



The Inside Scoop on Social, Economy, and Environmental Conditions in Pulau Burung District

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A SHORT INTRO TO PULAU BURUNG

The district of Pulau Burung is administratively under the regency of Indragiri Hilir in the province of Riau. Situated in the eastern coastal area of Riau Province, it also has thousands kilometer of man-made channels weaving their ways through the upstream to downstream area. Consequently, the main mobilization means is water transportation using woody boat, speedboat or pompong (a slow-wooden boat with small engine capacity). Land transportation is limited since the road that connects its villages can only accommodate two-wheeled vehicles. It is also inadvisable to use the road after heavy rain. The district is four-hour away by land via Tembilahan, the capital city of Indragiri Hilir Regency. Pulau Burung is also accessible by three-hour boat ride from Batam Island.

LIFE AS COCONUT FARMERS

Most of the people who live in Pulau Burung work as coconut farmers. The fruit comes from the tree of life - a label given to coconut tree due to the fact that every single part of it could be utilized. Indragiri Hilir District is a peatland-rich area where Indonesia's largest

integrated coconut plantation is located. According to BPS, in 2015, the regency of Indragiri Hilir managed to produce 360.595 tons coconut with more than 440.000 hectares plantation. The district of Pulau Burung is among the major contributors with 10.768 tons of coconut production in the same year.

LOCAL COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL, ECONOMY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Today, as the mismanagement of peatland agriculture has become increasingly alarming, there is an urgent need to identify the viable method of sustainable agriculture practice in peatland region. Unlike other agriculture practices in peatland that causes the area to be highly flammable, land fire in Pulau Burung has been consistently preventable. This not only enables the community to thrive, but also to improve the social, economy, and environmental aspects of their district. To assess their condition, Tay Juhana Foundation (TJF) conducted interviews with 29 respondents from five villages in Pulau Burung District with the following result:

Table 1. Interview results with local people about their perspective on social, economy, and environmental conditions in Pulau Burung District.

TOPIC	INDICATORS	SCORE*
Agriculture Practice	Farming method on peatland, harvest quality, source of income, and low agricultural conflict.	3
Economic Condition	Adequate income to meet the basic needs, own assets such as house, land, and vehicle.	2.4
Fire Control	The practice of land burning, the availability of fire department, proper equipment and monitoring activities.	3.3
Food Security	Food access, affordability, nutrition, and availability.	3
Waste & Pollution	Signs of contamination, waste management and utilization, the impact.	2.4
Health	Access to healthcare, sanitation, community health program, and recorded epidemic disease.	2.9
Education	Access to education, education level, affordability, quality, and available facilities.	2.9
Infrastructure	Access to public facilities, types of infrastructures, the condition and maintenance.	2.8
Land Governance	Land certificate process and requirements, governance, land-use, dispute, and level of land ownership.	2
Water Governance	Access to clean water, governance, water resource, utilization, conflict, and affordability.	2.4

*The scale ranges from:
0.0 - 1 (Very Poor); 1.1 - 2 (Poor); 2.1 - 3 (Good); to 3.1 - 4 (Excellent)

Table 1 showed that forest fire control scored the highest point. According to the respondents, strict control and monitoring along with the law enforcement to prevent the fire are properly implemented. The coconut farmers stated they no longer practice the slash-and-burn method to clear the land since years ago. Food security also recorded relatively positive since most people have their own crops as source of food which increase the food affordability.

Health, education, and infrastructure obtained similar scores as these three aspects are accessible to the local people. Public facilities like village health center, school, and road are available at each village. However,

an issue comes from the high cost of boat transportation which hampers their mobility from one village to another and in-and-out the district.

Low scores can be found in the economic condition since the local people, especially the farmers, consider their incomes are only enough to cover their primary needs, such as housing and daily meal. They are struggling to meet other needs such as children education, advance healthcare, and clean water. Moreover, the farmers heavily rely on coconut production as their main agriculture commodity - which has the risk of fluctuating price.

As for waste and pollution issues, the community identified that most of the scattered garbage in the canal and the road come from domestic waste. Low awareness and lack of education on waste management are part of the main challenges. Like a typical peatland area, Pulau Burung's water is mostly acidic. To attain freshwater, people normally collect rainwater or spare their income to buy water gallons in the local market. This condition has made the indicator of water governance scored pretty low.

Lastly, land governance is considered as the weakest aspect. The farmers revealed that they are not facing any land disputes. Nevertheless, they find difficulties in obtaining the land certificate due to various reasons. Ranging from farmer's incapability to provide the full payment of the land credit requested by the bank, to the unclear policy on the ownership of the land certificates that requires attention from the national government.

WAY FORWARD

High awareness amongst the community to prevent land fire is vital part of the agricultural best practice indicators. Further research and community program to build a better system in providing clean freshwater should be implemented. Identification on the feasible alternative commodities and waste management to improve the people's conditions can be assessed in the next phase of this study. Therefore, TJF welcomes any partnership opportunity to conduct project or research which strengthen the role of peatland communities in promoting sustainable agriculture practice to achieve food security.

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ABOUT TJF

Tay Juhana Foundation (TJF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promote the advocacy of the conversion and cultivation of suboptimal lands into productive lands, through the most environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable manner.

CONTACT US

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