Unveiling Irregular Migration: An Evaluation of Airport Interventions and Geographic Trends in Sri Lanka

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Abstract : The phenomenon of irregular migration and human trafficking presents multifaceted challenges to Sri Lanka, with specific focus on the migration routes to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Sultanate of Oman, and Malaysia. This research critically assesses the efficacy of a pilot project instituted at Bandaranaike International Airport aimed at the identification and deterrence of potential irregular migrants. Additionally, the study conducts a nuanced analysis of the geographical tendencies pertaining to passengers who revise their migration intentions at the airport. Pertinently, the findings indicate that Colombo and Gampaha Districts emerge as the most susceptible to human trafficking, with Galle, Nuwaraeliya, Rathnapura, and Polonnaruwa Districts following as areas of elevated concern, particularly within the framework of the 'visit visa' scenario. These insights emanate from an extensive data collection period spanning 50 days of the pilot project, encompassing 1,479 passengers, of which 46 returnees reported to the Safe Migration Promotion Unit. The research is founded on the twin objectives of comprehending the motivations of passengers and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, with a view to devising precision-targeted prevention strategies. Through this endeavor, the study actively contributes to the safeguarding of the rights and welfare of migrants, significantly advancing the ongoing battle against irregular migration.

Keywords : irregular migration, human trafficking, airport interventions, geographic trends
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