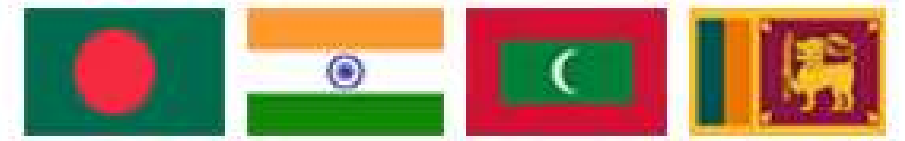




**BOBP** For Sustainable Fisheries  
**BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME**  
Inter-Governmental Organisation



# Managing the Unmanaged: Implementing a Regional Plan of Action on IUU Fishing in the Bay of Bengal Region

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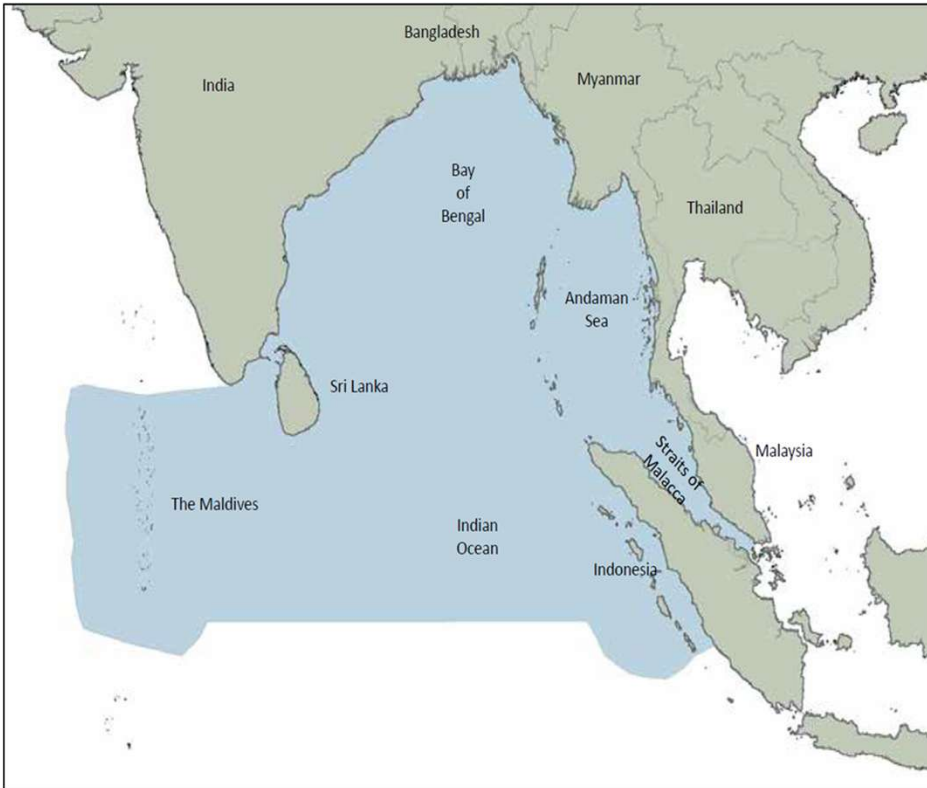
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Presentation prepared for the IOCINDIO Workshop on Strengthening Ocean Sustainability  
19 – 20 May 2025, UAE



# BOBP – Inter Governmental Organisation

*A Regional Fisheries Body committed to facilitate evidence-based fisheries management*



Bangladesh  
India  
Maldives  
Sri Lanka

} Contracting  
Parties

## Objective

To enhance **co-operation** among member countries, other countries and organisations in the region and provide technical and management advisory services for sustainable marine fisheries development and management in the BOB region.

## Themes

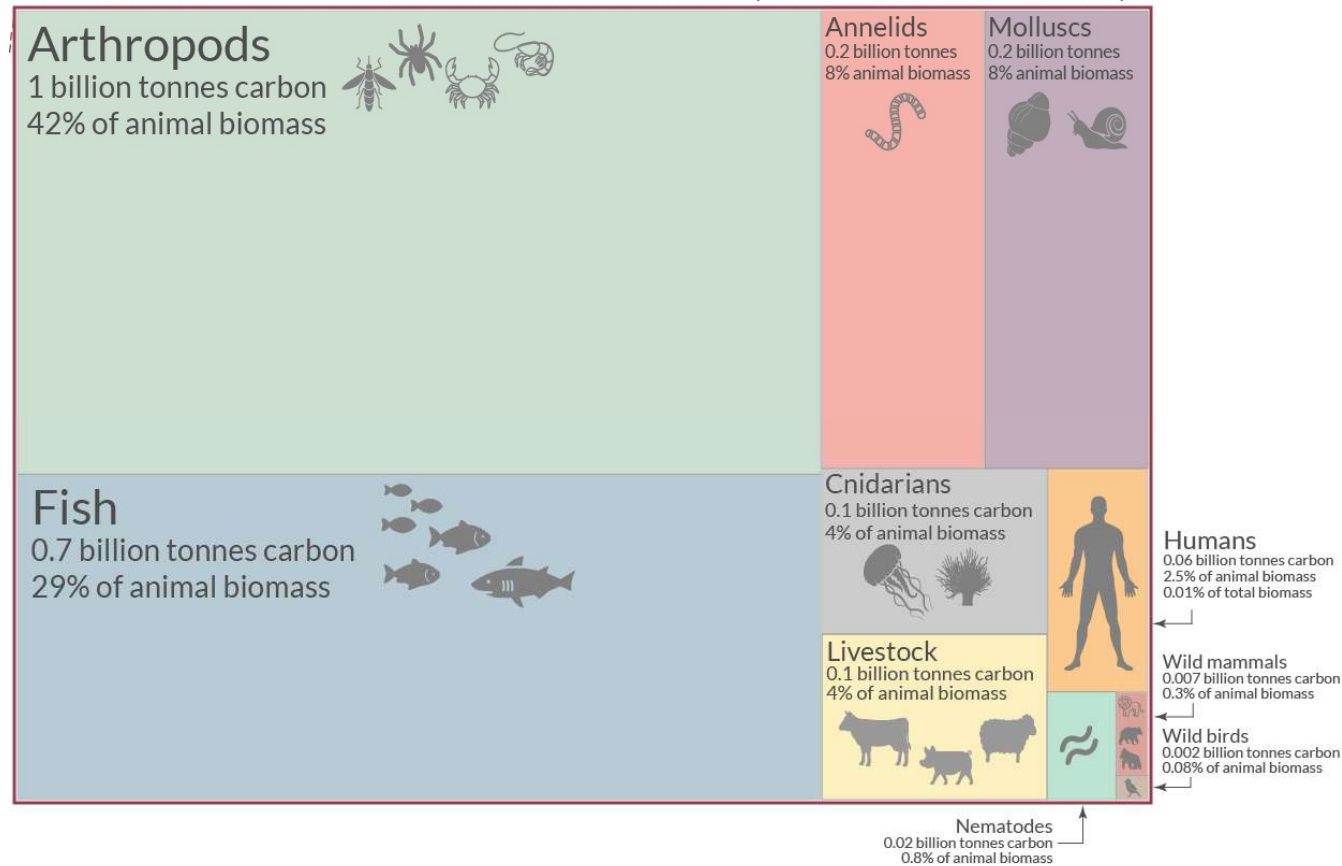
- Fisheries Resource Management
- Ecosystem & Biodiversity Conservation
- Livelihoods and Occupational Safety

