

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



February 2017

Issue: 50

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In the spirit of February, and keeping with the theme of love and Valentine's Day, this month we share two stories about support and collaboration in the name of conservation! Our first story in this edition of *Code Red* is about the success of our artisans with the support and guidance of our Sustainable Livelihoods team.

Our second story is about our collaborative conservation efforts to help combat forest fires. We recently worked together with *Greenpeace Indonesia* and the Rural Forestry Department to construct dams to be used as water storage to fight future forest fires. With our combined efforts, we made a significant advance in helping the local community be prepared to combat the next potentially devastating fire.

Maybe all of this talk of support and collaboration has put you in the spirit too! Check out our side bar with a link to donate to help further our cause, or maybe you want to join our team, we are looking for new volunteer research assistants! Click the link for more information.

### In This Issue:


With a Little Love and Support, Our Artisans Enjoy Success

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Help Spread the Love

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD  
Executive Director

[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](#)

## With a Little Love and Support, Our Artisans Enjoy Success

*By Wendy Tamariska, GPOCP Sustainable Livelihoods Manager*

Finding steady work and earning enough income to support a family has been a very real challenge for many of the communities living around Gunung Palung. Most adults are undereducated and there are very few employment options for them in their small villages. Oftentimes, these communities depend on harvesting natural resources from the rainforest in and around Gunung Palung National Park for income. These activities have included illegal logging, growing crops, and hunting wildlife, sometimes even orangutans. Protecting these forests takes these sources of income away, and thus building local capacity for sustainable alternatives is one of our essential conservation strategies. We work with local people to develop these sustainable livelihoods, and our participants have become quite successful over the years. More and more slash-and-burn farmers and loggers are interested in joining our program as a result of our artisans' successes.

In 2009, GPOCP established our Sustainable Livelihoods Program, and for the past eight years we have been working closely with communities and local government to help people adopt "forest-friendly" livelihood options, thus reducing their dependence on economic activities that exploit the environment. One of our Sustainable Livelihood programs is supporting our Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) artisan groups.

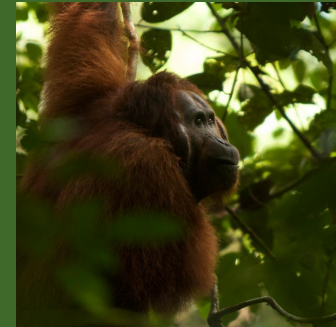


*A small sample of some of the crafts the GPOCP artisans make from pandan and nypa leaves.*

Our NTFP artisan groups operate in four villages in the GPNP buffer zone: Sejahtera, Pangkalan Buton, Batu Barat, and Harapan Mulia.

## Volunteer Research Assistants Needed

Want to work in one of the only remaining intact primary forests in Indonesia and study wild orangutans? We are looking for volunteers! Check out our [post](#) on Primate Info Net for more information.



*Gunung Palung adult male, Alfred. Photo © Russell Laman*

## Help Spread the Love

Feeling in the loving spirit this month? Please consider donating to our cause. Every little bit helps and goes directly towards our conservation programs. Click [here](#) for more information on what you can do to help.



Group members weave traditional handicrafts from readily available forest products, such as *pandan* and *nypa* leaves. These crafts, with the help of GPOCP and our partners, are then sold at local, national, and international markets and art expos. Our four groups encompass approximately 60 local households, with an additional group of 10-15 junior and senior high school students who are mentored by Ibu Ida, our most experienced craftswoman.

You may recall one of our previous success stories about Ibu Vina, a local woman from Sejahtera village. She previously earned income by harvesting rocks and sand from inside of the National Park to sell to construction companies. However, she completely stopped that work and dedicates her time now to weaving jewelry and tikar mats from readily available forest materials.

We have another success story to share about Ibu Rajemah. She is part of our NTFP artisan group, *Peramas Indah*, in the village of Pangkalan Buton. Revenues from the sale of her *pandan* crafts enabled her to afford to send her son to college, the first in the family to attend university! There was even some extra funds left over to allow her to renovate and tile her house.



*Ibu Rajemah was recently able to send her son to college (and tile her porch) with money she earned from selling her handicrafts.*

Another artisan who has been able to earn a living now from the sale of her handicrafts is Ibu Ayu Baiti from Sejahtera village. Ibu Baiti was able to pay off her motorbike, an essential mode of transportation in Indonesian villages, ahead of schedule. Her children also insisted that she treat herself to something nice as a reward for her hard work. Thus, she bought herself a bracelet and two gold rings, all through selling her handicraft products!



