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Project Title: USAID RDMA's Marine Conservation Activity

Prospect Funding Agency: USAID

Lead Department: TBD

Proposed Budget: TBD

Duration: Estimated for 5-years

1. Background/Introduction

USAID intends to build off the successes of the USAID Oceans activity to continue advancing efforts to combat IUU fishing and to promote sustainable fisheries and the conservation of marine biodiversity. To guide future programming, USAID developed a draft [situation model](#) (see attached) and context analysis which visually describes the current context for an anticipated regional activity and identifies leverage points which could be chained through strategic interventions. This context analysis and draft strategic approaches are described below.

Program focal interests - The model describes the broad goals of the program as improving the management and conservation of areas of high marine biodiversity within the geographic area of the U.S. Government's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Specific biodiversity focal interests include representative habitats, coral reefs and reef-associated species, high-value species, protected species, and charismatic megafauna. Improved management of this natural capital is expected to advance human wellbeing by supporting food security, sustainable trade, stability and rule of law, equitable economic growth, livelihoods in coastal communities, and improved integration of human welfare into fisheries value chains.

Threats to biodiversity - The model identifies four broad threats to marine biodiversity in the region: climate change; marine and land pollution, including plastics; poorly planned development; and fishing related threats, including unsustainable fishing and IUU fishing. Based on a ranking of these threats and an assessment of the manageable interests of USAID, this situation model focuses on the threats to biodiversity from fishing-related activities.

Drivers of unsustainable and IUU fishing - The model hypothesizes that the main driver of fishing-related threats to marine biodiversity is overcapacity in the sector, resulting from inadequate enforcement of existing fishing and trade laws as well as inadequate fisheries management at multiple scales (regional, national, and subnational). The model proposes that the reason for weak enforcement and fisheries management is that current market and regulatory arrangements do not adequately incentivize compliance with rules and support for more sustainable management, and it identifies three key drivers for this situation: 1) currently there are high economic rewards with low risk of getting caught or punished for rule-breaking, which results in widespread corruption and abuse in the sector; 2) current information flows slow trade, accountability, and decision-making; and 3) regional organizations are not effectively facilitating transboundary management and enforcement. The situation model suggests that inefficiencies in the current flows of information are partially due to the slow uptake of eCDT tools in the sector due to a range of barriers, and that a key reason for weak performance by regional organizations is a lack of constructive engagement by multiple stakeholders, including industry, civil society, academia, and governments. Finally, the model identifies root causes of the current situation as including: increasing demand for cheap fish for protein and feeds, poor working conditions, lack of organization and voice among small-scale fishers to advocate for more equitable distributions of catch and profits, and a high demand for employment in fisheries.

2. Goals/Strategic Approaches

Strategic approaches - Based on USAID's draft situation model, five draft strategic approaches were identified as potential areas for USAID targeted investments to reduce IUU and unsustainable fishing and conserve marine biodiversity in Asia:

1. ***Advance Regional Seafood Traceability*** - Promote the uptake and use of eCDT tools by governments and industry to increase transparency in the seafood supply chain, reduce IUU fishing practices, improve data management, and aid in fisheries management planning;
2. ***Demonstrate Regional Transboundary Fisheries Management*** - To manage fisheries effectively, stakeholders need a well-designed set of management principles codified as law, the law needs to be enforced, and there needs to be a mechanism to inform and adapt governance and fisheries management as conditions change. Management principles are legally established in the region but they are poorly and unevenly enforced. Enforcing the law is outside of the mandate of USAID, but a substantial contribution could be made by creating a data system that informs the governance and the science of sustainable catch and fisheries management at a regional scale. USAID could work to demonstrate successful multi-national implementation of sub-regional EAFM plans to advance marine biodiversity conservation and fisheries management capacity that promotes the use of eCDT systems for data-driven fisheries management;
3. ***Private Sector Engagement*** - Work with the private sector to increase the impact of marine conservation efforts through uptake and use of eCDT solutions throughout the supply chain and to support improved human welfare conditions and gender equity in the fisheries sector. Gender equitable supply chains, with empowered women and men, lie at the heart of regional fisheries management solutions;
4. ***Strengthen Regional Cooperation*** - Work with regional organizations and stakeholders to develop a strong and lasting regional understanding and consensus of the critical importance to reduce IUU fishing and unsustainable fishing in Asia;
5. ***Strengthen Regional Institutional Capacity*** - Work with regional organizations and government partners to build the capacity of institutions in Asia to combat IUU fishing, promote sustainable fisheries, and conserve marine biodiversity in the region.

3. Expected Outputs/Outcomes

TBD

4. Progress and Status

Concept planning stage