

**Project Steering Committee Meetings, SECO supported projects in Sarawak  
24-26 May 2010, Miri Sarawak, Malaysia**

**BACK-TO-OFFICE REPORT  
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**ITTO Project PD 451/07 Rev.1(F):  
Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation: The Pulong Tau National Park, Phase II'**

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**Background**

The Pulong Tau National Park, the only national park in Sarawak that has been proposed by local communities (and been realized by the Government of Sarawak), was officially launched in 2005 (Pulong Tau means "Our forest"). The Park includes hill *dipterocarp* and mountain forests including the highest peak of Sarawak, Gunung Murud. The project supports the management planning of the Park including the extension of the Park in the surrounding forests that are exploited for timber harvesting or planned to be exploited. The extension allows including the area of Batu Lawi, one of the core areas of the Penan community. The project supports dialogue between local Penan, Lun Bawan and Kelabit communities with the Government, supports collaborative management efforts for the Park management and supports community development activities for the Penan, Lun Bawang and Kelabit living in the vicinity of the Park. Particular attention is given to the rights and inclusion of Penan settlement and semi-nomadic families in the activities of the project. The project has been started in 2006 and it is proposed to extent its duration until February 2012-

**The Steering Committee Meeting**

**1. General remarks**

The meeting was opened by Mr. Sapuan, the officer responsible for international cooperation of the Sarawak Forestry Service, followed by addresses by Urs Stemmler, the **Swiss Ambassador to Malaysia**, Mr. Sato from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Chris Walden, from the US Embassy and Dr. Ma from the ITTO Secretariat. Dato Frezailah from the Malaysian Certification Council also addressed the SC. 23 people participated in the meeting, including representatives from local communities, the Vice-Major from the Miri region, a representative from the State Planning Ministry and two representatives from the Ministry of Environment from Kuala Lumpur. The meeting was well organized and conducted in a good spirit. It has to be highlighted that there was – for the first time - an excellent participation of the other donor agencies, USA and Japan in the meeting.

**2. Review of the project progress in 2009**

Dr. Paul Chai, the ITTO project manager, made presented the progress of project implementation (period March 2009- February 2010) following the ITTO format of project activities under each specific objective and the lessons learned. A critical analysis of the project's implementation to date, describing the problems encountered and lessons learned was done in a line-by-line discussion of the Steering Committee (SC). His presentation is attached to this back-to-office report.

Three activities that are of specific importance from the Swiss/SECO viewpoint need special attention:

- **Extension of the Pulong Tau National Park.** The extension of the National Park to protect the living areas of Penan communities in the northern and western part of the Park was a main objective for phase II of the project. Despite to many difficulties, the following can be reported:

Area 1: Batu Lawi (see map). The western extension of the Pulong Tau National Park: will increase the protected area by 16,000 ha. What **has been achieved** is that Samling surrenders its coupes 13 and 14 after their re-entry in the zone on 30 June 2010. The core area of the Batu Lawi mountain, a circle around the peak of Batu Lawi of about 4,000 hectares remains unlogged, the other area has been logged once (about 15 years ago) or twice (1995, 2009/10). To secure this extension and to propose a rehabilitation plan to be implemented by the Sarawak Forestry is a central point that also justifies an extension of the project by one year. Assessment of the logged-over areas and rehabilitation assessment has been started with financial and logistical support Samling. A nursery has been put in place. A specific effort needs to be done in respect to mapping and satellite coverage of the extended area.

Area 2: Long Repung in the eastern part of the park, bordering to Indonesia (8,000 ha). The Samling timber company, after long and intensive negotiations, gave up that coupe for extension without doing any logging. It has been added to the National Park.

- **Birth certificates and identify cards for Penan.** Since April 2008, the project has helped 342 Penan to apply for birth certificates and identity cards. However, by mid-2010, only few of them (less than 50) have received the documents. Additional effort is needed to follow-up with the responsible authorities and to assure that all people who applied will get their legal documents. The documents are handled in Kuala Lumpur by people who are not familiar with the context. Another problem consists in the fact that a number of new identity cards have been issued but send to the local authorities in Marudi and elsewhere. The result is that it is difficult to track them by the project and also for the Penan to receive them. Other application forms have been assessed as not sufficient to deliver the required documents and these people have to be contacted again which is difficult and time consuming. The project thus needs to do additional efforts in this complicated legal field. This activity remains of great importance for from our perspective as it is the element that has created most trust by the local Penan communities. It is also an important step to legally recognize entire Penan families that inhabit the buffer zone of the Pulong Tau National Park.
- **Community development activities:** Community development activities are implemented in the areas inhabited by Lun Bawang, Kelabit and Penan communities. From particular interest from the Swiss perspective is the support that the project can render to the Penan settlements in the vicinity of the Park. Good contacts have been established with the Penan communities of Ba Tik A and B, Ba Medamut and Long Lellang. The Kuba'an suspension bridge was constructed, mostly with the support from the Ba Madamut community, another suspension bridge (Ngehlah suspension bridge) is planned on the footpath to Ba Tik. The extension to Ulun Limbang area is planned, but activities and contacts with the Penan communities in that area will need some more time (thus another reason to extent the project by one year).
- A ranger Lepok Bunga Post has been constructed in Lepok Bunga at foot of the trail to Mount Murut and another in planned in the small Penan settlement of Ba' Medamot. This local ranger

posts will be the platform for a light ecotourism development that should give some of the Penan people a platform to work as a guide in the park.

