

Taking the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to the Grassroots



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Consultation with Stakeholders in
Tamil Nadu, India
Chennai, 29 June 2007

**Bay of Bengal Programme
Inter-Governmental Organisation
Chennai - 600 018, India**

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Preface

This is the report of a consultation held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, on June 29, 2007, organized by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO). It was meant to popularize and improve awareness among stakeholders of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Some 46 persons – officials from the Department of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, and some 25 fishers of the state – took part.

The report presents the consultation's deliberations. Of particular interest are the many suggestions and recommendations made by fishers not merely about the Code but about many aspects of small-scale fisheries and its governance as pertaining to their work and livelihood. An annexure to the Code summarizes the Technical Guidelines and the International Plans of Action which are a part of the Code.

The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, adopted on October 31, 1995 by more than 170 members of the FAO, has been described as "one of the most important international instruments devised for management of our planet's aquatic resources." A collection of principles, goals and elements of action, it sets out standards of behaviour for responsible practices in fisheries. The aim: to ensure effective conservation, management and development of aquatic resources.

The Code is voluntary in nature and directed at all stakeholders in fisheries – its production, processing and marketing; its governance and administration.

To promote knowledge of the Code among fisheries officials and scientists, the BOBP-IGO has held seminars in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives. It has published and disseminated booklets on the Code and a concise version of it in English; has organized translations of concise versions in the vernacular of all coastal states in India (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Oriya, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Bengali), also in Sinhala and Divehi. The 2007 desk calendar brought out by the BOBP-IGO focuses on the Code of Conduct. A few thousand posters in colour publicizing the Code have been published and disseminated.

Interaction and discussion of the Code with the primary producers, the fishers, is essential. The consultation described in this report was one of the first in this direction.

The BOBP-IGO is a regional fisheries body which presently covers four countries around the Bay of Bengal – Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The BOBP-IGO, which formally came into being in 2003, plays a catalytic and consultative role in developing coastal fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal to help improve the conditions of small-scale fisherfolk in member-countries.

