

COURSE REPORT

REHABILITATION BEST PRACTICES FOR RIPARIAN RESERVES IN OIL PALM PLANTATIONS

April 24-25, 2018

Danau Sembuluh, Seruyan Regency, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

A field training organized by:
Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI),
Tropenbos Indonesia Program (TBI), and
Goodhope Asia Holdings, Ltd.



PT. Agromas' riparian reserve in need of restoration

Background: Indonesia has undergone a massive expansion of oil palm plantations in recent years, making it the world's largest palm oil producer. This expansion has resulted in a large loss of biological diversity and environmental services provided by the forest ecosystems that have been converted to monocultures of oil palm. In response, many non governmental organizations and other stakeholders have been working to pressure the palm oil industry to mitigate its environmental and social impacts. One initiative, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), for example, is a multi-stakeholder certification scheme that has set up a series of criteria and indicators which companies must adhere to in order to have their palm oil certified as being sustainable.

ELTI is an initiative of: **Yale SCHOOL OF FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**



Mr. Ganapathy Karpan, General Manager PT Agro Indomas, giving a speech to open the morning's field-based activities

Principle 4 of the RSPO Principles and Criteria (2013) requires the “protection of water courses and wetlands, including maintaining and restoring appropriate riparian and other buffer zones.” Riparian reserves (also called riparian or riverine buffer zones or margins) are strips of natural vegetation located along rivers, streams and lakes, surrounded by areas of non-natural vegetation like plantations. The presence of natural vegetation next to water ways provides significant environmental benefits within an oil palm plantation and for downstream water users. Riparian reserves, for example, help to filter out pollutants, stabilize river banks, reduce downstream flooding, and help maintain natural habitats for aquatic plants and animals. On account of these positive environmental benefits, many countries now legally require agricultural managers to leave riparian areas alongside rivers and streams. Many plantation companies, however, lack the technical expertise needed to conserve and restore natural vegetation in these riparian reserves.

This training event was organized by ELTI and TBI in close coordination with Mr. Abrar Ramlan, one of ELTI's training program alumni. Mr. Abrar Ramlan is the Assistant Manager of Conservation for Singapore-based Goodhope Asia Holdings, LTD., a company which has shown a significant commitment to implementing the RSPO principles and criteria (though not without some recent problems). Mr. Abrar Ramlan is currently leading the implementation of a plan to rehabilitate the riparian zones at PT Agro Indomas, one of Goodhope's companies in Central Kalimantan. Mr. Abrar Ramlan asked for assistance from ELTI and Tropenbos in organizing the training, the first phase of this initiative.

Objectives:

This training event was designed to provide managers and operational staff with the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate the planning and implementation of effective forest rehabilitation projects in oil palm plantation riparian reserves. The two main objectives were as follows:

1. To promote and enhance the understanding of the benefits of rehabilitating riparian reserves in oil palm plantations
2. To provide information on restoration techniques and considerations for the development of management and monitoring plans.



Tree planting by participants

Program

Day 1

The training started with opening remarks by Mr. Ilhar Swasono (Plantation Manager at PT Agro Indomas). Mr. Abrar Ramlan then provided information on the background and objectives of the training. In particular, he explained how he had attended an ELTI training event on forest rehabilitation in January 2018, which helped him establish a good understanding of the subject of forest rehabilitation which he is now helping implement in Goodhope's plantations. Dr. Djaka Riksanto (RSPO Technical Manager – Indonesia) then provided information on the benefits of riparian reserves, RSPO principles and criteria relating to riparian buffers, and the stages of effective monitoring and management. Afterwards, Mr. Ujang Susep Irawan (Tropenbos Indonesia) gave a presentation on seed germination and nursery development. Mr. Burhanuddin Adman from the Research & Development Institute for Natural Resource Conservation Technology (BALITEK-KSDA) then gave a presentation showcasing a successful forest rehabilitation program in East Kalimantan and provided further considerations for planning and implementing restoration programs for degraded habitats. For the last session of the day, participants were divided into six groups, which were tasked to make a summary of all the material presented earlier in the day. The summaries were to be submitted and presented by each group on the second day of training.



Working groups of participants



Mr. Ujang Susep Irawan explaining and demonstrating techniques for planting and managing seedlings



Mr. Ujang Susep Irawan demonstrating how to vegetatively reproduce tree seedlings

Day 2

The second day of the training started with a short speech by Mr. Ganapathy Karpan (General Manager of PT Agro Indomas), who expressed his appreciation for this initiative. The event continued with the ceremonial planting of seedlings in the riparian reserve. Mr. Ujang Susep Irawan, assisted by Dr. Arbainsyah, Mr. Burhanuddin Adman, and Dr. Djaka Riksanto, evaluated the participants' plantings and passed on tips for improving their technique. The instructors then guided the participants in hands-on activities related to seed germination and nursery development. After the field activities, representatives from each group gave short presentations explaining what they had learned from the training. Dr. Arbainsyah (ELTI-Asia Program Assistant) then provided an introduction to the ELTI Leadership Program, which the course alumni could apply to for additional training, professional development, and project support. The training then ended with a course evaluation and closing remarks by Mr. M. Akhyar Rizki (EHS Regional Manager).

Participants:

This training was attended by a total of 38 participants from 15 oil palm companies. Six of the companies were subsidiaries of Goodhope Asia Holding, Inc., while the remaining 8 companies are closely located near the Goodhope plantation where the training was held.



Participants and organizers at the Goodhope Academy for Management of Excellence Training Center

Follow-up:

All of the participants actively took part in the two-day training. ELTI and the other training organizers will continue to interact with the training participants through a WhatsApp group, which the participants can also use to share information about the riparian rehabilitation efforts at their individual sites. Finally, one of the training participants has requested ELTI's Leadership Program to provide assistance in conducting a training on primate conservation in a "High Conservation Value" area of the oil palm plantation where he works.

This event was possible thanks to Arcadia, whose Environmental Conservation grants support programmes that protect and enhance biodiversity, and provide field training and academic research.