

STORY OF HOPE AND STRUGGLE

MAY 2025



The
Samdhana
Institute

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8 Stories



Indigenous Community in Nagekeo Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), performed at the Opening Ceremony of the BAMBOO CONNECTION seminar and workshop, held by the Sao Meze Community, January 27-28, 2025. They firmly uphold their traditions and culture. The younger generation is trained and accustomed to traditions from an early age to form a generation that loves nature and is resilient.

Photo by BAMBU SUDAH OLAH-KOMUNITAS SAO MEZE/Santos Dhedu

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All articles are translated into English and edited by Chris Alexander
Design and Layout by Anggit Saranta

Stories of Hope and Struggle (SHS 2025) Introduction

Welcome to the 2025 edition of our Stories of Hope and Struggle (SHS) publication, covering programme developments from May 2024 to April 2025. In the following pages, we sketch out the various challenges faced by our partner organisations in Indonesia, while also outlining several opportunities for progress and the solutions already being implemented at ground level to achieve positive impact.

At the centre of this progressive approach is the Next-Level Grants Facility (NLGF); a funding initiative established by the Samdhana Institute to help deliver the objectives of our Voice for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme. All over Indonesia, strategic implementation of NLGF funding is facilitating the active participation of local civil society, and particularly youth groups, in decision-making processes related to climate change.

The voices of these groups, and the pertinent local perspectives they can offer to such dialogues, are all too often overlooked and undervalued. Whether discussing climate change policy, technological innovation or land tenure legislation, local voices simply must be heard. The NLGF fund is designed to elevate local communities and amplify their inputs, while also supporting the work of grassroots organisations so they can quickly respond to emergencies, threats and opportunities in their respective landscapes.

An emerging global crisis demands an equally urgent and far-reaching approach. With that in mind, and working through

the NLGF, we have extended funding support to 13 provinces in Indonesia, spanning North Sumatra to West Papua, and are working alongside 47 NGOs and a further 13 individual partners to achieve maximum impact in each of these project locations.

As per May 2025, our priority locations are DKI Jakarta, DIY Yogyakarta, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) and Tanah Papua, as these are the destinations where existing VCA partnerships are centred. By focusing our efforts on these nodes in the wider network, we are able to build on existing progress and expand our impact to other sites, depending on the scale and urgency of their unique requirements and the challenges they face.

In this publication, we intend to look a little deeper into this network, beyond the numbers and the satellite view, to listen and learn from the perspectives of people working to combat climate change at ground level. From Bengkulu to Alor, and from highlands to forests and coral reefs, the following eight stories reveal the many and varied ways in which Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in Indonesia are coming together to devise, implement and advocate responses to the worsening impacts of climate change.

These are more than just stories of hope and struggle – each one represents significant milestones on our collective journey to a more sustainable, equitable future for Indonesia; critical first steps on the road ahead, opening up pathways to progress for other projects to follow.

Securing the Availability of Freshwater in Kaana Village, Enggano Island

Written by An Nisa Nurul Suci (Bengkulu - LATUN)
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

"If you really want to make it a customary forest, then do it seriously!"

A teacher and native of Enggano Island in Bengkulu, Abdul Aziz made this statement during an initial outreach activity conducted by the LATUN Foundation (Lestari Alam Laut Untuk Negeri), in response to plans to designate the Danau Pulau Forest on his island as a Customary Forest (referred to in Indonesia as *Hutan Adat*).

Born in 1981, Abdul Aziz has long been active in the Enggano Traditional Council based in Kaana Village, Enggano Subdistrict. He chose the word "*nian*" (meaning 'truly' or 'seriously') to emphasise that any such plans should only be carried out with full commitment.

Aziz was alluding to a previous project, in which the protection process only went as far as documentation and mapping. His community was disappointed not to see this initial baseline study followed through and finalised in the form of

official designation. To restore the trust of the community, and secure protection for their forest, a more persistent approach will be needed moving forwards.

An Essential Ecosystem in Need of Protection

Aziz's concern for the Danau Pulau Forest began long before LATUN initiated its protection plan. He had once seen someone from another village hunting birds in the forest. "It looked like he got 40 birds. I happened to be passing by and saw him. I immediately scolded him," Aziz recalled, with a hint of lingering anger.

Now 43 years old, Aziz's concerns



Photo by LATUN/An Nisa Nurul Suci



are well founded. Danau Pulau Forest represents an essential ecosystem that needs protection, and a vital source of freshwater that must be secured for the surrounding communities. The key is maintaining a safe level of vegetation cover, which enables groundwater absorption. When the forest is intact, water levels in Danau Pulau and several artesian springs within the forest also remain stable. However, the forest cover has been in serious decline since 2009.

Satellite data reveals the scale of recent damage. Between 2009 and 2020, around 21.3 hectares of trees have been lost. For local people like Aziz, this poses a number of worrying concerns: what will the forest look like 10 years from now? Where will the community find clean water if the vegetation continues to diminish? For Aziz, the answer lies in protecting the forest. “The Danau Pulau Forest is our last hope for protecting the lake and the upstream of the Kikuba River,” he says.

Support From Samdhana and LATUN

Aziz is a leader of the Kaana Village Traditional Council, which understands the importance of these efforts and

fully supports the LATUN programme, which is backed by the Samdhana Institute. The Council has been working tirelessly to meet the necessary requirements for official recognition of the forest as a customary area by the Ministry of Forestry.

Working alongside village officials and Indigenous youth groups, Aziz has been venturing into the forest and crossing rivers to install temporary boundary markers for the proposed customary forest demarcation. Every time there is a LATUN meeting concerning the future of Danau Pulau Forest, Aziz’s name is usually the first on the attendance sheet.