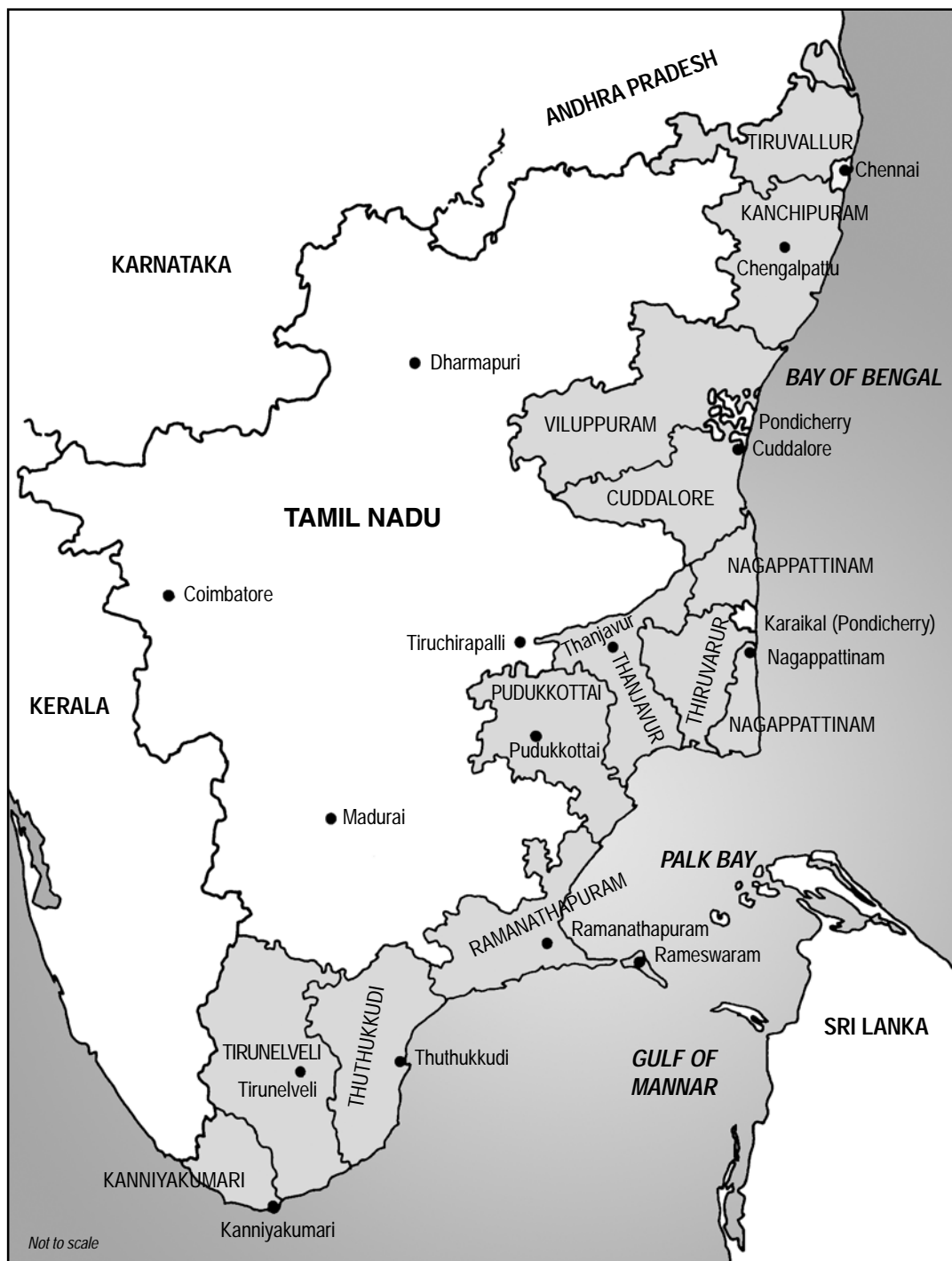


Y S Yadava
Director, BOBP-IGO



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Taking the Code to the Grassroots

Report of a one-day consultation with stakeholders, including fisher communities of Tamil Nadu, on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

It was both substantive and productive. And for once, fishers held the stage. It was wonderful to see fishers from Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu speaking with flair and feeling on matters that affect them most – fisheries and their livelihoods.

The date: June 29, 2007. The occasion: a one-day consultation in Chennai with fishers, NGO representatives, government officials, and other stakeholders. Subject: The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its implementation in Tamil Nadu. Organiser: The BOBP-IGO. Highlight: Release of Tamil-language versions of the Technical Guidelines on Marine Fisheries relating to the Code of Conduct. Participation: 46 persons, including some 25 fishers.

Dr Y S Yadava, Director, BOBP-IGO, welcomed the gathering. In his inaugural address, Mr Ajay Bhattacharya, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, urged the Government of Tamil Nadu to ensure that the fishing community reaped tangible benefits from implementation of the Code of Conduct.

Mr Bhattacharya pointed out that fishing areas and fishery resources are limited. While marine fish production has remained constant during the past decade, the number of fishers and fishing boats has gone up alarmingly, and fishers' incomes have gone down. Result: fishermen have taken to fishing with nets of smaller mesh sizes. The Technical Guidelines of the Code of Conduct translated into Tamil by the BOBP-IGO would enlarge understanding of the Guidelines and induce better awareness among fishermen.

The Tamil versions of a set of Technical Guidelines of the Code of Conduct, consisting of nine booklets, were then officially released. The first copies were presented to the Joint Secretary, to a representative of the Director of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, and a representative of the fisher community. Two sets of the booklets were distributed to every participant present.

