

PROGRESS REPORT TO
WILDCATS CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Strengthening a consensus for
protection of Sumatran tiger in Bengkulu
area of Kerinci Seblat National Park, Sumatra

FEBRUARY-SEPTEMBER 2018

by

Lingkar Institut



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

The project objective is to reduce poaching and illegal wildlife trade threat to Sumatran tiger through practical collaborations between government, religious leaders and forest edge communities and building conservation awareness using Islamic perspective and values.

The project team worked closely with partners of the Lebong chapter of the Indonesia Council of Islamic Scholars (MUI) to strengthen awareness of the Fatwa MUI No. 4/2014 which prohibits Muslims in Indonesia from hunting or trading endangered wildlife such as Sumatran tiger.

These activities had a strong focus to key villages in Lebong district identified by the project team in 2017 as sources of poaching threat to Sumatran tiger in national park forests in Lebong and surrounding areas.

The Lingkar team also started working with the North Bengkulu chapter of the Council of Islamic Scholars in the neighbouring district of North Bengkulu and mosque leaders and preachers in this district are now also routinely socializing the MUI Fatwa during religious and other community events.

Socialisation of the MUI *Fatwa* in this district has been mainly focused to forest-edge villages and market towns where previous investigations by Lingkar Institut and project partners have identified tiger poachers or traders.

The project team also commenced to work closely with local government education department officials and secondary school teachers in Lebong District to prepare to incorporate nature and wildlife conservation into the education curriculum for junior high schools in Lebong district.

This planning has been enthusiastically received by district government decision makers and it is now expected that Lebong district will be the first in Indonesia to incorporate conservation into the secondary school education syllabus.

Eight SMART patrols were conducted by a collaborative Rapid Response patrol team composing rangers from the national park and local forestry service and the local community.

Patrols were conducted routinely and using information from the forest-edge community and mosque congregations and reported six tigers present on patrol routes with only one active tiger snare recorded – in a watershed protection forest adjoining the national park on the Lebong-North Bengkulu borders.

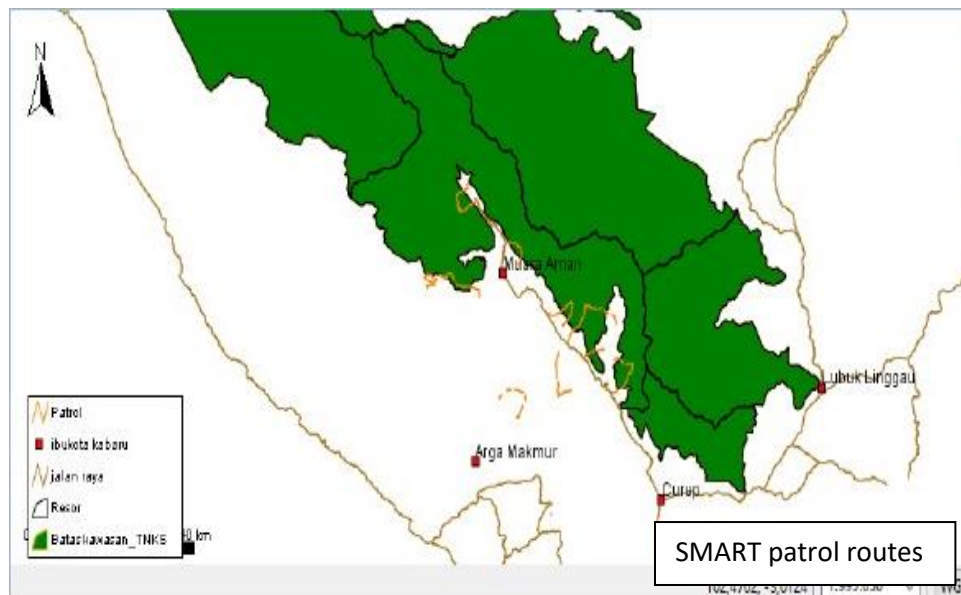
Using these activities, the project team has continued to work to build broad-based support for conservation of tiger and other wildlife and reduce threat from wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade.

