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ITDGI

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF  
FISHING COMMUNITIES IN  
BATTICALOA**

by

Mano Rajasingam



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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

cadjan	partition/roofing material from coconut palm fronds
cheetu	informal savings group
dry zone	northern, eastern and southern three-quarters of the island, where rainfall is below 75"/year
grama sevaka	village administrator
gramodaya mandalaya	association of peoples organisations in each village
Jihad	Muslim religious group
kachcheri	district administrative centre
kalas	core crew of a beach seine
karai valai	beach seine
karaiyar	fisher caste
kathan	'the one who saved'
kathuvalai	disco net
kooni	small shrimp
kovil	temple
maha	major cultivation season
mandrady	foreman of fishworkers
mudalali	businessman/investor
mukuvar	an ethnic group in eastern area
nalavar	a caste
pallar	a caste
teppam	non-mechanised craft
thimilar	a social group in eastern coast
thiruvilla	celebration
thonie	boat
vaadi	site/temporary camp
vallam	non-mechanised boat
veddhas	hunter-gatherers
vellalar	a caste group
wet zone	south-west quarter of the island where rainfall is over 75"/year
yala	minor cultivation season

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asia Development Bank
AGA	Assistant Government Agent
BIRRP	Batticaloa Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Programme
DoF	Department of Fisheries
EHED	Eastern Human and Economic Development
EPDP	Eelam People's Democratic Party
EPRLF	Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front
EROS	Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students
IPKF	Indian Peace-Keeping Force
ITDG	Intermediate Technology Development Group
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NEP	North-Eastern Province
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
OBM	Outboard Motor
PC	Provincial Council
PLOTE	People Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam
SEDEC	Social and Economic Development Centre
SLA	Sri Lanka Army
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
TCCS	Thrift and Credit Co-operative Society
TELO	Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation
TNA	Tamil National Army
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
UNHCR	United National High Commissioner for Refugees
UNP	United National Party
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

## PREFACE

ITDG and SEDEC/EHED, in an initial attempt to identify appropriate ways of assisting fishing communities in Batticaloa, commissioned this study by MANDRU in August 1992. The objectives of the study were to:

- i. discuss and prioritise participatively the real needs of fishing communities
- ii. assess the realism of commencing small-scale economic activities in the context of these needs and prioritise given the current unstable situation.

Even though initially the study was intended to cover only about three villages, it was substantially extended to 10 villages during the process of field work in September/October 1992. The study was conducted at a time when the rehabilitation drive was on, with Government and NGOs providing relief assistance. The communities had suffered a great deal, which to some extent coloured responses of those interviewed. Immediate needs were more important to people than real needs. Disruption in community life for a long period distorts perceptions of community life itself.

Although it was intended to complete the study before December 1992, it has been delayed by another 9 months due to unavoidable reasons .

Most of the statistical data obtained was from 1981 figures, as up-dated statistical data was not available. Some of the data which has been up-dated by the Batticaloa kachcheri has been included.

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However, opinions expressed and conclusions reached are mine and mine alone.

43, Station Cross Road  
Batticaloa

M. Rajasingam  
MANDRU



## 1 THE BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Location

Sri Lanka is an island with a coastline of 1770 km and a population of 17½ million. It is estimated that 78% of the population live in rural areas and about 4% of this population is dependant on the fishery sector for their livelihood. Fish has traditionally been the most popular and inexpensive form of protein, and accounts for about 70% of the total animal protein intake of the people. Fishery, therefore, is an important and significant economic activity in Sri Lanka.

The district of Batticaloa, situated on the eastern coast covers a land area of approximately 2464 km<sup>2</sup> and inland waterway of about 108 km<sup>2</sup>. It extends from Verugal (74 km north of Batticaloa) to Thuraineelavanai (35 km south of Batticaloa). The Batticaloa district is bounded by Polonnaruwa district in the west, Verugal Aru and Trincomalee district in the North, Amparai district in the south and the Bay of Bengal in the east, with a coastline 120 km long. Geographically the district could be divided in to two areas: the coastal strip between the sea in the east and lagoon in the west is the land area where almost 90% of the population of the district reside; and the areas west of the lagoon are sparsely populated and contain 90% of the total paddy lands of the district and grazing lands. The population is concentrated in hamlets in the highlands; the vast extents of low lying areas form the paddylands.

### 1.2 Physical Features

Agro climatically the district falls within the dry zone. It is relatively flat, not exceeding 8m in height above sea level. It consists of undulating plains and alluvial flats, which are watered by rivers originating in the Uva and the Central provinces. The east coast of the district consists of sandy soils and the west consists of clay soils. Batticaloa district has three lagoons i.e. Panichchenkerny lagoon, Vallaichchenai lagoon and the Batticaloa lagoon, which is the largest. The Batticaloa lagoon, 13,500 ha in extent, opens into the sea in Amirthakali near Batticaloa in the north and Kallar in the south. Among the 125 species of fish and crustaceans found in the lagoons, 80 species migrate from the sea and into the lagoon waters during certain periods. The district contains 17 major irrigation tanks, and 193 minor irrigation tanks.

The land bordering the lagoons consists of alluvial soil. All streams that discharge into the lagoon or the sea flow from sources in the dry zone itself, and consequently dwindle into a trickle in July/August after running in spate during the North-East monsoon (December-February).

### 1.3 Climate

The rainfall is bimodal with a mean annual rainfall of 1190 mm at 75% probability. The main rain is received from October to January and is of both inter monsoon and North-East monsoon types. Occasional rains during the South-West monsoon are also experienced during May-June. During the last two decades it has been observed that whilst it used to rain over 75-80 days in the past, there is now less rainfall over an average of 40-50 days. Temperature varies between 25°C - 29°C, with peak temperatures recorded in June. This too has been observed to have changed with temperatures as high as 32°C recorded in July in recent years. The district is humid, averaging 74%.

The climatic changes of recent years are yet to be studied.

### 1.4 Mineral Resources

Mineral resources available in the district are limited to rock deposits, sea shells, silicon and clay.

### 1.5 Population

Batticaloa district has a population of 420,000, which is predominantly Tamil (72%) and Muslims (24%) (Table 1). Muslims live in the highly populated small villages of Oddumavadi, Eravur and Kathankudi, whilst the Tamils are spread all over the district. Sinhalese population was concentrated in the Batticaloa town, and consisted largely of government officers; and could also be found in small hamlets along the borders of Amparai and Polonnaruwa districts.

Hindus (66.2%) and Muslims (24%) form the major religious groups. Catholics (5.8%) and other Christians (1.1%) form an influential social group in the district, particularly in the Batticaloa town. This influence has its historical roots in the establishment of educational institutions by the Methodists and Catholics in the latter half of the 19th century.

Veddhas (hunter-gatherers) appear to have been the original inhabitants of the area. Even today, descendants of the Veddha community live in Valaichchenai, Vaharai and Verugal. They live off the forest and engage in chena cultivation.

Tamils have lived in the eastern seaboard from around the 2nd century AD. Their villages were administered by Chieftains under the rulers of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy. These communities were agrarian, and settled in the island from the Malabar coast in South India. A 16th century Kandyan king gifted a large area in the Batticaloa district to a Muslim regiment which played a crucial role in a war, and helped him defeat the

enemy. Descendants of this regiment, who married local women, are believed to have settled in Kathankudy. Hence the Tamil name 'Kathan' meaning 'the one who saved'. Even at the present time Muslims are sometimes referred to as 'Kathan' by the local Tamil population. After the Portuguese arrived in the island in 1505, they monopolised trade in the western coast and took control of the Colombo and Galle ports. Muslim traders, who were seen as competitors, were driven out by the Portuguese and they settled in the Batticaloa area.

Migratory Sinhalese fishermen have been visiting the east for several centuries. There is evidence that most of the sea-going fishermen in the Batticaloa area learnt their skills from Sinhalese fishermen. Tamil and Muslim fishermen from Mannar, Jaffna and Mullaitivu areas have also settled in Batticaloa during the last few centuries and have introduced sea fishing to the local people.

Batticaloa was fully integrated into the national economy during the British period in the 19th and 20th centuries. Several educated civil servants from Jaffna served in Batticaloa as administrators and a few settled down in Batticaloa. Some of the prominent Tamil families in the district are domiciled only for about three generations. With the increase in trading, several large coconut plantations were established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Tamils dominated the agriculture sector, while Muslims had attained prominence in trade and commerce. Sinhalese pursued mainly fishing. A few Sinhalese who settled in Batticaloa established bakery and vegetable businesses.

The Dutch-Burgher community in the district was engaged in skilled occupations such as carpentry, shoe making and lately motor mechanics. They have adopted Tamil as their mother tongue during the post colonial era.

## 1.6 Infrastructure

Public transport (operated by Transport Board) had a fleet of 63 buses. Only one half of these are operating at present. Rail transport is available from Colombo approaching Batticaloa from the north (Valaichchenai) twice a week. Populated areas along the main roads have received electricity.

## 1.7 Agriculture

Paddy cultivation and fishery are the principal economic activities in the Batticaloa district. Of a total of just over 100,000 family units in the district 28.2% are engaged in agriculture and 14.6% in fishery. Of the 17.7% engaged in casual labour, the majority are engaged in agriculture and fishery related activities. The special socio-cultural and geographic nature of the district which has a long coastline, three lagoons and many irrigation tanks allows

both agricultural and fishery activities to be undertaken simultaneously. This is particularly significant amongst the population living in the vicinity of the lagoons. Paddy lands, most of which are situated west of the lagoons, are cultivated by farmers living east of the lagoon.

Paddy cultivation, which is the major economic activity, is undertaken during both maha and yala seasons. 68,000 ha and 50,000 ha are cultivated during maha and yala respectively.

About 33,000 ha are cultivated under major irrigation tanks and 2,800 ha under minor irrigation tanks.

Landholding in paddy is as follows:

< 1 acre	48.0%
1-2 acres	9.4%
2-3 acres	8.4%
> 20 acres	34.2%

Average holding is 2.9 acres (1.17 ha)

Subsidiary food crops such as manioc, maize, green gram, black gram, cow pea, ground nut, chillies, red onions, gingelly, kurakkan and sweet potato are cultivated in about 2,450 ha. Cadju, which is grown on in a plantation scale and in small holdings, covers around 2,500 ha.

Animal husbandry is an important activity in the district. It is estimated that 138,000 meat cattle, 13,300 buffaloes, 39,400 goats, 600 sheep and 1.6 million poultry are reared in the district.

## 1.8 Land use

Available land use data indicate that of the 411,684 ha of land, 1,370 ha is urban land and 148,294 ha. is State land. The balance is agricultural land (Table 2).

## 1.9 Cottage Industries

Cottage industries using paddy, paddy straw, coconut fibre, pan grass, cane, cashew shell, clay, granite etc., are being undertaken. Until recently, the handloom weaving was one of the largest cottage industries in the district.



### 1.10 Fishing

Out of a little over 100,000 family units in the district, 14,638, or 14.6% of, family units are engaged in fishery. According to the DoF, there are 14,638 fishing families 7,288 lagoon fishermen and 8,211 sea going fishermen. There are 146 fishing villages and 137 landing sites in the district (Table 3). A unique feature in Batticaloa is that even non-fishermen engage in the activity, especially in the lagoon, mainly for personal consumption. During the season for prawns, especially the Tiger prawns for which Batticaloa is famous, even a small catch brings an additional income to non-fishermen.

Lagoon fishermen are all artisanal fishermen - that is, they use exclusively traditional methods of fishing and do not use mechanised craft or gear. Sea fishermen, on the other hand, have differentiated into the following social groups:

**Fishermen** individuals who own/rent craft and gear and directly engage in the capture of fish primarily for sale in the market

**Absentee fishermen** individuals who own craft and gear which is used for fishing, but do not themselves directly engage in catching the fish. The catch is for sale in the market.

**Fishworkers** individuals who do not own/rent craft and gear and are employed on craft or beach seine for a wage, which is determined as a share of the catch. The term includes those workers engaged in activities directly related to fishing (drying fish, repairing, nets, etc.) for a wage. It does not include petty processors, traders, etc., who more correctly belong in the small industrial and marketing sectors of fishery.

For the purposes of the present study, fishermen and fishworkers were classified on the basis of income levels into three strata:

**Rich Fishermen :-** Directly engaged in fish capture and owning 3½ ton boats, 17½ ft boats with outboards and beach seines.

**Middle :-** Owners of vallams and other gear and fish workers in 3½ ton and 17½ boats.

**Poor :-** Fishworkers employed on crafts and in beach seine and fishermen with few productive assets.

The term 'fishermen' shall refer to rich, middle and poor fishermen unless specified otherwise.

A variety of craft and gear are used by fishermen:

Mechanised craft

3½ ton mechanised boats with inboard motor  
17-21 ft. boat with outboard motor

Non-mechanised craft

Vallams

Thonies

(Beach-seine) Karai vallar vallam

Madal vallam

Theppam

Gear - Lagoon

Cast net  
Small mesh net (sudai net)  
Prawn net  
Sprat net  
Crab cage  
Athangu (for prawns)  
Hook and line  
Bottom set long line

Gear - Sea

Disco net (combination of varying mesh sizes)  
Adaisal net (used during dark nights)  
Bottom set gill nets  
Keeri nets  
Hook and line  
Mid water gill net  
Athangu (for cuttlefish)  
Kumbala net  
Mural net  
Drift gill net  
Beach seine

### 1.11 Politics

When Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) became independent in 1948, political alliances were national in character. By 1956, with the introduction of 'Sinhala only' policy, the population polarised along linguistic lines, as it did in the other areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Communally motivated violence in 1958, 1961, 1977, and more frequently in the 1980s has left deep scars in the political consciousness of the people.

The Batticaloa district, which included the present Amparai district, was the first to experience the State-sponsored settlements of Sinhala colonists in major irrigation projects, which was to become one of the main issues of contention between the Tamil political parties and the United National Party (UNP) and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) governments. Batticaloa district before long became a part of the North-East Tamil resistance in both the parliamentary and guerilla arenas. A section of the Muslims too became part of the Tamil-led agitation for greater autonomy for the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

Ideologically the Tamil political parties across the spectrum placed emphasis on the identity of the Tamil people who predominantly occupied the Northern and Eastern Provinces. They proposed the introduction of political structures in these two provinces which could give expression to the aspirations of Tamils.

The 1957 Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam pact, which was unilaterally abrogated by the then prime minister Mr. SWRD Bandaranaike, had been concluded on this basis. Over the next decades, several attempts at finding a solution failed, and the middle class Tamil youth took to arms demanding a Tamil homeland and independence. The 1977 general elections were a major victory for the Tamil separatist demand in the North-East, when the Tamil political party, Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), contested on a separatist platform and won sufficient seats to become the major opposition party in Parliament. However, by that period, the Eastern Province was already ethnically heterogeneous and its area fragmented between ethnic groups, as substantial increases in the Sinhala and Muslim populations had occurred during the preceding three decades.

With increasing militancy of the Tamil youth, and the proliferation of Tamil militant groups, the Eastern Province, and especially the Batticaloa district, also became a theatre for militant activity in the 1980s. A substantial section of the Muslim population of the district covertly supported the militant groups, particularly the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which had some Muslim youth in its cadre. The rise in Muslim fundamentalism and the ideological influence of the Iranian revolution prevented a larger section of militant Muslim youth joining the Tamil youth in their struggle for autonomy/independence.

Under the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) arrived in the Northern and Eastern Provinces with a mandate to end the armed resistance of the LTTE and help implement the Accord. In the wake of LTTE resistance to the IPKF, strong ties developed between the Muslims and the LTTE as the IPKF discriminated against the Muslims in the day to day de facto IPKF administration. Between 1987 and 1990 several Muslim youth joined the LTTE. The same period also saw the merger of the two provinces into the North-East Province (NEP), and the establishment of Provincial Councils (PCs) in all 8 provinces of the country. In the NEP, the PC was controlled by a coalition led by the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). Even though EPRLF enjoyed some support in the area, they (and other members of the coalition) were seen as collaborators with the Indians and began to lose support, especially after the infamous forced conscription of youth into the Tamil National Army (TNA). The ease with which the LTTE defeated the TNA as the IPKF was withdrawn in early 1990 indicated the strength of support LTTE enjoyed amongst Tamils and Muslims.

In June 1990, the cessation of hostilities under the Accord ended and a full scale war broke out again between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army (SLA).

## 2 CURRENT SITUATION

### 2.1 The war and its implications for communities

#### Tamils

It is estimated that since June 1990 over 2,500 Tamils have been killed, 750 placed under detention and over 1,000 have disappeared, believed to be killed. Destruction to personal property and productive assets is staggering, running into billions of rupees. Over 78,000 families were affected in the post 1990 conflict, the majority being Tamils. Tamils bore the brunt of SLA attacks during military operations by the SLA to establish control in the town and other main villages in populated areas. Most of the deaths, disappearances and destruction to property took place between June 1990 and March 1991. In addition, the ethnic tensions between Tamil and Muslim communities and intermittent attacks on Muslim civilians brought retaliation on Tamil civilians. Tamil villages bordering the three main Muslim villages of Kathankudi, Eravur and Oddumavadi were attacked following the massacre of Muslims in two mosques for which the LTTE was held culpable. The people from these Tamil villages were displaced, and to this day are living either in refugee camps or with relatives.

The hostilities widely disrupted agricultural production. The farmers lost two seasons of paddy cultivation in 1991 and 1992, and it is estimated that only about 65% of the paddy land is presently cultivated. Some of the large landholders have refrained from cultivating

their land mainly because of the fear that the LTTE would demand a percentage of the harvest. It is believed that the LTTE has in fact cultivated some of this land themselves or has 'rented out' the land to smallholders in return for a share of the crop. Cultivating paddy lands situated west of the lagoon has proved unsafe for the small farmers, as the SLA operations against the LTTE are concentrated in this area. Many have had their harvests destroyed by the SLA, some were arrested, and over 50 killed during the last two years.

For fishermen, restrictions placed on the use of outboard motors and on fishing time, with a prohibition on night fishing, caused severe hardships. Loss of productive assets of fishermen too had placed them in a position of not being able to undertake fishing immediately.

The period between June 1990 and December 1992 was also one in which travel was restricted. Access to markets and workplace was uncertain.

However, early in 1993, a Pakistani faith healer's visit to Kathankudi, and Tamils being invited to an audience with him by the Muslim community, brought a major shift in the relations between the two communities. Almost 2000 Tamils queued up all day to see the holy man and the Tamil visitors were fed by the Kathankudi community. Almost overnight, a psychological change occurred. The presence of Tamils in Muslim areas and vice versa was not seen as a threat. An unconfirmed report that the Muslim leadership and the LTTE have reached an understanding could also be a reason for improved relations.

### Muslims

When the SLA was moving into Batticaloa in June 1990, the Muslim community and the areas in which they lived were perceived as a lesser security threat. Establishment of camps and logistical support was relatively easy in Muslim areas. The mosque massacres in Kathankudi in August 1990, followed by the arming of Muslim youth, formation of Muslim Home Guards and attacks on Tamil civilians, caused a rift between communities.

The Muslims, who dominated trade, were economically the worst affected by this turn of events. Their trading activities in the area came to a standstill. Muslim traders were able to travel on the main Trincomalee road only three times a week, when the roads were 'cleared' by the security forces. The handloom industry, mostly owned by Muslims employing Tamil workers, came to a halt. Muslims in effect lived like a community under siege.

Most of the Muslim-owned agricultural lands have not been cultivated since 1987, from the time the IPKF moved in. They are hopeful of cultivating during the maha season in 1993.

