

Voices from the forest



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NEW FILM ON NTFPS

voices from the forest in India

Women from a self-help group in India sort through dried amla fruit. Traditionally, amla is made into chutneys and pickles. Here it is processed into candy, breath freshener. Through the assistance of Keystone Foundation, productivity has increased three-fold with the adoption of new technology for processing. This story, and many others, are featured in a new film made by the NTFP-EP through Gekko Studio/ Telapak and Dusty Food Productions.

The 30-minute film was first shown during the Madhu Duniya (Honey World) Conference {see p. 8}. For details to get a copy, please email publications@ntfp.org (Manila) or kf@keystone-foundation.org (India).



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OIL PALM IN MALAYSIA

Shaken, not stirred

by MADHU RAMNATH, NTFP-EP

2 At the international airport in Jakarta, on my way back to India, I happened to sit next to a Malaysian businessman. He was a polished, smiling man of the world, who enquired where I was bound.

"Back home," I replied.

"Where from?"

"Sarawak." I was still deeply affected by what I had experienced there.

"What were you doing there?"

"Just went to admire the palm oil plantations and to check whether the logging companies have the latest machines."

There was a long silence between us; he could break it if he wanted.

"How did you come here?" he asked after awhile. And he answered for me, "Plane!"

"Yes."

"See, we need development, you can't have planes and economic growth without what the government is doing in Sarawak."

"But the Penan live there! And they are being hedged in from all sides. They are Malaysian too." I'm agitated.

"How many are they? Ten thousand? Twenty thousand? The majority wants development, we can't have them occupy all that forest." He is calm, understands my misplaced troubles and would like to correct my perspective.

I speak with difficulty. "I'm not against development, against planes and computers, only they don't have to mean large-scale logging." Then, trying to explain better, "It could be like the domestic airport in Jakarta, planes and trees together, and no AC! We could stretch our threshold of discomfort a little." I am willing to try. "Your choice is like the airport in KL, like a hospital, antiseptic. Closed."

He stared at me for sometime, unsmiling, faint traces of annoyance around his mouth. "I don't think we

should continue this discussion."

I won't let go. "I think we should. Most of the people I know agree with me and I don't even suspect that more than half the world thinks like you, have certain assumptions they proceed from. In your world, do you meet people like me?"

"No." He smiled. "Go on."

We had reached a new level in our conversation, agreeing to disagree a little.

"I'm talking about keeping options open," I began. "Do you know what is happening in Sarawak?"

"No, I haven't been there."

"There are miles and miles and miles of oil palm plantations, and one comes across logging trucks everywhere, finishing off the best forests of this country. And one wonders where the Penan will go."

"Why are the Penan so important?"

"Because they are nomadic and have a lifestyle that causes almost no damage to the earth," I tried. "They own not much more than they can carry."

"You can't expect all of us to go back to that stage!"

"No, I don't. But I expect that we should keep that option alive and open. What options have we after the oil finishes? It's already peaked. We have no options in place yet, only some hazy whim of developing bio-fuels. And we will go to war to meet our oil demands, but we still don't have a viable option for a lifestyle without oil."

"Science will come up with something; they have also explored the possibility of using palm oil for fuel." I recognised that absolute belief people have in science,



Some members of the Penan tribe that the author stayed with

despite all its sinning.

His flight was announced. He shook my hand, gave me his card, and walked away towards the security check.

I sat thinking of the Penan.

The group we had spent our little time with in Sarawak rainforest consisted of 14 families, some monkeys, dogs and poultry. Just large enough to hunt with, just small enough for the share of meat to fill all stomachs; larger groups will have to split, take new routes, explore new territories. They had apparently been camping here for almost two months, it was getting time to move; they move when the nearby resources get depleted, or when the surroundings of the camp gets filthy. Nomads move before an illness gathers a presence among them: unlike modern peoples, they have avoided epidemics.

The day went by with children splashing and frolicking in the nearby stream along which the encampment was. A few people went for gathering food, some brought firewood for the night. A dog lay wounded and whined every now and then in pain; a few children kept it company throughout the day, a woman fed it and gave it medicine. An old man guided a younger man in making a blowpipe, a meticulous process that takes up to a week: the precision with which it is made and handled is of prime concern, as it assures them a regular supply of meat.

Our meal at night was of sago mush and a couple of bits of roasted wild boar. No salt, no oil, one bowl for all of us to eat out of, we pass the meat and knife around. Despite staying with many tribal communities before, this was new, an insight into travelling light, not just from one place to another, but through life. The kind of baggage we accumulate on our longest journey makes us who we are. And who are we really, and how different are we from the Penan?

The Penan live in the real world, where people are able to just be, without having to be kept busy! Where hunger dictates action and time loses its subtle but tyrannical power over us. We live in a world where time becomes a nuisance: we have to use our time wisely, profitably, and secure our future. Entertainment is an addiction, to both children and adults, in the form of some screen watching, buying or selling something virtual or real! We know no rest.

Yet, as the Malaysian businessman would have said, and as the world confirms, it is the Penan who have to face reality and accept that times have changed. I am told that it is this virtual world we live in which is true: the Penan world of wandering in search of food – and wood for the blow-pipes and poison for their darts – is an aberration.

The poverty of our society is that it has closed such options of lifestyle. It is just not done for people to wander about in a small group through miles of rainforest, camp for a few months at a time at some lovely spot and know most intimately a section of this earth, and move on when the game does so. And en route, to grow up and marry and have children, get old and tell stories, and pass away, just like the rest of the world does within its walls! No, this

is unthinkable in our modern times, what will the other nations say of a government that lets its people wander about half-naked through the forest?

The modern intrusion into Penan life was *deja vu*: I have seen all this happen in many remote parts of India. The Penan were required to have identity cards like everyone else; settled Dayak from the region were laying claims to their territories; logging companies were closing in from all sides and sago plants had to be planted all around their camp to stake their claim to the land. Sooner or later their one basic trait – nomadism – that makes people like the Penan unique among forest tribes, will have to be sacrificed at the altar of civilisation. They can then have an address, be visited by all the humanitarian agencies and be, if pursued long enough, just like us!



A Penan resting in a traditional hut.

TOP: A view from the plane of extensive palm oil plantations

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Editorial

As we release the 14th issue of Voices, we also celebrate 10 years of the NTFP-EP network! We are excited to be moving into the next decade, continuing with greater collaboration and exchange, the cornerstones of the EP's work.

Nanang Sujana of Gekko Studio/Telapak (Indonesia) took the cover photo while he was filming Voices from the Forest India. Along with Rita Banerji of Dusty Foot Productions (India), we've come out with the latest film offering of the EP. We're not only proud of this new film, but proud to feature the wonderful work of our partners and of the new collaboration that made it possible.

Shaken, not stirred - this is how Madhu Ramnath describes the plight of the Penan tribe in Malaysia with the encroachment of oil palm plantations in their ancestral lands {p. 2}.

Meanwhile, the hunter-gatherer Punan of Indonesia face a similar situation. Eaglewood (gaharu), prized for incense, may well be on its way to extinction. But there is reason for optimism as Pak Niko of LP3M tells how the Punan are working to help protect this resource by cultivating eaglewood {p. 12}.

There was a wealth of exchange in two major events that took place in the latter part of 2007. NTFP-EP's annual regional meeting in Indonesia was an experience to be remembered as sharing took place amidst a flurry of travel by plane, by bus and by speedboat and houseboat! The communities of Danau Sentarum played host, providing a rich interaction on the issues of resource management in wetlands {p. 6}.



Seting enjoying a light moment with her son

The Madhu Duniya conference in India was all that it was expected to be, and more. It turned out to be an "anthropologist's dream," as Kunal Sharma of Keystone puts it, in his article documenting the various exchanges of NTFP-EP partners with the honey collectors and practitioners of India {p. 8}. Many honey-related activities took place, including a training in Cambodia and the launch of a honey processing lab in the Philippines {pp. 10-11}.

