

## CULTIVATING NATURAL DYE-PRODUCING PLANTS AND PROTECTING FORESTS IN INDONESIA

The [UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion](#) is disseminating the article on the [UNDP KalFor project](#) that is taking place on the island of Borneo in Indonesia and promotes the revival of natural dyeing practices based on the traditional knowledge of the Ensaid Panjang village.

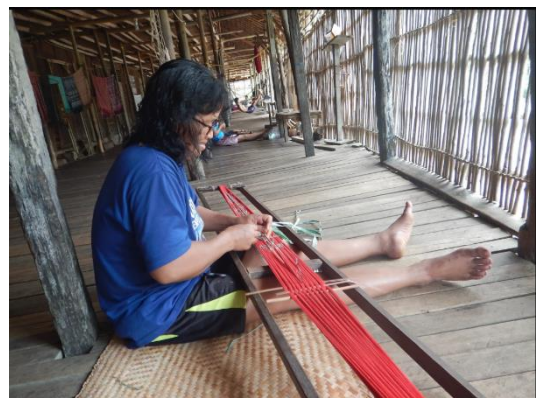
The KalFor project, which is supported by UNDP Indonesia, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) of Indonesia, is bolstering the national program to preserve the remaining forests in Kalimantan territory. The project is operationalized by MoEF, the National Development Planning Agency and other government institutions, improving a national framework to maintain the remaining forests with their biodiversity and ecosystem functions, to compete economically with the agricultural monoculture sector.

The Ensaid Panjang village lies in the Sintang District of West Kalimantan Province, one of the project's areas. The District is notable for its National Park, which was established as a nature reserve in 1978, and is home to over 1,000 species of plants and animals, including vulnerable, threatened, or endangered species.

The district's economy is dominated by natural resource-based sectors as agriculture and forest degradation threaten carbon stores, traditional culture, long-term livelihoods of communities, and biodiversity simultaneously. The primary cause of biodiversity loss is forest destruction and degradation, which has been exacerbated by forest clearing for monoculture crops. Forested areas cover 59% of Sintang's territory, but the district has one of the highest rates of degradation, deforestation, and fires in West Kalimantan.

The production and use of natural dyes is an activity that is part of the tradition of the Ensaid Panjang weavers, who use them to colour the fabrics produced for common uses and for the ceremonies of the local culture, while contributing to the protection of biodiversity and forest conservation.

In the framework of the KalFor project, the weavers of the Ensaid Panjang village started activities of forest rehabilitation and enrichment by planting and cultivating natural dye-producing plants, recognizing that naturally dyed textiles are high in value and demand in international markets. Valuing natural dyes and locally-produced textiles is not only a way of cultural preservation





but it also bolsters the value of the forests they come from, also giving animals, insects, fungi and other plants a chance to thrive.

The weavers of Ensaïd Panjang count on a consolidated knowledge of the resources available in their forest. The article mentions some examples as the lengkar tree (*Litsea angulata*) which produces a deep red colour which is highly valued by the Dayak peoples for dying hand-woven cloth. Crimson and brown colours can be produced from Mengkudu (*Morinda citrifolia*), purples from tarum leaves (*Marsdenia sp*), yellows from the rhizome of the turmeric plant (*Curcuma domestica*), and burnt umber, sienna, and even black dyes from the leaves and fruit skins of Rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*) and Jengkol (*Archidendron pauciflorum*).

The village community has seen in the KalFor project an opportunity to protect their forests and use the new resources to support their main enterprise of weaving. With project support, Ensaïd Panjang village currently maintains five forest units that would otherwise be open to non-forestry development. These forest units comprise over 150 hectares of sustainable, diverse, regenerating woodlands. In these units, community members implement initiatives strengthening their weaving heritage through the cultivation of natural dye-bearing plants, using forest-preserving and sustainable farming methods.

The project has also conducted a series of skill development trainings to combine innovation and ancient artistry. The trainings included support for product diversification (via the expansion of traditional patterns onto modern products such as purses, bags and book covers), as well as marketing and promotion, ensuring the participation of young people. Thanks also to the targeted government funding for the Ensaïd Panjang weavers, the support of the project is intended to have long-term impact.

The added value of the new products should help the economic activity of weavers and natural dyes producers to grow by making wise use of natural resources. The Government of Sintang District asks all women of the village to work together to keep their culture of weaving to sustain their local economy and inspire all weavers in the District to follow their example. Through these activities, the KalFor project is obtaining results for culture and biodiversity preservation, community livelihoods and economic development simultaneously, by making forest preservation, in service of traditional dye bearing plants, more profitable than monoculture plantations.

Studies carried out by participants in the [UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion](#) document the great damage generated in the environment by artificial dyes commonly used by the fashion industry. By enhancing existing traditional knowledge, the practices of production and use of natural dyes make an important contribution to solving these problems, offering the ever-growing market of consumers committed to the environment their high-quality products, free from chemicals and which do not harm health.

Furthermore, by emphasizing the contribution of planting and cultivating natural dye-producing plants, the KalFor project places these practices on the [global agenda aimed at protecting forests and restoring ecosystems](#). Promoted by important international organizations, this approach will certainly inspire other countries and territories to implement similar initiatives that enhance the great resources of nature and traditional knowledge still used by local communities around the world.



**To know more**

[Article in UNDP Ecosystems & Biodiversity website](#)

[News in UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion website](#)

[KalFor Project document in undp.org](#)

[GEF - Forest Area Planning & Management in Kalimantan - KalFor| UNDP Indonesia](#)

[Collaborative Management in prfindonesia.org](#)

[Plant species used in Ensaid Panjang Village in researchgate.net](#)

[Photos of Ensaid Panjang in Borneo Adventure](#)

[Forests for Fashion - UNECE](#)

[ForestsforFashionBooklet2019.pdf \(unece.org\)](#)

[United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion](#)

[United Nations decade on Ecosystems Restoration](#)

