



CTA-143-Goggles, children and coral

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For a **Diver**  Every day is **Ocean Day**

Children living on Indonesia's coast get free goggles to enjoy - and save – precious reef
Minister fighting marine pollution says she wants to give next generation ‘the eyes’ to appreciate the marine world
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[Kate Lamb](#) in Jakarta

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Local children and students on the island of Bangka after receiving their free goggles Photograph: Indonesian Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministry.

Indonesia’s maritime affairs minister has come up with an unconventional way to help preserve precious reefs from marine pollution: distribute boatloads of free goggles to children in the archipelago’s remote coastal regions.

An avid snorkeler who is known for blowing up illegal fishing boats, minister Susi Pudijastuti said she wanted to give the next generation of Indonesians “the eyes” to fully appreciate their marine environment.

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During visits to Indonesia's remote eastern areas, home to the "Coral Triangle" and some of the most diverse marine life in the world, the minister said she noticed Indonesian children watching tourists snorkelling for hours, not fully understanding what they were doing.

"I just realised in one moment: how can we ask them, how can we push them to take care of the beauty of the underwater world if they don't even see how beautiful it is," she said, "I realised, what we see, they don't see."

Since 2016 the program has given out more than 2,000 pairs of goggles to children in West Papua, Maluku, Sulawesi and east and west Nusa Tenggara.

Visiting Banggai Laut in Sulawesi, one area where goggles had been distributed, the minister said children were swimming and jumping around, amazed by their reefs.

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Indonesian students on the island of Belitung receive free goggles Photograph: Indonesian Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministry.

[In a video](#) in which she answered questions about the initiative submitted by the Guardian she said: "We all have to start giving them the eyes to be able to see the beauty of the world under the water, to be able to ask them, put them as one of the guards of the oceans."

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In a country suffering from chronic maritime waste, the minister hopes the initiative will encourage young Indonesians to appreciate their reefs, and in turn inspire them to protect their marine environment.

[Indonesia](#) is the world's biggest marine polluter after China, discarding 3.22m metric tons of waste annually.

In June Indonesia's [two largest Islamic organisations pledged to try to mitigate the problem](#) by running sermons about environmental awareness.

Susi said she was angered when she saw plastic "at the beach, on the shore, on the reef, everywhere", and took measures to reduce usage in her own ministry. Single-use plastic is banned at Indonesia's maritime affairs and fisheries ministry, and at all its ministerial events.

Susi told the Guardian she looked forward to the day when Indonesia could ban single-use plastic altogether.

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