

***Fishing Communities
of
Northeast
and
Ethnic Factor***

A Report by NESOHR

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Abbreviations

SLN	Sri Lankan Navy
SLMM	Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission
SLAFs	Sri Lankan Armed Forces
SLA	Sri Lankan Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
CFA	Ceasefire Agreement
GoSL	Government of Sri Lankan
HSZ	High Security Zone
UNP	United National Party
EPDP	Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (also Paramilitary Group)
MDB	Multi Day Boat

Introduction

“They come and fish in the richest fishing grounds that are our traditional fishing area, while we are not allowed to go beyond 500 metres from the shore.... We are forced to fish only between 5.00 am and 7.30 am.... Our equipment and catches are stolen by SLN..... Is this the kind of peace we are to welcome”?

Fish is the main source of protein for the people of Northeast. Fishing has been the livelihood for 12% of the people of Northeast. That is a total of 320,000 people in Northeast whose livelihood depends on fishing. In contrast, only 250,000 people from the rest of the island depend on fishing for their livelihood. These statistics are worth remembering when reading this report about the situation of the fishing community and the fishing industry in Northeast.

Also worth remembering is that the current CFA interpretation by SLMM grants the GoSL the sovereign rights over the entire sea surrounding the island unlike in the case of land, which has clearly demarcated GoSL and LTTE controlled areas. Therefore, where ever fishermen live in Northeast, their lives and the lives of their families will be dictated by the SLAFs.

Traditionally the northern seas have been a rich fishing ground and produced almost 45% of the fish in the island. The knowledge and expertise in fishing in Northeast with its very long tradition has been outstanding. With proper assistance, the fishing industry in Northeast holds the potential to become a high foreign exchange earner.

The dominance of northern fishing in the island was gradually and later systematically destroyed using the Sri Lankan Navy from the 1980's onwards. Some of the statistical data published by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in 2004 stands as proof to the success of the destructive occupation of the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN). Another factor in the destruction of Northeast fisheries is the total control of the fisheries by GoSL with no power at the provincial level to plan and develop the sector at the local level.

The CFA of 2002 and the easing on fishing restriction immediately after did result in some improvements in the fishing industry in Northeast. However, the degree of normalcy that was achieved was far short of what the fishermen expected. Restrictions on the movement of fishermen continued, stalling the rehabilitation of the industry as will be proved in this document.

In more recent times, the harassment and intimidation of the SLN and the deliberate destruction of the fishing resource in Northeast has outraged and at the same time terrorized the Northeast fishing communities.

1. Northeast fishing communities prior to 1980's

1.1 Jaffna, Mullaithivu & Mannar

In the northern sector of Northeast, all types of fishing methods were used by the fishing community ranging from coastal netting to deep sea fishing to diving. Fishing is done in sea, lakes and off islets. Fishing is also carried out throughout the year in different parts of the Jaffna peninsula. Jaffna fisherman shifted to areas that are conducive for fishing as the season shifted. This is one reason for the high production of fish from Jaffna prior to the destruction of the industry by SLAFs.

Fishermen in the north, in 1975, were already fishing in homemade vessels made of wood that could go into deep seas and stay for 24 hours. These were known as the 3-1/2 ton boats. Several types of locally available wood were used for its construction. Sometimes, Aviseeyam wood was imported from Nuwereliya for this purpose. These large boats needed large engines and up to 120 HP engines were used to go to deep sea. The extensive knowledge about sea and waves of the fishermen was applied to produce efficient fishing techniques. These fishermen would adjust the height of the floating net and the eyes in the net to maximize the catch by studying the wave patterns. During that time, fishing among the Sinhala people in south was neither as extensive as it was in the north nor was there the expertise that was found in the north. In fact, Sinhala fishermen from Pananthurai, Gale, Maththarai, and Negambo came and worked for the fishermen in the north.

The flourishing fishing industry required many supporting services which provided employment for many more. For example in Mayiliddy in the early 1980s, there were 1500 fishing families and a further 5000 families depended on the work associated with the fish sale and manufacturing tasks. The first fishing harbour in the island was built in the north in 1975 in recognition of the high yield from this area. This harbour in Mayiliddy also has a cooler, ice factory, boat repair workshop, and fuel pumping station. This was used by the fisherman until the 1980s when the SLN took over the harbour for its own use and banned the fishermen from using it.

There were 14 ice factories in the north in the early 1980's. In addition there were boat construction yards, engine and net manufacturing plants. "CEYNOR" was a joint venture between Sri Lankan then known as (Ceylon) and Norway. With assistance from Norway several projects to improve the fishing industry were undertaken throughout the coastal areas of the island. The CEYNOR funded factory was built in Karainagar and Kurunagar to build boats and to manufacture fishing nets.

The graph in Figure-1 shows the marine fish production in Jaffna and Mannar districts from 1951 to 2003. It shows the steady and steep growth of the fish production up until the early 1980's.

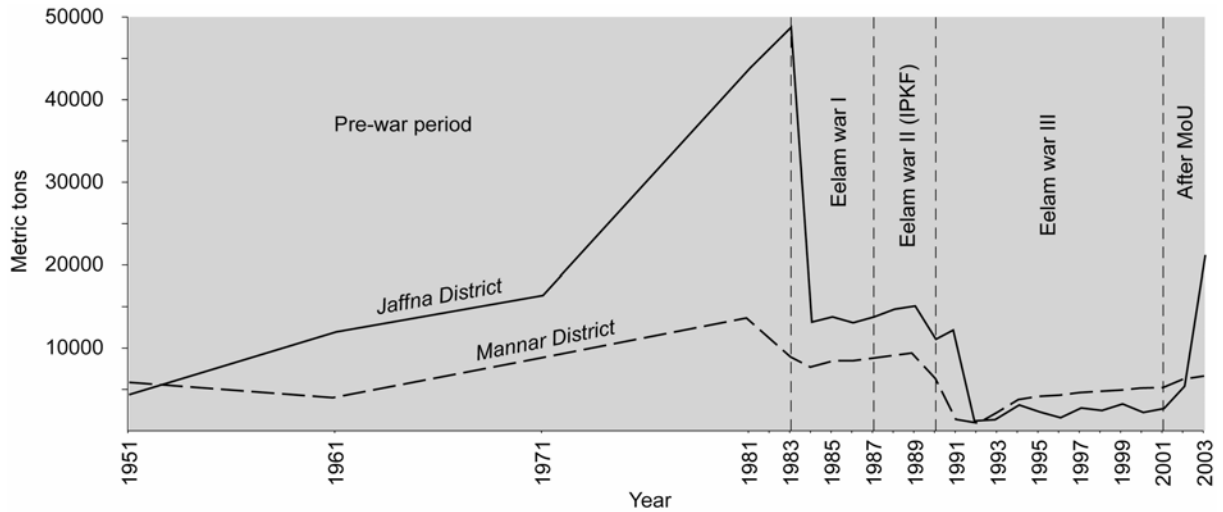


Fig 1 – Growth and decline of fish production in Jaffna and Mannar

1.2 Their community life



The men in the fishing communities spend long hours in the sea. Even after reaching the shores with the catch, there remain the labour intensive tasks of removing the fish from the net, cleaning and sorting the catch, marketing what could be marketed before the fish is spoilt, and preserving the rest. These activities are all carried out at the shores. Fishing communities would construct low cost semi permanent shelters for the community at the shore where these activities can be carried out in the shade. These semi permanent shelters at the shore are called “Vaadi”. Indeed, fishermen prefer to sleep in this “Vaadi” because of the cool sea breeze and would go home mostly to eat and bathe.

It is the custom in this community for the women folk to welcome their husbands, returning from sea, with a bottle of tea. Today many fishermen recall this cup of tea, from their wives standing at the shore, with much nostalgia and sadness. It is nostalgia because now they have been denied this traditional practice by the SLN which determines “where the fishermen can and cannot go” as will be seen later. Another delicacy recalled by many is the dish that women folk in the community would prepare by selecting the best fish from the fresh catch just brought to the shore.

Women would bring all the spices and other ingredients for this dish to the shore and instantly prepare it at the “Vaadi” for their men who have just returned from sea. This is eaten with freshly cooked rice also made at the shore. This combination is called “Puliyanam”.

Women folk had an equal if not larger role in the processing of the fish that was caught. As such, women too, spend a lot of their time at the sea shore processing the fish. With the women, the children too, would spend a lot of time at the shore. In the fisher society women contribute 30-40% towards the fish production process in addition to their other household chores.

Given that there were no fences at the shore, fishing families that gather at the shores, to receive their men from the sea and for the processing of the fish, created a pleasant social context. Thus the shores have been a place of socializing for the fishing communities. One can only imagine what it is like to lose this.

1.3 Trincomalee

The Bay area around Trincomalee harbour is also a rich fishing area. Fifty years ago, during the season for a particular species of fish known as “Soodai”, all that the fishermen needed to do was to sit in their boats with a lamp and make noises by hitting on the boat. The disturbed fishes would jump in the air and some will land inside the boat. There were times when the fishermen will be forced to put out the lamp because the boat would be dangerously full of fish that it is at risk of sinking.

Due to such rich fishing fields near the harbour fishermen had no need to go deep sea fishing. However, they are known to have also gone deep sea fishing in manual powered boats. By late 1970’s they were doing deep sea fishing with boats manufactured in Jaffna and Negambo.

All along the coast, north of the Trincomalee harbour, fishermen from both Tamil and Muslim communities lived for centuries and were fishing using traditional methods. During the 1960’s a handful of Sinhala fishermen came and attempted to fish. They were clearly less knowledgeable about fishing and often would be jealous of the success of the local fishermen. There was tension between the Sinhala and Tamil fishermen even at that time. Tamil fishermen recall the first clashes between them and the Sinhala fishermen and it is referred to by them as “Soodai troubles”, referring to the species of fish over which the troubles were centred.

There were no weapons at that time except sticks, thus no loss of life occurred in these early “Soodai troubles”. Gradually GoSL stationed more and more Police and Navy with heavy weapons near the harbour and Tamil lives were lost. During the 1980’s this violence against the fishermen increased sharply and most of them displaced Jaffna, inland and also to India. Presently most of these coastal areas north of the Trincomalee harbour, which were the traditional fishing areas of these displaced Tamil fishermen, have been settled by Sinhala fishermen. Today even after four years of ceasefire they are unable to go back to their villages. Tamils are still not allowed to return to their villages of Kokkilai, Kokkuthoduvai and Karunattukkerni.

These villages located on the border between Mullaithivu and Trincomalee have been deliberately emptied of Tamils as a ploy to fragment the Tamil homeland. A similar strategy of emptying Tamils from the villages located in the border of Trincomalee and Batticaloa has also been executed by GoSL. The ancient Tamil village of Manalaru has been converted into Gal Oya, a Sinhala village. These fishermen express anger that Sinhala people are living and fishing in their traditional fishing grounds, while they are forced to live in UNHCR refugee camps. In Allsthoddam there is a big UNHCR refugee camp where many of those displaced by the Sinhala settlements are living.

1.4 Batticaloa & Amparai

In the Vakarai area of Batticaloa fishermen were going to sea as far as 25 Kms in FRB boats. Today the older fishermen are nostalgic about the days when they went deep sea fishing. They say that to reflect on those days is exhilarating and they long to experience it again. They have not gone deep sea fishing for more than 25 years and the younger fishermen do not even know what it is like.

The coastal fishing communities in Amparai consisted entirely of Tamils. The adjoining inland communities were farmers. Together they sustained a community that was economically self sufficient. This was the life pattern of all the villages along the Amparai coast.

Beginning from the 1960's, Muslim people started to settle in these Amparai villages. The issue of land grabbing by fraudulent means from the Tamils in Amparai is a deep wound that remains for the Tamils of Amparai. This area of ancient Tamil villages has turned into Sinhala and Muslim majority areas. Tamil people have been pushed into the bottom strata of society by the land grab and resulting economic domination.

2. Northeast fishing communities after 1980's

2.1 Jaffna, Mullaithivu & Mannar

The SLN has started to destroy fishing vessels belonging to Jaffna fishermen from 1983 onwards. In 1990 there was a large military operation and occupation in Mayiliddy which was near the present Palay military airport. Most of the large fishing boats owned by the fishermen were destroyed by the SLN during this time. This area was declared a HSZ and the displaced people have not been allowed to return. People were displaced with the clothes they were wearing and nothing else. The fishermen believe that the boats belonging to them were taken to the south Sri Lanka and some were simply destroyed. Fishermen who tried to go back to their areas and recover their boats and other equipment were killed by the SLN. The Table-1 lists the fishing vessels owned by Jaffna fishermen that were destroyed by SLN during the war.

During the period of J R Jayawardhana's presidency he gazetted the limit of five nautical miles for fishermen in the north. When the Indian Peace Keeping Force took control of Jaffna they eased this limit. This was reintroduced in 1998 without any legal authority other than the draconian Emergency Regulation and was enforced by SLN whether or not the Emergency Regulations were in force.

