

## ***The Dynamics of the Cooperation Between Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and Mexico (Operation Milagro)***

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*Received: January 1, 2024; Revised: March 1, 2024; Approved: March 31, 2024*

### **ABSTRACT**

*The rapid stream of globalization is giving a wider range of international public relations spheres. As the effects of globalization are the birth of local and international NGOs its activism is shaped from various perspectives. One of the INGOs is Sea Shepherd run based on the idea of environmentalism, especially focused on marine life protection but often accused of being violent and its movement labeled as eco-terrorism. We are using the case of Operation Milagro (2015-2018) between Sea Shepherd and the Mexican government that cooperated. This journal aims to analyze the relationship between two actors including the mechanism of cooperation in Operation Milagro to prevent the extinction of Vaquita Porpoise and the other endangered species in the Cortez Sea, Gulf of California. This article uses relative deprivation theory and transnationalism concepts to gain a new understanding of the analyzed data. We argue that the cooperation of both actors in Operation Milagro is creating a new stage of understanding between both sides through its deprivation of the Sea Shepherd and the cooperation between Mexico and Sea Shepherd. From the point of view of Sea Shepherd, it became a useful tool to reconstruct a new identity as not only an altruistic NGO but also a cooperative nonstate actor. On the other hand, Mexico provided the navy and federal police to facilitate the Sea Shepherd to reach its goal. The author uses some methods such as literature study by collecting data and facts from books, online sites, online journals, and online news. This article also provides some critiques of a problem that came from the effect of cooperation between two actors.*

*Keywords: Sea Shepherd, Mexico, relative deprivation, transnationalism, environmentalism*

## INTRODUCTION

In the modern world where nations live together as a global community reducing the use of armed forces does not mean the amount of violence will decrease. Despite the use of force regularly used by a country or global community such as the UN to settle conflicts, the world is still facing a variety of hostilities that cause damage to human life or endanger their struggle to live. One of the new kinds of serious issues that not only a nation could face due to the globalization era is environmental damage. Damages to the environment could mean natural damage and also man-made damage that possibly causes serious threats to either humans or wildlife. The threats that appear caused by environmental damages are commonly destructive, affecting the regional or even global system.

Therefore, the emergence of the 'green movement' non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began to spread from one country to another. The presence of environmentalism and altruism by such NGOs has exposed social and political science scholars to open a brand-new fresh layer of social movement perspective regarding the ideas or values that they offer for reaching the goal. Although this phenomenon is not new in international relations it is still a unique form of international public relations due to the involvement of a non-state actor in the international relations system, in other words, current environmentalism NGOs are trying to act as mediator actors for regional and global environmental issues that stand between the objects and subjects (Stuart et al., 2013). Ian Adams had predicted such movements like Sea Shepherd and the other NGOs by saying that new radicalism political ideology is such deviance from the main theme of global politics color however its existence based on common awareness is truly undeniable (Adams et al., 2004). On the other hand, Watson and his crew believe that Sea Shepherd must possess the ability and power to influence the decision-maker both in the state and even at the international level. Environmentalist tends to act based on their passionate idealism that makes their diaspora in the global interdependence flexible beyond national territories and quite easy to

persuade people around the world regarding their principle of being a non-profit organization.

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society ('SSCS') is one of the existing NGOs that is running the idea of environmentalism. Its first operation started in 2002 and gained popularity and was well-known for the direct violent actions of its members against the Japanese Whaling fleet along the Antarctic water (Sea Shepherd, 2017b). Sea Shepherd Conservation Society is an organization that was invented by Captain Paul Watson in 1977 and officially incorporated in the United States in 1981. Paul Watson was a member of Greenpeace before he created the Earth Force Society (1971) and took base in Vancouver, Canada (Sea Shepherd, 2008). In the end, his resignation from Greenpeace was because of his disappointment with Greenpeace due to its 'softness' stance when the organization faced environmental threats all around the world caused by human activity. This becomes a new path for the beginning of controversial action in the future and started a new path of his way by using militant activities in the sea to confront environmental threats caused by human excessive fishing or pollution to protect marine species that go to extinction.

