

## **Socio-economic status of coastal fishers in Thampalakamam bay of Kinniya**

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Kinniya is one of the 11 Divisional Secretary Divisions in Trincomalee District, populated with 96% of Muslims. Traditionally, the livelihoods of about 450 fishers in Kinniya are supported by Thampalakamam bay. However, the socio-economic condition of these fishers seems to be threatened by anthropogenic effects, seasonality in fish production, the civil war and the tsunami in 2004. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyse their socio-economic conditions *via* a questionnaire survey in five Grama Niladhari Divisions of Thampalakamam Bay area of Kinniya. A total of 135 active fishers were randomly selected to collect data on their social structures, fishing activities and constraints in fisheries. All the data were analyzed using SAS software package. Results showed that 90% of the fishers in the study area were males and the majority of the fishers (48%) aged between 25 to 44 years. Around 62% of the fishers descended from fishing families. The average age at entry into fishing was high ( $P < 0.05$ ) for male fishers who descended from non-fishing families than for male fishers who descended from fishing families. Majority (36%) of the fishers were educated up to primary level (up to grade 5). The average family size of the fishers was ( $6.2 \pm 2.6$ ) larger than the average family size of fishing families in Sri Lanka. The average family size of uneducated male fishers was higher ( $P < 0.05$ ) than educated male fishers. The study area was dominated (83%) by the gillnet fishery which produced 1.6 MT of fish/fisher in 2010. The female fishers were mainly involved in seasonal harvesting of shellfish and assisting their spouse in fishing to raise the family income. This was revealed by the low ( $P < 0.05$ ) average monthly income of female fishers (Rs.  $13,241 \pm 11,361$ ) than the average monthly income of male fishers (Rs.  $20,505 \pm 12,597$ ). The average monthly income of gillnet fishers was (Rs.  $21,651 \pm 12,921$ ) higher ( $P < 0.05$ ) than the average of non-gillnet users (Rs.  $13,879 \pm 9,706$ ). Apart from extreme weather conditions, increased number of fishers, the use of monofilament nets, dynamiting and the presence of a security zone, often

constrained the coastal fisheries in the study area. However, 95% of the fishers wanted to continue fishing as their main livelihood in the future. Co-management is suggested as a strategy that could lead to sustainable coastal fisheries in the study area.

Keywords: coastal fishers, socio-economic condition, education, gender role

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