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*Research Paper:*

**MIGRANT LABOUR AND THE BARBADIAN SOCIETY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of this paper was to observe the employment of migrant labour, particularly in the Financial Services and Construction Industries in Barbados.

The migrant worker is deemed as a worker moving from one country to another seeking employment. The form of employment could be seasonal, temporary or a more permanent contractual arrangement. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) documentation migrant workers can be classified as either foreign workers (legally employed immigrants for an extended period) or guest workers (who are on a contractual arrangement for six months or less).

With the advent of the CSME including the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas under *Articles 45 and 46* which has made provisions for the migration of skilled workers to seek employment within any of the Caribbean member states without prejudice or impediments, it has become useful to consider the movement and trends of migrant labour.

Based on the employment numbers in the *Barbados Economic and Social Report (2006)* it is the assumption that foreign workers from within the Caribbean region are attracted to Barbados where the unemployment rate is one of the lowest and the opportunities and standard of living are the greatest in the region.

In 1999 there was an ILO study which sought to investigate the employment policy in Barbados which included little detail on migrant labour. However there has been no extensive work done on migrant labour.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The process used to explore the level of employment of migrant workers across Barbados was through the application of both quantitative and qualitative methods of study where various levels of persons across a different spectrum of occupations within the two

industries were interviewed about migrant workers in their organisation. To achieve the above, the study employed one survey instrument for data collection.

The questionnaire is mostly quantitative. It covers establishments in two industry groupings: Construction and Financial Services. These two industries were specifically selected. The reason for selecting these two particular sectors is that these industries were known to have recruited foreign workers more than any other industries.

### **Selection Criteria**

The sample size is sixty companies, with thirty companies being randomly selected from each of the two industries. All inferences made are based on these sixty companies.

Non proportional quota sampling is the survey method applied. This method is the non-probabilistic analogue of stratified random sampling in that it is typically used to assure that smaller groups are adequately represented in the sample. Non-proportional quota sampling is one of the non-probability sampling methods. It is much less restrictive when compared to proportional quota sampling, since one only needs to specify the number of sampled units required in each category.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at each of the sixty establishments where the questionnaire was completed. The inferences are restricted to the 60 companies and not generalised to the entire population.

The names of the establishments are derived from the Business Register compiled by the Barbados Statistical Service. The Business Register contains data on the total number of employees registered with the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) per company which was the variable used to select each company. The main activity of the establishments is classified according to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC).

### **Nature of the Questionnaire**

This questionnaire sought to establish which of the companies has employed migrant workers; the share of migrant workers to the total number of workers; the origin of these workers; and the types of occupations that they are engaged in. The questionnaire also

established if these workers were in formal or informal employment. The detailed questionnaire is in Appendix 1. The questionnaire was not pre-tested as it was critiqued by advisors and recommendations were made in lieu of pilot testing. Appendix 2 gives an explanation of the variables used in the questionnaire.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

The data were analysed using SPSS and then transferred to Excel for a more comprehensive outlook. Descriptive methods of data analysis were used. Outlined below is the tabulation plan for the main outputs of the study.

Basic frequencies and cross tabulations were run and basic data consistency checks were done. For example, the number of employees in question six should be less than or equal to number of employees in question two. If the answer to question three about employing non-Barbadians was 'Yes', then number of employees in question six should not be zero. Refer to questionnaire in Appendix 1.

Cross tabulations were conducted on the total number of migrant workers as a proportion of total number of employees and the number of migrant workers by industry classification.

There was a descriptive trend analysis done on the number of migrant employees in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Analyses were conducted on the male and female migrant employees and the ratios between the two sexes. There were also analyses done on the employment categories of workers such as managers, professionals, clerical, other skilled, unskilled. There were also comparisons on migrant employees being sought from within and outside of the Caribbean region and whether there were recruited on a part-time or full-time basis.

## **RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

Questionnaires were distributed to 60 companies in the Construction and Financial Services sectors. Although the original intention was to equally distribute the questionnaires, the 60 questionnaires were distributed among 37 companies in the Financial Services sector and 23 companies in the Construction sector. Non-quota

sampling was applied. Out of the 60 companies targeted, 58 of them responded, representing a response rate of 97%. One company in each of the two sectors did not respond to the questionnaire at all.

