Small-scale fisher migration, conflict and wellbeing

A case study from Sri Lanka

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4 Small-scale fisheries and fisher migration along the northwestern coast of Sri Lanka

4.1 Introduction
Located in the Indian Ocean, slightly southeast of the Indian sub-continent, Sri Lanka (previous: Ceylon) is also known as the ‘Pearl of the Indian Ocean’. Sri Lanka is endowed with a coastline of 1585 km and has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 517,000 km\(^2\) that extends up to 200 nautical miles from the seashore in all but one direction. The exception is the sea area between Sri Lanka and India, in which negotiations have resulted in a mutually accepted marine boundary across the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Bay. Making use of a substantial marine resource, the marine fisheries sector contributes 1.3 percent to the national GDP (MFARD 2016). Out of the 21 million Sri Lankan people, more than 800,000 people are actively engaged in marine fisheries, which provide a means of livelihood for 2.7 million people directly and indirectly (NARA 2017).

The marine fisheries sector in Sri Lanka can be divided into three sub-sectors: deep-sea, coastal, and lagoon fisheries. The focus of this study is on coastal fisheries that are home to the small-scale fishing sector in the country. Small-scale fisheries are a major contributor to the national economy in terms of production and employment realized using diverse fishing techniques and implements. Because of monsoon wind patterns, small-scale fisheries are often characterized by seasonality, forcing many small-scale fishers to shift to other fishing grounds during the local non-fishing season. In Negombo, Chilaw, and Mannar small-scale fishers thus migrate to compatible areas along the northwestern and eastern coasts. Being the first empirical chapter, the next section presents the demographic characteristics of small-scale fisheries in Negombo and Chilaw, from where the migrant fishers in my study derive (see 4.2). It also discusses the host region in Mannar. Section 4.3 elaborates the migration process, its modes, and driving factors. Section 4.4 highlights the key fisheries institutions dealing with migrants’ governing regimes, their functions, and legal systems. The Chapter concludes by answering the first research sub-question: How can small-scale fishing and fisher migration in northwestern Sri Lanka be characterized? (see 4.5).

4.2 Small-scale fisheries in Sri Lanka
Coastal fishing livelihoods in Sri Lanka are diverse, complex, and dynamic depending on the fishery, the fishing techniques employed, the scale of operation, the specific craft-gear combination, the status of tenure and other features (NARA 2017; MFARD 2016; Amarasinghe 2011). Different types of fishing craft operate in deep-sea and coastal fisheries. Deep-sea fishery is carried out using so-called multi-day (or IMUL) boats (MFARD 2016). Other fishing craft—both traditional and modern—are employed in the coastal fisheries sector, including In-board One-day Boats (IDAY), Out-board engine Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic Boats (OFRP), Motorized Traditional Boats (MTRB), and Non-motorized Traditional Boats (NTRB) (see Table 4.1).
Table 4.1 Fishing fleets operating in Sri Lankan marine fisheries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Deep-sea</th>
<th>Coastal</th>
<th>Coastal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMUL</td>
<td>IDAY</td>
<td>OFRP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>8,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,572</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>8,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>9,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>11,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,581</td>
<td>1,493</td>
<td>11,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,328</td>
<td>1,164</td>
<td>11,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2,394</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>13,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>15,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,809</td>
<td>1,940</td>
<td>14,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,934</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>17,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3,346</td>
<td>1,177</td>
<td>18,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3,872</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>22,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>4,080</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>23,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4,111</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>23,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4,447</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>23,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4,218</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>24,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3,996</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>24,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4,196</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>24,394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MFARD 2018a

Photo 4.1 Fishing craft in small-scale fisheries

Canoe

Theppam

Vallam
Outrigger canoe, *theppam*, and *vallam* are traditional small-scale fishing craft operating in the inshore area. OFRP boat fishers have the technical capacity to proceed further from the shore. Although a few beach seines are operating in Mannar, Negombo and Chilaw, my study focuses exclusively on OFRP boat fishers. The increasing number of fishing vessels (see Table 4.1), especially in coastal fisheries, indicates the soaring fishing pressure on marine resources. The income of individual fishers in small-scale fishing is determined according to a share system (Wickramasinghe 2010; Koralagama 2009; Acheson 1981). Figure 4.1 presents the most common income sharing system in Negombo and Chilaw, which is also common in Southern Sri Lanka (Koralagama 2009).

**Figure 4.1 Income sharing in small-scale fisheries**

After deducting all operating expenses, the income is distributed among the owners of craft and gear, and those providing labour. If the boat owner also owns the gear, he can acquire 2/3 of the income. Yet, under such circumstances, he is also vulnerable because all risks, such as gear loss, boat repairs, fuel costs, and poor catch would rest on him whereas the crew can go with another boat owner at any time. Therefore, the owner usually allows the crew to bring their gear to keep them attached to a boat.
Climate of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an island located in the tropics between 5° 55’ to 9° 51’ North latitude and between 79° 4’ to 81° 53’ East longitude. Its geographic location is associated with a monsoon climate. Southwest and northeast monsoons alternate during the year, providing the island with four climatic seasons (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Main climatic seasons in Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climatic season</th>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First inter-monsoon</td>
<td>March – April</td>
<td>Southwest slope gets heavy rainfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest monsoon</td>
<td>May - September</td>
<td>Southwest and west coastal belt experience high rainfall. Lower rainfall in north and southeast region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second inter-monsoon</td>
<td>October - November</td>
<td>Southwestern region receives the highest rainfall. Almost the entire island receives a considerable rainfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast monsoon</td>
<td>December – February</td>
<td>North and eastern slopes receive the highest rainfall. West coastal belt up to Chilaw gets the minimum rainfall.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Meteorology Department (Last access on 22/10/2018)

Fishing communities

In Sri Lanka, most of the small-scale fishers belong to the Sinhalese Karawa or Tamil Karaiyar castes and half of them are Catholics (Munasinghe 1985 –the last available data in this regard is in 1980). Except the northern and eastern coasts where Tamil Karayar dominates, the rest of the coastal belt is occupied by the Sinhalese Karawa. In addition, the Paravars and Mukkuvar castes are present on the west coast in Sri Lanka. Although other castes and social groups are involved in the fishing industry as marketers, retailers, entrepreneurs and boat owners (especially multiday boats owners) the key players in fishing operations are still from traditional fishing castes. In addition, Muslims have been working in fishing and fishing related occupations in both Mannar and Negombo for many decades (Stirrat 1988) and in the Trincomalee District in the eastern coast (Lokuge 2017). At present, fish trading in Mannar is mostly handled by Muslim traders but their presence in Negombo and Chilaw is not significant.

Sri Lankan small-scale fisheries exhibit a gendered labour division, which varies according to the location and community (Weeratunge 2003). Gender norms in Sri Lanka generally prevent women from fishing with craft and gear in marine and lagoon fisheries. However, their participation and involvement is visible in gleaning, fish marketing, processing, and other supportive pre- and post-harvesting operations (Weerathunge et al. 2016). In contrast, men’s involvement can be seen in all stages of fish harvesting, processing, and marketing (Koralagama and Bandara 2018; Koralagama 2009).