Backing Panthom in Kalimantan, Margaretha Seting Beraan joins the EP team. Welcome, Seting! - Aloisa Zamora-Santos

The NTFP-EP Secretariat: Jenne de Beer, Executive Director
Maria Cristina S. Guerrero, Deputy Director
Caroline Ongleo-Magbanua, Programme Manager
Aloisa Zamora-Santos, Information Management Officer
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Panthom Priyandoko, Kalimantan Facilitator
Margaretha Seting Beraan, Kalimantan Field Assistant
Femy Pinto, Facilitator for Cambodia



Pastor Kanis Kopong, a supporter of LP3M, takes a breather on the houseboat during the recent NTFP-EP regional meeting held in Danau Sentarum, Indonesia. Read the full article on the regional meeting on p. 4.

VINCE DOCTA

by VO THANH LIEM & LUU HONG TRUONG,
Center for Biodiversity and Development, Vietnam

REGIONAL MEETING OCTOBER 2007, DANAU

a wealth of in asia's

We arrived at Danau Sentarum National Park, West Kalimantan on 28 October after departing from Vietnam on the 25th. On the second day of the trip, we gathered together with the other EP partners in Pontianak in East Kalimantan. It was an unforgettable 10 hours in the two buses from Pontianak to Sintang where we witnessed huge oil palm plantations and large degraded forests. This was the first time we saw the Kalimantan forests, which are well known as the world's second largest tropical rainforest. Human impacts could be reflected in Kalimantan forests along the way. Local communities were scattered and looked like small clusters of villagers along the road.

ROOS CIEREMANS



The six hours on the high speed boats, which each consisted of one driver and four passengers allowed us to take photos of small villages and rubber plantations along the Kapuas River banks. Although our boat driver was very skilled, the nervousness could be seen on every passenger's face, especially every time we passed wavy lines which were often generated by other travelling boats. For Liem, this means of travelling is extremely strange as he has not used to working or travelling in a wetland area.

Finally, we arrived at the venue of the annual NTFP Regional Meeting – a field station with two boats of the Riak Bumi project located on a hill surrounded by interconnecting lakes and swamp forests of Danau Sentarum National Park. Our first view of the National Park from the hilltop at sunset was spectacular.

The presentations of the Upland Marketing Foundation Inc., Keystone Foundation, Riak Bumi/Dian Niaga, LP3M and others provided us, the Vietnamese partner CBD, with different lessons in the field of community-based enterprise development, especially those marketing local products directly to end users and international markets. Although the potential of products in the market is very important for the project's success, even more important is the role the organisations play in helping communities approach the market and fetch fair prices.

With suitable support, the production of local communities has really improved. The field trip around Danau Sentarum has shown the success of the Association of Periaus of Danau Sentarum in mobilising themselves to apply the Internal Control System for their natural honey. This is obviously the key factor for their getting the BIOCert organic certification for their honey.

In a local household, we saw how honey was collected from the *tikung* that hang in the swamp forest; it looked very high quality and clean. We were impressed with the peaceful local livelihood that should be sweetened and enriched partially by their forest honey and that appeared to be better than that of the minority Raglay at Nui Chua National Park and the Cham at Ta Kou Nature Reserve in

Vietnam. This success of the *periaus* was possible particularly because they got valuable support by Dian Niaga and Riak Bumi. We believe that Dian Niaga, whose office is located in Jakarta, has overcome many challenges to be able to act in this remote area.

This reminds us of the discussions with Snehata Nath of Keystone Foundation in Kotakiri two years ago about the advantages of their headquarter's location right in the Nilgiris, not far away from the communities they were working with.

The Custom Made Crafts Center opens another window for NTFP development. It is successful in adapting traditional material/products into modern-styled products which are favoured by the high-end market. This dramatically contributes to adding value to traded products and to improve the income of producers. Although each product may occupy its own section of the market, it was still concerned with the not-accepted traditional

products with cultural value which may become partially ignored as the high-end products are favoured in the market and prioritised in production and trading.

Community-based enterprise development is a field new to CBD. As this is a must-do for the forest-dependent minority communities of Raglay and Cham, as a consequence many questions and challenges are ahead. What are their needs? What are the "right" products for them to develop: charcoal, *Sterculia* gum, *Cyclea liana*, honey, bamboo, dragon's blood, crafts? Marketing issues? Their self-mobilisation? And many other questions.

In a recent project supported by the Cordaid (Project 300/10017 D9), CBD worked with the Raglay communities in Nui Chua National Park, Ninh Thuan Province, Vietnam to identify and rank their needs based on community and stakeholder workshops last December. The results from the workshops are the basis to develop a follow-up proposal which will assist the minorities and the local government to jointly develop more sustainable forest-based livelihoods in and around the park. A similar project may be developed for the Cham minority as results from CBD's coming IUCN-supported project at Ta Kou Nature Reserve. Sharing the experience from the EP partners, including experience in community-based enterprise development, is crucial for CBD in preparing and implementing the proposals. The meeting in Danau Sentarum has generated issues that CBD and its local partners will meet and address in the near future.

We left Kalimantan with many lessons learned and memorable notes, especially remembering the friendly local people with nice dances, sweet honey and the tasteful sago mixed with fish that we enjoyed for the first time!

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LUU HONG TRUONG

"To see the sun set in the lakes, to hear an ancient Iban song and to share this with such inspiring people, is an experience I will never forget" - Roos Cieremans, Cordaid

LUU HONG TRUONG



LUU HONG TRUONG



ROOS CIEREMANS



ROOS CIEREMANS



TOP: Left: A stretch of oil palm plantations, Middle: Travelling by high speed boat to the conference venue. L-R: Vo Than Liem on the lookout for honey hives; A light moment en route to a field trip site; An Iban dance to welcome participants; Mathew of Keystone, in traditional garb, represents the participants in a traditional welcome ceremony

exchanges wetlands

LUU HONG TRUONG



LUU HONG TRUONG

by SESELIA ERNAWATI, Riak Bumi, Indonesia

The Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme hosted its annual regional meeting for its partners last 29-30 November 2007 at the research station of Tekenang village, Danau Sentarum National Park. Every year, the NTFP-EP chooses one of the sites of their partners with the place changing every year. This means that the partner becomes highly involved in preparations and gives the community a greater opportunity to participate in sharing experience. This year, partners came from India, Malaysia, Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Netherlands, with a total of 46 participants including those from the local community.

The theme for this year's meeting was "Forest-based Community Enterprises"

environment and conservation as well as NTFPs. We also discussed the potential of NTFPs, strategies, management approaches, and research on NTFPs, with a focus on Kalimantan. We hope discussions will encourage future plans focusing on priority products that are supported by the NTFP-EP. On the last day, we visited some villages in Danau Sentarum that produce NTFPs such as forest honey, handicraft, hard resin, and fish.

Many partners of NTFP-EP are already caring for the environment while enhancing community income. Participants are expected to apply learnings on natural resource management system, organizing, marketing system.

There is a wide variety of potential products that partners can look into, such as crafts, honey, hard resin, eaglewood, dragon's blood, medicinal plants and fish. If the products are developed and produce

economic value, they are a valuable alternative income.

Aside from the sharing of experiences, the meeting gave participants the opportunity to show and discuss the development of NTFPs from their countries. For example, NTFPs from Indonesia and the Philippines are relatively more ready for marketing and product diversification compared to that of other regions. Meanwhile in India, the sustainable management of NTFPs is supported by research which partners undertake in their own organisations.

Those from Indonesia presented their products including dragon's blood, eaglewood management, and their stand against oil palm plantations. Also highlighted was the Forest Honey Network which has spread in nine areas in different islands in Indonesia, as well as having organic honey from one of its members.