This journey has seen its fair share of challenges, from natural disruptions to community disputes. On a number of occasions, storms have forced the team to halt their outdoor work, setting up the boundary markers, which took longer than initially planned. There were also tenure issues with neighbouring landowners, which were resolved by Aziz and his team through a series of patient and respectful dialogue sessions. These meetings between landowners, traditional council members and village officials

resulted in compromises that avoided major conflicts and kept the project on track.

Overcoming Obstacles: Next Steps on the Journey to Official Recognition

Official recognition of customary forests is a stepwise process, as outlined in the Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry (*Permen LH*). The first step is collection of evidence and baseline data; next, the community must submit an application for the designation of a customary forest, which is then verified and validated by the government.

At present, the process has stalled at the documentation stage because the community has not yet received recognition from the local government, making the path to obtaining customary forest status more difficult and time-consuming than expected. This is the same barrier that the community came up against in the past. Another obstacle is the recent change in regency leadership, which has further delayed the submission of applications for the recognition of customary law communities.

Despite these setbacks, Samdhana and LATUN continue working with the community and are in constant communication with the legal authorities of North Bengkulu Regency, advocating the issuance of a decree (SK) recognising the customary law community. Once the SK is in place, the community can submit a customary forest application to the regional parliament (DPR).

Looking to the Future

In spite of all these challenges, several important milestones on the journey have already been reached. On Saturday, 23 November 2024, LATUN secured written approval for the customary forest from 40 representatives of all six Indigenous groups on Enggano Island: the Kaitora, Kaahoao, Kaarubi, Kaharuba, Kauno and Kaamay. To date, Aziz and his team have installed 75 boundary markers and recorded their GPS coordinates, providing a ground-level framework for official recognition to follow.

Moreover, at the landscape level, a draft scientific paper on the biodiversity of the Danau Pulau Forest has also been prepared. Meanwhile, at the community level, there has also been a shift in perspective, as collective priorities begin to align with the plan. Aziz says the LATUN programme has been integral to this change in attitudes. "The positive impact I've seen is that the community now understands the benefits of protecting the forest," he says.

The story of the Danau Pulau Forest is one of resilience, leadership and a growing recognition that environmental stewardship must begin at home. A story of hope and struggle. Thanks to the tireless efforts of community leaders like Abdul Aziz and the support of engaged youth, the people of Kaana Village are forging a new path—one that honours tradition and embraces the urgent need to secure natural resources for the future. As formal recognition of the forest as

a Customary Forest draws closer, the groundwork laid by Kaana Village Traditional Council, LATUN, local councils and Indigenous communities stands as a model for grassroots-driven conservation, not only on preserving freshwater, but the also keeping the cultural lifeblood of their communities alive. protecting the forest," he says.

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Photo by LATUN/An Nisa Nurul Suci

Danau Pulau Forest: Habitat of Endemic Birds in Enggano

Written by An Nisa Nurul Suci (Bengkulu - LATUN)
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

Floating in the Indian Ocean to the west of Sumatra, Enggano is one of Indonesia's outermost islands. Covering an area of around 400 square kilometres, Enggano is a coral island formed through ancient shifts to tectonic plates that pushed reefs on the seabed to the surface, creating land.

Today, clues to this ancient geology are all around. Dr. Gunggung Senoaji, a forestry lecturer at the University of Bengkulu, often sees relics of history on his walks around the island. "While surveying forested hills," he explains, "I sometimes find coral up there," he said. The unique origin story of Enggano's creation also reveals itself in other ways. Because the island has never

been connected to neighbouring Sumatra, its biodiversity is unusually distinct from the mainland. Despite its unassuming size, Enggano is well and truly on the map for many domestic and foreign visitors.

Why Are International Visitors Flocking to Enggano?

Zulvan is a local youth who believes the diversity of birds on Enggano Island is particularly fascinating. Known to his friends as Zul, he is a tour guide for both local and international birdwatchers. Birding—observing birds in their natural habitats—is a pastime that's growing in popularity on this isolated island. During a 2015 expedition by the



Photo by LATUN/An Nisa Nurul Suci

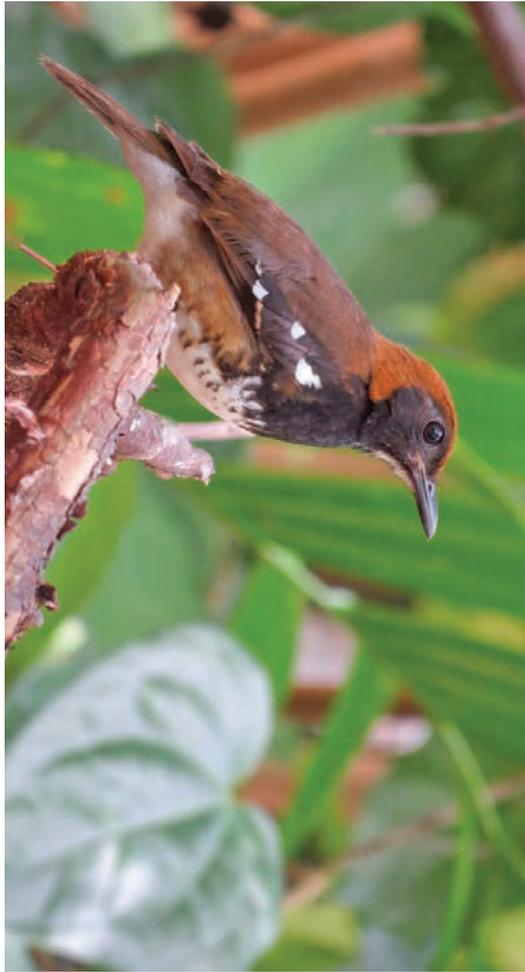


Photo by LATUN/An Nisa Nurul Suci

Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), no fewer than 35 bird species were documented on Enggano, 14 of which are endemic to the island. It's no surprise, then, that Enggano is listed as an Endemic Bird Area (EBA) by BirdLife International – a distinction that is drawing international visitors from far and wide.

