

WORKSHOP REFLECTION - ART, MARINE CONSERVATION, AND MY SCHOOL

I conducted an art workshop with the students of class 6C in my school, CS Academy, Kovaipudur. This was part of my pledge after attending the 'Art for Conservation' (A4C) Workshop run by Zooreach and the US Consulate, Chennai, in May 2024. My plan was to raise awareness on the pressing issues to marine ecosystems and how they have been severely impacted by bycatch and overfishing. I used an illustrative comic I made on this problem as a presentation interspersed with photographs of what is really happening on the coast. The reason I had listened to a talk by the Zooreach team and given my love for marine animals like Manta Rays and Jellyfish felt inspired to raise awareness on the topic.

Initially, I felt rather scared and the fact that there were all these young, bright, creative minds that looked up at me as I entered the room was rather intimidating. However, this thought was instantly extinguished by the flames of desire and determination I felt to inspire them, make a difference and open their minds to as many new things as possible. So I dove right in and got straight into explaining the issue to the very best of my



ability and the joy I felt in sharing the love for art and animals and slowly observing as the coils at the back of their brain started turning as they began to comprehend the graveness of the situation was truly immense and extremely exhilarating.

The experience opened up a whole new world for me—the world of teaching—and the thought of me having been on the other side of the classroom for the first time still leaves me in awe. The kids got to work, their motivation unwavering and remarkable. I split them up into four groups giving each one of them a separate species as such:

1. Fishermen - Their goal was to feed their families and be able to earn a living, and do so by any and all means possible whether that be harmful and illegal or not.

