

General Data

- **Donor Agency** : Rufford Small Grant (RSG)
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- **Project Title** : Environment Education - raising awareness of forest issues
in Aceh
- **Project Manager** : Dr. Lesley McCulloch
- **Project Location** : Aceh province in the district/municipal of Banda Aceh,
Aceh Besar, Pidie, Pidie Jaya, North Aceh, Lhokseumawe,
Langsa, and East Aceh.

In keeping with EOA's objectives of raising environmental awareness, empowering local communities, and building local capacities, we have designed an integrated programme of environmental education aimed at improving environmental awareness, promoting conservation and encouraging environmental leadership. The programme is primarily implemented in areas where EOA's business cooperative groups are located, and brings EOA business cooperative group members together with other members of the local community to raise awareness of local environmental issues that have a direct or indirect impact on villagers' economic and social life. In most areas, the programme combines distribution of manuals on particular issues—forest conservation, pesticide use, etc—with training workshops and discussion sessions for the entire community.

Achievements in 2006

1. Forest conservation awareness campaign: In the post-tsunami/post-peace process environment, forestry operations, both legal and illegal, have mushroomed in Aceh. As the incidence of environmental problems such as flooding, landslides, and animal-people conflict becomes more frequent, local people have begun to question whether, and to what extent, local deforestation might be the cause. Forestry conservation has thus become EOA's principle environmental focus. With funding from the Rufford Foundation (as well as a small contribution from another donor), EOA has produced a 40-page manual entitled "Forests: Guardians of All Life, How to Become Environmental Leader for your Future." This manual gives a readable but detailed introduction to the biodiversity and vulnerability of Aceh's forests, and proposes a series of conservation measures that are easy for anyone to implement in their daily lives. The Department of Forestry in Aceh has approved this short manual as an important tool toward forest and wildlife conservation in Aceh. It is being used by the EOA environment education team to raise awareness in the villages where we work, and has also been distributed via the provincial Department of Forestry as well as other government departments and NGOs.

2. Pesticide awareness campaign: In addition to the forest conservation campaign, EOA has also spearheaded efforts to raise public awareness about the dangers of pesticide and herbicide use. In Aceh, the use of highly toxic herbicides and pesticides such as Gramoxone, Roundup and Polaris is widespread. Local farmers appear unaware of the highly dangerous nature of these products, which are often bought from local dealers in unsealed bags which display no warning of their hazards. Furthermore, in palm smallholdings and estates it is not uncommon for chemicals to be used without sufficient protective clothing being worn by workers. Toxic runoff further contaminates rivers and streams, sources both of drinking/washing water and of foodstuffs such as fish. In 2006, EOA produced two leaflets for distribution both to EOA groups and to broader village communities, one on pesticides and a second on organic farming techniques.

EOA is producing a series of environmental training manuals, brochures, pamphlets, and other awareness raising tools to assist in our EE programme. We are grateful to the Rufford Foundation for generous assistance in both producing these publications and also in conducting training sessions and informal discussions in many villages in Aceh.

Taking into account local conditions in Aceh, in addition to the focus outlined above, we have held discussions on the following topics: sustainable living, sustainable farming methods, and waste management issues. We have also begun to hold discussions and produce preliminary

handouts on some aspects of global warming to which local people can relate, for example Banda Aceh (the capital city of Aceh) is low-lying and floods regularly as sea levels rise. Secondly, the fact that the rainy season in Aceh has become unpredictable in recent years has brought chaos and poverty, so many people can relate very easily to these implications of global warming.

Our primary target audience is members of our existing network. Under our livelihood programme, EOA has helped establish 30 women business cooperative groups that have around 400+ members. The environment education programme assisted these groups in including environment criteria in their business plan and in doing a small environmental impact assessment of their business.

Within the EOA set of programmes the environment education (EE) programme is one of the most dominant. Our EE programme ensures that environmental criteria are included in our cooperative business concept and also in the EOA indicators for groups of women that will receive revolving loans from EOA. All 30 member groups must ensure their businesses comply with the environmental, social and ethical standards of the EOA microfinance concept. In addition to disbursing funding and ensuring best environmental practice for the businesses, EOA also engages in a much broader EE programme that includes not only members of the business groups, but also the broader village communities.

Environment Conservation Manual

For the period of this project, Rufford Small Grant (RSG) significantly contributed to the publication of two environment education information and workshop manuals: the first is a cartoon book called 'Steps to becoming kinder to our environment', containing several sections with differing themes about sustainable living, including travel, waste management, the use of power such as electricity, and others. The second is a manual on forest conservation called 'Forests: Guardians of All Life – How to become environmental leaders for your future'. Both are available in the local language Bahasa Indonesia, as well as in English, and distributed widely in Aceh, more broadly in Indonesia and overseas.