Activities and Interim Results

1 SMART Forest Patrols by a collaborative Rapid Response patrol unit.

A total of eight SMART patrols were conducted in national park and park-edge forests in Lebong district with support from WCCA and other donors by a patrol unit composing national park and local forestry service rangers and members of forest-edge communities

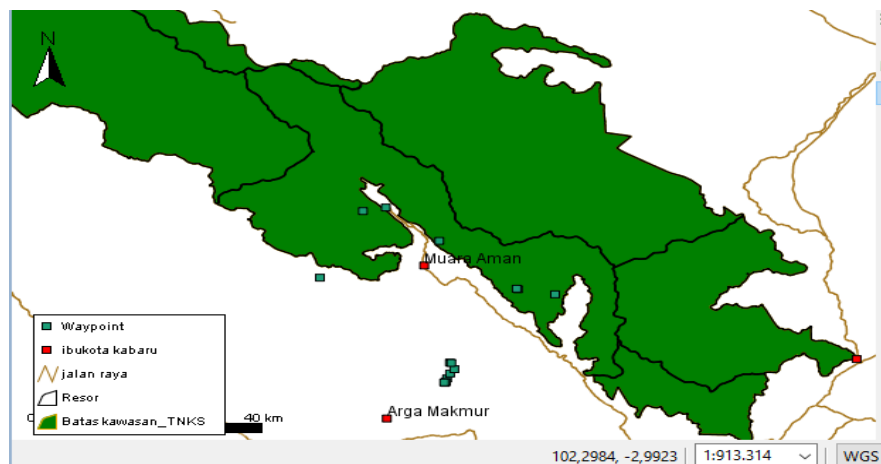
These patrols covered a total walking distance of 120Km (by GPS Waypoint) in a



generally very hilly area with 42 unit days spent on SMART forest patrols in the project area. Patrols reported the presence of not fewer than six Sumatran tiger on these patrols with tiger presence identified by pugmarks, faeces and scrapes/scratch marks and with six of the eight patrols conducted in the project area reporting tiger present (See Map, Right)

Active or potential poaching threat to tiger was recorded on two of eight RRU patrols with one

active tiger snare detected and made safe on a patrol in park-edge forests on the Lebong-North Bengkulu district borders in August.



A second patrol in national park forests in eastern Lebong encountered a poachers' 'camp' and found five tiger cable snares or 'seling' – but no deer snares - concealed in the camp.



RRU team with an active tiger snare destroyed on a patrol in August

These snares were found in a regularly-used camp in an area close to where a TPCU patrol in 2015 reported clear signs of the loss of three tigers to snare poaching.

A third RRU patrol – launched on the basis of community information regarding suspected tiger poaching – resulted in the detection of an illegal muzzle-loader gun (see photograph

below) in a poachers' camp a full day's walk into the national park forest. This patrol was only accompanied by auxiliary national park rangers and not, as usual, a full park or forestry



service ranger and the team was worried to carry it out and so destroyed the gun on site burning and breaking it.

A patrol evaluation meeting subsequently agreed that in the future, such items must be formally passed to the national park or other appropriate government authority for follow up action where possible

This patrol also met two armed men leaving the forest, one carrying a gun likely intended for shooting helmeted hornbill while the second was carrying a larger caliber weapon.

The patrol team was unarmed and so not in a position to detain these men who were subsequently identified as members of a known poaching syndicate, one of whom was arrested in a recent TPCU law enforcement action in Mukomuko.

No active tiger snares were recorded on this patrol but the project team is concerned that some tiger poachers may be changing their method of operation in response to their snares being destroyed.

Two further patrols were conducted in July outside the Lebong project area in forests in central-southern Bengkulu province between Kerinci Seblat national park and Bukit Barisan Selatan national park with the support of Forum Harimaukita (Sumatran Tiger Conservation Forum) to mark Global Tiger Day 2018.

