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MIGRATION OF SRI LANKAN WOMEN AS HOUSEMAIDS TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Sriyani Tidball
University of Nebraska - Lincoln, mtidball3@unl.edu

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MIGRATION OF SRI LANKAN WOMEN AS HOUSEMAIDS TO THE MIDDLE EAST
SRIYANI TIDBALL
More than 1.7 million Sri Lankans now work abroad, and nearly 600,000 are housemaids... In Saudi Arabia, the most common destination, they call Sri Lanka “the country of housemaids.”
FACT

Fifteen to 20 percent of the 120,000 (approx) Sri Lankan women who leave each year for the Gulf return prematurely, face abuse, nonpayment of salary, or get drawn into illicit human trafficking schemes or prostitution.

Hundreds of housemaids have become pregnant, often after rapes, producing children who, until Sri Lanka’s Constitution was recently amended, were Stateless because their fathers were foreigners.
Labor Market for Sri Lankan Maids

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, U.A.E. and Jordan were the major labor receiving countries that have captured over 86% of the Sri Lankan foreign workers. Their work contracts do not fall under labor laws but under the jurisdiction of immigration authorities.
FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS

Foreign exchange earnings show that these employees earned Rs. 382,801 Million in 2009 which was 47.03% of total foreign exchange earnings of Sri Lanka. A very large source of income for the Government of Sri Lanka.

According to Reuters Sri Lanka received $2.5 billion from workers’ remittances in 2008 and $3.4 billion in 2009.
IN 2009

Departures of workers for foreign employment: 247,119
Female participation was 51.73%, out of total departures
89% of total female migrant workers that left Sri Lanka went as housemaids
The number of licensed foreign employment agencies in Sri Lanka increased from 626 to 646
182 raids on illegal recruiting agencies
COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY SLBFE

The number of complaints received in 2009 from women working as housemaids increased by 2,402 complaints, 4.88% of recruitment.

Recorded Harassment Complaints (Physical and Sexual)
2005 – 1,949
2006 - 1,765
2007 – 997
2008 – 1,188

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY SLBFE 2009

Complaints: 12,061 – 78% females
Physical and sexual harassment: 96% female
Not sent back at the end of contract: 92% female
Not payment of agreed wages: 81% female
Breach of contract: 62% female

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
## COMPLAINTS BY COUNTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>M/F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>424/3343</td>
<td>3747/662</td>
<td>4196/1232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>70/1486</td>
<td>1556/234</td>
<td>2054/259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>12/833</td>
<td>845/54</td>
<td>1004/37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>193/510</td>
<td>703/272</td>
<td>821/399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>338/114</td>
<td>452/418</td>
<td>555/440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>SLF BE</td>
<td>(2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SLF BE (2009)
DEATHS OF HOUSEMAIDS

Number of deaths reported during the year 2009 was 333. An increase by 4.88% over 2008.

Analysis of the most recent 340 deaths
Accidental: 277
Homicide: 50
Suicide: 13

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
KUWAIT

KUWAIT - Nearly 2,000 women domestic workers every year since the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 have fled the homes of abusive employers. These women are mainly from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and India. They report patterns of rape and physical assault, with debt bondage and illegal confinement being common.

Human Rights Watch Global Report on Women's Human Rights
KUWAIT (TIER 3)

Kuwait is a destination country for men and women trafficked for the purposes of forced labor. The majority of trafficking victims are from among the over 500,000 foreign women recruited for domestic service work in Kuwait ... Adult female migrant workers are particularly vulnerable, and consequently are often victims of sexual exploitation and forced prostitution.

Extracted from U.S. State Dept Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2009
SAUDI ARABIA

Foreign embassies continued to receive many reports that employers abused foreign women working as domestic servants. Some embassies of countries with large domestic servant populations maintained safe houses to which their citizens may flee to escape work situations that included forced confinement, withholding of food, nonpayment of salaries, beating and other physical abuse, and rape.

