

A Quarter Century of Bay of Bengal News

by S R Madhu

Human beings desire longevity, so do journals! For any development journal, 25 years is a rare landmark. *Bay of Bengal News* (BBN) has just crossed it, and this issue — the 80th issue of BBN — celebrates the occasion. However, it is not an exercise in either narcissism or nostalgia. It is a factual and anecdotal review aimed at people concerned with development and communication. It is also significant for the BOBP's archives. The review is necessarily both selective and subjective.

How does the present BBN (June 2006) differ from that of the first issue (January 1981)? Black-and-white photographs have given way to colour, litho-offset paper to art paper. The manual design of yesteryear has given way to computerized design, with the power of Photoshop, Illustrator and Corel Draw reinforcing artistic creativity.

Why was BBN popular from the start? Because it applied to fisheries development the techniques of modern magazine journalism — imaginative design, professional action photographs, catchy headings, concise factual and anecdotal writing free of jargon, first-rate printing.

When BBN was born in January 1981, the few fisheries magazines in the region were mundane activity catalogues with little descriptive or analytical text. The mug shots or workshop snaps they printed generated little visual excitement. BBN therefore stood out with its creative design, flamboyant visuals and racy text.

What about the content of BBN? It has over a quarter century reflected

the Programme's changing thrust and orientation. The first phase of the BOBP (1979-1986) focused on technology, the second phase (1987-1994) on communities and extension of technologies, the third phase (1994-2000, extended till March 2003) on management, the present Inter-Governmental Organisation (from April 2003) on sustainable development and management of coastal fisheries.

Dr Y S Yadava, director of the BOBP-IGO, recalls that BBN served as a medium of continuity between BOBP and the IGO. When the process of transforming the BOBP began, "I was advised to keep publishing the BBN."

Bay of Bengal News is only one of the information tools used by BOBP over the years. The others: technical reports, calendars, extension manuals, brochures, audio-visuals, video films, posters, exhibitions, CD-ROMs, comic books, CDs, the library. But BBN has been the oldest tool, it has had the widest reach, and the best impact.

BOBP's first director Lars Engvall, who published the first 52 issues of BBN, said that fisheries officials absorbed BOBP's technical work quicker from the short, simple articles of *Bay of Bengal News* than from detailed technical reports. To the surprise of many, BBN often published frank critiques of its own work, and highlighted problems and failures. Reason: failures are more useful as lessons and guidelines for future development than successes.

This article provides a few highlights of BBN coverage as well as of BOBP work during the past quarter century. BBN and BOBP are inter-twined!

The New York Times on BOBP

Early in its life (on January 22, 1981), BOBP made a little splash in the world's greatest newspaper, *The New York Times*. (See the second issue of BBN, May 1981). *New York Times* correspondent K Kasturi Rangan was charmed by kattumarams and our beachcraft development work. His story headed "Innovative fishermen in India trying motorboats" inspired many phone calls and letters to the UN headquarters in New York.



Bewildered UN staff who hadn't heard of this project in faraway Madras, turned to the FAO headquarters in Rome for enlightenment.

Photo exhibitions

One of the first major events in BOBP was a photo exhibition on small-scale fisheries held in 1981. The four-day event was inaugurated on October 16, World Food Day. It was also held in Colombo later – on December 5-7, 1981. About a hundred photographs of small-scale fishing communities and of BOBP work were on view in specially designed stands. The BBN of December 1981 published a sampling of the exhibition pictures in a four-page feature. Stunning!

Why the photo exhibition? To put small-scale fisheries in the limelight, to stimulate interest in our own work, to obtain attractive photographs for BBN, and build a photo collection. The exhibition was inaugurated in Chennai by Tamil Nadu's then Finance Minister V R Nedunchezian, and in Colombo by Fisheries Minister Festus Perera.