Fishing too became unsafe for the Muslim community. The fear of drifting into Tamil areas prevented marine fishing activities and lagoon fishing was confined to the daytime. Fish marketing, mainly operated by Muslim mudalalis (businessmen) came to a halt. It is only in 1993 that this situation has eased and some fishing and trading activities have become possible again.

Politically, a move to demarcate a Muslim AGA division in the East was pursued in earnest. This was, in a way, to force any future political solution to incorporate a Muslim-controlled administrative division in the east, and also set a precedent for establishing similar administrative units in the north of the NEP.

### Sinhalese

The Sinhalese form a very small minority, of 3.22%. The main social groupings of Sinhalese in the district were the government servants living in the Batticaloa municipal area, two settlements of fishermen along the coast, and a few small hamlets along the Amparai and Polonnaruwa borders. When the IPKF moved into the district in 1987, most of the fishermen and the colonists in the few agricultural hamlets were forced to move away. In June 1990, all the Sinhalese living in the Batticaloa municipal area too were forced out by the LTTE. Currently, only Sinhalese armed service personnel, one fishing community in Kalkudah, and a few hamlets remain. The civilian population in the district is estimated at around 2,300.

Since the beginning of 1993, with the announcement of the Presidential Mobile Service and improvements in mobility, a few vegetable traders and some in the services sector have returned.

### 2.2 Current inter-actions of groups

Tamil politico-militancy groups operating in collaboration with the SLA are the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), the dominant group being the TELO. The EPRLF and the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) have a non-military profile in the area. All the above mentioned groups are in conflict with the LTTE. Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) have a low profile, since sections of this organisation merged with the LTTE.

Amongst the Muslims, the armed para-military unit, the Home Guards, and the underground Jihad play a smaller role in the conflict.

TELO is the principal group functioning in collaboration with the SLA, assisting it to man

checkpoints. It is held responsible by the local population for several disappearances of Tamils in the area. TELO also performs a role in the interrogation of suspects and identification of LTTE cadre and supporters. One section of Tamil public opinion holds the TELO and SLA are responsible for the 1990 mosque massacres, while Muslims firmly believe that the culprits are the LTTE. Since TELO enjoys the support of the administration in Batticaloa, they are able to operate freely in and around the town and up to Chenkaladi, 10 miles north of it. Extortion, illegal sand mining and timber transportation are some of the activities attributed to this group. Even though TELO is unpopular amongst the civilian population, they are considered to be the only Tamil counter-measure to the Muslim Home Guards, whom the Tamils fear. They operate only in Tamil areas and are usually not allowed into the Muslim areas.

Muslim Home Guards were formed as a response to the mosque massacres. They are expected to operate in conjunction with either the SLA or the police. However, there have been instances of the Home Guards operating independently around the Tamil villages bordering Muslim areas. The Home Guards are perceived as the major obstacle to resettlement of the Tamil population displaced from these regions. These refugees have demanded the disarming of Home Guards as a pre-condition for them to get back to their villages.

The Jihad, believed to be a group of Muslim religious fundamentalists supported by Iran, have a strong influence amongst Muslims through the mosques. Even though many believe that the Jihad lays down the definitive ideological line for the Muslim community, the strong federation of mosques and community organisations in fact decide on all major issues affecting the community. During the period of relative normalcy after January 1993, the influence of the Jihad appears to be on the decline.

The SLA, having established control of the Batticaloa town and the main roads, are in the process of handing over security matters to the Police. SLA is almost 100% Sinhalese and their presence is resented by the majority of the Tamil population, while the Muslims have a greater trust. They believe that it was the SLA which effectively prevented the LTTE from over-running entire Muslim villages, or at least prevented the Muslim population from being forced to leave by the LTTE as happened in the north. SLA has the responsibility for clearing the area of LTTE activity, and they bear the brunt of LTTE attacks. Although the SLA acted in an unprofessional manner at the beginning of the current war, there appears to be an improvement in their day-to-day interactions with the community. The conscious effort of the military hierarchy to win the 'hearts and minds of the people' has at least made some soldiers a little sensitive to civilian needs and demands. The Task Force on Human Rights has improved the situation a little. Officers and soldiers being court-martialled, and individuals with proven brutality being transferred out, has helped ease the tensions between the SLA and civilians. Even though the level of harrassment has reduced

compared to the initial period, isolated incidents do occur.

The Police on their part are keen to establish their authority in the area. This causes some friction between them and the SLA. The establishment of Police posts and the fact that the civilian population is keen to have civilian rule in the area, have increased the possibility for the Police to take control of most areas. In one instance, the Superintendent of Police, responding to complaints of illegal felling for firewood, provided fishing nets to 50 woodcutters with the assistance of an NGO. This was an attempt to provide alternative employment for them. The Police force includes several Tamil-speaking recruits from the area, which has increased public confidence in the Police in recent times.

The LTTE, the main adversary of the forces, has limited its military activities to the remote areas. Frequent 'notes' demanding payment of a particular sum from individuals, are being responded to clandestinely. NGOs are asked to report to the LTTE on their activities. Inquiries are held regularly on complaints made to the LTTE. The fact that most of the people who are summoned by the LTTE respond, indicates that at least in the consciousness of the public the LTTE has not been marginalised. It is generally believed that the LTTE will come back into prominence sooner rather than later, and that they should not be antagonised. While the LTTE does not enjoy 100% support of the people, there is great respect for the organisation and their commitment to the cause, with which many Tamils would identify themselves.

### 2.3 Restrictions on Community Life

Men, especially young men, are prime LTTE suspects, and consequently are targets of the security forces. The initial spate of killing, and the subsequent terrorising tactics forced many young men to stay indoors, flee to jungle hide-outs of the LTTE, leave Batticaloa for Colombo and, in some cases, out of the island to destinations in Europe and North America. Unemployment, which is well over 50% in the district for young men between the ages of 18-30, caused severe problems. The employed male is usually exculpated from being a member of the LTTE, or even a sympathiser in the eyes of the security forces. But the unemployed, young male carried a double burden. He was denied an income and career prospects; and he was viewed with suspicion by the security forces as a possible LTTE member or sympathiser. This caused severe restrictions on all activities for young men who are students or who work alongside their fathers and are not part of the formal labour force.

In a sense, women whose husbands or sons were killed are more affected by the unfolding situation. To cope with the loss of a breadwinner, or to compensate for the restriction on the free movement of (young) men, women are more and more taking charge of matters hitherto closed to them. For the poor, activities like trading, new forms of earning an income like milling rice, making rice flakes, selling firewood, etc., opened up. Even visits



to the AGA's office, Batticaloa kachcheri, SLA camp, etc., to complete ration entitlement forms, apply for and obtain compensation for death or loss of property, or to check on a male member of the family who had been taken away by the SLA, were mainly undertaken by women. Several women have come to Colombo to pursue cases of detention during this period, even though for many it was the first trip to the capital. Women were considered to be more effective in dealing with these situations, and men readily agreed to allow women a leading role in matters concerned with the security forces.

On the main roads into Batticaloa, military checkpoints abound. A 20 mile journey from Valaichchenai to Batticaloa by bus could take 2½-3 hours. Because at each checkpoint all the passengers were expected to alight and walk up to the checkpoint, be checked including all parcels, reboard the bus and alight for the same process within a couple of miles. For example, paddy transportation is extremely tedious, and at at least in one checkpoint all the contents of the gunny bags will have to be emptied on the road and then refilled. One lorryload could take more than three hours to be checked and reloaded. Within the municipal limits of Batticaloa there still are a minimum of four checkpoints.

#### 2.4 Restrictions on fishing

The fishermen in the Batticaloa district began to experience serious security-related problems after the LTTE resumed hostilities against the IPKF in October 1987; and these problems continue to threaten their livelihood. Because the LTTE transported men and materials over the coastal and lagoon waters, both the IPKF and SLA imposed Security Zones in coastal areas and in the lagoons. Except for a brief period between March and June 1990, restrictions have been imposed on fishermen in the lagoon as well as at sea.

A near total ban on night fishing in the lagoon was imposed by the security forces. In certain areas within sight of the army camps, only limited numbers of fishermen were issued with permits authorising them to fish; but their movements were restricted. In addition to registering their names and boats with the neighbouring army camp upon which permits are issued, fishermen have to conform to zones of operation, time deadlines to start and end fishing, boats to be parked near the army camp, etc.

Both lagoon and sea fishermen have a practice of starting out only around midnight and returning at daybreak. But in most cases fishermen were now required to report at the nearest security camp before 5.30 pm and allowed to return only after daybreak and not earlier. To be found at shore between dusk and daybreak could become a matter of life and death for the fishermen. In certain places where the camp was near the shore, fishermen were allowed to go out late but required to be at the spot with boat and gear before dusk. In general, fishermen still cannot go out during the preferred tide or currents. Even if the weather turns unfavourable midway through their outing they cannot come

ashore. Very often they are forced to spend the whole night out in the lagoon, and under considerable hardship.

Only around 10 to 12 lagoon fishermen were permitted to fish at night in most areas, and they were chosen on a rota system operated by the offices in the Army camp. These fishermen came in at daybreak, marketed their catch and returned home usually around 11 am. They have very little time to mend gear and to rest before going back to the lagoon at the earlier time of 5.30 pm.

The additional problem of the Muslim-Tamil conflict since August 1990 has further aggravated the security situation.

Restrictions on lagoon fishing in the night have been relaxed during the current year. Around the Batticaloa town area, lagoon fishing activity is now undertaken as before. However outside the municipal limits, fishermen have to conform to the varying regulations of the security forces from time to time.

All SLA camp authorities do not have the same system. Some are more flexible than others. As SLA personnel change over every three or four months, the tendency is for the new command to formulate new regulations, to which fishermen have to conform.

Sea fishing too has had similar restrictions, which have been relaxed to some extent from January 1993. For sea fishermen, setting definite times when they can come ashore often causes life or death problems. During periods of such restrictions many did not take a chance with their lives, and remained ashore.

One of the main problems for the owners of boats with outboard engines was the total ban on the use of all motorised boats, except from the Valaichchenai and Muhathuvaram fishery harbours. While there are indications that these restrictions are being relaxed and, progressively, all fishing activity could become normal again, the capacity of the LTTE to resume military activity in the area soon is real. The security situation, then, could change quite dramatically within days, and restrictions in fishing operations reintroduced.

### 3. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FISHING COMMUNITIES

Many of the problems associated with the development of the fishery sector, especially in the context of outside forces interacting with small-scale fishing communities, are shared by other productive sectors. In many instances social scientists engaged in the study of the fishery sector have invariably drawn on methodologies employed in peasant (agriculture) studies. This has contributed to the common failure of fishery development schemes; even in instances where a degree of success can be demonstrated, the schemes had uncertain and

marginal outcomes. Therefore, it is imperative that social, economic and cultural characteristics of fishing communities are identified which are significant for development interventions.

### 3.1 Socio Cultural Characteristics

Two primary categories of fish production must be separated at the outset - aquaculture as opposed to capture fishery. The only thing these two categories have in common is the product - fish. Aquaculture is akin to agriculture or animal husbandry rather than to capture fishery. An aquaculturist develops a specific area, acquires land and property rights, controls harvest, uses different technologies, utilises different management practices, employs capital etc. Whereas capture fishery, especially small scale has, none of these. The psychology of capture fishermen in his relations of production is significantly different to that of a culturist. Capture fishermen depend on open access and common rights to the resources. Often they move from place to place where the fish are, take risks with their lives, employ very little capital, and are uncertain of the catch. If an aquaculturist husband's resources, the capture fisherman is a hunter-gatherer.

### 3.2 Capture Fishery

Capture fishery could be categorised into distinct types. The most readily recognised and accepted criterion is the scale of fishing, to distinguish between large and artisanal fishermen.

Large scale fishermen could be considered as those who are more organised, use capital intensive methods, generate much higher incomes for both owners of productive assets and crew, and supply most of the processed fish and often are export-oriented. Small-scale fishermen on the other hand are usually limited to coastal areas, near lagoons and estuaries, use labour intensive methods, use minimum mechanical power either in boats or gear and use technology which has been available for several generations for handling and processing the catch. Unlike the large scale deep-sea going fishermen who deal with a large biomass of pelagic stocks small scale fishermen have to contend with a limited biomass.

Other important distinctions are the degree of risks involved to both person and equipment and the distances from residence to the work place. These differences also reflect in the work patterns and structure of different communities.

### 3.3 Resource Variability

Predictable long-term or seasonal variation, and relative availability, of different fish species exploited elicit behavioral responses manifested in the social environment. Shifting

residence, leaving families behind where only men move around and engaging in agriculture inland are some manifestations. Others include the work schedule which differs from other occupations because fishermen are out at work very often at night rather than during the day. The prey is mobile, weather conditions could be unfavorable and day-to-day variation in catch means unpredictable incomes. All these have an impact on how the communities on how they live and organise their social relations.

### 3.4 Relative Isolation

Like many other occupational subcultures, fishermen form societies unto themselves. Capture fishermen frequently live along narrow strips adjoining the sea, lagoons, lakes and rivers usually separated from the land-based society. Fishermen in many parts of Sri Lanka, for example belong to the lowest caste groups. Upward social mobility too is low within this group.

This relative isolation affects other socio-cultural variables which in turn have a direct bearing on development. A low level of educational achievements, negative attitudes towards formal education, and dropping out of school early due to those factors, are some of its manifestations.

### 3.5 Division of labour by gender

By the nature of the work women are not directly involved in the act of capture fishery. Even though in many cases they may engage in net repair, drying fish and marketing, along with the functions of child care. they are not included amongst the crew. But women who trade are able to continue work while males engaged in capture fishery may work only intermittently.

### 3.6 Use rights to resources

The importance of land tenure systems in agriculture is recognised as a principal factor in the social organisation of peasants. Sea tenure systems are hardly taken seriously when considering fishing communities.

The relative difficulty in the definition of space in the waters and the mobility of the prey make it difficult to talk of tenurial systems for individuals. Communal use rights over certain areas of certain communities have been traditionally recognised. Fishermen of a particular community compete with each other to capture resources in a specified area. One instance where individuals are given certain rights by the state is, in the case of beach-seine owners, who "lease" a section of a sea shore, and consequently have rights over a certain section of the sea adjoining the shore for fishing. However, resource conflicts arise when sea-going

fishermen use certain types of nets further in the sea and either capture, or prevent the capture of, certain species of fish on which the beach-seiners depend. These conflicts sometimes take a violent turn and physical damage to property and even death of fishermen involved in the conflict are not uncommon. Conflict is often resolved peacefully only by outside intervention.

Fishing in inland waterbodies like small tanks, usually operates on a tender system. Tenders are called by the government, and individuals awarded the tender could in turn award use rights to fishermen for a fee or a share of the catch or both.

### 3.7 Organisation of Work

It has been observed that lagoon fishermen prefer to work alone without any assistance. In some cases fishermen take a young son along more as a trainee rather than for the extra pair of hands. The habit of working alone is attributed to the low level of incomes which, if shared with another adult, will be insufficient for either person. Therefore, the lagoon fisherman is more independent in his organisation of work.

In contrast, sea fishermen display an interdependence and co-operative nature in their activities. The need for co-ordination within fishing crews, combined with physical risks associated with the marine environment, increases both the need for teamwork and the importance of each individual. They are forced to make decisions quickly and in conditions of uncertainty, decisions that have an immediate effect on the safety of the crew and vessel and of course the success of the "hunt". These decisions lead to a set of complicated tasks to be performed by each individual member of the crew with very little verbal communication. Here, each member of the crew must not only make independent decisions, but as a crew must also accept individual division of labour in the common pursuit of the prey. The fact that there is a rapid depreciation of equipment decreases the social and economic distance between the owners of productive assets and hired fishworkers.

In order to reinforce interdependence and co-operation among members of crew, crews often comprise of kinsman, which enhances co-operation. On occasions particular individuals outside the kinship structure become members because of their proven skill and ability in fishing and/or teamwork. However, this sort of egalitarianism is found only within a crew and not between crews.

Nevertheless, out at sea, it is common practice to come to the aid of another crew in distress. This interestingly is true even across the ethnic divide where Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim fishermen help each other.

#### 4. STATE POLICY IN FISHERY DEVELOPMENT

In Sri Lanka, small-scale marine fishery development policies have been an integral part of agricultural development policies. Prior to the early 1950s, State intervention for economic development in fishery was minimal. This was in keeping with the policy perspectives based on the export-led economic growth model where plantation agriculture was seen as the motive force for growth. A secondary economic role was assigned to peasant agriculture and fishery which were to supply the day to day consumption needs of the growing rural and urban populations.

The first major State intervention in the fishery sector came in 1954 with the Six Year Programme of Investment. The stated objective was to minimise the import of fish, which meant a maximisation of the aggregate catch. This was to be achieved by State intervention to raise the efficiency of each fisherman by (a) mechanising existing craft and introduction of new craft and (b) popularising improved fishing techniques. State policy concentrated on the exploitation of resources, hitherto under-exploited coastal fishery (between 16km-40 km) and the unexploited off shore (40km-100km) and deep sea (> 100 km) fishery. This appeared to make sense at that time as only about 50% of the domestic consumption needs were met by local capture.

However, the process of raising the aggregate catch level proved to be more complicated than the mere mechanisation of the fleet. Prior to mechanisation, beach-seine and boat fishermen, using non-mechanised craft and gear and exploiting only the coastal fishery resources (up to 16 km), were responsible for almost 90% of the total catch. Although beach-seine were responsible for a substantial portion of the catch, given the limited resource base and technology improvement, it did not possess the capacity for expansion. In contrast, the non-mechanised boat fishermen, who also comprise the majority of fishermen and were engaged in subsistence fishing, represented the potential target for implementation of the new policy.

Implementation ran into difficulties when the pilot programme of supplying outboard motors and 17½ ft. crafts to subsistence fishermen was not received with enthusiasm. This led to the conclusion that the supply of selected inputs was an inefficient way of resource utilisation. Because the efficient utilisation of one input depended on the simultaneous application of other complementary inputs (nets, credit etc.), policy in 1958 was supplemented by a second loan programme. By 1965 an input package consisting of boat and gear was evolved and, together with the extension programme by the Department of Fisheries, new technologies were accepted more readily by fishermen.

Beginning in 1958, the inputs were distributed through fishermen's co-operatives. These co-operatives were first established in 1941 to supply consumption credit and to serve as sales

outlets. By 1970, craft and gear were issued to co-operatives to rent them to fishermen. With the liberalisation of the economy in 1977, inputs were also made available through market channels.

Between 1977 and 1983 a rapid increase in mechanisation occurred resulting in an increase (average rate of 8%) in the aggregate catch.

State intervention, in terms of provision of inputs through the co-operative system also attempted 'community development'. This did not result in the 'development of the community'. Since the target group was the owners of craft and gear and in that too the more successful ones, fishworkers (who were the majority) were left behind. Adoption of technology led to resource conflicts where the newly mechanised craft competed with the traditional beach-seiners and small vallam operators - resulting in the depletion of catch of the latter which in turn reduced income levels of fishworkers, while some of the more successful boat and outboard owners and their crew enhanced their income. This trend over the last three decades has created new forms of social stratification within the fishing community.

Fishermen who were successful in obtaining inputs from the government through the co-operatives very often sold their boats and engines because either they themselves were not actual fishermen (but through influence in the community and political patronage had been able to give themselves priority ranking in the provision of inputs), or found themselves incapable of adjusting to the upgrading of technology which also required certain entrepreneurial skills.

