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October 1999

*Voices from the Forest*

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## ***Voices from the Forest***

### **Editorial**

Many enthusiastic reactions followed the release of the first issue of 'Voices from the Forest'. The second issue of the bulletin at hand contains inspiring reports of several successful exchange visits.

There is an article on the serious threats that encounter the CADCs (Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claims) in the Philippines; a contribution from Sarawak on the discussion about bio-prospecting; an introduction to the Analogue Forestry System as developed in Sri Lanka; and finally, a review of two newly published books.

The next issue of 'Voices from the Forest' will be released in April 2000. Among the subjects: traditional eagle wood (gaharu) harvesting methods in Kalimantan; indigenous resin tapping in Sumatra, Palawan and Peninsular Malaysia; approaches to the labelling of NTFPs for the domestic or overseas market; handicraft development in the Philippines and fruit bats in Vietnam.

Other contributions (preferably with pictures!) and reactions are most welcome.

**Written by:**  
**Redaction of 'Voices from the Forest'**

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**Exchange News**

The NC-IUCN/RTR small grants programme has earmarked financial support for the next phase of the exchange programme, starting January 2000. The financial support is directed particularly at extension of the programme to other countries in Asia. Additional funding is sought for consolidation and intensification of current activities.

From 28-30 April the second regional exchange workshop was held in Miri, Sarawak (see article below).

The next regional meeting will take place from December 13-16 this year in Palawan, the Philippines and will be hosted by NATRIPAL (United Tribes of Palawan). During the meeting the programme's achievements will be evaluated. Furthermore, priorities for the next two years will be discussed. A field trip to one of the CADC sites on the island is also scheduled.

The conference 'Enhancement of Indigenous initiatives for community-based Resource Management', which will be organized by PLASMA in Samarinda, East Kalimantan has been postponed to the fourth week of January, 2000.

***Written by:***  
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## *Voices from the Forest*

### **No Apologies: Report of Rattan Study Tour to East Kalimantan**

Back in 1996, NATRIPAL, the United Tribes of Palawan, Philippines, staff and consultants hatched the idea of an exchange trip between the Dayaks of East Kalimantan, Indonesia and the Indigenous Peoples of Palawan, Philippines.

Growing ever so conscious of the dwindling rattan resource in the wild, the objective of the exchange trip for the Filipinos (and other interested parties) was to learn from the traditional Dayak rattan planting systems in swiddens (or 'rattan gardens' as they are often called). The ultimate goal would be to determine the adaptability of such systems in the Palawan context and to test them in the field. After three years of waiting, the trip finally came to fruition last September, 1999.

Two Tagbanua participants, namely Rev. Fr. Armando R. Limsa, founder and adviser of NATRIPAL, and Loreta Alsas, NATRIPAL's Resource Management Unit Coordinator, represented the Palawan contingent, while Thomas Pilang, Dayak Iban, represented Sarawak, Malaysia. The group was led by the young, energetic Dayak Bahau, Seting Beraan, PLASMA's research coordinator. I tagged along to feed my interest in NTFP development and to look in detail at the fallow management aspect of the system on behalf of global research conducted by Cornell University.

The mission seemed clear cut and straight forward, but we left with a much deeper and enriching experience than we all expected.

The group arrived in Lambing, Kutai District after a 20 hour boat ride down the Mahakam River. Pak Sadidin, a Dayak community leader and public school teacher gave us an introduction into his rattan garden. He showed us his jute sack full of rotan sega (*Calamus caesius*) seeds that he had collected and was soon to plant. He kindly shared with us some of the seeds from his abundant supply for our own experimentation.

The next day, we were off, snaking through the province's complicated river systems. We were in awe with the richness of biodiversity in Kalimantan. We stooped to miss the diving kingfishers and pointed fingers at a family of monkeys or a slow monitor lizard climbing out of the water.

Finally we reached Madjaun, where we were met at the riverside by the small but eager community. After feverish handshaking, and a sumptuous meal of kancil (mousedeer), spontaneously, the participants exchanged experiences in community forestry. Palawan representatives shared their experiences in NTFP marketing, resource management, as well as in delineation of ancestral domains. Dayak Benuaq of Madjaun led by Pak Syahrudin, went on to tell the visitors about the struggle of the local community to save the Gunung Menaliq (Menaliq Mountain) from intrusions from mining and logging companies. Thomas Pilang shared the traumatic experience of how his community members (including his father) had been jailed when they courageously opposed the oil palm plantation encroaching on their native customary land in Sarawak. Though the stories left painful images in our minds, we slept soundly thinking of the regional network we were building to fight for common causes facing indigenous people.

