

Bay of Bengal Programme

Fishery Resources

REEF FISH RESOURCES SURVEY IN THE MALDIVES

- Phase II

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Reef Fish Resources Survey in the Maldives
– Phase II

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This paper describes the second phase of a reef fish resources survey carried out in the Maldives and presents preliminary estimates of reef fish densities and maximum potential yields. This follows an earlier phase carried out during 1987-88 in North Male Atoll from the research vessel *Faruinas* (Van der Knaap *et al* 1991) of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture. That first survey phase established that handlines and longlines are the best gear for catching Maldivian reef fish, it collected a considerable quantity of information of value for long-term stock assessment and for potential developers, and it made a first estimate of potential yields from N. Male Atoll.

The second phase was conducted in Shaviyani, Alifu and Laaniu Atolls during 1989-91. Species compositions and catch rates for the major gear and fishing areas were established, regional and seasonal differences were noted and a considerable quantity of information on the biological characteristics of commercial species was collected.

Preliminary estimates indicate a maximum potential yield of commercial reef fish (*i.e.* medium to large snapper, grouper, emperor and reef-associated jack) of the order of 30,000 \pm 13,000 t/year. The atoll basins (which constitute by far the largest part of the Maldivian atolls) are identified as having relatively large reef fish resources. The deep reef slopes outside the atolls support some high value species, but their total potential yield is relatively small. It must, however, be noted that the stock assessment presented here is only of a preliminary nature and if the reef fishery is to be expanded, possibilities for which appear to be good, detailed monitoring will be required to make a more precise stock assessment.

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The Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) is a multi-agency regional fisheries programme which covers seven countries around the Bay of Bengal – Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand. The Programme plays a catalytic and consultative role – it develops, demonstrates and promotes new techniques, technologies or ideas to help improve the conditions of small-scale fisherfolk communities in member-countries. The BOBP is sponsored by the governments of Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, by member-governments in the Bay of Bengal region, and also by AGFUND (Arab Gulf Fund for United Nations Development Organizations) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). The main executing agency is the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations).

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Hauling aboard the R. V. Farumas a sting ray caught on the long/me.

Fig 1: Map of the Maldives

