

# DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND CONSERVATION THROUGH ISLAMIC TEACHING<sup>1</sup>

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## 1 THE NEED FOR CONSERVATION IN INDONESIA

Indonesia, often called a megadiversity country,<sup>2</sup> is one of the world's three richest countries in terms of biological diversity. Its people have, also, very diverse cultural traditions—336 cultural groups have been identified<sup>3</sup>—and very different levels of education. Those cultural traditions, based to a large extent on religious beliefs and practices, are the basis of the people's values and inform their attitudes to nature and conservation.<sup>4</sup> Indonesia's economy-oriented development policy,

<sup>1</sup> This article forms part of my research at the Program Study for Environment and Natural Resources Management (PS-PSL), Bogor Agricultural University. It was written in close consultation with Hadi Sukadi Alikodra (Chair, Advisory Commission, Bogor Agricultural University), Ahmad Arif Amin (Member, Advisory Commission, Bogor Agricultural University), Jatna Supriantna (Advisory Commission, Department of Biology, University of Indonesia; Regional Vice President, Conservation International–Indonesia), and Ahmad Sudirman Abbas (Advisory Commission, State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta).

<sup>2</sup> The other two megadiversity countries are Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo. See R. Mittermeier, P. Gil and C. Goettsch-Mittermeier, *Megadiversity: Earth's Biologically Wealthiest Nation* (Washington DC: Conservation International, Cemex. Prado Norte, 1997), 501.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>4</sup> See S. R. Kellert, *The Value of Life: Biological Diversity and Human Society* (Washington DC: Island Press, 1996), 9. Kellert forcefully describes the values that are caring towards the natural world, often expressed through human adaptation: 'Although these values are rooted in human biology, they are shaped by the formative influence of experience, learning and culture.'

which depends on heavy usage of natural resources, has placed extreme pressures on the nation's environment and its natural diversity. The resulting decline in environmental quality has pushed the country's network of NGOs (non-governmental organizations), as well as some government sectors, to become more aware of new approaches to environmental issues. The traditional heavily authoritarian approach is beginning to be replaced by an approach that has a gentler, lighter touch—it is one that lets local people identify and tackle problems within the perspective of their religious beliefs and practices.

Growth-oriented development has put enormous pressure on natural resources and people used to regard it as the only kind of development that is possible. Indonesia's civil society became aware of this unsustainable policy in the middle of the 1970s, when WALHI (Indonesia Forum for Environmental Networking) was first established to advocate environmental protection, facilitate the growth of other environmental NGOs, train and build capacity among environmental partners, and improve the effectiveness of the NGOs by linking through networking and information exchange. Since the 1990s, the number of NGOs has grown rapidly. About 600 NGOs have been established, of which 400 are included in WALHI's network, which makes it the largest NGO network in the country.<sup>5</sup> Other NGOs focus on different aspects of what is needed—such as science and research, education, advocacy, community development, etc.—but they use conventional and secular approaches, which sometimes do not work. We believe another approach is warranted, one that most Indonesians can relate to.

Changes between the wet and the dry seasons in Indonesia can be extreme. The dry season in various places, such as on the islands of Kalimantan and Sumatra, often causes prolonged fires that are environmentally problematic, even to neighbouring countries, because of the smoke and haze generated. Forest patches are sometimes intentionally set on fire by farmers and land-clearing entrepreneurs. This happens every year and leads to environmental disaster where the fires become uncontrollable. Wildfires can affect anywhere between thousands to millions of hectares of forest. Forest fires in Indonesia peaked during the protracted dry season in 1997–98; in total, the fires burned 9.7 million hectares of land, 4.8 million hectares of which were forested. The economic losses due to these fires were estimated at US\$ 9.3–9.7 million in direct losses to individual citizens and those in the

<sup>5</sup> M. Indrawan, R. B. Primarck, J. Supriatna, *Biologi Konservasi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2007), 553 .

business community.<sup>6</sup> The overall loss to the nation was, however, pretty much incalculable: plantation and farm crops, unlogged and logged natural forest, and timber plantations and non-timber forest product, not to mention the services lost due to the destruction of forest—protection from flooding, soil erosion and siltation, and excess carbon (that used to be absorbed by the forest) being released into the atmosphere. Also, haze and smoke from the fires gave rise to respiratory problems which affected the health of many citizens, and significantly damaged transportation and tourism.

