The southwest monsoon of 2013: It's disastrous Impact on the balapitiya fishing population of Coastal southwest sri lanka and the urgent need For information communication technology (ICT) Application

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ABSTRACT

Monsoon was traditionally defined as a seasonal reversing wind accompanied by corresponding changes in the precipitation but is now understood as the seasonal change in atmospheric circulation and precipitation associated with the asymmetric heating of land and sea. Sri Lanka is affected annually both by the southwest and northeast monsoons and shows marked variations from intensified disastrous situations to failure. The 2013 southwest monsoon brought disaster to the fishing population of the southwest quadrant especially Balapitiya Divisional Secretariat Division (DSD). Its impact peaked on June 8th with the sudden intensification of the system resulting in high wind and precipitation that led to human death and property loss. The highest number of deaths, missing and injured were reported from Balapitiya DSD. The main objective of the present investigation was to study the damaging effect of the southwest monsoon of 8th June 2013 on the fishing population of the most affected Grama Niladhari (GN) divisions of the Balapitiya DSD. Other objectives were to find out whether an early warning had been issued, the observations of the fishing community on the intensified monsoon situation, safety measures adopted by the community during the disaster, their traditional knowledge on identifying a severe weather situation and the nature of damages to vegetation. The study area covered Ahungalla, Weliwathugoda, Wellabada, Werathuduwa, Brahmanawaththa south and Brahmanawaththa north Grama Niladhari (GN) Divisions. The primary method used was a questionnaire survey on the affected fishing population. Random sampling technique based on the list of affected families provided by the GN of the affected divisions was used to select the sample. Forty questionnaires were administered to each GN division except

Brahmanawatte north (39) totaling to 279 affected families in the study area. Other supplementary methods used were interviews, personal and group discussions and case studies. The study was under taken in July 2013. Simple statistical methods such as percentages were used to analyze the data. Result show that there were 24 deaths (out of 27 in Sri Lanka) in the study area. 35.06% said the most serious damage were to their fishing materials, 29.22% said they were unable to go fishing as a result of bad weather. 84.94% said that no early warnings were issued before the disaster and 56.90% have seen uprooted trees in the study area. As protection methods 56.48% had stayed inside the house. Use of ICT as an early warning measure could have saved many human lives if applied during this disaster situation.

Key words: ICT, Southwest monsoon, Coastal fishing population,
Balapitiya, Damages