The following day, the Madjaun community demonstrated the different ways that the Dayak Benuaq practice rattan planting. They mentioned 7 different ways that they planted rattan, alternating from seeds, to seedlings, and timing planting efforts before or after the burning stages of ladang (swiddens). The Dayak Benuaq teachers explained that it was important to plant seeds and seedlings near decaying tree trunks in the ladang and to maximize the use of these trunks as natural fertilizer.

Excited about forest products in general, the members of Madjaun picked up a copy of Gaharu, PLASMA's official newsletter, and attempted to follow the damar (*Shorea javanica*) tapping techniques of those in Krui, Lampung, Sumatra. This was

done with the help of PLASMA forester/community organizer, Nuripto. The following day, Loreta also demonstrated the Pala'wan method of almaciga (*Agathis philippinensis*) resin harvesting, where Pala'wan are careful not to extend taps to the vascular cambium of the tree so as to allow for complete healing.

The sharing lasted into the evenings when the focus then was turned to cultural aspects. The Dayak Benuaq, dressed in colorful regalia, danced and sang to the beat of the gong and other traditional instruments. Palawan representatives sang a courtship song from the northern tribes of Palawan, and Thomas drew volunteers from the crowd to help him with an Iban march.

The following days were spent in Tepulang, a community straddling the Idaant river. There we joined up with SHK Kaltim, Sistem Hutan Kerakyatan Kalimantan Timur, a consortium of NGOs in East Kalimantan working on efforts to promote community based forest management. Though the visiting party arrived late in the night, the community members waited patiently to receive us and we discussed the plans for the next day. In the morning, the group brought us through their tanah adat (customary land), allowing us to marvel at various land uses such as kebun karet (rubber gardens), kebun rotan (rattan gardens), uraat uraaq (early fallow stage after swiddens), bengkar (primary forest) and simpukng (fruit gardens). The group learned that the rattan planting system was part of an intricate tapestry of several systems fostered with respect and care for resources and built on the Dayak's belief in symbiosis between humans and the earth.

The official trip ended with a visit to Eheng, a Dayak community that developed a tourist market for their anjat, decorative rattan baskets. Unfortunately, political unrest in the nation has left the village wanting for visitors. NATRIPAL shared some of their experiences with marketing efforts of NTFPs and hopes to link the community with alternative trade ventures to establish more secure markets for their products.

The group parted ways with pledges to continue support for issues such as advocacy and information exchange. NATRIPAL has already set provincial meetings in October and national meetings in December to share learnings from the visit. Thomas recorded interviews with various Dayak community members and plans to use their original voices in relaying this experience to the Dayak Iban and Penan of Sarawak.

On the slow boat back to Samarinda, I recalled the Dayak leaders of each village profusely apologizing in case their hospitality was lacking or the offered food unsatisfactory. As Fr. Limsa said, "They have no reason to apologize". The Dayak helped to refresh our energies in an often neglected sector of forestry. They left us hopeful and longing for the next opportunity not only to cultivate NTFPs like rattan, but to nurture cultures and draw strength from each others' common struggles.

Note:

This exchange visit took place within the framework of the NTFP Exchange Programme, and was made possible through co-ordination efforts between PLASMA (the Institute for Environment and People Empowerment), the host NGO, BRIMAS (Borneo Resources Institute) and NATRIPAL (United Tribes of Palawan).

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### Regional NTFP Exchange Meeting in Miri, Sarawak

From 28-30 April 1999, the second regional NTFP exchange workshop was held in Miri, Sarawak, hosted by BRIMAS. 35 participants from Sarawak itself, the Philippines and Kalimantan attended the meeting.



Display of longhouse handicraft items from Sarawak, Malaysia  
*Photo: Mark Bujang (BRIMAS)*

The workshop started with an introduction by BRIMAS. The introduction depicted how much of the precious produce from Sarawak's forests has been lost in recent years by indiscriminate logging and more recently through the establishment of large oil palm plantations. The Kalimantan team got the audience excited with their contribution on traditional management of rattan, bird's nests and eaglewood (gaharu). The participants from the Philippines reported their successes with the marketing of jams and jellies made from forest fruits, Apis dorsata honey and other forest products. They also gave insight to the process - now under threat - that led to the recognition of native forest lands (the so-called CADC). Finally, several speakers from Sarawak described how they got involved in reforestation projects. They reported that in some locations, trees have already been planted for fruit and local wood needs - although so far on a limited scale. The villages involved are considering to also include rattan, medicinal plants and the nut bearing illipe tree. One Penan community is currently experimenting with the enrichment planting of sago palms (*Eugeissona utilis*) - their staple food - in secondary forest. More detailed discussions took place in small groups. The proceedings are available to the partners in the exchange programme (EP). The participants evaluated the meeting as a most stimulating exchange of experiences and ideas. They all articulated the motivation to be involved in future activities.