Deteriorating environmental conditions are in fact exacerbated by human acts so that at times it looks as if nature is retaliating—no longer willing to be hospitable to those who abuse the land and resources, and responding to that disastrous abuse with its own set of disasters. Many disasters can be attributed directly or indirectly to forest destruction. Natural forests previously functioned in protective ways. One of these is stabilizing the soil on steep mountain inclines. However, as these slopes have become home to human settlement, river canals have been dug for irrigation and the slopes have been planted as agricultural and rice paddy fields. Consequently, floods and landslides recur every year, especially during the transition between the main seasons.

The Ministry of Environment in its 2004 report on the status of the Indonesian environment recorded 194 floods and landslides in 24 provinces during 2003 and up to September 2004. These floods and landslides claimed 338 lives, with an additional 144 people recorded missing and 131,558 people displaced as refugees. The infrastructure inundated included 21,732 hectares of settlement, 64,050 hectares of houses, 540 hectares of public facilities, 247km of road, 16 bridges, 94,197 hectares of rice fields, and 3,655 hectares of plantation land as well as 3,463 hectares of fishery land. The floods and landslides also damaged 7,127 houses, 686 public facilities, 338 km of road, 59 bridges, 63 dykes, 12,078 metres of duct, 9,592 metres of dam, and 54 irrigation facilities.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime, illegal logging is still prevalent in Indonesian forests and, to put it bluntly, is still proving very difficult to eradicate. The logs are frequently taken from natural areas, including conservation areas (protected forests, national parks, and other conservation areas), and exported. Rampant illegal logging (damages total 2.8 million hectares

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank, *Indonesia: Environmental and Natural Resource Management in a Time of Transition* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2001), 17.

<sup>7</sup> MoE, *The Status of Indonesian Environment in 2004* (Jakarta: Ministry of Environment, 2005), 2.

per year, and economic losses to the state are approximately Rp35 trillion per year, or Rp82 billion per day) is primarily due to the disparity between supply and demand, to the huge foreign markets for illegal logs. Weak or absent law enforcement and the poverty that afflicts communities living in the vicinity of forests further aggravate this problem.<sup>8</sup>

Several areas have recently been designated as national parks in Indonesia and as of this writing the number has reached 41 national parks with a total area of 15 million hectares.<sup>9</sup> However, even after such areas are designated as conservation areas, they are not free from sundry disturbances and human interventions. Timber cutting continues in the national parks but, being under public scrutiny, it is closely managed.

## 2 CONSERVATION IN INDONESIA AS A MUSLIM COUNTRY

As the population of Indonesia includes 177.5 million Muslims,<sup>10</sup> it seems reasonable to ask if it is possible to mobilize awareness about environmental issues through Islamic principles. In our view, this approach holds huge potential for the world's most populous Muslim country. Living in a predominantly Muslim country blessed with such vast and varied biological resources, Indonesian Muslims as Muslims can be expected to feel grateful and to preserve what has come to them as a divine blessing. It would be bitterly ironic if the country with the largest Muslim population should become notorious for serious environmental failures when one of Islam's key principles is the respect and conservation of God's creation. If that turns out to be the case, Indonesian Muslims will have failed to adhere to this principle

Most Muslim-populated countries are classed by the United Nations as among the 'least developed', though many of them are rich in natural resources, such as various minerals and oil in the Middle East, or the extraordinary bio-diversity in Indonesia and Malaysia. None of these countries, however, are free of environmental problems. In the central

<sup>8</sup> B. M. Poernama, 'Pemberantasan Illegal logging dan penyelundupan kayu: Menuju kelestarian hutan dan Peningkatan Kinerja Sektor Kehutanan', paper presented at the National Forest Seminar, Jakarta, 8 March 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Forestry (DoF), *Kawasan Konservasi Pesona Alam Tiada Batas* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal PHKA, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> See Departemen Agama, *Jumlah Penduduk Menurut Propinsi dan Agama Tahun 2004*. [http://www.depag.go.id/Hal\\_1.php](http://www.depag.go.id/Hal_1.php). Accessed 15 February 2006.