Photographs for the exhibition were shot by Harry Miller, photo editor of the *Indian Express*, Chennai, who travelled to fishing villages of India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, Miller spent some time shooting a mechanic at work atop a boat at the Danida boatyard. Staff of DANIDA in Copenhagen were entranced by this picture (it appeared in the May 1981 BBN) and sent copies of it far and wide. Another poignant picture was of two Cox's Bazar fishermen, heads bent, hands busy, mending nets in the soft glow of twilight. A third photo winner: A smiling boy held aloft a fish like a trophy for Miller, and he eagerly clicked. What resulted was the signature photograph of the exhibition, reproduced by several newspapers and magazines, also in the BBN of May 1981.

In Kakinada, Miller crouched at the beach with his wide-angle lens as two slender women carrying a fish basket walked from the beach to the



shore. Just before he clicked, a young man ran in between, and Miller exploded in wrath – as any photographer would. But the two women offered to recreate their walk for Miller's benefit despite being late for an auction. Result: a beautiful shot. It generated as much attention at the exhibition as it did in BBN's fourth issue (December 1981).

We built on the photo exhibition collection fairly systematically in later years. Our library gradually came to house thousands of slides, plus prints in color and b-w. These were catalogued and indexed. They are now being digitized.

A decade later, in July-August 1991 – the BOBP held an exhibition of photographs and drawings titled "Fisherfolk of the Bay" in Chennai in co-operation with the Alliance Francaise. A *therukoothu* (street play) performance by a Pulicat troupe was a highlight of the inaugural day. The exhibition, featured in the September 1991 BBN, again generated very good press coverage.

To get back to chronology. The June 1981 issue of BBN sparked an ebullient letter from Mr Kenneth Lucas, then FAO's Assistant Director-General of Fisheries. He asked for details of the staffing

pattern, the methodology and the costs of BBN. He sent FAO fisheries projects worldwide a circular citing BBN, asking them to consider publishing newsletters to disseminate their work. Today, several FAO projects put out their own newsletters. *Bay of Bengal News* was definitely a trend-setter.

Fishing technology

During its initial years, BOBP carried out painstaking studies on making the traditional kattumaram more profitable. The studies dealt with chemical impregnation to strengthen kattumaram logs, and sourcing the Andaman Islands for more durable wooden logs. But the conclusion, in the words of director Lars Engvall, was that the kattumaram was a "near-perfect craft", thanks to centuries of evolution, and could not be improved in practically useful ways.

A Daniel of the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department wrote a first-rate article on kattumarams (September 1981). Kattumaram fishermen were profiled in a few articles.

Fishing craft and gear technology fairly dominated the first few years of both BOBP and BBN. Extensive work was done on beachcraft. The work entailed research, design, development, building and testing of 14 prototypes; plus experiments on improving engines, sails, hulls and beach-hauling devices. Naval architect Oyvind Gulbrandsen of Norway spearheaded our beachcraft effort as consultant.

The pages of BBN reflected all this ferment. Some significant articles on beachcraft: "Better beachboats for India's east coast" (January 1981), "Beach-hauling devices" by Arild Overa (March 1983), "Beachcraft development: looking ahead" by Oyvind Gulbrandsen (March 1986); "BOBP beachcraft: how is the fishing performance?" by R Ravikumar (September 1987).

BBN published many creative and innovative sketches and diagrams on beachcraft. These contained either visual overviews or technical data

with a clarity and detail that no photograph could provide, and delighted Lars Engvall and the fishing technology staff. They were prepared by E Amalore, a qualified engineering draughtsman. Example: A sequence motion diagram for surf-crossing.

BOBP's fishing craft initiatives in Sri Lanka were described in many articles. Publisher Engvall said in his one-page "Letter from the Publisher" (December 1987), "An idea whose time has come" that multi-day trips for offshore fishing, advocated for a long time by many agencies including the BOBP, had suddenly arrived.

BOBP's extensive work on fishing gear was regularly reported in the BBN. Improvements were tried out with driftnets, trawls and set bagnets in Bangladesh; with fish aggregating devices in Sri Lanka. A major activity in India was the introduction of high-opening bottom trawls (HBT) in Tuticorin and Rameswaram. The rationale was that shrimp trawlers were usually busy only for four months a year. During the remaining months, shrimp trawlers could use HBT to catch fish (BBN, January & September 1981, March 1983).

