



GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

**REPORT ON
MIGRATION SURVEY
1992-93**

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
1994**

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P R E F A C E

Because of the high density of population and low employment opportunities in the state, both inter-regional and international migration took place simultaneously from Kerala during the past few decades. But we have no authentic up-to-date information regarding the number of such migrants. Since the migration to foreign countries particularly to Gulf countries considerably influence the socio-economic development of the State, the number of migrants and returnees are important for many policy decisions.

Therefore, a survey on migration was undertaken with the twin objectives of estimating the number of outmigrants to foreign countries and to other states and union territories and the number of foreign returnees. Among other parametres, the survey also envisaged to ascertain the present activity status of the foreign returnees. This survey was conducted along with the 49th round of the National Sample Survey during 1992-'93.

This report was prepared by Sri. C. Appukkuttan Pillai, Joint Director. The unstinted services rendered by the investigators, supervisory officers, Smt. T. Bhavana, Research Officer, Shri. Gopi, Research Assistant and the Staff of the Computer Division are gratefully acknowledged.

It is hoped that this report will be useful to those who are interested in the migration studies. Suggestions for improvement will be very much appreciated.

Thiruvananthapuram,
15 - 03 - 1994.

Dr. M. Kuttappan,
Director of Economics
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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Kerala, with a density of population of 749 persons per sq.km. as against the all-India average of 267 persons according to 1991 census, is the second most densely populated state in India, next only to West Bengal (766 persons). The high density of population coupled with very low employment generation activities in the past forced large number of people to migrate to outside the state for employment. Both inter-regional and international migration took place simultaneously from Kerala during the last four decades. While inter regional migration of educated youth from Kerala to urban centres in India became the most important outlet for the growing educated labour force during the period 1950-1970, international migration of comparatively less educated and unskilled workers to Gulf countries assumed considerable importance during the last two decades. Consequent on the hike in oil prices during 1973-'74 and afterwards there is considerable increase in the revenue of oil producing and exporting Gulf countries. The resultant heavy investment in infra-structural facilities generated great demand for skilled and unskilled workers from abroad especially from Asian countries. From India, Kerala State with high incidence of unemployment contributed the largest share of labour force to Gulf countries. Kerala is also a participant in the new phase of migration of skilled and professionally qualified personnel to the developed countries of the West which may be called as "brain drain".

1.2 Though it is a fact that large number of 'Keralites' have migrated to foreign countries and to other parts of India we have no authentic

up-to-date information regarding the number of such migrants. The most reliable and authentic data were made available from the Survey on Housing and Employment conducted by the Department of Economics and Statistics in 1980. It was a census in which the details from all the households were collected by the investigators. The survey was carried out as an employment generation scheme in which details were collected by the investigators selected and trained from among the job seekers registered with the employment exchanges of the State.

1.3 According to the Housing and Employment Survey 1980, 5.1 lakhs persons from Kerala were migrated outside the state for employment and out of this 2.1 lakh persons were in foreign countries. Migrants to Gulf countries alone came to 1.86 lakhs. After 1980 there has been considerable changes affecting the number of migrants but we have no reliable data. Since migration to Gulf countries considerably influence the socio-economic development of Kerala in view of its large size and remittances, data regarding the number of migrants and number of returnees etc. are important for many policy decisions and also for academic purposes. A census of all households in the state is a costly and time consuming process and hence it is decided to estimate the number of migrants and other parameters through a sample survey along with the 49th round of National Sample Survey.

Objectives of the survey

1.4 The main objectives of the survey are:-

1. to estimate the number of persons migrated from Kerala to Gulf countries, other foreign countries and to other states and union territories within India;
2. to estimate the number of migrants returned from Gulf countries and other foreign countries after employment and
3. to identify the reasons for return and to ascertain the present status of returnees

Coverage and sample design

1.5 The survey covered all the 14 districts of Kerala and it was carried out along with the house listing operation of 49th round of National Sample Survey. It may be remembered that National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Government of India is the most important agency in the country to collect socio-economic data employing scientific sample method. N.S.S.O. generally uses a stratified two stage design with census villages and urban blocks as first stage units and households as second stage units. State Departments of Economics and Statistics also participates in the N.S.S. by collecting details from an equal number of sample households or enterprises.

1.6 The details for the survey were collected along with the house listing work of the 49th round of National Sample Survey (N.S.S.) from July 1992 to June 1993. The house listing was done in 204 census villages and 92 urban blocks selected for the matching state sample of

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N.S.S. The details were collected in a pre-designed interview schedule by the investigators of N.S.S. in addition to their normal work under the supervision of district level officers.

