



ALIEN LABOURERS AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES THE CASE OF MONTSERRAT

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Abstract: This paper strives to assess the characteristic features of the 'alien labourers' and the range of services that they render in the island of Montserrat. Data are drawn from secondary data contained in the archives of the Labour Commissioner's Office. The data have been re-formatted and analysed in SPSS. The study seeks to examine characteristics associated with tenure and labour market services rendered by such labourers. The findings are interpreted in the context of development initiatives pursued by the Government of Montserrat and articulated in the island's Sustainable Development Plan.

Keywords: *work permits; labour market; foreign workers; Sustainable Development; Montserrat; economic migrants; sexual division of labour; population dynamics.*

INTRODUCTION

Montserrat is located in the eastern Caribbean chain of islands and covers a land area of 102.7 sq km (39.5 sq miles). Located 43 km (25 miles) to the south-west of Antigua and 43 km (25 miles) north-west of Guadeloupe, Montserrat is 17.6 km (11 miles) in length and 11.2 km (7 miles) in width. Topographically, Montserrat is mountainous consisting of volcanic peaks that rise to an altitude of about 900 m (3,000 feet) above sea level. Moreover, flat coastal land is rarely available and unlike many of its neighbouring Caribbean islands, has black sand beaches. The island has been characterised by a very small population. According to Fergus (2004), the first official census count in 1678 resulted in a population size of 3,674, a little more than two-thirds of whom were white, either of

English, Irish or Scottish stock with the Irish representing more than a half. By 1871, the island's population size was 8,693 and had increased by 40.5% at the beginning of the 20th century amounting to 12,215 in 1901. The population of Montserrat was known to have eclipsed 14,000 by 1946. By the 1960s, the population of Montserrat declined to between 11,000 and 12,000 persons and was sustained at such levels throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

With the onset of the 1990s, Montserrat had begun to show signs of substantial recovery after being devastated by Hurricane David in the 1980s. However, such recovery was short-lived as geomorphological factors had gained momentum and were due to spawn radical change for the social, economic and environmental sustainability of Montserrat

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and its peoples. Since 1995, the Soufriere Hills Volcano has been active and with the onset of the new millennium, the status remains unchanged. From the standpoint of the island's population size, the gravity of such volcanic activity resulted in declines from well over 11,000 in the 1980s to just above 10,000 by 1995. By 1998, the population of Montserrat had declined to 2,726 and by the end of the 1990s, the island's population was approaching 3,500. The mid-1990s was characterised by phenomenal out-migration due to the volcanic activity on the island. Insofar as the first major sign of volcanic activity became manifest in 1995, between 1996 and 1998, the loss due to net migration had amounted to more than 70% of the island's population, the vast majority of whom would have been evacuees. In fact, the reversal of the island's sex ratio since 1998 in favour of a preponderance of males suggests that women were the principal evacuees. By mid-2004, there appeared to be some recovery with respect to population size with the number of residents on the island being in the vicinity of 4,500.

Prior to 1997, approximately 60% of the island's population consisted of persons 15–64 years and hence in primary working-age groups. However, by the late 1990s, that proportion had declined as a result of the evacuation of persons mainly those aged 15–64 years. In addition, the late 1990s were characterised by increases in the proportion of the population consisting of elderly persons 65 years or older. At the height of the volcanic crisis during 1998, this proportion exceeded 20%. According to St. Bernard (2006), "the volcanic crisis precipitated the aging of the Montserratian population as emigrants and evacuees appeared to be persons of school-age and working-age who sought refuge in other countries where they could have sustained age-related life stage functions". In order to rebuild Montserrat

in the aftermath of the volcanic eruptions of the mid-1990s, the Government of Montserrat commissioned a Sustainable Development Plan 1998–2002 that was directed towards the development of the northern third of Montserrat, greater efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector, partnership and promotion of the private sector, protection of the vulnerable and promotion of social welfare.

Since 2002, the threat posed by the level of uncertainty due to living in the shadow of an active volcano has loomed unabated. Nonetheless, the Government of Montserrat has been desirous of establishing mechanisms to enable residents and in particular, Montserratians to sustain a livelihood in Montserrat. As a consequence, the Government embarked upon the development of a second Sustainable Development Plan for the period 2003–2007. This appeared to be a worthy intervention insofar as the population of Montserrat had begun to increase since 1999 due to immigration and to some extent, the return of former residents who sought refuge in a number of countries. This has had implications for the age structure of the island's population with the onset of the new millennium and particularly since 2000, has resulted in an increase in the relative size of the working-age population to just over 60% of the island's population. At the same time, the aging process in Montserrat seems quite evident with the proportion of the population 65 years or older stabilising at approximately 16% during the early years of the new millennium.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The goal of the Sustainable Development Plan 2003–2007 is to transform Montserrat into a service-oriented and export-led economy. It hinges upon six strategic objectives,