A typical fishermen who obtained a government loan went through the following. He joined the co-operative to be included in the hire-purchase scheme and to be selected by ballot for loan entitlement. He then made an initial deposit and received the loan repayable in 5 years, to purchase a hull and engine. The loan amount covered only the vessel and the engine, but not the gear, so that he had to go to private money lenders for additional funds. As the new equipment deteriorated faster, maintenance was costly. His loan repayment was not related to the periodicity of catch or the value but was fixed, to be paid monthly. During the off-season his loan repayment was invariably higher than his income, and he was forced to borrow from moneylenders. After a while, when his debts mounted, he sold his boat and engine to a wealthy mudalali.

This again threw up new and sharper economic inequalities within the community and specially gave rise to a class of absentee fishermen who owned boat and gear. They were economically stronger than capture fishermen and were able to lend money - or controlled vital service sectors like transport, etc. This created for the first time wholly new relationships not unlike those between absentee landlords and tenants/workers in

agriculture. The implications of changes in social stratification and emergence of new social groups/classes in fishing communities has yet to be studied.

## 5. FISHERY IN BATTICALOA

### 5.1 Sea Fishing

The living standard and condition of most full-time fishermen leave much to be desired. Few have achieved social mobility as a consequence of economic advancement from fishery related activities over the years; for the majority living conditions have deteriorated. While some owners of boats and gear have been able to accumulate wealth and consequently also diversify economic activities, the majority have either remained at subsistence level or have lost their craft and/or gear and become fishworkers, entirely dependent on a few mudalalis for work.

This situation is particularly true for sea fishermen. While owners of sea going boats and gear often are part-time fishermen with interests outside fishery, fishworkers are dependent on the industry almost on a full-time basis. Owners of productive assets have consolidated their control over the industry through the co-operatives and through political patronage. Not surprisingly, the poorest of the fishermen are fishworkers involved in sea fishery. For them an income between Rs. 20-40/- per day is the average.

Small fishermen who own traditional craft and gear have also been adversely affected by the introduction of technology, i.e. fibre glass boats and outboard engines by both Government and donor agencies. The economically more powerful fishermen were quick to adopt new technology, and they competed for the fishery resource on the same fishing grounds with owners of teppams and vallams. Over the years owners of traditional craft experienced a fall in catch levels and incomes.

The district had over 100 beach seine sites or karai valai vaadis prior to 1987. Ownership of beach-seine was mainly with the Sinhalese migratory fishermen. Very few Tamils owned beach-seines although this is a Tamil area and a vast majority of fishermen are Tamils.

Beach-seine sites are allocated by the Department of Fisheries (DoF) on a lease basis. The policy of Government to give priority to migratory fishermen in allocating beach-seine sites has favoured the issue of permits to Sinhalese. Wealthy Tamil fishermen not investing entirely in fishery too may have favoured Sinhalese and some Muslims. However, almost all the fishworkers were either Tamils or Muslims.

Karai valai, a popular method of fishing in the district, employs the largest number of fishworkers. Up to 60 fishworkers are involved in each karai valai vaadi. Sinhalese



migratory fishermen come with a skeleton crew to the east coast and during the season employ Tamil fishworkers. The decline in numbers of the Sinhalese migratory fishermen over the last few years and particularly since June 1990 when they all pulled out of the Batticaloa coast, and the Government decision not to reallocate the karai valai fishing sites to others, rendered an estimated 3,000 or more fishworkers unemployed, who have sought employment with the few Muslim and Tamil karai valai fishermen. As a consequence, incomes have reduced and unemployment is high. The living conditions of fishworkers have deteriorated drastically, and for some families obtaining one meal a day has become a luxury.

Investment in beach-seines in present day value is in excess of Rs. 300,000/-. Each beach-seine vaadi will usually cast their nets twice a day, first very early in the morning around 6 am and next around mid-day. Fishermen recall instances when in one cast alone the fish caught was valued at a couple of hundred thousand rupees. In the last few years, according to fishworkers, these occasions have been few and far between. Days when they had even a catch valued at Rs. 20,000/- were rare.

The system in operation in the Batticaloa district for beach-seine is as follows. The owner of the boat and gear usually employs a core crew of about 15, who are responsible for casting. They are employed because of their skill, and only a couple of members of this crew would be kinsman of the owner. This crew is commonly known as the kalas.

Another 35 to 50 fishworkers are employed on shore to draw the karai valai. A few of these fishworkers are retained by the owner on a full time basis mainly to ensure that sufficient labour is available on shore for drawing the nets. Others are employed on a day to day basis and the labour requirement is determined by the size of catch. In a good season where the catch is good all fishworkers get fish for their consumption and one meal cooked in the vaadi.

One quarter of the catch value is divided amongst all the on-shore fishworkers. The balance is divided into two equal shares; one share goes to the owner and the other share is divided amongst the members of the kalas. For example when the catch value is Rs. 20,000/-, with a kalas of 15 and 50 on-shore fishworkers, the owner gets a share of Rs. 7500/-, members of the kalas get Rs. 500/- each, and the fishworkers Rs. 100/- each. In actual practice, regular workers would get their share after deduction for loans obtained from the owner and the casual workers, after deductions for meals and loans. The actual selling price is not known to fishworkers in all instances. Traders who purchase in bulk have their own arrangements and price worked out with the owners. Fishworkers often have to be satisfied with the selling price quoted by the beach-seine owner. Fishworkers who dare to complain risk being excluded from working in the vaadi. When the catch is low, a reduced number of fishworkers are employed and often the choice of who works for the day is entirely

dependent on the owners discretion. The mandrady (foremen of fishworkers) has also considerable discretionary powers to employ whom he wishes.

Prior to 1987, the district exported more than 80% of the catch outside the district. Marketing was undertaken by big mudalalis and the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation. Since 1990, infrastructure facilities (transport and ice plants) have become virtually non-existent, and access to markets outside the district is very restricted. Consequently, demand fell; and the catch level reduced. Further reasons for reduced catch levels are restrictions imposed by security forces, the lack of credit, and reluctance of fishermen to invest under current political conditions. Most fishermen have not invested in different sizes of nets necessary to exploit particular seasonal fish resources. The combined result is a low catch, usually sufficient to meet only local consumption demands.

At the same time, the dominance of a few big mudalalis prior to 1990 has also collapsed, giving rise to a new generation of small traders who, with the help of some sections of the armed forces, purchase from fishermen directly at exploitative prices, and market locally. A few enterprising fishermen who were unable to engage in fishing due to the prevailing situation have now taken up local trading as a means of earning an income instead of fishing.

The ethnic dimension in the marketing of fish too has had an effect on prices. Under normal conditions, large traders who transported fish to outside markets were either Muslims or Sinhalese. Since 1990, it has become difficult for these traders to operate in the Batticaloa district, which has closed the only marketing channel outside the district.

## 5.2 Lagoon Fishing

Lagoon fishing in the Batticaloa district displays special features not found elsewhere in the island. Official figures of the DoF put the figure of lagoon fishermen at 9,250. However it appears that only about half of them are full-time lagoon fishermen, who depend on this activity as the only source for their livelihood. Many of those classified as lagoon fishermen have other sources of income like agriculture, small business, supply of fuel wood, government employment etc.

As most of the agricultural land is located west of the lagoon and owners of this land live east of the lagoon, it is a common practice for larger land owners to own boats primarily as a means of transport. Ownership of a boat, according to the DoF, entitles one to automatically qualify as a fisherman. The practice of either undertaking seasonal fishing themselves or hiring out their boats during the season (when land is not cultivated) is quite common. Since the hire charges are quite low at about Rs 10/= per day and many non-fishermen own boats, most of the lagoon fishermen who themselves do not own boats are

able to hire them during most of the year. However, as the peak season for prawns coincides with that of cultivation activities, actual fishermen are sometimes denied access to boats. The practice of fishermen boat owners lending boats to other fishermen either free of charge or for a small fee is common in the area. This practice is particularly prevalent amongst kinsmen. Most of the lagoon fishermen own their gear (Table 4.2).

Almost all the lagoon fishermen fish exclusively in the lagoon. The lack of expertise in sea fishing and the fear of the sea distinguish them from sea fishermen, some of whom fish in the lagoon when they are unable to go out to sea. The present security conditions and restrictions placed on fishermen have increased the number of fishermen using the lagoon. The fact that many sea fishermen fishing in the lagoon use some of the gear used in the sea to capture higher catch levels, is considered an advantage only in the short term. They are viewed as intruders by the lagoon fishermen who claim that their use of particular types of nets (kattuvalai or disconets), and ignorance of the lagoon life cycles, disturb fish habitats and, as a consequence, destroy the resource base of the lagoon.

Lagoon fishermen often fish alone, or with a member of the family, like a young son. Income therefore is kept within the family unit unlike in sea fishing. Almost all the lagoon fishermen living west of the lagoon also have agricultural interests and either own land or are able to lease land for cultivation. This practice allows the female members of fishing households to engage in productive agricultural activity unlike many families living east of the lagoon.

Pollution of the lagoon is seen by many lagoon fishermen as one of the long term problems and a threat to their livelihood. The lagoon, being surrounded by agricultural land, is the receptacle of fertilizer, pesticides and weedicides which drain from the agricultural fields. Urban waste is directly dumped into the lagoon. This is identified as one of the major immediate reasons for the diminishing resources in the lagoon. In addition, destruction of mangrove vegetation mainly for fuelwood, the construction of two bridges near the bar mouth which restrict free flow of lagoon water and movement of marine life, and alterations in the salinity levels, have all contributed to changes in this delicate ecosystem, which threaten the natural resources base and could undermine economic activities of the population dependent on the lagoon.

### 5.3 Socio-economic Condition of Fishing Households

The socio-economic condition of sea and lagoon fishermen have many features in common, and to some extent they are shared by fishing communities elsewhere in the island. At the same time, there are certain differences between fishing communities which engage in sea fishing and those that fish in inland water bodies.

Generally, most fishing families have a larger family unit than the average for the district, which is just over 4. The tendency to set up independent households when young people get married is also higher in the community.

The poorer households display low educational achievements amongst both sexes, while the incidence of women being relatively better educated was high (Table 4.3.2). The desire to educate children was higher in the lagoon fishing community compared to the sea fishing community. Here again the proximity to the urban areas and the availability of schools play a role in the decision to educate children. Further away from the educational centres and the urban areas, drop out level from school is high. Poor facilities in schools, lack of motivation by teachers and the community, low economic status of the family and low social mobility of the family contribute towards children being kept away from school. This happens to boys much earlier than girls, partly because boys are called upon to assist their fathers in fishing and related activities. The fact that for the girl child, education is considered as a part of the dowry also contributes towards girls staying in school a little longer than boys.

The wealthier families in the community have acquired wealth either through fishing activities and consolidated their new social status through educational attainment or through direct access to education. The tendency to educate their children out of fishing was observed in these families too. Typically when the first generation had access to better educational facilities either through wealth or proximity to an educational institution of some standing, they moved away from fishing and the village and their children almost never took up fishing or related activities.

Most of the lagoon fishermen would like their children to attain a level of educational attainment and acquire other skills to enable them to move out of fishing and into other means of livelihood. Even some of the poorer sections expressed the desire for their children to move out of fishing because their relatives had done so and they did not see much future for social and economic advancement by continuing in the traditional occupation (Table 4.4).

In the last 15 years or so, a large number of young men and women from the wealthier group have gone abroad. For example in Kallar, at least five boats and gear were not used by the families because there was nobody in the family to use them as they had all emigrated to Western countries. The families were holding on to the equipment until the residency status of their children abroad was confirmed. Nevertheless they continue to have links with fishermen's co-operatives and indirectly benefit from their connections by way of political or departmental access.

Consumption of alcohol is high in the fishing community. Hard work, physical exhaustion

and lack of sleep are generally used to justify alcohol consumption by men. The social stigma attached to women consuming alcohol is lower within the community. In each community there are two or three families who specialise in the preparation and distribution of the illicit brew. In many families a substantial portion of the family income is spent on men consuming alcohol. This, however, is absent in Muslim fishing communities.

Most of the poorer fishermen live nearer the fishing ground. Their huts are situated on land granted to them free by Government, and most of them have some form of title deed. Lack of electricity, drinking water and toilet facilities is common within the poorer sections of the community. Most of the fishermen who have attempted to build brick houses have fallen in debt and have not completed the structures. Building a brick house, however, remains a high priority in the community (Table 4.3.3).

A few men from the sea fishing community do find work as agricultural labourers during the maha harvest season, during a period of about 6 to 8 weeks in February and March. Fewer still also find work during the yala harvest. Each year, a group of men from a fishing community goes to areas several miles away and contracts their labour for harvesting. Many lagoon fishermen engage in the cultivation of a little paddy and subsidiary crops. When such cultivation takes place close to the lagoon, mangrove vegetation on and around the site selected for cultivation are destroyed. Several acres of land cleared and cultivated by fishermen remains fallow due to the subsequent rise in salinity of the soils.

The supply of fire wood to the urban consumer is another occupation undertaken by fishermen when work is scarce. One outing for firewood could earn around Rs. 150/- to 200/- and, in recent months, supply of firewood has become a very popular alternative to fishing (Tables 4.3.4 and 4.3.5).

#### 5.4 Status of the resource

Wooden vallams were out-numbered by the fibre glass vallams. The reduction in the availability of timber since the cyclone of 1978 was attributed as the reason for the change over to fibre glass boats. Technical adaptability, superior performance or low maintenance cost was also mentioned by fishermen as a reason for this change. Mechanised boats were exclusively used in the sea and ownership was limited to a very small percentage of fishermen.

At the stage of capture, two important variables affect the households; they are the levels of catch and the net income from fishing. Almost all fishermen interviewed used nylon nets. But the level of catch brought in by each fisherman depends on further factors: skill of fisherman, type of craft and gear, number of nets used, the range of sizes owned and the management of the fishing operation. Over time, seasonal factors also influence the level

of catch.

The type of craft used determined the distance travelled to fishing grounds. Here the 3½ ton boats enjoy a distinct advantage. They possess a longer range and this is evident in their average duration of travel which tend to be around 12 hours compared to about 4 hours for 17½ ft. outboard motor boats and 2 hours for vallams.

As the owners of 3½ ton boats have access to fishing grounds which are well beyond the reach of other mechanised and non-mechanised craft, there hardly exists any resource conflicts between them and others.

However, the fishing grounds of other mechanised boats and vallams overlap, and there exists resource conflicts. There are occasional violent conflicts which result in nets being slashed or burnt and crafts being damaged. One reason for these conflicts is the use of particular types of net which, when placed in the path of fish movement towards the shore, other fishermen reason drives fish back to the sea thereby preventing them from reaching the fishing grounds of vallams. The same reason is attributed to the decline in beach-seine catch levels.

By virtue of differing capacities of each type of craft and due to the differences in economic strength of each owner, the number of nets carried by each craft also varies. This, in turn, introduces considerable variations in catch level between fishermen owning different types of craft as well as within each type of craft.

#### Scale and Health of Existing Fishery

Batticaloa district like many other areas in the NEP has suffered a series of setbacks during the last 15 years. While in most areas disaster struck in July 1983, in Batticaloa the 1978 cyclone which devastated the district is considered to be the worst event. This was particularly so for fishermen. 1983, 1985 and 1990 are other significant years when the ethnic problem brought violence and destruction.

Several schemes of assistance to fishermen have been implemented during the post 1978 period. However, losses during the periods of ethnic conflict have continued.

Since 1989, under the Unified Assistance Scheme of the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, 11,000 fishing families received Rs. 4,000/- each as a productive enterprise grant. Other major programmes include 2,845 units of nets (post-1990, Australia), 15 Nos 18 ft. boats with OBM and gear (UNHCR), 25 OBMs to co-operatives (Australia), 54 sea going thonies and fishing gear worth Rs. 30,000/-, 122 lagoon thonies with fishing gear worth Rs. 15,000/- (ADB Rehabilitation Scheme). In 1992, NORAD and ADB launched a

programme to provide boats and gear to fishermen's co-operatives. In addition, WUSC and a few other small NGOs have provided assistance to fishermen during the last two years (Table 5.1).

The Unified Assistance Scheme, which has spent Rs. 44 million on 11,000 fishing families (another 2000 families still to be paid), could be considered a failure because more than 90% of beneficiaries spent the money for consumption needs, or paying off debts, rather than buying productive assets, as envisaged under the scheme. Most of the beneficiaries contended that Rs. 4000/- was insufficient to invest on production-related goods.

Data on loss of craft (Table 5.2) and gear is rather unreliable as the information was obtained under difficult conditions. The realisation that compensatory payments would be forthcoming also added to the rather exaggerated information provided by local officials. Boats and gear sold immediately after June 1990, have also been reported as lost. Co-operative societies seem to have encouraged the declaration of assets as lost and damaged. The availability of lagoon canoes, in particular, for hire probably is indicative of a transfer of ownership rather than the craft being 'lost', a euphemism for destroyed.

A declining trend for fish production could be observed (Table 5.3). Peak production of fish in recent years was recorded in 1982 (marine) and 1980 (lagoon). While figures substantiate the claims of fishermen, that over the last decade there has been a decline in catch, it appears to be significant for sea fishing rather than lagoon fishing.

A sharp drop in marine fish catch since 1983 could be attributed to the ethnic violence in the country that year, when migratory Sinhalese fishermen stopped coming in large numbers to the district. It also appears that a significant proportion of the catch belonged to migratory fishermen. The observation of local fishermen that Sinhalese fishermen were better skilled, and therefore were able to bring in a better harvest, could partly explain the decline in catch levels. However, it is also true that coastal fishermen have been experiencing a reduction in catch levels over the last decade. Money incomes have also dropped correspondingly.

Where lagoon fishing is concerned, a significant reduction in the catch level could be associated with the year 1986, after the Tamil-Muslim violence began and the Special Task Force carried out operations in the area. As the lagoon became a security concern for the SLA and the IPKF, severe restrictions were placed on fishing activities from time to time. While 1991 and 1992 could be considered good years for lagoon fishing, a substantial reduction in the catch level of prawns has caused incomes to decline. While the security situation could be one of the causes for this reduction, fishermen claim with certainty that this is primarily because of the degradation of the lagoon.

## 5.5 The Social Structure and Organisations in the Community and Linkages Outside

Within the Tamil and Muslim fishing communities, families arrange marriages within the community, failing which they obtain partners from neighbouring communities. Most of the marriages are between families within the district. In the case of sea fishermen there are instances where migratory Sinhalese fishermen have married women in the local community. In exceptional cases they have also settled down in Batticaloa. But many of them often have another family in the south.

The caste system is not strictly applied in the Batticaloa district compared to Jaffna, Mannar and Mullaitivu, especially between the Vellalar and Karaiyar communities. Social cross-caste mobility is common amongst Karaiyar (including Mukuvar and Thimilar) and Vellalar. However it is not usual for the fishing community to marry into the Pallar or Nalavar communities. Within the Muslim community this type of social mobility is higher.

As in Kandyan areas, a matriarchal family system had been in existence for several centuries before it was changed by the influence of colonial religions and administrative practices. Women usually take decisions on major family issues like marriages, education of children, investments (purchase of house, jewellery, etc.). Even a production-related investment needs the consent of women when funds are raised by pawning jewellery.

Children in most cases involve themselves in both production-related as well as household activities. Male children will typically help the father in fishing, repair of nets or picking fish for bait, while female children from a very young age help the mother in childcare and household activities. Drying fish is one major fishing-related activity women are involved in when there are glut landings.

