

Report on Participation in Sharks International 2026, Sri Lanka



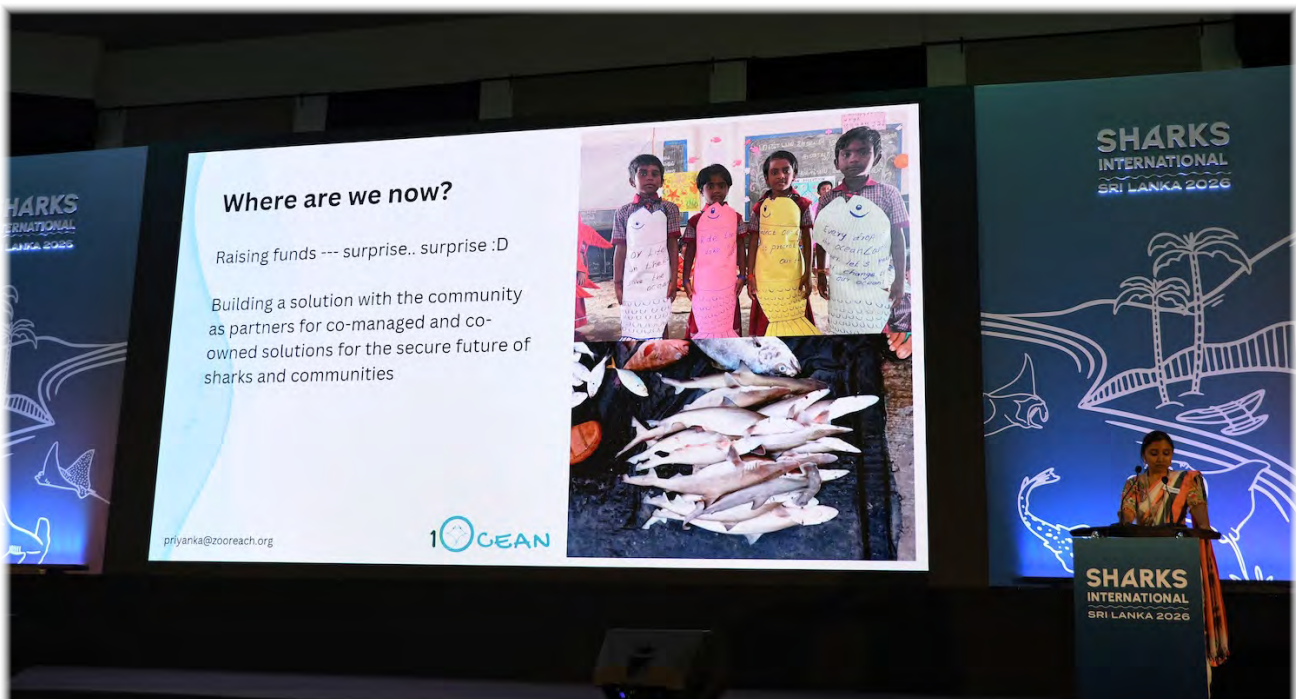
The Zooreach team had the opportunity to participate in Sharks International 2026, held in Sri Lanka on 4–8 May 2026, one of the world’s leading conferences dedicated to the conservation, research, and management of sharks, rays, and chimaeras. The event brought together more than 800 participants from over 80 countries, including scientists, conservation practitioners, policymakers, educators, fisheries experts, students, and representatives from non-governmental organizations. The conference provided a unique platform for sharing knowledge, discussing emerging challenges, and fostering collaborations for the conservation of elasmobranchs globally.

The conference featured a wide range of presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities covering diverse

aspects of shark and ray conservation.

Throughout the event, experts presented the latest research on shark and ray biology, ecology, population dynamics, distribution patterns, and habitat use. Several sessions highlighted advances in tracking technologies, genetic studies, and monitoring approaches that are improving our understanding of species movements and population trends. Discussions also emphasized the importance of integrating scientific evidence into conservation planning and fisheries management. There was a specific session focussed on deep elasmobranchs and their study.

A major theme of the conference was the growing need to address threats faced by sharks and rays, including overfishing, habitat degradation, climate change, and illegal wildlife





trade. Numerous presentations examined trade dynamics and market trends affecting shark and ray populations locally and worldwide. Researchers and practitioners shared insights into the complexity of international trade networks and their impacts on vulnerable species. In addition, several sessions focused on national and international laws, policies, and regulatory frameworks designed to improve species protection and their efficacy. Discussions around implementation challenges, compliance mechanisms, and the role of multilateral agreements highlighted the importance of collaboration between governments, researchers, and local communities.

Among the many contributions presented at the conference, the 10CEAN team represented by Priyanka Iyer and Usha Ravindra delivered two important talks that showcased community-based conservation and public engagement initiatives being implemented in India.

The first presentation focused on working with coastal communities to build a sustainable fisheries model that balances conservation goals with local livelihoods. The talk highlighted the importance of engaging fishers and fishing communities as key partners in conservation rather than viewing them solely as resource users. Through participatory approaches, awareness programmes, stakeholder consultations, and livelihood-focused interventions, the initiative seeks to promote sustainable fishing practices while supporting the socioeconomic well-being of coastal communities.

The presentation emphasized that long-term conservation success depends on community ownership, trust-building, and the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into fisheries management. The audience showed considerable interest in the practical lessons learned from implementing community-based conservation strategies and the potential for

scaling such models across other regions. The second presentation introduced the Citizen Science Portal developed under the 10CEAN programme and highlighted efforts to engage young people in marine conservation. The talk described a series of workshops conducted with students from eight colleges located in coastal regions across the states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. These workshops were designed to build awareness about sharks and rays, improve understanding of marine biodiversity, and train students in citizen science methodologies. Participants were introduced to the portal and encouraged to contribute observations and data that can support research and conservation efforts. The initiative demonstrates how citizen science can bridge the gap between scientific research and public participation, creating opportunities for students and communities to become active contributors to marine conservation. The presentation generated positive discussion regarding the role of technology, education, and youth engagement in strengthening conservation outcomes.

In addition to the scientific sessions, the conference provided valuable opportunities for interaction with researchers and practitioners working across different regions of the world. Informal discussions and networking sessions facilitated knowledge exchange on best practices in conservation planning, fisheries management, policy advocacy, community engagement, and capacity building. Learning about successful initiatives from diverse geographical contexts helped broaden perspectives on addressing conservation challenges and identifying opportunities for future collaboration.

One of the most significant takeaways from Sharks International 2026 was the recognition that effective shark and ray conservation requires a multidisciplinary approach. Scientific research alone is insufficient without strong policy frameworks, stakeholder participation, education, and community involvement. The conference repeatedly highlighted the importance of integrating ecological knowledge with social, economic, and governance considerations to achieve lasting conservation impacts.

Overall, Sharks International 2026 was an enriching and inspiring experience. The conference successfully brought together a global community committed to the conservation of sharks and rays, facilitating the exchange of scientific knowledge, practical experiences, and innovative solutions. The participation of over 800 delegates from more than 80 countries demonstrated the growing international commitment to addressing the challenges facing these ecologically important species. The presentations delivered by the 10CEAN team showcased meaningful examples of community-based conservation and citizen science engagement, reinforcing the value of collaborative approaches in advancing marine conservation. The knowledge gained and connections established during the conference will contribute significantly to future efforts aimed at promoting sustainable fisheries, enhancing public participation, and ensuring the long-term conservation of sharks and rays.

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