Watson and other volunteers decided to establish the new emerging 'green' forces followed by the use of vessels to lead the patrolling action on the seas. In the early period when the Sea Shepherd was first established, the organization was financially supported by crowdfunding from soliciting donations program and financial aid from the Fund for Animals. Even today, several parts of the same funding model are still being used for the sake of the NGO's sustainability (Nagtzaam, 2014). Despite Sea Shepherd's identical ideas with its former platform (Greenpeace), and compared to it or even the others, one of the most underlined crucial factors of Sea Shepherd itself is that Watson and his crew emphasized the use of militant direct action as a primary function of SSCS compared the other 'green' NGOs (Nagtzaam, 2014).

In 2013, Sethe a Shepherd Conservation Society carried out the ongoing

Operation Milagro, which means “miracle” in Spanish. Just like its name, this operation is as difficult as conducting a miracle. With this, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society hopes to save the endangered Vaquita Porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*), a marine mammal that is considered the most endangered in the world. Only endemic to the Baja California Region, the Gulf of California, or the Sea of Cortez to be precise, this sea creature is one of the victims of illegal fishing of Totoaba fish which has an enormous demand from the Chinese consumers as its swim bladder is highly-priced. Preventing the extinction of Vaquita Porpoise is a necessity for preserving its existence and in the future, providing benefits for the organization, the Mexican Government, and the whole world (Sea Shepherd, 2017a).

In terms of efforts held by the Government of Mexico, there have been a considerable number of actions taken. In 2012, the government in collaboration with WWF executed a program to collect the gillnets, both abandoned and currently used by fishermen and poachers. With help from the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change of Mexico, the Mexican Government managed to do a current estimation effort of the Vaquita Porpoises population (Mongabay, 2017). In 2017, the Mexican Government organized an emergency action plan, which was Vaquita CPR (Vaquita Conservation, Protection, and Recovery) that involved conservation experts, scientists, and marine mammal veterinarians (NMMF, n.d.). The Mexico Navy has also begun monitoring the Vaquita Porpoise habitat and guarding the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, which has been a close partner for over three years, and their Vaquita Porpoise documentation and recovery actions which are often confronted by the fishermen and poachers (Marex, 2018).

The reasons for the creation of this article are that this specific case has not been fully investigated yet, particularly after the anti-whale post-campaign that popularly stole the world's attention despite its risking measurement act led by Sea Shepherd against the Japanese Whalers fleet (Stuart et al., 2013). Thus, an advanced and deeper understanding of this case is still needed. This

specific case which is the cooperation treaty between The Government of Mexico and Sea Shepherd focused on marine life conservation, specifically, we set off from the point of view of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society itself is within the scope of the subject regarding the international public relations, therefore, created a new interesting fact for the writers to do a closer analysis of the case. Beyond the argument, the article seeks to provide an answer to the question about how the pattern of cooperation mechanism which is conducted during Operation Milagro that taken in the first place between the two actors in the international public relations studies possibly created.

This article hopes that the evaluation of cooperation between the government of Mexico through the enforcement of seacoast security by exerting its navy and its cooperation with the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society could lead to new facts and extend the scope of social sciences discoveries which can be used for further research purposes in the future.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses qualitative descriptive methods to scrutinize the object of the study. According to Kim et al (2017), this research produces data that describes the 'who, what, and where of an event or experience' from a subjective point of view (Kim et al., 2017). To obtain the data, we use literature study data from various sources such as books, journals, proceedings, reports, news, the internet, and so on. Meanwhile, Miles and Huberman explained that three steps of research involve collecting data, and analysis activities include three main lines, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Silalahi, 2009).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Relative Deprivation Theory**

Based on the case mentioned above, relative deprivation theory is a popular theory that went from the theories of the social movement we adopted to form the sociology perspective by Ted Robert Gurr (1971). Therefore, social movements include individuals, groups, or even organizations structured

formally that are engaged in extra-institutional issues and conflicts (Christiansen, 2008). Reaching the goals among civil society indicates that movements have leadership emerge so it is well planned. According to Blumer, even the emerges are also able to work out within coalescence with other groups if the conditions at all possible based on the stages of social movement theories approach (Christiansen, 2008).

