

ABSTRACT

Worldwide fisheries are in trouble. Like other developing countries, fisheries in Sri Lanka face many problems. Management of small-scale fisheries has become very critical and poses an extraordinary challenge both for local communities and governments. Coastal marine sector is an important subsector in fisheries where fish production has reached an optimal during past decade. The state of management and resource exploitation is found to be variable in nature having number of stakeholders with a long history of existence of community-based management systems.

The present research work has been undertaken to review traditional management systems with community-level collective efforts and current approaches to establish community-based resource management for establishing good governance through co-management regime for sustainable fisheries management in Sri Lanka. Open access and poor enforcement of law are identified as the major management issues which in one way or the other responsible for almost all the problems related to the fishing industry. In the study on some selected case studies with community-based fisheries management systems, it was observed that most of these systems operate successfully independently or with the government assistance. According to the analysis, it is observed that there is a spectrum of community-based participatory management systems operating in the coastal fishery sector. Most of the key conditions for successful community-based co-management in coastal marine fisheries are satisfactorily met in the prevailing situations and many of the important facilitating factors exist at required levels and the legislation been provided by the new fisheries Act.

Community-based management/ co-management systems appear to have many advantages over conventional approaches in many situations, although such systems are not universally applicable to all situations. As these systems cannot be successfully established and maintained in isolation, with restructuring and developing new legal, administrative and institutional arrangements at both national and community level with sufficient decentralization of authority, community-based co-management is a possible and effective solution for better management of fishing industry. Under these conditions it can be concluded that prospects for developing community-based co-management in Sri Lanka is commendable. In the face of expected further reduction in government resource management budgets and constantly increasing pressure on resources, to respond the multi-faceted problems confronting coastal communities, co-management is not only an interesting but a necessary option for Sri Lanka.

Key words: co-management, community-based management, key conditions, sustainability, fisheries of Sri Lanka, open access, stakeholders