

TRANSLATION OF THE RSGF NEWS IN LOCAL NEWSPAPER

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RSGF England Saves the Forests and Indigenous Peoples of S.E. Sulawesi

Kendari, (Sultra Pos)

RSGF or *Rufford Small Grants Foundation*, a non-profit organisation based in Great Britain, during the last five years has been doing its best to conserve over 2.5 million hectares of natural forests of S.E. Sulawesi while protecting about 200 thousands of indigenous peoples of 29 ethnic groups depending upon the forests.

The very latest work supported by the conservation foundation is the establishment of good forest management by enhancing the capacity of indigenous forest peoples in tackling the Participatory Forest Management (PFM).

The activity was started in August 2009. RSGF through its field organiser, Alimaturahim, has intensively trained 30 representatives of indigenous peoples in investigating, negotiating, and implementing PFM.

More effective and innovative

Dedi Irwanto, Forestry Engineer, from the Forestry Agency of S.E. Sulawesi Province emphasised that the Government of S.E. Sulawesi Province enormously appreciates the work of the RSGF in the region. Forest conservation, according to Dedi, represents as the most strategic program because it is closely related with the global warming which increasingly constitutes the world's most serious environmental issue today.

Compared with other forestry programs having once been initiated in the region so far, the work of RSGF seems to be more effective and innovative because it conserves the forests while improving the living standard of the indigenous forest peoples, said Dedi.

"So far, we never respect the indigenous forest peoples and ignore them in forest management. In fact, they are the nearest people to the forests and play the key role toward the success of forest conservation", he added.

Therefore, on behalf of the forestry authority in the region, Dedi deeply thanks and appreciates the initiatives supported by the RSGF in S.E. Sulawesi to date.

Very proud

In other occasion, Laode Halami, the prominent leader of indigenous peoples of S.E. Sulawesi revealed that the strategic involvement of indigenous peoples in forest conservation programs is completely a new idea and it makes the indigenous peoples of the province very proud.

“So far, only we, the indigenous peoples, who soundly barracked when forests were destroyed, but no one who wants to listen to us. Whereas, without us, the forests are impossible to conserve”, Halami stressed emotionally.

On behalf of all indigenous forest peoples of S.E. Sulawesi, Halami extremely expects that the best practice created by the RSGF should be applied as the main reference for the betterment of forest-management policy in the region.

“We will lobby the Local Parliament to immediately adopt the RSGF-supported program into the forest-management policy and system in S.E. Sulawesi. Otherwise, we will face the total extinction of forest in the country”, he threatened.

The RSGF funds

In the meantime, in his report to the Provincial Government, Forestry Authority, and Parliament, Alimaturahim highlighted that RSGF has financially supported forest conservation programs in S.E. Sulawesi since the period of 2005-2006.

In the beginning, the RSGF supported the nature conservation project integrated with the elimination of poverty of indigenous forest peoples with a grant of £ 5,000 or Rp 90 million.

In the period of 2007-2008 RSGF again provided another grant of £ 5,000 for the enhancement the capacity of indigenous forest peoples to control forest fires around the natural forests of S.E. Sulawesi.

In the recent period (2009-2010) RSGF has enormously increased its grant more than double, namely at £ 12,000 (about Rp 200 million).

Alimaturahim and his team used the latest grant for the enhancement of the indigenous forest peoples' capacity in investigating, negotiating, and implementing the forest management system in participative way around the province. (Sus)

PHOTO CAPTION: Alimaturahim (two from left) is sitting together with the Government and Forestry Authority of S.E. Sulawesi Province. (Photo by: Ist.)