Among all the birdwatching spots, Danau Pulau Forest stands out. “For birding, Danau Pulau is top of the list,” says Zul. And for good reason. Several of Enggano’s endemic bird species can be found in this forest, including the Enggano scops owl (*Otus enganensis*), Enggano hill myna (*Gracula enganensis*), Enggano white-eye (*Zosterops salvadorii*) and Enggano thrush (*Zoothera leucolaema*). Other species include the Enggano parakeet

(*Psittacula longicauda*), the Black-naped monarch (*Hypothymis azurea*) and the Cinnamon ground dove (*Macropygia cinnamomea*).

Preserving Wildlife on an Island of Natural Treasures

This rich diversity of birdlife is directly connected to health and preservation of the Danau Pulau Forest. With this correlation in mind, LATUN (*Lestari Alam Laut Untuk Negeri*) has developed a programme to preserve the forest, with funding from Samdhana Institute through the NLGF-VCA (Next Level Grants Facility – Voice for Just Climate Action).

The program includes steps to formally designate the area as a Customary Forest. This process involves defining boundaries, establishing customary legal structures and preparing scientific documentation. But the first, and arguably the most critical step, is securing community approval.

Alamudin is the head of Kaana Village in Enggano. He recently voiced his full support for the programme. In a public meeting, he urged residents to unite in completing the forest designation, so they can preserve their island’s treasures for future generations. “We’re getting older,” he said to the assembled crowd. “If we don’t protect the forest now, our children and grandchildren will suffer the consequences.”

Documenting Biodiversity, Assessing Threats

Another key requirement for the designation is a scientific paper. To support this, LATUN, led by Zul, conducted an inventory of biodiversity in the Danau Pulau Forest. During



field observations, no birds were seen—only heard from a distance. The Enggano hill myna was heard singing continuously during the trek.

Zul occasionally played birdcalls to attract birds, but without success. “Someone had just been hunting, so the birds were scared off,” he explained, pointing to feathers scattered on the ground. Villagers confirmed that illegal bird hunting in the forest remains common, especially for the Green imperial pigeon (*Ducula aenea*), known locally as ‘pergam’, which is hunted for food and sale.

“Pergam is what most people are after,” explained Nurul, a longtime Enggano resident who also participated in the biodiversity survey. Nurul is highly knowledgeable about the flora of the forest. She pointed out that the meranti, or *umih* tree (*Shorea sp.*), is the most common species observed here. “Umih provides the pigeons with their favourite food,” she said, “so there are many of them here.”

Zul added that pigeons here play a vital ecosystem role securing the health of the forest, as they eat only the red inner part of the meranti’s fruit and later disperse its seeds throughout the forest in their droppings. Interestingly, the umih fruit was also once used in traditional wedding ceremonies; brides in Enggano used the red part as

natural nail polish. “They would rub it on their nails to colour them,” a local woman explained during the forest walk.

Branching Out: Documenting Trees and Non-timber Forest Products

Besides meranti, other trees here include keraai and kasai (*Pometia pinnata*), purut (*Myristica elliptica*), bintangur (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) and ehei (*Dracontomelon dao*). Valuable hardwood species like ironwood (*Intsia bijuga*), rengas (*Gluta renghas*) and apua (*Kompassia malaccensis*) have also been documented

The team also found many non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as rattan (*Calamus spp.*) and liana (*woody climbing plants*), which often grow symbiotically with trees. Two types of liana were found: *akar dober* and *akar kuning*. According to Nurul, *akar dober* can be a source of drinking water in the forest, while *akar kuning* is known as a natural malaria remedy.



Danau Pulau Forest on Enggano Island is incredibly rich in biodiversity, which is why LATUN's program has inspired hope across the community. Zul hopes to see further development of the forest, including plant enrichment, so it can one day become a semi-botanical garden and a resource for botanical education.

Enggano Island's Danau Pulau Forest is more than just a haven for endemic birds and native trees—it's a living archive of ecological and cultural heritage. Through the collaborative efforts of LATUN, local leaders and community members like Zul and Nurul, steps are now being taken to preserve these natural treasures for generations to come. As birdwatchers, scientists and residents unite in their appreciation for Enggano's biodiversity, and commit to its conservation through official protective status, this isolated island now stands apart as a hopeful example of how local action can shape a more sustainable and resilient future for people and nature

Mapping Out the Next Steps

Field activities on Enggano Island began on 24-26 November 2024, marking a crucial step in the local community's effort — alongside LATUN — to protect their forest and freshwater lake through formal recognition as customary (adat) forest. For the people of this small island, where freshwater is scarce, safeguarding natural resources has become a matter of survival. The ultimate goal is to secure legal recognition that not only affirms their traditional custodianship but also

provides the legal tools needed to defend their land from harmful development.

To lay the groundwork for this recognition, LATUN and community members organised focus group discussions to raise awareness; drafted an academic paper, developed through participatory field observations and group work in the forest and lake area; and installed temporary boundary markers to identify zones in need of protection. These efforts have strengthened local resolve and built a shared sense of purpose around forest and water conservation.

