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Urban family migration and its effects on the destination household well-being: A case study of urban locations in the Colombo district

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Literature on family migration towards urban locations in developing countries emphasizes that family migration plays a vital role to make effects on the entire society. Among these effects, socio-economic well-being of migrant families, urban population growth, urban economic development etc. are the main reasons. As in many other developing countries, socio-economic well-being issue of migrant families is one of key issues faced by most urban migrants in Sri Lanka. Hence, this study explores the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of urban migrants and their status of socio-economic wellbeing at the destination. The quantitative data of this study was collected from a sample survey by using an interviewer-administered questionnaire covering 400 migrant households from four urban areas of the Colombo district. The demographic characteristics and socio-economic factors of migrant families were identified by applying univariate and bivariate analyses while the factors related to socioeconomic wellbeing were analyzed using factor analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed using the content analysis method. The study found that the highest proportion of migrant household heads (22%) were between 45-49 age group. Male-headed migrants (89%) are higher than female counterparts. Out of migrant household heads majority are Sinhalese. Most male (29%) and female (41%) respondents have secondary level education. Although, most of the young age household heads have migrated to urban areas since their marriage and employment purposes, middle aged migrants have decided to move because of other purposes like their children's education. Furthermore, more than half of the migrant household heads were engaged in informal employments. Although migrant households have been able to significantly improve their economic wellbeing within the living time at destination, the qualitative findings indicated that urban family migration effects to increase socioeconomic wellbeing issues in urban areas such as house congestion, alcoholism and drug abuse, air, water and noise pollution etc. Hence, these findings suggest that the government should decentralize urban institutions making the public services available in sub-urban and rural areas as well. Ultimately, the government or non-government authorities should try to introduce appropriate policy and programs to overcome social inequalities among urban displaced migrants' and social and economic wellbeing issues of urban migrants who are engaged in the informal sector employments.

Keywords: Socio-economic well-being, Household, Migrant families