Experience and the impact of voluntourism in Samboja Lestari Orangutan Rehabilitation Center

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Abstract. Voluntourism is a type of alternative tourism that growing rapidly in recent years, mixing voluntary works and tourism activity in developing countries, including Indonesia. Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF), alongside with The Great Project (TGP), are organizations that have been conducting this program. The objective of the research was to understood how voluntourism program has been implemented, identify voluntourists’ perception towards the program, also how to enhance the impact of voluntourism program. Research was conducted in Samboja Lestari Orangutan Rehabilitation Center in June and July 2018 using questionnaires, interview, and field observation. Voluntourist activities were mainly prepares food and enrichment on weekdays, and tourism activity on weekends, Staffs were important part of program. Various impacts from voluntourism program were experienced by voluntourist, local staffs, BOSF, TGP, and the objects (orangutans and sunbears). Voluntourism program needs to keep focusing on raising awareness and local involvement, in order to create voluntourism as significant part of improvement of various conservation programs in Indonesia.

1. Introduction
Voluntourism is a rising popular concept of ecotourism in recent years [1]. Voluntourism is derived from two words, volunteer and tourism, defined as a business model on tourist who pay a fee for doing voluntary work as a form of recreation [2]. Therefore voluntourism program usually mix working and touristy activity [3]. This concept of “giving back” and “making a difference” were the main attraction of voluntourism [1]. Voluntourist usually goes to exotic developing country in Asia, Africa, and South America to give a “bigger impact” [4]. Wildlife conservation also came to top 3 volunteer program types, after medical and educational [5]. Indonesia is one of voluntourist favorite destination, for its biodiversity and unique culture.

In Indonesia, voluntourism program grows in recent years. Various programs about culture, education, and wildlife are available all across Indonesia. The majority of wildlife voluntourism program were held by rescue center, such as Samboja Lestari Orangutan Rehabilitation Center that managed by Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF). BOSF is a non-government organization that works on orangutan rescue and rehabilitation since 1991. This Foundation also works on habitat protection and restoration in different areas of Central and East Kalimantan. BOSF works together along with The Great Projects (TGP) to provide voluntourism program in Samboja Lestari area. Other than alongside BOSF, TGP held 34 volunteering projects across Asia, Africa, and South America. TGP works toward
animal welfare and responsible tourism, encouraging voluntourists to work with wildlife on site, and giving donation.

Voluntourism could be a form on conservation education, and ecotourism. As voluntourist work and engage with environment more than usual tourist while doing their activity, voluntourist can learn so much more, and then experience perpective change. This massive phenomenon should be learned and managed to have better impacts.

The objective of this research were to understand how BOSF, alongside TGP implemented voluntourism program, identify voluntourists’ perception on program, identify impacts of voluntourism program for stakeholders and to found how to enhance voluntourism program.

2. Methods
The Research was conducted on BOSF’s volunteering program in Samboja Lestari, East Kalimantan, which organized by TGP. There were two types of respondents as object of study, namely staff respondents and voluntourist respondents. Staffs being interviewed were the staff who exclusively work with voluntourist. Voluntourist respondents were voluntourist groups that work in Samboja Lestari from June to July 2018. There were 36 voluntourists that engaged to the program, but only 32 people agreed to be respondents of the research. Voluntourist were from United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and other Global South countries (Ireland, USA, France, Canada, and Austria) with age range from 18-71 years old. Voluntourist are mostly female and working in non-conservation fields.

Data collected in this research were program implementation, and its impacts (Table 1). Questionnaires were employed to voluntourist while interview were conducted with voluntourist coordinator and other paid staffs related to voluntourists. One researcher (ACO) also involved in voluntourism program as voluntourist for 3 weeks. Interview and field observation results were analyzed using descriptive analysis, while questionnaire result were quantified using scores (1 to 5)

| Data Type              | Data Collection          | Data Analyze                        | Description                                                                 |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Program Implementation | Interview, field observation | Descriptive analysis                | Describe how program implemented                                           |
| Perception on Program  | Questionnaires, interview | Likert scale with scoring, descriptive analysis | Describe interview result about voluntourist’s program experience.          |
| Benefit for voluntourist | Questionnaires, interview | Likert scale with scoring, descriptive analysis | How voluntourist benefits from the program.                                 |
| Impact for stakeholder  | Interview                 | Descriptive analysis                | How all stakeholder impacted by program.                                    |
| Enhancing voluntourism | Field observation, literature study | Descriptive analysis                | Identify aspect that important for enhancing voluntourism.                 |

