



SUCCESS STORY

USAID Indonesia Builds Onboard Observer Expertise On ETP Species



Dian Novianto, a Fisheries Researcher from the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), demonstrates the proper method of using a dehooker to release fishhooks from marine ETP species caught by fishing operations.

Photo: USAID Ber-IKAN / Dwi Aryo

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Dian Novianto,
Fisheries Researcher,
National Research and
Innovation Agency (BRIN)

The term Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species (ETP) refers to species that are listed as endangered, threatened or protected under national and international legislations. Loss of these species can have series impacts to overall ecosystem health. Although the need to strengthen ETP marine species protections is well understood in Indonesia, lack of data and integration of by-catch mitigation strategies, monitoring, and enforcement into fisheries management plans (FMP) and government budgets limits implementation. Accurate data collection is the first step in understanding current impacts and potential conservation measures for ETP species. Onboard observers on fishing vessels carry a front-line responsibility for gathering data on fishing interactions with ETP species but their capacity and knowledge is often limited.

USAID Indonesia's Collaborative Fisheries Management project (USAID Ber-IKAN) supports the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) Directorate for Fish Resources Management (PSDI) and the Fisheries Research Center under the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) to develop approaches to reduce fishing impacts to ETP species.

In November and December 2023, USAID Ber-IKAN and MMAF delivered a newly designed ETP species data collection and monitoring curriculum to 43 fishing vessel onboard observers from Eastern Indonesia in Bitung, North Sulawesi Province (29) and Western Indonesia in Batam, Riau Islands Province (14). The impact of the two initiatives was immediately visible through pre- and post-training tests of the 43 onboard observer's knowledge and skills.

Recognizing USAID Ber-IKAN's contribution, Dian Novianto, a Fisheries Researcher from BRIN, emphasized the importance of the training: "This training is very much needed to improve the onboard observers' capacity and knowledge on the proper procedures for capturing and reporting data on ETP species impacts from fishing vessels through by-catches (unintended catch), how to handle ETP species according to established guidelines, and proper handling and release of ETP species to ensuring survival of accidentally caught ETP species." USAID Ber-IKAN support significantly contributes to strengthening fisheries governance and the formulation of evidence-based policies based on accurate data collection.

The success of sustainable fisheries management relies on data-driven practices covering fisheries catch data as well as other 'non-target catch' caught by accident (by-catch). By-catch, recognized as the primary threat to ETP species, presents a significant challenge in Indonesia. Ade Setia Januar, Sub-Coordinator for Monitoring Fish Resource Management at the ministry highlighted the crucial role USAID Ber-IKAN collaboration: "We could not succeed without strong collaboration of partners such as USAID Ber-IKAN particularly in effective implementation of the onboard observer program with its emphasis on protecting ETP species."

USAID Ber-IKAN is a five-year project implemented by Resonance Global in partnership with DT Global, Environmental Defense Fund, Marine Change, MDPI Foundation, and San Francisco State University. USAID Ber-IKAN actively collaborates with MMAF and BRIN to strengthen data collection crucial for achieving sustainable fisheries in Indonesia.