

K a b a r I t a h



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Editorial

It is quite striking how quickly circumstances can change. Seven months ago - in September 2008 - things were really booming, with expansionist plans underway in both Central Kalimantan and East Kalimantan. Within a few months all this changed, with drastic cuts and reductions taking place, and no clear sign for when this trend might change.

This month - six months later - we will receive our first cash infusion from Kalimantan Gold since the tap shut off last October. This is a very welcome change that makes it possible to hire new staff and start rebuilding our programs.

We have been very fortunate to find two very experienced development practitioners - Frind Imanuel and Basir Daud. Frind is a Dayak from Bukit Batu area in Kalteng, with 14 years in donor projects and government programs. Basir is a Bugis who hails from South Sulawesi, but has been working in Kalteng on and off in government and donor projects for 15 years.

Frind will focus on our Kahayan River programs, and Basir will take care of our East Kalimantan programs and eastern Kalteng.

Several new initiatives are starting in May and June. Both involve the application of our governance-strengthening approach through participatory planning. One location is very close to Palangka Raya in Bukit Batu subdistrict and the other is in Berau regency in East Kalimantan. One involves collaboration with an NGO, and the other is with an Australian mining company. In both spots we will work very closely with local communities and local government authorities.

It seems as if the dry season is upon us, so let's pray that we have a smoke-free season this year.

Bardolf Paul
Director

Villagers Play Active Role in Musrenbang



Villagers discuss planning options during the Musrenbang in Tumbang Marikoi

Another round of Musrenbang, the annual development planning mechanism, started at the beginning of this year, and YTS worked hard to move the process along, making sure that the development plan from each village was prepared and submitted properly.

Compared to last year, the planning process in villages and sub districts shows a significant improvement, on both community and government sides.

From the community side, villagers are starting to realize the importance of their role and involvement in the Musrenbang. As a key participant, the community should carefully identify its needs and develop a plan to address these needs, and then present the plan to local government. YTS has been working in the village to raise awareness about the importance of this mechanism, and to assist in the planning process. As members of the community better understand their role, they can now develop the plan less from an individual, and more from a community perspective, working together to achieve shared and collective benefits.

Government, on the other hand,

made some progress in organizing the events. Understanding that the focus is bottom-up planning, government is starting to pay attention to the voices of villagers. This can be seen by the appearance of sub district representatives in villages during the Musrenbang process. It is quite important for villagers to have representatives from higher levels of government attending the meeting, because it gives them assurance that government is paying attention to their needs.

For government, having representatives in the village Musrenbang gives a clearer idea of the issues to address, as they can hear directly the aspirations of the community, and look closely at conditions in the village. This can also provide inputs for decision-makers to define development programs at higher levels.

Although there still are some obstacles in the process, such as passive participation due to lack of knowledge about the Musrenbang process, and poor scheduling, the overall mechanism appears to be well on its way to ensuring better participation in the national development planning process.

Interest Groups Improve Skills After Reorganization

Following the review in the end of last year, YTS has been facilitating the reorganization of Rubber Interest Groups in 12 villages, resulting in a higher level of group participation. Members are now more active in group activities, and keep up with the target and plan they have agreed upon.

The groups very clearly have been improving their skills in rubber farming. In the second round of training in March, they

received another 8,000 high-quality, hybrid seeds from YTS. Learning from their previous experience, in which most of the seeds did not germinate in the seedbed, members have been making serious efforts to improve conditions in the nursery and to reduce mortality. The groups follow a regular maintenance schedule, and now use the correct procedure in moving the seedlings into poly bags.

This new dynamic has attracted the interest of local government, deciding to allocate funds for a similar program in the villages. During a coordination meeting with the YTS team, government officials mentioned that this training program could be a model for other villages that have not yet started on this track; and it offers a good chance for government to collaborate with villages that already have built nurseries under the YTS program.

YTS has been facilitating this activity since early last year, beginning by providing funds for technical support and training materials. As the process evolved, demands and needs started growing, so YTS began to link villagers to outside resources, including local government. Starting this year, the villages began receiving support under a fund from the Australian Embassy called the Direct Assistance Program (DAP), which will fund the rubber program for a one year period. Villagers hope successful results from this program will bring further interest and support from other parties to help improve livelihoods in their communities.



Rubber Livelihood Group members carefully plant their hybrid seeds

New Project starts near Palangka Raya

YTS will open up a new development front starting in May. The objective is to apply the governance strengthening approach in Bukit Batu subdistrict, in collaboration with YUM, Yayasan Usaha Mulia, that already has health, micro-credit, clean water and sanitation projects in the area.

As Bukit Batu is quite close to Palangka Raya, it is a good location to demonstrate the effectiveness of the YTS approach to government policy-makers and other development actors. This hopefully will attract additional support and facilitate the further spread of the approach.

The Rungan Sari compound is also within the subdistrict, and the intention is to link up with individuals and projects based there, who also have a development agenda, and who want to get involved in this new initiative.