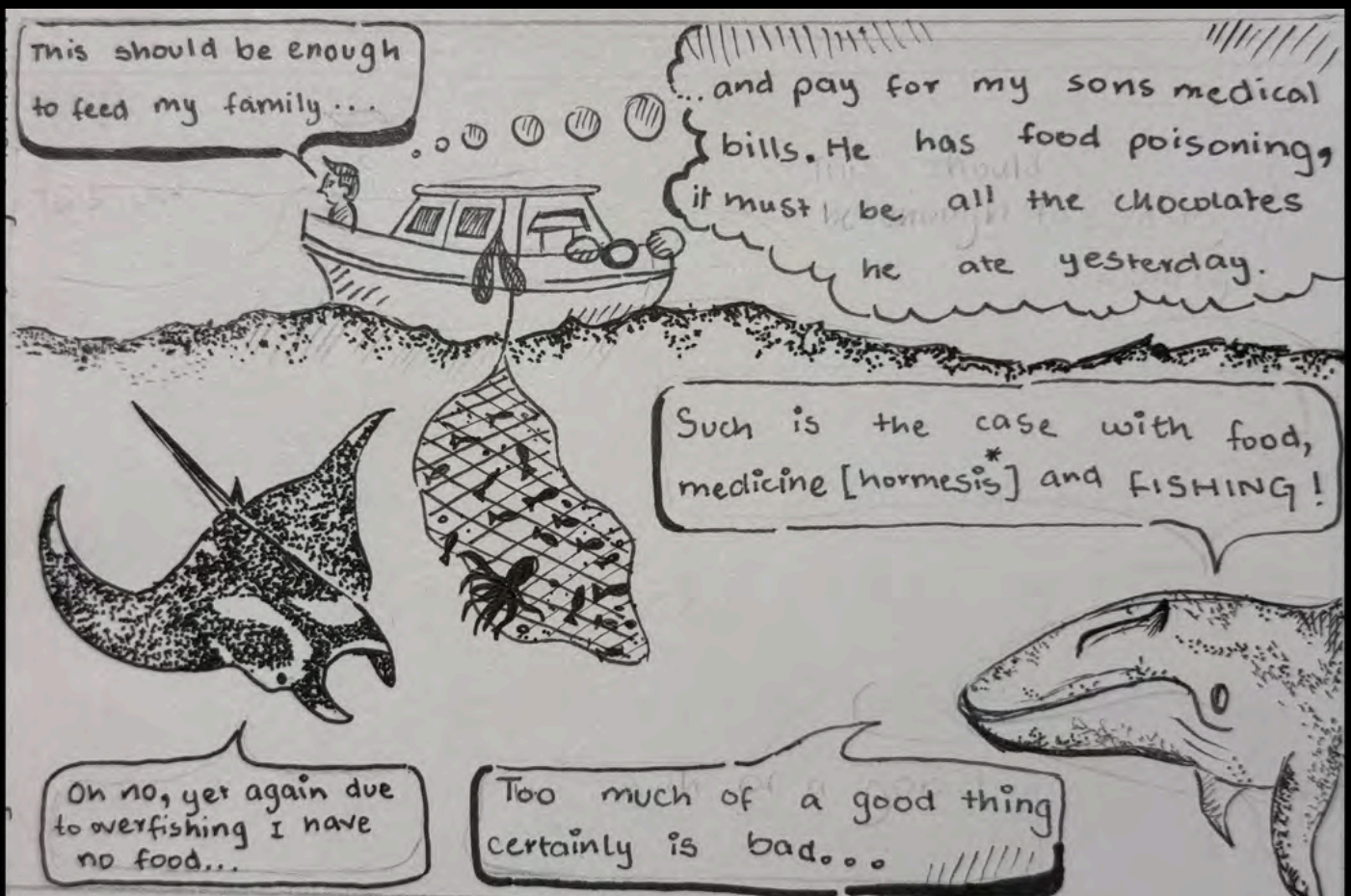
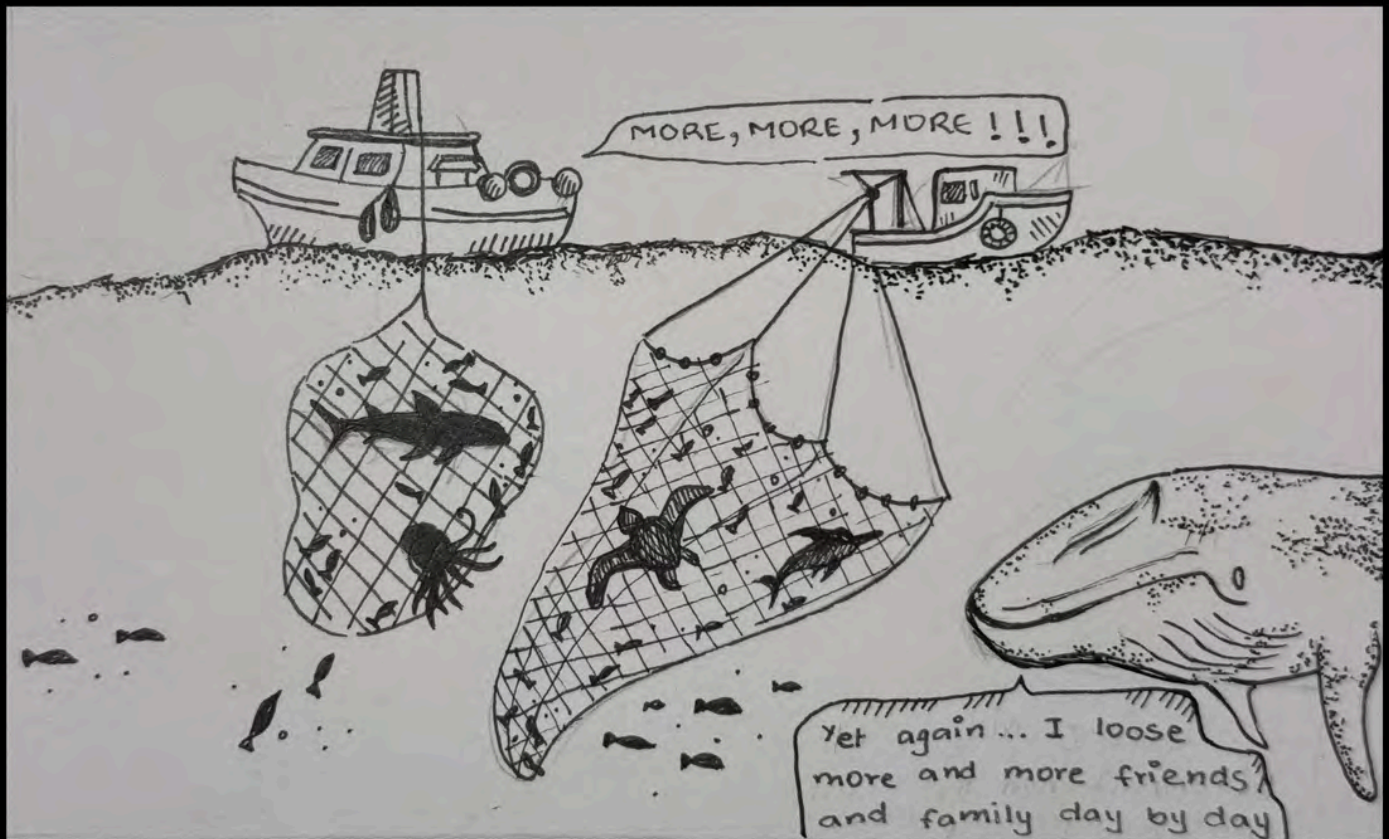
2. Coral reef - The members of this team were tasked with maintaining unity and providing shelter to all their marine inhabitants without being scooped up and destroyed by bottom trawlers.

