



# 15<sup>th</sup> REGIONAL MEETING



Report on the NTFP-EP Regional Meeting

## CHANGING LIVELIHOOD SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA: CHALLENGES, LESSONS AND TOOLS

22-25 October 2018

Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia

**MISEREOR**  
DAS HILFSWERK



Svenska Naturskyddsforeningen

## BACKGROUND

On the occasion of NTFP-EP's 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary in 2018, some of NTFP-EP's founders, members, Board, staff and partners across South and Southeast Asia came together to reflect upon key changes transforming the livelihood systems of traditional hunter-gatherers, indigenous and local communities dependent on forests; from nomadic/semi-nomadic to sedentary farming. Across the countries where we work in India, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia, along with new partners in Laos, Myanmar and Thailand, we have observed various ecological factors and economic pressures shaping this transformation. We see a decline in biodiversity and the loss of important food and economic species. Communities experience severe cultural transformation alongside examples of cultural resilience.

New research has been completed or is ongoing within the NTFP-EP network. In this regional meeting, we explored deeper conversations and analysis of NTFP-EP interventions and ways in which we are adapting our field responses. We also discussed different alternative strategies to respond to the pressures and changes to local and indigenous communities, taking into account their respective political and economic context.

We acknowledged the various strategies being taken up within the network to respond to these changes on the ground. This regional meeting was an opportunity to also share amongst members the innovations in NTFP-EP programmes and strategies (and learn also from other participants who are new to the network) or political instruments used to affect change.

### Meeting Objectives:

- To present research and advocacy strategies/experiences from the network on monocultures and other development threats and their impacts on community livelihood systems;
- To share experience on community based strategies and instruments used to address the challenges and impacts to livelihoods;
- To explore links within the network of key trends; and
- To identify priority network action for 2019 and beyond along with levels of support needed, and or future research and advocacy collaboration.

## MEETING PROCEEDINGS: DAY 1: 22 OCT 2018

### Session 1: Introduction

An ice breaking session was held before the substantive meeting started. Everyone was given time to find a partner and understand their background. After that, both persons had to introduce each other. The hall was bustling with a lot of information being exchanged along with noise and laughter.



## Session 2: Introduction of Meeting Framework

Femy introduced the Meeting Framework (see Figure 1 below), which she hoped would guide our discussions and our analysis. She also requested that we flesh out the framework interactively as we proceed with our discussions so that our policy and advocacy responses would be relevant as well as impactful. This framework was used throughout the regional meeting and our discussions evolved with it.

As well, Femy requested that we in NTFP-EP look into what we and our partners have achieved. This regional meeting was to affirm the validity of our being part of a network. Through our discussions, we could look clearly at the current situation of the various communities that we work with to examine whether or not we have to change our approaches and network with other groups so as to support our overall programme.

The theme of Day One of the Regional Meeting was entitled, 'Natural resource extraction and impacts on forest-based livelihood systems: Pitfalls and challenges'. It had three sub-themes that focused on monocultures (supply chains, labour and impact), mining (the impact on women and environment) and hydropower.

