Bay of Bengal Policy Research Areas

A dynamic list of topical fisheries issues

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Bay of Bengal Policy Research Areas
A dynamic list of topical thematic focus areas
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Design
BOBP Design Factory
bobpdesignfactory@gmail.com

BOBP For Sustainable Fisheries
BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME
Inter-Governmental Organisation

Dr. P. Krishnan
Director

PREFACE

Enhancing the science-policy interface and pilot evidence-driven policy making are major hallmarks of BOBP. We, at BOBP-IGO, are alive to the changes happening in the fisheries management in terms of collection and use of information in fishing operation and management. The sector has internalized technology in every facets from locating fishes to fishing to connecting with the markets. With increasing pressure on coastal and marine ecosystems including fish stocks, the sector requires transformation in its approach towards assessment and management.

We have identified a few topical areas of research having regional relevance, with an objective of catalysing transformation in fisheries towards sustainability and equity. Our path to achieve this is to facilitate implementation of fisheries management systems in the region that deal with real-time issues and where policies are evidence-driven and ecosystem-based.

The BOBP-IGO will leverage its global knowledge networks and rope-in research institutions and internationally acclaimed experts in the proposed programs. We have taken steps to create a Virtual Policy Research Group and also a framework to partner with private IT firms to co-develop relevant digital solutions using frontier tools.

While initiating the research projects at the right earnest, we shall continue to reach potential national and international agencies to collaborate through technical partnership and/or financial sponsorship.

We look forward to strengthen our contribution to the region through individual and institutional partnerships.

(Dr. P. Krishnan)

Framework for Collaborative Policy Research

To strengthen its contributions, the IGO has instituted innovative mechanisms to benefit from its global knowledge networks and through effective partnership with the national governments and their constituent research and academic institutions.

It also envisions to partner with IT firms in the private sector to advance its agenda of evidence-based natural resource management and governance.

Virtual Network of Researchers

The BOBP-IGO is building an inter-disciplinary team of experts, namely "Bay of Bengal Policy Research Group - BOBPRG", to accelerate the transformation of the fisheries sector of this region towards real-time, evidence-driven and ecosystem-based management. The BOBPRG will work closely with the BOBP Secretariat and its full-range of stakeholders on contemporary questions and challenges.

The BOBP-IGO has instituted a platform for the researchers affiliated with Universities, R&D institutions, Think Tanks, NGOs or Civil Society organisations, with demonstrated academic standing and interest to work on issues of the member-countries of the BOBP-IGO to be part of the BOBPRG as BOB Fellows, and contribute intellectually on thematic discussion groups, without affecting their routine activities in their respective organisations.

The BOBP-IGO has also instituted internship for the University students interested to work on regional fisheries management, ecosystem conservation, coastal livelihoods and occupational safety. The students shall choose from Physical, Virtual or Hybrid Internship options, in consultation with their academic mentors.

Partnering with IT Firms

The advancements in frontier digital technology including mobile applications, artificial intelligence, block chain technology, machine learning, GIS& remote sensing, etc. have fast-paced the reach of scientific knowledge-based solutions for the benefit of its end users. BOBP recognizes the vast potential of leveraging these technologies for addressing various issues concerning the regional fisheries management and also those faced by the coastal community in BOB region.

Towards this end, BOBP-IGO has instituted a mechanism to empanel Software/Product Engineering Firms who are willing to partner with BOBP-IGO for codevelopment imaginative IP-enabled digital products/solutions, so as to fast track the transition towards evidence-driven sustainable fisheries resource management.

For details visit www.bobpigo.org

Current Research Themes

The BOBP-IGO undertakes policy research on national and international fisheries and environmental issues to inform and shape sustainable fisheries management in the region. The research agenda of the BOBP Secretariat is designed in consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee of the IGO and approved by its Governing Council, comprising of Secretaries and Senior Officers of the Fisheries Ministries of Member Countries.

The IGO undertakes contract and consultancy research sponsored by various national, international and multilateral funding agencies, on contemporary issues of the region. It also undertakes specific short-term country-specific research projects on request from the member countries.

