



Ibu Bumi Orangutan

September 2025

Conservation Program at Gunung Leuser National Park



**Sumatra
trekking**

About

- Ibu Bumi Orangutan was initiated Non-Government Organization (NGO) established in Spain. The organization is focused on rural development and environmental education such as conservation of endangered species and forest habitat, restoration of degraded ecosystems that link to climate mitigation and generating income for local people.
- Our NGO, Ibu Bumi Orangutan, operates in an area of the Bahorok National Park community, which is highly exposed to deforestation and habitat loss. To address this problem, we are waging a relentless struggle to establish a system of ecotourism and sustainable agricultural development.
- Our organization goal is to fulfil a unique role, that of providing education, awareness, equitable development and preserve species such as the critically endangered Sumatran tiger. We will pursue this goal through a combination of capacity building, policy implementation, awareness campaign and field project.

Our Team:

- IBO has developed a strong team of local, national and international professionals committed to conservation and community development in Sumatra.
- They have a range of educational backgrounds, are well-respected within local communities and amongst government stakeholders for their work and commitment.
- They have developed strong political, local cultural and community relationships.



The urgent need for conservation

Gunung Leuser National Park (GNLP) is an area of extraordinary biodiversity, including the world's highest density of threatened Orangutan populations, as well as Tiger and Elephant populations. It is a critical habitat for Sumatran tigers, with a population estimated at over 50 individuals. The NP also harbours many rare and threatened mammals, plants, birds, and fish species.

There are several critical major threats to the ecosystem including:

- Habitat destruction: Illegal logging, encroachment, and clearing for plantations (oil palm and rubber).
- Poaching: Illegal hunting is a significant problem.
- Fragmented Corridors: Wildlife corridors have been cut off by roads and settlements.

The root causes of these threats stem from socioeconomic disparities, inadequate public policies, and insufficient law enforcement.



The proposed solution



Community-Based Forest Protection

- **Project Location & Context**
- **Location:** Sapo Padang Enclave and the buffer zone of the Leuser ecosystem in Bahorok, Langkat, North Sumatra.
- **Local Community:** The ethnic majority are Karonese, comprising about 10,331 households across 3 villages.
- **Project Area:** 47,000 ha of forest in the buffer zone, which is highly vulnerable to damage.

Proposed Strategy

- **Empowering Local Communities:** Provide greater opportunities for community participation in forest protection and sustainable management.
- **Land Tenure Security:** Ensure the status of community-owned land to reduce conflicts with the government.
- **Economic Improvement:** The project aims to improve the local economy, addressing one of the root causes of deforestation.
- By empowering the local community, this initiative seeks to establish a sustainable model for preserving both the forest and its incredible biodiversity.

The objectives

- The overall goal of the project is to contribute to the effective protection of the rainforest ecosystem in the North of Sumatra through a community-led conservation program and wildlife conservation.
- The objectives of this program are defined as follows:
- To offer sustainable and environmentally friendly of livelihood development alternatives
- To generate social awareness about the importance of natural resources for the survival and development of local communities
- To promote collaboration and coordinated action between the different entities and stakeholders in the area



Main rationale support

- This project will support the government in protection GLNP, restore and increase the number of wildlife habitats through the wildlife corridor management activities.
- Restoration activity in the project site will involve local communities at the project site.
- The project will also support the development of an adaptive management plan for the reserve ecosystem to protect community-based biodiversity.



