CHAMPIONS OF THE FOREST

Champions of the Forest

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Indonesia is a tropical archipelagic nation with a broad range of ecosystems, from marine to the snow-capped highlands of Mount Jayawijaya. As such, Indonesia is world-renowned for its extraordinary wealth of biodiversity as well as unique cultural values and practices. In villages and communities where people are dependent on forests, their traditional social, cultural, and spiritual values are strong and help them to maintain resilience in the face of change.

The central government, local governments, private sector, academics, non-governmental organizations, traditional leaders, religious leaders, community elders, activists, and especially those who live around forest areas, each have an important role to play in building collective awareness in ensuring a responsible relationship with nature. We must strive to realize forest management that is more thoughtful, environmentally friendly, and respectful of the ecosystem's own ability to maintain resilience in the face of human exploitation.

Sustainable management of forest resources must always consider the needs of both sides – humans and forest ecosystems – in integrated and balanced ways. This means recognizing and sustainably managing essential goods and services provided by forests such as food, fuel, clean water, sources of livelihood, protection from floods and landslides, as well as cultural and spiritual values.

Conservation, which is often understood as only the work of government and law enforcement, needs to be implemented through a new approach that is based on the principles of collaboration and multi-stakeholder partnership cooperation, encouraging the full participation and collective responsibility of the local community , academics, local government, and private sector.

I thank USAID LESTARI for their partnership and collaboration in supporting the conservation and sustainable management of forests, as well as supporting community empowerment activities in Aceh, Central Kalimantan and Papua. I also greatly appreciate the compilation of this book as an informative and inspiring presentation of the commitment of many individuals to support these efforts.

We will continue to build awareness and collective action to protect Indonesia's biodiversity and cultural values while continuing to manage forests more responsibly, so that the benefits can still be enjoyed by future generations. This is the attitude we need to build and guarantee cross-generational justice.

Ir. Wiratno, M.Sc
Director General KSDAE
Ministry of Environment and Forestry

One of USAID's core objectives around the world is to empower stakeholders to advance sustainable development. In Indonesia, we understand that advancing sustainable development means helping to conserve the country's vast rainforests, biodiversity, and natural resources. USAID is proud to have partnered with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry on the LESTARI project. We thank the Ministry of Environment and Forestry as well as other partners including BAPPENAS, Provincial and District Governments, Forest Management Units, national parks, universities, private sector partners, NGOs, and local communities for their commitments, leadership, and vision.

LESTARI project partners have demonstrated how collaboration between stakeholders with shared values can build capacity, deliver conservation, and advance sustainable development. We now hope that our partners can take these successful initiatives, sustain them in a more self-reliant manner, and share them with others in order to amplify impact to even broader areas. In doing so, we hope to contribute to a more prosperous and sustainable future for Indonesia.

Matthew Burton
Director of Environment Office
USAID/Indonesia

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USAID LESTARI partners with the Government of Indonesia to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and conserve biodiversity in carbon rich and biologically significant forest and mangrove ecosystems. This is achieved through improved land use governance, enhanced protected areas management and protection of key species, sustainable private sector and industry practices, and expanded constituencies for conservation among various stakeholders. Activities are targeted in six strategic landscapes in the provinces of Aceh, Central Kalimantan, and Papua where primary forest cover remains most intact and carbon stocks are greatest. LESTARI works in close partnership and coordination with the Directorate General of Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation (KSDAE) of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry as well as the Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS).

Over the course of this 5-year project (July 2015 – July 2020), LESTARI has identified and empowered a host of Champions – individuals that demonstrate leadership, passion, and commitment towards forest conservation and sustainable development for local communities in their region. These individuals appreciate the immeasurable benefits and services provided by Indonesia's forests – freshwater, clean air, food and fuel, protection from landslides, cultural and spiritual value – and also understand the threats they face from unsustainable exploitation. This underscores the important role Champions play in building awareness, serving as role models, and sharing the values of conservation for the benefit of both current and future generations.

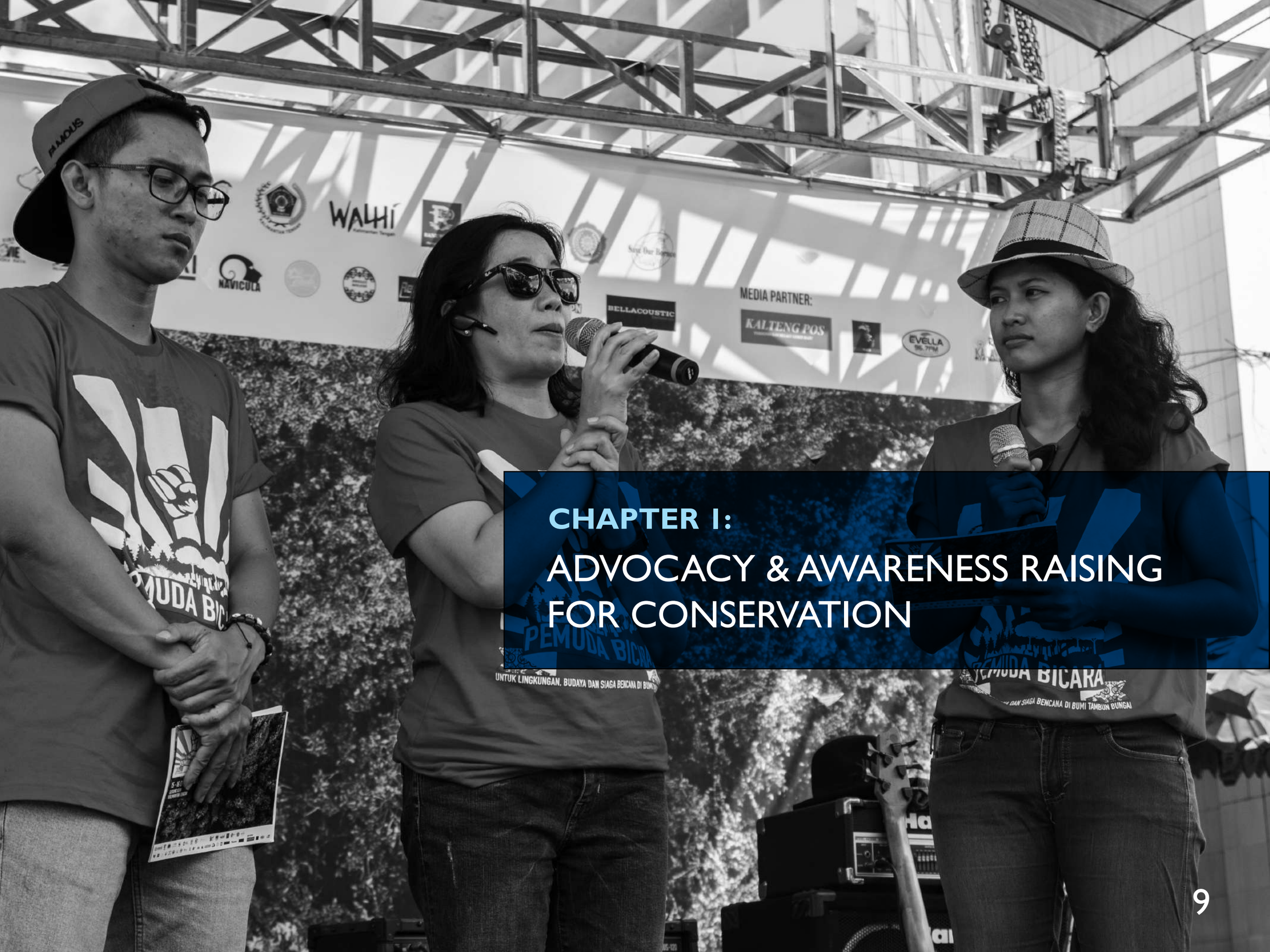
As of February 2020, 580 Champions have been identified and have collaborated on LESTARI initiatives, based on their particular roles and positions, across all landscapes. Champions come from a broad range of roles and backgrounds including:

- Staff of district/provincial forestry agencies, BAPPEDA, and other government agencies
- National park management staff
- Forest Management Unit staff
- Local farmers and members of farmers' cooperatives
- Members of local NGOs, traditional/indigenous community groups, women's groups, and other community-based organizations
- Local media and journalists covering environmental issues
- Academics from partner universities
- Private sector staff

LESTARI has partnered with and supported these Champions through a broad range of technical assistance, capacity building trainings, workshops, and one-on-one engagements. For instance, farmers have received technical trainings based on sustainable cultivation practices and have been connected with buyers to improve their market access and incomes. Conservation area managers have been assisted to improve their patrolling, data management, and collaborative management practices, reducing threats from wildlife crimes and forest encroachment. Local government agencies have been assisted to develop sound development plans, policies, and budgets that advance sustainable development while safeguarding the high value forests that local communities depend upon.

Champions of the Forest is a compilation of the photos and perspectives of 40 Champions that have partnered with LESTARI. The publication is divided into six sections based on the main thematic clusters covered by LESTARI initiatives. The information and quotations were captured through direct interviews with each individual by the LESTARI team. Hence it is meant to be a reflection of their own voices and perspectives, highlighting their passion and dedication towards advancing conservation and sustainable development in their communities. Beyond the LESTARI project, they will carry forward these commitments and actions, and hopefully inspire other young Champions along the way.

LESTARI CONSERVATION COLLABORATIONS
Banda Aceh
ACEH
Medan
MALAYSIA
Leuser
SINGAPORE
SOUTH CHINA SEA
BRUNEI
SULAWESI SEA
PACIFIC OCEAN
CENTRAL KALIMANTAN
Palangkaraya
Katingan-Kahayan
INDIAN OCEAN
JAVA SEA
Jakarta
BANDA SEA
Sarmi
Cyclops
Jayapura
PAPUA
Lorentz Lowlands
Mappi-Bouven Digoel
AUSTRALIA
Legend:
Project Head Office
Provincial Office
Landscape Office
National Boundary
LESTARI-supported Landscapes
Conservation Areas
Forest Cover:
Primary Forest
Secondary Forest



CHAPTER 1:

ADVOCACY & AWARENESS RAISING FOR CONSERVATION

"Protecting the environment is the responsibility of all citizens, men and women alike. We must all take collaborative actions, however small, to protect nature."

Masyitah

Member of Women's Group for the Conservation of Leuser

The *Perempuan Peduli Leuser* (Women's Group for the Conservation of Leuser) is a women-led community-based organization that runs awareness-raising campaigns aimed at improving the understanding and appreciation of conserving the Leuser forest ecosystem amongst local communities in Aceh. As an active member, Masyitah believes it is her duty to spread this important message, especially with students and youth groups, so that the next generation grows up valuing nature conservation and responsible natural resource management.

Zulkarnaini Masry

Activity Coordinator of Environmental Journalists' Forum

A native of North Aceh, Zulkarnaini Masry is the soft-spoken yet passionate activity coordinator of the Environmental Journalists' Forum (Forum Jurnalis Lingkungan, or FJL). FJL organizes trainings and discussions for its 30 members, which include journalists, photographers, and videographers, in order to improve their understanding and coverage of important environmental issues impacting local communities in the Aceh region. They have coordinated to conduct successful campaigns on illegal logging, natural resource licensing, and community-wildlife conflict, resulting in more comprehensive responses from local authorities to tackle these issues. With guidance from Zulkarnaini, FJL has also focused on training 'citizen journalists' to better understand environmental issues and spread awareness through social media. He hopes that this will help to inspire youth in Aceh to become more actively engaged in conservation issues.

"It is our responsibility to raise awareness on local environmental issues that impact the lives of people in our community."

Emmanuela Shinta

Founder and Executive Director,
Rana Welum Foundation

"Our ancestors told us that God only created the earth once. That's a gift, and we have to keep it."

A kind yet outspoken environmentalist, Emmanuela Shinta is the founder and director of Yayasan Rana Welum. Her organization aims to spread awareness and action on important environmental issues – such as forest and land fires – directly impacting the well-being of local communities in Central Kalimantan. She utilizes documentary videos to tell meaningful stories and inspire change.

Through a few collaborations between Ranu Welum and community stakeholders, Emmanuela has seen a small grassroots conservation initiative take hold and continue to operate independently. This has helped to spread awareness on the rights of local communities to access their land and manage it responsibly. It has also given her the insight and inspiration to pursue bigger initiatives in the future, not just in Kalimantan but nationwide in Indonesia. She remains optimistic that there will be greater recognition of indigenous communities' roles in advancing forest conservation.

Bonifasius Jakfu

Chairperson of Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Climate Change, Asmat District

According to Bonifasius Jakfu, the mangrove forests of Asmat District are part of the ancestral history of local traditional communities. Besides being a place to hunt, fish, and earn a livelihood, the forests are their source of cultural and spiritual identity.

Since 2017, Bonifasius has been the devoted Chairperson of the Multi-stakeholder Forum (MSF) on Climate Change for this remote district in southern Papua. The MSF includes representatives from both local government and local communities, and therefore has been an important platform to build dialogue, trust, and collaboration between stakeholders. Under direction from Bonifasius, the MSF has directly contributed to village-level policies and plans for mangrove protection and freshwater resource management. He feels pleased to see greater recognition of traditional communities' perspectives and values, enabled through the MSF.

"Through this multi-stakeholder forum, we aspire to lift up the voices of traditional communities in managing and protecting their natural resources."

CHAPTER 2:

PRO-FOREST POLICIES, PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

"Our approach to advancing sustainable development in Gayo Lues District means improving the economic welfare of local communities while at the same time reducing the threats from deforestation and environmental degradation."

Muhammad Amru

Bupati of Gayo Lues District

Muhammad Amru is the Bupati of Gayo Lues District – a stunningly picturesque region in the forested highlands of Aceh Province. His vision for development and enhancing community welfare is built around the sustainable cultivation of one key commodity that is part of the daily culture of the Acehnese people: coffee. Gayo coffee is prized in Indonesia for its unique aroma and taste, due to its cultivation in this high-altitude landscape. Muhammad has supported programs for seed procurement, nursery development, and landscape rehabilitation for villages across the entire district. At the same time, he has ensured expanding cultivation is done sustainably by allocating funds to conserve upstream rivers and surrounding protected forest areas.