3. Voluntourists’ program experience
3.1. General condition of Samboja Lestari
Samboja Lestari is a 1800 ha area of tropical rainforest restoration in East Kalimantan Province, located 38 km from Balikpapan. This area has been managed and replanted by BOSF to create a better habitat for orangutan rehabilitation. At the moment this site is home for more than 200 orangutans and 50 sun bears. The main focus of Samboja Lestari is orangutan rescue, translocation, nursery, rehabilitation, and reintroduction. Samboja Lestari also has been taking care of sun bears which non-releasable at the moment.
Voluntourism program at Samboja Lestari started to conducted properly in 2014, when BOSF decide to work with TGP to manage their volunteering program. There is a voluntourist coordinator from TGP, assisted by two local BOSFs staff, to manage all the voluntourists who work in Samboja Lestari. These BOSF staffs have been working with orangutan for a long time, so they have vast knowledge and close relationship with orangutans at the sanctuary. The program grand design was made by voluntourist coordinator. The itinerary itself tries to balance workload as volunteer and touristic activity. There are several program offered based on stay duration (7 day, 13 day, 27 day), though every volunteer donating the same amount (GBP 350) per program.

BOSF and TGP have different roles to this voluntourism program. BOSF focused to orangutan management, so they mainly focus on what orangutan needs and how to limit voluntourist negative influence to orangutan (spread diseases, too much contact, etc). TGP focused on voluntourist management, and how they can maximize the voluntourist involvement to improve orangutan welfare.

3.2. Voluntourism program at Samboja Lestari
Voluntourist activities could be divided into two categories, volunteer activity and tourism activity. Volunteer activity usually runs from Monday to Friday from 8am-4pm with 2 hours lunch break in between. Meanwhile tourism activities usually held on weekends. Every batch of voluntourist follows similar activities throughout the program (Table 2).

Several activities as volunteer such as fig picking, ginger leaf collecting, bamboo collecting, enrichment making, orangutan husbandry. All of these works were physically demanding, with heavier work usually scheduled as afternoon activities. Lighter works, such as enrichment making, were scheduled in the morning. There are also several support activities such as briefing and site tour to make voluntourist more organized and have deeper understanding about the project and its site. BOSF instruct no-animal-touching policy in all voluntourist activities.

Voluntourist mainly working alongside BOSF enrichment staffs, even though other staff were also helping if needed. Gathering and making enrichment were activities that time-consumming and needed to be done every day. Voluntourist existence help orangutan and sunbears lived in Samboja Lestari received their enrichment daily, which is impossible to be done by only 3 official enrichment staffs. Orangutan husbandry activity was one of the most rewarding activities, since the result would last long. Voluntourist could see the cage they clean, or hammock they made, or different kind of enrichment, used by orangutan later.

Some touristy activities were done inside project side, while other activities scattered in several places around Samboja. Recreational activities done inside project were firetower sightseeing, orangutan island boat-trip, farewell party. Many voluntourist looking forward to orangutan island boat trip the most. This activity offer experience to be close to orangutan without cage, safely. When staff was giving food for orangutan, voluntourist were able to observing orangutan behavior closely from inside the boat Meanwhile several touristy activities done outside project were Black River cruise, jungle walk and canopy trail, shopping at night market and Balikpapan city tour. Some voluntourist also feel that several working activities were refreshing and enjoyable and consider them as tourism activity too.

TGP and BOSF create this voluntourism program in such way that voluntourist able to feel involved and “making difference” for orangutans and sunbears at Samboja Lestari ORC. Voluntourist staying at an exclusive lodge on site, and having their routine of work and tourism activity, amend to different feeling from typical mass tourism [6]. Since most voluntourist were not working in environmental sector, voluntourist able to saw their daily activity as voluntourist were tourism activity, as they escape their everyday life and adapting to different roles in life [7],[8]. Work aside, different lifestyle also made deep impression to voluntourist. As life style at eco-lodge were kept modest and simple, often even without internet connection, much different with western comforts.
### Table 2. Voluntourism activity in Samboja Lestari Orangutan Rehabilitation Center

