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Squeezed between the Lines

Vaddam - Village Profile

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Preface

The IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 is a joint venture of the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP), Sri Lanka and the Centre for Advanced Training in Agricultural and Rural Development (CATAD) from Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany. The study is funded by IFSP with the financial assistance of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) and is carried out by an interdisciplinary Sri Lankan-German team of young researchers and practitioners.

The IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 explores socio-economic coping strategies and changes in land use pattern of conflict-affected communities in Trincomalee District. The study follows the livelihood system approach developed by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK.

The preliminary results of the IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 are documented in then IFSP Working Papers 37 to 45. The different steps of knowledge generation along the consecutive research phases and the research results are presented for further discussion.

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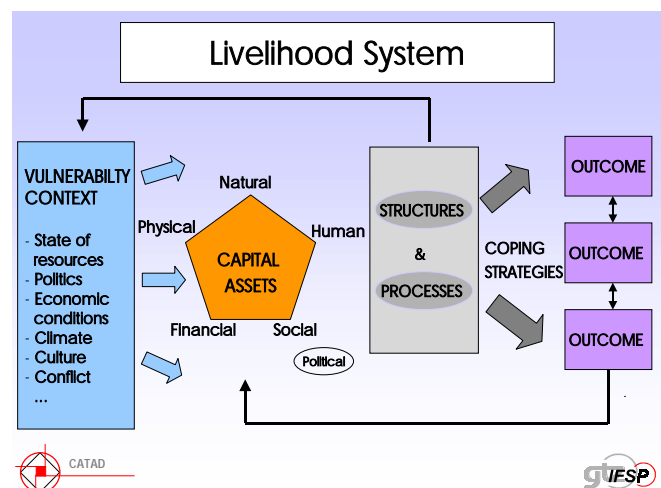
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The prevailing conflict and war in the Northeast Province (NEP) of Sri Lanka have resulted in an alarming degree of malnutrition and impoverishment. The most pervasive deprivation of people originates from the loss of lives, physical destruction and psychological trauma, internal displacement, the breakdown of community and institutional networks. The severely restricted local economy prevents individuals from approaching opportunities. The vulnerability of households that depend on fishing, small-scale labour, and of female-headed households in particular, is striking. How do people, especially vulnerable families, manage to survive in such a political, social and economic environment? Are livelihoods sufficient to sustain a living for people? It would be essential for the various actors and agencies in rehabilitation and development to gain a thorough understanding of how people cope with the prevailing conditions of a protracted war in order to derive appropriate interventions strategies.

The Livelihood System Approach (LSA) provides a framework of analysis to better understand the complexity of community life and behavioural pattern of people in a particular context. The LSA differentiates between three levels of analysis:

- (i) *Vulnerability Context*: what are the social, political, economic and natural trends and shocks and local cultural practices, which affect livelihoods? Villagers face these frame conditions without being able to change or influence them.
- (ii) *Capital Assets*: what are the resources a household can rely on. We distinguish six forms of capital: natural, social, human, physical, financial and political capital.
- (iii) *Structures and Processes*: structures (organisations, laws, policies) and how these are performing (processes = rules of the game, (dis-) incentives) define people's livelihood options.
- (iv) *Coping Strategies*: How do people combine their capital assets while making use of existing structures and processes in order to carry out livelihood activities under the prevailing vulnerability context?
- (v) *Outcomes*: livelihood activities derive certain positive and negative outcomes for the household and its capital assets.
- (vi) *Feedback loops*: what are the effects of these outcomes on the capital assets of both the household carrying out the livelihood activities and those of other households or communities?



The present village profile of Vaddam, Muthur DS Division follows the logic of the LSA and analyses behavioural pattern of villagers under the special vulnerability context of a Muslim fishing community close to uncleared area.

