

PACIFIC FORUM
WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY



KEY FINDINGS

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION ON WPS & MARITIME ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES IN THE CORAL TRIANGLE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

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CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION ON WPS & MARITIME ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES IN THE CORAL TRIANGLE

WORKSHOP PURPOSE

In recent years, the links between the health of the maritime environment and national security have come to the fore. Marine degradation exacerbates instability both at sea and on land. Crucially, women are intimately involved in the maritime environment, but their contributions to its health and security are often overlooked. In coastal communities in the Coral Triangle, more than 50% of fishery workers are women; IUU fishing reduces the available stocks for women to catch, harming their economic and social security. Building the capacity of partner maritime law enforcement agencies to identify and tackle maritime environmental crimes is critical to the region's security. By incorporating WPS principles, this event series seeks to highlight the importance of women in the maritime environment and the role it plays in advancing women's economic and social empowerment.

WORKSHOP SERIES OBJECTIVES

1. Promote a cooperative effort between the maritime law enforcement agencies of Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea (PNG).
2. Integrate Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and promote cross-border cooperation in tackling maritime environmental crime in the Coral Triangle and beyond.
3. Advise Indonesian, Timorese, and Papuan maritime law enforcement on incorporating a gender perspective.
4. Promote dialogue between participants from local women's CSOs and maritime law enforcement that work on protecting the region's maritime environment.



Participating Countries

Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste

Participating Defense Force Branches

Indonesia:

Bakamla, Directorate of Law Enforcement
Directorate General of Marine and
Fisheries Resources Surveillance,
General Directorate of Fisheries
Fisheries Products Processing Surveillance,
Directorate of Management Fisheries
Resources Surveillance
Human Resources of Law Enforcement Officer
and Cooperation in Law Enforcement,
Directorate of Law Enforcement

Papua New Guinea:

Papua New Guinea Defence Force

Timor-Leste:

General Directorate of Fisheries, Aquaculture and
Marine Resources
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries
and Forestry,
Ministry of Defense
National Police of Timor-Leste

Participating Civil Society Organizations

Indonesia:

Coral Triangle Center
Coral Triangle Initiative-Coral Reefs,
Fisheries, and Food Security
Destructive Fishing Watch
Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative (IOJI)
Research Center for Society and Culture,
National Research and Innovation Agency
Jakarta

Papua New Guinea:

Advancing PNG Women Leaders Network
Piku Biodiversity Network Inc.
SeaWomen of Melanesia

Timor-Leste:

Belun
Fundasaun Mahein
UN Women

United States:

Stimson Center

KEY FINDINGS

Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea (PNG) are heavily dependent on marine natural resources for food, environmental, and economic security, all of which is threatened by rampant maritime environmental crimes in the Coral Triangle. On February 6-7, 2024, the Pacific Forum, with support from the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Office of the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), held the first virtual event for the workshop series Cross-Border Cooperation on WPS & Maritime Environmental Crimes in the Coral Triangle.

By incorporating WPS principles, this event series seeks to highlight the importance of women in the maritime environment and the role the maritime environment plays in advancing women's economic and social empowerment. The first event brought together 33 defense and security personnel and women's civil society organizations (CSOs) from Indonesia, PNG, and Timor-Leste. The event offered U.S. partner defense forces and CSOs an exploratory and interactive platform to discuss gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive policies related to maritime environmental security threats. By emphasizing local women's leadership, experience, and expertise, and helping to foster relationships between them and their country's defense and security personnel, this workshop aimed to improve the long-term effectiveness of maritime security responses for maritime environmental crimes in the Coral Triangle region.

The key topics covered throughout the virtual workshop included the fundamentals of WPS and maritime environmental crimes; the importance of integrating a gender perspective into a holistic response to

maritime environmental crimes; and how to advance WPS & maritime environmental security through partnerships between civil society and the military. Country-specific group breakout sessions enabled participants to interact and share their own contextual expertise, perspectives, and suggestions. The event highlighted the expertise and real experiences of women from civil society organizations in the three partner nations. The Coral Triangle is an area of outstanding marine biodiversity. The region is home to more than 550 unique species of coral and thousands of species of reef fish, many of which are endemic to the area. It serves as a breeding ground for cetaceans and other marine megafauna. The Coral Triangle provides food security to over 130 million people living in and around the region. In coastal communities in the Coral Triangle, the blue economy is also an important pillar to women's human security, since more than 50% of fishery workers are women.

