

THE BAY OF BENGAL LARGE MARINE ECOSYSTEM PROGRAMME

(GCP/RAS/175/SWE)

(GCP/RAS/179/WBG)

The First Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme, 28- 29 January 2002, Taj Connemara Hotel, Chennai, India

Report of the Meeting

The First Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Programme (BOBLME) held at the Taj Connemara Hotel, Chennai, India 28-29 January 2002. . Mr P K Pattanaik, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries, Government of India was elected to Chair the meeting. The list of participants and observers is given in Appendix A.

1. Welcome

The Regional Co-ordinator, Dr Michael O'Toole (F AO) welcomed the delegates behalf of F AO and noted that representatives from all eight countries were in attendance. He then called for the election of a chairperson

2. Election of Chairperson

The representative from Thailand, Mr Maitree Duangsawasdi proposed that Mr P K Pattanaik (India) Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture (Dairying and Animal Husbandry) be elected Chairperson for the meeting. This was seconded by Mr H V C Fernando of Sri Lanka. Mr Pattanaik formally opened the meeting by stating that the eight countries around the Bay of Bengal region represented a quarter of the world's population and that great efforts were needed to address the environmental and socio-economic problems of the region. He hoped that by addressing the comprehensive agenda that the committee would embark on a process that would ultimately result in the adoption of a Strategic Action Plan for the sustainable management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem. The Chairperson then asked the participants to formally introduce themselves.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

The Programme Steering Committee adopted the agenda for the first meeting of the Bay of Bengal LME PDF Block B Programme as proposed and documents were made available to the various members.

4. Bay of Bengal LME Programme Document

A presentation was given by Ms Barbara Cooney (F AO Rome) on the history of the GEF and International Waters programme and how the Bay of Bengal LME Programme evolved within the region.

She pointed out that GEF was a complex financial mechanism that provided new and additional grants and concessionary funding to meet agreed incremental costs to achieve global environmental benefits. The GEF focal areas were Biodiversity, International Waters, Climate Change and Ozone Layer and its partners included implementing and executing agencies, international organizations, bilateral co-operation agencies, multilateral development agencies, the private sector and NGO's. Ms Cooney outlined the GEF Operational Programs of relevance to fisheries in International Waters, Biodiversity and Multifocal portfolios and listed the operational principles of the GEF in carrying out their programmes of action.

With regard to the Bay of Bengal LME Programme, Ms Cooney defined the overall goal as follows:- The development of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) to protect the health of the ecosystems and manage the living resources of the Bay of Bengal in a sustainable manner with a view to improving food and livelihood security of the regions large coastal population. She described key aspects of the PDF Block B programme development process which built on the excellent collaboration already established through the former Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) emphasizing that the LME programme development should be flexible, action orientated and country driven.

A second presentation by given by Dr O'Toole who provided an overview on the execution of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem programme (PDF Block B Phase). He outlined the threats to the living marine resources of the region from unsustainable fishing practices, land based and sea sources of pollution and large scale socio-economic pressures. The objectives of the PDF Block B development phase of the programme was to establish a communication and co-ordination mechanisms, synthesize and assess information, draft a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) framework document and a Project Brief which would lead to the development of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for addressing the problems and issues facing the sustainable management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem.. The SAP would deal mainly with policy actions and institutional arrangement to be agreed by the countries that would address the transboundary issues and promote co-operative action. A draft workplan was presented and agreed which included the establishment of a Programme Steering Committee (PSC) and nomination of National Co-ordinators , the setting up of National Task Forces and Scientific Advisory Panel and the holding of two regional and eight national workshops.

The question of the boundary of the Bay of Bengal LME was briefly discussed and Dr O'Toole suggested that it should extend from high water mark out to the EEZ and should include the whole Island of Sumatra in Indonesia. It was also suggested that the terms of reference for the BOBLME should not include basin wide and river catchment areas or the high seas region of the Bay of Bengal. However, these matters were open for discussion by countries during the development process. Dr O'Toole also pointed out that it may take up to three years to complete the PDF Block B phase depending on the number of issues to be addressed. Those currently included in the Pro Doc were fisheries, marine pollution, coastal resources and habitat conservation, ecosystem health, aquaculture, biodiversity, and socio-economics issues It was stressed that more effective

mitigation and co-operative action may be achieved if fewer and more clearly focused issues were tackled.

A discussion followed on the ProDoc and points raised in the presentation. Mr U Hla Win (Myanmar) expressed his appreciation of the efforts in organizing the meeting. He pointed out that Myanmar had a very large coastline with unique areas of biodiversity, many islands (800) and delta regions and large river inputs into the eastern part of the Bay of Bengal. These areas are not mentioned in the ProDoc and should be given due recognition in any conservation and sustainable management strategy for the Bay of Bengal.