The theory of Relative Deprivation is a part of social movement theories that focuses on the observation and exploration of the basic causes of deprivation that refer to violent, aggressive, and militant action by individuals or groups. However, the definition of Relative Deprivation as well as Gurr himself in Ahmad Saleh's article states "*Relative Deprivation is the discrepancies between what people want, their value expectations, and what they gain, their value accruing capabilities*" (Saleh, 2013).

The basic stage and collective violence action in society are caused by the psychological frustration felt by both individual and social groups that have been deeply and often experienced so that would emerge the possibility of increased aggression measurements as anger creates (Saleh, 2013). Certain community tends to resist regimes when they are losing hope whether it is political, cultural, ethnicity, or even economic values and rights in the community as used to be idealized previously. A transition becomes certain before the aggressive or violent actions start. While kind of tough leader-type is a decisive point as it relates to shared ideas and collection action survival in the field among the community (Gurr, 2016).

The aggressiveness causes the community to be more violent which means that is a threat to a ruler which would create political instability (Saleh, 2013). These collective identities bring in the Sea Shepherd in a circumstance of conflict since Operation Milagro V may define what kind of factors and how such an INGO like that is possible as a reflection of the manifestations of the social movement can become the opponent actor in terms of facing the realities like illegal poachers, marine life destruction phenomenon and the

other negative activity along the seashore of Mexico.

Such collective action is always positioning itself to challenge the mainstream of the existing social structure so then, theoretically, the action and goal of social movements are categorized as a controversy (Melucci, 1980). In the case of Operation Milagro V held by cooperation between Sea Shepherd and the Mexican government to do some sea patrol, the use of theory is to explore and discover Sea Shepherd's motives and expectations that form its identity nowadays.

### **Transnationalism Concept**

According to a book written by Steven Vertovec, a well-known anthropologist, Honorary Joint Professor of Sociology and Ethnology at the University of Göttingen and Director of Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Transnationalism is a concept that focuses on the topic of relations that are formed by non-state actors, which are Companies/Associations, NGOs, individual figures, and more, with another non-state actors or institutions. Connections and relations that were created and then maintained to be sustainable and continuous between the two actors are based on the fact that the two cooperating parties have shared primary interests (for example common beliefs, cultures, and geographical landscapes) and also common goals and purposes. The globalization phenomenon has transformed the way societies interact with each other as it formed a much easier way for people to communicate. This phenomenon has led to transnationalism as a new way of international relations which globalization defined by James N. Rosenau, Former President of the International Studies Association as multiple and complex interconnections. This means that the notion of transnationalism can be perceived as one of the effects that emerged from the globalization phenomenon. The basic assumption of Transnationalism is an international relation held by state actors that are now involving civil society such as expert individuals, organizations, and private societies that possess influential impacts (Vertovec, 2009). The concept of



transnationalism strongly believes that non-state actors can transform social issues and phenomena into international issues (develop issues and phenomena to a bigger and higher scale) with the act of advocacy. The definition of a non-state actor as a group of advocacy is explained by Keck and Sicking (1998) in their work, *Activists Beyond Borders*. They defined non-state actors as advocacy groups that concern and work on primary and essential issues, those actors consist of Non-Government Organizations, International Non-Government Organizations, activists, media publishers, religious organizations, diasporas, academics, experts, foundation organizations, lobbyists, local or domestic social movements that have branches and/or gain support and sympathizers from local, national, and even regional level, and more (Ani Soetjipto, 2018).

