



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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*The **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** is a biweekly collection of summaries of articles related to conservation, the environment, and sustainability in Indonesia that have appeared in print or online in local, regional, and global English-language media. We welcome comments, suggestions, and corrections. To learn more about us and to access previous editions of the News Digest, please visit our website at www.starlingresources.com. If you would like to add colleagues or friends to our distribution list or unsubscribe, please contact us at newsdigest@starlingresources.com.*

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A. Marine and Fisheries

[Indonesia Needs Rp1.4tn to Expedite Blue Economy Transformation, Says State Official](#)

—Dewi Elvia Muthiariny, *Tempo*, 9 August 2023

Indonesia's Secretary of the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture, Andie Megantara, stated that around Rp 1.4 trillion (US\$92 million) is required to accelerate the transformation of the blue economy in the country. Currently, only about 20-25 percent of this needed funding is available. Andie highlighted the importance of collaborative funding sources during the National Seminar on Transformation of Maritime Civilization. Indonesia possesses vast maritime potential, including extensive mangroves, seagrass, coral reefs, and protected areas, contributing to its mega biodiversity. The maritime sector's optimization is projected to contribute about 12.5 percent to the GDP by 2045, aligning with the country's Golden Indonesia vision. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries has outlined five

priority programs for blue economy transformation, including marine conservation, surveillance, quota-based fishing, sustainable aquaculture, and plastic waste cleanup.

[Incorporating Blue Economy and Ocean Justice into the National Development Plans](#)

—Sheena Suparman, *TheJakartaPost*, 9 August 2023

The Indonesian National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) has added a mandate to incorporate the Blue Economy Development Framework into its National Long Term Development Plan 2005-2025 to tap into the sector's potential and align with global sustainable development initiatives. The framework aims to contribute around \$256 billion to the country's annual gross value in five years. A 2-day seminar hosted by the Indonesian Ocean Justice Initiative (IOJI) in collaboration with Bappenas and the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment, discussed the potential for enhancing the maritime sector's sustainability and equity aspects, opportunities to increase the welfare of ocean-dependent people, blue/ocean justice principles, and challenges of implementation. Dr. Vivi Yulaswati, the Deputy of Maritime Affairs and Natural Resources at Bappenas, noted that in order for Indonesia to achieve its Golden Indonesia vision by 2045, the blue economy needs to be appropriately integrated into national development plans. Achieving this necessitates effective awareness-building and education efforts to underscore the potential of the blue economy in advancing Indonesia's prosperity.

[Indonesian illegal shark and ray exports remain rampant amid poor monitoring](#)

—A. Asnawi, *Mongabay*, 8 August 2023

The illegal trade in sharks and rays remains rampant in Indonesia, despite regulations that try to prohibit the capture or trade of many of these vulnerable species. Limited monitoring capacity and resources, widespread corruption, and the vast expanse of the Indonesian archipelago are some of the factors enabling this lucrative trade. While the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) claims that Indonesia contributes 16.8% to the global shark market, concerns raised by the wildlife monitoring NGO TRAFFIC cast doubt on data accuracy due to a significant portion of undetected trade. Moreover, the presence of inconsistencies in data between different government agencies, further fuels skepticism. For instance, in 2021, there was a substantial 40% inconsistency in the reported volume of exported shark fins between the MMAF and the Fish Quarantine and Quality Control Agency (BKIPM). In an investigation conducted earlier this year by Mongabay Indonesia, researchers found no evidence of officers collecting or verifying landing data at the monitored ports, reinforcing the lack of reliability in data collection.

B. Forests and Land Use

[Progress on slowing deforestation could boost climate efforts, say experts](#)

—Patrick Greenfield, *TheGuardian*, 7 August 2023

Falling deforestation rates in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Colombia, and Brazil are offering hope for climate and biodiversity efforts. Experts believe that if wealthy nations provide support to tropical forested countries, it could help deliver on the deforestation reduction targets set for 2030. Between 2020 and 2022, Indonesia reduced its primary forest loss by 64%, more than any other country according to monitoring organisation Global Forest Watch (GFW). Liz Goldman, senior GIS research manager for GFW, said: "From a data point of view, I think Indonesia and Malaysia should be included as success stories[...] We're really

seeing government and corporate actions coming together to have a positive influence there.” Arief Wijaya, the program director at the World Resources Institute in Indonesia, highlighted that the decline in deforestation was a result of intensified law enforcement, peatland restoration, fire mitigation initiatives, and farming restrictions in vulnerable regions. However, he stressed the significance of maintaining these efforts consistently, and noted that the 2024 presidential election, may see a change in priorities, as demonstrated by Brazil’s past experience.

