

Post-War Resettlement And Migrant Fishers: A Case Study on Small-Scale Fishery in Mannar, Sri Lanka

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Abstract - Peaceful integration with equal economic, political, and cultural rights are crucial for individual and community wellbeing that levy on the government especially in war-affected regions. However, demerits are also possible in relation to resettlement and reconciliation process with a sort of ethnic polarization in certain areas in Northern Sri Lanka after an extended civil war between Government of Sri Lanka and Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam for 30 years. Seasonal migrant fishers (Sinhalese) from South are experiencing an unfavourable environment in post-war era, is unraveled in this paper emphasizing the numerous obstacles on their migration. The study was carried out in Silavathurei and SouthBar in Mannar District (Northern Province) interviewing 100 seasonal migrant fishers from Negombo and Chilaw (Western and North-western provinces respectively). Focus Group Discussions (4) and Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques were applied for qualitative data collection. Five point Likert scale (1- very much dissatisfied...5 – very much satisfied) was used to glean data on community relationships and satisfactions. The results show that 93.2* percent (mean = 1.59) are not satisfied (* both dissatisfied and very much dissatisfied) about the social condition prevailing in Mannar fishing communities due to ill-treatments and barriers imposed on their arrival. The resettlement with ethnic shuffling was complained by 54.8* percent stating loss of harmony and peace than earlier. Although, they are satisfied about physical security (75%*), the relationships with Tamil and Muslim fishermen, fish merchants, fisheries organizations, and fisheries officers have been badly affected (mean = 2.12). Having all these repercussions 52* percent of migrant fishers are dissatisfied about the overall societal relationships emerged in post war period resulting less achievements (mean = 2.63) in their lives. The study has been revealed that the resettlement and rehabilitation took place in Mannar is least effective as it could not reconcile their relational wellbeing with expected ethnic cohesion but aroused inter and intra community disaggregation.

Keywords - ethnicity, migrant fishers, post war, relational wellbeing, resettlement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, migration is not only an integral part of people's lives but also a part of economic and social structures of countries and regions [1]. It is a strategy to secure the livelihoods of vulnerable people like fishers who struggle to survive and prosper without trapping in poverty nets but to search and acquire opportunities for their nourishments [2]. Migration in fisheries has referred as a permanent shifting of both places of fishing and residence [3] but, a broader interpretation including seasonal migration, circulation flows, and tourism are also discussed [4]. Spatial and temporal migration is a common feature demonstrated by small scale fishers [5] in tropical countries like Sri Lanka. Fishers spatially migrate when they cross the boundaries of politico-administrative structures and dimensions over a time period is the temporal migration [3]. Small scale fishers move their homes to remote areas following the natural movements of target fish species [2, 4,7] that has become their way of life [7,8]. In fact, migration is a process determined by economic, political, and historical pattern of resource availability [6] and resource extraction.

By being a demographic factor with assessing difficulties [4] due to frequent movements and operations at the sea [5] only few researches have been conducted in West Africa and Asia on fishers' migration [2, 5, 8] and as a part of their fishing operations [2, 4, 5, 6, 8]. However, migration is poorly recognized and less discussed in policy decisions especially related to coastal fishing in developing countries [6, 8]. Moreover, literature on seasonal and temporal migration is not common as rural-urban migration [9]. However, the presence of a larger number of migrant fishers contributes for social and cultural changes, exploitation of recreational resources, interventions in to the local jurisdictions and interruptions to the local resource governance and so on [5, 8, 9]. Consequently, conflicts between migrant fishers and local fishers are not rare in any territory [5].

Understanding on migration, especially dwelling upon natural resources together with migrating patterns, spatial distribution of fishing efforts, temporary settlements, and institutional framework [6] has to be considered in policy formulation meeting pressing challenges and governance structures [9].

This paper examines such a situation where the fisheries communities in war affected areas undergo severe stresses due to Indian trawling, illegal fishing and resource based conflicts creating social unrest and threat on their survival.

II. METHODOLOGY

Mannar district was selected due to a) a war affected region; b) resettlement and restructuring has been done; c) hosts small scale migrant fishers; and d) represents multi-ethnicity and multi-religion. SouthBar and Silavathurei fish landing sites were selected as study locations where the migrant fishers settled together with Tamil and Muslim fishing communities but separately. Field data were collected for seven months from July- October, 2014 and January – March, 2015 covering both seasons at two destinations (home region in Negombo and Chilaw in Western and Northern western provinces and migrating sites in Silavathurei and SouthBar in Mannar district in Northern Province). The data collection was qualitative, adopting participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques (pair wise ranking for this paper), four focus group discussion, and qualitative questions based questionnaire (n=100). Key informant discussions (n=10) were held with both migrant fishers and local fishers. This study is one part of a larger PhD research conducted in two phases; first, interviewed migrant fishers in their home location in 2014; second, interviewed migrant fishers at migrated site in 2015. Data were analysed qualitatively using descriptive statistics.

III. RESULTS

Results of the research explain key characteristics of migration inflow, conflicting issues encountered by migrants at their host region, and satisfaction of migrants on community relationships especially after the post-war resettlements. The next section elaborates the migration influx.

