

**Increasing family disputes and divorce in modern Sri Lanka: Is labour migration a key contributor?**

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# **Increasing Family Disputes and Divorce in Modern Sri Lanka: Is Labour Migration a Key Contributor?**

## *Abstract*

Qualitative and quantitative investigations was made on sample of 625 households of migrant families to elucidate the impact of labour migration on increasing pattern of family disputes, divorce and their wellbeing in Sri Lanka. Remittances are the direct financial benefits received by the family left behind and for migrant households it is a significant share of their income. About 90 percent of the migrant households receive the remittances at least once in three months. However, long term separation is the most significant non financial cost faced by both the migrant and the family left behind. A considerable proportion of migrants tend to spend more than six years abroad. Also the percentage of married people who work abroad for a long time is considerably high. Longer separations of the migrant and his/her spouse disturb the attachments between them that can be needed up with a permanent separation or a divorce. Inability to adjust for changes occurred with the migration of spouse the left behind spouse form new relationships or marry again. On the other hand living in the new geographical setting and the loneliness motivates the migrants to leave their family and make new relationships; at the sometime, many female spouses with family disputes deploy migration as an escape route and are ended up with permanent separations. Hence, it is clear that while remittances bring the families financial benefits and strengthen the family attachments, long term migration negatively affect the benefits for each party and are resulted in many disputes, separations and divorce in Sri Lanka.

## **Introduction**

Stability of family and the factors influencing family disputes and divorces has been discussed in the literature. Family disputes refers to the conflicts between two party in a family life and that can be extended or ended up with divorce which is defined as the formal legal ending of a marriage. Migration for labour on the other hand, creates long term separation of the family members. This paper focuses on the contribution of the labour migration on family disputes and divorce in the Sri Lankan context.

## **Background of the Study**

In terms of family disputes and divorce, Sri Lanka was at a better position among South Asian countries. Rate of divorce was lower than one percent in the history. This brought Sri Lanka among one of the countries with lowest divorce rates, in the history. However, recent statistics show that the divorce rate