



# MARINE CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

## *Providing Social, Cultural and Economic Benefits to Local Communities*

Local resource owners, managers and users are using Marine Conservation Agreements (MCAs) to sustainably manage their marine resources and to ensure these resources benefit the lives of coastal and island peoples. While government mandated protected areas do offer some protection, they alone cannot ensure that many of Indonesia's remote regions are protected. MCAs empower local people to conserve local systems, help to improve marine protection, and deliver tangible benefits like food and income to the people who depend on them for their survival.

### **What Are MCAs?**

MCAs can be formal or informal, involve any combination of partners including local resource owners, managers, or users, and sets guidelines on collective action that will be taken to achieve agreed-upon marine conservation goals. MCAs must explicitly say what direct or indirect economic benefits are provided in exchange for specific conservation actions.

### **Who should be involved in setting up an MCA?**

MCAs can be initiated by resource owners or conservation project managers, including government entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), eco-friendly



Village in Raja Ampat, Indonesia ©Dwi Aryo Handono/TNC

businesses, and even private individuals.

### **What is the process for establishing an MCA?**

Each MCA is designed to meet the needs of the unique group of stakeholders who have come together to develop the agreement. As such, the goals, conservation commitments and economic incentives will vary from agreement to agreement. In Indonesia, MCAs have been used to help create marine sanctuaries (e.g., at the Togeon Islands), establish no-takes zones (e.g., at the Bunaken National Park), modify fishing practices (e.g., at Gili Trawangan), manage tourism (e.g., at

Komodo National Park), and to protect sea turtle nesting beaches (e.g., at Ranawangko Village, North Sulawesi).

There are typically four phases involved in setting up an MCA: 1) feasibility analysis 2) stakeholder engagement 3) design and stakeholder agreement; and 4) implementation. Most MCAs involve both a formal legal process and an informal negotiated process, both of which depend on the location and social-cultural context.

When an MCA is established, the details for how it will be managed are made explicit within the agreement. The following are three common management scenarios for

MCA:

1) Resource owners retain all of their rights to areas and resources and manage the MCA project themselves.

2) Resource owners retain all of their rights to areas and resources, but ask that the conservation project managers manage the MCA.

3) Resource owners transfer some or all of their rights to areas and resources, as well as management responsibilities of the MCA, to the conservation project managers.

### How can communities benefit from MCAs?

MCAs can deliver many benefits to communities/resource owners in Indonesia. They help to protect culture by improving the management of important cultural and spiritual places. They can also ensure people have more fish to eat by improving the management and protection of marine areas. Depending on how the MCA is designed, communities/resource owners can also benefit economically by fulfilling agreed upon conservation goals. Again, each MCA is different, and as such the benefits can vary quite dramatically. It is the responsibility of the stakeholders to ensure the MCA reflects their particular needs.

### What can we do to make sure our MCA is successful?

Stakeholder participation is critical to the long-term success of MCAs across Indonesia. From the very beginning of the process, communities/resource owners need to be actively involved to ensure the agreement is designed to meet their needs, and to ensure that they understand what is expected of them if the MCA is to be successful in achieving its goals. Incentives that achieve community support for MCA projects are those that are transpar-



Coastal and island communities highly depend on their marine resources for food and livelihoods ©Feri Latief

ently provided to communities or groups at-large, explicitly as a result of the communities'/groups' contributions towards achieving the MCA project goals.

### TNC's role in MCAs

As part of our support for the *Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security*, TNC is committed to supporting the Indonesian government to explore new and innovative approaches to marine conservation and management. MCAs are one of a range of tools that have been successfully tried in Indonesia by local NGOs and the private sector that have the potential to provide both environmental and social benefits to local communities and stakeholders. TNC is available to provide technical support on MCAs and a wide range of marine strategies for Indonesia.

### for more information:

More in-depth information on Marine Conservation Agreements can be accessed at [www.mcatoolkit.org](http://www.mcatoolkit.org). A report, in English and Bahasa Indonesia, that documents findings from a recent MCA analysis in Indonesia can also be accessed from the online toolkit ([http://www.mcatoolkit.org/Country\\_Analyses/Indonesia.html](http://www.mcatoolkit.org/Country_Analyses/Indonesia.html)). The report identifies the parameters under which MCAs have been and can be implemented in Indonesia, providing examples and documenting the different types of existing MCAs. We encourage you to review the online toolkit and the report, and please get in touch with us if you have questions or require technical advice.

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