one of which is “to promote the retention of the present population and encourage the return of Montserratians from overseas.” In order to attain sustainable development and enhance systems in productive, social and public spheres, the Government of Montserrat has to consider national demographic attributes of the island’s population. To this end, the Sustainable Development Plan advocates the need to increase the size of the island’s population. St. Bernard (2006) identifies migration as the principal medium through which any kind of population growth could be achieved in Montserrat. This is due principally to the prospect of fertility levels that are either sustained at relatively low levels or even declining to the extent that the island may experience reductions in the absolute number of births in the coming years. At the same time, the annual number of deaths is likely to rise in the coming years due principally to population aging.

The following quotation epitomises the option available to the Government of Montserrat in its quest to facilitate sustainable development through fostering population growth:

Migration is the “wild card” that will determine whether the size of the Montserratian population increases or decreases and the pace at which such change occurs across time. Moreover, levels of migration are less predictable given the myriad forces that influence migratory behaviour. Given the more predictable nature of fertility and mortality when compared to migration, migration is likely to be the lever through which Montserratian authorities might be able to effect desirable changes in population size and demographic outcomes to facilitate the island’s development initiatives (St. Bernard, 2006, pp.38–39).

Based upon projections, the relative sizes of the young working age sub-population

between the ages of 25 years and 44 years are likely to decline throughout the first two decades of the new millennium. The prospect of such an outcome exerts pressure on the Labour Commissioner’s Office with regard to granting additional work permits to aliens to fulfill the requirements of the workforce. Moreover, this reinforces the need for Montserratian authorities to pursue strategies that would increase positive net migration across time and according to St. Bernard (2006), this can only be accomplished, first of all, by retaining natives, attracting natives living abroad and encouraging them to return, and by continuing the grant of work permits providing that steps are taken to monitor outcomes and regulate the process.

This study is predicated upon the fact that the island has been significantly affected by the volcanic eruption. Apart from the long-term social and economic impacts of the volcanic crisis, there had been a process of depopulation that gained momentum with the impending fate of the volcanic eruption. Despite the emergent threat of sustained volcanic activity, the Government wishes to foster population growth as a means of stimulating sustainable development on the island. Accordingly, the paper supports the view that sustained levels of immigration is the most realistic mechanism for attaining population growth and quite apart from Montserratian natives, such immigration is to be fueled by alien population groups principally from other neighbouring Caribbean islands but also from other interesting international sources. The main thrust of the paper is therefore to examine variations on the basis of gender, countries of origin and the period of entry into Montserrat among alien workers who have successfully obtained work permits to work in Montserrat. Additionally, the paper seeks to examine interesting associations

between individuals' attributes such as gender, age, country of origin, period of entry into Montserrat and type of economic activity as means of gauging their prospective implications for sustainable development in Montserrat. These major concerns will form the basis of a systematic discussion which may spawn further questions and interest that should inform further research initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unlike several of the other English-speaking Caribbean islands, Montserrat has not been the target of much demographic research. Ebanks (1987) and Daly (1996) constitute two noteworthy contributions to demographic analyses targeting Montserrat. Ebanks (1987) was part of a larger initiative undertaken under the auspices of the CARICOM Secretariat and provided an overall assessment of demographic patterns in the 1980s. Altogether, he concluded that the components of demographic change were such that natural increase marginally eclipsed the loss due to migration resulting in a small net gain in annual population sizes during the period. Daly (1996) was also part of a similar CARICOM initiative one decade later and analysed demographic patterns emerging out of the 1991 Population and Housing Census for Montserrat. In so doing, she supported claims made by Ebanks (1987) regarding lower fertility levels and population aging. She also recognized that the relative size of the population in working-age groups was higher in 1991 than at the times of the censuses conducted in 1980 or 1970 and concluded that such outcomes were consistent with initiatives geared towards the creation of more jobs and fostering self-employment opportunities. In a later study, St. Bernard (2006) traced demographic patterns throughout the 1990s and in the early years of the new millennium. In addition,

he analysed population projection for Montserrat terminating in 2025 and made general observations that are consistent with those of Ebanks (1987) and Daly (1996) that revealed slow rates of population growth and population aging.