1.2 Methodology and Research Methods

A research team comprising German and Sri Lankan scientists from multi-disciplinary backgrounds carried out the action- and decision-oriented research project in Vaddam in the period of August to September 2001. The key research phase was in the week from 6 to 10 August. Existing knowledge gaps were further investigated in a second field phase in September. The team employed a wide range of qualitative research methods, namely in-depth interviews with individuals or families, focused group discussions and semi-structured interviews with key resource persons. In addition, selected rapid rural appraisal (RRA) tools were applied where appropriate. The teams used unstructured interview guidelines, which were adapted according to the flow of conversation, newly erupting information or other local conditions. Thus, the investigation was largely explorative in nature. Informants in the villages were randomly selected for interviews focusing on different social groups in the community (widows, farmers, monk, village leader, shopkeeper etc.).

The research team also co-operated closely with the field staff of IFSP, namely the respective community mobilisers of the area. For preparation, the team utilised existing secondary sources available at IFSP, viz. poverty profile (village data sheet), the PNA report and other planning documents, and interviewed key field staff of IFSP. The Sri Lankan team members largely conducted the interviews in the villages and interpreted for the German team members. After each field day, the different sub-groups met to discuss the progress of research and key issues of the day in order to derive the focus of investigation for the consecutive days. The team started with a general introduction of the purpose of the study to the villagers.

2 VULNERABILITY CONTEXT

2.1 Historical Background

Vaddam is located in Muthur DS Division and comes under Thagwanagar Gramasewaka (GS) Division. It is a Muslim fishing village, which was established 48 years ago from people coming from Akkraichchenai in search of settlement land. There had been seven fishing families along the coastal line before. The new families started to build their houses by clearing the jungle on the peninsula, which is surrounded by the sea of Muthur bay in the North and a branch of the sea in the East and the South (see sketch map). The name Vaddam itself is derived from this natural setting.

People of the area had to face natural disasters in the form of cyclones in 1966 and December 2000. Political disasters forced villagers to displace several times in the period from 1990 to 2001. Sometimes this displacement kept them away from home for three months and sometimes only for some days.

2.2 Impact of the Conflict

Nowadays, Vaddam borders the Muslim and more prosperous village of Thakwanagar to the West and uncleared area to the East. The latter has a clear impact on the livelihood strategies of the villagers. People often referred to fights between the LTTE and the Navy, which sometimes directly affected villagers, because they got trapped between the lines in their boats or along the beach, and then hit by firing of the Navy. The security restrictions on fishing limit the economic opportunities for fishermen considerable. The situation can be described as being squeezed between the two conflict parties: on the one hand, the LTTE, which claims taxes and exercises pressure on villagers, and on the other hand the navy, which limits the economic mobility of the fishermen. Handling this difficult situation is at the core of people's coping strategies in Vaddam.

2.3 State of Natural Resources

Other natural resources than those derived from the sea are scarce. There is no land available for either grazing animals or doing cultivation. Some villagers said that nowadays land even gets scarce for building new houses. The sandy soil allows coconut and drumstick trees to grow. In their yards people grow some Manioc trees and vegetables like eggplant, chilli and ladies' fingers.

3 STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

3.1 Infrastructural Facilities

The general state of infrastructure in Vaddam is comparatively good. Most houses are built with bricks and covered with corrugated iron. Electricity is available in the village, but not all houses are connected. About one quarter of the families have their own well and people do not complain about the quality of the water.

An important feature of the village is the closeness to the jetty going three times a day to Trincomalee. Even more influential is the closeness to Muthur town (approx. 2 km away) with the Divisional Secretary Office and other facilities as well as markets. Health facilities of Muthur town are easily accessible to Vaddam people. In addition there is a mobile health scheme run by the Department of Health, which provides vaccination for children. Nowadays, traditional midwives offer their services to women in Vaddam. The Fishermen's society started running a nursery school recently. Another primary school for the children from grade 1 to 5 is located in Thagwanagar, which is only 500 m away from Vaddam. The next school with education up to A-level is located in Akkaraichchenai around 1 km away from Vaddam.

There are several very small shops scattered all over the village and six big shops along the main road. The Vaddam shops sell daily items like coconuts, rice, soap, kerosene, oil, cigarettes and biscuits. One of the big shops sells fishing materials like hooks and strings and is owned by the RDS president. Close to these bigger shops is a spacious bus-stand.