Ansar

Section Head, Central Kalimantan Forestry Agency

As a Section Head in the Forestry Agency of Central Kalimantan, Ansar is broadly involved in forestry planning and budgeting matters. He firmly believes that strengthening Forest Management Units (FMUs) is crucial to improving the monitoring and management of the expansive forest areas in his province. FMUs are the frontline institutions responsible for the day-to-day management of their forest areas. There are 33 FMUs in Central Kalimantan, yet most of them are under-staffed and under-funded. Under his leadership and guidance, programs and funds from the Provincial Forestry Agency aimed at strengthening FMUs have been drastically increased.

"Partnerships are an important means to fill planning holes that cannot be resolved directly by our agency."

"We strive to encourage collaborative and innovative approaches for forestry and environmental management in Aceh that bring sustainable benefits to the people in our communties."

Sahrial

Head of Environment and Forestry Agency, Aceh Province

As Head of the Provincial Environment and Forestry Agency for Aceh, Sahrial oversees a broad range of programs, budgets, and personnel that work together to strengthen forest management and protection. Because of limitations in government funds and human resources capacity, and the vast and important areas of forest cover in Aceh, he is a strong proponent of collaborative forest management with communities. He believes this creates a win-win scenario boosting community benefits while furthering the goals of his agency. Under his leadership, budget support for advancing community social forestry initiatives has been expanded significantly.

Rudi Purwadi

Regional Disaster Management Agency, Pulang Pisau District

Seasonal forest and land fires are a recurring disaster in Indonesia that affect not just the natural environment but also the health, economy, and education of local communities. Central Kalimantan, with its carbon-rich peatlands, is often one of the worst affected regions. As a leader in the Regional Disaster Management Agency, Rudi Purwadi takes the issue of fire very seriously. He feels optimistic to see that the agency is now focusing more on planning and prevention systems, including early warning and fast response protocols. He is also a strong advocate for a multi-stakeholder approach to fire mitigation, as one agency alone cannot cover the vast areas prone to fire. He supports community outreach and engagement, building the awareness of local communities to avoid burning, report incidents, and reduce the vulnerability of their lands to fire.

"Mitigating fire risk is not solely the job of one agency. It is a shared responsibility, and every citizen must do his part."

"Our local wisdom can contribute to sustainable development in our village while helping to protect the forests of Cyclops Nature Reserve."

Gustav Toto

Tribal Leader, Necheibe Village, Papua Province

As Tribal Leader of Necheibe Village. Gustav Toto is the proud head of his traditional community located just north of the Cyclops Nature Reserve in Papua Province. Cyclops' forests play an important role in regulating the freshwater supply of surrounding villages, including Necheibe. For Gustav's community, these forests are not just a bunch of trees, but a source of life. Under his leadership, village officials came together to produce a development plan that incorporates traditional wisdom and regulations aimed at protecting these vital forests. Gustav believes this is a crucial aspect of furthering sustainable development in his community.

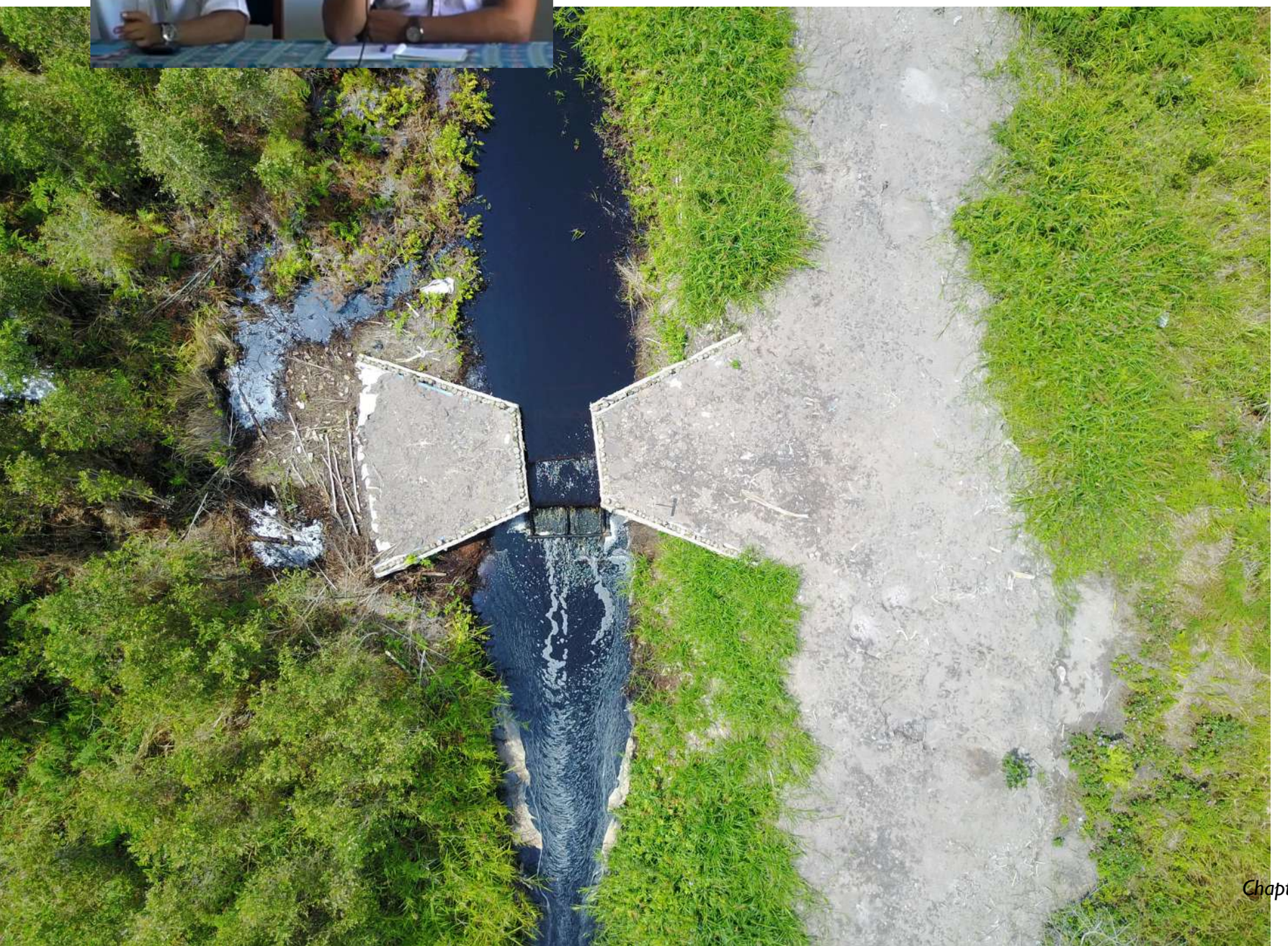
Della Rumlus

Head of Research and Development, BAPPEDA, Mappi District

Mappi District is located in a remote corner in the southern portion of Papua Province. Given that the vast majority of the district area covered by natural forest, natural resources play a vital role in the everyday lives of local traditional communities. As a senior member of the Regional Development Planning Agency (BA PPEDA) in Mappi, Della Rumlus is directly involved in planning and budgeting processes for the district. She has been a vocal proponent of revising the existing spatial plan to incorporate stronger protections for culturally and environmentally significant lands, and giving local communities a stronger voice in land use decision making. As a pragmatic and results-oriented leader, she has also advocated for government budget allocations to ensure the rules and regulations stipulated in the spatial plan are actually implemented on the ground.

