

# **Socio-economic Status of Inland Fishermen: Case of Anuradhapura District in Sri Lanka**

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Inland fishing is the main source of income of many rural people who live adjacent to most of the tanks in Sri Lanka. The objective of this study was to find out the present status of socio economic factors affecting inland fishermen in Anuradhapura district in Sri Lanka. According to the statistics, there are 4083 fishermen in Anuradhapura district. Out of them, 96 fishermen were randomly selected for this study. Data was collected using a household survey with the help of a pre-tested questionnaire during August-October 2014 and was analyzed using MS Excel software.

This research is descriptive in nature. According to the results, out of the total fisherman population, 98% were male fishermen and female participation was very low. Furthermore, majority of the fishermen (46%) belonged to middle age category (35-50years). The involvement of young people in fishing activities is considerably low at present. The main reasons for becoming a fisherman were unemployed situation, poverty, government training programs, and family backgrounds. A majority of the fishermen (55%) had education up to GCE O/L. Therefore, they have a considerable level of education. However, a significant number of fishermen (53%) hadn't got any training or additional education regarding fishing. Although most of the fishermen (39%) had 5-7 of family members, one or two members from each family were doing fishing. Nevertheless, some fishermen (19%) earn Rs. 41,000-50,000 per month from fishing. This is a significant level of monthly income when Anuradhapura district is taken in to account. However, while 26% fishermen were doing only fishing as their one and only source of income, 18% of fishermen were earning 41%-50% of their total monthly income from fishing. In off seasons especially during rainy seasons (October to April), fishermen have to find other income sources as fish harvest drastically go down. The cost of fishing has significantly increased at present compared with the past five years. The majority of fishermen had sold their harvest to middlemen at a low price like Rs. 200-250/kg. Although there was a significant demand for inland fish, there was not enough supply to fulfill that demand. Therefore, it is important to motivate fishermen to increase their supply. Also there should be a mechanism to maintain a fair price for the fishermen. Most of the fishermen had problems regarding the high prices of essential equipment, getting those equipment from the government due to the influences of political parties and poor extension service on inland fishing of the area. Therefore, finding solutions for these problems, motivating fishermen to gain higher production, would lead to better socio-economic status.

**Keywords:** *Inland fishing, Inland fishery industry, Fishermen, Anuradhapura district, Sri Lanka*