Immediately after the workshop a fieldtrip was organised to an Iban community near the famous Niah caves. A seemingly endless drive through a newly established oil palm plantation brought the group to the village. The longhouse and immediate surroundings appeared as a small island in the midst of an oil palm sea. The local Ibans explained that since the plantation was established a couple of years ago, no wild animals were left in the area. Meanwhile, the group of visitors was extremely well received in the longhouse itself. In the middle of the night a lively discussion took place concerning handicraft production, involving practically the whole community. All of a sudden a wave of activity went through the house. Grandmothers started weaving mats, men started splitting rattan and some teenagers showed unfinished baskets or procured old heirlooms from their rooms.





Participants of Miri Workshop discussing resource mapping.  
Photo: Mark Bujang (BRIMAS)

Back in town, one participant from the Philippines, UNAC-Upland Marketing Program coordinator Rene Guarin spend a day visiting the shops that sell handicraft items in Miri. After this small survey, the idea for a local 'Indigenous Handicraft Shop' as an outlet for longhouse products, which came up during the meeting, was again discussed with BRIMAS staff. According to Mr. Guarin the establishment of such an outlet should be feasible since: 1. High quality handicraft products can be found quite easily in the interior of the state; 2. The display of handicraft items in the few shops that currently sell these items, is not particularly attractive; 3. Most tourists visiting Sarawak pass by boring Miri on their way to Mulu National Park. A strong selling argument for this category of customers will be that buying the products will both support the livelihood of Dayak communities and contribute to efforts directed at forest conservation and forest rehabilitation (for example, with a reference in the Lonely Planet travel guide). The main challenge is (apart from money for initial investment): to find somebody with ambition and basic skills to run the shop. UMP offered internship for training - if needed.

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## *Voices from the Forest*

### **Historic Meeting of Honey Producers from Southern Vietnam and West Kalimantan**

*"It was practised by our ancestors; so we know it was there long time ago; but we can't tell since when honey was collected this way".*

(Statement by the 'Tikung' honey gatherers from the Danau Sentarum Wild Life Reserve, West Kalimantan upper Kapuas lake region, and the 'Gac Keo' honey producers from U Minh, Vietnam).

In September 1996, three beekeepers from West Kalimantan visited Vietnam. They shook hands with their colleagues working in the low Melaleuca forest bushes, and exchanged their common interest: getting honey from the 'Giant' honeybee *Apis dorsata*.

A unique event, because it was the first time in history their traditional techniques of bee management were highlighted. The exchange led to interesting learning experiences for both groups.

#### **The big bee**

Among the four honey bee species in Asia, the largest species *Apis dorsata* has been the main producer of honey in South and South East Asia. Unlike *Apis mellifera*, or *Apis cerana*, bee species which can be kept in man made hives, the *Apis dorsata* was always regarded as a wild bee; not a bee to domesticate.

*Apis dorsata* produces honey in open nests of one major comb with dimensions of up to 1.5 m<sup>2</sup>. The bees of a colony build this comb hanging from a rockface, or under the branches of tall trees. In rainforests some big trees can be found which sometimes host more than hundred colonies.

*Apis dorsata* colonies seasonally migrate between various sites. Although we now know much of their nesting behaviour still little is known about their migration patterns. But the beekeepers know what is most important to them: the time the swarms come to settle and the right time to harvest the honey.

#### **Honey 'hunting'**

All over Asia where *Apis dorsata* is common and forests exist, people collect its honey. But only recently the profession of honey collector, or better the bee specialist is reflected upon. In contrast to settlers or other exploiters of the forest, the techniques, skills and knowledge of the traditional honey gatherers are passed on from generation to generation.

The time for the collection of honey is integrated in the cultural and spiritual life of many forest inhabitants. The profession of climbing the rock or the trees is a specialised art: the prerogative of only some shamans, who inherited this task from their fathers. With many rituals, songs and prayers - always with excitement and joy once the honey comes down - the honey collectors seriously fulfil their tasks. And they have to be very conscious and careful, as their climbing up and down is a very dangerous task. Imagine, the climbing of a tree or rock - using wobbling ladders which are self-made from bark or lianas. This task is mostly practised during moonless nights, to give the bees no chance to see any movement. Imagine the potential threat of thousands of fiercely stinging bees. It is no surprise that those few shamans who fearlessly and successfully perform this practice are held in high esteem among their people.