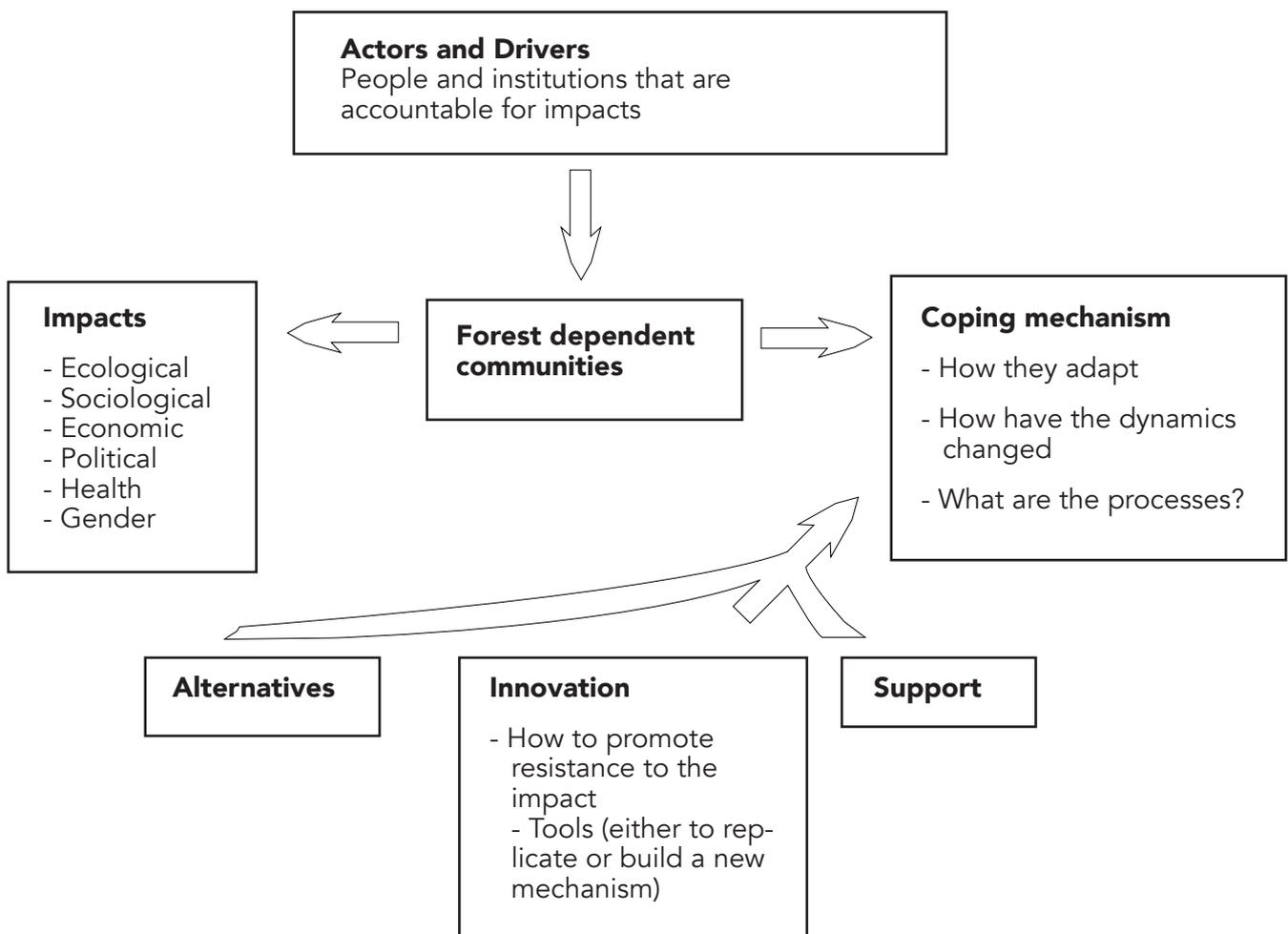


Figure 1: Regional Meeting Framework

### Session 3: Presentation of Individual Country Experiences

#### Presentation 1: Ramgual Sinha, PRERAK, India

Ramgual explained that PRERAK was established at 1989 and that their work now covered 10 districts in Central India, mainly in areas where indigenous people and natural resources are highly concentrated.

#### Issues

1. Land title is not given to the people.
2. No proper market access for the communities. Government does not declare the minimum support price.
3. Decreasing NTFP production and unfair marketing.
4. Land is rich, but people are poor. Land acquisition occurred for mining, displacement of the community, pollution of air and water in mining area.
5. Displacement of the community due to the establishment of wildlife sanctuary/ national park/tiger & elephant corridors

#### Intervention efforts by PRERAK

##### Awareness

- Organize meetings, rallies and foot marches (without good leadership, the community cannot fight for their rights)
- Teaching the community about policy like Forest Rights Act, information on natural resources, and gender equality

##### Capacity building

- Workshops and trainings are organized to help villagers get land titles and community rights

##### Community-led advocacy

- Promoting land ownership and the ownership of community resources. Continuing usage of traditional knowledge and the practicing of traditional thrift.

##### Promoting the collection of wild seeds and nursery development

- Teaching the community to manage their nursery

- Reviving the organic agricultural system that does not rely on irrigation because new agricultural methods force farmers to purchase seeds and use chemical fertilizers/pesticides
- There are 350 varieties of rice at PRERAK's community farm. Farm staff examine, choose and plant the rice types that best suits the different soil conditions of the various village lands. Farmers borrow the appropriate seed and repay the rice farm bank with new seeds.

#### Livelihood

- PRERAK promotes the production and marketing of NTFPs like tendu leaf, mahua, sal seed and tubers.

