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Addressing Labour's Precariousness in Sri Lanka and Beyond

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ABSTRACTS

A History of Precarity - An Attempt at Understanding the Rising Tide of Precarious Work and its Impact on the Labour Law Regime.

Lakmali Hemachandra

Abstract:

Sri Lankan labour law regime historically takes after the post war consensus between capital and labour which originated in the Western World and is based on the principle of tripartism. Capital, Labour and the State were brought into a system of dispute resolution, or industrial dispute resolution which curbed militant labour activism that preceded the second world war. A strong feature of the new consensus was the protection awarded to labour by legislations which ensured that unequal bargaining power between the employee and employer was balanced out by state intervention. However, the real strength of labour lied in the trade unions which preceded any type of state sponsorship. Especially in the pre-independent era militant trade unionism was posing challenges to bosses, as well as to the state. However, a sharp turn towards neoliberal economic policy in the late 70's, in the aftermath of the global breakdown of post war consensus resulted in the withdrawal of the state from labour protection. Structural changes in the economy, which moved from an import substitution model to an export-oriented model meant drastic changes in working class as well. Struck down by state repression and ensconced in conservatism, the trade union movement was not successful to capture the changing nature of the worker, leading to a gradual decline in the organized working class. This paper argues that precariousness in the working class which was an integral part of the post liberalization economic model accelerated in the context of state's withdrawal from labour protection and weakened collective bargaining power. The paper also argues that the death of militant trade unionism in the pre-independent era, which understood 'worker' as a political category rather than an economic or a legal category and the rise of state sponsored conservative trade unionism in the post independent era was also instrumental in limiting the scope of the labour movement.

Key words - Precarious work, trade unions, labour laws, tripartism, neoliberalism, state

Lakmali Hemachandra is a lawyer and a labour rights activist, engaged in litigation, research and organizing work in the Sri Lankan labour movement with a special focus on informal labour and its impact on the enforcement of labour laws. The author is attached to the Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers' Union as a legal consultant.

Structural Transformation and the Changing Nature of Employment in Sri Lanka

Nomaan Majid

Ramani Gunatilaka

Abstract:

The paper examines some qualitative aspects of the employment transformation that accompanied Sri Lanka's growth process between 2006 and 2014. The economy has experienced distinct sectoral changes in the structural composition of output, which have in turn been accompanied by shifting compositions of employment in terms of skills and in the terms and conditions of work, whether in the organized or unorganized parts of the economy. Using nationally representative Labour Force Survey data of 2006 and 2014, we trace how structural transformation at macro level has been accompanied by welfare changes at the level of the individual worker, by addressing the following questions: (a) How did the structure of Sri Lanka's output and productivity change during recent times?; (b) What were the transformations in employment structure and skills that accompanied these output shifts?; and, (c) What were the welfare changes in terms of the conditions of decent work and poverty, that were also experienced?

The analysis finds a clear direction in the shifts in employment: workforces in each sector are becoming better educated and the shares of the middle-level occupations are expanding at the expense of the shares of both high and low occupation categories. Working poverty has declined; average daily cash wage rates of casual workers have increased; and, the reduction in wage dispersion across sectors and within skill groups in formal employment show an overall improvement at macro level. While these developments are to be welcomed, it is still apparent that the extent of formal employment is low, and that the transition to formality is not robust: employment has become more informal in every sector other than in construction and services. Transitioning from informality to formality remains the most pressing employment challenge that Sri Lanka faces.

Nomaan Majid is a Senior Employment Specialist in the ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia. He has worked at the ILO since 1995. His research interests are in the subjects of employment, labour markets, income distribution and poverty, particularly in developing countries. He was educated in Pakistan and in England and holds a doctorate in Economics from the University of Oxford.

Ramani Gunatilaka works as an independent consultant in Sri Lanka and the region. Her research has focused on labour markets, income distribution, poverty, education, and subjective well-being. She holds a BSc in economics from University College London, an MSc in development economics from the University of Oxford, and a doctorate in applied econometrics from Monash University. She has published internationally in the areas of income distribution, labour markets and subjective well-being.

Are Worker Rights of Precarious Employment Protected in Sri Lanka?

