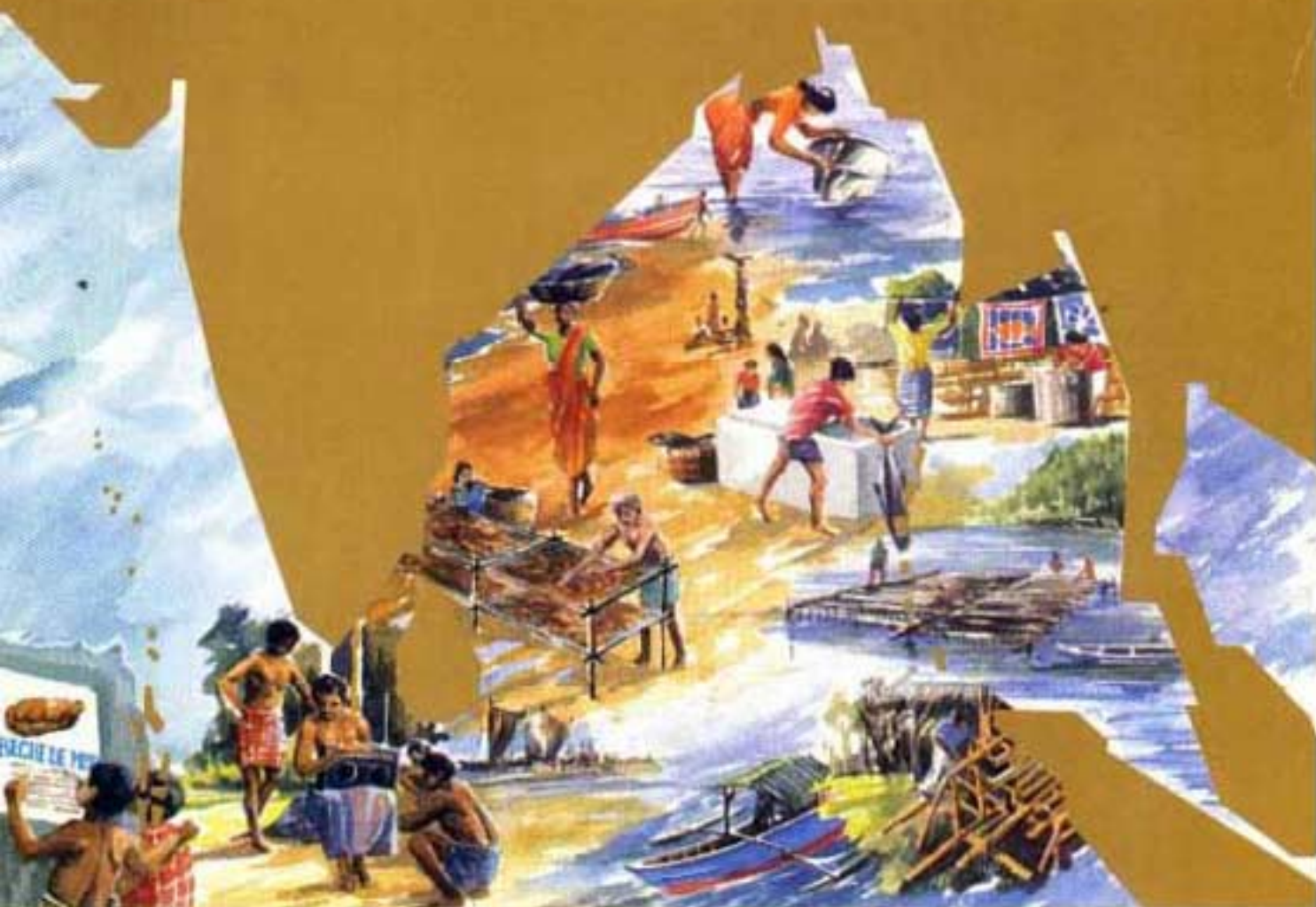




# Biosocioeconomics of Fishing for Small Pelagics along the Southwest Coast of Sri Lanka



Bay of Bengal Programme  
Small-scale Fisherfolk Communities  
Bioeconomics of Small-scale Fisheries

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Biosocioeconomics of fishing for small pelagics  
along the southwest coast of Sri Lanka

by

P Dayaratne  
K P Sivakumaran

*National Aquatic Resources Agency, Colombo, Sri Lanka*

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The marine fishery in Sri Lanka is the country's major source of animal protein supply (60%). It also provides employment to around 100,000 fishermen. More than 90 per cent of the fish production comes from the coastal area extending up to about 25 nautical miles from the shore. A group of small pelagic species constitutes more than 45 per cent of this catch.

Before the motorization of fishing craft in the early 1950s, almost the entire production of small pelagics came from the beach seine (BS). After motorization, however, small-mesh gillnets (GN) became popular. With the introduction of synthetic material, the gillnet became the major gear. In the early 1980s, fishermen on the southwest coast of Sri Lanka started using the purse seine (PS) to target small pelagic resources.

The rapid increase in fishing intensity due to motorization gave rise to several fishing disputes. The use of the more efficient purse seine in the southwestern coastal waters led to several conflicts. In 1987, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (MFAR) framed regulations limiting the area of operation of the PS. However, enforcement of these regulations was not successful. The MFAR thereupon, realized the need to examine the possible interaction between the different fisheries in terms of resources and income distribution among various user-groups. It was expected that the information obtained through a study would assist in arriving at sound management measures. The study was undertaken by the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) with guidance from the Bay of Bengal Programme's biosocioeconomics team. The reporting was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) is a multiagency regional fisheries programme which covers seven countries around the Bay of Bengal — Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The Programme plays a catalytic and consultative role: it develops, demonstrates and promotes new technologies, methodologies and ideas to help improve the conditions of small-scale fisherfolk communities in member countries. The BOBP is sponsored by the governments of Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, and also by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). The main executing agency is the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations).

This document is a working paper and has not been cleared by the Government concerned or the FAO.

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