Table-1 Fishing vessels in Jaffna destroyed during war

F.I. Division	31/2 tons & 28-32 feet boat	17 1/2 tons mechanised boats	Mechanised traditional craft		Non-mechanised traditional craft	
			Vallam	Kattumaram	Vallam	Kattumaram
Jaffna West	282	127	43		449	
Jaffna East	5	58	70		398	5
Chulipuram	11	171		50	458	262
Sandilipay	5	90		90		405
K.K.S. West	2	78		157		100
K.K.S. East	31	456		123		47
Pt. Pedro West	140	230		315		370
Velanai	32	158	107	55	343	111
Kayts	8	75		30	362	108
Delft	29	98		47		117
Pallai		10	25		30	
Pt Pedro East	11	120		125		60
Thalayady	13	272		60		63
Aliyawalai		105	60	210		55
Chavakachcheri					95	5
Total	569	2048	305	1262	2135	1708

Thondamanaru is the fishing coast along the northern edge of Jaffna. In 1983 the jetty in Koddadi, Thondamanaru was taken over by the SLN. An area of 1/2 mile all around this jetty was also taken over and all the houses in this area belonging to civilians were burnt down. 290 families were displaced. The wood from many of the boats and Katumarams belonging to the fishermen were used to build security posts for the SLN. The present President of the fishermen society was shot through the stomach in the 1990's. He still carries the scar. He was later arrested and kept for 14 days on accusation that he put sand in the Navy's food and that he burnt the national flag.

Along the coast of Thondamanaru in the northern edge of Jaffna peninsula 50 metres of rock extends into the sea. In order to enter the sea from this area fishermen need

entry cannals because it is not possible to take boats over these rocky beds. Thondamanaru has 45 entry ports. With the gradual encroachment of SLN into their fishing area the Thondamanru fishermen are today allowed to use only 20.

There were several military actions during the period of war that gradually displaced more and more fishing families from their fishing areas. Many families are still in refugee camps 15 years later such as the people from Valigamam who have been living in refugee camps for more than 15 years as a result of HSZ declaration. The relief they receive amounts to Rs 1200.00 worth of dry rations. These people have lost their land, their income, their way of life and their community. Absolutely no compensation has been given. Neither has any alternate livelihood options made available to these people. The refugee camp life has destroyed the education of its children and the health of the community too.

Some fishing families have displaced to other fishing villages. The right to fish has longstanding culturally enshrined patterns. Those displaced to other areas while tolerated by the local fishermen out of sympathy at start face internal conflicts for land and fishing rights. Such problems demonstrate the need for the fishing families to return to their own villages.

2.2 Trincomalee

In Trincomalee, GoSL sets up model villages on the pretext of settling equal number of Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim fishermen. Yet due to the constant threat and disparity in the treatment that Tamils face at the hands of SLN, Tamil people do not feel safe and comfortable in these villages. Eventually they move out and the entire village then becomes a Sinhala settlement.

From ancient times Trincomalee fishermen sold their catch at the shores and they were not involved in transporting and marketing. A handful of Sinhala people would buy the fish from the Tamil fishermen and transport it on bicycles to the fish market near by. From there Sinhala businessmen would buy and transport fish in large scale to other parts of the island, mainly to Colombo. In due course the marketing aspect of the fishing industry was fully controlled by Sinhala businessmen and it is well known to those in the industry that these middlemen pay less to buy from the Tamil fishermen than what they pay to the Sinhala fishermen. Tamil fishermen in Trincomalee have known for a longtime that the only remedy for this is to get fully involved in the marketing aspect of the fishing industry. They have found this a long struggle which they waged for almost 20 years. Only in the last year or so they have managed to form a co-operative society which has managed to start a marketing section. This co-operative is paying better price to the Tamil fishermen. Unfortunately the SLN and the Sinhala businessmen view this effort as a LTTE initiative and it faces dangers for this reason. Their lorries transporting fish to Colombo has been stopped and threatened more than once in Sinhala villages.

Yet, even today there are no Tamils in the Trincomalee market and it is staffed entirely by Sinhalese. Any attempts by a Tamil to do business in this market will first

be stopped by SLN who will refuse permission and then later threatened using the paramilitaries.

An ancient Tamil village in Trincomalee is Ukanatha-Soodamunai. It has 100 anchorages. There are three lakes which were used for prawn aquaculture. Today Tamils cannot work here.

Trincomalee Fishermen Co-operative has banned dynamite fishing and certain types of nets that catch very small fish. Such fishing methods are also illegal under the Sri Lankan law. Yet, the SLN deliberately encourages unsocial elements in the fishing community to break the ban assuring them of SLN protection. Muslim and Sinhala fishermen are also using these banned fishing methods with the protection of SLN. Fishermen in south Trincomalee report a noticeable reduction in the fish resource due to the indiscriminate use of these resource depleting practices.

Fishermen in some villages report that during war the families were allowed to keep only 1Kg of rice at home. If the family keeps anything more they will be accused of feeding LTTE and be put through punishments ranging from harassment, beating, arrest to killing. Before the CFA all shop owners must hand over their keys to SLA before going home and the pick their keys from SLA the next morning. They had to take the boats to the SLN camps and leave them there even if it is several Kms from their home.

During war, kerosene cannot be carried in cans from the shops and fishermen were forced to carry kerosene in plastic bags.

2.3 Batticaloa & Amparai

The violence against the coastal villages of Amparai was initially conducted by Muslims with the protection of SLA. The villagers recall scores of massacres lead by Muslims with SLA protection. Today the LTTE advices these Tamils in Amparai to learn to live peacefully with the Muslims. For the Tamil villagers, this advice causes them a deep sense of pain. The brutal violence, gruesome and inhumane rape and humiliation suffered by these Tamil people at the hands of the Muslim people from 1960 onwards have not yet been publicly acknowledged and therefore the process of healing has not yet begun. The process of acknowledgement is a basic requirement for any rebuilding of an amicable relationship between the two communities. SLA and the paramilitaries like the Jihath supported by SLA is a big hurdle in this process of rebuilding the relationship between the Tamil and Muslim community.

SLN gunboats constantly roam 1-2 Kms from shores and the fishermen are forced to stay inside this unofficial limit put by SLN. However, since the CFA, they are roaming so close that the fishermen are afraid to go any further than 500 metres from the shore. This 500 meter limit is adhered to by the fishermen only because the SLN Dora boats cannot come closer than 500 metres from the shore because the water is not deep enough. Therefore it is within these 500 metres that the Amparai fishermen carry out their fishing.

Even in basic necessities such as health care there are glaring discrepancy between Muslim and Tamil communities. The hospital in the Muslim area of Eluvadduvan and the Ashraf Memorial hospital have excellent facilities that far exceed the one doctor clinic in the Tamil area of Amparai. Here there is no pharmacy and the doctor's effort to open a pharmacy for the community was blocked by SLA.

3. *Tsunami facts*

While this report attempts to illustrate the suffering of the fishermen since the 1980s it does not go into detail re the devastation they experienced immediately after the tsunami. However, what follows will hopefully give the reader some understanding of the post tsunami experiences of the fisher people of the Northeast.

With the CFA signed in 2002, SLN eased some of the restrictions on fishing it had been imposing. However, these limits were merely for cosmetic reasons as demonstrated by the hundreds of protests that were continually held by local fishermen.

It was in this context that the fishermen faced the Boxing Day Tsunami. The eastern shores of the island were the worst affected areas. The Table-2 below provides the summary of damages caused by the tsunami to the fishing community in Northeast.

District	Death of fishermen	Total deaths	Houses of fishermen Destroyed	Total houses Destroyed	Boats before tsunami	Boats affected by tsunami
Ampara	1025	10436	3526	10566	1598	1598
Batticaloa	1229	2840	6535	9905	3022	3017
Trincomalee	725	1078	3907	4643	2782	2567
Mullathivu	2524	3000	1861	5137	830	804
Kilinochchi	11	560	8	0	737	186
Jaffna	926	2640	3469	3686	3915	2279
Mannar	0	0	0	0	1818	109
Total	6440	20554	19306	33937	14702	10560

The failure of GoSL to implement the P-TOMS (Post Tsunami Operational Management Structure) with the LTTE has denied the fishermen of Northeast the outpouring of aid from international community for the tsunami affected people in the island.

Fishermen are still frustrated about the relief they received following the tsunami. According to them, one boat needs about 40 nets to make it worthwhile going to sea. Most however were given only 10 nets each and many received much less.

Prior to the tsunami, displaced people were given a maximum Rs 1260 per month depending on the family size. After tsunami the Samurdhi stamps was introduced which allocated a maximum of Rs 600 per month. Following the tsunami the fishermen received less aid than they did before it .

Many Jaffna fishermen are quick to point out that on the third day after the tsunami SLN put sentry points for every 50 metres using the property and housing material belonging to the people affected by the tsunami.

In Thumbalai in Jaffna, 15 new houses were near completion to be given to tsunami affected people. SLN has built a bund that has included these 15 new houses thus denying it to the tsunami affected fishermen.

Sampoor village in Trincomalee that came under SLN attack on 20 March 2006 (see NESOHR report) was severely affected by the tsunami. The village of 1700 families lost everything. Within four months of the tsunami, GTZ donated 45 boats and a few nets for each boat to this village. Yet, the engines for the boats did not arrive until much later. In the meantime SLA has installed several administrative red tapes thus preventing the fishermen from receiving the engines. Some of these fishermen when they went to sea for the first time after the tsunami on 5 March 2006 were fired at by SLN. These fishermen left their nets and ran to the shore.

In Trincomalee, Paneme is a Sinhala village where there was just one boat prior to the tsunami that was used for fishing. Following the tsunami, 200 boats were given to this village. In Vakarai in the Batticaloa district the Fishermen Union has 4888 members. 2100 of those persons died in the tsunami. All the homes were destroyed. Fishermen requested 500 boats for their members. So far they have only be given 166 boats. Their welfare given after the tsunami has been stopped although they still live in the transit shelters. Not a single permanent home has been built for the people who lost everything. The INGOs who promised to build them homes are frustrated by the cement and other building material restrictions enforced by SLA. All such material into Vakarai must be brought through the Mankerni SLA checkpoint. The housing needs for the people of this Fishermen Union are 500 houses per village for 12 villages. That is 6000 homes that have not been built