In recent years, the links between the health of the maritime environment and national security have come to the fore. Maritime crimes, including Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing; wildlife trafficking; illegal mining and dredging; looting of underwater archeological sites; tampering with undersea waste deposits; human trafficking; and marine pollution threaten the region's environmental and human security. Marine degradation exacerbates instability both at sea and on land and may increase community fragility. These environmental crimes are often aided by a lack of transboundary cooperation. Cross-border environmental crimes and marine pollution, such as the re-routing of illegal wastes to

Southeast Asia, pose significant harm to the Coral Triangle.

Building the capacity of partner maritime law enforcement agencies to identify and tackle maritime environmental crimes is critical to the region's security. However, weak governance, lack of technology and monitoring systems, and limited training programs have impeded law enforcement efforts to counter the threats facing the Coral Triangle. Other roadblocks to cross-border cooperation include lack of consistent military presence in affected areas and limited enforcement resources. What's more, interstate cooperation is often dependent on political and security relationships, but these relationships are not always consistent.

The response to environmental crimes requires cooperation and partnership at all levels of government and civil society. The power of these partnerships improves prevention, mitigation, and empowerment efforts needed for effective responses.

Workshop participants learned about the Coral Triangle Initiative-Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF), a platform developed to encourage better cross-border cooperation. Nevertheless, challenges in collaboration between CSOs and the military remain. In Indonesia, while positive relationships exist between CSOs and the military, communication sharing is always a challenge. In PNG, the military is not able to have a strong presence in all provinces, requiring community leaders to address security threats on the ground. In Timor-Leste, while there is monitoring of IUU activities, enforcement is difficult, especially in light of equipment limitations.

Crucially, women are intimately involved in the maritime environment, but their contributions to its health and security are

often overlooked. IUU fishing reduces the available stocks for women to catch, harming their economic and social security.

Participants were introduced to the ways in which the WPS agenda intersects with maritime environmental security by recognizing the significant role women play in sustainable ocean governance and conservation efforts.

Empowering women in coastal communities enhances their capacity to participate in decision-making processes related to maritime environmental protection, contributing to more resilient and inclusive approaches to addressing marine threats and promoting long-term environmental sustainability. By fostering women's leadership, harnessing their unique perspectives, incorporating them in both community-based surveillance and formal law enforcement, and overcoming patriarchal cultural barriers, the Coral Triangle countries can unlock the full potential of WPS for inclusive and sustainable maritime security.

The full implementation of WPS principles necessitates active and continuous review and revision of existing maritime law enforcement policies, as well as enhanced efforts in representation and ensuring women's voices shape policies, enforcement strategies, and decision-making processes at all levels, both at the community level and in government.

Moreover, consideration of the gendered impacts of maritime environmental threats have not found their way into defense and security responses to such crimes due to a lack of consultation with women. For instance, though many women are employed in fishery processing jobs and rely on them as their primary income source, women's fisheries activities are often seasonal and take place within the informal economy making them more vulnerable than men to losses of

income due to economic downturns and environmental changes within the blue economy.

By weakening women's economic and human security in coastal communities, maritime environmental crimes can destabilize communities over the long term. Failure to include such a perspective in maritime environmental law enforcement may entrench gender inequalities that contribute to community fragility.

Women's CSOs bring a unique perspective to the table and can shed light on the role of human rights and gender empowerment in maritime environmental security. The CTI-CFF brings a gender perspective to their fishery management work, in particular through the Women's Leadership Forum. At the national level, the Timor-Leste Marine Resources Management, Fisheries and Pisciculture agency has developed a community-based IUU fishing reporting system powered in part by the efforts of women in 27 different communities across the country. The result is a robust database that tracks illegal marine activities and provides a clearer picture of problems and possible policy solutions. Community data gathering, with support from government agencies and CSOs, makes it possible for national strategies to be based on each country's realities on the ground.

Regardless of geopolitical challenges, states that share the same waters could mutually invest in making those spaces safer and more productive for economic and human security, including for women. Given the international nature of the WPS agenda, applying its principles to maritime environmental security may make cross-border engagement more feasible, and lead to more impactful responses to IUU fishing, pollution events, and other environmental crimes.

Engagement between CSOs and defense and security personnel has the potential to yield more efficient enforcement of laws, more inclusive peacebuilding efforts, better information sharing practices, and more effective advocacy work. Inviting women to take positions of leadership also helps to dispel myths of women's lesser expertise, authority, and experience in maritime environmental security.

Additionally, their inclusion promotes accountability, transparency, and gender-sensitive approaches within civil-military collaborations, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes in conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

This key findings document was prepared for the Pacific Forum International by Maryruth Belsey Priebe (maryruth@pacforum.org) with contributions from Lily Schlieman, Rayne Sullivan, Miah Bonilla, and Luke McFadden. This report reflects the views of the organizers; it is not a consensus document.