## Verticals

- Research 4 Development
- Policy Advocacy
- Capacity Development

# If earth was an animal democracy, fishes could have been the ruler of the earth, but...

## Animal biomass: 2 billion tonnes of carbon (0.4% of total biomass)

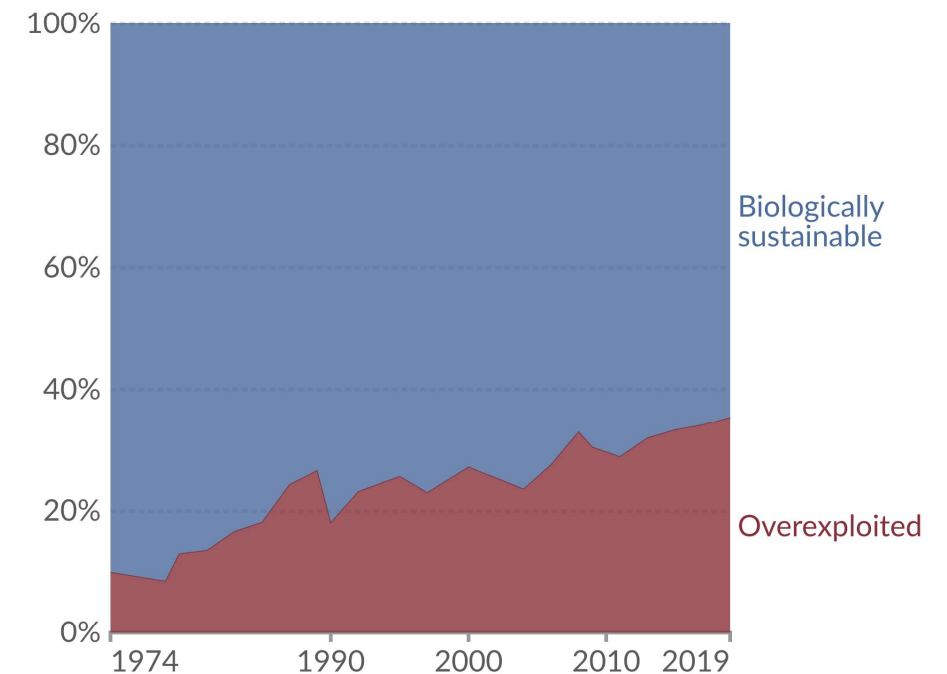


Hannah Ritchie (2019) - "Humans make up just 0.01% of Earth's life — what's the rest?" Published online at OurWorldinData.org. Retrieved from: 'https://ourworldindata.org/life-on-earth' [Online Resource]