3.2 External Support

The Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) is active since summer 2000 and has assisted 15 selected families in toilet construction under the health programme. In addition, IFSP has started community projects, e.g. earth movements for a community building and the construction of road drainage. Up to now, no poverty project has started yet. Apart from IFSP, no other agency or NGO is working in Vaddam. According to some elders, Asia Foundation used to work in Vaddam earlier. No other NGOs were mentioned.

3.3 Leadership

The elders play a major role in informal leadership in Vaddam. Whenever villagers have small problems they consult a neighbouring old man or an old man in their family. Otherwise they go to the mosque society, which helps them to solve their problems. In Islam, masuro is practised as a form of informal discussion within any group of people. These discussions are also used for decision-making. Whenever the people of Vaddam have free time they like to gather for masuro and discuss topics related to religion, politics, economics or other urgent matters.

3.4 Formal and Informal Institutions on Village Level

3.4.1 Mosque Society

The Muslim or Mosque Society is the first institution to resolve conflicts before they are taken to court. It deals with minor social problems within the village, e.g. marriage problems and problems deriving from debts that cannot be paid back. Eleven neutral members with some social status are preferably selected for three years in a row.

The assistance that individuals can expect from the Mosque Society in the case of hardship is limited as the society rather perceives its task in co-ordinating than attributing help. Nevertheless it was told that the Mosque Society gets 2,5% of people's yearly income, which can then be taken for charity for individual people who need help. Additionally little gifts coming from Middle Eastern countries are distributed by the Mosque Society during fasting time, especially for widows and very poor people.

Box 2: Religious leadership

The *maulavi* teaches Islam in mosques and schools. It is a respected occupation. To become a *maulavi* one has to study Islam in theory and practise in the way of prayers and singing prayers. It is not allowed for a *maulavi* to go for any other jobs than teaching Islam religion. Therefore only few Muslims become *maulavi*.

Close to the old mosque, a new and larger mosque is presently under construction with the help of the Colombo branch of the Mosque Society. IFSP has provided some help for earth movement to build this mosque. According to the Mosque Society's president, the society and the Rural Development Society (RDS) join for common works initiated from outside projects or NGOs. If there is profit from a common activity they either share it or give it for the Mosque "as the Mosque is for everybody anyway". The Mosque Society is, according to the president, the first to be addressed by the GS for development activities.

3.4.2 Fishermen's Society

The Fishermen's Society of Vaddam was formed only six months ago. Presently it is collecting membership fee and monthly contributions of Rs.200 and encourages people to save. The Fishermen's Society president said that the society has around 50 members. Even though some of them are paying less than Rs.200 or no money at all, they are still allowed as members as this activity is in the starting phase. The president noted that members of Vaddam and Thagwanagar Fishermen's Societies could join in the formation of a fishermen's bank, which could possibly do all money transactions and even take loans. However, the responsible ministry has to grant approval for the bank's foundation. Small fish vendors are also allowed to save the money at this society, but are not eligible to receive loans from it.

3.4.3 Rural Development Society

According to the president of the Rural Development Society (RDS), it performs specific tasks. These include for example taking sub contracts to build houses or constructing roads, building channels with the help of the villagers when the water is blocking the roads. The society also assists in cleaning the well of a villager, restructuring the roof of a *cajan* house with *cajans* and other help, which is needed.

3.4.4 *Vaadi*-system ¹

The process of selling fish through the *vaadi*-owner can also be described as an informal institution. Most fishermen sell their catch to the *vaadi*-owner (who is at the same time the Fishermen Society's president) in order to receive an immediate payment. If the catch of fish is less than 5kg, the person who has been selected as broker for fish sales from the tender board „Pradeshiya Saba“² will do the trading in front of both, the fishermen and the petty traders who are doing door step sales in Muthur area. This person will keep 3% of the sales from the fishermen for his trading activity.

