

Another Masarang day

This morning the day started at 5 am when the church speakers announced the blessed words, carrying far over the rice fields all the way to my bedroom window. Shortly after the roosters joined in as well. I am in Tomohon, the city up in the mountains above Manado, the capital of the Indonesian province of North Sulawesi where our Masarang Foundation is located.

Often I tell our staff to make sure people that support us are aware of what we are doing and how important they are for our work. And often they tell me nothing special happened. Really?... Well, let me give it a try as an example of what might be interesting to people abroad to read about those routine things. To be honest, a lot happened today, but then also much happens every day!

After my regular morning routines Florine, a student from Utrecht, The Netherlands, came to visit. We looked through her work on assessing the value of the Masarang Mountain reforestation for the local people. Less flooding, more regular spring water, better water quality, higher water tables, more rice production, etc. The hardest thing? Asking the right questions and knowing when people are answering you to please you or really present the facts.

Then working with my brother Theo, who is a mechanical expert, on the design of the Illipe nut factory in West Kalimantan. So important to increase income from a natural forest in Borneo and making these forests worth protecting.



Next: our lawyer! She brought all the documents for the newly acquired land with beautiful forest that we will protect. Lots of issues she had to face off with, since many “officials” wanted a piece of what they saw as the “cake”. The new forest land holds virtually all the wildlife that Sulawesi possesses! 620 hectares is a nice start and we hope we can still add much forest to this area.

Simon Purser is delighted at the new opportunities we now all of a sudden have for releases of animals from Tasikoki and to set up a wonderful new project for in situ protection of wildlife.

Then a meeting in our newly rented Masarang office in Tomohon. Here is a picture of the office. Tomorrow Dirja, our gardening expert, will come and make a design for the garden. People from the tax office visit to teach our staff about the new electronic system that is now being implemented for tax affairs. Another car with people from our bank shows up. I



leave the office while Onna, our great female CEO continues with lots of personal and budgeting affairs.



I get a SMS from West Kalimantan. The hanging parrots that we saved have been released in the orangutan forest. Great! Then working on maps and work plans and discussing the progress of my PhD student Tartius while waiting to be picked up to go to our Minaesa University. Dr. Julius also arrives and we look at the construction site. The new office and lecture rooms are ready and we work out several plans for the near future.

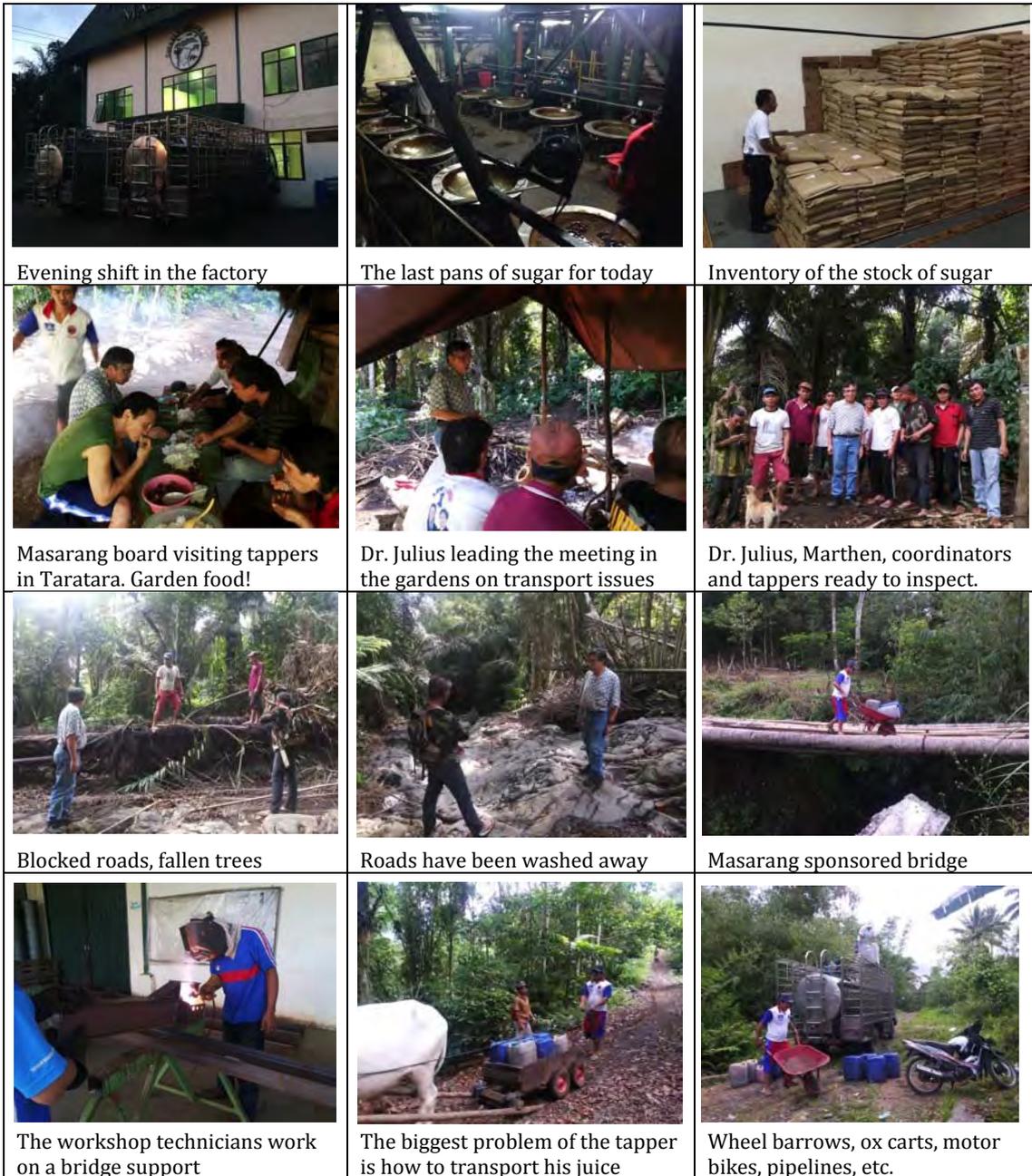
Next stop, the sugar factory. We inspect the new roof of the village hub that was blown to pieces during the storm that caused so much flooding, land slides and deaths. The roof is much better than before and I am very pleased!



Marthen, the palm sugar factory director, shows me the pictures of the work the farmers did to repair roads that were washed away, to remove trees that blocked them, and to plan a pipeline from a rocket stove so we can increase the juice deliveries to our Masarang Palm Sugar factory. I am happy to see that now 10 stainless steel cooking pans are fully operational. The demand for the sugar is very high and we have to continuously come up with solutions for more juice, more heat, more processing capacity, etc.

When we tried to get more steam it turned out that the valves of the geothermal plant had become totally stuck. So we have to wait until the whole installation is shut down for maintenance in June before we can get more heat. In the mean time Theo installed all kinds of clever improvements to do more with the rest steam we have. We check the condition in the storage and I am happy to see that soon another container with our organic palm sugar can be shipped to The

Netherlands. Just have a look at the following pictures to realize what is going on to keep providing the sugar palm tappers with income.



We have a short meeting with Welly, the farmer that manages part of the Village Hub, and visit his pigs, goats and fishponds. Then we drive from the factory back to a restaurant in Tomohon and afterwards we bought some good durians. And as an extra bonus a rescue of another *Macaca heckii* in Tomohon! The evening is for Skype calls, emails and more report writing.



Nothing special? Hmm...

Willie smits, Tomohon, 29-4-2014