#### Lobby and advocate of mining issues

- PRERAK organises communities to fight against land/forest encroachment by companies and the government
- Promotes local production of salt and fights against the salt tax
- Promotes the production and use of their own coal fuel

#### Future plans

- Community awareness, orientation and sensitization
- Spreading related information
- Trying to support and revive traditional knowledge agricultural practices
- Documenting of local cultures and practices
- Identification of wild food, processing and preparation
- Capacity building such as awareness of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), Forest Rights Committee (FRC) and community forest management
- Promotion of organic farming and traditional practices like making own pesticides

## Presentation 2: Madhu Ramath, NTFP-EP India

Madhu spoke about the impact of oil palm plantation expansion in India. Through NTFP partners, Madhu conducted a small survey on the status of oil palm in some states in India. His findings were as follows:

- On April 2017, the Indian PM ordered the expansion of oil palm monocrop plantations in the country to one million hectares by 2030. The reason behind this programme is because India, as the largest importer of palm oil, wants to replace palm oil imports with domestic production.
- Sixteen states have been chosen to be involved in this large-scale mission. This programme has seen some states (like some North-Eastern states) undermine shifting cultivation as such land is easily acquired for oil palm conversion due to the autonomy of district councils.
- The share of groundnut monocrop agriculture fell but palm oil rose.
- Low import duty has damaged home-grown vegetable oils production making palm oil cheaper than other vegetable oils.
- States that were formerly reliant on coal production have shifted to oil palm production.
- There are subsidies for oil palm planters such as water, pesticides, fertilizer and grants for land preparation. However, the viability of oil palm is in doubt when the farmers are dispersed around the area and high-grade fresh fruit bunches (FFB) are not available due to the distance to the mill. This eventually pushes down FFB prices.
- In water-deficient states, 250 litres of water is needed for each oil palm tree per day. Water resource stress and scarcity is thus a major problem.
- Presently, 60%-70% of palm oil is imported into India. This has dictated the domestic price rather than the 30%-40% of domestic palm oil production. Import duties are lowered in India despite the global fall of palm oil prices.
- The trend to plant oil palm started in India after Atal Bihari's visit in Malaysia in 2001. Farmers who could not handle the flood of imported palm oil soon shifted to planting other crops.
- None of the NGOs in India are aware of the threats posed to India by oil palm.

### Impact

1. Environmental impact: Water stress due to low rainfall
2. Sociological impact: Women are side-lined and are not included in the decision making process; there are land grabs and displacement of communities

### Issues

1. There is low awareness about oil palm cultivation and its implications
2. Low awareness on the links and the impact of imports
3. Palm oil is pervading the market and its products have yet to receive serious attention
4. There are changes in forest policies such as compensatory afforestation that intend to bring in large-scale plantation corporates in the name of afforestation on degraded land. The whole process lacks transparency on the financial flows of this activity.

### Future Plans

1. Workshops & Awareness Raising
2. Exchange visits
3. In-depth research (loss of wild food, ecological changes, privatization....)
4. Explore possible ways to grow oil palm on a small scale

### Discussion 1

- India, China and Holland are the biggest importers of palm oil. Oil palm plantations have destroyed traditional vegetable/seeds oil and created a huge carbon footprint.
- North-eastern India has higher rainfall, is the multi-use of land possible? After all, traditional shifting cultivation has an extremely varied method of cultivating crops.
- What is the land transaction system like in India? Do communities own the land or lease their lands to the company?
- The government is persuading farmers to plant oil palm. Land is acquired by way of declaring plots as degraded land which can then be acquired.
- There is mining going on in Cambodia, what is the name of the mining company?  
: Jindal
- China plays an important role of the expanding landscape of mining in Cambodia until Laos. How about NTFP EP establish an office in China to tackle the problem?