"Through our spatial planning process, we hope to improve the management and protection of natural areas in our district valued by traditional communities."

"It is important to build public awareness on responsible land use management to protect our communities from the threat of forest and land fires."



Wanson

Head of Garung Village, Central Kalimantan

Garung Village is located atop a carbon-rich peatland area in Pulang Pisau District. Due years of mismanagement, the peatland had become dried out and degraded, making the region prone to devastating fires. Under leadership from Village Head Wanson, things have changed drastically. He has helped to coordinate efforts to construct the much-needed canal blocks, maintaining moisture levels in the peatland and reducing susceptibility to fire. He has done so through securing buy-in from local communities in his village as well as coordination with local and national government agencies, including the Peatland Restoration Agency. With Wanson's guidance and reassurance, the community has come to realize that they should not simply play a passive role in government-led fire mitigation initiatives; it is their right and responsibility to serve as active participants.

Maryana J. Hamadi

Head of Mimika District Forestry Branch

A native Papuan and mother of two, Maryana J. Hamadi is well-respected in her community for being a strong, intelligent, and collaborative leader. As Head of the Forestry Branch in Mimika District, Papua, she not only manages the agency but is actively involved in all major activities. She was part of the team that conducted the district's Strategic Environmental Assessment, working to ensure its recommendations for conservation are consulted transparently to the public and officially incorporated into the district spatial plan. Despite her position, she remains humble and always open to learning new things. She strongly believes it is her responsibility to advance multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration as the foundation for good environmental governance in her district.

"Especially in the forestry sector, when managing vast areas of land, we simply cannot work alone. Forming partnerships with community and private sector stakeholders is crucial."

CHAPTER 3:

COLLABORATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL FORESTRY

"This land is our home. We chop sago palms in the forest, hunt wild boar, and fish in the river. If we don't protect our forests, who will? It is our duty to protect them for the sake of our children and grandchildren."

Samuel Betaubun Apoka

Leader of Community Forest Patrol, Nayaro Village

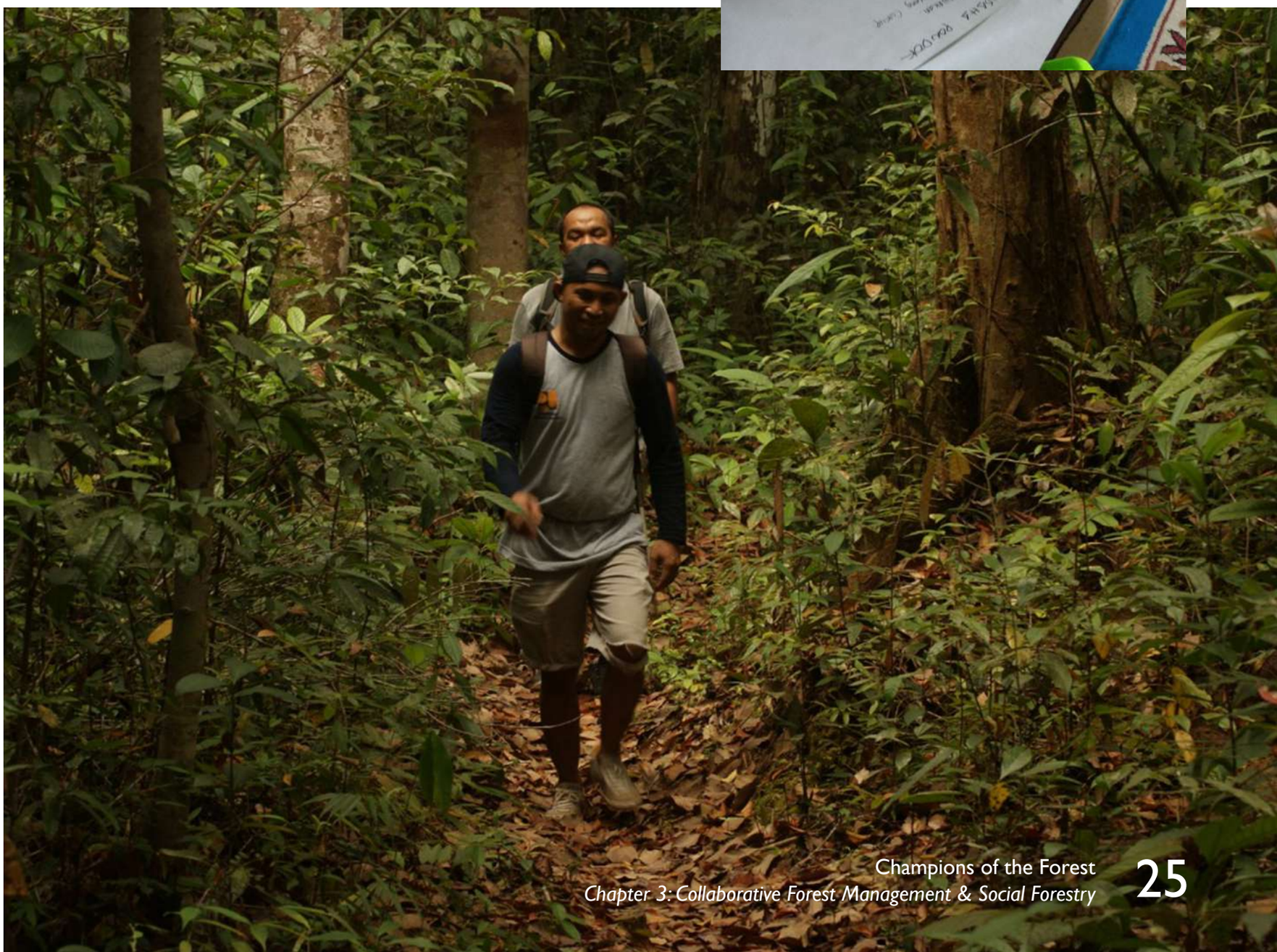
Samuel first became involved in conservation activities after taking part in participatory mapping activities, which opened his eyes to the importance of officially documenting important cultural and environmental areas valued by his community in Mimika District, Papua. Through consultation with Nayaro Village elders and the Village Government, he helped to found the Mame Airafua Kampung Nayaro forest patrol group. Consisting mostly of young and enthusiastic people from the village, the group works under the guidance of the Mimika District Forestry Branch to conduct routine forest patrols aimed at protecting the natural assets in their village.