The reason why the concept of transnationalism is used to analyze this specific case which is the cooperation between the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society ('SSCS') and the Government of Mexico because this concept can explain past cases and events in terms of cooperation between two specific type actors mentioned above, for this exact case is the cooperation of an NGO with a government or an institution. The country of Mexico is facing a huge problem with preserving the critically endangered *Vaquita* Porpoise as the government is struggling heavily to protect the *Vaquita's* natural habitat from fishermen and illegal poachers because of the use of gill nets. Sea Shepherd Conservation Society is one of the non-state actors mentioned in the theory description. This organization focuses on conservation and organizing rescue actions for endangered sea creatures and has a considerable amount of track records and achievements. Although the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has been operating rescue actions on this specific issue since 2013 by the name of Operation Milagro and has had a positive impact on *Vaquita's* population, the government is still facing the fact that *Vaquita's* population keeps on decreasing even though not as rapid as it is used to, thanks to the help of organizations such as Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Based on the fact

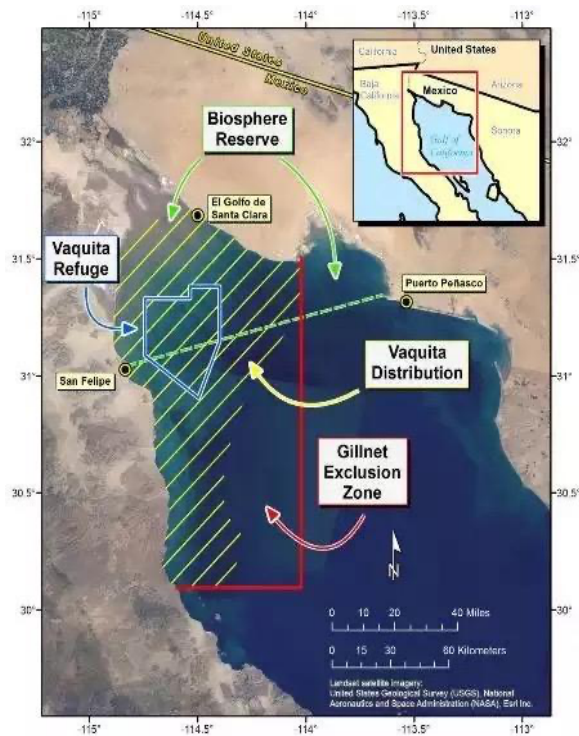


that these helpful organizations, specifically Sea Shepherds have the expertise and advanced observation and preservation procedures of endangered sea creatures has led to the agreement of partnership between the government of Mexico and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society on May 5, 2015, with one of the agreements consists of protection of Sea Shepherd vessels by the Mexican Navy and joint patrolling procedures (Scoop, 2015).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### What was Sea Shepherd trying to protect?

As an international *environmentalism* NGO, Sea Shepherd decided to launch the ongoing operation, Milagro, meaning 'miracle' in 2013. The operation focused on the conservation efforts of *Vaquita* porpoises by doing direct actions, such as sea patrolling with vessels. The scope of the operation was taking place over the Cortez Sea of Mexico which is the only known habitat for the mammal *vaquita* porpoises that are known as the most endangered, smallest, and rarest cetacean species. They live exclusively in The Mexican Gulf of California including the Cortez Sea. The decreasing amount of the cetacean had become a serious issue for Sea Shepherd and The Mexican government. By the fall of 2015, the known *Vaquitas* population within the Cortez Sea was only 97 and only 25 productive female *Vaquitas* were left. The report indicated that more direct actions must be held to not only protect the endangered species but also conserve the habitat through strict policies by the government and Sea Shepherd towards the uncontrollable poaching activities in the area (Sea Shepherd, n.d.).