Priyanka Jayawardena

Abstract:

As of 2013, out of the total wage employees of 4.7 million, 56% (2.6 million) were in precarious employment – temporary/casual workers or workers without a permanent employer. This study investigates as to how precarious employment affect the workers in terms of job security, employment based social security coverage, wages etc, using Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2013 data. Further, it investigates why such a large proportion of the employees choose to participate in the precarious employment.

Study reveals 90% of temporary workers are attached to the private sector. Further, the private sector has expanded more for temporary and casual jobs in the recent past. During the 2006-2013 period, private sector temporary and casual workers have increased by over 350,000 while private sector permanent employees have increased only by 15,000 during the same period. Although, EPF Act covers all employees including temporary employees study findings reveals that out of the temporary workers 86% of them are not covered by either pension scheme or provident fund.

Further, absence of documentation to establish employee employer relationship may dilute the worker rights that stipulated in labour legislation. Although, statute imposes an obligation to issue a letter of appointment to employees, around 83% of temporary and casual employees have not received a written contract. The difference in monthly wages between permanent vs non-permanent employment were 89% favoring the permanent employment. Of the wage differences 43% were due to unexplained reasons such as unequal treatment of temporary workers; probationary nature of employment etc.

Both labour supply side issues as well as limited permanent job opportunities influence the higher incidence of non-standard employment in Sri Lanka. Study findings revealed that labour supply side issues such as less educated, unskilled workers and new labour market entrants were more likely to be engaged in non-standard forms of employment. These factors negatively affect employer's selection criteria for permanent job opportunities. Also, data reveals that private sector has expanded more for temporary and casual jobs in the recent past which creates demand shortages for permanent job opportunities in the labour market.

Priyanka Jayawardena is a Research Economist with research interests in Economics of Education and Health, Labour & Migration, Distributional and equity analysis. Priyanka has worked as consultant to international organizations including World Bank, ADB and UNICEF. She has conducted numerous research studies relating to the human resource development in Sri Lanka for a variety of development partners and various government ministries. Many of her research has been published in peer reviewed national and international journals and book chapters. She holds a B.Sc (Hons) specialized in Statistics and an MA in Economics, both from the University of Colombo.

Militarisation and the Creation of Precarious Labour in the Vanni Region

Dharsha Jegatheeswaran

Abstract:

Despite over eight years having passed since the war ended, levels of militarisation in the North and East remain extremely high, with the military's presence in the Vanni region being as high as one soldier to every two civilians in certain areas. The military has continued since the war ended to entrench its presence in the Vanni region, particularly through its involvement in civilian activities. Starting in 2012, the military formally began extending this involvement to the employment of war-affected Tamil civilians through the military's Civil Security Department (CSD). I argue that militarised employment such as through the CSD only exacerbates the marginalization of already vulnerable segments of the population and therein constitutes a form of precarious labour (though perhaps outside the traditional definitions of precariousness).

The CSD employs approximately 3200-3500 individuals in the districts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, in the deeply war-affected Vanni region. These employees were all recruited after 2012, and recruitment was primarily targeted at former LTTE cadres and war-affected women. These CSD employees come from some of the most marginalized segments of the war-affected Tamil population, who were already vulnerable to numerous forces including internal community stigmatization and the security forces. Their employment with the CSD has exacerbated this marginalization in many ways through its creation of their economic dependence on the military. This economic dependence has led to the explicit and implicit suppression of their civic and political engagement, the repression of local economic growth, the destruction of Tamil community identity and cohesiveness, and further marginalization of Tamil women employees. Additionally, given the military's strict limitation of access to CSD places of employment, the embedded culture of fear within the CSD, and the power imbalances at play, serious questions must be asked about whether CSD employees can meaningfully access labour rights and regulatory regimes.

Ultimately, the answer to creating more sustainable, fair and decent work opportunities in the Vanni does not lie with the military, and military-created employment opportunities cannot be analysed without situating them in the ethnic conflict.

Note: This presentation will be based on a report written by the author in October 2017, "Civil Security Department: The Deep Militarisation of the Vanni".

Dharsha Jegatheeswaran is a Canadian lawyer who has been based in Jaffna, Sri Lanka since August 2016 serving as Research Director at the Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research (ACPR). She is also currently the Human Rights Director for Washington-based NGO, People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL). Dharsha holds a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law and a B.Sc. from McMaster University. She has conducted research and advocacy for multiple Tamil diaspora advocacy organizations and has attended the UN Human Rights Council numerous times as an advocate on Tamil issues. She formerly interned at the Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2013 looking at illegal land acquisitions.