Middle East, environmental conditions deteriorated dramatically following the military response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.<sup>11</sup> In general, severe environmental degradation is directly attributable to human impact. Some predominantly Muslim countries such as Egypt and Pakistan have experienced environmental degradation on a scale similar to Kuwait due to poor environmental management and the insensitive behaviour of Muslim societies toward their local environments.

### 3 INVOLVING ULEMA OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS (PESANTREN)

Emil Salim, who served as Minister of Environment for the Republic of Indonesia in the 1980s, told us of his consulting Bunya Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amarullah, a prominent Islamic scholar popularly known by the acronym Hamka, who served as the head of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). He asked Hamka what the role of Muslims was in conserving the environment. Hamka answered that Muslims could be motivated if they understood the direct, practical benefit. For example, Muslims must do the prayer (*ṣalāh*) five times a day and must have water to do the obligatory ablutions before they pray. Only in the emergency situation of non-availability of clean water is it permissible to do a symbolic ablution without water (i. e. *tayammum*). For that reason, the provision of clean water is considered in Islamic teaching as a religious duty for the Muslim community. Since Muslims have to conserve water as well as its sources in order to worship, water conservation is mandatory for Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

The advice Emil Salim got from Hamka, as well as the example he set of consulting the ulema, needs to be followed up. Encouraged by discussions with the alumni from Syarif Hidayatullah National Islamic University (UINSH), Jakarta, our research team resolved to use the same approach in 2003. We concluded that there is an urgent need to meet with the ulema and look into relevant Islamic teaching in the light of the traditional sources of Islam, namely the Qur'ān, Prophetic *ḥadīth*, and classical, Islamic scholarly texts (*fiqh*).

The available literature dealing with the environment and Islam is generally of an apologetic character. One of the more attractive

<sup>11</sup> See M. Y. Izzi Dien, 'Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice' *Journal of Belief and Values* 18/1 (1997): 47–59.

<sup>12</sup> See F. M. Mangunjaya, 'Agama Mengatasi Krisis Lingkungan', *Tropika Indonesia*, 9/3–4 (2005): 8–11.

documents that goes into the relevant verses of the Qur'ān is *Sustainable Forest, Faith and Piety*, a document issued by the Department of Forestry and Plantations.<sup>13</sup> However, more thorough, systematic and factual on-the-ground research to study arguments regarding Islam and natural and environmental conservation remains to be done.

Internationally, the relevance of religious traditions in protecting biological diversity has been deemed critical. For example, a research report by WWF International and the Alliance of Religion and Conservation (ARC) concludes that a range of spiritual teachings can have an important role to play in preserving natural areas. This report specifically reviews the potential of religious teachings that can be instrumental in protecting conservation areas. According to the report, the relationship between religion and the environment can be categorized in two ways:

- Sacred places—meaning both sacred natural sites and built structures in natural or semi-natural areas—can contribute directly to global conservation efforts since such places have come into being, and been properly protected, through traditions that date back thousands of years.
- General influence—through their worldviews and ethical traditions faiths can have a major impact on how their adherents see the duty to protect nature.<sup>14</sup>

In Indonesia, INFORM (Indonesia Forest and Media Campaign), a project combining media campaigns and field activities, focused on forest protection efforts in Sumatra and Kalimantan. INFORM is run by six conservation organizations: Conservation International Indonesia (CI-I), Bird Life Indonesia, Fauna and Flora International Indonesia Programme, The Nature Conservancy Indonesia Program, and the WWF Indonesia.<sup>15</sup>

The project began with discussions of religious teachings generally in respect of their concern for natural and environmental conservation. Particularly for Islam, which has the largest number of adherents and scholars in the country, INFORM invited 31 pesantren ulema from different regions. Most of the ulema and non-formal leaders who attended were able to bring to bear their expertise and competence with the relevant texts of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* and authoritative jurisprudence.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Forestry, *Sustainable Forest, Faith, and Piety* (Jakarta: Departement Kehutanan dan Perkebunan, 1999), 235.

<sup>14</sup> See WWF International and ARC, *Beyond Belief: Linking Faiths and Protected Areas to Support Biodiversity Conservation* (Switzerland: WWF International and ARC, 2005), 143.

<sup>15</sup> The World Bank, *Faiths and the Environment: The World Bank Support 2000–2005* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2006), 16.