When the catches exceed 5kg however, the fishermen take them to the *vaadi*-owner. Sometimes they are bound to sell their fish to him because he had given them loans and financial support (for buying boats and other equipment) that he does not claim back but rather considers as a social investment. He in turn sells the fish to a *vaadi*-person in Takwanagar who has the necessary capital for trading with Colombo traders. (The latter do not pay before they in turn sell the fish in Colombo). In addition, the *vaadi*-owner sells to local traders who come to Vaddam and sell the fish in Muthur area. Considering the price of fish, which cannot be sold at Colombo, the fishermen are paid a good price by the *vaadi*-owner. For the other fish varieties, which can neither be sold in Colombo nor in local markets, he will pay a lower price only. The *vaadi*-owner processes the catch into dried fish and sells it to Kurunegalle traders.

3.5 Religion and Social Change

People of Vaddam are very concerned about following Islamic rules. They do not accept interest derived from savings. Furthermore, money earnings of women are officially not accepted. However, women going to work abroad are accepted and it is even said that this fosters their religiosity.

¹ The term *vaadi* refers to a *cajan*-covered stall on the beachside, which offers shade for the selling of the freshly caught fish to the *vaadi*-owner. Sometimes the latter is also processing fish there, namely salting and drying it.

² Pradeshiya Saba ("regional society") is a local body, which shall be elected by the people of the area on divisional secretariat level. This board looks after the collection of taxes in the area and at the same time does some development work like constructing roads in the area. Because of the prevailing situation this board is not active at the moment. Decisions are taken by the respective D.S. of the area. Tender is a procedure, which is common in Sri Lanka. A suitable person is selected for the activity – be it a business, the collection of taxes for relevant authorities or the construction of houses.

According to the G.S, an increase in religious faith could be observed during the last years due to the conflict. Muslims would reason that the difficult situation could only be a result of lack of good religious conduct. As indicators for people's attitudinal change towards Islam the G.S. gave the number of newly built mosques on the one hand and the fuller old mosques on the other hand.

An old man stated that the brotherhood among neighbours had declined since the first arrival in the 50ies, with the form of settlement becoming denser. As another reason for weaker social bonds, he mentioned the steady increase of differences in wealth.

3.6 Credit and Savings

For financial handling, Vaddam people do not consider a bank. They use the *seetu* system that is a form of saving in a group manner (see box). Post office savings are sometimes preferred by the Muslim fishermen because their Islamic idea of not taking interest is more closely linked to the banking system rather than the post office. Here the official procedures are also less complicated for them. Saving in the form of jewellery is also very popular.

Box 3: The seetu-system

Every member (up to around ten people) pays a monthly contribution in cash or kind and therefore gets eligible for a bigger amount of money when it comes to his or her turn. Getting the monthly collection is done in an order arranged beforehand. Sometimes the members who are willing to wait longer for their turn get some percentages more than those who profit first. There is always one person who is mainly responsible for the monthly collection of the payments. He or she will also profit from this duty by getting slightly more.

3.7 Youth and Marriage

The marriage age in Vaddam seems to have decreased compared to former times. For the past, 25-26 years was given for men and 20-22 years for women, whereas the marriage age today ranges between 15-17 years for women and 20-22 for men. In the eyes of an old man, the outer influences of media, television and newspapers as well as the tendency to go abroad give kids more freedom of an 'unhealthy' kind. This change in society was made responsible for the early marriages that occur nowadays. Nevertheless he also stated that in former times boys and girls used to enjoy more freedom to meet each other before marriage compared to present times. In this regard, Islam was said to have influenced the relationship between the sexes.

Concerning Islamic marriage rules, the husband has to give *mahar* to the wife. It can consist of jewellery but is often replaced by some small amount of money. As dowry given from the wife's side a wooden vessel or boat is expected. So, normally when a father has his own boat he has to use it as dowry for his daughter's husband, which means that he will become a daily fishing wage-labourer and thus has to be willing to degrade his social status.