### **Total Number of Workers**

The demographic composition of the respondents included companies that employed a very small workforce to a very large workforce. The groupings of the employee workforce comprised ranges from 0-4 employees, 5-9, 10-19, 20-99, 100-499 and over 500 employees.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the companies by employment size for the period 2005-2007. It shows that the majority of the companies have an employee workforce of between 20 and 99 persons.

**Table 1: Percentage of total companies according to employment size during the years 2005-2007**

<b>Employee Range</b>	<b>Percentage of companies</b>		
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>0-4</b>	31.0	18.9	5.2
<b>5-9</b>	5.1	6.8	1.7
<b>10-19</b>	25.8	20.6	24.1
<b>20-99</b>	27.6	43.1	53.4
<b>100-499</b>	8.6	8.6	12.1
<b>500+</b>	1.7	1.7	3.4
<b>Total (%)</b>	100	100	100
<b>Total (N)</b>	58	58	58

### **Share of Non-Barbadians to the Total Number of Employees**

As is illustrated in Table 2, the total number of migrant workers is only a small percentage of the total workforce. Only 3.7% of the total employees were migrant workers in 2005. This increased marginally to 4.2% in 2006 and 5.2% in 2007. Compared with the Construction sector, the financial services sector has a larger share of the

migrant workers, in percentage terms. Of the total number of employees in the financial services sector, an average of 12.5% of the workers are migrant employees, compared to an average of 3.4% in the Construction sector. However, in terms of absolute numbers, there are more people employed in the Construction sector than in the Financial Services sector.

**Table 2: Share of migrant workers by industry groupings**

Industry	2005			2006			2007		
	Total	Migrants	% Share	Total	Migrants	% Share	Total	Migrants	% Share
<b>Construction</b>	5872	157	2.7	7397	251	3.4	8539	351	4.1
<b>Financial</b>	608	81	13.3	842	92	10.9	1104	147	13.3
<b>Total</b>	6480	238	3.7	8239	343	4.2	9643	498	5.2

### Sex Distribution of Migrant Workers

The survey also sought to determine the distribution of the foreign-born employees by sex. Table 3 has two main parts with the first part showing absolute values while the second part shows the percentage distribution. Overall, about three in every four or 75% of migrants employed in these two sectors were male. The Construction sector is male-dominated, with an average of 86% over the three years. The Financial Services sector had a more equitably distributed migrant work force, with a distribution ratio of nearly 1:1.

**Table 3: Total Number of migrant employees by sex and industry grouping**

Industry	2005			2006			2007		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Construction</b>	137	20	157	219	32	251	297	54	351
<b>Financial</b>	42	39	81	49	43	92	77	70	147
<b>Total</b>	179	59	238	268	75	343	374	124	498
<b>Percent distribution of migrant workers by sex</b>									
<b>Construction</b>	87	12	100	87	12	100	84	15	100

<b>Financial</b>	51	48	100	53	46	100	52	47	100
<b>Total</b>	75	24	100	78	21	100	75	24	100

### Occupations of the Migrant Workers

The survey results in Table 4 show that these companies mostly attracted skilled workers. Most of the skilled migrant workers were employed in the “Other skilled workers” category, averaging 57.6% of the total migrants employed in the two sectors. The unskilled work force only accounted for an average of 12% over the period 2005-2007.

**Table 4: Percentages of migrant workers by level of occupation**

	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%
Managerial	14.0	7.8	9.2
Professional	5.2	9.2	14.3
Clerical	12.4	9.8	10.3
Other Skilled	57.5	61.0	54.2
Unskilled	10.9	12.2	12.1
Total (%)	100	100.0	100.0
Total (N)	193	295	456

At least four out of every five migrants are employed on full time basis. This is shown in Table 5. In 2005, over 90% of ‘Other skilled’ and ‘unskilled’ categories of migrant workers were employed on a full-time basis. However, only two out of every five professionals were employed on a full time basis. Similar trends are observed in 2006 and 2007.