1. Migration influx

Sri Lankan fishery is greatly influenced by the monsoonal wind patterns from October to March (Northwest Monsoon) having relatively high air temperatures and weaker winds, which are favourable for small scale fishers who target small fish species like sardine, sprats, mullet. In contrast, Southeast monsoon from April to September characterized with lower air temperature and strong winds mostly not advisable for small scale fishing operations due to risk, uncertain weather, and harsh sea condition (Key informant). Following the seasonality, there is a substantial level of migration inflow crossing local administrative boundaries from Negombo, Chilaw, and Puttlam areas to North and East provinces; mainly to Mannar district in Northern Province. Majority of migrants in Silavathurei and SouthBar are from Negombo (75

– 80 percentage), followed by Chilaw (10 – 15 percentage), and other areas such as Kalpitiya, Puttlam, and Mulathivu (account for less than 10 percentage).

2. Conflicting issues for migrant fishers

After the resettlement programme in Mannar, majority of Muslims were granted with lands and a small house compared to Tamils (Key informant discussions) making them better off and empowered. This new settlement scheme changed the conventional demographic composition (earlier majority was Tamils) where numerous issues popped out especially on migrant fishers from the emerged Muslim fishing communities whom were not fishers in origin. The summary results of the four pairwise rankings conducted in 2014 and 2015 were presented in table 1 by extracting five most important issues.

Table I
Barriers on arrival of migrants (2014/2015)

South Bar 2014	Silavathurei 2014	Silavathurei 2015	South Bar 2015
1. Indian trawling	1. Indian trawling	1. Malpractices of FI	1. Indian trawling
2. Restrict the arrival till 15 th October	2. Restriction on the landing site	2. Biased government institutions	2. Dynamite fishing
3. Squid jigging	3. Surukku nets	3. Surukku nets	3. Problems from local fishers
4. Log and dynamite fishing	4. Log and dynamite fishing	4. Middle men intervention	4. Fisheries officers are not fair
5. Surukku nets	5. SCUBA diving	5. Indian trawling	5. Surukku nets/ remove wadi when leave

Source: Pairwise ranking

Trespass of Indian trawlers has become one of the main problems in both sites in 2014 and 2015. This depicts; the state does not involve in to the matter although the Navy surveillance can limit upto some extent as well as the government can influence TamilNadu state to control: the fishing community is not united to force the government through a collective action that would positively influence the government. Panankattikuttiya Fisheries Organization (PFO), established by the local small scale fishers restrict migration opportunities only for 50 fishing boats allowing migrants' arrival only after 15th of October otherwise do not let to fish. Access restrictions on; landing site, fisheries, beach, and market are profound. Claiming for property rights by locals restrict access routes to the beach and premises for

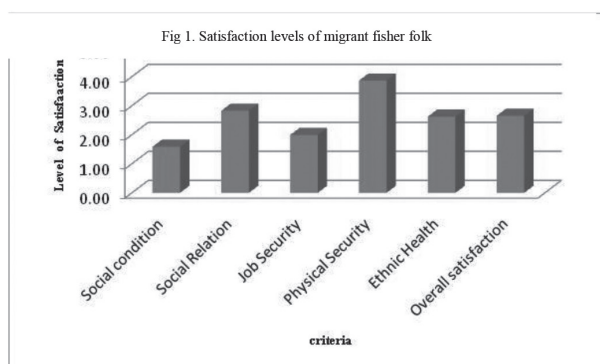
wadi construction. Moreover, migrants are not allowed to obtain logs, rotting timber, or firewoods from adjacent forests.

Third, fourth, and fifth issues represent surukku net, dynamiting, log fishing, squid jigging, and SCUBA diving, which are banned by the Act of Fisheries but mostly practiced by local fishers (Key informant). Being traditional fishers, migrant fishers adapt sustainable fishing techniques only with gill nets and hook and line hence illegal fishing techniques cause damages to their fishing crafts and gears further multiplied by harvest losses. Moreover, they follow their own sustainable measures enforced by the National Fisheries Federation (NFF/ Negombo and Chilaw), which are not accepted by locals.

Problems in 2015 unravel the emerging dissatisfaction on government officials and government institutes (Ministry of Fisheries). Lack of co-operation with PFO and the influence of middlemen are other obstacles that make migrant fishers powerless and marginalised.

3. Satisfaction on community relationships

A likert scale was adapted to rate the level of satisfaction (1- very much dissatisfied... 5 – very much satisfied) on community relationships especially after post-war resettlement. Accordingly, 93.2 percentage of the sample mentioned dissatisfied social condition. Prevalence of ethnic conflicts was reported by 54.8 percentages. Almost all are dissatisfied on job security that has a detrimental impact on their fishing livelihood. Social relationships and overall satisfaction has been affected greatly for 52 percentages in general. However, due to the peaceful environment with defence forces, the physical security is confirmed by 75 percentages of respondents (Fig 1).



In general, an obvious deterioration of community relationships has been reported making an unfriendly environment for migrants.

IV. CONCLUSION

Migration is a common and seasonally practicing process by small scale fishing communities in North-western coast, Sri Lanka from historical days. An unfavourable living condition prevailing after post-war resettlement programme in Mannar is examined that made migrants marginalised and frustrated. Access based restrictions imposed on migrants' arrival, fishing operation (in the sea), temporary settlements, and landing sites (on the beach) are challenging. Employment of illegal fishing techniques further exacerbates the situation of migrants due to poor catches, inadequate income, and great losses. Finally, institution based restrictions such as malpractices, favours, and exclusions frustrate migrants making them further marginalised. Conflicting atmosphere badly affect on cognitive dimension of lives thus satisfaction on social networking, relationships, job security, and ethnic harmony at migratory site is poorly rated. Effective institutional arrangement is the prime focus including the excluded actors (migrants) into an interactive governing system.

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