

**Report on**  
**Activity Status of Migrants**  
**And**  
**Returnees**

**Department of Economics & Statistics**

# Chapter – I

## INTRODUCTION

### *An Overview*

- 1.1 The number of persons going abroad for employment and in search of better opportunities has shown an ever-increasing trend since Independence. The effect of this migration is felt in every aspect of the economy and the society in the State. In other words the prosperity and economic growth of the state have a correlation with the remittance from Non-Resident Keralities. During the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cash remittances received by Kerala households from emigrants to gulf countries, popularly known as “Gulf Money”, has emerged as the most dynamic single factor that contributed to the economic substance of the State. In the context of continued failure on the agricultural front, stagnation in industrial growth and shortfall in employment opportunities resulting in gruesome unemployment among the educated youth, migration from Kerala has contributed more to poverty alleviation in the State than any other factor. The Statistics appeared in media about migrants and their remittances give an indication of the important role played in the economy of the state by the remittances received from emigrants abroad.
- 1.2 A disturbing factor in this context, which has gained considerable attention in the administrative and political circles in recent years, is the increase in the number of emigrants who return to the State after employment abroad for several years. Their return to the Home State is prompted by various factors including the emerging situation in, and the policies adopted by, the destination countries. There is an apprehension that the number of return emigrants might increase rapidly in the coming years. In 1998 the number of return emigrants in the State was estimated as 5.43 lakhs. In appreciation of the enormous contribution to the State’s economy made by these persons and to instill a sense of confidence in those who are still working abroad, the State has to take up measures and provide

necessary mechanism to rehabilitate them in the best possible way and to utilize to the maximum extent the expertise they have gained abroad.

- 1.3 For a proper understanding of the determinants and consequences of the migration and the demographic transition in the State in the last quarter of the century, a historical overview of the subject matter is considered necessary. Though Kerala has a long tradition of trade contacts with the West and the Middle East, dating back to the period before Christ, migration of workers from Kerala is a relatively recent phenomenon. Undaunted by threats from external enemies and enjoying internal peace ensured by local Kings, the Keralaites lived a contented and happy life and seldom thought of venturing beyond the natural boundaries of the State, for earning a livelihood. Journeys beyond the Western Ghats were undertaken only by a few Keralaites, mostly scholars and Pilgrims on religious pilgrimage to holy places in the northern parts of India. Even when the British permitted indenture emigration of Indian labour to countries like Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Mauritius, and Fiji etc. in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Tamilians constituted the bulk of the emigrants. Keralaites generally kept away from the large-scale emigration to these countries. Even the few Keralaites who migrated to Malaya, Singapore, and Ceylon were mostly educated persons, professional traders and “non-labour” employees, whereas the emigrated Tamilians were mostly of the labour class.

### ***Migration to Other States***

- 1.4 Till the beginning of World War II Kerala was a net-in-migration State, as it attracted labour force and traders in large numbers from the neighboring area, mainly the Madras Presidency. In earlier years migration of Keralaites to other parts of India was mostly confined to persons from Malabar area, which was the part of Madras Presidency and where living conditions were less favorable than in the princely States of Travancore and Cochin. Kerala's transition to a net out – migration state came about during World War II, when a large number of youth from the State were recruited for war related jobs and sent to other parts of India and even to foreign countries like Burma Malaya and Singapore. This gave them an opportunity to see life in other places. The freedom struggle, Indian Independence of 1947 and integration of the princely States with the rest of India

opened up to the educated Keralite job opportunities in other parts of the Country, like Bombay and Delhi. Expansion in the field of education compared to other Indian States and demographic explosion within the State, resulting in pressure on land and mounting unemployment among the educated youth, were other factors that gave a fillip to the migration of Keralite to other States, especially the metropolitan cities like Madras, Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. Since 1947 Kerala is a net out-migration State. .

### ***Emigration to Foreign Countries***

- 1.5 Prior to Independence, emigration of Keralite to foreign countries was mainly confined to Ceylon, Malaya, Burma and Singapore and these emigrants were either Malabar Muslims or those hailed from a few places like Chirayinkil, Varkala, Chengannur and Pathanamthitta in Travancore. Their number was not significant but the upward social mobility of their families as reflected in their lifestyle had a demonstration effect. These positive gains contributed to acceleration of emigration from the State to other regions of the world when opportunities emerged. Since Independence Keralite have migrated to almost all Countries, even though in small numbers. Their presence is conspicuous in the United States and Western Europe. However, large-scale emigration to the Gulf countries began in the 1970s consequent on the oil boom in these countries and today the largest number of emigrants from Kerala is working in the Gulf Countries. According to the Housing and Employment Survey conducted during 1980, 5.1 lakhs persons from Kerala were migrated outside the state for employment and out of this 2.1 lakhs were in foreign countries.

