

Dear Friends,

We have wonderful news! We have secured government approval to start the hospital and environmental health program around Gunung Palung National Park. Two days ago we were able to have a huge meeting with the key government players (Department of Health, National Park Office, Regency Planning Commission, heads of sub-regencies, environmental protection agency, etc). Over twenty-five people attended and there was lively discussion with good suggestions made, a few helpful cautions offered, and some light-hearted wrangling between various areas vying for the hospital to be in their area. Overall there was unanimous support. A few details will be added to the memorandum of understanding and in the meantime we will be given a letter of support from the Regency Head. Their main request was that we please move forward as quickly as possible because the health care needs are so great.

We are delighted that in just over one year from my move to Indonesia we have full government support for a combined human and environmental health project and that the location is in so many ways so perfect. This is an area with huge health care needs that is right next to a particularly beautiful forest with very high conservation value. This forest is also now quite well protected (although protecting it will always be fragile) and we have very strong community support. I am also pleased that the area around Gunung Palung National Park is relatively accessible and that we have so many long-term friends in the area.

I have just gotten back to Java and will leave tomorrow for a trip to the East Coast. This last month was quite a frustrating time because the big meeting was scheduled and then had to be delayed twice. This was because of the forest fires you may have heard about. For much of the last month the fires in Borneo have closed the airports with visibility sometimes less than 30 meters. A recent report showed that illegal burning of rain forest in Borneo makes Indonesia number three in the world for carbon emissions (after the US and China). This year has been particularly bad with the longest dry season on record. Large companies (often not even Indonesian) illegally start forest fires in order to clear land for their own gain. Once the land is degraded it is easier to argue that they can plant oil palm or other cash crops on what was previously high biodiversity value rain forest. In areas where there are hospitals, they have been filled with people with severe asthma and respiratory infections. Here again is a strong link between human and environmental health (both locally and globally). These fires will not be easy to prevent but we hope to work together with the government and local people to raise awareness.

In the meantime during this last month we have been working on grant applications and have been planning my trip back to the East Coast in November (11-27). I am so excited to see so many of you on this list and am honored by how many people are helping with our fund-raising efforts. I will be giving talks and meeting people at Yale on Nov 13 & 14, and then having a series of house parties (Vermont on the 16th and 17th, Northampton on the 18th, Cambridge on the 19th, and then DC on the 22nd). In between there are lots of meetings with friends and people who are interested in helping. If we don't already have a plan to meet up and you would like to do so, please let Julia Riseman know. She is doing wonderful work helping to organize the whole schedule (jriseman@healthinharmony.org).

This last month we have also been working on the permission and questions for the baseline survey we plan on doing in January with 74 nurses. This survey will be essential in determining health status and attitudes about the environment so that we know where best to target interventions. However, I am finding it tricky to make sure we cover all the bases, not ask leading questions, and not overload people. Does anyone reading this have lots of experience with questionnaires and want to volunteer to help me work on it?

I hope you are all well and I thank you very much for being so supportive. I am hoping that the generosity of so many people on this list with both time and money is an indication that we will indeed be able to raise funds for this project both through grants and personal donations. At the beginning of the holidays, we hope you will consider including Health In Harmony in your giving.

Please see below for a partial list of all the people who have been helping this month. There are so many ways to help with this work, and our list of volunteers keeps growing. It now includes all kinds of people from retired executives in California, Doctors in New Haven to high school students in Texas. I am so grateful for all of your support. Also a special thanks to Nancy Barnes who recently retired from a life of grant-writing and is now volunteering to help us write grants.

Warmly,
Kinari Webb

For the month of October, special thanks to:

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Leslie Levin

Alan Wilson
Carolyn Kingson
Jonathan Kingson
Margaret Jones O'Grady
Jennifer Wells
Jean M Riseman
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The mission of Health In Harmony is to join with rural Indonesian communities in improving the health of people and the natural environment by providing improved access to medical care, sharing empowering knowledge, and advocating for the inherent value of all life.