
GPOCP December 2024 - Advocating for Women as Conservation & How to Be a Botanist



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Happy New Year and greetings from Cabang Panti Research Station! I am currently in Indonesia at the research camp with my family and the research team. We had the opportunity to spend New Year's Eve with many of the staff in Ketapang, where we enjoyed good food, games, singing, laughter and camaraderie. We have just arrived at camp and are so excited to see this mast, which you read about in last month's newsletter. I am hopeful for many interesting orangutan follows while we are here.

In the December issue of Code RED, we hear from our Sustainable Livelihoods Manager, Ranti Naruri, about an inspiring event advocating for women's rights, safety, and empowerment.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Empowering Women and Ending Violence

How to Be a Botanist

Our second article is from Ari Marlina, who goes by “li,” our Botany Laboratory Assistant at camp. She shares with us about a special opportunity she had to participate in a botany workshop held by some of the foremost experts in Indonesian botany.

I wish you all peace and joy during 2025. We are so excited to continue sharing our progress with you in the months ahead.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director
[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](#)



Some of the fruits the orangutans have been eating during the mast, designed and photographed by li, Ziya, and Ishma

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Empowering Women and Ending Violence: A Call for Change During the 16 Days of Anti-Violence Against Women

By Ranti Naruri, Sustainable Livelihoods Manager

From November 25 to December 10, the world unites to observe the 16 Days of Anti-Violence Against Women (16 HAKTP), a campaign dedicated to raising awareness about this critical issue. In Indonesia, this annual event has been observed since 2001, highlighting the need to eliminate violence in all its forms, from physical to psychological abuse. It's a reminder that violence against women is not only a violation of human rights but also an assault on dignity, gender equality, and freedom.

Yayasan Palung is a member of the Indonesian Young Women Activist Forum (FAMM I). For years, we have actively participated in initiatives aimed at fighting violence against women and empowering local communities. This year, we took part in an impactful event that brought together men and women from Sukadana and Simpang Hilir Districts to discuss a pressing issue—early marriage—and its devastating effects on women and children.

Fighting violence and oppression against women aligns with wildlife and forest conservation efforts in rural Indonesia in several important ways, especially when considering our broader goals of social well-being, sustainable development, and community empowerment. Empowering women is crucial in building strong, resilient communities. When women have access to education and are free from violence, they can take more active roles in local conservation initiatives. Protecting women's rights, reducing violence, and promoting gender equality are part of a holistic approach to sustainable development.



The community members, men and women alike, joined together to raise awareness about early marriage.

A Community United for Change

I was honored to host this event at our center in Bentangor. There were 20 participants from the community that joined the day's activities. Mr. Budi Irianto, a social service expert from North Kayong Regency, spoke about the dangers of early marriage and its far-reaching consequences. His session aimed to raise awareness about the risks associated with early marriage, including maternal and child mortality, domestic violence (KDRT), psychological distress, and the high rate of school dropouts.

By shedding light on these issues, Mr. Irianto encouraged the community to make informed decisions that could prevent these outcomes. In addition to the informative sessions, participants were invited to create posters as part of a public awareness campaign, sharing key messages to prevent early marriage and its negative impacts.