Rahmad Saduri

Social Forestry Group, Tangkahen Village

Led by Rahmad Saduri, community members in Tangkahen Village in Central Kalimantan decided that the best use of their village's forests was to protect them. The forests in neighboring villages had suffered from illegal logging and deforestation, and they feared their area would also be threatened. They established the Tangkahen Social Forestry Group, and following a long application process, they successfully secured a Village Forestry (Hutan Desa) permit. This permit provides them the legal right to access, manage, and protect their 162-hectare forest area. In conjunction with the FMU, they conduct routine patrols to ensure the area is well-protected. With support from the local government, the group is now focused on developing ecotourism experiences in their area, generating revenue for the group and sharing the natural beauty of the region with the outside world.

"This social forestry area has been entrusted to us. It is our duty to protect it and manage it sustainably for the welfare of our community."



"To preserve the forest, we aim to empower our forest-edge communities by helping them to develop and market sustainable non-timber forest products."

Bintara Yakkub

Local Leader, South Aceh District

As a local leader in South Aceh District, Bintara Yakkub is always eager to establish new partnerships aimed at protecting the forest area in his district. He believes that empowering forest-edge communities through improved livelihoods is crucial, and to do so successfully requires collaboration between government, communities, and the private sector. He is a strong advocate of social forestry groups in his district, assisting them to access trainings aimed at developing and marketing quality sustainable forest-based products such as rattan handicrafts.

Sulaiman Brutu

Farmer, Kemitraan Konservasi

For several decades, Sulaiman Brutu has been a smallholder farmer in an area adjacent to Gunung Leuser National Park in Aceh Province. During much of this time, his village has seen conflict between farmers and the national park authorities regarding the location of the park boundary and permissibility of farming activities in the area. This ongoing conflict left him disheartened as he struggled to earn a consistent income from his crops.

Since 2017, however, a new approach based on mutual trust and collaboration has been implemented, and it has yielded positive outcomes for all stakeholders. Developed by the Directorate General of Ecosystem Conservation at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, the program is known as Kemitraan Konservasi (Conser vation Partnership). Under this program, the farmers have been permitted to conduct limited agroforestry-based farming in exchange for commitments to sustainably manage their area in conjunction with park authorities and conduct no new land clearing. This has created a new beginning for Sulaiman and his fellow farmers. Sulaiman feels grateful to be part of this solution and expresses his enthusiasm to strictly adhere to the partnership agreement with the national park.

”The durian seedlings that I planted will soon bear fruit, and I will be able to earn income to support my family. I feel proud and grateful to part of this partnership program.”

"Forest conservation cannot be accomplished only through top-down regulations. Village-level planning, policies, and budgets are equally important."

Sendy de Soysa

Mangrove Co-management Officer, Blue Forests

A native of the island of Maluku, Sendy de Soysa grew up surrounded by a tropical paradise of mountainous forests and pristine ocean waters. She has been an avid environmentalist for as long as she can remember. Now based in Timika, Papua and working for local NGO Blue Forests, her role is to support mangrove conservation through collaboration with local communities in the districts of Mimika and Asmat. She is proud to report that she has grown and learned a great deal through this experience. She has contributed to village-level plans and policies for conservation as well as helped to mobilize community forest patrol groups to improve monitoring and enforcement. She feels her greatest lesson learned is that for conservation to be effective, it all starts at the local level.

Eparianti

Rumah Rungko Community Forestry Group

Eparianti is an active member of her community forestry group known as Rumah Rungko in South Aceh District. After successfully applying for and securing a Community Forestry Permit from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, the group has earned the right to manage a 105-hectare forest area. Around a quarter of the group is composed of women, and amongst them, Eparianti is one of their most vocal and dedicated leaders. She is an eager participant in all trainings, especially on rattan basket weaving and marketing of finished products. She focuses on creating unique and eye-catching motifs while also assisting her fellow group members. She feels grateful for developing this source of livelihood while doing her small part to promote sustainable forest management.

"I aspire to promote innovation and creativity amongst women in our community in making rattan handicraft products."

"My FMU staff no longer sit idly and wait for guidance or direction. With a solid management plan in place, we all know what we need to do on a daily basis."

Teuku Kamaruzzaman Syah

Head of FMU V, Aceh

Forest Management Units (FMUs) are the local institutions responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and management of forest areas under their jurisdiction. FMU V in the Aceh region covers an expansive 211,156 hectares of protected forests bordering Gunung Leuser National Park, a biodiversity hotspot and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Teuku Kamaruzzaman Syah, Head of FMU V, feels proud when reflecting on just how far his FMU has come in terms of building management capacity. His team has been involved in every step of the development of their long-term management plan, as opposed to just assigning it to external consultants. Now that their plan has been officially approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, they feel confident and empowered to manage their area more effectively.

Apriyandi

Section Head of FMU XVI,
Central Kalimantan

As Section Head of Forest Management Unit (FMU) XVI in Central Kalimantan Province, Apriandi oversees the direct management and protection of over 294,000 hectares of forest. One of his priorities has been to enhance the effectiveness of ranger patrols through a comprehensive database that streamlines patrol planning, implementation, and reporting. He feels proud that his patrol data-base has even been replicated and adopted by other FMU institutions in the province. Apriandi also regularly coordinates with the Provincial Forestry Agency on planning and budgeting needs. He feels optimistic now that greater funds are being channeled directly to FMUs, enabling them to operate more effectively and independently.

"A strong and effective FMU means a well-protected forest."

"Protecting mangrove forests means preserving the way of life for the Kamoro people."

Oktavianus Waka

Field Facilitator, YAPAAPUA Foundation

As a field facilitator with the local NGO YAPAAPUA (Foundation for the Indigenous People of Papua), Oktavianus Waka works on the frontlines of mangrove conservation in the District of Mimika on the southern coast of Papua. These intact mangroves are amongst the most biodiverse and carbon-rich wetlands in the world, and are valued greatly by local traditional communities. Oktavianus works directly with three coastalcommunities in the villages of Atuka, Timika Pantai, and Keakwa that are home to members of the Kamoro Tribe. He has dedicated his time to build relationships and gain the trust of these communities. This has allowed him to work collaboratively with community leaders to develop village-level policies, plans, and protocols aimed at protecting and sustainably managing their natural resources. Oktavianus feels grateful for this opportunity to learn, put his knowledge into action, and make a positive impact for local communities in Papua.

CHAPTER 4:

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS

"We are no longer thinking simply about expanding the quantity of production; we are now focused on quality, sustainability, and fetching a premium price for our products."

Hasanudin

Head of Cacao Farmers' Group

As head of his local cacao farmers' group, Hasanudin is a natural leader in his community. He believes that focusing on quality and sustainable production is a worthwhile investment that leads to improved incomes for farmers and less harmful impacts on soil, land and forests. After several years of intensive trainings, his cacao farmers' group is now able to consistently produce high-quality fermented cacao, fetching nearly twice the price that they received previously. They have also applied for and secured UTZ sustainability certification – a standard valued by high-end chocolate companies in Indonesia and across the world – which should secure further price premiums for the farmers. Admittedly hesitant at first to embrace new farming practices, he feels proud and confident when reflecting on this journey to sustainability.