## Status of the world's fish stocks

Our World  
in Data

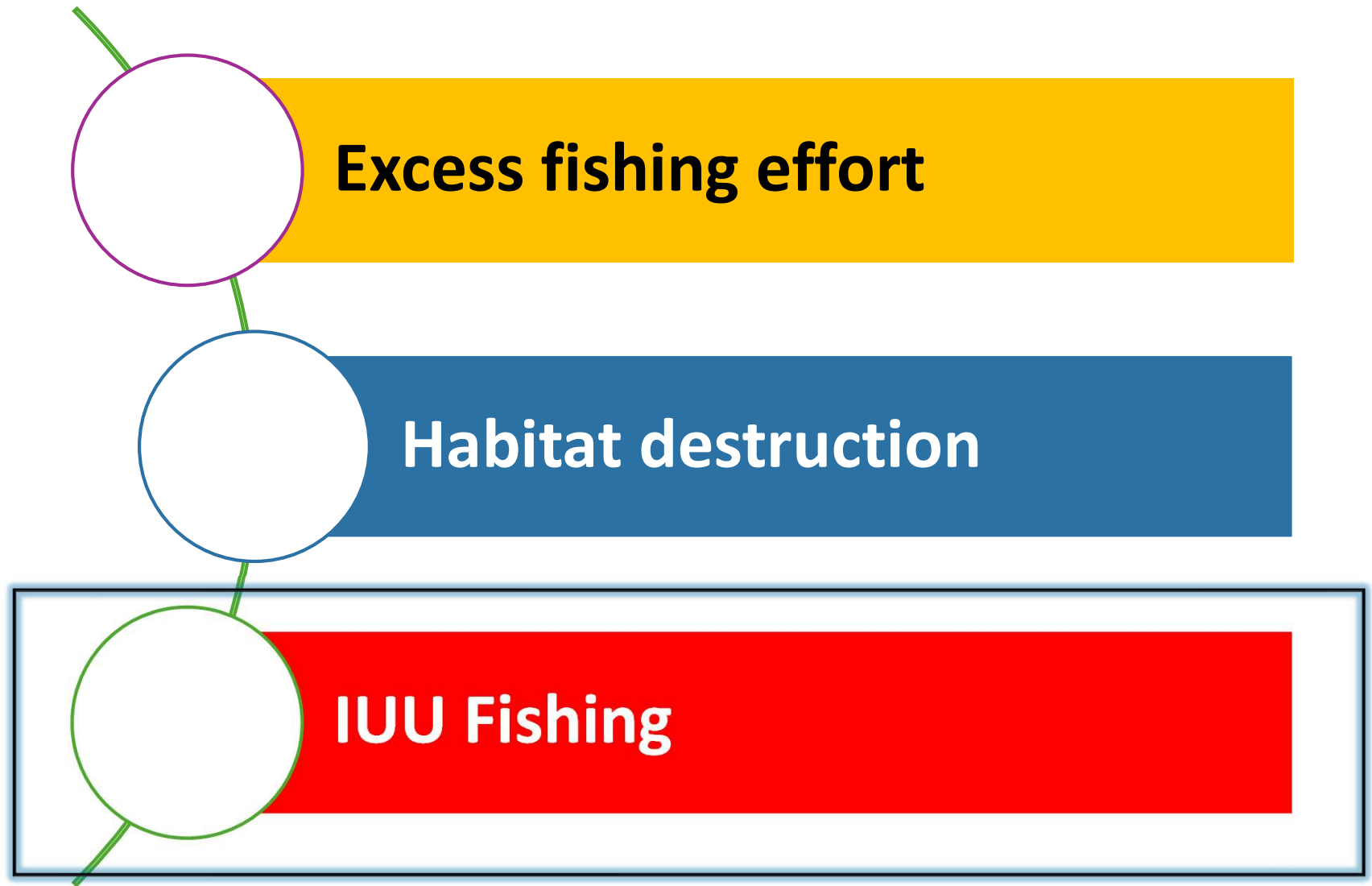
Fish stocks become overexploited when fish are caught at a rate higher than the population can support.



Data source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2023) CC BY

Note: Only data on assessed fish stocks are included here; many fish stocks across Africa, Asia, and South America have not been assessed.

# What's driving fishes to margins?



# IUU fishing accelerate global fisheries sustainability by undermining its all three pillars.

- **Three pillars of sustainability**

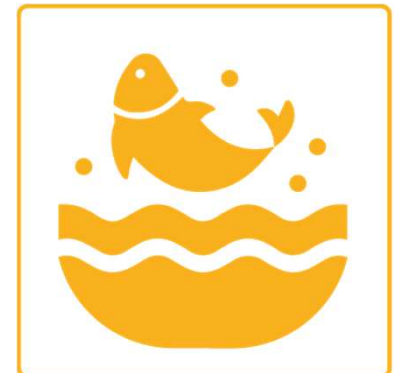
- Biological – undermines conservation and management measures
- Economic – undermines fishing rights, increases management costs, disrupt local market
- Social – Likely to impact artisanal and marginal fisheries, coastal food security, promote unsafe practices and accentuate poverty.