However, the road to official recognition remains long and costly. While the community is ready, the process has stalled due to a lack of formal recognition from local government — a prerequisite for submitting their claim as a customary law community. Political shifts, including a recent change in regency leadership, have added further delays

LATUN is working closely with the legal office of North Bengkulu Regency to help secure a decree (SK) recognising the community's customary status, which would unlock the next stage of the application process. With sustained funding support and partnerships with organisations like Samdhana, this vision of legal protection for Enggano's forest is slowly coming into focus.

Rooted in Resilience: How Kawalelo's Youth are Fighting Drought with Bamboo

Written by Yohanes Kada Boli Watokolah (Karli)
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

Climate change has left no corner of Indonesia untouched, and in Kawalelo Village, East Flores, the effects are hitting close to home. The local spring, Wato Nitung—once just a secondary water source—has become the community's lifeline after a social conflict in 2021 severed access to their main water supply in Bama Village.

"We used to get water freely from Bama," explained a local resident. "But after the conflict, the supply was cut off, and we've had to depend entirely on Wato Nitung, even though it's barely enough."

Droughts and erratic rainfall have further reduced the spring's output. As a result, the village's 165 households now spend around IDR 240,000 (US\$ 14.5) per month on clean water—purchasing two drums (200 litres each) per week at IDR 30,000 (US\$ 1.8) per drum. This financial strain has deepened economic hardship for many families.

A Youth-Led Response

Faced with water insecurity and climate disruption, a group of local

youths decided to act. In 2018, they began replanting the area around the spring with bamboo; known for its ability to hold soils together and regulate groundwater.

At the heart of this initiative is Bamboo ANDAKA, a youth group whose name means 'Children of Kawalelo'. "It's a heavy task for me and my friends," said 24-year-old Yosef Alfreanus Nagut, known locally as Alfren. "We have to care for the spring while also working to support our families."

In 2018, the group successfully planted over 1,000 bamboo shoots, at a rate of about 100 per month. In the years since, they have continued this work, with around 4,000 trees planted in total. However, several of the original members have had to leave the village in search of work. "Even though we're leaving, we still want to support our friends from afar," said Yofer Liga and Stef Piran before boarding a boat to leave the island.

Alfren has kept the project alive with the support of his mother, Thersia

Kelogo Hera. “I’m proud,” she says, “as long as what he does helps others and doesn’t harm anyone, I support him.”

Strengthening the Effort

Bamboo ANDAKA have been supported by funding from Samdhana Institute through the Next Level Grants Facility (NLGF) project; a funding initiative designed to support the Voice for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme in Indonesia. Their work has also attracted the attention of several local and national organisations, including the Diocese of Larantuka’s Social and Economic Development Foundation (Yaspensel), the People’s Coalition for Food Sovereignty (KRKP), the KEHATI Foundation and the village government. Each of these groups are now working together under the VCA programme.

With their backing, the Bamboo ANDAKA has expanded its efforts, and

the 4,000 bamboo seedlings planted to date have shown an 80% survival rate. They also made attempts to introduce 2,500 forest cotton (*kapok*) seedlings, but these were lost to a flash flood in 2021 (another indicator of the worsening impacts of climate change in the region).

Nevertheless, the youth groups here remained undeterred. Their partnership with Samdhana through the NLGF project has helped evolve their bamboo planting activities into a formal climate adaptation initiative. The rehabilitation of the Wato Nitung spring now involves vulnerable community members—elders, widows, and young people—who are working together to restore and protect the ecosystem.

Looking Ahead

The journey to safeguard Kawalelo’s only remaining freshwater spring has been both a physical and emotional challenge for Alfren and his community. “As more bamboo is planted, the task grows heavier,” he admitted. “But I believe we’ll get through it, and this work won’t be in vain.”

With continued support from Samdhana and an alliance of various other partners, the people of Kawalelo are not only responding to the immediate water crisis but also planting seeds—literally and figuratively—for a more sustainable future. The next step may involve building stronger community-based water systems and expanding bamboo reforestation to other threatened areas, ensuring that Wato Nitung and the spirit of youth-led action continue to flow for generations to come.



Photo by Yohanes Kada Boli Watokolah

Listening to Youth, Demanding Justice: One Enumerator's Journey into Climate Awareness in Jakarta

Written by Masagus Achmad Fathan Mubina
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

In one of the world's most polluted cities, young voices are mobilising for climate justice through data, dialogue and direct engagement.

In Jakarta, a sprawling city choked by traffic, pollution and concrete, climate action can feel distant or abstract. But for Adiba, a geography graduate with a passion for environmental advocacy, the climate crisis is not just a topic for study—it's a call to action.

"I wanted to hear what people my age really think," said Adiba, who joined the Climate Rangers Jakarta initiative as a field enumerator for a survey supported by the NGLF-VCA programme. "We always talk about Gen Z being at the forefront of change, but I needed to know—are we being included in the solutions?"

Climate Anxiety, Mismatched Action

Before becoming a researcher, Adiba spent a semester teaching high school geography at SMA Negeri 54 Jakarta. She remembers how lessons on greenhouse gases would often spark spirited conversations, but that youthful enthusiasm rarely translated into meaningful engagement beyond the classroom.

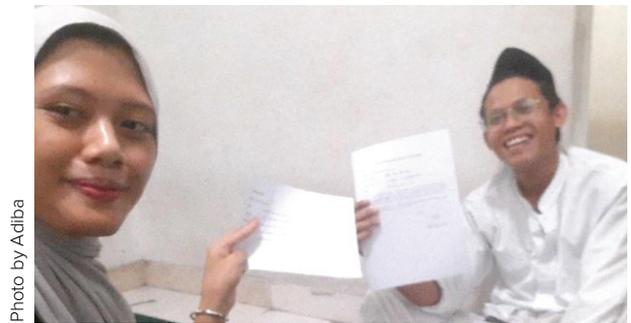


Photo by Adiba

According to a 2021 survey by Indikator Politik Indonesia, 82% of young Indonesians are concerned about environmental degradation, and 74% are especially worried about pollution. Yet a separate UNICEF report paints a stark picture: Indonesia's youth face a high climate risk index, exposing them to dangerous vulnerabilities with little say in the policies affecting them.