4.2.1 Main fishing grounds in northwestern Sri Lanka

The northwestern region of Sri Lanka, which is administratively in the Mannar District, adjoins both the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar, with Mannar Island marking the boundary between the two sea areas. The western tip of Mannar Island connects with India at Rameswaram through a chain of reefs, sand banks.

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7 Gender based superstitious thoughts (norms) explained by Weerathunge (2003) are presented in Chapter 6.
8 Gleaning is collecting shellfish using small nets called athanguwa, especially in lagoons.
and sand dunes (Figure 1.3). My two research sites are located along the Gulf of Mannar, in the southern part of the Mannar District (Table 3.1).

The Gulf of Mannar is a rich fishing ground with a fish bank, prawn bank, and a pearl bank between the Southeastern tip of India and the Northwest coast of Sri Lanka (NARA 2017). The dominating livelihood along the coast is small-scale fisheries that provide opportunities to approximately 16 percent of the permanent population (Table 4.3). Fishers have formed 71 fisher community organizations consisting of 6,719 members from six Fisheries Inspector Divisions (FIDs) covering 36 fishing villages (MFARD 2018). The absence of proper reconciliation, rehabilitation, and policy representations are argued to underlie the conflicts with fishers who migrate to the Gulf of Mannar territory from southern, northwestern, and western provinces and have settled permanently or for a particular season (Amarasinghe 2011). Migrant fishers from the North (Jaffna), who also visit this region, are more concerned about sea cucumber harvesting, which is one of the most lucrative fisheries in the Gulf of Mannar (ibid.).

4.2.2 Small-scale fisheries along the northwestern coast of Sri Lanka

Marine fisheries constitute one of the most prominent livelihoods along this coast dating back at least to the 1800s (Stirrat 1988). Three fisheries districts—Negombo (Western Province), Chilaw (Northwestern Province), and Mannar (Northern Province)—in the northwestern coastal belt occupy 30 Fisheries Inspector Divisions (FIDs). Key fisheries statistics of the three fisheries districts are given in Table 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Negombo</th>
<th>Chilaw</th>
<th>Mannar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OFRP boats</td>
<td>2,857</td>
<td>2,769</td>
<td>2,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active fishers</td>
<td>11,410</td>
<td>12,340</td>
<td>17,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing households</td>
<td>9,340</td>
<td>9,330</td>
<td>14,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing household population</td>
<td>50,250</td>
<td>46,650</td>
<td>59,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish production (MT)</td>
<td>36,260</td>
<td>33,830</td>
<td>19,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries Inspector Divisions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MFARD 2018

Negombo

Being located in an industrial zone of the District in the Western Province, Negombo is characterized by a large number of livelihood activities. Despite the Katunayake Free Trade Zone, the international airport and other manufacturing factories operating in Negombo, the fishing occupation is still perceived as a valuable heritage by the three clans of the Karawa caste, viz. Warnakulasuriya, Mihindukulasuriya, and Kurukulasuriya. Among them, the Warnakulasuriya clan specializes in near-shore fishing, the Kurukulasuriya clan engages in stake net (kattudel) fishing, and Mihindukulasuriya clan members are involved in beach seine fishing (KI#10; Kurukulasuriya 1996). Negombo is blessed with multiple fishing opportunities: deep-sea fishing with multi-day boats, small-scale fishing with one-day boats, beachside fishing through beach seine operations, and lagoon fishing with traditional craft and gear. Compared to the other two fisheries districts, Negombo has the highest number of one-day boats (Table 4.3) and thus contributes the highest fish production to the national economy.
Chilaw

Stemming from the same origin and clans as Negombo fishers (KI#1), Negombo and Chilaw fishing communities have important common features. Notably, both fisher groups are Tamil speaking, Roman Catholic Sinhalese (Kurukulasuriya 1996). Compared to Negombo, the livelihood opportunities are limited in Chilaw due to the lack of industrial ventures. However, agriculture and fisheries are the main income sources for men and women (ibid.).

Figure 4.2 Study site - Negombo and Chilaw

Source: Survey Department, Colombo 2017

History of Negombo and Chilaw fishers

Scholars record the arrival of fishers from South India in the 19th century, settling along the coastal belt up to Chilaw and Puttalam (Stirrat 1988). Although they call themselves Sinhalese, their South Indian origins are displayed by Hindu temples in two locations and the use of the Tamil language instead of Sinhala (participant observation). At some point in their history, these migrants converted from Hinduism to Roman Catholics due to their interaction with Portuguese, Dutch, and English traders and missionaries (Alexander 1982; KI#1).

Fishing was one of the prime sectors that integrated into the capitalist system in the 19th century and was accorded an important place in the political scenario of the country (Stirrat 1988: 20; Alexander 1982:95). Many of the early indigenous members of the capitalist class were from the major fishing caste, Karawa.
The fish processing industry too has a long history dating back to the Portuguese period in the 1500s (Peiris 1949 in Stirrat 1988). Salted, dried, cured, jadi⁹, or pickled fish were distributed in the interior regions by Muslim traders and bartered for paddy and arecanut. Muslim fish traders dominated the Negombo fish market in the early 1800s with the authority to trade by paying several thousand LKR to the government (Percival 1803:88 in Stirrat 1988:21).

In the 1960s, only around 30 percent of fishers in Negombo seem to have possessed their gear (De Silva 1964: 21). However, today, those who own boats also have nets targeting specific fish species. The common practice is for fishers to equip themselves with different nets for different fish species such as sardinella, mackerel, big eye scade, and flying fish. Their fishing equipment was supplemented by gear donations during the post-tsunami rehabilitation period. A historical profile of fisheries in Negombo developed after speaking to migrant fisherwomen, is presented in Table 4.4. It is noted that the information derives from memory and may therefore, be inaccurate.

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⁹Jadi is a delicious food preparation made of whole fish, using a special technique of fish preservation.
Table 4.4. Historical profile of fisheries in 1970 - 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish harvest</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>150 (only theppam)</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15 (4 theppam)</td>
<td>134 (4 theppam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of families migrated to Mannar</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family economic position</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity in the family</td>
<td>🔋🔋🔋🔋</td>
<td>🔋🔋🔋🔋</td>
<td>🔋🔋🔋🔋</td>
<td>🔋🔋🔋🔋</td>
<td>🔋🔋🔋🔋</td>
<td>🔋🔋🔋🔋</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevailing conflicts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Indian soldiers, EPRLF, TELO, LTTE</td>
<td>LTTE</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Indian trawling, illegal fishing, Tamil/Muslim problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish selling mechanism</td>
<td>Fisheries Corporation</td>
<td>Traders from Anuradhapura, Matara, Jaffna</td>
<td>traders in Colombo</td>
<td>Traders from Anuradhapura</td>
<td>Traders from Anuradhapura and Vavuniya</td>
<td>Village traders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities in migration sites</td>
<td>2 Wells, kerosene lamps, no toilets</td>
<td>2 Wells, kerosene lamps, no toilets</td>
<td>2 Wells, kerosene lamps, no toilets</td>
<td>2 Wells, kerosene lamps, no toilets</td>
<td>Well, kerosene lamps, no toilets</td>
<td>kerosene lamps, 3 toilets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Shark, sardinella, ray fish, turtles, prawn, seer fish</td>
<td>Ray fish, sardinella, queen fish, mackerel, seer fish, shark, prawn</td>
<td>Sardinella</td>
<td>Sardinella, big eye scade</td>
<td>Sardinella, ray fish</td>
<td>Sardinella, ray fish, flying fish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Author -PRA exercise at fieldwork phase I at Negombo (n=8)
According to my respondents (Table 4.4), the fish harvest was plentiful even during the war in the North. However, as per Table 4.4, the fish harvest is declining, especially after the cessation of the war and subsequent resettlement and re-engagement of locals in fishing activities. Yet, the fisheries statistics do not prove a decrease but the catch is always fluctuating so as the catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) (Table 4.5). Yet, the recent stock assessment data (unpublished) indicates a decline of the near-shore fish stocks to one fifth of the fish stock in 1978-1980 (NARA 2019). Although the reasons for these changes have not been explained by the fisheries statistical reports and records published by MFARD (and NARA), the historical profile presents a declining harvest from 2002 (Table 4.4). This can be due to the increasing number of migrant fishers and boats in the aftermath of the war as well as post-war rehabilitation and reconciliation programmes carried out in Northern Sri Lanka.

