

Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

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Case Study Name:	Sri Lankan reservoir fishery: a case for introduction of a co-management strategy		
Author:	U. S. Amarasinghe, S. S. De Silva		
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Region:	South Asia		
Country:	Sri Lanka		
Ecosystem Type:	Aquatic		
Social Characteristics:	Rural village		
Scale of Study:	National		
Resource Type:	Fisheries		
Type of Initiative:	Research driven project		
Community Based Work:	Resource management		
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Summary:

The inland fisheries of Sri Lanka are essentially artisanal on most of the reservoirs in the country. The annual inland fish production declined dramatically after 1990, when state patronage for the development of the inland fisheries was discontinued for 4 years. This decline was shown to be a result of growth overfishing of the two dominant cichlid species which accounted for over 90% of landings. This was a result of using small mesh (<6.9 cm) gillnets in the absence of the State-sponsored monitoring procedure in the fishery after 1990. This indicates that it is necessary to monitor inland fisheries management in Sri Lanka through a centralized authority in the current situation. However, in some Sri Lankan reservoirs, fishing communities can be categorized as 'organized' because they collectively make decisions to define procedures for the rational exploitation of the fishery resources. In reservoirs with 'organized' fishing, the communities themselves have developed mechanisms to regulate the landing sizes of dominant cichlid fish species through community-based fisheries management strategies. In such reservoirs, over-exploitation of fish stocks was not evident, even after 1990, when state-sponsored monitoring procedures were suspended. Based on these observations, an alternative approach is recommended for the management of Sri Lankan reservoir capture fisheries in which the Government and resource-users have equal responsibilities in the management of the resources.