A honey collector from Kalimantan making a rafter in Melaleuca forest in Vietnam  
*Photo: Vincent Mulder (NECTAR)*

The knowledge of the honey collectors not only comprises the techniques of making the ladders, the climbing and approaching of the nests, and cutting the comb. They also know the best moment for honey collection; this is when the top of the nests' combs are filled with sealed honey. These combs sometimes yield more than 20 kg.

Their practice often also includes the safeguarding of the sustainability of the honey gathering practice. They maintain a taboo on cropping all the nests of a tree; thereby making sure that some bee colonies remain.

In some regions, tree branches are cleaned and smoothened prior to the migration of the colonies in order to attract more colonies to that specific site.

The sites where *Apis dorsata* colonies have their nests (big trees or rocks) are 'owned' by either individuals or by a group. The owners may ask the honey collector to crop the honey for them. For time immemorial, honey has been one of the most valued products from the forests. The production and collection of honey follows a seasonal and rational cropping calendar ? contrary to the common believe by outsiders that production and collection are erratic. And hence, it is appropriate that we speak of 'Managed Honey Collection' instead of 'Honey Hunting' (whereby the latter refers to ad hoc finding and cropping of bee nests).

#### **Tikung honey collection**

In the upper Kapuas Lake region of West Kalimantan one can find forests which are seasonally submerged. The water level in the lake may even vary 14 meters between dry and rainy season. The dry season only lasts for a few months. A report by Dutch colonisers in 1851 already mentioned the importance of honey and wax production by inhabitants from this region. It was the major trade at that time, and exports were common to Pontianak by riverboat and then further to major Asian cities.

After the dry season in October, bee colonies migrate to the submerged forest area. This 'wet' forest is typical for its low shape: in rainy season the canopy reaches less than 6 meters above water level. Therefore colonies settle on branches easily accessible by boat.

It is most probably due to this accessibility that the people there developed a technique, existing long before 1851, to seduce the colonies to wooden planks or boards (tikung). Such a board, of about 2-meter length with a width of 20-30 cm is attached to the small branches of a tree, thus making an attractive nesting site for migrating bees. Honey collector families may have up to 500 tikung boards. In all villages in the lake area, groups of honey collectors have specific claims on parts of

the forest where they hang their tikung. Special laws and regulations make sure that the number of disputes among honey collectors is minimal. At present about 250 families in the region engage in tikung honey collection.

#### **'Gac Keo' practices in Vietnam**

A similar system exists in the southern tip of Vietnam. Also here a low seasonally submerged forest exists. The forest is almost formed by one major species of tree, *Melaleuca leucadendron*. The water level during the rainy season does not rise more than 1 meter, as most water can flow away to the coast. Here groups of honey collectors use poles which are split, called 'gac keo' which means rafter, to erect an attractive nesting site for bees - like the roof beams of a house. Frenchmen who also stressed the importance of this area for its wax and honey production described this system of highly managed honey collection around 1900. At present there are only a few groups of professional honey collectors still at work: in total less than 100 people.



Flood forest in upper-Kapuas lake region.  
*Photo: Vincent Mulder (NECTAR)*

#### **Exchange meeting of Tikung and Gac Keo honey collectors**

Organised by NECTAR \* and the Beekeeping Research and Development Centre in Hanoi \*\*, with financial support from Balance \*\*\* and the Committee Science and Technology for Vietnam, three Tikung beekeepers met in October 1996 for about 3 days with their Gac Keo Colleagues in the *Melaleuca* forest in U Minh Vietnam.

Their enthusiasm during the mutual exchanging of their knowledge, amongst others while Gac Keo collectors practised the positioning of rafters in their marshy forests, led to a number of good learning points.

For example, the Vietnamese faced problems with the marketing of their honey due to inadequate storage and lack of good market outlets. Annually 20 tons of honey were produced, but the honey deteriorated rapidly, and did not reach customers in the cities. Their Tikung colleagues brought in some good recent experience regarding the marketing of their own honey. Assisted by the Wetlands International Indonesia Programme, they had improved the packaging and labelling of the honey, making sure customers who preferred their *Apis dorsata* honey, could make sure they would get it. Contacts with outlets and shops in Pontianak and Jakarta ensured proper marketing and sale.

The Kalimantan Tikung beekeepers gained interesting knowledge on improved sustainable cropping of the honey combs. Instead of collecting honey during night-time, they witnessed the cropping practices at daytime as it is practised in U Minh. The difference is that the bees can orientate themselves much better during daytime. With much smouldering smoke bees are chased away. After cutting the unprotected honeycomb the bees return to their nest and can start building the honeycomb anew on a remaining part of the brood comb being left. This practice

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guarantees a higher survival rate of the existing colonies in the area. This results in potentially higher honey harvests.