**FIGURE 1.** Cortez Sea and Operation Milagro Map

Source: (<https://seashepherd.org/news/sea-shepherd-announces-operation-milagro-ii-fall-2015-vaquita-porpoise-defense-campaign/>)

Sea Shepherd used to patrol the Cortez Sea daily to collect and destroy the gillnets left by Mexican poachers along the seashore. Mexican fishermen used to net *totoaba* fish on the seashore by using gill nets. However, the gillnets often trapped the *Vaquitas* as the species were migrating to the Cortez Sea from California. The other issue with the rapid population decrease is that their reproduction rate takes a considerable amount of time. A female *vaquita* can only give birth to a single *vaquita* every two years. This is also aggravated by the fact that a *vaquita* can only live for 20 years, quite short of the lifespan of a marine mammal (Sea Shepherd, 2015a).

### **How was the operation being held?**

Operation Milagro is a currently ongoing action that is held by Sea Shepherd crews and vessels to protect *Vaquita's* survival. The difficulties of this operation are not only the constant threat of safety that the crews are

facing because of their violent approach when conducting this operation, the existence of illegal poachers doing illegal fishing of poaching the protected marine creatures, and local fishermen that are feeling disturbed by Sea Shepherd's actions. Due to the reasons mentioned, Sea Shepherd is forced to keep their operation with such an approach which is direct and violent and conducted all year long, throughout the years.

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has been doing quite tremendous work on preserving the population of *Vaquita* porpoise since 2013 with their Milagro operation. Their first step of action is filming and taking photographs of detailed documentation of *Vaquitas'* habitat, condition, and population. At the beginning of their rescue operations, Sea Shepherd has not yet formed a connection with the Mexican Government, even more so doing joint operations. But Sea Shepherd had given critical opinions and suggestions to the Mexican Government to preserve *Vaquitas*.

The first operation was held in 2015 by the name of Operation Milagro II which took place in the Cortez Sea, using one of Sea Shepherd's research vessels named R/V Martin Sheen. During the beginning of the operation, Sea Shepherd was guarded by the Navy and Federal Police of Mexico to avoid harmful actions that could come from anyone with no exception from the threat created by the crew itself (Sea Shepherd, 2015a). As we argue, due to the level of difficulties faced by such *altruistic* activity, we argue that the involvement of the Navy of Mexico and the Federal Police was helpful for the sake of sustainable development over the operation. The effects of sustainability created from the partnership between Sea Shepherd and the Government of Mexico resulted in the continuous stage of operations until panned in July 2016 (Sea Shepherd, 2015a).

The extended operation period of organizing the operation by Sea Shepherd until the present is one of the proofs for the argument. A year later, the operation was continued to the next phase and became even more active than before. In early 2017, Sea Shepherd launched the next campaign called

Operation Milagro III. The operation had quite a lot of differences from the previous one. With the Navy and Federal Police that now was on board Sea Shepherd vessels, guarding the operation. The main goal was not only to ensure the *Vaquitas*' survival but also indirectly were help other species which were sharks from the threats of extinction by constantly finding and removing "ghost nets" (Sea Shepherd, 2023). In the fall of 2017, Sea Shepherd conducted Operation Milagro IV with the same goal and support from the Mexican authority, the action took place in the Gulf of California. The operation was more vocal and people's attention by discovering the dreadful fact that the species of *Vaquitas* were now less than 30. The vessels were to patrol every day to face the problem as still, the presence of gillnets over the waters kept on happening. The gillnets were believed as the main cause of the extinction of some marine species, not only *Vaquitas* but also sharks and *Totoabas* (Sea Shepherd, 2015b). The latest and ongoing Operation Milagro V with a new vessel, named White Holly carries on the continued objectives from the previous operations. The patrol action over Cortez Sea launched in September 2018 is still going on to this day.