**amazon smile**

Choose GPOCP as your Amazon Smile recipient and 0.05% of your sales will go directly to us.

Forward to a Friend

*"If you love a flower, don't pick it up. Because if you pick it up it dies and ceases to be what you love. So if you love a flower, let it be. Love is not about possession. Love is about appreciation"*

*-Dalai Lama-*



*Ibu Ayu Baiti showing off the jewelry she treated herself to with money she earned through the sale of her handicrafts.*

The monthly income from the sale of their crafts covers the daily expense of their families and has allowed Ibu Ayu Baiti and Ibu Rajemah to enjoy a better quality of life, expand their families' education and make improvements to their homes, all through sustainable means. It is not just these two artisans who are experiencing such great success with the help of GPOCP's Sustainable Livelihoods team, many families are flourishing and are able to save money, something that never seemed attainable through previous methods of earning income. GPOCP looks forward to helping other communities create successful, sustainable groups and improving livelihoods throughout the Gunung Palung landscape.

## **GPOCP Collaborates to Fight Fires**

*By Edi Rahman, GPOCP Animal and Habitat Protection Manager*

Forest fires are often a problem the Indonesian people are faced with every year, especially during the dry season. In 2015, Indonesia was literally on fire. Unfortunately, West Kalimantan and the Gunung Palung landscape were not spared from this destruction. Fires were often visible in the lands surrounding our Customary Forests in the villages of Nipah Kuning, Pemangkat, Pulau Kumbang, Padu Banjar and Penjataan. These villages reside adjacent to Gunung Palung National Park, which represents prime orangutan habitat.



*The forest fires of 2015 caused catastrophic damage to West Kalimantan as well as many other parts of Indonesia. Photo © Tim Laman.*

Oftentimes, the cause of these fires is from common land use practices throughout the region. Many farmers use slash and burn methods to clear land and prepare it for the next season's crops. These agricultural areas are rich in peat, which is a major source of carbon. Once this peat land is ignited, it is often very difficult to extinguish, and the fires continue to burn underground. GPOCP found that local people were not aware that these practices are the cause of the fires and the broader impacts these fires have on their land, local forests and the economy. These fires come at a severe cost to the community. Besides the economic loss due to not being able to utilize the land, there is also a great human impact. In 2015 many people, including children, became sick or developed asthma due to the inhalation of smoke. Students were not able to even attend school because the smoke was too thick to travel.



*The fires throughout Indonesia in 2015 were often caused by slash and burn farming methods. Photo © Tim Laman.*

Learning from these experiences, we also noticed there was a lack of fire extinguishers, as well as the availability of water, such as in lakes, rivers and ponds, to help put out fires. GPOCP realized fire prevention efforts must be a priority. We must work with the communities to prevent fires in the first place, rather than tackling the fire after it is out of control. GPOCP and *Greenpeace Indonesia* decided to work together with the Institute of Rural Forest

Management, known locally as LPHD, in several villages. We coordinated community discussions on fire prevention, fire-fighter training and the construction of dams to store water for future use. We assisted groups of all ages by talking to school groups about fire prevention and working with villagers to educate and help construct the dams.



*Local villagers and the LPHD of Pemangkat helping construct a dam, which will help conserve water that can be used to fight forest fires in the future. Photo by Edi Rahman, © GPOCP.*

We spent two days training and collecting materials to construct the water holding structures. We used locally sourced materials, such as a water resistant wood, tarps and sacks with ground fill for the support. The primary goal of the dam is to keep the peatland wet so that it does not easily catch fire. Likewise, the water storage acts as a backup method if emergency stocks are needed to extinguish a fire. This stored water can also be used for bathing and washing by the local community as well.

We started this dam-making project in the village of Pemangkat, with the LPHD and local villagers. Soon after we finished in Pemangkat, the villages of Penjataan, Nipah Kuning, Pulau Kumbang and Padu Banjar initiated construction of a dam in each of their respective areas as well. Each dam is not far from the peat land area and will serve as a preventative measure to control fires before they get out of control. This project was made possible with support from the Arcus Foundation.



*A member of the LPHD of Pulau Kumbang assessing the final construction of the dam. Photo by Edi Rahman, © GPOCP.*

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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