In addition, they were able to offer a number of policy recommendations.

The pesantren ulema constitute for this nation a store of the wealth of the Islamic tradition—this is visible in their memorization of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* and study of *fiqh*. But they also study and discuss emerging values as they affect the community. One example is the hundred-year-old Pesantren Lirboyo, Kediri, and its *Majlis Lajnah Bahtsu Masaʾil*. This school has an average 7000 students per year. Under the leadership of KH Anʾim Falahuddin Mahrus, it studies and responds to contemporary issues which, as with other pesantren, are set out in book form and circulated to the wider community for discussion outside the pesantren circle. KH Anʾim Falahuddin Mahrus made the important observation that ‘a study on the environment has not been conducted by the pesantren of Lirboyo’. He said that many discussions with the *santri* (pesantren students) and Islamic scholars in Lirboyo had related to social issues but environmental issues had not yet been studied. KH Husein Muhammad, the leader of Pondok Pesantren Dar al-Tauhid, Cirebon, said: ‘In point of fact the issue of natural and environmental conservation has not been discussed explicitly [i.e. in those terms] in the classical books of Islam.’ Accordingly, efforts to research into and respond to environmental issues are made through what he called ‘marginal *fiqh*’, meaning that the ideas of different ulema and the material found in dispersed *ḥadīths* need to be gathered and studied systematically.<sup>16</sup>

According to KH Husein Muhammad, he never found the Arabic word *al-bīʿa*, now used for ‘environment’, used in that sense in the books of *fiqh* of the classical period. The discussions of relevance to the topic are scattered across many different ‘chapters’ (*bāb*) of *fiqh*. Similarly, in respect of general objectives of the Shariʿa also, the five agreed upon speak of protection of 1) religion, 2) reason, 3) life, 4) property and 5) descendants, but ‘environment’ is not in that list. However, if we reflect on what the realization of each of these objectives entails, each of them is clearly related to issues of environmental concern. For example, respect for the creation of God, responsible stewardship of all that is placed in our power and care, is a core element of ‘protecting’ the religion. As for ‘protecting’ life, reason, and the wealth of our own and future generations, the sheer necessity of clean air and water and sensibly managed consumption to achieve these objectives is self-evident. KH

<sup>16</sup> For the rest of the interview with KH Husein Muhammad: ‘Muslims are invited to understand environmental issues’ (Ummat diajak memahami persoalan lingkungan), see *Tropika Indonesia* 8/3 (2004): 46–7.

Hussein Muhammad was convinced therefore that if environmental issues are raised as such with the ulema, there would be no resistance to doing so.<sup>17</sup>

In Indonesia *lingkungan hidup*, the translation of the English word 'environment', like the equivalent in other Islamic languages—such as *al-bi'a* (Arabic), *mohit-i zist*, (Persian) and *çevre* (Turkish) has a relatively short history.<sup>18</sup> Responding to environmental issues in the Islamic world should be considered a pressing duty of the present ulema, especially in light of the accelerating pace of the concerns that flow from modern technologies and lifestyles.

We believe that the initiative to bring the pesantren ulema together for a quite comprehensive discussion about Islamic teachings—starting from LIDO in March 2004—constitutes a successful first step to building a *fiqh al-bi'a*. The Report on *Fiqh al-Biah*<sup>19</sup> produced by the ulema has been warmly welcomed among environmental conservationists and activists in Indonesia.

### 3.1. Islamic boarding school joint activity

Activities within the pesantren are being followed up with a new initiative by CI-I in cooperation with the Faiths and Environment Initiative, World Bank. CI-I promised a series of activities: among other things, the publication of a book on nature conservation in Islam,<sup>20</sup> seed planting in the vicinity of the Mount Gede Pangrango National Park (TNGGP), training and education of senior pesantren students on environmental and natural conservation, and a national workshop on the role of Muslims in responding to environmental and natural conservation, and an environmental awareness-raising programme in the regions.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> However, as we shall note below, the ulema of other populous Muslim countries do not necessarily follow the environmental protection agenda, indeed view it as 'Western' and for that reason alone 'unIslamic'.

<sup>18</sup> R. C. Foltz (ed.), 'The Environmental Crisis in the Muslim World' in *Environmentalism in the Muslim World* (New York: Nova Science Publisher, 2005), 'Introduction', ix.

