

Participatory Risk Assessment of IUU Fishing in the BOBLME Region

A Dinner Meeting on Curbing of IUU Fishing under the BOBLME Project at the Sidelines of the SEAFDEC-BOBP-IGO Regional MCS Training Programme

Event Time & Date: 1600 Hours November 20, 2024

Location: TD's Dormitory Meeting Room, Samut Prakan, Thailand

Duration: 2.30 hours

1.0 Introduction

The **Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project**, funded by GEF and NORAD, seeks to foster regional cooperation among member countries to address critical transboundary environmental challenges, including Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. IUU fishing remains a significant barrier to sustainable fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal, leading to the depletion of vital fish stocks, resource conflicts, and loss of biodiversity. The BOBLME Project aims to achieve a **20% reduction in IUU fishing** within its program phase by strengthening national and regional Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) systems, enhancing vessel tracking, and implementing regional data-sharing frameworks. In summary, by the end of the project, the following key outputs are anticipated:

1. 20% reduction in IUU **fishing from the BOBLME phase 1 baseline estimate** for selected fisheries.
2. Implement and as necessary **prepare Regional Plan(s) of Action (RPOA)** to address IUU fishing in the BOBLME.
3. **Seven National** Plans of Action (NPOAs-IUU) and national IUU Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) systems and Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) **strengthened.**
4. **Tools for promoting best practices**, such as MCS, Port State Measures (PSM) and traceability of fish and fisheries products (including catch documentation schemes), policies and national actions, to combat IUU fishing developed and implemented in national pilot/investment projects. Countries supported in acceding to the PSMA.
5. **Regional capacity development programme on port inspections, MCS and traceability** implemented with 20 national fisheries staff trained in each country.
6. **Gender is mainstreamed** into actions to combat and eliminate IUU Fishing in BOBLME.

However, establishing the baseline of IUU fishing from which the progress can be monitored in challenging. A study commissioned by FAO in this regard highlighted increasing regional

commitment due to factors like economic pressures from export markets (e.g., the EU), public demand for sustainable seafood, and international obligations under agreements like the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA). IUU fishing impacts resources, leads to economic losses, and creates conflicts within national fisheries, especially between small-scale and large-scale fishers.

Key Observations and Current IUU Status

The advisory note underscores the difficulty in quantifying IUU fishing due to its covert nature, making it hard to measure accurately. A baseline study by APFIC in 2016 and a later assessment by Wilcox et al. (2021) estimate illegal fishing volumes in the Bay of Bengal at around **716,000 to 1,363,000 tonnes (Table 1)**. Overcapacity and overfishing, particularly from trawlers and cross-border incursions, are identified as significant drivers. Despite improved regional MCS efforts, including enhanced port controls and vessel registration, IUU fishing persists.

Study	IUU catch Tonnes		Value (million USD)		% of annual catch reported to FAO	Coverage (area/location)
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	%	
Meere & Lack, 2008	3,400,000 – 8,100,000		-		8 – 16%	Asia-Pacific. Case studies and examples. Did not make an aggregated estimate (Area 71)
Agnew et al 2009	467,865	970,589	421	874	8 – 16%	Eastern Indian Ocean (larger than BOBLME)
Agnew et al 2009	785,897	1,729,588	707	1,557		Western Central Pacific
APFIC review 2016 (Un-published Presented at APFIC 34th Session)	716,071	745,814	1,128	1,854	10%	Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea and Malacca Straits. Focussed on illegal activity, primarily by foreign vessels. No extrapolation.
	777,478	940,498	935	1,810	8 – 10%	South China Sea, Gulf of Thailand, Arafura-Timor Sea, Banda Sea, Savu Sea, Sulu-Celebes, Sulawesi Sea, Makassar Strait,

						Molucca Sea, Halmahera Strait
BOBLME, 2015	2,169,766	6,540,997				Asian region. Whole of country EEZ so includes large areas outside of BOB. The figure is the estimate of illegal catch for the countries in Bay of Bengal. The study also estimated unreported catch. Data was extrapolated.
Wilcox et al., 2021	1,363,000		4,921.3		21%	Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. Focussed on illegal activity, primarily by foreign vessels. Data was extrapolated.
Spijkers et al., 2023	1,320,921		1,301.1		28%	East and West Indian Ocean. Use similar methodology to CSIRO 2019

2.0 Objectives of the Event

In the above background, participants from the regional training programme along with officials from FAO, SEAFDEC and BOBP-IGO will meet on 20th November 2024 for a dinner meeting to discuss the following issues:

- **Data validation:** Are the IUU hotspots identified in the earlier studies still valid? If there are changes, then what are these changes.
- **Risk assessment:** Use a risk assessment methodology proposed by FAO to assess the national risks of IUU fishing.
- **National updates:** provide update on national activities during last 5 years to curb IUU fishing.
- **Proposed a structure for BOBLME Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing** to monitor progress in implementation of NPOA and RPOA-IUU, plan and support capacity building activities and improve country-to-country collaboration.

Agenda for the Dinner Meeting on IUU Fishing (20th November 2024)

Duration (hours)	Activity	Details
1600 - 1610	Welcome and Opening Remarks	BOBP-IGO & SEAFDEC
1610 - 1620	Presentation on IUU Hotspot Data by FAO Overview of previously identified hotspots and recent updates.	Simon Funge-Smith, Consultant, FAO
1620 - 1640	Group Discussion on IUU Hotspots Assess relevance of existing hotspots, discuss changes, and note new areas of concern.	Participants
1640 - 1650	Applying the FAO Risk Assessment Methodology: Explanation of the proposed methodology for assessing national IUU risks.	Simon Funge-Smith (FAO Consultant)
1650 - 1710	Interactive Risk Assessment: Participants apply the methodology to their country contexts and provide feedback.	Participants
1710 - 1750	National Updates on IUU Control Efforts: Recent national efforts to combat IUU fishing, highlighting best practices, challenges, and lessons learned.	Country Representatives
1750 - 1805	Structuring the BOBLME Regional Working Group on IUU Fishing	Angela Lentisco (FAORAP), R Mukherjee, BOBP-IGO
1805 - 1820	Feedback on Input on the structure, priority areas for collaboration, and capacity-building needs.	Participants
1820 - 1830	Wrap-Up and Next Steps	Concluding Remarks by SEAFDEC and BOBP-IGO Summary of key points, agreed actions, and a roadmap for BOBLME IUU initiatives.
1830 -	Cocktail Dinner	Hosted by Director, BOBP-IGO

ALL PARTICIPANTS OF THE REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND THE SIDE-EVENT