



Sustainable Forests & Livelihoods (SUFAL) Project

Report on the
Second consultation workshop with fishers, fishing vessel owners,
and traders engaged in shark and ray fisheries, processing , and
trade, for sharing knowledge on the status of and threats to sharks
and rays for a national conservation strategy

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Bangladesh Forest Department
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Report on the Second consultation workshop with fishers, fishing vessel owners, and traders engaged in shark and ray fisheries, processing , and trade, for sharing knowledge on the status of and threats to sharks and rays for a national conservation strategy

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Cover Photo

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BFD – Bangladesh Forest Department

DoF – Department of Fisheries

GoB – Government of Bangladesh

NCSSR – National Conservation Strategy and Plan of Action for Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh

NDF – Non-Detriment Finding

SMART – Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool

SoNG – Swatch-of-No-Ground

SOPs – Standard Operating Procedures

SUFAL – Sustainable Forests & Livelihoods Project

ToR – Terms of Reference

WCS – Wildlife Conservation Society



Spadenose sharks landed in Alipur, Kuakata



Seagoing fishing vessels unloading their catch in Mohipur, Kuakata

1. Background

The National Conservation Strategy for Sharks and Rays in Bangladesh (NCSSR) envisions sharks and rays effectively protected and sustainably managed, delivering ecological and socio-economic benefits to people and ecosystems. The objectives of the strategy are to reduce mortalities of threatened shark and ray species, ensure the exploitation of non-threatened species is sustainable, protect priority habitats, strengthen governance and enforcement, engage fishing communities, and improve monitoring and reporting. The NCSSR provides strategic guidance on interventions to protect threatened species and populations from extinction and manage the sustainable use of non-threatened species for a healthy ocean and healthy coastal people.

Priority actions for the conservation of threatened sharks and rays and the sustainable exploitation of species not in immediate danger of extinction were included in a first draft of the NCSSR informed by results from a baseline status and threat assessment. These were refined after a two-day consultative workshop conducted in May 2021 with national experts from government agencies, research institutions, academics, and development and conservation professionals¹. This report provides additional recommended actions and suggested governance frameworks from a second day-long consultation workshop conducted in November 2021 with fishers, fishing vessel owners, and traders engaged in shark and ray fisheries, processing, and trade. The agenda is provided in Appendix 1.

¹ SUFAL. 2021. Report on the national consultation for sharing knowledge on the status of and threats to sharks and rays in Bangladesh and developing a national conservation strategy.

2. Workshop Participants

Thirty participants (Appendix 2) participated in the consultation workshop, including ten fishers, twelve fishing vessel captains, and eight fish or shark and ray traders. Of these participants, two were both traders and fishing vessel captains and four captains own their vessels. Participants were selected and invited with the help of the *Majhi Shomiti* (Fishing Vessel Owners Association) in Alipur. The consultation workshop started at midday, November 6th, 2021. The association offered their meeting room as the venue.

3. Opening Session

Elisabeth Fahrni Mansur welcomed the participants and thanked them for their willingness to share their knowledge on the status and threats to sharks and rays. She briefly introduced the SUFAL shark and ray assignment and the goal of the consultation workshop to engage local stakeholders for enriching and “ground-truthing” the NCSSR. She explained the consultation ground rules as respectful behavior, listening to others, and sharing new ideas, which were written in Bengali and displayed on a flip chart for review by the participants .

4. Proceedings of Consultation Workshop

Participants and facilitators were requested to share their most memorable encounter with a shark or ray. Recollections ranged from the thrill of spotting live sharks while fishing to catching sawfish (*Pristidae*), mobula rays (*Mobula*), and a giant freshwater whipray (*Urogymnus polylepis*), as well as the live release of a hammerhead shark (*Sphyrnidae*). Fishers generally expressed a fearful relationship with sharks and rays.

In a brief photo-illustrated Power-Point presentation in simple Bangla, Nadim Parvez, WCS Senior Coordinator for Educational Outreach, described the importance of protecting threatened species and sustaining non-threatened species for fisheries and fishery livelihoods. He also told workshop participants about the role of sharks and rays in productive marine ecosystems and the threats they face.



