



A diver wearing a black cap and wetsuit is filming a large shark underwater. The diver is holding a blue GoPro camera on a tripod. The shark is swimming towards the camera, its mouth slightly open. The water is dark and murky.

SHARKS AND UPDATES FROM PROJECT HIU

DECEMBER 2020

 Our [website](#)

 Our [instagram](#)

PROJECT SCOPE

As a child, all I cared about was the Great Barrier Reef. Growing up on a sailboat from the age of two, diving from the age of seven, the reef was the source of my inspiration. It supported me, healed me and shaped me. I became a certified diver at the age of 12 and, at age 14, I picked up an underwater camera for the first time. I left school to begin home schooling and fully devoted myself to life on the reef.

I REMEMBER CLEARLY THE FIRST TIME I REALISED THAT THIS HOME WAS UNDER THREAT.

We were many days offshore seeking new spots to dive. Looking out to the nearby isolated reef atolls I remember seeing the shape of a boat. I was only 15 at the time when I asked the captain, "what is that?" The captain replied explaining the small boat was of Indonesian origin. Fishing boats that travel all the way from Indonesia, likely without GPS, to fish our reefs. Often illegally. They were here to take our sharks. So far from home in the shadow of an overfished ocean, they searched for new and vibrant places to fill their boats, the reefs I called home were one of them.

*I WILL NEVER FORGET LANDING IN GROUND ZERO OF PROJECT HIU MANY YEARS LATER AND THINKING TO MYSELF AS I GAZED UPON THE FISHING COMMUNITY I WAS DETERMINED TO INFILTRATE...
"I'VE SEEN THESE BOATS BEFORE".*

An aerial photograph of a person swimming in clear, turquoise water. The water is exceptionally clear, revealing a rocky seabed with various coral and reef structures. To the right, a rocky coastline with sparse green vegetation meets the water. The overall scene is serene and natural.

*THEY WERE THE SAME.
I HAD SEEN AS A CHILD ON OUR REEFS,
THE DISTINCTIVE INDONESIAN FISHING VESSEL,*

a symbol of destruction to any ocean lover. I never would have imagined in a million years, that I would find a home amongst my enemies.

A revolution in their collaboration, and a way to save the reef that raised me amongst the very boats I once gazed at, destroying them. Project Hiu entered my life two years ago when I was struggling to find faith in the impact I was having. I realised that I was approaching every situation with an archaic mindset. To be able to share what we have achieved since then, with people from around the world who continue to believe in me and support me, is the most important thing to happen to me as a conservationist.

*PROJECT HIU IS A REVOLUTION,
ONE THAT FORCES US
TO CHANGE THE WAY WE SEE THE PEOPLE
WE ONCE PERCEIVED AS ENEMIES,
SHAPE THE WAY WE HELP OUR OCEANS,
AND TEACH US SOMETHING ABOUT OURSELVES
WE NEVER KNEW WE NEEDED TO LEARN.*

It's a revolution I cannot take credit for, something I owe both the fishermen who accepted me, and those of you who have supported me.

A composite image featuring a man in the water in the foreground and a woman on a boat in the background. The man is smiling and making a rock-on hand gesture. The woman is leaning over the side of a boat, possibly handling gear. The background shows a tropical coastline with green hills under a clear sky.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR

Since Project Hiu began in 2018, we have hired three fishing boats, one of which has been fully decommissioned and is used exclusively for tourism. Saving sharks was the initial goal, yet since the development of the project, humans have become an equal focus.

I quickly learnt the importance of our presence benefiting the entire community and not just a few fishermen. In order to give incentive to a whole village to choose tourism over fishing, the following initiatives were born;

- waste management
- education programs
- boat refurbishing
- supplying means to clean water and hygiene
- English lesson material for the islands school
- and jobs for the female population

We have completed all of these things on a small scale and would like to continue expanding on them as we move forward.