Dr Yadava provided an overview of the Code through a powerpoint presentation. He recalled that the Code says "The right to fish carries with it the obligation to do so in a responsible manner." He said the Code contains 12 articles plus two annexes. The FAO has also elaborated Technical Guidelines (TG) on the Code dealing with various aspects of marine fisheries. He explained the meaning of 12 TGs which cover fishing operations; vessel monitoring system; a precautionary approach to capture fisheries and species introductions; integration of fisheries into coastal area management; fisheries management; responsible fish utilization; indicators for sustainable development of marine capture fisheries; International Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of sea birds in long line fisheries; IPOA for the conservation and management of sharks; IPOA on the management of fishing capacity; IPOA to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and management objectives.

Dr Yadava also analysed responses to a questionnaire on the Code of Conduct mailed a few months earlier to some 50 fishers and fisheries officials of Tamil Nadu.

- 17 percent of those who responded said they had read the concise version of the Code of Conduct, in either English or Tamil.
- What did they regard as the most important messages of the Code? In order of priority, it was fisheries management, fishing operations, post-harvest technology, education and training, sea safety, communication, conservation.
- 83 percent of those who responded, said the Code needed to be adapted to meet local situations and requirements in Tamil Nadu.

- They were willing to assist implementation of the Code through the government, or through NGOs, village committees, social workers, fishermen and heads of village or fisher associations.

Dr S Vijaykumar, Tamil Nadu's Director of Fisheries, detailed the government's schemes for the welfare of fishing communities. Examples:

- Sea ranching of shrimps (*Penaeus monodon*). As many as 45.5 million seed at a cost of Rs 1.35 crores have already been released. Fishers say the shrimp population in inshore areas has gone up as a result. Such ranching will help rejuvenate shrimp stocks.
- The Government does not permit shrimp farming in mangrove areas. A seasonal ban on mechanized fishing has been in force during the past few years. (The ban is from April 15 to May 29 on the east coast of Tamil Nadu, June 15 to July 31 on the west coast. During this period, diesel is not supplied to boats. Fishermen have been co-operating with the ban order.)
- Fishing harbour management committees have been constituted to maintain fishing harbours in the State as per international standards. The DOF recently conducted a two-day workshop with stakeholders on proper management of fishing harbours and fish landing centers (FLCs). The Department will soon bring out a manual for management of fishing harbours and fishing landing centers, a draft is ready.
- To enhance fish resources, the DOF has taken up a programme on artificial reefs (ARs) with the help of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) and the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Co-operative Federation. The Department has implemented this scheme in 10 places during the past three years. Fishermen have reported an increase in fish biomass from areas where the reefs are located. The CMFRI is now trying to involve local NGOs in this programme. The Department has given fishers solar dryers, and trained them to reduce fish spoilage.
- Other activities: promotion of tuna fishing to reduce pressure on inshore areas and encourage diversification; setting up of the Fishermen Welfare Board and Fisheries Advisory Committees; welfare schemes such as housing, insurance and saving-cum-relief; strengthening of fisheries research and statistics; a ban on the fishing of endangered species such as sea horses and chanks; a ban on pair trawling to conserve resources.

Dr Vijaykumar said the DOF would like mesh size regulations to curb juvenile fishing to be enforced at the manufacturing stage itself – by the manufacturing units.

Dr Vijaykumar said that a project on development of fisheries policy in Tamil Nadu, to be funded by the World Bank and executed by the FAO, would commence soon. The project could be a role model for other states too. The State Government would also receive Rs 12 crores from Japan under a World Bank Project to set up a modern fish processing complex.

The Directorate of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, has set up a 'Touch Screen' system, with the help of the Electronic Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT). (Just touch the screen with a pen or pencil to get highlighted information on various aspects of fisheries.) The DOF is also trying to provide fishers with seamless communication units, which will be equipped with an inbuilt Global Positioning System. ELCOT believes that VHF communication would be the best.

Dr Vijaykumar said that 90 per cent of the boats in Tamil Nadu are now registered. Such registration, and display of registration numbers on boats, is compulsory. Life jackets are being provided to fishers, also subsidies for ice boxes and nets. 360° lanterns will be given to fishers to ensure their safety during night fishing.

