

THE IMPACT OF 1983 - 1987 DISTURBANCES ON THE
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THOSE
INVOLVED IN FISHING IN THE JAFFNA LAGOON

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The Jaffna lagoon has an area of approximately 421 square km. The estimates of the number engaged in fishing in the Jaffna lagoon range from 2000 to 4000. The present study is an attempt to assess and bring to light the impact of the 1983 - 1987 disturbances on the socio-economic status of these people.

Data was collected through a questionnaire administered to a randomly selected sample of 350 families engaged in fishing in the lagoon. Information was gathered on their personal details, occupation, assets and income, losses and relief obtained.

The results indicated appreciable changes in occupation, assets and income. 30% of the fishermen seem to have changed their occupation. Restriction in fishing time affected 97% of them, 67% being adversely affected. All the mechanised boats and trawlers and 21% of the ordinary boats were lost. The maximum loss was in fishing gears amounting to 61%. 15% had lost their personnel, 24% their vehicles and 11% their houses.

The average total catch of prawns and fishes/day/family dropped by 50%, resulting in a reduction of the monthly average family income from Rs.1064/- to Rs.577/-.

The relief provided appears to be totally inadequate and every family contacted had indicated the need for further relief which ranged from Rs.5000/- to Rs.100,000/- to bring the economic status of these fishermen to the pre 1983 level. Relief measures are recommended.