The HBT turned out to be very successful – in fact so successful that they posed a threat to fishery resources.

In 1984, I accompanied a PTI (Press Trust of India) reporter and photographer Harry Miller to Rameswaram and Tuticorin for a demonstration of HBTs. The PTI reporter was swept off his feet by the success of HBTs. His sensational report about the HBT catches was flashed by newspapers from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, with front-page headlines about tons of fish being thrown into the sea. Owners of insulated vans from Bombay and Delhi air-dashed to Rameswaram and Tuticorin. BOBP became the best-known four-letter word in fisheries!

On a personal note: My toughest "hardship experience" in the BOBP

The first editor of *Bay of Bengal News*

Mr S R Madhu is the founding editor of *Bay of Bengal News*. He edited the first 42 issues of BBN, from January 1981 to June 1991. He has also been associated as consultant with the last 24 issues of BBN.

Mr Madhu joined the Bay of Bengal Programme as Information Officer in September 1979 after 15 years as writer and editor with the mass media in Bombay and New Delhi. In 1991, he was transferred to an FAO programme in Africa as Information Officer. He has been a consultant since return to India four years later.

Mr Madhu believes that development projects should communicate regularly with several types of audiences – rural populations, scientists, policy-makers, donors, the media. A regular pictorial newsletter is an excellent tool for such communication; it enables and strengthens project visibility and impact. He lauds the enlightened support extended to the newsletter by the three directors of BOBP – Mr Lars Engvall, Dr Kee-chai Chong and Dr Y S Yadava.



was a four-day assignment in Sonadia island in Bangladesh in 1984. We stayed in a BOBP hut – huts are the only form of housing in this all-fisherman island inhabited just five months a year. No tap water, no electricity, no toilets; you relieve yourself in the open. ("It's a great experience to work in Sonadia – you will never again take basic facilities for granted," said fishing technologist G Pajot.)

My assignment at Sonadia was to research and report for BBN on BOBP's experimental work on alternatives to the standard Behundi net. Some of the 3 000 Behundi fishermen in Sonadia were at BOBP's request trying out these alternatives – which, it was hoped, would either lower their costs or raise their incomes or both. (As it turned out, the results were not clear-cut and BOBP did not recommend the alternatives.)

My human interest profile of Sonadia island (March 1984 BBN) aroused much interest outside Bangladesh; my article on the sensitive subject of the behundi fishery and our experimental work was scanned by many eyes and went

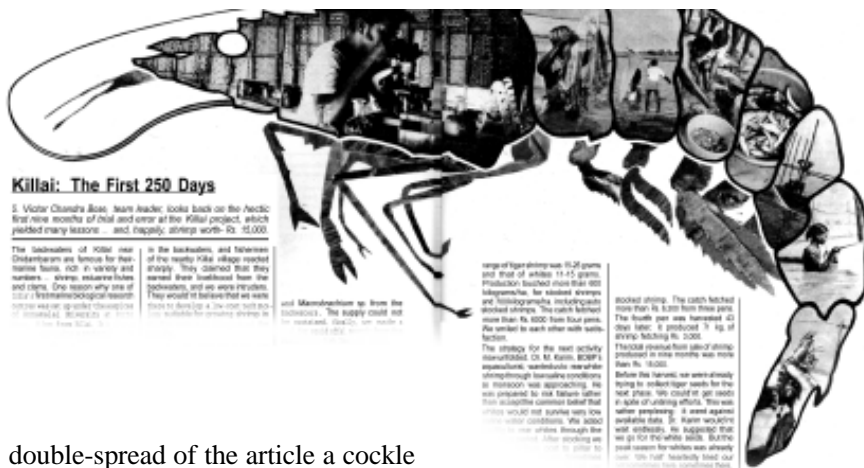
through a few drafts before publication in BBN.

Aquaculture

Photographers are fond of marine fish capture (the interaction of man, fish, water and sky is full of visual interest), but artists adore aquaculture. That's what one would infer from *Bay of Bengal News!* Some of BBN's most arresting layouts have been inspired by our aquaculture work.