Young women attaining puberty have quickly to be married off. The average age of young women marrying in the district is lower than the national average, which is around 24 years. In the fishing communities it is even lower. Girls in their teens are married off - and are often mothers before they are out of their teens. This situation was exacerbated in late 1989 and early 1990 by the forced conscription of the EPRLF Provincial Government, when young boys were picked up almost off the road and taken to training camps of the TNA. Married men were excluded from conscription. So quick marriages were a way to avoid conscription, and young men mostly in their teens were married to teenage girls during this period.

Most newly married couples live in the same village/community as their parents - usually in the village of the man. The close supportive role played by the family was evident during the recent conflict situation, when hundreds of men were either killed or arrested. Brothers, sisters and parents have supported young women who lost their husbands. According to



official figures, there are 3,102 next of kin eligible for compensation for losses incurred in the period before June 1990, and 2,601 for those in the period after June 1990 (BIRRP Office Batticaloa). Actual deaths are higher, and disappearances are not included in these figures. Given the extensive disruption to family and community life, women who have been widowed depend on close family and relatives for financial and emotional support.

Religious groups fulfil many socialising needs of the community to a considerable extent. Hindu kovils, especially the 3 week long thiruvilla (celebrations) held at each local kovil between June and August every year, provide the most important community event. Each day's thiruvilla is taken by a different section of the community of devotees, usually caste-based. In recent times, this arrangement provides the arena for demonstrating each group's economic strength, which, except on rare occasions when it turns violent, evokes a healthy competitive spirit amongst the social groups in the village.

For the Christians, especially the Roman Catholics who form the majority of Christian in the district, the church is the focal point of religious activities. The Catholic church, through its relief and rehabilitation organisation, Eastern Human and Economic Development (EHED) in Batticaloa, has worked with all religious communities, including the Muslims. For the Muslims, the mosque is the focal point of religious, social and political activities. In Kathankudy, the Federation of Mosques and Muslim Institutions, an umbrella body of about 64 institutions including business, trade and educational bodies, has emerged as the collective voice of the Muslim community in Kathankudy.

Other formal organisational structures in the community include:

Industrial Co-operative Societies	121
Secondary Co-operative Unions	3
Gramodaya Mandalayas	134
Rural Development Societies	275
Women Rural Development Societies	91
Multipurpose Co-operative Societies	137
Primary Multipurpose Co-operative Societies	14
Fisheries Co-operative Societies	93
Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies	208
School Co-operative Societies	35
Agrarian Service Centres	17
Agricultural Co-operatives	27
Other Co-operatives	20
Other Non-Governmental Organisations or Private Volunteer Organisations	42

Several of the above organisations have not been functioning in recent years, and some of them began functioning only since late 1991. The Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies (TCCS) have to a large extent been the most successful of the local organisations; they mobilise savings in the community, especially in the middle and lower middle classes. Some Rural Development Societies (RDS), four industrial co-operatives and Gramodaya Mandalayas have been active in the District. Most other institutions are controlled by a few, and manipulated to cater to private needs.

Markets for fish, garden produce, baskets, mats, cadjan, etc., are mostly outside the village community. Both retail and wholesale traders, in many cases Muslims, either purchase at the village itself or at the market centres in Kathankudy, Eravur, Chenkalady and Kaluvandikudy. Producers have direct links with the primary purchaser, who in turn has links either directly or through other traders to markets outside the district in Kalmunai, Vallaichchenai, Badulla, Kandy, Polonnoruwa and Colombo. Most of the primary buyers pay cash for their purchases, and the unit price paid for most of the goods is less than 50% of the retail value.

Most of the shops in the village sell goods on credit which, again, is an adjustment to the variable income of fishermen. But prices are high, and quality and weight are questionable. Even though fishermen and their wives would do their major shopping at the nearest market, the shop around the corner becomes handy for bread, tea, sugar, milk powder, condiments, etc., and purchases are usually for one time use only - just enough for family needs.

The market for crab cages and fish baskets, which are made locally, is very large within the district, and producers often sell directly to users. However mostly non-fishing communities produce these goods. Demand for low quality pots for the curd industry, as well as pots for household use, is high within the district. Temple festivals are the main marketing outlets for pottery and handicrafts, as most people purchase them only during these festivities. During the last few years, several young women have been trained in palmyrah handicraft to make both utility and ornamental items which are purchased by the Palmyrah Development Board and a few traders. Recently some of these items were exported to Europe, North America and Australia, and the quality of products in Batticaloa is considered to be good compared to that of items produced in other production centres in the country.

Conflict arbitration in the family involves relatives and elders in the village. In some cases, especially in Catholic communities, the priest is called in to settle issues. Within the Muslim community, the mosque plays an important role as the mediator. In addition, Mediation Boards have jurisdiction over a wide range of disputes in community life, and are quite effective. These have not been established in most of the Tamil areas, due to the current

situation.

Within the village, conflicts which cannot be settled by elders and individuals with influence, like the Grama Sevaka or the teacher in the village school, are taken to the Police and the courts. However, during the last eight years or so, Tamil militant organisations, particularly the LTTE, have been performing the role of arbiter in conflicts. The LTTE has even regular quasi-courts, where cases are heard and matters settled. Other militant organisations performed this function prior to June 1990 in their strongholds. Matters related to inter-village disputes and resource use have also been taken up by the LTTE. For example, the LTTE has imposed a total ban on cutting of mangroves and trees, and coral mining. In areas under their control they are effective in enforcing the ban, while elsewhere offenders are conscious of the ban, and they are confronted by the LTTE when possible.

Conflict over fishing related issues like overfishing, use of prohibited gear and fishing rights, often take a violent form and officials, politicians and the police have had to intervene. Since only a few individuals are directly involved in the conflict, the immediate act of violence or force becomes the focus, while the real issue is rarely handled immediately. The co-operative society sometimes becomes the forum for articulation of issues, while police and fishery officials become the enforcers.

Of a total population of 420,043, 230,450 (54%) are food stamp recipients in the district. The total value of food stamps per month is Rs 8,031,390. Following the beginning of hostilities between the LTTE and SLA in June 1990, dry rations to the value of Rs 4.9 m in 1990, Rs 192.4 m in 1991, Rs 130.8 m in 1992, and Rs 31.9 m in the first three months of 1993 have been issued to displaced people in the district. A total of 2,652 families were provided dry rations in 20 refugee camps or welfare centres in December 1992. Another 15,467 families who are displaced and are living with friends and relatives also received dry rations. Overall a large section of the community has come to depend on the State to provide basic food requirements.

The fact that 90,884 families were registered as affected/displaced and eligible for assistance in the pre-June 1990 period, and 103,778 families were registered as affected/displaced in the post-June 1990 period, shows the scale of disruption to community life in the district. (In the post-June 1990 period only 51,044 families have been registered as eligible for

assistance.) The District Reconstruction Coordinating Committee has assessed the post-June 1990 damage as follows:

	Rs. million
Agriculture	778.3
3012 Fishing boats	43.1
55,042 Houses	5843.3
Co-operatives	403.6
Government buildings	336.0
Vehicles	172.1
Total	7576.3

Assistance provided by Government was in the form of Rs 2,000 as settling-in allowance (SIA), and Rs 4,000 as Productive Enterprise Grant (PEG) for each eligible family.

In addition, payments were made to next of kin for death and injury.

	No. eligible	No. paid	Amount paid Rs. million	No.	Balance Amount (Rs. m)
SIA	62,100	35,477	23.23	26,623	100.96
PEG	49,069	10,002	4.58	39,067	191.69
Death	2,601	192	7.09	2,409	83.94
Injury	1,860	9	0.06	1,851	27.83

Even though some compensatory payments are made by Government, it is only a fraction of what people have lost.

Since large numbers were eligible for assistance, a considerable amount of time and energy has been spent in trying to obtain the assistance. The Government machinery has been extremely slow in responding to some of these immediate needs. In the fishing community, too, the majority of families were eligible for more than one form of assistance.

During the group and individual interviews, several older fishermen and women who were over 50 years of age were asked to compare the present conditions with those of their parents when they were young. Everyone mentioned that in the 1950s and 1960s the community was much smaller, and earnings were more than sufficient to maintain a family. They had all been owners of vallams and thonies, and spent a considerable time in fishing and related activity. A substantial number had owned/encroached agricultural land and cultivated paddy. Over the years, most of the agricultural land had either been sold or

abandoned, as fishing became more capital-intensive with new technology, government-assisted loans were available for investment in new craft and gear, and cultivation of paddy mainly for subsistence became uneconomical. Most of them claim that if educational opportunities had been available as they are today, they would have done 'something else' instead of fishing. For both sea and lagoon fishing communities, this period was associated with stronger community life, and characterised by supportive families and friends who helped each other out in times of need. They contrast the present conditions, of poverty and breakdown of community ties, with the period when they had been better off. Today, even if they have the will to help, they have no means to do so. With the increase in the number of fishermen, the catch per unit effort they claim has come down drastically. While fish prices have gone up, it has not compensated for inflation. Sea fishing communities have in general not experienced the social mobility of lagoon fishing communities, since educational opportunities were minimal.

### Management

The catch level is also influenced by the expertise of fishworkers. Due to the fact that owners of mechanised boats are capable of providing relatively high and regular incomes, they as a consequence are able to attract what they consider to be the skilled fishworkers. This places the owners of mechanised boats in a relatively advantageous position vis-a-vis those of non-mechanised crafts.

Migrant fishermen from the Southern coast not only employed fishworkers, but also possessed superior techniques in capture fishery. This provided the local fishworkers with a higher income. The Southerner is considered to be more skilled and daring by the locals; and they themselves attribute their lack of skills to the natural richness endowed by nature to the area, which did not demand that they should take risks out at sea. While there may be a grain of truth in the reasoning, the more likely explanation seems to be that mechanisation, which is a prerequisite to develop additional skills, did not come their way in abundance as it did for Western and Southern Sinhalese fishermen. The politicised nature of the fishery development programme pursued by the Government deprived them of ready capital and training necessary to acquire skills to be on a par with Southern fishermen. A few fishermen who seem to possess the skills also appear to have come and settled in Batticaloa in the post-independence period from Mannar or Mullaitivu.

Not only do fishermen of mechanised boats bring in a larger catch, but their composition of catch too displays an important difference. Mechanised crafts capture the largest proportion of high value big fish.

The income accruing to fishermen is computed on a share basis. After deductions from the total sales revenue are made for the cost of the outing (fuel, bait, meals, etc.), the balance

is divided into equal shares, including an additional share for boat and gear. Each member of the crew receives one share. The owner of the boat, and any member of the crew who advanced money for the fishing trip, each gets two shares - one as a fisherman, and the other as the investor.

Catch value is usually a function of the quantity landed, species content, and the day's market value. The larger the quantity of high value species like seer, paraw or koduwa, the higher the day's income. However, if there is a glut landing of even the high value species on any particular day, prices come down drastically.

Variations in levels of catch are reflected in the levels of average gross incomes of fishermen. Despite higher costs of fishing operations, the average net income of fishermen of 3½ ton boats is considerably higher than those of 17½ ft. boats, whose incomes in turn are higher than the non-mechanised boat operators. Whilst it is true that the net income of all fishermen is determined by the seasonal variations and market price of fish, the relative difference between incomes generated by different fishing technologies used could be said to be primarily a function of mechanisation and the number of nets used.

The capacity to trade in dry fish to compensate for glut landings is also proportionately higher amongst the wealthier fishermen. They are able to dry and store fish to be disposed of when the demand for dried fish is higher. Poorer fishermen lack capital and storage space in their smaller houses, and are forced to sell off dried fish within a few days, when the market price for dried fish could be unfavourable.

As elsewhere the crew are linked by kinship ties to owners of craft. Apart from hiring one or two outsiders who have demonstrated skill, others tend to be relatives of the owner in order to minimise losses through theft. Some of the owners of mechanised craft who had hired the entire crew outside kinship have had to give up operations, because the crew sold most of the catch at mid-sea and claimed that the catch was low on their return. Therefore owners who have no kinsmen to undertake fishing operations hire their boats and gear for a monthly fee or often sell them.

#### Fishermen Co-operative Societies

Fishermen Co-operative Societies in Sri Lanka were established by the DoF, under the purview of the Department of Co-operative Development. Fishermen co-operatives in Batticaloa were no exception. They were initiated not so much to induce 'co-operative action' amongst fishermen, but to use the institution to promote Government-sponsored development activities, as Rural Development Societies were used in the agricultural sector.

In Batticaloa, co-operatives in existence prior to June 1990 were all disrupted and most

became defunct. A concerted effort was undertaken by the DoF to reactivate co-operatives in late 1991 and early 1992. Consequently 107 societies were formed, with 75 of them registered with the Department of Co-operatives, with a total membership of 12,572. While initially there appeared to be only just under 300 fishermen who are not members of the co-operative societies, in fact a closer scrutiny revealed that up to 30% could be outside the co-operative societies, a vast majority of whom belong to the poorest segment of the community.

Of the members, about 10% are women members who are relatives of richer fishermen, and have been made members of the co-operative to boost the numbers. Some women members interviewed did not even know that they were members of the co-operative. This situation is a result of the new regulation that each co-operative should have a membership of at least 100 persons. Communities which do not have the required number of fishermen in a particular society have included female relatives as members. Since they are expected to pay Rs. 100/- each upon joining the co-operative, it is the wealthier fishermen who are able to include their female family members. Traders, rich fishermen, absentee fishermen, and individuals who have very little to do with the actual trade dominate co-operatives. Thus, a stated objective of establishing co-operatives - of replacing the exploitative middlemen/trading with co-operative societies - was not achieved.

The formation of co-operative societies and the membership drive appear to have another motive where the Department is concerned - that is, competition with Negombo, which has the largest membership. A pension scheme introduced by the Ministry recently is the basis for this competition. The Department in Batticaloa is keen to see that more fishermen join the scheme. Various rehabilitation assistance programmes are used as bait to induce fishermen to join co-operatives and join the pension scheme. This has had limited success.

Except for the members who are able to exert political and departmental influence, and consequently wield power in the co-operative societies, most others are skeptical about the functioning of these societies. Experience of societies being controlled by a few powerful people, who have benefitted from these societies, has left an impression that these societies too are corrupt. Several instances of corruption among office bearers and department officials were recalled by members.

The fact that the vast majority of fishermen are poor, less educated, and have to depend on day-to-day meagre earnings for their living, has placed them in a disadvantageous position vis-a-vis the richer fishermen, or the owners of the means of production. Fishermen can hardly spare the time to attend meetings and meet officials during the normal working hours, during which they are either working or retiring after a night out. Most of the poor fishermen and fishworkers either do not know what is happening in their co-operative or are not members. Some have been left out because they are unable to buy the share capital, and

others have kept away because they do not believe that the co-operatives will really help them, based on past experience.

Election of office bearers therefore automatically tilts in favour of the rich, influential and educated elite among the community. Participation in the fishermen's co-operatives has been the lowest within the co-operative system in the country (Table 4.5). Neither the Department of Fisheries nor the Department of Co-operative Development have addressed this issue with any conviction. Both Departments have been content to play the numbers game, of showing a large membership on paper. As with the case of Rural Development Societies in agriculture, the fishermen's co-operatives, too, could not work against the established power structure in the villages, and were co-opted by the elite. The state could not reach the poorer fishermen through the co-operatives as intended.

Unfortunately, exceptions are few. A handful of societies have progressed along co-operative lines. A strong leadership was evident where co-operatives were active. Leadership also often came from outside the actual fishing community from people who are educated, have access to information and officials and can afford to spend their time in the society activity.

### Women

Unlike in most fishing communities elsewhere, in Batticaloa women are not involved in fishing-related activities except in a couple of villages. In Kallar and Kaluvenkerni women engage in the marketing of fish to a significant extent. Usually widows and single mothers are engaged in marketing in the local marketplace, or carry fish in baskets to sell in nearby villages. This takes up the entire morning hours for women in Kaluvenkerni, who finish up with purchases for the day's cooking, usually after 1 p.m.

Collection of firewood for their own use and for sale to neighbours is usually undertaken by groups of women who walk 2-6 miles for their collection two or three times a week. Each trip provides them with an opportunity to meet each other, and is considered a social event. Women who undertake this task are reluctant to miss even a day, mainly due to the social value of these outings. Each trip could take 2-4 hours, and is undertaken in the early afternoon.

Women become mothers at a very young age, and an unplanned family soon becomes a burden. As children get older, the girl child of six or seven sometimes has to take care of younger siblings, at the expense of her own schooling. Unlike in several other fishing communities in Sri Lanka, in Batticaloa women spend most of their time doing household chores.



Hand milling of rice, making rice flakes, preparation of kadaiappam (breakfast food like hoppers, string hoppers, puttu and rotti) for sale, and catering to small eating houses in the village or landing sites which fishermen frequent, are also undertaken by women. A few have a sewing machine with which they service local orders.

Mat weaving, basket making (cane and palmyrah) and cadjan making are also activities through which women supplement family incomes.

Toddy and arrack sale in fishing villages interestingly are also largely managed by women, usually widows. These women earn very high incomes compared to others.

Amongst lagoon fishing families quite a few women and children pick clams, boil and shell them to be sold in the local market. Even though the price is very low, and the labour time-consuming, clam shells are sold to lime kilns which supply lime to the construction industry. Since there is a ban on mining corals the demand for clam shells is high.

In Kallar a tiny shrimp (kooni) is almost exclusively caught and marketed by women. Kooni is caught in very shallow waters in the lagoon, usually using a sheet of cloth.

When water and land is available along the lagoon, some women undertake home gardening, poultry and animal husbandry (cows for milk and goats for meat).

- Women plan and undertake large household investments like purchasing a radio, extensions or periodic repairs to the house or investment in jewellery. They also control family savings placed in cheetu.

## 5.6 Savings and Credit

Cheetu is an informal system of saving, involving a group of people who have trust in each other. Usually women are the members of the cheetu groups, which were the forerunner of the institutionalised TCCS of today. For the poor, cheetu is the most important source of savings for planned activities like buying jewellery, repairs to the house, expenditure for weddings and other celebrations, and even for production-oriented activity.

Each woman would join a day cheetu of Rs 1-5/=, weekly cheetus of around Rs 50/=, or a monthly cheetu for up to Rs 500/=. Depending on the number of people involved in the cheetu, the saving component is high. One's turn to draw on the savings is determined by lots drawn on the first day. The person who operates the cheetu has the choice of any draw. A much more complicated bid system is also used, where the lowest bidder gets the cheetu, but is liable to pay the full amount in the subsequent draws.

The pawning of jewellery when the need arises is the most popular and quick way of raising ready cash. Established pawn brokers, as well as wealthy individuals in the community, provide this service at interest rates ranging from 36% to 120%. At the community level, people will speak of 3% and 10% interest, which is the interest per month rather than per year.

Primary fish buyers who act as moneylenders and traditional money lenders in the fishing communities have had a long relationship with fishermen and know the problem of fishermen. They understand the environmental constraints and usually adapt to short-term, unpredictable variability of catch by permitting flexibility in repayment of loans. The relationship is that of a benefactor who understands and makes adjustments.