**SDG 14**



**Challenge 4: Develop a sustainable, resilient and equitable ocean economy**

**Challenge 3:  
Sustainably nourish  
the global population**



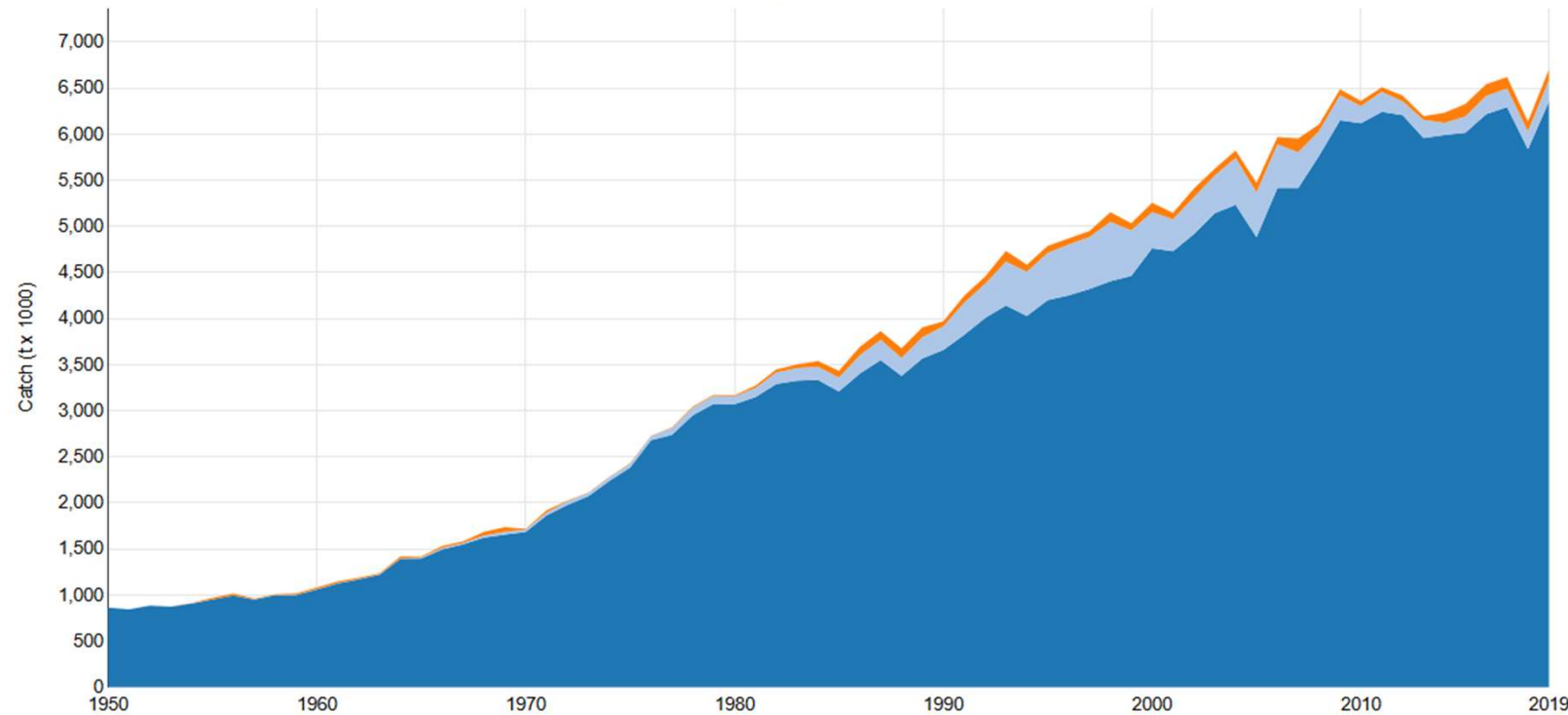
# State of fisheries in Bay of Bengal

**Between 1950 to present catch increased by 800%**

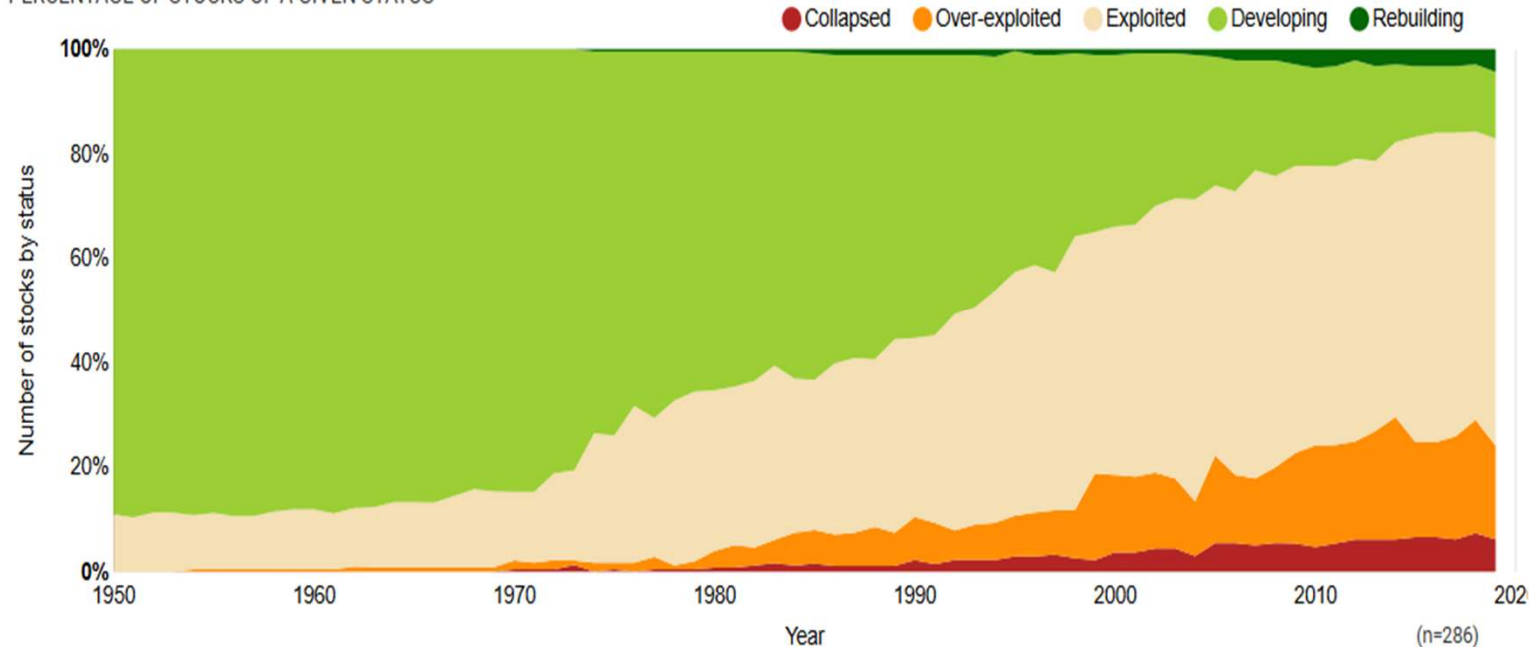
**The catch rate accelerated during 1970s with widespread mechanization of fishing fleet.**

**With technological progress effort is still growing though catch seems to be flattening.**

**Most exploited fish stocks were not assessed. But even limited data shows 24% stocks are over-exploited or collapsed.**



PERCENTAGE OF STOCKS OF A GIVEN STATUS



## Nearly half of the global fishing fleet own by the Bay of Bengal rim countries making them amongst the top fishing nations

Country	Share (2023)	Rank (2023)	Economy	FV-Powered	FV-Non-Powered	Fishers
Indonesia	9.21%	2	Developing	4,60,658	1,65,050	28,12,291
India	5.09%	5	Developing	1,43,020	50,567	87,16,117
Thailand	1.70%	15	Developing	11,237		1,95,629
Malaysia	1.60%	17	Developing	47,790	3,155	1,29,800
Myanmar	0.90%	22	Developing	17,288	5,122	
Bangladesh	0.85%	25	Developing	33,093	34,810	17,25,976
Sri Lanka	0.37%	45	Developing	31,376	27,469	2,83,653
Maldives	0.20%	61	Developing	17,000		2,500
<b>Total</b>				<b>7,61,462</b>	<b>2,86,173</b>	<b>1,38,65,966</b>