Sahidin

Chairman of Village-Owned Enterprise for Coffee

Agusen Village is located in a serene landscape of rolling green hills in Gayo Lues District, buffering Gunung Leuser National Park. With support from the Government of Indonesia, more than 2 million coffee seedlings have been planted in Agusen Village, supporting local livelihoods while also helping to rehabilitate the landscape that serves as a gateway to the national park.

As Chairman of Agusen's Village-Owned Enterprise (known as BUMK), Sahidin is focused on expanding the market for the arabica coffee produced by farmers in his village. Following intensive trainings and support from village funds, his BUMK is now capable of processing coffee beans (pulping, fermenting, drying, hulling, and sorting) as well as marketing and selling them to private sector buyers. He also continues to share knowledge and best practices with farmers so that they can consistently maintain a high standard of coffee cultivation. He feels exceptionally proud of these achievements and their contribution to his village's economic development.

"Our mindset and capacity has changed drastically in Agusen Village. We now have a modern and growing coffee-based enterprise, from cultivation to processing and marketing."

"Rubber is not just a crop. It is the source of our livelihoods. It is the responsibility of each member to ensure that our farmers' group runs professionally and contributes to sustainable economic development in our community."

Yuliati

Member of Rubber Farmers' Group

For generations, the rubber commodity has been an important contributor to local livelihoods in Central Kalimantan. However the quality and yield from smallholders have been typically low in this region due to a lack of investment and training in best practices. In the past, many plantations were simply abandoned, leaving them prone to fires. As Treasurer of the Maliku Bersama rubber farmers' group, Yuliati understands these challenges and has worked with farmers to overcome them. Following intensive trainings, a partnership with a local private sector buyer, and support from the local government, the farmers are now focused on sustainable agricultural practices and consistently producing high-grade rubber. Yuliati feels a sense of pride and accomplishment, noting how far the group has come from previously only thinking about day-to-day needs to now considering long-term planning and quality of output.

Yustinus Taime

Vanilla Farmer

As a vanilla farmer in the buffer zone area of Cyclops Nature Reserve, Yustinus Taime understands the critical role of the surrounding forest ecosystem. Cyclops' forests directly provide the freshwater supply for the large downstream communities in Jayapura and Sentani. Yustinus feels proud to be part of efforts to protect these forests while being able to earn an income and provide for his family. In exchange for permission to conduct vanilla cultivation in the buffer zone area, Yustinus and his vanilla farmers group have committed to ensuring no cultivation occurs within the protected area boundary. They also routinely conduct community patrols of the area to detect and mitigate encroachment and other illegal activities. Yustinus eagerly shares this initiative with members of his clan, hoping to recruit them to join while spreading awareness on the importance of sustainable agriculture and ecosystem conservation.

"The responsibility of a farmer is not just to manage crops, but also to preserve the surrounding ecosystem."

"My faith in God inspires me to lead and empower our community group."

Etira Wonda

Leader of the Lembah Putri Group

With her optimistic attitude, Etira Wonda is seen as a respected leader in her community in Jayapura, Papua. She was selected as Head of the Lembah Putri Group, a community-based enterprise that consists mostly of women entrepreneurs. Etira leads the group in joining trainings to improve their skills in flower cultivation, which is conducted in areas located outside of protected forest boundaries. She is known for her creativity and enthusiasm in cultivating and arranging orchids, roses, begonias, and other ornamental flowers. Upon harvest, the group will be able to sell their flower arrangements in the local market and generate revenue for its members. Etira feels blessed in being able to lead this initiative to help improve the lives of people in her community.

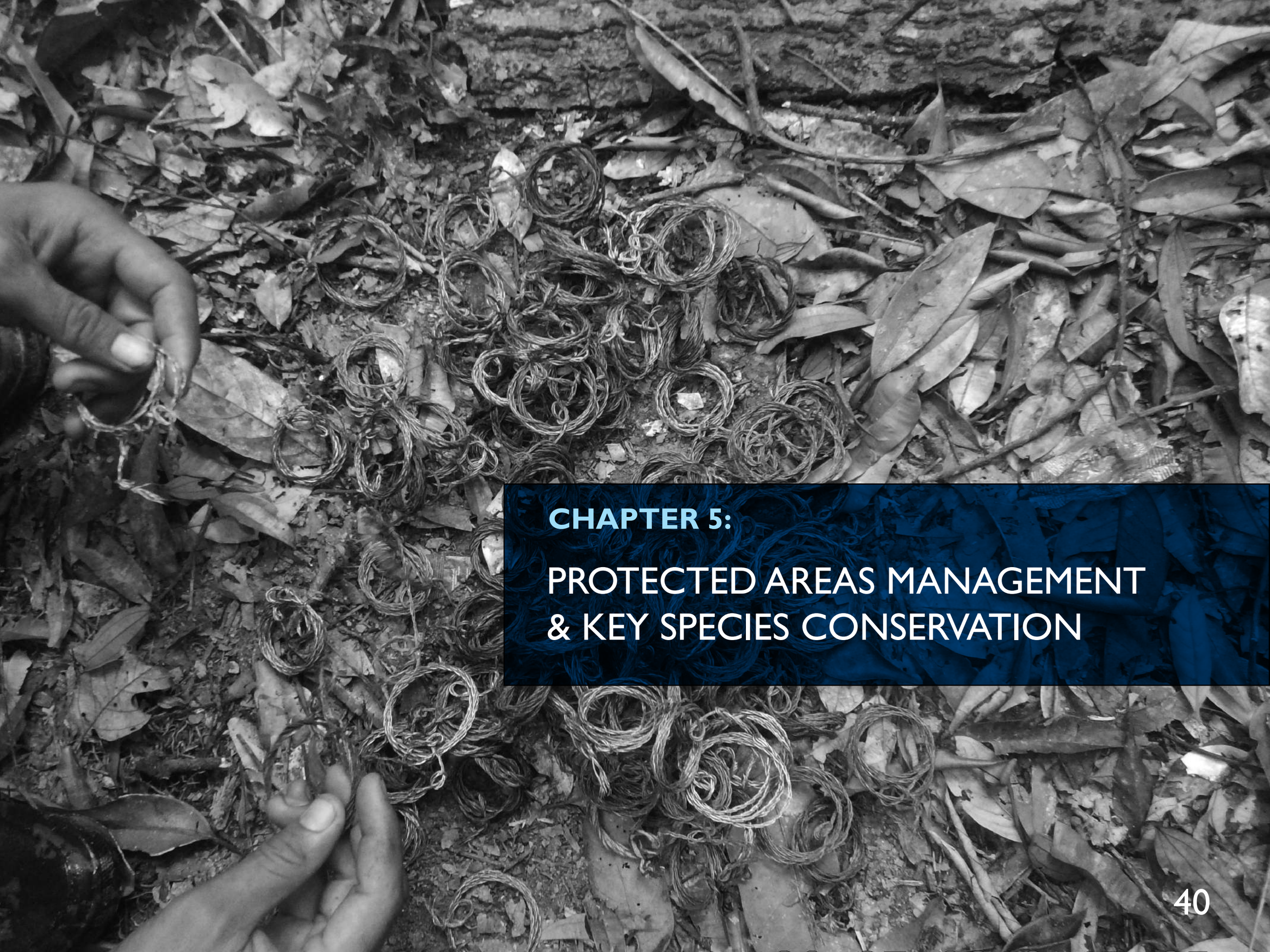
Indrayani

Head of Nutmeg Farmers' Group

At first, Indrayani and his fellow nutmeg farmers only carried out subsistence-based farming activities in South Aceh District. They specialized in growing nutmeg and producing fertilizer, but lacked the confidence and knowledge to ramp up their yields. Led by Indrayani, however, the farmers' group was soon able to transform the business.

