



CMS Shark MoU – MOS3: A report from the Wildlife Conservation Society

Activities undertaken since MOS2 to support the Signatories (and non- signatory range states for listed species) with the implementation of the Conservation Plan, along with associated WCS shark and ray work in non- signatory countries.

Conserving and managing the vast wildlife aggregations, marine biodiversity, and fisheries that are sustained in coastal waters is a monumental task that few countries have the capacity to do on their own. WCS is responding by working with Governments globally in the areas of ocean protection, sustainable fisheries, and marine species conservation across the waters of 23 countries and all five oceans where the need is greatest.

Around the world, we work in seascapes to monitor shark and ray populations and, in some cases, shark and ray fisheries landings, provide technical support to the design of marine protected areas and fisheries management regimes, and assist government agencies, fishers, and others to manage and conserve species and their habitats.

This report summarizes WCS's global shark and ray conservation and management activities, many of which help fulfil the agreed activities in the Conservation Plan and the Programme of Work 2016-2018 for the shark MoU. Although not always species specific, the work includes many of the species listed on the appendices of the MoU, in areas where WCS works on comprehensive research and management reform for sharks and rays.

Although many of the countries where we work aren't signatories to CMS or the CMS Shark MoU, given the highly migratory status of many of the species listed on both agreements, the progress on shark research and management in non- party countries is relevant to the implementation of the MoU.

We have structured this report into the sections of the CMS shark MoU Conservation Plan as follows:

Objective A: Improving understanding of migratory shark populations through research, monitoring and information exchange

In the **Southwest Indian Ocean** a regional status report developed by WCS and several collaborators, collection of fisheries data on shark and ray species in northwest Madagascar and Tanzania, and the collection of data through BRUV surveys, have filled critical data gaps in our understanding of fisheries, threats and conservation needs, and provide valuable information for informing policy decisions and the management of these taxa. In addition, WCS has engaged with fishing communities in several seascapes in Madagascar, through public presentations and stakeholder meetings, as well as capacity building/training of fishing community members to collect fishery catch data at landing sites.

In **Myanmar**, WCS has undertaken surveys across the country three seasons, providing an elasmobranch species and catch database for Rakhine State and an updated national species list for Myanmar. This information is assisting us in helping the Government with prioritizing species for protection to be addressed in the NPOA. A formal NPOA Working group has been established, and initial investigations into export and trade routes have begun in year two as planned, and will be expanded in year three.

In **Indonesia**, WCS has worked on the collection of comprehensive fisheries and socioeconomic data from key sites in two focal provinces (West Nusa Tenggara and Aceh), which is being used to inform local-level habitat protection and fisheries management measures, coupled with national- and provincial-level policy processes, to facilitate the implementation of CITES and the NPOA sharks.

Objective B: Ensuring that directed and non-directed fisheries for sharks are sustainable

In **Myanmar**, the goal of the NPOA we are working on is to support the Government of Myanmar to realize their ambitions to ensure the conservation and management of sharks and rays. The NPOA is anticipated to include objectives to address and monitor the usage of shark fisheries, as well as efforts to reduce shark capture. We will encourage inclusion of new provisions to protect rays, as well as new requirements outlined by recent CITES species listings (e.g. for manta rays, which are also listed on the CMS shark MoU). Initial discussions have already touched upon opportunities for new legal mechanisms that would link and harmonize national protections with present and future CITES listings. While the policy implications of this work have not yet been fully realized, our expanded policy efforts in year three will build a solid foundation for maximizing conservation outcomes for sharks and rays. In conjunction with a greater understating of trade issues, this will lead to enhanced effectiveness of CITES implementation in Myanmar.

In **Indonesia**, the Development of Non-Detriment Finding (NDF) studies for CITES-listed species have progressed, with the finalization of a hammerhead shark NDF, and others for silky sharks, thresher sharks and mobula rays in draft – all of which are also listed on the CMS shark MoU. Work has also established Government commitments to establish two new marine protected

areas, Aceh Jaya in Aceh and Lunyuk in West Nusa Tenggara, which together will protect 120,000 ha of critical habitat for juvenile hammerhead sharks and wedgefishes

Objective C: Ensuring to the extent practicable the protection of critical habitats and migratory corridors and critical life stages of shark

In **Argentina**, sensitive coastal areas for the conservation of sharks and rays were identified, and a larger WCS project was formed to establish a Coastal Shark Corridor proposal (a regional MPA) in Central Chubut.

In **Gabon**, one of the key policy steps is the creation by Gabon in 2017 of the Africa largest marine protected areas network consisting of 9 new marine parks and 11 new aquatic reserves representing 53,000 sq. km, just over 26% of Gabon's Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). WCS has developed management plans for these MPA's that include no commercial shark fishing, and the banning of gear used to target sharks.

In **Bangladesh**, substantial progress has been made on developing management plans for the Swatch of No Ground (SoNG) MPA, by conducting a series of consultations in fishing communities. CMS listed species, such as mobula rays, hammerhead and whale sharks are caught in this region, so establishing formal manage plans will benefit them. Work has also been commissioned to promote improved legislative protection of sharks and rays by providing technical support to the Department of Fisheries for a revision of the Marine Fisheries Act, that would include better management for many CMS MoU listed species, such as sawfish, whale sharks and mobula rays.

Objective D: Increasing public awareness of threats to sharks and their habitats, and enhance public participation in conservation activities

In **Bangladesh**, focused work has been undertaken in this area, via the following key actions: (1) Conducting four interactive *Healthy Ocean - Healthy People Exhibitions* which built informed constituencies for the stewardship of sharks and rays among fishers, fish traders and government managers, (2) Convening two seminars for government officers from seven law enforcement agencies on implementing measures to protect sharks and ray and implement CITES regulations, (3) Producing and distributing educational outreach publications to aid in the identification of protected sharks and rays with a special focus on CITES and CMS Appendix I and II listed species.

Objective E: Enhancing national, regional and international cooperation

In the **Southeast Asia Archipelago**, WCS Organized and coordinated a shark and ray symposium - "Putting marine science in to practice for conservation and management of sharks and rays in South East Asia" and a WCS South East Asia regional meeting at the Society for Conservation Biology 5th International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC5). This allowed teams from

throughout south and southeast Asia to discuss and co-ordinate their work on this project, and showcase it to a wide audience.

Globally, WCS continues to engage in relevant international processes that can help progress the management and conservation of sharks and rays – including CITES and CMS, and regional agreements such as the Nairobi Convention. We are equally committed to ensuring that measures adopted in these fora are properly implemented wherever we work.