industry are higher than that of non-migrants.
International female migrants in Sri Lanka

- Out of the total departures for foreign employment, 52.77 per cent were women in 2007.

- It was 33.02 per cent in 1986.

- Out of these total female migrants, about 92 were housemaids.

- Out of the females working abroad, 95 per cent were in the Middle East countries.
Characteristics of international female migrants

Save the children (2006)

- About 80 per cent were in the age group 21-40
- About 50 per cent had children less than 6 yrs of age at the time of the mother’s departure
- About 50 per cent of the families had semi-permanent and temporary houses
- Average annual income was very low
- Nearly 75 per cent were married
Family well-being

Definition of the family

According to the Children’s Health Encyclopaedia (2007), a **family** is a group of two people or more related by marriage, blood relation, or adoption and usually live together.

It is more important to mention here that ‘the essence of the family group is the parent-child relationship whose outlines vary widely among cultures’.

(Children’s Health Encyclopaedia 2007)
Family well-being (contd.)

- **Nuclear family**
  Consists of the marital pair living with their offspring in a separate dwelling

- **Extended family**
  This is defined as ‘the relatives of an individual, both by blood and by marriage, other than its immediate family, such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins’

  (Adoption Glossary 2007).
Family well-being (contd.)

- Well-being is a process rather than a static condition or the status of a situation

- No universally accepted definition

- Well-being at the family level is the process of improving all spheres of life
  - Economic well-being
  - Social well-being
Two forms of influence of women’s migration on family well-being:

- Raising economic conditions through the injection of remittances
- Modifying social behaviour through the diffusion of secular ideas in the traditional cultures of the sending communities
Implications of women’s migration on family well-being depends on:

- Duration of exposure
- Intensity of effect
- Nature of exposure
Family well-being (contd.)

Economic well-being:

- Ability to save money
- Investments
- Raising living conditions
- Access to facilities
- Repaying debts
Family well-being (contd.)

Social well-being:
- Improvement in health
- Education of children
- Women’s position

Important:
Maximize positive impacts
Minimize negative impacts
Family well-being (contd.)

Transnational mothering

- Growing phenomenon

- Migrant mothers do not always pass their gender responsibilities to other family members left behind

- The try to maintain the responsibility of nurturing their children and maintain intimacy across boarders

- They remain responsible for ensuring both economic and social security for their children
Family well-being (contd.)

Transnational mothering

- Consequences of distant mothering
- How women are mothering from a distance
Family well-being (contd.)

Consequences of distant mothering

Economic impact

- High level of remittances – increase in household income
- Migrant mothers are more concerned with their children’s well-being and remit more money home
- Remittances are used to ensure food security, repay debts, cover schooling costs and medical bills, and improve well-being of those left behind
Family well-being (contd.)

Social impact

**Education:**

Positive - School enrolment
  - School performance

Negative - Acquiring education
  - Educational performance
  - Drop outs of school to look for work or to help household chores
Family well-being (contd.)

Well-being of children

- Problems with friends, classmates, relations and siblings
- Physiological and emotional problems
- Poor social adjustment
- Physical health of children
- Happiness of children

Emotional strains
Family well-being (contd.)

- How women are mothering from a distance

**Transnational communication**

Flow of ideas, information, emotions goods and money

**Adjustment of family left behind**

- Child care activities
- Reorganization of gender and familial roles
Contribution to the discipline

Fertility and mortality

Migration

Trends

Characteristics

Determinants and consequences at aggregate level

Economic benefits of migration
Contribution to the discipline (contd.)

- Traditional international migration theories – focus on economic causes and effects
- Two-way relationship between migration and families focuses on maximization of the income of families
- Economic and social well-being of the families
- Economic and social impact on families and children of internal migrants - Thailand, Indonesia, India
Contribution to the discipline (contd.)

The Sri Lankan experience

- Many studies on macroeconomic implications of migration
- Gamburd – Investigation of impacts on families
- Ratnayake & Eelens– Different aspects of female migration
- Save the children – impact on children
Policy implications

- Current policies on migration
- Future policies
Thank you