

THE OCEANS AND FISHERIES PARTNERSHIP

ENHANCING TRACEABILITY AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA PHILIPPINES BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is causing conflict and instability among Southeast Asian nations over encroachment, poaching, and transshipment; is rife with trafficking, forced labor, and other human rights abuses; is causing fisheries to collapse; and is costing countries in the region billions of dollars annually.

The Oceans and Fisheries Partnership (USAID Oceans), a partnership between the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), is working to strengthen regional cooperation to combat IUU fishing, promote sustainable fisheries, and conserve marine biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. **The backbone of the program is the development and implementation of country-specific, financially sustainable Catch Documentation and Traceability (CDT) system.** This CDT system will be integrated with existing government systems, will also incorporate human welfare data elements, and will be demonstrated within an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) framework.

FIGHTING IUU FISHING WITH TRACEABILITY

Traceability in the fisheries sector is the ability to record and track *key data points* at *critical tracking events* throughout the supply chain, from point of catch to point of consumption. In conjunction with import regulations, traceability offers **a market-based approach to combatting IUU fishing** that also offers a significant opportunity for governments to strengthen fisheries management and potentially improve the labor conditions of fishers.

TRANSPARENT, INTEGRATED, and SHAREABLE data is enabled by traceability and can:

- Deter illegal trade by protecting and potentially enhancing the value of legally caught fish.
- Improve the efficiency of fish purchasing and processing, enhancing industry profitability and reducing risks.
- Provide more accurate information about harvesting levels, strengthening sustainable fisheries management.
- Enhance evidence-based policy and decision-making for enforcement, management, and port security.
- Assist in safeguarding fisher rights and well-being on fishing vessels.

TRACEABILITY AND ECONOMICS

Resources dedicated to combatting IUU fishing will have positive economic impacts. **Investments in enhancing traceability will reduce losses and improve economic growth in the fisheries sector.**

In addition to decreasing poaching pressures by reducing the market for illegal seafood and seafood products, traceability can help accomplish key economic and business goals, such as:

- Preserve accurate product information as demanded by the market.
- Allow product differentiation for leveraging different markets and price premiums.
- Resolve inefficiencies and improve operations (e.g., inventory management, transition times, analytics for decision-making).
- Help reduce product spoilage and waste in the cold chain by improving logistical efficiencies.
- Identify proven “good actors” so that governments can better target enforcement resources.

USAID OCEANS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND BEYOND

SEAFDEC estimates that IUU fishing costs the Philippines over US \$620 million each year, not including the cost of damage to the ecosystem.

USAID Oceans has selected the Philippines as one of two countries to support CDT system development, implementation, and testing. After assessing regional fisheries data and opportunities, the Philippines and Indonesia were selected to host the two program learning sites, serving as a model for regional learning and expansion.

USAID Oceans identified General Santos City, situated in the Sarangani Bay and facing the Celebes Sea, as the best learning site in the Philippines for implementing traceability for high value tuna fisheries because of the site's proximity to a major tuna migration corridor in the Celebes Sea, its high volume of tuna landed at port, and rich biodiversity. General Santos is recognized as the tuna capital of the Philippines, responsible for over 65 percent of the country's tuna production. In 2014, over 190,000 metric tons of fish were landed in General Santos City, more than twice the volume of fish landed just ten years ago. (Philippine Fisheries Development Authority)

Based on the same criteria and the high volume of fish landed from the same transboundary area as General Santos, USAID Oceans selected Bitung, Indonesia as the complementary demonstration and learning site. The learning sites will serve as models for regional expansion. ASEAN and Coral Triangle Initiative member countries have selected learning sites in each of their respective countries that will leverage Philippine and Indonesian learning site activities.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Engagement at the national and site level includes close coordination with the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), with nominated BFAR counterparts supporting each of USAID Oceans' programmatic objectives: catch documentation and traceability, implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management, and improving human welfare in the fisheries sector. USAID will ensure strategic alignment with BFAR leadership, and the USAID Oceans national and site-level coordinators will assist BFAR in managing the USAID Oceans implementation plan for the Philippines.

At the learning site in General Santos City, USAID Oceans will:

- Conduct a value chain assessment to identify the main export markets and articulate the cost, benefits, and return on equity.
- Perform in-depth analyses to support EAFM plan development and human welfare interventions, including a Rapid Appraisal for fisheries management and gender analysis of the fisheries sector.
- Engage the private sector to implement traceability that will secure their strong support, thus ensuring a financially sustainable CDT system.
- Identify the CDT requirements of different stakeholders to develop a design that builds off of existing systems.
- Provide assistance for all stakeholders, including local and central government agencies, in implementing CDT through:
 - Capacity building to operate CDT
 - Promoting a business enabling environment for CDT
 - Technical and infrastructure support
 - Knowledge-building engagement (information, education, and communications)
 - Relationship development among stakeholders
- Conduct a gap analysis and create a roadmap for CDT expansion across the Philippines.