

Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP) Restoration Program

I. Background:

The Orangutan Information Centre (OIC) was founded in 2001 by the Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS) in collaboration with local conservationists to raise awareness of environmental and orangutan conservation issues amongst local communities. The Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP) restoration program is a local community development project managed by OIC aimed at undoing the damage caused through large-scale conversion of national park forest into plantation agriculture. Various indigenous seedlings have been cultivated and maintained locally, within four separate nursery sites developed in the community. In addition to forest rehabilitation, the project provides sustainable alternative livelihoods for local people living adjacent to this area, thus they will not only gain from having the forests reforested (and therein a return of valuable natural ecological services lost to forest clearing and monoculture agricultural development), but also benefit as a community through training and agroforestry schemes. The program was initiated in August 2007 and now operates in conjunction with a local community farmers' group established as a result of this initiative, to carry out replanting and serve as in-field management for the project.

II. Objectives

- To help enhance the rehabilitation of degraded GLNP areas as a result of deforestation and conversion to oil palm plantations, by replanting land with indigenous tree species
- Conduct regular maintenance of planted trees to help ensure their survival and growth
- Monitor the land and planted trees within the GLNP to ensure continued security and protection from any further encroachment
- To improve the capacity of local communities in conservation and forestry program in an effort to increase ownership and responsibility of local communities towards the sustainability of the GLNP



Two groups of seedlings will be replanted in the national park:

- Indigenous hardwood tree species that naturally grow in the forests of the GLNP
- Fruit tree species to be planted in an area designated for a community forestry program to reinforce buffer-zones adjacent to the park.

III. Impact

Since the inception of the program, 100,876 tree seedlings have been cultivated and planted on 82.6 hectares of degraded national park land. Realizing that local people and their support are an absolutely vital aspect of any conservation effort, we have made it a cornerstone of all of our work to involve and also encourage communities to initiate their own conservation activities. Without the local people's commitment, the project will fail to engage and educate those who have the most direct interaction with the forests and also the most immediate influence on the sustainability of these habitats. When people are taught about the many intrinsic ecological services and values provided by orangutans and their forest homes, they are much more likely to support and campaign for their conservation. The program has also provided alternative additional incomes for the people in the form of job opportunities in the nursery and in replanting activities. Entrepreneurship was encouraged through the development of community based tree nurseries which can support replanting and forestry programs. The local community has initiated this scheme and provided a supply of seedlings for local replanting initiatives. The forestry scheme is also being promoted to local communities that are not currently involved in the replanting program.

The reforestation efforts are making a direct impact on the condition of the forests and over time will improve the rainforest habitat that several endemic, endangered species such as the Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*), Sumatran elephant (*Elephas maximus sumatranus*), Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*), Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*), Thomas leaf monkey (*Presbytis thomasi*), long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*), pig-tailed macaque (*M. nemestrina*), slow loris (*Nycticebus coucang*), gibbons and siamangs (Family Hylobatidae) and numerous unique reptile, insect, bird and plant species call their home.

The replanting program has instilled positive views on the importance of protecting forests from encroachment in order to maintain ecological sustainability.