SUFAL team leader interacting with consultation participants

Facilitated working group discussions

The NCSSR objectives to engage fishing communities in shark and ray protection and to strengthen governance and coordination were at the center of discussions. Of particular interest were suggestions to improve compliance with species protection and trade regulations.

Questions were formulated and locally feasible solutions discussed for (i) reducing catches, retentions, landings, and trade of protected species, (ii) increasing awareness and local engagement in shark and ray protection efforts, and (iii) sustainably harvesting non-threatened species. The questions included: How can fishery stakeholders be motivated to comply with species protection regulations and safely release threatened species? How can domestic demand for protected species be reduced and value-enhanced products from sustainably caught non-threatened species be promoted? How can compliance with species protection and trade regulations be promoted for reducing poverty in shark and ray-dependent coastal communities and developing supplementary livelihood alternatives, particularly for women working in shark and ray fishery?

Four working groups gathered around flipcharts with these questions (Figure 1) while facilitators helped participants identify locally feasible actions to achieve desired shark and ray outcomes. Proposed actions were noted on the flipchart which enabled working group members to correct or clarify any misunderstandings.



Figure 1. Recommendations from local stakeholder working groups written on flipcharts.

Working Group 1 was tasked with identifying **incentives for traders to comply with national and international trade regulations** to (i) Empower fishery stakeholders to comply with species protection regulations and motivate them to safely release threatened species, (ii) Ensure that protected species are not retained, landed, traded, or consumed, and (iii) Reduce landings and illegal trade in protected species.

Proposed incentives were to:

- a) Provide alternative fishing gears to fishers currently using bottom-long lines with unbaited hooks targeting rays that are less harmful to threatened sharks and rays.
- b) Stop industrial fishing in waters less than 40 meters deep to reduce competition between small-scale and industrial fisheries.
- c) Provide a checklist with pictures of protected sharks and rays to the fishers, traders, and vessel owners.
- d) Train fishers on identifying, proper handling, and safely releasing protected sharks and rays.

Working Group 2 was asked to propose actions for **reducing domestic demand for protected species** to (i) Protect species at conservation risk, and (ii) Reduce infractions and increase local engagement to protect sharks and rays.

Recommendations were to:

- a) Promote the protection of threatened species in marketplaces through posters or brochures.
- b) Broadcast protected species images on television, Facebook, and YouTube, emphasizing that their consumption has no medical benefits.
- c) Hold fishers, especially those using trawling or set-bag nets, accountable for retaining and landing protected species.
- d) Prevent foreign fishing vessels from entering territorial waters, especially during ban periods, through strict surveillance.
- e) Strictly enforce species protection laws at landing sites and wholesale fish markets.
- f) Fine traders and fishermen who buy or sell protected species.
- g) Reconsider timing of fishing ban period to coincide with the pupping time of sharks and rays.
- h) Inform fishermen about the need to safeguard protected sharks and rays in their natural habitat and penalties for landing and trading them.

Working Group 3 was requested to identify approaches for **promoting value-enhanced products from sustainably caught non-threatened sharks and rays** to (i) Protect species not retained, landed, traded, or processed, and (ii) Stabilize populations of threatened and non-threatened species.

Proposed approaches were to:

- a) Identify and award law-abiding fishers and traders who safely release protected sharks and rays, for example low interest loans.
- b) Train fishers and women to process legally landed sharks and rays.
- c) Establish a skin and liver processing centre for producing export-quality products from legally landed sharks and rays.

- d) Promote other income-generating options during the winter when fishers shift to bottom-set baited longlines catching rays.
- e) Improve transport and access to landing sites and processing centres, and create a better working environment in these places.
- f) Maintain a list of shark and ray traders and exporters for monitoring the illegal trade.

Working Group 4 was asked to identify **feasible incentives for shark and ray-dependent coastal communities to reduce poverty and develop supplementary livelihood alternatives especially for women to help ensure that** (i) Non-threatened sharks and rays are sustainably harvested to benefit fishery livelihoods, and (ii) Healthy populations of both threatened and non-threatened shark and ray species are sustained.