The pen culture project in Killai, near Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, led to a superbly designed BBN (July 1983). Particularly ingenious was the illustration for the article "Killai: the first 250 days". What we had were several workmanlike pictures. Artist Amalore drew a giant-sized shrimp, arranged eight pictures within it, and got it reduced by photo-copier. Result: hypnotic! Inventive verve couldn't be bettered.

For an article on cockle culture in Malaysia (June 1985 BBN), no attractive photographs were available. But creativity provided a solution. Artists Amalore and S Jayaraj made a few hundred photo copies of a single cockle and gave a



Killai: The First 250 Days

S. Victor Chandra Bose, team leader, looks back on the hectic first nine months of trial and error at the Killai project, which yielded many lessons – and rapidly altered worth- Rs. 15,000.

The introduction of Killai near Chandernagore was done for two reasons. One, to provide an alternative source of income for the people of the area, and two, to provide a source of protein for the people of the area.

in the introduction, and failure of the project. The supply could not be maintained. The supply could not be maintained. The supply could not be maintained.

range of tiger shrimp was 10-20 grams and that of white shrimp 15-25 grams. Production started from 1985. The catch started from 1985. The catch started from 1985.

Before the harvest, an experiment was conducted to see if the shrimp could be fed with a mixture of rice and other ingredients. The results were promising. It was found that the shrimp could be fed with a mixture of rice and other ingredients.

double-spread of the article a cockle embroidery!

Bay of Bengal News was featured in an FAO Rome publication in 1987. Writing about newsletters of development projects, Tony Loftas of the FAO's Information Division said that some newsletters could be produced by an editor alone; a sophisticated newsletter like *Bay of Bengal News* was possible only with professional design inputs. He illustrated his article with a double-spread from the March 1987 BBN that was headed "Extending the shrimp culture bonanza to India's rural poor".

BBN reported frequently on the biggest success of BOBP's first phase — the finfish cage culture project in Phang Nga bay, Thailand. (Cage culture of finfish began in six villages of Phang Nga province in 1979. It took off, and spread to 26 villages in all the six coastal provinces of southern Thailand).

The Phang Nga success story was described in his usual concise style by the late Vernon Pietersz, the Program's Development Adviser, in the cover story of BBN, September 1982. The project's socio-economic impact a decade after introduction of cage culture was analysed again by Pietersz (BBN, June 1990). He said that prosperity powered by fish cage culture was evident in the metalled roads, houses of concrete and asbestos that replaced nipa thatch, the cars and motorcycles, TVs and refrigerators.

Oyster culture was a success in Malaysia — because of several factors including the participatory

approach. (BBN, June 1991, March 1992, September 1992 and March 1993). Other culture projects (shrimp, seaweed, cockle) in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand were less successful but yielded useful information and valuable lessons.

Aquaculturist Charles Angell did several interesting analyses for BBN of aquaculture projects and potential. Examples: March 1987 BBN (a workshop on shrimp culture on India's east coast), June 1987 (cover story on cockle management in Malaysia), March 1988 (shrimp feed formulation), December 1989 (seminar on seaweed production and utilization in the Bay of Bengal, held in Thailand), June 1990 (freshwater prawn fry marketing in Bangladesh).

Women's empowerment

Reports, articles and photo essays on women's issues are among BBN's most widely read stories. BOBP was the first agency in the region to systematically document the conditions of women in fisheries, and strategies to better their lot.

The setting up of a Fisherwomen's Extension Service in Tamil Nadu, a "link worker" training scheme in

Chennai for women from 14 fishing villages, a regional workshop, socio-economic studies, training courses, women's self-help groups, credit schemes, income-generation activities – these were carried out in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, and reported and investigated in *Bay of Bengal News*.

"Improving the participation of women in fisheries in their own development" – this was one of the main aims of BOBP's work with fisherwomen.

The September 1989 cover story in BBN "We want a fish market," captured the determination of the fisherwomen of Besant Nagar, Chennai, and the development process set in motion by BOBP to train the women, get them to approach the Corporation of Madras and help them realize their dream of a fish market.

