

BLONGKO MARINE SANCTUARY

Minahasa, North Sulawesi, Indonesia

The USAID-supported coastal management initiative in Indonesia, *Proyek Pesisir*, has a motto of *From local action to national practice*, which is epitomized by its field site in Blongko.

Blongko is a small village with a population of 1,250. It is located on the northwest shore of Minahasa, approximately one degree, eight minutes north of the equator. Its approximately 6.5 kilometers of coastline is healthy and productive, bordered by relatively thick and vigorous mangrove. Most of the population lives along the water, and the majority of the population are fishers, although almost all residents both fish and farm. The fishery, both offshore and on the coral reef, plays a significant role in the livelihood of the community. Most fish captured is used for home consumption or sold by the fishers' wives in the local community.

The idea of making six hectares of the coast containing a mangrove swamp and part of the coral reef a marine sanctuary came about after a field visit by Blongko villagers to a marine sanctuary at Apo Island in the Philippines and a return visit by the Apo Island village chief and members of the women's cooperative to observe Blongko and exchange ideas. The *kepala desa*, village government head official of Blongko and the community, quickly understood the Apo Island group's description of how their community-driven marine sanctuary effort was developed and implemented. Realizing the value of the local fishery, and seeing a way to protect it as a valuable nursery for fish that could help feed future generations, he worked with *Proyek Pesisir* staff and community members to collect data, identify a proper site, and develop a local ordinance to regulate the proposed protected area. Within a year, the community fully supported the concept, completed technical research and selected a site. The village government also received support from the regional and national governments for the ordinance that the villagers had crafted. In October, 1998, the area will be officially designated a marine sanctuary. Already an information/meeting center is under construction, placement of boundary markers is underway and information signs are being created. By promoting the community-based marine sanctuary, Blongko's residents now have a more active role and responsibility for protecting and sustaining marine resources which directly affect their day-to-day lives. The resource users in Blongko are now becoming resource managers.



Fishing boats at Blongko with the marine sanctuary in background at right

While one small sanctuary may not seem like much, if it is used as a model which is replicated widely, it can greatly add to the amount of coral reef area protected within a nation. It also has positive financial implications over time: with budgets being cut due to the national economic crisis, community-based marine sanctuaries become an attractive and less-costly means of marine ecosystem and biodiversity protection as the majority of costs—like the benefits—can be internalized within the community rather than be rolled into national budgets.

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