Outside the net: Intersectionality and inequality in the fisheries of Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

Gayathri Lokuge

Dorothea Hilhorst

Abstract:

Inequality and conflict in Sri Lanka have frequently been analysed along ethnic lines. However, many scholars have stressed the importance of other dimensions of identity, such as gender, caste and class, in studying social tension. This study uses intersectionality theory to examine how a combination of the social categories of gender, race, ethnicity and location creates structural inequality in women's work. This article draws upon in-depth research on Muslim, Tamil, Sinhalese and indigenous/Veder women who catch and market fish in the conflict-affected eastern district of Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. The focus was on intra-group differences among these women and the different sources of power they use to subvert existing power structures. Although multiple inequalities affected the respondents' daily lives and made their work precarious, they were not passive victims; they used their own agency to negotiate for their livelihoods. Nevertheless, the women who comprise the focus of this study appeared to be completely invisible to government fisheries management bodies. The lack of institutional representation has disadvantaged them in their negotiations for space to engage in livelihood activities. Registration of these women by the government department of fisheries among those who make a living from fishing would provide them with a first measure of recognition and empowerment, strengthening their chances of negotiating access to the fishery livelihood resources.

Gayathri Lokuge recently completed her PhD at the Wageningen University-the Netherlands and is a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Poverty Analysis, Colombo-Sri Lanka. Her main research interests include conflict, livelihoods, poverty and identity.

Dorothea Hilhorst is a Professor at the International Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands. Her main research interests include humanitarian aid, disaster studies and gender.

Emplacement: Precarious Labor, Migration, and Sri Lanka's Family Background Report Policy

Michele Ruth Gamburd

Abstract:

This paper examines the assumptions about family structure and care work that underlie a recent Sri Lankan state regulation, referred to colloquially as the "Family Background Report" (FBR), which restricts the transnational labor migration of women with children under the age of five. Since the early 1980s, women from Sri Lanka have migrated to the Middle East to work as domestic servants in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). A culture of migration has developed, with laborers' remittances forming key parts of family financial strategies.

Using ethnographic data gathered in 2015, I delve into current ethnographic realities, considering how extended families in rural Sri Lanka deal with the FBR's politically persuasive but practically inappropriate restrictions, and the potential and actual consequences of these rules for both migrants and elders. I evaluate how the FBR rules affect household finances in families that have in the past depended on female migration, and I explore how the regulations force poor families to adjust to employment options newly narrowed by gender, age, and parental status. I am especially interested in the effects on women in the grandparent generation as the policy destabilizes informal kin-work and long-standing practices of intergenerational reciprocity.

The focus on women's "emplacement" provides a crucial counterpoint to current theoretical focus in the migration literature on issues of "deportability." Scholars have convincingly argued that uncertainty around a migrant laborer's right to stay in the host country constitutes a form of structural violence and creates a docile, productive workforce. Compared to the adverse effects migrants experience under threat of deportation (inability to stay in the host country), I suggest that FBR restrictions (inability to leave the country of origin) creates converse but equally oppressive situations of social suffering and precarity for migrants and their families.

Michele Ruth Gamburd is Professor of Anthropology at Portland State University. A cultural anthropologist, she received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1995. She is the author of *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids* (2000), *Breaking the Ashes: The Culture of Illicit Liquor in Sri Lanka* (2008) and *The Golden Wave: Culture and Politics after Sri Lanka's Tsunami Disaster* (2013). She is co-editor (with Dennis B. McGilvray) of *Tsunami Recovery in Sri Lanka: Ethnic and Regional Dimensions* (2010).

Permanently Temporary: Protracted Precarity and Repeat Migration in Sri Lanka

Matt Withers

Abstract:

Temporary labour migration into the lower tiers of capitalist production and reproduction has increasingly been understood through the conceptual lens of precarity, particularly from the perspective of migrant-receiving countries of the global North. In this context, precarity refers explicitly to a 'moment' in late capitalism in which the exploitation of migrant labour has become systemic, entailing generalizable conditions of uncertainty, disempowerment, vulnerability and insufficiency maintained to further segment and informalize labour markets. Yet, for major sending regions like South Asia, this 'new global norm of contingent employment, social risk and fragmented life situations — without security, protection or predictability' (Schierup et al., 2015: 2) hardly constitutes a new state of affairs. Migration cannot be seen as a linear pathway into precarity or a process by which migrants become precarious. Rather, foreign employment demands to be understood as precarious work undertaken to mitigate existing conditions of precarity at home, generally structured by historical and ongoing processes of uneven development. Sri Lanka's long history of temporary labour migration affirms this notion; there is little evidence that metamorphosis into transnational waged worker provides salvation from vulnerability. Rather, the predominance of temporary contract migration leads inevitably to return, whereupon the unmet promises of the 'migration-development nexus' frequently entail relapse into economic marginalisation and recourse to repeat migration. What emerges is a transnational experience of precarity that is spatio-temporally reconfigured through the process of temporary labour migration, but nonetheless remains a constant experience for migrant workers caught between modalities of exclusion and exploitation.

Matt Withers completed his PhD within the Department of Political Economy at the University of Sydney and has since worked as a lecturer and research officer at the same institution. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow with the Centre for Global Social Policy at the University of Toronto, though remains based in Sydney at the University of New South Wales. His current research addresses temporary labour migration from Sri Lanka and its relationship with crises of production and reproduction. This work frames the strained work and care burdens of migrant domestic workers as a basis for conceptualising the need for 'decent care' regimes, and therein the explicit valuing of care work, as an essential consideration within the broader decent work agenda.

Well-being and Motility of Female Heads of Households in Vulnerable and Precarious Situations: The Case of a Fishing Village in South India

Fazeeha Azmi

Ragnhild Lund

Nitya Rao

Manimohan Renganathan

Abstract:

Since the 2004 tsunami, coastal communities in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu have been confronted not just by variable climatic conditions and extreme events, but equally by a rapid expansion in mechanized fishing, leading to a depletion of fish stock. In this paper, by focusing on the motility of female heads of households (FHHs) in their pursuit for well-being, we unpack the gendered notions of well-being in a fishing community in a context of vulnerability and precariousness under neo-liberalism. These contexts have resulted in decreasing opportunities for livelihoods in the village, forcing women to seek employment outside the village, and hence increasing their motility. We present the case of how FHHs in a fishing village in Tamil Nadu have tried to achieve their various well-being targets and overcome their vulnerabilities through different livelihood strategies that involve moving within and outside their village. The study is based on fieldwork undertaken in April and May 2017. Information was gathered through informal discussions, focus groups and twenty in depth interviews.

Fazeeha Azmi is a post-doctoral research fellow attached to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Geography, Norway. Her research interests include post war youth, poverty and livelihood changes, women and migration, internal displacement and post war development in Sri Lanka. She has published journal articles and book chapters on gender, migration, youth and forced displacement in Sri Lanka.

Ragnhild Lund is professor of Geography/Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, since 1994. Her research interests are theories of development and geography, gender and development, development induced displacement, post-crisis recovery, transnational feminism and women's activism. She has extensively published scientific articles on gender, youth, activism, forced migration, mobility, livelihoods, orphan hood/HIV/AIDS, and post-war recovery.

Nitya Rao is Professor, Gender and Development at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom. She has been a researcher, teacher and field-level practitioner for over thirty years. Her research interests include a gender analysis of agrarian relations, livelihoods and migration, educational choices and social mobility, intra-household relations and women's empowerment.

R. Manimohan is working as Research Coordinator with Fisheries Management Resource Centre (FishMARC) at Trivandrum, India. His research interests include the political economy of natural resource management and policy, particularly focusing on land, water and fisheries.

Labouring for Salt – Convict Workers in the Levayas of Magampattu, in the early 19th century.

Sanayi Marcelline

Abstract:

Shifting the scholarly lens away from prisoners and convicts as ‘criminals’ or the textualizing of criminal bodies, to looking at convicts as workers or labourers; this paper deals with the phenomenon of labour extraction, moral attitudes and social control in the early years of the British administration of the Maritime Provinces of the island of Ceylon. It focuses specifically on the use of ‘criminals’ convicted to hard labour by the Supreme Court in circuit and other inferior courts of justice in Galle, Hambantota and Matara to work the salt pans in the levayas at Magampattu (Hambantota), at a time when the British administrators were still grappling with the complexities of transition from Dutch to British colonial power. For the colonial administrators, the use of convict labour was not only a question of extracting labour at ‘no great expense’ as a means of increasing the revenue of the Colonial state from its Salt monopoly; it was also a way of meting out a ‘severe form of punishment’ to the criminals. This paper also seeks to tease out the subaltern lives of convict workers as involuntary or forced labour to further our understanding of colonialism and labour history in Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

Sanayi Marcelline MPhil. in Historical Studies, (Cantab), U.K. is a Visiting Lecturer in History at the University of Colombo, and the American College of Higher Education. Her research interests include the Sinhala- Tamil Riot of 1958 and State Reform in Sri Lanka.

