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BOBLME contract: LOA/RAP/2012/44

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## Acronyms used

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOBLME</td>
<td>Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COFI</td>
<td>Committee on Fisheries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRFP</td>
<td>Darwin Reef Fish Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FMA</td>
<td>Fisheries Management Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPOA</td>
<td>International Plan of Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOA</td>
<td>Letter of Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Marine Research Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPOA</td>
<td>National Plan of Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAP</td>
<td>Region Asia-Pacific</td>
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<td>RFMOs</td>
<td>Regional Fisheries Management Organisations</td>
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<td>STELCO</td>
<td>State Electric Company</td>
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Consolidated report

Formulation and implementation of National Plan of Action for conservation of sharks

Marine Research Centre, Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture

31 August 2015

1. About the project

The project “Formulation and implementation of National Plan of Action for conservation of sharks” (LOA/RAP/2012/44, is a grant project of Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project to the Government of the Maldives. The Letter of Agreement was signed by World Food and Agriculture Organization on 14 September 2012 and by the Government of the Maldives on 29 September 2012. The project was implemented on behalf of the Government of the Maldives by the Marine Research Centre (MRC) of Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture.

2. Synopsis of the completed work

2.1. Trainings on taxonomy of sharks

The workshop on the taxonomy of sharks took place on 21 January 2013. The training was given for tuna longline fishermen. As the Maldives lacks a fisheries observer scheme, the training was focused on fishermen from tuna longliners, since the majority of the bycatch would be from tuna longliners. Hence, the training was designed to assist the longline fishermen on identifying the types of sharks they were likely to encounter on their fishing trips, which would inevitably enhance the reporting of bycatch from longliners.

Sixteen fishermen from two longline vessels, Big Eye 02 and Sunfish attended the workshop that took place in the Housing Development Corporation in Hulhumalé. Hussain Sinan, Director of Fisheries Management Division of Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (MoFA), briefed the fishermen on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and on the importance of logging the catch including the bycatch. This was followed by a detailed presentation on the taxonomy of the oceanic sharks found in Maldives. The presentation on taxonomy of sharks was given by Khadeeja Ali, Senior Research Officer of Marine Research Centre. Furthermore, the new longline log book was presented to the fishermen and instructions were given on how to fill the logbook.
2.2. **Study on the socio-economic Impact of complete shark fishing ban on former shark fishermen**

From April-May 2013, seven islands known for shark fishing (two from North atolls, and five from Central atolls) were surveyed for socio-economic impact of shark ban. 125 former shark fishermen were interviewed. Surveys were carried out using a structured questionnaire, where fishermen were asked on their current income generating activities, current levels of income, their perception on finding income generating activities, their level of income when they did shark fishing, their view on shark abundance at the time of ban, how long it took them to find a meaningful alternative livelihood after the ban and whether they participated in the government’s gear buy back scheme, how much they received for the compensation and whether or not they were interested in taking part in trainings on alternative income generating activities. The report on the study has been completed.

2.3. **Sharkwatch programme**

Training on Sharkwatch programme was conducted at Sun Island Resort on 12 June 2013. Dive centre staff from two resorts; Sun Island and Holiday Island Resort attended the one day workshop.

2.3.1. **Workshop on Maldives Sharkwatch programme**

The session began with the presentation by Ms Khadeeja Ali on the background of shark fisheries of Maldives detailing on the situations that led to the total shark fishing ban. After her presentation, there was a ten minute discussion time, where some participants provided their feedback on ways to strengthen the Shark trust fund. Some participants inquired about the socio-economic status of former shark fishermen while some asked about the fate of shark stocks if the fishing ban was not imposed. After the ten minutes discussion, a coffee break was taken. After the coffee break the session resumed with the presentation on overview of the four years of Sharkwatch by Ms Shahaama Sattar, Local Consultant of Darwin Reef Fish project. Sharkwatch was initiated under collaboration between Marine Research Centre and Marine Conservation Society under the Darwin Reef Fish project.

**Key findings of the overview**

- The White tip reef shark (*Triaenodon obesus*) was seen to the most sighted species, followed by the Grey reef shark (*Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*) and Black tip reef shark (*Carcharhinus melanopterus*).
- Both the number of sites surveyed and time spent on surveying was observed to be on an increasing trend.
- The average number of sharks per survey is seen to be lowest for Baa Atoll, which used to be a key shark fishing atoll.
- Noonu Atoll and South Male” Atoll were seen to have the highest average number of sharks/survey. Noonu Atoll was not a key shark fishing atoll, which could be the contributing factor for this result, while one of the key survey sites in South Male” Atoll is a protected area, which could be the contributing factor for the high average for the atoll.
- While a significant increase in numbers at the different sites over the years was not a common occurrence, it was also encouraging to see abundance did not decline either.

After the presentation, the participants were asked to provide suggestions to improve the programme and circulate the overview within their respective dive schools and provide their comments within a week.

2.3.2. **Sharkwatch reports**

Sharkwatch reports were analyzed for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Sharkwatch, started in 2009 by Darwin Reef Fish Project (DRFP), a collaboration with Marine Conservation Society of UK
and MRC. DRFP’s timeframe was from 2009-2013 and all reports were produced by DRFP consultants in collaboration with staff of MRC.

