

# Indigenous knowledge in marine fisheries:

## “An exciting initiative from the BOBP-IGO”



*The BOBP-IGO has initiated studies on Indigenous Knowledge in Marine Fisheries in the member-countries. Here is some basic information about this initiative.*

**Q: Why should we be interested in indigenous knowledge?**

**A:** Everyone agrees that in the world of development, despite the formidable expertise available today, and the technological wizardry of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have much to learn from the indigenous knowledge that traditional communities have harboured for centuries.

In the Bay of Bengal region, marine fisherfolk hold a rich legacy of indigenous knowledge and traditional wisdom. Many traditional practices are based on sound common sense. They are eco-friendly as well. The FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries also recognises this fact.

**Q: So what does the BOBP-IGO intend to do about indigenous knowledge?**

**A:** Quite simply – to research, to learn, to debate, to document, to network. We'll give the process of building a database on traditional knowledge in marine fisheries, the

initiative and the momentum it needs. It will be a partnership effort – with NGOs, UN agencies, other development organisations, and of course the fishers of Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka who are member-countries of the IGO.

**Q: What process would be used to document indigenous knowledge?**

**A:** The preparatory efforts will include a two-day “scoping workshop”, the preparation of case-studies and finally a “writeshop” to document the case studies with illustrations.

**Q: Can you explain these two terms – the scoping workshop and the writeshop?**

**A:** In the “scoping workshop” some 15 specialists in indigenous knowledge will discuss the scope of the study – the theme, topics and formats for 50 case-studies. They will also identify the researchers who are to prepare the case-studies. They will agree on a ‘prior informed consent’ framework for the study, a mechanism of consent by the

owners of the traditional knowledge, to the dissemination of this knowledge. In the “writeshop” the case-studies will be presented and critiqued. In co-operation with the authors, the editorial team will draft, polish and finalise the case-studies in an easy-to-read quick-to-absorb style. Artists will do illustrations. Discussion summaries and findings will also be prepared and the document will be ready at the end of the “writeshop”.

**Q: What exactly will you do after the writeshop, what will come out of your effort, and when?**

**A:** The output will include a publication and a CD-ROM on “Indigenous knowledge in marine fisheries: best practices for fisheries resources management and conservation”, which will be distributed widely within and outside the region. The study will help establish a strong network of IK-in-Fisheries practitioners and researchers. *Bay of Bengal News* will serve as a networking forum, with regular updates, articles and ideas on IK in fisheries. Feedback either direct or through the BOBP-IGO website [www.bobpigo.org](http://www.bobpigo.org) will improve the knowledge base.

*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.

