

Rochester Academy of Science Larry King Memorial Lecture
Saving Rainforest with a Stethoscope and Hoof Trimmers

Loss of rainforest in Borneo from logging dramatically increases every year with one exception. Tropical rainforests are the lungs of our planet as well as provide the last refuge for critically endangered animals such as Borneo orangutans. Our (www.healthinharmony.org) unique approach of radical listening to logging villagers identified community-led, sustainable solutions to reverse poverty and identify alternative revenue streams to logging. The top reason for logging was to pay for expensive, remotely accessible health care. Loggers embraced capacity building opportunities including small scale livestock farming, commercial level compost production and organic farming of abandoned slash and burn plots. Ten years after launching an incentivized community health care program providing 70% subsidy for patients living in non-logging villages as well as accepting non-cash payments such as manure & compost has resulted in an 86% reduction in logging families surrounding Gunung Palung National Park's 225,000 forested acres. New access to affordable, high-quality health care has improved health metrics including a 68% decrease in infant mortality, 62% decrease in cough of 3 weeks duration (tuberculosis), 50% decrease in diarrheal disease, 27% decrease in fever, 16% decrease in births per mother and 26% increase in childhood immunizations. Our integrated health care and conservation model emphasizing radical listening to reverse trends in poverty transforming lives of stakeholders may be replicated around the globe from the Borneo to Rochester, NY.

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