

Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation: The Pulong Tau National Park, Sarawak State Malaysia

Final Report

PD 224/03 Rev.1 (F)

I. Introduction

The project was approved by the International Tropical Timber Council at its Thirty-fifth Session in November 2003 and full financing was pledged during the same Session. The agreement regulating the implementation of the project was signed by the Government of Malaysia on 13 July 2004 and by ITTO on 15 October 2004. The first disbursement of funds was made on 27 December 2004. The Committee at its 39th session granted a 9-month extension with additional funds amounting to US\$129,600.

The Pulong Tau National Park (PTNP) is located in Sarawak's northern highlands, and was gazetted in March 2005 with an area of about 60,000 ha. This was enlarged to 164,000 ha. The project reflects Sarawak's continuing support to ITTO in promoting Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation (TBC) among its member countries.

II. Project Objectives

The project aims to contribute to conservation of natural ecosystems in the Kelabit Highlands of the State of Sarawak and to sustainable development of the local communities through the implementation of activities of biodiversity conservation and support to local socio-economic development initiatives. Its specific objectives are: i) to initiate a process of sustainable conservation management of the Pulong Tau National Park (PTNP); and ii) to improve cooperation between Sarawak and Indonesia for the conservation of trans-boundary ecosystem of Pulong Tau and Kayan Mentarang National Parks (KMNP).

III. Project Achievements and Outputs

The project achieved substantial progress in the attainment of seven project outputs under specific objective 1 and specific objective 2 as follows:

- Output 1.1 - The conservation and management capacity for PTNP strengthened;
- Output 1.2 - The extension of PTNP initiated;
- Output 1.3 - Baseline ecological and biodiversity surveys carried out and results published;
- Output 1.4 - Socio-economic and cultural studies carried out;
- Output 1.5 - Management plan elaborated and approved.
- Output 2.1 - An agenda for cooperation in TBC elaborated and for the transboundary ecosystems between PTNP and KMNP initiated;

- Output 2.2 - High-level contact between the State of Sarawak and Indonesia for TBC relating to transboundary ecosystems between PTNP and KMNP initiated.

The project enabled the collection of a wide range of baseline data covering the fields of geology, soils, forest ecology, flora and fauna, socio-economy and cultures for the first time for use in PTNP's conservation management planning and community development activities. Another important output was preparation of a park management plan. The socio-economic and cultural surveys helped to determine user characteristics and dependence of the different communities on the forest resources, in particular resources from inside PTNP. For transboundary cooperation, a number of cross-border activities had been proposed for implementation under Phase II. A Joint Task Force (JTF) between PTNP and KMNP was formed to establish formal contacts between the two sides. Members of the JTF comprise representatives from relevant ministries, departments or agencies in Malaysia and Indonesia. The JTF's TOR include coordinating and facilitating activities such as joint enforcement, cross visits, joint research, information exchange and training and ecotourism.

The project strategy emphasized multi-stakeholder participation and consisted essentially of two parts. The first part concerned TBC cooperation taking into account the two host governments' responsibilities at the national/state, provisional/divisional and management levels. The second part of the strategy was targeted at conservation management process at the State of Sarawak or national park level. It emphasized strengthening of ground management, establishing baseline for management planning, elaborating the management plan, organizing stakeholders awareness activities, initiating proposal for extension to PTNP and finally implementing the management plan.

The project delivered valuable scientific data and information that have helped to establish PTNP as a biodiversity hotspot in Sarawak, as an important water catchment serving several hundred thousand people, and as an integral part of the highland environment including the people. The results have enhanced the people's knowledge on the park and on sustainable development of a shared resource. For example, Mt. Murud continues to be used as a site for religious retreat, the Penan are allowed to collect materials and produce from certain areas in the park for domestic use, cultural sites have been surveyed and mapped, and a number of fish spawning areas identified to help the Kelabit community to protect their fish resource. With baseline data obtained and management plan prepared, SFD and SFC can begin to make plans to improve the park's management and facilities. The project was successfully completed after a nine-month extension with all its specific objectives and outputs realized. The results of the project implementation have been published in 15 technical reports for dissemination.

IV. Lessons Learnt

From the lessons learned from the implementation of the project, the following recommendations are given to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future projects.

Development Lessons

- In realizing conservation management objectives, recognize the local peoples' traditional user rights and needs of the forest resource in order to avoid or resolve management conflicts. It is necessary to realize that achieving conservation objectives could be very difficult if the people's traditional user rights and needs are not taken into account.
- Through development of community-based activities and training in entrepreneurship and business skills, help to improve living standards of the local people and to reduce their dependence on the forest.
- Assist the Penan community who are stricken by poverty by providing training in community development and other necessary support.
- Implement TBC activities with KMNP in Indonesia and organize joint research.

Operational Lessons

- Strengthen working partnerships between project staff, SFC and local stakeholders and seeking local knowledge and experience in planning and development through close

- collaboration with local communities. Continue to seek assistance from local key stakeholders and government or private agencies to ensure smooth implementation.
- Strengthen PTNP's on-the-ground management as this is crucial to improving efficiency in project implementation.
 - Through training and interactions, enhance local knowledge of project staff, park managers as this knowledge is essential for smooth operational planning and execution of duties.
 - Build more rangers post near local settlements to facilitate collaboration in project implementation and conservation management with the people.

V. Concluding Remarks

The Executing Agency has submitted the completion report, and technical reports resulting from the implementation of the project to the ITTO Secretariat in accordance with the project agreement signed with ITTO. In November 2008, the Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management declared this project complete, subject to the submission of satisfactory final financial statements.