Traditional source of credit for fishermen was the trader/middlemen and big trading mudalalis, who loaned to fishermen for both production-related and consumption needs. With the advent of the mechanisation programme in the mid 1950's, a manifestation of economic underdevelopment was soon encountered. Most of the artisanal fishermen, being subsistence fishermen, lacked the risk bearing capacity to invest in mechanisation. But the traditional money lenders were reluctant to extend credit to a new untested fishing strategy, and the value of investment required was well beyond their capacity to service. At the same time, commercial banks, which were expected to adopt a 'development perspective' and provide credit to small fishermen to upgrade technologies, imposed stringent conditions which excluded the majority of poor fishermen from being creditworthy. From the banks' perspective, the richer fishermen, who were least in need of credit, were defined as the most eligible for credit. Smaller fishermen, all of whom are food stamp holders, still rely on the cheetu system for funds for production-related investments, mostly for nets, the cost of which could vary between Rs. 600/- and Rs. 6000/-. The other sources are a wealthier relative or a money lender in the village. The interest rates charged vary between 36% in some cases, to 120% in others.

Predictably, the rich fishermen became richer, and the poor fishermen became poorer. Allegedly to benefit poor fishermen, credit on easy terms was channelled through the Fishermen's Co-operatives. But a majority of beneficiaries were again the richer fishermen, who controlled the co-operatives. Not surprisingly the co-operatives could not ensure full repayment of loans in most instances. In the end the loans were written off by government as a means of extending local political patronage, a practice already widely adopted in agriculture.

From the late 1970's onwards, when there was considerable expansion in the export of sea food (prawns, shrimps, cuttlefish and crabs) from Sri Lanka, large export companies moved in with credit in the form of cash advances through their purchasing agents. This credit was available to both lagoon and sea fishermen. This brought in a boom in the incomes of

fishermen, albeit only during a short period each year, because the prices paid by the exporters were several times higher than the prices obtained in the local market. This was also accompanied by an increase in the number of fishermen, particularly in the lagoon during the season for prawns.

The uncertain security situation in the district during the last few years drastically reduced the supply for export. This, together with restrictions in fishing activities, have been disincentives to the large export-oriented companies, which no longer extend credit.

In Batticaloa district, the level of loan disbursement is only about 20% of, say, Trincomalee district. For example, only one multi-day deep sea going boat has been approved for Batticaloa, while Trincomalee has obtained approval for 24. The reasons for this disproportionate treatment are attributed partly to political considerations based on ethnic factors, and partly to the security situation prevailing in the district.

To support poorer fishermen, a few informal credit organisations, like the TCCS and Savings Clubs, have emerged. The Savings Clubs were set up by NGOs.

### 5.7 Marketing

The market for fish is very attractive in Batticaloa as in the rest of the island. Fish culture in inland irrigation tanks was promoted by the Government for several years; but it was abandoned in 1990 for religio-political reasons. This has decreased the supply of fish inland severalfold. A further reason for high and rising market price for fish is the disruption of the traditional supply of fish from Mannar, Jaffna, Mallaitivu, and Trincomalee areas due to security operations. The consequent reduction in fish supply pushed prices up, well beyond the reach of the poor in the country. Even landing sites situated a few kilometres outside Batticaloa town are frequently unable to access their usual markets. The situation is expected to improve as hostilities reduce.

However, a high market price does not mean that the fishermen receive high prices for their catch. Traditionally the big mudalalis came from the Sinhalese and Muslim communities. The continuing war had disrupted this marketing channel. As a result, a few traders dominate the Batticaloa market. They, through their purchasing agents, buy fish, sold by auction at the landing sites. Lack of competitive buying at the landing sites has kept prices low. Even though small fishermen would get a higher price at the market, most of them don't sell at the market themselves: they lack the confidence necessary to sell at the market, and cannot devote sufficient time for marketing without infringing on their work and rest hours. Therefore the general preference is to sell it to the highest bidder at the landing site.

In lagoon fishing, prawns, shrimps and crabs have a market outside the district, but only for

a short season; fish is sold almost exclusively in the local market. The preference for lagoon fish outside the district is low, and hardly any lagoon fish is taken to markets outside. Their potential is almost entirely within the district for local consumption, or at best in areas adjoining the district.

Many of the lagoon fishermen sell their catch to small traders, who each trade in a particular area on bicycles. A few undertake their own marketing, retailing in village markets or at certain spots within villages. Marketing is almost entirely done by men except in a few places like Kallar and Kaluvankerni, where women too engage in marketing activities. On the whole, Batticaloa is unlike other places in the island where women play a major role in marketing. The relationships with the small traders are usually on the basis of a sale and best price paid, although the practice of fishermen giving their catch to the traders on credit is not uncommon. Lagoon fishermen also trade within the community where the bait for crabs for example, is caught and sold to fishermen who specialise in crab traps.

In general, artisanal fishermen face major constraints. The first is the non-availability of ice, which is necessary to preserve the fish. Secondly, transport difficulties arising from restriction of movement of vehicles and delay at military checkpoints hamper shipments. Both these constraints could be viewed as temporary obstacles which may be removed as security conditions improve. But a more serious long-term problem is the fairly rapid increase in the cost of fishing operations without a corresponding rise in prices received by fishermen. Here immediate action is required to arrest the otherwise certain impoverishment of the fishing community.

## 6. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### 6.1 Fishing community needs and aspirations

A striking feature of fishing communities in Batticaloa was the neglect of children's needs from a very young age. From personal hygiene to proper health care, the needs of the young child were neglected. In a majority of villages, facilities for pre-school education is non-existent. If a child is ill, the mother usually take the child to a government medical institution, which is often situated several miles away. The mother and sick child would either have to catch a bus, which is irregular, or be forced to walk a long way.

Housing is one of the priority needs expressed by men and women in the community. For the poor, 200 ft<sup>2</sup> space with a cadjan roof is a big house. It is estimated that the population in the district spend Rs 50 m annually to buy cadjan. Because the 1978 cyclone destroyed a large number of coconut trees, most of the cadjan is now brought from outside the district. Annual house repairs before the monsoon starts is a ritual expenditure most fishing families

have to incur. The million houses programme of the government has been implemented in a few villages. But structures built are unsuitable to local climatic conditions. Even elementary needs of hygiene have been overlooked; for instance, the new constructions do not possess toilets and drinking water facilities. Most men would use the bush or the beach, while women use the bush, and children anywhere. Health problems associated with faecal pollution are quite common in fishing communities.

School drop-out rate in the sea fishing community is high for both boys and girls. Most of these youths have very little opportunity outside the fishing sector to make a living. Young children, who drop out of school to help their parents, have no opportunity for basic education, since the school system does not cater to their special needs. Opportunities to learn other skills are almost non-existent for most of the young people, who have missed out on formal schooling. For young women, too, training opportunities to access jobs, or even to earn additional income, are limited to perhaps sewing.

The coastal environment where most sea fishing communities live is exposed to the sea and the sun. The 1978 cyclone felled most of the tree cover, which had given some protection from the elements. The almost total lack of any protection from the wind, and the flat terrain with soils that are classified as regosols on recent beach and dune sands, are not conducive to home gardening. Deforestation by both natural and human agents has depleted vegetation near villages. So women are forced to travel an hour or two on foot to collect firewood.

Most women are not actively involved in fishery co-operatives. They participate in religious and community activity like death, marriage, attainment of puberty, etc., where collective organisational skills are at play. But there are very few institutional arrangements specifically for women. The cheetu group is the main community organisation they participate in with a great degree of enthusiasm.

The marketing of fish outside the district is entirely in the hands of big fish mudalalis. Even though catch levels have come down, there is a surplus that can be sold in markets outside the district. Availability of ice and transportation are two major constraints to marketing. While high value fish earns high incomes, low value species caught in the coastal waters, which are the major component of the catch, fetch very low prices.

There is a great market potential for dry fish which is sand free and of good quality. But very little of this quality dry fish is produced. Even though the price difference between good and bad quality dry fish is substantial, marketing mechanisms and the cost of capital tied up with purchase, drying and storage cannot be absorbed by most fishermen. Often quality suffers, and the dried fish is sold as quickly as possible, sometimes at 25% to 40% of the retail market price.

## 6.2 Existing socio-economic arrangements

Co-operatives have not been able to compete with middlemen, who provide efficient marketing and other services to fishermen. The purchasing centre operated by the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation did to some extent offer better prices and nudge the purchase price of middlemen higher. This price regulation has, however, broken down when the Fish Processing complex run by the corporation was closed and purchases were discontinued.

When fishermen were asked why they sell to one middleman rather than another, 52% of fishermen interviewed responded that choice was determined by prices offered, 36% responded that the middleman provided assistance such as a loan. More fishermen from the rural areas responded that middlemen provided 'help' compared to urban fishermen. 'Help' included providing spares and storage in a freezer (Table 4.7.). Other responses were that the middleman was a friend who always buys and is fair in pricing; less than 5% said that they owed money to the middleman.

If co-operatives had to compete with the middlemen they would have to fulfill at least some of these needs.

Traditional fishing grounds of communities are respected, and generally conflicts do not arise from infringement of these community rights. However use of certain gear like disco-nets, which are directly detrimental to the fishing prospects of others, does lead to violent conflict. Due to the security situation, certain communities have been forced to fish in areas traditionally used by other communities. This has caused some friction between them, especially when the newcomer used superior technology.

## 6.3 Needs as expressed by fishermen

The following are needs as expressed by fishermen on fishing related activities.

### a. **Supply and availability of ice**

Most of the ice plants in the Batticaloa and adjoining districts have been damaged or are now not in use. Availability of ice would enhance the quality of fish when it reaches the market.

### b. **Credit and repayment schedules for fishermen**

All credit schemes should be re-evaluated on the basis of organisational capacity of the channelling institution and the seasonal variations in income of fishermen.

c. **Vaadis at landing sites**

Construction of small vaadis at landing sites will enable fishermen to meet and discuss on a continuing basis. This will help co-operative action and accountability.

d. **Enforcement of the prohibited gear laws**

Especially in the lagoon, the use of drift nets and gill nets are prohibited. Users of these nets infringe on the resource of small fishermen using cast nets. In addition, the use of petromax lamps in the lagoon, which adversely affects prawn and fish fingerling, should be prohibited.

e. **Opening of the estuary at Muhathuvaram**

The opening at the Muhathuvaram end of the lagoon where it meets the sea remains closed during five months of the year. This reduces the salinity of the lagoon water and prevents the flow of water, which fishermen are convinced is a major reason for the dwindling of fish resources in the lagoon. This may be so, but an in-depth study on the subject should be undertaken before any concrete steps are taken to keep the Muhathuvaram open for longer periods and alter the natural phenomenon, as it could have a far reaching effect on the ecosystem of the lagoon.

6.4 Some Constraints to participation

- a. It is generally believed that fishing communities are homogenous, cohesive groups. The communities themselves have, to some extent, internalised this myth, which permits political patronage based on caste alliances and turns these communities into vote blocks. Any proper organisation within the community will necessarily expose the myth of cohesiveness, which in turn will limit political patronage.
- b. Social differentiation within the communities will make it increasingly difficult for poorer fishermen to effectively participate in institutionalised decision making processes, and any community-wide organisation will be controlled by the community elite.
- c. Within a community, the conflict of interest between users of different technologies may result in all sections not participating in a single community-wide organisation.
- d. As organisational matters require the investment of time to attend meetings,

gather information, follow-up, contacts with external agencies etc., the poorer sections may find it difficult to contribute their time. Again the wealthier members of the community will tend to control the organisation.

- e. The majority of fishermen depend on a few moneylenders for their production related and other credit needs. These are usually mudalalis and their agents, who are the centre of effective social grouping, and control decision-making.
- f. The increase in the complexity of the technology used also means that advances in technology tend to tighten the link between those who are able to finance long term and emergency needs and the richer fishermen, who can avail themselves of this facility.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Conclusions

Fishing communities in Batticaloa have undergone radical socio-economic changes during the last three decades. Community control over, and almost exclusive access to, traditional fishing grounds and coastal resources with community-based institutional structures and support mechanisms have given way to market forces determining every aspect of community life. In one sense it is useful to even ask the question - is there a community as it used to be? These changes have occurred both through government intervention in fishery development and the opening up of export markets for prawns, shrimps, cuttlefish and crabs in Japan, the USA and Europe. As significant amounts of earnings began to accrue to the fishery sector through export markets, consumer demands in Tokyo and New York, rather than Colombo, dictated the development of the sector and began influencing community life.

The attempt to modernise the traditional, artisanal fishing technology by the introduction of mechanised craft and nylon nets, and the establishment of co-operatives with policy priorities determined by government, have all contributed to the undermining of traditional institutions' resource management practices and artisanal technologies. The development objective of raising catch levels to meet the demands of a growing population did increase the supply of fish, but in the process artisanal fishing communities have been rendered poor, and, in some cases, destitute.

The introduction of high value and relatively sophisticated technologies into the sector also undermined the traditional use rights enjoyed by fishing communities. Because, most members of the community could not manage the new technologies and had little option except to allow the intrusion of investors who were better skilled in managing new capital-



intensive methods.

With the increase in capital investment for modern fishing operations, the social composition of owners and operators of larger vessels has changed. Presently ownership patterns of large vessels and karai valai has changed to the hands of non-fishermen in the communities, big traders or fish mudalalis, and in some cases investors from outside the fishery sector like transporters and ice-factory owners. Although violent conflicts between trawlers and artisanal fishermen are not as intense as in many other parts of the country, growing inequalities in wealth and income have aggravated social tensions which are in many ways an extension of resource conflict at sea.

Despite government development efforts from the early 1960s, fishing communities have not been able to change their status, of being at the bottom of the social and economic scale. The surplus, either in local or export marketing, accrues not to fishermen but to intermediaries. Marketing mechanisms are consciously kept that way to enable the middlemen to reap profits, while fishermen stay impoverished. Credit availability and access favour the wealthy. Even when credit is made available to individuals who are from the poorer sections, institutional mechanisms operate against capital accumulation by the weaker segment of the community.

The fishermen's co-operative has failed to earn the trust of poorer fishermen as a mechanism for improving their lot. Co-operatives are largely controlled by wealthy mudalalis, or individuals from the community who have no real involvement in the activity of fishing. Officials of the DoF and Co-operative Development set priorities, and determine the manner in which the societies are run. Very often it is the State priorities that assume importance, as opposed to needs of fishermen.

The decline in real incomes for small-scale fishermen has increased the need of the community to find alternative sources of income. As opportunities are limited in the district, even with better access to educational facilities the younger generation face an uncertain future. They are neither absorbed into fishing nor able to compete successfully with youth from socially mobile sections of the larger society.

It is very unlikely that alternative employment and income-earning opportunities for the youth could be found in the short term in other sectors of the economy. Therefore alternatives should be sought within the fishery sector.

More specifically, institutional arrangements for marketing would have to be established to ensure that at least a majority of fishermen receive a fair market price. Traditional fishing rights should be strengthened to protect the coastal fishing grounds of fishing communities from large-scale investors from outside these communities. Alternative credit arrangements,

which will take into consideration the particular needs of artisanal fishermen, cannot be left to the commercial banking sector. The credit institution and availability should be closer to the community rather than the credit-worthy individual.

The near demise of community-based resource management practices, especially in the lagoon environment, has seriously threatened sustainable use of an important resource base. Siltation, urban waste, chemicals from industrial and agricultural activity, are serious threats to the delicate lagoonal ecosystem. Environmental rehabilitation of the lagoon is imperative to ensure that its resources will continue to sustain future generations.

Health (housing, water, sanitation) and infrastructure facilities are poor amongst fishing communities. Access to health facilities will help improve community life.

While access to basic education is available, in many cases it was observed that the drop-out rate in primary schools, especially of boys belonging to the sea fishing community was high. Poverty is the main reason attributed to children not continuing studies. Although it is known that many such children work to supplement family income, educational institutions do not take this fact into account. Consequently, the school time clashes with that for earning an income, and many children are forced to abandon schooling since supplementary family income is the more immediate need.

Access to training facilities for young people, both men and women, is poor. Opportunities for specific skills-oriented training will enhance their chance of survival.

Specialised processing and marketing of some of the exotic items caught or picked by women like kooni or clam could add value severalfold and enhance income of women already engaged in the activity and may encourage others to follow.

The current security situation is far from being normal. People have learnt to adjust to long-term and arbitrary restrictions placed on community life and their livelihood. Even though the district is supposed to be a cleared area and civil administration is supposed to have returned to normal, in fact civil administration to a large extent works under military authority. If the war continues, it is likely that military authority will determine priorities in the near future, and restrictions will continue with superficial concessions.

Generally the population and particularly the fishermen do not feel confident that any major investment is worthwhile. But they have to continue fishing, as it is their livelihood. Confidence in borrowing and repaying for productive activity is low.

## 7.2 Recommendations

1. The fishermen's co-operative societies have failed to assist the poorer sections of the community. Alternative organisational structures, based on local community groups, need to be established or strengthened. These organisations should include women, and credit should be channelled through these structures.
2. Policy decisions at the highest levels should be taken to ensure that only fishermen have access to technology and credit for fishing.
3. Young people in the community need to be provided with training within the fishery sector in deep sea fishing, motor mechanics, boat repair and building, etc. The long-term need will be also to provide training outside the fishery sector.
4. The lagoon is being overfished - with over 2,000 boats and 7,000 fishermen operating in the Batticaloa lagoon alone. For sustainable exploitation of this rich resource base, the lagoon environment needs to be protected and rehabilitated. Issues of pollution from industrial and agricultural effluents and urban waste need to be addressed. It is more important to protect the resource base than provide boats and gear for the lagoon.
5. The service sector in fishery needs to be strengthened. Particularly, availability of ice and cool room facilities, together with marketing mechanisms which enable fishermen to receive higher prices for their catch, should be considered.
6. Specialised processing and marketing of exotic items caught and picked by women like kooni and clam should be considered. Better methods of drying fish could add value.
7. Alternative educational opportunities for young school drop-outs should be given in their own villages.
8. Social infrastructure and housing construction should be improved. Training members of the community in construction will enable alternative skills to be developed as well as enhance incomes.
9. Coastal resources are being depleted, and the coastal environment is being damaged mainly by activities further inland. Artificial reefs, etc., may help to

increase the coastal potential. A concerted effort must be directed towards controlling pollution, deforestation and soil erosion.

10. Alternative sources of fuelwood and fuelwood saving methods should be introduced.
11. Prawn culture could be undertaken. Instead of the capital-intensive methods employed in large farms, low-capital 'backyard' prawn farming techniques may be more appropriate.
12. Traditional resource management methods should be documented; the possibilities of reintroducing them to suit present socio-economic relations should be explored.

ANNEXES

## METHODOLOGY

The main objectives of the study were to:

- (a) prioritise participatively the real needs of the fishing community
- (b) assess the realism of commencing small-scale economic activities in the context of these needs and priorities, given the current unstable conditions.

The investigation was expected to cover both lagoon and sea fishing in the district of Batticaloa. Communities using the lagoon and sea were clearly identifiable. There were some communities where fishermen who used the lagoon and sea were mixed. It was anticipated that fishing communities using both areas would present a different set of problems.

As ITDG was planning to work with SEDEC, which in Batticaloa worked through the EHED, the developmental arm of the Catholic Church, it was agreed between MANDRU and ITDG that in selecting fishing communities for the study, EHED should be consulted so that communities where EHED was able to work would be included. Consequently discussions were held between EHED and MANDRU to decide on the communities which were to be included in the study. EHED's preferences were Thannamunai, Aarapathai, Manjanthoduvai, Bar Road and Kathankudy. Aarapathai and Manjanthoduvai were majority Hindu communities, Kathankudy 100% Muslim, and Thannamunai and Bar Road majority Catholic. It was also agreed to include Morakkottanchenai which was about 14 miles north of Batticaloa and Kallar about 20 miles south of Batticaloa - as the furthest points along the 105 km coastline of the district.