These honey collection practices have high potential for areas in South and South East Asia where low canopy forests exist. It would be extremely interesting to get in touch with honey collector groups elsewhere, e.g. in the Sundarbans in India and Bangladesh.

Footnotes:

- \* NECTAR (Netherlands Expertise Center for Apicultural Resources), P.O. Box 141, 6720 AC Bennekom Netherlands (Phone/Fax: 31-74-2421997; E-mail: [e.westendorp@popin.nl](mailto:e.westendorp@popin.nl))
- \*\* Beekeeping Research and Development Centre (BRDC) Lang Ha, Dong Da, Hanoi, Vietnam (Phone: 84-4-8343185; Fax: 84-4-8352725).
- \*\*\* This Dutch co-funding organisation was formerly called CEBEMO.

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**Hopes dashed? The Story of Ancestral Domain Claims in the Philippines**

During the past two decades many communities of forest dwellers followed in the footsteps of the Ikalahan and entered a forest land management agreement in order to have legal land tenure over their Ancestral Lands, most of which are covered with forests. This, perhaps, was not ideal but the Ikalahan and others were realistic and knew that the 'ideal' seldom exists outside of storybooks. The agreement, which they entered, was known by several different names, the most recent of which was the Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) [or Community Based Resource Management Agreement (CBRMA) in view of the fact that some of the areas are mangroves and bays, not forests].

For practical purposes the CBFMA was quite effective but many of the Indigenous Peoples, especially in the Central Cordillera Mountains of Luzon and elsewhere, refused it on ideological grounds. They asked: "What right does the government have to 'lease' to us, even gratuitously, the lands which already belonged to our ancestors before the creation of the government?" It is a very logical questions but one which is almost impossible for a bureaucracy to answer.

When 'People Power' drove the Marcos Regime from the Islands in 1986 a new constitution was drafted and approved under the government of Corazon Aquino. That constitution required that the Congress pass legislation recognising the Ancestral Domain of Indigenous Peoples. This came closer to fulfilling the dreams of the Indigenous Peoples but it was necessary for everyone to await such legislation.

Congresses came and went. Several bills were filed to recognise Ancestral Rights but nothing was passed. Years went by. Most of the realistic members of the Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines refused to even hope. 'How can a congress composed of wealthy land owners be expected to pass a proper law to recognise Ancestral Domain Rights of Indigenous Peoples over lands, which have valuable resources?' was their question.

The Cabinet of President Ramos also had little hope of obtaining the proper legislation and so decided to do by administrative actions what apparently could not be done by legislation. It implemented the constitutional mandate by issuing Department Administrative Order #2 (DAO 2) in 1993 which provided for the issuance of Certificates of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) over lands of Indigenous Peoples. The community was required, of course, to adequately document their claims but the requirements were not arduous. There were still a few IP communities who refused this approach. 'We want a Title, not a CADC,' was their stand. Most communities, however, felt that this was as near to the best as they could hope for. Many Social Development Agencies (NGOs) worked over-time to help the communities prepare their evidences and many CADCs were issued over very large areas of forest land. The approach became a key program under the Ramos Administration and hopes soared.

Then in the last months of the Ramos Administration an Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) got past the congressional committees and serious discussions took place. Many of the Indigenous People pointed out some defects in the bill but it was not appropriate for them to fight against it. There was little hope of its passing anyway. Then President Fidel Ramos, himself, intervened and pushed the Congress to pass the legislation. Contrary to most expectations the bill was passed during the last days of the last congress under the Ramos Administration.

One of the primary provisions of the IPRA Bill was that all CADCs would automatically, upon application by the holders, be turned into Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs). This was almost beyond the hopes of the concerned persons but it happened.

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The legislation also provided for the elimination of the various government Departments and Commissions dealing with IP affairs and the establishment of a new office under the President. This was to be known as the National Council for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and was to be composed of IP representatives nominated by various groups of IPs themselves.

This was almost too good to be true. As it turned out, it was too good to be true.

First, most of the persons appointed to the NCIP by Presidents Ramos and Estrada did not go through the proper selection procedure. Many were political appointees whose qualifications were under question. Several of them had actually been charged for various violations of law. The concerned IP groups were dismayed at what had happened. The political infighting was so ghastly that the NCIP was, for most intents and purposes, not operational.

Second, one of the few things which the NCIP did do was to issue Administrative Order #3 (AO 3) which established a policy that if they, the NCIP, would approve the implementation of any government or private project within a CADC area, that approval was all that was necessary to prove the 'free and informed consent' of the affected community to that project.