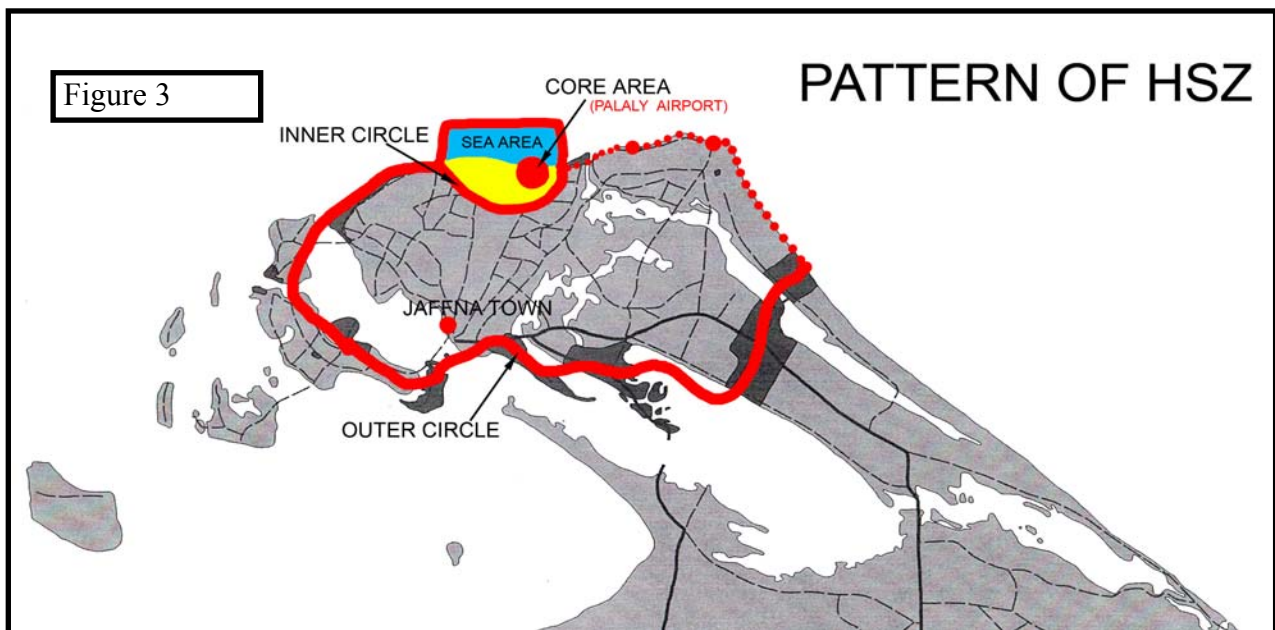
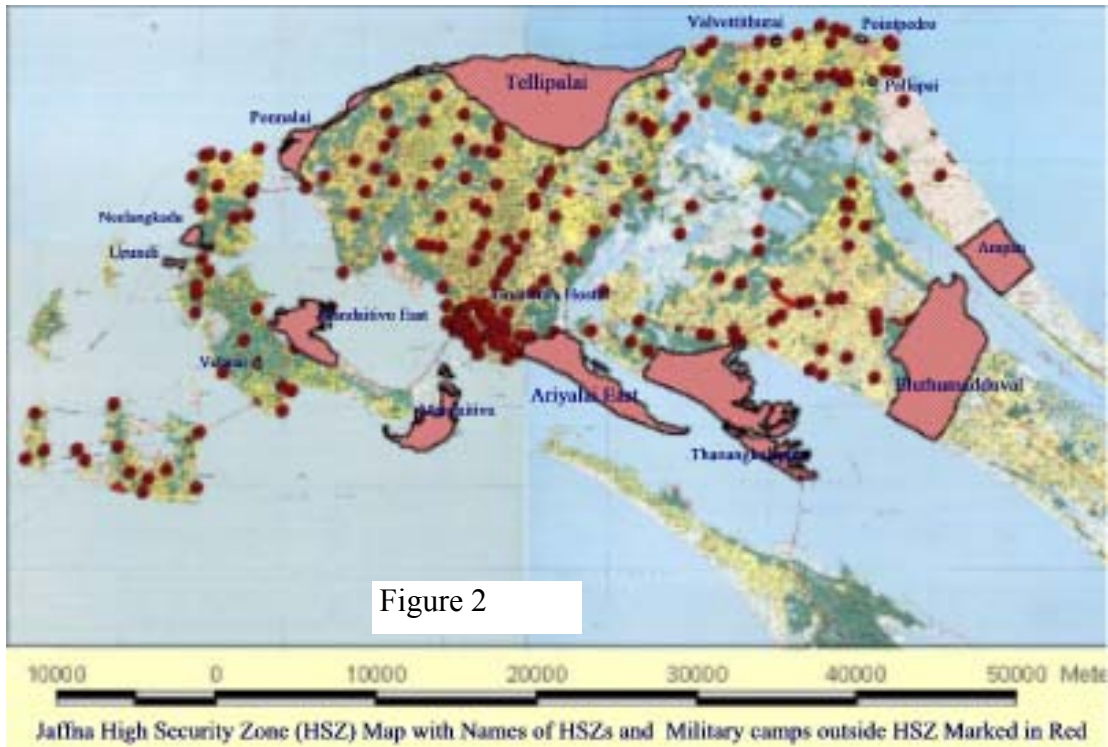
In the Trincomalee district, within a month after the tsunami, in January 2005, GoSL setup a housing scheme overnight preparing to settle Sinhala people in a large sports grounds known as McIser Staium. The Tamils in the area staged a massive protest and the scheme was quickly abandoned. In Amparai also, after tsunami in the pretext of tsunami resettlement Muslims are resettled in Tamil areas.

What this shows is the attitude of GoSL in exploiting every possible means to settle Sinhala people in Tamil areas even today, during the CFA period, immediately after tsunami, in the presence of a large number of INGOs. It is then not too hard to imagine the virulence of their schemes in the 1980s when no one was watching their activities. But perhaps *it is* hard to imagine, as in the 1980s a Tamil cemetery was

turned into a housing scheme for Sinhalese. That Sinhala Village is called Samudhragama.

4. Pattern of HSZ

4.1 Jaffna and her military noose



The Figure-2 shows the HSZs in Jaffna and the red circles are the SLA camps spread throughout Jaffna.

The fall of Elephant Pass in the early 2000 has altered the pattern in which the SL military controlled Jaffna. The present pattern of HSZ surrounding Jaffna peninsula is nothing less than a military noose setup around the peninsula (see Figure-3).

The Palaly airport and the KKS camp form the core of the military base (red circle at the top of the map in Figure-3). This is the control centre. The south of this area, the Valigamam area, forms the inner circle of this HSZ noose (the yellow area in the map). The outer loop, drawn in red, is made up of a string of SLA and SLN camps stretching eastwards, in the clockwise direction from the core, up to Point Pedro, and then southwards down to the Ampan HSZ, Eluthumadduval HSZ, then towards Kilali, Muhamail and westward to Ariyalai, Mandaitivu, and then northwards to Kaytes and back to the core area. Five Kms of sea along the core area, the Valigamam North HSZ area, is also declared as HSZ. Similarly no-go sea zones adjacent to the land HSZs and the SLA and SLN camps along the red loop circling the peninsula is also maintained by SLN. This is the military noose around Jaffna and her people. No one can enter or leave Jaffna by land or sea without SLAFs permission.

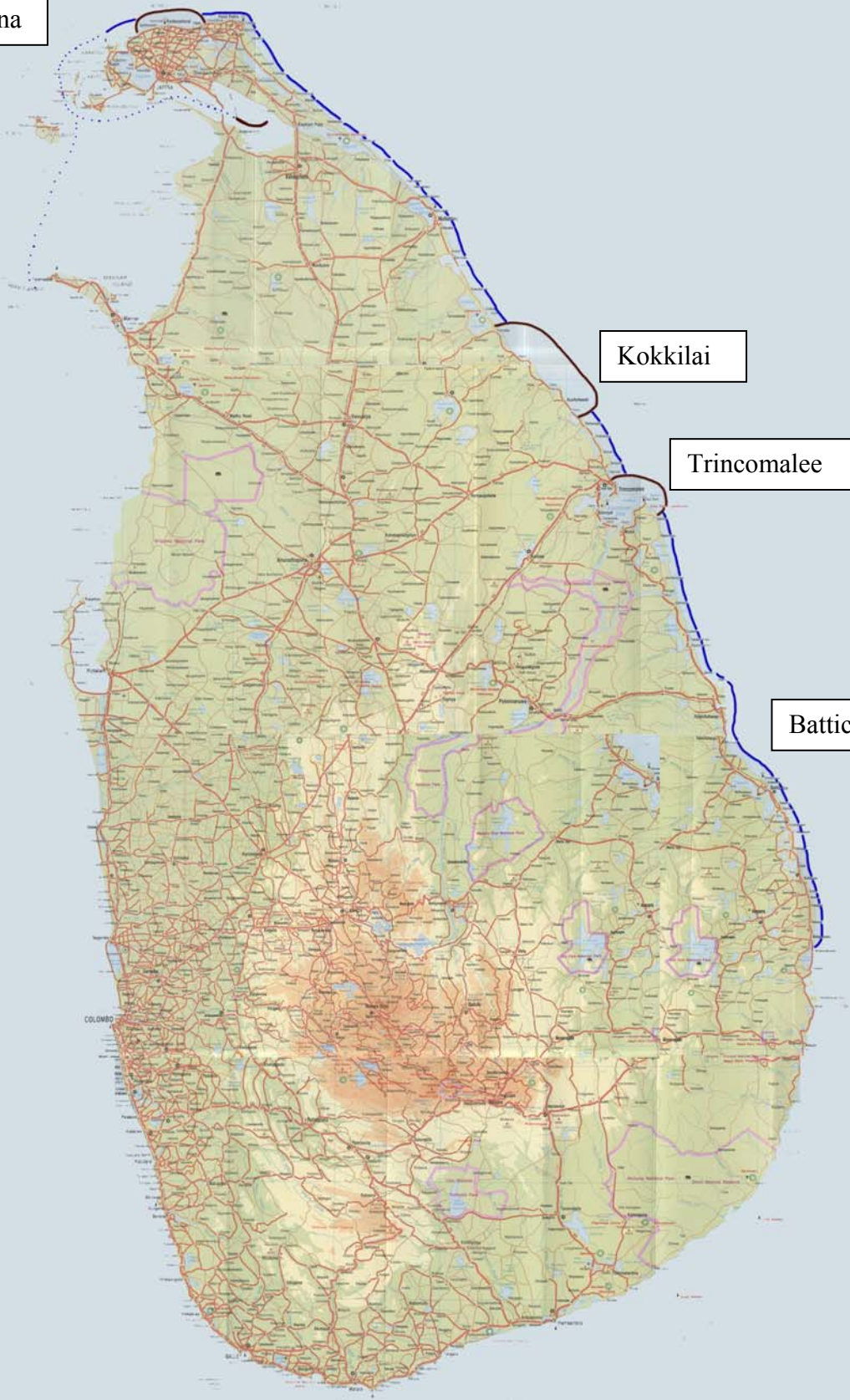
A total area of 145 Sq Kms and a total coastal length of 81.5 Kms have been declared as HSZ. This is a third of the peninsula area. Approximately 60,000 uniformed military personnel are stationed in this HSZ. There are 500,000 civilians living in Jaffna who are forced to live in the area between the inner circle and the outer circle of the HSZ. Effectively for every 9 civilians there is one uniformed military personal dictating the parameters of their daily lives. Most of the restrictions (as described later in relation to the fishermen) applied on the 500,000 people are effectively tightening the noose. The condition in Jaffna, surrounded by the military noose, is like an open prison. But it does not end here. The net work of military camps set throughout the peninsula further ensnares the people caught in the HSZ noose.

Along the 81 Kms of coastline that have been declared as HSZ are several harbours used by fisherman. For example the HSZ in Point Pedro, Mayiliddy, KKS, and Kaytes have important harbours that have been absorbed into these HSZs denying the fishermen access. See Figure-8 for the distribution of fishing harbours and anchorages in use along the cost of the island. This shows not only the neglect of the Northeastern coast by the State but also the deliberate destruction by the State of what was already in existence. Furthermore, 5 Km into sea from Thondamanru to Mathahal (part of the core of HSZ) one of the richest fishing grounds in the island is also denied to the fishermen.

Outside the 81 Kms of sea coast which is prohibited to all people of Jaffna, the use of the remainder of the Jaffna sea coast is strictly controlled by the military. The controlling methods include a pass system for access to sea coast and strict limitations on where one can enter and exit the sea as described later in this report.

Figure-4 Holding line of the Northeast fishing community

Jaffna



Kokkilai

Trincomalee

Batticaloa

4.2 Trincomalee, Mullaithivu & Mannar, Batticaloa & Amparai

Figure-4 shows the holding line, shown in blue, within which, the fishermen from north all along the coast of east, say that they are forced to fish. Fishermen who move outside this line are harassed badly as described later in this report. This holding line which varies from 8 nautical miles down to 1 nautical mile is maintained by the SLN through various terror tactics. Beyond the blue line all around the Northeast coast only Sinhala fishermen are able to go and fish.

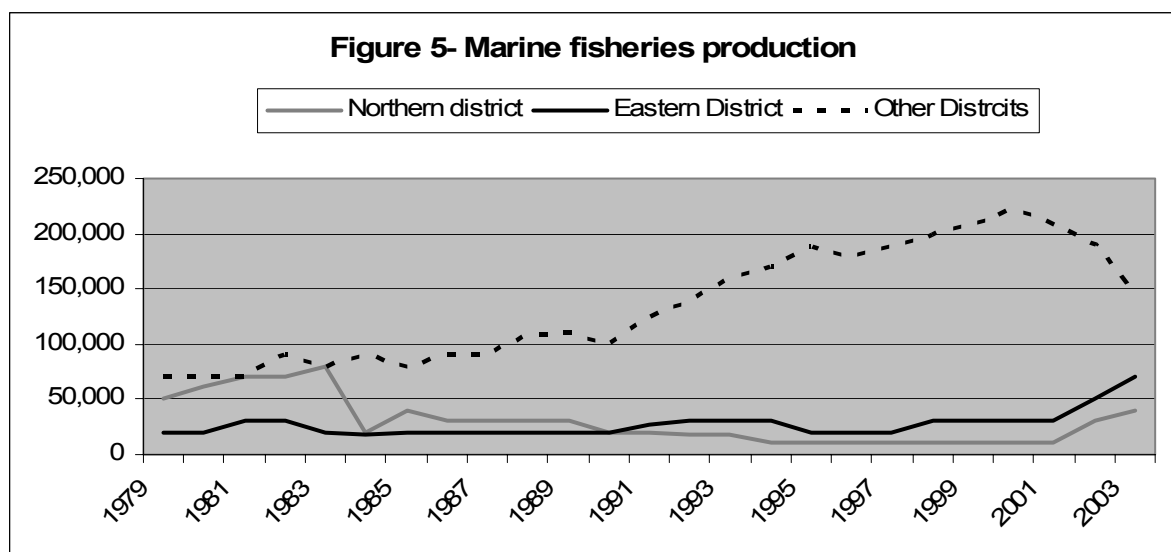
There is a good anchorage facility inside the Bay area of Trincomalee and only Sinhala fishermen are allowed to park their MDBs there.

