

## **Project Update: June 2002**

Interviews with fishers, government officials and buyers in North and Central Sulawesi has revealed a large and growing trade for Banggai cardinalfish. It is estimated that at least 700,000 fish were bought in the Banggai region during 2000-01. Fishers and domestic buyers receive low prices for Banggai cardinalfish when compared with many other aquarium fishes, yet the ease with which fishers can catch large numbers of fish using inexpensive gear in shallow water has led many fishers with few other economic options to participate in this emerging trade.

Whether the aquarium trade exerts enough pressure on Banggai cardinal fish populations to threaten their continued persistence in the wild cannot be precisely determined from our initial trade surveys. Nevertheless, we support proactive management measures to safeguard wild populations given that:

- the species biological characteristics make it vulnerable to exploitation (low fecundity, restricted geographic range);
- the current annual trade for the international aquarium market involves hundreds of thousands of fish and appears to be expanding; and
- local reef habitats are under increasing pressure from destructive fishing, amongst other factors.

Such measures could include the institution of trade regulations and the development of community based management initiatives for the Banggai region.