2.4. **NPOA-sharks**

On 4 March, 2014 the draft NPOA-sharks was presented to the ministers of MoFA and their feedback was solicited.

2.4.1. **Stakeholder consultation of NPOA-sharks**

The workshop took place on 10 April 2015 at the auditorium of State Electric Company (STELCO). The workshop was conducted in two main sessions, each of which was broken down into sessions of presentations and subsequent 15-20 minute discussions sessions.

In the first session, a presentation was given on the background of the NPOA-sharks, describing the endorsement of the International Plan of Action (IPOA) on the conservation and management of sharks by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 1999, objectives described in IPOA-sharks that a NPOA-sharks should strive to achieve and the rationale for developing a NPOA-sharks for Maldives. The presentation also highlighted the current issues faced in the implementation of the shark ban such as the lack of the trade, import and export ban and the lack of support from tourism industry for the Shark trust fund. Furthermore, highlights of results of recent studies done by Marine Research Centre such as the willingness to pay for Sharkwatching and the socio-economic impact of the shark ban on former shark fishermen was provided. A discussion of ten minutes was given for answering the questions raised on the presentation by the workshop participants.

After the first presentation, the participants were randomly divided into three groups. Each group comprised of former shark fishermen, government officials and marine biologists from tourist resorts. Only group one consisted of a representative of the longline industry. Group 1 consisted of government officials from EPA, MRC, FMA, Marine biologists from Kuramathi, former shark fishermen and a representative from longline vessel. Group 2 consisted of government officials from MRC, MoT, MoED, former shark fishermen and Marine biologists from Cheval Blanc Randheli, Gili Lankanfushi and Kuramathi Island Resort. Group 3 consist of a Marine biologist from Four Seasons Kuda Huraa, former government officials involved in shark fisheries, representatives from MoT, MoEE and former shark fishermen. Each group had two staff from MRC/FMA to guide and facilitate the discussions. All groups were given the task of commenting and providing their thoughts on proposed actions of NPOA-sharks. After presenting each area of the action plan, fifteen to twenty minutes were provided for the participants to discuss and comment among their group on the proposed actions. The comments and thoughts on the proposed actions were compiled and presented by each group at the end of the workshop.
The workshop was successful in terms of soliciting feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. There was a strong opposition from some of the former shark fishermen to lift the ban and allow certain zones for shark fishing and these has been included in the comments on the action plan. NPOA-sharks for Maldives is a plan proposed for over four years and with the overarching goal of Maldives NPOA-sharks is “to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the shark ban” and MoFA now focuses on mitigating the impacts of the shark ban through enhancing alternative livelihoods of the former shark fishermen. Therefore, throughout the workshop, MoFA took the stand to maintain the shark ban and focused more on ways to enhance the livelihoods of former shark fishermen.

Some key findings of the workshop

- Although there were comments from the former shark fishermen to lift the shark ban, majority of the participants agreed with actions proposed in the plan and were in support of plan’s overarching goal to effectively implement and monitor the ban
- Majority agreed on enhancing alternative livelihoods for fishermen and thereby agreed with the Shark trust fund and stressed on strengthening the Shark trust fund as well as stressed on the need for an effective mechanism to garner funds to be in place.
- Participants noted for the enforcement officers (fisheries observers) an effective scheme is needed which shall ensure that officers shall have good knowledge on the shark species, fisheries, rules and regulations and the officers needs to be rotated among vessels to prevent corruption and other illegal activities. Majority agreed that allowing the utilization of shark bycatch from tuna longlining could be taken as an incentive for illegal shark fishing, and hence the majority was not in support of the proposed action to allow the utilization of shark bycatch from longliners.
- Participants unanimously agreed not to share assessments of shark resources with RFMOs, until other countries of the region take necessary measures to effectively manage their shark resources.
- Participants particularly from tourist resorts urged to strengthen the Sharkwatch programme and ensure the designation of a dedicated team for Sharkwatch programme from MRC.

2.4.2. Design of NPOA-sharks

A graphics designer was hired to design the layout of NPOA-sharks document. All photographs of sharks used in the document were provided by Mr Adam Abdul Raheem.
Appendix I  Supportive documents

1. **Workshop report on training on taxonomy of sharks**

2. **National Plan of Action on the Conservation of Sharks in the Maldives**
   
   

3. **Workshop report of the stakeholder consultation to present Maldives NPOA-Sharks**
   

4. **Report on the socio-economic impact assessment of the complete shark fishing ban on former shark fishermen**
   

5. **Shark watch reports 2011-2012, 2012-2013**

6. **Workshop report on Maldives Shark watch programme**
Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand are working together through the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project to lay the foundations for a coordinated programme of action designed to better the lives of the coastal populations through improved regional management of the Bay of Bengal environment and its fisheries.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is the implementing agency for the BOBLME Project.

The Project is funded principally by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the FAO, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the USA.

For more information, please visit www.boblme.org