

7 January 2008

Dear Friends of Health In Harmony,

Happy New Year!

With your support, 2007 was a fantastic year in the development of our human health and conservation program in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. We are thrilled to share with you a review of the accomplishments you helped create this last year.

- ♣ By early 2007, we had selected Gunung Palung National Park and the surrounding villages as the site on which Health In Harmony would focus its efforts. The national park represents tremendous biodiversity, a stronghold for orangutans, a vast area of lowland rainforest, and a critical watershed for local people—as well as the victim of illegal logging. The surrounding communities, on whose protection the ultimate fate of the park relies, are poor and suffer from serious and debilitating, but curable, health problems. It is a site with enormous potential for using a system of healthcare incentives to motivate environmental protection.
- ♣ In February, we began our activities with a baseline survey of health problems and environmental attitudes in the 40 communities around the park. This was a massive effort, enabled by the “loan” of 60 students from two West Kalimantan nursing schools. With their help, we collected data from 1400 households that provided us with information that is helping us to prioritize our health service efforts, develop programs to combat malaria and tuberculosis, and design our conservation program.
- ♣ By June we had obtained the necessary permits and government support, found a small building suitable for a clinic, made needed renovations to the building, obtained donations of and purchased medicines and equipment, and set up a clinic in the beautiful village of Sukadana. On June 12th we held the official opening party and cut a red ribbon strung across the clinic porch between a column and a rolling IV pole. For Kinari, that moment represented the dream of over a decade. It was a superb party with excellent local food, good attendance of both villagers and government representatives, and an enthusiastic local response. Following its opening, the clinic was immediately off to a roaring start: in only six months and with only three doctors, we have treated almost 2000 patients.
- ♣ During the first few months of the clinic’s operation, Kinari’s husband Cam devoted much time to creating an excellent computer system for tracking patient medical histories and care. The system also enables us to record a patient’s involvement in our alternative payment program—a patient can work off debt from healthcare or earn credit at the clinic by participating in ecologically-friendly or conservation-promoting work, like helping on the organic farm we began to prepare at the same time we opened the clinic or providing materials needed for the farm.

♣ In early 2007, we put a serious effort into fund-raising for our conservation agenda through grant writing, and the work paid off with generous grants from the SeaWorld-Busch Gardens Conservation Fund and the US Fish & Wildlife Service Great Apes Conservation Fund. Over the last six months, we have been using these funds to kick off the conservation program by meeting with the 40 communities around the park to identify fair healthcare-for-conservation trades. Through participatory workshops, we are working with villages to find out what health services (e.g., discounts at the clinic, mobile clinic visits, immunization programs, etc.) we can provide them to motivate their protection of the national park. Thus far, our conservation team has had a positive response from local people, who unanimously agree that poor health is a major cause of their economic problems. The incentive system will be implemented and tested in a few months time.

♣ In September, we implemented a DOTS program to combat drug-resistant tuberculosis in the Gunung Palung area, where the disease is frighteningly common. The key element of a DOTS program is a staff of healthcare workers who visit TB patients daily or several times each week to ensure that the patients are disciplined in taking their medicines. As such, the first step was to form and train a 14-person team of reliable local people, capable of adhering to a rigorous schedule of home visits and coaxing TB patients into sticking with the daily regimen of antibiotics. The team is currently active and responsible for treating more than 50 patients in villages on the border of the national park.

♣ Most important of all, we created a strong staff of medical and conservation people who enabled the accomplishments above. The group is now 13, including three doctors, three nurses, a pharmacist, an organic farm manager, two administrative folks, and three conservationists. The staff is young, diverse, enthusiastic, and smart. This team benefited frequently during the year from the expertise of volunteers, including Esme Cullen (a Brown University student who helped establish the organic farm), Jeremy Sussman (a medical resident with a phenomenal knowledge of medicine), Luth (a Javanese soil scientist who trained in France and helped us select our organic farm land), Zac Schaffer (a recent high school graduate who is currently giving Sukadanans an awesome English language curriculum), and the fabulous David Werner (author of *Where There Is No Doctor*, an incredibly useful reference for field biologists and rural medical workers).

There is much, much more to tell, but we'll save some stories for upcoming events (to be announced soon) on both the West and East coasts of the US, where we hope to see you in person. Many thanks for your generous support and best wishes for a healthy, happy 2008!

Salam hangat,

Kinari Webb & Antonia Gorog