OUR IMPACT ON THE INDONESIAN ECONOMY

We know now thanks to research and data collection in certain parts of the world that the value of a shark alive, far exceeds the value of that same shark dead. This is true for anywhere with a tourism economy that includes the ocean. When we crunched the numbers to see the value of our impact, the economic impact of a small amount of money required to change an income, and the large amount of money that potentially saves the local economy. Recent research has shown that 772,171 shark tourists visited Indonesia in 2017 alone. It was estimated they contributed around 22 million USD to the Indonesian economy to see sharks alive. If shark populations continue to decline due to insufficient conservation actions, the tourism industry could suffer economic losses from shark and ray tourism of more than USD 121 million per annum by 2027, as well as detrimental impacts on species, marine ecosystems, fisheries and people.

*THERE IS MORE POWER IN A LIVE SHARK,
THAN A DEAD ONE.*

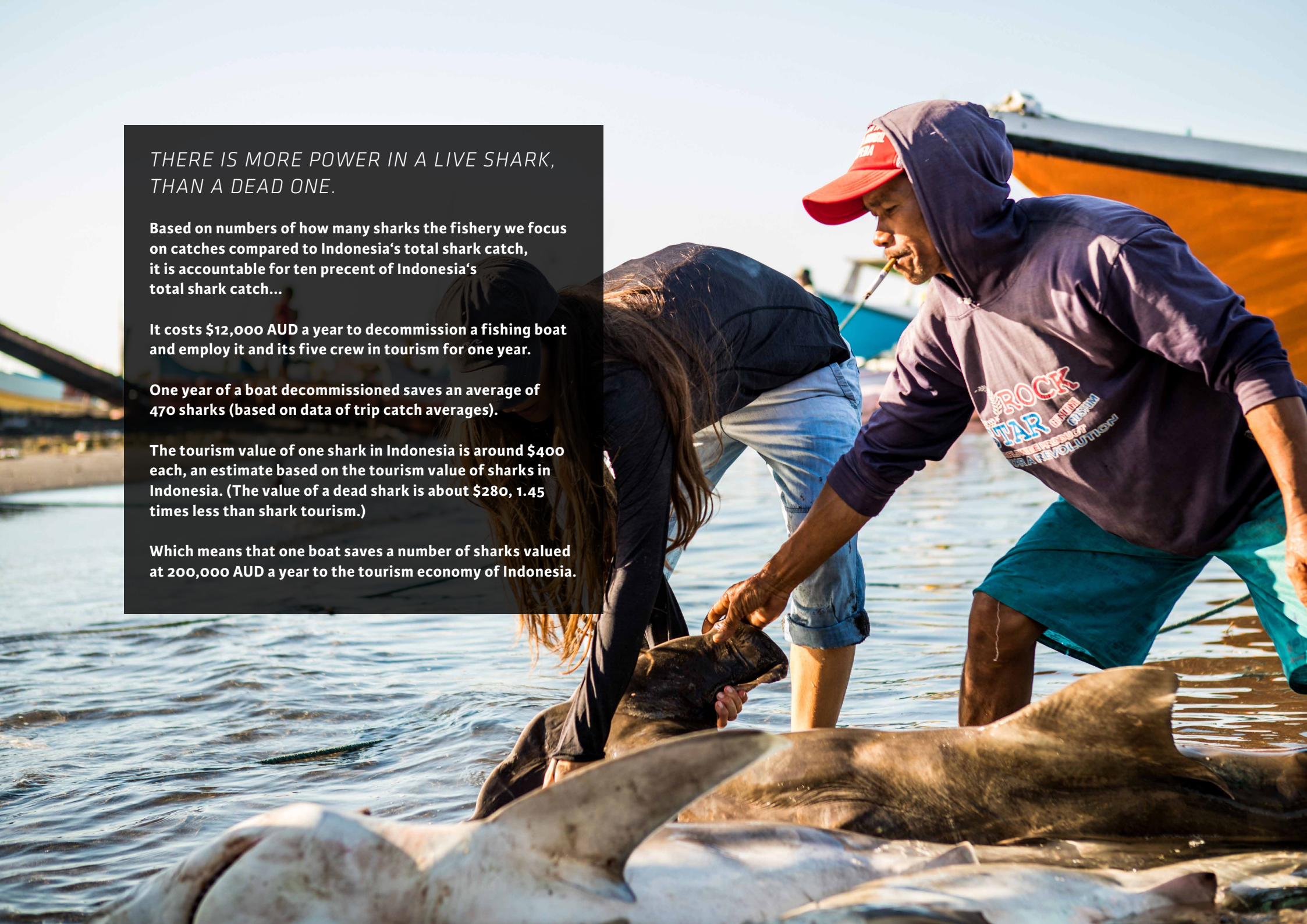
Based on numbers of how many sharks the fishery we focus on catches compared to Indonesia's total shark catch, it is accountable for ten percent of Indonesia's total shark catch...