### Presentation 3: Andrew Aeria and Amanda Ng, NTFP EP Malaysia

Andrew and Amanda recently concluded a year-long study of smallholders and their enthusiasm for planting oil palm monocrops as opposed to planting a diversity of their traditional crops. Some key points presented were as follows:

- Sarawak has targeted an available total acreage of two million hectares of oil palm plantations by 2020.
- There are 1.5 million hectares of native customary land categorized as 'idle' which will form the basis for expanding oil palm monocrops
- There has been a sharp increase of oil palm smallholder landholdings, from 9000 hectares in 2001 to 190,000 hectares in 2017
- Smallholders are defined as farmers who rely on family-based labour on small plots of land totalling less than 50 hectares
- Why do smallholders in Sarawak plant oil palm?
  1. It provides a lucrative and steady income
  2. It allows smallholders to claim native customary rights over their land and is a strategy to oppose land grabs by politicians/corporates
  3. It is easier to care for than other crops
  4. It acts as bait to attract wild boars hunted by natives
- Why do smallholders in Sarawak not plant oil palm?
  1. Smallholder farmers do not have capital (money, car). It is very expensive to start an estate and to manage it
  2. There is insufficient knowledge about how to run an oil palm plantation
  3. Many are too old to manage an oil palm crop which is heavily labour intensive
  4. Many are too young to manage oil palm
  5. The oil palm thorns are poisonous and very painful
- Integrated farming is still being practised among many rural villagers
- Food security and access to markets are key determinants of what crops are cultivated by villagers
- Some farmers see oil palm as an alternative income for the community: communal contract farming and ecotourism
- There is low awareness of food security risks and the environmental impact of oil palm monocrops; just a minority of farmers are aware of these risks
- All are not aware of the impact to global warming and climate change

- Oil palm is perceived as good because it provides a regular stream of money, has a stable market price, has easy market access, brings development and provides a modern lifestyle.
- Farmers can hire local and foreign workers for labour; oil palm also acts as an alternative way to attract youth to return to the village and work, to secure their NCR lands
- Almost all oil palm planters think they are financially better off, and want to expand their oil palm estates; many already are deeply dependent on oil palm for cash.
- There is a steep decline in the production of forest products, a rise in water pollution due to chemical runoff from pesticides and fertilizers
- Food security, global warming, climate change or any environmental impact is not the concern of the community. Some farmers believe that modern technology will solve all environmental problems
- Little work safety precautions are taken despite some awareness of the dangers from oil palm harvesting and pesticide application.
- There is little to no transmission of traditional knowledge due to out-migration. This has led to loss of traditional knowledge and culture
- There is an increase in 'idle' land; provisional leases over native customary land will rise due to state policy
- The social dynamics of the village has changed due to oil palm; there are clear rich/poor wealth gaps and power struggles or exploitative relation within the community

## Discussion 2

- Malaysian government labour regulations are strict. Estate work is hard, but labour gets low wages, so smallholders and plantations rely on foreign labour. If there is a labour crisis, the industry will be crippled.
- NGOs are pushing for family labour for the smallholder
- The definition of a "forest" plays an important role in determining land use
- The plantation industry has never lost money
- Sarawak Biodiversity Center oversees the commercialization of the state's natural resources
- Intra-community conflict has increased due to oil palm monocropping. Generally, village headmen control communal land and often lease such lands to oil palm companies without consulting the community. Often, headmen also provide the sole means of transport for villagers to sell fresh fruit bunches to mills. As well, they tend to pressure the community to plant oil palm. Community members unable to afford oil palm monocrops are left discriminated or seen as 'unwilling to

develop' and stay poor.

- There are presently more than 400 cases of land conflict between communities and oil palm companies in Sarawak.

#### **Presentation 4: Riko, Walhi Riau**

- Sago is important for restoration of forests in Riau. It can be managed by the community, ensure community livelihoods, balance ecosystems and climate, as well as secure community lands.
- Riau has nine million hectares of lands comprising 61% peatlands (4.5 million hectares). 55% of the mainland belongs to two companies that utilise it as wood concessions, pulp and paper plantation as well as oil palm plantations.
- The Annual Haze is caused by the drainage and firing of peatlands. Peatlands are flatlands which are suitable for monoculture crop cultivation. The government alienates land to companies for logging. Drainage of peatland leads to water loss in peats and increased acidity of peat. Dry peat lands are prone to fire and cause carbon dioxide release. Burnt ground is made fertile through fire. Companies use this method to reduce costs on chemical fertilizers. This slash and burn method started the problematic haze around Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore since the oil palm and acacia boom in Indonesia at 1997. Every year, Riau faces haze because of the opening up and firing of new concession on peat lands by companies.