**Table 4.5 Fish production and active fisher population in Mannar fisheries District (2004 - 2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish production (Mt)</td>
<td>8,380</td>
<td>7,390</td>
<td>12,860</td>
<td>13,480</td>
<td>11,110</td>
<td>22,130</td>
<td>19,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active fishers</td>
<td>9,400</td>
<td>10,540</td>
<td>18,530</td>
<td>18,960</td>
<td>18,220</td>
<td>18,380</td>
<td>17,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPUE&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MFARD 2016*

During the intense phase of the war (2002 – 2009), migration to Mannar shrank to 10 – 25 families, as did income levels and family unity. Compared to the period up to 2009, when problems were mainly related to the war, fishers are now undergoing various difficulties due to Indian trawling, illegal fishing, and restrictions on migration. Freedom in fish marketing during the war period was low. Now it is dominated by local traders who are either Tamil or Muslim. Although the Fisheries Corporation was actively involved in purchasing fish from the fisherfolk in the early 1970s, the present market is dominated by private traders. The catch composition was comparatively rich in 1970s – 1980s with high value fish varieties such as seer fish, prawn and shark (Table 4.4). The declining availability of these species may also be caused by ecological deterioration of the fisheries. Furthermore, the living conditions in migrating sites have not improved much over the decades. Since 1970s, the development work in the area is limited only to the provision of three toilets donated by the Regional Council in Silavathurai in 2014.

The relationship between migration and the household economy shows that when fishers migrate, their earnings normally increase, thereby ensuring a good living standard. The availability of money reduces household violence and disputes. Hence, unity in the family increases. My respondents recall the 1970s and early 1980s as the golden days of their fishing livelihoods due to migration in higher numbers than present, good harvests, multiple market opportunities, higher savings, and positive relationships within the household and the migrant community, as well as the host population.

**Mannar**

Mannar small-scale fishery is a diverse, complex, and dynamic system. It is *diverse* in terms of fishing communities, fishing techniques, fish species, and ethnicities. The system is *complex* as it carries many

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<sup>10</sup> Calculated by the author.
interactions among fishers, fish merchants, fishing communities and state officials (Figure 5.1). The fishery is *dynamic* due to the seasonality, which causes migrant fishers to move up and down; locals switch between fishing and non-fishing activities.

Mannar is an administrative district, also known as a fisheries district. It covers a large land area (1,996 km²). Although it has a larger fishing population and a higher number of fishing households, fish production seems to have been lower than in the other two districts (see Table 4.3) in 2015. This might be due to the availability of fewer fishing craft. Most Mannar fishers are small-scale, employing OFRP boats, motorized traditional boats (*vallam*), and non-motorized traditional craft (*theppam*) with various gear combinations (see Photo 4.1). They also target the smaller fish varieties. The northwest monsoon period is the favourable fishing season. Savings, selling dried fish, confectionaries, poultry/goat keeping, and working as waged labourers are the means of living for the locals during the off-season (KI#2). Large scale poaching by Indian trawlers is reported by the locals as a regular occurrence (Section 1.4.2) around Pallimunai, Santhipuram, Jim Brown Nagar, Thalaimannar, SouthBar, and Silavathurai areas in Mannar (Figure 4.3) during the period of fieldwork, apparently depriving local fishers of a good catch. As a long-term effect, environmental sustainability may also have suffered (I# 8).

**Figure 4.3 Indian trawler encroachment routes**

![Map showing Indian trawler encroachment routes](image)

*Source: Based on Soosai 2017*

Technology has become an important factor influencing the level and value of fish catch (Tuomi-Nikula 1985, in Bavinck 1998 and Scholtens 2016). Different user groups in fishing communities are referred by the name of the technology they are using.
4.3 Migration

Fishers migrate as units (craft and crew), sometimes-including spouses, parents and children (Figure 4.6). There are two types of migration (see 2.3.1). Some families migrate to the North (or East) and settle for several years, and hence are referred to as permanent settlers (e.g. in Thalaimannar-pier and Silavathurai). Seasonal migration occurs when families/individuals move from one place to another only for a certain period in the year. They also settle in temporary huts to continue with their livelihoods. At the end of the period, they return to their houses. However, migration is not a mere journey from one place to another. Several documents are required by the District Fisheries Office in the host region to grant migration permission to the migrant fishers. Information on the permanent address of the fisher, boat registration number, engine capacity, gear type, migrating area, intended stay, mode of travel, and other documents should be provided to the District Fisheries Office in the home region with the stamped signatures of the President and the Secretary of the local fisheries cooperative societies (e.g. NFF). The approved application with the signature of the Additional Director of Fisheries in the home region is then hand delivered to the Additional Director of Fisheries in the host region by the migrant fisher. Fishers lacking permission cannot claim incentives provided by the government during their stay in the host region.

4.3.1 Migration outflow from Negombo and Chilaw

The fishing season for Negombo and Chilaw is from May to September (see 1.2.2). Hence, small-scale fishers in these places migrate mainly to Mannar in the north, and Uchchaweli, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa in the east coast (Figure 4.4) during the northeast monsoon season. Different migration patterns are recorded such as marriages, resettlements, internal displacements, and employment (Census and Statistics 2015). Although employment is ranked as the second most important reason for migration island-wide (ibid.), there is no one-dimensional reason for the seasonal migration of fishers. Identities are robustly plural (Sen 2006: 19) and layered (Kraan 2009). The Negombo and Chilaw fishers are Sinhalese from birth, and their language and religion is identical to that of northern Tamils rather than southern fishers who are Sinhala speaking Buddhists. Linguistic identity and other cultural similarities influence settlements and mixing with local inhabitants (Odotei 2002: 2) similar to the migrant fishers in Negombo and Chilaw. Seasonal migrants live in temporary huts called wadi. These are built of sticks, and woven cajan leaves for the stay of
migrants at the migratory site. Normally, the floor is just sand (the beach) covered by mats where people lie down and sleep. A typical wadi has only two rooms – a comparatively large living area where the household members sit, sleep, and dress, and has a small kitchen. Migrants have to pay a fee to the Municipal Council in order to construct a wadi on the beach and need to obtain a license from the Coast Conservation Department (CCD) for their temporary construction. At the end of the season, they are obliged to remove the wadi when they leave the premises (Table 4.10).