[Indonesian oil palm firm slapped with \\$61m fine for fires on its plantation](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 1 August 2023

Indonesia's Supreme Court has upheld a \$61 million fine imposed on oil palm company PT Rafi Kamajaya Abadi (RKA) for extensive fires on its plantation, destroying 2,560 hectares of land in West Kalimantan between 2018 and 2019. The burning, which occurred partly on peatlands, caused irreparable damage to carbon-rich ecosystems, emitted substantial greenhouse gases, and created a suffocating haze affecting nearby communities and even drifting into Malaysia's Sarawak. The ruling reaffirms the principle of "strict liability" for fires in the plantation industry, holding companies accountable regardless of whether their negligence directly caused the fires. The environment ministry has initiated lawsuits against 22 companies for fires on their concessions, with 13 being held liable having exhausted all appeal options. The government is now beginning the process of collecting fines from them, which may include seizing assets. This decision marks progress in enforcing laws against companies responsible for land burning, with other similar cases pending.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area

[Elephant encounters rattle farmers in Indonesia's Jambi province](#)

—Yitno Suprpto, *Mongabay*, 1 August 2023

Rampant deforestation for agriculture has resulted in significant habitat loss and escalating conflicts between Sumatran elephants (*Elephas maximus sumatrensis*) and farmers in Indonesia. All wild elephant enclaves in Jambi province have been encroached upon by smallholder farmers or industrial plantations, resulting in increasing raids of croplands for sustenance, causing substantial damages to crops and livelihoods. The situation has worsened as about 70% of Sumatran forests vanished over the last 25 years, mainly for oil palm, pulp, and rubber production. Efforts by the Indonesian conservation department to relocate elephants to restoration areas have met resistance from local farmers. Alber Tetanus, coordinator of the Indonesian Elephant Conservation Forum (FKGI) Jambi, said his organization had recorded 700 elephant deaths in the past decade owing to ivory poachers or conflicts with farmers. Over 2 million small-scale farmers across Indonesia contribute 40% of the country's oil palm production; however, many grapple with thin profits as inflation increases family expenses. Understandably, the conflict arising from elephants damaging crops is exacerbating tensions. Experts stress that comprehensive reviews of permits within animal habitats are necessary to mitigate human-elephant conflicts and preserve the endangered species.

[World's top sovereign fund latest to cut ties with dam in orangutan habitat](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 31 July 2023

The world's largest sovereign wealth fund has recommended divesting from the Chinese state-owned multinational Power Construction Corporation of China Ltd. (PowerChina) due to its involvement in a hydropower project in Indonesia's Batang Toru forest, the habitat of the critically endangered Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*) of which less than 800 individuals remain. The Tapanuli orangutan was formally described as a new species in 2017 and declared as the most threatened great ape species in the world. Despite PowerChina's claims of compliance with standards, experts warn that the dam will disrupt the ape's habitat and gene pool, potentially leading to extinction. The Batang Toru ecosystem is the last remaining habitat of this species, which has already seen its habitat reduced to just 5% of its historic range, and a key biodiversity area home to unique wildlife such as the critically endangered Sumatran Tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*). Proceeding with this project would go against the commitment made at the U.N. Biodiversity Conference (COP15) by 196 countries, including Indonesia and China, to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Although the move by the Norwegian fund represents a mere 0.03% stake in PowerChina, the decision to divest is seen as a signal for China and Indonesia to reconsider the project's environmental impact.

[Amid government inaction, Indonesia's rhinos head toward extinction \(analysis\)](#)

—Jeremy Hance, *Mongabay*, 27 July 2023

Indonesia's two rhino species, the Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) and the Javan rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*), rank among the world's most endangered large mammals, each with fewer than 60 individuals remaining in the wild. However, as Kinnaird from WWF points out, a lack of government commitment has led to poorly managed conservation initiatives, unfulfilled pledges for captive-breeding efforts and artificial reproductive technologies, and inflated rhino counts that present a distorted view of increasing wild populations. Several organizations monitoring the more critically endangered Sumatran rhino population suggest that the species might already be extinct in southern Sumatra, leaving Gunung Leuser National Park as its last refuge. In recent years, only 18 individuals have been caught on camera in all of Leuser, although the belief is there may be 20-30 animals in total. Meanwhile, it is believed that there are 50-60 Javan rhinos left in the wild on the neighbouring island of Java. Adding to the concern is the government's vindictive response to criticism and its active hindrance of conservation programs by denying necessary permits.

