



## The Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape Sub-Regional Plan: Taking an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management

### Background

The *Sub-Regional Plan for Managing Transboundary Fisheries in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape* is an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management Plan that provides an overview of proposed goals, objectives and management actions to enable the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion (SSME) to achieve a common fisheries management vision by 2030. The plan is the first known sub-regional EAFM plan in fisheries management literature; it proposes specific management goals, objectives, and management actions to be undertaken by relevant governmental agencies, non-governmental partners, and multi-lateral/regional organizations focused on fisheries management and biodiversity conservation in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. The plan is an entirely voluntary agreement and all proposed management actions are ‘offered’ (i.e., contributed) and ‘maintained’ at the discretion of each participating nation implementing the plan.

The plan was developed through a collaborative process led by the USAID Oceans and Fisheries Partnership (USAID Oceans), with its partner the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), and in participation with relevant national fisheries agencies, fisheries management experts, and non-governmental partners. It is envisioned that the Sub-Regional Plan will be finalized and implemented through the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security’s (CTI-CFF) EAFM and Seascape Working Group in 2018.



### Vision, Goals and Objectives

The vision guiding the ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) within the Sulu Sulawesi Seascape sub-region states that:

*“By 2030, the transboundary fisheries of the Sulu Sulawesi Seas are ecologically healthy and deliver ecosystem services that provide equitable benefits to our people through collaborative, safe, and legal regional fisheries management.”*

The Plan calls for an immediate focus on five species of economically-important, transboundary small pelagic fisheries and a longer-term focus on seven target species of economically-important, transboundary large pelagic and neritic tuna fisheries, as well as six target species of coral reef-associated transboundary fish species. Following the EAFM framework, the Sulu Sulawesi Seascape Sub-Regional Plan includes three goals:

*Ecological - Goal #1: Improved long-term health of living marine resources and their habitats through responsible regional fisheries management for optimal benefits to our communities.*

*Human Wellbeing - Goal #2: Resilient, self-reliant, and empowered communities who benefit from inclusive, just, responsible, and economically- and socially-equitable fisheries management.*

*Governance - Goal #3: Improved governance and transboundary fishery policy capacity through a coordinated regional framework that is effectively implemented through a participatory, responsive, transparent, and adaptive process.*

Under each goal, associated objectives have been identified for completion within the specified timeframe (i.e., 2018 through 2025).

Goal 1 - Associated ecological objectives (EO):

EO-1: Establish and maintain optimal sustainable exploitation rates for the specified transboundary fisheries/species

EO-2: Establish and maintain suitable water quality parameters

EO-3: Restore critical fish habitat and conserve *in situ* marine biodiversity

EO-4: Control and maintain fishery by-catch at an ecologically-acceptable level

EO-5: Minimize the negative impacts of fishing practices and technologies on the environment

EO-6: Create new scientific data and knowledge and improve regional information sharing

Goal 2 - Associated socioeconomic objectives (SO):

SO-1: Enhance and stabilize income generation from regional fisheries

SO-2: Improve community resilience through livelihood diversification (including biodiversity-friendly enterprises)

SO-3: Improve (fishers) human well-being characterized by legal, just, and equitable conditions

SO-4: Strengthen equity and social benefit, to ensure access, participation, and decision-making

SO-5: Enhance and stabilize household dietary consumption for improved local food security

Goal 3 - Associated governance objectives (GO):

GO-1: Combat IUU/illegal fishing

GO-2: Strengthen local capacity to engage in and successfully undertake sustainable livelihoods, responsible fishing practices

GO-3: Develop resilient fisheries framework to address climate change impacts

GO-4: Strengthen regional monitoring, control, and surveillance efforts associated with fisheries

GO-5: Improve judicial and enforcement capacity associated with fisheries

GO-6: Enhance stakeholder participation in regional fishery management processes and decision-making, integrating local wisdom and traditional knowledge, as applicable.

GO-7: Coordinate fisheries management plans at various levels of governance (national, local, transboundary)

To achieve these objectives, the plan outlines a set of proposed management actions to be fully and effectively completed at the sub-regional level. The plan is linked “upwards” to several existing regional fisheries organizations and legal and policy instruments; linked ‘downward’ to relevant national, provincial, and local fisheries management actions currently being implemented by a participating country or regional/multinational agreement (e.g., CTI-CFF); and is linked to actions being newly proposed for future implementation by at least one plan within each of the three countries. It is recommended that a voluntary coordinating governance mechanism should be established at the sub-regional level to support implementation.

## **Process and Next Steps**

The proposed Sub-Regional Plan draws builds from a draft plan developed in 2015 by the USAID-supported CTI-CFF initiative, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), GIZ, and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In August 2017, USAID Oceans set out to update and broaden the plan, gathering inputs through a regional workshop that convened over 90 participants from 10 SEAFDEC and CTI-CFF member countries, as well as other partners undertaking fisheries management work in Southeast Asia. Out of the workshop, the Sub-Regional Plan was developed and distributed for peer review.

The draft was formally endorsed by the CTI-CFF EAFM Technical Working Group and Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-13) in November 2017, with review, finalization, and adoption of the plan integrated into the EAFM TWG 2018 Workplan. A third workshop was held in July 2018 to finalize the plan in partnership with the CTI-CFF Seascape Working Group, GIZ and partners; following, USAID Oceans is continuing to socialize the draft plan in the region and looks forward to Plan adoption in late 2018.

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