Both patrols recorded active tiger poaching with three active tiger snares destroyed and this may be a sign that some poachers have moved away from Kerinci Seblat area because of patrols and other activities by this team and our partners

Lingkar members met with district or provincial national park officials routinely each month to discuss proposed RRU patrols and results of patrols and investigations with MUI leaders sometimes joining these meetings. All RRU patrols were conducted under *Surat Perintah Tugas* letters of authority issued by the national park section manager for Lebong area of the national park.

2 Investigations and Information collection

Investigations were conducted across the project area to identify wildlife criminals and their networks and to secure information on suspected active poaching threat to tiger and their prey for a rapid patrol response.

A total of 14 investigations lasting between one and three days were conducted in and around the project area by members of the Lingkar team, excluding information collected from informants by telephone and incidental, unplanned direct meetings with informants or suspects.

The key finding during this period was that one of two tiger poachers arrested in an intelligence-led law enforcement action by TPCUs in Mukomuko district in the north of Bengkulu in 2014 is now active again and has built a new tiger poaching syndicate. It is very likely that the two armed men met by a RRU patrol in July were members of the known syndicate. Discussions with district police advise that the leader of this gang is also known to police for arms offences.

A second investigation conducted in partnership with the Bengkulu TPCU team has identified a major illegal wildlife trader operating in a park-edge district capital to the south of the project area with the suspect trading both tigers and pangolin but also drugs (methyl amphetamine *aka* crystal meths).

This investigation is ongoing with information shared between Lingkar and Bengkulu TPCUs but information has not been shared with police as the suspect is known to be 'close' to some senior government officers.

Information from the community on suspected poaching and other forest offences and the wildlife trade – in particular trade in wild songbirds - was easier to secure this year than in 2017 and this is very likely to be a result of socialization of the MUI Fatwa in key villages (*see Activity 3*).

3 Work with religious leaders from the Indonesia Islamic Scholars Council (MUI) of Lebong and North Bengkulu districts to build support for wildlife conservation using religious values.



Socialising Fatwa MUI in Ketenong II village

Activities were conducted in two Kerinci Seblat national park-edge districts in partnership with local leaders of the Islamic Scholars Council of Indonesia to socialize a national *fatwa* issued by the MUI in 2014 which forbids poaching and trade in endangered wildlife.

In Lebong district, where Lingkar worked with district religious leaders of MUI in 2017 to socialize and activate the *Fatwa* MUI among the community, the main focus has been to park-edge villages identified as sources of poaching threat to tiger and other endangered species.

Activities have been conducted in partnership with MUI in four of the five villages selected as a priority for awareness raising and we also worked to mobilise young people 'Nature Lover' groups in some location.

Best results have been achieved in the very remote village of Sungai Lisai where the community now quickly reports on outsiders entering their forests and where the community is becoming very supportive for tiger and tiger habitat conservation.

However in a second 'key village' in Lebong now known as the home of at least two poachers, the community is still blaming neighbouring villagers for poaching in this area and still does not want to take responsibility for correcting behavior of rogue members of their community. The Lingkar team and MUI partners are still working to identify the good solution to this problem.



Training local Nature Lover group in the MUI Fatwa so they can use in their hobby to educate friends and family on tiger conservation

The team has not yet started activities in one important 'key' village as the correct strategy to win support must first be identified. This is a big challenge as this village is the home of the poacher who is a recidivist who was arrested for tiger and clouded leopard poaching in another district of Bengkulu a few years ago.

Lingkar already established good relationship with MUI leaders in North Bengkulu district which border Kerinci Seblat national park to the north of Lebong district during activities in 2017 supported by WildCats Conservation Alliance.

For this district, Lingkar held meetings with MUI of North Bengkulu to brief the religious leaders on wildlife crime in this area – which includes not only poaching and illegal wildlife trade in tigers but also Sumatran elephant.



Lingkar and MUI North Bengkulu then agreed an MoU identifying actions to be taken in this very big district. A training was then provided for North Bengkulu *Ulama* with trainers from KSNP, KSDA, Police and local government.

We had planned for this training to be for 20 mosque preachers and teachers but the religious leaders were very enthusiastic and more than 30 people attend this wildlife and forest conservation training which explain the reason for the *Fatwa* of MUI on hunting and trade in endangered wildlife and wildlife conservation needs and threat to tiger in this area.