Extracted from U.S. State Dept, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2005
SAUDI ARABIA

The story of Ariyawathi – doctors removed 13 nails and five needles from her body – leaving nine nails in her body

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ge9dyWzxDAAs

The story of Rizana Nafeek on death row
The story of Padma
The story of Chandragani
## Regional Distribution of Remittances (Billions of United States Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## DEPARTURES FOR FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT SRI LANKA 1997 - 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>No. %</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>No. %</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>37,552</td>
<td>24.99</td>
<td>112,731</td>
<td>75.01</td>
<td>150,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>53,867</td>
<td>33.71</td>
<td>105,949</td>
<td>66.29</td>
<td>159,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>63,720</td>
<td>35.45</td>
<td>116,015</td>
<td>64.55</td>
<td>179,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>59,793</td>
<td>32.82</td>
<td>122,395</td>
<td>67.18</td>
<td>182,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>59,807</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>124,200</td>
<td>67.50</td>
<td>184,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>70,522</td>
<td>34.61</td>
<td>133,251</td>
<td>65.39</td>
<td>203,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>74,508</td>
<td>35.51</td>
<td>135,338</td>
<td>64.49</td>
<td>209,846</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>80,699</td>
<td>37.59</td>
<td>134,010</td>
<td>62.41</td>
<td>214,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>93,896</td>
<td>40.60</td>
<td>137,394</td>
<td>59.40</td>
<td>231,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>90,170</td>
<td>44.65</td>
<td>111,778</td>
<td>55.35</td>
<td>201,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>102,629</td>
<td>47.23</td>
<td>114,677</td>
<td>52.77</td>
<td>217,306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information Technology Division-Airport Survey-SLBFE 1992-1993
## MANPOWER LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manpower Level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Level</td>
<td>12,200</td>
<td>2,550</td>
<td>14,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Level</td>
<td>36,500</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>46,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical &amp; Related</td>
<td>59,300</td>
<td>11,780</td>
<td>71,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>260,400</td>
<td>107,100</td>
<td>367,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi Skilled</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>3,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>250,800</td>
<td>77,990</td>
<td>328,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housemaids</td>
<td></td>
<td>810,500</td>
<td>810,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>622,300</td>
<td>1,020,155</td>
<td>1,642,455</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information Technology Division-Airport Survey-SLBFE
MORE INFORMATION

About 40% of the migrants do not face difficulties.

40% have difficulties not related to trafficking.

20% at the mercy of traffickers.

Source: Rural Development Foundation Sri Lanka
MORE INFORMATION

A mid-2009 survey states about housemaid returnees to Sri Lanka
48% were assaulted by someone from the employer’s household
52% were not paid the promised salary
84% were not paid for their overtime work

INTERVIEWED WOMEN AFTER THEIR EMPLOYMENT AS HOUSEMAIDS

Of Those Who Paid: Personal / Loan

- Personal: 50%
- Loan: 50%
THE COST OF GETTING THE JOB

Did You Pay the Agent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DID YOU HAVE ANY TIME OFF EACH WEEK

![Bar chart showing time off: 28% Yes, 72% No.](chart.png)
EMPLOYERS RETAINS TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Travel Documents

89

Retained by Employer

Kept by Employee

11
KNEW ILL-TREATED SRI LANKAN MAIDS

Know Other Sri Lankans Who Were Ill-Treated
COMING BACK TO SRI LANKA

Home Situation on Return

- Good: 33%
- OK: 27%
- Bad: 40%
MADE MONEY AS A HOUSEMAID

Make Money as Planned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DID THIS HELP YOUR FAMILY

Are You Glad You Went?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IOM AND CENWOR

Due to interpretation: Professor of Law, and head of CENWOR Savithri Gunasekera says human trafficking law needs to be reformed for they cannot conclude that Sri Lanka’s migrant women are being trafficked.
SOCIAL UPHEAVAL WITHOUT A MOTHER AT HOME

Families become dysfunctional
Lack a mother’s care and love
Money gets used before the mother returns
Husband starts drinking or becomes unfaithful
Increased incidents of incest
Some teenage children get pregnant
Some get abused
Children drop out of school
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Two Catholic nuns (a German and a Sri Lankan) lived in Jordan for 10 years and helped women in distress. They are trying to deter women from becoming housemaids.

GOSL has recently made 21 minimum age, working on skills training, prosecuting illegal employment agencies and policy reform

Need more job opportunities in Sri Lanka

NGO’s: WIN, ACTFORM, Heavena …

The story of Indu
THANK YOU

Sriyani Tidball