Trincomalee fishermen also express shock and dismay at the number of new checkpoints put up by the SLA near the harbour. They are frustrated that these are being put up after the Geneva talks in February

While there are no HSZ zone as such in the Batticaloa and Amparai district shores, the restrictions on how far into the sea fishermen can go is even more stringent in this area than in the north. Most fishermen say that they restrict their fishing to less than 1 KM from the shores.

5. Where not to go

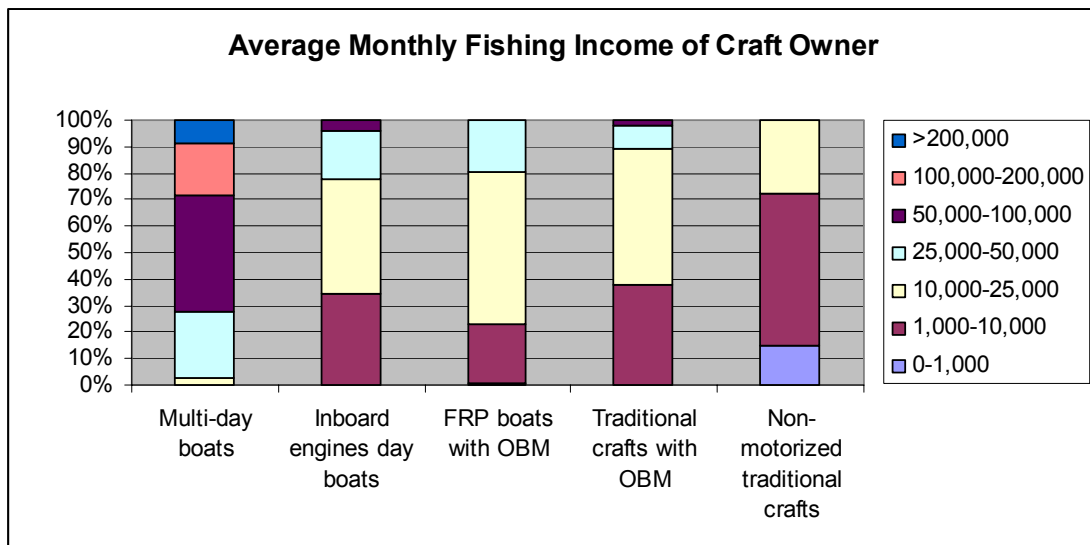
“The shocking truth is that children of fisher families who would grow up in the beach are now growing up without ever seeing the beach in GoSL areas of Northeast. Indeed most young people under the age of 25 growing up in Jaffna have not seen the Jaffna beaches”.



The five nautical mile limit for fishermen in Northeast, first gazetted in 1984, was already mentioned earlier and its shaky legal standing was noted. Over the years the SLN enforced this limit with its military might and it has gradually become a regular practice. Many Northeast fishermen have been killed at sea for tress passing this limit in their own traditional seas (See the list of fishermen who have perished in the sea at the hands of the SLN).

This five mile limit for Tamils has denied the Northeast fishermen deep sea fishing. Although these same fishermen were first ones in the island to go deep sea fishing using their own home made 3 1/2 ton boats with internal 120 HP engines. As the graph in Figure-5 shows this restriction is one of the many causes of the drop in production in the North which in 1984 produced 45% of the fish production of the entire island.

In the Jaffna district the “Where Not to Go” stick of SLN denies fishermen one of the richest fishing grounds in the island, which is the area marked blue in Figure-3,. This “Where Not to Go” stick applied to sea has many other dimensions.



During the period from the mid 1980s fishing vessels were introduced with iced fish storage and other facilities that would permit fishing in very deep seas. This meant that vessels could stay for several days in the deep seas. These vessels are commonly called Multi-Day-Boats (MDB). The distribution map of these MDBs throughout the island (Figure-7) is another eye opener to the level of subjugation that has suppressed the growth of the fishing industry in Northeast and indeed brought it to the subsistence level.

The following is a case of a Tamil fisherman who attempted to own a MDB and operate it from the coast of Trincomalee. This gives a clear demonstration of the well planned sabotage by SLAFs to stop Tamil fishermen entering this field. The MDB owned by a Tamil fisherman was operated by his son in the sea with others employed by him. This son was arrested by Trincomalee SLA and kept in detention for 24 hours and released with no explanation for the arrest. The father, owner of the MDB, was ordered to come to the police station and several inquiries were made into his person. Exhausted by this persistent harassment he sold his MDB and gave up his efforts to enter the market.

Figure 6 shows the disparity in the income of those who own MDBs and thus go deep sea fishing in comparison to other types of vessels. Majority of the Tamil fishermen in Northeast do not even know of echo-sounder, radar and other technology used in these MDBs.

The “Where Not to Go” stick of SLN against Tamils does not stop with its restrictions about how far Tamil fishermen can go into the sea. The stick is also applied in several formats along the coastline. These include, a strict system of needing a “pass” for anyone who wants to go to the coast and restrictions on where the fishing vessels can enter and exit the sea. The “pass” restrictions enforced by the SLN and the restrictions on entry and exit locations for the fishermen are described in a separate section below. Some of these fishermen are not even allowed to throw nets from ashore at night.

Fishermen have been given instructions that they are not to come within 600 metres of any military installations. The difficulty fishermen have of negotiating the various naval checkpoints makes the compliance with this rule a complicated and onerous activity. Changes in wind direction can force fishermen into these forbidden areas and when they take alternate routes to avoid checkpoints, fishermen are routinely stopped and asked about their activities and harassed.

Along the southern Trincomalee coast is a long road like rock formation that runs 10 Kms from the shore along the coast. This is a rich fishing grounds where fishes come to reproduce. Yet these rich fishing grounds are cordoned off from the Tamil fishermen due to the distance limitation placed on them by SLN.

In Jaffna after President Rajapakse came to power, fishermen from 6 of the 14 Fishermen Cooperatives were banned from areas where they were traditionally fishing. 1500 families have been affected and displaced.

There are four cemeteries near the coast in Jaffna. Those who wish to go to the cemetery for a funeral must hand over their identity card to SLN before going to the cemetery. Sometimes a funeral procession must wait for hours with the body of a loved one before being allowed to proceed.

Fishing off the Trincomalee harbour prior to the CFA and during the war was restricted to two miles on either side of SLN camps and two miles out to sea. Since the CFA, restricted areas stretch 5 miles across the base in the bay and 10 miles out to the sea. Now almost the entire Trincomalee coastal area is subjected to fishing ban .

Figure 7

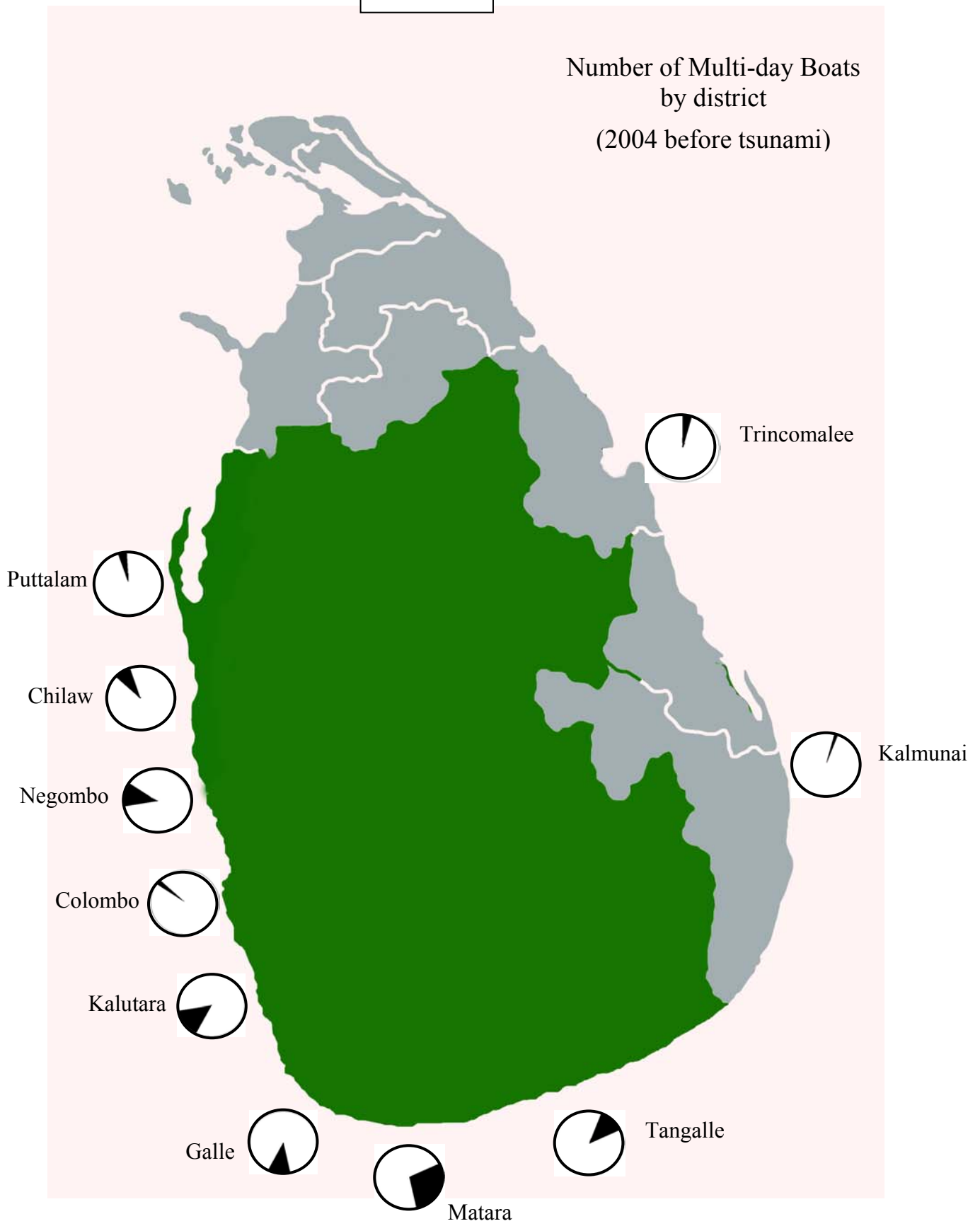


Table-3

Displacement pattern of a fishing village in Jaffna

No. of Displacement	No. of households
Once	35
Twice	64
3 times	46
4 times	21
More than 4 times	18
No answer	12
Total	196

SLN has also has imposed restrictions on where fish can be brought ashore, limiting these locations to military areas, often far from the intended destination of the fish. The result is increased cost and at times ruined fish due to extended transportation times.

5.1 Displacement

Faced with the SLN take over of their coastal living spaces, their livelihood and violence (as described later), the fishing communities have been displaced over and over again. Table-3 shows the displacement pattern of a typical village fishing village in Jaffna.

6. *When not to go*

In Jaffna fisherman can go to sea and come out of sea only between 6.00 am and 6.00 pm. This means fishermen enter the sea at 6.00 pm because traditionally night time fishing is preferred to avoid hot sun and because it is more productive. These fishermen are barred from returning to the shore even for emergency before 6.00 am. This time restriction also applies to fishermen in Trincomalee.

In Poonkary in Mannar, which is in the LTTE controlled area, fishing at night is banned (by the SLN as they control the seas) all together and fishermen are forced to fish in the day, which is less productive. GoSL controlled areas of Mannar is the only coast in Northeast where there is no time restriction to fish. However, even here, a ban on night time fishing is in force in Pesalai south area.

Jaffna fishermen say that they are forced to touch the coast only at a prefixed location from where they left the sea. Each village has one entry point. There are, however, SLN checkpoints every 50 metres or so. SLN at each of these checkpoints have ordered the fishermen who are returning to coast to call out to them if they are passing close to their checkpoint. Yet, when fishermen obeyed this rule SLN have come out with sticks to beat the fishermen for disturbing their sleep.

SLN is trying hard to implement a time restriction in Trincomalee similar to the one operating in Jaffan. This time restriction forces them to fish only during the day time, whereas most of the fishermen are used to night fishing. Fishermen are resisting it. However, the boats of fishermen who disobey the time restriction are rammed by SLN boats, thus threatening the fishermen and damaging the boats. In certain areas like Sampoor the fishermen are allowed to fish only from 5.00 and till 7.30 am - they can be in the sea for only 2 ½ hours per day.

7. What not to take

Before the CFA, SLN banned fishermen from using outboard motors. After the CFA, fishermen were allowed to use outboard motors, but the horsepower of such motors was restricted to 15 HP. It is indeed not possible to go beyond 5 nautical miles into sea with engines of this HP. These are same fishermen who have used 125 HP engine in the 1980s.

