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### Small-scale fisher migration, conflict and wellbeing

*A case study from Sri Lanka*

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## 9 Conclusions

### 9.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to assess whether there are lessons to be learnt from the case study on the challenges facing the migratory fisher population in northwestern Sri Lanka to add to the existing body of relevant scholarly knowledge, and what the implications are for their wellbeing in Sri Lanka in particular and migratory populations world-wide in general. At the outset, this thesis assumes that the wellbeing of fishers is a complex and difficult area to study, given that multi-level conflicts occur with respect to fisheries and related resources. It should be noted that this thesis explores the perspectives of migrant fishers only and recognizes the need for additional research to explore the perspectives and lived experiences of host communities as well. This concluding chapter integrates insights from the preceding chapters for generalization in the academic debate. It addresses the research sub-questions (see 9.2), answers the main question (see 9.3), discusses the thesis contribution to scholarly debate (see 9.4), and finally makes policy suggestions and recommendations for further research (see 9.5).

### 9.2 Answering the research sub-questions

This thesis addresses the main question: *How is the wellbeing of migrant fisher households and communities affected by fisheries conflicts and what context specific wellbeing indicators can be formulated to inform inclusive development policies?* The thesis has answered the main research question through a series of sub-questions. The findings on each are presented below.

#### *How can small-scale fishing and fisher migration in northwestern Sri Lanka be characterized?*

Chapter 4 has elaborated on fishing grounds, fishing practices, the migration process, and characteristics of fishing locations both in the home region – Negombo and Chilaw – and in the host region – Mannar District, with a focus on migrant fishing communities in two settlements called SouthBar and Silavathurai. Small-scale fishers in Negombo and Chilaw routinely migrate to Mannar District with the onset of monsoon winds and rain in October and November. They stay in the host region until March or April of next year. The Gulf of Mannar (adjoining the coastline where the case study settlements are located) is a preferred fishing ground for both locals and migrants because the seabed, wind patterns and seawater currents are compatible with the fishing techniques (gill nets, hooks and line) they use. The migrant fishers mostly target small fish varieties such as sardines and mackerel, which generally receive lower prices than large fish species in the market. Migrants construct temporary huts (*wadi*) and sheds (*pandalama*) in front of each *wadi* to store the fishing craft and to engage in fisheries-related activities such as fish sorting, net cleaning, net mending, and net loading. The literature suggests that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Stirrat 1988) migrants have followed the same migratory routes as identified by Bartz (1959) in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Compared to the findings of Bartz (1959), this thesis has observed a slight reduction in the number of migration destinations; e.g. Jaffna is no longer a migratory destination for Negombo and Chilaw fishers. Instead, new migratory routes have appeared along the west coast such as Panadura and Moratuwa involving short distance visits.

Mixed identities are visible in migrant fishing communities. Although the migrant fishers of this study are generally Sinhalese, they are fluent in Tamil, which is the language in the north of Sri Lanka where the Tamil community is dominant. In addition, Muslim communities are growing due to post-war resettlement

and rehabilitation programmes. All three ethnicities are actively engaging in fishing and fishing-related activities (trading). The Roman Catholic religion is practiced by both Tamils and Sinhalese. The common language and religion have made Sinhalese migrant fishers analogous to the local fishing population, enabling cross-cultural relationships. Migration is driven by the annual monsoon seasons and other factors including high-population densities in the home region, profitability of fishing operations in the host region, and inter- and intra-community relationships.