#### **Presentation 5: Mynabel, NTFP-EP Asia**

- Mynabel discussed women and mining in Asia (WAMA); how the role of women is important in ecology and the environment.
- Mining has caused river pollution by zinc. Poisonous zinc affects women's skin and health.
- NGOs are helping document these mining issues and their impacts

#### **Plans**

- Empower grassroots groups
- Bridge the global and local via workshops, including involving institutions, and
- improving local economic power

**Presentation 6: Katherine from NTFP-EP Asia**

- Philippines has 6.5 million hectares of forests and there are currently 40 mines operating in the country.
  - There are problems with local governments rezoning environmentally critical areas for mining
1. Weak implementation
    - Mining activities are allowed in watersheds, protected areas and core zones
    - Large scale mining companies are allowed permits for small scale mining while their large-scale permits are still being processed
    - Small scale mining is allowed without the establishment of small-scale mining reservations
  2. Poverty traps
    - Communities in mining areas are mostly poor
  3. Displacement of community and affecting the livelihood
    - Mining causes displacement of communities and negatively impacts their livelihoods.
  4. Health risks and food security
    - Causes skin lesions, environmental disasters, violence caused by militarization and killing of mining opponents and other activists
  5. Impact
    - Forest degradation
    - River pollution, contamination of water resources
    - Increased burden on women and does not include women in decision making processes
  6. Plan - Save Palawan Movement
    - Movement led by indigenous youth and women
    - Capacity building trainings
    - Filing of cases
    - Security protocols
    - Campaigning
    - Community-based NTFP enterprises
    - Improve policy, inclusive participation, landscape-friendly enterprises

### Discussion 3

- Indigenous people in Palawan were traditionally gold miners. The community had small scale mining areas. Chinese traders acquired these mines by negotiating with the local governor and paying a rent.
- Many mines are violating laws. Labour seldom had work safety protections. They risked their lives working in the mines. Accidents occurred frequently. Mining lands were not rehabilitated and once the mines were exhausted, companies would rent the mines to others and let them bear the rehabilitation costs. Women often were victims of mining accidents when they lost their partners due to mining accidents.

### Presentation 7: Jeremy Ironside

- Hydropower in Mekong
- The Mekong river is rich in fisheries but faces serious overfishing and illegal fishing
- There are presently more than 42 dams (projected and operating) along the length of the Mekong which severely affects fisheries and other protected areas

### Impacts

1. Loss of forest
  - More than 50,000 hectares of forest has been lost after being alienated and inundated for hydropower dams; only 2% has been replanted
2. Migration and resettlement
  - has led to the loss of community lands
  - Case study: Dead in the water: A story about the Nam Theun 2 Dam Project that was touted to provide Thailand with electricity, reduce poverty, improve the livelihood of affected community and promote economic benefits to the community. 16 villages were resettled for the project and much biodiversity lost.
3. Crisis of legitimacy and sustainable hydropower
  - Caused the loss of communal land
  - Food security risks, villagers unable to produce food
  - Has starved water buffaloes
  - Led to loss of fisheries due to the diversion of a river which has led to the destruction of fish and river habitats
  - Unsustainable income from illegal logging and wildlife poaching
  - Affected community livelihood worse off
  - Revenue from hydropower is not used to reduce poverty

### Lessons

- (i) Simplistic expectations about the benefits of hydropower projects
  - (ii) Hydropower dams feed into high electricity consumption in Thailand but disregard impacts upon Laotian communities
  - (iii) Difficulty of restoring livelihoods, indigenous cultures and ecosystems
  - (iv) NGOs must be careful to facilitate projects and mitigate problems
- Xe Nam Noy Dam collapse this year at Xe Pian affected 16 communities and the death toll was more than 800 persons because the Korean company cut costs during dam construction.

### **Alternatives**

- (i) Conduct comprehensive energy assessments
- (ii) Explore local/decentralized energy options
- (iii) Exhibit models of clean energy to show how locals can benefit
- (iv) Reduce energy use via new economic models
- (v) Advocacy
  - : NGO/Community resistance
  - : Raise public awareness
  - : Conduct consultations
  - : Develop grievance mechanisms
  - : Demonstrate alternatives

