

The People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice (KIARA) has called on the government to reconsider its plan to raise the price of subsidized premium gasoline by Rp 2,000 (20 US cents) and diesel fuel by Rp 1,000 in June as the increase would not be accompanied by a guarantee that fishermen would have better access to fuel.

"We urge the government to cancel its plan to raise the price of subsidized fuel unless it improves the function of fuel stations for fishermen and guarantees access and the availability of subsidized fuel for traditional fishermen," said KIARA secretary-general Abdul Halim in a statement on Thursday.

KIARA data shows that during 2010-2013, the government's allocation for the subsidy fuel had increased by 182 percent.

Despite such an increase, Halim said traditional fishermen still lacked access to subsidized fuel whereas fuel accounted for 60 to 70 percent of a fisherman's costs.

"As a result, fishermen's families keep find it difficult to improve their welfare," he said.

In a survey, KIARA found poor access and availability of subsidized fuel at 237 fuel stations for fishermen in areas across the country in 2011, in which traditional fishermen suffered the most.

The reported illicit use of subsidized fuel at many fuel stations such as in Tarakan, East Kalimantan, aggravates the problem.

"Authorities should take tough measures to sanction fuel station owners and users who are involved in the illicit use of subsidized fuel," said Halim. (ebf)