D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

[A Landmark Achievement: Expansion of Indonesia's Renewable Energy Supply Chain](#)

—*AsiaOne*, 9 August 2023

Renewable energy companies VENA ENERGY and REPT BATTERO have formally signed a framework agreement to explore opportunities for establishing local production lines for energy storage components in Indonesia. The collaboration aims to support VENA ENERGY's 8GWh large-scale energy storage project in the Riau Islands, enhance Indonesia's renewable energy supply chain and infrastructure while promoting global adoption of renewable energy. With support from the Indonesian government, the agreement seeks to provide sustainable and efficient clean energy, contributing to carbon emissions reduction. The CEO of VENA ENERGY emphasized the potential for job creation and industrial expansion, aligning with Indonesia's energy transition plan. The CEO of REPT

BATTERO highlighted their commitment to supporting global carbon neutrality and sustainable development.

[RI needs new rules to compete for carbon capture investment](#)

—Divya Karyza, *TheJakartaPost*, 5 August 2023

Indonesia needs to take more assertive steps to attract carbon capture investment due to increasing competition from neighboring ASEAN countries, such as Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines, which are also developing carbon capture regulations and projects. While Indonesia currently projects to receive 80% of carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) investment in the region by 2030, that share is expected to decrease to around 60% by 2040. To remain competitive, Indonesia needs internationally credible projects and regulations, along with mechanisms such as failure-to-deliver penalties and clear long-term legal liabilities. Carbon capture is a key part of Indonesia's strategy to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060. However, critics point out that the technology's success has been hindered by high capital costs, unclear revenue streams, and limited technological readiness.

[Agriculture among first Indonesia's industries hit by climate change](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *TheJakartaPost*, 2 August 2023

July 2023 is expected to be the hottest month on record globally, according to the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. Indonesia has experienced moderate impacts from this global heating, particularly affecting its agriculture sector. After 3 years of La Nina, which tends to bring cooler, wetter weather to the archipelago, El Nino has surfaced in the Pacific Ocean, causing record-breaking temperatures and fires in many parts of the northern hemisphere. Indonesia's fortunate geography, surrounded by oceans, has partially buffered the country from the full impact of heat waves. However, the country is still likely to experience gradual temperature increases and other effects of climate change. Farmers in Indonesia have reported hotter and drier conditions, impacting crop growth. An analysis by the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) predicts that more than 95% of rice fields across the country would experience below-average rainfall this year. Experts suggest that adapting to rising temperatures will be crucial, involving strategies like building climate-friendly houses, altering daily habits, and adjusting agricultural practices such as conserving water and planting drought-resistant crops. The urgency for climate adaptation remains critical to prevent more severe consequences in the future.

E. Pollution and Waste

[Plastic 'Frankenrocks' pose new pollution threat to coastal environment](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 2 August 2023

Uncontrolled burning of plastic waste on Indonesian beaches has given rise to a novel environmental concern: the emergence of plastic-rock hybrids known as plastiglomerates. As the plastic melts, it is melded with natural components like sand, coral fragments, and shells. This new form of plastic pollution poses a threat to coastal ecosystems and fisheries, contributing to chemical contamination in nearby habitats like coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass meadows. The collaborative study conducted by Indonesian and German scientists on a beach in West Java emphasizes the need for improved waste management practices and the reduction of single-use plastics. Indonesia is a significant contributor to plastic waste

globally, producing about 6.8 million metric tons annually, with approximately 620,000 metric tons ending up in the ocean. Indonesia is targeting a 70% reduction in plastic waste by 2025, with strategies including beach cleanups, local government initiatives to curb single-use plastics through bans, private sector investment in sustainable alternatives, and a push for producers to bear responsibility for their product waste.

Report: Utami, D.A., Reuning, L., Schwark, L. *et al.* [Plastiglomerates from uncontrolled burning of plastic waste on Indonesian beaches contain high contents of organic pollutants](#). *Sci Rep* 13, 10383 (2023).

[Indonesia Cracks Down on the Scourge of Imported Plastic Waste](#)

—Beth Gardiner, *Yale Environment 360*, 1 August 2023

The 2019 global rules on cross-border shipments of plastic waste, enacted as amendments to the Basel Convention, aimed to halt the export of contaminated, mixed, or unrecyclable plastics to less-developed nations without consent. However, enforcement of these rules has been challenging. Indonesia, a recipient of foreign waste, implemented stringent regulations and enforcement after public outrage and environmental concerns. The country now only allows well-sorted scrap imports, and containers must be inspected before shipping. While progress has been made in reducing contaminated waste imports, challenges persist due to the trade's opaque nature and shifts in waste routes. Additionally, recycling plastics, even those easily processed, poses environmental and health risks. The Basel Convention's plastic amendments have shown some promise but are hindered by non-participation, loopholes, and limited enforcement.

