



Voices

OCTOBER 2002

Brothers Dwi and Anton have grown up in a family that values education highly. Their mother teaches pre-school, and their father is a clerk in the local high school. Even so, beginning from primary school, both of these recent secondary school graduates spent their free time helping their father Wahono on the family's 3-hectare coffee plot.

That plot is situated on the steep volcanic slopes of Sumber Jaya, a sub-district of Lampung Province in southern Sumatra. Sumber Jaya lies in the foothills just to the east of a major national park and is part of Indonesia's main coffee-growing belt. Over the past 50 years, large areas of 'protected' natural forest on gazetted State Forest Land—including the 3 hectares managed by the brothers' family—have been converted into coffee gardens.

Since graduation from secondary school, Dwi and Anton have taken the lead in managing the family's coffee. But their future on this plot is uncertain. The brothers' biggest worry is that the family will be forced from the land—again. In 1995, the Indonesian Government initiated a reforestation project in the State Forest zone, forcing small-scale farmers off the land by destroying their coffee gardens and planting timber trees in the hope of preventing the farmers' return. Some were forced at gunpoint to uproot the coffee themselves.

In hopes of securing rights to the contested land in Sumber Jaya, several groups have formed recently to apply for stewardship contracts through the Community Forestry Programme (HKM) of the Government. Anton and Dwi's father is the leader of one group, which joined together in 2000. ASB researchers are working with several of these groups, local government and the Forestry Department to facilitate negotiation for HKM status. The overarching goal is to develop a process by which the Government can meet its environmental objectives to protect watersheds and park boundaries, while also enabling established settlers to make a living by managing their coffee systems in ways that are environmentally sound.

"We are afraid of being evicted again."

— ANTON

J Lewis



For example, under the HKM agreements, farmers' continued rights to existing plots are linked to preservation of the remaining natural forest nearby. In addition to the moratorium on clearing new land, farmers also agree to use agroforestry practices to enhance sustainability of coffee production on the land they already have cleared. For their part, Dwi and Anton have planted valuable trees such as durian, avocado, breadfruit and nutmeg within their coffee, thereby creating a more complex multi-strata system to control erosion and improve habitat. They also support a nearby community nursery as a source of additional planting material.

Like their older brother, who is currently living in Java and studying accounting, both Dwi and Anton want to attend university. Anton, who just graduated from high school, hopes to study agriculture at Lampung University. Ultimately, he dreams of working for an agricultural company or the Civil Service. Coffee farming is a fallback option if these plans do not materialise. However, he prefers not to farm on State Forest Land for fear of being evicted again. Dwi plans to farm while waiting for his turn at university. In the meantime, he is hopeful that the group his father leads will succeed in securing HKM status for their land. Failing that, he also might leave their coffee field. He would prefer to cultivate annual crops on land nearer to the family's home in town, because it involves fewer restrictions and less risk of eviction.

ASB Voices is published by the Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn (ASB) Programme. The series aims to convey for a broad audience the insights and perspectives from people's real-life experiences and challenges in the humid tropics.

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