Chapter 4 also describes the existing institutional set-up with illustrations of formal and informal structures operating from international to local levels. UNCLOS (1985) and bilateral agreements with India (Table 4.7) provide the international framework for regulating fishing activities. FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing (1995) and the Voluntary Code on Sustaining Small-Scale Fisheries (2014) are accepted by the Sri Lankan government as providing guidance for achieving sustainability, equality, participation in decision-making, and appropriate social conditions. The National Fisheries Act (1996), National Fisheries Policy (2018), and Coast Conservation Act (1981) have been adopted to conserve the fisheries resources while ensuring fishers' rights. Cooperatives are the main CBOs governing fisheries. The National Fisheries Federation (NFF) located in Negombo operates as the apex body for cooperative activities in the western and northwestern regions while Panankattikuttiya Fisheries Cooperative Society (PFCS) operates in the northern region. The Catholic Church is recognized as an important religious institute, which enhances community cohesion, spirituality, and good deeds in society; it even mediates to solve fisheries-related problems not only at the community level but also at national level. In addition, informal institutions operate on the basis of shared norms and working rules, such as reciprocity, mutual respect, temporal closures (e.g. restrictions have been imposed on evening fishing, fishing on full-moon days, and fishing once a day; see 4.4.2), and crewmember participation in pre- and post- harvest fishing operations (cf. Wickramasinghe 2010) especially among migrant fisher communities.

Chapter 4 concludes that migrant and host communities share values and social characteristics that enable co-existence and provide for mutually satisfying relations, despite the competition over resources and space. This is not to say, however, that there is no conflict (see below). Various conditions at the host sites as well as the migrant sites have contributed to making migration an enduring historical practice. Fisheries governance is accomplished by multiple and sometimes-contradictory institutions at the international, national, and local levels (see below).

***What are the multi-scalar fisheries conflicts that affect the household and community wellbeing of migrant fishers in northwestern Sri Lanka?***

Chapter 5 presents an overview of prevailing conflicts in migrant fishing communities. Multiple conflicts emerge from international to community levels. These conflicts focus on (i) access rights to fishing grounds and landing sites; (ii) disputed fishing methods and practices; (iii) international and local level boundary disputes; and (iv) multiple levels of governance- the hierarchies of which are not always clear. I will synthesize the research findings of each of these four conflicts below.

Access-based conflicts prevail mainly at community level, specifically between migrant fishing communities and local fishing communities and middlemen. Migrant fishers are considered to be 'outsiders', and local communities impose restrictions on the number of migrants allowed, time of arrival,

and location of settlements. Dominant fish traders in Mannar are seen to be monopolizing fish marketing and forcing migrants to sell fish to them at low costs. Harmful fishing practices of local fishers, including trawling, negatively affect marine ecosystem sustainability, reducing migrant fishers' income due to low harvests and high operational costs. The pair-wise ranking exercises, interviews, and key informant discussions (including a former fisheries leader from a local community) all lead to the conclusion that illegal fishing gear and practices of local fishing communities have led to adverse impacts. A few migrants also admitted their involvement in illegal fishing practices, which they resorted to due to soaring debts and rising ill-being in the face of a decreasing fish harvest. I have not been able to verify from local communities if this indeed is the case. However, the perception of the use of illegal fishing methods and banned practices by local fishers is a cause of conflict irrespective of the individual or community involved. It results in a few winners and many losers because of the destruction they cause to the marine ecosystem. The interviewees also claimed that Indian trawlers regularly cross the international maritime boundary line between India and Sri Lanka for fishing in this part of the Sri Lankan waters. This depletes the fish available to migrant fishers.

Disputes over governing mechanisms also occur at national and community levels. Although multiple formal and informal institutions operate in the northwestern small-scale fisheries, fragmentation and non-communication prevail. Complications that result from legal pluralism are discussed in the following section. Although the community-based formal institutes established by the migrant fishing communities (NFF) were invited to the fisheries-related decision-making forum prior and during the war, the present context ignores such collaboration from the local governing systems at the migratory site. Moreover, local knowledge and practices adopted by the NFF and informal institutions (of migrants) are not sufficiently acknowledged or recognized by national and local legal systems. Further, the noncompliance of officers, responsible authorities, and state creates voids in the governing mechanism bringing grievances to the lower levels of hierarchy. For example, the perception of migrant fishers' is that the state does not adequately protest Indian trawler poaching while *wadi* removal at the end of the season is not monitored by the CCD. It is also perceived that illegal fishing gear is seldom confiscated and users arrested, and that local officers favour local communities at the cost of migrants creating further tension. In contrast, *wadi* removal is a grievance of migrants as they are anxious of the loss of a familiar place (hinders place attachment), they need to bear a high cost for migration, and fear inter- and intra- competition over the place in the future (see 5.2).