Mr Sudarshan Rodrigues (UNDP-New Delhi) raised the point that there were several GEF projects in India and the region that addressed biodiversity issues including transboundary issues. e.g. the turtle project in India. He offered to assist with establishing linkages between these, UNDP and the Bay of Bengal LME Programme. Dr O'Toole mentioned during a regional visit to the eight countries, many GEF, UN Agencies and donor funded projects were operating throughout the area with little information exchange between countries or overall co-ordination.

Dr O'Toole briefly discussed the budget and it was felt that to achieve the outputs and objectives of the Bay of Bengal PDF Block B phase, it was essential to seek additional technical assistance and further funding especially for the regional workshops to ensure that these meetings were fully participatory. This was endorsed by the countries.

Mr M K R Nair (India) suggested that more time should be allocated to the synthesis and assessment of information and in the preparation of the Country Reports. Ms Barbara Cooney made the point that the Country Reports would not be of publishable quality as this was not a requirement. The regional thematic reports (a synthesis of all the national reports) in contrast should be of a quality that could be published at a later date following reviewing by a regional/ international scientific panel. Dr O'Toole stated that the Regional Thematic Reports should not be too overburdened with detail but should provide a comprehensive overview of the status of the living marine resources, the environment and as well as the problems, threats and the issues facing the region.

"- It was important that the right information get into these reports and that the countries are satisfied with the national inputs.

Mr Mian Sabala Sitanggang (Indonesia) apologized for the absence of Mr Saut Hutagalung, the officially nominated representative to the Programme Steering Committee and said that he could not attend due to a parliamentary meeting. He suggested that some sites in Indonesian waters should also be considered for inclusion in the BOBLME programme i.e. the Niar Islands - Southern Islands.

Mr Junaidi bin Che Ayub (Malaysia) pointed out that the entire west coast of Malaysia including the Straits of Malacca would need to be considered as part of the BOBLME Programme. Mr Ahmed Hafiz (Maldives) stated that there were two atolls presently under separate GEF projects but the BOBLME Programme could cover all the other atolls in the country.

On the question of scope and issues for the BOBLME, Mr Richard Ackennan (World Bank) suggested that it would be better to narrow down the scope with a phased involvement tackling only high priority issues first and gradually adding more. It would be much better to have addressed a few issues with quantifiable benefits and improvements as a result rather than trying to take on everything and achieving nothing.

6. Bay of Bengal LME Programme -Terms of Reference 6.1. Regional Co-ordinator

The terms of reference and responsibilities of the Regional Co-ordinator were presented which included the establishment of communication and co-ordination mechanisms, the setting up of the Programme Steering Committee, National Co-ordinators and National Task Forces and the organization of the Regional and National Workshops.

6.2. National Co-ordinator

Considerable discussion on the terms of reference for the National Co-ordinator took place amongst member countries and it was recommended that the reference to a "PhD qualification and competence in scientific and technical fields of fisheries and aquaculture management and have a sound knowledge of environmental issues affecting coastal and marine resources" be dropped and that instead the following phrase " the person shall be a competent high ranking government official with a fisheries management/aquaculture background" added.

Mr Junaidi bin Che Ayub stated that it fully supports the BOBLME programme but informed the meeting that their National Co-ordinator had not yet been nominated as they were waiting to see what the scope of the programme would eventually be before finalizing a decision. It is likely that a person from another Ministry e.g. Science and Technology may be nominated. The question of linkages between the National Co-ordinator and the Programme Steering Committee member was raised in the event that the National Co-ordinator belong to another Ministry. It was felt that the terms of reference for the National Co-ordinator was pitched too high and that a PhD requirement was not necessary. Mr Junaidi bin Che Ayub asked about the terms of reference for national consultants and what the requirements were. Dr O'Toole replied that these were not decided as yet.

Mr M K R Nair suggested that a secretarial support be provided to the National Co-ordinator as the communication mechanisms with others can be very elaborate especially in the case of India. Dr O'Toole replied that such support was not planned for in the budget or Pro Doc.

6.3. National Task Force

Some discussion between member states was held on the terms of reference for the National Task Force. Mr Bhuiyan Rafiuddin Ahmed (Bangladesh) felt that the National Task Force should be convened as soon as possible by the National Co-ordinator rather than waiting until the First Regional Workshop. In the terms of reference, the last part of the fourth paragraph should be omitted with a full stop placed after "as soon as possible" and much of the fifth paragraph should be re-written. Dr O'Toole undertook to re-write these terms of reference again taking into account what was discussed and send copies to committee members for endorsement. The Committee agreed that the National Task Force should be formally established by the National Co-ordinator in each country prior to holding the First Regional Workshop.

