



**CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
IN MANAGEMENT OF TROPICAL PEATLAND**

**UNIVERSITY OF PALANGKA RAYA,
CENTRAL KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA**

Monday 29th July 2002

TO ANYONE WHO IS PREPARED TO HELP

**“CENTRAL KALIMANTAN IS ON FIRE AGAIN!
A PLEA FOR URGENT ASSISTANCE”**

“A fire fighting team, ‘Tim Serbu Api’ (TSA) under my direction is working hard to suppress fires in Block C of the former Mega Rice Project area, near to the Kalamancangan Canal in Central Kalimantan Province of Indonesia. We started on Friday 25th July 2002 and worked without rest or stopping every day and night. So far we have successfully installed deep wells below this peat covered landscape in three locations and obtained water to wet the peat surface along a transect line 800-900 metres long to try to stop the fire from spreading to the nearby village and destroying crops, houses, forest and peat.

Fire has also started in the Natural laboratory for Management of Peat Swamp Forest where we have been recording biodiversity and natural resource functions of this threatened ecosystem for the last 10 years. Its future survival is now at stake. So far we have managed to extinguish fire near to our plot 1B that is 2 km inside the jungle from the Sebangau River and another outbreak nearer to the river bank but only because of the hard effort of the TSA team and the group of 17 young volunteers from the United Kingdom who are currently living and working in this hazardous environment. This area is also home to the largest remaining orang utan population in the world. Its survival is also threatened and up to 5,000 animals could die if these fires gain a firm hold.

The National, Provincial and Local Governments are powerless to do anything, only meeting and talking, while destruction takes place around them. All of the people in and around the Provincial capital of Palangka Raya are now suffering from the choking haze and smoke. The conditions are terrible and many children will become ill, some permanently. We desperately need help to extinguish these fires.

My fire fighting team has no money, only big hearts and much determination. My colleagues and I have given up working at our jobs and are doing dangerous work day and

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night to try to stop the inferno increasing to the catastrophic level it reached in 1997 when nearly 2 Giga Tonnes of carbon were released into the world's atmosphere, causing much destruction and affecting global climate. No one helped us then and I hope sincerely that someone will listen now it is happening again.

We need money to pay for basic equipment and fire fighters' time to leave their families and combat this menace. How can we find an emergency budget? Can you please announce this impending catastrophe to people and institutions outside of Central Kalimantan, especially those who know and love the peat swamps with their irreplaceable biodiversity and carbon store. We need money for pumping machines and materials, also for TSA compensations (operating budget). Please hurry because, in the meantime, the landscape burns, biodiversity and carbon disappears and local people suffer on top of their previous suffering.

Please help!

SUWIDO H. LIMIN

Director CIMTROP
Palangka Raya, 29th July 2002