### **Presentation 8: Lorang, Cambodia Indigenous People Alliances (CIPA)**

Lorang presented the impact of the Lower Sesan 2 Dam in Cambodia

- The Lower Sesan 2 Dam started operations last year. It has affected communities like the Kbalromeas and Srekor where the dam flood inundated their community burial grounds, their homelands and paddy fields.
- Grassroots communities have built solidarity among themselves because of a lack of access for public services like education, medical attention
- One key priority presently is to get their communal land titles recognized
- The dam resettlement compensation policy
  - : Five hectares of land granted to each family of affected communities but the land quality is poor
  - : Resettled families need to rely on cash for livelihood
  - : During the dry season, they need to buy water
- There is presently no local authority paying any attention to their livelihood problems. As well, they face logging company encroachment into their remaining lands

### **Presentation 9: My Dung, Vietnam**

- The Mekong Delta has suffered tremendously from upstream dams causing changed river flows, saline intrusion, decreased sediment flow and a decrease of aquatic resources. This has affected around 60 million persons living downstream.
- The consequences of these impacts contributed to poverty, livelihood stress, social insecurity, water pollution and climate change.
- A decrease of sediments has decreased the rice yield
- Fish size, weight and amount are decreasing

#### **Problems of dam**

- (i) Accidents
- (ii) Forest loss
- (iii) Endangers lives and community livelihoods

#### **Coping Strategies**

- (i) Advocacy efforts to stop dam building
- (ii) Development of NTFP resources to improve community livelihoods
- (iii) Encourage community capacity building and promote community initiatives

#### **Challenges**

- (i) Impacts of dams cannot be forecast accurately as communities suffer long-term. As well, communities lack much time to adapt between dam announcement and resettlement
- (ii) Poverty
- (iii) Climate change
- (iv) Inability to stop dam construction by Laos government

### **Discussion 4**

- Use mechanism from the ground and fight for the recognition of communal land title
- Mekong cooperation has agreed for sustainable development, however due to the political economic situation of the countries, the money sources and flows are unknown
- Small dams are viable, but governments choose to build mega dams
- In the case of Indonesia, the government pushed for hydropower as well and it is seen as alternative clean energy which improves community livelihoods
- Discussions are on-going for EIA & SIA project guidelines in ASEAN



Our Regional Meeting Mapping

**Day 2: 23 October 2018**

On the second day of the regional meeting, the participants separated into two groups for the field visits.

Fourteen persons went to the Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation at PermyJaya while 16 persons went to John Jau’s smallholder farm located at Bakong. The field visit started at 8.30pm and ended at 3pm. After our study visits, the participants held an hour of discussions from 4pm with all sharing their key impressions of their respective visits to the oil palm plantation and the oil palm smallholder farm. The basic findings were as per the table below.

<b>Plantation</b>	<b>Smallholder</b>
Labour intensive, heavy dependence on foreign labour	Traditional knowledge practitioner
Capital intensive and mechanised	Always experimenting - trial and error
Large scale land area	Operating at a loss
Monoculture planting and highly systematic	Exploring the possibility of an NGO working together with smallholders?
Claimed to support local community	Diverse crops, such as coffee planted under oil palm
No EIA conducted for oil palm estates with less than 500 hectares land area	Little capital but willing to try different crops
Highly disciplined work/management system	Dynamics of creativity but remains economically poor
Extensive destruction of forest	Diverse income streams but not for long term
Regulated drainage of peat lands based on 'natural systems'	Lacks external labour force, relies on family labour
Too much chemical manipulation of land	Messy farm
Strict control of labour	
No RSPO sustainability certification; adheres to MSPO standards	
Focuses mainly on production bottomline	
No buffer zone between the estate and river (30m)	
Safety equipment is only worn for demonstration purposes	
Encourages smallholder to sell FFB to them	

*Differences between Plantations and Smallholder Oil Palm Areas*



*Group that visited the Oil Palm Plantation*

In the evening, the meeting participants adjourned to the Miri Yacht Club to celebrate NTFP EP's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**Day 3: 24 October 2018**

The last day of our regional meeting discussed alternative community-based strategies, lessons and good practices as possible ways for NTFP-EP to respond to the pervasiveness of monocrops. Madhu kick-started the day's discussion by pre-launching his forthcoming publication entitled, 'Coming home to the forests for food'.