However, environmentalist efforts always result in both horizontal conflict and vertical conflict. Although, Sea Shepherd experienced the horizontal side of the conflict. This is because their partnership with the Mexican government made no vertical conflict ever happen. Strict national sea laws and regulations that were enforced by the Mexican Navy and Sea Shepherd are facing resistance from the local fishermen's point of view. On January 9, 2019, Mexican poachers were trying to sabotage M/V Farley Mowat during patrol (The Maritime Executive, 2019). The radical contact between poachers against Sea Shepherd crews was categorized as a conflict stage. The attack happened during the moment of patrol by Farley Mowat without optimum guard by the Navy or the Federal Police. Fortunately, the Navy commander in the San Felipe region responded immediately by sending their helicopter to fly over the area where the incident occurred (The Maritime

Executive, 2019). According to the maritime executive, the fishermen community is demanding a “softened” sea law and regulation for fishing. They view the strictness of government and the involvement of INGO Sea Shepherd as a restraining act to their rights for sailing and fishing. Furthermore, it will create a situation that is cornered by the fishermen considering their economic work to fulfill daily needs is being blocked.

The undercover conflict between the poachers and Sea Shepherd was proved as a deprivation action. It is believed that Sea Shepherd conducted a relative deprivation which has been portrayed since the early establishment and the purposes of the INGO itself by Paul Watson separating from Greenpeace and rather creating neo-green forces that focus on marine life conservation, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. It was because of the frustration of some within Greenpeace’s main body that criticizing the gap between Greenpeace’s dreams and its action was considered useless and seemed not taking serious direct action to protect the earth from wild exploitations. We believe that Sea Shepherd took a deprivation form of INGO that purely took the riskiest aspect of voluntary and “green” support action all this time. The deprivation aspect is shown through direct and violent confrontation towards poachers and the self-removing of gillnets over the Cortez Sea. However, before the Mexico campaign, the Sea Shepherds seemed involved and considered part of *eco-terrorism* on the sea during their battle against the Japanese Whaler Fleet in 2011 which the conflict continued until fall 2017. That is one of the portrayals of how society generates action or response from its awareness due to the balance of the ecosystem based on strong conviction.

Furthermore, industrialization and globalization accelerate the distribution of information and are getting ever stronger. Therefore, such conditions successfully created a turning point for new or alternative ideas run by Sea Shepherd who were marginalized before the end of the Cold War to gain more populism in international society. The main consequence that is

benefitting Sea Shepherd is the unstoppable rise of collective awareness of human responsibility to protect the environment as they were originally designed to complete and need each other between human and nature, especially marine life for the sustainability of the ideal ecosystem as a whole. Sea Shepherd succeeds in manifesting its action through the use of protest participation by groups using vessels and deviant action against marine exploitations. Sometimes, the deviances portrayed possibly direct to an open conflict between Sea Shepherd themselves and the poachers. We also discuss the deviances of Sea Shepherd and based on that, able to cooperate with the Mexican authority through the Navy and Federal Policy. The fact is, that even relative deprivation can encourage a new form of international cooperation with actors that are involved.

#### **Operation Milagro: Joint Cooperation with Mexico**

Sea Shepherd is one of the prime examples of the entrance of civil society into the international arena. The form of cooperation between Sea Shepherd and the Government of Mexico is one of the proofs that in certain conditions, the non-state actor has tremendous ability and can contribute better which could lead to better results in terms of understanding and solving certain problems. For this specific case, Sea Shepherd has the basics and foundations as an organization that is concerned and focuses on the field of sea creature conservation. This is strengthened by the fact that Sea Shepherd has members who are passionate and knowledgeable about the issues and problems of the threats of extinction aimed towards sea creatures based on the members' own experience and many other reasons. Even though Sea Shepherd had a negative mark on their history with their altercation against Japanese Whales on the controversy of Whale rescue efforts, this organization has a considerably positive track record.

Knowing the fact that the rapidly decreasing population of *vaquitas* kept on occurring, the Government of Mexico started to incorporate outside help to prevent *vaquitas* from extinction. Sea Shepherds who have been in

Mexico since 2013 when the population of *vaquita* porpoises was about 100 have been doing their best to delay the rapidly decreasing population of *vaquita* porpoises on their own by doing independent full-scale documentation of the depressing condition of *vaquita* porpoises, followed by critics and suggestions to the people of Mexico and especially the Government to implement a quick and massive response. This showed that there were advocating efforts made by Sea Shepherd to achieve their purposes and goals which can be traced to their altruistic characteristic. Their altruistic trait is mainly focused on implementing efforts to rescue and prevent marine creatures from extinction and later to preserve their population to a state of no longer in danger of extinction.