Source: FAO Fisheries & Aquaculture Yearbook 2021. For Maldives from country presentation

The Region Is a **Global Fisheries hotspot**



Fisheries Are Critical to **Coastal Livelihoods and Employment**



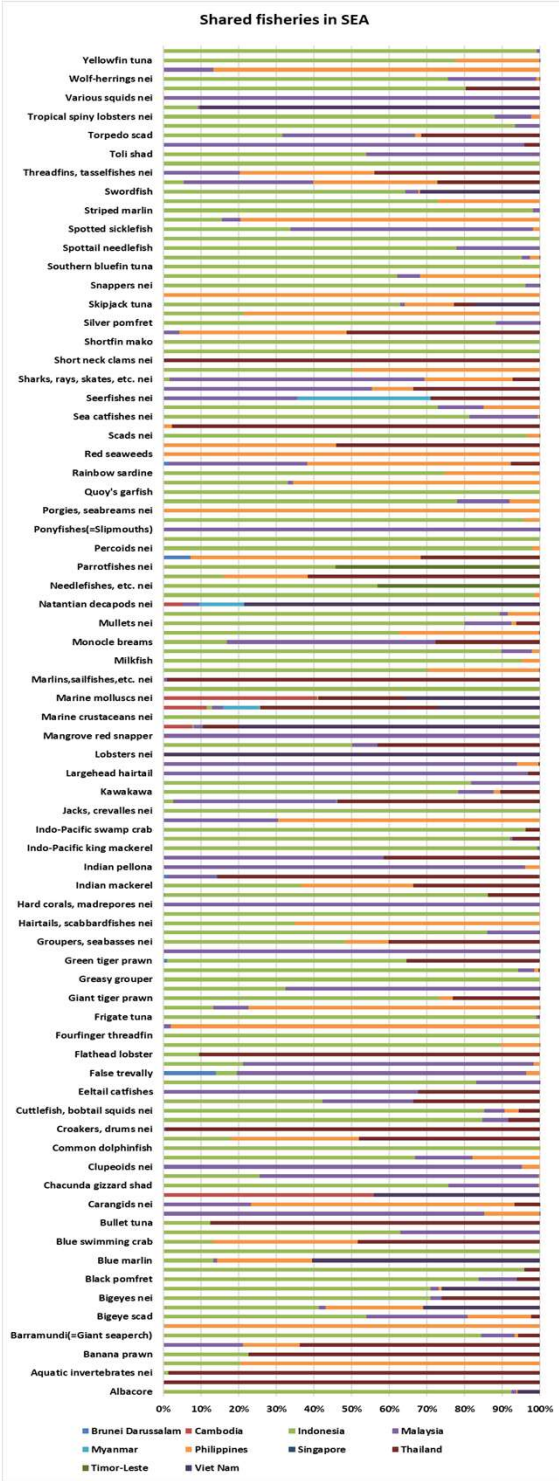
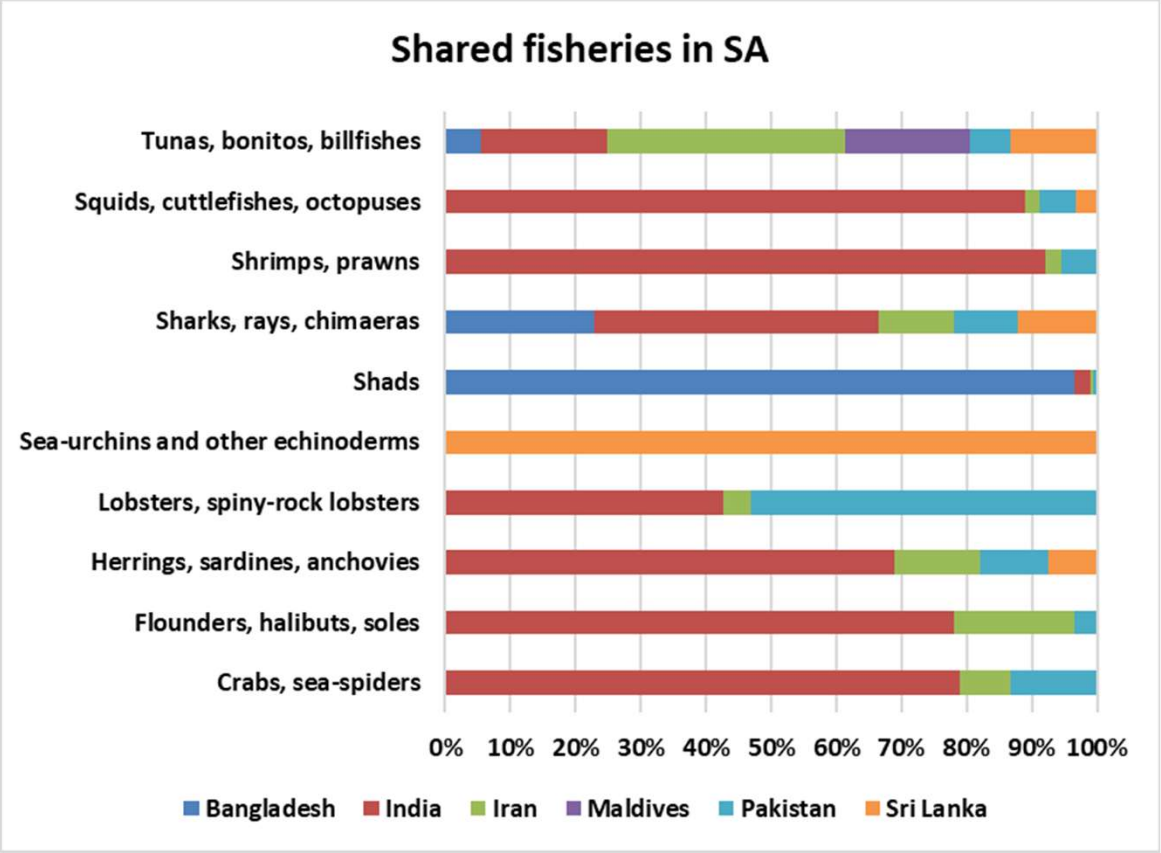
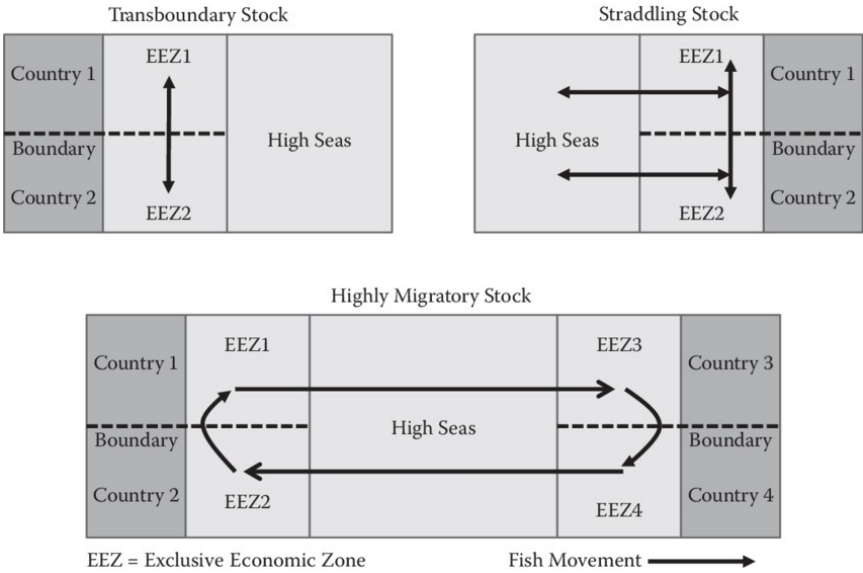
Strong Presence of **Small-Scale and Artisanal Fisheries**