**Photo 4.3 Migrant fishers' wadi in SouthBar**

![Migrant fishers' wadi in SouthBar](image)

*Source: Author*

My preliminary survey (Phase I) at the home region (Negombo and Chilaw) shows a substantial level of migration outflow from Negombo (80%) and Chilaw (12%) to Mannar. A few (8%) migrate to Kalpitiya, Trincomalee, and Mulaithivu Fisheries Districts (Figure 4.4). As in the case of Anglo-Ewe fishers in Ghana who practice the beach seine fishing technique wherever they go (Kraan 2009; Akyeampong 2001), the small-scale fishers in the northwest coast of Sri Lanka (Negombo and Chilaw) make use of the same gill nets at their migrating sites.

Figure 4.4 is similar to the map drawn by Bartz (1959) (Figure 1.1). However, two changes seem to have taken place since his fieldwork in 1950: (i) in the early 1950s, migrant fishers in Negombo and Chilaw used to migrate to the Jaffna Peninsula rather than the northeast and northwest coasts. In contrast, no fishers migrate to Jaffna today; (ii) at present, a few fishermen from Negombo and Chilaw migrate to Moratuwa and Panadura along the southwest coast. However, fishermen had not migrated to these locations in the 1950s. In sum, although some changes have taken place, the migratory routes to Mannar that were available to fishers from Negombo and Chilaw in the 1950s are still being followed. It must be noted that although my two fieldwork locations in the Mannar District were not the only ones visited by fishers from Negombo and Chilaw, they were the most popular (see Table 4.6).
Silavathurai is also known as, ‘Muthu Halawatha’ where, muthu refers to pearl and halawatha is the Sinhalese name of Chilaw. The name was given because the place is located close to the former pearl bank in Mannar (Figure 1.3) with permanent and migrant settlers arriving from Chilaw (KI#5, I#7). The following reasons make Silavathurai popular for migrant fishers (participant observation; KI#3,4, and 5; I#4).
i. Silavathurai is located on the main island, 13 km southward to Mannar town (SouthBar locates in Mannar islet) (Figure 3.2). Being relatively closer than SouthBar (32 km), Silavathurai cuts down transportation costs significantly.\footnote{Transportation cost to Silavathurai is 12 000 – 14 000 LKR (88.8-103.7 USD) and 15 000 – 18 000 LKR (111-133 USD) for SouthBar.}

ii. SouthBar is an isolated beach-strip between the sea and an abandoned wood (mainly palm trees). Local fishers from Shanthipuram and Mannar town (Tamils and Muslims) occupy the SouthBar fish-landing site simultaneously. In contrast, Silavathurai is inhabited by only Negombo and Chillaw migrants. Hence, the Silavathurai landing site is known as ‘Sinhala Wadiya’. On the other hand, access to local labour for fisheries related pre- and post-activities is easier at the Silavathurai fish landing site due to the local fishing villages nearby.

iii. Silavathurai is blessed with clean ground water (2 wells owned by the locals) and toilets donated by the ‘Regional Council’ (Pradesheeya Sabha). The ground water is accessible for bathing, washing, and sanitation, but not drinkable due to high salinity. In contrast, neither toilets nor water is available in SouthBar, which implies that migrant fishers in SouthBar have to buy water from a vendor for all purposes.

Comparatively, fewer families (about 15) migrate to the Old and New Piers in Mannar –mainly to join with their friends who reside there permanently (see 4.3). Batthalangundu, an islet in Kalpitiya in the northwest coast, is also populated by seasonal migrants from Negombo and Chilaw. Fewer numbers of Negombo and Chilaw migrants choose Panadura and Moratuwa on the west coast and Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Pulmoddai on the east coast (Figure 4.4). However, all the migrating households in the sample have been in either Silavathurai or SouthBar or both at least once. The season hosts more than 1500 migrants together with 10,000 local active fishers plus fish traders, transporters, and processors (KI#2, 3, 4).

4.3.2 Age distribution

About 67 percent of the sample (n=138) are between 36–55 years (Figure 4.5). Younger fishers (below 25 years), who are newly married or have small children do not tend to migrate compared to middle-aged fishers (between 36–55 years). Poverty in the household, responsibilities towards grandchildren, and lifelong routine behavior encourage elderly fishers (14 percent) to continue migration even if in poor health (e.g. low physical fitness, backbone pain, vision problems).
4.3.3 Companions in migration
Most fishers (38 percent) are accompanied only by crewmembers, leaving their spouse and children at home (Figure 4.6).

Sometimes, the father migrates with his son as his crew labour for fishing or vice versa (28 percent). Fourteen percent go with the whole family when the children are not yet at schooling age or have left school. In 22 percent of the cases, the husband and wife migrate together, leaving their children with the grandparents, siblings, or relatives.

Fishing is a hard job requiring a huge effort and physical engagement. Hence, meals are rarely prepared by fishers or crewmembers. Finding a crewmember or obtaining labour for other fishing operations (net mending, fixing hooks and lines, and fixing baits) is hardly possible without providing meals. This
encourages fishers to take their wives, mothers, or mothers-in-law when migrating. In the absence of a person to cook, food is purchased from companions in the neighbourhood or a relative. One interviewee explained regarding his stay in SouthBar:

“I have five brothers. We all migrate to SouthBar leaving our families in Chilaw because we do not want to disturb the education of our kids. Also, the living condition is not comfortable for a longer stay for them. Instead, our parents (mother and father) accompany us. Mother prepares meals for us. We live in separate wadi built close by. We go to parent’s wadi for food and tea. Wife and children pay a short visit during the school vacation”. (I# 46)

4.3.4 Drivers of migration
Some scholars (Nunan 2010; Randall 2005) point out that migration follows the natural movements of the target species. Unlike in West African communities in which people migrate to travel, or go to other places depending solely on social position (Kraan 2009), the Sri Lankan migrant fishing communities have made it a routine behaviour. During my fieldwork (phase I) I asked one of the fishermen in Sea Street, Negombo whether he would migrate this time or not. His reply was that he would not migrate and instead live on minor earnings as a daily paid labourer. While I was gathering data in phase II in SouthBar, I ran into the same person and inquired about his arrival. His answer was “when my friends and relatives migrate day by day carrying their boats in lorries I could not help but join them”. Neither domestic nor social position as husband, son, father, boat owner, crewmember or economic and social status had influenced migration but the community affiliations had motivated the process. Another interviewee explained:

“We can’t employ our hurullo, salayo, piyamesso\(^\text{12}\) nets during the warakan [Southeast monsoon] season in Negombo. If we would have sprat nets, we could earn something. However, since we don’t have these nets, we need to migrate”. (I# 24)

The above quote highlights a few points: (i) fisher migration is driven by fish migration. As small fish species migrate to other places following seawater currents and upwelling with the wind pattern, the fishers also migrate; (ii) fishers try to select places compatible with fishing gear, weather, and fish catch; (iii) availability of sufficient and appropriate net pieces can encourage or discourage migration. Accordingly, migration to areas that are more conducive to fishing is a common practice for various reasons (see Figure 4.7).

