

Doing what we  
can for the next  
generations



## Our Mission

Why are we involved in net-making using the fibers of the sugar palm in a rural area of Indonesia? The answer to this question comes from an understanding of the daily lives and livelihood of the people who live there.

We want them to realize that escaping poverty by risking their lives with illegal gold mining is not the way things need to be.

We want to show them that there are new possibilities in the future of their children.



Experimental sugar palm fiber netting to prevent sediment runoff collaboratively installed with the people of Bone Bolango Regency, Gorontalo Province, Indonesia (2016)

## Contact

Professor Masayuki Sakakibara  
Leader for SRIREP Project,  
Research Institute for Humanity and  
Nature(RIHN)

457-4 Motoyama Kamigamo, Kita-ku, Kyoto,  
Japan.  
Email: [srirep@chikyu.ac.jp](mailto:srirep@chikyu.ac.jp)  
Phone: +81-75-707-2333

Sugar palm  
fiber nets in  
Gorontalo

Project to Weave  
the Future

## Life in West Tulabolo Village

West Tulabolo Village is a small village nestled between mountains in the center of Bone Bolango Regency. There is only an elementary school in the village, and the children must commute to a town several kilometers away to attend middle school.

The water and land of the village is polluted with naturally-occurring arsenic making the region unfit for agriculture. However, the alternative occupation of the villagers is working in a mine, or more accurately, transporting people and materials there by motorbike taxis.



The rich natural landscape of Tulabolo

## Gold Mining and Pollution

The people of the village have a hard life, and many must work as mine laborers in illegal artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) to make ends meet. The gold mining process in ASGM requires the use of mercury, leading to mercury contamination across the area and causing grave health risks to the people there.



Aerial picture of the mine in the middle of the rainforest where the people of West Tulabolo Village work

## Meeting the Villagers and their Sugar Palm Fibers

The people of West Tulabolo Village live in harmony with nature. For instance, a villager makes everyday use of the knowledge of creating a traditional net with the fibers of the sugar palm stalks around them.

We consulted with Japanese technicians and villagers and began to make nets out of ropes made of sugar palm fiber. The technique of the villagers is on par with first-class artisans, and we were amazed at the precision and strength of their netting.



Sugar palms dot the forests around the village

## Making Nets with Sugar Palm Fibers

Currently in West Tulabolo Village, the villagers, including those who work in the mine, have started the Moopiya Group, and work together with us to manufacture goods using the Sugar Palm. The Group leader, Mr. Hamzah Papatungan, worked in mining for a long time, but quit his job there five years ago. He began his new work creating Sugar Palm netting for the sake of his children and grandchildren.



Leader of MOOPIYA Group: Mr. Hamzah Papatungan (70)

## The Sugar Palm Fiber Net Manufacturing Process



Sugar palm fibers, the tools to create the netting, and the finished net



Hand-making the nets from Sugar Palm fibers



The netting is made from weaving Sugar Palm fibers together. The work is done by hand and takes some time, but these nets are stronger and more resilient than conventional plant fiber netting.

The world is now aiming to move away from the use of plastic and is shifting towards the use of natural fibers. We are working together with Bone Bolango Regency and Gorontalo State University to examine potential sales routes and uses for these Sugar Palm nets. There are plans for them to be used both inside of Indonesia and in other countries to prevent landslides and sediment runoff.

## Towards a Mercury-Free Society

The gold mining work, which uses mercury, in Gorontalo is beginning to shift towards a new kind of work that uses natural fibers.

The goal of the SRIREP Project, RIHN is to identify a way to resolve the problem of mercury pollution from the ASGM activity which is the larger context of the poverty of the people in that region. Our project members will continue to work together with the locals to putting this solution in practice.