<sup>19</sup> See A. S. Muhammad, H. Muhammad, R. Mabur, A. S. Abbas, A. Firman, F. M. Mangunjaya, K. IB. Pasha, M. Andriana (eds.), *Fiqh Lingkungan [fiqh al-bi'a]* (INFORM: Sukabumi, May 2004).

<sup>20</sup> F. M. Mangunjaya, *Konservasi Alam Dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005), 142.

<sup>21</sup> See the report of Conservation International Indonesia, *Islamic Boarding Schools and Conservation* (Jakarta: Final Report CI-Indonesia, 2005), 24.



The programme met with a very favourable response from pesantren circles since they learned something new about environmental activities in Indonesia. KH Deden A. Jauhari, the leader of Pondok Pesantren At-Tanwiryah, Cianjur, said that involving *santri* and ulema in natural conservation and plant growing is very good and should be supported by all the ulema in Indonesia: ‘Many verses in the Qur’ān explain about natural conservation. One of the verses of *al-Rūm* mentions that “damage on land and sea is caused by human acts”.’ As part of the aforementioned programme, six pesantren in the vicinity of TNGGP grew plant seeds that have a high biological diversity of 3000 trees.

A national workshop, held in cooperation with the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI), also brought in other stakeholders: the Ministry of Environment (KLH), Department of Forestry, pesantren leaders, Department of Religious Affairs, Department of National Development, the Ulama Council (MUI), Universitas Islam Syarif Hidayatullah and NGOs. This workshop was an effort to disseminate and follow up on the results of the INFORM report, and to get more practical policy suggestions for Muslims to take up in environmental and natural conservation. The workshop was called ‘The Role of Muslims in Environmental and Natural Conservation’ and made the following recommendations:

Whereas Muslims are aware of the importance of environmental and natural conservation in their daily activities:

1. Muslims, especially the pesantren network, must be actively involved in natural conservation practice including land and sea conservation.
2. In the context of promoting conservation, there is a need for practical actions, the dissemination of which will involve the leaders of pesantren, other local leaders and awareness-raisers (*dā'i*) in notably: i) pesantren, local communities and mosques; ii) networks of pesantren students, community members, and the wider public, with the aim of involving all citizens in environmental and natural conservation activities.
3. Environmental Fiqh (*fiqh al-bī'ā*) must be included as a subject within the aforementioned circles, and a time target put on the agenda which can then be communicated to all community members, as appropriate for local conditions.
4. It is expected that pesantren have land available (for example, plantation land) to practise and demonstrate conservation activities.
5. It is necessary to monitor government policy (especially regional government policy) in relation to environmental issues.

6. It is important to establish an environmental care forum consisting of leaders of pesantren, scientists and related parties to promote and voice the interest of environmental and natural conservation.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to workshop activity at national level, a workshop at local level with a focus on the Wakatobi National Park and Buton, South East Sulawesi was also organized. It aimed to combine awareness raising with efforts to save Lambusango Nature Reserve and coral reef areas that are being continually damaged by non-environmentally friendly exploitation—fish bombing and potassium in the Wakatobi Marine National Park areas. During the workshop, the imam of the local mosque and opinion leaders including the relevant stakeholders were invited. Forty participants coming from Wanci, Kaledupa, Tomiai and several districts such as Kadatua, Tomiai, Siempu and Batu Atas, Buton districts, as well as the representatives of the Religious Affairs Service Office, Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) and Tourism Service Office attended the workshop.

The participants followed the activities enthusiastically and learned a lot about new practical ways to provide information for the community on the importance of environmental conservation. Reference was made to *Fiqh al-Biah* (INFORM, 2005), using the Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīths* cited in it, to motivate listners. KH Husain Muhammad (one of the editors and initiators of the document) contributed by visiting the community and doing the awareness-raising at the mosque in Wanci.

