

Assessment of the status of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) in Southern Coastal waters of Sri Lanka: fisher' perspectives

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Abandoned Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG), otherwise known as “ghost gear” has now become a global concern and assessments on the sources, types and impacts of ALDFG are extremely rare at local level. A survey was conducted in eleven fishing sites in the Southern coastal region to assess the status, of ALDFG generated from the three fishery types; offshore, coastal and artisanal. Forty five fishermen of offshore, 26 of coastal and 14 of artisanal fisheries were interviewed taking convenient samples and they were given a pretested semi-structured questionnaire to assess their experiences on the origin, types, encountering and impacts of ALDFG. Based on the number of respondents and their answers, “percentage respondents (%)” were calculated to determine the frequency of the particular incident. In all cases, fishing nets become the major source of the ALDFG, followed by hooks and lines. Fishing gear happened to be damaged and therefore, abandoned mainly due to poor weather conditions in coastal fisheries (61.5%) and in artisanal fisheries (78.6%). This cause it not common in offshore fisheries (35.5%), as in many cases, gear becomes damaged and abandoned when they become snagged on other large objects such as whales (95.5%). In lesser incidents of coastal fisheries (57.6%) and artisanal fisheries (71.4%), gear has to be abandoned due to natural disturbances. Most common reason for gear to be lost in coastal fisheries (92.3%) and artisanal fisheries (100%) is poor weather conditions, while in offshore fisheries, the most common reason is becoming entangled with passing vessels (91.1%). In both coastal and offshore fisheries, the most vulnerable groups to become entangled in ALDFG are turtles (100%), followed by marine mammals. Both anthropogenic and natural causes may result in ALDFG that ends up ghost fishing and a robust system of recovering and managing ALDFG has to be implemented.

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