It costs \$12,000 AUD a year to decommission a fishing boat and employ it and its five crew in tourism for one year.

One year of a boat decommissioned saves an average of 470 sharks (based on data of trip catch averages).

The tourism value of one shark in Indonesia is around \$400 each, an estimate based on the tourism value of sharks in Indonesia. (The value of a dead shark is about \$280, 1.45 times less than shark tourism.)

Which means that one boat saves a number of sharks valued at 200,000 AUD a year to the tourism economy of Indonesia.





OUR IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL

The overarching question that the individual needs to be asked is: „Why should you choose tourism instead of fishing?“ I will never forget the fourth trip I brought tourists to the sharks. In the weeks and months leading into this trip, we had crunched the numbers of our work at Project Hiu. Through this analysis and investigation, we were able to draw conclusions on how much money the fishermen made fishing sharks previously, compared to when they started working on tourism trips with us. The numbers had shown a much better financial gain with tourism. However, in the circumstances where there was a good catch of high valued sharks, there was potential for them to make more money fishing. One of the most impactful moments on my fourth trip came about when I asked them, „Why are you happy to work for me if you can make more fishing?“ The captain turned to me and said two words... “Accidents happen“. It quickly became apparent that their choice wasn’t based on money. For the fisherman, there was more than their income at stake.

The decision the fisherman made to choose tourism instead of fishing was based on an array of situational uncertainties, at times dangerous ones, that they had to face whilst out on the boat fishing. Furthermore, they understood that each time they went fishing, they took the risk that they may not return to their family.

