

K a b a r I t a h



Edition 20 : December 2008 - February 2009

Editorial

After many years trying to attract donor support to Central Kalimantan, the tide seems to be turning in the wake of the global focus on climate change. One of the biggest follies in development took place in Central Kalimantan with the clearing of one million hectares of peat swamp forest, home to large populations of orang-utans and other wildlife species.

In the past year a project was launched to begin to rehabilitate and revitalize these lands with the involvement of local people. The first step was to create a master plan. One of the central components in the plan is community development, and YTS shared its experience and approach with those crafting the plan.

In December and January, two people from YTS joined the project's community development team, and the final document recommends a methodology very similar to what YTS is using. This is a very positive development because it means that this approach will be extended to 227 villages in four districts. If the application proves successful, it could very easily provide an example for other regions in the province.

Notwithstanding the above, YTS also is in discussion with Gunung Mas district, where we currently are working in 16 villages in three subdistricts. We are encouraging the new district head to apply the YTS development approach to the rest of the district, which contains 102 additional villages. If this could be undertaken, it would provide a demonstration on a grand scale of an approach to development that really benefits the local population.

We may also be implementing this approach with an Australian mining company in Berau district in East Kalimantan, starting sometime in March. And recently we visited a new area in Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan where we are awaiting the green light to proceed.

Of course, as these are uncertain times, we will have to see how each of these prospects unfolds.

Bardolf Paul
Director

Clean water, vegetables, marketing are priorities in 2009



Villagers in Terindak, East Kalimantan discuss development priorities with Leony from YTS

Addressing the needs of all of the villages can be an onerous task for Kecamatan staff.

However, the Musrenbang Desa can be of enormous assistance to government at this level, as it provides an official pathway to channel the wishes and demands of village communities in a straightforward way. Properly facilitated, it is led by the village itself, thus reducing demands on government staff who can then attend as participants.

It seems that there is a growing awareness of these benefits, and facilitation of the Mus-Desa has now been built into the annual planning cycle of the PNPM village program, the national poverty reduction program.

This has already been the case in YTS for the last five years, although in Kaltim we only began this process of empowerment in 2008, and so have just facilitated these events for a second time in 2009. This time, the three village communities we work with were more aware of the purpose of the

meeting and placed more importance on the discussions.

This year, these annual village planning events were also attended by a representative of the Kecamatan staff, which was a welcome development. Villagers were able to discuss various sources of funding with him directly and discuss alternatives. The government representative also explained what funds were to be available, and which were not.

Such an exchange is helpful for both the government and the village as they can discuss the realities of individual requests for assistance, such as the level of funding, logistics, and so on. Evidently, this attendance is mutually beneficial, as the village knows better what to expect, and the Kecamatan staff are not struck later by unrealistic demands.

Furthermore, a process of prioritization can be undertaken, and the relative importance of each project can be weighted relative to others. For example, it emerged that clean water was a priority

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Improving the performance of Rubber Interest Groups

After seven months, the Rubber Interest Groups in 12 villages held performance reviews and found that shortcomings in technical capacity and social dynamics affected the quality of seedlings they produced.

Seedlings were not tended properly at each stage in the growing cycle. This was compounded by poor leadership, commitment, and participation from group members.

After the review, and in the interest of ensuring that the nursery project achieves real learning and improved livelihoods, YTS asked each group to get each member to sign an agreement committing to full participation in group activities. This resulted in some members dropping out, who felt they had learned enough, and some new members joining who were eager to learn.

The groups then created strategic plans that defined a time frame and listed expected results. Each group selected a location, and will build a fence and roof to protect the seedbed. The seeds will be planted and grown in polybags, and tended collectively by the group. They will set targets for each stage in raising the seedlings, and these will be carefully monitored and evaluated by the group.



Linae, from Karetau Sarian, Central Kalimantan, works in the nursery with other members of the rubber livelihood group

Each group selected a leader to help mobilise people and make sure activities are implemented properly. The first round of training begins in February; and the second in March. Expectations are high that reorganising the groups will bring greater benefits to everyone.

Strengthening skills in Village Management Groups

Although initially it was not encouraging, the training for Village Management Groups in East Kalimantan did end up well.

At first, very few people showed up for the start-up session in Tenggiling village, so the YTS training team felt quite pessimistic. Soon, however, everyone arrived, and they quickly got involved in the training, raising many questions about financial reporting and management. The four person Management Group will need some additional support, but for now they are able to make a proper budget and report on expenditures.

The training covered other areas, such as on-going planning, liaison with local government, mobilising the livelihood interest groups, and coordinating with outside technical support people. However, the main focus was on budgeting and reporting. Sumali from YTS, provided some practical suggestions for making the financial management easier.

