



Press release

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For immediate release

Going “glocal” for the forests of West Kalimantan

Pontianak, West Kalimantan – Working with local partners and communities, DeforestAction, a global environmental movement supporting forest preservation, education and the rescue and rehabilitation of orang utans in West Kalimantan, today provided an update of a novel environmental project started a year ago to find solutions to deforestation and threats to indigenous communities.

Representatives from DeforestAction, consisting of 11 people from eight countries aged 20 to 32, have spent over three months in West Kalimantan working with local partners to lay foundations for long-term projects.

The projects include outreach to local students on the importance of forest preservation, the development of eco-tourism and an orang utan rehabilitation and release site in Tembak village, and the use of satellite images to assist the village of Ensaid Panjang in mapping their forests.

Education

DeforestAction’s education team comprising of Eco Warriors Mark Kuroski and Kodi Twiner have traveled to 15 schools in Sintang regency to perform a musical on a special friendship forged between a boy and a rescued orang utan. They have spread the message of courage, as well as the importance of forests and wildlife, to over 2,000 students through their performances.

Project Tembak

Tembak, an indigenous Dayak village three hours’ drive south of Sintang town, has offered 63 hectares of its community forest for the rehabilitation of orang utans from Sintang Orangutan Centre run by the Kobus Foundation. Tembak has also offered 20,000 hectares of another nearby forest shared with several other villages for the release of rehabilitated orang utans.

The village had approached the Kobus Foundation in November 2010 to work together on projects centered around forest preservation and sustainable livelihoods from sugar palm (a villager had read in the Kapuas Post and Kapuas Raya about Dr Willie Smits’ work with sugar palm).

Tembak village has started efforts to secure the hutan adat status for its forests and, if government permits for the rehabilitation and release of orang utans

there are secured, theirs will be the first hutan adat in West Borneo to also serve as a release site for orang utans.

In the last two months, the Eco Warriors from DeforestAction have contributed to the welfare of two orang utans, Jojo and Juvi, at Sintang Orangutan Centre. They have also worked with Kobus and Tembak to set up a cage, caretakers' hut and water supply system at the rehabilitation site in Tembak's community forest. Through Indonesian Eco Warrior Fahrani Empel, they have secured a US\$10,000 donation from London-based essential oils company Aura Soma to build an animal clinic in Tembak.

The Eco Warriors have also worked to set up a nursery of fruit trees and other useful species that can be planted in the rehabilitation forests and village.

The people of Tembak are also keen to explore eco-tourism, and the Eco Warriors are in the midst of setting up a website to share the village's beauty with the rest of the world. They are working with local partners, film and eco-tourism company Canopy Indonesia, to ensure eco-tourism takes place on a sustainable scale.

Project Ensaid Panjang

Ensaid Panjang village is a community two hours' drive from Sintang currently involved in a dispute with another village called Sabang Laja. According to the residents of Ensaid Panjang longhouse, Sabang Laja has trespassed into Ensaid Panjang's community forest and carried out unauthorised logging there.

The longhouse residents want to protect their seven community forests for future generations. The Eco Warriors have made a map of their land and forests using radar images made available to its partner, Earthwatchers, an innovative new programme developed by technology company Geodan that allows school children from around the world to monitor forests from satellite images and spread awareness when they detect illegal deforestation.

The map is the most comprehensive image of Ensaid Panjang's land ever made available to the villagers, and will be useful in helping them to protect their forests and defend their land against unauthorised logging activities.

The projects undertaken by DeforestAction's Eco Warriors are a work-in-progress. Even as most of the Eco Warriors head back to their home countries, they will continue to be involved in the work of DeforestAction, and two Eco Warriors have plans to stay for a few more months in Indonesia to continue work on the ground with Canopy Indonesia.

Funds are also needed to sustain the projects over the long-term, and DeforestAction is keen to explore sponsorship and partnership opportunities with interested parties.

"We faced many challenges in Borneo. One of them was the language barrier for team members who were not from Indonesia, which made the communication process difficult at times," said Ms Fahrani Empel, the Eco Warrior from Indonesia. "As for myself, I focused a lot on raising funds within my external networks, to sustain the viability of this project. My greatest dream is to see Jojo and Juvi playing in the forests of Tembak."

“The partnership between DeforestAction and Canopy Indonesia will open doors to the development of more programmes in future – the pilot Eco Village projects of Ensaid Panjang and Tembak, for instance,” said Mr Deny Sofian, founder of Canopy Indonesia. “Improvement of the local economy will happen simultaneously with conservation and increase of land value. The welfare of local people will be in balance with nature.”

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About DeforestAction

DeforestAction is a global environmental movement supporting forest preservation, education and the rescue and rehabilitation of orang utans in West Kalimantan. It started in March 2010, when 12 schools and 90 students from the Asia Pacific region were invited to Singapore for Microsoft’s Regional Innovative Education Forum. Students and teachers decided they wanted to tackle one global issue – as a pilot – and they chose deforestation. They agreed on the name DeforestAction, and launched a global collaborative project with, for and by students around the world.

Eleven Eco Warriors were selected last June to be the eyes and ears for students on the ground in West Kalimantan. The Eco Warriors are now board members of DeforestAction. They first arrived in West Kalimantan in September 2011 and witnessed deforestation and threats to indigenous communities during their 20 days there. They returned in March this year for the next 80 days of the project, as described above. For more information, please visit www.deforestaction.com.

About Canopy Indonesia

Canopy Indonesia is a company founded in 2003 engaged in documentary film production, community and media development, as well as eco-tourism development. It is based in Pontianak, with field offices in Sintang regency and Danau Sentarum National Park in the Kapuas Hulu regency. Canopy’s projects include the development of eco-tourism at Kabung island in the Bengkayang regency and Danau Sentarum National Park.

Its films have won awards including the Best Short Film and Communal Jury Choice awards for “Indonesiaku di Tepi Batas” – about a village along the Indonesia-Malaysia border – at the Festival Film Dokumenter Jogja 2011, and Best Documentary for “Long Life through to the Long House” at the Festival film dokumenter “kearifan local Cirebon in 2009. Canopy’s directors are Mr Deny Sofian and Ms Venie Hartinie. The company is DeforestAction’s local partner in Indonesia.

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