Benefits

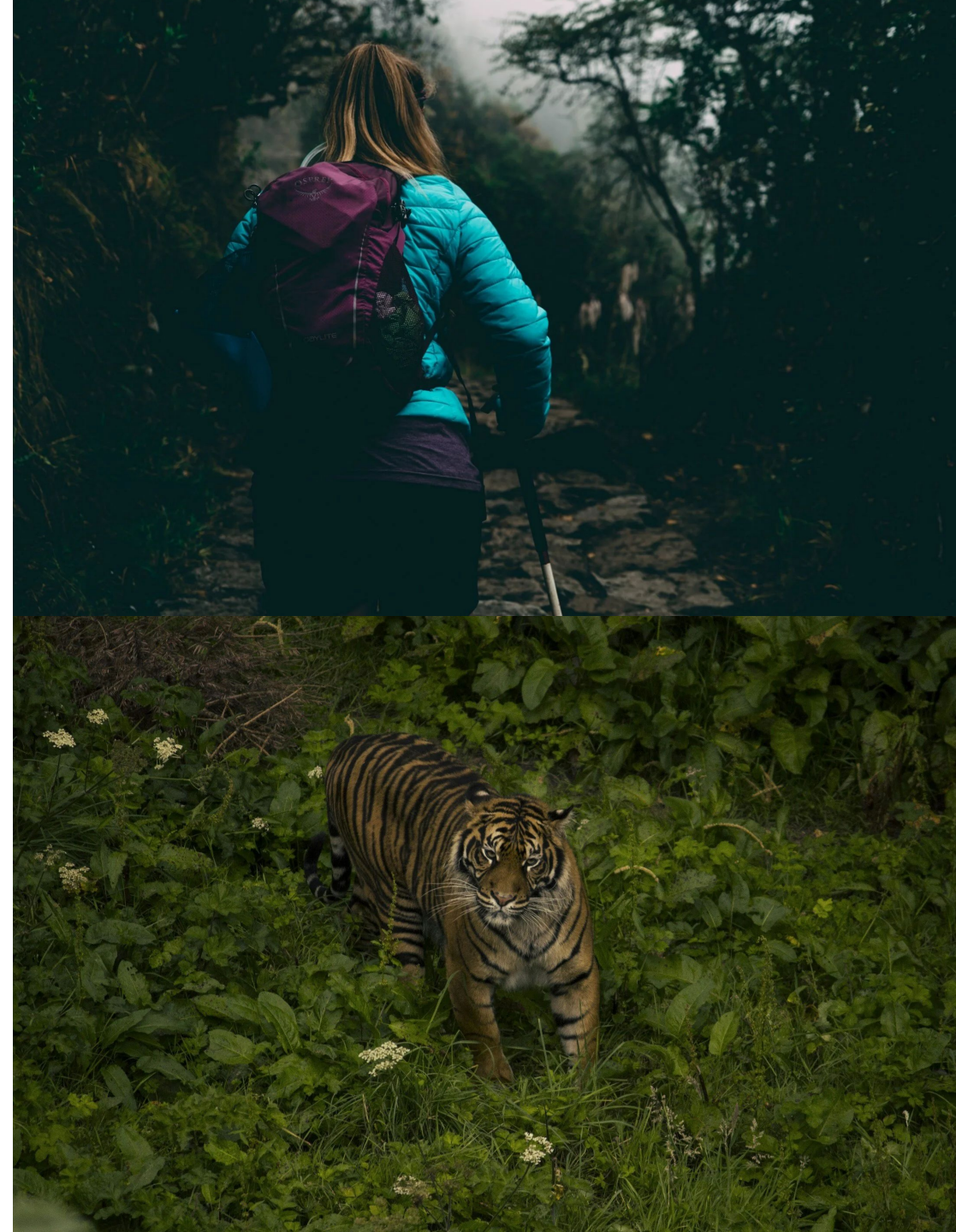
- This project will create job opportunities for the local community which will provide economic improvement to the community.
- The project is highly participatory and involves the community at all levels. Several training activities and workshops have been planned to improve their capacity.
- This project will be managed by Ibu Bumi Orangutan (IBO) with USU (University Sumatera Utara) by involving local Government and communities.



5-pillar approach

This project will follow a 5-pillar approach in line with the principles of Wildlife Heritage Areas. We plan to collaborate with Gunung Leuser National Park and the local community, working together to generate solutions that not only support socioeconomic development but also the conservation of wildlife and the rain forest.

