

Increasing Prescribed Fire Capacity: Developing a Training Program for a Commercial Company

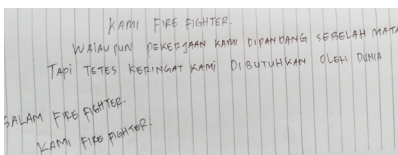
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Sinarmas firefighters at Simpan Heran (Palembang, Sumatra, Indonesia) prepare to start their arduous pack test.
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A Sinarmas firefighter completes his arduous pack test in Sungai Tapah (Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia).
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*We are firefighters. Although our work is underestimated, our sweat drops are needed by the world.
Greetings, firefighters.
We are firefighters.*

Thoughts from the notebook of a firefighter, written during a training course at District Tanjung Jati, Palembang (Sumatra, Indonesia).

OPPORTUNITY Sinarmas Forestry Company is a conglomerate of 38 private forestry companies and partners that manages harvesting and conservation operations on 2.7 million hectares across Indonesia. In 2015, Sinarmas hired a team to train 3,000 new wildland firefighters to create a workforce so at the end of five years, local teams can manage the prevention, preparation, early detection and rapid response to wildfire. Eighty-five percent of the new firefighters came in with little or no experience. Language barriers, and structural, social and cultural conditions also offered challenges—as well as continuous opportunities to analyze, plan and adapt with various adjustments to strategies

SOLUTION The initial evaluation of the five regions took two months, as the team learned about the needs, strengths and opportunities available. Within four months, the training team created the agendas and materials to be delivered through a new five-day basic firefighter training course.

In addition to the basic firefighter training, the team started developing a local training cadre, and began providing the senior managers, dispatchers, planning chiefs and logistics coordinators the specialized training they needed to support the hundreds of new firefighters in their regions.

COSTS AND LOGISTICS In addition to salaries for the primary trainers (from Australia, Canada, South Africa, United States, Portugal and Spain), costs for the project included equipment such as dozers, pumps and hoses, trucks and helicopters. Costs for this project were spread across the 38 participating companies.

WHAT WORKED? With strong social, historical and cultural structures in place, working locally from community to community was the only possible way to meet objectives. We evaluated firefighters in four different key competency areas: knowledge, skills, attitude and physical condition; the results of each of these was color-coded—red meaning the firefighter lacks the competency; yellow, still needs to improve some areas; and green, the firefighter is effective and efficient in the competency.

Key to success has been an integrated fire management approach, a continuous focus on the need to keep integrating all the parts together.

INSIGHT “Fire is fire everywhere—we all face the same challenges and we all belong to the same family.”

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) are part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together* (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

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