### 3.2. *Qur'ān-based environmental teaching*

The warm welcome from the ulema—particularly those from pesantren circles—is a good sign. Although this movement has not yet involved ulema at the national level, in general the ulema who take part in national forums are those who are active in pesantren and are the alumni of the existing pesantren in Indonesia. We may be surprised that a lot of ulema in Indonesia are moderate and inclusive, and there is no resistance from them to getting involved in the conservation and environmental movement. The pesantren as the last guard of traditional Islam are now 'opening their window' to communicate Islamic environmental issues—which are contemporary problems and issues—to Islamic communities in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> The responses of the pesantren ulema in Indonesia have been positive, in contrast to those in Pakistan. The civil society (NGOs) in that country, for example organizations such as Pakistani World Wide

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Muslim Abdurrahman, 'Terbukanya jendela pondok pesantren', *Kompas Daily*, 7 July 2006.

Fund for Nature (WWF) have also made efforts to involve religious leaders and ulema, but they have failed because Pakistani ulema rejected this and said that environmental issues constituted a Western agenda, as described by Ali Raza Rizvi of Pakistani IUCN:

In a society like Pakistan, religious leaders play an important role in everyday life. While Islam, the main religion, does advocate conservation and the importance of natural resources, the religious leaders have viewed these trends with suspicion—as part of a ‘Western’ agenda in fact. This has been due to the religious leaders’ own ignorance of ecological realities, and unfortunately has resulted in their opposing the civil society organizations working in this sector.<sup>24</sup>

The success of environmental activists and conservationists in Indonesia in getting the cooperation of the ulema there was also recognized by Fazlun Khalid, the Director and Founder of Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) in Birmingham, UK. He writes that the ulema in Indonesia are much more advanced in this regard as compared to those of Pakistan.

Khalid is a former English civil servant who has studied and been actively involved in Islamic environmentalism for two decades. In collaboration with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and WWF as well as the World Bank, he has organized training in various countries including the workshop called: ‘Qur’an, Creation and Conservation’.<sup>25</sup> This workshop presents the principal concepts from the Qur’an and Islamic teachings relevant to conservation, of which the most important are: *tawhīd*, *fiṭra*, *mīzān*, *khalīfa*. The key concept is *mīzān*, the teaching that God created this earth in a harmonious, balanced condition and subjected it to human stewardship for the benefit of humankind but they have the potential to disrupt and damage this condition and engender, in its place, imbalances. Khalid has worked with Muslim religious schools, teachers, scholars and muftis, in the many different predominantly-Muslim countries to raise environmental awareness on the basis of Islamic ethics. He has collaborated with different NGOs such as CI-I and WWF.

In Indonesia, IFEES organized the same workshop for stakeholders in Sungai Penuh, Kerinci Seblat National Park, Jambi and in Garut, West Java.<sup>26</sup> During the last workshop, participants searched the Qur’an for guidance on conservation ethics and how to effect change in the lifestyles of Muslims. This workshop was held in cooperation with Islamic

<sup>24</sup> Ali Raza Rizvi, ‘Pakistan’ in Richard C. Foltz (ed.) *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Fazlun M. Khalid, ‘Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics’, in *ibid*, 87.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 108–9.

scholars and senior teachers, as well as other stakeholders, in Panyabungan, Mandailing Natal (Madina) at the end of January 2006, close to the Batang Gadis National Park. The workshop was jointly sponsored by CI-I, the Forestry Service Office, Mandailing Natal, IFEEES & Muslim Hands (Birmingham, UK), Department of Anthropology–Fisip USU, Bitra Consortium, and Association of Mandailing Families–HIKMA (Malaysia).<sup>27</sup>

This workshop was expected to generate good conservation outcomes by strengthening the Islamic emphasis that conserving nature and environment is at the core of the stewardship mandate granted by God to human beings. Mandailing Natal is predominantly a Muslim regency and there are many traditional Islamic boarding schools there, one of which is Pondok Pesantren Al-Mustafawiyah Purba Baru. It has been in existence for more than 70 years and has 7000 active *santri* coming from the whole of Sumatra and even from Malaysia.