**Table 5: Percentages of migrant workers by employment status and category**

	2005			2006			2007		
	Part Time	Full Time	Total	Part Time	Full Time	Total	Part Time	Full Time	Total
Managerial	18.5	81.5	100.0	13.0	87.0	100.0	11.9	88.1	100.0
Professional	60.0	40.0	100.0	55.6	44.4	100.0	29.2	70.8	100.0
Clerical	37.5	62.5	100.0	27.6	72.4	100.0	19.1	80.9	100.0

Other Skilled	2.7	97.3	100.0	6.7	93.3	100.0	14.2	85.8	100.0
Unskilled	9.5	90.5	100.0	52.8	47.2	100.0	45.5	54.5	100.0
Total (%)	11.9	88.0	100.0	19.3	80.7	100.0	20.4	79.6	100.0
(N)	23	170	193	57	238	295	93	363	456

### **Distribution by Place of Origin**

The migrant workers were also analysed by their place of origin. All migrants from within the Caribbean region are classified as ‘regional’ migrants, while those from the rest of the world are classified as ‘extra-regional’ migrants. Table 6 shows that with the exception of 2006, most of the managerial positions were taken up by people from outside the Caribbean region, accounting for 59% in 2005 and 71% in 2007. The professional category was dominated by migrants from within the Caribbean for all the years except for 2006. All the other categories – “clerical”, “other skilled” and “unskilled” had migrants from within the region as the majority.

**Table 6: Percentages of migrant workers by category & region**

	2005				2006				2007			
	Regional	Extra Regional	Total	(N)	Regional	Extra Regional	Total	(N)	Regional	Extra Regional	Total	(N)
	%	%			%	%			%	%		
Managerial	40.7	59.3	100.0	27	47.8	52.2	100.0	23	28.6	71.4	100.0	42
Professional	60.0	40.0	100.0	10	37.0	63.0	100.0	27	58.5	41.5	100.0	65
Clerical	75.0	25.0	100.0	24	75.9	24.1	100.0	29	70.2	29.8	100.0	47
Skilled	100.0	0.0	100.0	111	90.0	10.0	100.0	180	85.0	15.0	100.0	247
Unskilled	81.0	19.0	100.0	21	86.1	13.9	100.0	36	98.2	1.8	100.0	55

### **Formal / Informal Employment**

Employees are considered to have informal jobs if their employment relation is not subject to national legislation, income taxation, social protection, or entitlement to certain employment benefits (paid annual or sick leave, severance pay, etc.). Although the companies surveyed were in the formal sector of the economy, it was necessary to explore the employee benefits that accrued to migrant workers. This may give an indication of whether their conditions of service are formal or informal and in part

whether migrants are legal or illegal. Table 7 shows the percentage distribution of benefits given to migrant workers.

**Table 7: Benefits given to migrant workers**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)	Total (%)	N
Paid vacation	86.7	6.7	6.7	100	45
Paid sick leave	88.4	4.7	7.0	100	43
Sickness benefit	63.6	9.1	27.3	100	44
Profit share	13.3	55.6	31.1	100	45
Bonus	71.7	10.9	17.4	100	46
Severance pay	73.9	6.5	19.6	100	46
Non-contributory pension	10.9	45.7	43.5	100	46
Contributory pension	40.5	21.4	38.1	100	42
Other	-	16.7	83.3	100	18

For migrant workers the benefit of paid vacation was allotted in at least 87% of companies. Paid sick leave was given in 88% of organizations and 64% gave sickness benefits. However 56% of respondents mentioned that there were no provisions made for migrant workers to receive profit share although 72% of employers gave bonus to these workers. Eleven per cent of companies included their migrant workers in non-contributory pension schemes with 46% of the companies reporting that their migrant workers were not involved in the non-contributory pension scheme.

## **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

From the survey there are a growing number of migrant workers being included in the Barbadian labour market annually. The results suggested that the majority of companies were in favour of hiring migrant workers and that the trend of doing so showed a steady increase over the three years under review. Though the three year period is too short to make meaningful conclusions, it does give some narrow indication of the increase in the number of migrant workers.