Estimation procedure

The estimated population of Kerala as on 31st December 1992 was divided by the population of sample households to get the multiplier. Using this multiplier the total number of migrants and the returned migrants from foreign countries in the state were estimated from the number of migrants and returnees from the sampled households. A foreign returned person is defined as one who returned to Kerala after working atleast one year in foreign countries and is not intending to go back again.

CHAPTER II

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

2.1 The estimated number of migrants from Kerala to Gulf countries, other foreign countries and within the country but outside the state is given in the table below.

Table - 1
Distribution of estimated migrants

Sl. No.	Country/State	Number	Percentage
1	2	3	4
1.	Gulf countries	641387	53.79
2.	Other Foreign Countries	27480	2.30
	Sub total (foreign migrants)	668867	56.09
3.	Other States and Union Territories within India	523456	43.91
	Total	1192323	100.00

2.2 The above table shows that 56.09% of the total migration was to foreign countries and 43.91% of the migration to other states and Union Territories of the country. Gulf countries alone account for 53.79% of the total migrants and 95.89% of the foreign migrants.

Demographic characteristics of migrants

2.3 The study revealed that out of 42367 households covered in the survey, there were 8938 migrants. There were 206 migrants to other foreign countries. The number of migrants to other states and Union Territories within the country formed 43.91% of the total migrants. Distribution of migrants is given in table No.2.

Table - 2
Distribution of sample migrants according to destination

Sl. No.	Designation	Number		Total	Percentage		Total
		Males	Females		Males	Females	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
01.	Gulf countries	4558	250	4808	94.80	05.20	100
02.	Other Foreign Countries	153	53	206	74.28	25.72	100

(Contd.)

(Table 2 contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Sub Total (Foreign Migrants)	4711	303	5014	93.96	06.04	100
03.	Other States and Union Territories	3102	822	3924	79.05	20.95	100
	Total Migrants	7813	1125	8938	87.41	12.59	100

2.4 The above table also shows that among the total migrants 87.41% were males and 12.59% were females. In the case of Gulf migration, the proportion of female was only 5.2% as against 25.72% in the case of other foreign countries.

2.5 Sex-wise distribution of migrants according to age is given in Table 3.

Table - 3
Distribution of migrants according to age and sex

Sl. No.	Age group	Males		Females		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Less than 15	246	2.75	227	2.54	473	5.29
2.	15-25	1481	16.57	365	4.08	1846	20.66
3.	25-45	5320	59.52	496	5.55	5816	65.11
4.	45-60	733	8.20	32	0.36	765	8.56
5.	60 and above	33	0.37	5	0.06	38	0.37
	Total	7813	87.41	1125	12.59	8938	100.00

Table - 4
Distribution of Gulf migrants according to age and sex

Sl. No.	Age group	Males		Females		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Less than 15	68	1.41	74	1.54	142	2.95
2.	15-25	595	12.38	22	0.46	617	12.83

(Contd.)

(Table 4 contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3.	25-45	3456	71.88	144	3.00	3600	74.83
4.	45-60	429	8.92	10	0.21	439	9.13
5.	60 and above	10	0.21	0	0.00	10	0.21
	Total	4558	94.80	250	5.20	4808	100.00

2.6 The age-wise distribution of Gulf migrants given in Table 4 shows that about 75% of the Gulf migrants were of age between 25 and 45 and 88 percent were in the age group 15-45. This shows that a lion's share of the migrants are youth and it confirms the notion that migration is always a youth phenomenon. The dominance of youth in migration also produces positive results both for the host country and the sending country, since the quality of work would be better and their tenure in the host country would be longer. Consequently the remittance by the migrants to the sending country would continue for a longer period. Naturally, the economic and social condition of the families of the migrants would also rise to the higher rung of the ladder.

Table - 5
Distribution of migrants according to education

Sl. No.	Qualification	Number			Percentage		
		Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I General							
1.	Illiterate	183	120	303	2.05	1.35	3.39
2.	Primary	1063	79	1142	11.89	0.88	12.78
3.	Primary to SSLC	3300	223	3523	36.92	2.49	39.44
4.	SSLC	2025	277	2299	22.66	3.10	25.74

(Contd.)

(Table 5 contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. Pre-Degree		618	280	897	6.91	3.14	10.04
6. Graduate		537	117	653	6.01	1.31	7.31
7. Post-graduate		84	29	113	0.94	0.32	1.26
8. Others		3	0	3	0.03	0.00	0.03
Total		7813	1125	8938	87.41	12.59	100.00

II. Technical

1. Certificate		711	138	849	7.96	1.54	9.50
2. Diploma		204	81	285	2.28	0.91	3.19
3. Degree & above		79	21	100	0.88	0.24	1.12
4. Others		52	5	57	0.58	0.06	0.64
Total		1046	245	1291	11.71	2.74	14.45

2.7 The education status of the out-migrants will throw light on the extent of outflow of qualified personnel from the sending country. They also provide information on the educational status of personnel going to different destinations under three different groups viz. Gulf countries, other foreign countries and other states in India.