The IP communities knew that the NCIP could, and probably would, issue such approval without even consulting with the communities involved. This was obviously not what the IPs had in mind.

In effect AO 3 made it almost impossible for an IP community to object to any government project which was being pushed by the President of the Philippines. Their 'legal spokesman' for the approval of the project was a Council of Presidential Appointees which functioned only within the Presidential office.

Third, the logging and mining interests became very concerned about the IPRA. Most of the remaining mineral deposits and all of the valuable timber stands were within lands, which were already, or would soon become, CADC or CADT areas. It appears that these economic powers convinced a former member of the Supreme Court to file a taxpayer suit in the Supreme Court requesting that IPRA be declared unconstitutional.

Even the groups of IPs who did not like the provisions of the IPRA were forced to intervene to protect it. The Solicitor General was supposed to file a response defending the IPRA. He filed a response agreeing with the complainant against the IPRA. The Ikalahan retained a legal group and filed a strong rebuttal, as did a few NGOs but the case is still pending before the Supreme Court.

At first there was much fear that if the IPRA would be declared unconstitutional, the CADCs would also be cancelled. The most recent research indicates that this would probably not happen automatically. The same opponents who are objecting to the IPRA, however, also object to the CADCs and if they would win the case against the IPRA they would probably tackle the CADCs also. Needless to say, not a single CADT has been issued.

Where are we now? No one knows what the outcome will be in the Supreme Court. This is still hanging.

The Department of Justice has been asked to rule on the qualifications and procedural issues regarding the present members of the NCIP. If they are disqualified, a new slate would be presented for appointment. It appears that the qualifications of the proposed new slate are much better and the members more likely to fulfil the expectations of the IPs. In the meantime the NCIP is in limbo.

Before the passage of the IPRA, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was empowered to evaluate the evidences and issue CADCs. They had the network and the capability to do so and handled the task well. With the passage of the IPRA, however, this task went to the NCIP which has neither the budget nor the skills needed to implement the program. The DENR has closed its

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doors to the issue of Ancestral Domain.

Several IP communities who have CADCs are reinforcing their Ancestral Claims with the CBFMA. The present administration of the DENR still articulates verbally its support of the CBFMA program but in actual practice it is no longer a priority and in many places is being discouraged.

What will happen next? Your guess will be as good as mine!

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### **Sarawak: A Bioprospectors Heaven**

Parallel with the recent development of biotechnological industries in the state of Sarawak, the State Government has established a Biodiversity Centre, which would implement its research and development using the rich diverse biodiversity of the state. For this purpose selected areas have been earmarked for the establishment of Biotechnology Parks.

According to the Chief Minister of Sarawak, Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, 'Sarawak is one of the few places left in the world with a large enough area of pristine rainforest where there exists thousands upon thousands of insect and plant species, which have medical and other applications to give the world new products'. Sarawak is preparing to enter the biotechnological era and with this a Biodiversity Ordinance was passed by the State Legislative Assembly on the 4th December 1997.

In the last few years, various research institutions, local and foreign, in collaboration with government agencies have started research on our vast biological and genetic resources. In early September 1998, the State Government signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on industrial research with the Australian University of Adelaide and a private research company. The details of the MOU are being incorporated into business plans.

Another example is the research on the 'Bintangor Tree' (*Calophyllum lanigerum* & *C. teysmanii*). According to research findings, this tree contains a compound called calanolide, which possibly has the properties for an anti-AIDS vaccine.

Initially, the research institution conducting the research was the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the US and the University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Currently, the State Government agencies and NCI collaborate with local and foreign pharmaceutical companies.

A third example concerns the medicinal indigenous plant found in Sarawak is 'Tongkat Ali' (*Eurycoma longifolia*). The roots contain biologically active compounds, which have the potential to be developed as anti-malarial drug. These roots are also used traditionally as an aphrodisiac and to lower high blood pressure levels. Issues arising from these activities.

Biotechnology is a multi-billion-ringgit (editor: one ringgit is approximately US\$ 0.25) industry world wide, and has been identified by the government as an area of high priority. But who will reap the rewards in the end? The question is: does the State Government recognise the rights of the indigenous and local communities to their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices with regards to these resources. Do the bioprospectors receive the indigenous and local community's consent prior to collecting?

According to the Sarawak Biodiversity Ordinance, 1997 Chapter 27, Section 21-23, a permit must be obtained from the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre before any type of collection can be made on any biological resources in the State. The permit mentions Prior Informed Consent (PIC), but it states nothing about benefit sharing mechanisms or indigenous or local community's participation.

