

Digitising Photographs — the BOBP-IGO Experience

Since its inception, the BOBP has recognised the vibrant and compelling role of photography in not merely documenting but promoting and catalyzing development. Photo exhibitions in Chennai and Colombo (1980 and 1981) were the first major photo activities of the BOBP. Just about all of the BOBP's professional staff were prolific camera-persons - though very often, enthusiasm for photography far surpassed talent!

Over the years, BOBP and later its successor the BOBP-IGO, built up a formidable collection of several thousand photographs - both slides and color negatives. These vividly capture both small-scale fisherfolk communities and the work of the BOBP in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The collection was painstakingly catalogued and indexed with the help of a staff documentalist. More than a dozen slide shows were organised. These were prime attractions at the Advisory Committee meetings of the BOBP and the Governing Council Meetings of the BOBP-IGO.

But prints and negatives deteriorate with time. The BOBP-IGO decided to digitize the photo collection to preserve it. About 1 500 negative folders containing some 22 200 photographs have so far been scanned and stored in electronic format. An equal number of photographs still remain to be digitized. Our photo wealth - earlier visible through slides and prints and negatives taking up several shelves in the library - is now invisible, compressed into DVDs. Once completed, the BOBP-IGO's digital photo library could perhaps be one of the richest photographic resources on small-scale fisheries in the world.

Technologies come and go, but photography continues to drive impact in BOBP-IGO's information and documentation effort.



Bay of Bengal News is a quarterly publication of the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO). The BOBP-IGO is a regional fisheries body, which presently covers four countries around the Bay of Bengal – Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The BOBP-IGO plays a catalytic and consultative role in developing coastal fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal to help improve the conditions of small-scale fisherfolk in the member-countries.