Fishing communities included in the final survey are Thevapuram (Morakkottanchenai), Kaluvenkerni, Pankudaveli, Thannamunai, Paalameenmadu, Puthumuhathuvaram, Amirthakali, Navatkudah, Kallady, Palamunai (Kathankudy), Aarapathai, Manjanthoduvai and Kallar.

Communities were also identified on the following basis. Kaluthavalai because it is one of the largest fishing villages in the district, Aarapathai and Manjanthoduvai because of their close proximity to Muslim fishing communities. Pankudaveli because it is situated west of the lagoon, Navatkudah because of its active Fishermen's co-op., and Kallady, Amirthakali and Puthumuhathuvaram because of their urban setting.

#### Selection of fishing families

This was relatively uncomplicated as most of the poorer fishermen lived clustered together. In each village, 2 to 3 informants were first approached to select up to 20 poor fishermen. Most of the informants were individuals who had been associated with MANDRU on the survey conducted jointly by the Eastern University and MANDRU. They were reliable and had shown interest in the development of the village. In each village at least one office bearer of the fishermen's co-operative was interviewed. Ownership of productive assets, which indicated the wealth of fishermen, was used for wealth ranking fishermen. Four such ranks were decided after a preliminary survey.

Absentee Fishermen :- Usually owners of 3½ ton boats, 17½ ft. boat with outboard and owners of more than one boat, who do not directly engage in fish capture.

Rich Fishermen :- Directly engage in fish capture and own 3½ boats, 17½ ft boats with outboards and beach seines.

Middle :- Owners of vallams and other gear and fishworkers in 3½ ton and 17½ boats.

Poor :- Fishworkers employed on crafts and in beach seine and fishermen with few productive assets.

In tables in the following sections, income groups have been divided as follows:

I	>10,000/= per month
II	5,000-10,000/= per month
III	1,500-5,000/= per month
IV	<1,500/= per month

All categories were interviewed. However 90% were from the middle and poor groups - see Table 3.1.1.

### Individual Interviews

Interviews were conducted with all members of the family in most cases. In some instances 2 or more other fishermen joined in the interviews. A checklist of questions was used in each interview. The questions were framed as follows.

1. Household details: How many people? Who? Educational levels? What form of fishing? With whom? On what basis? What other incomes and employment opportunities? Income levels? Time spent on fishing? Expenditure related to food, education medicine?

Observations relating to the house and facilities like well, toilet, electricity, furniture were recorded.

2. Co-operatives and other organisations: Membership in fishermen's co-op? What other organisations? Why? What benefits? Level of involvement? Relationship with DOF, Banks? Before and After.

3. Productive Assets: What productive assets are owned? What are rented? From whom? How much? Repair costs? Responsibility? What are the needs related to fishing activity? What have you done to fulfill these needs? Who makes gear? Historical variation in activity?

4. Marketing: How do you market? If to a trader or traders, why? What are the relationships with traders? What are the marketing problems?

5. Fishing Grounds: What is your fishing ground? What problems do you encounter with other fishermen? How do you solve this? Restrictions and use of gear? How can beneficial prohibition be implemented? Any problem with migratory fishermen? How do you solve this?

6. Expectations: What are your expectations for your family? Children? Any plans for other forms of earning an income? What?

7. Security Conditions: How have you been affected by the security situation? Before and after June 1990?

8. Credit: Any attempts to get loans? From whom? Why? Can you repay? Do you usually borrow? From whom?

9. Women: What do the women do? Time spent on housekeeping? Other? What activities related to fishing do you get involved in? Involvement in any organisations? What other productive activity? Your expectations? For the children? What are your immediate and long term needs?

Each interview usually took about 1 to 1½ hours.

### **Group interviews**

At least 2 group interviews in each village were conducted. In addition, exclusively women were interviewed in groups in Pankudaveli, Puthumuhathuvaram, Thevapuram (Morakkotanchenai) and Manjanthoduvai.

Group interview focus was mainly on collective problems relating to security, work, credit, co-operatives, marketing, constraints to long term fishing activity and needs. Women's groups focus was on work, alternatives, perceived needs and community support systems.

### **Key Informants :**

In each village two key informants were chosen on the basis of the researchers' prior contacts with them. In addition, officers of the Department of Fisheries, Bank Managers (People's Bank, Bank of Ceylon), selected traders, the Planning Officer, Batticaloa kachcheri and a range of NGO representatives were interviewed. Four selected presidents of co-operative societies were also interviewed.

TABLE 1 - POPULATION

1.1 Population projections for 1990 by ethnic group and religion

Buddhists	2.7%	1,134	Sinhalese	3.22%	13,525
Hindus	66.2%	278,068	Tamils	70.82%	297,475
Muslims	24.1%	101,230	Moors	23.97%	100,684
R.Catholic	5.8%	24,363	Ind.Tamils	1.17%	4,915
Christians	1.1%	4,621	Malays	0.02%	84
Others	0.1%	420	Others	0.11%	462
100%		420,043	100%		420,043

1.2 Population projection for 1990 by age

Age composition	Number	Percentage
0-14	180,913	43
15-64	226,949	54
65 & over	12,181	3

1.3 Other population statistical projections for 1990

Fertility rate	3.6
Birth rate	30.3 per 1000
Death rate	5.4 per 1000
Infant mortality	8 per 1000
Population density	151/km <sup>2</sup>

Source: Batticaloa Kachcheri; projections for 1990 based on 1981 Census



TABLE 2 - USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

	ha.	%
Homesteads	37,510	2.8
Coconut	3,860	1.5
Perennial crops	3,570	1.4
Paddy	67,320	25.6
Sparingly used crop lands	38,920	14.8
Other crop land	360	0.1
Forest land	53,750	20.2
Range land	50,280	19.1
Inland water bodies	24,400	9.3
Barren land	12,470	4.7
Urban	1,370	0.5

Source: Batticaloa Kachcheri, 1990

TABLE 3 - FISHING POPULATION

Fisheries Inspection Division	No. of Landing Centres	No. of Villages	Fishing Families	Active F/men	Lagoon F/Men	Sea F/men	Fishing Population
Vahanai	13	19	1,778	1,892	710	1,182	8,801
V'chenai W	14	11	1,171	1,185	322	863	5,855
V'chenai E	11	19	2,256	2,305	805	1,500	11,480
Chenkalady	8	10	1,671	1,780	510	1,270	8,355
Batti N	25	28	2,017	2,127	1,015	1,112	10,085
Batti W	8	11	678	754	754	-	3,490
Kattankudy	3	4	608	658	304	354	3,040
Batti S	12	12	1,088	1,168	463	705	5,440
Kaluvanchikudy	22	14	1,616	1,810	585	1,225	8,080
Vellavelvy	7	7	885	925	925	-	4,425
Paddipalai	14	11	850	895	895	-	4,250
TOTAL	137	146	14,638	15,499	7,288	8,211	73,101

Source: Batticaloa Kachcheri, 1990

TABLE 4 - INFORMATION FROM INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS  
(TOTAL INTERVIEWS 195; INTERVIEWS HELD SEPT/OCT 1992)

4.1 Location and income range of individuals interviewed

INTERVIEWS (Total Interviews: 195)

		I >10,000/=	II 4 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Thevapuram	S	1	2	2	14
Kaluvankerni	S	2	2	6	12
Palamunai	S	2	2	2	8
Puthumhathuvaram	(L	-	-	6	7
	(S	2	2	4	6
Thannamunai	L	-	-	1	7
Kallar	(L	-	-	3	8
	(S	1	2	6	6
Aarappathai	L	-	-	3	11
Maryanthudurai	L	-	-	-	13
Amirthakali	(L	-	-	2	6
	(S	-	-	2	4
Naratkuda	L	-	-	4	9
Paalameenmadu	(L	-	-	3	11
	(S	-	1	1	9
TOTAL	(L	-	-	22	72
	(S	8	11	23	59

S = Sea

L = Lagoon

Table 4.2 Ownership of productive assets

	I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Own boat and gear	8	11	41	49
Rent boat and gear	-	-	4	37
Own nets <3,000/=	-	-	-	76

Table 4.3 Household detail

## 4.3.1 Assets

	I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Own house	8	10	36	101
Agricultural land	4	5	21	18
Motor vehicle	3	2	7	1
Bicycle	8	11	45	84
Jewellery	8	11	45	93
Radio	8	11	40	67
TV	7	9	12	4
VCR	5	6	4	-

Table 4.3.2 Educational Attainment

		I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Below year III	L	-	-	6	21
	S	-	4	10	23
Between year III & V	L	-	-	9	42
	S	1	4	8	21
Between year VI & VIII	L	-	-	3	7
	S	4	3	5	14
GCE O level	L	-	-	3	2
	S	3	-	-	1
GCE A level	L	-	-	1	-
	S	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	L	-	-	22	72
	S	8	11	23	59

Table 4.3.3 Housing Information

		I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
<b>HOUSE</b>					
brick walls/tiled roof	L	-	-	2	2
	S	7	8	3	2
brick walls/cadjan roof	L	-	-	9	21
	S	1	3	6	15
cadjan hut	L	-	-	11	49
	S	-	-	14	42
<b>WATER &amp; SANITATION</b>					
own well		7	9	24	34
share well		1	2	21	97
toilets		8	10	16	28
no toilets		-	1	29	103

Table 4.3.4 Source of Income outside fishing activity

	I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Business	3	-	-	-
Agriculture	4	2	4	4
Trading	3	6	5	7
Labour	-	-	24	48
Firewood sale	-	-	5	12
No other source	1	5	21	61

Table 4.4 Expectations for Children

	I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Fishing	-	-	7	29
Other skills	1	4	3	34
Education	7	7	35	68

Table 4.5 Co-operative Membership/Accounts

	I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Member of Co-op	7	9	32	79
Relationship with DoF	8	11	34	63
Have Bank Account	6	8	18	33
Co-op is beneficial	6	9	24	41

Table 4.6 Primary source for credit

	I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Bank	6	7	8	6
Mudalali/trader	2	2	3	11
Relatives	-	-	4	24
Pawn jewellery	-	1	18	51
Cheetu	-	1	12	39

Table 4.7 Trading

	I >10,000/=	II 5-10,000/=	III 1,500-5,000/=	IV <1,500/=
Sell to the same trader	4	6	21	47
Sell themselves	-	1	3	29
Sell to the same trader because:				
- he pays a good price	-	-	2	9
- advances money	-	2	3	11
- buys regularly	3	1	6	4
- pays immediately	1	3	9	14
- lends for other purposes also	-	-	1	9

Table 4.8 Activity: Individual and Family

		paddy cultiva- tion	fish trading	agri. labour	garden produce	fire- wood sale	handi- crafts	casual labour	sea shell	dry fish	small busi- ness
Thevapuram	I	x	x							x	
	II		x								x
	III		x							x	x
	IV		x	x		x		x	x		x
Kaluvankemi	I		x							x	
	II	x	x							x	x
	III	x	x		x	x		x		x	x
	IV		x	x		x		x		x	x
Palamunai	I	x	x				x			x	
	II	x					x			x	x
	III						x	x			x
	IV	x	x	x			x	x			x
Pathumukath- uvaram	I		x								x
	II		x							x	x
	III		x					x			x
	IV		x					x			x
Thanmamunai	I										
	II										
	III	x	x		x				x		x
	IV		x				x	x	x		
Kallar	I		x								x
	II		x								
	III		x					x	x	x	x
	IV		x					x	x	x	
Aarappathai	I										
	II										
	III	x	x	x			x	x		x	
	IV		x	x			x	x			
Manjanthoduvai	I										
	II										
	III										
	IV		x	x			x	x			x
Amirthakali	I										
	II										
	III		x					x		x	x
	IV		x			x				x	
Navatkuda	I										
	II										
	III	x	x					x			x
	IV					x	x	x			x
Paalameenmadu	I										
	II		x								x
	III		x				x	x			x
	IV		x			x	x	x			
Pankudaveli		x	x	x	x		x	x			x

## 4.9 Sea Fish caught by month

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Parai (Trevally)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Sura (Shark)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					
Thirukkai (Devil Ray)							x	x	x	x		
Keeri (Herring)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Nethali (Anchovy)				xx	xx	xx	x	x	x			
Kumbala (Indian Mackerel)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Suran (Skip Jack Tuna)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Thalapath	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Kalavai (Reef Cod)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Seela (Barracuda)		x	x	x	x	x	x					
Thumbayan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					
Soodai				x	x	x			xx	xx	xx	
Velliya	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Squid/cuttlefish				xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x			
Katta	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x	x	x			
Thitali	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Otti				x	x	xx	xx	x	x	xx	xx	xx
Siluthal		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	xx	xx	xx
Prawn (white)	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx					
Paalai			x	xx	xx	xx	xx					
Kaatal				x	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx		
Kelevala	x	x	x	x	xx	xx	xx	x	x	x		
Balaya	x	x	x	x	xx	x	x	x	x			
Oora	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x						
Mural	x	xx	xx	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x		

xx Good catch

x Small catch



## 4.10 Gear Used by Month

GEAR TYPE - LAGOON	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Cast net	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Small mesh net (sudai net)	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x	x	x	x	x
Prawn net	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x	x			
Sprat net							xx	xx	xx			
Crab cage	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	
Athangu (for prawns)	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x	x			
Hook and line	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x	x			
Bottom set long line	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
GEAR TYPE - SEA												
Disco net (combination of varying mesh sizes)			xx	xx	xx	x	x					
Adaisal net (used during dark nights)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Bottom set gill nets	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Keeri nets			xx	xx	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx		
Hook and line	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Mid water gill net		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Athangu (for cuttlefish)	x	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x				
Kumbala net			xx	xx	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx		
Mural net			xx	xx	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	x		
Drift gill net				x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx			
Beach seine	x	x	x	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	x	x	

xx Used very frequently

x Used occasionally

TABLE 5 - SCALE AND HEALTH OF FISHING INDUSTRY

5.1 Status of available craft

<u>Craft</u>	July 1992	<u>Nos</u>
3½ ton mechanised boats		124
17-21 ft. boat OBM		127
Non-mechanised Vallams		125
Non-mechanised Thonies		1333
(Beach-seine) Karaivalai Vallam		43

Source: Batticaloa Kachcheri, 1992

<u>Craft</u>	July 1993	<u>Nos</u>
3½ ton mechanised boats		133
17-23 ft. fibreglass boats		122
Lagoon Thonies		1413
Sea Thonies		407
Madal Vallam		253
Theppam		15

Source: Batticaloa kachcheri, 1993

5.2 Loss of craft in last 15 years

<u>Craft</u>	<u>Nos lost</u>
3½ ton mechanised	14
17 ft. - 21 ft. mechanised boat	120
Out board motors	46
Lagoon canoes	2015
Sea going craft	410
Beach-seine	75

Source: Batticaloa kachcheri, 1992

5.3 Fish production in Batticaloa District

## FISH PRODUCTION (mt.) IN BATTICALOA DISTRICT

Year	Marine	Lagoon	Crab	Prawn	Cuttlefish	Total
1980	6675	402	22	48	8	7137
1981	8837	375	18	94	11	9335
1982	9283	342	24	81	9	9739
1983	4098	271	9	22	5	4603
1984	3582	360	15	37	14	4008
1985	3256	375	16	69	11	3727
1986	3256	142	12	74	19	3503
1987	3382	141	9	29	15	3576
1988	3432	207	13	19	16	3687
1989	3218	223	17	23	19	3500
1990	2938	21	6	21	7	2983
1991	1472	310	48	30	36	1896
1992	2380	368	20	30	9	2807

Source: District Fisheries Extension Office, 1993

## PRODUCTION OF FRESH FISH IN 1981

	mt.	%
Blood fish	2240	24
Shark and skate	840	9
Rock fish	933	10
Paraw	280	3
Seer	280	3
Small fish (karaivalai)	3734	40
Others	1028	11
Total	9335	100

Source: Department of Fisheries, Batticaloa, 1981

## VILLAGE PROFILES

Paalameenmadu, Amirthakali and Puthumuhathuvaram

Paalameenmadu, Amirthakali and Puthumuhathuvaram are mixed Hindu and Catholic communities, situated near the sand bar where the lagoon meets the sea, and are within 1 km. from each other. All three are primarily fishing villages with fishermen using both the lagoon and the sea.

As the sand bar is breached every year with the monsoon floods, the lagoon is open to the sea for around 8 months of the year. This is also one of two fishery harbours in the district where 3½ ton boats are able to operate most of the year; these move to Valaichchenai when the sand bar closes. This area used to be the focus of all fishing activity, and there were over 100 fish purchasing vaadis operating mainly controlled by Sinhala mudalalis; during the season for prawns, export companies too set up their purchasing centres. This scale of activity had provided most of the community with employment and trading opportunities, and created several middlemen from the community who prospered.

Over the last 10 years, the security situation has forced most of the Sinhalese mudalalis to close down their vaadis, and by June 1990 the last of them withdrew. Advances paid to fishermen by mudalalis have been blocked, and the middlemen are reluctant to reestablish their contacts, as they would have to bear responsibility for these advances - which run into millions of rupees, and for which they have stood guarantee. At the same time, some have payments due from Colombo-based mudalalis, and are unable to get started again because of lack of capital. Formerly wealthy and active local middlemen have given up trading, except a few who are also owners of craft.

All three villages have their share of poor fishermen and fishworkers - these have equally suffered due to the almost complete stoppage of trading activities in the area, except for a small wholesale and retail market in Amirthakali.

Up to 1978, when the cyclone hit Eatticaloa, a harbour in Paalameenmadu was in operation in the lagoon. This had been a major centre for transporting items from India. Older villagers recall times (up to about 1958) when cement, tiles and other building materials were transported from India in sail boats, unloaded in Paalameenmadu and taken all over what was then Batticaloa District (including what is now Amparai). A customs post was in operation until 1978. In 1988 and 89, only the IPKF brought in a few bargeloads of goats, and unloaded at this site.

Situated within the municipal limits of Batticaloa, these communities had easy access to schools and other facilities. A large number have found employment in Government service and the private sector. During the last 15 years, a large number also found employment in Middle Eastern countries. A large section of the poor still remain, pursuing their traditional fishing activity. While electricity is available in all three villages, Amirthakali and Paalameenmadu have a serious water problem. A set of wells constructed in Paalameenmadu has been the main supply of water to the town, especially the Puliyanthirum area. About 175,000 gallons of water are pumped out daily from these wells; according to the local community, this is the reason why over 300 wells have become saline in the area. At present a few standposts supply water for

a couple of hours each day.

Paalameenmadu and Navalady (near the sand bar across the lagoon from Paalameenmadu) are two areas designated for sand mining by the Forest Officer, with approval of the Coast Conservation Department. During the height of construction activity, which in recent years has been mainly related to the reconstruction programme, sand had been mined from the outskirts of Paalameenmadu creating an environmental problem.

The poorest of the villages is Amirthakali, where most of the fishermen use the lagoon; fishermen from both Puthumuhathuvaram and Paalameenmadu are sea as well as lagoon fishermen. Availability of drinking water is a serious problem in this area. Toilets are limited to the better-off members in the community. A system of 8 natural ponds connected to the lagoon in the Paalameenmadu area provides the fishing grounds for poorer fishermen and children.