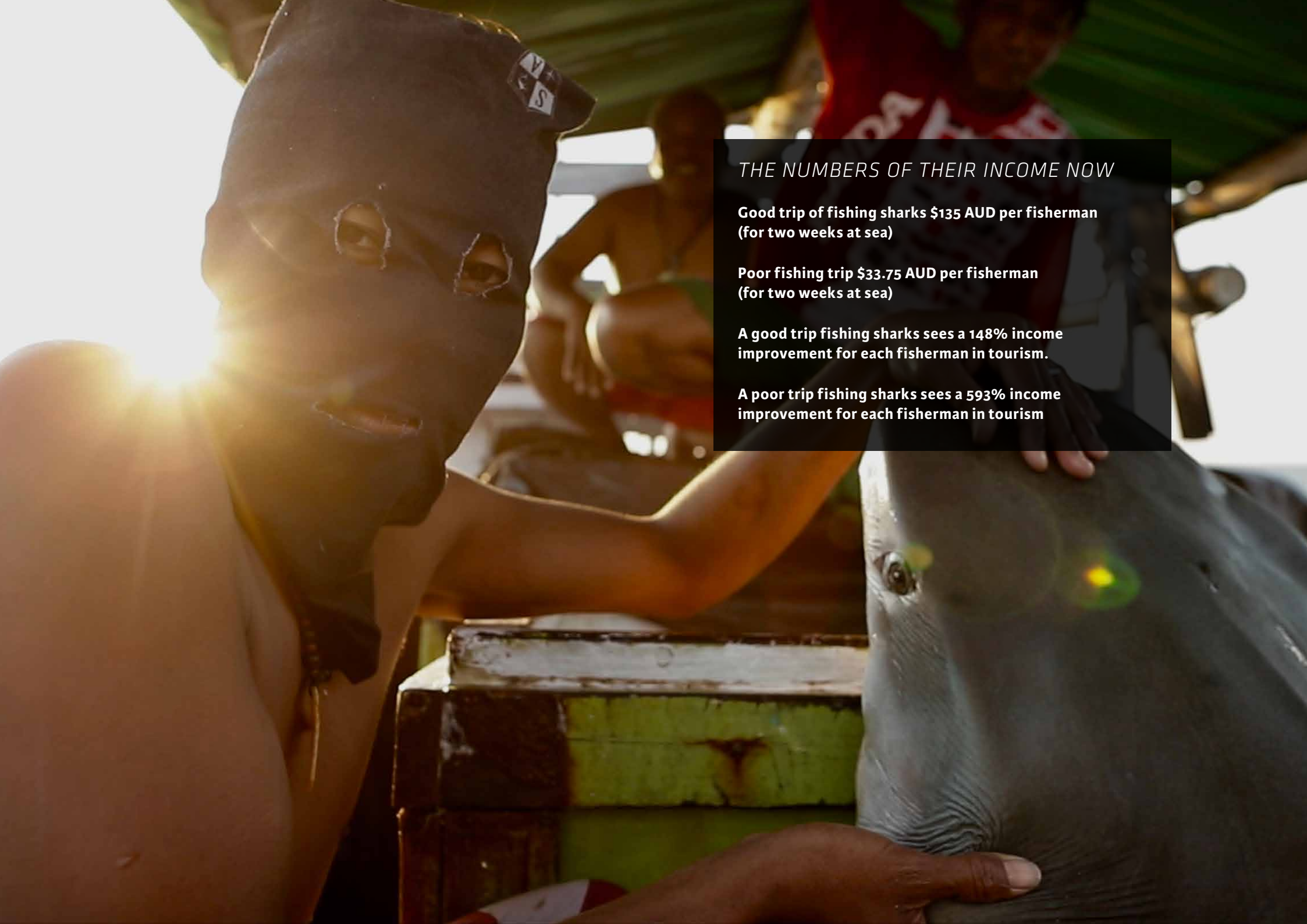


Project Hiu is not just offering an alternative to protect sharks, but to improve the lives of humans too. That's when the reality of what we are doing became very clear to me. It doesn't stop there...

*IUU STANDS FOR ILLEGAL,
UNREGULATED, AND UNREPORTED.*

IUU fishing is a huge issue in Indonesian waters, and it goes beyond fishing. Human trafficking alone is estimated to generate over USD 150 billion in annual profits for criminal enterprises globally. One of my captains once told me how much money he was offered to smuggle people on his boat, for the money, a worthy risk, but he did not take it. He could have ended up in jail for life, instead, now he helps me run Project Hiu. These operations target to exploit those of low income and education, exposing a lot of small fishing communities with the threat of involvement in a lot more than just illegal fishing. We offer an alternative to not only killing sharks but exploitation from other areas.

Since that trip, the wage we pay the fishermen has improved to incentivize them from returning to fishing. This comes with a new set of rules such as being required to keep fishing equipment on the boat during tourist trips (so I know it's not being utilized elsewhere) and being "grounded" the entire month, which involves updates to me that the boats have stayed in harbour even after I have left.



THE NUMBERS OF THEIR INCOME NOW

**Good trip of fishing sharks \$135 AUD per fisherman
(for two weeks at sea)**

**Poor fishing trip \$33.75 AUD per fisherman
(for two weeks at sea)**

**A good trip fishing sharks sees a 148% income
improvement for each fisherman in tourism.**

**A poor trip fishing sharks sees a 593% income
improvement for each fisherman in tourism**

THE SCHOOL

There a school on an island dominated by our shark fishing community. The school holds their children, the islands future.

