



TIMOR-LESTE

and the Coral Triangle Support Partnership

The Coral Triangle

The Coral Triangle holds the highest diversity of marine life in the world. Spanning 648 million hectares off the coasts of Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste, the ecosystems in the region support the livelihoods of over 340 million people spread across the six countries.

Yet this abundant marine ecosystem is now at risk. Unsustainable fishing, rapid population growth, and the effects of climate change are not only damaging the environment, but also threatening the food security of those who depend on the valuable natural resources in the region.

Located in the heart of the Coral Triangle region, Timor-Leste boasts rich and relatively pristine marine areas as well as economic potential in marine and coastal ecotourism. The largely untouched waters off Timor-Leste's coast provide an important migratory corridor for whales, dolphins, and six threatened turtle species within the region.

The Coral Triangle Support Partnership

In 2009, the six nations of the Coral Triangle came together to form the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF).

As part of its support to the CTI-CFF, USAID funds the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP) to ensure that the expertise, traditional knowledge, and history held by each country is well-utilized and shared across the region.

CTSP is unique five-year project which brings together the work of WWF, Conservation International, and The Nature Conservancy.

CTSP matches science with traditional knowledge to provide realistic, practical solutions for conservation and resource management – empowering local people to protect their ecosystems and their livelihoods.



Around 90 percent of people in Timor-Leste depend on natural resources to live



! COUNTRY FACTFILE

Although small compared to other countries in the Coral Triangle, Timor-Leste boasts rich and relatively pristine marine areas as well as huge unfulfilled economic potential in marine and coastal ecotourism.



- Up to 250,000 people (approximately a quarter of the population) in Timor-Leste lost their lives during the 24 years of Indonesian occupation at the end of the 20th century.
- Timor-Leste became independent from Indonesia in 2002, making it one of the world's youngest countries.
- 50% of people live on less than \$2 a day and many children are undernourished.
- 45% of people have no regular, reliable source of food.
- Fish supplies (essential for food security) are dwindling as a result of overfishing and damaging fishing methods.

We empower local people to build sustainable livelihoods

CTSP in Timor-Leste works with the national government and the National Directorate for Fisheries and Aquaculture to bring about better marine management practices which contribute to sustainable livelihoods.

In order to achieve these outcomes, CTSP listens and learns from local communities and promotes sustainable fisheries practices. Using local knowledge, CTSP has helped the government develop a National Plan of Action that has the support of the local communities - involving the people who remain central to successful marine management practices. The plan sets out how Timor-Leste will work towards national goals and also contribute to the regional goals of the Coral Triangle Initiative.

Much of CTSP work focuses on Nino Konis Santana National Park, which includes valuable marine areas. The national park is rich in natural resources but ongoing threats to the health of coastal areas continue to put communities and their livelihoods at risk.

CTSP also helps build the decision-making capacity of government officials, providing advice and data to help them build policies that address illegal and unregulated fishing while allowing the people and coastlines of Timor-Leste to thrive.

“It would be impossible for the government to provide technical support of this quality due to the current human resources gap and budget constraints. CTSP support is greatly valued.”

Mr Augusto Fernandes,
National Director for Fisheries
and Aquaculture



Alternative livelihoods

CTSP helps the most vulnerable communities develop alternative livelihoods that offer a more reliable source of food and cause less damage to marine life and ecosystems.



Climate change

Government staff and communities within the national park now conduct surveys of their coastlines to devise their local “Early Action Plan” to prepare for the impacts of climate change. This will help the people who are at the most risk to adapt and plan for their future.



Community awareness

CTSP empowers communities by helping them gain an awareness of their crucial role in conserving coastal resources. Activities such as workshops, film screenings, and hands-on training have been a success, and the national park is now co-managed by local people such as Ernesto (see “Success Story” below).



Gathering knowledge

Limited information about the state of Timor-Leste’s reefs makes planning and decision-making very difficult for local leaders. By involving local fishermen in collecting data and reporting on results, leaders can now make more informed decisions for the future.



SUCCESS STORY: THE TURTLE MAN

Ernesto “The Turtle Man” De Cruz is playing a crucial role in protecting the precious marine resources in Nino Konis Santana National Park.

For generations, the men in Ernesto’s family have made a living by fishing the rich waters off Timor-Leste, and are widely regarded as the best turtle hunters in the province. But times are changing. “We are catching less, a lot less, than even five years ago,” reports Ernesto.

Ernesto is one of many fishermen CTSP has been working with. By sharing the skills to make small, but crucial changes, local people are empowered to safeguard the future of their own precious resources.

“We throw the baby fish back into the ocean and I have stopped catching turtles,”

Ernesto says. “That’s okay with me, because it means we will have more fish and turtles to catch in the future. It’s not a problem.”

Ernesto and others in his community are also involved in collecting the country’s first set of marine resource data. By combining his invaluable local knowledge with the development of new resource management skills, people like Ernesto can lead Timor-Leste’s Nino Konis Santana National Park to a more sustainable future.