



## KEY FINDINGS

# CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION ON WPS & MARITIME ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES IN THE CORAL TRIANGLE BALI WORKSHOP | APRIL 23-25, 2024

Author: Maryruth Belsey Priebe

Contributions from: Lily Schlieman, Allison Lee, Miah Bonilla, and Jeff Otto

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Cover image: UN Women Indonesia Community Peacebuilding Discussions

# 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, International Cooperation  
 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

*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

*Papua New Guinea*

Papua New Guinea Defence Force

**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



## KEY FINDINGS

The Pacific Forum, in partnership with the Coral Triangle Center, held the second event in the workshop series *Cross-Border Cooperation on WPS & Maritime Environmental Crimes in the Coral Triangle*, sponsored by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Office of Women, Peace and Security, from April 23-25, 2024, in Bali, Indonesia. This hybrid virtual / in-person event, featuring 32 participants from Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea, sought to highlight the importance of women in the maritime environment, how they are impacted by maritime environmental crimes, and the role civil society and defense force collaboration can play in advancing women's economic and social empowerment.



The second workshop offered defense forces and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from the Coral Triangle region an exploratory and interactive platform to discuss gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive policies related to maritime environmental security threats. Participants identified the following challenges as the ones that most limit interaction between defense / security and women's civil society organizations: Lack of access to opportunities for collaboration/engagement, lack of leadership support for women to participate in maritime environmental security initiatives, and general challenges in civil-military cooperation (not related to gender). By emphasizing local women's leadership, experience, and expertise,

and helping to foster relationships between CSOs 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.

Speakers highlighted the numerous threats faced by the Coral Triangle, including oil pollution, plastic pollution, IUU fishing, and other environmental stressors. Oil pollution, documented extensively in Indonesia by the Ocean Justice Initiative, poses a significant risk to marine ecosystems, with incidents such as ship-to-ship transshipment in areas like Johor, Malaysia, leading to transboundary pollution affecting regions like the Nias Islands. Plastic pollution is rampant, particularly in areas like Banda Island, where women-led initiatives are emerging to manage waste and promote community engagement. IUU fishing exacerbates these issues, with inadequate enforcement of maritime laws allowing for unsustainable practices that deplete biodiversity and harm coastal communities, as seen in Lampung's blue swimming crab fisheries. IUU fishing, maritime pollution, plastic pollution, and coral destruction were emphasized by Indonesian speakers, with specific concerns about border disputes exacerbating the issue of IUU fishing in the north Natuna Sea.

Crimes of convergence are also a significant threat. These crimes impact both human welfare and the environment, and include other forms of fisheries crimes, destructive fishing practices like fish bombing, coral dredging, overfishing, illegal coastal development, wildlife trafficking, and poaching. Some of these crimes of convergence occur along informal borders within the Coral Triangle where fisherpeople operate in the gray zone of legality. The practice of crossing these informal borders for trade dates before the existence of borders. Often

called "barter trade," marine goods are exchanged for other goods like sugar, gasoline, and other needed household items, as well as money. This informal trade network also provides a route for more illicit flows of traffic. In addition to the illegal and informal "barter trade" system, organized, transnational criminal networks also engage in non-traditional maritime crimes such as trafficking in persons, drugs, and small arms; piracy; labor abuse; inter-communal violence over resources; and murder at sea. Terrorism thrives in these opaque waters. Specifically, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Sulu Archipelago is backed by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a Salafi-jihadist group. ASG is responsible for a number of piratical ransom-orientated kidnappings and hijackings, armed robberies, and bombings at sea. Drug smuggling, involving meth and cocaine from South America and other Asian countries, pose significant challenges as well. For example, drug trading in Papua New Guinea, youth involvement is a concern due to unemployment.

In addressing such challenges, the inclusion of women's voices is crucial. Women play pivotal roles in coastal communities, managing resources, and contributing to sustainable practices. Women also play many roles in maritime environmental security -- as perpetrators of crime, as law enforcement personnel, and as victims of maritime environmental crimes. When asked, workshop participants overwhelmingly indicated that IUU fishing had the biggest impact on women in terms of economic disadvantage, but plastic pollution and human trafficking were the next most impactful crimes for women, followed by drug trafficking. For instance, in Timor-Leste, where challenges related to drug trafficking are common, some participants noted that women are being recruited for smuggling operations. Despite the many ways maritime insecurities impact women, they are often marginalized in decision-making processes. Involving women not only enhances the effectiveness of conservation efforts, but empowering women in fisheries management, marine conservation,

and waste management helps to mitigate threats within the maritime environment in the Coral Triangle for greater security in maritime communities.