The purpose of these environment conservation manuals is to raise awareness on a wide variety of local environmental issues among the local Acehnese communities, especially our own (EOA) network of women's fair trade business cooperatives in Aceh. The groups were assisted by EOA by giving technical assistance as well as revolving credit. In addition to the businesses run by the groups, members also make a commitment to learn about the environment and to engage as much as possible in environmentally sound practices in their own business, and to help raise awareness about the natural environment in their villages. To assist in building members capacity EOA runs an extensive environmental education programme.

The manual and the accompanying workshops are not only targeted at members of the EOA women's business network, but at the broader community. As a result of the work of EOA, some villages have established small committees to coordinate the village's response to the ever-changing environmental problems they regularly face. In addition, the manual is being used by several local NGOs such as Aceh Solidarity Forum (ASF), Yayasan Lamjabat, Yayasan Simeulu Listari, and others in their own environment education programmes, as well as by some international donors. Many schools in Aceh have also found the manual very useful: "This manual is excellent, it tells the story of the forest in a very simple and inspiring way. It encourages us to secure this great resource for our future generation – it's a very valuable and easy to use tool for the teachers in my school" (Tinsyah Amaiteng, MAN, Sinabang, Simeulu). The Aceh Department of Forestry has also distributed the manual to all its departments in the districts of Aceh for use in education programmes around the province.

The process of writing the manual was a collaborative effort by the EOA environment education team with input from the local Department of Forestry. A local artist was contracted to work on the illustrations, which he did in collaboration with the EE team to ensure the illustrations complimented and clarified the narrative. The Head of the Department of Forestry, Banda Aceh, Dr Hanifah Affan, also made a significant contribution to the book, as did the Chief of Inventory and Management in the same department, Saminuddin B. Tou. This process itself was a very interesting and fruitful one, and has built a much closer relationship between the department and EOA. We continue our working relationship with them, including in the districts.

This manual gives an extensive introduction and overview of Aceh's forest and the richness of the ecosystem found there. It contains suggestions for activities that local communities can undertake as part of their daily lives, and explains the collective benefit of small lifestyle changes. The manual also tries to encourage people to think differently about the forest, not only as land with economic value.

Dr Hanifah Affan, Head of Department of Forestry in Aceh: *"We are very happy to participate in producing this manual, it's a very important contribution to socialising forest conservation in Aceh. We strongly support this initiative and the work that relate to raising awareness of local people about the importance of the forest in Aceh and in the world."*

We will also share this manual within our line of ministry in Jakarta, our Department offices in the districts, as well as with the schools with which we are working."

Saminuddin B.Tou also from the same department: "We were very happy to input to this manual and grateful for the opportunity to do so. I also would like to thank EOA for giving us one box of this forest manual and their manual on sustainable living – both are extremely useful as I haven't seen other similar publications in Aceh, these are the first that I know of."

ASF requested multiple copies: "The book on sustainable living is very important, it has been very useful for our community work on waste management issues in the west coast of Aceh, it is very practical; we would like to ask for 150 copies to be distributed for the communities. The forest book is also being used by us, we have used the manual to train our staff and they now use it in the community workshops."

Series of Environment Discussions

Environmental problems are becoming chronic in Aceh due to several factors: a) the reconstruction effort requires an unprecedented amount of wood, cement, bricks, stone and other building materials, much of which is being torn from the forests and mountains of Aceh, b) the post-conflict environment in Aceh has seen areas that were previously unfrequented because they were too dangerous being opened up to logging, quarrying, for plantations and other activities.

All EOA staff come together at the end of each month to review the previous month's work, and to plan for the following month. We also share information from the districts about new developments vis-à-vis environment problems (or successes) and plan how to address these within our network. It is also a time for learning; the environment has been a central theme of monthly staff training and discussion sessions. We always invite an outside speaker from either another NGO, government department, donor or others working on the environment that might have some interesting information or advice to share. All staff attend these sessions which can last from 2 hours to a full day.

In addition, the EOA environment education team also makes regular visits to member groups that are located in five areas of Aceh: Aceh Besar, Pidie, Lhokseumawe, North Aceh, and in

East Aceh. Each area shares a set of specific, as well as having common problems. Participatory assessments are conducted with the groups (other women in the village are welcome to join in) during which we walk through the village with an environment check list that will help them identify what issues are problematic, and why. Some of the most common and identified as most urgent problems relate to waste management, sanitation, animal-people conflict, flooding, landslides and other 'natural' disasters. In some cases where villages are in close proximity, we will also hold some joint meetings about problems that extend beyond the boundaries of one village, such as throwing rubbish in rivers and polluting rivers in other ways, flooding and others.

Since EOA has been working in some of the villages for several years, we also have excellent relations with the head of villages and local school teachers, thus the EE team also facilitates activities for the local children, both in an informal setting, and in the more formal environment of the school. In 2007, environment education was, for the first time, included in the curriculum of school in Aceh. However, the capacity of local teachers to implement this is extremely low, EOA has been asked to help in several villages.

On some occasions we do field trips, such as to organic farms, the Greenhands school at IDEP, the local government landfill site just outside Banda Aceh, the Sekolah Lingkungan at Ujung Pancu.

