Consequences of the tsunami on fisheries and coastal livelihood: a case study of tsunami ravaged southern Sri Lanka

D.A.M. De Silva and Masahiro Yamao

Abstract

Tsunami catastrophe has had devastated ten main fishing districts of the country and which account for 72% of the marine landings. The tsunami affected areas are very important for commercial tuna fisheries and fish landings (except shrimp aquaculture), fleet operations and livelihood of fishermen. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of tsunami on seafood export industry of Sri Lanka and to formulate the sub sector analysis for the sustainable livelihood of the stakeholders of the seafood industry. Drawing on questionnaire based surveys of 9 villages in 3 districts, the paper elucidates how fishers, traders and export-processors managing the post tsunami situation to the recovery. Human and social capital building capacities of the sub-sectors were in similar level. The physical capital status of the export-processors was better than the producers and traders while their financial capital access was poor. The damages to domestic fleet strength (about 75%) and poor demand on fresh fish were resulted slower rehabilitating of fishing operations and especially low tuna supply. The impact of shocks and trends had similar low figures for traders and export-processors but higher for producers while impact of seasonality was negligible compared with others. The changes of policies (100m buffer zone), institutions and processes (except scrapping the import duties) have little impact on export-processors compared to producers and traders. The damages to the Maldivian fleet operations have also badly affected to the tuna re-export, dry fish and Maldive fish exports sector. Traders and export-processors have better livelihood strategies than the fishers. Export-processors in west, north-west coasts are operating in their full capacity to fill the supply gap while south cost is more focusing on one-day operating small fleets with long-line tuna fishery for export.