Based on present trends, companies and institutions that develop useful products from traditional knowledge and biological resources apply for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) over these so-called innovations. Through IPR, they acquire monopoly rights to prohibit others from using the innovation without paying for such use. Eventually, the indigenous and local communities will be faced with a difficult situation where they cannot continue using these resources in a manner as they have always done, without being bothered by these companies for royalty payments, or other restrictions in the use of these resources.

Following the depletion of the rainforest in Sarawak due to logging European

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countries started to contemplate a boycott of tropical timber from countries that do not managed their forest on a sustainable basis.

In response to this, the Malaysian and German governments formed a Malaysian-German Technical Co-operation Project on sustainable forest management in 1995. A pilot project measuring 150,000 hectares of virgin forests in Upper Baram, Sarawak was identified. The Forest Management Information System Sarawak (FOMISS), a body formed between the Sarawak Forest Department and the German government agency GTZ (Gesellschaft f?r Technische Zusammenarbeit) was given the task to undertake the project together with Samling, a timber company. FOMISS is currently conducting taxonomic inventories and ethno-botanical research in the area, which is divided into 560-survey inventory plots.<sup>1</sup> The project was undertaken on the premise that the rainforest can be both protected and exploited economically to generate income and job opportunities. Within the context of the FOMISS project, the State Government is, however, extinguishing or curtailing the customary rights of the indigenous communities (Penan, Kenyah and Kelabit) to land and forest resources. This act of the government is not in compliance with international treaties and agreements (e.g. Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD) and Forest Stewardship Council principles.

It is crucial that indigenous people's rights and custodial role with regard to the genetic resources within their territories are recognised. They must have the right to participate in, and administer, any programme which impacts on their territory and livelihood, as well as control or share any benefits that are derived from them. Biotechnological developments may have the potential to make a contribution to humanity, and it may bring socio-economic benefits to the people of Sarawak. But we must also remember to protect and continue conserving our biological resources by being aware of these issues. Lest we come to a point in time when all these resources are gone and whatever small quantities left to us would already belong to others.

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### **Analogue Forestry - Sri Lanka**

Nineteen years ago, the Neo Synthesis Research Centre (NSRC), based in Sri Lanka, developed a method to restore degraded and even disappeared forests ? called Analogue Forestry. Through Analogue Forestry much of the original levels of biodiversity is restored and soil and hydrology in degraded landscapes rehabilitated. At the same time, Analogue Forestry offers communities depending on these ecosystems alternative ways to cultivate subsistence and commercial products.



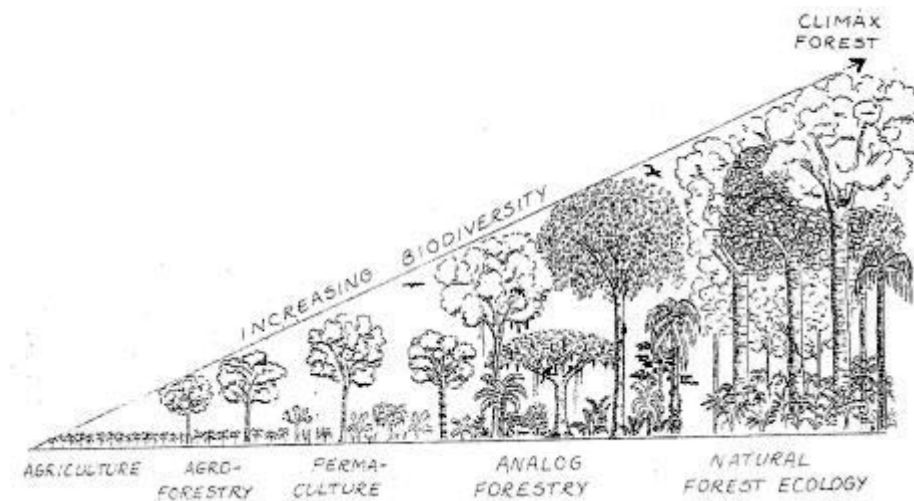
Analogue Forestry is used to restore ecosystems, 'analogous in architectural structure and ecological function' to the original forest ecosystems that once existed in the area ? using a combination of planting, natural regeneration and re-introduction of flora and fauna. Analogue Forestry requires high levels of management, is labour intensive and offers a great variety of products all year round.

NSRC has also developed a system of crop certification. Rural people that produce according to the principles of Analogue Forestry will have their crops certified as Forest Garden Products (FGPs). The system of certification is based on a local network of inspectors, supervised by an independent local institution, which is member of the International Analogue Forestry Network (IAFN). In order to assure a reliable marketing channel, NSRC participated in the creation of Lanka Organics Private Ltd. This Colombo-based company is currently the largest exporter of Forest Garden Products.