The Region Is Marked by Diversity in Fleet and **Governance Capacity**



# In Bay of Bengal region, majority of the species are shared and catches are largely coming from shared stocks

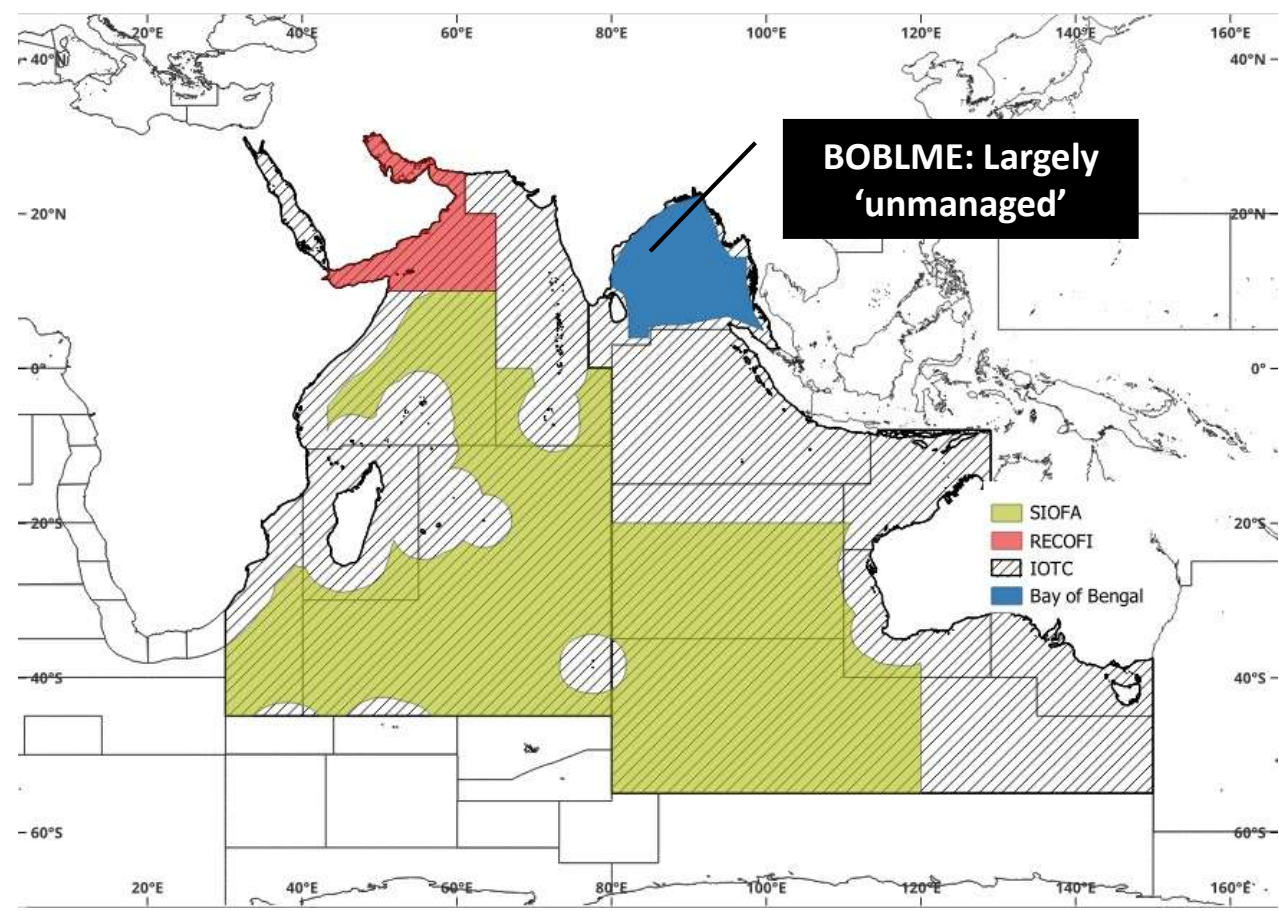