\(^{12}\) See Annex V for the common names of these fish varieties.
Men and women in Negombo and Chilaw small-scale fisheries are engaged in multiple economic activities such as fishing, trading, dried fish processing, net mending, fish sorting, and net loading during the fishing season. During the off-season, they have few fishing possibilities. Thus, 42 percent of fishermen and women in the above areas migrate to compatible areas during the off-season. Being a rich fishing ground with multiple income generating opportunities, Mannar is more profitable than the home region during the northeast monsoon (see 7.2.1.4). Thus, 27 percent migrate to pursue the lucrative fishery in Mannar. The population density in the home region encourages fishers to move to less populated areas and hence 12 percent choose Mannar as their destination (see 7.2.1.5).

4.4 Formal/informal institutional involvement

Formal and informal institutions play a crucial role in seasonal migration. Institutions render multiple benefits to their members; (a) higher income for right holders, (b) stabilizing income over time, (c) conflict resolution, (d) risk reduction in relation to life and equipment, and (e) benefits to other members of the community (Wickramasinghe and Bavinck 2015). Besides, permission for migration is also granted with the involvement of local and regional institutions (see 4.3). It is for all these reasons that the role of formal and informal institutions, and their norms and rules need to be analysed in migration studies.

4.4.1 Formal structures – international/national law

Formal institutions include norms and rules that have been codified in legal instruments (see 2.2.4). The efficacy and effectiveness of such institutions depend on institutional design. Formal institutions at international, national, and local levels are given below.

4.4.1.1 International

The following international legal instruments apply in Sri Lankan fisheries (see Table 4.7). These instruments cover issues related to boundaries and jurisdiction, the protection of fisheries, and codes of conduct regarding fishing activities. However, as interviews reveal, most of the relevant rules are being violated. The reasons for violations were not subject to analysis in this thesis.
### Table 4.7 International and transboundary legal instruments applicable to small-scale fisheries in Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal instruments</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Srima-Sasthri agreement (26th and 28th June 1974)</td>
<td>Declaration of IMBL between Sri Lanka and India defining the boundary of historic waters. Sri Lanka got Kachchathivu Island whereas India got Rameswaram. The agreement restricted Indian fishers and fishing vessels from entering Sri Lankan waters including in the historic water, territorial sea, and the EEZ and vice versa. Indian fishermen and pilgrims will enjoy the access to visit Kachchativu without obtaining visa from Sri Lanka (Article 5)</td>
<td>In action but violated by both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen (see Table 4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement between Sri Lanka and India (23rd March 1976)</td>
<td>Extension of maritime boundary between Sri Lanka and India in the Gulf of Mannar beyond the position 13m and the Bay of Bengal and related matters</td>
<td>In action but violated by both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement between Sri Lanka and India on (22nd November 1976)</td>
<td>The extension of the maritime boundary in the Gulf of Mannar from position 13m to the tri-junction point between Sri Lanka, India, and Maldives (Point T)</td>
<td>In action but violated by both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime Zone Law, No. 22 of 1976, Article 7 (adopted by Sri Lanka) (Gazette, No. 248/1 dated 15/01/1977)</td>
<td>Extended IMBL to cover the Gulf of Mannar and Bay of Bengal: total sea area covered was 30,000 sq. km; regulates the Palk Bay region: a part of Sri Lankas’ internal waters.¹³</td>
<td>In action but violated by both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982)</td>
<td>a) Determines the allowable catch in the EEZ (Article 61.1); b) Affirms the sole exploitation rights to a country within its EEZ (Art. 56.1 and 62.4); c) Highlights the importance of a proper fish stock assessment to improve the fish production by increasing the number of fishing fleets (Article 61)</td>
<td>Implemented, but violated by both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries,</td>
<td>Includes international principles for responsible conservation of fisheries resources, fisheries management and development (Article 5), and</td>
<td>The principles and standards are being violated by</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹³The historic waters in the Palk Bay and Palk Strait form a part of Sri Lanka’s so-called internal waters, to which other legal parameters apply. See figure 1.5 for a geographic depiction of these waters.
FAO (1995), not legally binding provides standard of conducts for all persons involved in the fisheries sector (Article 2) local small-scale fishers by using illegal fishing techniques (Peramunagama and Amarasinghe 2017; Amarasinghe 2013)

Voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries by FAO (2015) Includes guidelines for activities along the value chain including pre-, harvest, and post-harvest, gender roles, food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, and sustainable resource utilization. Partly implemented (KI#8,12)

Source: Author (based on UN 1977)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arrested</th>
<th>Repatriated by Sri Lankan Navy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>Trawlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2313</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sri Lanka Navy 2016

4.4.1.2 National

Every successive government adopts development strategies or policy frameworks. Recent policy options include the *Mahinda Chintana* (2005), the ten-year development policy framework: 2007 – 2016 (MFARD 2010), the fisheries sector development strategy: 2010 – 2013 (Performance 2014), fisheries policy (MFARD 2018b), cooperative policy (Department of Cooperatives 2018). The policy objectives of each document related to small-scale marine fisheries are presented in Table 4.9.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Policy objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mahinda Chintana 2005 – 2010 | Strengthen the coast guard to protect ocean resources from foreign fishing vessels  
Enhance employment opportunities in the sector  
Increase national fish production  
Provide 500 multi-day boats at concessionary prices to the coastal fishers  
Develop 100 fishing harbours, anchorages, boat yards and fishery craft centers along coast  
Provide a fuel subsidy  
Provide incentives to the private sector to make fishing crafts with new technology  
Provide fishing gear to small-scale fishers at a concessionary rate  
Set up fish processing factories closer to fish harbours  
Curb the use of destructive fishing methods (Annex IV) |
| Ten year development policy framework 2007 – 2016 | Improve nutrition and food security of people by increasing national fish production  
Minimize post-harvest losses and improve the quality and safety of fish products  
Increase jobs in fisheries/ related industries and improve livelihoods of fishing communities  
Conserve the coastal and aquatic environment by implementing Coastal Zone Management Plan – 2004 (Gazette 1429/11 of 24 January 2006)  
Increase local fish production to 685,690 Mt  
Increase price competitiveness by market planning  
Enhance socio-economic status of the productive poor  
Manage fisheries using novel techniques while maintaining biological sustainability  
Ensure compliance with FAO compliance agreements: UNCLOS Article 194(5); Code of Conduct; and Voluntary guidelines |
| National fisheries policy - 2018 | Sustainable management of resources using science-based information to decide upon fishing techniques and enhance the stocks of endangered, threatened and protected species  
Maintain the ban of fishing in Sri Lanka waters by foreign fishing vessels except for research and development purposes  
Recognize, empower, and strengthen fisheries cooperatives in addressing issues in fisheries and fisher wellbeing, and in representing fishing communities at decision making platforms  
Promote the establishment of new marine industries utilizing living marine resources  
Promote conservation of the marine and coastal environment  
Work for generation of more employment opportunities in the sector where possible to alleviate poverty through sustainable livelihoods  
Provide training and capacity building programs to assist women and marginalized groups to take up supplementary income generation activities (micro- business enterprises) with special attention to widows  
Encourage communities to commence business activities including integrated sustainable tourism  
Promote equal opportunities and participation for both men and women in the activities and decision making processes  
Take measures to prevent alcoholism in fishing communities  
Improve the social safety net and social security protection for the fishers and fish workers including women |
Governance and Inclusive development, AISSR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperative policy - 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect the tenure rights of the traditional, migrant, subsistence, and artisanal fishing communities to land, waters, and fish resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure safe, healthy, and fair working conditions at sea, inland waters, and on land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote investment in human resource development such as health, education, literacy, and digital inclusion in fishing communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work together with other local, national, regional, and international institutions. The policy has welcome multi-provincial organizations through joint arrangement among individual cooperatives under the NFF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusions of women and youth into the production process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase job opportunities by value addition in fisheries (Art 4.1) through diversified, increased, and strengthened participation in value chain system. Establish strategic commercial partnerships and joint ventures with other sectors and networks for trading, value chain development, and market establishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions for social and health services, social functions, banking facilities, environment conservation, and disaster management services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-functioning database on fishers, fishing methods, migration, and fishing gear need to be maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive participation in decision-making process and the governing system and inclusion of different ethnic groups, different communities, and religious groups from local level to the national level without discrimination (Art 15.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt environmental friendly production and processing methodologies (Article 14.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MFARD 2018b, 2016, 2013, 2010; National policy on cooperatives 2018