1. Support and celebrate local people to care for and protect the unique wildlife in their environment.
2. Provide an opportunity for the travel industry to promote more responsible wildlife experiences as an alternative to exploitative, extractive, or consumptive captive or wild animal attractions.
3. Emphasise our cultural links with nature as a powerful tool to encourage positive change for animals and people.
4. Incorporate animal welfare as an integral part of what constitutes 'sustainable practices' or 'wildlife friendly'.
5. Use an approach combining nature conservation and animal welfare successfully, as part of a growing movement.





1. Cultural importance of wildlife



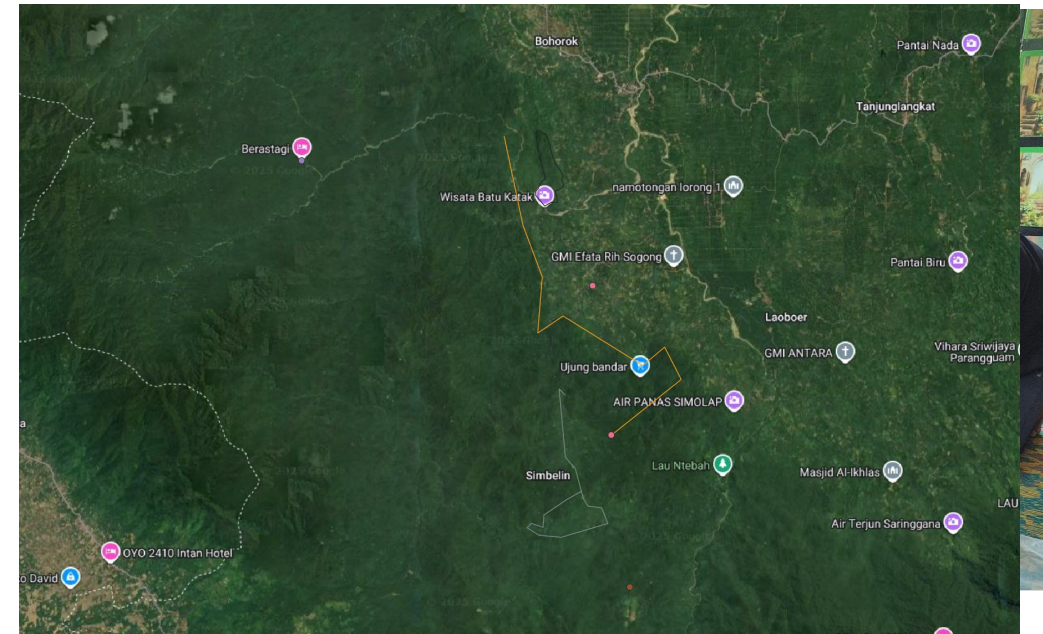
1. The Cultural importance of wildlife (1)

- The Karo people, a subgroup of the Batak ethnic group in North Sumatra, have a deep connection to their environment. This relationship is reflected in their traditional beliefs and social structures, which are often rooted in animism and a belief in the interconnectedness of all living things.
- Ecological Myths:** The Karo people have numerous ecological myths that serve as a form of traditional environmental education. These stories often teach about **respecting nature** and its creatures, highlighting that **humans are a part of the ecosystem, not separate from it.**
- Spiritual and Cosmological Roles:** Animals are seen as having a spiritual dimension. The Sumatran tiger, for example, is a significant cultural icon for many indigenous communities in Sumatra. It's often believed to have a dual identity as both a physical animal and a spirit tiger that enforces moral rules. Killing a tiger can be seen as a serious transgression.
- Art and Rituals:** The natural world, including wildlife, is a source of inspiration for Karo art, carvings, and traditional houses. Daily activities like hunting, fishing, and farming are often accompanied by rituals to ensure a good harvest or a safe hunt, emphasizing a harmonious relationship with nature.