Witnessing the efforts that were done since 2013 and ongoing actions to the present day from Sea Shepherd can be viewed as a significant effect. This was proven by the fact that the Government of Mexico finally started to step in and lend a hand on this specific issue after recognizing the critical state of *Vaquitas* that kept on being destroyed by the use of gillnets by fishermen and poachers. The Government of Mexico also implemented quite a lot of policies regarding the preservation of *vaquitas*, such as issuing a prohibition of the use of gillnets, a gillnet buy-back option for fishermen and poachers with an agreement not to use gillnets anymore as a tool of fishing, and proposed a gillnet-free zone, especially in the Cortez Sea (Sea Shepherd, 2015a).

In 2017, the Government of Mexico announced cooperation actions with Sea Shepherd to smoothen and expedite the rescue, preservation, conservation efforts, and protection of *vaquitas* from fishermen and poachers. The advocacy efforts that were made by Sea Shepherd impacted and influenced the people of Mexico and around the world. Sea Shepherd has raised awareness from the people regarding the importance of protecting and preserving sustainability, especially in terms of marine life regarding the issue of the critical state of *vaquita* porpoise. The effect of advocacy efforts made by Sea Shepherd can be proved by the emergence of news and media outlets



reporting this issue which is the condition of nearly extinct *vaquitas*. Another proof is the emergence of several domestic or local social movements that focus on and are concerned with this specific issue, for example, VIVA *Vaquita*.

The future of the issue of *vaquitas* and the cooperation between Sea Shepherd and the Government of Mexico in our opinion will most likely be solely depending on the fate of *vaquitas* themselves. A news source *Underwater 360* predicted that *vaquitas* have the opportunity to go extinct in 2022-2023, although the only problem this issue faces is still the extensive use of gillnets and even by-catch (manual) by fishermen and poachers. This illegal fishing practice is the sole problem for *vaquita* porpoise. This shows a clash between Sea Shepherd with the Mexican Government and the local fishermen in the scope of local civil society. The fishermen and poachers have their reason for using gillnets as a tool of fishing commodities, which is to catch *totoaba* fish whose swim bladders are highly priced and have a huge demand in China and Hong Kong, priced at about US\$10,000 per kilogram (Sea Shepherd, 2015a). These reasons make it unlikely for fishermen and poachers to stop doing illegal fishing procedures to fish *totoaba* and *vaquita porpoises* because of their high demand (Jarvis, 2016).

But one thing we are sure of is that Sea Shepherd will not stop fighting to rescue and preserve *vaquita* porpoises based on a reasonable basis. The first is that as mentioned, Sea Shepherd and their altruistic trait of rescuing, preserving, conserving, and protecting marine creatures. The second is that if they do fail this operation, it will add another bad mark on their history because they would likely try to move on as soon as possible from their dark past with the altercation between them and the Japanese Whaling fleet with the Shark rescue efforts. Another problem that might be considered is on the shoulder of the Government. The Mexican Government needs to find the middle ground in terms of protecting their citizens which in this case the fishermen from losing their jobs, and also protecting the habitat and preserving the population of *Vaquitas*.

## The Current Situation in Mexico

Mexico's cooperation with Sea Shepherd is considered not to have a significant effect. In the end, the *Vaquita* population is now even more of a concern. The prediction that the *Vaquita* will become extinct in 2022 or 2023 does not seem an impossible thing. On the official website of Sea Shepherd, it is stated that the *Vaquita* population is less than 20 (Sea Shepherd, 2021). Meanwhile, other sources say that the *Vaquita* population is now less than 10 individuals (Canon, 2022). This shows that the performance of the Sea Shepherd is unquestionable. In terms of public awareness, they may have succeeded in increasing it. However, regarding efforts to keep the *Vaquita* from extinction, they are far from successful. This cannot be separated from the number of fishermen who still use gillnets when catching fish.