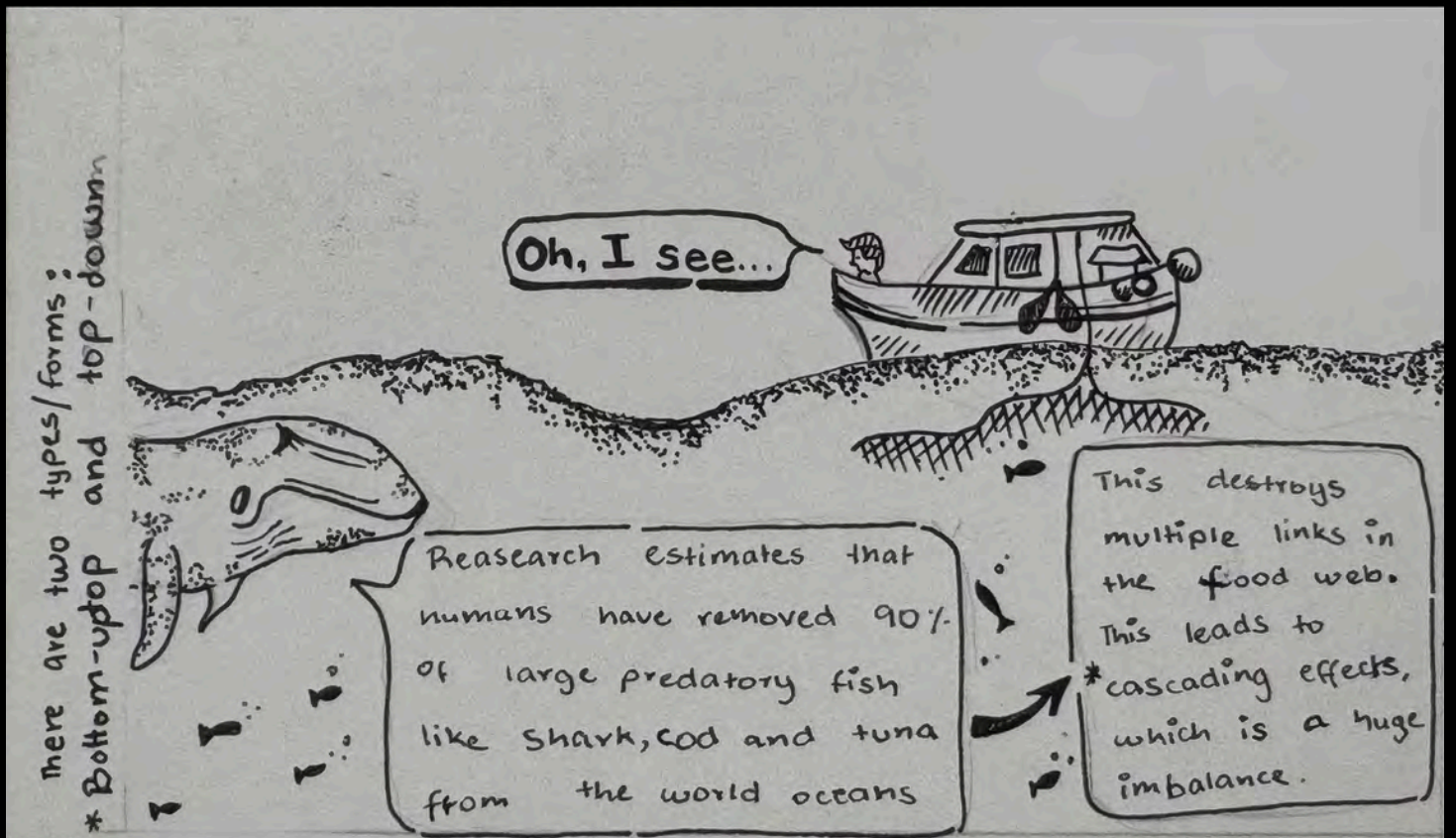
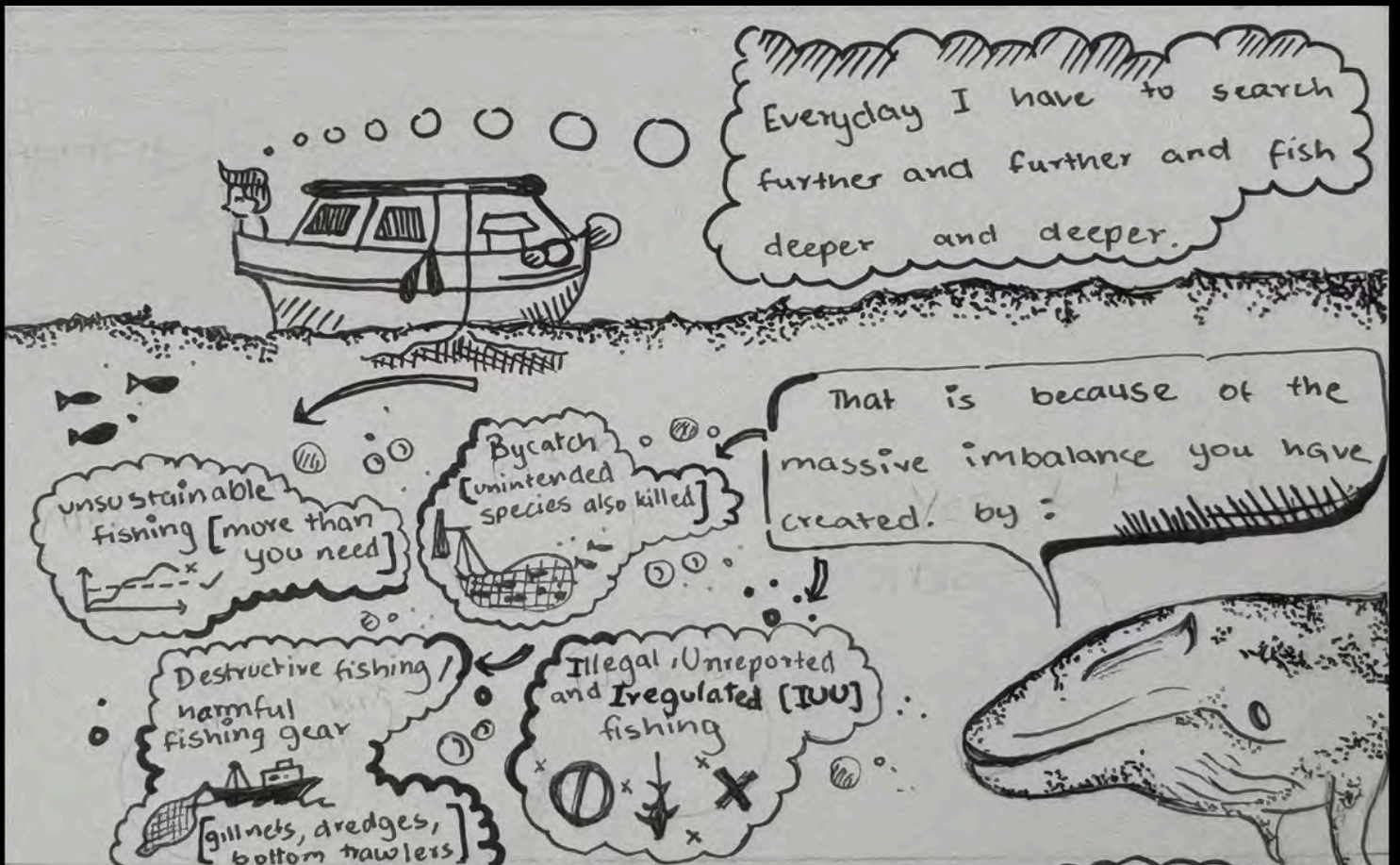
3. Sharks, Whales, Rays, and Turtles - Their goal was to ensure they escape and stay far away from the fishing boat and nets and maintain the balance of the food chain by being the necessary control systems / predators to ensure the prevention of cascading effects.

