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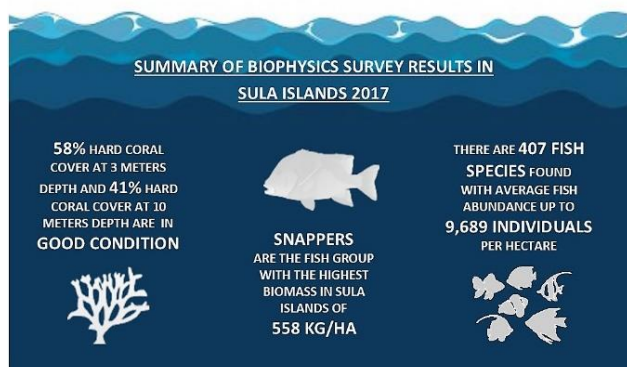
USAID SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEMS ADVANCED (USAID SEA) PROJECT: SULA ISLANDS

The little-known Sula Islands District is a piece of paradise that lies at the south-west of North Maluku Province. The area consists of 3 inhabited islands and 21 mostly uninhabited and unexplored islands, and seas that are home to some of the richest marine biodiversity in eastern Indonesia.

Mangole and Sulabesi are the largest islands in the group and function as the center of commerce and trade, whereas, Lifmatola and Fatkauyon Islands are known as the home to charismatic marine species such as sea turtles, sharks and dolphins.

Established in 2003, Sula Islands is one of the newest regencies in Indonesia. With a total area of 13,732.70 km² – of which approximately 48% is ocean, Sula Islands is administratively divided into 12 sub-districts and 78 villages. The majority of its 132,524 population work as fishermen and traders, and rely heavily on marine resources for their livelihoods. In 2015, the income per capita in Sula reached IDR 18.7 million (USD 1,300) per year, still below the province's annual per capita income of IDR 21 million (USD 1,460). Agriculture, forestry and fisheries contribute 40% to the local economy.

MARINE ECOSYSTEMS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



The surrounding waters of Sula Islands are recognized to be high value fishing grounds, where pelagic fish and demersal fish such as tuna, skip jack, small mackerel and fusiliers in all sizes can be found in large numbers. Swathes of healthy coral reefs surrounding the islands are also home to large populations of reef fish such as red snappers.

In 2016, the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) estimated the capture fisheries potential in Sula Islands at 33,061 metric tons per year for pelagic fish and 16,870 metric tons per year for demersal fish. The majority of fishermen in Sula Islands still use traditional fishing gear such as rods, purse seine and gillnet, and struggle to optimize their catch. Total capture fisheries in the islands were recorded at 25,707 metric tons in 2015.

Sula Islands also have several white sandy beaches, healthy coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass that support charismatic marine animals, such as sea turtles, sharks, dolphins and other cetaceans. In April 2017, a USAID SEA Project's scientific survey implemented by the Coral Triangle Center (CTC) identified several spawning aggregation sites in the Sula Islands which are important for managing sustainable capture fisheries. The survey also showed dense population of sea turtles with an average of 40 individuals of either the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) or hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) found in one transect of less than 300 meters. This finding underscores the potential of Sula Islands for sustainable and eco-tourism alternative livelihood for the islands' inhabitants.



USAID SEA PROJECT ACTIVITIES IN SULA ISLANDS

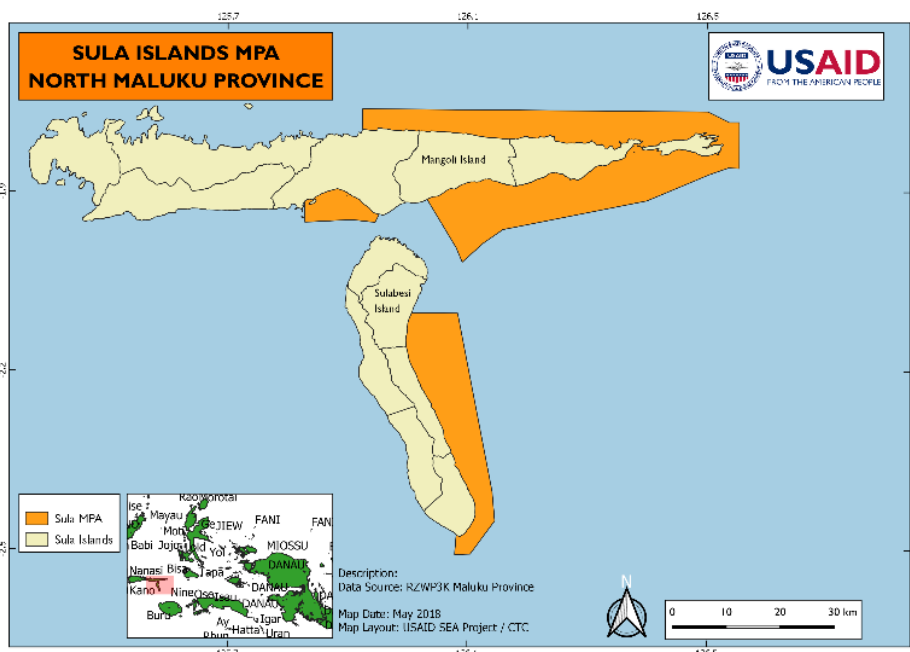
The USAID SEA Project supports the Provincial Government of North Maluku in establishing effectively managed marine protected areas (MPA) with policies and active programs that focus on marine conservation and sustainable fishing practices for better marine ecosystems. This also includes the establishment of MPAs to meet the goal of one-million hectares of new MPAs within Indonesian Fisheries Management Area (FMA) 715.

Sula Islands does not have any MPA yet but declared 17,000 hectares in Lifmatola Island as a Natural Reserve in 1995. This reserved area is proposed to be scaled-up to a multiple-use MPA covering 110,439 hectares (see map) that contains a zoning system that supports the sustainable fisheries, conservation of threatened marine species, marine eco-tourism and management priorities.

The USAID SEA Project, through CTC, will support the MPA expansion and establishment process by providing more scientific input, supporting development of the zoning plan and finalization of MPA management plan, and providing training and environmental education to the local communities and government officers.

Apart from the MPA establishment, USAID SEA Project will also help strengthen targeted community-based sustainable marine eco-tourism and implement a targeted on-the-ground and responsive communications strategy. Through the *Pejuang Laut* (Champions of the Sea) program, local leaders' knowledge, skills, and capabilities will be strengthened so that they can lead their respective communities in the sustainable management of marine resources in Sula Islands.

By providing 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 the district by ensuring a sustainable economic future that depends heavily on its rich coastal and marine resources.



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