These policy objectives are implemented by different policy bodies and through a variety of policy instruments. The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (MFARD) is the apex body formed by the central government to deal with fisheries-related matters. The Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC), Ceylon Fisheries Harbour Corporation, National Aquatic Resources Research and development Authority (NARA), National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA), Coast Conservation Department (CCD), and Cey-Nor Foundation Ltd has been established under the purview of MFARD to carry out different services for the fisheries sector. The Navy is responsible for the protection and safeguarding of the coastal belt. CCD is responsible for coastal constructions and rehabilitations, thus wadi construction is under their authority. In addition, there are other government enforced rules and regulations (see Table 4.10). The cooperative policy has been enforced through the Department of Cooperatives. The main objectives of the cooperative policy are given below.
**Cooperative policy**

Year 2011-2020 has been named as the blueprint for a cooperative development decade by the general assembly of the International Cooperative Alliance in 2012. Having regarding the importance of cooperatives in economic and social development of the rural communities, following the sustainable development goals to be achieved in 2030 (SDSN 2015) and International Labour Organization (ILO) recommendations (No. 193 of 2002) on the promotion of cooperatives, the national cooperative policy was formulated in year 2018. The objective of the national cooperative policy is “to provide a more conducive and supportive policy and legal framework for the development and strengthening of cooperatives with member participation and with a sense of ownership in Sri Lanka as guided by the internationally recognized cooperative values [self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity] and principles so as to enable them to freely and actively respond to the needs of members as well as of the society, free of political intervention, while contribution towards socio-economic development of Sri Lanka” (Cooperative policy 2018:3). Policy instruments are formulated to enhance the wellbeing of small-scale fishers in Sri Lanka through the apex body of the rural cooperative societies, i.e. National Fisheries Federation (see 4.4.1.3).
Table 4.10 Legal instruments enacted in Sri Lankan small-scale fisheries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal instruments</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries Ordinance, No 24 of 1940</td>
<td>Protection of fish in Ceylon waters and registration of fishing boats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Societies Act No. 5 of 1972</td>
<td>Explain the registration formalities, roles of the office bearers, memberships, and functions of the co-operative societies. The main objective is to promote the economic, social, and cultural interests of its members under the co-operative principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries Act, No 59 of 1979</td>
<td>Regulation of foreign fishing boats in Sri Lankan waters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No. 2 of 1996                                  | a) Regulates, controls, and manages fisheries and aquatic resources in Sri Lankan waters;  
b) Prohibits destructive fishing techniques such as: trawling, purse seine, nylon nets, dynamiting;  
c) Restricts fishing of dolphins, whales, turtles;  
d) Enacts closed seasons (e.g. February and September for lobster to maintain the sustainability of the marine ecosystem (Annex IV) |
| Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No. 11 of 2017                                 | Ban on trawler fishing in Sri Lankan waters,                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management Act, No. 57 of 1981 (CCD 2018) | Prohibits removal and destruction of fauna and flora from barrier beaches, spits and dunes; all development activities for the private purposes and construction of fences within the fore-shore are prohibited; Beach seine operation and huts for beach seine operation are allowed; all the dwelling houses need permits |

Source: Author (based on literature)

The main community-based institutions related to migration in Sri Lanka are discussed below.

4.4.1.3 Local- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
The fishers who share the same territory, interact regularly over livelihood issues, bound by social ties including kinships (Agrawal 2001), and pursue common objectives (North 1990) are known as fishing communities. Since, formal organizations are structured by norms and rules (Bromley 2008; North 1990; Ostrom 1990) CBOs are formal organizations established in fishing communities and include the National Fisheries Federation and Sri Vimukthi Women’s Fisheries Organization (SVFO). These two bodies facilitate the livelihoods and migrations of fishers from Negombo and Chilaw. Local fishers in Mannar are attached to the Panankattikuttiya Fisheries Cooperative Society (PFCS). However, fish traders are not attached to anyone (KI#2,6).
Fisheries Co-operative Societies and the National Fisheries Federation (NFF) – Negombo and Chilaw

Cooperatives are self-responsible entities to facilitate horizontal and vertical coordination, working relationships, and social and macro-economic development of rural communities. Fisheries Co-operative Societies (FCS) function as the main government policy channel linking the coastal population with the state yet adopt a self-governance mechanism (Amarasinghe and Bavinck 2017). FCS in Sri Lanka was established in the early 1940s under the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the Department of Co-operatives (DFAR 1952). The main objectives of a FCS are “the fulfillment of economic, social, and cultural requirements and the development of sentiments and practice of economization, cooperativeness, and self-help” (Wickramasinghe 2010: 139). The membership depends on ethnicity and religion (Amarasinghe and Bavinck 2017). However, in 2011, all these fisheries cooperatives were re-organized under the NFF by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. At present, NFF is the national apex body for all the fisheries cooperatives and operations are under the provision of the Cooperative Societies Act No. 5 of 1972 and the Fisheries Cooperative Constitution (ibid.; Wickramasinghe 2010).

In most parts of Sri Lanka including the north, [south and west] membership in cooperatives is compulsory for fisherfolk (Amarasinghe and Bavinck 2017) and members of the FCS automatically become the members of NFF. Although all members of the FCSs are members of the NFF, active members are mostly from Negombo, Chilaw, Kalpitiya, Mannar, and Jaffna. Being located in Negombo, the fishermen of Sea Street and Kudapaduwa hold privileged positions in the NFF. Twenty-one landing sites in Negombo are monitored by presidents appointed for each landing site, and they are responsible for looking into any fisheries related issue, conflict, and fishing operations. The Board of Directors is summoned every Monday at 7.00 pm for one hour at the NFF premises. The NFF establishes its daughter associations at each migratory site for efficient management. St. Mary’s Fisheries Association and St. Sebastian’s Fisheries Association were established at the Kalpitiya and Mannar fisheries sites (at the migratory sites) respectively. All migrants are members of the Association. Thus collective activities are better organized and facilitated (see 4.4). The same arrangement is reported from the Chilaw Fisheries Co-operative Society, yet the direct involvement of NFF is less. However, the office bearers in Chilaw FCS are responsible for reporting to the NFF officials and the NFF is responsible for disseminating any information, amendment, or decision taken at the Annual General Meeting to the respective FCS.