The research themes identified provisionally for the IGO are summarized herewith, for which detailed project proposals will be submitted to various national and international agencies for collaboration and sponsorship.

1

Reimagining Regional Fisheries Management: Participatory Approaches for Near Real-time Stock Assessment

FAO reports that only 25% of the world fish catch comes from the numerically assessed stocks. The catch details from the Bay of Bengal region are riddled with inconsistencies, particularly due to the predominance of small-scale multi-species fishery. The data on fishing effort and catch are collected periodically by all the countries. However, the research outputs on the stock status are not robust enough to influence the state policy on appropriate fisheries management.
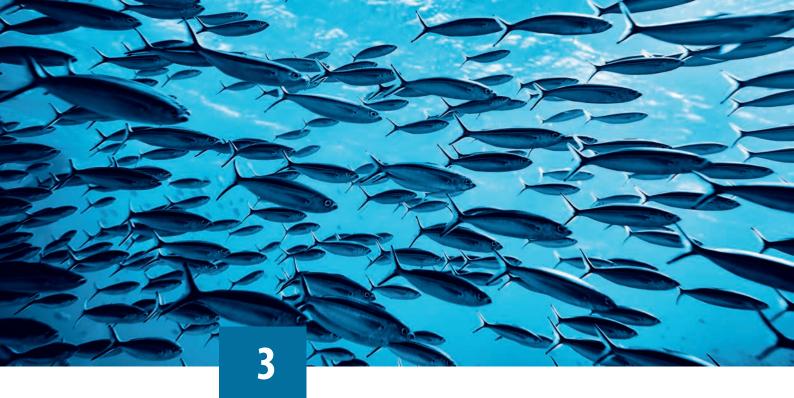
The IGO envisions to develop a methodological framework for collecting fisheries data, analysing them to determine the status of the stock, and visualizing the same to aid in informed decision making by the resource managers. The methodological framework will be tested on a pilot basis in different geographies and a roadmap will be developed to scale up the approach in the region.

2

Capturing the Hidden Harvest:
A Framework for Small-Scale
Multi-Species Fishery

The artisanal and small-scale fisheries (ASSF) constitutes the backbone of the marine fisheries sector of the Bay of Bengal region providing employment and food security in the coastal areas. The contribution of ASSF to the fishery, their vulnerabilities to multiple stressors and non-inclusiveness in the national and regional context need to be profiled to evolve livelihood strategies to strengthen their adaptation and resilience.

The proposed programme will be based on emerging global methodologies to quantify the role of ASSF while adapting it for local and regional ground realities. The output of the programme will contribute to reducing the Unreported fishing component of the IUU fishing and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG 2: No Poverty; SDG 13: Life Below Water; SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

3

Shared Prosperity: Governance and Institutional Framework for Assessment and Management of Blue Economy in the Bay of Bengal

Blue Economy principles are identified by the Bay of Bengal rim countries to foster economic development in their respective countries. By nature, the blue economy is multi-sectoral and balancing is required to optimize the net gain from the activities while maintaining or sustainably enhancing ecosystem services. Such balancing requires investment in marine spatial planning, coastal zone development, and integration of ecosystem approaches.

The IGO envisions supporting the development of national and regional guidelines for blue economy development. Developing framework for mapping, assessment, and sustainable utilisation of the blue economic potential at regional, national and sub-national; Contextualising fisheries in blue economy and identifying complementarities; Capturing the socio-economic implications for coastal/fishing communities and maximising the gains for small-scale fishers; and Evolving appropriate governance frameworks would be priority areas. A multi-disciplinary research process will aid in simulating multiple pathways for optimal solutions.

4

Back to Basics: Revitalising Traditional Knowledge for Sustaining Fisheries Future

BoB region has been a cradle of civilisation and the coastal fishing communities have nurtured and sustained a rich pool of practical knowledge and skillsets honed over several centuries. Traditional knowledge and modern science have borrowed from and influenced each other, especially over the last two centuries. However, there is a need to improve the documentation and deepen the understanding of the indigenous community-held knowledge related to fisheries. Modern science might still benefit from this appreciation and knowledge.