From Cambodia and Vietnam, there was a discussion on potential products and the concern for managing their natural resources sustainably.

New ideas were shared among NTFP partners, particularly those natural resources that can be developed and provide economic benefit while protecting the forest. For example, one participant from a village in Danau Sentarum said that their community has dragon's blood, but the potential in their place is not yet developed. He was excited to develop this and other products to add his family income.

The Head of the Danau Sentarum National Park agency from government graced the occasion. His presence boosted the morale of present community members, signifying the support for the communities in Danau Sentarum to develop NTFPs in this conservation area.

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TOP, LEFT: A plenary session
TOP, RIGHT: A fisherman in the waters of Danau Sentarum; LEFT: Danau Sentarum, view from a hill



ROOS CIERMANS

exchange news

Around the region from October 2007 - Feb 2008

ROOS CIEREMENS



NTFP-EP annual regional meeting

Forty-six partners from the region and donors from Netherlands came together in Danau Sentarum National Park, West Kalimantan, Indonesia last 29-31 October 2007 to share lessons on community-based enterprise development especially on resource management and trade issues on handicrafts, honey, dragon's blood and gaharu.

This year's regional meeting was organised through Indonesian partner Riak Bumi. The meeting was capped by a field visit to the Association of Periaus of Danau Sentarum where participants witnessed not only the resource management of honey through the *tikung* technique in wetlands but also the traditional long houses and the warm hospitality of the Iban communities. {See articles and more photos on pp. 4-5}

Back to back with this event, NTFP-EP attended the Kalimantan Consultative Meeting held on 1 November. Through the consultation, identified were priority issues, activities, and strategies as basis for the NTFP-EP action planning for strategic interventions in Kalimantan.

Regional meeting participants were highly anticipated and were warmly welcomed by the Iban community.

ASEAN calls for more rural industries

EP Deputy Director Crissy Guerrero attended to EU-ASEAN Environmental Policy Meeting held last 22-23 November 2007 in Singapore. The meeting was a well-timed meeting given newly approved declarations on the environment, including the declaration to plant 10 million hectares by 2020 and to enforce the commitment of biodiversity conservation.

Of interest to the EP network is the challenge to set up more rural industries. This was highlighted in the ASEAN Secretary General's opening statement, this being the response to the worsening environmental problem of urbanization and the volumes

Ms. Crissy Guerrero with other Philippine delegates and Mr. Juan Echanove of the Delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines

of waste people were bring and producing in the cities. Unfortunately, no clear strategy as yet been defined.

Another sweet exchange: Keystone visits Vietnam

Keystone staff – Justinraj, Chandran, Rajendran and Leo – got an opportunity during the third week of November 2007 to upgrade their bee keeping skills with the BRDC, Vietnam. They posed their concerns to Dr. Phung Huu Chinh, Nguyen Ngoc Vaung and Truong Tuan.

Some learning highlights include the Queen rearing technique, which involves how best to influence the queen's pheromones and timings with grafted larvae. The making of an artificial queen cup was another important technique they learned, while honey quality testing methods, the basics and sucrose analysis were useful.

Impressed with the Vietnamese knowledge on bee behaviour, Keystone likewise mentioned new learnings on hive inspection chart and colony efficiency, and how feeding techniques may prevent absconding.

Lending a helping hand to Latin America NTFP manual

NTFP-EP is lending a hand in the development of regional case studies for incorporation into the Latin American Version of the manual "Steps to Sustainable and Community-based NTFP management." The first writeshop is scheduled for May 2008. Latin American partners are now in the process of establishing their own network, as inspired by the EP example.



Subanen IP leaders & elders unite for the environment and IP concerns

Mining companies and illegal logging pose great threats to the Subanen's tenure and control in their land; the Subanen is an IP group from the southern Philippines. In the desire to unite and protect their territories and defend their rights to their ancestral domains, Subanen leaders and elders met in a General Assembly held on 18-20 November 2007 in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. Some 124 recognised Subanen leaders and elders coming from 10 territories, found mostly in Zamboanga del Sur and strategically located around their sacred mountain, Mt. Pinukis, came to discuss how they can establish the foundations for stronger collaboration.

The concrete outputs of the Assembly were the formulation of a draft framework plan for the protection of Mt. Pinukis and their ancestral domain. This includes the formation of an interim body to protect and safeguard the mountain and its watershed areas, the passing of related resolutions to all concerned agencies to protect the mountain and assert the recognition of it as the Subanen's sacred place and, the passing of resolutions declaring all ancestral domain territories that surround Mt. Pinukis to be free from development aggression, especially mining and logging activities.

The assembly was supported by the NTFP-EP, the Foundation for Sustainable Society, Inc., AnthroWatch, Upholding Life and Nature, and the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples. {VINCE DOCTA}

Rattan ban lifted in Indonesia

An export ban for raw and semi-processed rattan has for long kept forest gate prices at rock bottom in Indonesia. Recently, the ministry of trade and industry finally lifted the ban. EP – together with SawitWatch and other partners – is now looking into ways to ensure that (a substantial part of) expected higher prices will be passed on to rattan collectors and farmers in the archipelago.

We've moved!

After having shared an office all these years with the NTFP Task Force and the CustomMade Crafts Center, the EP now calls next door, home. The EP now occupies 92 Masikap Extension and can be reached through an additional phone number: 63 2 9204201.

More sweet activities spin off from Madhu Duniya

Read about this "anthropologist's dream" in Kunal Sharma's full article on p. 8.

The conference generated follow-up activities such as the upcoming translation of Dr. Chinh's *Apis dorsata* field guide, the improvement of dehumidification techniques, organic honey certification in the Philippines, training on sustainable harvesting of wild bees in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh, among others.

KEYSTONE



Local dancers wait for the dhimsa dances to begin at the Madhu Duniya

External evaluation to feed into upcoming strategic planning

An external assessment of the NTFP-EP was conducted in October 2007 through the expertise of Dr. Julian F. Gonsalves and Mr. Antonio B. Quizon. The evaluation made specific recommendations on the role and effectiveness of NTFP-EP in building the capacity of its partners and target communities and will be valuable input in the design of EP's next three-year (2008-2010) Strategic Plan.

However, due to space limitations, here are just a few of the results from the accompanying readership survey of *Voices*. Thank you for the positive feedback; it only makes us work harder!

► "NTFP EP is one of only a handful of groups in the world that are undertaking applied work on NTFPs in a serious and committed way. Their newsletter reflects commitment to a network which provides rich input each issue."

► "One really feels that the newsletter is as colourful and diverse as NTFPs are!"



ANG CHEATLOM

More women than men are involved in making furniture making, as pointed out in the factory visit.

Cambodian partner participates in China workshop on rattan

A representative of the Cambodia National Working Group, Mr. Ang Cheatlom of Buddhism for a Progressive Society, attended the INBAR Global Rattan Workshop held from 8-11 January 2008, in Haikou, China with over 40 participants from China, Philippine, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Ghana and Cameroon countries.

The main objective of the workshop was to discuss sustainability management strategy of rattan around the world. INBAR members presented their achievements on rattan projects. Field visits included a community plantation site, a formerly degraded forest,

that is supported by INBAR Project in Five Triangle Mountain in Hainan Island; and a rattan factory which employs over 500 people and exports globally.

Cheatlom shared some of the lessons learned for application in Cambodia, including:

- Nursery seedlings are very important to current Cambodia because natural rattan forests have been over exploited;
- Although communities may plant rattan for livelihood, the benefits are felt only in the long-term so alternative livelihood options need to be provided to the community; and
- Cooperation with the private sector may contribute to community development on NTFPs.

Ruth Canlas, new NTFP Task Force Coordinator

The NTFP Task Force is now (wo)manned by Ms. Ruth Canlas. No stranger to NTFP-TF, Ruth previously was a project coordinator for the network and continued to provide consultancy services to NTFP-TF in previous years. Welcome Ruth, and the best of luck in working with you and all of our partners!