Source+ SeaAroundUs





# Fisheries Management in BOB/IO

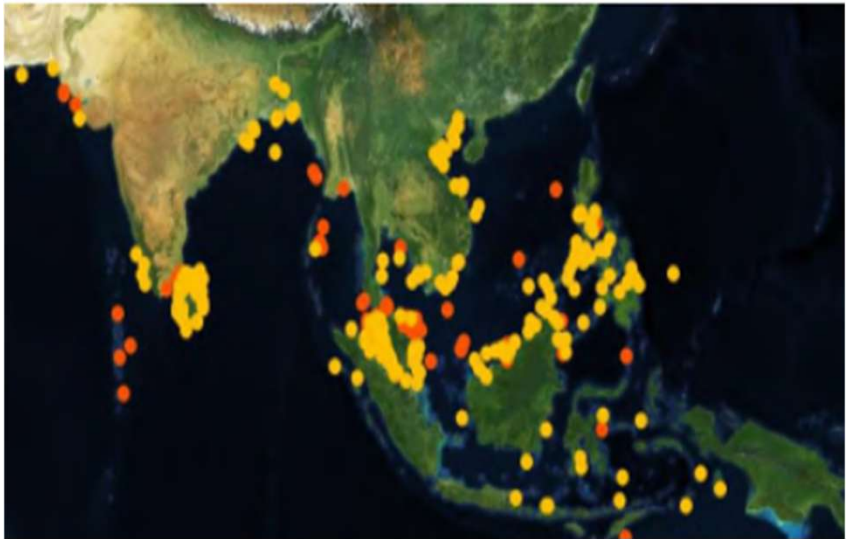
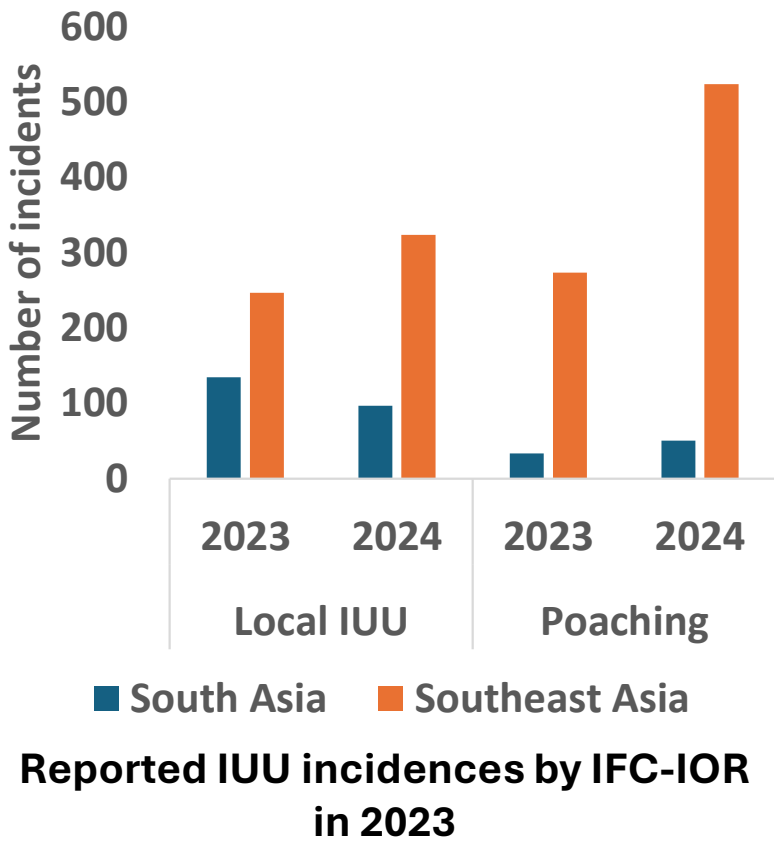
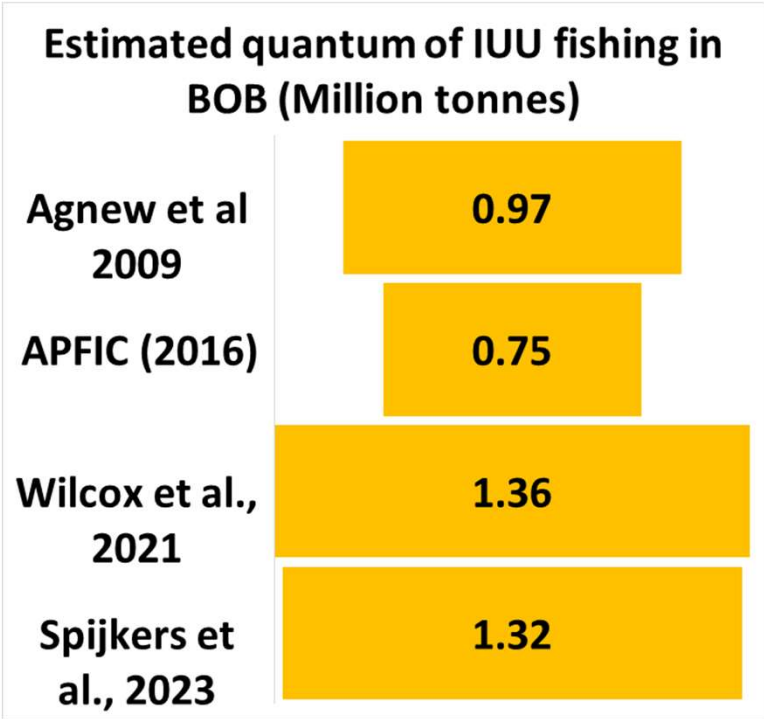