| Activity                      | Duration                  | Person in charge | Description                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Briefing                      | 2 hours (once in program) | Coordinator      | Given prior working. Information given: general information of BOSF, site map, safety measurement, funding situation, living condition, schedules. |
| Program introduction *        | 3–4 hours (once in program) | Coordinator, Staff I, Staff II | Walking tour around the sites, explanation about orangutan condition in the wilds, their estimate population, their importance for environment, threat for orangutan sustainability, Indonesian policy for orangutan, information about several orangutans at sight, open discussion about orangutan, BOSF, and project in general. |
| Firetower sightseeing         | 1 hour (once in program)  | Staff II         | See Samboja Lestari sites from above (around 20m), while receiving explanation from the staff about sites and threat to sites from local community. |
| Fig picking                   | 2 hours (1-2 times per week) | Coordinator-Staff I, Staff II | Cut downs and gather fig branch (including *Ficus aurat*, *Ficus grassularoides*), to fed directly to orangutan or used as enrichment ingredients. |
| Ginger-leaf (Alpinia sp.) collecting * | 2 hours (3-4 times per week) | Coordinator-Staff I, Staff II | Collect red ginger-leaves and green ginger-leaves on different area every day. Ginger-leaves were used as food source and nest-material for orangutan. Every orangutan was given 4-5 pieces of leaves every day. |
| Bamboo collecting             | 2 hours (once per week)  | Coordinator, staff I, staff II | Cutting bamboo as package for food enrichment. Different kind of bamboo used in different kind of enrichment. Bamboo collected from the forest, then cuts into 15-20 cm long each. |
| Orangutan enrichment making   | 4 hours (2-4 per week)   | Coordinator (main), staff I, staff II | Gain material to make enrichment (branches, leaves, figs, etc), make enrichment giving enrichment to orangutan (under supervision), watch orangutan enjoy their enrichment. |
| Sunbear enrichment making      | 4 hours (1-2 per week)   | Coordinator (main), staff I, staff II | Help spreading and hiding food in sunbear enclosure, make enrichment, giving enrichment to sunbear (under supervision), watching sunbear meal time (using stager above enclosure barrier) |
| Orangutan husbandry           | 2 hours (1-3 times per week) | Coordinator (main), staff I, staff II | Cage cleaning, hammock making, river cleaning, building enrichment area, etc. This part always consulted with BOSF, and could be different for every group. |
| Orangutan island boat trip     | 30 minutes (once)        | Enrichment staff | Boat trip around orangutan island with BOS staff, while giving around food or enrichment. |
| Tourism activity*             | 2-4 hours (once per activity) | Coordinator (main), staff I, staff II | Black River cruise, jungle walk and canopy trail, shopping at night market, Balikpapan city tour. Offered to voluntourist on their free time, usually on weekend. |
| Farewell party                 | Optional (at the end of program) | Staff I (main), coordinator | Video of orangutan, short video of voluntourist journey, express gratitude for their involvement in orangutan conservation, and program evaluation. |

Program were formatted to make voluntourist work physically challenging, but also rewarding by allowing voluntourist experience how their work make the animals lives better. It made voluntourists able to reflect on themselves when they make connection with orangutan while working. This certain outcome needs to be encouraged further [9]. Activities with orangutan make the most impact to voluntourist, and became their most memorable events as well their life changing events. Some
voluntourist made commitment to put more care on orangutan conservation after making this connection. It also happened on elephant project in Bostwana, when voluntourist feels empathy toward suffered elephant while taking care of them [10].

3.3. Voluntourist perception on program

There are several items that become main consideration for voluntourism program (Table 3). In general, voluntourist have a good perception on program implementation in Samboja Lestari. Staff quality got the highest score (4.88), as voluntourist really appreciate how the staff implemented the program, and inspired them to care about orangutan. Followed by supervision (4.85), as Coordinator and voluntourist staff was always reachable by voluntourist, while also supervise all voluntourist activity. Transparency also get high point (4.72), aside of information given via website, lots of information also shared while working. Every question asked by voluntourist about orangutan condition and BOSF in general always answered by Coordinator and voluntourist staff. Therefore, voluntourist feels that they have access to information about how their funding works. The lowest score was recognition (3.75), since there were only a few non-formal activities to rewarding voluntourist for their good works, and there is no personal recognition given to voluntourist. Followed by training (3.77), as there were not much training activities given to improve voluntourist skills. Voluntourist activity mainly simple and did not need any specific skills.

Table 3. Voluntourist perception towards program

| Aspect                | Description                                                                 | Perception Score (1-5) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Transparency          | Information about program, site, and fund accessible for voluntourist        | 4.72                   |
| Screening procedure   | Recruitment process, voluntourist selection                                  | 3.95                   |
| Policies              | Rules and procedure for voluntourist on program                              | 4.17                   |
| Safety measurement    | Safety procedure, limitation, medical equipment                              | 4.03                   |
| Training              | Training to enrich voluntourist skill                                        | 3.77                   |
| Supervision           | **Communication, explanation, guidance by staff during program**             | **4.85**               |
| Staff quality         | **Work ethics, value, and service provided by paid staff**                   | **4.88**               |
| Social activity       | Gathering, group activity to strengthen relationship among voluntourists     | 4.58                   |
| Recognition           | Awards or rewards to recognize voluntourist that doing a good job           | 3.75                   |
| Evaluation            | Recording impacts of program, and put suggestion for improvement            | 4.17                   |