Philippine actor supports NTFPs

The CustomMade Crafts Center in Manila recently had a well-known local TV-film-stage actor, John Arcilla, supporting the sale of NTFP handicrafts



during the International Trade and Tourism Expo 2008 held from 29 February to 2 March 2008. The trade fair is one of the biggest in the country.

With John's support, much attention was given to the stories of the indigenous artisans behind the various products of the CMCC. There were various print, radio and TV promotional opportunities.

Database on NTFPs of South and Southeast Asian in the works

What NTFP is that? Now you may not have to look very far. A database on NTFPs in the region is a new feature on www.ntfp.org, the NTFP-EP website. Like Wikipedia, NTFP-EP partners are encouraged to contribute their information on NTFPs they are working on or are of interest within South and Southeast Asia.

The database is a response to the dearth of information on NTFPs and it is the only database of its kind in the region at the moment. The database is envisioned to be a platform for further information sharing and exchange on NTFPs, their uses and roles – not only among partners, but with other stakeholders as well. Please visit the database at www.ntfp.org and click on "NTFP database" in the main navigation.



A sample page from the NTFP resource database - includes a profile, distribution and uses in various countries, and other interesting trivia

Philippine partner joins German trade fair for biological products

In February 2008, Oyen Padilla of PCART (Palawan), through EP, participated in the BioFach in Nuremberg, by far the world's largest trade fair for biological products. Oyen, with a background in processing technology, was most impressed by the wealth of state-of-the-art (but utterly unaffordable) equipment displayed on the fair grounds.

Fair trade was the big buzz at the event and many would bring the issue up before almost anything else. Meanwhile, importers from Sri Lanka and India, respectively, showed serious interest in copra and ingredients for herbal medicines from Oyen's home island Palawan. {JENNE DE BEER}



a sweet taste of honey

by KUNAL SHARMA, Keystone Foundation, India

8

The sleepy town of Araku woke up to a rather unusual episode on its single arterial road on the evening of 27th November 2008. For two Siddhis, with close resemblance to their African forefathers, were conducting a mock display of their honey hunting prowess, leaving delegate members and passersby speechless. To the accompaniment of music, honey hunters swiftly scaled a eucalyptus tree and artfully hunted mock honey. As they climbed down, an enterprising delegate collected user fees from the exasperated members of the town and gifted it to the honey hunters for their daring effort. This in essence was the spirit with which the first ever Madhu Duniya was held, with camaraderie and a willingness to learn from the experiences of one another.

Madhu Duniya has been unique in more ways than one. It was an international conference with participants from eight countries and about 70 participants; the agenda varied from scientific collection of honey to its management and marketing. There were technical discussions on appropriate technologies as well as light hearted sessions such as this impromptu mock honey collection. But above all, this was probably the first time in living memory that indigenous honey hunters from so many places on the earth assembled at one place and spoke about their art with pride, disagreed, sometimes even argued vociferously but each one basking in the knowledge that theirs is an art that is unique to the world we live in today. This was also an anthropologist's dream come true for it is not everyday that you find so many sub species of the human race come together, people with different looks and diets, but all sharing the common ancestor.

Programme

Participants from ten Indian states and seven countries deliberated for three days, with a field trip packed in so that they may see techniques used by locals in honey collection.

The conference was inaugurated with a ceremonial tasting of honey by participants and assemblage of people as per languages common to them. Thereafter, Snehlata Nath, director of Keystone

Foundation spoke on how the conference was conceived and what was aimed to be achieved. Laya Director Dominique also spoke in detail about the region and about his organisation, LAYA.

There were various sets of discussions that began with Jenne de Beer of NTFP-EP speaking about the work being done by the NTFP-EP and the need to work actively towards better management of NTFPs. Nicola Bradbear, from Bees for Development, spoke about the status of bees in the world through a well laid out presentation that touched on all the major issues affecting management of bees.

The conference was also an occasion to launch a new book by Keystone Foundation, *Honey Trails in the Blue Mountains* that elicited positive response from the delegates.

Voices from the Forest India, a documentary by the NTFP-EP that was produced by South and South East Asian partners of the exchange programme was the most awaited release of the conference. The film documents the role of NTFPs, including honey, in the livelihoods of people from various places of the country. These places, though geographically distinct, share a common link with each other – that of close associations with the forest and forest resources. Madhu Duniya was an apt moment to release the film as most of the partners who were involved in the shoot were present at the conference and heartily congratulated each other for the fine effort. Jenne De Beer officially released the film and it is now available to all through the EP office and through its partners.

Honey hunters who had assembled from various parts of the nation and Southeast Asia had an engrossing time as they listened to one another speaking about their trade and small secrets about this ancient art. The discussions were wide and varied as Joanne Abrina of NATRIPAL, Philippines spoke of their gained skills in forming sustainable organisations, Johnny Utama of Dian Niaga, Indonesia, spoke of the evolution and branding of the "Dorsata" brand which is in high demand these days. With people reminiscing about their honey types and nest sizes – honey hunters offered their experiences from the Nilgiris and from Mandla district, from Nagarjuna Srisailem and from Vishakapatnam region, from Orissa



PREVIOUS PAGE,
L-R: Chandran talking
about honey hunting
in the Nilgiris; The
participants during
a plenary session;
Baneswar Dehuri
explaining the various
tools used in honey
hunting

THIS PAGE:
Government officials
in a honey taste
testing session;
Wrapping up a day's
session by dancing the
night away; BELOW:
Honey hunters in
Peddabidda village

and from Belgaum, from Bastar and from Maharashtra. It was a day of sharing age-old wisdom that is under threat and the tribal way of life was perhaps better understood, fitting perhaps was to wrap up the night with a tribal dance performance locally called the *dhimsa*.

A field visit was planned for the delegates and they were taken to two separate villages, Peddabidda and Bangarampeta, where they got a glimpse of the village life of the indigenous people of the region. The visits were facilitated by the Kovel Foundation which imparts trainings and has set up

nurseries to replenish forest resources. The afternoon was spent in speaking to the people about their honey hunting techniques and benefits accrued from training sessions.

The conference continued the next day with presentations and discussions by subject experts where the most prominent issues that came up for discussion included:

- ▶ Culture of the honey hunters should be preserved;
- ▶ Local markets should be developed;
- ▶ Extensions should be taken place with indigenous bees and in a sustainable manner;
- ▶ Transfer of technology should take place, if they have too, in a planned and phased manner;
- ▶ Preference needs to be paid to 'value addition,'
- ▶ It is necessary to consolidate individuals into groups;
- ▶ Branding of value added products should be of a high quality;
- ▶ Technical research should translate at the local level;
- ▶ Policy should not have tunnel-vision approach with one size fitting all, but should be more responsive and sensitive to local cultures;
- ▶ Indigenous knowledge should be promoted and, wherever needed, should be strengthened.

Discussions focused on these larger topics and the last day saw delegates assembling into smaller groups to further discuss and

come up with recommendations and ideas.

The conference saw the active cooperation of officials from various government departments who were keen to use the expertise of the groups in their larger NTFP enterprises. Mr. Tapes Kumar Jha, conservator of forests in Bastar, spoke about his region and the efforts undertaken by the Minor Forest Produce Federation to bring together tribal villages and increase their options of earnings from sale of NTFPs. Mr. Pattabiramaiah, senior manager of the Kasipatnam branch of GCC, explained his organisation's pioneer role in organizing the tribal population and initiating sales.

The conference in its larger format was an opportunity to get a glimpse of the myriad ways that honey hunters practice their art. The practice of honey hunting is itself in decline, having being replaced by more commercial ventures. Moreover, the role of cultures and traditions is being relegated to the backseat, and the conference was a chance for implementing agencies to see for themselves the richness of this art. As it was the first such initiative, it is envisaged that in future, conferences would involve greater inputs from various stakeholders and thus assist in securing better management principles.