Working Title: The things we do are written in heaven, and yet not on earth: Exploring the precarity of Catholic women religious in South Asia's labour force.

Anupama Ranawana

Abstract:

Nuns, as Derounian (2017) notes, provide a unique example of unpaid labour. Although women religious in the Catholic world work professionally across the globe, in fields such as medicine, academia, social work, education, law and care work, their recognition within the Church and the global labour force remains limited. The subalternity of their situation is, in part, related to traditional views of the religious as a volunteer professional, as well as the fact that nuns do not have access to the higher echelons of the Catholic Church. Nuns themselves, may often emphasize their calling to serve, the informality of their work, over the skills and expertise that they have acquired (ibid). Yet, the picture is often more complex, and Roman Catholic female congregations are often remarked upon with a level of academic puzzlement, an enigma (Magnon 2006), of social and labour history. At once, they are a religious, occupational and professional identity that varies from many ideals of womanhood, and yet also an idealized type of virtue that seeks to serve the lives of others (ibid, Hurd 2011). Within this, also, by sheer virtue of their labour activity they disrupt narratives of womanly un-Being (Beattie 2016, Triisberg 2015). Women religious in South Asia are a unique example of this intersectional identity, working not only in professional capacities, but also in the frontlines of social movements. Their formal subalternity and precarity, combined with their informal grassroots power, make them a figure of particular academic curiosity.

Drawing from a larger project that is examining the identity of women religious in South Asia's feminist rights movements, this paper explores the precarity of Catholic women religious in the subcontinent's labour force. In doing so, it aims to further theorize the intersection of precarious labour and gender, paying particular attention to how affinities and entanglements between feminist politics and the struggles of precarious workers are configured and imagined in South Asia's regional politics.

Anupama Ranawana (University of Aberdeen), researches and teaches on religious political thought in the international, with a specific focus on Catholicism and Buddhism. She is also a Senior Research fellow at the Centre for Poverty Analysis, where she is part of a team examining the intersection of multidimensional poverty and reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka.

Precarious work? Small-scale fishing as a livelihood and a way of life in Sri Lanka

Nireka Weeratunge

Mohamed Faslan

Nirmi Vitarana

Nadine Vanniasinkam

Dilanthi Koralagama

Abstract:

The fisheries sector in Sri Lanka consists predominantly of small-scale or artisanal fishers. While the technology of boats and fishing gear has changed since the so-called “Blue Revolution”, which began in the 1950s, social relations remain intricate with a range of catch share arrangements between boat owner and crew, trading relations between fishers and fish traders, and employment relations between entrepreneurs and fish processors. Fishing, as an occupation, is perceived both by fishers and others as dangerous and uncertain due to the risk to life, craft and gear by constant exposure to the vagaries of the sea and the weather. At the same time, fishers follow an ethos of freedom and independence, shaped by underlying notions of masculinity, considering fishing not only as a means of earning a living, but as a way of life. Labour organizations have described working conditions in fisheries value chains as intensively exploitative, especially of vulnerable groups, such as women and migrant workers. Based on qualitative fieldwork in four fishing communities in the West and East coasts of Sri Lanka, this paper looks at the lived experience of fishing and fisheries-related work by men and women. It explores the extent to which work in small-scale fishing is “precarious” - in terms of economic uncertainty, absence of state regulation/provisioning, marginalization and inequality, and environmental degradation. It discusses the working conditions and social relations among men and women in fishing communities of different ethnic/caste groups from an interpretive perspective. It argues that the nature and experience of work in communities of small-scale fishers challenges concepts of work as understood in the context of formal waged employment. It also poses questions on how we might understand precarity from the perspective of those who practice a livelihood, which is perceived by themselves and others as dangerous and uncertain.