2.8 One of the important observations emerging from the survey is that about 56% of the out-migrants were having qualification below SSLC. It is interesting to note that 3.39% of the out migrants were illiterate. Migrants with technical qualification constituted only 14.45%.

Table - 6
Educational status of gulf migrants

Sl. No.	Qualification	Number			Percentage		
		Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I. General							
1. Illiterate		84	44	128	1.75	0.92	2.66

(Contd.)

(Table 6 contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. Primary		812	35	847	16.89	0.73	17.62
3. Primary to SSLC		2183	50	2233	45.40	1.04	46.44
4. SSLC		974	39	1013	20.26	0.81	21.07
5. Pre-degree		254	48	302	5.28	1.00	6.28
6. Graduate		228	28	256	4.74	0.58	5.32
7. Post-Graduate		23	6	29	0.48	0.12	0.60
Total		4558	250	4808	94.80	5.20	100.00

II. Technical

1. Certificate		338	20	358	7.03	0.42	7.45
2. Diploma		96	26	122	2.00	0.54	2.54
3. Degree & above		17	7	24	0.35	0.15	0.50
4. Others		22	0	22	0.46	0.00	0.46
Total		473	53	526	9.84	1.11	10.95

2.9 The above table shows that 67% of the migrants to Gulf countries had qualification below SSLC and 2.66% were illiterate. The Gulf countries absorb the highest proportion of out-migrants with education level up to SSLC. This shows that the proportion of the unskilled labour is the highest in the case of migration to Gulf countries.

Distribution of migrants by aim of migration

2.10 The high pressure on land coupled with scarce employment opportunities prevailing in the state creates a natural tendency among the youth to seek job elsewhere.

2.11 The channel for getting a viza to go abroad is usually through the relatives, friends and some other recruiting agencies and even at a high cost such opportunities will be seized by the aspirants. The table No.7

gives the aim of the migration. It could be seen from the table that 87.5% of the migrant households reported that obtaining job was the aim of migration.

Table - 7
Aim of migration

Sl. No.	Aim	Males	%	Females	%	Total	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	For employment	7325	87.95	490	5.49	7815	87.44
2.	For other purposes	488	5.46	635	7.10	1123	12.56
	Total	7813	87.41	1125	12.59	8938	100.00

Table - 8
Distribution of migrants according to living condition

Sl. No.	Country/State	Living condition				
		Total	With family	%	Without family	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Europe & America	122	70	57.38	52	42.62
2.	Gulf countries	4808	419	8.71	4389	91.29
3.	Other foreign countries	84	16	19.05	68	80.95
4.	States/UTS	3924	997	25.41	2927	74.59
	Total	8938	1502	17.00	7436	83.00

2.12 The above table shows that 17% of the total migrants live with their family while 83% live without family. It is interesting to note that 57.38% of the migrants in Europe & USA live with family while only 8.71% live with family in the Gulf countries.

Duration of stay

2.13 The acute unemployment and high dependency ratio in the home state coupled with aspiration for a better standard of living tempt the migrants to stay as long as possible in the host countries. The longer period of employment with renewal of the contracts would enable migrants to save a substantial amount, so that on termination of the contract and the consequent return to home country will not pose a serious problem for the future. As more than half of the migrants are in the youth age they would stay in the countries as long as possible. The following table shows the distribution of migrants according to the duration of stay.

Table - 9
Distribution of migrants according to the duration of stay

Sl. No.	Period of stay (Years)	Males	Females	Total	%	Gulf countries
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Below 1	828	103	931	10.42	11.48
2.	1 - 2	1474	250	1724	19.29	20.80
3.	2 - 3	1130	197	1327	14.85	15.18
4.	3 - 4	774	132	906	10.14	9.07
5.	4 - 5	655	95	750	8.39	8.57
6.	5 - 6	424	73	497	5.56	5.34
7.	6 - 7	445	58	503	5.63	6.14
8.	7 - 8	186	36	222	2.48	2.39
9.	8 - 9	375	36	411	4.60	4.89
10.	9 - 10	121	7	128	1.43	1.39
11.	10 and above	1401	138	1539	17.21	14.75
Total		7813	1125	8938	100.00	100.00

2.14 The above table shows that 10.4% of the total migrants stayed below one year as against 11.5% in the case of Gulf migrants. Also about 52.7% of the total migrants stayed from 1 to 5 years, about 53.6% of the Gulf migrants had the same duration in their places of work. While about 17% of the total migrants stayed for more than 10 years only 14.8% of the Gulf migrants stayed there for more than 10 years. This indicates that the period of stay is more in countries outside the Gulf region.