Dr Vijaykumar said the DOF had imposed a fine on fishing boats straying across the India-Sri Lanka international border, but this order had been stayed by a court. Assistance for sales tax exemption had

been given to boats registered *before* the Tenth Five Year Plan. Similar assistance for boats registered *during* the period had been requested from the Joint Secretary.

Following Dr Vijaykumar's detailed overview, the fishing community expressed its views frankly – not just about the Code but about all aspects of small-scale fisheries and their livelihoods. Their remarks and suggestions, and those of other participants, have been grouped under six major heads.

(i) Popularizing and raising awareness about the Code of Conduct

1. Hold grassroots-level meetings regularly with stakeholders.
2. Create and raise awareness about the Code through street meetings, beach meetings, theatre, street plays, folk songs, cultural programmes. Involve community leaders and the media in these meetings.
3. Popularize the Code in villages through TV, ads and pamphlets in public places like bus stands and cinema halls (especially in coastal areas), and slide shows on conservation.
4. Make the Code of Conduct a part of the school curriculum, so that children learn early about conservation and sustainable fishing methods. Use signboards to teach students.
5. Conduct meetings at district/ taluk/ village level to create awareness.
6. Send fishers abroad, particularly to other developing countries, so that they learn about developments there.
7. Inform fishers about the depletion of shark fisheries, about how birds are being caught by longlines.
8. Organizations like Fishery Survey of India should contact local leaders and through them hold meetings with fishers.
9. Distribute copies of the Technical Guidelines far and wide.

(ii) Pollution control

10. Stop water pollution in Tuticorin caused by fly ash from the thermal plant.
11. Stop the release of chemicals into the waters by other industries in Tuticorin, and the discharge of industrial and thermal effluents into the sea. All this is depleting fishery resources and affecting fish breeding. It is even affecting the health of the community.
12. Stop the excessive catch of juveniles.
13. Combat the effects of the atomic power plant, which is affecting marine resources.
14. Too many prawn farms, they are harming fishery resources through release of untreated farm effluents and chemicals. Check and monitor such farms.
15. Put an end to prawn farming in mangrove areas.

(iii) Regulation of gear and mesh size

16. Stop purse-seine operations. They are catching small-sized fishes and are impairing fisheries as a whole.
17. Ban trawling, it is disturbing the eco-system.
18. Permit pair trawling with increased mesh size.
19. Put an end to irresponsible fishing and catches of juveniles. Traditional fishermen are doing this, through methods like purse-seining, mechanized fishermen through small mesh sizes. The government is not tackling the problem.
20. Ban dynamite fishing.
21. Introduce mesh-size control.

22. Stop the use of machine-made nets or regulate mesh sizes of manufacturing nets at the factory itself – it is depleting fishery resources.
23. Hook and line and gill nets are the best gear for fishing. 60 mm mesh size should be used for nylon nets, 120 mm for HDP.
24. Nets of small-mesh size should not be manufactured at all. Cotton nets are good for the fishery.

(iv) Safety at Sea

25. Insure FRP boats.
26. An appeal to the Coast Guard – don't frighten fishermen.

(v) General conservation measures

27. Undertake sea ranching all along the coastline. Done in a few areas, it will not be very beneficial.
28. Implement all acts and rules strictly.
29. Address the problem of fish discards at sea.
30. Fix the quantity of fish to be captured. When a fish ban is in force in Tamil Nadu during the monsoon, Kerala fishers come to Kanyakumari for fishing. Impose a strict ban on fishing for 60 days.
31. Consult all fisher representatives about mesh size before amending the 1983 Act.
32. The ranching programmes of Tamil Nadu fisheries – a very good initiative. But pond rearing in these programmes is not satisfactory. Fishermen should be allowed to take active part in the programme.
33. Create awareness among fishers who have been depleting fishing resources through wrong fishing methods – both mechanized and traditional fishermen are offenders.
34. Police and village committees should regulate fishing. The Government and the Gulf of Mannar protection committee should work together to implement the law and prevent any fishing in the Gulf of Mannar biosphere.
35. Curb poaching of our resources by foreign vessels. Curb poaching in Tamil Nadu by fishermen from neighbouring states.
36. Stop the fishing of juveniles and small fishes.
37. Divide the fishing ban period on the east coast into two periods — one in April, another in September.
38. Introduce a system whereby country craft can fish for four days a week and mechanized boats for three days. This will help conservation.
39. Introduce a token system for sale of diesel to mechanized boats on the basis of criteria such as vessel size, fishing area and number of crew. This will help regulation and monitoring by the authorities and prevent misuse of diesel purchase.
40. Encourage community-based fisheries management.
41. Address the impact of the Sethu Samudaram project on fishery resources.