Nireka Weeratunge is an anthropologist and Research Fellow at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. Her main areas of work are the social and cultural aspects of livelihood strategies in the context of poverty, wellbeing, vulnerability and resilience of rural households in fishing and farming communities in the Asia-Pacific region. She currently leads an ICES team as Principal Investigator of the Sri Lankan component of a three-country research project on “Migration and collectives/networks as pathways out of poverty? Gendered vulnerabilities and capabilities amongst poor fishing communities in Asia”. She has a PhD in anthropology from the University of Toronto, Canada.

Mohamed Faslan is a researcher at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. He has a BA (Hons) and MA in Political Science from the University of Colombo. He has been a visiting lecturer at the Department of Political Science and Public Policy, University of Colombo. His research interests lie in peace and conflict, ethnicity, inter-religious relations and fishing disputes. He is Coordinator of the Sri Lankan component of the project on “Migration and

collectives/networks as pathways out of poverty? Gendered vulnerabilities and capabilities amongst poor fishing communities in Asia”.

Nirmi Vitarana is a researcher at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. She completed her Bachelor’s degree and post-graduate studies at the University of Colombo and has a Masters in Sustainable International Development from the Heller School of Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, USA. She is a Visiting Lecturer at the Department of Disability Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. Her research interests are human rights of marginalized and vulnerable populations, governance ethics, and concepts of communitarianism. She also engages in research and advocacy on women’s rights and disability rights.

Nadine Vanniasinkam is a researcher at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. She has a BA (Hons) in English Literature from the University of Colombo, an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Melbourne and an LL.B from the University of London. Her research interests lie in inter-religious conflict and co-existence, gender and minority identity politics.

Dilanthi Koralagama is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka. She has a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture, with a specialization in Agricultural Economics from the University of Ruhuna, and a MSc in Fisheries Economics and Management from the University of Tromso, Norway. Presently she is reading for her PhD at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands on ‘Wellbeing of migrant fishers in a conflicting arena - a case of Northern Sri Lanka’. Her research interests are focused on small-scale fisheries, livelihoods, wellbeing, and gender.

The Political Economy of Violence: Women and Economic Relations in Post-War Sri Lanka

Prashanthi Jayasekara
Nadhiya Najab.

Abstract:

This qualitative study focuses on women beedi rollers in a village in the North of Sri Lanka and illuminates how gendered violence is generated and sustained through political economic relations and processes, as well as their intersections with gender, caste and class oppression. The central contention of this study is that situating gendered violence in the political economy allows an understanding of how women's labour bears a signature of experiences of precarity and structural violence. Through a case study of the beedi rollers in Vettikadu¹, a fishing village in Jaffna, the paper locates the experiences and narratives of women beedi rollers at the intersection of a sexualised division of labour and space and an exploitative beedi industry. Furthermore, this study inquires gendered violence in relation to conditions of 'war' and 'post-war'.

Key words: violence, gender, caste, class, precarious work, beedi industry, poverty

Prashanthi Jayasekara is presently a post-graduate student at the University of Sussex. Her research interests include gendered violence and people's economic relations in post-war political economies.

Nadhiya Najab is a Research Professional attached to the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA). Nadhiya has been working under the Migration and Post-Conflict thematic and the work intended to be presented at this conference is part of the research conducted under the Secure Livelihood Research Consortium. Her research areas of interest include understanding the effects of development interventions on people in conflict affected/post-war contexts, as well as economic relations in post-war economies.

¹ The name of the village has been anonymized.

The Health and Welfare Concerns of Migrant Sex Workers in Japan: A Case Study of Foreign Female Escorts in Tokyo

Shayani Jayasinghe

Abstract:

This study aims to understand the health-related challenges concerning foreign female migrants who are involved in the Japanese sex industry as escorts and the measures which they take in handling these types of challenges. By using Dervin's Sense Making Theory as theoretical framework, the research materials composed of first and second-hand data. The first-hand data comprises of data obtained from interviews and fieldwork conducted in Kabukicho and Roppongi. Second hand data comprises of information obtained from scholarly articles, newspaper articles, and web reports. From the first-hand data, this study reveals that the escorts are exposed to many physical and mental health related complications. This is due to the nature of their occupation and the challenges which they face from their working environment, clients, family members, and healthcare professionals. The health and personal safety of sex workers depend on the context and location of their transactions, and the intensity of their working life. The health and welfare of migrant sex workers shows positive signs in situations where they have a higher educational level and status measured by their ability to earn a high income, the ability to take independent decisions, and access to proper healthcare services and community-based organizations.