SLN in Jaffna prohibits fishermen from taking more than specified amount of oil. Knives are not permitted to be taken. The knife is an essential fishermen's tool that could save life at sea. If the sharp nose of "Thirukkai", a particular species of fish, pierces the body then the nose of the fish must be cut and then the nose pulled out. If this is not done death could result. Jaffna fishermen are not allowed to take a radio. This is a handy companion during the long night at sea. Cell phones are also not permitted to be taken. Again a potential life saver is being denied to the fishermen. Given the ban on these simple items it goes without saying that the fishermen are also barred from taking a GPS receiver. These have become a very useful tool in locating schools of fish thus speeding up the time taken to locate catch.

8. What not to have

8.1 Outboard engines

Everywhere along the Northeast coast fishermen say that they are not permitted to use more than 15HP engines. Some of these same fishermen prior to the 1980s were using even 125HP engines.

In Trincomalee restrictions are placed on Tamils even on the use of outboard motors. In fact, motors cannot be registered under a Tamil name. Tamils have to pay money and buy the motor and then register it under a Sinhala name.

8.2 Lighthouses

Lighthouses are essential guides for fishermen going to sea at night. There were several lighthouses scattered along the Northeast coast. Some of them were in KKS, Point Pedro, Analaithivu, Poonakary and Mullaithivu. Many were destroyed by SLN or SLA. The rest are occupied by SLN and the lights are never lit and they are all in bad repair. Efforts made to put some of these lighthouses were blocked by SLN. GTZ, a German INGO came forward to rebuild the destroyed lighthouse in Mullaithivu but SLN did not give permission for its reconstruction.

Each lighthouse has a unique signal that identifies it. These were very valuable in orienting fishermen at sea. At times fishermen's boats can stray and sometimes far from their home port. Some have strayed as far as the Indian shoreline. Sometimes when the boats are lost, Indian trawlers will pick them up, but charge up to Rs.50,000 to bring them back to shore.

8.3 Harbours & Anchorages

The fishing harbour in Mayiliddy was the first of its kind built in the island in 1974. This highlights the fact that fishing was well advanced there at this time in comparison to the rest of the island. Figure-8 shows the location of fishing harbours at present. Clearly the SLN can determine that the Northeast fishermen are NOT to have these facilities.

Mullaithivu had a jetty that is used to ferry passengers and goods back and forth from the Jaffna peninsula. This route is now cut-off since the Jaffna peninsula came under the control of the SL military. Residents must now ferry goods via a land route that is three times as long.

Only in Mannar in GoSL controlled areas Tamil fishermen own 3 ½ ton boats. Yet because they have no harbours to anchor these large boats, all 60 of them, are presently damaged. Government has made no efforts to facilitate a harbour for the fishermen.

Joseph Fernando Sebamali
Vannankulam, Mullaitivi



“We were all affected by the December 2004 tsunami. We lost everything. We are now living in the transit camp at Unnappulavu.

On 23 January 2006 at 8.30 pm my son, Jeyakumar Ravi (39) and his friend, Anthonypillai Soosainathar (47) were out fishing. We heard Sri Lankan Navy fire. There was continuous firing. We could not see the focus light of the Navy boats. We knew Navy was firing and we were worried. We waited at the beach without going home for all the fishermen to return. We waited till 7.00 am the next day and my son's boat did not return.

We sent two boats to look for my son's boat. The Navy was still there and those who went to look returned without looking for the missing boat out of fear. Then again at 8.30 am we sent a large flotilla of boats with white flags to look for the missing boat and the fishermen. They did not find anything. Next day also three boats went again looking. The boat and the two fishermen were not to be seen.

On the 5th day about 3 Kms from our village the locals found my son's boat. It had a Navy wire tied to it and there were gunshot marks on it.

My son and his family were displaced to India during the 1990 Sri Lankan military operation in Mullaitivu. He came back in February 2003 because I was ill in Mullaitivu. My son left his wife and two children in India and brought one of his children with him. Since then he has been looking after me. What will I do now with his child?

Soosainathar who also disappeared with my son too displaced to India in 1990. He too came back after the ceasefire. He lost his wife and his 13 year old daughter in that tsunami”.

Yogambikai Subramaniam (47) and her son Vasanthan (23)
Uduthurai, Vadamaradchi East, Jaffna



“We lived in Uduthurai, our own village, with my husband and children. All my children were studying at school in Uduthurai. We were displaced from our own village of Uduthurai in Jaffna to Chempiyanpatru in 1990 due to the Sri Lankan military actions. In Chempiyanpatru our life was very hard. We scratched a living doing labouring work. My husband also did some fishing. Then again in 1995 we were displaced to Vanni when the Sri Lankan Army took over Jaffna. There our situation was even worse. We were struggling to eat.

My two elder sons said they did not want to go to school but wanted to start fishing. They went fishing with relatives. In 1997 while they were fishing, a SLAF bomber dropped bombs and both my sons were killed. We lost 12 more relatives in this bombing at the sea shore. The body of my younger son was recovered and was handed to us. We never saw the body of our older son.

We moved back to Uduthurai after the ceasefire agreement was signed. Then in December 2004 the tsunami came. I lost nine family members including my two brothers. I have only this son. He is 23. Because the SLN is attacking fishermen even now, when my only son goes to the sea, I do not sleep that night. I will wait crying until he comes back. My husband sells dry fish at the market.

We lost everything in the tsunami. We were given a few nets. We did not receive a boat. My son goes to fish in the boats belonging to others”.

Chellaiah Yogendrarasa (45)

Vaduvan, Mullaitivu



“When Sri Lankan Army took Mullaitivu we displaced to Mathalan. Once I came back to Vaduvan just to check my home. My leg was blown up in a landmine planted by the Sri Lankan Navy. Again during a bombing raids I was injured badly on my arm and I also lost the sight in one eye.

People helped me to get a boat and out of necessity I started to fish again. I have six children to support. In 1997, one of my boats went missing and I went looking. We did not find the boat but Navy saw us. They beat us badly and put a rope around us and pulled us into their boat. There they beat us again and burnt us with cigarettes. They took us to the Palaly military camp and kept us there for seven months. My family did not know where I was. We were given only the food that was to be thrown. The military said this is the food they give to LTTE. Eventually we were released through ICRC.

A similar incident happened again and we were taken to Trincomalee. There we were hung upside down and chillies were burnt underneath us. Bag filled with petrol was placed over our head. Only when we were choking for air they would remove and ask us to tell the truth. We would say that we are family men and we have no connection with LTTE. When we were about to die we were handed to the police and were released through the courts. We came back to Vanni.

My 17 year old son went fishing in February 2001 with another friend. We heard Navy gun fire. We were worried. All the fishing boats were rushing to the shore. My son’s friend came and fell at my feet and cried. He said that my son was killed by the Navy fire”.

Jeyadevan Banumathy (47)

Uduthurai, Jaffna



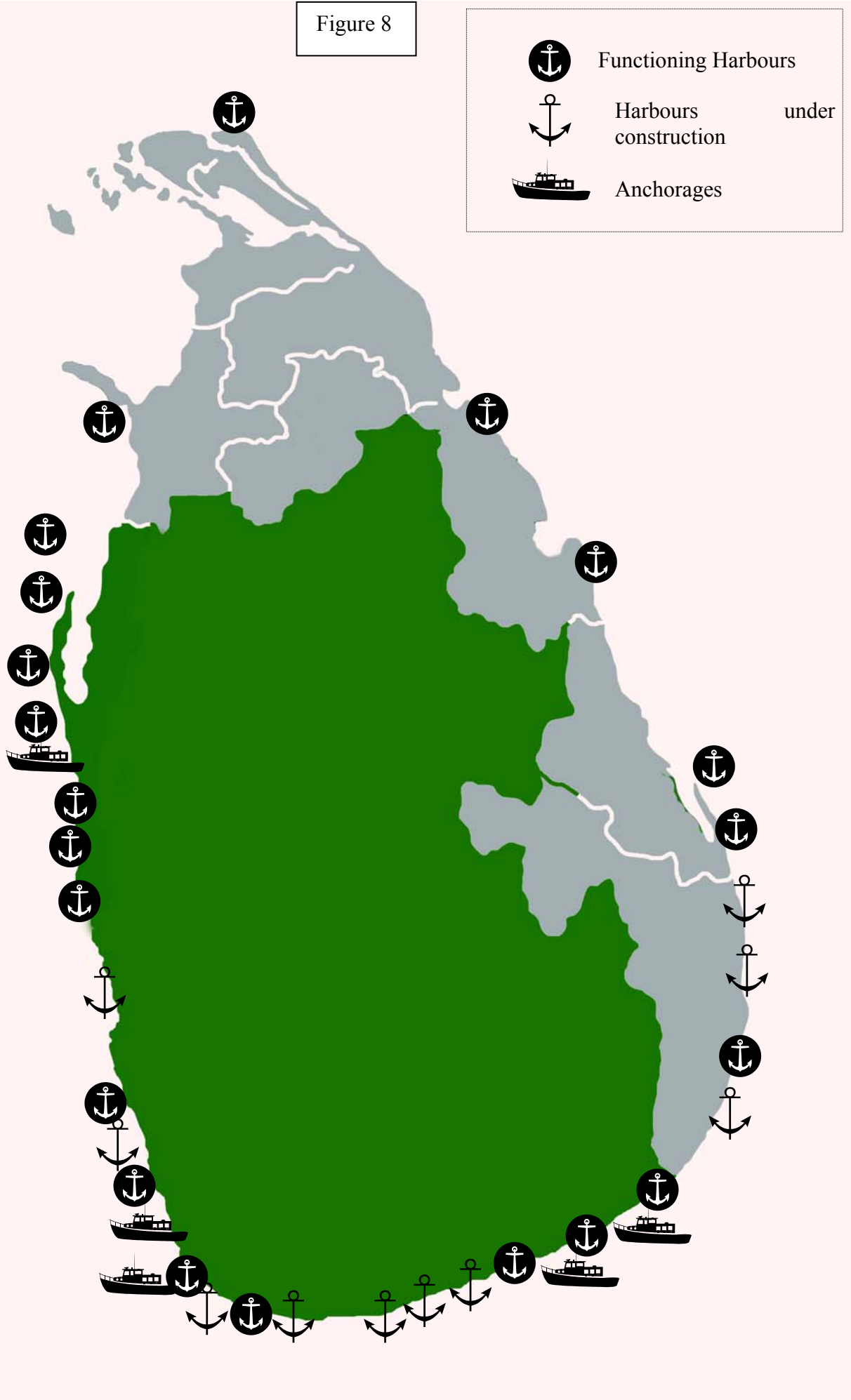
“We displaced from our village to Chundikulam in 1990 due to Sri Lankan military attacks. We were very poor but we were happy. My husband, Subramaniam Jeyadevan, went to sea on 3 March 1990. He did not return. But his boat reached the shore. There I found his sarong and the food box. The food he took had been eaten and the box was empty.

Later I heard that the fellow fishermen who went in the same boat had survived. He said that Sri Lankan Navy fire hit my husband on his head. They both jumped into the sea and were swimming towards the shore. My husband was bleeding and he could not swim. His friend has told him that he will go to the shore and get help. However, when he reached the shore he had fainted and we did not know what has happened. We later searched in the sea and found his body. He had gun shot wounds in his head.

I had brought up three very small children by selling dry fish. I got my eldest son married. He died in the December tsunami.

I had two brothers. One of my brothers was taken by Sri Lankan Navy and he is still missing”.

Figure 8



8.4 Ice plants

Table-4

Number of Ice Plants before and after the War

District	No. of Plants as at 1987	No of .Plants in 2003
Mannar	3	2
Kilinochchi	-	0
Jaffna	12	2
Mullativu	3	0
Trincomalee	2	2
Batticaloa	4	1
Ampara	4	1
Total	31	8

Table-4 shows the number of ice-plants in Northeast before and after the war giving an insight into the devastation caused by SLN on the industry.

8.5 Boat yards and Net manufacturing centres

CEYNOR was a joint venture in fishing industry between Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon) and Norway that began in the 1970s. Through this scheme several projects for the development of fisheries were undertaken.

CEYNOR funded factories were built in Karainagar and Kurunagar to build boats and to make nets. These decayed during war were destroyed by the Sri Lankan military. Five years ago, during the first term of President Kumaratunge these were refurbished and launched as a Limited Company and named NorthSea Company. However, this was used as EPDP base. After CFA, Maheswaran, an MP for UNP incorporated NorthSea into the Hindu Affairs Ministry to the amusement and irritation of the Fishermen Unions. This incorporation prevented the Fishermen's Union from having a partnership in the production of the boats and nets. This new mode of operating the factories did not produce 1% of the needs of the Jaffna fishermen.

