

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED
IN LAGOON FISHING (VALAICHENAI AND PANICHCHANKERNY
LAGOONS) IN THE BATTICALOA DISTRICT**

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Fishing industry is considered one of the major sources of national revenue and protein value needed to our nation and also provides regular employment facilities directly and indirectly. As far as the district of Batticaloa is concerned, this industry has very long historic tradition and popularity irrespective of community. For the people of Batticaloa District, fishing is holding the second place next to the agriculture employment and private sector employees are far below in number. Total number of fisherman engaged in marine and lagoon fishing amounts to 16,000. Other than marine fishing there are 10,600 fishermen engaged in lagoon and inland fishing. There are 48,500 people involved indirectly in marine and lagoon fishing in the Batticaloa district. Though the lagoon fishing has long traditional back ground historical prominence, the people involved in this industry are very poor in socio-economic status and there has been no progressive advancement in their living conditions, when compared to other employment sectors. To ascertain the cause and reasons for such situation, it is inevitable that an experimental research implemented with the following objectives:

- to find the socio – economic status of the people who are involved in lagoon fishing in Valaichenai and pannichankerny lagoons.
- to ascertain reasons for the poor, low level living conditions of these families and to identify the main factors affecting them.
- to seek necessary measures to recommend suitable solutions for the necessary rectification.

The primary data were obtained by random selection (15%) among the fishermen of each lagoon and necessary data were collected by questionnaires. The collected data were categorized using technical indexing system. For easy comparison the fishing villages were grouped in each lagoon area. In data collection importance was given to the following: Education, Health, Income, Housing condition, Savings, Food, Family sector, Transport and Other facilities.

The Secondary data were collected to compare the situation of the present fishing families with that of the past fishing families to ascertain their socio-economic and other aspects including their industry and the data were obtained from Kachcheri, Batticaloa, Fisheries Dept. and D.S. Office. Personal visits have been made to observe the true position of the fishing families.

The living conditions and social-economical status were highly affected. Many differences were found in the families of one village from the other who carry out their fishing in the same lagoon. The living condition of Valaichenai fishermen was far above to that of fishermen of pannichankerny where marketing facilities have not been organized successfully and as such the mediators and fish traders were benefited much more than the fishermen. In pannichankerny area cold storage facilities and transport facilities were not available and these factors too affected the fishermen.

From the available data, it is evident that the facilities need to be strengthened in these areas for marketing their catches in order to improve the socio-economic status of the fishing families.