

KfW Development Bank and German Embassy Visit Hutan Harapan

After a two year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hutan Harapan was once again receiving international guests. From 7-11 April 2022, Hutan Harapan was visited by a delegation composed of Warthane Puvanarajah from the German Embassy, Frank Broesamlen and Hubertus Kraienhorst from KfW Germany and Angela Tormin from KfW, Jakarta office and Tom Kirschey from NABU Germany. Given the limited time available, a number of locations were visited in Hutan Harapan so that the delegation obtained an insight to the work underway and the challenges facing management.

Maintaining an ecosystem restoration concession is an expensive venture and with KfW funding coming to an end in 2026, Hutan Harapan is diversifying funding sources away from a reliance on donor funds. To this end, Hutan Harapan is cultivating vanilla and patchouli, a flowering plant valued for its fragrant essential oil. Both commodities are highly valued in the market place. The visitors saw firsthand the shade house where half acre of vanilla is being cultivated and soon to be scaled up to 2 ha. Just next to the vanilla, patchouli is being cultivated. In both instances developing the systems for their cultivation has been a steep learning curve. Although, the vanilla will not be ready to be harvested for another two years, Hutan Harapan has already identified a buyer. In the case of Patchouli, the first harvest will take place later this year and if the quality meets international standards, a buyer has committed to buy it.

The visitors also met with the Batin Sembilan families to learn about the agroforestry program being developed in partnership with PT REKI. Mang Rusman, the head of the Batin Sembilan in Sei Kelumpang area, explained that it is a relatively new approach for them as traditionally the Batin Sembilan have relied on forest resources for their livelihoods. The discussion took place over hot tea and boiled cassava. One of their main concerns has been the continued attempts by outsiders to clear the forests to plant palm oil.

The visit was not all business however, as the guests were able to enjoy the forest view from the fire tower. Dr Frank Broesamlen- Hutan Harapan Project Director for KfW was very enthusiastic about climbing the new 25m high fire tower. "I am very happy to see this beautiful forest. The air is cool, the forest is beautiful. I really support the restoration and management of Hutan Harapan, he declared." Meanwhile, Angela Tormin, Director of KfW for Indonesia wanted to get a sense of the forest by taking walking through a relatively undisturbed area. Musadat, the Hutan Harapan tour guide, took the team to an overgrown trail in the Telang river area where the forest canopy is closed.

The President Director of PT REKI, Mangarah Silalahi thanked extended his thanks to the visitors; "We thank the Indonesian and German governments for supporting the restoration and the business development efforts of Hutan Harapan. Also, we extend our thanks to the South Sumatra and Jambi governments and other key stakeholders for their support." To close out the visit, each of the visitors planted a tree in the Jerat river area. Planting a tree is the same as planting kindness. **(Seleksa Srengenge)**

A delegation from the German Embassy, KfW Germany and NABU Germany visited The Batin Sembilan community in Kelumpang. (Doc. Hutan Harapan/Saleksa Srengenge)



Batin Sembilan children studying in the forest with the Besamo School teacher. (Doc. Hutan Harapan/Saleksa Srengenge)

Batin Sembilan Children and Post-Pandemic Education

In preparation for 2022-2023 school year, the Hutan Harapan Besamo school primary school teacher, Rio and Teguh invited parents to discuss the resumption of learning activities at the school which had been closed during the pandemic. Online learning was impossible in this area due to the lack of internet access, not to mention the prohibitive cost of getting online. Rather, children were visited by their teacher at home. Lessons were held in groups of Kelumpang or Tanding for two hours a day. At the outset the informal learning approach was effective, but as time passed, the children's attention span waned and attendance began to drop off. Sometimes the children choose to follow their parents to work in the forest looking for damar.

The teachers apply various ways to keep the children enthusiastic to learn. They frequently leave learning choices to the children. And the children will happily choose to learn in the forest while playing. Mida, one of the parents Besamo School, was enthusiastic that the school was going to reopen. The meeting was the first to be held after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We are happy that Besamo school is reopening because we want our children to be able to study well at school," said Mida.