**Presentation 1: Dr. Prasert, PASD**

- PASD is involved in rational food advocacy, the promotion of agricultural biodiversity and securing the livelihood of the Karen people in Thailand
- PASD created a term: rational agriculture but the phrase is often misunderstood
- The Karen people practice integrated resource livelihood which includes rotational farming, agro-forestry, paddy field, husbandry, forest for hunting and gathering. The newest practice is bee keeping

**Challenges**

- (i) Discrimination is prevalent because the practice of rational agriculture is not recognized by law
- (ii) Government coercion to stop the practice and shift to permanent land use
- (iii) Burning of the forest for swidden farming is prohibited
- (iv) The transmission of traditional knowledge to youth is difficult
- (v) There is a need for interdisciplinary research on rotational farming

**Future Programme/Plan**

- (i) Revitalization and transmission of traditional knowledge and customary use practices to the younger generation
- (ii) Innovation of rotational farming products and integrating innovation of forest products to drive community economic self-reliance
- (iii) Move into NTFPs
- (iv) Bee keeping in fallow land
- (v) Set up social enterprises
- (vi) Declare areas with rich natural resources to be managed as special Cultural Zones
- (vii) Advocate GIS mapping to addressing resource management, draw boundaries between insiders and outsiders, protect and preserve the forest
- (viii) Raise public awareness

**Opportunities for recognition**

- Rational agriculture as a part of a self-sufficient economy
  - Push for constitutional recognition
  - Cabinet resolution
  - International agreements and declarations
- There is a need to engage in policy and legal reform at various level to support and promote community-based sustainable socio-ecological production systems

**Challenging Issues remain**

- (i) Legalization of rotational farming in national law
- (ii) Youth out-migration
- (iii) Expanding the model to other communities is difficult
- (iv) Need to network on rational farming and natural resource management at the local and international levels

**Discussion 1**

- PASD's situation and challenges are similar to the Indonesian situation. This rotational agriculture practice by a community is seen as deforestation and there is no recognition of it with the public often misunderstanding the practice. Often, provincial minority groups are those who practice slash and burn. They plant vegetables, paddy and trees. This swidden practice has been used for more than 1000 years and the forest is still here, but of late, many have given/sold these lands to companies due to the existence of concession agreements. Indigenous peoples' land management system is also not the main culprit causing climate change.
- Philippines is still pushing for the recognition of land. There are also efforts to change the policy on sustainable forest management by documenting grassroots agricultural practices. Unfortunately, the Philippine government arrests and fines Indigenous people for practicing shifting cultivation. Instead, shifting cultivation should be decriminalized. It is hoped that a roundtable discussion for policy making on this issue will be held soon
- Sarawak has a similar situation. Shifting cultivation promotes food diversity and capacity. The challenges are at the legislative level that limit community land use, creates problems and threats among the indigenous people without proper understanding of their practices. Licenses granted on community reserved forests in the name of forest conservation to companies in fact amounts to a land grab that takes away peoples' land.
- Socio-political and economic factors affects environmental policy and practices. While community farming practices are collective, governments push for individual farming units
- In Thailand, tea farming is integrated in the forest, no toxins and/or chemicals go into the forest. Yields are high and the community is able to earn a high income
- How do we justify land ownership? Via policy and via boundary marking of communal land. Communities have rights to use communal land but presently do not

hold title although there may be individual land title

- Why can't rotational farming be promoted as a sustainable farming system to people?
- People of the Amazon also live and survive by practicing shifting cultivation. Humans are part and parcel of the ecosystem. It is difficult to find land left fallow for a 10 years cycle currently. This contributes to carbon release and climate change. And contributes towards intensifying land infertility
- Rotational farming allows for fallow periods, but we need more scientific studies and mechanisms to promote its adoption
- During the 1960s, the closure of shifting cultivation in South India led communities to farm permanent plots. Communities adapted to these changes. On the other hand, North India practiced shifting cultivation but used a shorter fallow period based on a different model for integrated crops in farm and forest.
- Fallow is sustainable. We need to map the rotational farming cycle and demand rights to use the land. We need to lobby for its recognition from local administrative authorities
- Shifting cultivation in Indonesia is also decreasing because of a decline in the number of communities that still farm. Politics also plays a role in affecting this because shifting cultivation is linked to forest fires
- The absence of young people working on farms means there is a dire shortage of farm labour
- We need to be more aware of traditional practices, good management of cash crops, rotational farming instead of emptying the forest for monocrop plantations
- When we compare cash crops with rotational farming, the latter also brings income to the village. There is a need to assist community learning and promote a search for alternatives to monocrops

**Presentation 2: Kate, NTFP EP Asia**

Kate from NTFP-EP Asia presented about 'ICCA-Defending identity, culture and territories'.

