



EXPLORING THE GOVERNANCE OF RESOURCES IN THE LOWER KINABATANGAN-SEGAMA WETLANDS RAMSAR SITE

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EXPLORING THE GOVERNANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN
THE LOWER KINABATANGAN-SEGAMA WETLANDS RAMSAR SITE

IUCN, CEESP and authors are grateful to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for supporting the production of this paper and the broader development of the Natural Resource Governance Framework.

Recognition and respect for tenure rights has long been recognized as an important concern for development, conserva The 'Ramsar Community Group 8 Project' (RCG8) – as it is locally known – aims to increase community-based governance and management of natural resources in the Lower Kinabatangan-Segama Wetlands Ramsar Site (Ramsar site) and to communicate lessons learnt to the team within IUCN working on the Natural Resource Governance Framework (NRGF).

For the purposes of this project, 'natural resource governance' is defined as the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say in the management of natural resources – including biodiversity conservation (IUCN WCC-RES 3.012).

Key outputs are:

1. The development of joint-governance and co-management plans and agreements as part of the revised Ramsar Site Management Plan, and
2. This case study, which provides an overview of the work thus far and presents it in the context of the NRGF. It is intended to feed into the development of the NRGF Assessment Guide.

This case study contains the following three parts and sections:

Part I: Overview of the LKSW Ramsar Site

Part II: Working Towards the Recognition of Community-based Governance Systems

Part III: Reflections on the project relevant for the NRGF Assessment Guide Working Draft

This section presents a summary of the interplay between the issues with which the communities are grappling.

- Pollution:** The main negative influence on the Ramsar site's water quality is pollution from the upstream oil palm estates. There is a sense in each village that runoff from the land and mills is adversely impacting the aquatic ecosystem, but the community members are not sure of the exact level of causation.
- Outsiders:** Outsiders are a grave concern, due to their numbers, aggression and unsustainable and unmonitored fishing practices. Community members argue that they are often acting against the law and in ways that intimidate the locals into inaction.
- Fish numbers:** Fish numbers are dropping within the Ramsar site, though the exact causes of this are not known. Suggested reasons include overfishing (including by community members and outsiders) and pollution from the estates/mills.
- Fish prices:** People are aware that the fish they sell are worth more up the value chain, but not sure how to maximize their selling price to the middlemen.
- Forest resources:** Many of the communities expressed concern at their inability to use wood and other forest products (including fish) due to the rules relating to forest and wildlife reserves.
- Human-wildlife conflict:** Some villages reported more damage to their assets from monkeys, others from wild boars.
- Common general concerns:** The villages shared core concerns such as: lower catches, oil palm's negative influences on the aquatic ecosystem, intrusions and intimidation by outsiders, lack of amenities/public services, and related frustrations with authorities - including Sabah Forestry Department, Department of Fisheries and the security services.
- Water, electricity, communications and transport:**

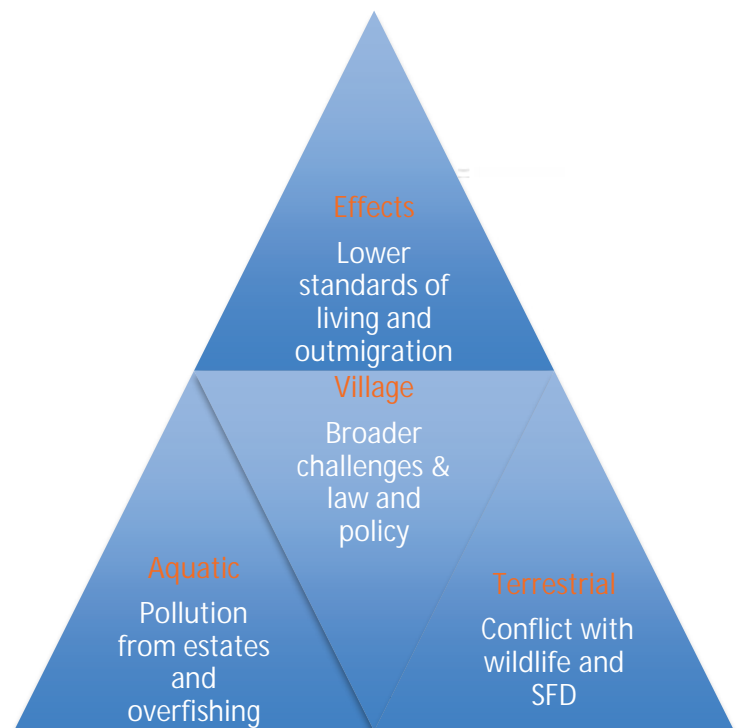
Each of these is at low levels and relatively expensive in each village.

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- Ramsar awareness:** The level of knowledge about the Ramsar site was very low, epitomized by the fact that communities at Tundun Bohangin did not know what it is despite living across from SFD's Ramsar HQ.
- Law and policy:** Knowledge about law and policy is low, and largely based on hearsay.

5.

- Outmigration:** These dynamics are causing many people to leave the villages for education and work elsewhere.
- Quandary over approach:** There is a general dissatisfaction about the current situation in each village, but few ideas about how to improve the local life without outside help.
- Positivity:** Particular individuals in each village felt emboldened by hearing the fact that others are in similar situations, that their numbers are 2,500 and that a united front could make a difference.



In a simplified version of the above, we see the two rivers' social-ecological systems as being in decline due to two main processes that are depleting the area's natural capital, exacerbated by a third factor.