6.4. National and Regional Reports and Scientific Review Groups

National Reports would be produced by national consultants in such fields of living marine resources, coastal conservation, marine pollution and socio-economics. These reports would be reviewed by national experts appointed by the National Co-ordinator in consultation with the National Task Force to ensure that the information is scientifically and technically correct and no major errors or omissions are contained in the reports. These Regional Thematic Reports would be synthesized from the National Reports and reviewed by a Scientific Advisory Panel which would comprise of a number of regional and international experts in their fields. Members of the review group and the Scientific Advisory Panel would be paid an agreed honorarium for their inputs.

7. Travel Mission Report

Dr O'Toole briefly reviewed the travel report on his visit to the Bay of Bengal countries undertaken from 14th October to 30th November 2001. He reported that there was good support for the Bay of Bengal LME Programme in the countries visited the region. However, he was not able to meet Malaysian officials because of logistical reasons. Most countries had requested further time to study the ProDoc and the terms of references drafted for the Programme Steering Committee member, the National Co-ordinator and the National Task Force. There was some confusion on the future of the BOBP programme and how the BOBLME Programme would relate to it and the new proposed BOBP-IGO which was presently being discussed. Most countries felt that the scope of the issues to be addressed as outlined in the ProDoc was too great and these should be narrow down to relate mainly to fisheries and marine environmental concerns that related to fisheries and ecosystem health. The importance of the National Co-ordinator was stressed and that much depended on the effectiveness of the National Task Force and the national consultants to delivery the country outputs.

8. First Regional Workshop

The Committee gratefully accepted the kind offer of Thailand to host the First Regional Workshop with a date in mid-May to be confirmed later. Dr O'Toole would follow-up

with Dr Duangawasdi on the conflation of dates and the venue. The draft guidelines prepared for the workshop by Dr O'Toole proposed a full day of international and national papers which would be held prior to the two day brainstorming workshop. A Logical Framework Analysis type approach would be used to encourage a fuller participation.

Ms Barbara Cooney felt that there were too many presentations scheduled for the first day and that the international keynote speakers should be limited. She also felt that it was important to clearly define the goals of the workshop. Mr Ahmed Hafiz asked whether national presentations should cover the entire country or only the marine fisheries and environment. Mr Fernando (Sri Lanka) suggested that a small Working Group be convened the following day to plan for the Regional Workshop. This was agreed to and would be organized by Dr O'Toole.

Ms Barbara Cooney stated that the current budget allocated for the First Regional Workshop was approximately *US\$60,000* which included the travel and DSA costs for three national representatives. Dr O'Toole suggested that further funds may be needed to cover additional costs including the participation of some international keynote speakers and other national representatives. Ms Cooney pointed out that should further national participation be required, financial support would have to be sought from donors to cover the extra costs involved. She recommended that governments contact the donors directly for additional funds. Mr Ahmed Hafiz said that it would be difficult for his government to make a direct approach to donors but he would follow up on this on his return.

Ms Cooney informed the committee that GEF had increased their contributions in recent years to the PDF Block B process and it now stood at *US\$700,000* as opposed to the maximum of *US\$360,000* which was formerly allocated. GEF may be willing to increase their contribution to meet budget shortfalls since they regarded the Bay of Bengal LME as a priority. It was also pointed out that FAO – Bangkok could provide Secretariat support for the Regional Workshop.

Dr O'Toole recommended that a facilitator of international recognition be recruited for the workshop and that he be provided with 2-3 local facilitators (consultants) who would assist in the brainstorming process and in report-back. Ms Cooney suggested that should there be a budget shortfall for the First Regional Workshop, some funds allocated to the Second Regional Workshop could be moved forward and additional support solicited later from donors.

9. A Case History - The Benguela Current LME Programme

An overview of the PDF Block B process of the Benguela Current LME Programme (BCLME) was given by Dr O'Toole in which he outlined the approach taken in developing the TDA and SAP. Essentially, the Sanle process is being adopted with the Bay of Bengal LME programme development i.e. establishment of communication and co-ordination mechanisms, synthesizing and assessing information, drafting a TDA and elements of a SAP and the preparation of a Project Brief for GEF funding. In the

Benguela Current LME, the issues centred mainly around fisheries, the oceanographic environment, and adverse environmental effects and pollution associated with offshore oil and gas exploration and production, diamond mining and coastal developments. Socio-economics of the maritime economy were also assessed. The regional TDA Workshop identified and prioritised key issues, threats and problems within the BCLME and identified the transboundary water related environmental concerns and the sectoral policies that caused them. The three main areas where actions were proposed were 1) sustainable management and utilization of resources 2) assessment of environmental variability, ecosystem impacts and improvement of predictability and 3) maintenance of ecosystem health and management of pollution. The TDA was formulated and prioritized as per:- Issues>problems>causes>impacts>risks>socio-economic consequence >transboundary consequences>activities/solutions> priorities>outputs> costs.

