

HECx Sumatra Workshop personalities

Sally Walker

Wahdi Azmi, Programme Manager, Fauna & Flora International - Sumatran Elephant Conservation Programme (FFI-SECP). Wahdi is a Veterinarian also which is helpful monitoring associated **CRU, Community Response Unit** elephant programmes and camps. We met Wahdi via email through Heidi Riddle. When we asked for people who could be trained ahead of time to take care of planning and ground-level logistics as well as teaching, Wadhi nominated **Harmita Desmerry, Education & Awareness Manager (FFI-SECP)** and **Kaniwa Berliani**, (affectionately called Wawa), **a Teacher specialised in Environmental issues**.

These two Sumatran educators were invited to the three HECx workshops conducted in Bangladesh by **B.A. Daniel and R. Marimuthu**. Their status was Intern Trainees and with each successive workshop they took part in teaching, packing, unpacking, distributing and packing again a very large amount of educational materials. With this experience in hand, they were very much in control of things when we joined them at the first Workshop, held at the Jungle Lodge in Tangkahan Village, from 1-3 December 09. **Edy Sunardi**, associated with the CRU Camp there was contact person and local organiser.

Throughout the 3 workshops, participants were Sumatran-speaking only, so everything had to be translated by Merry and Wawa with help from Wadhi and our Marimuthu. Marimuthu lived in Brunei, South East Asia for some time and was fluent in Bahasa. This was very helpful to the rest of us from ZOO as well as our Sumatran partners.

There was a good crowd of participants, liberally peppered with Aceh CRU people who were hosting the next workshop near Aceh at a government training facility. Halimatussa'diah (Iep) as contact person. The Aceh CRU folks were all totally into these workshops, jumping into activities such as childrens games, drama, painting displays, mapping, role play and all the other techniques we use to teach people to teach meaningfully.

What's that? Teach meaningfully ...? That's "active learning". Get people to relax and have fun while they learn - it works great. They bond emotionally with the theme, the objective and the methodology so that information sticks with them but, more importantly, behavioural and attitudinal change also takes place.

But I must say something about the Jungle Lodge in Tangkahan Village. Tangkahan which means place of transit has been declared an ecotourism area and is managed by the villages Namo Sialang and Sei Serdang. Before, locals misused the forest for their own livelihood and were rewarded by ecological

events such as destructive floods that caused them to wake up. In 2001 the two villages worked together, creating rules to prohibit people from exploiting the forest. They set up a body called Lembaga Pariwisata Tangkahan, LPT or Tangkahan Tourism Institute and took help from Indecon and FFI in managing the whole ecosystem of Tangkahan.

On the way to Tangkahan which is about 2 plus hours from Medan, where you fly from Jakarta, Wadhi explained that it was adjacent to a 1 million ha. national park. What he didn't say is that the Jungle Lodge where the workshop was to take place is like a Magic Kingdom out of a movie set. It is situated right inside the Jungle beside a fast flowing river up on a cliff face with nothing to see except beautiful vegetation, birds, primates, amazing geckos, monitor lizards, and other wildlife while you eat your lunch on the verandha. To balance this luxury, you sleep to the accompaniment of huge but playful rats galloping in the eves of your hut and bats batting around, and mice chewing their way into your room and into your backpack (it happened to Heidi), and no lights after midnight. Not so easily seen are Sumatran orangutans, tigers and elephants... but they are there. Gibbons also can be heard calling and occasionally seen swinging through the trees.

So the workshop went on in the main lodge which had a roof but no walls so that the park paradise was continuously on view. It was a magnificent setting, and once I got a flashlight and a couple of big bottles of Coke Zero, I calmed down and was almost tolerable to be around. I don't see well or even walk well on rough ground so the lack of good light made me more prickly than usual.

The enthusiasm of these participants of the first workshop never waned ... we admitted to them that they were the BEST ever at the validictory. The group from Aceh who were putting on the 2nd workshop stayed till the end of the first one, meaning they had to drive day and night to reach the workshop they were hosting!

The II Workshop took place about two hours from Aceh, 5-7 December 09 at a government training centre. As a venue it was fine and the workshop went very well, but nothing could beat Tangkahan.

Unfortunately I had to miss the Bengkulu workshop but got an opportunity to see some of Banda Aceh tsunami impact, which I will never forget. My driver lost ten family members and got goose bumps whenever he mentioned it. He took me to see the ocean liner which was washed up 3km on shore during the tsunami. It is being retained where it is as a memorial to those who were killed. Villages which were destroyed there have come back again and people go about their lives as if the presence of a giant ship next door was nothing unusual.