### **Migration Survey 1992-93**

- 1.6 Migration to foreign countries, particularly to Gulf countries, considerably influenced the Socio-economic development of the State. Hence the Department of Economics and Statistics conducted a Survey in 1992-93, with the twin objectives of estimating the number of out-migrants to foreign countries and to other States and Union Territories and the number of returnees from foreign countries. The survey, which covered 42,367 households in 14 districts, was

carried out along with the house listing operation of the 49th round of National Sample Survey. The number of Keralaite migrants to Gulf Countries was estimated to be 6,41,387 and those to other foreign countries to 27,480. The survey also estimated that 1.17 lakhs persons had returned from the Gulf till the end of December 1992. The major reasons for the reverse flow were completion of the construction projects, availability of cheap labour from other countries and curtailment of wages and perquisites, apart from the Gulf war of 1990.

### ***Present Study***

- 1.7 The Survey of 92-93 was conducted covering less than 1% of the households in the State and with limited objectives. As the number of migrants from Kerala to abroad increases rapidly, the Socio-economic conditions of the people in the State is also changing. During the last ten-fifteen years on the one hand the number of migrants is increasing and on the other hand the number of returnees is also increasing. The problems faced by the migrants in the migrant country, rehabilitation of returnees etc. have also become State's responsibility. For the formulation of proper and meaningful schemes to solve these problems, reliable and timely information is necessary. Considering these, State Government accorded sanction for conduct of the present Survey as per GO (Rt.) 382/98/plg. Dated 5-10-1998.

### **Objectives of the Survey**

- 1.8 The main objectives of the Survey are –
1. To get an estimate of the demographic particulars and family status of the migrants.
  2. To get a picture about the number of persons migrated and returned mainly from Gulf and other foreign countries.
  3. To study the returnees' problems.
  4. To assess the volume of remittances and their utilisation.

5. To compare the socio-economic condition of migrants' families with other families.
6. To study the impact of the foreign influence on the States' economy and the Standard of living of the people as a whole.

1.9 The following methodology was adopted for the study.

The Survey covered all the 14 districts in the State. A multistage sampling technique was adopted for the survey. The first stage unit (stratum) was block panchayaths in rural areas and Municipalities / Corporations in urban areas. In the first Stage 10% of Panchayat/Municipal/corporation wards were selected through circular systematic sampling. From each selected ward 20% households (primary unit) were selected for detailed Survey. Households were selected as clusters of 20 houses, starting from a house selected using systematic sampling.

### ***Organisation of the field work***

1.10 In order to carry out the fieldwork 600 enumerators were recruited for 30 days from the unemployed graduates and post-graduates. In each district a committee was constituted comprising of the Deputy Director (Economics & Statistics), Employment Officer and a representative from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics. The committee made the selection of enumerators by giving publicity through local newspaper media utilising the services of District Information Center.

### ***Training***

1.11 Two levels of training were arranged. In the first stage district level officers were given centralized training at Thiruvananthapuram. The field enumerators were given training in each district-by-district level officers. Senior officers of the Directorate were given overall charge of 2 or 3 districts for training, field inspection etc.

### ***Supervision***

1.12 The departmental officers in various cadres were entrusted with the supervision in addition to their normal duty.

## **Schedules**

- 1.13 A schedule with 4 parts was designed for listing, detailed enquiry etc. of all families in the selected cluster of households.
- 1.14 First part of the schedule dealt with general features of families of selected cluster of households, details of family members, educational status, employment status, and residential status, along with means of livelihood.
- 1.15 Second part of the schedule dealt with the overall details of employed migrants along with the family members who were staying with them abroad.
- 1.16 Third part of the schedule dealt with overall details of returnees from abroad.
- Forth part of the schedule dealt with the details of persons died abroad during the period of employment.

## **Field work**

- The field work was carried out during 1999 and a quick report released in 2000.
- 1.17 The Survey results were processed in the computer division of the Department in the Districts and the Directorate. The results were presented in the following chapters.

Chapter	– 2	–	Characteristics of population and households.
Chapter	– 3	–	Dimensions of migration
Chapter	– 4	–	Return emigrants and their problems
Chapter	– 5	–	Details of Death Abroad.
Chapter	– 6	–	Summary of conclusions and views