Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Ghofrane Labyedh
Project Title	Together Protect Life in Oceans for Sharks and Rays in the Southern Coastline of Cameroon.
Application ID	38106-2
Date of this Report	24-04-2024

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Double the local capacity in generating quality and cost-effective data collectively on elasmobranchs on the Cameroon coast.				• 15 fishers from the southern coastline of Cameroon have been identified and involved in the SIREN network through the socio-economic interviews and meetings. • 120 interviews have been held along the southern coastline of Cameroon with fishers and the fisheries-service employees to raise their perceptions about the threatened elasmobranch species and also to gather critical information on fishery characteristics, catch locations, and perceptions related to the most effective fisheries management options.
Establish a baseline scientific knowledge on the species composition of elasmobranch catch in the southern coastline of Cameroon that will include the distribution, bycatch frequencies, sex-ratio, and average body sizes.				• Elasmobranch catches along the southern coastline of Cameroon are documented including diversity, abundance, distribution, sex composition, size composition, and maturity. • Fishery characteristics along the southern coastline are determined including vessel type, gear type and mesh size, fishing effort and catch locations. • Conducted an ID Workshop on the identification of sharks and rays in Cameroon with the specialist @Rima Jabado • Conducted the first research dive in Cameroon, in Limbe

				(the South-West Region) to explore the marine biodiversity including sharks and rays. • Collected 50 samples of landed sharks and rays along the southern coastline of Cameroon. • A scientific paper will be published this year on Diversity, Abundance and Distribution of Elasmobranchs in Cameroon.
Improve the perception of the local population on the importance and conservation status of the threatened elasmobranch species of Cameroon				• The fishing community and the government representatives are informed with elasmobranch status in Cameroon during meetings and the Gulf of Guinea Workshop.
Raise the national legal status of the threatened elasmobranch species.				• Cameroon passed recently a national ban on shark finning requiring all fishers to land sharks whole. • After the creation of the Gulf of Guinea network which has been expanded to the greater West Africa to build a joint strategy, and collaborative research that will underlie actionable science-based management, the African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation (AMMCO) is partnering with the Manta Trust, the IUCN Shark Specialist Group (SSG), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Gabon, the Humane Society International (HIS) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to implement

				this strategy in Cameroon and neighbouring countries in West Africa. • Also, we are working on CITES implementation in Cameroon.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a) Improved scientific knowledge on elasmobranch along the southern coastline of Cameroon.
b) Improved local perception of sharks and rays in Kribi, Cameroon.
c) Drafted regional effective management strategy for shark and ray conservation in Cameroon and neighbouring countries in West Africa.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

- There has been some uncertainty over whose government institution is in charge of elasmobranch protection in Cameroon, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MINEPIA), or the Ministry of the Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED). As a result, we have been working with the three ministries to clarify their respective roles in elasmobranch conservation and to reassure the implementation of local legislation.
- AMMCO recently created a genetic lab with basic equipment, which would not allow us to complete all the necessary genetic analyses. As a result, we are currently working on the CITES research permit to be able to send the collected samples to international labs for further analysis.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

The project has engaged local fishing communities through fish market surveys and socio-economic interviews, establishing robust connections with stakeholders at the national level to support ongoing conservation efforts. Additionally, this project was conducted in partnership with key government stakeholders, including the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MINEPIA), and the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature, and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), to identify and develop effective management strategies for sharks and rays in Cameroon. Furthermore, various citizen sectors within local communities, such as students, volunteers, and local scientists, were actively involved in project activities and training sessions. These local communities have benefited from the project's collection of new scientific data on species-specific landing trends in Cameroonian fisheries.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Data collected from this project, along with others, has revealed that the scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) and the blackchin guitarfish (*Glaucostegus cemiculus*) are the most frequently landed species in the small-scale fishery of Cameroon. Both species are classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Consequently, we are currently working to improve the conservation efforts for these two species through the implementation of live release activities with fishers. This work is supported financially by the Save Our Seas Foundation and The National Geographic Society. Our aim is to integrate these activities into future management plans in the region.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

The data collected through this project has been shared with the IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group (SSG) for inclusion in the Global Report - Cameroon section. Additionally, the project results have been disseminated through the Global Shark Meat Project Expert Survey. Furthermore, highlights and achievements of this project were presented at the West Africa Marine Science Symposium (WAMSS) in August 2023. We are currently in the process of preparing a scientific paper on the Diversity, Abundance, and Distribution of Elasmobranchs in Cameroon for publication. Moreover, we plan to present the project results during AMMCO's annual Street Whale festival.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Our future steps to continue studying and protecting shark and ray species in Cameroon involve several key initiatives. Firstly, we plan to investigate industrial fishery practices through on-board observations, focusing on determining the bycatch of sharks and rays in this sector. Secondly, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the process of shark and ray exportation, including identifying exported destinations, the specific products exported (such as fins, liver oil, skin, gill plates, meat, etc.), and the associated prices of these exports.

Furthermore, we intend to conduct genetic analysis through DNA barcoding to establish a comprehensive reference DNA barcode database of local elasmobranch species in Cameroon.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The Rufford Foundation logo has been included in all documents utilised throughout this project, such as questionnaires, sampling sheets, reports, etc. Additionally, we have been tagging the Rufford Foundation's social media platforms in our publications and posts. Furthermore, all PowerPoint presentations related to this work have included the Rufford Foundation logo.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.
Aristide Takoukam Kamla: the supervisor and the advisor of the following project.
Eddy Nnanga: The supervisor and the site manager in Kribi are with AMMCO.
Betty Laglbauer: the supervisor and the advisor as Fisheries & Policy Manager of the following project.
Cedric Biankeu: Field Assistant at fish market surveys and socio-economic interviews.
Ulrich NGONDJI: Field Assistant at fish market surveys and socio-economic interviews.
Lyne kamga: Field Assistant at fish market surveys.
Suzanne Mayang: Field Assistant during the socio-economic interviews.

10. Any other comments?