This paper calls for more efficient mechanisms and health policies to address these grievances, improve the situation in their occupational environments and bring about positive changes in the lives of sex workers. Future educational and awareness programs need to focus on strategies which can improve the active participation of sex workers and bring different stakeholders together to improve the health and welfare of sex workers as well as their status and living conditions.

Key Words – Sex Industry, Sex Work, Escort, Health Policy, Empowerment

Shayani Jayasinghe is an academic researcher. She has worked as a program officer for International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) from May 2014- January 2015. Her first assignment at ICES, was for the SPICE/ICES Project on Intimate Partner Violence in two districts (Anuradhapura and Batticaloa) of Sri Lanka. Afterwards, she worked as the Program Officer/enumerator for the EQUITAS/ICES Project on Religious Violence. Shayani completed her Diploma in International Relations at the Bandaranaike Center for International Studies (2009) and obtained her Bachelor's Degree in History from the University of Colombo (2013). She also represented Sri Lanka at JENESYS 2.0 Youth Exchange Program in Tokyo, Japan in June 2013. Thereafter, she received the MEXT Scholarship from the government of Japan to continue her postgraduate studies at Sophia University.

From Precariousness to Progressive Movement: The struggle of Tamil Fishermen in Sri Lanka

Thiyagaraja Waradas

Upul. K. Wickremasinghe

M.I.M Infaz

R.N. Uttamadasa

Abstract:

This paper documents the collective political action by the Northern Sri Lankan fishermen against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing by the Indian vessels in Sri Lankan waters. The Sri Lankan waters of Palk Bay, Palk Strait and Mannar Basin are being trawled three days per week by thousands of illegal Indian vessels from the Tamil Nadu state. IUU fishing has increased the precariousness of the livelihood of Northern Sri Lankan fishermen who are ethnic Tamils and just resumed fishing after the thirty-year civil war in the island. Thirty thousand traditional fisher families from the Northern Sri Lanka solely depend on traditional fishing.

Northern Sri Lankan Fishermen has become politically and economically precarious due to IUU fishing by their Indian counterparts. There are three political reasons for their precariousness. First the culprits of the IUU fishing are the same brothers who had provided shelter and safety to the Northern Sri Lankan fishermen during the conflict. Therefore, it is perceived to be difficult to confront their brothers from the opposite shore. Second, the political representatives of Northern Sri Lankan fishermen are reluctant to voice for them as it would not be prudent to irritate the existing relationship with their neighbouring Tamil Nadu where the trawlers come from. For many political leaders of the Northern Sri Lankan fishermen irritating such relationship by voicing against IUU fishing would be detrimental in their collective struggle for self-determination rights in Sri Lanka. Third, Northern Sri Lankan fishermen are politically uncared population for the government of Sri Lanka due to their strong patronage relationship to Tamil political parties in the Northern Sri Lanka. In addition to this political precariousness loss of income, gears, equipments and threatening to destroy the fishing grounds made them economically precarious.

With no alternatives Northern Sri Lankan Fishermen ventured into number of collective actions with mixed results. Some did yield fruitful results in the struggle for transforming precariousness while other activities did not. Here we would highlight number of such initiatives and why certain initiatives were not successful in bringing substantial transformation into fishermen in the North. Based on the Paulo Freire's idea of emancipatory learning, the Education Renaissance Program (ERP) began to support and interact such actions. The proposed panel brings certain key issues and lessons from the transformation of a precarious labour into an active collective political force.

Thiyagaraja Waradas is a PhD candidate at University of Bath and possesses both governmental and civil society level first-hand experience with the fisheries movement in Sri Lanka. He is also co-founder of the Education Renaissance Programme.

Upul. K. Wickremasinghe is the co-founder of Education Renaissance Program and has first-hand experience coordinating fishermen activities in Colombo. He is a PhD candidate at Durham University in the UK.

M.I.M Infaz is the President of Education Renaissance Program and currently lead person with the fishermen's activism in Sri Lanka.

R.N. Uttamadasa is the ex-secretary to Education Renaissance Program and support fishermen initiatives. She is a Lecturer at the Open University of Sri Lanka.