Recommendations were to:

- a) Establish small-scale industries with employment opportunities for fishermen and women in or near these communities.
- b) Create employment opportunities for fishermen and women through the Government's Youth Development Department.
- c) Promote alternative work opportunities such as operating or repairing rickshaws, vans, and easy-bikes.
- d) Enable fishermen to get re-employed in other occupations with government assistance for repaying their loans.
- e) Extend government provisions of rice and other food to fishermen through the winter season as an incentive for releasing shark and ray catches.
- f) Train women in sewing, furniture making, and handicraft production.
- g) Restrict all fishing within a 20-kilometer radius around the Swatch-of-No-Ground Marine Protected Area during the winter season to reduce shark and ray catches.
- h) Prohibit fishing in rivers adjacent to the Sundarbans Reserved Forest during the winter season to reduce shark and ray catches.
- i) Strictly prohibit marine set-bag nets and trawl fishing to reduce shark and ray mortalities.
- j) Establish marine protected areas or fish sanctuaries in shark and ray spawning or nursery grounds.

Discussions were lively and often dominated by leaders. However they were generally constructive and a consensus was achieved on the recommendations which were written on the flipchart. When the meeting was reconvened after lunch, one participant from each of the four working groups presented proposed actions. Others participants added comments.

During the final discussion, additional recommendations were made (Figure 3). Participants said that, if a rescue vessel was made available to their association, they could respond to emergencies at sea. They also mentioned that a wireless tower would allow communication over VHF radio. In addition to the provision of and learning how to use a GPS, the fishermen would appreciate the provision of life jackets and rescue rings for improved at-sea safety. Participants also requested bouy demarcation of a sunken ship near the Payra No. 3 buoy which poses a hazard to their vessels.

The lead facilitator ended the discussion by recapping decisions reached as well as explaining how this information will be incorporated in the NCSSR for shark and ray conservation management in Bangladesh.



Figure 2. A participant presenting their group results (left) and final discussion during the workshop (right).

4. Closing Remarks

The SUFAL shark and ray assignment team leader thanked all participants for sharing their time and knowledge, and for engaging in constructive discussions to identify practical solutions for enriching the NCSSR. Elisabeth encouraged participants to take charge of the challenges they face instead of waiting for external help to bring about necessary changes. She then invited the president and ex-president of the *Majhi Shomiti Alipur* to provide their closing remarks.

Majhi Nuru, ex-president of the association, stated that the organization had been serving the people for 18 years. At sea, fishermen are often in danger and many die. He expressed his gratitude to WCS for listening to their concerns and requested that their views be conveyed to the government. Before this workshop, he and others had been under the impression that all fishing and eating sharks and rays was prohibited. Through this program, they had learned to differentiate protected species. He encouraged the fishermen not to catch these threatened species and share information on shark and ray catches with others. He lamented that fishers no longer catch as many large hilsa as they used to and hoped that everyone would follow government regulations to increase the numbers and catches of large hilsa for future generations.

Majhi Munnat, the current president of the association, thanked WCS for working for them. He reiterated that sharks and rays are important for keeping the ocean healthy which is important for our country and its people.

Appendix 1. Agenda for 2nd NCSSR consultation workshop

Consultation for sharing knowledge on the status of and threats to sharks and rays for a national conservation strategy with fishers, fishing vessel owners, and traders engaged in shark and ray fisheries, processing, and trade, conducted under the Bangladesh Forest Department's SUFAL project shark and ray assignment.