F. Investment and Finance

[Funding circularity: Investing in Asia's circular economy business models](#)

—Abhishyant Kidangoor, *Mongabay*, 1 August 2023

Circulate Capital, a Singapore-based investment management firm, is actively supporting circular business models in emerging economies, with a strong emphasis on South and Southeast Asia. Established in 2018 with a substantial \$100 million fund, the firm aims to champion the adoption of circular economy principles that prioritize "reuse, repair, refurbish, and recycle," departing from the traditional linear model. This strategic shift not only addresses waste and pollution but also has the potential to effectively combat the escalating climate crisis by reducing new raw material extraction and greenhouse gas emissions. The firm's investments have yielded impressive circular solutions, including Tridi Oasis in Indonesia. An Indonesian company led exclusively by women, Tridi Oasis specializes in recycling polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles, producing recycled PET (rPET) flakes for packaging materials and textiles. Having recycled over 250 million plastic bottles since its inception in 2015, Tridi Oasis stands as a prime example of how dedicated support can drive innovative circular solutions.

[Indonesia Secures Investment Commitment Worth US\\$11.5 Billion from China](#)

—Petir Garda Bhwana, *Tempo*, 30 July 2023

During a two-day visit to Chengdu, China, President Joko Widodo of Indonesia secured an investment commitment of \$11.5 billion from Chinese company Xinyi. Xinyi, one of the world's largest glass producers, plans to establish a glass and solar panel manufacturing facility on Rempang Island, Batam. This investment is set to become the world's second-largest factory of its kind, creating around 35,000 jobs within downstream processing of raw materials in Indonesia. The majority of the output, about 95%, will be exported due to overseas market demand. Indonesia, with vast quartz sand reserves—the main raw material for making glass and solar panels—sees this partnership as a means to tap into the booming solar panel market where China is a major player.

G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

West Sumatra administration criticized for stifling protests

—Dio Suhenda, *The Jakarta Post*, 6 August 2023

Protests against an oil refinery construction in West Sumatra, Indonesia, resulted in the arrest of over a dozen demonstrators, drawing criticism of heavy-handed tactics by local authorities. The West Sumatra provincial administration and police faced accusations of abusing power and violating human rights as they dispersed the protests, which had been ongoing for several days. Activists were demanding dialogue with the government regarding the oil refinery project and voiced concerns about land conflicts experienced by palm oil farmers. The incident also saw journalists being harassed and intimidated, highlighting ongoing challenges to press freedom in Indonesia. In 2022, there were 61 attacks on journalists and media outlets, impacting 97 victims, with over a third of the attacks attributed to police, military, or government officials, according to a report by The Alliance of Independent Journalists' (AJI).

In Indonesia's Aceh, Indigenous communities seek recognition of their forest rights

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 28 July 2023

For the first time in history, the Indonesian government plans to recognize the customary forests of Indigenous communities in Aceh province. The plan for national recognition follows local authorities' recognition of some Indigenous communities. Unlike West Papua and Papua—the two other provinces with special autonomy status—Indigenous communities in Aceh have not had their rights to ancestral forests recognized. Evidence shows that forests managed by Indigenous communities are healthier and better protected. Recognition of customary forests would also contribute to President Joko Widodo's social forestry program, which aims to allocate 12.7 million hectares of state forest to local communities for sustainable management. However, plans could still be hampered by bureaucratic hurdles due to complicated administrative divisions in Aceh and hazy boundaries.

Elders call for Indigenous cultural preservation in new Indonesia capital

—Muhammad Razil Fauzan, *Mongabay*, 27 July 2023

Indigenous elders in Indonesia's East Kalimantan province express concerns that the construction of the country's new capital city could displace communities and threaten their spiritual traditions and customs. Development plans are already encroaching on people's homes. In the village of Bumi Harapan, the customary elder's house falls within the city's development zone, and he has received no clear information on relocation and

compensation. “Maybe I will be moving from here soon because I’m within those coordinates,” he said. Forest Watch Indonesia indicates that nearly half of the capital site could be considered customary territory, with 21 communities having claims within the estate. However, Indigenous peoples' claims over the territory remain unrecognized, raising fears the development will erode their traditions and restrict their access to land. While the government promises to include local Indigenous peoples in the capital's blueprint, concerns persist about the impact on their way of life and the need for better protection and empowerment of their culture.

End

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