Given that this paper is premised on migration being the principal lever to effect population growth in Montserrat, migratory patterns and their impact from a developmental standpoint are central to informing discussions that emerge out of this paper. By Caribbean standards, there is a wide and varied literature targeting migratory movement. In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the literature concentrated principally upon emigration from Caribbean countries and subsequent outcomes associated with such emigration (Anderson, 1985; Cooper, 1985; Ebanks et al., 1979; Girling, 1974; Maunder, 1955; Roberts and Mills, 1958; Roberts, 1981; Tidrick, 1966). Such migration had been primarily due to pressures associated with over-population, and in particular, job shortages that had begun subsequent to the emancipation of slavery and intensified across time. In the post-World War II era, such problems had intensified further and several countries in the region had become net losers of population due to migration. This reinforced the importance of studying emigration, if only to examine its effects on the development status of countries. The impact of emigration is also manifest in terms of the brain drain which is deemed to have a negative impact on national development. This has been the focus of research in Guyana (Boodhoo and Baksh, 1981) and in Trinidad and Tobago (Rampersad and Pujadas, 1970).

Insofar as the process of emigration was gaining momentum, studies targeting the impact of remittances and the phenomenon of return migration were inevitable. According to Stinner et al. (1982):

Migrants to the metropole and to other societies within the region do return and this return conveys important demographic, socio-economic and political implications for the original sending society and the migrants themselves (pp.xxxix)

Since the 1980s, there has been a proliferation of studies of immigration and in particular, that which focuses upon return migration in the context of Caribbean societies (Byron, 1994, 2000; Conway et al., 2009; De Souza, 1998, 2005; Gmelch, 1987; Muschkin, 1993; Plaza, 2002; Rubenstein, 1982; St. Bernard, 2005, 2006; Thomas-Hope, 1985, 1999). Moreover, two edited volumes addressing the dynamics of return migration from different perspectives have added considerably to the scholarly literature (Plaza and Henry, 2006; Potter et al., 2005). While these studies have focused primarily on return migration to countries such as Jamaica, Barbados, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago, the two edited volumes have attempted to be a bit more broad-based in terms of the range of countries covered in their respective texts. With the exception of Puerto Rico, many of the other countries reviewed have been characterised by steady flows of returnees who had been emigrants mainly to the UK and to a lesser extent, the USA and Canada during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s.

For Caribbean societies, the phenomenon of elderly returnees is likely to persist and even gain momentum during the early years of the 21st century. Due principally to the aging of earlier waves of North Atlantic Caribbean migrants, a number of Caribbean countries can expect increasing numbers of elderly returnees from the USA and Canada. Generally speaking, Byron (2000) noted that return migration from the USA and Canada is likely to become much more commonplace beyond 2000.

She also noted that there is likely to be an influx of younger returnees due primarily to contractual labour involving agricultural farm workers who have been drawn from a number of Caribbean islands to work in the USA and Canada. The impact of globalisation and the proliferation of industries in sectors such as tourism, retail sales and “hi-tech” activities constitute a second set of factors that she identified as being instrumental in prompting the return of younger returnees to their Caribbean homelands. A third factor was the deportation of young Caribbean nationals who violated visa restrictions or had criminal records. Increasingly, Caribbean nationals have been migrating to the North Atlantic for short sojourns during which they can earn sufficient income to fund major domestic projects such as housing.

The return of second-generation Caribbean migrants is an important factor that has been documented in recent studies of return migration among younger persons of Caribbean heritage. Plaza (2002) examines the adjustment experiences of second-generation British Caribbean returnees to Barbados and Jamaica. He noted that factors associated with race, skin colour and gender were principal motivators of their decision to return to the Caribbean. According to Plaza (2002), this group of returnees generally secure professional jobs but at the same time, experience great difficulty from their local peers in making the transition to a professional life in the Caribbean.

Based upon fieldwork conducted during the mid-1960s, Philpott (1973) examined West Indian migratory processes with a view towards discerning their implications within institutional spheres in small domestic settings. His study focused specifically on the island of Montserrat where migration to Britain was heavily concentrated in the 20–45 age group. In his view, such emigration

was consistent with a 'migrant ideology' that was based upon a high likelihood of return – a prospect being stimulated by domestic commitments in the form of remittances to the island. Philpott (1973) also documented cases in which Montserratians embraced 'migration ideologies' and returned to the island to become petty entrepreneurs investing in 'rum shops', transportation and agriculture. While such decisions enhanced the social status of the returnees within domestic spheres, the outcomes were short-lived insofar as the Montserratian economy was incapable of guaranteeing them a sustainable livelihood. The end result was the eventual re-migration of several returnees.

These reviews touch on several dimensions of return migration focusing primarily on selectivity and direction, motivation for return, consequences and the exercise of choice by considering re-migration. The consequences of return migration and choices associated with re-migration are somewhat related insofar as the latter is often contingent on the former as observed in Philpott (1973) and Plaza (2002). This study is unique insofar as it departs from former studies that have focused attention on emigrants and return migrants and instead throws light upon economic migrants in a host territory.