In Terindak, six villagers participated very actively - they raised many questions and openly discussed their needs and concerns. The YTS trainers felt this group achieved a good understanding of the content.

The training in Bunau village had to be cancelled, due to a sudden death in the village. However, this will be rescheduled for a later date.



Sumali (far right), YTS Kaltim Manager, provides some suggestions to the Tenggiling Village management group to make financial management easier.

Clean water, vegetables ...

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concern for both men and women in all villages. Interestingly, this concurred with the Kecamatan's priorities, so there was unanimous agreement on making this a first priority project in these villages.

Furthermore, although government planning often focuses heavily on infrastructure projects, holding the village forum allowed the Economic and Socio-Cultural Sectors to be explored as well, where philosophies, cultural practices, everyday livelihoods and new business opportunities provided more meaningful contexts to discussions.

For example, what emerged clearly from the discussion on 'Economy' in the village of Tenggiling is that vegetable growing is a priority need, as villagers are continually purchasing vegetables from outside. This fact only emerged because YTS facilitated a study of problems resulting from changes in the seasonal calendar. (As elsewhere in the world, climatic changes are affecting the farmers' ability to plan their planting cycles).

Furthermore, there was opportunity to discuss aspects that might not otherwise have been raised or discussed publicly. The event provided an excellent opportunity for the villagers to examine their 'livelihood strategies' through analysis of the Economic Sector of their plans. Thus, new ideas were raised, such as expanding into agribusiness and producing permanent crops such as Coffee and Cocoa, as well as investigating the further potential for marketing vegetables, fruits, and even fruit tree seedlings. Last but not least, the need for the continuation of YTS technical assistance programs, was clearly articulated by the respective interest groups, and entered into their annual plans.

Looking back and looking forward

At the end of every year in Central Kalimantan, YTS, together with partner villages makes a performance review of the past year's activities, before making plans for the coming 12 months. These reviews take place in each village, followed by a program review with representatives from all villages at subdistrict level. However, this year due to budget constraints, reviews were only held in the villages.

Village Review and Planning

During the review, each village examined four aspects – the annual planning process, institutional development and performance, technical support to village livelihood groups, and achievements.

Planning: Each village produces an annual development plan which feeds into the government planning process, called Musrenbang. However, government is not providing enough guidance in the Musrenbang, which results in a lack of full participation in the process. In the village, turnout is low, making it difficult to set priorities for district government consideration.

Institutional: Most Village Management Groups have inactive members, and this creates more work for the active members. However, in general, the Management Groups do have good relations with the village governing bodies and other village institutions.

Technical Support: Rubber Livelihood Groups have achieved 75% of their planned objectives. These groups have improved their knowledge and ability to select good seeds for planting, and have been raising viable seedlings in village nurseries, with minimal mortality after outplanting in the field. However, there still are members of these groups who do not take part in the group work.



YTS staff preparing their annual work plans for 2009 in Rungan Sari, Central Kalimantan

Achievements: Most notably, government has been approving village infrastructure projects, based on the proposals that YTS helped villages write; and the livelihood training programs for villagers on rubber, pigs, and fish have resulted in better quality seedlings, bigger and healthier pigs, and improved conditions for fish-rearing.

In the 2009 Musrenbang, government will be asked to support training for nurseries, fish- and pig-rearing, and upland rice cultivation.

YTS Review

Following the village reviews in Central and East Kalimantan, YTS staff gathered to make their own assessment of the year's activities and to create the 2009 program.

In Central Kalimantan, YTS will

stop work in three villages - Rangan Hiran, Tumbang Lapan and Karetau Rambangun – partly because of the economic situation, but mainly due to the low level of cooperation from the village government. Work will continue in other villages, and now that a new district leader is in place, efforts will be made to get an agreement for closer cooperation with the district in extending the participatory planning approach and livelihood support activities to other villages in the district.

In 2008, the East Kalimantan team achieved particular success with their technical support program for chickens and rice cultivation. As Kalimantan Gold intends to open new areas in 2009, this program likely will be extended to communities close to those operations, after implementing the participatory planning approach.

Profile: Ibu Yuntai - enthusiastic about chickens



Ibu Yuntai, a leading member of the chicken livelihood group

Ibu Yuntai is one of the most dynamic members of the Chicken Livelihood Group in Terindak village, in East Kalimantan. She always gets excited and involved whenever there is a training event.

Realising that farming the barren, hilly lands was getting increasingly difficult, she decided to investigate small-scale chicken rearing as an alternative livelihood. Raising chickens is

relatively easy to do and there is a good market demand in the immediate area, with a number of companies wanting to buy local poultry products.

At the beginning of the project, Bu Yuntai demonstrated her enthusiasm by building a chicken coop just outside of

her home. She was the first person in the village to do this. Normally chickens are allowed to range freely, scavenging for their food. By applying other lessons learned in the training, such as providing proper food and health care, she boosted the growth rate of her flock.