3.8 Security Restrictions

The Sri Lankan Navy imposes security restrictions on fishing: Small boats are only allowed to go for fishing within the first 3 km along the seashore. At the same time big boats are not allowed to do net fishing in this area. They have to go to the open sea east of the Foul Lighthouse. Beyond the 3 km line, no fishing is allowed to big boats. The time allocation for fishing in bigger boats is from 5pm to 7am of the next day. Fishermen are not allowed to come back to the shore before 7am. This restriction is maintained by the Navy and can be increased if the security situation is getting worse. A table of time and area restriction is given below:

Type	Cost	Allowed Area	Allowed Time
1. "Thonnie" - made out of wood - non mechanised - 2 persons can go	Rs.3000	Within 2km from seashore	No time restrictions
2. Wooden vessel - 4 persons can go	Rs15,000	Within 2km from seashore	No time restrictions
3. Plastic boat - 4 persons can go - mechanised	Rs.20,000 to Rs.50,000	Away from the Foul point	5pm to 7am; fishermen are not allowed to come back before 7am

In addition, villagers face financial claims of armed actors in the form of either bribery or taxation. In general, villagers fulfil these claims in order to continue their economic activities.

4 COPING STRATEGIES

This chapter will start with a short description of how different income generating activities are carried out with the help of different capital assets, as well as structures and processes at village level, and how they are influenced by frame conditions. We will then point out underlying coping strategies.

4.1 Fishing

Fishing is the main source of income in Vaddam. The natural resources are favourable, although the weather conditions change with the seasons and influence the fishing routine of the fishermen and therefore their catches (cf. Annex 2).

The main physical precondition for fishing is the boat. Three types of boats are used. There are small wooden ones called *thonie*, which can take one to two persons at a time. They are made from the wood of mango-trees, which is sometimes cut in the jungle in cleared or uncleared area. In this case a license is needed. In other cases, the wood is bought from mango-tree owners. The other two types of boats can take four people at a time. They are either made of wood or of plastic.

Different boats and equipment have to be used according to the season. When going with the *thonie*, fishermen normally use net and hook for fishing. Net fishing can be done with small, mechanised boats outside of the bay although it is rarely done in Vaddam.

Fishing skills are very refined. This is the reason why boat owners only lend their boats to trustworthy people or family members with the required knowledge and skills. In the big boats it is normally father and sons, brothers or cousins who go fishing together. Young boys start joining at the age of 12 to 16 years. Although the fishermen, who are fishing together are mostly related, they still belong to different households and therefore have to share the income for their catch. The procedure is that one fifth goes to the boat owner, while the rest is equally shared between those who joined the trip. Most of the time, the boat owner is one of them, if not he will still get 20% of the catch. If he joins he will get 40% (it is formulated that 20% always goes to the boat) and the other three 20% each.

Considering the fishing activities of Vaddam, different coping strategies could be observed. The actual individual income from fishing was intentionally not given to us. In the PRA done with a group of fishermen, they rather preferred to estimate the total income of the village. This hiding of economic facts is probably motivated by the wish to downplay the own economic status in order to further qualify for project benefits and for Samurdhi assistance.

Box ? : Income and Expenditure

It seems that the fishermen get Rs.3000 per month as an average income, which ranges from Rs.1200 to Rs.6000. The control of money within the household lies in the hand of men. But as they often go fishing during night-time and therefore sleep during the day, women are in charge of managing the household's expenses.

It might also be that the unwillingness to openly talk about the actual income is linked to the wish to minimise taxation from official and unofficial power holders.

The closeness to uncleared area clearly influences the fishing activities, not only because of the fishing restrictions mentioned above but also because of instances where fishing equipment, mainly in the form of boats, was taken. In order to avoid such losses, Vaddam people seem to accept economic disadvantages caused by their choices of investment:

As the natural capital is favourable for fishing, the way of fishing or the apparatus used for fishing would have to be improved in order to have a better catch and to feed an increasing population. But according to villagers, LTTE levies taxes, which rise with the size of the boat and are higher for those people who earn more. According to their good condition we could at the same time observe that people have invested in their houses. This investment in shelter rather than in goods that can be taken away (boats, chicken etc.) can be interpreted as a reaction to the frame condition of regular taxation.³ As houses are unproductive capital compared to bigger boats, it can be concluded that Vaddam people downscale their economy while at the same time minimizing economic loss and therefore economic risk.

