



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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Building Conservation Professionals:

NGO staff gather to create a “Culture of Care”



Harry Hilser

What gives you encouragement? In the face of so many challenges, participants wrote, drew, and doodled about the things that keep them hopeful for Nature’s future.

What are the biggest practical obstacles that make it hard to achieve our conservation goals in Indonesia? Insufficient funding? Lack of political support? These and many others are indeed serious challenges, but leaders of on-the-ground conservation organizations--those “in the trenches”--generally agree: the single most important limitation we face is the difficulty in finding skilled, dedicated, and reliable staff.

Although Indonesia is the most biodiverse country in the world, conservation is not a mainstream value in Indonesian society, and the conservation community in Sulawesi is small. Apart from ALTO, most conservation NGOs (non-governmental organizations) are clustered in the northern part of the island, where, while comparing notes over coffee, the (continued on p. 2)



Reyni Palohoen

What would you do if...? The group used role-plays to dramatize common dynamics and dilemmas staff face in their work.

Festival 2018:

Drama and music delight and inspire Tompotika villagers

Question: what is more fun than spending the day playing active, animal-themed games, and then watching a clever, funny show, live, in the evening? Answer: nothing whatsoever! Or at least, that was the answer to be read on the faces of residents in seven Tompotika villages during February 2018--the seven villages where, over the course of three weeks, ALTO’s Festival came to town.



Sandhy Bawotong

We all need healthy forests. In the evening drama, Maleo and Babirusa both lose their home when Sulawesi native forest is cleared for Big Oil Palm.



Noval Suling

Maleos and Sea Turtles and Tarsiers, Oh My! Festival includes face-painting of favorite Sulawesi wildlife.

In what has now become a cherished tradition, in February 2018 ALTO’s **Tompotika International Maleo and Sea Turtle Festival** marked its fourth year celebrating Sulawesi’s natural heritage. Festival begins in the tiny village of Tanah Merah, where twelve high school students from across Tompotika gather together under the direction of the ALTO team and Nick Fury and Ross Brown, two expert coaches from Australia. Over the course of a week, the kids created and rehearsed an original show--this year, on the theme of forests and Oil Palm--including marvelous painted sets, puppets, acrobatics, and even (continued on p. 3)

Building Professionalism *(continued from p.1)*



Reyni Palohoen

"We ought to do a workshop like this at least once a year!" In pairs and small groups, staff discussed what works--and what doesn't--in their daily tasks as individuals and teams. And they relished the process!

Topics addressed ranged from the philosophical ("What values and habits define us as conservationists?") to the practical ("Why do I need to get a receipt when I spend AITo money?"). With both deep respect and light-heartedness, the group also attempted to address some of the delicate issues that come up when working across cultures. These are big topics, and this workshop was but a start--but it was a good start. Together, these staff are creating a new "culture": conservation professionals who truly "walk the talk" of caring for Nature. ~

idea for the "Culture of Care" workshop was conceived. We all want and need to deepen our commitment to Nature, our inspiration to work hard on her behalf, and our skills in carrying out our tasks as professionals. Why not gather Sulawesi conservation NGO staff and take some serious steps in that direction, together? If we highlight those things that most inspire us, and address head-on some of our common pitfalls, can we build a stronger corporate and individual "culture of care" for Nature and each other?

For three days in November, 2017, staff from four Sulawesi NGO's--Selamatkan Yaki, Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Centre, the Macaca Nigra Project, and AITo--gathered at Tasikoki. Two outside experts also joined the group. Conservation finance and operations expert Lala Tanudjaja trained staff on the how's and why's of financial and procedural accountability, and corporate team-building expert Nick Fury led the group through a variety of exercises that increased our awareness, bonding, and motivation.



"Conservation may be swimming upstream, but it is a noble calling." 30 staff from 4 NGOs gathered to help each other grow in commitment and discipline.

The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation/ Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika ("AITo") is dedicated to conserving the unparalleled natural and cultural heritage of the lands and waters surrounding Mt. Tompotika, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Effective, creative, and efficient, AITo protects endangered species, tropical rainforests, and coral reefs while promoting the dignity and self-sufficiency of local communities in a changing world. In Tompotika and everywhere, AITo believes that the quality of our human lives is bound up to the health of our natural environment and our relationships to it.

AITo is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States and a registered Yayasan in Indonesia, made possible by your donations. Thank you for your support!

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Faye Wilkinson: still making a difference



Courtesy photo

Faye Wilkinson lived modestly. It gave her joy to be able to give money to facilitate good things happening in the world around her.

Faye Wilkinson was a big thinker. A teacher and world traveler, Faye had an endless curiosity about people, places, and creatures all over this planet. She loved nature, education, and the Arts, and cared enormously about plants and animals not only where they occurred in her backyard of Vashon Island, USA, but also in other parts of the world, where their human neighbors were often less well-

equipped to conserve them. When Faye died of cancer in 2016, the world lost a big heart and an open mind--but Faye's influence will endure. AITo has used a bequest from Faye to establish a scholarship fund which enables kids in our conservation partner villages to continue their schooling past grade 6. Growing up in an AITo partner village, these kids have internalized a strong conservation ethic; with the education Faye has facilitated, they'll be able to take that out into the world, to a much broader range of careers and futures than otherwise would have been possible. Going forward, the kids are carrying Faye's legacy: open minds and big hearts, out into a greener world. ~

Festival (continued from p.1)

Noval Sulung



Sandhy Bawotong



Top: Not just for kids! A group of ladies gets competitive with the maleo ring toss. "Where's my sticker?"

