

**“Keep the soil fertility and forests for the sovereignty of the environment”  
by JRKDem**



**Script of audio production for Stories from the soils audio series**

Forests are natural resources that we must keep and save. It contains biodiversity including forests as source of flora and fauna's life, source of springs; preventing flooding and erosion also maintain the soil fertility.

The damage of forests region led to deforested forest, critical land, and drought of springs, extinction of flora and fauna as well as threat of natural disasters.

Research data in 2009 issued by [PPLH Mangkubumi](#) stated that the damage of forests in Tulungagung region has reached more than 50% of 40,000 hectares of total forest area in the north and south of Tulungagung. This forest damage is caused by illegal logging that occurs massively. This illegal activity is done by individuals, as well as organized groups. In addition, there are still communities who cut down the forest for farmland, coupled with the activities of excavation (mining of rocks and soil) that contributes to forest destruction.

On this occasion, we present the results of an interview with Muhammad Ichwan Mustofa, Director of the Environmental Training Center (PPLH) Mangkubumi in Tulungagung. In this interview, we discuss the theme of "Keep the soil fertility and forests for the sovereignty of the environment". Here are the results of the interview.

**Noor Chasanah (host):**        **First, could you say your full name and where you work?**

Ichwan Mustofa:        Let me introduce myself, I'm Muhammad Ichwan Mustofa from The Centre of Environmental Training , an NGO that is concentrating on issues of the forestry governance and environment in Tulungagung also in region of East Java.

**Noor :**    **What are the activities that have been done by PPLH so far?**

Ichwan :    Actually, PPLH focus on three issues. The empowerment of forest community, the empowerment of riverbank community and campaigner issues related to encourage better governance. Besides, forestry issue, we empower communities not to damage the forest, not to do illegal logging, we also act as facilitators in territorial conflicts in forest areas, especially in Tulungagung.

**Noor : So far, what has been the response of governments to the existence of PPLH Mangkubuwi?**

Ichwan : To this day we are still supported by civil society and by community. This is becomes vitamin or a power so PPLH until now still has activities and is still at the forefront in order to defend the interests of society. The government has had a variety of responses, some of them (made us) happy because PPLH has been involved in the development process, but also there (are some) that (they) do not like because it might be considered a threat. For example, PPLH frequently criticized the government policies that we consider do not consider the preservation of the environment and the communities in areas of forests and rivers.

**Noor : In general, how do you see the condition of forests in Tulungagung now?**

Ichwan : Actually our forests are divided in two; i.e the forests which is into concessions of Perhutani (Indonesian State Forestry Enterprise) and community forests. Concession forest in Tulungagung reach to more than 100,000 hectares be the area that managed by Indonesian State Forestry Enterprise i.e Perhutani, it is divided of KPH Kediri and KPH Blitar. The results of our monitoring on those forests in Tulungagung (is that they are) getting damaged or (that) deforestation is higher from 2006 until now. We saw the forest cover in Tulungagung is now only 30%. That means that about 70% of its condition was critical, then the damage factor due to mining that had been so long damaging the environment. Also, we have discovered massive illegal logging in forest areas of Perhutani. According to the study of PPLH Mangkubumi, in Perhutani they failed to manage the sustainability of the forest and to conserve it for the community. On the contrary, a forest which is managed by the community increasingly its sustainability with indicators that the cover land of the forest is good.

**Noor : How vast is the level of deforestation in Tulungagung, approximately how many percent of the whole forest?**

Ichwan : In Tulungagung we see a deforestation level of about 70% with indication we can see a map of land cover, so the land cover of that forest was already very critical. We see (while we are in) in the field many occurrences of illegal mining in Tulungagung in the Perhutani area and Perhutani has been silent. We suspect it is the same case of illegal mining but Perhutani has not done anything recently. There is the case of Mr. Salim Kancil. Then, the Perhutani had disciplined them but it was 10 years ago. Occurrences of massive illegal mining in Perhutani land damages the forests. Both transfer functions of forests become agricultural land. Thirdly, we see almost every year that disaster occurred in Tulungagung. It began

with floods, landslide, and tornado... This is an indication that actually the system of our forestry is damaged badly.

**Noor : Is there many illegal logging occurring?**

Ichwan : Now it has reduced because the forest is almost gone, but maybe 5 or 3 years ago, cases of illegal logging were still going on with the forgery of documents.

