

A Survey Report on The Socio-Economic Conditions of Two Fishing Communities in Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka.

V. Santhanam

Department of Biological Sciences, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.
Corresponding Author: oniv.@seu.ac.lk

Poor people will not buy the concept of management unless it improves their livelihood. To encourage a community based approach to fisheries management practices the socioeconomic conditions of the fisher communities should therefore be improved. This paper aims to describe and summarize the socioeconomic conditions, fishing practices and income of two fishing communities in the Batticaloa district. Data were collected in the year 2006 through a semi-structured, predominantly qualitative but also quantitative, questionnaire at an interview. Forty eight, mainly, lagoon fishermen from the Koddaimunai Fishermen's Cooperative Society (FCS) and 51 mostly sea fishers from the tsunami housing scheme Swiss village (Palameenmadu FCS) were questioned. Ethnicity, religion, occupation, gender, age, ownership of boat/gear and family size were addressed as they are related to willingness to participate in fisheries management. Regularity, frequency and duration of fishing, the distance travelled into sea or lagoon, the types of gears and boats used, experience in fishing, the needs and problems of the fishing communities and their marketing strategies were surveyed as they influence the average income of the fishermen. Results were summarized as bar charts, box-plots, histograms and bivariate scattergrams. Statistical Analysis was carried out using MINITAB (Version 14), EXCEL (2. 1) and modified Nomographs (to test percentages). The two communities differed ($P < 0.05$) in their average age and experience in terms of number of years of fishing. The Koddaimunai FCS fishermen used more thornies, castnets, traps while the Swiss village fishermen used more outboard motor boats with line and drift nets ($P < 0.10$). In communities housing, loan facility, FCS help, pension, safety at work, training received are unsatisfactory. The daily average per-capita income was significantly different ($P < 0.10$) from Rs. 75.00 (Koddaimunai FCS) to 100 (Palameenmadu FCS) which was above the national poverty line (Rs 46.00 day⁻¹ person⁻¹) for the year 2006/2007. For both communities the income was unstable and insufficient and extra income from fishery non related activity or the ability to save money was not possible. In both communities, capital and labour expenditure were high followed by expenditure for fuel, repair and license. Auctioning heaped fish was the preferred style of marketing. Scatterplots of daily per-capita income against fishing experience, duration of fishing, ownership of boats/gears and types of boats/gears did not show much difference, with the income always centering around Rupees 0.00 to 100.00. Non availability of credit facility, technical training and fishing rights and high fuel prices, poor marketing strategies and greedy middlemen are a threat to good management practices. Strengthening of the FCS ought to be the first step towards developing a community based fisheries management in these communities.

Key words: Fisheries management, Fishing communities, Socioeconomic conditions