Furthermore, conflicts are gendered. The role of migrant women in pre- and post-fishing practices is generally not discussed and hardly acknowledged by the community, although their contribution is significant. In addition, customary norms reduce the freedom of migrant women to access fishing grounds. Multi-level conflicts have made fisherwomen more vulnerable because, a) a poor catch leaves less fish for drying reducing the family income; b) low fishing incomes are compensated by increasing the women's (household) involvement in pre- and post-harvest activities, thus relying on the flexibility of their time; c) the risk of sexual harassment limits women's mobility and wellbeing; d) poor sanitation and hygienic conditions affect women's health and dignity at the migratory sites; and e) the loss of income and increasing debts are borne by women who are forced to sacrifice their assets (jewelry) and petty savings (*seettu*). These affect their economic independence and sense of dignity and happiness.

***What are the multiple socio-legal systems applied in the region that have affected the fisheries conflicts and household and community wellbeing of migrant fishers?***

Chapter 5 builds on the legal pluralism theory that discusses the existing multiple legal systems in identical jurisdictions. Such pluralism can be positive in allowing for multiple ideas to co-exist but can also contribute to normative confusion, conflict and forum shopping. This chapter identifies overlapping legal systems operating in Sri Lankan fisheries and, specifically, the Mannar migrant fishing sites. Sometimes law is of local origin, such as when local fishers, united in their local cooperative society, strive to implement customary law and limit the number of migrants visiting the host site. It finds a counterpoint in the migrant fishers' claim for historical rights for fishing in the region.

In many other cases, law is 'imported' from other scale levels and locations, reflecting not only the mobility of people but also the mobility of law (Benda-Beckmann et al. 2005). As such, migrant fishers look for sustenance through their membership of the NFF. Both migrant and local fishers regularly appeal to the local Roman Catholic priest for advice and mediation, thereby introducing yet another source of normative authority. There is also the gamut of government law and authority that ranges from the national to the local level and spans a range of policy fields. The most important of these, for this study, is the National Fisheries Policy, which prohibits a range of fishing methods and practices. Some of these rules are blatantly transgressed by local fisher folk, much to the annoyance of migrant fishers who repeatedly find local government officers turning a blind eye. Also, Indian trawlers enter Sri Lankan waters and disturb local fishing operations. This habit, which commenced during the war, has become a part of the regular fishing practice, and, while not condoned by the Indian authorities, is not effectively obstructed either (Stephen 2015). International law (UNCLOS; FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing) addresses transnational boundary transgressions. However, as the Indian and Sri Lankan governments prefer bilateral negotiations to international mediation, the case has not been brought to the International Court of Justice or any other international tribunal. Such cross-border trawling has, therefore, become an irritant in the relationship between India and Sri Lanka, and has important effects on the fisheries in northern Sri Lanka (Scholtens 2016).

The legal pluralism analysis made use of the typology of relations between legal systems presented by Bavinck and Gupta (2014). This typology distinguishes relations of indifference, competition, accommodation, and mutual support. Rather than gathering the manifold relations between legal systems in Sri Lankan migrant fishing practice under one heading, this study has identified all four types as existing in the same setting. When local fishers prevent migrant fishers from exercising what they see as their historical rights, two legal systems are in conflict. Indifference prevails between government officers and fishers regarding many of the norms of reciprocity and mutual respect that are not relevant from a government perspective. Many (not all) state rules aimed at resource conservation and ecosystem health are accommodated and generally endorsed by both migrant and local fishers, even if some secretly violate the rules. Mutual support between Sri Lankan state authorities and fishers is found in their rejection of transboundary trawling and in support of measures to contain it. Thus, local and migrant fishers generally applaud the actions of the Sri Lankan navy in apprehending Indian poachers.