The Fishermen Cooperative Union of Jaffna had its head office in 1st Cross Street in town. Two ice factories operated in its premises prior to the war. This too was dilapidated during war. After the war, with a lot of hard work, the union staff set in motion a project to rebuild this office with ice factories, cool rooms, and fish

processing plants among other things. This project was approved by GoSL in 2001. On the day of laying the foundation stone the SLA came and stopped further work being done. If the project had gone ahead it would have employed women from war affected families.

Even as early as 1983, permission to build a factory to convert excess fish into poultry feed was denied by SLN.

8.6 Decent price for their catch

The marketing of the fish caught by fishermen is mostly in the hands of middlemen to take a huge profit. Often they loan money to the fishermen to buy the fishing equipment thus holding them permanently as their customer. This prevents the fishermen from seeking the highest bidder for their catch.

In Trincomalee fish marketing is in the hands of Singhalese, who buy the catch and ship the catch to Colombo. These middlemen pay a lower price for the fish from Tamil fishermen. A Tamil group tried to become involved in marketing but failed, largely due to the efforts of interested Singhalese parties, who drove the Tamil group out of business.

Recently with assistance from TRO the Fishermen Cooperatives is trying to enter the marketing sector and provide decent price to the fishermen for their catch. The Cooperatives are finding this to be a long, hard struggle.

Fishermen also receive a lower price for their catch because the journey to Colombo is long there are delays due to the extensive SLA checking which results in the fish spoiling.

8.7 Educational courses on the fishing sector

Northeast Secretariat On Human Rights (NESOHR) in a report on discrimination in the textbook production process for school children said,

“In the year 1997 a new subject about fishing was introduced to Sinhala medium schools. A new teacher’s guide to teach this subject was also produced in Sinhala in 1997. The equivalent teacher’s guide in Tamil was not produced until the year 2004. In other words Tamil students were not considered a target group for teaching this new subject for seven years. This was the case in spite of the fact that there are more coastal fishing areas in the Tamil majority regions.

The educationalist in the Northeast realising the importance of fishers in their region trained volunteers to teach this subject. In 2004, more than 800 Tamil students sat the national Year 11 examination of this subject as opposed to just under 120 Sinhala

students. This clearly demonstrates that the need for teaching this subject is much greater in the Northeast region than in the Sinhala majority areas”.

Similarly a course conducted in Trincomalee in recent times was conducted only in the Sinhala language thus excluding the Tamil fishermen.

9. More control (The Pass System)

“They give pass to show the outside world that they are letting fishermen to fish but are harassing them and terrorizing them to stop them going fishing”.

The pass system is most grueling in the Jaffna peninsula. Up until recently there has been no pass system for the fishermen in the rest of the coast of Northeast. However, fishermen are under pressure to register for pass in the other coastal areas under the GoSL control. Fishermen have expressed strong objections, yet they also say that they will capitulate because the power is in the hands of SLN and fishermen must earn a livelihood. In some parts of Mannar under SLA control it has already been put in practice.

9.1 Jaffna

Everyone needs a pass simply to go to the beach. If they are fisherman going to sea to fish they need a pass for their boat as well. Fisherman can go only in the boat for which they have been given permission to go. If a boat is in repair fisherman cannot go fishing in another boat. They also need to get permission to take the boat from the beach to inland for repair and again to take it back to the beach. The same applies to bring new boats to the beach. There is a lot of red tape and delays in obtaining the pass. The process of obtaining permission for such activity is not centralized in one place. Fishermen have to obtain permission at three separate levels causing a lot of delays. The letters requesting permission etc also must be given in English and letters written in Tamil are not accepted. These cause additional expense to the fisherman because most of them do not know English.

Fishing boats entrance into sea is limited to fixed corridors. In the SLA controlled areas in the North fishermen going to sea can enter and exit the sea only through these corridors with pass obtained from the SLN. SLN checkpoints along the coast for every 50 Kms control this access into sea.

To obtain a pass from SLN, fishermen must make their own pass in two copies with their photos and get it signed by the President of their society and by the owner. The SL Navy chief will then sign it and be given to fishermen. Fishermen must then laminate it.

9.2 Going to sea

Fishermen pass through two level of checking before going to sea. At the first stop, which is usually inland from the sea by about 1 Km, they handover their Pass and take a token. At the next stop which is close to the sea they handover this token and will be given the original Pass which they take with them to sea. The reverse happens when returning back to home.

Body checking has been introduced lately. Fishermen complain that this is demeaning and bordering on sexual harassment.

Fishermen's families in GoSL controlled areas also need a Pass to go to the beach. Given the long and arduous process they have to go through, the fisher families no longer go to the shore. The "Vaadi" practice of the fishing community described earlier has therefore been completely abandoned. It is not hard to imagine the result of losing a cultural practice that affects family interactions and social interactions. The loss of the "Vaadi" habit is also hard on the families economically because the beach space is used for most of the fish marketing and processing activities. The shocking truth is that children of fisher families who effectively grow up in the beach are now growing up without ever seeing the beach in GoSL areas of Northeast. If one visits the LTTE administered coastline, the stark difference in the way of life of fishing communities there compared to the fishing community in GoSL areas of Northeast will be apparent.

In Trincomalee, SLN has imposed a Pass system similar to the one that has been in place in Jaffna. The Trincomalee fishermen are resisting its enforcement. SLN has been harassing the presidents of the Fishermen Co-operatives to implement the Pass system.

9.3 Buyers also need pass

The sale of the catch is also usually conducted at the beach. The buyers of the catch must also have a pass to be at the beach to purchase the catch. These buyers will need a vehicle or a motorbike to take their purchase away. They also need a pass for this vehicle or motorbike. Thus the pass pervades all aspects of the fishing industry in GoSL areas of Northeast.

In the GoSL areas of Mannar, the pass system is not implemented. Despite this the SLN have detained people for not having a pass. SLN also continue demand pass from local fishermen at sea. Often the fishermen are arrested because they did not have a pass. The process to securing the release of those thus detained can be very complicated and time-consuming.

10. At sea there are no witness

In Figure-9, the second picture is what is visible for a naked eye from the shore. The SLN boats are constantly traveling at great speeds close to shores. When fishermen see this they will not go to sea that day out of fear. Those who are at sea will leave everything and rush back to shore. That is an indication of the level of harassment and violence experienced by the fishermen at the hands of SLN.

There were scores of incidents at sea where SLN harassed the fishermen at sea. When in attack mood SLN are often drunk and fishermen notice a strong smell of alcohol. Unfortunately, complaints to SLMM do not produce any justice to the fishermen. This is because these incidents happen at sea, mostly night, and only eyewitness to the incidents are the fishermen who are the victims and SLN personnel who are the perpetrators. Faced with this level of harassment on a daily basis and with no justice or recourse, what have the fishermen left to believe in?

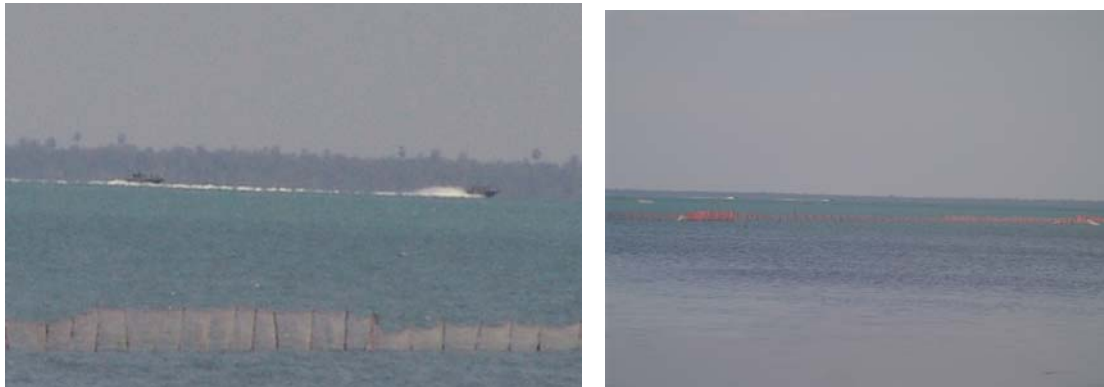


Fig-9 SLN Boats as seen by fishermen

10.1 Sinhalese and Indians can but not locals

In the deep northern seas, where northern fishermen are barred from fishing, Sinhala fishermen are coming in MDB and are fishing freely. This sea one of the richest fishing areas in the island. The plunder of the resources, that by natural law should belong to the local people, by outsiders with the active support of the government must be one the gravest violation of a people's right.

Indian trawlers arrive in the sea off Mannar in large numbers. Their movement, in such a large number, is clearly visible for the fishermen from shore. They come with power lights in such large numbers that fishermen describe the sight as "moving park". When they come, it is impossible for the local fishermen in small boats to fish. These Indian trawlers scoop everything from the sea bed with no discrimination on what they are taking. This indiscriminate destruction of a people's resource is deliberately encouraged by SLN. It appears as if the SLN and by implication the GoSL wants the resources of the Northeast destroyed. One Mannar fishermen, put it

this way, “the pain we feel when we see what the Indian trawlers are doing is like seeing one’s child die”. These fishermen ask why the SLN that is able to stop their tiny boats is unable to stop the large number of Indian trawlers doing what is both nationally and internationally unmistakably illegal.

Another illegal practice not controlled by the SLN in Mannar sea is the practice of dynamiting which is banned internationally and by GoSL. They let fishermen to do this with no regard for protecting the sea resources. Schools of almost 5000 fish may be moving and when dynamited all of them are killed. Those who perform this only take what they need and leave the rest of the dead fish in the sea. This is exactly the reason why this has been banned internationally. These large numbers of dead fishes will also prevent other fishes from coming to the area because the fish can smell the decaying fish, thus denying small scale local fishermen their catch.

10.2 Harassment

“Navy has come and looked and clearly seen that it is a fishing boat with fishermen in it. The Navy will then retreat far, speed up and ram into the fishermen’s boat. Often seeing the speeding Navy boat fishermen will abandon their boat with all its equipment and jump into sea for safety”.

“They repeatedly warn us that if one of their boats is attacked then they will kill all of us”.

Harassment at sea is something that Tamil fishermen all along the coast of Northeast complain about.

All the fishing boats, belonging to fishermen, are expected to display in bold a particular number which identifies that fisherman and his own boat. They cannot go fishing in any other boat. In traditional fishing villages fishermen often go fishing with their relatives and it is common for them go fishing in different boats belonging to their families. This is not only a violation of human rights by current standards but also a violation of the age old wisdom of a self sufficient, communal people.

After President Rajapakse came to power the fishing restrictions have been tightened even further. Previously fishermen went up to 3-5 Kms into the sea but now they are being stopped from going beyond 2 Kms into sea. Fishermen in Poonakary in Mannar and Trincomalee are particularly affected by this. SLN boats are frequently patrolling the sea just outside the limit where they do not want the fishermen to go. In fact, the fishermen always abandon their boats and rush to the shore as soon as they site a SLN boat. The picture taken on March 21st from the coast of Poonakary shows how close the SLN boats are patrolling. When in such close proximity fishermen dare not to go to sea.

Some other harassments methods cited by fishermen include the following.

1. SLN have physically picked up fishermen and just dropped them into sea and then driven away.
2. SLN have taken the hot water that is ejected from the boat engines and thrown it at the fishermen.
3. SLN shine the bright focus light on fishermen so that they can never read the number on the SLN boat which attacked them.
4. SLN would pour water on the fishermen's lamp to put it out so that they cannot see the SLN men and thus will not be able to identify them later.
5. The rule is that fishermen must call out to any SLAFs post nearby when they are reentering. When they do this the SLN come with a sticks to beat fishermen because the SLN persons were woken up from their sleep.
6. SLN boats routinely provoke local fishermen. The SLN boats hone in on the local fishing boats causing the local fishermen to leave their nets and flee. When the fishermen return to gather their nets, the Navy boats return and intimidate the fishermen. This is undertaken as a kind of game by the SLN at the expense of fishermen.
7. After the rape and murder of Tharshini Ilayathamby in Punguduthivu in Jaffna in December 2005, 150 families from Punguduthivu left by sea to go to Vanni. Navy stopped them and dragged their boats back to Punguduthivu.

In Trincomalee for example, although there are Singhalese, Muslims, and Tamils, it is the Tamil population that is singled out and harassed. The last two months have seen an increase in the harassment of Tamil fishermen.

Unlawfully taking the various means by which you make your livelihood to most people would seem a grave violation of one's right. However, most fishermen appear to be resigned to the fact that SLN will steal their catch. Indeed, they appear to feel that this is better than the other forms of harassments where their life is threatened and their boats and equipment damaged or stolen.

10.3 Destruction and stealing of equipment and catch

Most fishermen have stories of how SLN personnel help themselves freely to the catch from fishermen at sea. Indeed, even on the shore, Sri Lankan police have come and demanded fish and they pay the price they feel like and fishermen take it without protesting due to fear.