As Vaddam people are located close to a security camp and LTTE controlled area, supporting either LTTE or the security personals for economic advantages could open further opportunities. The villagers, however, clearly avoid such alliances with one of the conflicting sides. Thus they do not take such calculated risk. Squeezed between the lines of the armed actors, Vaddam people keep a low economic and political profile to survive without endangering themselves in daily life.

Box 4: Individual investment in social capital

The personal strategy of the *vaadi* owner is to give out loans without claiming money back. It can be considered as a form of economic and social risk minimisation through investment in social capital. By helping people he increases his social acceptance while at the same time obliging the villagers to stick to him for their sales.

The Muslim neighbours from Thagwanagar are important for Vaddam villagers because they buy some amount of fish from them and supply firewood as well as other important items like rice and vegetable. Villagers from Vaddam complained that some fishermen from Thagwanagar people were illegally fishing with disco-nets and dynamiting. Tamils from neighbouring uncleared area in turn were fishing with stable nets, which are also unfavourable for the ecological regeneration of fish. Even though Vaddam people know that what the neighbouring villagers are doing is illegal, they do not take any action to raise this issue officially in order to go against them. They rather continue to practise their traditional way of fishing and therefore keep low profile in the prevailing conflict situation, again avoiding

³ Nevertheless it must also not be forgotten that Vaddam villagers do not have access to loans from a bank (which they might not use anyway in order to observe their religious rule that taking interest is not allowed). They thus might simply lack the financial assets for additional investment in improved equipment.

taking part of either side.

The deliberate non-alliance with either of the two conflict parties and consequently, the low economic and political profile villagers from Vaddam keep, means environmental and economical disadvantages.

4.2 Managing Household Economics

As fishing is often done during the night, most of the fishermen come back to their houses and rest during the morning hours. So managing the family, cooking, marketing and other responsibilities are done by the women of the family. When the catch is low or the season is not suitable for catching fish, she manages to prepare the meals by cooking green leaves or manioc as curry, which is available for free or cheap prize. Some women keep a small garden with manioc and *murunga* even if the available space is small. They thus bridge bad fishing times. Some of the women have the habit to keep dry fish for the rainy season. Here, a flexible way of organizing the family and adaptation to the respective availability of food can be discerned as a form of coping.

Box 5: Food habits

As fishermen, Vaddam people mainly eat fish and rice. In rainy season when the catch of fish is low they use vegetables or dry fish for their daily meals. Otherwise the quantity of vegetable is small compared to fish. Women explained that they would appreciate a diet containing more fruits and vegetables.

Due to Islam halal is practised as the prescribed way of killing animals. Some animals like pigs and crabs are prohibited for meals. The sequence of eating seems to be the typical one of the area, the father gets served first followed by the children and finally the wife takes her portion. Nevertheless this topic is difficult to tackle in interviews. Participant observation – which was not possible due to the limitations of time for the study - would be the more appropriate method to find out how people are handling food distribution in their daily life.

A certain willingness to degrade social status for income reasons can be found in the cases of boat owners who give their own boat as dowry to a daughter. Then they join the son-in-law or other boats as daily fishing wage-labourers. The same occurs when they need some money urgently and thus sell their boats and become wage-labourers.

4.3 Shop-owners

The following information is based on a mixture of interviews with different shop-owners. As most of the Vaddam people are fishermen, they financially depend on the catch of fish. Whenever they have a good catch and therefore can earn money, they go to Muthur town for big purchases. Otherwise they come to the shops in

Vaddam to buy daily needed items starting from 1kg of rice, a piece of coconut, coconut oil for Rs.5, salt for Rs.2 and other items.

The shops are run with the intake and refilled with goods on a daily basis. A small hut or room of 10' x 10' is the average size of the shop. Most of the shops are selling goods for immediate payment only. However, they are allowing a small amount of sales for loan. The shop owners said that they cannot run their business without giving loans although it is risky for them. It seems that they manage by limiting the loans on the one hand and maintaining the customers on the other hand.

