

THE URGENCY TO RESCUE THE SUMATRAN RHINO POPULATION



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In 1990, during the preparation of the 1993-2003 Indonesian Rhino Strategy and Action Plan (SRAK), the number of Sumatran rhinos was estimated to be around 400 individuals. Many protection efforts have been made by the government and civil society. However, the fact is that experts at the 2019 Emergency Action Plan workshop, based on some information, estimate that the number of Sumatran rhinos in the wild has decreased to less than 100 individuals.

The causes include, among others, the practice of hunting and trafficking of animals, habitat degradation and fragmentation, and diseases of the reproductive system. Therefore, urgent and real steps are needed, as well as the collaboration of all parties in preventing extinction and restoring the rhino population to a safe level.

As an effort to save the Sumatran Rhino population, the Government of Indonesia has prepared an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) to Save the Sumatran Rhino Population 2018-2021 (SK Dirjen KSDAE No. SK 421 / KSDAE / SET / KSA.2 / XII / 2018 dated December 6, 2018). This RAD is a strategic, urgent, revolutionary and high priority step to save the Sumatran rhino from extinction. This RAD is very important, considering that currently the population is small, the breeding rate is low, the population is isolated and not viable, and the threat of hunting and habitat loss is high.

The KEHATI Foundation through the TFCA-Sumatra and TFCA Kalimantan programs have programs to protect key species in Indonesia, including the Sumatran rhino. Funds spent on species protection in support of RAD are worth nearly Rp. 100 billion in Sumatra, and around Rp. 16 billion in Kalimantan.

"The KEHATI Foundation through partners at the local level and together with all parties will continue to support biodiversity conservation programs in Indonesia, including saving the Sumatran rhino, both in Sumatra and Kalimantan. In order for this goal to be realized, we hope that the RAD that has been prepared can be in line with the local government's medium and long-term development plans," said the Executive Director of the KEHATI Foundation, Riki Frindos.

Conservation of the Sumatran rhino is very important for Indonesia. In addition to its critical status (critically endangered), this animal that likes to eat young leaves has the function of regenerating the forest by growing new shoots from the leaves it eats. Due to the long range

of roads, the rhino is also a dispersing agent for seeds through the seeds of the forest that stick to its body. In addition, the rhino opens a pathway of thick vegetation for other wildlife.

Safeguards by the Tropical Forest Conservation Action (TFCA) Program

Through the existing funding scheme, the KEHATI Foundation's TFCA Sumatra Program focuses on supporting the implementation of the recovery of the Sumatran rhino population through several programs, among others, first, intensively protecting populations that are still viable in their habitat. This program massively protects the existing rhino population to develop naturally. One of the activities is the establishment of an institutional patrol team and capacity building of patrol members through various training facilities and development of the patrol team with the community. Apart from having an impact on protecting the rhino population, patrols also have a direct impact on protecting forests and other animals. Second, it provides accurate data on the condition of the population for making informed conservation decisions. TFCA Sumatra partners conduct occupancy surveys to determine the distribution, estimated occupancy rate of represented habitat blocks, and study the factors that determine the presence and occupancy of rhinos in the TNGL, TNWK and BBSNP landscapes. To support survey activities, TFCA Sumatera provided 317 camera traps which were distributed to the 3 national parks. Isolated rhino populations will be rescued (rescue) to facilitate their semi-natural breeding in certain locations known as Sanctuary.

Seeing the emergency rescue of the Sumatran rhino, TFCA Sumatra also provides and encourages the formation of a conservation strategy and action plan (SRAK), and supports the steps of the Rhino Emergency Action Plan (RAD). RAD with the short term goal is to produce as many rhino calves as possible to be returned to their natural habitat, and protect the population in their natural habitat. It is hoped that RAD can synergize and be translated into a regional spatial planning system, as well as in line with the long and medium term development plans of both central and regional governments.

For the Sumatran rhino rescue program in Kalimantan, another KEHATI Foundation's special program, namely TFCA Kalimantan, through its grant recipient partner ALeRT (Alliance for Sustainable Rimba Terpadu) has succeeded in rescuing a live specimen of a female Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus Sumatrensis*) named Pahu from the forest area of Kampung Besiq, Damai District. . The rhino will become one of the inhabitants of the Rhino Sanctuary in Kelian (East Kalimantan) to be bred in an ex situ location.

Based on survey results and information from the community, it is predicted that there will be at least three pockets of rhino habitat covering 400,000 hectares in West Kutai, East Kalimantan. In the last condition, Badak Pahu was observed to be in good health, weighing up to 360 kg.

ALeRT activities supported by TFCA Kalimantan include social surveys and rescue operations to asylum locations, asylum development, health management and asylum operations. The Sumatran rhino conservation led by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has received support from various parties, such as private companies, local NGOs, and local governments, namely the West Kutai Regency Government and the East Kalimantan Provincial Government. Apart from the Sumatran rhino, several Indonesian endemic species are also included in the conservation program by the KEHATI Foundation, namely tigers, elephants, orangutans by TFCA Sumatra, and ivory hornbills, orangutans, proboscis monkeys, dolphins and banteng by TFCA Kalimantan. "The KEHATI Foundation continues to be committed to conserving biodiversity in Indonesia, including endangered species. This is to maintain the sustainability of life in Indonesia and a form of our responsibility to future generations, because biodiversity is the future of mankind," concluded Riki.

GRANTS PROGRAM

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