



## CASE STUDY

# A Collaborative Plan to Safeguard the Biodiversity and Carbon Sequestration of Kalimantan's Peatlands

## Facilitated Four-Day Workshop to Set a Stakeholder-Informed Course of Action

Nestled within the lush landscape of the Indonesian islands, the Kalimantan region encompasses nearly three-quarters of Borneo. The island has a staggering level of biodiversity — it is home to 221 species of terrestrial mammals, 420 species of avian wonders, 15,000 varieties of flowering plants, and is one of only two places in the world where wild orangutans still live.

Peatlands, like those in the Kalimantan region, are critical for the future of the planet's climate. These tropical wetlands sequester almost twice as much carbon as the world's forests combined. Indonesia accounts for about 36% of the world's peatlands, holding an estimated 55 billion to 57 billion metric tons of carbon.

Kalimantan is also home to Indigenous communities whose lives revolve around the forests. But, in recent decades, commercial development — such as coal mines, oil palm plantations, and logging — has contributed to significant depletion of the island's rainforests, habitat loss, and erosion of its coastal ecosystems.

### TEAM:

Kalimantan Peatlands

### PROJECT:

Preserving Peatlands at the Muara Siran and Kapuas Hulu Pilot Sites

### AGILITY LAB OFFERING:

Four-day Theory of Change Workshop in 2023


**IMPACT:** An actionable Theory of Change with intermediate checkpoints and a clear directive to prepare a proposal for funding 2024–26.

**TNC 2030 OCEANS GOAL:** Carbon Emissions + Healthy Lands

The high rate of deforestation has led to severe habitat loss for endemic species, such as Bornean orangutans and proboscis monkeys; created a growing threat to the Indigenous communities in the region; and resulted in ongoing destruction of the region's peatlands. The destruction of the peatlands releases 2 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually, or roughly 5% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

The region's biodiversity and carbon stores have set the Kalimantan Peatlands as a Focal Place, one of only four regions worldwide to have this designation. To achieve the 2030 Impact Goals set by The Nature Conservancy, Kalimantan and the other three focal regions are considered "must-wins." In a world grappling with the dire consequences of climate change, preserving the Kalimantan Peatlands emerges as a pivotal region in the global work toward environmental balance.

The Indonesian branch of The Nature Conservancy (locally referred to as YKAN) is committed to conserving biodiversity in West and East Kalimantan; keeping the Peatlands intact; and helping Indigenous communities increase their power, legal reach, and protected land ownership in the region. The Kalimantan Peatlands conservation team is focused on two pilot sites — Muara Siran and Kapuas Hulu — to demonstrate that similar interventions could be scaled to other locations in the Peatlands region.



**“We believe that this project will have a profound positive impact on both nature and the surrounding communities by 2030.”**

— [RASIS PUTRA RITONGA](#), NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS DATA MANAGER FOR YKAN

To develop a compelling case for leaders and funders to support this work, the Kalimantan Peatlands conservation team set out to create a Theory of Change, which is a roadmap for how the team's interventions will address a given set of problems and achieve determined outcomes. The YKAN team called upon two sister teams from The Nature Conservancy — The Agility Lab and CbD 2.0 — to organize and co-facilitate a four-day Theory of Change workshop in Bali.

## Laying Groundwork for a Successful Theory of Change Workshop

The facilitators designed the Theory of Change workshop to develop a deeper understanding of the local communities and underlying issues surrounding the work, which meant convening a wide array of stakeholders in addition to the conservation team members working at the pilot sites. Participants included representatives from the Muara Siran and Kapuas Hulu communities; scientists, field team members, consultants, and key partners executing related conservation work; and leadership and decisionmakers, including a government representative.



## THEORY OF CHANGE

A facilitated Conservation By Design module held as a multi-day workshop that empowers teams to draft or refine their Theory of Change, enhance team alignment, and improve communication with external stakeholders.

