

Community-Based Sustainable Forest Management of Sungai Medihit Watershed, SARAWAK, BORNEO

APFNET Project Improving Lives of Local Communities in Sarawak, Borneo

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background

APFNET Project: Community Based Sustainable Forest Management of Sungai Medihit Watershed, Sarawak, MALAYSIA (Serial Number: APFNET/2013/PP/05) targets two isolated communities, the Kelabit community of Kampung Long Napir and the Penan community of Kampung Bahagia. The Project began in July 2015.

The Sungai Medihit Watershed (approx. 35,400 ha) is located in Ulu Limbang in northern Sarawak, MALAYSIA. It flows north-northwest to its confluence with Sungai Limbang at Long Napir. Two local indigenous communities occupy the catchment, the Kelabits and the Penans. These communities occupy the Sungai Medihit catchment – the most remote location in Ulu Limbang in northern Sarawak – about 150KM (and a four hour drive in a 4WD vehicle on rough logging roads) from Limbang Town. These isolated communities live without amenities such as supplies of treated water and electricity. There is a government run primary school but no clinic.

The Kelabits were the first occupants of Sungai Medihit catchment. A study made on the Kelabit past and current use of forestlands revealed that they have been living in Sungai Medihit Watershed for more than 100 years as evidenced by remnants of old settlements, burial sites and farmlands situated in various places. There are records of lands cleared for hill paddy and tapioca planting from before 1958. Clearing of forestlands and burning for shifting agriculture are still in practice today. The Kelabits and the Penans have been living in harmony in the catchment for many years, lending support to one another. Both communities are subsistence farmers and practice shifting agriculture. Most of the lands are hilly or mountainous, and is unsuitable for large scale wet paddy cultivation. The Kelabits and the Penans depend on jungle resources and/or hunting for their living. But because of logging operations, low paddy yields and the depletion of forest resources, both communities now live in relative poverty barely at subsistence level. Long Napir is located at the confluence of two rivers, Sungai Medihit and Sungai Limbang, about 90 miles from Limbang. The nearest town is Nanga Medamit. This can be reached in about four hours by 4WD vehicle on logging tracks, but the journey by river takes a day.



PROJECT GOAL, OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

Goal

The goal is to promote sustainable forest management in Sungai Medihit Watershed through community capacity building, innovative operational model demonstration and establishing a self-regulatory and voluntary governance mechanism on community development.

Outputs

- Reports and community management plan.
- Income generating demonstration.
- Buildings and roads improved.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the project include:

- To improve sustainable forest management through practical forest management plans, applying innovative forest management techniques and establishing effective forest management mechanisms;
- To enhance the communities' capacity for sustainable forest management and livelihood development; and
- To improve the community living conditions by renovating the service infrastructure.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The Project has two main Outputs with six Activities as briefly described:

Output 1: Improvement in Community Forest Management

Activity 1.1: Baseline Survey on Resources and Socio-Economic Development

Data collected indicate the current situation of the two communities' socio-economic status and the catchment's forest resources. Forest resources are better understood in terms of forest stand density, species composition, size class distribution amongst others.

Activity 1.2: Community Forest Management Planning

Target communities recognise that Sustainable Forest Management of local forests is essential to improving their socio-economic status the role to play in developing ways to manage it sustainably, especially in view of their detailed knowledge of resources; its location and potential to impact livelihood. This progress has been achieved through various community dialogues, technical discussion and others.

Activity 1.3: Demonstrate Sustainable Community Forest Management Practices

Target communities are aware of the tree species and NTFPs that may help improve their livelihoods including how and where to obtain, protect and harvest sustainably. They have also improved their understanding of a HCVF protected for community use.

Activity 1.4: Establish the Participatory Community Forest Management Mechanism

Dialogues have been conducted with the target communities. The progress made is gradual acceptance of the local communities on the concept of Sustainable Forest Management. A draft Co-Management Agreement is also in progress.

Output 2: Capacity of the Community on Development Enhanced

Activity 2.1: Alternative Livelihood Activities

Target communities were exposed to other alternative livelihood improvements that have successfully increased household income. Other households are motivated to adopt these demonstrations, lessen their dependent on forest resources income. Vegetables planting, fish and chicken rearing has been successfully implemented.

Activity 2.2: Infrastructure Improvement Contributing to SFM

Successful discussions with Native Customary Rights (NCR) land owners regarding the construction of the road from Kampung Long Napir to Kampung Bahagia have been achieved. Both target communities are involved in implementation of activities which resulted in an increase in their household income and promote sense of ownership towards the infrastructure. The gravel road has been successfully completed. The Guesthouse for the Community School meanwhile has been improved and fully renovated by the Project Team.

