



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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## Ten More Years! ALTo-Taima village collaboration renewed until 2034

Back in 2006, when the ALTo partnership was founded at the invitation of residents of Tompotika's Taima village, the goal was very simple: working together, could we prevent the extinction of the Critically Endangered and fast-disappearing Maleo bird? At that time, villagers entered into a voluntary agreement to end poaching of Maleo eggs and work with ALTo to protect the Maleos' nesting ground, and this collaborative effort has been spectacularly successful at recovering the local Maleo population—numbers have increased seven-fold since then. Today, the Taima-Libuun nesting ground is the healthiest and most populous Maleo site in the world.

The collaborative effort has also become a source of great pride and joy to local villagers, who take *(continued on p. 2)*



Janina Kraemer

**Thriving at Taima-Libuun.** The population of Critically Endangered Maleos here has increased 7-fold since the ALTo - community partnership began protecting them in 2006. Now that partnership will continue for at least another ten years.

## Monjagai: Let's Guard! New Community Ranger team launched



Aqil Pas

Ranger Diman locates and removes a snare made of fishing line.

the new corps of forest protectors is up and running—and already at work guarding the forest and ending poaching.

Why former hunters? It takes one to know one: they are the ones who've spent the most time in the forest, and know all the tricks of the poacher's trade. As former hunter and now keen conservationist Yudil Dilao explains, "Hunting was my art, my hobby... but I stopped in 2013 *(continued on p. 3)*

If you want to protect a large patch of rainforest, it helps to enlist the aid of the people who know and love it best. At the center of the Tompotika peninsula lies the 800km<sup>2</sup> (300 mi<sup>2</sup>) "Heart of Tompotika Forest" that serves as homeland and critical habitat for countless wild creatures, as well as backyard for folks living in dozens of villages around its perimeter. Earlier this year, ALTo recruited twelve special men from those villages, all of them current or former hunters, and gave them a new job and a proud new identity as forest *protectors* rather than forest *destroyers*. Last month, the essential preliminary training for their new role as Community Forest Rangers was completed, and now



Pandy Isfandri

**The Monjagai Tompotika Rangers: ready and rarin' to go.** At the final training before launching their patrols, the rangers practiced roles and protocols for situations they might encounter in the forest. Policeman Pak Salim (top row, yellow shirt) joined to show support from local law enforcement for the new corps of Community Rangers.



## Maleos - 10 more years! (continued from p. 1)

Sutrisman Labuna, 17



turns each day partnering with AIto staff to guard and monitor the nesting ground.

And now, in late September, AIto and Taima village have renewed our collaboration agreement for another ten years, until 2034. While

previous agreements have had maximum terms of five years, all parties are so satisfied with the partnership that a ten-year commitment seemed more fitting. The regional government, too, has come to take great pride in Maleos' success here, and made their support clear.

This is great news for AIto, for Taima village, and above all for the Maleo as a species, which sadly, outside of Tompotika, continues to decline sharply. But with this agreement, and thanks to AIto supporters, the community-based Taima-Libuun project will continue to serve as an example of best practices and a beacon of hope to other potential Maleo conservation efforts, for at least another decade. *Hidup Maleo!* (Long Live Maleo!) ~

The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation/ Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika ("AL-TO") is committed to helping all of nature, including people, thrive. Our work is centered in Sulawesi, Indonesia – one of Earth's most unique biological treasure-houses. At the invitation of local communities, AIto forges partnerships to protect and restore imperiled species, tropical rainforests, and other natural ecosystems while supporting the dignity and self-sufficiency of local communities in a changing world.

AIto is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States and a registered Yayasan in Indonesia, made possible by your donations. Thank you for your support!

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## Tompotika nickel mining? "Even though they offer money, I don't want this mine."



Pandji Kresno

*Forests Bring Life, Mining Brings Ruin.* Ibu Dorotia's new t-shirt speaks her mind. "This is my place. I don't want this mine."

For the residents of Sampaka village, and especially its Tanah Merah section, the global nickel mining boom spells disaster. With more than a dozen mines permitted or operating nearby, Tanah Merah is in the crosshairs for another large mine which is permitted, but does not yet control the land it wants to mine.

For a few residents, the sky-high prices they've been offered to sell to the mining company are tempting. But for most, no amount of money is worth the destruction of their water, their air, their home. "Me, I'm a poor person," says Tanah Merah resident Dorotia Fone. "But this is my place. Even though they offer money, I don't want this mine. I don't want it."

Some Tanah Merah residents said they share Ibu Dorotia's sentiments, but want to avoid conflict and don't wish to speak out against the mine. So, recently AIto produced t-shirts bearing the slogan *Hutan Bikin Hidup, Tambang Bikin Rusak* (Forests Bring Life, Mining Brings Ruin), and offered the shirts free to anyone in the village. The first 300 shirts went instantly, and more have been requested.

AIto has hosted a number of well-attended informational meetings on mining impacts, and villagers have also asked AIto to attend and "fact-check" meetings hosted by mining representatives.

The future of their village is at stake, and they want to make decisions together. "We want to speak with one voice," villagers affirmed. ~



Pandji Kresno

*Three generations refusing mining.* "Times are good for us right now. Our crops [cloves, nutmeg, chocolate] are thriving, and we just got electric lights to light our evenings. Why would we want to destroy our forests and ruin our water for mining?"