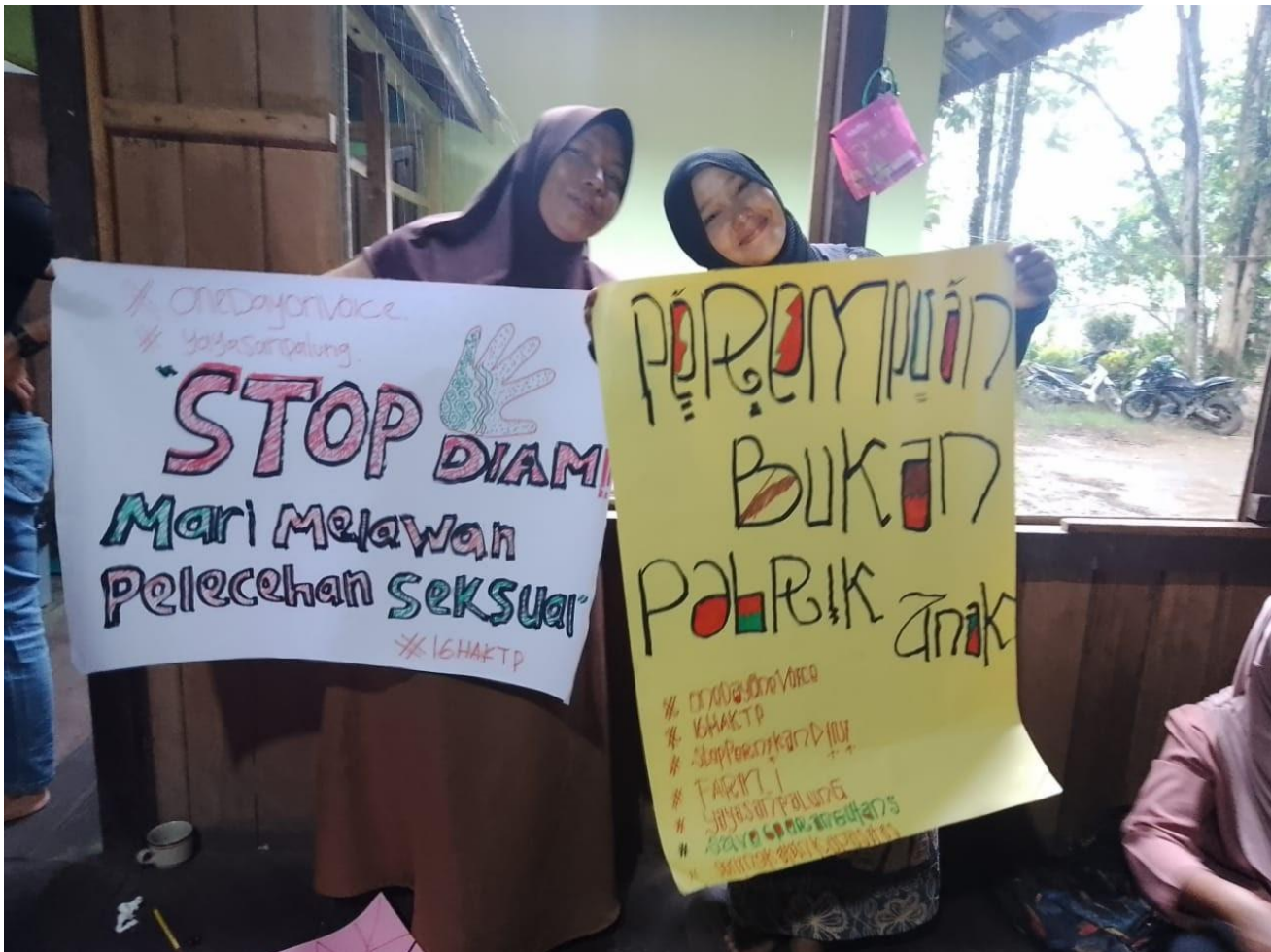


Participants share their posters to raise awareness about early marriage and violence against women.

Shifting the Narrative: Women's Progress and the Need for Awareness

I have worked closely with local communities throughout the region for a long time now, and it is true that significant progress has been made in improving women's access to economic opportunities and education. More women are pursuing their dreams of continuing their education and securing better incomes for their families. However, despite these positive strides, the reality remains grim for many women who continue to suffer from various forms of violence—physical, verbal, and psychological.

Awareness is the key to combating these injustices. While progress is being made, the ongoing violence against women highlights a deeper issue: the imbalance of power between men and women. This power disparity leaves women vulnerable to violence and prevents them from enjoying their basic rights, including the right to security, education, health, and the freedom to work.



"Stop being quiet, fight sexual harassment" and "Women are not child factories" are some of the messages conveyed in the public awareness campaign.

The Power of Community Action

The campaign against violence is not just a moral appeal—it's a call to action. It's a challenge to all of us to take concrete steps toward creating a more just and safe society for women and girls everywhere. This means supporting organizations that advocate for women's rights, participating in gender justice initiatives, and educating ourselves and others about the harmful impacts of violence against women.

As we reflect on the 16 Days of Anti-Violence Against Women, it's important to remember that the journey toward a fair and equitable society is ongoing. The efforts of organizations like our own, in collaboration with local communities, continue to inspire change and foster a collective spirit of care, compassion, and justice.

A Future Built on Equality

Looking ahead, we hope to inspire even more individuals to stand up for women's rights and to take part in the fight against violence. By joining hands and raising our voices, we can work together to create a society where women and girls are free from violence and discrimination—a society where all people can live in peace and dignity.

As the 16 Days of Anti-Violence Against Women draws to a close, let this be a reminder that the fight for gender equality is far from over. Let's continue to build communities where every woman, man, and child can thrive, free from the fear of violence.

How to Be a Botanist

By Ari Marlina (Ii), Botany Laboratory Assistant

"Seize the opportunity, or create it yourself," said Salah, one of the instructors, during the closing night of the "How to be a Botanist" training. Those words stuck with me, prompting a moment of self-reflection. I couldn't help but think back on my journey—how I took small steps and seized an opportunity that eventually led me to become one of the fortunate participants in this transformative training.

It all started when I saw a flyer for the training on social media. Intrigued, I decided to give it a try, seeing it as a perfect opportunity to expand my skills as a laboratory assistant for GPOCP/Yayasan Palung's research program, focusing on managing orangutan food samples.

