



Excerpted from:

Social forestry

Mantri + Lurah = Ma-Lu

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How forestry, agriculture and the needs of people in the countryside are being dealt with by an Indonesian state forestry company



A TREE NURSERY IN CENTRAL JAVA
an area of massive erosion and massive reforestation

The main task of Perum Perhutani, Indonesia's forest state corporation for Java, is to implement reforestation and afforestation activities in the best possible manner and in the shortest possible time. In 1975, barren land covered 90 031 hectares, or 14 percent of the forest areas in central Java. This entire area has now been reforested.

The afforestation programme undertaken by Perum Perhutani aims at improving soil fertility, enhancing the social and economic standards of the population and rehabilitating water resources.

Perum Perhutani's efforts to conserve the living environment, especially its forest vegetation, are undertaken through a preventive measure called the "prosperity approach." This approach creates projects designed to improve the standard of living of those living near forests. These projects include mass intensification of inter-cropping, honeybee cultivation, creating fuelwood supplies, planting elephant grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*), building check dams and supplying clean water.

Such projects, as part of the prosperity approach, do not, of and by themselves, necessarily ensure environmental balance. Guidance or education of the local population is also necessary. Such guidance is provided through the *Mantri*, or Forest Guard, and the *Lurah*, or Head of Village, programmes. Since the *Mantri* and the *Lurah* are intended to work together, the entire effort is called *Ma-Lu* (*Mantri-Lurah*).

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Why are the *Mantri* and the *Lurah* connected to efforts to achieve environmental prosperity? The answer lies in their importance in the village, where they can communicate directly with villagers and oversee the surrounding forest.

By 1980, when this article was written, *Unasyilva* was also beginning to publish more authors from developing countries – and more articles documenting local forest management practices, presented by the people practising them.

The *Mantri* act as important field workers, handling technical problems directly in accordance with a policy outline given by their superiors. The *Lurah*, besides his natural hierarchical authority, has a psychological influence over the village population.

In the *Ma-Lu* programme, the *Mantri* must become the centres of agricultural and silvicultural information for the population around the forests. Their own houses must serve as models, with seedling beds of forest and fruit-bearing plants. Their efforts are supplemented through mass education activities such as radio broadcasts.

In addition to material benefits, the *Ma-Lu* programme can also achieve psychological benefits in that it promotes personal relationships between Perum Perhutani officials and village leaders, resulting in the development of a mutual sense of responsibility. Based on its success so far, the *Ma-Lu* programme was expanded in 1979. We believe we have developed a self-help method that fits our needs and our culture. It is flexible and it works. ■

Sofyan Hanafie wrote this article while Forest Administrator, Telawa District, for Perum Perhutani, the Indonesian state forestry company operating in Java.