POST-VOLCANIC SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Based upon qualitative accounts, St. Bernard (2006) documents some experiences of the population of Montserrat in the aftermath of the volcanic crisis. While young people and their respective families had migrated and in many instances, have never returned to Montserrat, older folk who initially migrated have returned resulting in further population aging and an increase in the need for public geriatric care. The volcanic crisis has also spawned the migration of nurses and other skilled health care professionals, and there have been problems recruiting nurses to fill

the void despite reductions in the number of positions. Generally speaking, Montserratian nurses employed abroad have not been demonstrating a willingness to return to Montserrat. This is further compounded by the presence of an active volcano, non-competitive remuneration packages and a high cost of living, these being among the main factors militating against positive recruitment outcomes with regard to retaining skilled healthcare professionals and other classes of professional workers in Montserrat.

Familial unification and discontent are instrumental in influencing migratory decisions including the length of sojourns abroad. Based upon qualitative accounts, the volcanic crisis precipitated familial disruption as wives and children left for England leaving husbands and fathers behind. According to one of the key informants in this study, there have been instances when such disruptions were deemed indefinite with husbands/fathers continuing to live in Montserrat. Such episodes are associated with increased prospects for the onset of separation, mental problems and infidelity, all of which, further militate against familial reunification in Montserrat. As such, wives and children are less likely to return to Montserrat. From a theoretical standpoint, the concept of migration inertia is relevant insofar as the longer an individual's migratory sojourn abroad, the lower the probability of return to his/her country of origin.

METHODOLOGY

The principal unit of analysis is the applicant for work permits that have been approved between the late 1990s and April 2005. The focus is upon applicants who have submitted their first applications in any given year. Thus, applicants who have submitted applications for renewals or variations in any given year, have not been enumerated for analysis. Altogether, 652 cases are to be analysed statistically. It is expected that

number of first applications is likely to constitute a measure of the ceiling with respect to population injections due to immigration as a result of work permit grants.

Data were obtained from the Labour Commissioner's Office, Department of Labour, The Government of Montserrat. Such data were stored as archival data in EXCEL format, imported into SPSS and meticulously edited using manual and computer edits for the purposes of data cleaning and improving data quality. In the SPSS format, the data are analysed using very simple descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and cross-tabulations. Due to small population sizes, the analysis of specific small populations has been avoided to conceal applicants' identities. The results are interpreted systematically based upon the principles associated with frequency distributions and cross-tabulations as a means of answering the important questions.

MAJOR FINDINGS

For the period between the late 1990s and April 2005, Table 1 shows that there were approximately 652 first applications for work permits requested by foreigners who sought to participate in gainful employment in Montserrat. This number should represent an upper limit in terms of foreigners' entry into Montserrat for the purpose of participating in labour market activities. In the Pre-2000 period, there were 117 applications. This coincided with the volcanic crisis and the period of recovery which followed the major volcanic episodes of the late 1990s. In 2000, the number of applications exceeded 100 but the number declined subsequently and on a continuous basis to 63 in 2003. By 2004, the number of applications more than doubled that of the previous year and numbered 144. Moreover, between January 2005 and April 2005, there were 47 applications.

According to Table 1, the majority of applicants have been male submitting 410 or approximately 63% of the 652 applications. Approximately 68% of the applicants have been under 35 years among whom, the majority is observed to be under 25 years. More than half of the applicants numbering 346 or approximately 53% are observed to have been born in Guyana. Noteworthy numbers of applicants are also evident in the case of persons born in Jamaica (125), Dominica (56), Dominican Republic (43) and India (26).

CHARACTERISTICS OF ALIEN LABOURERS – AGE AND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Table 2 shows that the number of applications approved for males outnumber the number approved for females in the Pre-2000 period as well as annually during the early years of the 2000s. For applicants in the majority of age groups, this pattern persists across the various periods under review. Irrespective of the various periods under review, applicants who have been issued work permits are mostly under 35 years, this being evident irrespective of applicants' sex. Table 3 shows that a much larger number of applications were approved for applicants born in Guyana and to a lesser extent, those born in Jamaica than was the case for applicants who were born in other countries. This was evident for the various periods under review and is likely to be a function of variation in the frequency of applications for work permits from nationals of the different countries. Thus, it would appear that Guyanese and Jamaican nationals apply for such work permits more frequently than nationals of other countries and therefore obtain such approvals more frequently. The presence of nationals from the Dominican Republic, Dominica and India is also worth noting despite their more variable pattern across the period. Nationals from a number

Table I First applications for work permits – selected characteristics, late 1990s¹ – April 2005

Attributes/Characteristics	Number
All Applicants	652
Year of First Application	
Pre-2000	117
2000	110
2001	90
2002	81
2003	63
2004	114
Jan-April 2005	47
Sex of Applicant	
Male	410
Female	242
Age Group of Application	
<25 years	168
22-29 years	151
30-34 years	122
35-39 years	92
40-44 years	53
45 years and over	60
Country of Birth of Applicant	
Dominica	56
Dominican Republic	43
Guyana	346
India	26
Jamaica	125
St. Lucia	12
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	19
Other Caribbean	10
Rest of the World	15

Note: Late 1990s/Pre-2000 consists of 72 cases in 1999, 39 cases in 1998, 2 cases in 1997 and 3 cases in 1996. There was one case for which the timing was difficult to determine. Other Caribbean refers to applicants who were born in Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti and Grenada. Rest of the World refers to applicants who were born in Canada, China, Bulgaria, Ghana, Republic of Togo, Syria, the UK and the USA.

