

## Project Update: March 2023

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023

From February to March 2023, we successfully conducted face to face interviews using a tested questionnaire with 100 local fishermen covering several fishing jetties and villages in Sandakan (n = 50) and Tawau (n = 50) in Sabah.



A male *Hippocampus trimaculatus* that was captured as bycatch by a fisherman using gill net, the most common fishing gear that catches seahorses in Tawau (photo by Chin Nurhiqwanalina).



Left: Seahorse bycatch was also caught by seine nets (local name: pukat tarik) in Sandakan (© Chin Nurhiqwanalina) Right: A pair of dried seahorses (*H. spinosissimus*) being sold for RM25 per packet for blood-cleansing in a TCM shop in Tawau (© Chin Nurhiqwanalina).

Besides that, we had carried out the traditional medicine survey across Sandakan (n = 4) and Tawau (n = 5) through interviews with a total of nine traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioners/ traders at TCM shops.

The results from the fisher and TM surveys are summarised as below:



Seahorses catch among fishermen in Sandakan and Tawau.

## SEAHORSE TRADE FOR TCM

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Out of the 9 TCM practitioners/ traders interviewed, 3 were selling dried seahorses and 6 have never sold.

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Seahorse trade among TCM practitioners/ traders in Sandakan and Tawau.

Previous studies on seahorse fisheries and trade in Sabah were limited and less comprehensive. From this study, we have provided current baseline information on local seahorse catch and trade as well as imports and exports from Sabah. A vast majority of the local fishers have caught seahorses and Sabah contributes relatively to the global seahorse trade. Findings from this study could facilitate relevant intervention measures to promote sustainable use, fisheries, and trade of seahorses as a highly valued marine resource in the state.