The December 1987 BBN cover feature "We are hungry only for seaweed" presented photo reportage





on the women seaweed collectors of Chinnapalem village near Mandapam. S R Madhu wrote: “The energy, the skills and the stamina of Chinnapalem women, their bonhomie, their *joie de vivre* and smiling good humour in the face of adversity, are splendid to watch. Whoever said that our rural folk are passive and fatalistic, should meet the women of Chinnapalem. Salute them!”

This story led to inquiries from **India Today** magazine. Armed with our information and contacts, they sent a writer-photographer team to Mandapam. Result: another photo essay on the women seaweed collectors. An example of the multiplying impact of **BBN**.

A beautiful photo feature on income-options for women in Bangladesh fisheries appeared in the December 1996 **BBN**.

People's participation

BOBP has always sought, promoted and documented a participatory approach to development. The very popular December 1986 **BBN** had a cover package on people's participation (PEP), with an introduction by Rathin Roy.

The issue also carried three fact-packed articles on “fisherfolk power in south India”. They were about SIFFS, the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies, in Trivandrum; the Sangams of Kanyakumari; and a voluntary

organization in Quilon. The issue went out of stock very soon.

A major BOBP contribution to PEP knowledge and literature was through a special one-year SIDA-funded project in 1986-87. The learnings from several activities were discussed at a regional consultation in Bangalore in May 1987 that brought

together 45 participants from several countries. In the September 1987 **BBN**, Rathin Roy discussed the consultation and its findings.

Credit, non-formal education and other extension activities

In 1979, Orissa's Director of Fisheries requested BOBP to help train 15 newly recruited young extension officers. In 1981-82, BOBP implemented a one-year **in-service training programme**.

BOBP's training officer Uwe Tietze summarized the in-service programme in the June 1992 **BBN**. It was to consist of four modules – credit and financial assistance; community development; fishing craft and gear improvement. Each module would last three months and consist of a residential course, a pilot project and a final workshop.

The credit module paved the way for an outstanding **credit project for Orissa fisherfolk** – which is a favourite case-study at seminars worldwide on rural credit. In the March 1984 **BBN**, Uwe Tietze summarized the rationale and **modus operandi** of the project. He said credit for fisherfolk without subsidies would be viable provided it was preceded by the right preparation and documentation (including data on fisherfolk communities, fishing craft and gear, costs-and-earnings analyses of craft and gear); and the right degree of participation by multiple stakeholders.

The **non-formal education project for Orissa fisherfolk children** was also an offshoot of the training scheme. The December 1984 and December 1985 issues of **BBN** described the project in detail. In co-operation with various state agencies, UNICEF, and a full-time consultant (Ms Namita Ray), BOBP prepared a curriculum and some 120 booklets for fisherfolk children aged between 6 and 14. Some 20 non-formal centres were set up in four coastal districts of Orissa – Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam.

Training Officer Uwe Tietze spent more time in Orissa than in Chennai, because of the work demanded by the in-service training, the credit and NFE projects. Following his work with BOBP, Tietze served the FAO in Rome for more than 20 years; He says the insights of his BOBP experience were invaluable throughout his career.

BOBP organized a first-of-its-kind **NFE project for adult fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu**. It was described in detail in the December 1983 and March 1985 issues of **BBN**. Materials were prepared for adult fisherfolk, for animators (teachers) and for trainers of animators in co-operation with NFE specialists. These were scrutinized by expert teams and reviewed at workshops.

A Trainers' Manual and an Animator's Guide published by BOBP sparked astonishing demand not just from all parts of India, but worldwide – demonstrating the need for these publications. In the March 1985 **BBN**, Valli Seshan and L S Saraswathi described the rationale and origin of the NFE project and the content of the many publications under the project.

The most heartening index of the project's success – it inspired an almost identical NFE package for rural populations in general by the Government of India, using the same consultants as the BOBP.

The March 1990 **Bay of Bengal News** carried an attractive photo

feature on an “integrated extension activities project” in 20-odd fishing villages of Ranong province, Thailand.