## Community Rangers (continued from p.1)

when I met AITo and found out [the animals I hunted] are protected." Now Yudil and the other rangers, in small teams, have begun patrolling the Heart of Tompotika Forest to prevent poaching, illegal logging, and other destructive practices.

The rangers will liaise with local police, who have been enthusiastically supportive of the effort. AITo is also sponsoring outreach meetings in villages to inform communities about the new ranger team, and about recent changes in Indonesian law that have increased the penalties for poaching. As AITo's Indonesia Program Director Sukendra "Ken" Mahalaya explained, "It's even more important now, and poachers must be told. With the change in law, there is no distinction anymore between light and heavy infractions... If poachers are caught, the impacts will be huge, and they will regret it."

After the training, the new rangers were keen to go right out on patrol. And on their first day, they raided a poachers' hut that was serving as a base for snaring anoa, a rare dwarf buffalo. Tompotika's forest and wildlife may face many threats, but now they have a strong new corps of defenders in the Monjagai Rangers. Stay tuned! ~

**At the poachers' hut.** Though the poachers themselves were not present, the rangers found the horns of a recently-dead anoa, and confiscated 17 anoa snares (above). The anoa is Endangered and found only in Sulawesi.



Sandhy Bawotong

Sandhy Bawotong

## English instruction for AITo staff

One of AITo's highest priorities is to "build capacity" amongst our local staff, who are the future of conservation in Tompotika and all Indonesia. What the staff have requested as their highest priority to that end is instruction in English. Through learning English, they can read the latest in conservation science and practice, communicate with others in the international conservation community, and participate in conferences.

But high-quality English instruction in Tompotika is hard to come by. So, AITo persuaded gifted English teacher Jawan, SPd, a top Luwuk high school teacher, to give our staff private instruction in his spare time. Said staff member Ipan, "Pak Jawan's way of teaching is very fun and easy to understand," while Ahmad added, "I'm lucky to have this opportunity and I'm very happy about it. Thank you!" *Thank you, AITo supporters, for making it possible! ~*



**I am, you are, she is.** Expert English teacher Pak Jawan (L) works with AITo staff Ipan and Agil at the AITo office in Luwuk, Tompotika's gateway city. Instruction is in small groups of the same level.

Sandhy Bawotong

## Follow-up: first Illegal logging prosecution and conviction!

Back in May of 2021, this newsletter reported on the first incidence of an illegal logging prosecution in Indonesia's Banggai Regency, of which Tompotika is a part. Wanting quick cash, a local woman had commissioned a young man to illegally cut and mill one of the oldest, largest, and most ecologically-important trees in the corridor area that connects AITo's protected Taima-Libuun Maleo nesting ground with the neighboring Heart of Tompotika forest habitat. Sadly, illegal logging events in the region have been commonplace, and in the past, would have been ignored by local authorities. But this time, AITo and villagers worked together to demand prosecution of the offenders. "They stole from all of us," people protested. And so, for the first time, an illegal logging incident was taken to court.

It took time, especially due to Covid, but we are gratified to report that, for the first time in Banggai, illegal loggers have been convicted and sentenced! A three-judge panel sentenced the offenders to a fine of Rp 1 million (about \$70) and 3 months in jail, with jail time commuted to probation. It's a start. Make no mistake, a new message is spreading in Tompotika: crimes against Nature are serious, and will not be tolerated! ~

**A tragic loss.** In February 2021, the AITo patrol team caught an illegal logger in the act of felling this huge Mother Tree, critical for Maleos and the forest community. Sadly, it was too late to save the tree, but, for the first time, the perpetrators have now been convicted and sentenced!







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## The Faces of AlTo - Maleo, the Pride of Tompotika

Pandji Kresno



What does a village need most? Since 2014, AlTo has been working side by side with the people of Tompotika's TOWER village, which hosts our second protected Maleo nesting ground. The effort has been hugely successful—Maleo numbers have increased more than seven-fold under AlTo's "Respect for Nature" approach that ends poaching and protects habitat. And everyone is thrilled! Customarily, as a kind of 'thank you' gesture from the international conservation community for their collaboration in the efforts, AlTo asks our partner villages what their greatest needs are, and how we might be able to help. The people of TOWER village are mostly simple farmers and fisherfolk; they live very modestly, and you might expect that they would ask for, say, equipment for their health clinic, or school materials, or repairs to their village buildings.

But when asked what they most needed, TOWER residents had a different answer. On the one hand, they asked for a three-wheeled trash collection vehicle, as reported in AlTo's April 2023 newsletter. But besides that, what villagers wanted most was an emblem of their pride—a statue right on the main road through the village—that would tell the world that people here love and protect their Maleos, and that, here, these imperiled birds are recovering.

And now, thanks to the skilled and sensitive work of Jakarta-based sculptor Ary Dananjaya Cahyono, the pride of TOWER residents is life-like and visible to all. The Maleo pair stand over 3 m tall on a pedestal and are sculpted of a special cement. The new statue was dedicated in an event with village and regional officials on Oct 14. Earlier, a village resident was asked what benefits, if any, she had received from the partnership with AlTo. "Benefits? Why, it has brought back our Maleo!" For the people of TOWER, 'what we need most' is love and pride. ~

