

An Investigation of the Economic Impact on Fishing Communities in Mannar District Caused by Illegal Fishing by Indian Trawlers in Sri Lankan Waters

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Mannar district is located in the Northwestern Sri Lanka (8° 52' 0" N, 80° 4' 0" E). Thalaimannar, Pesalai, Vankalaipaadu, Erukkalampiddy, Pallimunai, Panankaddikoddil, Thalvupadu in Mannar District were selected for the study. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire survey and direct interviews with fishing community leaders, officials of department of fisheries, fishing agents and traders. Information on fishing season (charts), monthly income, the relative impact of Indian trawlers on village fishing activity, direct and indirect losses to the ancillary service sectors in each village, the quantities of fish and fish species caught by Indian trawlers and the number of Indian trawlers and their annual production were obtained. Secondary data was gathered through research papers, publications and internet. Gathered data were analysed with three approaches i.e. Approach A: Direct losses due to Indian trawlers harvesting Mannar's marine resources, (estimated daily and annual direct losses were Rs.54.4 million and Rs.6955.2 million, respectively) Approach B: Indirect loss due to Mannar fishermen by not being able to harvest Mannar's marine resources (estimated annual indirect losses were Rs.425.63 million), Approach C: Direct losses due to the destruction of fishing gears (Rs. 2, 56, 18,750), Approach D: Direct and indirect losses for ancillary service sector (Rs.24, 59,400 and Rs.24, 59,400 respectively). Data were analyzed using MS Excel 2010. Indian trawlers fish in the northern Palk Bay and south of Gulf of Mannar all year round, while they trawl Pesalai, Vankalaipaadu, Erukkalampiddy and Pallimunai in northern coast of Mannar from May to October. Further, Panankaddu koddil and Thalvupadu, located in Southern Mannar were trawled from November to April. Mechanized trawling has been banned by Tamil Nadu State Government for 45 days a year, therefore illegal trawl fishing stops in between March to April (about 45 days). In this study it was found that Thalaimannar (with idela location for fishing), Pesalai and Vankalaipaadu villages were highly affected. Vankalaipaadu fishery activities mainly depend on gill net. It was found gill net fishing activity was affected by trawler activity. Five other villages faced less loss due to the operation of trawlers, because fishery activities carried out only for six months using variety of fishing gears.

Keywords: Mannar district, Indian Trawlers, Coastal fishery, Gill net, Economic Impacts.