### Kaluvenkerni

Kaluvenkerni is one of the largest fishing villages in the district. The population is predominantly Hindu with a small community of Catholics and Methodists. Settlement in the village started following the coconut plantations last century, when labourers in these plantations began settling down and supplementing their incomes with marine fishing. First they began working in the beach-seines of Sinhalese migratory fishermen, but as they acquired skills in marine fishing, the community began to take up fishing as the primary activity. The early settlers in the area are reported to have come from Thethativu and Kaluthavalai areas. Prior to the 1978 cyclone, there were only 6 mechanised craft, 75 thonies and 9 beach-seines.

Government intervention in providing craft and gear in the post-cyclone period helped the community recover, but by 1985, with the Special Task Force (STF) moving into the area and restrictions placed on the use of mechanised craft, and the killing of civilians, life in the village began to get disrupted. By 1987, the IPKF and EPRLF had set up camps in the village, imposing severe restrictions in community life. Conscription into the TNA in 1989-90 forced several young men to flee the village or get married.

Most of the fishworkers find alternative employment as agricultural labourers in January and February, and again in August, and some find employment in one of the rice mills in Amparai. Women are involved in mat weaving, fish trading, drying fish, toddy and arrack sale, and run small shops. Children pick fish off the beach-seines for their family consumption, as well as for sale, usually by the mothers, in the villages inland.

Up to 1985, the largest catch in the district is reported to have come from this area. Allowing for disruption of life since that time, fishermen feel that present catch levels have come down drastically. With an increase in craft, catch per unit effort is reported to be very low. While a quantity of low value species keeps coming in, fishermen complain that it is the reduction of the quality of high value species that has made the difference in incomes in recent years. An ice plant situated at the landing site by the Fisheries Corporation was damaged and closed down in 1987. The fishermen do not market their catch themselves in Valaichchenai, and 75-100 traders on bicycles are the main marketing channel. The Vantharumoolai-Kaluvenkerni road, once busy with regular lorries taking fish to Colombo, is now used only by two-wheelers. This

has provided trading opportunities to several men on bicycles and motorcycles, who sell to vaadis in Eravur and Valaichchenai.

Access to health services and good schools is difficult. In recent times, only one boy is reported to have entered the University, and another has got a teaching appointment.

#### Aarappathai, Manjanthoduvai and Navatkudah

Aarappathai and Manjanthoduvai are two Tamil villages situated on either side of Kathankudy (Muslim), and were the most affected Tamil villages following the communal violence in 1990. Navatkudah is situated immediately south of Manjanthoduvai, and hosted the refugees from Manjanthoduvai. All three are lagoon fishing villages. Communities from all three villages are well linked to the urban centre of Batticaloa town.

Those in Aarappathai community with interests in farming are the most socially mobile section of the three. Education was given priority, and a large section found jobs in government service. Several years ago they started coir-based cottage industry and basket-making. The coir industry in Aarappathai, with coconut fibre as the raw material, supplies the largest amount of brooms and brushes in the district. Fishermen from elsewhere depend on baskets and fish/crab cages made here.

Manjanthoduvai and Navatkudah are recent settlements. As always, these settlements are colonised with the poor from other areas. Almost the entire Manjanthoduvai village was made refugees in 1990. It is only in early 1993 that some resettled back in their homes. Fishing and related activities are not the major economic activity in these villages; however the poor are mostly from the fishing community. Over 200 fishermen from these villages specialise in catching crabs. Around three exporters have purchasing agents operating in these areas. During the season from June to December, these fishermen are able to earn higher incomes.

All three villages had a good relationship with the neighbouring Muslim village, Kathankudy, up to the 1990 communal violence. A large number of these communities depend on Kathankudy for their livelihood - many women working on handlooms owned by Muslims in Kathankudy, masons, carpenters, washer workers and unskilled labourers, have all found employment in Kathankudy. Relations between communities have considerably improved at present, with old relationships being re-established.

#### Paalamunai

Paalamunai is a Muslim fishing village situated south of Kathankudy along the coast. This too is a recent settlement, colonised by Muslims from Kathankudy. Paalamunai is one of 13 satellite villages around Kathankudy.

Even though this is primarily a marine fishing village with about 100 fishermen out of a community of about 150 families, only 52 are full-time fishermen while others have interests in agriculture and handlooms. All those who had agricultural land west of the lagoon have not cultivated since the arrival of the IPKF in 1987. A few own cashew land around the village. Women do not participate in fishing-related work, but work on handlooms at home. As access to education in Kathankudy and other Tamil schools has been relatively easy, several members

of the community have attained higher educational levels than neighbouring sea-fishing Tamil communities.

Even though Paalamunai has to some extent received privileged treatment, being allowed to fish while restrictions were severe in the area, the perceived threat to their lives if they drifted prevented these fishermen from going deep-sea fishing until recently. At least 7 motorised craft operate from the village in addition to about 50 thonies.

Prior to 1978, 3½ ton mechanised boats were used in the area. A group of enterprising fishermen had also built a trawler, which was sunk in the cyclone.

This could be considered as a relatively rich fishing village compared to many others on the coast.

### Pankudaveli

Pankudaveli is situated west of the lagoon. In a community of about 150 families, most of which are farmers, agricultural labourers and fishermen all at the same time. Only a few families depend entirely on fishing for their livelihood.

Areas west of the lagoon were considered as hostile by the security forces, and Pankudaveli was one of the villages considered as such. When the SLA moved into Batticaloa District in 1990, most of the population of the district moved west of the lagoon, and Pankudaveli was one of the few villages which hosted some refugees for about 8 months. With little access to schools and other facilities, the community had been isolated for a long time.

Fishermen and cultivators trade in Eravur, which is the nearest market. During the period up to February 1993 when marketing was difficult, the community completely relied on farm produce with subsistence fishing. Women in the community work on fields, home gardens, and help the men in mending nets, drying fish, etc.

### Kallar

Kallar is situated at the southern end of the district, where the lagoon opens into the sea. Kallar is predominantly Hindu with a Methodist parish. Out of nearly 1,200 families in the Kallar area, about 400 are fishing families. Schooling facilities established by the Methodist Church in Kallar and Kalmunai a few miles south, meant the community had access to education, and has been able to establish themselves as one of the most social mobile groups in Batticaloa. Several have been able to go to university and do professional courses, and consequently have found employment. A large number of families have members in western countries.

Most of the original fishing families have given up fishing. Even today, several boats lie idle in the family gardens. Three fishermen co-operatives are active in Kallar (two sea fishermen co-operatives and one lagoon fishermen co-operative). 32 sea-going craft and 100 lagoon craft are in operation at present. One half of the lagoon craft are hired by fishermen. The poorer sector in Kallar are the fishermen.

Unlike in other areas in the district, women are actively involved in fishery-related activities, especially trading. This special characteristic is attributed to the original settlers who were fishermen from the north. Women are also engaged in catching kooni.

As the STF took control of the area in late 1990, restrictions were imposed on all fishing activities. Lagoon fishermen were required to park their boats adjoining the STF camp, movement of people between dusk and dawn was restricted and community life was stifled. The situation began to ease only in early 1993.

### Thannamunnai

Thannamunnai is a village 7 km north of Batticaloa Town. This is predominantly Catholic and considered to be a traditional fishing village. However there are only about 14 full-time fishermen in the village, and another 25 who are occasional fishermen. During the last few decades, educational opportunities and its close proximity to the town has enabled many fisher families to move out of the profession. This social mobility is quite widespread in the village and the remaining fishermen are the poorer segment of the village. They too want their children to seek other job opportunities.

Being more than 95% Catholic and 100% Tamil-speaking, the Catholic Church has exerted tremendous influence over the village. Since the cyclone of 1978, Thannamunnai has received several rounds of assistance compared to other villages, mainly administered by the Catholic Church. All the fishing families have received assistance more than once. However the organisational structure of the remaining fishermen remains weak. While in many social practices they co-operate, being individual lagoon fishermen there is little co-operation in the organisation of their work. The parish priest plays a pivotal role in this community, but neither the church nor EHED has paid much attention to organising fishermen. Even in the fishermen's co-operative, the wealthy non fishermen have greater influence.

Most of the women are engaged in housekeeping and child care activities. A few engage in making cadjan. One woman runs a small shop.

The catch is traded in Batticaloa town - mainly to traders who take it outside Batticaloa for retailing. Average value of the catch from the village is below Rs. 2500/- per day. Prawns, a high value catch, have declined during the last 4 to 5 years. This is attributed to the depletion in the mangrove vegetation in the area and the construction of a bridge near the town which restricts free movement of prawns into the lagoon breeding area.

Four fishermen own boats while others are able to hire boats for a monthly rental of about Rs. 300/- from farmers who own boats.

Almost all fishermen have a habit of drinking arrack. Even though they are not to be considered as alcoholics, a substantial proportion of their earnings is spent in drinking - spending between Rs. 50/- and Rs. 100/- on alcohol. Usually their earning for the day is calculated on the basis of deducting expenses inclusive of alcohol.

All the fishermen are registered with the police and have permission to fish. Fishing during the day is not prohibited, however they are expected to go out to the lagoon by 6pm and return only



after daybreak. This has increased the number of hours they usually spend in fishing, and is physically very demanding; they can expect to rest only after about 11 am having finished marketing and repairing the nets.

Most of the other residents of Thannamunai are employed either in the public or private sector. In addition families who have been involved in fishing until recently hire out the boats they own. A few are cultivators of paddy.

### Thevapuram

Thevapuram is a predominantly Hindu traditional fishing village, situated 26 km north of Batticaloa in Morakkotanchenai less than 1km from the main Trincomalee road. Fishermen have access to both the Valaichchenai lagoon and the sea. There are around 1500 people, in 285 family units.

Most of the villagers could be considered as living under the poverty line, and Thevapuram is one of the poorer villages in the district. Thatched huts, no toilet facilities, a lot of children of school-going age not attending school, very little social mobility and low educational levels characterise the village.

67 lagoon fishermen traditionally fish in the lagoon owning 47 lagoon-going craft. However after the commencement of the problems in June 1990 half these craft were lost, and over 20 fishermen were killed. There are only around 27 craft available to the fishermen at present. The military camp has restricted fishing and the number of boats allowed at any one time is 10. Fishermen go out on a rota basis every other night. This has drastically reduced their average earnings.

At present fishermen go out in pairs, so most of the lagoon fishermen will get a turn once in two days; this practice is adopted mainly as a personal security measure.

There is one active fishermen's co-operative in Thevapuram, with about 140 members. An equal number are not members of the co-operative because they cannot afford to pay membership dues. Most of the community have work as fishworkers in the karai valai vaadis of Paalaiyadithona and areas adjoining Kaluvenkerni. Fishing in the backwaters (which are called Thonas) is an activity children indulge in everyday while some of the poorer fishermen cast nets during the prawn season.

Gathering firewood in nearby forest and shrub jungles for sale in other villages has been an important activity during the last 3 years. Some men regularly work as agricultural labourers during the cultivation seasons. Some have taken up fish trading in recent times purchasing small quantities for sale in Valaichchenai or in villages inland. Some of the women in the village have taken up hand milling of paddy and sell the rice to local shops to earn an income.

Prior to 1990, many had regular employment in karai valai vaadis owned by Sinhalese. The departure of these Sinhalese fishermen rendered them unemployed. Between 35-40 adult males have been killed, disappeared or have been arrested during the last three years.

## CASE STUDIES

The case studies are real life stories of people who were interviewed in the villages. All names are fictitious.

Case Study I :

Sinnavan is 41 yrs old, a Catholic, and married with 9 children. The eldest child is 14 yrs and the youngest is 3 months old. He has been a fisherman from his teens having completed only up to grade six in school.

Sinnavan lives in Thannamunai and is exclusively a lagoon fisherman. In 1966 he started fishing on a full time basis, with an uncle, and within 5 years he was able to buy a boat and nets independently. He remembers the 1970s and early '80s as relatively easy - his income was sufficient to maintain his family and buy a small plot of land. He put up a cadjan hut initially but over time made some additional investments in the house.

With 9 children including a set of triplets his wife has been only used to housekeeping and childcare activities. 3 of their children had died soon after birth.

In early 1986 he lost his boat, and EHED helped him with a loan of Rs. 10,000/- to establish a bakery. The bakery was established in one part of the house; as he was not used to running a bakery two experienced men were hired to run the bakery, supervised by his wife and himself. He continued to hire a boat and do fishing. The bakery project was ill conceived and soon ran into financial problems. Loan repayments to EHED also became a problem. When the IPKF ransacked the bakery in November 1987, he sold all the remaining equipment and defaulted on the EHED loan.

Like his father, he only knows fishing in the lagoon, but he wants his male children to study and find other forms of employment. The oldest of the boys help him with fishing. If he owned more nets, he feels he can improve his catch and consequently look after his family better.

At present he hires a boat at Rs 10 a day, and owns three pieces of net; he goes out fishing every day and sells the catch at the Batticaloa market to other traders. His average daily income is around Rs. 100, with which he feeds his family. When he is unable to fish during the off season he sells firewood. In the early 1980s, Sinnavan remembers that during the prawn season he has earned Rs 2,000 in one day. But around the Thannamunai part of the lagoon, prawns have been scarce during the last five years. He now specialises in fishing for keluthi, a species preferred as bait by those who catch crabs.

He is one of the 14 full-time fishermen in Thannamunai. He is a member of the Fishermen's Co-operative, which has a membership of 104. Most members are non-fishermen, who have been able to join because of the Co-operative Department regulation that to register a co-operative the minimum number of members should be 100.

The Catholic Church has been very supportive of the fishing community in Thannamunai. The social life of most of the families is centered around the village parish.

Mary, his wife, studied up to Grade 5 in primary school, and thereafter stayed back to help her mother. She got married when she was 17, was pregnant within months and does not quite remember a period when she was not pregnant. She has little time for anything apart from looking after the children, cooking, and going to church. The bakery experiment was her first venture into business, and she considers her failure in not properly managing it as the main reason for the financial difficulties they ran into and its eventual closure.

Mary does not get involved in the financial management of the family. Her husband is the one who earns and manages all financial matters. Sinnavan's drinking habit causes a few problems, but Mary considers it as tolerable. However, she protests that more than Rs 1,000/= per month is spent on drinks.

Mary is confident that none of her male children will be fishermen, and that the female children will not marry fishermen. Life has been a struggle since she married, and she is very keen to educate all her children so that they will have a better chance of survival.

The period between June 1990 and April 1991 was the most difficult for the family, when there was no income. The church provided additional dry rations and cash to the community to get through the difficult times. Sinnavan together with a group of other fishermen and non-fishermen in the community are involved in subscribing to a cheetu. The cheetu varies between Rs. 10 per day to Rs 500. Most of the investments in nets and house renovation have been possible through cheetu. He does not feel that he should buy a boat, because renting one costs him only Rs. 10 a day.

#### Case Study II :

Sinna Lebbe is a Muslim fishermen living in Palamunai, just outside Kathankudy. He is 34 years old, married with three children aged nine, seven and four.

He studied up to GCE (Ordinary Level) in Kathankudy, and took up full time fishing when he was 18; he had assisted his father, who worked with his brother-in-law, from age 13. In 1977, his father died. Having tried to obtain a job after leaving school and not succeeding, he joined his uncle in his father's place. As his employer lost his boat and gear in 1985, he found work with another uncle with whom he has continued to work to date.

Sinna Lebbe and three others work on his uncle's 23 ft. fibreglass boat fitted with an outboard engine. His uncle himself is a fisherman who goes along with his crew. Prior to 1990, their income was considered good, and Sinna Lebbe earned an average of Rs 2,500 every month. As the security conditions deteriorated, and the fear of drifting into Tamil areas at night became a real threat to life, they restricted fishing to near the shore in low wind conditions.

Sinna Lebbe and his wife have two handlooms in his house; one of them is operated by his wife, who employs another young girl from the community to work on the other. Sarongs, towels and bedsheets are the main products, which are purchased by traders in Kathankudy. Sinna Lebbe engages in a little trade on his own, when he can afford to tie up his own capital for a couple of months in the handloom products. When they are short of capital, traders in Kathankudy give yarn on credit basis and also purchase the products.

The family owns 3 acres of paddy land west of the lagoon, which has not been cultivated since 1987. Before that the land was cultivated by another relative, who gave a share of the crop to the Lebbe family.

Family income was supplemented during the last three years by trading cashew nuts during the season. With a capital of about Rs 15,000, Sinna Lebbe was able to invest in cashew nuts which he packeted for the retail market and sold to a group of vendors on credit.

His credit needs for the handlooms are met by handloom merchants who readily advance the yarn. For his personal credit needs he is able to access a wealthy businessman in the community in Kathankudy.

With improved relations between the Tamil and Muslim communities since early 1993, life has returned to normal for Sinna Lebbe except for the fact that a close relative and his family from Ollikulam, another village near Kathankudy, are still with him as refugees; Sinna Lebbe has supported them for nearly three years.

### Case Study 3

Ponmalar is 23 years old with two children aged 6 and 2, and lives in Thevapuram. Her husband, Thavarasa, was killed in 1990 by the SLA, before her second child was born. She married Thavarasa in 1987, but her husband had to flee the area due to harrassment by the IPKF, but returned home in March 1990. Her attempts to obtain compensation for her husband's death have failed, as she was told that he was a militant and was shot dead by the SLA.

As Ponmalar's parents live in the same village she stayed with her parents and two younger siblings. Her father, who is a fishworker in a karai valai vaadi had been supporting her and the two children. She dropped out of school when she was 10 to take care of her two sisters and help her mother, who was sick.

The father's income during the period of current conflict was hardly sufficient to feed the family. In June 1991, Ponmalar sold her only pair of earrings to pay for her confinement, and with a new baby on her hands started hand-milling rice. On average she earns Rs. 20 per day. She sells the rice in a village shop and buys some provisions for the amount. She sometimes gets goods on credit when she needs extras.

One of her sisters, an 18 year old, was married to a relative in January 1990. This marriage was arranged in a hurry so that the young man could avoid conscription by the EPRLF. Her brother-in-law is a young fisherman and finds additional employment in a rice mill in Sammanthurai in Amparai District. He too supports the family, as his wife lives with her parents.

### Case Study 4

Sakthivel Pushpan lives with his wife, four daughters and three grandchildren in Pankudaveli. He is 57 years old, hardworking, and considers himself as a fisherman as his father was one too. He owns a lagoon thonie and has three pieces of net. He has cultivated 3 acres of paddy land

without interruption right through the period of crisis.

Pushpan's son-in-law was killed in June 1990 in Amparai, where he worked as a rice mill operator. His daughter and 3 children stay with him and his wife. Pushpan had educated all his daughters up to Grade 8 at Chenkaladi, thereafter they stayed at home. His wife, Thavamany, and the daughters work on a vegetable plot of around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre around their home.

From December onwards, after the rains, he returns to fishing as the season for prawns begins at that time. Even in recent times he has earned up to Rs 1,500 per day on some days, while his average income during this season is about Rs 200 per day. A Muslim mudalali in Eravur, to whom he had been supplying prawns for several years, continues to be the only person he supplies, as they have cultivated the relationship over a long period. Pushpan has regularly sold his catch of prawns to this man, apart from early 1991 when he could not go to Eravur; then the prawns were consumed by the family and relatives, who had come to their village as refugees from Vantharumoolan. Pushpan recalls this as the only season in the last 15 years when his family were able to eat prawns - otherwise they have been sold. He sells his fish catch to another trader, who purchases in Pankudaveli itself.

Pushpan usually devotes his time during October each year for cultivation of paddy. The family work together on the paddy land on land preparation, sowing and weeding. The family work together during the paddy harvest. The entire home consumption need is met by this plot, and the surplus is sold to one of the rice mills. Vegetables from the home garden are sold to traders, who buy at the farm gate. The family had been able to build a brick house and own a water pump.