Forest Garden Products form a different category of produce: derived from man-made forests (developed by using the Analogue Forestry method) and must be distinguished from NTFPs, which are products derived from the wild in natural forests.

Under what conditions can AF be implemented?

Although the Analogue Forestry is inspired by the Sri Lankan tradition of home gardens, this method can be applied in tropical as well as temperate and boreal countries. NGOs and communities in Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya, Peru, and the Philippines have adopted analogue Forestry. The main resources needed are land and human time and knowledge. Investment in plants and trees is relatively low, as most species used are indigenous, organic and locally available. Training by one of the experts from the International Analogue Forestry Network (see addresses at the end) can be solicited. They can assist in the development of a management plan that meets the constraints and possibilities of the community and the local climate and ecological conditions..

**Suggested reading:**

R. Senanayake: Analogue Forestry as a conservation tool (FAO, Bangkok 1987).  
 The Analog Forestry Manual, (1997, Falls Brooks Center, New Brunswick, CA).  
 Manual Precito de Foresteria Analogia (1998, Rainforest Rescue, Quito, Ecuador).

**Web-sites:**

<http://www.forestgarden.org>  
[http://www.elements.nb.ca/theme/climate/jean/ran\\_ana.htm](http://www.elements.nb.ca/theme/climate/jean/ran_ana.htm)  
<http://www.guayapi.com>

**Essential contacts:**

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### Books

#### I Forests for the Future

Local Strategies for Forest Protection, Economic Welfare and Social Justice  
*Paul Wolvekamp (editor), in collaboration with Ann Danaiya Usher, Vijay Paranjpye and Madhu Ramnath*

This book addresses the question: how can local and indigenous communities maintain the balance between their societies and their forest environments when faced with increasing external pressures, rising populations and growing demands for basic needs and cash.

Causes of deforestation usually lie outside the forest. World demand for wood, paper and other raw materials determine the fate of the forest, rather than local peoples' needs and forest conservation.

As for the efforts by governments or corporations to restore and manage forest environments, they are often either non-existent or at best ineffective.

And yet, within communities which depend on forests, there frequently exists a wealth of knowledge about rational land use and environmental protection. The case studies in this volume come from all around the world and include tropical, temperate and boreal zones. They describe the positive efforts undertaken to consolidate or adapt local forest management systems to a changing environment.

One of the things that distinguishes this book is that its contributors belong to local groups involved in these efforts. The book presents their experiences and recommendations on how to re-establish community control over forestlands and preserve them for the future. Virtually all case studies record accounts regarding NTFPs.

In the words of Larry Lohmann of Corner House UK and author of 'Pulping of the South':

*"Any time you hear someone say there are 'no alternatives' to centralised state control of sensitive forest areas, reach for this book. Providing the sort of perspective that can come only from those closely engaged in the tough realities of local forest struggles, it both informs and inspires."*

Copies of 'Forests for the Future' will be made available to partners in the Exchange Programme free of charge.



#### II The Commercial Use of Biodiversity

Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing  
*Kerry ten Kate & Sarah A. Laird Earthscan Publications Ltd., London (398 pages)*

This book is based on a thoroughly researched report prepared for the European Commission by Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

It contains 1.3 kg of up-to-date information, which may be highly interesting to some of the readers of 'Voices from the Forest'.

The first part of the book explains the provisions of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) on access and benefit-sharing, national laws to implement them, and material transfer agreements. The second part - in fact the core of the book - comprises seven chapters, each of which takes as its theme a major industry sector which requires access to genetic material for



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research and development.

Most relevant for those involved in the discussion around benefit-sharing and access to forest resources are the chapters on botanical medicines and cosmetic products. Each of these chapters contains an overview of the industrial sector concerned, the size of the market, and information on some important regulatory trends, which influence research and development. In each of these chapters a section on access reviews the role of different actors seeking access to genetic resources. Other sections try to provide the best available information on indicative royalties, fees per sample, etc.

The price of this publication is a prohibitive 50 pound sterling. However, the European Commission (DG 11) has been so generous to provide a limited number of copies free of charge to the partners in the NTFP Exchange Programme!

Also available free of charge for partners in the Exchange Programme:

De Beer & McDermott: The Economic Value of Non-timber Forest Products in Southeast Asia (second edition); Amsterdam, 1996. Contact: NC-IUCN, Cas Besselink: Fax: 31-20-6279349 or E-mail: [mail@nciucn.nl](mailto:mail@nciucn.nl)

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**Redaction 'Voices from the Forest'**

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