The role of the NFF is important not only as a governing body, but also as a service provider. If a boat suffers a breakdown or meets with an accident at Negombo or Chilaw sea, the NFF provides a boat and kerosene (fuel) to tow the affected boat and crew to the shore. Moreover, official arrangements are provided for fisher rescue operations with the support of the Navy. It provides assistance to continue fishing by providing a boat for a maximum of 3 days while the damaged boat is repaired. The NFF has a bank near the fish market to motivate fishers to save on their way back home. It sells fishing gear and equipment keeping a small margin. The NFF has three weighing scales located at the fish market (Photo 4.4). Three reliable members do the weighing against a fee paid in fish from the total weighed fish, which is then sold in the market for an income. The NFF donates 30,000 LKR (222 USD) on the death of a person from a member’s family and a maximum of 10,000 LKR (74 USD) to repair a damaged boat. They provide loans
at a two percent annual interest rate but zero interest is charged for loans to pilgrims who worship at ‘Velankanni Mother’\textsuperscript{14} in India.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Photo 4.4 Weighing balance at Negombo fish market}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image4.4.png}
\end{center}

\textit{Source: Author}

A kindergarten is operating in Negombo for children of fishing households charging 300 LKR (2.2 USD) monthly per child (KI#3). At present, three teachers teach 60 children and all expenses are borne by the NFF. The NFF acts as the utility billing agent for electricity and water supply in the area. The NFF building is free to conduct any meeting organized by other associations, bodies, or research groups. The federation has rented out five shops near the fish market. It closely interacts with fisheries associations in Rameswaram, Mandapam, and Thuththukudi in South India, especially to release arrested small-scale Sri Lankan fishers who have trespassed the MBL.

\textit{Panankattikutti Fisheries Cooperative Society (PFCS)}

The Panankattikutti Fisheries Cooperative Society (PFCS) was established on 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 1982 for local fishers in Mannar (North) including Silavathurai and SouthBar. It was established for three reasons: (i) lack of incentives provided by the government for local fishing communities, (ii) lack of credit facilities for fishers, and (iii) lack of a proper pricing mechanism for the fish harvest. The cooperative society started with 400 members and has grown to 930 male and 70 female members by 2015. Two types of meetings are summoned by the PFCS: board meetings (once a month with the participation of the seven office bearers) and common meetings (does not have a definite date and month but all members are invited to participate). The functions of the PFCS include; adapting the government cooperative rules and regulations to local situations, improving fishing livelihoods with the concept of ‘one helps many; many help one’, donating relief packages following natural disasters, 25,000 LKR (185 USD) death donation, 10,000 LKR (74 USD) donation for the children who enter government universities from member fishing households, loan facilities with a 6 percent interest per annum, dispute resolution facilities for inter- and intra- fishing communities (e.g. disputes with migrant fishers), taking necessary action for improving the village (e.g. the two taverns operating in the village were closed permanently due to the intervention of PFCS because of increasing fights and socially unacceptable behavior of the men folk), requests permission to cut twigs and

\textsuperscript{14}A Saint of the Roman Catholic religion. The church is located in TamilNadu, South India.
stakes for stake net fishing from the Department of Forestry and Coast Conservation Department, supporting requests for permission to transport lobsters, compensation for losses due to burnt wadis and losses of fishing equipment up to a maximum amount of 200,000 LKR (1481 USD), and supporting school children in poor fishing households by granting stationeries for studies. The following fishing techniques are approved by the PFCS: prawn cages, ring seine, wing nets, stake nets (without galvanized pipes), long line, shark nets, SCUBA diving, and brush piles.

**Sri Vimukthi Women’s Fisheries Organization (SVFO)**

Sri Vimukthi Women’s Fisheries Organization (SVFO) was established in 2000 by the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO– a local NGO) to assist the Sri Lankan wives of multi-day boat crewmembers who were arrested by the Indian Navy or Coast Guard while crossing the MBL. They help these women to begin procedures for the release of their husbands. Having experienced the importance of collectivism, those women have continued to engage with SVFO and NAFSO even after their husbands were released. At present, the SVFO renders services in five areas (i.e. policy advocacy; self-employment, youth and environment, land, peace and sustainable development) for all fisherwives in Negombo, Chilaw, and Mannar (in Mannar it is named as Valapari Women’s Fisheries Organization) irrespective of the scale of operation on policy and advocacy on fisheries and women and alternative income sources.

The SVFO provides leadership training and self-employment programmes (e.g. Maldives fish production, dried fish processing, jadi making, and yoghurt preparation) on the request of members that are most demanding and feasible. It provides short- and long-term loans for cottage enterprises at a rate of 1.25 percent per annum from 25,000 LKR (185 USD) up to 100,000 LKR (740 USD). Monitoring and mentoring include providing necessary skills, awareness, and technical knowhow to ensure effective and efficient functioning with sufficient turnover and profit.

The SVFO conducts environmental programmes in Negombo lagoon and promotes children’s awareness of environmental and resource conservation through a children’s club. It deals with matters relating to land rights, human rights, and living rights. It organizes protest campaigns against any violation of fishers’ rights anywhere in the country. During the time of my fieldwork, the SVFO organized a protest in Jaffna against the government’s land acquisition agenda along the coast to promote tourism (land grabbing). Together with NAFSO, it has launched a peace and development programme to strengthen the leaders through capacity building, training programmes, loan schemes, and awareness campaigns. The programme initiated in 2006 with 1050 members (47 small groups). Later, many of the fisherwomen did not participate because of the shame of not being able to repay the loans or money borrowed from neighbours, feelings of helplessness, and loss of self-esteem due to poor earnings, poor savings, and loss of wealth. Only 785 members were still active in 2014. Amidst all these difficulties, the SVFO tries its best to empower marginalized fisherwomen with alternative income generating activities.

**Religious institute – The Church**

The lives of Negombo and Chilaw fishing communities are shaped by the Roman Catholic Church established in each village. Almost all the villagers in Negombo and Chilaw are Roman Catholics (KI#10, 13) and followers of St. Sebastian. A great respect and expectations have been vested upon the Church by the fishing communities for sustenance and success in the fisheries-based livelihoods. Sunday mornings
have been devoted by both men and women for Church-based activities, whereas the rest of the day is
utilized for gatherings and entertainment. The Sunday Mass at the Church is considered as a compulsory
and unavoidable routine in their calendar even at their migratory sites. The gathering is educated and
advised by the priest on good deeds and societal malpractices arising in the area, such as the use of illicit
liquor and narcotic drugs, and environmental pollution. This time has also become an opportunity for the
attendees to communicate with the priest. The problems encountered by the community emerging at the
macro-level are discussed with the priest. Thus, most of the solutions have been brought with the support
of the priest. Such a situation is explained below.