The project encompassed culture of oyster, grouper, mussel and shrimp; crab and squid traps; women’s activities; health care, non-formal education, credit. The BBN photo feature presented several culture activities, plus a very effective health care activity at Kor Sin Hai that was the essence of simplicity.

Sri Lankan fisherfolk have a special empathy for radio – their companion for news and entertainment out in the sea. The Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation has been airing special **radio programmes for fisherfolk** from January 1989. The September 1990 *Bay of Bengal News* reported on an evaluation of these programmes by British expert Michael Pickstock, formerly of the BBC. He returned later and helped organize a regional **radio training workshop** in Colombo; Pickstock and S Muthiah were among the resource persons. The September 1991 BBN enhanced the impact and reach of the training through detailed articles.

The radio training workshop generated considerable interest in the Maldives – a country of scattered islands, where radio has been a binding force for fisherfolk from 1978. In April-May 1993,

Pickstock was engaged to train 10 staff of the Voice of Maldives. “One small step for radio, one slightly bigger step for fisheries management,” said an article in the September 1993 BBN.

Bay of Bengal News helped popularize RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal) as an extension tool in the region, through actual practice, manuals and reports, and BBN articles (a cover story in June 1990; RRA in post-harvest fisheries in the September 1993 BBN).

Fisheries resources

Information on fishery resources in the Bay of Bengal? The question aroused a cynical smile way back in 1979. “Unavailable, unreliable” was the terse comment by an expert. The picture is different now; BOBP has made the difference, with a stream of technical papers and reports, and some avidly read BBN articles. There have been wide-ranging resource reviews, plus insightful analyses on shrimp, hilsa, tuna, mackerel, demersal fish, reef fish, ornamental fish.

Our first intervention in fishery resources was a 1980 consultation in Chittagong on stock assessment in fisheries of the Bay of Bengal. B T Antony Raja was the consultant and a demanding one. His fact-packed technical paper “Current knowledge on the shelf resources in the Bay of

Bengal,” was reprinted twice; but demand for it continued.

The first BBN article on resources, fittingly enough, was by Antony Raja. His May 1981 piece was titled: “Fisheries resources in the Bay of Bengal: what do we know about them?” It was accompanied by a profile of Raja.

A four-year resources project funded by the UNDP (1983-1986) provided valuable knowledge on fish stocks of the region – such as the tuna resources of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the hilsa resources of Bangladesh, the scad and mackerel resources of Malaysia and Thailand, the tuna resources of Thailand and Indonesia in the Andaman Sea.

Dr K Sivasubramaniam succinctly summed up this project’s work in the May 1987 BBN. He said that the project reviewed management and assessment practices, investigated resources, helped to computerize data processing and stock assessment, trained national biologists in sampling techniques as well as in data collection and analysis, and brought out 15 publications.

What was the state of research on fishery resources in the region? Siebren C Venema did a cover story in the September 1985 BBN. He outlined nine key areas for resource research and action needed in each. The article was followed by concise data-laden “factsheets” in the BBN about fishery resources research in the region.

In August 1986, BOBP launched a two-year UNDP-funded project to study the abundance of reef fish resources in the Maldives and the gear that could best tap this resource. The project was reported and discussed in the March 1988, March 1989 and March 1992 issues of BBN.

The December 1992 BBN spotlighted shark-fishing in the Maldives. (This issue also described shark longlining on India’s east coast and the shark fin trade in the Bay of Bengal.)

Radio programme for Sri Lankan fisherfolk





The “shoe dhoni” community of Andhra Pradesh

In 1991, BOBP introduced studies on bio-socio-economics to the region. The idea was not merely to improve the catches and incomes of fishers but also to improve their knowledge on resources and strengthen their participation in resource management.

Dr Sivasubramaniam discussed the significant concept of bio-socio-economics in the December 1993 BBN. His article was followed by case-studies of six completed projects.

In sum, the BOBP’s projects and publications, and the articles in *Bay of Bengal News*, have made a noticeable difference to fisheries resources knowledge in the Bay of

Bengal. However, what still needs to be done in the region by way of resource information, databases and skill training is enormous.