(vi) Government support

42. Subsidize the kerosene used in OBMs. Extend diesel subsidy to traditional craft.
43. Construct exclusive fish landing centers for traditional craft. Improve the conditions of all fish landing centers.
44. Provide financial assistance for deep sea fishing.

45. Diesel makes fishing un-economical. It takes up 70 percent of the expense of mechanized boat fishing. Develop fuel alternatives like gas conversion, etc.
46. Provide subsidies for kattumaram fishing.
47. Provide assistance for FRP boats and diesel, and insurance for these boats.
48. Mr Saravanan of DHAN Foundation, Chennai, said his organization carried out several extension and awareness programmes and had started a number of IT centers in villages. Literature published by BOBP-IGO, including the Technical Guidelines of the Code, could be uploaded on the website of the DHAN Foundation, so that users of the IT Centres could access them. He asked for a set of CDs of the Technical Guidelines.

Mr Saravanan said that existing traditional knowledge in fisheries, which was considerable, should be tapped for resource conservation. The Code of Conduct could be incorporated in traditional fishing practices.

49. Mr C M Muralidharan, FAO Consultant, United Nations Tsunami Recovery Support Project, referred to the catch of juveniles by fishers using small-mesh sized nets. He suggested that controls on such gear be introduced at the manufacturing end. Likewise, marketing controls would put an end to the trade in juveniles and small species. Policy should be formulated in consultation with stakeholders at different levels. He said the study on the use of the token system for diesel purchase in Palk Bay could help reduce fishing pressure by trawlers. The study was being carried out by the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies with assistance from Netherlands.
50. Dr H Kasim, Principal Scientist, CMFRI, discussed implementation of the Code in Tamil Nadu. He said that fishermen should exercise self-control and avoid overfishing, they should realize its repercussions. Institutions like the CMFRI and the Fishery Survey of India (FSI) were willing to extend the results of their scientific research; fishers should invite the experts to their villages for meetings. He said 45-day ban on mechanized fishing in the east coast (April-May) and the west coast (July-August) is helping conservation by reducing fishing effort.
51. Deputy Commandant Anupam Rai of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), Chennai said that the ICG interacts regularly with the fisher community, especially on safety at sea. He would inform the ICG headquarters about the publication of the Technical Guidelines, which would be very useful. He said that the emergency contact No 1718 for distress at sea is now supported by Public Sector telephone companies like VSNL & BSNL. The ICG is also getting the six-digit number 155211 changed to 1554, a number already in use in Saurashtra. He said the ICG is working with the Indian Space Research Organisation on communication aspects; it is interacting with Bharat Heavy Electronics Limited (BHEL) for the manufacture of low-cost EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons), and with Antariksh/Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) on a low-cost Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). A VMS hub is being set up in Porbandar. So far 15 EPIRBs have been set up on boats on a trial basis. The ICG is also working with mobile companies for setting up a distress alert system.
Mr Rai requested fishers to be accurate while reporting fishers missing at sea. The ICG should be given regular updates on the status of a missing boat, say every eight or 10 hours. He said fishers don't seem to bother much about safety. They don't carry life jackets, and don't wear them when they do.
He said the sea-worthiness of fishing vessels constructed after the tsunami was questionable. He complained that some fishers operate close to data bouys and damage the equipment – the ICG has received some complaints on the issue from the National Institute of Ocean Technology. Fishing close to data buoys and oil rigs should be avoided. In fact, fishing was

prohibited within a range of 1 000 meters from oil rigs. Many boats did not bear clear registration numbers. In conclusion, he urged the fishing community to give the ICG information on what was happening at sea, it would serve as intelligence support.