Boats are routinely confiscated by SLN and only returned after prolonged petitioning and intervention by the Fishermen Cooperative Society. If a boat has gone missing there is no hand phone permitted to trace the boat. Fishermen do not extra fuel to go in search of the missing boat. In one instance a fishermen's hand phone rang while the SLN was nearby. The navy personal grabbed the hand phone and threw it in the sea.

Norway Point is good breeding grounds for fish and thus a good fishing spot for fishermen. SLN is occupying this island and by using various tactics the SLN is preventing fishermen from going near it. Two fishermen Kaliappu Shanmugathan and Ponnambalam Thavam set up their expensive equipment that included 100, 18 feet long poles which they plant in the sea bed and then cast the net around it. Each of the poles itself is worth Rs 800. SLN has stolen the poles and has used it to build a fence around their camp at Norway Point. This is sufficient to deter fishermen from fishing there because they cannot afford to lose such equipment.

Sampoor fishermen say that 15 of their nets were stolen. The SLN first denied stealing. Fishermen complained to Muthur Jetti Camp. SLN has also stolen some nets from Muslim fishermen. The chief at the SLN camp ordered the SLN to return the nets. SLN brought 5 nets and told the Tamil fishermen to share it with the Muslim fishermen who have also lost nets. This is a sure way to create conflict between Tamil and Muslim fishermen. This simple act was committed to deliberately create this conflict.

Even in the Mullaithivu seas, SLN harassment continues. Soon after the signing of the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), while a fisherman by the name of Philipiah Pakiarasa was fishing about 5 Km out at sea, a SLN boat approached him, honed in, and rammed his vessel. In another similar incident in Mullaithivu seas, another fisherman, Daniel, was about 6 Km out at sea when SLN boats rammed into his boat. Their boats were sunk but the fishermen swam to safety. They could have easily perished in the sea.

10.4 Deaths & disappearances

Large numbers of fishermen have perished at sea while fishing at the hands of SLN. The list that follows gives those fishermen who perished in the northern seas. Attempts to collect a list of eastern fishermen who perished in the sea did not produce a detailed list except the comment,

“At least a thousand fishermen would have perished at sea from our community but we did not keep track of this because no one told us to do that”.

10.4.1 List of names of some fishermen killed at sea by SLN

1. 26.10.93 Selvanayagam Ranjakumar, Inparuddi, Point Pedro
2. 04.01.94 Sathyappillai Iruthayarajah, Sakkoddai, Pt. Pedro
3. 04.01.94 David Uthyakumar, Sakkoddai, Pt. Pedro
4. 04.01.94 Thiruchelvam Amilraj, Sakkoddai, Pt. Pedro
5. 04.01.94 Mariyampillai Alfred, Sakkoddai, Pt. Pedro
6. 04.01.94 Josep Alfred Thayan, Sakkoddai, Pt. Pedro
7. 21.01.94 Soosaipillai Mariyaselvam, Polikandi East, Pt. Pedro
8. 14.02.91 Rajah Ramalingam, Aathikovilady, Pt. Pedro
9. 10.12.92 Sellathurai Raveenthirarajah, Aathikovilady, Pt. Pedro
10. 23.11.92 Kanakasuntharam Arunthavarajah, Aathikovilady, Pt. Pedro
11. 05.09.93 Iyathurai- Thakkathurai Aathikovilady, Pt. Pedro
12. 14.08.90 Ramachandran Anpusivam, Kothiyal, Pt. Pedro
13. 23.02.91 Nallathampi Raththinavel, Periyakadatkurai, Pt. Pedro

14. 13.09.03 Tharmalingam Raththinakanakasapai, Thondamanaru, Pt. Pedro
15. 14.12.94 Nagamani Thiyagarajah, Urkavarthurai
16. 14.12.94 Thiyagarajah Thiyakakumar, Urkavarthurai
17. 07.05.96 Thiruchchelvam Nesan, Urkavarthurai
18. 10.08.86 Imanual Mariyanayakam, Jaffna
19. 08.09.94 Imanual Anton Ruthra, Jaffna
20. 02.08.94 Adaikkalamuththu Antony, Jaffna
21. 02.08.94 Felix Justin, Jaffna
22. 09.03.94 Soosaippillai Thevadas, Jaffna
23. 19.04.94 Mariyathas Awerd Siril, Jaffna
24. 10.06.86 Anton Theltanveen, Jaffna
25. 06.04.86 Michael Anthonippillai Siluvaithasan, 3/3 Water Tank Rd, Jaffna
26. 15.12.90 Saviriyam Mariyadas, 7/4 Centre East Rd, Jaffna
27. 13.06.94 Sebasthiyampillai Antonydas, 32Water Tank Rd, Jaffna
28. 15.10.87 Likori Rons, 6 1st Cross Street, Jaffna
29. 10.06.86 Alosiyas Likori, 6 1st Cross Street, Jaffna
30. 04.12.96 Cristhopher Sebastiyam, 6 1st Cross Street, Jaffna
31. 08.09.94 Victor - Antony Lorans 20, 2nd cross street
32. 10.06.86 John George, 19, 3rd Cross Street, Jaffna
33. 18.10.87 Muthiyappu Christian, 28, 3rd Cross Street, Jaffna
34. 10.06.86 Imanual Patrick, 38 2nd Cross Street, Jaffna
35. 10.06.86 Muthiyadippu Antonydas 24, 1st Cross Street, Jaffna
36. 10.06.95 Mariyanayagam Angelo (Kunadas), 30, 2nd Cross Street, Jaffna
37. 03.12.96 Ponnuthurai Coliston, 30/2 3rd Cross Street, Jaffna
38. 10.06.86 Saviriyon Jesuthasan Nickson, 19, 2nd Cross Street, Jaffna
39. 10.06.86 Emalyanus Maksmas Eswaran, 12 St James Rd, Jaffna
40. 24.09.94 Joseph Thevadas, 15/8 Centre East Rd, Jaffna
41. 09.10.95 Christophor Peter Jeyaseelan, 8 Centre East Rd, Jaffna
42. 09.10.94 Kirishnasami, 8 Centre East Rd, Jaffna
43. 19.10.84 Alfred Alosias, 1/1 Water Tank Rd, Jaffna
44. 10.06.86 Joseph Fernando, 28 2nd Cross Street, Jaffna
45. 04.12.96 Alponse Anton, 9/5 4th Cross Street, Jaffna
46. 28.11.88 Chirisanthu Soosaithasan, 7/1 2nd Cross Street, Jaffna
47. 02.08.94 Adaikkalamuththu Antony,
48. 10.06.86 Pankithas Antony Julias, 25 St James Rd, Jaffna
49. 10.06.86 Benedict Quebertnesan, 16 Isplan Rd, Jaffna
50. 22.07.99 Kanakaiya Sivayokalingam, Velanai, Jaffna
51. 10.07.84 Madutheen Sepasthiyampillai, Ward 2 Allaippiddi, Jaffna
52. 05.02.93 Pakkiyanathan Vaiththiyathan
53. 26.07.89 Kanthiya Yokarajah, Nainatheevu North
54. 26.07.89 Selvarajah Ewaran, Nainatheevu North
55. 13.03.86 Veerakaththi Sathasivam, Nainatheevu, North
56. 13.03.86 Pillaiyan Nagesu, Nainatheevu, North
57. 03.12.94 Neekilampillai Sepasthiyampillai, 14 Puthukkudiyiruppu, Jaffna
58. 31.12.93 Aaraani Francis, 46/47 St Anthonies, Jaffna
59. 05.12.93 Kiyomar Mary Rosary, 20 3rd Cross St, Jaffna
60. 28.06.95 Kurusumuththu Christi, 24 2nd Cross St, Jaffna
61. 14.02.88 Rasappu Pakkiyanathan, 1/2 3rd Cross St, Jaffna
62. 11.11.93 K. Sepasthiyamma, 173/5 Kadatkarai Rd, Jaffna
63. 11.11.93 K. Jesuthas, 173/5 Kadatkarai Rd, Jaffna
64. 21.01.90 J. Vimalraj, 89 Kadatkarai Rd, Jaffna
65. 14.02.88 S. Anthony, 21 1st Cross St, Jaffna
66. 30.05.98 M. Annie Regina, 25/2 2nd Cross St, Jaffna
67. 30.10.98 Justin Libris, 25/2 2nd Cross St, Jaffna
68. 02.03.89 Santhiyappillai Anthonippillai, Ward 3 Kudavil, Nedunthivu
69. 23.04.93 Leenappu Sakayamariyampillai, Ward 10 Nedunthivu, Nedunthivu
70. 05.09.96 Seevarathnam Rathinakumar, Savalkaddu Aanaikkoddai, Sandilippai
71. 05.09.96 Thavarajah Ithayarajah, Suthumalai South, Sandilippai
72. 28.07.96 Sellathurai Ramanathan, Suthumalai South, Sandilippai
73. 05.12.98 Sinnaiya Thankarajah, Suthumalai South, Sandilippai
74. 22.10.87 Ponnampalam Thavarajah, Suthumalai South, Sandilippai
75. 04.12.93 Kumar Kanakalingam, Savalkaddu, Sandilippai
76. 05.09.96 Selvarathnam Rajasingam, Savalkaddu, Sandilippai
77. 08.07.98 Vaithilingam Arichchanthren, Suthumalai South, Sandilippai
78. 09.04.96 Rajalingam Rajaneethan, Savalkaddu, Sandilippai
79. 30.08.96 Rasaiya Thiruchchelvam, Suthumalai South Savalkaddu, Sandilippai
80. 25.09.96 Theiventhiran Santhirarajah, Suthumalai South Savalkaddu, Sandilippai
81. 08.03.95 Sithampari Kanthaiya, Savalkaddu, Sandilippai
82. 07.10.93 Thavarajah Raveenthran, Suthumalai South Savalkaddu, Sandilippai
83. 28.02.94 Arumukam Chellaiya, Navaly, Sandilippai
84. 28.02.94 Veluppillai Nadarajah, Navaly, Sandilippai
85. 28.02.94 N. Yogam, Navaly, Sandilippai
86. 04.11.98 S. Aanantharajah, Savalkaddu, Aanaikkoddai, Sandilippai
87. 12.12.07 Anthonippillai Filomina, 22Centre East Rd
88. 12.12.07 Jesuthasan Mariyaran, 4 Centre East Rd

89. 12.12.07 Jone Mariyadas, 47 Odakkarai Rd
90. 12.12.07 Kristhurajah Vijaya, 15 Centre West Rd
91. 12.12.07 Baskaran Nishanthini, 7 Centre West Rd
92. 12.12.07 Amalathas, 7/4 Centre East Rd,
93. 12.12.07 Ayasan Manivannan, 21 1st Cross St
94. 12.12.07 Anthonipillai Kanagaratnam, 5 2nd Cross St
95. 12.12.07 Stanislos, 18A Kadatkarai Rd
96. 12.12.07 Raveenthiran Pransisthamma, 42 Old BankaRd
97. 12.12.07 Nicholas, 13/10 5th Cross St
98. 12.12.07 Nadarajah Venikuveya, 32 Water tank Rd
99. 12.12.07 I.R.Henady 39, St Sebasthian Rd
100. 12.12.07 Ramesh 55, 3rd Cross St
101. 12.12.07 Kaleer Rakuman. 79 Kadatkarai Rd
102. 12.12.07 Alakendren Luvirran 10, Railway Line
103. 12.12.07 Mariyanayakam Christina, 7/3 Centre East Rd
104. 12.12.07 A.Anton 17/6, Kadatkarai Rd
105. 12.12.07 Imanual Christian, 13/1 5th Cross Street
106. 12.12.07 Micharl Colin, 87 Kadatkarai Rd
107. 12.12.07 Benadict Sepasthiampillai, 23 3rd Cross St
108. 12.12.07 Qupad Nesan Ramesh, 16 Ispinand Rd
109. 12.12.07 Pilip Anthonipillai, 610 Kadatkarai Rd, Jaffna
110. 26.12.87 Muruhaiya Nadarasa, Trincomalee
111. 22.08.83 Subas, Kuchchaveli, Trincomalee
112. 22.08.83 Thankarasa, , Kuchchaveli, Trincomalee
113. 14.08.83 Raju, Trincomalee
114. 09.11.83 Selvarasa, Trincomalee
115. 09.11.83 Paandiyan, Trincomalee
116. 18.06.84, Seddiyar, Uppuveli, Trincomalee
117. 01.08.84, Ahilan, Thirukadalur, Trincomalee

