Bay of Bengal
LARGE MARINE ECOSYSTEM PROJECT
A SHARED VISION

EIGHT COUNTRIES CONNECTED BY ONE ECOSYSTEM, WORKING TOGETHER TO SECURE ITS FUTURE

- Enough fish for future generations
- Healthy coastal and near-shore marine habitats
- Reduced pollution from agriculture, industry and large coastal cities
- Coastal communities resilient to the impacts of climate change
- Stakeholders working together for the common good
OUR APPROACH

To bring people together to recover the health of the Bay of Bengal, rejuvenate its living resources, and improve the livelihoods of the coastal populations.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

- Creating and strengthening processes for planning and dialogue
- Harmonizing policies on transboundary challenges
- Enhancing mechanisms for regional collaboration and information exchange
- Involving people in coastal communities in management and decision making processes

IMPROVING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Implementing best management practices
- Developing and applying indicators of ecosystem health
- Promoting the use of marine protected areas in fisheries management
- Strengthening management capacity
- Providing advice on the status of fisheries resources

EXPANDING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF:

- Fisheries and ecology of hilsa, Indian mackerel and sharks
- Large-scale processes, ecology and climate change
- The challenges facing small-scale fishers
Bay of Bengal

HOME TO ONE QUARTER OF THE WORLD’S POOR

Bangladesh India Indonesia Malaysia Maldives Myanmar Thailand Sri Lanka

AREA
Total maritime area: 6.2 million km²
Total area of EEZs: 4.3 million km²
Combined length of coastline: 14,000 km

PEOPLE
Total population of countries: 2 billion
Population of the coastal zone: 450 million

FISHERIES
Employment in fisheries: 4.5 million
Number of fishers: 2.2 million
Number of fishing boats: 415,000
Annual fisheries production: 6 million tonnes
Value of fisheries production: USD 4 billion

ENVIRONMENT
8% of the world’s mangroves: including some of the oldest mangroves
12% of the world’s coral reefs
Some of the largest estuaries in the world
Marine resources in the Bay of Bengal are under increasing pressure due to over exploitation, loss of critical habitats, and pollution.

**OVER EXPLOITATION OF MARINE RESOURCES**

**THE EVIDENCE:**
- Decline in fish stocks
- Changes in composition of species
- High proportion of juvenile fish in catches
- Changes in marine biodiversity

**THE UNDERLYING CAUSES:**
- Open access to fishing grounds
- Increasing effort from trawlers and purse seiners
- High demand for seed and fish meal for aquaculture
- Ineffective fisheries management
- Illegal and destructive fishing

**LOSS OF CRITICAL HABITATS**

**MAINLY:**
- Mangroves
- Coral reefs
- Seagrasses

**THE UNDERLYING CAUSES:**
- Overuse by coastal poor to fulfill day-to-day needs
- Lack of coastal development plans
- Increasing trade in products from coastal habitats
- Coastal development and industrialization
- Ineffective marine protected areas and lack of enforcement
- Intensive upstream agricultural practices
- Increasing tourism
- Climate change

**POLLUTION SOURCES:**
- Sewage-borne pathogens and organic effluents
- Solid waste/marine litter
- Nutrient inputs
- Oil spills
- Persistent organic pollutants and persistent toxic substances
- Sedimentation
- Heavy metals

**THE UNDERLYING CAUSES:**
- Increasing coastal populations
- More garbage per person
- Migration of industry into BOBLME countries
- Proliferation of small industries
- Low per capita GDP resulting in insufficient waste management
ABOUT THE PROJECT

The BOBLME Project includes Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The project aims to improve the lives of the coastal populations through better regional management of the Bay of Bengal environment and its fisheries.

Over a five-year period—the first of two phases of the Project—our work is focused on gaining a better understanding of major marine resources and identifying the critical issues and the underlying causes contributing to a decline in the health of the Bay of Bengal ecosystem.

With that knowledge, we can begin strengthening and harmonizing management capabilities in each participating country in preparation for the second phase of the project.

EMPHASIS ON HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Ensuring that future generations have sufficient fish and other marine resources will depend on how well we manage the supporting ecosystems today.

The Project promotes ecosystem based management approaches for sustaining some of the most important shared fish stocks including Hilsa shad, Indian mackerel, and sharks.

FULL STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Involving a wide range of stakeholders is vital to the success of the Project. The project therefore works with communities, local, national and state governments, universities, NGOs, industry and regional organizations.

DIAGNOSIS AND STRATEGY

The Project brings stakeholders together to develop a joint Strategic Action Programme - a road map that outlines the ways and means of addressing priority issues identified by the member countries.
**Multi-sectoral National Task Force**

Government ministries and departments
International and local NGOs
International development agencies
University researchers
Public and private research institutions
The private sector
Civil society organizations

**National Scientific Advisory Panel**

National experts on:
Living marine resources
Oceanography
Pollution
Coastal management
Socio-economics

**National Experts**

**TEN AREAS OF WORK**

1. Identifying the major transboundary issues and their causes, and developing a plan to address them
2. Integrated Coastal Management
3. Policy Harmonization
4. Fisheries Resources Assessment and Management
5. Critical Habitat Management
6. Ocean Dynamics, Productivity and Climate Change
7. Marine Protected Areas
8. Ecosystem Health Indicators
9. Land-Based Sources of Pollution
10. Training and Communications

**MANAGING LARGE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS: A TRANSBOUNDARY CHALLENGE**

Living ecosystems don’t conform to political boundaries. Managing transboundary resources is one of the greatest challenges a government faces.

Transboundary challenges of concern in the BOBLME region include:

- Sustaining shared fish resources
- Restoring and protecting mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass
- Reducing pollution and promoting ecosystem health
- Preparing coastal communities for the impacts of climate change
The BOBLME Project is principally supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the USA (NOAA), and the World Bank. The BOBLME Project is a five-year commitment valued at USD 31 million. FAO is the executing agency.

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