Bottom: A song about a mountain. Kids from Tanah Merah primary school sing in praise of Mt. Tompotika.

fire-breathing--all under the direction of multitasking artist coaches Brown and Fury. The student actors work hard, and are stretched to discover strength and creativity they didn't know they had. They become tightly bonded as a group, and we know from numerous past years' alumni returning to volunteer that the experience can completely change their lives. "I would do anything for AIto... I hope I can help make people more aware [about conservation] in my career," said Wahyu, a 2014 alumnus now finishing college in Java.

After rehearsal week, the Company goes on the road. Sets, props, and equipment for 35 people are loaded into a large cargo truck, and in six distant Tompotika villages--which vary each year--the half-day Festival comes to town, free for all comers. During the daylight, villagers play tug-of-war or hula hoop, or earn a pencil or sticker tossing baby sea turtle-shaped bean bags to "safety" in the open ocean. (All prizes, of course, carry a conservation message!) Others peruse the booths filled with conservation information and nature photography. "Will you come back tomorrow, so we can play some more?", says one little boy, as darkness falls.

The students' show crowns the evening, bringing awareness through comedy and drama to a serious conservation



Noval Sulung

"I'll make you all rich!" As the show depicts, hollow promises by Oil Palm magnates often lead to disaster for both nature and local communities.

issue--this year, deforestation for Oil Palm. "I entreat you all to pay attention," the Camat (governor) told the audience, introducing the show. "Come, let us protect our natural heritage." ~ **View a short video about Festival on our website, www.tompotika.org**

Jackoustick: Contest sparks new original music for conservation by Tompotika artists

Noval Sulung



Let's All -- first place, Balantak Jackoustik contest. This band of four middle school girls chose for their name the English "Let's All" and then explained it by adding, in Indonesian, "... guard, protect, and preserve Sulawesi nature!"

cash and musical instruments. Open to all, a total of 12 groups performed, and the Camat (governor) of each district took part in judging.

Some participants admitted to struggling to come up with conservation lyrics. Yet, amateurs all, the performers poured their hearts into their music--always beautifully, and sometimes quite movingly. "The footsteps of a poacher/Destroy an innocent animal..." Proof of success: snatches of the songs were still being heard hummed by others, weeks later. ~

The late Dr. Jack Barbash, former AIto-US Board member, was a man of deep dedication and boundless enthusiasm for the things he loved--and among the things he loved best were music and conservation. So when Jack died in 2015 and his family and friends wished to honor his memory, establishing a mechanism for inspiring new music and conservation in a place where he had dedicated so much time and care seemed like a no-brainer. In February 2018, in conjunction with Festival, AIto sponsored the second Jackoustick: Music for Conservation contest --and this year's Jackoustick was even bigger and better than the first.

Jackoustick was held twice, in the capital villages of Tompotika's two main districts, as part of Festival. Contestants had to compose and perform an original song on a conservation theme, competing for prizes of



Sandhy Bawotong

"Struck by the beauty of nature..." ABG, a band of three brothers, won first place in the Bualemo Jackoustick contest.



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The Faces of ALTO: The Cooking Ladies of Tanah Merah



Marcy Summers

The Cooking Ladies wield the “weapons” of their trade. Eti, Edel, Eti, and Nona (left to right) cook rice, squash, coconut milk, tofu, eggs, papaya flowers, and other local vegetarian foods for the ALTO team.

including a dozen local teenagers, there are traffic jams in the washrooms, but “having lots of people around is great--it’s so quiet here most of the time.”

When not cooking for ALTO, Nona is a teacher at the village primary school; the others work in their fields, growing chocolate, coconut, and cloves. Having ALTO around over the years, they say, has changed their views. “Before, we were scared of the forests, and wildlife.” They only went there to get firewood. “We didn’t know about how forests prevent floods, and landslides. Now we have put away the chainsaw.” “With ALTO, we’ve become aware. Some animals are protected. Now if we see a monkey we chase it away instead of killing it... Let ALTO keep progressing--otherwise the forests will disappear!” ~

“If we didn’t have ALTO, we wouldn’t know anything about the forests.” Back in 1995, Nona, Edel, Eti, and Eti all relocated with their families to Tompotika’s village of Tanah Merah from Nusa Tenggara, in Southeastern Indonesia, as part of the government transmigration program of the time. Under that program, people from more densely populated parts of Indonesia were invited to re-settle in remote areas like Tompotika; each transmigrant family was given a house and four hectares of land to farm in the new village, just carved out of the previously pristine forests of Tompotika. Now, these and a few other women comprise the team that feeds up to three dozen people when ALTO does a Festival or other activity.

The women love it when ALTO comes to their remote village. They giggle that with the ALTO Festival crew in town, includ-



Noval Suling

Simple, delicious local fare. Ibu Nona’s kitchen consists of a table, two woodfired stoves, and ample floor space where the Cooking Ladies squat over their work. “I think the water that we boil here for drinking tastes better than the bottled water you buy in a plastic jug,” says Ibu Nona (right).