



704/F

**Coping strategies towards idiosyncratic shocks among small scale marine fishing households in Southern Sri Lanka**

Dilanthi Koralagama

*Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Ruhuna, Matara.*

Marine fishing is associated with risk, uncertainty and danger resulting with idiosyncratic shocks and collective shocks, which lower the well-being of fishing families. Since idiosyncratic shocks affect individual households they are considered as manageable shocks at the community level. This study attempted to investigate the types of main idiosyncratic shocks and coping strategies adopted by fishing households in Southern Sri Lanka.

A stratified simple random sample of 50 respondents which included non-mechanized traditional craft owners, fiber reinforced plastic boat owners and crew members from two fishing villages, Kalamatiya and Rekawa, were selected. A structured questionnaire and informal discussions were the tools for data collection. The data were analyzed graphically and statistically.

The results show a positive relationship ( $r = 0.792$ ) between fishing income and the level of household expenses. The severe income fluctuation was the crucial idiosyncratic shock. Inability to sail in harsh weather, inability to secure operational expenditure, and damage to fishing craft and gear are the others. Being small scale fishermen, the stress of such shocks is immense. Coping strategies have two motives; ex-ante, and ex-post. Kruskal-Wallis test confirmed that saving in formal and informal finance institutions and activity diversification such as engagement in paid labour, migration to other areas for shrimp and lobster harvesting or fishing gear repairing are the main ex-ante strategies. Ex-post strategies are borrowing from neighbours and banks and mortgaging and selling assets. Moreover, safety nets, mutual insurance strategies such as revolving funds, and co-operative societies are popular as collective shock absorbents. Out of the two types of collective coping mechanisms are popular and most desired.

In ensuring sustainable shock mitigation practices and policy formulation against the vulnerability among small scale fisher folk, it is important to focus attention on supporting the adoption of collective coping mechanisms, which appeared to be the most effective and popular.