This situation still occurs because the use of this method is considered the most effective way to catch as many fish as possible. However, the consequence is that fishermen cannot choose, because they will catch fish that fall into the net, including the *Vaquita* itself. Maybe the community understands but, in practice, they still ignore it, so it cannot be denied that this has an impact on endangered fish species, including *Vaquita*. Economic reasons are a strong factor that requires people to use this method to survive and get as much profit as possible. The government itself is considered unable to take a solution. Fishermen feel that the government has not provided an alternative for fishermen so as not to catch fish illegally. Some say that the *Vaquita* is an obstacle or even a pest so when the *Vaquita* goes extinct it will be even better for fishermen (Canon, 2022).

This condition indicates that there is a conflict of interest between the parties involved. For the government, and INGOs like Sea Shepherd, of course, their interest is to protect *Vaquita* from the threat of extinction. As for local fishermen, rather than just protecting *Vaquita*, they perceive the fish as a nuisance so they catch fish that have a high selling value such as *totoaba*. In other words, they realize that the use of gillnets may be dangerous but, there

is something even more dangerous than that, as they lose out on greater economic benefits when they do not use this method of fishing. Meanwhile, the government itself is considered not successful in providing alternative policies that can be profitable for fishermen.

In this case, it is understandable that different interests hinder the process of preserving the *Vaquita*. If this situation is allowed to continue, it is not impossible for the population of *Vaquita* will become after 2022 or 2023 can come true. Therefore, more concrete steps are needed by the government to provide an alternative for fishermen who still use gillnets. Firmness is also needed so that the number of illegal fishing in the waters where *Vaquita* lives is kept as low as possible. As for Sea Shepherd, report accuracy can be a key factor in ensuring the survival of the *Vaquita* itself. The report can help them map out appropriate steps to maintain the survival of the *Vaquita* itself.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the writers pointed out that Sea Shepherd's rescue operation in the Cortez Sea of Mexico is purely altruistic. However, the operation itself turns into a good image-reconstructing process for the Sea Shepherd that was previously labeled globally as an ecoterrorism pirate on the sea. Further, the cooperation with the Mexican government became proof that supports the argument. Based on the relative deprivation perspective, the deviances of Sea Shepherds by doing such radical and frontal actions on the sea is indeed proved since the early establishment and also the track records during another campaign in the past, ultimately the Japanese Whaling case but the campaign in Mexico is an exception. Despite getting some resistance from the state, the Sea Shepherd has amazingly gained support from it. Even the government ordered the Navy and Federal Police to directly join the campaign by guarding and protecting vessels patrol which means SeaShepherd'sd objectives which is integrally arthe e same as the awareness of Mexico on the extinct threat of its *Vaquita* Porpoises. The phenomenon told

us that sometimes the relative deprivation by Sea Shepherd on Operation Milaentersring the stages of gaining support and cooperation with a legitimate actor (state). On the other hand, it means that the state nowadays needs to attend the other transnational actors as NGOs to help them deal with the circumstances they can't optimally solve. Although the cooperation between Sea Shepherd and Mexico seems to be a wise solution as the continuous operation is still running, any problems come come one another. The resistance of local fisherman communities by violently attacking the Sea Shepherd vessels during the patrol is one of the problems that the government, NGOs, and the people should resolve immediately. It can also be concluded that although the Sea Shepherd campaign has succeeded in increasing the awareness of related parties, in practice it is still far from successful. The indication is that the population of Vaquita is decreasing, especially in 2022-2023. This is of course caused by a conflict of interest between the fishermen and those who are trying to protect Vaquita, namely the government and Sea Shepherd. Meanwhile, the government itself has not provided adequate alternatives for fishermen, so they continue to use gillnets. This is a determining factor for the success or failure of efforts to maintain the Vaquita population in these waters.

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