Voluntourist staffs were important part of the program. Staffs have responsibility for voluntourist well-being as well project progression [11]. At Samboja Lestari, voluntourist staffs always work together alongside voluntourist, giving them close supervision and information anytime needed. Close supervision allow voluntourist to do their job safely, within target, ask question and get deeper understanding. Supervision also can used to understand deeper about voluntourist needs and gather information for program improvement. It’s important for staff to understands voluntourist necessities, and accommodate them well, so voluntourist productivity can be improved, while leaving better impression for voluntourist about working condition in program. It’s also important that staffs give impact to voluntourist through their passion, service, and inspiration.

Transparency is another important for voluntourist. Voluntourist need to make sure that their work really benefits orangutans and its habitat. Voluntourist in Bostwana emphasized their need of detailed information to decide whether they join the project, as well to help them preparing [10]. As voluntourist gave big sum of money and labor, voluntourist need to see the impact of their done to orangutan conservation. Certainty from the information BOSF and TGP gave them is important.
4. How voluntourism makes impact

4.1. Voluntourist benefit from program

Even though voluntourist have to pay to work, they also gain some benefit from this program (Table 4). Environment aspect got the highest point (4.02). It shows that voluntourist experience perspective shift about orangutan and forest, also develop care toward environment. Most of voluntourist most memorable moment were involved with orangutan, see how orangutan interact with each other, how happy orangutan playing with their enrichment, and how voluntourist seems to make some kind of connection with orangutan. Human aspect (3.97) follows closely. Voluntourist develop their knowledge, understanding, and attitude as human being. This program also do it role as recreation activity, that makes voluntourist relax and inspired, Lots of voluntourist also get new friends and valuable relation while working with other voluntourist (social aspect, 3.58). Even though not directly related, voluntourist also able to benefits on economic aspect, by improving their knowledge and understanding.

| Aspect   | Description                                                | Score |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Environment | Perspective shift, develop care toward environment        | 4.02  |
| Human    | Inspired, improve health, better self-image                | 3.97  |
| Social   | Build meaningful relationship, and communication skills    | 3.58  |
| Economy  | Improve skill, knowledge, confidence for future career     | 2.58  |

Voluntourists’ feel that this experience broaden their knowledge, change their view to the world, broadening horizons and gaining life experience, personal development, putting more value on self and building new relationship with various people [7], [12], [13]. Voluntourist were also experience change of perspective while voluntouristing. They become more aware about orangutan situation and conservation effort. The change wasn’t limited to their newly gained knowledge but also raising interest about various environment issues. Information gained through this program pique their curiosity and made them want to seek deeper understanding for the cause of environment issues and how they can help.

All these benefits became reason for many people came back to do the program again, or doing another voluntourism program in other place. These benefits also encourage them to promote this kind of program to their relation so they able to bring more people to do voluntourism program.

4.2. Voluntourism impacts for other stakeholders

This program was not only affected voluntourist. There also some impact received by other parties such as BOSF staff, BOSF (as organization), TGP, even orangutan and sun bear (Table 5). Voluntourism program also increase BOSF profitability, and local staff productivity. Even with language barriers, local staff seems more motivated when voluntourist was around. Voluntourist always pay donation to join the program, so BOSF get constant donation that can be used to improve orangutan welfares, as well orangutan release cost. Ecotourism funds were used for orangutan welfare, such as food enrichment supply, man-made islands, cage enrichment, even daily necessities. Without voluntourist, both orangutan and sunbear wouldn’t able to get enrichment each day. BOSF would also have to struggle more to find donation to sustain. Fund on NECC Malaysia also used to improve elephant welfare, as widen forest range for elephant, and improve health facility. They believe that elephant welfare directly impact their voluntourism business [16].
Table 5. Impact of voluntourism program.

| Subject          | Impacts                                                                 |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BOSF staff       | Relationship with foreigner (for voluntourist staff)                    |
|                  | Improve english conservation skills (for voluntourist and lodge staff) |
|                  | Encouraged to do better work while working along voluntourist           |
| BOSF             | Big donation from voluntourist (on program and after program)           |
|                  | Lodge were regularly occupied                                           |
|                  | Able to cover enrichment production                                      |
|                  | Construction project (building, man-made island, etc) were possible with |
|                  | work and money from voluntourist                                        |
|                  | Wishlist for urgent necessities that needed but not prioritize by BOSF  |
|                  | granted by voluntourist such as genset, freezer, etc,                   |
|                  | Tools of promotion, more known, more supporter, more donation           |
| TGP              | Gain promotion from voluntourist, good feedback                         |
|                  | Gain trust from voluntourist since working with trusted organization     |
| Orangutan, and   | Regular ginger leaf, logs. enrichment supply.                           |
| sun bear         | Used to human interaction (could affect their release potential)        |