“The government increased the fuel price by 40 percent in year 2013. As a result, the cost
of kerosene increased resulting in the rise of the cost of fishing. However, the price of fish
did not increase accordingly. This situation badly affected the fishers. Hence, the fishers
started to organize demonstrations (riots) against fuel prices. The fishers in Negombo and
Chilaw blocked the roads [also the other fishers in their towns] and demanded to reduce
the fuel prices. On this occasion, the priests in Negombo and Chilaw Churches got together
and requested a relief from the Ministry of Fisheries. At length, the fishers were offered
with a fuel subsidy worth 20,000 LKR [148 USD] per month by the government”. (KI#4)

Priests’ involvement in settling disputes on migration, landing sites, revolving fund groups (seettu),
community members, and many others are common (#4,7,12,44). Fishing livelihoods are conducted with
the blessings of the priest. The fishers, fishing vessels, and other fishing equipment are blessed by the priest
prior to migration on the first day of the season, and after the church feasts. Holy water is given to the
fishers after saying prayers at the beach. In return, a boat procession is organized by the fishing community
to take the crusade by sea to the adjacent church and return during the church festive season.

The church has become a haven for fisher wives too. Vows are made by fisher wives when they feel bad
about their lives (e.g. loss of good harvest for consecutive days, ill behavior of children and husband,
ilnesses, and mental trauma). The church is the gathering place for women during evenings for praying
and other kinds of spiritual activities or to organize special community events such as dramas, religious
singing events, and so on.

Sunday school is conducted by the Church to enhance religious education among school children.
Moreover, extra education is provided to improve children’s fluency on English, Mathematics, Science,
and others with the help of the priest, invited teachers, and the other educated youth in the community.
Church feasts have gained a high value in the fishers’ lives, sometimes more than Christmas. Although migrant fishers stay at the migratory site during the Christmas season, they make sure to attend the church feast on 22 January (in Negombo) and ninth of February (in Chilaw) (I#1,3,17,38). Migration has become the source of income that can be spent during the time of the Church feast (I#18,22,42). Savings from migration are utilized for food, drinks, clothes, to visit relatives or to treat relatives who visit their home during the feast time, and additional spending on snacks and toys for small kids from the feast fair. Moreover, jewelry would be released from mortgages to be worn at Church functions. These ambitions can only be attained by migration because the Church feast is due in January/February, which is the off-season at the home region. Donations are also made not only during the feast but also throughout the year for the development of the Church. Culture, lifestyle, and beliefs are shaped by the church. The priest and the church are seen as saviors. Social networking, gatherings, celebrations, and decisions are initiated and approved by the Church, which facilitates fishers’ wellbeing in material, relational, and subjective dimensions. Patience, peace of mind, and ‘everything is given by the God’ are attached with the church.

4.4.2 Informal structures – customary law

Informal institutions include de facto rules or norms and non-codified working rules (Wickramasinghe 2010). Informal fisheries organizations are structured by norms that oblige community members to contribute to collective actions for common interests making social orders that coerce or persuade fishers to act together (ibid.). These norms emerge from beliefs or behavioural practices. Informal organizations are important to (a) avoid inefficient economic outcomes (e.g. rent dissipation, extinction of valuable species, and inefficient use of resource permits), (b) impart indigenous knowledge of fish spawning, their habitats, appropriate technologies for different locations in the waters, and identifying productive fishing grounds, (c) facilitate sweeping reforms by conducting policy analysis, and (d) ensure a higher efficiency than de jure rights because, the cost of implementation, institutionalization arrangement, cost internalization, and monitoring are undertaken by the beneficiaries themselves (Schlager and Ostrom 1992:
Based on the explanations provided in Wickramasinghe (2010) the following norms and non-codified working rules were observed among migrant fishers in the migration sites as well as in Negombo and Chilaw.

**Crewmember participation in pre- and post- harvest fishing operations**

Normally, the crew is paid for their labour input in fishing in the sea. However, they also engage in pre-harvesting, net mending, and loading, post-harvesting, fish sorting and net cleaning. Although these are not codified, the crewmembers accomplish these tasks willingly to convey their trustworthiness and loyalty towards the boat owner that strengthens their relationships and job security.

**Reciprocity**

Anyone who supports in post-harvest activities such as pulling the craft, sorting, and net cleaning are offered some fish. When any fisher does not have a fish catch, he is offered some fish by the other fishers who have a good fish catch and vice versa. Hence, no fisher buys fish for their consumption but obtains some fish by helping other fishers.

**Evening fishing is restricted on certain days**

Evening fishing (known as sekkal fishing) is banned on full moon nights. Fishers believe that the egg bearing sardines come to the surface with the onset of moon light (kabba). Violators of this norm are punished by not being allowed to fish for three consecutive days by the NFF.

**Fishing is only allowed once a day**

Fishers in Negombo and Chilaw may only fish once a day even at their migration site. Nevertheless, local fishers in Mannar, who are members of PFCS often engage in multiple fishing trips. This is a non-codified working rule enforced by the NFF.

**Mutual respect**

Fishers think that other fishers are also struggling to live in the same way as they do. Thus, mutual respect is always valued. I noticed several fishing nets left on the beach. Boats and household furniture are left at the migratory site until migrant fishers return for the next season. They believe that all other fishers live with many difficulties. Thus, hurting others by stealing or sabotaging is considered a disgraceful act. Usually, neither the craft and gear on the beach, nor the nets set in the sea are stolen or damaged by other fishers. Fishers who do not follow these norms are excommunicated by their communities.
Fisher-trader relationship

Fishers use existing networks and organizations for the continuation of migration (Overa 2001). Fisher-trader tied relationships go back many centuries where Mannar traders advanced money for Negombo migrants even in 1897 on condition or on selling their fish to that particular trader (Stirrat 1988). Fish traders provide a purchaser for the catch, enhance economic security by facilitating access to credit, and are the first to notice if a boat fails to return from a fishing trip, as they are waiting for the harvest. However, the relationship can be exploitative due to the boat tying mechanism (i.e. the indebtedness of the fisher makes him sell the catch even at lower prices offered by the trader) (Amarasinghe 1989). Pre-arranged trade agreements between fishers and fish merchants establish a kind of mutual insurance by: a) safe-guarding each other from external threats (conflicts with locals); b) making each other powerful through payments (for the fisher) and guaranteed fish supply (for the trader); c) enabling the fisher to access some essential means of production (i.e. fuel) throughout the period and undisturbed consumption, thereby due to continued fishing practices even with borrowing; and d) ensuring profit for the trader in return.

Fishing communities and CBOs in Sri Lanka have simple, self-enforcing, non-codified norms and rules that are generally practiced with zero transaction costs. Fisheries working rules enforced through the NFF are informal and less complex than state regulations (Wickramasinghe 2010:195). In contrast, state institutions often have more formal, complex, scientifically informed, and hierarchically codified rules, which are more difficult to implement (Wickramasinghe and Bavinck 2015).
4.5 Conclusion
In answering the first sub-question –How can small-scale fishing and fisher migration in northwestern Sri Lanka be characterized– my research shows that the migration process of Negombo and Chilaw small-scale fishers stems from the 1800s, although clearly the population has increased substantially since then, and hence the increase of the population that migrates. The migration pattern of Negombo and Chilaw fisherfolk is an internal temporary migration for a particular season of the year, based on monsoonal winds and fish availability. Fishing operations at home and host regions are compatible. Adverse climatic conditions, seasonally unprofitable fishing, over-population in the home region, and inter- and intra-community relationships motivate the process of migration. The preferred migratory sites for Negombo and Chilaw fishers are Silavathurai and SouthBar. Fishers in between 36 to 55 years tend to migrate more than the others. Small-scale fisheries are governed through multiple legal systems at international, national, and local levels. Thus, both formal and informal institutions including customs and norms are remarkable.