Table 2 First applications for work permits by year of application, age group of applicant and sex of applicant – selected periods

	Pre-2000	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Jan–April 2005
Male applicants							
All Ages	76	69	57	45	38	94	28
Under 25 years	11	18	24	13	15	24	4
25–29 years	19	16	14	10	9	18	9
30–34 years	19	14	6	12	4	23	4
35–39 years	8	12	5	5	4	14	3
40–44 years	10	4	2	1	2	8	4
45 years and over	9	5	6	4	4	7	4
Female applicants							
All Ages	38	40	32	36	25	50	19
Under 25 years	4	10	10	9	5	17	4
25–29 years	9	8	6	9	11	8	5
30–34 years	8	7	5	6	3	8	3
35–39 years	8	7	5	5	3	8	5
40–44 years	4	5	6	1	1	5	–
45 years and over	5	2	–	6	2	4	2

Table 3 First applications for work permits by year of application, age group of applicant and sex of applicant – selected periods

	Pre-2000	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Jan–April 2005
Male applicants							
All Ages	79	69	57	45	38	94	28
Dominica	21	3	8	2	1	5	1
Dominican Republic	3	3	1	2	1	3	1
Guyana	43	37	25	31	17	55	17
India	4	3	6	1	7	4	1
Jamaica	2	12	14	5	6	21	4
St. Lucia	–	2	1	1	2	5	1
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1	8	1	1	1	–	1
Other Caribbean Countries	4	–	1	–	–	–	–
Rest of the World	1	1	1	2	3	1	2
Female applicants							
All Ages	38	41	33	36	25	50	19
Dominica	4	2	3	–	–	6	–
Dominican Republic	–	2	5	5	6	9	2
Guyana	22	17	17	22	11	22	10
India	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Jamaica	10	13	8	7	6	12	5
St. Lucia	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1	4	–	–	1	1	–
Other Caribbean Countries	1	3	–	–	–	–	–
Rest of the World	–	–	–	2	–	–	1

of other countries including St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti have obtained work permits during the period though in smaller numbers. Interestingly, it is worth noting that nationals of other Eastern Caribbean countries such as Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Antigua and Barbuda, have not been among applicants seeking work permits in Montserrat. With respect to international sources, work permits have been approved at various times

during the period for nationals of China, Bulgaria, Syria, Canada, the USA, the UK, the Republic of Togo and Ghana.

GENDER AND WORK ORIENTATIONS - THE LATE 1990S

For the late 1990s, it is not surprising that Table 4 shows that the majority of work permits were issued to foreigners who were skilled labourers, mainly masons, plumbers, carpenters, steel and joiners in the

Table 4 First applications for work permits by type of job sought (reference job) and sex of applicant late 1990s

Reference jobs	All applicants	Male applicants	Female applicants
Accountant, Business, Manager, Assistant Manager, Farm Manager, Architect, Assistant Architect, Chairman, Administrator, Football Co-ordinator, Supervisor, Senior CAD Technician, Storekeeper, Teacher, Engineer, Doctor, Journalist, Draughtsman, Dental Assistant, electrical Assistant	12	12	-
Carpenter, Mason, Joiner, Plumber, Renovating Homes, Steel Bender, Stone Builder, Joiner Assistant, Painter's Assistant, Pest Control Operator	40	40	-
Cashier, Clerical Officer, Clerk, Customer Service Representative, Receptionist, Sales' Clerk, Data Entry Operator, Secretary, Store Clerk	11	1	10
Beauticians, Assistant Beauticians, Hairdressers, Bakers, Bakers' Assistants, Blacksmith, Goldsmiths, Jewellers, Seamstress, Assistant Seamstress	4	2	2
Block Machine Operators, Drivers, Truckers, CAD Operators, Heavy Equipment Operator, Plant Operator, Skilled Worker	3	3	-
Auto Body Work, Auto-Electrician, Mechanic, Mechanic's Assistant	5	5	-
Apprentice Mechanic, Apprentice Carpenter, Apprentice Mason	-	-	-
Waitress, Chef, Assistant Chef, Bartending, Cook	1	1	-
Baby-Sitter, Caregiver, Domestic	20	-	20
Farm Worker, Floral Assistant, Gardener, Landscaper, Pool Maintenance	2	2	-
Gas Pump Attendant, Handyman, Cleaner, Checker, Labourer, Messenger, Watchman	11	11	-
Cargo Handler, Accounts Clerk, Administrative Assistant, Salesman, Production Assistant	6	3	3
Other/Not Stated	-	-	-

construction sector. This was a period consistent with infrastructural development in the northern third of Montserrat subsequent to volcanic eruptions during the mid to late 1990s. These work permits were issued to male applicants only as there appeared to be no female applicants. The period was also characterised by a noteworthy number of applications that were approved for females who sought to engage in housekeeping and care giving services including baby-sitting

in Montserrat. In this case, all of the applicants were female.