The type of relationship that prevails at a given time depends on the situation and context, whereby poverty sometimes induces fishers to ignore the precepts of law (customary or state) and pursue their wellbeing at

the cost of the wellbeing of migrant fishers. Much like Zeitoun and Mirumachi's (2008) diagnosis of transboundary water interactions, the relations between different parties and legal systems of Sri Lankan migrant fisheries move regularly between cooperation and conflict.

### ***How is wellbeing perceived and pursued by migrant fishermen and women?***

Chapter 6 elaborated on gender-related wellbeing indicators that answer the fourth sub-question. Several methods were explored to extract fisher relevant wellbeing factors for fishermen and women based on frequency, weight, and wellbeing dimensions. Material wellbeing aspects were prioritized by both migrant fishermen and women over relational and subjective wellbeing dimensions. Fishing related factors such as fishing methods, fish harvest, the fishing environment, and fishing costs were prioritized by men as essential for a better life. Financial stability, access to the sea, and alternative livelihood opportunities are the material wellbeing factors proposed by fisherwomen. Therefore, economic stability was highlighted as the most important material wellbeing factor for both men and women. Women in migrant fishing communities view good relationships within the family and a peaceful environment for fishing/living as important relational wellbeing factors. Although the fishermen value family relationships at a lower weighted average than women, they acknowledge the importance of community relationships and social harmony insisting on the importance of collectivism in fisheries-based occupations. Women value their children's education, future, and religious activities to a higher weighted average. In contrast, men seem slightly less committed to their children's education and future. Women are more exposed to the vulnerability of the fishing occupation and hence, reluctant to see their children taking up the occupation of fishers. In addition, job security, job satisfaction, and institutional involvement are seen to be vital at household and community level for both men and women.

Fishing activities are gendered. Pre-harvest activities such as net mending, net loading, fixing baits to hooks and lines, and fueling are mostly carried out by fishermen. Fisher wives participate in post-harvest operations by removing fish from the net, sorting, selling, and dried fish processing at the migratory sites. Occasionally, there are fisherwomen's groups who join beach seine operations, gather shellfish in shallow waters, fix bait on hooks, and help in net mending. However, the most common activity is dried fish processing, which is a supplementary income for fisherwomen and their households.

Migration enables fishing livelihoods especially during the off-season. Fisherwomen are engaged with income generating activities enabling them to buy jewelry, new clothes, financial supplements to spend at church ceremonies, and the cost of schooling of children. Income (and savings), social cohesion, self-esteem, and life-satisfaction are enhanced. However, the migration process has hindered the education of children. Nevertheless, the migration process nurtures most of the material and relational wellbeing aspects that are important to migrant fishing households.

Chapter 7 explains the motives of place making, demonstrated by seasonal migrant fishers along the northwestern coast. It answers the fifth research sub-question. In-depth interviews with fishermen and women reveal that economic, social, and functional aspects coinciding with the material, relational, and subjective dimensions of wellbeing drive the place-making behaviour of migrants. Although the migration process takes place mainly out of economic concern, the place selection is driven by social and functional motives. Access to the sea, credit, market, and labour and the availability of alternative income sources are

listed as economic motives ensuring an income throughout the season. The functional motives are affective, behavioural, and cognitive. Affective factors include happiness, togetherness, and mental relaxation. Behavioural factors include group entertainment, religiosity, and restoration practices. Knowledge and awareness of the resources, belongingness, and familiarity of the location are the cognitive factors. Social capital and fisher-trader relationships are important social factors in determining a place, also enhancing relational wellbeing. In addition, a place that asserts individual and community identity is chosen because fishers value their autonomy, freedom, and dignity. Nonetheless, collective decisions immensely influence the place selection because social ties are crucial for fishing operations. Place making motives are therefore, interdependent, interrelated and gendered contributing to women and men's wellbeing differently. Figure 7.1 presents a model, which defines migration as a process of livelihood continuation (economic), and psychological satisfaction (functional) expanding individual and collective (social) wellbeing. As far as the place of destination is congruent with these motives and three dimensional wellbeing aspects, the fishing communities, even amidst multiple conflicts and/or barriers, collectively continue the migration process. In other words, these small-scale fishers tend to migrate in regular patterns, thereby resembling other terrestrial semi-nomadic societies that are known to move around in other parts of the world according to seasonal variations. The place-making activities that such societies engage in always take place within temporal parameters. Migrant fishers in Sri Lanka are no different: it is within certain seasons of the year that they 'make place' in defined host sites around the island.