- A particular issue in the wider setting of the project is the relationship with the bordering Kayan Mentarang protected area in Indonesia as a transboundary protected area. The collaboration with the Indonesian side so rather meager, and has been worsen since the last meeting in which Indonesian lawmakers as to delete the mention of Transboundary, and only use the terminology of collaboration. One of the problems might be the lack of funding (the former Swiss support project has not received funding) of the Kayan Mentarang project. In the framework of the Heart of Borneo Initiative, the term of voluntary transboundary cooperation is used. This should also be the platform to continue with the established task force of Pulong Tau/Kajang Mentarang. As SECO had shown an interest in being associated to the Heart of Borneo Initiative, a contact with WWF Indonesia (as the implementing agency) has been proposed to clarify the situation<sup>1</sup>

### **3. Review of Yearly Plan of Operation (YPO) for Year 3 and associate budget**

The following elements have been presented under this agenda item:

- Approved Project activities and budget planned for 2010;
- A list of draft technical documents that will be published by the project;
- Establishment of mechanisms for ensuring sustainability after project completion.

The work programme presented is comprehensive and cover most of the aspects mentioned in the initial planning project document. The program include important work in the Penan area of Pulong Tau, including e.g. to support the Ba Medamut, settlement with gravity water, a guest house and the construction/rehabilitation of 20 houses, some on disposal for nomadic Penans to be used on their discretion. An additional suspension bridge is planned to cross the Nglah river to secure the pathway to Bario for the entire year, in particular for the Penan school children that commute monthly from the settlements to the boarding school. For this work, the project also depend the Ta Ann timber company to help to transport the material for the bridge.

Additional work requested by us to be included in a work plan. This work would conclude the work that has been scheduled in the initial planning of the project, but which could not be completed due to different reasons (including the delay in the extension of the Park):

- Secure the extended national park area of 24,000 hectares. Prepare detailed mapping and cover the 2 areas with detailed satellite images so that a proper assessment of the actual situation can be conducted
- Prepare a rehabilitation plan for the logged over area of Batu Lawi
- Targeted community activities linked with the park in the Penan area (including trail rehabilitation, park guide training, etc)
- Promote ecotourism including a comprehensive trail guide
- Assure that Park local young people from the Penan and Lu Bewang people getting a license as a Park Guide. Training of Park guides is provided for free by Sarawak Forestry
- Bring to a successful end the effort of getting identify card for Penan

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<sup>1</sup> This contact has been held in June 2010 with the head of WWF Indonesia in Yokjakarta. A short note on that meeting had been send to SECO.

- Extend modest community development activities to the Penan communities living in and adjacent to the extended park area, in particular in Batu Lawi/Limbang area.
- An attempt should be made to make the “story line” of the achievements of the Pulong Tau project public, in Sarawak and in Malaysia. This would also help to assure that the Sarawak government assures sufficient resources for the continuation of the project’s achievement after the end of the external support.

The project will not be able not achieve its results without carefully addressing the open issues. In addition, the remaining time of the actual phase (March 2011) is not sufficient to conduct all activities to full satisfaction. The project has well been launched – despite of the initial institutional difficulties. Now, in a phase of full recognition of the project’s objectives, it requires an extension, in particular for assuring the proper handling of the extended park and the inclusion of the Penan communities in that endeavor. Thus, all Steering Committee members agreed to an extension for another, 12 months of project duration, until February 2012. Additional funding would need to be pledged at the next ITTC session in Yokohama in December 2010. It is estimated that the internal funding needed for that year would be about 230,000 US\$, including ITTO overhead costs, which is complemented by national counterpart funding of about the same amount.

#### **4. Recommendations and final personal remarks**

**Extension of the project by one year** (until end of February 2012) with additional funds of approximately US\$ 230,000 (according to the planning) with clear tasks, such as:

- Secure extended park boundaries
- Planning of restoration of logged over areas
- Plan of inclusion of local communities in Park management
- Ecotourism, train local people as natural guides
- Finalize the issuing of the identity card for Penan
- Organize a final event and present a document on how the sustainability of the project’s activities can be achieved by the Sarawak authorities in collaboration with the local communities.

Dr. Paul Chai will prepare a document with the work plan and budget for of the extended park and submit it to the ITTO Secretariat in time for discussion and approval of the next Council session.

#### **Final Personal Remarks**

The Steering Committee was extremely successful, and due to our leading role in support the executing agency technically and operationally, the Sarawak Forestry Department, the partners and the other donors highlighted the important role that Switzerland/SECO played in the successful implementation of the project. In this respect, it is important to mention that the Swiss Ambassador to Malaysia, Mr. Stemmler played a crucial role in the development of the project. For the second time, he fully participated in the SC. He also attended the field visit in Bario. His interest in the project has to be specifically underlined as due to his presence, the Malaysian counterpart feels encouraged in their endeavor.

I would highly recommend continuing to support to the Pulong Tau project by supporting financially and operationally the extension of the project until February 2012.

**Annexes (which will be put at the SECO Website [www.tropicalforests.ch](http://www.tropicalforests.ch) :**

- Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting
- Powerpoint on the work progress and work planning for 2010
- Short presentation on the outcomes of the project
- Yearly plan of operations 2010