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USAID SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEMS ADVANCED (USAID SEA) PROJECT: LEASE ISLANDS – CENTRAL MALUKU

The Lease Islands are one of many small scattered archipelagos in Maluku consisting of three prominent islands: Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut. Besides its stunning landscapes and undersea charms, Lease Islands are rich in historical and cultural value, making it ideal as a tourism attraction.

Located less than three hours away from Ambon City, and easily accessible by a combination of car and speed boat, Lease Islands are strategically located. Their proximity with other big cities, such as Ambon and Masohi in Central Maluku District, are beneficial not only for visitors but also for local fishermen to trade their daily catch.

The total area of Lease Islands is 359 km², administratively divided into four sub-districts, namely Haruku, Saparua, East Saparua and Nusalaut, with a total of 34 villages. With 63,517 inhabitants, Lease is considered a densely populated small island group. The 2016 fishery data recorded 8,507 people in Lease who work as fishermen, using both traditional fishing gear such as pole lines and handlines, and modern tools such as purse seine and fish aggregation devices (FADs).

POTENTIAL MARINE RESOURCES FOR LIVELIHOOD



In 2016, total production of the capture fishery in Lease reached 26,951 metric tons valued more than IDR 77 billion. The fish commodities in Lease are big pelagics such as yellow fin and skipjack tuna, and small pelagics such as sailfish and mackerel. Despite its high potential, estimated at 788,939 metric tons per annum, the capture fishery sector has not been optimized due to the lack of cold storage facilities, resulting poverty among fisher households, who earn less than IDR 1 million (USD 70) per month.

Lease has an intact marine ecosystem of coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves that support abundant marine life, including the endangered sea mammal Dugong (*Dugong dugon*). In 2016, The Central Maluku District Department of Fisheries recorded the total coverage of coral reefs for 646 hectares, seagrass beds for 186 hectares, and mangroves for 343

hectares, most of which are in good condition. In April 2018, the USAID SEA Project through Coral Triangle Center (CTC) conducted scientific surveys to update the existing data.

For decades, the sea has contributed to shaping local cultures and traditions in Lease Islands. The residents of Haruku still use a traditional system, known as *sasi*, to protect specific marine resources from being overexploited by regulating the time, amount, size and method of fisheries activities. The Lease Islands were once used as a naval base and trade center during the Dutch colonial period and left a historical heritage of Port of Duurstede in Saparua and Port of Nieuw Zeelandia in Haruku.

Lease Islands are best visited from June to October when the weather and sea are perfect. The tropical sunlight and crystal clear waters are great for diving and snorkeling around Ameth Village in Nusalaut. The combination of natural beauty of land and sea, as well as strong cultural and historical values show Lease Islands' potential for eco-tourism development as an alternative livelihood for the inhabitants.

USAID SEA PROJECT ACTIVITIES IN LEASE ISLANDS

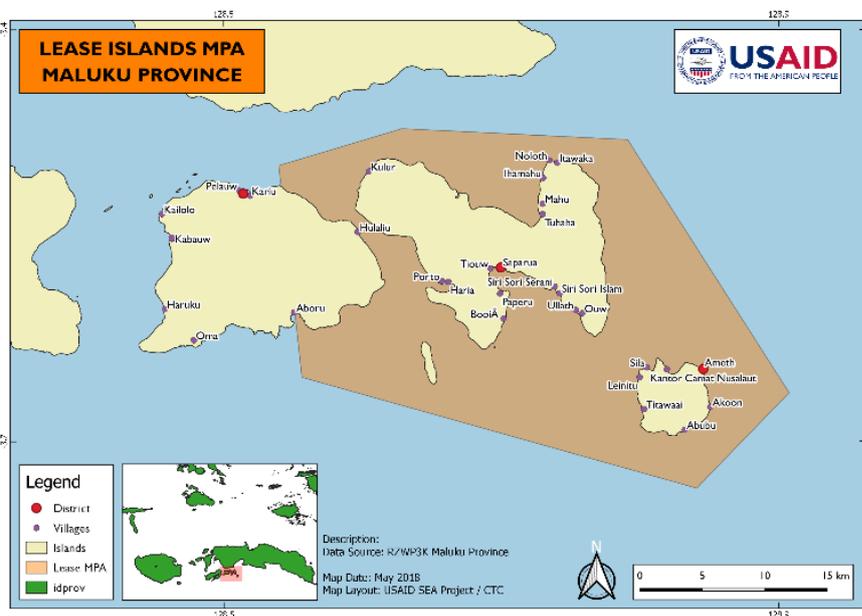
The USAID SEA Project supports the Provincial Government of Maluku, local government, community members and other stakeholders in Lease Islands to continue developing the already-initiated marine protected area (MPA) by facilitating new policies and active programs that support marine conservation, while reducing destructive fishing practices, and other pressures on marine ecosystems.

The Governor of Maluku's Decree No. 387 of 2016 reserved Lease Islands as a Coastal and Small Islands MPA (*Kawasan Konservasi Pesisir dan Pulau-Pulau Kecil KKP3K*). The conservation area covers a total of 81,573.48 hectares.

The USAID SEA Project, through CTC, will support the MPA development by providing scientific input, help in developing the zoning plan, finalizing the MPA management plan, and conducting training and environmental education for the local communities and government officers.

Apart from the MPA establishment, USAID SEA Project will also help strengthening targeted community-based sustainable marine conservation and eco-tourism, and advocate communities toward positive behaviour. Through the Pejuang Laut (Champions of the Sea) program, the local leaders will contribute their active involvement in promoting peers' and communities' knowledge and attitude in understanding conservation benefits in Lease Islands.

By providing a holistic support anchored on effective MPA management and sustainable fisheries methods, the USAID SEA Project aims to enhance the quality of people's lives in Lease islands by ensuring a sustainable economic future that depends heavily on its rich coastal and marine resources.



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