



BLUE FORESTS  
Yayasan Hutan Biru



Environmental  
Leadership &  
Training Initiative

## COURSE REPORT

# Training on Strengthening Ecotourism Group Capacity in Mentawir

Mentawir, Penajam Paser Utara, East Kalimantan  
May 30, 2024

A field course organized by  
The Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)  
Yayasan Hutan Biru (Blue Forests)



Lely Puspitasari

*Mentawir mangrove ecotourism site.*

**Background:** Mentawir Village in North Penajam Paser Regency of East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia, is renowned for its array of natural attractions. Located in the Balikpapan Bay area, these attractions include mangrove forests, river rafting, bamboo forests, and tropical scenery. Covering an area of 7,689 hectares, Mentawir Village is largely encompassed within the area of the new Indonesian capital city, Nusantara (Ibu Kota Nusantara/IKN), with approximately 7,667 hectares falling under its jurisdiction. Per the development plan for IKN, Mentawir Village serves a vital role as both an environmental buffer zone and a contributor to the region's food security.

ELTI is an initiative of:

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*The Forest School*





*Group discussion at the ecotourism site.*

Mentawir boasts 1,118 hectares of mangrove forests, comprising 1,109 hectares within the officially designated forest estate and nine hectares outside the official forest area. The mangroves within the forested areas are part of a forest concession managed by PT Inhutani I. The mangroves in Mentawir Village are ecologically and economically important. They serve as crucial habitat for key species, including proboscis monkeys (*Nasalis larvatus*), long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*), white-fronted langurs (*Presbytis frontata*), red langurs (*Presbytis rubicunda*), estuarine crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*), and other wildlife. Economically, the mangrove ecosystem supports local communities through activities such as fishing, ecotourism, and the collection of non-timber forest products.

The mangrove ecosystem in Mentawir remains largely healthy and serves as an ecotourism destination for the community's ecotourism group (Pokdarwis). In collaboration with PT Inhutani I, Pokdarwis has established ecotourism trails within the mangrove area. However, the collaboration agreement ended in 2019 and has yet to be renewed, resulting in the cessation of ecotourism management activities in Mentawir. This is a major problem; effective mangrove ecotourism management requires meticulous planning and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Given this situation, Blue Forests-ELTI, in partnership with Mentawir Village authorities, organized a course aimed at enhancing the capacity of Pokdarwis to manage mangrove ecotourism in Mentawir. The rich biodiversity in Mentawir Village holds significant potential for sustainable ecotourism development, thereby allowing communities to gain economic benefits from the forest. The hope is that the sustainable use of ecotourism resources will contribute to the conservation of the mangrove area in Mentawir Village. Improving the management of the mangroves is particularly timely as the opportunities and threats related to the mangroves are expected to grow as Mentawir is increasingly integrated into the new capital city.

**Training objectives:** The primary objective of this course was to enhance the capacity of Pokdarwis members and other stakeholders to effectively implement and manage sustainable ecotourism in Mentawir.





*A representative presents his group's findings from the field observations at the ecotourism area.*



*Course participants in class at the Mentawir Village auditorium.*

**Course format :** The course was held May 30, 2024, in the Mentawir ecotourism area (Pena- jam Paser Utara, East Kalimantan). The course facilitators were Lely Puspitasari, the Blue For- ests-ELTI Indonesia program coordinator, and Sulton Affifudin, the Blue Forests-ELTI program assistant. The lead trainer was Agus Bei, found- er and executive director of the Mangrove Center Graha Indah.

The course started with an introduction to the Blue Forests-ELTI program presented by Puspitasari, followed by a general orientation and training overview by Affifudin. The program continued with a pretest to assess the participants' knowledge of sustainable ecotourism and community group management.

Bei gave a presentation on the principles of sustainable ecotourism management, empha- sizing the need for innovation and creativity to highlight the uniqueness of a place to at- tract tourists. He discussed the challenges and opportunities in developing ecotourism busi- nesses in East Kalimantan and provided strate- gies for navigating the changing demands in the ecotourism sector. Bei also showed a video documenting his journey in establishing the Mangrove Center Graha Indah, illustrating the process of creating an ecotourism site and re- storing degraded coastal areas.

The course continued with a field visit and observations at the Mentawir ecotourism area. Participants were divided into two groups and tasked with analysing the condition of the ecotourism site. Applying the knowledge and skills gained during the morning session, they developed feedback and recommendations for enhancing the ecotourism potential. In the final session, representatives from each group presented their findings and management recommendations for improving the Mentawir ecotourism area.





Course participants at the Mentawir ecotourism area.

**Participants :** A total of 24 participants (20 men and four women) attended the course. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and included community groups from Mentawir and the neighboring villages of Argomulyo and Wonosari; government officials, including representatives from the Environmental Agency of Penajam Paser Utara and the Environment and Forestry Instrumentation Standardization Agency (Balai Penerapan Standar Instrumen Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan/BSILHK); staff from the Nusantara Capital City Authority; and private sector representatives from PT. Inhutani I.

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