Customary laws, deeply entrenched in the cultural fabric of regions like Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea (PNG), are fundamental pillars in regulating maritime environmental security. These laws, such as Tara Bandu in Timor-Leste, Coastal Marine Tenure (CMT) in PNG, and other marine-related Indigenous rituals and practices in Indonesia and elsewhere are rooted in tradition and social norms, governing activities like fishing and resource management. Women play pivotal roles in customary conservation practices, where they often serve as stewards of marine ecosystems. Despite their intrinsic significance, there are challenges in integrating customary laws with national and international legal frameworks. These hurdles encompass issues like language barriers hindering the translation of laws, discrepancies in translator interpretation (even within the same language), as well as the underrepresentation of Indigenous and women's voices in legislative processes, posing obstacles to effective policy efforts. Gender norms also limit their effectiveness. One example is Tara Bandu in Timor-Leste, where barriers to including women in enforcement processes result from gender norms that exclude women from such spaces. Nevertheless, incorporating customary laws into broader resource management strategies at the national level, and ensuring Indigenous women have a voice, can help achieve more sustainable and equitable development goals.

Women's active engagement in maritime security, particularly in enforcing regulations and addressing environmental crimes, can enhance cross-border cooperation in the Coral Triangle. When surveyed, participants found the following as the greatest benefits to considering gender or WPS in addressing maritime environmental crimes: it helps ensure women are included at the local and regional decision-



making levels, protects women from gender-based violence committed by security personnel, and ensures the specialized knowledge women provide assists in designing effective responses to maritime environmental crimes. Institutions like Bakamla, Indonesia's coast guard, emphasize the importance of inclusivity, with women participating in both front-line operations and negotiations. By integrating women into maritime law enforcement agencies like coast guards and marine police units, more effective surveillance and enforcement against maritime environmental crimes can be achieved. Furthermore, integrating gender considerations into adaptation and resilience-building efforts in coastal communities through regional cooperation initiatives like the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action (ATSEA) Program is essential to addressing the unique vulnerabilities of women and marginalized groups to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

Regional cooperation efforts through collaboration, data transparency, and knowledge sharing with a gender lens were also highlighted as crucial for addressing the multifaceted maritime issues. One example is the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF). The CTI-CFF serves as a platform for coordination among six countries, facilitating cross-boundary cooperation through initiatives like the Women Leaders' Forum (WLF). International instruments and partnerships with civil society organizations and women's groups further contribute to regional architectures supporting these endeavors. Other regional cooperation initiatives include the Regional Plan of Action to promote responsible fishing practices including combating IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU) and the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Fisheries (ASWGF). They ensure the inclusion of women's perspectives and experiences in the development and implementation of sustainable fisheries management strategies across Southeast Asia. Through capacity-building

programs targeted at both men and women in the military, training on maritime law enforcement and environmental protection is enhancing their roles in combating illegal fishing activities and preserving marine ecosystems within the Coral Triangle.



By fostering dialogue between defense / security forces with local women's CSOs from Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and PNG, the workshop was an important step to improving maritime environmental security responses through cross-border cooperation using a gender lens. Significant threats to the Coral Triangle, including oil and plastic pollution, IUU fishing, and various environmental crimes, cannot be adequately and sustainably solved without considering their impact on women as well as women's roles in perpetuating them. Including women and women's CSOs in decision-making and enforcement processes is crucial for enhancing security and sustainability. Moreover, regional cooperation must incorporate women's voices and gender considerations to address the complex maritime issues faced by both women and men in the region. Participants called for continued discussion and ongoing collaboration and agreed to meet again in the months and years ahead.

***This key findings document was prepared for the Pacific Forum International by Maryruth Belsey Priebe (maryruth@pacforum.org) with contributions from Lily Schlieman, Allison Lee, Miah Bonilla, and Jeff Otto. This document reflects the views of the organizers and workshop participants; it is not a consensus document.***