

K a b a r I t a h



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Editorial

During July, while in Canada, I had an opportunity to take part in a workshop sponsored by the Canadian government looking at the rules of procedure for a dispute resolution mechanism for Canadian extractive industries working abroad.

Attending this event were representatives from industry, NGOs and government, so it was a good cross-section of interests and varying perspectives.

The overall issue is: How can individuals or groups that have a genuine grievance with a foreign-based extractive company operating in their neighbourhood express their concerns to an impartial body, and have a fair review with some hope of redress if the complaint is valid?

This can be a pretty daunting prospect if the people wanting to lodge the grievance are located in a remote area and have significant cultural and linguistic differences. In general, existing mechanisms like this process very few applications a year, probably because of these constraints.

It's admirable for a national government to try to put this kind of mechanism in place, and to seek inputs from different interest groups in shaping its form and application.

Apart from Kalimantan Gold, there are other exploration companies from Canada working in Indonesia and already we have started talking to some of them about how best to engage with local communities and local government. We plan to continue seeking like-minded partners in the mining sector, and share our experience and expertise with them.

This initiative from the Canadian government is likely to make extractive companies more aware of their responsibility to local people when conducting exploration activities in remote locations. Hopefully, they will become interested in working with organisations like YTS that can help them achieve socially responsible development.

Bardolf Paul
Director

Romang Island



It's back-breaking work hauling heavy drilling equipment up the steep slopes on Romang Island

On Romang Island in Maluku, drilling is underway for gold. The exploration company, Robust Resources, is also intent on establishing good community relations on the island, and is assisted by the 'Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining' at the University of Queensland in Australia.

Surrounded by the Banda Sea, the communities here appear serene in their isolation. Living along the coast, they fish and farm, harvest coconuts and nutmeg, raise livestock, and cultivate seaweed for export. Although seemingly an idyllic setting, the remote location makes travel and trade difficult, and there is a serious lack of basic health services.

A preliminary visit by YTS this June, was accelerated by a chartered flight and a speedy company boat, making it possible for us to reach the island in only one day's travel from Kupang. Within a few days, we were able to visit each of the villages, and inform them of our purposes.

YTS has now been asked to return to Romang, to work in a participatory manner with the communities, and to help steer a course for development on the island, one that will build

an effective working relationship between the community, the government, and the company.

This August, eight staff will return to conduct 'Community-Led Analysis and Planning' with six separate communities. This will require three weeks of intensive effort from our staff, and the full involvement of the communities in the process. Together we shall analyse land-use, livelihood strategies, problems, solutions, and much more, leading to the development of an information base suitable for village-level planning.

In 2011, we will move through the village planning process, followed by the annual government planning process, to be held on the neighbouring island of Kisar. After that, we will move on to providing training and support for sustainable livelihoods.

There is a lot of new learning to do here, and there is a good opportunity to build a meaningful community relations program for the company; as well as to spread our 10-step methodology, in a collaborative effort to promote a more sustainable and socially-responsible minerals industry.

The Global Mercury Treaty

Indonesia has recently agreed to outlaw the use and production of mercury by entering into a legally binding international treaty on mercury. But stopping the use of this toxic substance in Indonesia will be impossible if no attention is paid to the issue of small scale gold mining.

Mercury contamination is widespread in Kalimantan and Sulawesi, as well as other islands, including Java. Small scale gold mining is by far the greatest cause of mercury emissions in Indonesia. In Bogor, near Jakarta, 17,000 kg of mercury is emitted by gold processors every year. In Kalimantan, every province is affected, and in Central Kalimantan, over 50,000 kg is emitted into the environment each year in one location alone. Furthermore, as background levels continue to increase in urban areas, more and more people are becoming threatened by these activities, not just the gold miners themselves.

Getting mercury recovery equipment to gold miners and gold processors is a priority issue for YTS. Each of the cheap and simple condensers we supply recovers mercury directly, and thus limits the quantity that escapes into the environment. Such mercury recovery equipment also protects workers and is very much appreciated in the field.

Furthermore, we find that when we distribute this very effective equipment, there is also a window of opportunity to conduct field education, and so raise the level of awareness in mining communities about the real dangers of mercury poisoning. For this reason, we are now designing new media on this topic, such as brochures and stickers aimed at raising the awareness of communities under threat from the spread of this dangerous toxin.



YTS field-tested its brochure on the dangers of mercury exposure first in gold shops in Palangka Raya, before it was distributed in Mount Muro

What Everybody Should Know About Mercury

All over Central Kalimantan, people are working with a dangerous poison every day, exposing themselves, their families, and their communities to danger. Even worse, they are poisoning the rivers and the fish we eat. Should we accept this situation and say that nothing can be done to change it?

If we do that, we are harming not only ourselves, but also our children, and our children's children, because mercury will remain in our environment for decades.