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Honey hunter Leiken, on the way back from Araku to Bastar, sharing some mahua flower wine with a couple of resus monkeys: "I learned something during the Madhu Duniya. Not to take the whole hive is really a good idea! Yes, I will remember it, but, you know, I am also glad to go home and back to work. Because at such events, day after day, it is sit and eat and eat and sit again." Hmm, maybe we need to plan for more exercise during future meetings...



Kudos to our honey pioneers

During the recent Madhu Duniya, the NTFP-EP and its partners recognized the pioneering achievements of two individuals and one group in relation to forest honey development and conservation in their respective countries.

DR. PHUNG HUU CHINH : "...in recognition of his pioneering work in Asian bee development and conservation."

Since the EP network's beginnings, Dr. Chinh of the Bee Research and Development Center (BRDC) in Hanoi, Vietnam has been an invaluable resource person on Asian bees technology (see related article on p. 11). Over the years, he has helped numerous partners across the region – including Keystone and Prakruti/ APPIKO (India), NATRIPAL (Philippines), and the Indonesian Forest Honey Network – improve their own honey systems and laboratory with his cheerful technical advice.



AMY MALING

MR. BANESWAR DEHURI: ".... in recognition of his lifetime commitment and involvement in *Apis dorsata* harvesting and management."

Baneswar is a honey hunter from the Khadia people and has been harvesting honey the traditional way all his life. He has willingly shared his experiences to the network.

Baneswar was so delighted when he was given the award and expressed his thanks to NTFP-EP; rather his entire village accepted this award with pride! Incidentally the day he received the certificate was a very auspicious day for the Khadia, i.e., Maghei Puja which is observed each year in the month of Magha (part of January and February) on the eve of fruiting season. They perform puja (offerings to God) and after that they start collection of fruits and

honey from the forest. Baneswar is the priest of their village Baniabasa and during puja, he jumps over fire seven times.

ASOSIASI PERIAU DANAU SENTARUM: "....in recognition of the group's pioneering work in *Apis dorsata* development and conservation."

The APDS is a peoples' organisation of forest honey collectors from five periaus (traditional organisations) in Danau Sentarum. In May 2007, the organisation was the very first group in Indonesia to be granted the right to carry Organic Certification seal by BIOCert, the country's certifying body.

Unfortunately, Danau Sentarum recently got hit by unusual floods wiping out virtually all of this season's honey harvest. To alleviate some of the pain that this caused to the honey collectors in the area, the award for the APDS came with a \$1000 prize from private money.

{With reports from Deepak Pani, Thomas Irawan and Jenne de Beer}



RIAK BUMI

NATRIPAL honey lab formally launched

by LORETA ALSA, NATRIPAL, Philippines

NATRIPAL started selling pure wild honey in 1995. Since then, we did not have a proper area/space for honey products coming from our member organisations. In 2004, NATRIPAL's honey processing unit was established through financial assistance from the Upland NGO Assistance Center. NATRIPAL faced up to the challenges by using integrated approaches/ interventions such as trainings and workshops in proper harvesting, good manufacturing practices, information dissemination campaigns, upgrading honey products to higher quality, marketing, etc. These activities were conducted through the assistance of the Non-Timber Forest Products-Task Force and the Upland Marketing Foundation, Inc. who provided us training, installation of systems, and conducted evaluation/observation on honey processing of NATRIPAL. Based on the results, the expansion of the said laboratory was needed in order to have a proper space for packaging, storage, processing, display area, etc.

Furthermore, through the Doen Foundation, NATRIPAL has been expanding its honey laboratory to accommodate increasing production. Last 13 December 2007 during the general assembly meeting of NATRIPAL, an inauguration/blessing of honey laboratory expansion was conducted headed by Rev. Fr. Armando R. Limsa, NATRIPAL adviser. Among those present during the event were representatives from the City Tourism Office of Puerto Princesa, Palawan NGO Network Incorporated and member organisations of the NATRIPAL federation. It is now operating in preparation for this coming honey season which starts in March and ends in May. Such space for the following honey production systems were in place – like receiving area, dehumidification, storage, washing and packaging area. This is really a big help for NATRIPAL to maintain its high quality of products.

NATRIPAL is continuously working to develop, promote and market pure wild honey. Our honey products are in the market now locally and even in Manila. Compared to previous years since we changed our packaging which is now more presentable and attractive to consumers, the demand is increasing.



Cutting of ribbon were officiated by Mr. Arlan Santos (NTFP-TF) and Ms. Mercedes Limsa (NATRIPAL).



BOTH PHOTOS IN THIS ARTICLE BY NATRIPAL

An impressive training in Cambodia

by DR. PHUNG HUU CHINH, Bee Research and Development Center, Vietnam

At the Madhu Duniya 2007 Conference, the biggest event for *Apis dorsata* honey hunters ever held, I met a lot of participants from India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Bangladesh. They came to exchange technologies, share experiences, knowledge and information. Most of them were new to me but some I'd already made their acquaintance. Among them, three Cambodians – Mr. Im Noeun, Mr. Sien Tha and Mr. Krang Phanny, who came from WWF Cambodia's Srepok Wilderness Area Project (SWAP) in Monduliri province – were very glad to meet me again.

They informed me of their success in applying new techniques to collect honey in a sustainable way. Last season, they had harvested honey two to three times from the same nest instead of only one time as they did before. They said they also introduced new methods to other honey hunters in the same village. This meeting made me remember the training I conducted in Sen Monorom, Monduliri province from 3-5 April 2007. The course was organised by WWF Cambodia with the cooperation of the NTFP-EP.

The objective of the training was to provide knowledge on sustainable honey harvesting methods and technologies in proper honey handling and main contents of the training as follows:

- ▶ Bees and the natural ecosystem,
- ▶ Bee biology of *Apis dorsata*,
- ▶ Traditional honey hunting methods in Asian countries,
- ▶ Sustainable hunting methods (in high tree and rafter), and
- ▶ Honey and wax collecting and processing (collecting, filtration, reducing water content, etc.)

There were about 30 participants who are honey hunters of two tribal communities of Monduliri, rafters from Koh Kong and other provinces, some staff of WWF, CFI, CAN-DO, and some officials from the department of forestry. It surprised me because almost all the trainees are only aged a little over 30, much younger than other trainees I often teach. First, I thought they might not be honey hunters, but just there to learn something. But after posing some questions, I knew I was wrong because most of them are honey hunters or often work closely with honey collectors. They had a lot of experiences in honey hunting methods that are similar to other hunters of Asian countries; for example, how to find an *Apis dorsata* nest, and how to make the ladder to climb up the tree.

Although honey hunting has been practiced for a long time, beekeeping is not yet that developed in Cambodia, and honey bee materials and books were rare. So the trainees were eager to learn and paid much attention to lectures and had a lot of questions on bee biology (bee's life cycle, cast, swarm, etc.) and sustainable honey harvesting.

In a usual training, trainees often want to finish lecture early for lunch break. But in this training all of participants stayed in class more than half an hour extra



so they could ask their questions.

During the training, participants were divided into two groups for group discussions. The first group included honey hunters and people working in highland forests; they discussed how to improve their harvesting of honey from high trees. The second group included those collecting *Apis dorsata* honey by rafter (*bong kong*) technique. The participants designed posters with a lot of illustrations to exchange the knowledge they had learnt and what they would apply in the near future. A lot of trainees made copies of my PowerPoint lectures and they said they wanted to introduce these lectures to their own communities.

At the third day, we took a short field trip to a village in the Monduliri Protected Forest. It was early honey season so we could see only one colony in a high tree. We also visited an indigenous Bunong village.