GENDER AND WORK ORIENTATIONS – THE EARLY 2000S

Table 5 reveals that between January 2000 and April 2005, the majority of applications that were approved permitted applicants to work as unskilled workers pursuing activities such as labourers, messengers and cleaners.

Table 5 First applications for work permits by type of job sought (reference job) and sex of applicant January 2000–April 2005

Reference jobs	All applicants	Male applicants	Female applicants
Accountant, Business, Manager, Assistant Manager, Farm Manager, Architect, Assistant Architect, Chairman, Administrator, Football Co-ordinator, Supervisor, Senior CAD Technician, Storekeeper, Teacher, Engineer, Doctor, Journalist, Draughtsman, Dental Assistant, electrical Assistant	52	42	10
Carpenter, Mason, Joiner, Plumber, Renovating Homes, Steel Bender, Stone Builder, Joiner Assistant, Painter’s Assistant. Pest Control Operator	59	54	5
Cashier, Clerical Officer, Clerk, Customer Service Representative, Receptionist, Sales’ Clerk, Data Entry Operator, Secretary, Store Clerk	55	11	44
Beauticians, Assistant Beauticians, Hairdressers, Bakers, Bakers’ Assistant, Blacksmith, Goldsmiths, Jewellers, Seamstress, Assistant Seamstress	22	9	13
Block Machine Operators, Drivers, Truckers, CAD Operators, Heavy Equipment Operator, Plant Operator, Skilled Worker	33	33	-
Auto Body Work, Auto-Electrician, Mechanic, Mechanic’s Assistant	10	10	-
Apprentice Mechanic, Apprentice Carpenter, Apprentice Mason	4	4	-
Waitress, Chef, Assistant Chef, Bartending, Cook	50	8	42
Baby-Sitter, Caregiver, Domestic	79	3	76
Farm Worker, Floral Assistant, Gardener, Landscaper, Pool Maintenance	34	32	2
Gas Pump Attendant, Handyman, Cleaner, Checker, Labourer, Messenger, Watchman	133	123	10
Cargo Handler, Accounts Clerk, Administrative Assistant, Salesman, Production Assistant	9	5	4
Other/Not Stated	3	3	-

Such work permits were issued principally to male applicants insofar as females appeared not to have indicated any interest in pursuing such work. Additionally, foreigners sought work in housekeeping and care-giving chores, hospitality-related work, as professional and associated technicians, skilled tradespersons, and clerical and secretarial workers. Whether in the Pre-2000 period or in the early years of the 2000s, males overwhelmingly outnumber females with respect to applications that had been approved for work sought as professionals and associated technicians, skilled tradespersons, equipment and machine operators, auto-repairs, agricultural and landscaping and unskilled workers. In contrast, females overwhelmingly outnumber males with respect to applications that have been submitted and approved for work sought in clerical and secretarial activities, hospitality, and housekeeping and care-giving chores. Such outcomes are consistent with the notion that gender-related labour patterns abound in alien labourers' pursuit of work in Montserrat.

MALE WORK ORIENTATIONS AND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

With reference to country of origin, Table 6 examines the distribution of males who were granted work in different occupational activities in Montserrat. Among Guyanese male applicants, the majority were permitted to work as unskilled workers, in particular as labourers. In addition, applications were approved for Guyanese males to pursue activities in a wide array of jobs, most notably as skilled tradespersons and as workers in agriculture and landscaping activities. Guyanese males were also granted permits to work as goldsmiths and jewellers.

Except for engaging in a narrower array of work activities, a similar pattern was evident among male applicants born in

Jamaica with the largest number of applicants being granted work permits, observed to be engaged in activities akin to unskilled work, skilled trades, and agriculture and landscaping. Though on a much smaller scale, the orientation towards different kinds of jobs pursued by male applicants from the Dominican Republic is similar to that of Jamaican and Guyanese males. However, the array of jobs is observed to be even narrower than that observed among the Jamaicans.