1. The Cultural importance of wildlife (2)

- Ecotourism is a key strategy for developing remote areas and creating a sustainable income source for communities living near the **Gunung Leuser National Park**. This park is a biodiversity hotspot, home to orangutans, tigers, elephants, rhinos, and many other unique species.
- **Local Involvement:** Our project focuses on the villages of **Sapo Padang, Batu Jongjong, Ujung Bandar, and Batu Katak**, which are part of a more than 40,000-hectare area of national park and green buffer zones. Village chiefs are highly interested in participating in ecotourism activities and are inviting their communities to join.
- **Collaborative Approach:** The goal is to develop ecotourism that is both beneficial for the local economy and respectful of wildlife and its habitat. This collaborative approach provides a valuable resource for the surrounding communities, creating a sustainable alternative to practices that may harm the environment.





2. Respectful human wildlife coexistence



2. Respectful human wildlife coexistence (1)

- In collaboration with TNGL (Gunung Leuser National Park) rangers and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), we empower local communities through education, awareness, and support. We are establishing children's education centres in multiple villages to build capacity and provide learning opportunities.
- Rangers help equip communities with the resources they need to develop sustainable ecotourism, manage homestays, and learn about wildlife protection and the prevention of illegal hunting (for pets). Our ultimate goal is to ensure communities have a deep understanding of what sustainable development and ecotourism truly mean.
- Alongside the rangers and North Sumatra University (USU), we conduct research on the wildlife of Gunung Leuser National Park and its surrounding green buffers. This research helps us monitor local species and identify specific threats they can represent. We also develop and implement strategies to help farmers mitigate human-wildlife conflict, such as providing livestock fences and sustainable solutions for agroforestry.



2. Respectful human wildlife coexistence (2)

How will we engage with the local community (farmers, villagers etc.)?

- Our local partners, plus John Purba (Director of TNGL) or Pindi Patana (Professor at USU) have the capacity to engage with these local stakeholders.

What role will volunteers play in supporting human-wildlife coexistence?

- They will assist with building fences, setting and monitoring camera traps, research, supporting agroforestry operations, teaching English/environmental education)

What guidelines and training model will be provided to tour/trek guides?

- Guidance and training comes from the National Park together with WCS Indonesia and IBO who provide classes, books and trainings



A photograph of an orangutan sitting on a tree branch in a lush green forest. The orangutan has reddish-brown fur and is looking towards the camera. The background is filled with dense green foliage. The image is partially obscured by a white overlay on the left side where the text is located.

3. Responsible wildlife tourism

3. Responsible wildlife tourism (1)

- The Sapo Padang enclave, a vital wildlife corridor, is at risk of deforestation. To protect it, we are developing a high-value, community-led ecotourism project. This initiative will not only safeguard the forest and its wildlife but also provide a model for sustainable development, creating new livelihoods and educational opportunities for local communities.
- We are not alone in this endeavour; our NGO Ibu Bumi Orangutan offers a range of expeditions and treks together with international partners, always employing local guides and porters. Along with standard 1–3-day treks, there will be opportunities to track with a professional army tracker and join research expeditions, gathering vital data on birds, big cats, elephants and the many other species that call the National Park their home.
- Furthermore, we also want to provide special opportunities for volunteers that will both generate good, stable income for local communities and also share educational activities with communities, the local team and local children.
- The volunteer program will provide a range of benefits and services to the local communities, through education (teaching English language, environmental education), assisting with a permaculture program, the trash bank program, contributing to wildlife research and conservation and many other initiatives. Although ecotourism is a new concept for the local communities, there is widespread enthusiasm for developing these initiatives and learning the new skills required.



3. Responsible wildlife tourism (2)

The Gunung Leuser NP is a biodiversity hotspot and incredible wildlife that will allow ecotourism enterprises to flourish. Our goal is to combine agroforestry programs, ecotourism and research to help conserve the incredible flora and fauna and support sustainable development in the region. There is a diverse range of opportunities for ecotourism activities. In addition to existing trekking and orangutan tours, we hope to create further itineraries for birdwatching, amphibious nocturnal trips to experience the forest at night, wild elephant tracking, and also encourage photographers to come and experience the natural beauty of the national park.

We ensure that ecotourism principles are integrated into all activities, with education and respect for nature key to all activities. In addition to ecotourism activities, we are developing a nursery for agroforestry activities together with farmers and organising tiger awareness initiatives and training for guides and porters.