That disconnect became the starting point for Adiba's work.

Mapping Perceptions, Street by Street

Adiba focused her fieldwork in East and Central Jakarta—dense, diverse districts marked by the dichotomy of urban hardship and vibrant community life. Reaching respondents, however, was not easy.

"Many young people were uncomfortable being approached in public," she explained. To get around this issue,

she turned to social media to make first contact. This method resonated with her fellow Gen Z peers. Eventually, she gathered small groups for face-to-face interviews, often in familiar community spaces like Nahdlatul Ulama University (UNUSIA).

Over three weeks, through rain, rescheduling and Jakarta's maze of alleyways, Adiba managed to interview 24 young people (13 male and 11 female) from Rawamangun, Ciracas, Lubang Buaya, Kemayoran, Cempaka Putih and Matraman. One interview took place in the modest Kemayoran home of a high school student named Anggi, which she reached via a narrow path lined with open drains.

The surroundings were a stark reminder: polluted and flood-prone neighbourhoods are ground zero for climate injustice.

Recognising Injustice, Redefining Climate Impacts

Through these conversations, Adiba discovered that many young people were connecting climate change not just to weather, but to broader life challenges—rising living costs, worsening health and even limited job opportunities.

“This is about more than the environment,” she said. “It’s about procedural injustice. Young people aren’t being involved in the climate decisions that shape their future.” One interviewee, Zeid, stood out. An active member of a sustainable fashion community, he had developed a clothing brand designed to be comfortable in Jakarta’s unpredictable weather. “It hit him during the interview,” Adiba recalled. “His work is actually a climate adaptation strategy.”

Zeid’s brand exemplified “recognitional justice”, by acknowledging the diverse ways young people experience and respond to

climate change. Adiba noted that with the right support, including access to climate action grants, these efforts could also deliver “distributive justice”, thereby ensuring fair access to resources and opportunities.

Youth-led Evidence for Policy Change

Adiba’s work formed part of a larger research effort led by Climate Rangers Jakarta, in which 10 enumerators gathered 416 survey responses from youths aged 16 to 26 across the capital. These activities have been funded by Samdhana Institute as part of the Next Level Grants Facility (NLGF) project; an initiative set up to support the Voice for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme in Indonesia.

The findings were telling:

- 36% believed climate change was driven by natural cycles, while 35% cited fossil fuel use and its contribution to extreme weather.
- 39% had heard of the term “climate justice.”
- 77% agreed that climate action should prioritise the rights of future generations—something they feel the government is not yet doing.

In addition to surveys, the team conducted focus group discussions and climate education sessions tailored to different audiences. This mixed-method approach aimed to build a stronger foundation for youth-led climate advocacy and policy influence.

“Climate justice cannot be achieved without inclusion,” Adiba said. “No one should be left behind—especially not young people.” Moving forward, and with funding support from Samdhana, Climate Rangers Jakarta will continue working to encourage the active involvement of young people in climate justice agenda.

From Campus to Community: Empowering Students in Jakarta to Reduce Their Carbon Footprint

Written by Masagus Achmad Fathan Mubina
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

For Alifah, a student at the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB University) in West Java, volunteering is a meaningful way to connect with the wider community. During her three semesters studying Environmental and Resource Economics, she has been growing increasingly aware of how economic activities impact the environment. Now, this awareness has inspired her to reduce her own ecological footprint.

Feeling that campus activism alone was no longer enough, Alifah sought out new ways to engage—and found a perfect outlet in Climate Rangers Jakarta; a youth-led organisation operating in 15 cities around Indonesia, which is fighting for intergenerational climate justice and a just energy transition. Here, working alongside other young changemakers, she found a vehicle for climate advocacy.

The Cost of Climate Responsibility

In 2024, a report by the Climate Action Tracker revealed that Indonesia's current climate policies and commitments remain inconsistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

When asked to rate youth involvement in climate action, Alifah gave it a 7 out of 10. She acknowledged that living sustainably often comes with added costs, such as donating to tree-planting initiatives or opting for electric vehicles on ride-hailing apps.

“For me, life and all our daily activities inevitably produce some waste. The question is how we manage that waste within reasonable limits. Unfortunately, climate movements tend to lose momentum and struggle with consistency,” she reflected.

The Power of Youth Education

To strengthen youth engagement in climate action, Alifah is focusing on education. According to a 2019 study by the American Psychological Association, children and teenagers often act as change agents within their families, influencing their parents' attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable practices like reducing plastic use or conserving water. Motivated by this potential, and aware that climate education is

largely absent from Indonesia's school curriculum, Alifah decided to take matters into her own hands.

A 2020 UNESCO report highlighted the lack of integration of carbon footprint and climate change concepts in school curricula across many developing countries. Determined to fill this gap, Alifah has designed a simple and practical climate education session for students at the SMPN 3 Junior High School in Jakarta.

change. To help translate theory into action, she timed the event 3 days after World Tree Day in November 2024 and led a symbolic yet meaningful activity: planting trees to offset carbon emissions.