Box 6: A special career

In one case, the shop owner was not a fisherman. He started his business out of 8 years of unemployment (only selling clothes before). His wife is looking after the shop most of the time. Going to Muthur market and buying things for the shop is covered by him.

This loan management without breaking the social network is an important coping strategy practised by the shopkeepers of Vaddam.

4.4 Overseas Employment

Another main source of income seems to be women's work as housemaids in Middle Eastern countries. Staying away for several years is usual. Especially Muslim women from Sri Lanka have the advantage that they do not depend on any form of capital apart from good health before leaving, because travel and passport arrangements are taken over by specialised agencies paid by the families who are looking for a housemaid. Nevertheless it was told that the lack of education, especially writing skills, quite often poses the problem of keeping contact to these women while they are away. This worries their relatives at home, especially because they know from experience of villagers that some women are maltreated. If the woman has children, she needs to count on other relatives (social capital) to look after them in her absence.

If the women are lucky, they work for a fair family, and the outcome of this coping strategy is a monthly income between Rs.5000 and Rs.9500. They send the money home through their boss's bank account. Living expenses are covered by the host-family. It seems that the money sent back to Vaddam relatives plays a major role in the economy of the village, especially for the construction of houses (construction costs approx. Rs. 500,000). This could explain the comparatively high standard of housing in Vaddam. When openly asking for the rough number of women working abroad, only four cases were mentioned. We assume that the number is considerably higher and that people therefore try to hide this economic source of income in order to qualify for assistance of NGOs and in order to prevent losing access to support from the government.

4.5 Other Activities of Women and Children

Women engage in several income generating activities within the village. They sell goods in shops, and sometimes even run the shops themselves. For these activities, they do not have to leave their homesteads. However, the traditional Muslim thought opposes the idea that women engage in money earning. It seems that in practice, villagers are willing to relax the strict enforcement of such religious rules. Some men even support their wives' activities. Apart from string hopper preparation, curd making and chicken rearing were also mentioned as typical activities of women. Curd making, however, was given up, because the milk seller stopped delivering milk due to the closure of the milk board. With chicken on the other hand women have made the experience that they easily die or are stolen. These examples nevertheless reveal that Muslim women also come up with their own ways of earning money as a coping strategy to support their living.

It seemed that especially children of widows are actively involved in the income-generating activities of their mothers. In this case they take over the selling part, either in shops or going from house to house in the morning in order to sell string hoppers. This form of utilizing the full labour capacity of the female-headed family is another coping strategy. Sometimes children collect mussels along the shores of the bay branch south of Vaddam.

Widows in Vaddam can also make use of the social network within the fishing community. This can be derived from the explanation of a widow that she regularly gets some small amounts of fish from the former fishing friends of her deceased husband as well as loans from her husband's family. It seems that both the common occupation and the Muslim religion enhance the feeling of social bonds within the community and therefore foster people's reliance on social networks as a coping strategy that can be applied in all kinds of different situations.

4.6 Accessing External Support

Between 1985 and 1999 villagers from Vaddam have temporarily gone to other villages. These displacements were rather short-term displacements ranging from one to several months. People went to stay with relatives at neighbouring villages and towns such as Kinniya, Kantale and Trincomalee. When they found that the security situation was back to normal, they returned.

The rations given to displaced people as well as money for resettlement also played a role for this temporary migration to other villages which in some cases was not linked to the security situation any more. This shows that the people of Vaddam not only consider temporary displacement as a means of managing personal risk but also as a coping strategy to make their living.

