



## SEVENTH NATIONAL MISSION MEETING ON CONSERVATION OF SHARKS-INDIA NMCSI-7

13<sup>th</sup> August 2015, Conference Hall, Paradip, Odisha India

### Proceedings

The Seventh National Mission Meeting on Shark Conservation, India was held on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2015 at the Conference Hall of the Harbour Management Society, Paradip, Odisha. Many boat owners, State Fisheries department personnel, representative from CMFRI, AD SGAF and HIS-India were attended and shared their views.

**Mr. Beraja, Assistant Director Fisheries, Government of Odisha** welcomed the participants. Welcoming the delegates, he said that he is happy to meet fishermen from Tamil Nadu who are very aggressive in fishing compare with the fishermen of Odisha. He said that shark is never been a targeted fisheries in Odisha coast. If so it will be accidental catch.

**Dr. Reeta Jayasankar, Principal, Scientist, Puri FC of CMFRI** has given the introductory talks. She said that she is happy to be a part of the National Mission on Conservation of Sharks organized by fishers. She also said that the contribution of NMCSI supports the International initiatives for conservation of elasmobranchs and sharks. India is second position in terms of shark landings. It is our responsibility to conserve vulnerable and endangered shark species from extinction for the sake of our future generations. She pointed out that while preparing the NPOA, the cooperation between various stakeholders to be considered.

**Mr. Vincent Jain, Chief Executive-ADSGAF and Core Team Member –NMCSI**, Summarised the objectives of the NMCSI with the outcome of the meetings of such kind taken place in each states. Participants were shown more interest on the outcome of the meetings held in each state.

### State wise NMCSI meeting

Sl.No	Place	Date
1	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	25 March 2014
2	Chennai, Tamil Nadu	25 July 2014
3	Manglore, Karnataka	20 November 2014
4	Versova, Maharastra	22 January 2015
5	Nellore, Andhrapradesh	24 April 2015
6	Veraval, Gujarat	17 July 2015
7	Paradip, Odisha	13 August 2015

Many times the participants intervned and said that fishermen of Odisha are not undertaking shark fishing. Already they are facing problem with turtle conservation efforts in the state and which affect their livelihood. They were conscious on accepting conservation shark with the fear of additional burden if shark fishing banned. Mr. Jain said that even though Orissa Fishermen do not undertake shark fishing activity, we are keen to have their ideas and representation in the National mission meeting so that our final recommendations can be representative of all fishermen in the country.

**Ms. Samyukta, Manager, Wildlife-HSI-India** said that this is her seventh and these meetings give large scope for interaction between the experienced fishermen and the learned scientists. Meetings of these two groups are indispensable for proposing any kind of conservation measures. Introduction of an implementable monitoring mechanism and adequate training in shark and ray species identification is important.

After the tea break the meeting resumed with discussion rather than Individual presentations.

#### 1. Shark fisheries of Odisha

Shark constitute only 0.3-0.5 % of the total fisheries in Odisha coast. They believe shark as Sagar Kanya and they do not do any targeted fisheries for shark. According to their views Shark is never been a targeted fisheries in Odisha coast. It is either an accidental catch or sometimes in Hook and line catch. The decline of shark fisheries is only due to the fishing pressure and target fisheries of shark in Tamil Nadu and Kerala coast. So if any conservation is required it should be for the Kerala and Tamil Nadu EEZ. Many of the opinion that due to foreign ships beyond EEZ (LOP) are sweeping the fisheries including sharks. So to conserve shark, it is advisable to ban these big players in the sea and ban all the foreign vessels to enter to Indian waters. Due to tremendous pressure on the fisher folk community for turtle conservation, they are not very much interested on any fishing ban on shark conservation.

Orissa has 6 coastal sectors and already a lot of diversity is being preserved here. Further, as a centre for many natural disasters, the fishermen in the state are often hit due to inaccessibility of the sea. Shark fisheries in Orissa are not very prominent. Fishermen in Orissa don't do deep sea fishing, don't catch sharks as main focus at all. Most sharks caught by Orissa fishermen are by-catch or accidental catch. Most times they make efforts to release the sharks back into the ocean.

Further, many of the fishermen believe that the huge sums of money that are being spent on turtle conservation should be better utilized. For example, 237 crores were spent last year on wildlife and NGO activities focusing on turtle conservation. If this money is given to the fishermen, they will not need to go fishing at all and the turtles will automatically be conserved.

Mr. Jain said that Orissa Fishermen can seek the support of AD SGAF for lobbying with the government or any other agencies to get reasonable compensation due to ban on fishing during turtle breeding season. Mr. Jain also suggested that if the Orissa Fishermen organize any protest against the long fishing ban period during turtle breeding, then AD SGAF would support them in such activities.