Now these preachers and respected religious leaders are socializing the MUI *Fatwa* 2014 and teaching about conservation in Islam in more than 20 mosques in forest-edge villages and market towns in North Bengkulu and MUI hope that this awareness programme may be extended in 2019 to more villages and to schools in this district.

In addition to the formal activities conducted in partnership with MUI in Lebong and North Bengkulu, Lingkar regularly coordinated with MUI leaders of these districts and there was often communication with village mosque leaders to report progress or to discuss problems including where they believed there was poaching or wildlife trade.

4. Development of a “Local Content” Conservation Education curriculum for Junior High School Students in Lebong District.

Activities to secure this objective commenced with focal group meetings between Lingkar – whose members include two provincial university lecturers – and Lebong district Education and Culture department.

These meetings identified key steps to be taken and in August there was signed an agreement between the Education department and Lingkar Institut so there is a formal basis for the next activities to be taken so that conservation become a part of the schools’ curriculum in Lebong district building a generation of young people who understand environment and wildlife conservation needs

Under our project planning we had proposed that Conservation should become a subject for students' study under a Local Content Curriculum and to be fully active from 2020.

However, discussion meetings with senior education officials of Lebong with Lingkar team subsequently decided that a more integrated approach better for the students and



Lebong district education and cultural department officers and Lingkar Institut members after signing of an agreement to incorporate Conservation into Lebong education curriculum

for conservation and that Conservation should not be an 'optional extra' but part of the wider school curriculum.

This mean that wildlife and environment conservation will be included in teaching of various subjects – presently planned to be Biology, Geography, History, Religion – in 10 Junior High School (SMP) in Lebong

from July 2019 (Indonesia school year start in July) and then become part of school curriculum for these subject in all junior high school in the district from 2020

A preparation committee composing personnel of the Lebong education department and Lingkar members has now been formed to draft the conservation syllabus items which will be designed to be appropriate and fit in to the wider Subject and it is hope that by end of project period, the basic teaching materials will have been identified

This change in how we build the Conservation curriculum means that by July 2019 when new School Year begins we must have teaching materials identified and must train approximately 40 Junior High School teachers so they can deliver teaching about conservation in their Subject area.

5: Human-tiger Conflict Mitigation – During this period there were two reports of minor human-tiger conflict in the project area (in 2017-2018 there were no reported human-tiger conflict).

In one case a tiger was reported in a mature village rubber garden close to the national park and in the second case in secondary forest; in both cases these tigers were moving within half a kilometre or less from a village.

In both cases, members of Lingkar Institut team checked the sites and confirmed that the reports were true because there were footmarks but also found that in both cases the tiger was moving back to the national park.

RRU patrol unit then conducted SMART patrol in the nearby forests, in one case joined by an experienced TPCU ranger, to make sure there was no problem in the forest that was causing tiger to come close to village

This was very fortunate in the case of the incident in Turan Lalang village in Lebong Selatan sub-district as the patrol found that a hunter had started to build, but not yet completed, making a tiger snare. This partly-built snare – which was almost ready for activation and needed only the cable attached - was destroyed by the RRU and after the patrol the head of the village and Ulama of the mosque were briefed about how some unknown person had tried to snare the tiger and they agreed to watch for and try to identify the person so he did not repeat this.

6 Other Activities

As well as the main activities conducted above, Lingkar routinely network with other local NGO in Bengkulu – WALHI, AMAN, Genesis etc – to discuss wildlife and forest conservation including threat to forest from mining (gold, coal) and with local police divisions to discuss patrol and investigation results where not too sensitive.

Lingkar was also invited to join a team formed by the acting governor of Bengkulu which proposes forests bordering KSNP in North Bengkulu and Mukomuko districts be scheduled as *Kawasan Ekosistem Esensial* or Area of Vital Ecosystem to safeguard important Sumatran elephant (and tiger) habitat and natural forest corridors.

We also joined national and international conservation NGO and forestry for meetings in Bogor, Java island to give input to develop and agree a new 10-year Sumatran tiger Conservation Strategy and Action Plan.