10.4.2 List of names of fishermen disappeared at sea by SLN

- 13.03.91 Subramaniam Ananthamayil, Polikandi West
- 16.06.91 N.Pulenthirarajah, Polikandi West
- 16.03.91 Sivapiragasam Ilango, Aathikovilady, Valveddithurai
- 16.03.91 Rasalingam Sathiyaseelan, Aathikovilady, Valveddithurai
- 16.03.91 Ponnampalam Nageswaralingam, Aathikovilady, Valveddithurai
- 08.05.94 Arumugam Thanurajah, Aathikovilady, Valveddithurai
- 07.05.94 Varatharajah Rasarithnam, Aathikovilady, Valveddithurai
- 16.06.90 Thirumenipillai Thirukkumaran, Aaladi Lane, Valaeddithurai
- 16.06.90 Navalingham Raveenthiran, Vevil Pillaiyarkovilady, Valveddithurai
- 16.06.90 Ragupathi Kaneshanath, Udaiyamanal pillaiyarkoviladi, Valveddithurai
- 13.08.90 Vetharaniyakurukkal Balasupiramaniam Vevil pillaiyarkovilady, VVT
- 14.08.90 Thirumenipillai Ramachchandran, Poththiyal, Valveddithurai
- 09.06.91 Suntharalingam Santhiralingam, A.M.School Lane, Valvaddithurai
- 01.05.96 Amarasingam Thayakaran, Urkavarturai
- 08.11.93 Aaseervatham Anton, Kurunakar
- 14.06.95 Benadict Alponse, 1st Cross Street,
- 14.06.95 Sosaippillai Anthonipillai, 13 New Garden Road
- 19.10.98 Yon- Ismar, 17/10 2nd Cross Street
- 13.11.94 Somapala- Disasparo, 30 Water Tank Road
- 14.06.95 J.Emil Aansaro, 7 Centre East Road,
- 14.06.95 Alponse Anton, 61/3 Mavunkarmal Road
- 14.06.95 Arulappu Anton Yoliyas, 61/3 Mavunkarmal road
- 30.11.90 Sebasitayan Sepastian, 36 2nd Cross Street
- 17.07.96 Arulrajan Anissan, Jaffna
- 30.11.90 Sebamalai Bernard, 36 2nd Cross St
- 14.06.95 Imanual Anton, 26 Centre East Road
- 08.08.96 Antony Anistan, 11/5 Puthukkudiyiruppu, Pasaiyur
- 12.12.07 Kanapathippillai Sivalingam, Inparuddi, Poinpedro

10.4.3 After CFA

Even as recent as in 24 January 2006, Soosainathar and Jeyakumar disappeared off the Mullaitivu coast. People at the shore heard Sri Lankan Navy gunboat fire.

On 2 July 2005, Tharman Raju (21), a fisherman from Gurunagar, a coastal suburb in Jaffna town, was killed instantly in the early morning around 3.30 a.m. when he got entangled in the live fence put up by the Sri Lanka Navy and was electrocuted.

On Thursday 2 May 2002 SLN fired on fishing boats off the coast of Vaakarai, Batticaloa killing several fishermen.

11. Further harassment

“Those who stand up are visited by army at night at their home. Often the electricity is cut before the army arrives”.

Judging by the number of complaints received by SLMM against SLN one is misled into believing that the SLN are not harassing or harming the fishermen. The truth is far from it. The harassment and resulting fear is so high most fishermen prefer to keep quiet than lay a complaint with SLMM. When gathered as a group their anger about the harassments they face is palpable.

11.1 Destruction

A year ago, the fishing cooperative formed by the fishermen in areas south of Sampoor was given a cooler truck by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) so that the fishermen could transport the fish to markets themselves without losing money to middlemen. The cooler goes to Trincomalee to pick up ice and returns before loading the fish to be taken to Colombo. On its way to Trincomalee to pick up ice the cooler truck must pass through the SLA Puhaiyilai checkpoint. At this checkpoint the SLA once told the cooler truck driver to turn off the headlights. As the driver was passing through a section that was narrowed by SLA to slow down traffic, the SLA men diverted the attention of the driver. SLA has also parked a truck that was sticking into this already narrowed section. Naturally the cooler truck hit the parked truck and sustained extensive damage. The driver and the cooperative that owns the truck are of the view this was a well planned action by the SLA to damage the truck.

The Vaakarai fishermen borrowed this same cooler occasionally so that they could transport the fish to Colombo themselves avoiding the middlemen. They have stopped this practice after the abduction of the TRO workers in Welikande in Batticaloa in February 2006.

11.2 Avoiding meetings

On hearing the complaints from the Tamil fishermen, SLMM organized a meeting with the SLN Commander, Government Agent and the Head of Fishing Division in Trincomalee. There were two meetings that were facilitated by SLMM. None of the government officers came for the third meeting fixed for 14th March. SLMM had told the fishermen that the SLN Commander has told SLMM that they are not coming to the meeting because they do not know how to respond to the fishermen woes.

11.3 Inquiries as a form of threat

Most Fishing Cooperative leaders from east say that Karuna group traces the movement of all the leaders. When they are not in the area they visit the homes of the leaders and inquire about their whereabouts. Some of the leader told the authors that due to such inquiries they have not slept at their home for 20 days. In Amparai, Jihath and Karuna group are working from the home of the brother-in-law of Athakulla an SLMC minister at 3rd Kurichchi, Pachchaipalli.

The SLN has been known to continue harassing fishing communities at night. Families are in the habit of locking their doors and must deal with the tension of a possible knock on the door. Paramilitary organizations such as the EPDP have been known to come to villages while the men are away during the day fishing and intimidate women and children.

11.4 Restrict economic activity

At the Muthur checkpoints fishermen face enormous harassment. They cannot take anything more than Rs 5000. To purchase some fishing equipment like string for repairing nets etc needs a lot more money. The amount of string that can be taken which they use to repair nets is also restricted. They are not allowed to take petrol at all. The amount of kerosene allowed is restricted to just enough for the family to fish. Consortium is not given permission to setup a fuel pumping stations. Four months ago Pirahalathan from Sampoor was arrested and beaten for taking Rs13,000 worth of clothes. He was later released but his clothes were not returned.

11.5 Restrict economic activity

At Kaddaiparichchan checkpoint in Trincomalee and at Mankerni checkpoint in Batticaloa restriction are placed on taking cement and other building material. These are areas where the tsunami destroyed the entire villages and there is the urgent need to rebuild homes. For example, in the Vaharai area not one single permanent home has been rebuilt out of the almost 5000 homes that were destroyed by the tsunami. Building material to this area can only be taken through the Mankerni checkpoint where SLA restricts the transportation of these materials.

During early 2006, fishermen were displaced from GoSL controlled areas to LTTE controlled areas. The refusal of the Military to allow displaced fishermen to bring their fishing gear with them when they flee denies these refugees a source of income in their host community. As a result, the host community resources are stretched to the limit to take care of incoming refugees.

12. Conclusion

The result of thirty years of well planned destruction of the Tamil fishing community is clearly visible in Table-5 which shows the percentage of the three ethnic communities among the vulnerable population in the same locality. In Trincomalee the vulnerable population of the fishing community is made up entirely of Tamil and Muslim population. In Batticaloa the vulnerable population of the fishing community is made up entirely of Tamils. For the entire eastern district 82% of the vulnerable population is from the Tamil community.

Table-5 Population and Ethnicity (%)

District and coastal DS	Sinhala	Tamil	Muslim	Other	Total Study Population
Trincomalee district					
Coastal	10.0	51	39	0	100
Vulnerable Coastal	0.5	56	43	0	100
Batticaloa district					
Coastal	0.0	84	15	1	100
Vulnerable Coastal	0.1	97	3	1	100
Ampara district					
Coastal	2.0	34	64	0	100
Vulnerable Coastal	6.0	62	32	0	
Eastern Province					
Coastal	3.0	38	59	0	100
Vulnerable Coastal	0.8	82	17	0	100

Annexure 1 - Sample harassment incidents:

Oct 2002, two fishermen of Supparamadam Point Pedro of Jaffna, Sivakaran & Ravikumar, were severely assaulted by SLN personnel when rough sea forced them to drift towards the high security zone of the Kankesanthurai harbour.

Jan 2003, Sri Lankan naval personnel who had gone in a Dvora gunboat intimidated the fishermen of Vadamarachchi, Jaffna and ordered them to dump all their belongings kept in the boat such as fuel, fishing gear and food items into the sea. Then the SLN assaulted the fishermen with clubs and electric wires. Affected fishermen are, V Arumaichelvan, G Chandrakumar, J Premadas, S Rajendran.

Jan 2003, SLN Dvora gunboat rammed a fishing boat belonging to S Sothilingam & Kandeepan, off the coast of Thondamanaru, Jaffna. Two fishermen, of Kerudavil were wounded when the boat capsized.

July 2003, several Valvettiturai fishermen had gone fishing in Valvettiturai Northern Sea seas. An SLN Dvora boat stopped one fishing boat. Fishermen in the boat then protested that they were already checked by the SLN soldiers located at the shore and there was no need for a second search in the sea. Angered soldiers then started assaulting fishermen in the boat. Affected fishermen are, P Yogathas & other fishermen of Valvettiturai

Oct 2003, Sri Lanka army soldiers assaulted and injured 19 fishermen in Munai, a coastal village on the outskirts of Point Pedro town, Jaffna. The assault on the fishermen began after SLAFs soldiers assaulted a young fishermen who sought permission to return home before the time ordered by the SLAFs. Affected fishermen are, A Muthukumar, K Xavier, T Thiraviyam, P Maran & 15 other fishermen

12 Dec 2005, Thilippaiya Pakkiyanathan was fishing at night. SLA boat came towards them. He made signal to show that he was a civilian but SLN came near of him. So the fisherman jumped into the sea and came to shore without his boat. His boat was attacked by SLA.

12 Dec 2005, Two fishermen from Kallapadu were going to fishing as a first time after tsunami disaster. They were attacked by SL Navy in the sea. 08 Jan 2006, SLA extended the area where fishing is banned near Trincomalee harbour and removed all fishing vessels belonging to civilians. 2500 families were affected. 450 fishing vessels were removed.

14 Jan 06, **Arrest and torture:** Two men, Arasaratnam Kuharasa & Sathasivam Easwaran, went to Trincomalee from Sampoor to buy nets on. They were arrested and detained for two months. They were released on 18-03-06 after severe torture. One them is unable to go fishing anymore.

16 Jan 2006, Trinco-Town&Gravets: SLN declared ban on fishing at night. That night SLN fired to chase all fishermen from the sea.

18 Jan 2006, Soma Ulageswaramoorthy 43, Veluppilai Rasaradnam 55, Apputhurai Kirubakaran, 40, Murukesu Kanthasami, 41, Mahalingam Lingaraja 25, Supramaniyam Yaheswaran 37: They were assaulted by SLN in Karainakar sea.

11 Feb 2006, Trinco-Town&Gravets: SLN stole equipment from the boat belonging to Alagaraja at sea.

11 Feb 2006, Alahuraja : SLA forcefully took his fishing instrument when he went fishing.

16 Feb 2006, Raju & Mathy were on their way to Pallaththodam when they were shot and killed by SLA.

23 Feb 2006, Thevasahayam Stanely & Jeyakumar Anthonippilai Soosainathar were disappeared in the sea. Their boat reached shore without them.

23 Feb 2006, Thevarasa Santhan & Thevarasa Jimbo were stopped by SLN and were scolded with bad words. Their nets were cut. They return to shore without nets.

23 Feb 2006, Sebamalai Robert Kennedy's pass was thrown into sea by SLN and he was chased to shore at gun point.

26 February 06, In Polikandy, Valavettithurai , fishermen from more than 10 boats were chased to shore after their passes were taken away by SLN.

06 March 06, Trinco-Town&Gravets: Sinhalaese from the village of Samudragama with SLN protection attacked four Tamil fishermen from Thirukadaloor and one of them sustained fractures in arms and legs. Two of their boats and engines were also damaged. Affected fishermen are, Anandaprasath, Thavisanthan, Subramanium and Jegan.

06 March 06, Trinco-Town&Gravets: Sinhalaese from the village of Samudragama with SLN protection attacked and destroyed the boat belonging to a fishermen from Veeranagar.

06 March 06, Aananthapirasath, Thavisanthan, Subramaniam, Jegan were attacked by SLA. One was admitted to hospital in serious condition.

06 March 06, Veeranakar Fisherman's boat was damaged by SLA in the sea.

07 March 2006, Trinco-Town&Gravets: Sinhalaese with SLN protection attacked Tamil fishermen from the village of Salli. Affected fishermen are, Ravi and Pavalarasasa.

07 March 2006, Trinco-Town&Gravets: due to attacks by SLA, 7 fisher families of Thirukadalur and 6 fisher families of Muthur have displaced from their homes.

07 Mar 2006, Ravi, Pavalarasasa fishermen from Sallikkiramam were attacked by SLA in the sea.

21 Mar 2006, Trincomalee : fishermen were fishing in the sea were chased to shore by shooting.

21 Mar 2006, Boats were burnt in Paddanatheru shore.

For more similar incidents, see NESOHR report: Fishermen's Human Right to Livelihood

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Note:

All of the numerical data presented in this report are sourced from the Statistical Unit of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources as reported in reference 1 above.