People in Madina have unique traditions related to conserving nature such as *harangan rarangan* (forbidden forest). This concept makes certain forest areas owned by a village (*huta*) sacrosanct so that it is forbidden to log them in order to make domestic furniture or to clear them for agricultural use. The custom may have originated in the belief that certain parts of forest were inhabited by supernatural creatures called *naborgo-borgo* (literally, ‘those that are damp’). It seems that the association lingers, as people there still believe that entering such areas violates a taboo and whoever does so will suffer a calamity.<sup>28</sup>

In Banda Aceh, in cooperation with IFEEES, the NAD Shariah Service Office and WWF Indonesia also organized a similar workshop together with *tengku* (the word for pesantren leaders in several regions in Aceh) and Aceh Shariah Council, the Regional Government, NGOs and related stakeholders in Banda Aceh. Tengku Dr. Musdaruddin MS from the Islamic Shariah Service Office of Nangroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD) Province explained that conservation and environmental movements have not yet come on to the agenda for implementation of Shari‘a in Aceh, but if this study could be strengthened with a more detailed focus on the Shari‘a, NAD would recommend it; moreover, one of the

<sup>27</sup> See the Press Release of CI-Indonesia: ‘Workshop on Islam and Conservation of Natural Resources, Mandailing Natal’, [www.conservation.or.id](http://www.conservation.or.id). Accessed on February 10, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Edi Ikhsan *et al.*, *Dari Hutan Rarangan ke Taman Nasional: Potret Komunitas Lokal di Sekitar Taman Nasional Batang Gadis* (Medan: Bitra Kosorsium and USU Press, 2005), 6.

important Shari'ah institutions such as the Hisbah Council<sup>29</sup> (in Aceh, it is called 'Shari'ah police') can serve as an enforcer in the event of violation of natural and environmental conservation laws.

Activities based on this approach were presented for the senior teachers of Pondok pesantren beginning with those in the vicinity of Mount Gede Pangrango National Park (TNGGP). With twenty pesantren representing the Regencies of Cianjur, Sukabumi and Bogor attending, the workshop was held on 14–16 March, 2006, in the Indonesian Environment Information Center complex (PILI), Cimahpar Bogor. This activity was organized by the Conservation and Religion Program team and Conservation Education Program CI-I supported by UNOCAL. The course contents comprised the Qur'an-based approach developed by IFEEES with environmental education content developed at Conservation International. Also invited to this workshop were the heads of Islamic boarding school coordination, which is supervised by the Regental and Municipal Service Offices of the Department of Religious Affairs in the Regencies mentioned. The workshop and training were followed up by sending their results in the form of recommendations to regional heads (governor, mayors and Regents), the Head of Regional Office of the Department of Religious Affairs of Bogor, Sukabami and Cianjur Districts, and leaders of the pesantren invited.

These workshops clearly opened up horizons for those participants who had not realized before that there was such a clear relationship between the Islamic message and conservation and maintaining environmental balance. Fachrul Razi, a senior teacher from Pondok Pesantren Darussalam, Ciomas Bogor, said that he felt enlightened by the training and had a strong intention to disseminate and implement the message in his pesantren. The teachers basically agreed that this workshop and training should be followed up with a pilot project to establish environmentally-friendly pesantrens.

<sup>29</sup> The Hisbah Council (*wilāyat al-ḥisba*) is a Shari'ah-enforcing agency. Market supervision is only one of the duties of this distinctive institution in the Islamic system; its officers (*muḥtasib*) were empowered to carry out sanctions as a result of a decision on any Shari'ah violation by a Muslim. See al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, chapter on 'Provisions regarding *Ḥisba*' (Indonesia transl. Fadli Bahri; Jakarta: Darul Falah, 2000), 398.

## CONCLUSIONS

Developing environmental awareness among Indonesian Muslims has been successful in that, by mobilizing core groups of Muslims, namely *pesantren* ulema, to build and publish documents in an environmental *fiqh* (*fiqh al-bi'a*), environmental activists are now welcomed warmly in several places. The world's most populous Muslim country, Indonesia has moderate ulema, particularly in *pesantren* circles, who are willing to support and cooperate with environmental activists and NGOs. This cooperative stance is owed in part to the very tangible consequences in disasters and damage to the environment witnessed in Indonesia in recent years. But it is owed also to the fact that as religious people the ulema understand the religious responsibility of gratitude and caring stewardship they owe to God for the resources He has provided and placed at the disposal of humankind. There is an urgent need for follow-up with broader activity involving *pesantren* circles and stakeholders in the nearby areas, since such Islamic and moral persuasion could arouse general public opinion in Indonesia and other Muslim countries to prevent further damage to the environment and further extinction of species, and to promote the sustainable utilization of natural resources and conservation of biological diversity.