***What are the important wellbeing priorities that could feed into inclusive development in fisheries?***

Chapter 8 explained the computation methods of wellbeing and thereby, the wellbeing priorities for ecological, social, and relational inclusion to be focused on in an inclusive development approach. This answers the sixth research sub-question. Wellbeing indices can be computed based on frequency, weights, and factor reduction methods. These indices are useful in the quantification of wellbeing and contribute to policy design. Proposed wellbeing indicators for index development for small-scale fisheries are good market prices for fish harvest, financial stability, and sustainable fishing methods (material wellbeing); a conflict free fishing environment, harmony with local fishers, and good family relations (relational wellbeing); education and future of children, and religious activities (subjective wellbeing). Unmet (unsatisfied) wellbeing aspects were identified as development frustrations. These include income losses due to illegal fishing methods of local fishers and Indian trawling in local waters, low prices for the catch, and high operational costs. Notably, women are dissatisfied with their children's education and prospects. Fisheries, cooperatives, education, and gender policies were analysed to disclose community level development gaps (or 'frustrations') in relation to social, ecological, and relational inclusiveness in the context of small-scale migrant fisher community livelihoods and lifestyles.

**9.3 Discussion: Answering the Main Question**

The answers to the sub-questions, provided above, assist in answering the main research question: *How is the wellbeing of migrant fisher households and communities affected by fisheries conflicts and what context specific wellbeing indicators can be formulated to inform policy?* This study established that the wellbeing of migrant fishers is affected by (i) conflicts over resources and space with the host communities and others in the fisheries field; (ii) legal plurality occurring at multiple levels of governance; (iii) the availability of resources (fish) or lack thereof; (iv) concerns about the future generation; and (v) women's lack of voice and countervailing rights.

Migrants/temporary settlers are vulnerable to conflicts due to the lack of access rights to places on the beach and in the sea, the use of destructive fishing techniques, poaching, and fragmented governing systems. Employment in non-fishing sectors or in deep-sea fishing (assuming that there was enough fish was in the exclusive economic zone of Sri Lanka and that local fishers had the necessary fishing equipment) would resolve these with multiple benefits such as (i) discouragement of migration, hence, conflicts can be reduced in the host region; (ii) regeneration of near-shore marine resources, which would ensure long-term ecosystem sustainability and future income; (iii) undisturbed family and social relationships due to being at home and free from conflicts; and (iv) safeguarding of children's future by providing them with a better formal education that would assist in finding future employment in non-fishing sectors.

The study highlights that multidimensional wellbeing is pursued by migrant fishers, out of economic (access to resources, markets, labour opportunities), social (fisher-trader relationships, collective activities of the own community), and functional (affective, cognitive, and behavioural) motives. These motives appear strong enough to continue with migration even amidst conflicts, considering migration not only as a process of livelihood continuation during the off-season but also as a process to attain individual and collective wellbeing. Therefore, the discontinuation of migration can lead to frustration, loss of identity, isolation, and a sort of 'social differentiation: inter- and intra-household inequality' (see Caravani 2019:1340).

Since small-scale fishers migrate in regular patterns, going back to the same places over and over again, this also raises intergenerational concerns that need to be governed. There are two governance scenarios that can be formulated in response. One would accommodate the migrating lifestyles and parents moving around, with or without children, by securing schooling in permanent or mobile forms. The second would arrange for the creation of new and permanent livelihood opportunities either in off-shore fishing or non-fishing sectors (mentioned above), thus relieving the stresses at the current migration locations.