The three unmarried daughters are in the early 20s, and the parents are looking for the right kind of young men for their daughters. Pushpan had managed to save some money which earns interest in the bank. He considers it sufficient to marry off his daughters. As his wife is registered as a farmer (the land belongs to her), Pushpan is registered as a full-time fisherman. Though he was not directly affected, he was able to get the Productive Enterprise Grant of Rs 4,000.

The family is almost self-sufficient in food. The oldest grandson, who is 12, stays in Chenkaladi with a relative and attends school there. Pushpan's ambition is to educate his grandchildren.

### Case Study 5

Ponnuthurai, 28, is married with a two year old child. He has lived in Manjanthoduvai since he was 16, when his family were given land to settle there. He has been a fisherman, mill worker, casual labourer, mason's assistant, and driver during his adult life, having left school aged 14. He got married to a friend's sister from adjoining Navatkudah in 1990, and has restarted fishing, which was his father's profession, on a full-time basis during the last two years. Earlier he took up fishing between irregular and temporary jobs. His decision to concentrate on fishing was influenced by his ability to catch crabs and wanting to spend as much time as possible with his infant daughter.

Life had been a struggle for Ponnuthurai from his youth. Since losing his father when he was

14, he has had to support his mother and younger brother, a couple of years his junior. His early experience in fishing was not very successful, so he switched to being a mason's assistant. He was able to educate his brother up to Advanced Level all by himself. When 17, he managed to get a driving licence and started driving a friend's old truck doing local transporting jobs. By 1985, his brother had come up to Advanced Level, and Ponnuthurai joined a militant movement. With the signing of the Peace Accord in July 1987, he returned to the village and worked as a casual labourer at a rice mill in Kathankudy. At this time, he started fishing again during his free time. He is known as 'Nandu' (crab) Ponnuthurai amongst his friends, due to his ability to catch good crabs, which he sells to an exporter's agent. Even though prices were low until April 1993 (average Rs 60 per kg.) he was able to earn about Rs 600 per day during July-December. He switches to prawns in January/February, and during the other months goes fishing. He hires a boat at Rs 10 per day.

During 1992, he had been able to construct a well in his house, and due to the demands of his young wife has also constructed a toilet. Even though his earnings have been high compared to his colleagues, Ponnuthurai does not have much in the way of savings, except for some jewellery he bought his wife. He attributes this to his generous disposition, and he lends money to friends which never gets repaid. This is his major conflict with his wife, and recently she has insisted on joining a Rs 10,000 cheetu at Rs 500 per month.

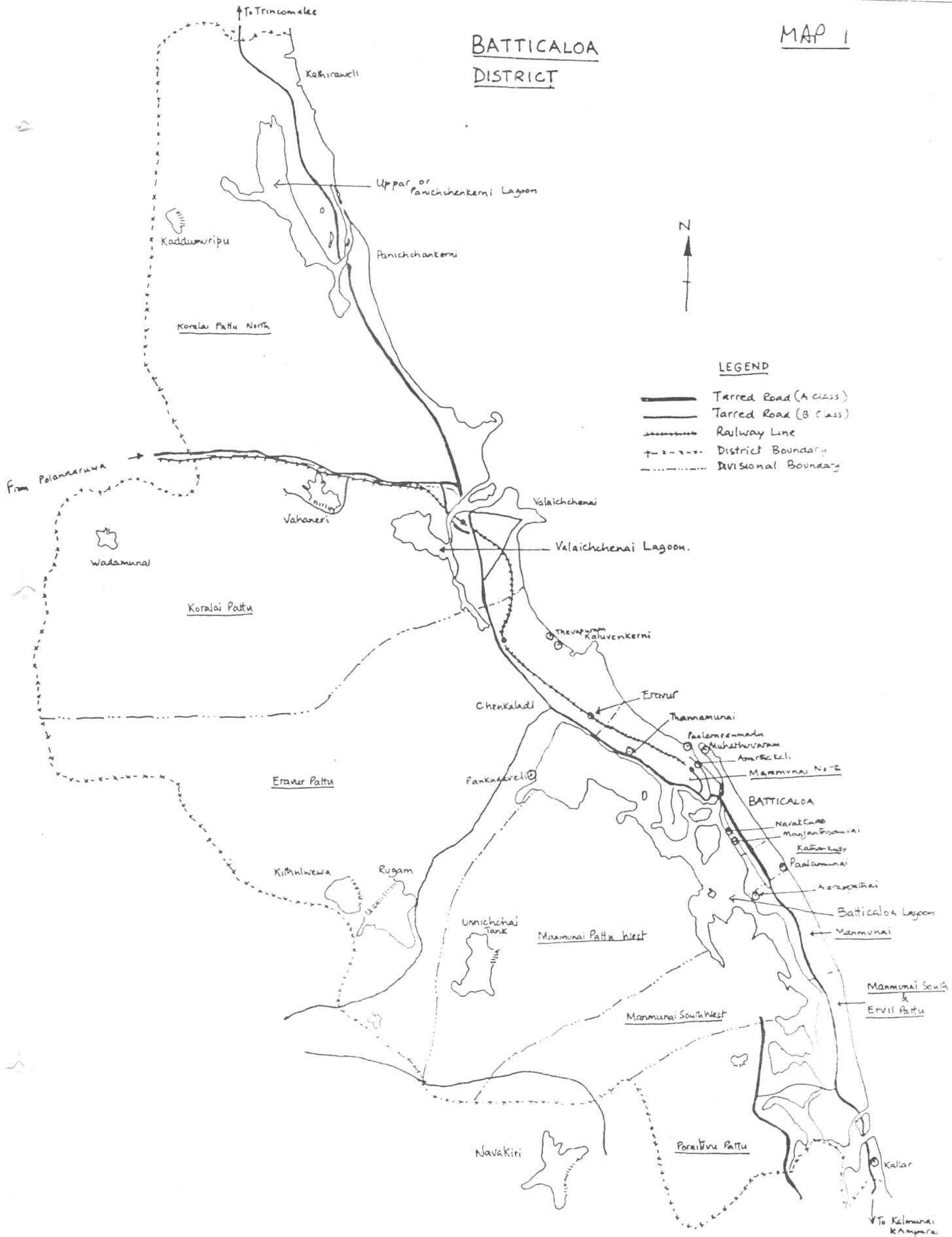
In 1990, when he and his young bride were made refugees in adjoining Navatkudah, they stayed with his in-laws and moved back to Manjanthodurvai in 1992, reconstructing his house with a loan of Rs 15,000 obtained from a friend. He has repaid more than half the loan within 6 months.

His mother stays with Ponnuthurai's brother, who is now a teacher in Munaithivu.

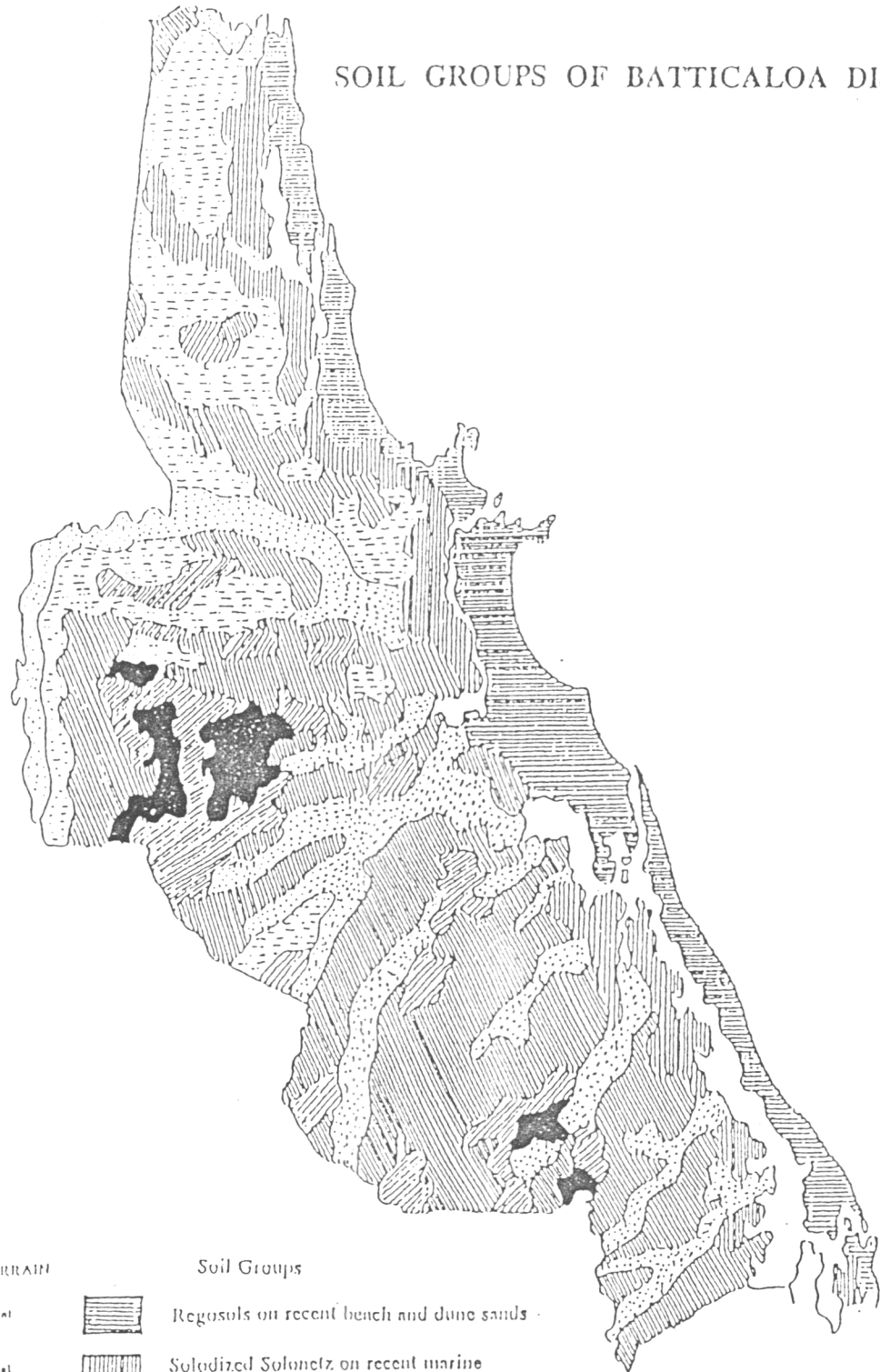
He wants to educate his daughter and rebuild his house when he has more money. He does not feel the need for his wife to do anything other than to raise their child, and any other children they may have.

# BATTICALOA DISTRICT

MAP 1



### SOIL GROUPS OF BATTICALOA DISTRICT



TERRAIN	Soil Groups
Flat	Regosols on recent beach and dune sands
Flat	Solodized Solonetz on recent marine calcareous sediments
Flat	Alluvial soils on variable drainage and texture
Undulating	Reddish Brown earths, Non-calciic brown soils and Low humic Gley soils
Undulating	Non-calciic Brown soils, on Old Alluvium
Undulating	Rock knob plains and Eroded Lands
Undulating	Erosional Remnants

Scale 1:500,000

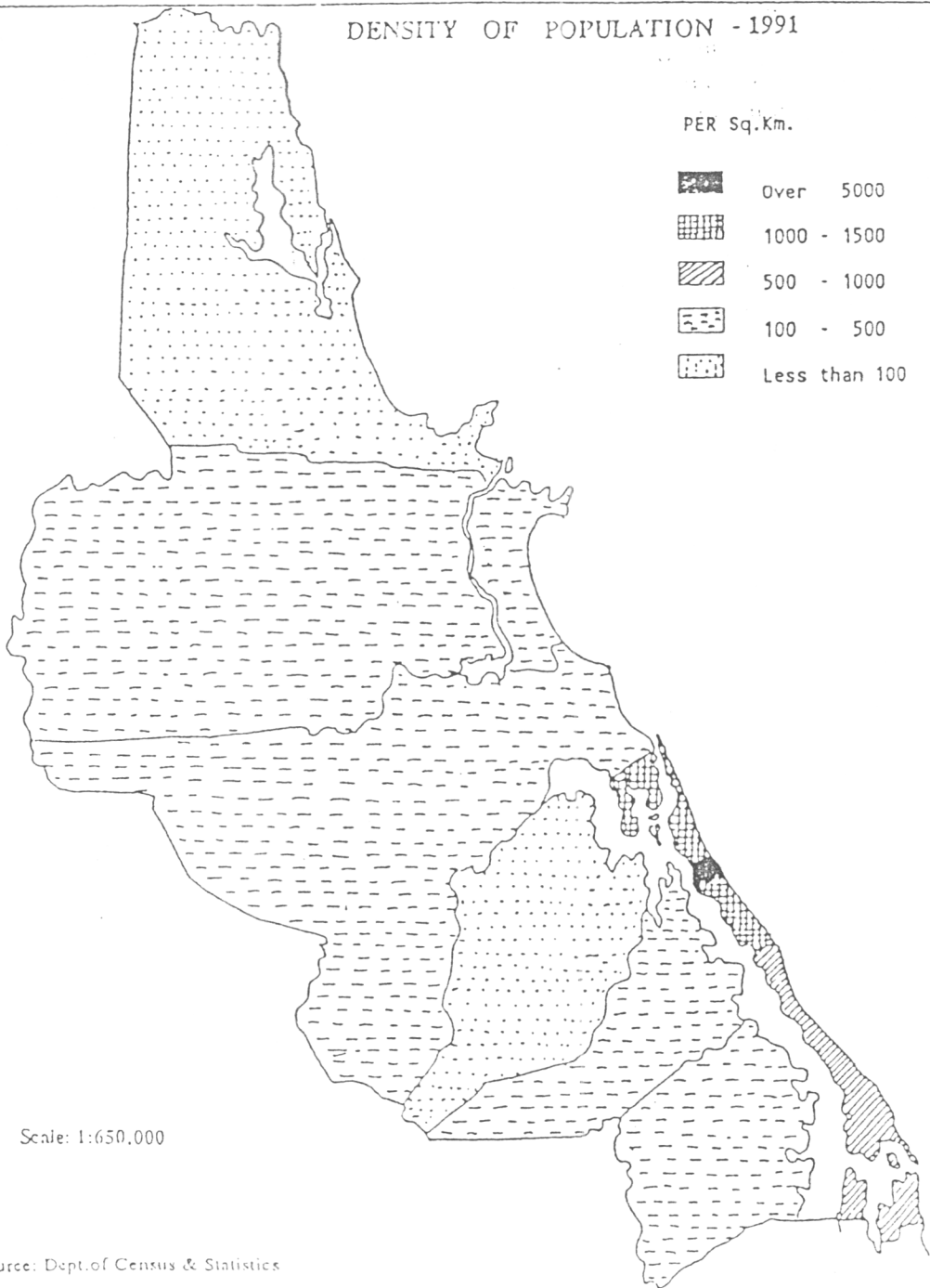
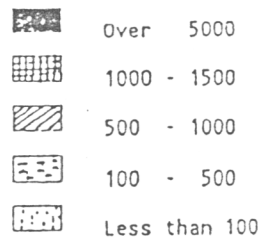


Source : The National Atlas of Sri Lanka, published by the Department of Survey on 1987



# DENSITY OF POPULATION - 1991

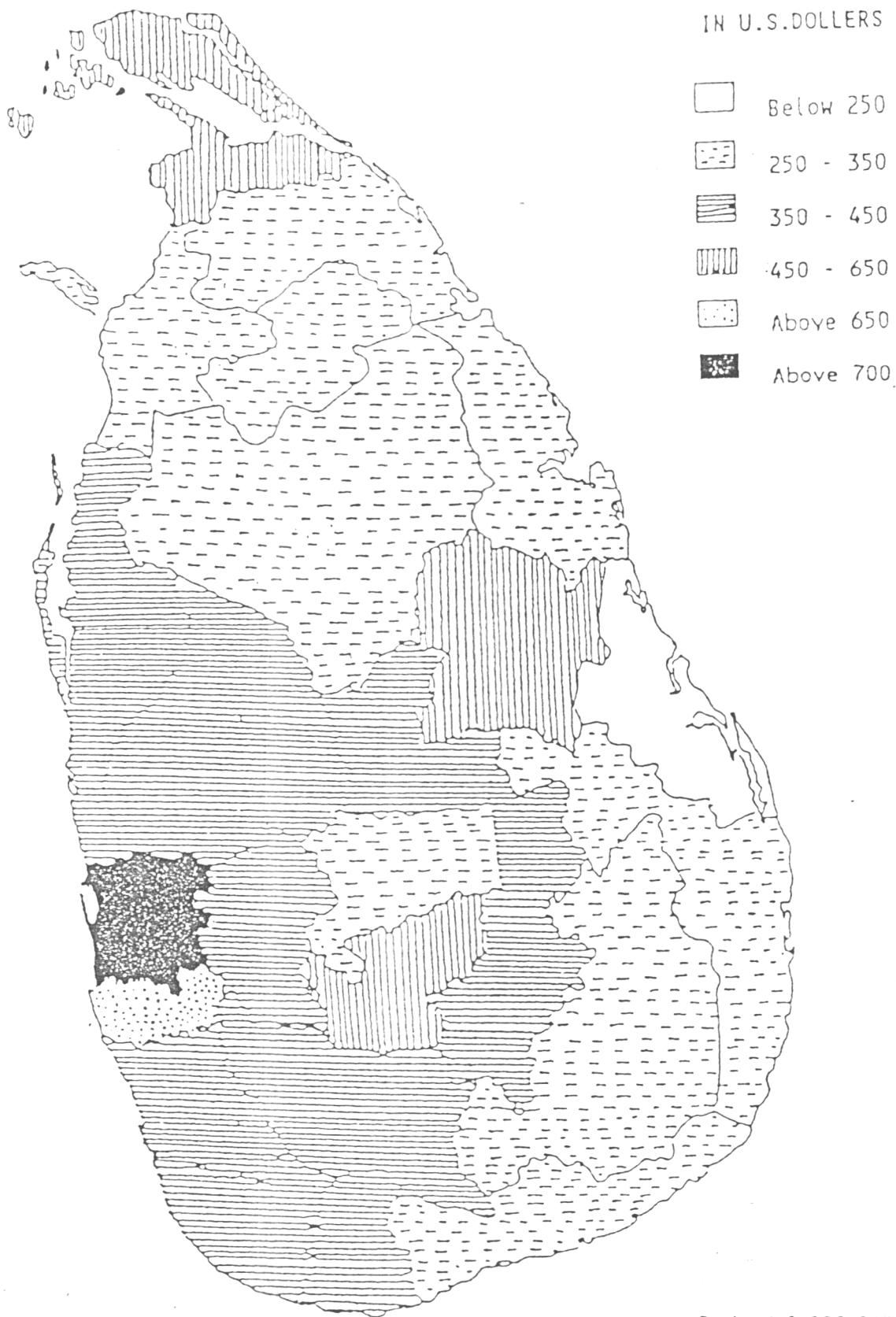
PER Sq.Km.



Scale: 1:650,000

Source: Dept. of Census & Statistics

# PERCAPITA INCOME COMPARED WITH OTHER DISTRICTS - 1988



Source: Demographic Survey Report 1988

Scale: 1:3,000,000



**Intermediate Technology Development Group  
(ITDG)**

33 1/1, Queen's Road,  
Colombo 3,  
Sri Lanka.

Phone : 503786, 586504  
Fax : 502850

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