Three in every four migrants employed in the two sectors were male. However, there was nothing to suggest overall gender discrimination in favour of male migrants. Construction was male-dominated, while Financial Services had more or less equally distributed males and females. Since Construction attracted more migrant workers and most of the construction work is typically labour intensive, this sector is more likely to attract males than females.

The results of the survey showed that migrant workers from outside of the Caribbean were more likely to be recruited in managerial posts. There was no clear indication that migrant workers were 'taking away' Barbadian jobs nor was there a suggestion that employers preferred to hire foreign-born workers. However the trend suggested that the work ethic of migrants is becoming attractive to Barbadian employers. The category of other skilled workers seemed to be of the greatest demand. The professional, clerical, skilled and unskilled positions were more likely to be filled in by migrants from within the Caribbean region.

The findings also showed that nearly three out of every five companies surveyed responded that the qualifications and skills are the main reasons for having hired foreign-born employees. This suggests that there is a growing tendency to recruit highly skilled personnel. This realisation by employers, coupled with government legislation (in particular the law that states the categories of migrants that qualify for an easier access to employment), may be responsible for the shift in focus from unskilled workers to the highly skilled workers. In fact, the survey results show that only about 10% of the migrant workers were unskilled.

The 'migrant labour market' is dominated by workers from within the Caribbean region. However, the top managerial positions are mostly occupied by migrants from outside the Caribbean, while the lower positions are mostly occupied by migrants from within the region. It is the view of the writer that many factors are at play here. The migrants from outside the Caribbean are more likely to penetrate the Barbados labour market due to the demand for managerial jobs. These proportions of managers from outside of the region may have implications for public policy.

It also showed that the Barbados labour market mostly attracts the lowly skilled and unskilled migrants from within the region. It can be argued that regional migrants are generally less qualified than the extra-regional migrants since they do not get the top jobs as identified in the findings of the study.

Most construction companies employ migrant labourers for the low skilled jobs. As was pointed out in the findings, the Construction industry has a higher rate of unskilled workers in 2006 and 2007, than the Financial Services sector. From the survey 83% of employers contended that migrant workers work better than local workers. It can be argued that this suggests that migrants are more reliable and dependable and that they are a large boost to productivity and development.

Although there were no informal sector estimates, the indications of informal employment conditions from the results of the survey about the benefits provided to migrants suggest that some of these workers may be operating under informal conditions. The low rate of migrant workers not entitled to pension suggests that most of their jobs are not permanent nor pensionable. They may just be employed on short-term contracts or as casual labour. This may be due to the desire by companies to reduce labour costs. The cost of labour inevitably increases when the labourers are permanent and are receiving benefits.

## **CONCLUSION**

Migrant workers constitute about 4% of the total number of persons employed by the responding companies in the survey. There were more migrants employed in the Construction as opposed to the Financial Services sector. Construction was male-dominated, while Financial Services had more or less equally distributed males and females.

### ***Limitations to the Study***

The number of years that were covered in the survey was not enough to monitor a trend analysis. However it was difficult on the part of the organizations to document the number of migrant employees over a longer period.

In fact one major limitation in observing migrant workers is the speculation that there is a greater number of illegal migrant workers than legal which contributes to the growing informal sector. However there are hardly any data collected or information provided on these illegal migrant workers.

Focusing on only two industries did not give a true indication of migration on Barbados as a whole but it did give an indication of how the phenomenon of migrant labour is viewed by employers in Barbados. Another limitation to the study is that the perspectives of the migrants themselves were not sought and that the answers and opinions stated by the employers have contained a bias. The migrant's view could have clarified any discrepancies and enhanced the reliability of the results.

### ***Recommendations***

More comprehensive studies on different aspects concerning migrants should be conducted in the Caribbean. This study could be conducted on a much larger scope to include many more sectors. Furthermore it is recommended that further studies such as measuring the economic gains from migrant labour could be undertaken by measuring the relationship among variables; for example GDP and the Balance of Payments (BOP) in relation to contributions made by migrants. An additional area that needs to be examined would be the impact of emigration on a country where the skilled and unskilled Caribbean workers are seeking jobs in more developed countries due to insufficient opportunities in their country.