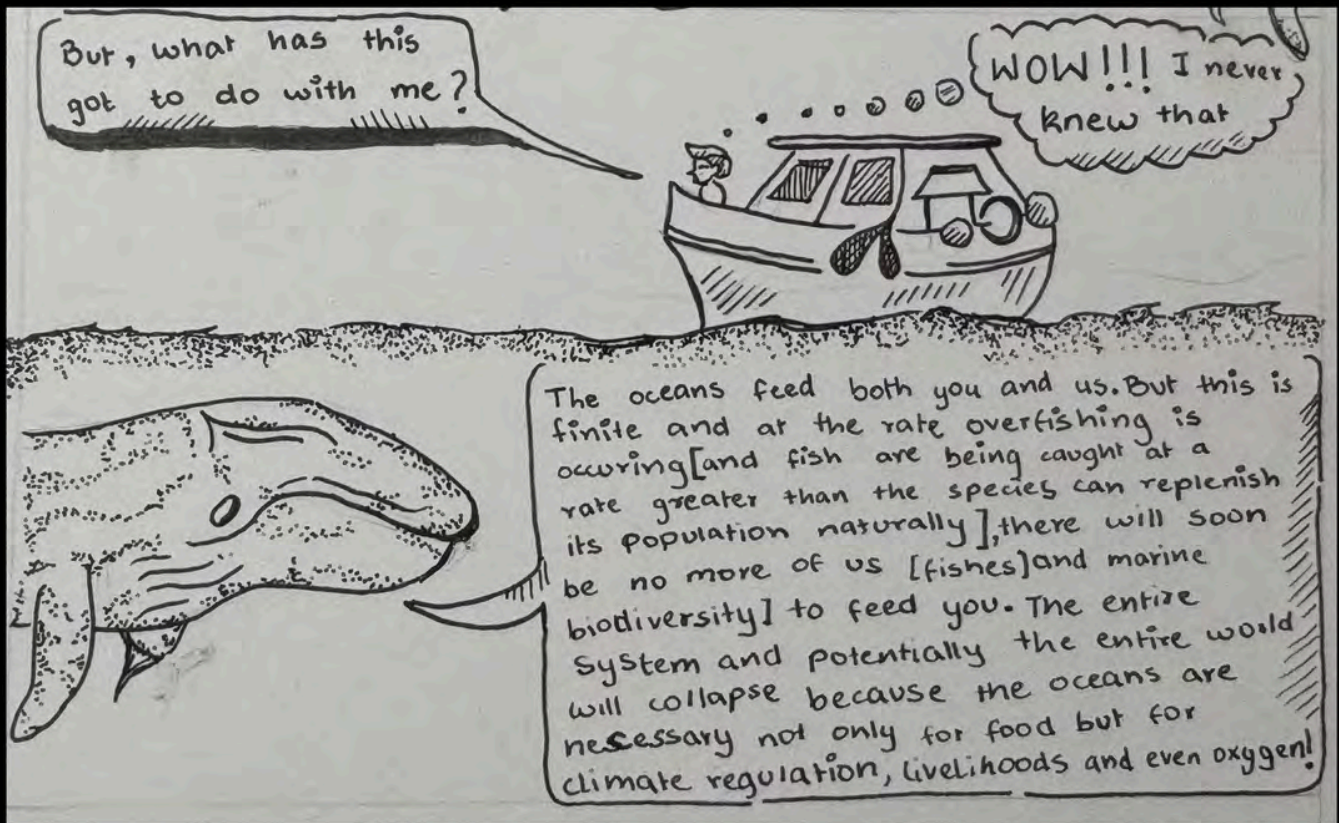




EFFECTS OF MARINE OVERFISHING







4. Jellyfish, Cephalopods, Seahorses, and schools of fish - The members of this team needed to survive without getting trapped in nets and plastic pollution in the ocean.

My overall goal was for them to make their own mini illustrations that would eventually be put together like puzzle pieces in order to become a complete marine ecosystem bustling and teeming with life while contrastingly also portraying the harm caused by destructive fishing methods like bottom trawling and dynamite fishing and of course the detrimental impact of overfishing and bycatch.

Much to my pleasure the enthusiastic children all participated, some creating small notes and taking their works home in order to work on them more, a much appreciated act. I was honoured to be a part of the Art for Conservation and I think the workshops I attended were a true testament to what the entire thing is based upon 'The power art' has in effectively communicating and conveying things across all ages, cultures, traditions, and everything bringing people together. It truly knows no limits!

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