Two months later, at the international conference "The role of NTFP in poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation" that was held from 11-14 June 2007 in Hanoi, Vietnam, there I met Ms. Amanda Bradley of CFI Cambodia. She informed me that the honey hunters in her project in Koh Kong province had successfully harvested two to three times in the same colonies and they hoped to get more honey.

I have conducted hundreds of training on honey hunting and beekeeping, but the enthusiasm and the results of this training for Khmers was one of the most impressive for me.

I would like to thank WWF Cambodia staff especially Ms. Amy Maling for all her communications and arrangements. Further, I thank Mr. Jenne De Beer for introducing me to WWF.

A group of honey hunters prepare their poster which served as a jumping board for further discussion



KEARIFAN DAYAK PUNAN MALINAU, KALIMANTAN TIMUR:

Melestarikan Hutan Melalui Budidaya Gaharu

by BORO SUBAN NIKOLAUS, Lembaga Pemerhati dan Pemberdayaan Dayak Punan Malinau (LP3M), Indonesia

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Masyarakat Dayak Punan lebih banyak tersebar di pedalaman Kabupaten Bulungan, Berau dan Malinau (CIFOR & Yayasan Adat Punan, 2003). Penyebaran masyarakat Punan saat ini lebih mudah dijumpai sebagai akibat dari program pemukiman kembali (resettlement) pada tahun 1972-1973. Sebelum adanya proyek tersebut, Masyarakat Punan lebih banyak mendiami wilayah-wilayah hulu sungai yang memiliki hutan primer. Kondisi ini dimungkinkan karena pola hidup mereka memang sangat bergantung pada pemanfaatan hasil hutan. Walaupun proyek resettlement ini kemudian berdampak pada perubahan pola hidup dan budaya Masyarakat Punan, tetapi ketergantungan pada hutan masih sangat kuat. Program ini mengakibatkan Masyarakat Punan semakin jauh dari kawasan hutan saat mencari binatang buruan dan hasil hutan lainnya.

Hidup Keseharian Masyarakat Punan

Pola kehidupan masyarakat Punan tidak dapat dilepaskan dari hutan. Mereka menempatkan hutan sebagai lumbung pakan dan sebagai rumah yang dapat membuat mereka merasa aman di dalamnya.

Dalam perkembangannya, sebagai hasil dari interaksi dengan kelompok masyarakat lainnya, pola kehidupan masyarakat Punan telah berkembang. Masyarakat Punan telah terbiasa berladang, menanam ubi, pisang dan tanaman palawija lainnya. Mereka juga memiliki ketrampilan mendulang emas dan membuat kerajinan dari rotan.

Walau demikian, masyarakat Punan masih sangat tergantung dengan hutan. Kebutuhan pokok selain beras mereka dapatkan

dari hutan. Gaharu dan rotan adalah komoditas utama yang menjadi sumber pendapatan bagi masyarakat Punan. Hasil penjualan dua komoditi ini mereka gunakan untuk membeli gula, garam, tembakau, pakaian, bahkan juga untuk membeli kebutuhan lain seperti televisi dan antena parabola.

Masyarakat Punan telah sejak lama memanfaatkan Gaharu untuk kebutuhan hidup. Mereka memanfaatkan gaharu secara lestari, dengan melakukan pemanenan sesuai kebutuhan. Masyarakat Punan memiliki kemampuan untuk mengenali pohon-pohon Gaharu yang berisi resin. Keahlian ini membuat mereka dapat melakukan penebangan/pemanenan Gaharu secara selektif. Hanya pohon-pohon berisi saja yang akan ditebang. Sedangkan untuk pohon-pohon Gaharu yang diketahui tidak berisi resin Gaharu akan ditandai untuk tetap dibiarkan tumbuh.

Sayangnya, kearifan ini tidak dimiliki oleh para pendatang yang juga melakukan pemanenan Gaharu. Sehingga, para pendatang cenderung menebang semua pohon Gaharu yang mereka temui. Kondisi ini menyebabkan populasi Gaharu turun secara drastis.

Selain itu, eksploitasi hutan besar-besaran yang telah dilakukan oleh perusahaan dan pemerintah serta kegiatan land-clearing dalam pembangunan perkebunan kelapa sawit juga menjadi faktor yang sangat mempengaruhi kepunahan pohon Gaharu, selain juga sangat membatasi ruang gerak masyarakat Punan di hutan.



Budidaya Gaharu

Pola kegiatan meramu yang dikenal oleh masyarakat Punan memang berasal dari kedekatan mereka dengan hutan sebagai sumber kehidupan yang menyediakan berbagai keperluan. Karena itu, masyarakat Punan

sebenarnya tidak mengenal aktivitas budidaya. Namun demikian, budaya masyarakat Punan tetap mencirikan kelestarian. Salah satunya adalah memanen hasil hutan secara lestari, termasuk juga adanya ketentuan untuk tidak berburu dan membunuh binatang hutan selama persediaan daging masih ada.

Masyarakat Punan menyadari bahwa perkembangan kelompok-kelompok masyarakat luar semakin pesat. Perkembangan ini menyebabkan tekanan pada hutan sebagai tempat masyarakat Punan bergantung semakin berat. Situasi ini diperparah dengan kebijakan pemerintah yang tidak memperhatikan kelestarian hutan, aktivitas perusahaan tanaman industri untuk pulp dan kertas, pembukaan perkebunan kelapa sawit dan upaya pencurian hasil hutan oleh pihak-pihak yang tidak bertanggungjawab.

Didasari oleh kondisi ini, masyarakat Punan mulai melakukan penyesuaian pola hidup, yang sebelumnya budaya meramu menjadi budaya budidaya. Mereka menyadari bahwa budaya budidaya adalah pintu masuk yang sangat strategis untuk melindungi kawasan hutan yang mereka miliki.

Di sisi lain, masyarakat Punan percaya bahwa gaharu memiliki hal-hal yang berkaitan dengan magis dan memiliki hubungan dengan tradisi nenek moyang mereka yang menempatkan Gaharu sebagai tanaman penyelamat dan penopang kehidupan. Kepercayaan ini membuat masyarakat Punan memperlakukan Gaharu sebagai sebuah komoditi yang istimewa. Ini dibuktikan dengan dilakukannya upacara adat sebelum mereka mencari Gaharu. Upacara ditujukan untuk memohon kepada roh-roh agar memberikan Gaharu yang berkualitas.

Masyarakat Punan menyadari bahwa dengan melakukan budidaya Gaharu, maka mereka akan mendapatkan dua keuntungan sekaligus, yaitu sebagai sarana untuk menegaskan hak dan kepemilikan kawasan adat kepada pihak-pihak lain, dan sebagai upaya pelestarian hutan sebagai kawasan hidup masyarakat Punan. Selain itu, masyarakat Punan menyadari bahwa dengan memelihara hutan, maka mereka akan berkontribusi pada upaya penyelamatan paru-paru dunia.

Satu hal penting yang patut menjadi catatan adalah sulitnya meyakinkan banyak anggota masyarakat Punan tentang kandungan resin Gaharu pada pohon-pohon Gaharu yang dibudidayakan. Hal ini dikarenakan mereka percaya bahwa kandungan resin pada pohon Gaharu hanya ada jika pohon Gaharu tumbuh secara alami di hutan. Untuk meyakinkan maka dilakukan kunjungan belajar ke tempat pembudidayaan Gaharu yang telah berhasil mendapatkan resin pada pohon Gaharu hasil budidaya. Kunjungan belajar dilaksanakan ke kebun Pastor Wan Ibung N. Berkingheri, OMI yang telah berhasil mengembangkan resin Gaharu melalui proses inokulasi dan melakukan budidaya anakan Gaharu dari pohon Gaharu yang memiliki resin.