Women's empowerment, participation in decision-making, involvement in economic activities, and social recognition is paramount in inclusive development policy. At present, women in small-scale migrating communities in Sri Lanka are not sufficiently represented in any forum or institution. Although the NFF stands as the apex body of all fisheries cooperatives in Sri Lanka, only male participation and membership is accepted. Thus, women's issues and priorities for wellbeing and development are scarcely raised in decision-making forums. Participation in decision-making forum, memberships in formal institutions, and the establishment of women-based CBOs would realize social inclusivity. Besides, a stable income was reiterated by both men and women as the most important material wellbeing factor. Women look forward to migrate as it enables them to engage in economic activities such as dried fish processing and fisheries-related activities, which save the household income without spending on hired labour. In contrast, their current small land plots with sandy soil and congested houses without sufficient backyard curb farming or livestock rearing. Further, dried fish processing is also challenged by external parties particularly the tourism industry (see 5.2.1.4), which compete for beach space. Investment in home-based economic activities outside fishing would be one option for women's empowerment. Public and private sector investment relieving women from unpaid labour and care work could be another strategy. Formal and informal education enhancing skills on non-fishing economic activities would (i) improve the family economy and possibly provide a way out of poverty; (ii) foster women's empowerment at household and



community level strengthening their negotiation positions and; (iii) reduce household violence due to improved gender relations; and (iv) motivate children for a better education and enable them to find jobs.

These inferences, drawn from my study on selected small-scale migrant fishing communities in northwestern Sri Lanka, have general features too. The next section, therefore, extrapolates the key findings on temporary migration and natural resource-based conflicts to the global context and scholarly debate.

#### **9.4 Contribution to scholarly debate**

The focus in this study has been on migrating fisher households and communities in northwestern Sri Lanka. Temporal fisher migration is a common practice around the country (Lokuge 2017; Amarasinghe 2013; 2011), creating livelihood opportunities for a considerable section of the population. Globally, migration in fisheries is substantial with various push and pull factors (Randall 2005; Kraan 2009). Moreover, migration in fisheries and the type of conflicts arising from this practice, resemble the conflicts taking place over other natural resources such as those encountered by other semi-nomadic population groups in the world. For example, Kassa (2019) explored land governance conflicts between farmers and nomadic herders in rural Ethiopia. The nature and scope of conflicts between seasonal migrants and sedentary populations in low-income countries, typically concern conflicts over natural resources, space and boundaries. Kassa (2019) identifies possible solutions in more flexible forms of land and boundary governance fostering more collaboration and precluding antagonistic interactions (p. 259).

Caravani (2019) discusses ‘de-pastoralisation’ (p. 1323) as a process that involves the transition of pastoral societies from nomadic and semi-nomadic to sedentary lifestyles in the northeast of Uganda, mainly because of increasing conflicts and drought (climatic factors). Mobile communities such as fishers and pastoralists are vulnerable to access-based conflicts (see 5.2.1.1) due to the increasing population in host communities (see Table 4.5; Caravani 2019), resource depletion (see Table 4.4; Pomeroy et al. 2007), and climate change (see 2.7; Allison et al. 2009). De-pastoralisation/sedentarisation has brought many advantages including improved health care, education, and market opportunities with more career opportunities for future generations (Fratkin and Roth 2005). These are the important wellbeing factors identified by small-scale fishers too (see 7.2.1.3 and 8.2.4.1). At the same time, mobile communities also experience disadvantages of sedentarization, as it brings about a considerably different lifestyle (Caravani 2019).

Women’s empowerment is important for non-discriminative gender relations (social inclusivity). Women who have come to the forefront in non-livestock activities may contribute to improved gender relations in de-pastoralised societies by contributing to the economic welfare of the household, destabilizing gender norms, which call for male leadership and obedient female, and access and control of resources (Wangui 2014). Similarly, non-fishing economic activities possibly enhance the household wellbeing with a supplementary income and wealth (material wellbeing), family relationships (relational wellbeing), personal dignity and aspirations (subjective wellbeing) (see 6.3.4).