- Training for guides (best practice guidelines disseminated to local guides and rangers)
- Well-established guidelines for trekking and wildlife activities (e.g. distance from wildlife, small group sizes, awareness of key times of year for species)
- Plan of communication for ethical/responsible tourism practices
- Job creation for local people and communities



We also hope to build a nature education centre for students and volunteers that will provide them courses about nature, guide teachings, tracking training, and much more. It will be an opportunity to teach local students from USU and local parts of the community in addition to a place for sleep, cooking, workshops and courses.

4. Steering Committee



4. Steering committee

The steering committee for this program brings together a diverse group of stakeholders from multiple villages, including chiefs, town councils, women's groups, and children. The goal is to help these communities, many of which have lost their traditions due to a history of colonisation by various religions, to recover their cultural heritage.

The program includes several initiatives:

- Establishing a women's handicraft group.
- Creating a traditional medicine garden group.
- Encouraging the continuation of sustainable tree crop cultivation in the Sapo Padang Enclave, with a focus on mitigating the fear of elephants.
- By using an anthropological approach, we will study and develop the individual skills of community members to enhance their abilities.

Project Partners

The project involves collaboration with several key partners:

- Government counterparts: These include the Police Forest Team from Gunung Leuser National Park, the Forestry Department at USU North Sumatra University, and local village chiefs.
- Local organisations: The RSF local foundation will assist Ibu Bumi Orangutan (IBO) in sharing knowledge about elephant conservation.
- International partners: The Ibu Bumi Orangutan NGO will manage the wildlife heritage areas program in North Sumatra with several international partners.





5. Management Plan



5. Management plan (1)

This three-year program aims to benefit over 10,500 people across four communities by providing direct and indirect income through ecotourism. In addition to traditional trekking and tours, the program includes a range of activities designed to create a sustainable local economy. These activities include building an education centre, investing in homestays, acquiring land for conservation, and developing regenerative agriculture programs. The project also focuses on creating new jobs and supporting the national park.

Project Structure & Responsibilities

The success of this program relies on collaboration among all stakeholders, each with specific roles:

- Village Chiefs: Responsible for village management and ensuring compliance with ecotourism regulations.
- National Park Team: Tasked with verifying data related to the forest and its surrounding areas.
- University: Will research wildlife, forestry, and community impact.
- Ibu Bumi Orangutan: Manages marketing, volunteers, expeditions, and livelihoods development. They are also responsible for collecting wildlife data.



5. Management plan (2)

Program Timeline & Goals

The program's three-year duration is designed to establish self-sustaining community initiatives. The goal is to equip communities with the necessary knowledge and resources to continue protecting their forest resources and managing their own sustainable businesses after the program concludes.

The duration of the program is 3 years; during that time, all aspects should be implemented and working. We will report once per year on the program with all data for wildlife heritage areas.

•Year One:

- Community Education: Implement education programs for children.
- Livelihoods Development: Support the creation of a local cooperative to generate income through trekking and other activities.

•Year Two:

- Infrastructure & Education: Build the "School of Nature," which will serve as a centre for volunteers and researchers, offering courses on wildlife tracking, housing a library, and providing workshop space. This is a key infrastructure investment.
- Market Access: Open the local cooperative to external markets and identify enterprises interested in purchasing local products like rubber, palm sugar, and kemiri.

•Year Three:

- Sustainable Partnerships: Establish a long-term partnership with a local livelihoods cooperative through an external contract.
- Educational Tourism: Secure commitments from European and American universities to send student groups annually to study local wildlife and forests.
- Wildlife Monitoring: Create a team to conduct monthly monitoring of the Sapo Padang enclave corridor.
- Program Handover: The communities will gain enough knowledge and resources to independently manage their enterprises and conservation efforts.

Identified Risks

- Indonesia has several crucial risks to take into account:
- High level of corruption
- High lack of resources
- Governments change many times, as do the laws and regulations
- Landowners are not the real owners; all is from the government in the regulation.
- Illegal palm oil companies that don't care about the forest or its wildlife