To date, 70 Batin Sembilan children have attended Besamo School since it was established in 2010. Currently, the school has 34 active students and the challenge of getting children to pursue higher education is ongoing. But, unfortunately this a rare occurrence since the costs are high. As recounted by Teguh, "...the challenge of continuing to junior high school is huge but we continue to encourage children not to stop after completing elementary school. One student completed his junior high school education and has now joined the army." In addition to the financial barriers there are also the cultural ones. The children have trouble adapting to city life and decide to return to Hutan Harapan to help their parents **(Rio A)**



Community Wardens in Hutan Harapan Community Based Forest Patrols

“We don’t bother you, why are you making trouble in our land?” said Mang Samsu and Mang Dani to an illegal forest cultivator they met during a patrol in the Hutan Harapan area in early March, 2022. Mang Samsu together with 48 Batin Sembilan, including eight women, are members of the Community Warden patrol team. They work in collaboration with the PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (REKI) patrol team to protect Hutan Harapan from illegal activities such as land clearing, forest and land fires, poaching and logging.

Currently, the Community Wardens conduct patrols twice a week with the PT REKI patrol team, particularly in those areas that are prone to illegal activities. The Community Wardens will reprimand and expel any group of illegal forest cultivators they meet. All encounters are recorded in the CyberTracker application along with any illegal activities that they have come across. This information is used to inform patrolling strategies and improve management plans. “We joined the patrols protecting Hutan Harapan because this is our home. We don’t want our home to be overtaken by encroachers,” said Mang Samsu, who is in charge of the Community Wardens.

In conducting patrols to protect Hutan Harapan, the Community Wardens were trained to use the Cyber Tracker-SMART tool; operate GPS and map data on GPS, and make patrol reports. In addition, they have formed a fire prevention community group (MPA). “This forest belongs to all of us, protecting this forest is the same as protecting our home,” concluded Mang Samsu in his discussions with the Hutan Harapan Communications Manager, Hospita Simanjuntak. **(Saleksa Srengenge)**



The Batin Sembilan Community Wardens conducting routine patrols in the Hutan Harapan area. (Doc. Hutan Harapan/Saleksa Srengenge)



Helmeted Hornbill perching on a kempas tree in early March 2022 in Hutan Harapan. (Doc. Hutan Harapan/Januardi)

Hutan Harapan The Future Home for Helmeted Hornbills

In the early morning of March 2022, the voice of a Helmeted Hornbill (*Rhinoplax vigil*) could be heard. For Hutan Harapan’s research staff, Januardi, the sound was unmistakable; the loud noisy call resembled a mad cackling laugh. Two Helmeted Hornbills were perched on a branch of a kempas tree (*Koompasia malaccensis*) about a hundred meters from Hutan Harapan’s guard post. Their appearance is unique; a leathery, wrinkled face sporting a bony casque on top of its’ beak and a long, black-and-white banded tail.

Helmeted Hornbills are found on the islands of Kalimantan and Sumatra. Hutan Harapan, which is located in Jambi- South Sumatra border, is an important habitat for the helmeted hornbill. A total of nine species of Hornbill are found on Sumatra; eight of them are in Hutan Harapan. Specific data on their numbers is lacking, but a Ministry of Environment and Forestry report (2018) stated that from 1980-2011, the population density ranged between 0.2 and 2.1 individuals per square kilometer in Kalimantan and Sumatra. There is little doubt that this density has decreased since then with the ongoing conversion of forests resulting in the loss of their habitats. Habitat loss is a major issue affecting this species as it relies on very old, large trees with hollows for nesting. In addition, poaching for its casque, also known hornbill ivory, has driven down its numbers. In 2015, the Helmeted Hornbill was classified as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

Hornbills are known as “Farmers of the Forest” because they are one of the most important seed dispersers in the forest which is critical for maintaining the ecosystem’s health. As in other Hornbill habitats, however, the cutting of large old trees is leading to a decline in hornbill populations which will spell disaster for biodiversity. The mutually beneficial interdependence of hornbills and intact forests plays a crucial role in the regeneration of forest tree species in the remaining landscape.

Hutan Harapan is the future home for Helmeted Hornbills in central of Sumatra because due to the conversion of forests in the surrounding area. Burung Indonesia has identified two important bird areas (Important Bird and Biodiversity Area-IBA) in Hutan Harapan; Bukit Bahar and Tajau Pecah. For this reason, support from various stakeholders is needed to protect the last Hornbill habitat - Hutan Harapan. “Protecting Hutan Harapan is the same as preparing the future home of the Helmeted Hornbill,” said Prof. Dr. Ani Mardiasuti, professor at Bogor Agricultural University, (IPB). **(HOS/Januardi)**