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In the months preceding the Theory of Change workshop, the project teams completed on-the-ground research in the relevant communities. This pre-work helped to identify and assess a complex web of challenges — and opportunities. The workshop was designed to start with a Situation Analysis, led by Sindhu Weber of CbD 2.0. The second half of the workshop was focused on drafting a Theory of Change, which was co-facilitated by The Agility Lab’s Camilla Zanzanaini and Sarah Ngo.

“The Situation Analysis process we led in advance of the Theory of Change workshop helped us understand what the YKAN teams hoped to get out of the experience so we could help them progress on their goals,” says Sarah Ngo, Agility Lab Theory of Change Program Manager. “It was amazing to see how the YKAN team members from the distinct pilot sites collaborated to build a clear, thoughtful, thorough mind map.”



*The Theory of Change participants display the workshop culmination: A roadmap established through a four-day expertly facilitated workshop.*

## Developing a Stakeholder-Centered Roadmap to Conserve the Peatlands

Once the workshop participants were gathered in Bali, the co-facilitators moved them through various cycles of brainstorming and dialogue to help the conservation team develop its Theory of Change. “We paid very close attention to the balance of voices in the room to ensure we heard from everyone and created a safe and open space for real sharing and discussion,” says Ngo. This attention included facilitation with translation headsets and workshop posters and “stickies” in multiple languages to ensure the process actively included all participants.

The intentional balance of voices in the room proved critical as the team discussed its planned intermediate results with participants. These intermediate results are crucial to measuring the effectiveness of “interventions,” or key strategic approaches outlined in a Theory of Change, as they give the conservation team shorter-term goals to aim for that are motivating, measurable, and immediately actionable. While long-term outcomes are often difficult to measure or see progress on quickly, intermediate results give a team a strong indication they are on track to achieve their ultimate impact goals.

One of the interventions the team identified and shared with the group was to generate additional nature-based income streams for local Indigenous communities to help them align their economic incentives with the desire to protect the Peatland ecosystems. While the team initially planned to develop infrastructure for nature-based income, a local community member pointed out that the challenge villagers face in starting up a new income source is not as much about infrastructure but connecting with buyers and markets for their products. In response, the team became more focused on selecting an intermediate result for their Theory of Change that focused on securing buyers and markets for new commodities before investing resources in training and infrastructure. “It says a lot about how this team is doing their work that they already had a trusting relationship with this community representative, and he was able to be such a powerful contributing voice as the team drafted its Theory of Change,” says Ngo.



**“The community input sets the team up for success, ensuring they’ll focus their efforts on the risky areas first, instead of potentially spending years building infrastructure and training, only to then find that no buyers or markets exist for the new products.”**

**— SARAH NGO, AGILITY LAB THEORY OF CHANGE PROGRAM MANAGER**



Throughout the four-day workshop, the team received invaluable feedback from participants that helped shape their long-term goals for 2030. “We got confirmation of the power of having diverse representation in the room,” Ngo says. “It was critical that we formed the first Theory of Change draft with all these voices. Had we tried to add their input afterward, it would have been tough for the team to fully integrate their input into the DNA of the Theory of Change.”

The conservation team’s next step is putting its plan into action while regularly updating the Theory of Change to best achieve their desired objectives. “The entire team now views the Theory of Change as a crucial tool for guiding decisions before implementation,” says Ritonga. “We’re committed to using this structural framework to ensure our efforts are more targeted and effective.”

Thanks to the development of the Theory of Change, the team now has a clear directive to prepare a funding proposal for 2024 to 2026, which includes well-defined activities in the targeted locations. It can also accurately estimate costs and distinguish between various intervention pathways, encompassing nature, people, policy, and economic opportunities.

“With the Theory of Change developed in May 2023, we are confident in presenting our comprehensive plan to donors, outlining our vision up to 2030,” says Ritonga. “The process was instrumental in helping us pinpoint existing challenges, consider costs, strategize upscaling, and determine specific interventions. All of these efforts align with our commitment to achieve The Nature Conservancy Impact Goals by 2030.”



## Let’s collaborate.

Take two minutes to let us know about your project and we’ll be in touch to explore how we might work together.

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