1. Oil palm estates use the rivers they adjoin as cost-neutral means of dealing with runoff and palm oil mill effluent (POME). This is harming marine life and lowering stocks of aquatic life depended on by the local communities.
2. Some locals as well as a large number of outsiders are overharvesting the remaining aquatic resources (primarily fish, prawns, crabs, shellfish).
3. The lack of access to forest resources is exacerbating the above two issues.

- Ensure that communities receive more of the benefits being generated from the area, such as clean water, food, and monies from ecotourism and the sale of sustainably harvested natural resources.

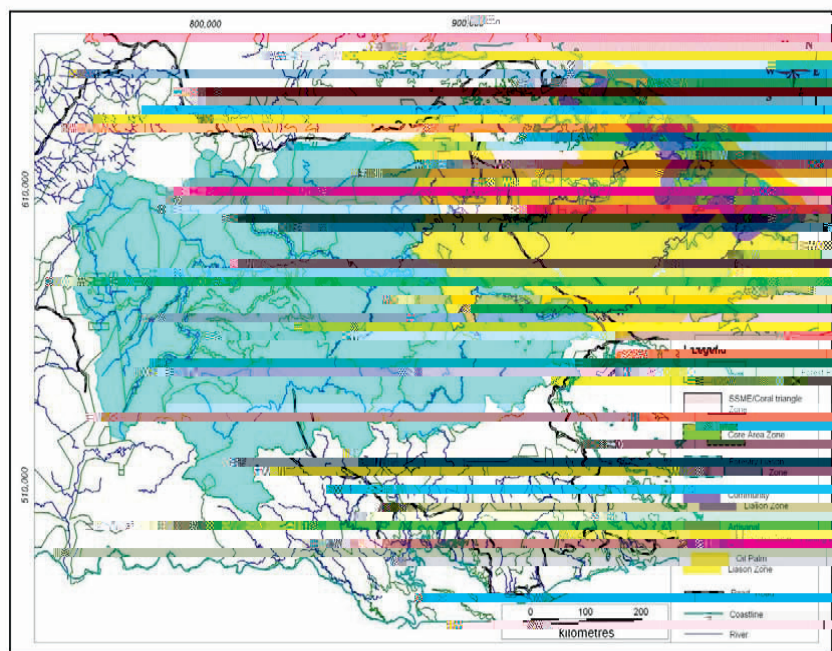
The Ramsar site was officially designated as Sabah's first Ramsar site at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the

Within the context of the emerging IUCN Natural Resource Governance Framework and Forever Sabah's guiding principles - being to shift Sabah's development trajectory towards an diversified governance, equitable benefit sharing, and a circular local economy (www.foreversabah.org) - the project is working in the buffer and core areas to:

- Develop joint-governance and co-management plans and agreements as part of the revised management plan,
- Reduce the pollution entering the Kinabatangan and Segama rivers, address illegal, unreported and unsustainable fishing along the rivers, and

The Core Area is 78,803 hectares and the Buffer Area is 2,200,847 hectares (2,279,650), formed of the following areas (working west to east):

- Forestry Liaison Zone: 1,464,655
- Oil Palm Liaison Zone: 650,545
- Community Liaison Zone: 85,647
- Artisanal Fishing Zone: 57,953



ties are shown to be sustainable and can be monitored and controlled.

- Collection of NTFPs such as medicinal plants and roo ng materials will be allowed under a collaborative NTFP harvesting plan.
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aim of the IUCN NRGF and the local process to participants including government agencies.

From 4-7 December 2015, the leaders of Sri Ganda, LEAP Spiral and Sabah Forestry Department co-organized a four-day training workshop located at the Kulamba Field Centre (Ramsar site). The training workshop aimed to expose to the community in the Ramsar site the power of community organizing and the great advantage of community-based participatory mapping. Community mapping experts from PACOS Trust were invited to conduct the training. Twenty-seven participants attended, representing seven villages (representatives of one village did not make it due to logistical issues).

Travel, food & catering was organized by volunteers from

and finalized the video. A first introductory video was released and it currently being use to help other stakeholders understand the process and to seek more partnerships. The LEAP team will produced a few more films next year on fishing conflict, water quality, community-based sports fishing, and citizen science.


The community of Sri Ganda and Dagat are the only villages that have people with relevant computer equipment. They are familiarizing themselves with the use of Google Earth Pro for the mapping work and are making draft zoning plans of their own areas. The other communities are not yet able

people together to discuss core findings and reach consensus on a set of protocols and zoning, address existing

The work in the Ramsar site has not explicitly created specific indicators and this is something to consider. As stated in Part I, it has created a clear problem statement, which in itself sets out the core changes the community wants to see, as per the 'most significant change' methodology for monitoring and evaluating a project. While the project could learn from the Assessment Guide in this regard, the Assessment Guide should help the reader understand that even very simple indicators are useful and not difficult to generate.

It may be helpful for the guidance to provide the reader a scenario at the top of the document that is developed in each section. This would benefit the reader by 'grounding' the guidance through a well thought out and evolving scenario.

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CEESP, the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy, is an inter-disciplinary network of professionals whose mission is to act as a source of advice on the environmental, economic, social and cultural factors that affect natural resources and biological diversity and to provide guidance and support towards effective policies and practices in environmental conservation and sustainable development.

The Natural Resource Governance Framework (NRGF) is an IUCN initiative created for the purpose of providing a robust, inclusive, and credible approach to assessing and strengthening natural resource governance, at multiple levels and in diverse contexts. The NRGF is hosted by the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), working in close collaboration with the IUCN Secretariat and partners across the Union.