

December 4, 2008

Dear Friends,

It has been another exciting and encouraging month in Sukadana. For this newsletter I invited Hotlin Ompussunggu and one of our volunteers, Peter Mayland to share a few words with you about their experiences of life here in Borneo. I hope you will enjoy hearing from them.

Hotlin

“I had a chance to go home for my sister’s wedding in the second week of November. It was a wonderful wedding. I enjoyed this visit because not only did I have a chance to meet family, but I also saw old friends - from high school, former colleagues, and also friends I used to hang out with. They asked me many question about my work, what I am doing and why ‘Sukadana’. That question made me ponder my circumstances and I said to myself that I have made the right decision.



I am grateful for the opportunity to work with a wonderful team that shares the same passion and compassion in helping people around Gunung Palung National Park. We are now ever more busy with medical teams in ASRI clinic as well as mobile clinics. During our visit to one mobile clinic, the chief of the village came to me and asked me if we could run two days of mobile clinic in that village instead of one day. He said that there are many sick people that still have no chance to see a doctor.

So far we have encountered thousands of people, but still there are more people in need and every one of them is special. One patient that is very special to me is Dardi. His situation reminds me of why I am here. He has been cured of TB meningitis that kept him in a dark room for six years, but he is not able to live a normal life as a boy his age because he is too afraid to leave his house. Now he is receiving therapy from one of our volunteers, Dr. Peter Mayland, who is a psychiatrist and Dr. Yeni who is one of the ASRI doctors. He is slowly dealing with his fear.

Thank you for helping us help thousands of people! Your support will enable us to help thousands more people in the future."

Peter

“Greetings from what Dr. Kinari termed the ‘end of the world’. When my wife, Laurel, and I arrived, our first response was culture shock. Sukadana is so different from any place we have been in our world travels.

Albeit with culture shock, 60 + year-old bodies and a lack of many creature comforts we are accustomed to in the West, our opportunity here has been priceless, and everything we hoped for in our grand service adventure. We would speak first of the sweetness of the people and their friendliness, especially among Clinic ASRI staff. An important lesson we have learned here is that caring and feelings of the heart are sent and received even in



the absence of a common language. The heart bridges what first appeared as an impossible cultural divide.

As a psychiatrist I thought there would be no psychiatric issues to deal with in 'paradise.' As it turns out, I believe I am seeing the same proportion of psychiatric issues as are seen in a primary care practice in the States (i.e. a lot!). When I have teamed up with Dr. Kinari, who has a great command of the language (Bahasa Indonesian), our results have been not only pleasantly surprising but a delight. In these local cultures, people do not generally express their stresses or relationship issues, but with encouragement, skills and heart, we have been pleasantly surprised with how much progress people have made. One of the Indonesian doctors (Dr. Yeni), who will train in psychiatry, has been inspired to also pursue psychotherapy.

Turning to general medicine, the amount of pathology we see is striking compared with US medical settings. Moreover, people wait a very long time for many reasons (money, distance, belief in traditional medicine) so that by the time we see them, their presentations are amazingly full blown. Unfortunately, many have waited too long and damage is irreversible or death unavoidable. I remember in particular a six-month-old boy who appeared to have a common upper respiratory infection. Our intuition alarmed us and we elected to keep the child in the clinic and started aggressive antibiotic therapy. A child's life was saved.



In case it is not already obvious, ASRI clinic is doing wonderful work and is absolutely worthy of support. We were impressed from afar but it is even more impressive in real life."

Kinari again

Please also see two new articles about Health In Harmony and Clinic ASRI's work - published in the Yale Medicine Magazine and on New America Media - posted on our website at www.healthinharmony.org/media.html.

As we near the end of the year, we feel so blessed by and excited about the medical and conservation successes that your donations have made possible over the last 12 months. Also as we near the end of the year, we're thinking to the year ahead. **You may have received Health In Harmony's annual appeal letter in the mail recently - donations made in response to that appeal will help us start 2009 on a strong foot.** Even if you haven't received the appeal letter, we hope you will choose to share some of your blessings, during this holiday season, with people on the other side of the world. They would be excited to give you a gift of rain forest protection in return.

Best wishes from Sukadana,

Kinari, Hotlin and Peter