

Community creates own solution for flooding

Cipinang Elok Dua housing complex in East Jakarta could become an example of how its residents transformed the barren and persistently flooded neighborhood into a green area over a 10-year period.

Now, tall trees with thick leaves growing from the roadside medians, creating a vast refuge of shade protecting everything beneath from the intense heat. Lush foliage makes various street corners in the neighborhood far more beautiful.

“It was not always like this. Ten years ago it was the complete opposite,” RW 10 community unit chief Saksono Hoesodo told The Jakarta Post on Saturday.

Residents faced various different environmental problems 10 years ago. Apart from the area’s barren land conditions devoid of green areas, they also had to deal with excessive waste and floods.

The community unit, spread over 32 hectares of land, housing 576 families responsible for 13 cubic meters of waste every day, while garbage trucks are only capable of carrying around 11.5 cubic meters each day.

“So, there has been an accumulation of around 1.5 cubic meters of trash every day,” explained Saksono, who had formerly served as City Sanitary Agency chief.

The pile up of trash caused additional problems when rubbish accumulated over time when gutters clogged the connection to the entire sewer system nearby Cipinang River.

Coupled with the fact that the volume for the community unit is usually lower than more populous surrounding areas, this often caused severe flooding when the rainy season arrived, with inundation failing to subside for many hours on end.

The worst floods occurred in 2002 and 2007, with floodwaters in 2002 resulting in a one-meter high inundation and the one in 2007 a 40-centimeter high. Both floods heavily traumatized residents, Saksono said.

Things began to change for the better in 2005, when the community unit received a Rp 9.5 million (US\$1,073.5) from the Jakarta administration as part of the latter’s city greening program.

The residents decided to use the money to buy a compost machine and establish a compost mill, with the goal of reducing waste.

“At first, it was not a unanimous decision,” Saksono recalled, explaining that those who lived around the projected compost mill area rejected the plan because they feared the mill would spread a hideous smell and be a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Currently, the compost mill can take up to three cubic meters of organic waste every day.

To solve the flood problem, Saksono decided to encourage biopores in his community after obtaining the idea from a relative working as an environmental engineering lecturer at the Trisakti University in West Jakarta.

The biopore method was devised by Bogor Institute of Agriculture researcher Kamil Brata, who made it public in 2007. It involves digging a one-meter deep hole with a 10-centimeter diameter and filling it with organic wastes, such as dead leaves and food leftovers. The intended goal was to attract worms, which will process the waste and turn it into compost in 40 days.

Saksono, however, decided to use the method to prevent floods from inundating his neighborhood, because he had already established a compost mill there.

“We began digging these biopores in late 2008. There were 500 holes initially,” he said, adding that more and more holes were dug after that first batch turned to be successful. (mim)

In formulating the WCPA Asia Program, a steering committee was established in 2009 and held its first meeting in Bangkok.

The committee's first meeting brought together regional experts to discuss challenges and opportunities and share experiences and information on protected area management across the region.

The main areas addressed during the first meeting were climate change, landscape connectivity and governance reform.

Following the formalization of the regional structure, WCPA Asia has developed a strategic plan where the main focus of the IUCN in Asia is to build recognition based on sound science to support livelihoods, especially for the poor, based on sustainable management of natural resources.

Bringing global conservation direction to Indonesia, as member of the IUCN, has a strategic role in its bid to preserve biodiversity, sustain development and mitigate impacts of climate change.

According to the IUCN, Indonesia is one of the world's seven richest countries in terms of biodiversity. It is home to 10 percent of the world's flowering plants, 12 percent of the world's mammals and 17 percent of the world's reptiles, amphibians and birds.

Despite its potential, Indonesia is faced with significant challenges due to development of palm oil plantations, encroachment of industrial plantations and forest fires. Forest law enforcement and governance are also among the major challenges Indonesia has to deal with.

Learning from global trends in addressing issues concerning biodiversity, Indonesia should prioritize improving governance in order to support effective environmental management, increase stakeholder participation, dedicate further resources through incentives for developing ecotourism in protected areas (such as national parks), enhance capacity building for forest managers, increase the number of forest rangers, promote public awareness and partner with local NGOs and international organizations to address climate change.

As a large country, Indonesia should also ensure effective laws are put in place to avoid illegal logging and deforestation.

In addition to those key areas, the government should also reconfirm its commitment to protecting the environment by exploring possibilities to increase sustainable use of the country's natural resources.

Conservation is not only about preserving and protecting, but also utilizing resources sustainably based on definitive management objectives.

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