52. Mr P Sivaraj, Zonal Director, FSI, described the awareness campaigns carried out by his organization on safety at sea, including popularization of the Code of Conduct. A meeting on sea safety was held recently at Marakkanam, Tamil Nadu and provisions of the Code were explained to fishers.
53. Mr R Ravikumar, Regional Coordinator, FAO Safety at Sea Project, said he was most impressed by the views of fishers at the consultation. Their participation was necessary for policy-making, and should be encouraged at the stage of policy formulation as well as implementation. He referred to Article 6 and Articles 8 and 8.25 of the Code, which concern safety at sea.
54. Mr Muthuswamy, Joint Director of Fisheries, Tamil Nadu, said that while issuing tokens to mechanized boats for supply of diesel, the authorities concerned should ensure that various requirements — such as registration, insurance, etc – were complied with. Mesh sizes should be controlled to prevent catch of juveniles. The Code of Conduct and its Technical Guidelines should be presented in more simple form, such as comic books. Village administrative committees should be utilized for popularizing the Code, and in general for implementing rules and regulations.

Conclusion

Fisher-participants said the consultation was very useful and would help more effective rehabilitation of fishers. The work initiated by the consultation should continue. In fact, more such consultations should be organised.

Many fishers said that the tsunami was a calamity but an opportunity as well. New programmes for fishers should be considered. The tsunami has brought about a situation where there are no labourers any more; those who never owned boats now do. It has been a great social leveler, and given many poor fishermen rich opportunities. These should be put to good use to bring about a better society.

In concluding remarks, Mr Bhattacharya said that the recent marine census conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture provided a good idea of the size of our fishing fleet. Marine fish production has remained constant for many years, it should be developed sustainably. He requested the Tamil Nadu Government to do what it could to implement the Code and its guidelines.

Dr Y S Yadava proposed a vote of thanks.

Technical Guidelines and International Plans of Action on Marine Fisheries

Technical Guideline 1- Fishing Operation:

These Technical Guidelines elaborate the provisions of the Code in relation to Fishing Operations and are addressed to States, international organizations, fisheries management bodies and fishers and their organizations. The Guidelines cover subjects such as fisheries protection, fishing activities, energy optimization, design, construction and modification of fishing harbours and landing places, etc.

Technical Guideline 1 Suppl.1- Fishing Operation- Vessel Monitoring System:

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) has been considered as an effective tool for Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS). These Technical Guidelines provide guidance to fisheries administrators considering implementing VMS in their fishery management system and to all other personnel involved in fisheries MCS.

Technical Guideline 2- Precautionary Approach to Capture Fisheries and Species Introductions:

These Technical Guidelines are aimed at raising the awareness about the need for precaution in fisheries, by providing the stakeholders with background information on the main issues and implications. They also provide practical guidance on how to apply such precaution.

Technical Guideline 3- Integration of Fisheries into Coastal Area Management:

Most capture fisheries are based on coastal stocks; other exploit offshore stocks, which spend part of their lives in inshore water. These Guidelines address the issue of how the fisheries sector can be integrated into coastal management planning so that interactions between the fisheries sector and other sectors can be taken into account in the establishment of management policy and practice with regard to coastal resources.

Technical Guideline 4- Fisheries Management:

These Technical Guidelines provide a background to the need for fisheries management and an introduction to the activities encompassed by fisheries management. They introduce the major constraints experienced in fisheries management and some of the related fundamental concepts. The Guidelines also examine biological, environmental, technological, socio-cultural, economic constraints and concepts and management process.

