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Audio / Health Report

Indonesia Clinic Seeks to Save Patients, Forests

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Dr. Kinari Webb listens to a child's chest before diagnosing him with whooping cough in the clinic in Sukadana, West Kalimantan.

10/04/2011

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This is the VOA Special English Health Report.

A clinic in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, works to support the health of people and forests. Kinari Webb is an American doctor who helped start the nonprofit group that operates the clinic. The group is known as ASRI. Dr. Webb says most communities value the local forests, but illegal logging is often their only way to earn money to pay for health care.

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KINARI WEBB: "Even if you know that if you protect the forest, that's good for your long-term well-being, if your short-term well-being -- like you have to get health care and you have to be able to pay for it, you're willing to do illegal logging to do that."

The clinic is in Sukadana, a village outside Gunung Palung National Park. Each month someone from ASRI visits the surrounding villages to see if they are actively logging or burning land within the park. Communities that do not take part in illegal logging pay about forty percent less for health care than those that do.

Also, the clinic uses a barter system. Patients can pay with things like handmade baskets, labor exchanges or young trees.

Patients learn about environmental conservation as they wait to register at the clinic. Many of the seventy staff members also help communities learn about organic farming and other ways to earn money.

In May ASRI started a program to identify forest "guardians." These guardians work with the community to try to prevent illegal logging. One of the guardians says he entered the program because ASRI helped his son recover from tuberculosis.

(SOUND)

The clinic is small and powered by electricity from a generator. On this day a nurse calms a four-year-old girl named Amelia. She was recently hurt in a motorbike accident. Later, Dr. Webb will see a baby with whooping cough and a mother and daughter with tuberculosis.

Dr. Webb says people did not trust the clinic at first. They wanted to go to the only hospital in the area. Yet its resources are limited and villagers often have to travel more than two hours to get there.

Now, people happily share stories about the clinic. Amelia's mother is one of them. She started going there when her daughter was eight months old. She says the treatment is good. Dr. Webb smiles when she hears that.

KINARI WEBB: "Health care is an incredible key. And everyone everywhere around knows that we really care and that we are helping save their lives."

And that's the VOA Special English Health Report. For more stories, go to voaspecialenglish.com or the VOA Learning English page on Facebook. I'm Faith Lapidus.

Contributing: Sara Schonhardt

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