Penutup

Kabupaten Malinau, pada konferensi perubahan iklim yang diselenggarakan oleh PBB pada bulan Desember 2007 lalu, telah menyatakan diri sebagai Kabupaten Konservasi. Ruang ini akan dimanfaatkan oleh LP3M dan Masyarakat Punan untuk melakukan penyadaran kepada publik bahwa dengan melakukan budidaya Gaharu, maka hutan dapat diselamatkan, dan pada saatnya nanti, hutan akan menjadi harapan hidup bagi seluruh masyarakat Indonesia.

THE WISDOM OF THE DAYAK PUNAN OF MALINAU, EAST KALIMANTAN

Conserving forests through eaglewood cultivation

The Dayak Punan community has spread throughout the Bulungan Regency, Berau and Malinau (CIFOR & Yayasan Adat Punan, 2003), a result of the government's resettlement program during 1972-1973.

Prior to this program, the Punan were concentrated in territories of the river upstream with primary forest. Despite the many changes in the Punan way of life, their dependence on the forest remains very strong. As such, the Punan continue to hunt and seek out other forest products despite being far from forested regions.

Punan life is entwined with that of the forest. They view the forest not only as their source of life, but as their home – a place where they feel safe and protected.

The Punan are hunter-gatherers and thus cultivation activities are alien to their culture. However, with greater interaction with other communities, they have learned to engage in farming, planting sweet potatoes, bananas and other crops.

They also have acquired skills in gold panning and craftsmanship of rattan. Eaglewood (or gaharu) and rattan are the main commodities that are a source of income for the Punan. Proceeds from the sale of these commodities are used to buy sugar, salt, tobacco, clothes, as well as television and parabolic antenna.

About gaharu: The Punan believe that eaglewood has magical qualities and is highly valued in traditional Punan life. Thus eaglewood is treated as a special commodity, with a traditional ceremony held before its harvesting. The ceremony implores the spirits for high quality resin.

Punan culture is characterised by being conservation-conscious. For example, it is local wisdom that hunting and killing wildlife is not done when meat supplies are still available. This principle holds true also for eaglewood harvesting. The Punan have long since been harvesting in a sustainable way. For example, they know which trees contain eaglewood resin and those trees known not to contain resin are marked and left to grow.

Unfortunately, this wisdom is not shared by outsiders who carried out indiscriminate harvesting of eaglewood, resulting in a drastic drop in the eaglewood population.

The impetus for gaharu cultivation: Today, eaglewood is on its way to extinction because of large-scale forest exploitation by pulp and paper companies, massive land-clearing in the development of oil palm plantations, and illegal logging. This situation is worsened by the government's lack of attention to forest conservation activities.

Faced with this situation, the Punan have been forced to adapt, their gathering culture becoming slowly a cultivation culture. They realised that it was only through cultivation that they would be able to protect the forests that they owned.

By cultivating eaglewood and contributing to its conservation, this would stress their rights and ownership over their traditional land. Moreover, they realised that they could get two profits at the same time – from the eaglewood naturally growing, and from the planted trees.

Initially, it was difficult to convince many of the Punan that planted eaglewood trees would produce the much-sought after resin as they traditionally believe that this resin is possible only in eaglewood trees that grew naturally in the forest. To persuade them, LP3M invited the Punan to visit the garden of Pastor Wan Ibung N. Berkingheri, OMI. He has successfully developed resin-producing eaglewood through the process of inoculation and continues to cultivate eaglewood seedlings from these trees.

In the Conference Climate Change that was held by the UN last December 2007 in Bali, the Kabupaten Malinau was stated as the Kabupaten Konservasi – Conservation District. LP3M and the Punan community used this opportunity to tell the story that through eaglewood cultivation, the forest could be rescued so that the forest can continue to be the source of the life for the Punan and the Indonesian peoples.

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BUNONG INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, CAMBODIA

rediscovering NTFPs

by AMY MALING, WWF Greater Mekong Cambodia Country Program, Cambodia

A Bunong community representative had the chance to join NTFP activities when WWF was invited to present the honey harvesting practices in Mondulkiri in the National NTFP Workshop held in December 2006. In the preparatory meetings, the steering committee members agreed to encourage local participation especially among the indigenous communities. And since this first involvement and introduction of Bunong communities to the NTFP network, many positive developments have taken place. In the short period of partnership with NTFP-EP, it has been true to its mission of being a catalyst for exchange, learning and providing technical assistance to indigenous peoples.

About the Bunong

Mondulkiri, a province located in the northeastern part of Cambodia is one of the highland provinces in Cambodia and a frontier to the last remaining evergreen and semi-evergreen forests in the country. The estimated 90% forest cover of the province is host to a relatively good population of large mammal species, some of which may no longer be found in other Southeast Asian countries. Inside and adjacent to these vast forests live the Bunong communities who primarily depend on its richness for their subsistence. Traditionally, the Buong hunt wildlife for their protein source and for traditional medicine. They gather wild vegetables and wild fruits for their daily food. The numerous

tributaries inside these forests provide a rich source of fish to the Bunong families during the wet season. As a source of cash income, wild honey, dry and liquid resin, sleng seeds (*Styrax nuxvomica*), and wildlife (a recent practice by some) are important forest products.

The Bunong is one of the indigenous minorities in Cambodia and there are around 30,000 believed to be in the country, with most of them found in Mondulkiri. Over half of the province population are Bunong. They live in dome-shaped houses made of bamboo and roofed with grass. Although some still maintain their traditional houses, most of them have started building houses that are similar to Khmer architecture. They practice shifting cultivation in *chamkar* (the local term for their swidden farm) and wet paddy farming in lowland areas.



TOP: A Bunong woman with firewood in a traditional basket

LEFT: A Bunong house, taken in Pu Long

Like most indigenous communities, the Bunong have a strong spiritual relationship with their forest. Being animist, a religion based on natural spirits and worship of ancestors, they often conduct their religious rituals in a designated spirit forest. Every village has its own spirit forest. They offer butchered animals and wine for thanksgiving, request for good health and a bountiful harvest. In some cases, important decisions like selling lands and animals are also consulted with the spirits.

The NTFP Project with Bunong Communities

Honey and resin are the two commercially important non-timber forest products for most Bunong communities. Resin tapping has always been an important source of cash income while honey trading started only in the last five years in response to the increasing market demand. In the past, they only used honey as a food supplement and for medicinal purposes.

The WWF Greater Mekong Cambodia Country Program recognised these two important products as entry for assistance to the Bunong communities and as a means of strengthening conservation of the remaining forests in province. With the assistance of the NTFP-EP, the project organised a training on sustainable honey harvesting. After the training given by Dr. Phung Huu Chinh, an expert from the Bee Research Development Center in Hanoi, Vietnam, several trainees reported good results after applying what they learned from the training. Inspired by the experiences of other communities shared by Dr. Chinh in his training, the honey hunters in the eight villages where WWF is working agreed to organise themselves into enterprise groups. Now there are two commune-level (one commune composed of several villages) honey associations with around 30 members each.

The period after the training and the next harvest season was devoted to planning, sharing with more villagers what they learned from the training, and more training (follow-up training on honey harvesting and handling and financial management training).

Now, the association members are in full strut preparing for the coming harvest season in March and for the first time selling their pure and clean honey in a package bearing their brand. As they conduct their monthly meetings discussing the launching of their product, one can sense the eager anticipation from everybody. This anticipation was compounded after the two honey association leaders shared their experiences and learning from the very eventful trip in India, the Madhu Duniya Conference held the last week of November; another sponsorship of the NTFP-EP to the Bunong honey project.

Yes indeed, in just more than a year of this partnership so many things exciting things have happened and the most awaited outcome is yet to come. Will the pilot project be successful? Will the Bunong honey create a name in the market? We don't know for sure, but whatever comes out of this initial phase of the project, we can humbly say that we have already gained some good benefits and initial successes – creating young leaders among the Bunong people, strengthening and reviving the value of community to a society torn by many years of war, and the invaluable lessons we learned and will continue to learn from implementing this project.