Fifty students, divided into 10 groups, successfully planted 10 trees with the support of school staff and community partners. The idea had taken root after Alifah connected with the school's administrative office and was



Photo by CLIMATE RANGER

Learning by Doing: A Climate Education Event

She began with a storytelling session on global warming, using Jakarta's increasingly hot weather as an entry point. A pre-class survey showed that many students were unaware of how their lifestyles contributed to climate

introduced to Mrs. Septia, a teacher there. The school principal, Mr. Irwanto, is a plant enthusiast who composts fallen leaves – he also welcomed the initiative wholeheartedly.

During her site visit, Alifah was impressed by the school's vibrant garden, already planted with chillies

and tamarind. “When I asked about seedlings, the principal expressed a desire to grow vegetables too,” she recalled.

Partnerships and Planting

To source the seedlings, Alifah reached out to the Jakarta Provincial Centre for Plant Seeds and Protection (P2BPT), under the Department of Food Security, Marine and Agriculture. Following a brief meeting and a written proposal, she secured donations of chilli and eggplant seedlings, which were delivered before the event.

Held on Saturday, 23 November 2024, the event was perfectly timed to coincide with the school’s weekly OSIS (student council) clean-up day. The climate education activities added new meaning to their routine.

A Day of Learning and Reflection
The day began with welcoming remarks from the school principal, followed by a film screening of *Once Loved* – a Climate Rangers Jakarta documentary highlighting the impact of plastic misuse on global warming. After the film, students shared their thoughts on climate injustice via a Mentimeter poll. Alifah then facilitated a session on carbon footprints. During the lively discussion, students came to a powerful conclusion: humanity has wronged the Earth.

The session ended with tree planting. The soil had been prepared in advance by Mr. Udin and Mr. Mang Iyan, who look after the school grounds. To recognise the students’ efforts, each received a certificate from CarbonEthics, confirming they had also

contributed to mangrove restoration—an initiative by Climate Rangers Jakarta to promote blue carbon solutions.

Shifting Perspectives, One Tree at a Time

“This activity really helped students understand the carbon footprint in their daily lives,” said Alifah. “At first, they didn’t know much, but by using everyday language and slang, the message landed. Whether they switch to public transport depends on the individual—but at least, by planting trees, they’re already part of the solution.”

For the school, the event aligned with the principal’s long-standing concern for waste and carbon emissions. It also strengthened their existing garden, waste composting and broader environmental awareness programme.

A Long-Term Vision for Youth Climate Action

Now, Alifah and the Community Service Division of Climate Rangers Jakarta are committed to expanding climate education across all levels—from primary schools to universities. “We hope activities like this continue to attract widespread support,” she said. “Guiding Jakarta’s students to reduce their carbon footprints is a shared investment in our future.”

Young People on the Frontlines of Climate Change in NTT

Written by Mutia Afianti (Executive Committee of Flobamorata, NTT)
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is a region located on the frontline of climate change. Here, irregular rainfall, prolonged droughts and rising temperatures are real and growing threats to economic resilience throughout the region. In this context, the challenge of balancing economic needs with environmental sustainability has become increasingly urgent.

A Youth-Led Movement for Change

Fortunately, amid these challenges,



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voices for change are rising—especially from young people. The Youth Coalition for Climate Change, or *Koalisi Kelompok Orang Muda Untuk Perubahan Iklim* (KOPI), is a collective movement that has reached over 134 communities across 12 districts and cities in NTT. KOPI is proving that innovation and collaboration are powerful weapons in the fight against the climate crisis.

KOPI promotes community-based

climate action through inclusive and participatory approaches. Its core mission is to empower youth to manage local resources as a form of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The KOPI campaign movement focuses on local climate solutions by youth groups in NTT, working online to raise awareness and educate the wider community about the potential benefits these solutions can bring to climate and community.

In practice, this involves capacity building in the local context, with an emphasis on topics like food security; and the formation of collective business units by youth groups, which promote independence and sustainability through support for localised climate solutions.

Harnessing Local Potential

Eda Tukan, 31, is Chair of the Executive Committee of Flobamoratus (KEF). She sees vast opportunity in the potential of NTT's youth—not only in natural resources like food, but also in crafts, culture and Indigenous knowledge. “These local potentials are diverse. It's not just nature or food, but also crafts, culture, and traditional knowledge,” said Eda.

Managing production at the community level, she believes, is one way to achieve self-sufficiency for the movement. “As a youth-led and largely independent social movement, we understand the need to strengthen our internal capacity,” she added.

Building Self-Reliant Communities



Photo by KOMITE EKSEKUTIF FLOBAMORATAS

To that end, Eda and the KEF team initiated production-based empowerment training for youth across regional KOPI chapters. This training arose from a shared realisation: social movements cannot rely solely on external aid.

“We can’t always depend on or wait for programmes,” said Eda. “If that becomes a habit, it limits our resilience. We must learn to see and maximise the resources already around us,” she added.

External funding and grants often come with deadlines, while the needs of local communities are continuous. “The key to empowerment is growing that sense of agency from within. And when we show seriousness, collaboration with aligned partners will follow,” she said.

From Production to Strategy

Supported by the Samdhana Institute under the NLGF-VCA (Next Level Grants Facility – Voice for Just Climate Action) programme, KEF’s training sessions encouraged participants to go beyond just ‘producing’. They learned to analyse costs, understand markets and identify their target audiences. Taking things a step further, participants were encouraged to consider how their activities could ultimately contribute to combatting climate change. It is this aspect of the production model that makes it unique.

“Talking about production isn’t just about having a product to sell,” said Eda. “The process is long and requires precision, commitment and focus.” A key insight from the training was the importance of professionalism and strategy. Many community groups previously underestimated their production costs, which led to minimal gains—or even losses. The sessions encouraged participants to adopt a more serious, business-minded approach.