#### 2. Shark fisheries of Tamil Nadu

Shark fishermen of Thoothor have been doing targeted shark fishing for many generations. In additions, sharks are also caught as part of accidental and incidental catch. However, once the fishermen of Thoothor recognized the fact that the shark catch was declining, they themselves have come forward to undertake conservation activities. Some of these activities include change in catch selection. So now, a major focus for fishermen in Thoothor is tuna fishing. If Orissa Fishermen are interested, the Thoothor fishermen can help train the fishermen of Orissa in long-lining and tuna fishing. They can also help them design boats, buy boats or modify existing boats for such activities.

#### 3. Need of Climate Change issues to be considered in conservation of sharks

Regarding impact of climate change on Shark conservation, the fisherman and trawl owner of this region have the opinion that Odisha is prone to frequent natural disasters like cyclone. Thus the fishermen are not allowed to go for fishing during that period thus reducing the fishing pressure. During the month of June-July 2015 there is only 10 fishing days due to cyclone and low pressure.

#### 4. Need of NPOA sharks

National Plan of Action for Conservation and Management of Sharks in India is a must. As India a member of the United Nations and FAO, she is expected to prepare a NPOA in order to provide a review of shark catches, management practices, policies, and status of species and stocks. Presently the mandatory for the preparation of the NPOA is assigned to BOBP-IGO. The CMFRI recently published a detailed guideline for NPOA

#### 5. Possibilities and Challenges of working together of fishermen of coastal states in conservation of sharks

Orissa fishermen are already facing tremendous issue with the bans that have been imposed on fishing as a part of turtle conservation efforts in the state. Hence, they are not keen on any more bans or any more conservation efforts, unless it falls within the existing fishing ban period.

If at all any such ban is there, it should be within the two months of existing National trawling ban 15<sup>th</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> June.

Some Orissa fishermen feel that sharks are sacred species (*sagar kanya*) and hence, do not fish it. This is why only juveniles are seen in the by-catch. The fisher folk community has agreed for shark conservation by throwing the fish back to sea (if alive while trawling, or if caught in Hooks and line)

#### 6. Role of State Fisheries departments in conservation of sharks

Orissa Government must clear on the difference between fishermen by caste and fishermen by activity. Since they are not so, a lot of the benefits that are earmarked for the fishermen in the state are not released on time to them. For conservation of point of view fishermen support is important.

According the fisheries officers, majority of the fishermen in the state are already practicing MSY Fishing (Maximum Sustainable Yield). So, no further conservation activities are really required to be undertaken by them.

Orissa fishermen feel that in order to conserve shark fisheries a serious ban should be placed on foreign fishing vessels especially the LOP vessels. Orissa fisheries department has to write to the Central Government for stopping the foreign fishing vessels in Indian water because they have destroyed local fisheries.

#### 7. Responsibilities of conservation groups, NGOs, Wildlife personnel in conservation of sharks

Conservation groups, NGOs and Wildlife departments are not considering the livelihood of the dependants when they propose any order. In Orissa the turtle ban affected the fishermen very much. The compensation during the ban period is only hand to mouth.

They have a proper plan to get the support of fishermen in implementing conservation measures. They have to give priority to the human being and their life. Rs. 237 crores was spent last year to

undertake activities focused on turtle conservation. If this money is given to the fishermen, they will not need to go fishing at all and the turtles will automatically be conserved.

**Advocate Jose Bilbin President, Fishermen Co-operative Society,** Thoothoor proposed vote of thanks

**Key recommendations:**

- The fishermen in Orissa should raise a consolidated voice against the delay in resource and benefit dissemination to them.
- Fishermen in the state should consider developing a model for eco-tourism during the turtle breeding season so that they can make money during this long fishing ban period without any additional investment.
- Orissa fishermen are willing to release any sharks that are accidentally caught on the hook-lines or nets and release them back to the sea, if they are still in good condition. There is a study undertaken by CMFRI on the survival rates of sharks caught in bottom trawling. This can be used by the fishermen to evaluate the conditions for release of sharks.
- For those sharks that are caught and not released, the local fishermen should learn how to better utilize the entire fish.
- Orissa fishermen should become more proactive and ensure that Government listens to their demands for safeguarding of livelihoods. They should also have a stronger representation at the All India Federation of Fishermen.
- A subsidiary of 30 lakhs is given by the Tamil Nadu Government for undertaking of tuna fishing activities. The fishermen of Orissa as well as the state fisheries department should try to work together to get such subsidies for the fishermen in the state.
- Fishermen of Orissa should follow the model of the National Mission Meeting on Conservation of Sharks and create similar consultations on the conservation of turtles in the state.
- Incentive-based conservation models should be developed by the State Fisheries Department for the local fishermen.