

## The current status of Negombo Lagoon fishery

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Sri Lanka has a large number of productive lagoons and Negombo Lagoon is one of the most productive lagoons among them. Several studies have been carried out regarding fisheries in Negombo Lagoon and this study focuses on the current status of Negombo Lagoon fishery. Fisheries data were collected from 10 major lagoon fishery landing sites from February to September 2017. The selected fish landing sites were visited every other week to collect information on fish catch, fishing effort (craft/gear combinations operated on the sampling dates), gear details (mesh size, pieces of nets, days of operation), and species composition of the catch. From the total number of craft operated, 30-60% was sampled at each sampling site. A variety of fishing gear and methods are being used in the Negombo Lagoon and those are operated targeting various types of fish and non fin fish species. These gear and methods are mostly practiced using Non motorized Traditional Boats (NTRB) or without crafts. Cast net, trammel net, stake net, stake net, gill net, scoop net and brush piles were identified as major fishing gear operated in the lagoon. Among these gear Gillnet recorded highest mean catch (10.6 kg/operation). The number of finfish species recorded during the study period was 67; representing 36 families. Among dominant fish varieties, *Mugil cephalus* (flathead mullet) contributes to 35% of the total catch, followed by *Arius* spp (20%), *Chanos chanos* (milkfish) (15%), *Siganus* spp. (Orawa) (10%), *Lates calcarifer* (Modha) (10%), *Etroplus* spp (Koraliya) (7) and *Oreochromis* spp (thilapia) (3%). Among the shrimps, *Penaeus indicus*, *P. semisulcatus* and *Metapenaeus moyebi* were the most abundant species. It is important to identify the long term trends in the fishery in order to identify the impact on fishery with regard to heavy fishing and rapid urban development around Negombo Lagoon and those trends could be used when formulating an effective management plans for the sustainable utilization of the fishery in Negombo Lagoon.

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