“Now, they’re thinking more carefully—planning, calculating and strategising their production models,” noted Eda. Another critical realisation was that profitability and social impact are two sides of the same coin; sustainability is essential to business success, while also being integral to socio-economic well-being.

“Our time and energy deserve to be recognised and valued,” Eda added.



Seeding Hope, One Step at a Time

This initiative proves that big change starts with small, deliberate steps. By building self-reliance through production, NTT's youth are creating a replicable model for climate change adaptation strategies that can be adopted at scale.

"I found the way they analysed things during training really inspiring. We're lucky to have these learning spaces within KOPI," Eda said, before emphasising the need for sustainable learning environments to

support ongoing local climate action.

The Production Management Training provided by KOPI demonstrates the power of collective action, particularly among youth groups working to combat climate change. By adopting a business mindset to address challenges such as environmental protection and sustainability, participants have opened the door to potential long-term solutions.

From Highlands to Coral Reefs: Youth-Driven Production Hubs and Self-Reliance in NTT

Written by Yurgen Nubatonis (Executive Committee, Flobamoratus, NTT)
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

With his small frame, dark skin and wavy hair, Esau Yakob Karmakani—better known as Opos—embodies the typical features of a young man from Alor. Raised in the highlands far from the coast, he now dedicates himself to marine conservation efforts. Today, he’s even a certified “Advanced Diver.”

His love for the ocean began after graduating from Universitas Tribuana Alor, when he volunteered for 3 months with the Alor District’s Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries. This experience led him to join *Thresher Shark Indonesia*, a conservation group focused on protecting sharks in Alor. It also introduced him to the Youth Coalition for Climate Change (Koalisi KOPI).

In early October 2024, Opos took part in a production-based livelihood training programme organised by Koalisi KOPI with support from the Samdhana Institute in Ndetundora II Village, Ende District. “I joined Koalisi KOPI because I wanted to support youth-led movements in Alor and expand my network,” he said.

The Coalition’s focus on climate action, particularly in coastal adaptation and mitigation, resonated with him. For Opos, it was a meaningful way to contribute to

preserving the planet, especially marine ecosystems.

Building a Movement with a Sustainable Backbone

When Opos joined, Koalisi KOPI had just established the Flobamoratus Executive Committee (KEF) in Waingapu, East Sumba. KEF serves to coordinate and connect 12 District Executive Committees (KED) across NTT.

Through discussions with fellow members, Opos learned that the coalition was working to build self-reliance within the youth movement. But how could they ensure that a network spanning 12 districts remained strong and effective?

The answer was “*basis produksi*”, or production-based livelihoods. Each KED began mapping out local resources—products, skills, and knowledge—that could be leveraged to financially sustain their work and grow their impact. Ideas flourished. In Alor, Opos and his team focused on coral reef restoration as a livelihood strategy. For him, what mattered most was the sincerity, commitment and shared concern among his peers.

“Transplanting coral requires diving experience, but none of the Koalisi KOPI members had dive certifications. Their dedication inspired me to get involved,” he said.

Restoring Reefs, Rebuilding Livelihoods

The choice to restore coral reefs stemmed from concern over their degradation due to unsustainable human activities. This is especially troubling, as Alor is renowned for having some of the most pristine reef ecosystems in Indonesia.

representatives from across the province. The experience was eye-opening.

“I found the training engaging because it was informal and fun, but the content really stuck with me,” he said. One key takeaway was how to draft a business plan using tools like the Business Model Canvas. He also learned what it takes to make a business sustainable.

“There are important points we need to consider when designing a business plan so that it’s not just an idea—we have to be

Photo by KOMITE EKSEKUTIF FLOBAMORATAS



Opos and his peers had previously transplanted 15 coral structures off Maimol Beach in Kabola, Alor. Their success reinforced their confidence. The coral structures are now growing and attracting fish, offering the first signs of ecological recovery.

Their ambition? To transform the conservation site into a marine tourism destination—much like the famed Kepa Beach—and use the income to scale up environmental campaigns across Alor.

Learning Business for Climate Action

As a delegate from KED Alor, Opos attended the Production-Based Livelihood Training from 5 to 8 October 2024, joining

ready to act,” said Opos, using the local Alor dialect term *eksen* (to take action).

The training helped him realise how environmental protection and business can go hand-in-hand. He returned with renewed motivation and practical tools to support marine conservation work in Alor.

“The training backed me up with knowledge to keep contributing to our oceans and coastlines,” he said.

Together with his team, Opos has finalised a conservation development plan for Maimol Beach, complete with a timeline and resource needs. It’s a testament to what can be achieved when young people unite with purpose and mutual support.

Reviving Patanjala: Traditional Knowledge in Climate Research and River Restoration

Written by Moch. Caesar Maulana (Sabadesa Institute)
Translated and edited by Chris Alexander

According to the Living Planet Index 2020, climate change has worsened environmental conditions around the world. Extreme rainfall has accelerated riverbank erosion, while prolonged droughts have reduced water flow, disrupted riverine ecosystems and led to an 84% decline in freshwater biodiversity since 1970.

River restoration has become a key strategy in climate change mitigation globally. The European Union's Water Framework Directive, for example, places river water quality as a regional priority. Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) are increasingly being adopted to rehabilitate river ecosystems and mitigate hydrometeorological disasters.

Indonesia's Rivers Under Threat



Photo by SABDA DESA INSTITUTE

In Indonesia—a country blessed with abundant freshwater—rivers are facing a critical threat. Data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) show that 82% of the country's major rivers are polluted, with the majority classified as heavily polluted.