5 FEEDBACK LOOPS - IMPACTS ON LIVELIHOODS

The coping strategies pursued by Vaddam people as well as their outcomes do not stay without further influence on the livelihoods of the villagers. Three major feedback loops can be discerned:

The fact that women go to work abroad as housemaids increases the financial capital of the household as well as its physical assets in those cases where the money is spent on the construction of houses. Nevertheless, the social asset also does not stay unaffected. It will have to be observed in the future how the tendency of migrating for economic purposes will affect both family relations and the upbringing of children who often stay without their mothers for several years. During that time other relatives take care of them. On the other hand, it seems that the trend to go to work in Middle Eastern countries strengthens the role of these women in their society. They contribute considerably to the family's income, gain a certain independence from their family and are respected for their enhanced religiosity. This could possibly have some positive feedback on other women's strive for income generating activities within the village.

Secondly, the avoidance of investing heavily in productive equipment reduces the possible income derived from fishing and keeps the physical production asset on a low level. This coping strategy takes account of the increased risk of loss due to the security situation and the presence of the LTTE. Fishermen therefore accept a lower economic profile in order to protect themselves from large losses of investment, when armed actors confiscate fibre boats. It was not possible to assess the overall economic impact of this coping strategy due to the limited research period.

Finally, one feedback loop derives from the tendency to keep low economic profile for better protection in the given security situation. By this, Vaddam people on the one hand attract outside state and NGO support because they appear more needy. Thus, an influence on the level of structures and processes is observed. On the other hand this economic behaviour confines people to fishing as the single most earning source and impedes diversification of income.

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ANNEX 1: Research Methods

Methods	Participants
Group discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General introduction: 12 men & 6 women participated ▪ 4 women ▪ A boat owner and neighbours ▪ Around 5 elders ▪ PRA with around 8 fishermen
Individual discussions/interviews with key informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ G.S and Samurdhy Officer ▪ Mosque Leader ▪ Fishermen's Society President/<i>vaadi</i> -owner ▪ RDS President ▪ Fisheries Inspector ▪ Colonisation Officer
Individual interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women who went to abroad (informal interview) ▪ Widow ▪ 2 shop owners ▪ Fisherman (informal interview)

ANNEX 2: PRA with Fishermen

Months	Type of Boat	Applied Technology	No of person involved	Type of Fish	Overall weight/ month or season	Price per kg	Total Income/ month or season
January	Wood	Hook	2	Parai	1500 kg	100/=	150000/=
				Vangadai	250 kg	80/=	20000/=
				Willai	500 kg	80/=	40000/=
				Soorai	500 kg	90/=	45000/=
				Mixed	3000 kg	50/=	150000/=
							405000/=
	Wood	Net	2	Kumbila	3000 kg	80/=	240000/=
				Seela	2000 kg	75/=	150000/=
				Koduwai	400 kg	90/=	36000/=
				Thirukai	1000 kg	30/=	30000/=
				Mixed	4000 kg	40/=	160000/=
							616000/=
February	Wood	Hook	2	Parai	2500 kg	90/=	225000/=
				Kendai	300 kg	40/=	12000/=
				Karal	1000 kg	70/=	70000/=
				thulwandu	500 kg	80/=	40000/=
				Mixed	3000 kg	40/=	120000/=
							467000/=
	Wood	Net	2	Neththali	5000 kg	70/=	350000/=
				Keeri	500 kg	50/=	25000/=
				Sudai	1000 kg	50/=	50000/=
				Ayalai	1300 kg	80/=	104000/=
				Mulluvaalai	1500 kg	60/=	90000/=
				Mixed	2500 kg	30/=	75000/=
							694000/=
March	Mechanised	Hook	3	Parai	4000 kg	90/=	360000/=
				Seela	3000 kg	80/=	240000/=
				Awuween	2000 kg	70/=	140000/=
				Arukkula	2000 kg	140/=	280000/=
				Mixed	5000 kg	70/=	350000/=
							1370000/=
	Mechanised	Net	3	Parai	5000 kg	90/=	450000/=
				Surai	5000 kg	80/=	400000/=
				Arukkula	2000 kg	130/=	260000/=
				Willai	2000 kg	60/=	120000/=
				Semeen	500 kg	70/=	35000/=
				Mixed	2000 kg	50/=	100000/=
							1365000
	Wood	Hook	2	Katta	1500 kg	60/=	90000/=
				Vangadai	500 kg	70/=	35000/=