RFMO	Focus	Relevance to India
IOTC	Tuna and tuna-like species (10%)	India is a major player in tuna fisheries
SIOFA	Generic. High seas of South Indian Ocean (<1%)	Relevant for deep-sea fishing interests
RECOFI	Generic (6%)	Potential area of interest for expanding fisheries
BOBP-IGO	RFAB	Capacity building, policy advisory
SEAFDEC	RFAB	Not of immediate relevance

In terms of geographical coverage, whole IO is under some or other regional arrangements.  
**However, in terms of species coverage, 83% catches are unmanaged.**



# Extent of IUU fishing– BOB & Indian Ocean Region



Reported IUU incidences by IFC-IOR in 2023

# *IUU Fishing: State of the Region*

## **Domestic IUU Fishing**

- *Rarely discussed*

## **Cross-border IUU Fishing**

- *Discussed but partially reported*

## **Distant water IUU Fishing**

- *Highlighted & reported*

## Ambiguities

- Overlapping definitions
- Some activities may be legal in one jurisdiction but illegal in another, creating ambiguity
- Difficult to quantify
- Inconsistent enforcement – large gap between the noise and actual listing

**GLOBALLY ABOUT 369 FISHING VESSELS LISTED AS IUU VESSELS (DWT = 155026 TONNE; Source: TMT) WITH APPROXIMATE CATCH OF 0.2 MILLION TONNES WHILE 2009 ESTIMATE OF IUU CATCH WAS 26 MILLION TONNES.**

# BOB RPOA-IUU

## Vision

Sustainable fisheries through regional action

## Objectives:

- Prevent and eliminate IUU fishing
- Strengthen regional cooperation
- Align fisheries policies internationally

**Endorsed by BOBP member countries  
in Feb 2025**



### **Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (RPOA-IUU)**

*(From the Exclusive Economic Zones of the Member-Countries of  
the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation)*

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing has been one of the biggest banes of fisheries in recent decades, putting the sustainability of fish stocks in peril. It's a scourge that has affected fisheries in all the continents and is undermining the efforts of nations in bringing back the depleted fish stocks to their original conditions. Its prevalence ranges from national waters to the sea areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) and from small-scale operators to large industrial-scale fishing vessels. The 2022 edition of the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)<sup>2</sup> highlights the fact that the fraction of fish stocks that are within biologically sustainable levels has exhibited a decreasing trend, from 90.0 percent in 1974 to 64.6 percent in 2019<sup>2</sup>.

Expecting global population to cross the 9 billion mark by the middle of the twenty-first century, availability of safe food would continue to remain the biggest challenge before mankind. And in the seafood sector, IUU fishing, if allowed to continue unabated, will act as a major deterrent in the contribution of fisheries to the global food and nutrition security and employment of millions of people. While the global agenda spearheaded by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provides a strong focus on elimination of IUU fishing within a certain time-frame, the real action lies with the countries to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. The countries need to first demonstrate action within their own jurisdictions and second through close cooperation and coordination with the neighbouring countries covering a wider seascape.

The 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations, with its global scope and aimed at all stakeholders whether government or non-government, has set out principles and international standards of behaviour for responsible practices with a view to ensuring the effective conservation, management and development of living aquatic resources, with due respect for the ecosystem and biodiversity. The CCRF further emphasizes on the role of fisheries as a vital source of food, employment, recreation, trade and economic well-being for people throughout the world, both for the present and the future generations and should, therefore, be conducted in a responsible manner. However, IUU fishing presents a contrasting picture of actions that are damaging the fisheries and biodiversity in most parts of the world's oceans.

*Duration of BOB  
RPOA-IUU: **2025 to  
2032***

*Provided for periodic  
reviews to  
accommodate sectoral  
changes and evolving  
capacity development  
needs of stakeholders*





# RPOA-IUU : Overview

- (i) Development and harmonisation of NPOA-IUU and Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (NPOA-MCS);
- (ii) Establishing a Regional Record of Fishing Vessels;
- (iii) Developing standardised inspection procedures and SOPs for port state measures;
- (iv) Promoting joint Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) and enforcement activities;
- (v) Enhancing information sharing and data transparency;
- (vi) Implementing harmonized catch documentation schemes;
- (vii) Providing technical assistance and support to member countries.

Outlined **20 comprehensive actions** to strengthen regional fisheries management and combat IUU fishing.

## Constraints & Challenges

- **Technical:** Surveillance, data limitations
- **Institutional:** Policy/legal variations
- **Economic:** Costs of enforcement
- **Social/Political:** Political will, stakeholder engagement

# Building on Regional Organisation-to-Organisation Collaboration



Organizations	Cooperation & Synergies
<b>BOBP-IGO &amp; IORA</b>	Fisheries governance, policy, blue economy initiatives
<b>BOBP-IGO &amp; BIMSTEC</b>	Fisheries management advocacy, joint political engagement
<b>BOBP-IGO &amp; FAO</b>	Technical capacity-building, standards harmonization
<b>BOBP-IGO &amp; UNODC</b>	Combat fisheries crimes, enforcement capacity building





# Roadmap for Cooperation: IOC-INDICO & BOBP-IGO

## Regional Ocean Data and Knowledge Hub

- Establish a Bay of Bengal hub via IOC's ODIS, integrating fisheries, ocean, and vessel data for MCS and planning.

## Joint Work on Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EAFM)

- Develop science-based regional EAFM frameworks and link IOC indicators with BOBP fisheries governance.

## Capacity Development and Technology Transfer

- Launch fellowships and training via Ocean Teacher Academy on IUU detection, modelling, and stock monitoring.

## Community-Based Monitoring and Ocean Literacy

- Promote citizen science, participatory monitoring, and local-language ocean literacy campaigns.

## Institutional Dialogue and Joint Planning

- Set up a Working Group and develop co-endorsed Ocean Decade Actions on SSF, IUU, and sustainable ocean economy.

***A shared ocean demands shared responsibility.  
Let's act together for sustainable fisheries!***

***Dead Sea: Sea without Fishes***



***London Sealife Aquarium: Fish without Sea***





**THANK YOU**