Dr O'Toole pointed out that the BCLME took almost nearly three years to develop before it was finally approved and US\$15 million was secured from GEF for implementation. It was a complicated process which finally resulted in an agreed SAP that was signed by seven Ministers from the three countries of Angola, Namibia and South Africa. The SAP outlines the Principles for Co-operation, the Institutional Arrangements and the Policy Actions required to achieve the overall goal "The Integrated Management of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem".

10. Bay of Bengal Discussion Document

Considerable interaction took place on the discussion document that was presented to the Committee for consideration. On the question of the scope and issues to be addressed by the BOBLME Programme, it was suggested by FAO and the World Bank that efforts should be primarily concentrated on living resources especially fisheries in the coastal and marine environment but also taking into account some of the aspects of environmental degradation and pollution. Ms Cooney felt that it was important to address socio-economics especially in relation to coastal livelihoods. The Committee agreed with this but felt that it should be left to the First Regional Workshop to establish and prioritise the issues.

With regard to the time frame of the PDF Block B process and the request for additional resources, Ms Cooney emphasized that there was flexibility built into the Programme and that the time could be extended and additional technical assistance made available if need be.

The BOBP-IGO was briefly discussed with some countries supporting the need for a formal IGO structure that could continue on the work of the former BOBP programme. Formal backing was yet to be received from a number of countries e.g. Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia but the matter was being taken up at government level.

On the proposal by Dr O'Toole of adopting a sub-regional approach i.e. to formulate two TDA's (one for south Asian countries and one for south east Asian countries), there was general agreement by the Committee that only one regional TDA should be produced and

that the region as a whole including all countries together as well as the entire ecosystem should be addressed as one. Mr Ned CrT (NOAA) strongly endorsed this view of a regional ecosystem approach involving all countries simultaneously in the process. Mr Fernando, Mr U Hla Win and Mr Pattanaik stressed that there were many common fisheries issues throughout the region that were already being discussed and addressed through the BOBP Programme and that there was a strong basis for a unified approach.

It was generally agreed that it would be better to keep the number of participants attending the First Regional Workshop to below one hundred to facilitate effective workshop brainstorming. Ms Cooney suggested that the budget for the First Regional Workshop be revised and circulated to the Committee for discussion and the Mr Pattanaik proposed that the timeframe of the PDF Block B process should be extended to ensure effective programme development.

11. Any Other Business

A series of logos for the Bay of Bengal LME Programme was presented to the Committee and one was selected as the preferred option. This will be slightly modified to include the lettering of the programme around the logo.

An internet web-page is also in the process of being designed and will be available for viewing once there is sufficient information to include on the website. A domain name has been registered (BOBLME.ORG) and a host server has been selected to park the site. It is anticipated that the ProDoc, names of members of the Programme Steering Committee, National Co-ordinators and the National Task Forces as well as the first Regional Workshop report will be lodged on the website by June 2002.

12. Next Steps

The Committee agreed the following:-

- that the organization of the First Regional Workshop was now the priority and the committee requested the Working Group to meet at 18h00 on Tuesday 29th January to discuss the format and organizational aspects of the workshop. Dr O'Toole would liaise with Dr Duangsawasdi on proposed dates and finding a suitable venue in Puket which could accommodate about one hundred persons. He would also approach F AORAP offices in Bangkok to provide assistance to the workshop e.g. the provision of a Secretariat.
- The BOBLME Workplan would be revised incorporating any changes in the light of discussions held at the PSC meeting.
- The National Co-ordinators are to establish a National Task Force prior to the First Regional Workshop

- Malaysia will consult with their government and propose a National Co-ordinator as soon as possible.

13. Close

Dr O'Toole summed up the days proceedings. The Chairperson then thanked everyone for their participation in a very successful First Meeting of the Bay of Bengal LME Steering Committee stating that a lot was achieved and the Committee has taken us in the right direction. Dr O'Toole thanked the Chairperson Mr Pattanaik for a job well done and keeping to the programme schedule.

BAY OF BENGAL LARGE MARINE ECOSYSTEM PROGRAMME**FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
CHENNAI, INDIA, 28TH JANUARY 2002****BANGLADESH**

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