Compared to nationals from Guyana, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, a different pattern emerges when one examines variations in the work-related activities of Indian and Dominican nationals who had been permitted to work in Montserrat. In the case of the Indians, the vast majority were permitted to work in professional, managerial and supervisory capacities. With respect to Dominican nationals, a larger number of approvals were granted to pursue work as skilled tradespersons and as equipment and machine operators than as labourers or as workers in agriculture. Thus, there appears to be a pattern of economic activity that is somewhat linked to social and economic characteristics that might be associated with applicants' country of birth.

FEMALE WORK ORIENTATIONS AND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Table 7 turns attention towards the distribution of females who were granted work permits to work in Montserrat during the early years of the 2000s. Whether Guyanese, Jamaican or from the Dominican Republic, the majority of applicants were permitted to work as housekeepers and caregivers. A notable number of Guyanese applicants appeared to have applied for work and were granted permits to work as tradespersons in male

Table 6 First applications for work permits by type of job sought (reference job) and country of birth of applicant male applicants January 2000–April 2005

Reference jobs	Dominica N = 20	Dominican Republic N = 12	Guyana N = 182	India N = 22	Jamaica N = 62
Accountant, Business, Manager, Assistant Manager, Farm Manager, Architect, Assistant Architect, Chairman, Administrator, Football Co-ordinator, Supervisor, Senior CAD Technician, Storekeeper, Teacher, Engineer, Doctor, Journalist, Draughtsman, Dental Assistant, electrical Assistant	-	-	6	17	4
Carpenter, Mason, Joiner, Plumber, Renovating Homes, Steel Bender, Stone Builder, Joiner Assistant, Painter's Assistant, Pest Control Operator	9	3	29	-	13
Cashier, Clerical Officer, Clerk, Customer Service Representative, Receptionist, Sales' Clerk, Data Entry Operator, Secretary, Store Clerk	-	-	3	1	-
Beauticians, Assistant Beauticians, Hairdressers, Bakers, Bakers' Assistant, Blacksmith, Goldsmiths, Jewellers, Seamstress, Assistant Seamstress	-	1	6	-	-
Block Machine Operators, Drivers, Truckers, CAD Operators, Heavy Equipment Operator, Plant Operator, Skilled Worker	5	-	10	-	3
Auto Body Work, Auto-Electrician, Mechanic, Mechanic's Assistant	1	2	7	-	-
Apprentice Mechanic, Apprentice Carpenter, Apprentice Mason	-	-	1	-	1
Waitress, Chef, Assistant Chef, Bartending, Cook	-	-	3	2	3
Baby-Sitter, Caregiver, Domestic	-	-	2	-	-
Farm Worker, Floral Assistant, Gardener, Landscaper, Pool Maintenance	-	1	21	-	9
Gas Pump Attendant, Handyman, Cleaner, Checker, Labourer, Messenger, Watchman	4	4	82	-	26
Cargo Handler, Accounts Clerk, Administrative Assistant, Salesman, Production Assistant	-	-	3	-	1
Other/Not Stated	-	-	1	-	2

Table 7 First applications for work permits by type of job sought (reference job) and country of birth of applicant female applicants January 2000–April 2005

Reference jobs	Dominica N = 11	Dominican Republic N = 29	Guyana N = 99	Jamaica N = 51
Accountant, Business, Manager, Assistant Manager, Farm Manager, Architect, Assistant Architect, Chairman, Administrator, Football Co-ordinator, Supervisor, Senior CAD Technician, Storekeeper, Teacher, Engineer, Doctor, Journalist, Draughtsman, Dental Assistant, Electrical Assistant	1	-	5	1
Carpenter, Mason, Joiner, Plumber, Renovating Homes, Steel Bender, Stone Builder, Joiner Assistant, Painter's Assistant, Pest Control Operator	-	-	17	1
Cashier, Clerical Officer, Clerk, Customer Service Representative, Receptionist, Sales' Clerk, Data Entry Operator, Secretary, Store Clerk	4	-	18	7
Beauticians, Assistant Beauticians, Hairdressers, Bakers, Bakers' Assistant, Blacksmith, Goldsmiths, Jewellers, Seamstress, Assistant Seamstress	-	6	6	3
Block Machine Operators, Drivers, Truckers, CAD Operators, Heavy Equipment Operator, Plant Operator, Skilled Worker	-	-	-	-
Auto Body Work, Auto-Electrician, Mechanic, Mechanic's Assistant	-	2	-	-
Apprentice Mechanic, Apprentice Carpenter, Apprentice Mason	-	-	-	-
Waitress, Chef, Assistant Chef, Bartending, Cook	4	4	12	10
Baby-Sitter, Caregiver, Domestic	1	17	34	22
Farm Worker, Floral Assistant, Gardener, Landscaper, Pool Maintenance	-	-	-	1
Gas Pump Attendant, Handyman, Cleaner, Checker, Labourer, Messenger, Watchman	-	-	4	3
Cargo Handler, Accounts Clerk, Administrative Assistant, Salesman, Production Assistant	1	-	3	2
Other/Not Stated	-	-	-	1

activities akin to the construction sector. Additionally, Table 7 reveals that female applicants generally appeared to have obtained work in hospitality-related activities, this being the case for women from the four principal source countries – namely Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Jamaica. It is also

worth noting that except in the case of the Dominican Republic, female applicants from Dominica, Guyana and Jamaica sought work and were permitted to work as clerical and secretarial workers. Thus, linguistic differences may have precluded such pursuits as options for female applicants from the Dominican Republic.