At first, I wasn't overly hopeful. I knew the competition would be fierce—after all, the training could only accommodate 21 participants, yet there were hundreds of applicants. Nevertheless, I filled out the registration form, meeting the requirements, and hoped for the best. A few days later, to my delight, I received the good news: I had been selected as one of the 13 out of 259 applicants from across Indonesia. Along with 8 other special participants, we formed the final group of 21 attendees.



All participants, trainers and organizers of the "How to be a Botanist" training event in the Rainbow House Nature Conservation Area, Ambawang, West Kalimantan.

This training was a collaboration between the Indonesian Rare Tree Forum (FPLI) and the Native Plants of the Archipelago (YTAN), with support from the Faculty of Forestry (Fahutan) at the University of Tanjungpura (UNTAN). It took place in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, from December 2-7, 2024. The trainers were experts in the field, including Prof. Tukirin Partomihardjo – Expert in Botanical Ecology (Indonesian Rare Tree Forum); Prof. Cam Webb – Botanical Ecologist (Herbarium, University of Alaska Museum of the North); Randi Agusti – Botanist (Natural Capital Foundation); Prima Hutabarat – Botanical Expert (National Innovation Research Agency/BRIN); Arief Hamidi – Botany Expert (Fauna & Flora Nature Together); Iyan Robiansyah – Conservation Expert (BRIN); and Wisnu Ardi – Botanist (BRIN).

This training was inspired by the growing awareness among botanists and ecologists about the challenges facing the world of botany. As Randi Agusti aptly put it, "Not only are plant species endangered, but Indonesian botanists are also starting to become extinct." The goal of the training was to inspire young Indonesians to step up and help save the country's rich biodiversity.



Plant sample identification practice in the field.

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Throughout the program, we gained invaluable knowledge that is not commonly accessible to the public. The curriculum was designed as both an introduction to and encouragement for aspiring botanists to continue contributing to the world of flora. The sessions combined lectures with hands-on practice, covering topics such as the role of a botanist, plant systematics & taxonomy, rare trees of Indonesia, Indonesian plant conservation, the IUCN Red List and plant assessment, forest ecology and applied dendrology, plant data management, collecting wet and dry samples, including DNA samples, and field data collection techniques and high-quality photography for plants.



li, planting a tree (left) and practice making specimens and processing data (right).

Several key takeaways resonated deeply with me, especially in relation to my work. One important lesson was that there are no rigid or specific rules for documenting plants. It all comes down to personal style, but identifying plant characteristics clearly is crucial. Even if you haven't been able to identify a specimen to the species level, collecting and recording plant information still qualifies you as a botanist. Taxonomic naming may be revised over time, but the act of documentation is invaluable.

This experience has reinforced my commitment to diligent study. It reminded me that every piece of knowledge is a lesson, and as a participant, my ultimate dream is to become like one of our esteemed instructors.

During one of the sessions, Dr. Cam Webb shared his experiences at Cabang Panti Research Station, even showing photos from the 1989 Cabang Panti team. I was thrilled to learn more about a place I knew well, and it made the discussions feel more familiar and open. The opportunity to learn from such an expert did not end with the training. Prof. Webb also visited the Cabang Panti Research Station from December 12-16, 2024, and I was fortunate to continue learning from him in person. This felt like an advanced bonus session, and I'm grateful for the extra time and insights he shared with us.



Prof. Cam Webb visits Cabang Panti: Plant species recognition practice in the field (left); Group photo at at camp (center); The 1989 Cabang Panti team (right).

Now that I've returned to my daily activities in Gunung Palung National Park's Cabang Panti Research Station, I feel energized by the knowledge I've gained. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to GPOCP/Yayasan Palung for supporting my professional growth, both through material resources and non-material encouragement. Their commitment to the development of staff capacity is truly invaluable.

I also want to send my best regards to FPLI, with the hope that they continue to flourish and bring more opportunities like this to young botanists in Indonesia.

Management of Cabang Panti Research Station is conducted by the Gunung Palung National Park Office (BTN-GP) in collaboration with GPOCP/YP. Scientific research is carried out in conjunction with the Faculty of Biology at Universitas Nasional (UNAS) and Boston University.

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."

~ John Muir



Our Contact Information

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation
Program
P.O. Box G
1661 Massachusetts Ave
Lexington, MA 02420
1-617-353-7723
<https://www.savegorangutans.org/>

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Yayasan Palung
Jl. Kol. Sugiono, no. 28, RT 013/RW 05 Sampit,
Kec. Delta Pawan, Kabupaten Ketapang,
Kalimantan Barat 78811, Indonesia
www.yayasanpalung.com

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