Technical Guideline 7- Responsible Fish Utilization:

The need for responsibility in the post-harvest sector of the fish producing industry is detailed in these Technical Guidelines. The industry that produces fish for food has three major areas of responsibility: (i) to the consumer to ensure that it is safe to eat and is of expected quality and nutritional value, (ii) to the resource to ensure that it is not wasted and (iii) to the environment to ensure that negative impacts are minimized.

Technical Guideline 8- Indicators for Sustainable Development of Marine Capture Fisheries:

These Technical Guidelines provide general information on the issue of sustainable development of fisheries in order to clarify why a system of indicators is needed to monitor the contribution of fisheries to sustainable development. They are complementary to the Guidelines of Fisheries Management and provide information on the type of indicators and related reference points needed.

International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Sea birds in Long Line Fisheries:

This International Plan of action (IPOA) brings out a set of activities for all the States where fishermen engage in longline fisheries. This includes an assessment of whether a problem exists with respect to the incidental catch of seabirds in longline fishery, adopting a national plan of action and procedures for review and reporting requirements.

International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks:

This IPOA applies to all States whose fishermen engage in shark fisheries. The IPOA sets out activities, which include assessment of whether a problem exists with respect to sharks, adopting a national plan of action for the conservation and management of sharks as well as procedures for national reviews and reporting requirements.

International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity:

This IPOA applies to all the States whose fishermen engage in capture fisheries. It describes the objectives, nature and scope of the IPOA, and identifies urgent actions and mechanisms to promote implementation. The urgent actions include assessment and monitoring of fishing capacity and preparation and implementation of national plans.

International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing:

This IPOA, applicable to all States and entities and to all fishers, provides the nature and scope of IUU fishing. It also details the IPOA's objectives, principles and implementation of measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.

Stopping Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing:

This booklet in a simple and non-technical manner describes some important aspects of the IPOA to prevent deter and eliminate IUU Fishing. The objectives of this Booklet are to familiarize States and others with the tools for use in dealing with IUU fishing and to suggest which tools to use in particular circumstances and to provide guidance on how to use the tools effectively.

Agenda

29 June 2007 (Friday)	
0900 – 0930	Registration
0930 – 1000	<i>Session I: Opening Remarks and Release of Technical Guidelines</i>
0930 – 0935	Lighting of the Traditional Lamp
0935 – 0940	Welcome and Introductory Remarks: BOBP-IGO
0940 – 0945	Introductory Remarks: Government of Tamil Nadu
0945 – 0955	Address by Chairperson: Joint Secretary (Fisheries), Government of India
0955 – 1000	Release of Technical Guidelines
1000 – 1030	<i>Group Photograph Tea/ Coffee</i>
1030 – 1300	<i>Session II: The Code of Conduct Responsible Fisheries and its Implementation</i>
1030 – 1040	Overview of the Code and its Technical Guidelines: BOBP-IGO
1040 – 1050	The Status of Implementation of the CCRF in Tamil Nadu: Department of Fisheries, Government of Tamil Nadu
1050 – 1300	Statements by representatives of the Fisher Groups/ NGOs/ Other invitees
1300 – 1400	<i>Lunch</i>
1400 – 1530	<i>Session III: Plenary Session</i>
1400 – 1530	Discussion on Major Recommendations made by the Stakeholders and their Adoption
1530 – 1540	Concluding Remarks by Chairperson
1540 – 1545	Vote of Thanks: BOBP-IGO
1545 – 1615	<i>Tea/ Coffee</i>
1615	<i>Participants Departure</i>



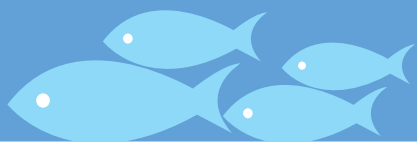
List of Participants

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The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is one of the most important international instruments devised for the management of the living aquatic resources of our planet. This landmark instrument is voluntary, standard-setting and is directed at everyone engaged in the conservation, management and development of fisheries.

This is the report of a consultation held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, on June 29, 2007 to popularize and improve awareness among stakeholders of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