BOBP-IGO envisions facilitating and strengthening regional, national and sub-national efforts to map and bring to light the hidden treasure trove of traditional knowledge and identify areas that modern science can validate and enrich for the public good.

5

Aquaculture-Fisheries Co-development for Stock Enhancement and Sea Ranching

The Bay of Bengal region is a leading contributor to both aquaculture and fisheries. Increasing population, limited land resources, and depleting marine fish stocks in a changing climate scenario pose a serious challenge for the fisheries sector to provide adequate and affordable food and nutrition. Increasing operational costs may also drive the fishers and the farmers to poverty.

BOBP-IGO envisions to develop a methodological framework for fisheries enhancement at the national and regional levels, taking advantage of the accumulated knowledge in the region on aquaculture, breeding, hatchery management, and stock assessment. The interconnected issues, such as identification of candidate species, technology readiness, fisheries management, ecosystem requirement and stakeholder buy-in, identification of capacity building requirements, facilitating south-south cooperation in fisheries enhancement, and development of regional management plans would be among the areas of focus.

6

Insurance for Ameliorating the Climate Risks of Coastal Fishers of the Bay of Bengal Region

Small-scale and artisanal fisheries face major threat from the changing climate, the impacts of which include extreme weather events, migration of fishes to newer habitats, increase in the fishing ban days, higher maintenance cost apart from actual loss of fishing assets, etc. Insurance is a risk-transfer and risk-pooling mechanism to compensate loss and damages from an adverse event. Hence, there is a need to make insurance climate-smart for building sectoral resilience.

A study will be undertaken to review the best practices with respect to loss and damage estimation process, types and features of insurance products in the region and also from across the globe. The sectoral need and institutional settings will be assessed and practical guidelines that can be integrated into national strategies for climate risk insurance will be developed.

Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project

The Bay of Bengal (BOB) in the northern Indian Ocean is one of the 66 Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) of the World. The BOBLME Project funded by the GEF sought to address the issue of the sustainability of the BOBLME region through a regional cooperative framework. The first phase of the project implemented during 2009-15, identified four common areas of regional and national concerns viz., overfishing, critical habitat degradation, pollution, and socio-economic challenges. A Strategic Action Programme (SAP) was developed which called for an institutional mechanism for addressing these problems through regional collective action.

The BOBP-IGO is all set to execute the second phase of the project in its member-countries: Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The objective of the Second Phase is '**to contribute to sustainable management of fisheries, marine living resources and their habitats in the Bay of Bengal region for the benefit of coastal states and communities'**. IUCN and SEAFDEC are other partnering agencies in the project with FAO providing overall supervision.

Duration of the project: 2022-2027

About BOBP-IGO

The Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), set up in 2003, evolved from the erstwhile Bay of Bengal Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) founded in 1979. The current members of the Organisation are Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka while Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand are cooperating non-contracting parties.

The BOBP-IGO is a Regional Fishery Advisory Body (RFAB), which serves as the think tank for the countries bordering the Bay of Bengal region on transboundary and contemporary regional issues concerning fisheries management, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, pollution management, livelihood and occupational safety. The IGO assists its member-countries in achieving UN Decadal Targets for fisheries management, ecosystem conservation and sustainable development in the region through research-based policy advocacy, need-based capacity development and extensive community engagement programs.

BOBP-IGO is a member of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network (RSN), coordinated by the FAO .

Our Partners (Still Expanding)

Each programme will be implemented in partnership with various national and international organizations in the region.

Our Team

Dr P Krishnan
DIRECTOR

Dr S Jayaraj
PUBLICATION OFFICER

Mr Rajdeep Mukherjee
POLICY ANALYST

Mr V Sreenivasan
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Ms Cheryl D Verghese
SR SECRETARY

Mr Krishna Mohan
SECRETARY

Bay of Bengal Programme
Inter-Governmental Organisation

91, Saint Mary's Road, Abhiramapuram
Chennai - 600 018, Tamil Nadu, India
Telephone: # 91 44 42040024
www.bobpigo.org
Email: info@bobpigo.org