

Say 'no' to American TED, but 'yes' to Swadeshi Trawl Guard
*(An indigenous device for better fish catch and better turtle protection
in the mixed-catch marine fisheries of India)*

(Download the Poster Presented on Trawl Guard <http://www.box.net/shared/cbfm7om1jn>)

For about a decade and half now, the trawl operators fishing in the turtle sensitive coastal waters of India are bound under an official mandate to use TED (Turtle Excluder Device) in their nets, lest their vessel, net and crew stand the chance of seizure, confiscation, fine and imprisonment under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and Orissa Marine Fisheries Regulation Act 1982. Both Govt of India and State of Orissa are keen on enforcing TED, because of a compulsion arising from a USA public law which says that any outside country exporting shrimp into USA has to certify that shrimp being exported has been caught from the sea with the help of a turtle exclusion device that is comparable to the one used in USA i.e TED. But the ground reality as it exists today in India is highly dismal and disappointing, from the points of view of both turtle protection and fish harvest. Because the Indian trawlers are interested in mixed catch of shrimp and fishes of any size, they are hesitant to use TED, which though effective in turtle protection, allows fishes of medium to big size escape the TED hole. They feel that the TED which was designed basically for exclusive shrimp trawling in US waters is unsuitable, nay unproductive in the context of mainstream Indian marine fisheries, where mixed catch of both shrimp and fishes is the go. Because of their strong mistrust of TED, they merely keep a TED or two atop their trawlers just to escape the legal hassle, but never use it in their day-to-day hauling operations. As a result, not only the trawling related turtle mortality remains as worrisome as before along Orissa coast, but also several trawlers are apprehended, and consequently penalised by the enforcement agencies every year on the ground of non-compliance of TED regulations.

In the context of such an unwarranted scenario, the emergence of an indigenous and innovative device called Trawl Guard, which can serve as far more effective alternative to any design of American TED, has unleashed a ray of hope both for trawl fisheries and turtle protection. Invented and used by a trawl driver of Orissa Mr. Anirudha Dalai in the wake of Super Cyclone of October 1999, Trawl Guard has been subject to a series of on-sea field tests and also its case presented on different occasions before eminent forums involving various stake-holders. In course of the field trials held so far, the indigenous Trawl Guard was found to be a more effective device than American TED in respect of both catch retention and turtle protection. As such there is no reason why there should be any further delay in the official recognition being extended to Swadeshi Trawl Guard as a substitute of American TED for mandatory use in the turtle sensitive coastal waters of Orissa and other concerned maritime States of the country.

A fresh effort was recently made to push forward the case of Trawl Guard vis-à-vis TED before a renowned international forum dedicated to turtle research and conservation. Mr. Chitta Behera presented a Poster entitled "IS TRAWL GUARD AN ALTERNATIVE TO TED IN MIXED-CATCH MARINE FISHERIES?" Or "No to TED, Yes to Trawl Guard- Why?" (<http://www.box.net/shared/cbfm7om1jn>) at the 30th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation held at Kala Academy, Panaji, Goa, 24-30 April 2010 with attendance from nearly 1000 delegates drawn from over 70 countries of the world.

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