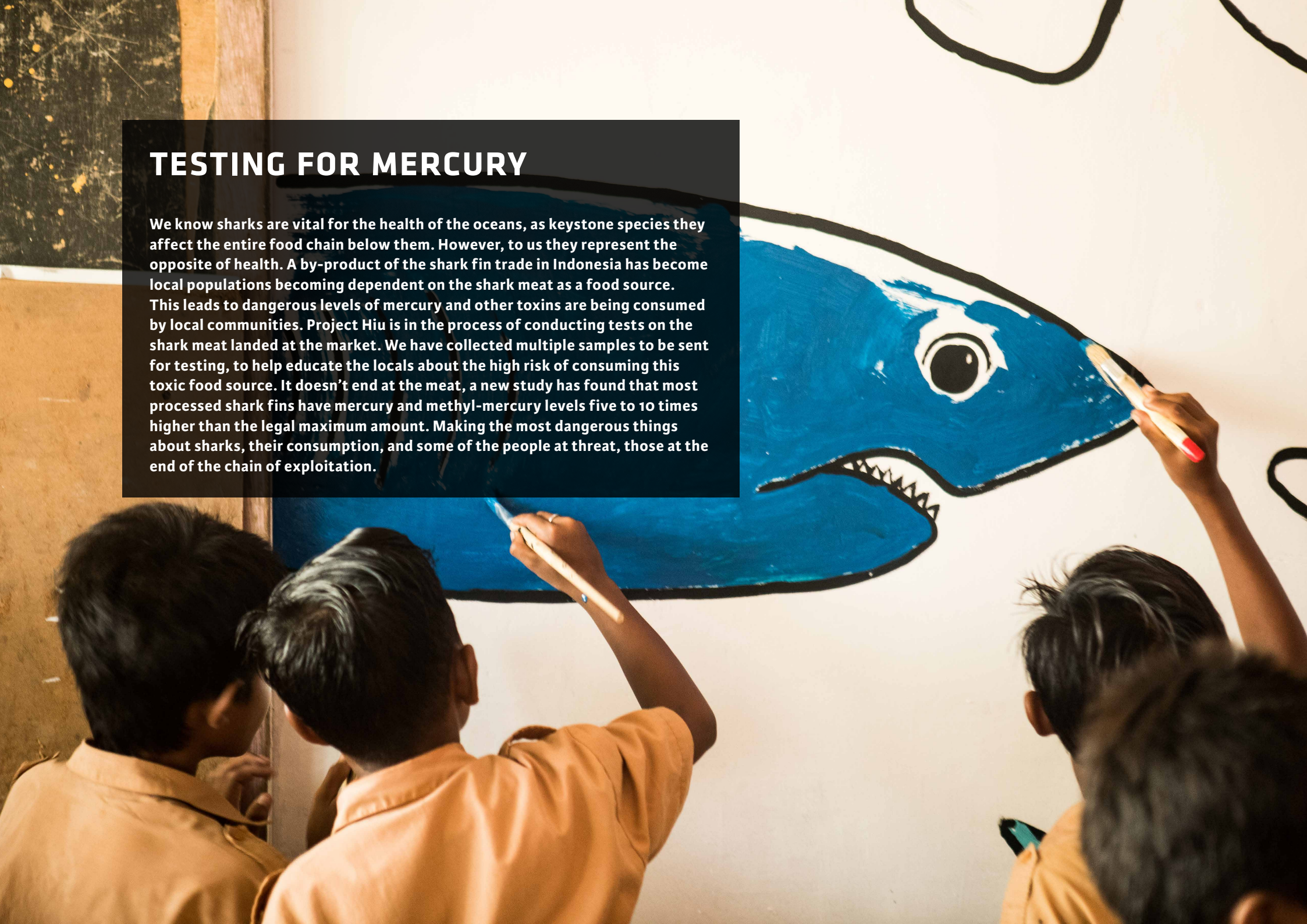
Since project Hiu started, we have filtered 1,000,000 litres of water by providing the children with a filter water bottle they can fill anywhere and use repetitively. It acts to clean the water they drink while preventing plastic pollution and illness, one of the small things you made possible with your purchase and donations. We created a mural after building a relationship with the headmaster of the underwater world, allowing the children to join in and paint with us. We have also facilitated over 1,000 English lessons in the school which will open a future in tourism, breaking the cycle and providing a brighter tomorrow for the next generation of this community.