YTS will start working in two villages, and eventually will expand to the rest of the subdistrict.

Mercury and Planet Earth

Mercury is attracting more attention these days, as many governments and international agencies work towards a Mercury Treaty to ban it from the international marketplace.

Although mercury pollution emanates from many sources, small-scale mining is a major contributor, for small-scale miners across the world still rely on it - as a cheap and easy method of recovering gold. Unfortunately, much of it gets lost in the process.

Once it is released into the environment, it travels for thousands of miles, to become a persistent global contaminant in the atmosphere or the sea.

Appropriate technological interventions, together with education about the problem, can do a lot to prevent this mercury being released. This benefits thousands of people living in mining communities; reduces emissions of mercury to the atmosphere; and lowers levels of methyl-mercury contamination in fish - a primary food source for us all.

YTS is now working to reduce mercury emissions from small-scale mining on the upper Barito river at Mt Muro, and in three towns on the upper Kahayan river.

At Mt Muro, where thousands of artisanal miners mine an ore rich in silver, it is possible to prevent vast amounts of mercury from being released if the existing retort technology can be improved. (A retort is a container in which mercury can be burned. It allows small scale miners to recover the mercury and recycle it. This saves them money and prevents pollution).

YTS is distributing factory-made retorts that can hold 1kg of mercury amalgam, but we are now also faced with the challenge of building retorts capable of burning 10 to 20 kg of mercury at a time.

Each retort we distribute will play its part in preventing mercury from being released into the atmosphere, soils and rivers of Central Kalimantan.



Gold worker tests a new, large retort to prevent mercury loss to the air

Building New Livelihood Opportunities in East Kalimantan

The villages of Terindak and Bunau in East Kalimantan have been making steady progress towards becoming small-scale chicken producers for their local area. These two villages are now raising hundreds of chickens in small coops and are awaiting a delivery of over 1,000 more birds - funded by the District Department of Agriculture.

Having received technical training from YTS in both chicken raising and rice cultivation, the respective farmers felt comfortable about requesting agricultural loans through the national Rural Agribusiness Development Program funding scheme. The villagers have therefore requested and received financial assistance for both livelihood activities supported by YTS to date.

Some progress has also been made by the forest community of Mewet (at Kalimantan Gold's Jelai Project exploration camp) with many small secure breeding boxes built above the ground; however the number of birds was reduced by the local spread of disease after an infected chicken was brought in from a local market.

Indeed, when YTS first arrived in 2007, the communities had given up all hope of raising chickens in these villages, as a result of bird flu repeatedly wiping out the local poultry.

Villagers now understand that they must pay more attention to their flocks if they are to be successful; that keeping fowl in coops allows them to grow faster and reproduce more quickly; and that they must vaccinate the birds regularly.

Successful farming also requires an appropriate business strategy. Thus, in our March training sessions, different business models were explored, comparing the

profitability of raising chickens for meat, for eggs, or for sale as chicks. Furthermore, fast-breeding chickens (45 days to market) can bring a higher level of profitability if attention is paid to the growth cycle system to achieve good results. Which of these approaches is most lucrative depends very much on local conditions.

Unfortunately, the local demand for chickens has dropped off, as the timber exploitation and mining exploration companies have suspended activities and shut down their camps as a direct result of the global financial crisis. Likewise, the local YTS office has closed temporarily, although efforts are being made to continue to provide technical support.



Pak Yanto's new chicken coop was built to house a larger flock

Australian Researchers Impressed with Musrenbang Process

Through a chance meeting with Kalimantan Gold's CEO Rahman Connelly at the Asia Mining Investment conference in Brisbane July 2007, Warwick Browne and Julia Keenan from the University of Queensland were invited to visit and observe the work of YTS in Central Kalimantan. This became a reality when Warwick and Julia flew into Palangka Raya at the beginning of March 2009 for a one week visit. The intention of the visit was to interview YTS partners from government to community around YTS's role and participation in the community and government annual planning process, locally known as Musrenbang.

With support from YTS staff, Warwick and Julia were able to learn about the Musrenbang process and gain some insights about the advantages and the short-comings of the process. Collecting this information was through a series of face-to-face interviews with the YTS staff who are active in the Musrenbang work, and then field visits to Kuala Kurun, Tumbang Miri, Tumbang Takaoi and Korik, where YTS have development programs that are informed by the annual Musrenbang exercise.

Warwick and Julia were able to interview district and sub-district officials as well as village leaders. The overall impression was that the Musrenbang process was a worthwhile exercise, made much more meaningful and effective by the proactive role played by YTS staff. The YTS staff were credited for building community and local

government capacity around understanding and facilitation of the Musrenbang process as well as helping write the annual development plan. The added bonus of YTS's involvement was that even though the planning is aimed at informing upper level government of community development aspirations, and helping in government planning and budgeting, the community annual plan identifies areas in which YTS can support communities by providing high-quality technical assistance and training.