By developing partnerships and accessing intensive trainings, they learned technical techniques in nutmeg grafting and organic fertilizer production as well as business management and product marketing. By applying these skills and investing in more workers, they expanded output from 1-2 tons to nearly 30 tons per month. This resulted in greater revenue for the group and improved incomes for its members. Indrayani is filled with pride when thinking about how far his team has come. He now regularly participates in agricultural exhibitions, sharing his successes and promoting his business within and beyond the Aceh region.

"In managing our business, we now have the capacity to think bigger and better."



CHAPTER 5:

PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT & KEY SPECIES CONSERVATION

"Effective management of the national park means not just giving orders, but actually going into the field, talking to patrol teams, and getting involved in on-the-ground activities."

Lisna Yulianti

Section Head, Sebangau National Park

Located between the Sebangau and Katingan Rivers, Sebangau National Park in Central Kalimantan Province covers an impressive 568,000 hectares. The area is home to carbon-rich peat forests that provide habitat for the world's largest orangutan population. However the conservation area managers face threats from illegal logging, encroachment, and forest fires, as well as difficulties in monitoring this vast area with limited human and financial resources. As a section manager of the park, Lisnawati takes on these challenges with passion and dedication. She has focused on building staff capacity, and routinely joins patrol activities. The patrols now routinely use the SMART system which collects and analyzes GPS data to better understand where threats occur. This has enabled a more efficient and effective use of patrol teams to detect and mitigate threats to the conservation area.

Masadi Keyder

SMART Patrol Staff, Gunung Leuser National Park

From an early age, Masadi Keyder has been an avid hiker and environmentalist, regularly going on long walks to enjoy the beauty of Gunung Leuser National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. When he was given the chance to join park staff as a community representative, he excitedly seized the opportunity. He routinely joins the SMART patrol teams in conducting patrols aimed at securing the park from encroachment, wildlife poaching, and other illegal activities. Through these joint patrols, he also plays an important role in building collaboration and understanding between park management and local communities living adjacent to the park boundary.

"Patrols are not only meant to safe-guard the national park, but are also a way to build bridges with the local community. During my patrols, I strive to explain to community members that conserving the forest also means securing their source of freshwater."

”Environmental conservation is not just the responsibility of government agencies. Communities also have an important role to play. We hope our work will help to instill this mindset with the next generation.”

Asrimaida

Coordinator of Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Task Force, South Aceh District

Human-wildlife conflict is a serious issue that affects the well-being and safety of both local communities and protected wildlife in Aceh. As natural forest habitats shrink, animals such as orangutans, tigers, and elephants – all critically endangered in Sumatra – are increasingly likely to end up in the plantations of local communities. This often leads to conflict as communities seek to protect their assets and retaliate against damage.

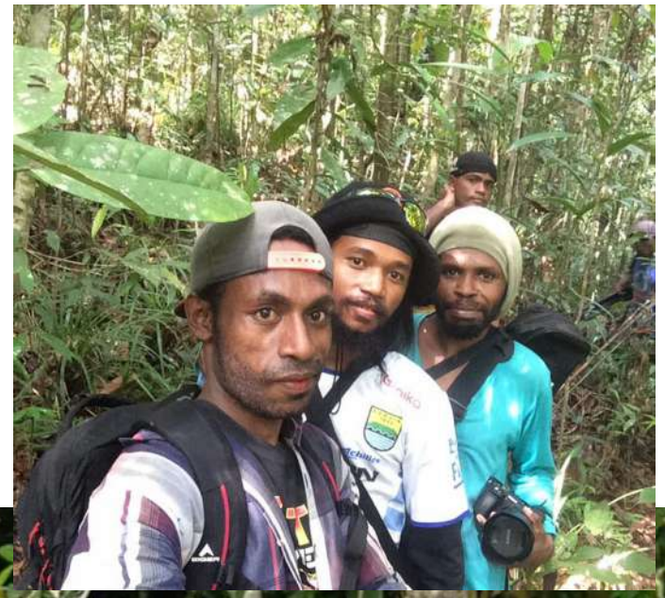
Asrimaida is a passionate leader working on the frontlines of this cause. As Coordinator of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Task Force in South Aceh District, she leads her team in conducting awareness-raising visits to local schools and villages. The team explains safe and effective strategies to mitigate harmful encounters with wildlife, while instilling the values of shared responsibility for conservation. As a woman in this leadership role, she feels proud to be a role model for youth in her community.

David Done

Member of Community Forest Patrol, Cyclops Nature Reserve

As a member of the Moi tribe in northern Papua, David Done grew up with the cultural and spiritual values of nature conservation. Since a young age, he has been a vocal proponent of protecting the forests of Cyclops Nature Reserve – a 31,000 hectare conservation area. These forests directly provide the freshwater springs that supply residents in nearby Jayapura, Papua's largest city. To his disappointment, he has seen ongoing threats to these forests from encroachment and illegal logging, mainly from migrant communities new to the area. When given the opportunity to join the Papua Nature Conservation Agency as a community-based patrol member, David enthusiastically agreed. Following training in equipment use and patrol protocol, he now routinely joins patrol activities in the nature reserve. He feels proud in doing his part to help secure these important forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

"I have always been interested in promoting nature conservation, but now that I am directly involved in patrols, I feel even more confident and empowered to spread this message with others in my community."



"We aspire to always have our door open to collaboration for conservation. I regularly remind my staff that this is the key to smart and effective management of this protected area."

Acha Anis Sokoy

Head of Lorentz National Park

Lorentz National Park in southern Papua is an impressive sight to behold. The sheer size of the park is difficult to grasp – at more than 2.3 million hectares, it is Southeast Asia's largest protected area and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It contains an outstanding range of ecosystems with 34 vegetation types, 123 recorded mammalian species, and 630 recorded bird species. The park also has remarkable cultural diversity, with several lowland and highland ethnic groups maintaining their traditional lifestyles.

Acha Anis Sokoy, the Head of Lorentz National Park, is a humble and dedicated man from the Sentani tribe. Under his leadership, the park has established a management approach that focuses on collaboration and partnership with local communities living within and adjacent to the park. This means that communities are supported in maintaining their traditional lifestyles while simultaneously helping to monitor and protect their areas.

Tutia Rahmi

BKSDA Aceh

As a staff member of the Aceh Nature Conservation Agency (BKSDA), Tutia Rahmi is involved in the management of Singkil Wildlife Reserve. This 81,802.22-hectare protected area in southern Aceh includes carbon-rich peat forests and the highest known population density of Sumatran orangutan. The area faces threats from illegal logging, peat fires, and encroachment driven by oil palm plantation expansion.