It may be wise to manage conflicts affecting migrants with a strong place attachment within the formal legislation system, by adopting an effective monitoring and governance mechanism. As explained by De Theije and colleagues (2014), small-scale gold mining sectors in countries such as Suriname, Colombia, and Brazil are characterized by migrant miners, the use of destructive extracting techniques, multiple

conflicts among stakeholders, open access to resources, and legal pluralism, resembling conflicts in my case study. These authors suggest “[the]... formalization of the activity [as]...the first step to resolving many social, economic, and environmental conflicts” (p. 144). Thus, multiple legal systems, formal and informal institutions, and indigenous knowledge can be accommodated, as in the case of the Tapajo region in Brazil where the formalization of small-scale gold mining has become a way to achieve a conflict free, sustainable economic activity. Such new rules need to be introduced by taking the perceptions of all those affected into account but will inevitably imply that all parties will have to be willing to accept the new rules that emerge, which may hold privileges but also restrictions for some.

The bigger question underlying these enquiries is, whether these migrant populations will have a future, given the reduced per capita availability of land, and how to invest therein? This is by no means an easy question to answer. This thesis had made a first step by investigating how conflicts affect migrant people’s wellbeing in multiple domains of life. As such, the thesis has made an empirical contribution to the scholarly debate on wellbeing in development. It has made several proposals to advance the wellbeing methodology by deriving fisheries-relevant indicators at individual and community level and from a gender-aware perspective that can be replicated.

## **9.5 Recommendations for policy and practices**

Based on the findings elaborated in the previous chapters, this section gives policy recommendations for access rights, economic diversification, children’s education, cooperation, and gender. The recommendations proposed below are related to small-scale migrant fishing communities along the northwestern coast of Sri Lanka. However, extrapolations are possible to other regions, countries and natural resource-based migrating/nomadic communities.

### ***Access rights for migrant fishers***

The thesis explains migration not only as a process to pursue economic gain, but to attain relational and subjective wellbeing for men and women. Apart from the fishing operations facilitated for fishers during the off-season, migration enhances social networks, relationships, and collective identity. Regarding place attachment and wellbeing theories, permission can be granted to interested migrating households with adequate monitoring during their stay at the migration site. However, the present context is contradictory because the National Fisheries Policy grants migrants the permission to fish within the country’s EEZ but the landing rights are not explicitly mentioned in Article 4.5.22 (MFARD 2018b). Therefore, Article 4.5.22 of the National Fisheries Policy (MFARD 2018b) needs to be amended to grant permits for migrants based on their historical rights to host beaches, during particular seasons, for a specific duration of stay, and concerning specific fishing practices.

### ***Economic diversification***

Income diversification is an important livelihood strategy to cope with risk, uncertainty, and vulnerability (Eriksson et al. 2017), thereby securing the living standard of fishing households against unpredictable fluctuations in fish prices and harvest. The need for diversification is cited in Sri Lankan fisheries and cooperative policies, but not elaborated in detail. Both fisheries-related and other economic activities can be introduced by the government, NGOs, and private firms. Training in off-shore fisheries skills can be conducted through non-formal education (education policy) and at workshops conducted by the MFARD (fisheries policy) and cooperatives (cooperative policy). The introduction of investment schemes allowing

fishers to acquire vehicles (for hire), shops, boat-repairing centers, mariculture assets, fish processing spaces, and related ventures can be promoted through public-private partnerships and NGOs. Such opportunities can be provided through the MFARD and the Ministry of Trade and Commerce. These might act as deterrents to fisher migration in Sri Lanka with positive results on children's education, household economy, family relations, and fisheries conflicts. Cooperatives could guide to implement some of these initiatives at the community level.

