

# Engaging Traditional Authorities (Panglima Laot) to Document and Map Marine Biodiversity

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It is extremely important when collecting fisheries information from the fishermen that when a fisherman says he caught fifteen "Lubium" that the researcher know which species might or might not be included in his catch. One of our current efforts is to try to engage the fishermen, help them to learn what is known about these different species from other parts of the world; e.g. the migration patterns, the life history, the reproductive potential. Conversely, the fishermen of Aceh also have a tremendous amount of knowledge about the marine life that live in the area. For example, they know where the shark nurseries are, the turtle nesting beaches, and the spawning grounds for a number of different species.



One of the first steps to sharing information is for both parties to gain a mutual understanding of what is being discussed. The names of fish can often be quite confusing. There is the common name, this is the name used by local people everyday when they talk about an animal that they may see in the wild or in the market. Then there is the scientific name, often used by researchers and natural resource managers when referring to a particular species. The scientific name typically does not change, but common names for the same species are different in each language and frequently change from one region to another. One of the ways in which to develop a shared understanding with the fishermen is to show pictures of different fish (including multiple pictures of the same

species) to fishermen. Then with each fisherman, discuss different characteristics of the animal, the life history, the reproductive potential, the migration patterns. Local fishermen often have a unique understanding of the fish in their area, they often call many different species by the same name, and they have several names for the same species e.g. depending upon maturity, sex, color variation. Showing multiple pictures of the 'same' species serves to corroborate their earlier comments made about that particular fish, as well as help us to discover subtle differences the fishermen see between what we think is "the same species"



The larger goal is to gather and test this local knowledge against existing scientific data. (Last year 25 new species were found in Indonesian fish markets). Furthermore, to help the Acehnese include their data and perspectives within global fisheries initiatives. Together with the fishermen, help them to access new markets so that they get better prices for the fish they catch and subsequently develop species inventories and species management strategies that will work for everyone in the region; fishermen, natural resource managers, eco-tourists, etc..