Post-harvest fisheries

The BOBP initially carried out post-harvest activities – handling, processing and marketing of fish – through a project funded by the UK’s Overseas Development Administration (ODA). This then became an independent project executed and funded by the UK’s DFID under the BOBP umbrella.

Bay of Bengal News has published numerous articles over the years on post-harvest work: an aluminium fish container for fisherwomen, use

of ice aboard small-scale craft, a permanent ice box, fish drying racks, fish smoking, fish marketing, discard of shrimp by-catch at sea, market research into fish consumption, better feed for shrimp.

Fisherfolk communities

An excellent BBN article on fisherfolk communities was the cover story of September 1990 – on a fisher community of Chollangi (near Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh) whose boats, the “shoe dhonis,” are also their homes. Author Venkatesh Salagrama, who had been wanting to investigate the community even in his student days, and artist-photographer E Amalore spent three days tracking this community.

BBN has also featured articles on fisher communities in Bangladesh (May 1981, March 1984, December 1990); India (December 1986, March 1989, March 2000); Sri Lanka (September 1990, December 1981); Maldives (March 1991); Thailand (March 1990, June 1990); and Indonesia (June 1991). The script of an audio-visual on small-scale fisherfolk communities in the region was published in the December 1990 BBN.

Fisheries management

Fisheries management was the focus of the BOBP’s third phase, which began in 1995. Rationale: falling catch rates and rising pressure on fisheries resources everywhere, including the Bay of Bengal region. The BOBP’s mandate was to facilitate management by raising awareness, strengthening the capacity of fisheries agencies, and providing technical assistance.

BBN spread management awareness by reporting and analyzing project activities and workshops, analysing management tools such as the stakeholder approach; and discussing success stories on fisheries management.

The management projects carried out by BOBP in member-countries were remarkably varied. It was **integrated reef resources management** in the Maldives –



checking damage to coral reefs, and developing a model for community-based reef resources management in four atolls – Vaavu, Meemu, Faafu, Dhaalu. (See BBN of March 1997, December 1998, June 1999.) In Sri Lanka, BOBP sought to study and document **ornamental fisheries**, promote awareness through seminars and workshops, organise insurance schemes and training courses for ornamental fish divers, and suggest management approaches (See BBN, December 1996, December 1997, 1998, June 1999).

The BBN of December 1996 made a big impact within and outside the Bay of Bengal region with its package of articles on ornamental fisheries in Sri Lanka by Rathindra Nath Roy and S R Madhu. “We had heard so much about ornamental fisheries; we now know what it is,” was a comment from FAO Rome. The package contained factual interviews with ornamental fish divers; an interview-based article on Lumbini, Sri Lanka’s biggest ornamental fish exporter; and an overview-article on the industry, why it needed management, and the BOBP’s proposed activities.

In Bangladesh, BOBP sought to limit effort and resource damage caused by the **push net and set bagnet fisheries**, and simultaneously minimize hardship to the thousands of people who depend on these gear. UNDP, DFID and the Department of Fisheries took up BOBP’s work. (See the articles “Parliamentarians consider food and livelihood security issues of coastal Bangladesh” – BBN, December 1997; “Managing the push-net and set bagnet fisheries in Bangladesh,” December 2000 BBN).

In Thailand, the BOBP carried out a very successful **CBFM (community-based fisheries management)** project to overcome the problems of overfishing and resource stress in 110 villages of Phang Nga bay. The CBFM measures including a ban on trawl



Ornamental fishes in reef ecosystem, Maldives

nets and push nets within 3 km of the shoreline; culture of finfish, oysters and mussels; installation of artificial reefs; voluntary surrender of push nets by fishers; sea ranchings; floating pontoons on the sea (See BBN of March 1997, June 1998, September 1998, December 1998, June 1999).

BOBP’s summary of the CBFM project in Thailand was published in the third volume of the book “Sustainable development success stories” brought out by the U N Commission on Sustainable Development. The story was reproduced in the September 1999 BBN.