Mercury does not belong in the human body. Consequently, any trace of this heavy metal, no matter how little it may seem, will do damage to your body. Mercury will have a harmful impact on your brain, your organs, and your nervous system. Constant exposure can cause blindness and death. Loss of hair, lack of appetite and loss of energy are common symptoms.

Gold miners handle mercury every day, and gold shops in towns and villages burn large quantities of mercury every day – contaminating the air we breathe. This even happens in the capital city of Palangka Raya, where thousands of people are exposed every day, without any knowledge of the danger.

YTS is working hard to reduce this kind of pollution, but we alone cannot stop this contamination from taking place. You also need to take action.

Gunung Mas: A District Level Approach

For a long time now, we have been hoping to expand our current field program to a level that would bring benefits to an entire district. We are presently working with government, NGO's and donor agencies in order to be able to achieve this; and soon we will be seeking the voluntary engagement of 32 new villages in the district of Gunung Mas.

The addition of these new villages will lead to the creation and implementation of village-level development plans; improved capacities and engagement of villagers in district level plans; improved capacities and engagement of district level officials in participatory planning processes; and enhanced livelihood practices among the villagers participating in 'economic livelihood groups'.

As we are currently working with 19 villages, this will mean working in over 50 villages in the district within the

next few years. This will require recruitment and training of new local staff.

Currently, we are seeking to establish an agreement with government, to have our approach adopted throughout the entire district. We have therefore been working closely with the district government in order to finalize an MoU that we hope will be approved by the District Head in the very near future.

This will mean that both parties will understand each other's role in the project and be able to proceed. So far, we have received positive responses from the district-level government, who have been very cooperative, and have welcome our initiative. It is very important for us to work closely with the government in this project, as our final goal is to get the government and the community to hold the key roles in getting the approach up and running.

Improving Livelihoods in Bukit Batu

Working in the dynamic arena of community empowerment can be a challenge for us field staff, for although the YTS methodology can be viewed as contemporary or cutting-edge, we can also get somewhat bored with the implementation, as we conduct the same routine each year.

This year, however, we are feeling somewhat proud about having so far managed to handle everything that has been thrown at us, as we are now well into the swing of the livelihood assistance programs. This year we are providing technical training in seven large villages in Bukit Batu. The focus is on fish-farming, raising chickens, and rubber cultivation.

These three areas of activities have been identified as the main sources of livelihood that villagers are interested in improving, and which YTS is therefore providing support for.

On the whole, it seems the livelihood assistance programs have made dynamic progress recently, as in Bukit Batu we have had the chance to seek out the most suitable experts that we could find to help the villagers in these programs.

Three new experts were identified and interviewed, all of whom are highly qualified and experienced. The three local experts all have institutional links: Ir. Budya Satata M.S. is an expert on animal husbandry from the University of Palangka Raya; Bpk. Erwira Nanang is a retiree from the department of fisheries, and Bpk. Ali Sukatman was formerly a trainer with the department of plantations. Having these three experts working with us is proving highly advantageous for our programs, as they are all very competent in their respective fields.

During the initial visits, the communities felt confident these trainers could assist them with their specific needs, and hire-contracts were signed in all cases.



Budya, the chicken training expert, demonstrates how to make high-quality, low-cost chicken feed

The livelihood interest groups are now experiencing the benefits of their expertise during the regular monthly trainings events that are held in the village. So far, the practical knowledge provided by the experts has answered most of the group's problems regarding their livelihood activities.

During short evaluations with the interest groups, some villagers raised ideas for better delivery of the training in the future, requesting improvements to the training media and the provision of more material assistance such as fledglings and fingerlings. Otherwise, the groups have shown they are satisfied with the training. Some of the groups have elevated their level of interest, and started to look into various marketing possibilities, in anticipation of more success from their livelihood activities in the future.

Profile: Mayang Meilantina, Overseas Development



Mayang left YTS for the Netherlands to enhance her knowledge in agriculture development

After working for more than 5 years at both YTS and Palangka Raya University, I felt it would be opportune to take a break from my routine and to go back to my studies, in order to further enhance my knowledge about agricultural development. Having received a full master degree's scholarship from STUNED-NESO Indonesia, I now study "International Development", specializing in "Rural Economic Development" at

Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

Now, at the end of my first year, I feel very much at home in Wageningen, surrounded by about seventy other Indonesian students that are also pursuing their master's and doctorate's in this little town. It is a pleasant place to study, with only about 35,000 people living in the town, 20% of whom are students. It is a warm and quiet place, far from the distractions of the city.

University semesters in the Netherlands are different to those in Indonesia. Lasting for only two months, a great deal of preparation time is required to follow the courses. One

advantage is that we have fewer subjects to study, as we can focus on our specialization. But having a final exam every two months is a bit stressful, especially as a sufficient level of English is truly necessary.

Fortunately, all of the study materials: the readings; lecturer's presentations; handbooks; and assignments; are fully-provided by the lecturers, who upload them to the intranet before each class starts. It is good to be exposed to such a high standard of teaching. The lectures and tutorials are all so thoroughly prepared. A two-hour session can have so much condensed information and useful knowledge in it.