To assist in the process of raising awareness about the environment, EOA produces its own bi-monthly newsletter which carries news about floodings, landslides, and other environmental problems that local people often face.

1. Discussions during monthly meeting (attended by all staff, local coordinators and some group members)

In November 2006, the Sumatran Orang-utan Society – Orangutan Information Center (SOS - OIC), joined the EOA monthly meeting to discuss the situation of the endangered orang-utan and forest issues more generally, with the staff and coordinators as well as some representatives from the Board of Aceh Women Fair Trade Cooperative (AWFTC). Budi Arianto from the Acehese Indigenous People Network (JKMA) also attended to lead a discussion on issues of local customary law and indigenous people's people rights vis-à-vis their land.

In January 2007, Ruth Mumby, an environment consultant from the Aceh Reconstruction Board (BRB) led a highly interactive workshop on the hazards of using and disposing of plastic. Ruth also included in the workshop a session on the cleaning products we use in our daily lives impact on the natural environment. The participants then made alternative personal and house cleaning products from fruit and vegetables, such as face masks, soaps, household cleaning etc. The issue of chemicals contained in health and cleaning products, the impact on one's body and on the environment shocked many in the meeting. Dewi, a participant from North Aceh said: "I had no idea that my soap contains chemicals – Now I feel afraid to use this soap to bathe my children. When I go home I will throw all chemicals out of my house, and tell my family and neighbours to do the same" she said. Recipe sheets were given out in order that participants are able to make the products when they return home, and are also able to share the advice with others in the villages. EOA local coordinators have also assisted to hold several local (village based) workshops following the format of the workshop.

Following from this workshop, coordinators and group members who attended were then able to hold discussions in the groups to raise awareness about the hazards of using too much plastic, and about the issue of chemicals in cleaning products which is of even greater urgency in the villages as washing is done in the rivers and waste water is thrown on the ground or channelled into rivers.

In February 2007, Sarah Gwilym, EOA EE coordinator facilitated the discussion on the issues of global warming and how everyone can do their little bit contribution to make less impact for global warming. The issue of rising sea levels and coastal erosion around Aceh was the ‘hot topic’ of this seminar.

In March 2007, the monthly meeting took place in East Aceh. This is an area of frequent flooding and landslides due to the rampant logging and illegal quarrying. We held several village discussions in this area which included village governance structure; separate ‘fun’ environment sessions were held for children.

In June the EOA monthly meeting returned to the issue of logging and forests, focussing on the non wood products that forest produce and that can be harvested in a sustainable way. Many of the EOA groups live close to forests and recognise the negative impact the post-tsunami reconstruction process and its increased need for wood and other construction materials has had on the villages.

2. Discussions and workshops in the field

Between November 2006 and February 2007, the SOS-OIC mobile awareness unit made regular visits to 6 EOA groups in Aceh Besar to introduce the issues of forest and loss of orangutan habitat. They also facilitated discussions on organic farming in Udeep Sabee and Sapue Paket, two farming cooperative groups in Aceh Besar. In addition, the SOS team also facilitated discussions with the community and kids from elementary school in several villages in Pidie area and Aceh Besar. Similar school-based discussions take place regularly in other areas as part of the regular EOA EE programme.

From November to May 2007 several workshops have taken place where we invited ‘experts’ from other organisations to facilitate. This was a very interesting experience not only for the communities, but also for EOA staff who were able to discuss many new ideas and exchange activity ideas with new networks. These discussions included solutions to animal-people conflict, separating waste and making organic composting for personal use, and the link between environment and personal health issues. Health issues are perhaps one of the biggest worries for local people – but often the link between environment problems and ill health are not identified, but are of paramount importance. Since health is identified as a priority by most villagers, it is an excellent entry point to discussing waste management, flooding, forest degradation, and other environment problems.

From 6 – 29 July 2007, David Susanto, a member of EOA Environment Education (EOA-EET) conducted intensive field visits to groups in three districts North Aceh, East Aceh, and Pidie. The focus of this field trip was to respond to requests for help in finding solutions for environment problems in 10 groups in these areas. David was able (with the assistance of the local communities) discuss the underlying cause of these problems and help begin to find solutions, including advocacy actions to the local governments. All these 10 groups were badly affected by the flash floods of December 2006 which wiped out livelihoods, and badly damaged houses and other infrastructure. As usual, separate workshops/discussions were held for children.

3.Children’s activities

In most of the villages where our member groups are present we also work with children in both the formal setting of the school, and informal settings to raise awareness of environmental issues. This ongoing programme involves many different activities such as drawing, model making, role playing, brain storming problems and solutions and short sketches written and presented by the children themselves. It also involves the EOA team in

some training for teachers who lack the knowledge and access to resources to undertake EE in the classroom. EOA has also been able to assist with resources, thanks to the grant from Rufford and also from other donors. We have provided books, materials for drawing and modelling, videos, and drums and signs needed to begin recycling rubbish in the schools and more generally in the villages. , and generating the stable climate.”