After attending a special training session in the town of Berau, she formed a group with other village women, and every month they each contribute Rp 5000 (about 50 cents) to buy additional items for their chickens, such as ingredients for making jamu, the traditional, herbal remedy. Ibu Yuntai had great success when she gave some of the jamu made by the group to her sick and paralyzed chickens. Within a few days they were back on their feet and running around, completely recovered.

Recently Ibu Yuntai expanded her chicken coop to accommodate 30 chickens, with separation walls for each age group. Her dream is to raise hundreds of chickens, and she seems well on the path to achieving that dream.

Feedback from locals essential for ecosystem rehabilitation

To ensure success in rehabilitating the peat swamp forest devastated by the former Mega Rice project, new guidelines were drafted for how to involve local people in the process. YTS was invited to join the team working on the guidelines in order to share our experience in strengthening the relationship between communities and local government.

The guidelines team met with all key stakeholders in the area – villagers, government officials, staff from development and conservation agencies – to gain a better understanding of the local context and to get ideas on what was needed to make the project work. Two workshops at district and province helped consolidate the findings and recommendations, before the guidelines were finalised.

As it turned out, villagers had a very low awareness of the issues, and local government was not really committed to finding common solutions. Even though both the President and the Governor had issued instructions, no action had been taken to implement these instructions. Planning and coordination mechanisms between departments and different levels of government were not functioning. Moreover, there was no mechanism to obtain critical feedback from villagers.

New guidelines for the project have been designed to overcome these obstacles, and some of the core guidelines incorporate the approach and methodology YTS has been working on since 2004.

Blacksmith funds new mercury project

Just recently YTS received funding from the Blacksmith Institute (www.blacksmith.org) to continue the work we were doing with UNIDO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, on preventing the release of large volumes of mercury into the air, water, and soils of Kalimantan. Mercury can seriously affect the human nervous system, and can lead to severe physical impairment and even death.

This new project is focusing on two sites – towns with gold shops up the Kahayan River, and an area on the Barito River close to the Indo Muro gold mine. The gold shops burn off the mercury used in the retrieval of gold from artisanal miners, and YTS is promoting a low-cost device to capture and recycle this mercury. In the Barito, the scale of mercury release is significantly greater, and we are starting to experiment with some new hardware that will make it possible to capture and recycle these larger amounts of mercury.

In both locations, the reception from government and the people using mercury has been very positive, with solid support from both parties.

Recently, the Executive Director of UNEP, the United Nations Environment Program, stated that every kilogram of mercury taken out of the environment can trigger up to \$12,500 worth of social, environmental, and human health benefits. Given that the volumes of mercury being released can be measured in Tonnes, the return on our efforts is likely to be very significant.



YTS is working to prevent the release of large quantities of toxic mercury into the environment from artisanal gold miners close to the Barito River in Central Kalimantan

News Flash

Aussie supported rubber activities start in March

The program to support 575 Dayak families in 13 villages to grow 52,000 high yield rubber seedlings gets underway in March. YTS received US\$ 2650 from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta to partially fund this program.

University of Queensland researchers look at Musrenbang

Two researchers from the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining arrive in early March to conduct research studies in Central Kalimantan on the work YTS has been doing with the Musrenbang national planning mechanism.

Mixed results from Musrenbang in subdistricts

Villagers submitted annual plans and took part in three subdistrict Musrenbangs in February in Central Kalimantan. There still is a lot of room for improvement at this level in the way that government organises and facilitates the process.

Guidelines ready for community involvement in Ex-Mega Rice Project

In January, YTS wrapped up its involvement in preparing the guidelines to involve 227 communities from four districts in Central Kalimantan in revitalizing and rehabilitating the former Mega Rice project peat swamp forest area.

Susila Dharma commits funds for Kalimantan Kids Club

YTS's scholarship fund, Kalimantan Kids Club, received commitments from Susila Dharma International and Susila Dharma Canada to fund this year's program supporting 19 Dayak children from poor households to continue their education.

Agenda

March

District Musrenbang
Rubber: Planting seeds in village nurseries
Chickens: Training in Kaltim
Blacksmith Project: Testing new retort
AYAD volunteer, Anton Harper, arrives
Aussie research team in Gunung Mas

April

Province Musrenbang
Rubber: Tending nurseries
Blacksmith: Site visit by Country Director

May

Rubber: Transplanting seedlings
Blacksmith: Distribute recycling equipment

Kabar Itah

Kabar Itah is the quarterly newsletter of Yayasan Tambuhak Sinta (YTS), an affiliate of PT. Kalimantan Surya Kencana (KSK), a mineral exploration company.

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