I was also pleased to find the university makes such good use of technology: each classroom is provided with a computer, a projector, and a sound system. Hundreds of computers, with free internet access, are made available to all students. When I saw this, it led me to the conclusion that technology must be the main driver of the country's development. However, after several months more study, I now wonder if in fact, it is more likely to be a country's human resources that drive its development. When working on projects with European students, I have been struck by their authentic motivation to study, their curiosity to learn, and their efforts to try to achieve the best possible outcome. As a result, I have now put aside the easygoing style I used to adopt in many aspects of my life, and I put greater value on my time in the Netherlands.

Inter-Institutional Sharing on Environmental Health Issues

Looking at the same issue from different perspectives is always interesting. So, when we were considering how to launch the new handbook "A Community Guide to Environmental Health" in Palangka Raya at the end of May, we took advantage of the opportunity to hold a workshop in which government staff and NGO's could share their thoughts on environmental health issues.

As the host, YTS brought together participants from various backgrounds, who see things from a variety of standpoints. The health department and public academy of health attended; as well as representatives from schools, colleges, and NGO's who deal with health issues in their programs.

Rini Sulaiman, one of the translation team, held a 20 minute presentation about how to use the environmental handbook. After the presentation, a very interesting discussion followed, with many opinions shared about the dynamics of health issues in Kalimantan.

Djenta Saha, a lecturer from the public health academy, responded positively to the event. Djenta believes that better community health is all about changing behaviour and raising awareness: "The population in Kalimantan, particularly those who live along rivers, still lack general awareness and basic knowledge about health issues. They suffer from poor health because they don't learn enough about the importance of being healthy and how to maintain that state". She also believes there are practical and easy ways to tackle the problem: "Achieving a state of good

health doesn't always mean spending a lot of money, it is more a matter of behavioural change. The question is how to raise people's interest in a healthy lifestyle, for then their behaviour will change accordingly". Overall, she was very positive about the book, and hopes that it can be used more widely in Kalimantan. Other participants also showed their enthusiasm during the workshop, indicating that the book launch was quite successful.

"A Community Guide for Environmental Health" was translated and adapted to Bahasa Indonesia by YTS, under permission from, and funded by, the Hesperian Foundation, with additional funds from Ford Foundation.



Rini Sulaiman leads discussions with government and civil society participants during the launching of the Environmental Health book in Palangka Raya

News Flash

New Management Assistant: Joshua Nugroho

At the beginning of June, Joshua Nugroho joined YTS as the new Assistant to the Director, replacing Mayang who is continuing her studies in the Netherlands. In the coming months, Joshua will learn much, and be exposed to all our various programs and activities, in order to gain a full understanding of how our organization functions. His role will be to ensure that field activities are managed properly, and to communicate with the government about YTS activities.

YTS Director's Trip to Canada

While on leave this July, our director Bardolf Paul met with several institutions to inform them about YTS activities, and worked with Susila Dharma Canada to finalise our proposal to CIDA, aimed at expanding our activities to include many more of the villages in Gunung Mas District. He also attended a workshop on grievance mechanisms for Canadian mining companies, held in Vancouver.

Mercury Expert Visit

Sam Spiegel, Cambridge scholar and expert on international mercury policy, undertook a field study in the gold fields of Galangan at the end of June; facilitated by YTS. The aim was to update findings made during implementation of the UNIDO Global Mercury Project. Sam has been doing comparative studies on mercury-use in ASM in Cambodia.

Student Research Project

Atikah Lorot, a student from Brussels, was with YTS from 19 – 25 July, during which time she gained an overview of the organization; studied our methodology; and examined our training approaches. In the field, she interviewed staff, village management groups, and interest group members, to get their perspectives about our programs. She will be reviewing her findings and submitting a final essay to earn credit for her International Baccalaureate.

Arrival of Julia Keenan: AYAD volunteer from Queensland University

Formerly a research assistant at 'The Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining' in Australia, Julia will start her volunteer assignment with YTS in August. She will help YTS with research, gender, and documentation.

YTS Website

Even more documents, presentations, and files have been uploaded to our website, adding to the comprehensive database of our work. Some new sections on collaboration with other companies and institutions will be coming soon, as well as a completed photo gallery. See: www.tambuhaksinta.com.

Agenda

September

Kahayan: Training on vegetable and rubber cultivation, Phase 2
Bukit Batu: Training on fish and chicken cultivation, Phase 3
Facilitating analysis & planning in Romang, Maluku
Presentation to Palangka Raya Planning Department
Presentation & signing MoU with Gunung Mas district

October

Kahayan: Training on vegetable and rubber cultivation, Phase 3
Bukit Batu: Training on fish and chicken cultivation, Phase 4

November

Kahayan: Training on vegetable and rubber cultivation, Phase 4
Bukit Batu: Training on fish and chicken cultivation, Phase 5
Review technical support in villages

Kabar Itah

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