We began the first ever introduction of trash bags for rubbish at the school, despite being warned the children would play with and break the bags, we started picking up a few bits of rubbish. Moments later the entire schoolyard joined in, picking up plastic and placing it in the rubbish bags we provided. Children who didn't speak a word of English were helping us clean their school without even being asked.



TESTING FOR MERCURY

We know sharks are vital for the health of the oceans, as keystone species they affect the entire food chain below them. However, to us they represent the opposite of health. A by-product of the shark fin trade in Indonesia has become local populations becoming dependent on the shark meat as a food source. This leads to dangerous levels of mercury and other toxins are being consumed by local communities. Project Hiu is in the process of conducting tests on the shark meat landed at the market. We have collected multiple samples to be sent for testing, to help educate the locals about the high risk of consuming this toxic food source. It doesn't end at the meat, a new study has found that most processed shark fins have mercury and methyl-mercury levels five to 10 times higher than the legal maximum amount. Making the most dangerous things about sharks, their consumption, and some of the people at threat, those at the end of the chain of exploitation.



TRASH

No access to proper waste management has taken a toll on marine life. Plastic is everywhere, a result of a community unable to afford to buy in bulk. To combat this we make strides with two issues at once by utilizing the fishermen to collect waste and take it to a recycling facility on the mainland.





BRACELET

The introduction of our trash bracelet became the foundation for funding this initiative, 1 bracelet = 1 trash bag donated.

We worked it out so that we didn't have to always rely on tourism, it's an important step for the future especially in times like these, to provide them with an income that doesn't rely on our presence.

A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by a large, dried shark fin. The person is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with a building. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

SHARK FINS

The high value of shark fins on global markets has sparked rapid growth in shark-fishing in Indonesia. Shark catch in Indonesia was estimated at more than 110,000 tonnes in 2007, representing the largest recorded harvest in the world. Indonesia is a target for the overseas shark trade because these fishermen with little alternative can be exploited. They go to sea for two weeks to fish sharks for such minimal money. They can risk their lives or incarceration by fishing illegally in international waters.

Companies that export shark fins can export more than a ton of fins per shipment, this provides these companies the opportunity to smuggle fins from protected species, forbidden to be sold in the trade. The people working to inspect and prevent these activities are overworked and under-resourced, making it extremely difficult to detect these fins. Some 230 metric tons were shipped out of one city in Indonesia alone between January and October 2019.

Project Hiu is working hard to uncover more information on the trade and highlight the exploitative mark-ups, the trade of endangered species, and the traders responsible. In addition, the project works on documenting and gaining insight into the trade of fins. We believe this transparency will not only give us a tactical advantage in targeting the consumers of shark fins, the people who drive the demand but an incentive for the fishermen it has exploited to know they deserve better.

A young girl on the left is wearing a black baseball cap with a blue patch featuring a shark and the letters 'SAF' in red. She is looking up at a woman on the right. The woman has blonde hair and is also looking up. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

OUR GOALS

Since its inception Project Hiu has developed and grown in ways I could never have dreamed of. Within the next five years, the goal is to create a well-established tourism hub that is operated and protected by shark fishermen.

It should be a self-sustaining operation that sufficiently supplements their income. This operation will become a blueprint for other fishing communities in Indonesia, as well as other affected communities around the world. During this growth period we want to see an increase in our fleet to at least ten boats.

All of this has been and will be made possible by the people who support our project. To those who already have, we can't thank you enough. To anyone who would consider supporting us in the future, your contribution can offer a safe, sustainable future to a community that only ever knew the killing of sharks.

A photograph of three young girls in school uniforms and hijabs, smiling and sitting at a table. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey box containing text.

