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**Threat to the Natural Resources of
Small-scale Fishermen of North Sulawesi**

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Abstract

Indonesian small-scale fishermen, who live along the coast and on the small islands, are not automatically guaranteed a prosperous life. This is because they often lack the technology needed or the capacity to maintain the quality of the environment.

Indonesia's small-scale fisher communities need a new strategy to strengthen their position. In some places, there are activities for the small-scale fishermen community to empower community and build capacity.

Introduction

The archipelago State of Indonesia comprises of 0.3 million sq km of sea, 2.8 million sq km of inshore waters and an additional 2.7 mn sq km of an Economic Exclusive Zone, rich with various coastal and marine natural resources.

But this condition does not automatically guarantee a prosperous life for the small-scale fishermen, who live along the coast and on the small islands. This is because they often lack the technology needed or the capacity to maintain the quality of the environment.

The government agrees that protection and management of coastal and marine resources is very important, so it embarks on a strategy to:

1. establish policies to sustain coastal and marine resources, especially for small-scale fisher communities;
2. strengthen fishery regulations;
3. decrease wastes from catching, handling and fish processing; and
4. curtail the catching of certain species of fish.

Until recent times, the structural imbalance in the community, hailing from feudal and colonial times, remains. The existence of several acts, like the Foreign Investment Act, the Mining Act, the Transmigration Act, the Irrigation Act, and the Fishery Act, shows a centralization of power.

According to the data of the Fishery Directorate General of the Republic of Indonesia Marine and Fishery Affairs Department, fishery vessels that do not use outboard motors, or that use a small-power outboard motor, belong to the small-scale fishery, and comprise 80 per cent of the total fishing vessels in Indonesia. The rest consists of vessels at least of 30 GT size, which use inboard motors. The North Sulawesi Provincial Government has tried to empower the small-scale fishermen by training and aid. But, in reality, the small-scale fishermen are restricted to a territory not more than 6 nautical miles, while foreign vessels are permitted to enter up to 12 nautical miles, until the Exclusive Economic Zone. The role of the military, particularly the army and the navy, in catching fish is very strong. Several fishing enterprises belong to military co-operatives, and operate fish vessels more than 30 GT in weight, in a huge of number spread throughout the whole of Indonesian marine territory.

Article 33, Section 3 of the Indonesian Constitution of 1945, states: "The terrestrial, water and natural resources inside belong to the State and should be used for the benefits of the greatest welfare of the people". Although the Ministry of Marine and Fishery Affairs Department recognizes the right of *traditional communities* to the coastal and marine territories, in fact, the Act Number 22/1999 about Regional Government does not recognize the rights and obligations of the *customary communities* or *local communities* to the coastal and marine territories and the natural resources within.

The local government's weaknesses to decentralize and democratize coastal and marine natural resources is also one reason for the suffering of the small-scale fishermen. After the implementation of Act Number 22/1999 about Regional Development, the small-scale fishermen were restricted by the administration from decentralization of power. In some places, conflicts among small-scale fishermen communities from several villages have occurred.

A new strategy

Indonesia's small-scale fisher communities need a new strategy to strengthen their position. In some places, there are activities for the small-scale fishermen community to empower community and build capacity.

Community-based natural resources management, which includes community-based marine and coastal resources management, is very important to enhance the prosperity of especially those whose lives depend upon the coastal and marine resources.

Indonesia navy's should implement their duty to protect the territory from fish poaching or illegal activities. The military's role in economic activity, especially on marine natural resources management, must be stopped immediately.

The government must recognize and guarantee small-scale fishermen's full access to natural resources, especially to coastal and marine natural resources, so that they can use the coastal and marine natural resources to increase their prosperity.

The fishermen must have direct access to politicians. The members of parliament must create and build a significant relationship with small-scale fishermen groups. The local government must have a strong commitment to implement the decentralization and democratization of coastal and marine natural resources.

Since the struggle is not waged by the small-scale fishermen community in local places alone, but by several small-scale fishermen in many places, they need strong alliances or networking with other stakeholder groups with deep concerns for their needs and opportunities.