### ***Children's education***

Compliance with education policy needs to be better monitored by the Ministry of Education, thereby facilitating the children of migrant fishers to have an adequate and undisturbed education. Subsidized hostels ensuring societal security and wellbeing of both parents and children are recommended for children of migrating communities. This could be undertaken with the support of the church – hostels for boys (under the supervision of a priest) and convents for girls (under the supervision of reverend sisters), thus providing a safe learning environment to bring up disciplined children in the fishing communities. Households that shift to other livelihood options (either land-based or off-shore fishing) can make use of regular education facilities.

### ***Strengthen the capacities of cooperatives***

Social and relational inclusiveness, which are not achieved due to multiple conflicts, can also be regained by strengthening the capacities of fisheries cooperatives. Appropriate revisions of the cooperative policy should be undertaken by the Ministry of Trade and Commerce to establish better communication and inter-connection between fisheries cooperatives in Sri Lanka, thereby enhancing community inclusion, knowledge sharing, experience and accommodative or mutually supportive legal relationships. Since fisheries depend on the health of the fish ecosystem, ecological inclusiveness calls on the state to take a more proactive stance on protecting these ecosystems.

### ***Gender-aware policies***

There is a need for the state to understand that fishing practices, including seasonal migration, pre- and post-harvest activities, wellbeing, consequences of conflicts, institutions, and place attachment are all gendered. Therefore, equal participation, voice, and empowerment in decision-making needs to be promoted especially through fisheries and cooperative policies. Regarding the values and needs of a gendered approach that pursues social inclusiveness (gender equality and wellbeing) and relational inclusiveness (unity and access to resources) in inclusive development, the empowerment of marginalized and deprived groups can be provided redress by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs.

Gender-aware inclusive policy suggestions are pivotal in attaining sustainable livelihood practices (see Thorpe et al. 2014) and wellbeing. Ecosystem sustainability, diversified income opportunities, and formal/informal education would enhance the material wellbeing. Improved gender relations through women's empowerment, free from conflicts due to well-defined access rights, and an effective governance mechanism with social inclusion would ascertain the relational wellbeing. All these together with the potential to fulfill aspirations for fisherwomen and their children could contribute to enhanced subjective wellbeing, which are determinants of inclusive development in marginalized and vulnerable societies depending on natural resources (fisheries, pastoral, farming) and subject to climate variability and change (seasonality, drought, flood).

*Recommendations for further research*

New research in Sri Lanka and other places in the world should investigate and monitor the drivers of migrating communities systematically: when and where they move, what this implies in the use of natural resources and space, to gender-related concerns, and to opportunities to find sustainable employment of future generations.

Furthermore, a number of knowledge gaps remain. First, this research analysed multi-scalar fisheries conflicts using the conflict typology of Charles (1992). However, the study can be elaborated further through research on conflict dynamics and wellbeing, exploring how wellbeing priorities change over time. Therefore, further research is needed on how multi-level conflicts evolve from latent to overt, and from local to national and international levels (or vice versa). An interconnected picture of multi-scalar conflicts and wellbeing, as these develop over time, will provide a more fine-tuned perspective on individual and collective wellbeing developments.

Secondly, whereas this research focused only on the migratory fishing community, their conflicts and their wellbeing, further research is needed on how local fishers (from the host community) perceive migrants and the effects of migration on their wellbeing. A comparative study including both parties involved in the scenario would be helpful to better understand complex trade-offs and the potential for conflict resolution from two sides.

Finally, this research experimented with calculating singular and multi-dimensional wellbeing indices using a necessity and satisfaction scale. However, it was based on a relatively small sample. Further research could be undertaken for larger communities with a broader scale and more variables at the micro level, and exploring interactions with macro level trends (e.g. fuel prices, inflation, unemployment) using regression modeling (see Decancq and Lugo 2013; Haq and Zia 2013). These could be used in policy formulation and setting target measures to monitor the wellbeing status of the population and to design instruments and intervention strategies to upscale the wellbeing of marginal fishing communities from a gender-aware perspective.