In India, three different management projects were carried out. In Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu, the aim was to **use GIS to produce maps on fishing intensity**, a first step toward scientific management. In Andhra Pradesh, **stakeholder** consultations were conducted to solve problems that plagued **shrimp culture**. A lavishly illustrated comic book was produced on shrimp culture to raise awareness of problems and of management techniques. In West Bengal, the use of **PRA as a tool for data collection and analysis** was popularized (See BBN of March 1997, March 1998, December 1998, June 1999, September 1999).

In Malaysia, a **Special Area Management Plan** was implemented for the Pulau Payar

Marine Park. It sought to integrate land and water management, test strategies to strengthen eco-tourism and ensure resource sustainability, enhance knowledge about the carrying capacity of the park, strengthen underwater biodiversity. The project led to valuable lessons for the **management of marine parks in Malaysia**. (See BBN of December 1998).

In Indonesia, the problems were **inadequate management and enforcement**, and resource conflicts between groups of fishermen. BOBP adopted a two-pronged strategy of promoting CBFM concepts at the national level and organizing stakeholder consultations and technical inputs at the local level. A BOBP study researched traditional community-based fisheries management in six provinces of Indonesia. An ADB-funded project grew out of this study (BBN, December 2000).

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) was highlighted and promoted in the region by the BOBP. A special issue of BBN (September 2000) explained the provisions of the Code and its technical guidelines. A **“Fishermen’s Week,”** held in some member-countries, was used to inform fisherfolk communities about the Code.

The BOBP’s director during its third phase, Dr Kee-Chai Chong, was passionately committed to the



Small-scale fisheries – an important component of marine fisheries in Bangladesh

concept of management. Through his many articles in BBN, he kept drilling the messages: respect nature, conserve resources, save more and spend less, tap the wisdom of the ancients, think about the future.

The BBN published several articles that documented the learnings from the third phase of BOBP, on the basis of the findings of a two-member mission – Mr G L Preston and Dr Y S Yadava (March 2000 and June 2000 BBN).

Reviews of BOBP

Two articles in *Bay of Bengal News* have summarized in words and pictures the work of the organization over the first 20 years. The December 2000 BBN carried the article “Glimpses into the BOBP’s achievements, 1979-2000,” describing the Programme’s work phase by phase. The January 2002-March 2003 issue, a curtain-raiser to the formation of the BOBP-IGO, presented in a nutshell the BOBP’s work over 23 years by discipline.

Sustainable development and management of coastal fisheries

The BOBP-IGO came into being in April 2003, with Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka as members. Its goal: Sustainable development and management of coastal fisheries. The emphasis is on shared learning and information exchange. Activities: Safety at sea, Code of Conduct for Responsible

Fisheries, poverty alleviation, women’s issues, reducing post-harvest losses, stock assessment, knowledge exchange and transfer.

The director of the IGO, Dr Y S Yadava, served earlier as India’s Fisheries Development Commissioner, and had contributed articles to *Bay of Bengal News*. He sees the BBN as an important instrument to carry out the mandate of the IGO. Six issues of the BBN have covered the IGO phase.

BBN has documented and analysed the destruction caused by the tsunami of December 26, 2004, including a one-day consultation among fisherfolk throughout Tamil Nadu in Chennai, and a post-

tsunami workshop in Mahabalipuram. As a positive measure for the fisheries of tomorrow, the IGO organised art contests on “Life after Tsunami” for schoolchildren of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Two well-illustrated articles in BBN, and a beautiful calendar for 2006, were part of the outcomes.

The BBN has constantly drawn the attention of the global community to occupational hazards connected with sea fishing – through the Regional Conference on Sea Safety held in Chennai during October 2001, which adopted a “Chennai Declaration” and subsequently through IFISH-3 (The Third International Conference on Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry) held in Mahabalipuram in February 2006. The Conference and its papers have been published in detail in BBN.

The BBN is becoming an important print medium for publicizing the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in the region. It is popularizing the CCRF in several ways – reporting the activities of the IGO in member-countries, articles on the CCRF Technical Guidelines, etc.

Way back in 1982, a reader in Colombo exclaimed, “Every issue of *Bay of Bengal News* seems to be better than the previous one.” That was a conscious aim, and it will continue to be so.

Life after Tsunami – Malé school children participating in the art contest