Warwick and Julia were encouraged about the potential for the Musrenbang process to provide good development outcomes for communities in Central Kalimantan, however there are many challenges for communities, as well as YTS and its development partners, to overcome in order to achieve good outcomes. Warwick and Julia view the role of YTS as very important in focusing on participation, empowerment, building local capacity, providing technical support and training, and were impressed by YTS's focus on local level self-determination and empowering communities to pursue their own development direction.

Warwick and Julia commend YTS on their work, thank the staff for their generous support, and wish them and their development partners all the best in the future – and hope to make a return to this wonderful part of the world again some day.

Communities, Conservation, and Carbon Credits

Why is the international community now so interested in the wetlands of Central Kalimantan ?

It is true that this river delta landscape, dominated by peatlands, has significant biodiversity value. Also true is that the 1,462,000 hectare Ex-Mega Rice Project (EMRP) area neighbouring Palangkaraya, comprises a massive reservoir of carbon.

Devastated by drainage canals and by fire, a new presidential decree demands the rehabilitation of the peat swamp forests, and a revitalization of agriculture in the area.

The area is home to Dayak communities who harvest the remaining forest for rattan, fish, and tree products; and transmigrants who have limited knowledge of farming on these peat soils. Poor farmers generally use fire as a tool to clear land, as this requires no capital or labour inputs.

As a result, the spread of forest fire is a critical environmental problem in this landscape, one that must be urgently resolved.

Sponsored by the Dutch government, a new masterplan for the EMRP has now paved the way for a variety of other donors seeking to commence REDD* forest conservation schemes and other such carbon-related projects in the area.

Community empowerment and socio-economic development are highly important aspects of the new masterplan; including the creation of local jobs, and new livelihoods that will outlast the project lifespan, such as rubber plantations.

Importantly for us, the participatory approach to community development that has been developed and tested by YTS over the past six years, has now also become a formal component of this major, new, integrated planning process.

*Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation

Profile: Yakub Sunan



Yakub looks forward to returning to his home village

Yakub is a 22 year-old university student who describes his experience with education as something that he has fought for.

His journey began at the age of eight when his parents decided to send him away from his remote village to a school in a larger town. Frequent holiday visits to the village made his early student years easier, but Yakub still feels a longing for his parents and friends.

When Yakub does return to the village, his friends comment that he puts too much effort into his education. Yakub knows that his friends do not value education as much as he does. He believes that to succeed with education you have to have the right attitude, as he explains: "I've moved around a lot, worked odd jobs, lived far away from my parents, but through these challenges I will get a quality education and hopefully a good job".

Yakub's plan is to return to the village after finishing his degree in Social and Political Studies at the University of Palangka Raya. His aim is to help his people by working for the government.

As a Kalimantan Kids Club recipient since 2005, he feels grateful for the scholarship, as it helped ease some of the financial pressure of studying. With one year remaining in his studies, Yakub is looking forward to putting his knowledge into practice, and to begin earning a sustainable income.

New Collaboration in East Kalimantan

In June, we will collaborate with a coal mining project in Berau district in East Kalimantan. An Australian-based company, Strike Resources, is preparing to mine a coal deposit that is close to some Dayak communities.

YTS will work with Strike's community development team to start participatory planning activities that will identify the needs and priorities for development in each community, and the types of support that government and the company could provide.

YTS will send a seven-person team to support the planning process, and to facilitate engagement between communities, local government, and the company.

News Flash

Subud Donors Support New Project in Bukit Batu

The Blond Trust, Susila Dharma Britain, and the Kalimantan Support Group have contributed funds to kick start a new governance-strengthening project in Bukit Batu subdistrict, close to Palangka Raya.

Mercury Recycling Units Installed in Kahayan Gold Shops

In early May, the YTS team installed two mercury recycling units in gold shops along the Kahayan River. Seven more units are on order.

YTS Director Evaluates Clean Water & Sanitation Projects

In mid-May the YTS Director reviewed a Clean Water and Sanitation Project funded by BMZ and managed by YUM, Yayasan Usaha Mulia.

YTS on Short-Listed Team for Kalimantan Forest-Carbon Project

YTS is a member of the team short-listed for the Indonesia Australia Forest Carbon Partnership Facility that is planned to start up in Central Kalimantan mid-2009.

Rubber Handbook Tested with Villagers in Kahayan River

A YTS field team tested the effectiveness of a handbook on rubber cultivation with Rubber Livelihood Groups in villages along the Kahayan River.

Agenda

June

Socialization & PRA in Berau, Kaltim
Socialization & PRA in Bukit Batu, Kalteng
Rubber: Training from Agriculture & Plantation Department

Blacksmith: Manufacture & distribution of large-capacity retorts, Assistance with fumehood installation in gold shops on Kahayan

July

Rubber: Tending nurseries
Blacksmith: Fumehood installations at Mount Muro

August

Rubber: Planning for second training with Agriculture & Plantation Department
Blacksmith: Distribution of retorts, monitoring

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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