Date: Saturday, 6. November 2021

Location: Meeting house of Alipur Majhi Shomiti, Alipur, Kuakata

<i>Time</i>	<i>Objective/Content</i>	<i>Activity/Facilitation</i>
09:00	Registration	Complete registration form, including consent for visual documentation, request for copies of consultation report and/or final NCSSR; provide educational materials and write name tag.
09:30	Film show	Set the scene with short documentary on sharks & rays in Bangladesh.
09:45	Welcome and introductions	Icebreaker – State your name and recount memorable encounter with a shark or a ray.
10:00	Goal, objectives, and process of consultation	Define success – Explain what we aim to achieve, why, and how this will benefit participants, sharks and rays, and the NCSSR. Ground rules.
10:15	Shark and ray status and conservation concerns	Understand the system – Set the scene by presenting key research findings in locally appropriate language, visually enhanced, so that participants understand conservation concerns and priority threats.
11:15	Tea & Refreshments	Mingle, facilitators prepare group works
11:30	Priority actions recommended in NCSSR	Where to intervene – Present suggested conservation interventions to address conservation concerns and mitigate priority threats.
12:00	Facilitated working groups for identifying priority actions and incentives for NCSSR	How to intervene – Prepare to Implement: Through facilitated discussion in groups of up to 10 persons identify specific actions (What is to be done, how and by whom?). Suggestions evaluated in terms of incentivizing compliance from local stakeholders. Discussion content recorded on flipchart papers visible for all working group participants.
13:00	Lunch	Rearrange seating, facilitators prepare summary recommendations
14:00	Presentation of outcomes from working group discussions	Participants identified at the beginning present the key outcomes from each group aided by the flipchart notes.
15:00	Plenary discussion on recommendations for inclusion in NCSSR	Ensure maximum agreement from local stakeholders through facilitated plenum discussion. Additional points noted and displayed alongside group outcomes.
15:30	Recap recommendations with opportunity for final comments and vote of approval	Recap key recommendations, identified approaches, incentives, and responsible parties, to increase sense of ownership and achievement among local stakeholders, with motivational value for the implementation phase.
16:00	Closing remarks	Formal closure with brief speeches from local dignitaries, recognition of participation and achievement, group photo, make sure everybody has WCS contact details/cards for follow-up.

Appendix 2. Participants of the 2nd consultation workshop in Kuakata



Consultation workshop with fishing vessel captains and traders for sharing knowledge on the status of sharks and rays, and their conservation and developing national conservation strategy
 Date: 06 November 2021
 Venue: Alipur, Kuakata




Registration

Sl. No.	Name	Organization and occupation	Contact (e-mail and Phone)	Consent for using photo for educational purpose		I would like to get a copy of this consultation report		Signature
				Yes	No	Yes	No	
1.	Md. Esmuch Faraji	Captain	017199687174	✓		✓		
2.	Holim Kazi	Fishers	01715079961	✓		✓		
3.	Md. Shaker Alam	Captain	01715836634	✓		✓		
4.	Md. Nizan	Fishers	01769568929	✓		✓		
5.	Shahjahan	Captain	01761701327	✓		✓		
6.	Nur Alam	Captain	01629991045	✓		✓		
7.	Md. Abdul Samad	Fishers	01760350310	✓		✓		
8.	Noyon	Captain + Trader	01771504989	✓		✓		
9.	Md. Nazim	Trader + Fishers	01719282462	✓		✓		
10.	Md. Harun Khan	Trader	01710022666	✓		✓		
11.	Nazmul	Captain	01811113640	✓		✓		
12.	Md. Tuku Shikhan	Fisher	01737655710	✓		✓		
13.	Md. Amir Hossen	Fisher	01715074912	✓		✓		
14.	Md. Abdul Kalam	Fisher	01732112610	✓		✓		
15.	Abdul Mommen	Fisher	01710248170	✓		✓		
16.	Md. Nur Sayed	Fisher	01717846616	✓		✓		
17.	Md. Selim	Captain	0173376836	✓		✓		
18.								
39.	Md. Omor Faruk	Fish Trader	01811178554	✓		✓		
40.	Md. Johangir	Captain	01733169403	✓		✓		
41.	Subahan Mollak	Captain	01713927111	✓		✓		
42.	Md. Faruk	Fisherman	0172377868	✓		✓		
43.	Md. Yousof	Captain	01732245438	✓		✓		
44.	Md. Riaz	Fisherman	0175712760	✓		✓		
45.	Md. Nurul Min	Fish Trader and Captain	01815754962	✓		✓		
46.	Md. Rakkan	Fish Trader	01714906861	✓		✓		
47.	Abu Rakkan Mungli	Fish Trader	01719636569	✓		✓		
48.	Md. Nabi Hossen	Fish Trader	01724995160	✓		✓		
49.	Shakhan Hossen	Trader	01720584504	✓		✓		
50.	Md. Breehu	Fish Captain	01728196715	✓		✓		