Tutia understands these grave challenges and believes in a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach to improving planning and management. This includes developing sound management plans and strategies, ensuring sufficient budget allocations, conducting awareness raising and outreach with local communities, and maintaining routine monitoring and patrol systems. Following sustained and improved efforts from her team, last year she was pleased and excited to see the management effectiveness score of the wildlife reserve rise from 55 to 81.

"I am always happy to work with people who are motivated to improve their performance and open to new approaches."

"Through partnerships, we can work collaboratively to improve the management of this ecologically-rich area."

Firasadi Nursubhi

Section Head, Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park

Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park covers an ecologically rich area in Central Kalimantan. It includes more than 800 species of plant as well the habitat of orangutans, clouded leopards, sun bears, maroon leaf monkeys, flying squirrels, and helmeted hornbills.

Firasadi Nursubhi is the committed yet easy-going section head of the national park. His priority is on continuously building the capacity of his staff to better manage this important area. Under his leadership, staff have been trained in the use of spatial data and detailed maps to guide the optimal placement and patrols of park rangers. He is also a collaborative leader, supporting engagement and partnerships with local communities, NGO partners, and other stakeholders working to advance the conservation of the national park.

Rianto

Field Staff, Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation

Rianto does not have a typical background of staff at a conservation NGO. He previously worked as an unlicensed gold miner – a practice that is not only illegal but also destructive to forest and river ecosystems. Although he was never proud of this work, he felt he simply had no other means to earn a living. When given the chance to learn about and ultimately join the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF), a local NGO, he leapt at the opportunity and has never looked back.

Since 2016, the BOSF team has rehabilitated and released 166 Bornean orangutans back to their native forest habitats within Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park. Rianto is part of the field team that conducts monitoring of orangutans after they have been newly released, ensuring they are adapting well to the environment. This is a crucial aspect of supporting a stable population of this globally-valued yet critically endangered species. Rianto feel proud for contributing to this important cause as well as grateful to BOSF for welcoming him into the conservation community.

"I have come a long way on my journey, and now I'm proud to be part of the solution to conserving the environment."

CHAPTER 6:

PRIVATE SECTOR ROLE IN CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

"Reducing our negative environmental impacts and transitioning to more sustainable operations is part of our responsibility. It also makes good business sense."

Lasmari

Area Manager, Dwima Group

The Dwima Group company operates natural forest timber concessions covering more than 375,000 hectares of forest in Central Kalimantan Province. As a manager in the company, Pak Lasmari is a firm believer that it is the company's responsibility to think beyond short-term profits and consider the sustainability of the surrounding ecosystem where they operate. He believes this makes sense from both a financial and environmental sustainability perspective. With his support, seven Dwima Group concessions in Central Kalimantan have adopted Reduced Impact Logging (RIL) – a set of modern logging techniques that minimize waste and damage to the surrounding environment, enable faster regeneration, improve efficiency, and reduce carbon emissions. He continues to work with company management to ensure sufficient budgets and human resources are allocated to enable ongoing RIL implementation on the ground.

Yusef Fabianus Hadiwinata

Community Development Manager,
PT RMU

PT RMU is a private sector firm that operates a 150,000-hectare ecosystem restoration concession in Central Kalimantan. In contrast to typical land use concessions, the main purpose of this concession is actually to conserve the natural forests and biodiversity, safeguarding them against the expanding oil palm plantations which dominate the surrounding region.

As Community Development Manager for PT RMU, Yusef Hadiwinata is an ardent believer that community outreach and partnerships are key to ensuring fair and sustainable benefits from the ecosystem restoration concession. He conducts routine engagement with communities from surrounding villages, building partnerships for non-timber forest products and eco-tourism, so that communities can improve their livelihoods while sharing in the responsibilities for forest conservation.

"Collaboration with communities is the key to making our work more effective."

"Sustainable logging means providing a source of decent income for local communities while at the same time conserving the forest for future generations."

Yance Kamelane

Head of Planning and Production, PT Wapoga Mutiara Timber

For more than a decade, Yance Kamelane has worked for the timber concession company PT Wapoga Mutiara Timber. He is currently Head of Planning and Production for their forest concession in Sarmi District, Papua Province. In this role, he has been a long time advocate for adopting Reduced Impact Logging (RIL) as standard operating procedure. While not an easy task – RIL requires comprehensive training, monitoring, and oversight – he believes the economic and environmental benefits are unquestionable. With his support, he is plea sed to see that the company has finally adopted RIL and allocated funds to ensure implementation. He proudly declares, "wherever my future career takes me, I'll continue to share and promote environmentally-responsible business practices."

Stevianus Lukas Laithenu

Factory Manager, PT Kahayan Berseri

Stevianus Lukas Laithenu is the humble and affable factory manager at PT Kahayan Berseri, a company which operates a rubber processing factory in Pulang Pisau District, Central Kalimantan. The company has established a partnership with the district government and 4 rubber farmer groups consisting of over 700 local farmers. With guidance from Stevianus, the company provides trainings for farmers to enhance their quality and yield, conduct good agricultural practices, and mitigate fire risk. The company pays a premium price to farmers for their high quality product, contributing to improved incomes. In exchange, the company receives a steady supply of natural rubber, which it processes into crumb rubber and exports to international buyers. Stevianus feels thrilled to be part of this win-win partnership and furthering sustainable economic development in his community.

"Through mutually beneficial co-operation with our partner rubber farmers, we strive to contribute to sustainable economic development in Central Kalimantan."

"We are a proud partner of multi-stakeholder efforts to preserve and protect Papua's precious wildlife."

Tumpal Sinaga

Superintendent of Biodiversity Conservation, PT Freeport Indonesia

As Superintendent of Biodiversity Conservation at PT Freeport Indonesia, Tumpal Sinaga feels proud that his company is giving back to the community and contributing to an important cause. He also understands that conservation is most effective not when a company or agency operates alone, but through engagement with a broad group of stakeholders. Tumpal is a regular member of the Mimika District Multi-stakeholder Forum (MSF), enabling his company to collaborate with members of the district government, local communities, and NGO stakeholders.

Through cooperation with the MSF, Tumpal has provided support for the conservation of illegally trafficked species such as the pig-nosed turtle – a heavily exploited and endangered species native to Papua. Partnering with BKSDA Papua, PT Freeport Indonesia has developed facilities to house and rehabilitate turtles confiscated by local authorities. This has contributed to the release of more than 5,000 turtles back to their native river habitats.

Photo Credit:

Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam Aceh • Blue Forest • Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation • Dinas Kehutanan Kalimantan Tengah • Dinas Kehutanan Kabupaten Mimika • Dwima Group • Forum Jurnalis Lingkungan • InProSuLA • Perempuan Peduli Leuser • PT Freeport Indonesia • PT Kahayan Berseri • PT RMU • PT Wapoga Mutiara Timber • Rini Sulistyawati • Sahabat Cipta • SATGAS Mitigasi Konflik Manusia-Satwa Liar Aceh Selatan • Taman Nasional Bukit Baka Bukit Raya • Taman Nasional Lorentz • Taman Nasional Sebangau • Yayasan Ranu Welum • USAID LESTARI • WCS Indonesia • Zulfan Monika.

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