There should be a greater corroborative effort among the agencies responsible for sources of information with data collection. These include the other government departments in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in Barbados, the work permits that have been issued and the contributions by the NIS.

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## **APPENDIX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

<b>MEASURING MIGRANT LABOUR IN BARBADOS 2008</b>
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**Please fill in this questionnaire as best as you can. For questions that require quantitative data, your best estimates are acceptable**

<b>NAME OF ORGANIZATION:</b> _____
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<b>TELEPHONE NO:</b> _____
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<b>JOB TITLE OF RESPONDENT:</b> _____
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**1. Classify your company according to the main economic activity**

ISIC	Kind of economic activity	Tick one box
5	Construction	
11	Financial services	

**2. What was the total number of employees in your firm as at December 31<sup>st</sup> in the years 2005, 2006, 2007?**

Years	2005	2006	2007
No. of Employees			

**3. Do you employ non-Barbadians?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

*If you answered 'NO' to question 3 end at question 4. If you answered 'YES' to question 3 continue from question 5.*

**4. Under what circumstances would you consider hiring foreign-born employees, if at all?**

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**5. Please describe below, the circumstances under which your organisation decided to employ migrant workers.**

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6. What was the total number of migrant male and female employees in your firm as at December 31<sup>st</sup> in the years 2005, 2006, 2007?

Years	2005		2006		2007	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
No. of Migrant Employees						

7. What are your reasons for hiring these migrant workers? (Please tick as many as are applicable).

a. Vacancies that are difficult to fill using local labour

b. Cost-effective/or cheaper than Barbadian workers

c. Other (please specify).....



**9. Are formal employment contracts issued to these migrants?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**10. Do migrant workers receive any of the following benefits?**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
a. Paid Vacation	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
b. Paid Sick-Leave	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
c. Sickness Benefit	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
d. Profit Share	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
e. Bonus	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
f. Severance pay	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
g. Non-contributory pension	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
h. Contributory pension (Medical Health Plan)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>
i. Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sup>9</sup>

**Thanks for your time in completing this questionnaire.**

## APPENDIX 2: AN EXPLANATION OF THE VARIABLES

Below is a description of some of the questions and concepts used to conduct the research.

- *Establishment / Company*: An establishment is an enterprise, or part of an enterprise, which engages in one, or predominantly one, kind of economic activity at or from one location or within one geographic area. It is loosely termed as ‘company’ throughout this report.<sup>1</sup>
- *ISIC / Main economic activity*: The main economic activity of the company is characterized by what is its main source of turnover/sales. The company itself will determine what is its main business activity. The classification used loosely follows the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) of all economic activities, but adapted to the Barbados economy. This is as used by the Barbados Statistical Service and the Barbados Central Bank. In this case the two industries are Construction which is coded as ‘5’ and Financial Services is coded as ‘11’ under ISIC.
- *Total number of employees*: The questionnaire asks for the total number of employees at one point in time, in this case, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2005, 2006 and 2007. This is the reference date to be used for asking all of the 60 companies in the survey of establishments and the number of workers represented by the labour unions.

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<sup>1</sup> Source Publication: ISIC Rev. 3, paragraph 106 <http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=858>

- *Employment Size:* The second criterion is formulated in terms of the number of employees employed by the company as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2005, 2006 and 2007. In the case of enterprises composed of more than one establishment the standard practice is for the enterprise to aggregate the number of employees.
  
- *Classification of employees by occupation:* The classification used is adapted from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) classified by major groups. By using the occupation classification it will determine the level of demand for highly skilled versus low skilled migrants.<sup>2</sup>
  
- *Professional worker:* Persons whose education and high level of technical expertise qualify them for employment in knowledge-based industries.
- *Other Skilled worker:* A person who has acquired the full qualifications needed to perform a recognized trade or other occupation. This term is applicable to those with vocational training.
- *Unskilled worker:* This person has no formal job training or qualifications beyond primary school level.
  
- *Formal contracts:* The criterion refers to the conditions of employment. It is used to determine whether the employment is formal or informal. The conclusion is drawn based on the benefits provided to the workers.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco88/publ4.htm>