

Managing the Blue Economy: A Case Study of Sea Cucumber Fishery in Sri Lanka

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Marine open access fisheries are subject to longstanding problem of exploitation. Referring to conventional fisheries, Ludwig et al. (1993)¹ state “shortsightedness and greed of humans underlie difficulties in management of resources” and “the prospect of wealth generates political and social power that is used to promote unlimited exploitation of resources.” In order to manage open access fisheries with high exports-driven demand, there is a need to study and develop management solutions. We look at one such fishery in the coastal Sri Lanka. The fishery has been volatile in terms of functioning of landing sites due to protracted conflict in the North. The more southern landing sites have functioned on a regular basis while more northern ones have been interrupted during episodes of armed conflict and related displacement. The other aspect of volatility of sea cucumber catches is the declining size of the catches. We study the management challenges of the fishery using a value chain study in the North-West coast of Sri Lanka. Five landing sites of the North-West coast are taken for analyzing the fishery value chain and management challenges at the first stage of the value chain. The findings document the key structural features of the fishery: Size of catch, number of divers (and boats), presence of cages, boating distance, location of collectors. Subsequently, we document the behavioral aspects of the fishery: price setting, threats to size of catch, state interventions needed, private sector interventions needed, and external influence. The findings highlight substantive threats to sustainability that is generalizable to this particular fishery including exploitation of both immature stocks and imbalanced value chain relations among stakeholders.

Key words: *Fisheries, Exploitation, Sea-cucumber, Value chain, Sustainability*