

The *Kalabia* Marine Conservation Education Program

Raja Ampat is widely known as one of the top marine conservation priority areas on Earth. Considered the “crown jewel” of the mega-diverse Bird’s Head Seascape (BHS), Raja Ampat’s rich coastal and marine resources also make it a target for development of economic sectors including fisheries, marine tourism, and extractive industries, such as mining and forestry.



Considered the “crown jewel” of the mega-diverse Bird’s Head Seascape (BHS), Raja Ampat harbors more than 1,480 species of coral reef fishes and 540 species of hard coral.

In 2004, Conservation International (CI) began a major marine conservation initiative, working with partners to safeguard Raja Ampat’s globally significant biodiversity and ensure that local communities derive sustainable livelihoods from their rich marine resources. One of the major problems is that young fishers are generally more skeptical of the need for marine conservation efforts and are most likely to engage in high-yield, yet destructive, fishing practices such as bomb and cyanide fishing. To tackle this problem, CI and our partner The Nature Conservancy (TNC) launched a comprehensive marine conservation education program for school children and young adults in the 103 villages of Raja Ampat. Given the remoteness of these villages, we employed an innovative platform for delivery of this education program—a 34-meter converted tuna long-liner vessel, the *MV Kalabia* – that visits

each of the villages in turn for three days and serves as a “floating education center.” Without question, the *Kalabia* education program is our most important strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine conservation efforts in Raja Ampat; today’s students are the fishermen and government officials of tomorrow, who will need to understand the importance of careful stewardship of their reefs and marine resources.

Named for Raja Ampat’s endemic “walking shark” (*Hemiscyllium freycineti*), the *Kalabia* can accommodate up to 50 students at a time. It began an ambitious schedule in April 2008, which aims to provide schoolchildren from all 103 villages in Raja Ampat with a 3-day intensive course in experiential marine conservation each year. To date, over 4800 students and teachers have taken the course. The curriculum was designed from the ground up—developed to build community knowledge, awareness, and a sense of pride and ownership of their marine natural resources, while urging conservation of these unique ecosystems.

The program itself is a highly-interactive series of activities and lessons in which students learn about basic marine biology, ecology, and conservation issues. Through exploratory hands-on activities, students gain basic knowledge about coral reef, mangrove, and seagrass ecosystems and their functions, as well as an understanding of concepts such as webs of life, carrying capacity, and the fisheries benefits of “no-take” marine reserves.



Named for the local “walking shark,” the 34-m *MV Kalabia* is an excellent education platform accommodating up to 50 students at a time.

Most importantly, the education team has carefully crafted the curriculum to address specific threats to marine ecosystems in Raja Ampat. The critical issues that were identified with stakeholders include: destructive fishing using dynamite and cyanide, consumption of sea turtles and their eggs, throwing garbage into the ocean, coral mining for construction, pollution from mining activities, and over-fishing of certain species (e.g., shark-finning, groupers, and anchovies). We feel strongly that this innovative conservation education program is key to the long-term success of the Raja Ampat MPA network and other marine conservation initiatives in the corridor.



Students collect trash from the beach around their village and then recycle it by making puppets. At the end of the three day course students perform puppet shows with their "trash puppets" to creatively illustrate environmental messages.

the future

The tremendous success of the *Kalabia* Marine Conservation Education Program in Raja Ampat has led to serious discussions of replicating the program in other areas of the Bird's Head Seascape and Indonesia, which would greatly expand the impact of this program. The Governor of West Papua Province has committed to expand the program. Likewise, the regent of Kaimana (in the southern Bird's Head) publicly pledged to launch a similar vessel and has asked CI to provide technical assistance.



Students gather at the bow of the boat for lessons, puppet shows, and musical performances.



CI believes the future health of Raja Ampat lies in the hands of the next generations of decision makers, who through education programs like the *Kalabia*, learn to conserve and love their natural treasures.

years of operation. Through this program, we have a tremendous opportunity to shape Papua's future generation of decision makers into real stewards of their environment and marine ecosystems, thus helping to protect one of the world's most important marine treasures.

Although the *Kalabia* Marine Conservation Education Program appears to have a bright future in Raja Ampat and beyond, CI requires the continued support of its donors to be able to keep the ship operational in the face of increasing fuel costs, and to expand the program to other key regions in the Bird's Head Seascape. We are urgently seeking support for the next two

OUR VISION

We imagine a healthy, prosperous world in which societies are forever committed to caring for and valuing nature, our global biodiversity, for the long-term benefit of people and all life on Earth.

OUR MISSION

Building upon a strong foundation of science, partnership and field demonstration, CI empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature, our global biodiversity, for the well-being of humanity.



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