

TRADITIONAL LAGOON FISHERIES IN NEGOMBO

D.S. Jayakody

National Aquatic Resources Agency
Crow Island, Colombo 15

ABSTRACT

Negombo lagoon is a bar-built estuary with a surface area of around 3,200 ha. The lagoon has a high productivity (150 kg/ha/year) and is rich in aquatic resources and biodiversity. Fishing takes place all year round using a total of 22 methods, of which 13 are entirely traditional. The latter include staked seine nets, brush piles, cast nets, kadippu nets, angling and scoop nets. Shrimp is the target species of most of these methods. Most of the traditional fishing gear is simply designed, easy to operate, resource friendly and causes little damage to the lagoon environment whereas modern fishing methods are efficient but are not always resource friendly. Except for the staked seine net and brush pile fisheries, the lagoon fisheries are open access. As almost all traditional fishing methods are confined to the lagoon mouth or to shallow sea grass areas and mangrove fringed banks, it would be difficult to impose strict regulations preventing fishing in these areas. The capital investment required to enter into fishing activities is low, so it is essential and urgent to bring all lagoon fishermen under a licensing scheme. When the multidisciplinary nature of fishing activities and strategies in implementing existing regulations are considered, community based management seems to be well suited to the Negombo lagoon ecosystem.