While things are happening fast, exciting things are also happening in the province that can negatively impact the claim of Bunong communities to their ancestral lands. A part of the protected area in the province measuring about 56,000 hectares has been issued for economic concession especially for rubber plantations. This has resulted to land speculation, land selling (some of which are done forcibly especially to the Bunong families) and more forest clearing. In response, the NTFP-EP recently concluded an independent investigation on the land issues in the province aimed at finding legal or extra legal options to securing the most important aspect to the livelihood of the Bunong communities, their lands and forests.

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European Union

The European Commission (EC) has an active environmental policy within its own sphere and supports developing countries in their efforts towards integrating the environmental dimension into their development process. Environmental problems continue to escalate in most countries, triggering an increase in awareness of the magnitude of the problem and of the need for action.



Throughout the years, the European Community has been supporting developing countries in promoting the conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests in order to meet the economic, social and environmental demands placed on forests at local, national and global levels.

Under their previous Programme on Tropical Forest and other Forests in Developing Countries, EU has provided support to the NTFP-EP and other Philippine-based NGOs through the "Building Forest Corridors through Sustainable Ancestral Domain Management Project," a five-year action which covers four important conservation-priority forest corridors in the Philippines, namely, portions of the Caraballo mountain range, Mindoro Island, Palawan Island and Central Mindanao corridor. Its overall goal is to promote forest corridor conservation through sustainable and effective ancestral domain management. The project recognises the indispensable role of indigenous communities in forest conservation given the Philippine country context where almost all forests are inhabited and where upland poverty is among the highest.

The EU's previous environment and forests regulations both expired at the end of 2006. In the past, environmental issues were seen as a barrier to development. Today, they are an integral component of the sustainable model of development. The EuropeAid Co-operation Office (EuropeAid) which is tasked with implementing the external aid instruments of the EC, actively supports the preservation of the environment and natural resources through the Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy Thematic Programme (ENRTP). This four-year strategy addresses environmental challenges that have a profound effect on the lives of poor people: rapidly degrading key ecosystems, climate change, poor global environmental governance and inadequate access to and security of energy supplies.

ENRTP recognises that a healthy environment and sound management of natural resources are crucial for lasting poverty reduction, while strong international environmental governance is required to reinforce the sustainability of global development as a response to the increasing environmental pressures being experienced across the globe and the fact that two-thirds of the planet's key ecosystem services are being degraded or used unsustainably which presents an obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. {by Vince Docta}

➡ www.delphi.ec.europa.eu (EU in the Philippines)
www.europa.eu/index_en.htm (EU portal)

oh my goodness!

'Mining' after all

A recent headline in a local Philippine newspaper: "Mining firm wants villagers to pay for its losses." In Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, Australian mining company OceanaGold has asked the court to compel tribal residents to pay for the losses it has incurred, after a court order forced it to stop demolishing houses for its planned gold-copper mining project.
{Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer, 03/05/08}

on our calendar

MARCH

28: Atty. Harrison Ngau Liang of Malaysia to visit legal rights groups in the Philippines. This is in support of advocacy on indigenous peoples and land rights & NTFP development in the Philippines

29-31: The NTFP-EP board members & staff come together for strategic planning for the network for the next three years

APRIL

1: The NTFP-EP turns 10! The anniversary celebration gathers colleagues and friends, old and new, in an evening of remembrance

2-3: Margaretha Seting, the new Kalimantan field assistant, visits the CustomMade Crafts Center in Manila

8-10: A workshop to develop mapping skills will be held among Penan leaders in Middle Baram, Sarawak, Indonesia

12: The Honey Festival (Festival Madu) will be held in the Botanical Garden (Kebun Raya) in Bogor, starring, among others, the

Start-up operations of the branding, promotions, marketing and sales support on honey enterprise of Mondulkiri, Cambodia

MAY

Handicrafts enterprise development training in Danau Sentarum by NTFP Task Force CMCC

JUNE

9-13: Cambodia partners learning visit to the CustomMade Crafts Center in Manila

SEPTEMBER

Seminar on Wild Bees and Forest Conservation in Jakarta, Indonesia

recommended books and films



A Nursery Manual: 100 Useful Plant Species. 2007. Ed: Madhu Ramnath. At the rate of deforestation in many parts of the world, there are very few options for communities than to go into active planting in order to restore degraded forests. This manual was borne out of requests to help raise and maintain nurseries

in India.

It details nursery raising techniques, including practical advice and illustrations on setting up a nursery. It provides information on 100 forest species as well as tips on seed treatment and germination derived from two decades of experience of the Palni Hills Conservation Council, an NGO in the hills of Kodaikanal. Documentation of these techniques is aimed to promote nursery raising and tree planting in degraded areas and farms.

With full color plates.

Published by Palni Hills Conservation Council (www.palnihills.org), NTFP-EP and the Keystone Foundation.

For further information, please contact Keystone Foundation, P.O. Box 35, Groves Hill Road, Kotagiri 6643217, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India; Tel: +91 4266 272277, email: kf@keystone-foundation.org. Or email the editor at madelly@gmail.com.



Forests, People & NTFPs: Cambodia newsletter. Two issues of this new newsletter have been published for the Cambodia Non-Timber Forest Products Working Group (CNWG). It presents

feature stories, newsclips and community voices around forests and livelihoods, initiatives in forest conservation, and NTFP livelihood development.

The CNWG is composed of individuals from local and international organizations, government offices, and community-based organisations that share a commitment towards sustainable development, poverty reduction and environment protection in Cambodia. It emerged out of the 1st NTFP National Workshop held in Phnom Penh in December 2006.

The newsletter is published in Khmer but English translations may soon be made available as PDFs. The next issue is due out this end-March.

Copies of all issues are available at the Community Forestry International (CFI) office at #206b, Norodom Blvd, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Send your comments and inquiries to: Contact: cnwg_news@online.com.kh or cnwg_info@online.com.kh.



Bee poster (in Khmer). A joint effort of members of the Cambodia NTFP Working Group-Honey subgroup, this poster provides information for local communities that harvest honey from the forests of Cambodia on: why bees are important

for the health of the environment; why bees need forests; what the threats are to bee populations; how to earn sustainable benefits from honey and how best to process in the village.

Contact: WWF Greater Mekong Cambodia Country Programme, #54 Street 352, Sangkat Boeung Keng Kang I, Phnom Penh, Cambodia PO Box 2467. Ph +855 23 218 034, Website: www.panda.org

Publications and videos are distributed free of charge to our partners and contacts as far as stocks allow. For more listings, please visit the information resources section of our website www.ntfp.org.

oh my goodness!

Costs outweigh benefits!

The benefits of biofuels may not be all they are touted to be. In the journal Science, two studies offer the conclusion: "Taken globally, the production of almost all biofuels resulted in ... (land) clearing, directly or indirectly, intentionally or not." Searchlinger, lead author of one of the studies states that "... most of the biofuel that people are using or planning to use would probably increase greenhouse gases substantially."

{Source: Herald International Tribune, 02/09-10/08}



A silent moment, a prayer, a solemn ritual for the repose of the soul of Mrs. Esther Rice, life time partner of Pastor Delbert Rice, NTFP-EP Treasurer and ecology advocate. We take this moment (or fill this space) to remember her and honor her 50 years of commitment to the health and welfare of the mountain people of Northern Luzon, Philippines. Lucky are those who had known Mrs. Esther Rice, and had known her well. For the many others who were not as fortunate, may she be a symbol of generosity and love for each of us, everyday and in all that we do.

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The NTFP-EP is a collaborative network of about 40 non-governmental organisations & community-based organisations in South and Southeast Asia. We work with forest-based communities to strengthen their capacity in sustainable management of natural resources.

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