WHAT WE NEED FOR THE FUTURE

- Infrastructure for the school, such as a toilet block (right now children and teachers go to the beach), a new classroom, and waste management (the ability to transport and collect rubbish so it can be taken to a recycling facility on the mainland - this is also a strictly female income earning potential). Ventilation installment for the classrooms (it becomes too hot for students to study at midday). Perhaps most essential, funding to allocate two local teachers to teach English lessons twice a week (the opportunity to learn English opening up a future in tourism for them).
- The hiring and refurbishing of additional boats. Our next target is two more fishing boats on top of the three we already use to partake in tourism during Project Hiu trips. This will set them up for a future in tourism and take them away from relying on fishing sharks. This includes making the boats safe, insurance and government required licenses.
- The seeking and establishing of new tourist attractions for the fishermen to base their business from. Right now the bulk of tourism is coming from our trips, we want to help give them the tools to act in our absence.
- The continued documentation, research, and exposure of the shark fin trade from captain to consumer.

A photograph of three people sitting on the edge of a white boat, looking at a map. The person on the left is a man in a green shirt and a black cap with 'SHARK' written on it. The person in the middle is a woman in a dark shirt and a tan hat. The person on the right is a woman in a pink shirt and a black cap. They are all smiling and appear to be in conversation. The background shows a vast blue ocean under a clear sky with a few distant boats.

WHEN WILL YOU BE ABLE TO JOIN US AGAIN?

When you join us on a fishing vessel on a Project Hiu trip you are replacing the wage dead sharks once provided. You are more than a tourist, you are the future for this community, you are the alternative. You will gain a first-hand insight into the lives of these people and the shark fin trade. In addition, you will get to see some of the most amazing coral reefs and shark nurseries Indonesia has to offer. Covid-19 will continue to halt our trips until we can assure safety of our isolated fishing community. We hope trips will commence as soon as possible, but as of now we are unable to know an exact time and appreciate your patience and understanding.

The best way to stay updated on future trips is



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remain on our [mailing list](#)

CONCLUSION

In the last decade, Indonesia contributed to more than 10% of the world's shark catches. For a long time we have looked down on these trades, assigned blame to these fishing communities and documented their practices to portray the horror. But what if we could have an impact? What if the fishing of sharks isn't to do with sharks at all? What if this is a socio-economic issue? What if we concentrated our efforts on lifting humans out of a life that leads to shark fishing and into something better, something safer and something that improves life above and below?

To protect sharks from imminent threat in the near future, without legal basis for enforcement, the communities that fish them will have to be the ones that protect them. This small village and the fishermen we work with represent far more than a simple project, they represent the preservation of connecting oceans, and an opportunity to drive a wedge between the hard working fishermen and the foreign buyers who profit from them. The foundation of this opportunity, is to surrender the mindset we have lived by, that shark fishermen are the enemy, and their demise is the triumph.

When you support us, you support them. You show them we are here to stay, guiding them to a new way of life. You are helping us change the world using our enemies on our side. I met a shark fishermen in May of 2018 and convinced him to rent me his boat, roll forward to 2020, he has a one year old daughter named "Pippy" which is my nick name. He named her after me knowing that I will be there for her future.





KNOWING THAT LITTLE PIP WAS BORN IN A HOUSE BUILT ON THE FISHING OF SHARKS, AND KNOWING THAT MY LIFE'S MISSION IS TO NOW ENSURING SHE IS RAISED IN A HOUSE BUILT ON TOURISM.



*WE DO THIS TO IMPROVE LIFE
ABOVE AND BELOW,
TO CHALLENGE EVERYTHING
WE THOUGHT WE KNEW,
AND TO CHANGE THE WORLD,
BY LOOKING TO THE VILLAINS,
AND SEEING ONLY HEROS.*

Rice means a lot to a small shark fishing village during covid. As we wait to see what the future holds I want to thank those of you who have donated and made it possible for me to send 400kg of rice and other small items of food to the village where Project Hiu operates once a month.

We are still in touch with all our Indonesian families and employees, keeping regular tabs on their health and safety and using this time to prepare for when travel opens up and we can safely return back to actions more ready than ever. In the absence of shark fishing and now tourism, their income is non-existent. Their trust in us supplying food and resources to keep their heads above water is an essential step in moving forward with our plans to better their future.

Everyone has played an essential part in helping us change the lives of fishermen and sharks, to those who have supported us along the way, we thank you endlessly for your help and support throughout this time.

*REGARDS,
MADISON STEWART*