CHAPTER III

RETURN FLOW OF MIGRANTS

3.1 Majority of the migrants to the Gulf countries belong to the unskilled and semi-skilled categories of labourers. They were working in the construction projects and other operational fields of the plants etc. Since many of the construction projects have been completed and prospects for new construction projects is not bright there is not much scope for further employment opportunities. Those who were already working on the projects had to return due to the termination of the contracts. The magnitude of the return flow of migrants began from 1980 onwards. The pace of return has increased since the wage rates of expatriate workers have been cut down drastically and cheap labour is available from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, Srilanka etc.

3.2 The situation was worsened by the out-break of the Gulf war and the return of the migrants reached the climax during 1990-'91. It was

reported that about 80,000 Keralites returned from Kuwait due to the war. However, after the cessation of war onward migration has started but at a slow pace.

Estimated number of returned migrants

3.3 According to the present survey the estimated number of returnees was 1,24,329 as on December 1992. The reason for the exodus was due to completion of construction projects, cheap labour available from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines etc. and the curtailment of wages. But the Kuwait-Iraq war had the worst effect on the Keralites who had to leave Kuwait and Iraq abandoning their job and belongings.

3.4 The war had extensively damaged the structure, and this necessitates reconstruction. It is heartening to note that since normalcy has been established in the war affected countries many of the returnees re-migrated to Kuwait.

Table - 10
Distribution of returnees from abroad

Sl. No.	Country	Number of migrants	Percentage
1	2	3	4
1.	Gulf countries	880	94.42
2.	Other foreign countries	52	5.58
Total		932	100.00

3.5 From this study, it has been revealed that there are 932 returnees as on the date of enumeration in the sample households and of which 880 were from Gulf countries.

3.6 The following table presents the distribution of returnees according to the reason for return. It could be seen that 41.85% of the returnees reported loss of employment due to termination and cancellation of the contracts as the reason for return. As mentioned earlier the completion of many of the construction projects and the cheap labour available from other countries were the reasons for not getting the contracts extended. About 12% of the returnees revealed that they had to return because of the health problems and illness. While 13% reported family problems as the reason for their return, 16.31% of the returnees reported reduction of wages and consequent decrease in income as the reason. Enough savings was reported as the reason by 3.54% of the returnees. It is to be noted that a returnee was defined as a migrant who stayed and worked in a foreign country for atleast one year and returned with no intention to go back.

Table - 11
Distribution of returnees according to reason for return

Sl. No.	Reason	No. of migrants	Percentage
1	2	3	4
1.	Loss of employment	390	41.85
2.	Illness	113	12.12
3.	Family problem	118	12.66
4.	Reduced income	152	16.31
5.	Saved enough	33	3.54
6.	Gulf war	85	9.12
7.	Others	41	4.40
	Total	932	100.00

Present activity status of returnees

3.7 The rehabilitation of the returnees particularly from Gulf countries poses a serious problem to the Government. It is a common

knowledge that savings of these migrants while abroad is being utilised for the purchase of land, construction of buildings, purchase of vehicles and durable consumer items. Therefore, majority had no substantial savings to live independently after return to home land.

3.8 The study revealed that 59.4% of the returnees from abroad are currently employed. This includes re-employment and self-employment. Hardly 20% of the total returnees remain unemployed.

Table - 12
Returnees according to their current activity status

Sl. No.	Activity	No. of returnees		Percentage	
		Gulf	Total foreign	Gulf	Total foreign
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Employees	41	46	4.66	4.94
2.	Self employed	281	300	31.93	32.18
3.	Employer	205	208	23.30	22.32
4.	Unemployed	181	185	20.57	19.85
5.	Household worker	153	167	17.39	17.92
6.	Others	19	26	2.16	2.79
	Total	880	932	100.00	100.00

CHAPTER IV SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

4.1 The estimated number of emigrants from Kerala to outside the State is 11.92 lakhs, out of which 6.69 lakhs are foreign migrants. Gulf migrants alone come to 6.41 lakhs which is 53.79% of the total migrants.

4.2 About one third of the Gulf migrants have qualification Secondary School Leaving Certificate and above and 21% are technically qualified.

4.3 92% of the emigrants in Gulf countries live without family while it is only 42.62% in the case of migrants in other foreign countries.

4.4 The survey revealed that 124329 migrants returned till December 1992 and out of this 94.42% were from Gulf countries.

4.5 41.85% of the returnees reported loss of employment as the reason for their return.

4.6 23.30% of the returnees from Gulf countries started some enterprises while 31.93% are self employed. Only 20% remain unemployed.

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