All of these impact leads to how voluntourism benefits conservation by raising awareness, promoting sustainable attitudes, developing appreciation to conservation efforts, and socio-economic inducements for conservation [14]. Voluntourist would feel love for nature and conservation after program [15]. Voluntourist bring the love of orangutan into action, and become agent of change for their community. A lot of voluntourist share their experience to their relation and raising fund to continue help orangutan, even when supposedly they are not related to the project anymore.

5. **Enhancing voluntourism as part of conservation action**

Alternative tourism was described as ‘new and exciting form of travel in defiance of the mass produced tourism product’ [17]. It is a form of tourism that moved towards anti-globalization and environment degradation issues. Alternative tourism can take form as backpacking, ecotourism, adventure tourism, and recently, voluntourism. Voluntourism successfully gain its popularity by portrayed as tourism package based on compassion and empathy for the endangered and needy [18]. The main feature of voluntourism was to meet special interest of volunteer such as wildlife and education, while offers authentic experience and direct participatory [2].

Considering how program implemented and how it impacted the stakeholders, voluntourism got great potential to be used in supporting conservation action. But then we need to make sure that voluntourism is going to the right way. There are several things that important to enhancing voluntourism.

Voluntourism gains popularity for its uniqueness. Voluntourist chose to do voluntourism program since they want to do different things from other people. Voluntourist usually motivated by compassion and empathy for the endangered and needy [17]. As voluntourism based on altruism, it usually takes place on as wanting to help, making differences, contributing on good cause, and being responsible to environment [18].

Voluntourist must have expectation for finally took decision to participate and voluntourism. Mostly they expect to have authentic experience by doing direct participation to conservation action [2]. It is really important to meet their expectation to make perspective change really set in their mind, but also so they can come back to do voluntourism program either for same or different program. Voluntourists’ expectation needs to be considered and infused while composing voluntourism program.

Voluntourist aside, local community engagement was also important part of voluntourism program. Many voluntourism program fail to link with local community [11], [19], [20]. This failure could take form on local people as dependent on voluntourist, local displacement, and obstruction to its
indigenous knowledge [21]. It also could make voluntourist have the false sense of understanding and therefore blaming local community for any environment issues may occurred there.

Voluntourism program is also facing the danger of booming trends nowadays [1]. There are rising trends that voluntourism now leaning towards business and profit, and only doing ‘fictitious’ conservation action [19]. Voluntourist is only doing action that didn’t actually make difference for the wildlife or environment involved in the program, and even harming environment by travelling faraway using plane [21]. So we need to make sure that voluntourism program also needs critical evaluation [22]. We need to make sure that conservation is the reason and purpose of composing voluntourism program.

Conservation education should be the main focus on formulating this program. Rising awareness, while encourage voluntourist enjoying their time on site, could ignite domino effect on general public perspective towards conservation action in general. Post-trip activity is also necessary for making voluntourist do their roles as agent of change. Either by area, or by batch, group of voluntourist can start to make their own project after their program finished, and share their progress regularly via Facebook group, so they can inspiring and helping each other. Good post-trip engagement would increase voluntourist possibility to keep contributing towards BOSF, and orangutan conservation in general. Local involvement is also critical in voluntourism program. Higher contact and communication will make better impact, both for voluntourist and local staff. Small project to engage with local community can also be prepared and implemented. Projects regarding community development, campaign, even fund raising could be prepared together by voluntourist and voluntourist (local) staffs.

6. Conclusion

Voluntourism is a rising alternative tourism, especially in Indonesia since its offer different kind of experience than mass tourism. Program was created to combine work and tourism activity and let voluntourist experience personal development and shift of perspective towards environmental issues. Staff and transparency were important part of program for voluntourist, since both of them gave feels of certainty. Voluntourism also gave impact to conservation work, animal welfare, staff, and organization. Perspective shift make the impact goes beyond time and place project implemented, as each voluntourist become agent of change to their own community. Funds also help to improve orangutan and sun bear welfares, as well organization sustainability. Voluntourism programs in Indonesia need to stay focus on rising awareness of voluntourist and making sure of local involvement, to make this program really benefiting conservation action in Indonesia.

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