

## **Reintegration of returned domestic workers in Sri Lanka: from challenges to opportunities within the community**

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The reintegration of returnee migrant workers in Sri Lanka is a highly challenging process. The overall reintegration program requires strong national and local capacities to deliver services and to harness the development impact of return migration. Therefore, any ad-hoc attempt to do the reintegration may create scepticism among returnees. Programmes should consider satisfaction of migrants' needs in each of the phases (pre-departure, departures, on-arrival and in-service) of their return process, as well as the needs and potentials of communities after return. Reintegration has two interrelated aspects, namely socio-cultural and the economic. Without socio-cultural reintegration, the economic reintegration will be a nightmare. Socio-cultural learning that migrant workers espoused at the countries that they were working may change the behaviour and lifestyle of them. This newly acquired values and lifestyle is costly if they are trying to maintain the same after returning to the motherland. It may erode the accumulated capital (savings from earnings) jeopardizing the potentials for investing in an income-earning avenue creating detrimental impacts to economic reintegration. Further, new value systems may prevent them to do some activities that are economically and socially beneficial. They will fail to face the socio-economic realities within the mother land and understand it. Therefore, reintegration should be first initiated with socio-cultural reintegration instead of prioritizing enhancement of economic aspect, and it is a process that ideally should be started at the point of departure, and if not, then at least few months before the return. As per Department of Census and Statistics definition, temporary migrant workers are those who have migrated for employment, have been living abroad for 6 months or more, and intend returning to Sri Lanka. Presently, there are approximately 497,544 Sri Lankan temporary migrant workers around the world. These temporary migrants live outside Sri Lanka as part of optimizing their lifecycle residential location sequence and maintain regular connections, and continue to contribute to the domestic population in many ways. Most temporary migrants return to Sri Lanka with improved human capital/skills and accumulated savings, which contribute to the productivity of the local economy upon their return and reintegration. This study attempts to do an in-depth analysis on application, success or failure of recent interventions with a view of identifying the best practices that can be adopted and to see whether these interveners initiated the process from the correct starting point.

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