**Noor : Deforestation is closely related to the soil conditions in the forest itself, how is the soil conditions in the forest of Tulungagung at this time?**

Ichwan : Tulungagung is divided in two. In the north Tulungagung, the governance has been pretty good so there are many source of springs also many plants that are semi agro forestry (agriculture and forestry united) because the contour of the soils is good and a lot of hara substance. It is different in the southern Tulungagung area. It has hills, rocky stones and it can only be cultivated during the rainy season when the dry season is almost very dry and nothing plants such as corn, palawija.

**Noor : Mostly in some areas that the forests barren, soil conditions in the rainy season cause landslides, does erosion and landslides also happen there?**

Ichwan : This happened in the north. In the northern part, the soils is rather loose and added with the forest conditions that are no longer sustainable it means the wide cover of forest is very reduced and minimized. So, when the rain season is quite long, there are occurances of landslides. PPLH records from 2008 till now show more than 20 cases of the landslides of houses; roads and agricultural land that are relatively severe. Each year, landslides occur 2 to 3 times.

**Noor : So far, what are the activities that have been done by PPLH related to repair the conditions of soils and forest which are mostly damaged in Tulungagung region?**

Ichwan : In 2010, we cooperated with an NGO in Jakarta. We did a conservation (project) in several sub districts in the southern Tulungagung. When the dry season came, the communities are not in shortages of clean water. We did a conservation activity; planting in the riverbank area, in the area of protected land in order to save the water, and we are grateful for good results. Plants like Trembesi, fruits that we plant with the communities in 2008 now it has already been harvested. Since 2011, PPLH has routine cooperation with Jasa Tirta company. Every year we get ration of 3 or 4 groups to increase the seeds in the region that have potential source of spring. In 3 years, we supported 3 places and 3 villages to do the reforestation to the farmer groups.

**Noor : What is the role of the community for conservation activity?**

Ichwan : During this time, PPLH acted as a facilitator to PJT as partner, we are not directly dropping. Communities themselves define, manage and spend the need of plants. The plantations are plant in the lands belonging to the communities, so that they have a concern for keeping it.

**Noor : What are barriers or obstacles still faced by PPLH to do the efforts to repair the forest and soils damage in Tulungagung?**

Ichwan : I see the role of government who has *tupoksi* (main duties and functions) to perform coaching through the forest department, through field officer, still less optimize to provide coaching to the farmers' groups. They come when there is a problem, if there is no problem they do not come, even though actually in the field a lot of problems are faced by forest farmers (farmers of agro-forestry). Second, the government support for NGO's works is also very minimal. They support but there is no support (support through policies is very minimal) but we still have consistent spirit in the empowerment movement of forest farmers community.

**Noor : What message is to be conveyed by PPLH to the community related to how they can participate to protect the forest areas in Tulungagung and its surrounding?**

Ichwan : First; we appeal to the people who are living in the forest areas to be wise and prudent to manage the forests sustainably, we use for the community interest with a note that it does not damage the forest. Secondly; we appealed to the local governments who have (control) the forest area to have a concern for the commitment of the empowerment of forest communities so that the forest conditions are not increasingly deforested each year but should be more sustainable. Third; a massive collaboration works between communities, civil society, NGOs and local governments is needed in order to restore the forest conditions which are already very damaged in Indonesia, especially in East Java.

**Noor : What is the motto of PPLH Mangkubumi?**

Ichwan : PPLH Mangkubumi is for environmental sovereignty, because we see our living environment is not sovereign. The indicator is that still a lot of our natural resources are exploited by foreign parties, the companies that do not have a commitment in order for the preservation of the environment. So we continue to encourage (to work towards) an environment (that) is sovereign. If we (are) sovereign, we will (be) independent. (At this time), we see (that we are) not independent in terms of environment and forest governance in Indonesia.

**Listeners, there is the results of our interview with Muhammad Ichwan Mustofa of the Environmental Training Center (PPLH) Mangkubumi in Tulungagung. Hopefully what has been presented, can be a motivation for us to contribute in preserving the soils and forests around**

**us. I'm Noor Chasanah that guides the interview this time will withdrew from the air wave. Greetings Democracy.**

This event is presented by the Community Radio Network for Democracy (JRKDem)

**"This segment is part of an audio series related to the International Year of Soils. It has been produced with the support of the World Association of Community Broadcasters, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2015."**