

SOCIO - ECONOMIC STATUS OF FISHING COMMUNITIES AT HURULU WEWA,
KALA WEWA AND MAHAKANADARAWA WEWA IN ANURADHAPURA
DISTRICT

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Fish serve as an important source of animal protein and comes from two main sources viz. marine and fresh water fish. At present, the marine fish price has increased due to several prevailing problems in the country. As a remedy, the government has taken steps to increase the inland fish production specially in the North Central Province. The problems associated with the inland fisheries are poor socio - economic status of fishing communities due to low fish production and poor inland aquatic resource management. Therefore, the present study was focused on assessing the socio - economic status of fishing communities in three selected tanks namely Hurulu wewa, Kala wewa and Makanadarawa wewa in the Anuradhapura district, to find out ways of uplifting the socio - economic states of these communities.

Data on socio - economic status were collected using semi - structured questionnaires by formal as well as informal interviews with 50 fishermen and 45 fish traders at the landing sites of each tank. To evaluate the fishing income, fish catch data were taken by measuring the weight of each fish species, number of canoes, number of net pieces operated per canoe, mesh size and catch per unit effort at the largest fish landing site of each tank for a period of 3 months. The data were analyzed by categorical data analysis using SAS package.

Most of the fishermen were Sinhalese Buddhists and the literacy level showed a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) among the fishing communities. Highest percentage of fishermen in Hurulu wewa and Mahakanadarawa wewa had completed their primary education whereas most of the fishermen at Kala wewa were illiterate. The family size showed a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) among fishing communities at the three tanks and the largest family size was observed in Kala wewa. The main occupation of the people was fishing. However, all the fishermen were involved in alternative occupations such as farming, working as labours, drivers etc. The income from fisheries showed a significant difference ($P < 0.05$). The income was not significant ($P > 0.05$) for alternative occupations. Highest fish production and income from fisheries were observed in Hurulu wewa, and the lowest in Kala wewa.

Since the fisheries co-operative society was actively functioning in Hurulu wewa, the resource was sustainably managed. As a result, the fish production and socio - economic status of the fishing community were comparatively higher in Huruluwewa than in Kala wewa and Makanadarawa wewa. The reason for exhibiting poor fish production and socio - economic status in Kala wewa was due to the inactive fisheries co-operative society and the prevalence of illegal fishing. Hence, the socio - economic status of fishing communities in these two tanks could be uplifted by sustainable management of resources through active fisheries co-operative society.

Key words: Inland Fishery, Socio - economic status, Fishing communities