SOME REFLECTION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Montserrat is a small island that is still exposed to an uncertain future as long as volcanic activity persists in the Soufriere Hills. Notwithstanding this, there are native Montserratians determined to eke out a livelihood on the fraction of the island, deemed to be habitable. The paper supports the view that population growth is critical to sustainable development initiatives in Montserrat and that such growth can only be achieved through immigration which is likely to constitute aliens seeking work in Montserrat more so than the return of Montserratian natives. CARICOM nationals from Guyana, Jamaica and Dominica and Hispanics from the Dominican Republic constitute the vast majority of alien labourers who sought work in Montserrat during the late 1990s and between 2000 and April 2005. Also noteworthy is the notable presence of a very small Indian sub-population from Asia.

The data on first applications for work permits reveal that males outnumbered females and that applicants were young primarily in their twenties and early thirties, the latter being the case whether applicants were male or female. On an annual basis, the number of first applications by males exceeded the number by females, this being especially evident in the case of Guyanese applicants. Prior to 2001, the number of first applications by males from the Dominican Republic exceeded that of their female counterparts. However, between 2001 and April 2005, the number of applicants by females from the Dominican Republic exceeded that by males.

Notwithstanding a small number of first applications to pursue professional and technical work, the majority of applications were submitted by applicants who sought work in construction activities, as caregivers and domestics, or as unskilled workers

during the latter half of the 1990s. A clear sexual division of work aspirations was evident with males submitting virtually every application for professional and technical work, construction work and unskilled labour and females submitting every application for work as caregivers and domestics. Since 2000 and until April 2005, there was very little change in the pattern that emerged in the late 1990s, the main differences being a proliferation of applications to pursue skilled work and tertiary-level services, and a small but increasing presence of female applicants interested in pursuing work in primarily male domains. It is also noteworthy that large numbers of applications for unskilled work, care-giving and domestic activities, and construction work were submitted by applicants from Guyana and Jamaica.

Considering some of the observations that emerge in the context of work permit applications, there appear to be a number of important implications for initiatives geared toward attaining sustainable development in Montserrat. The preponderance of male applicants has the effect of increasing the sex ratio, this being further exacerbated by the fact that applicants are mostly in their 20s and early 30s. Notwithstanding the 'youth bias' which seems characteristic of foreign workers and its impact in retarding the pace of ageing and cushioning the elderly dependency burden, population projections are consistent with prospective increases in the proportion of the population 65 years or older. The latter is concomitant with a growing need for care-giving services which have primarily been female domains and may result in increasing numbers of females seeking work permits to undertake such work in the future. The fact that work permits have been issued enabling foreign workers to pursue specific kinds of activities suggests that there is a shortage in the native Montserratian labour

market to fill all of the gaps. This is particularly true with respect to construction work and unskilled work which have been main activities pursued by foreign workers from Guyana and Jamaica.

In essence, work permit recipients have filled some important gaps in areas where Montserrat may not have critical mass among its native residents. Foreign workers particularly those from Guyana and Jamaica have been instrumental in broadening the tax base for increasing revenue through direct taxes and public services. Through their services, they have facilitated post-volcanic recovery efforts in Montserrat by virtue of their economic contribution which has been a major feature of their sojourn in Montserrat irrespective of their ulterior motives. Their efforts along with those of native Montserratians have been critical to the preservation of institutions, whether social, economic, political or cultural. Such institutions, having been preserved, albeit with subtle inherent changes, are likely to spawn outcomes that are harbingers for sustainable development through the promotion of change providing that temporal changes within the wide array of institutional spheres, reflect some form of amelioration characterised by greater access to condition and opportunity on one hand and thrusts toward greater equality and equity on the other.

Notwithstanding the uncertainty surrounding the future of the volcanic activity, the Government of Montserrat continues to strive towards the attainment of sustainable development. Being constrained by the shadow of an active volcano and the despair that characterises the lives of residents, native as well as foreign, human life continues to thrive in

Montserrat and will continue to thrive if not interrupted by the forces of nature. To this end, the Government of Montserrat has to embrace a 'quasi-open' migration policy that makes allowances to accommodate new waves of immigrants as there is likely to be persistent leakage as natives emigrate and foreign workers continue their search for pastures deemed to be greener than Montserrat.

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