The main drivers of river degradation in Indonesia include rapid land-use change due to urbanisation and industry, mismanaged domestic and industrial waste, and deforestation in upstream areas, which leads to severe sedimentation and ecological imbalance.

A Local Leader Steps Up

In Sukabumi Regency, West Java, 42-year-old Abdul Aziz is among those deeply concerned about the health of local rivers. A youth leader from Cisaat Village, Cicurug Subdistrict, Aziz has long enjoyed adventurous activities—especially river trekking along the Cicatih River near his home. Over time, the deteriorating condition of the river

moved him to join the environmental group *Cicurug Peduli*.

Photo by SABDA DESA INSTITUTE



Through his activism, Aziz connected with the Sabadesa Institute, a local civil society organisation focused on environmental issues. This partnership, supported by Samdhana Institute, sparked a collaborative programme to restore the Cicatih River watershed as a local response to the climate crisis.

The Sabadesa Institute: Restoring Nature, Raising Awareness

Sabadesa is one of several Samdhana grantees supported by the NLGF-VCA (Next Level Grants Facility – Voice for Just Climate Action) project. Their work focuses on restoring natural ecosystems in the Cicatih sub-watershed area and raising public awareness, especially among local residents and stakeholders in the region, about the connectivity between ecosystem health and productivity of the wider river network.

Support from Samdhana has been critical to expand this work and deepen its impact, both in terms of ecosystem health and community awareness. As part of the Cicatih Watershed Recovery Programme, Sabadesa has successfully carried out a socialisation workshop, training on map digitisation,

simulations of river surveys and field exploration of the Cicatih sub-watershed.

The results of these activities, including data from monitoring of the Cicatih River, have been used to compile evidence-based policy recommendations which have then been presented to the Public Works Department through the Water Resources Management Division, the River Basin Center, local government and several private companies in the Cicatih River area that utilise this water as a raw material in their production processes.

With funding support from Samdhana Institute, Sabadesa is working to demonstrate the essential linkages between nature, community, business and government, thereby creating an ecosystem of positive impacts that can ripple outwards into each of these areas.

Mapping, Training, and Field Surveys

The Sabadesa Institute's work began with awareness-raising workshops and programme consolidation, followed by a series of technical training sessions which included digital mapping, mountaineering and field simulations on river measurements. These activities culminated in a full assessment of the river's existing condition and a field survey.

Sarip Hidayatulloh, Director of Sabadesa, explains that the Cicatih River is one of West Java's most vital rivers, supporting water supply, flood control, and biodiversity. Yet the data paint a worrying picture: the river is in a critical state, with a degradation level of 64.2%.



Photo by SABDA DESA INSTITUTE

“The main issues facing the Cicatih River are land-use change along its banks, high sedimentation due to upstream deforestation, water pollution from domestic waste and harmful agricultural practices,” he explained.

The Patanjala System: Embracing Indigenous Knowledge

The workshops brought together local policymakers and community members, successfully establishing a shared action plan and commitment to tackle climate impacts in the watershed. During these discussions, Aziz introduced *Patanjala*, a traditional Sundanese ecological philosophy still observed by communities living along the river.

“*Patanjala* outlines the relationship between humans and nature,” explains Aziz. “This approach offers a valuable framework for integrating local wisdom with modern strategies in river restoration.”

Over the next two months, Aziz and the community group *Incuputu Pangauban Cicatih* conducted a field study of the 54-kilometre-long river, dividing it into 18 sampling points. Equipped with GPS, ropes, harnesses and other tools, the team braved rugged terrain and rainy conditions, often hiking for hours and camping overnight at survey sites.

Findings and Classification of River Zones

Each sample point took between one and three hours to assess, involving river measurements and ecological condition assessments. After completing the fieldwork, the team analysed their data using the Patanjala framework, which divides forest zones into three categories:

- *Leuweung Larangan* (sacred forest)
- *Leuweung Tutupan* (protected forest)
- *Leuweung Baladahan* (utilised forest)

The analysis confirmed that the Cicatih River is in a *lara*, or early critical state, with a 64.2% disturbance level. “This calls for immediate rehabilitation through

a riverbank restoration approach,” Aziz stated during the Field Survey Evaluation and Results Workshop.

From Local Initiative to National Relevance

Rivers play a vital ecological, social and economic role in responding to climate change. Riparian buffer zones need special protection, but poor enforcement and oversight have left them vulnerable.

Restoring the Cicatih River is not just a local effort; it represents Indonesia’s broader stance on environmental protection. Integrating nature-based solutions, cross-sector partnerships and indigenous knowledge can create a pathway toward sustainable restoration. These efforts support both national objectives and international commitments to preserve freshwater ecosystems.

Policy Recommendations and Community Benefits

To conclude the project, Aziz and the local community formulated a policy recommendation document. This outlines the current condition of the Cicatih River and proposes actions including rehabilitation, preservation and restoration of the riparian ecosystem.

The community has also gained significant benefits from this initiative, including new partnership networks, critical baseline data on the protected river zone and, most importantly, a deeper understanding of the *Patanjala* concept. Moving forward, this ethos will be the guiding hand in their continued restoration activities.

Photo by SABDA DESA INSTITUTE





Sekolah Kampung Perubahan Iklim dan Basis Produksi Koalisi KOPI

The **Samdhana Institute** is dedicated to the rights and values of indigenous peoples and local communities. We envision a future in which natural, cultural and spiritual diversity are valued, where communities can enjoy fair and equitable access to land and full recourse to the rule of law. Working alongside local communities, leaders and civil society, we address barriers to social and environmental justice, by facilitating support and helping to build resilience. Together, we are committed to the wellbeing, dignity and development of indigenous peoples and local communities in Southeast Asia.