- Characteristics of an ICCA
  - (i) Local community has close connection with the area
  - (ii) Villagers are major decision makers and have the capacity to develop and enforce regulations
  - (iii) Decisions and efforts for conservation by the villagers strengthen biodiversity, ecological functions and cultural values
- Instruments that can be used are:
  - : Mapping
  - : Assessment
  - : Lobbying for ICCA mapping and documentation
  - : Conservation plan
  - : ICCA registry
- ICCA provides a link and network for the local community
- Malaysia's problem: Capacity is needed in the country. In early December, ICCA shall be included in the national agenda with the help from Indonesia and Philippine for capacity building and experience sharing sessions
- Kate discussed the case of Palawan which is an ICCA under protection but which is still being surveyed. It is a fallow system seen as having 'too much' of shifting cultivation and thus faces government criticism for 'too much burning'. The community elders take the view that since it is an ICCA, the government cannot stop them.
- Local government in response is drafting a 'no burning policy'. How should we respond to local government? Shouldn't local government give fire permits to assist villagers with their livelihood?
- Another case is that of Indonesia. There is a need to increase lobbying activities to support ICCAs. There are communities mostly surrounded by oil palm but which see potential ICCAs in nearby forest areas which can support local communities
- Here, there is an additional layer of ICCA. Local governments are tasked to flesh out details about ICCA. They need to work out legalities, guidelines and which specific agency to host the ICCA and policy consultants
- However, government agencies have poor collaboration and their respective databases are not linked. Registration can be problematic and often different levels of government, at district and provincial level, have different visions of ICCA from that of local communities
- When government agencies and databases are not linked, ICCA recognition will be based on their terms and the potential problem is it will be fragmented and not coordinated

- As well, how do we get ICCA approval from government? We need policy changes for ICCA recognition, to establish protected areas where indigenous peoples' (IP) lands area protected as well as elaborate how land use by IPs fit into official forest management plans
- ICCA is self-initiated, global principle which is used by IPs as a negotiation tool but there is no official recognition in policy

### **Presentation 3: Jusupta, NTFP-EP Indonesia**

Jusgupta discussed the production of sago starch in Sungai Tohor, Meranti Island, which is the largest sago production area in Indonesia

- Sungai Tohor is peat land area
- Almost the entire community depends on sago crops for their livelihood
- Planting sago helps in peat swamp ecosystem conservation, at the same time the local community is able to use the natural resources

#### **Problem**

- (i) Peat fires
- (ii) Pests and pest control measures
- (iii) Efforts do not translate into sago growing optimally
- (iv) Low selling price for sago

#### **Causes**

- (i) Opening up of agricultural land is 'cost efficient' when you burn peat forests
- (ii) Poor treatment methods to control pests
- (iii) Sago cultivation knowledge is minimal
- (iv) Villagers are poor and desperate for cash

#### **Solutions**

- (i) We need to promote Sago cultivation training
- (ii) There is a need to establish low-cost credit facilities for sago farmers
- (iii) Establish sago farmer groups for easier access to capital, markets and technical information

#### **Presentation 4: Beng, School of Living Tradition (SLT), Philippines**

- Most times, the transmission on traditional knowledge for an enterprise fails because we always work with the elders; we view the older people as having capacity. Young people generally have no interest in pursuing the traditional/cultural enterprise because they don't know the real value of that enterprise or regard it as backward and not 'modern'. Consequently, the younger generation do not connect to traditional values that represent their identity and at best, only see the enterprise as a commodity.
- There is also a language barrier. Having gone to national schools, the young generation of IPs no longer speak their native languages fluently (if at all) because of discrimination
- There is an emerging market for green products from mainstream entrepreneurs
- Market demand for these green products can be high. However, the danger of supplying such green products to large enterprises is that it tends to lead to over-extraction of limited resources
- The SLT is a non-formal center of learning; its mode of teaching is usually oral and based primarily on practical demonstrations
- Intangible cultural heritages are transmitted to the younger generation from cultural masters
- SLT was established with support from:
  - (i) Partner organizations
  - (ii) Local coordinators
  - (iii) Strategic planning
  - (iv) Transmission takes place through Cultural mapping, Development of learning guides, Student selection, Learning sessions and assessments
- (v) Sustainability is assured via Organizational development, Capacity building on enterprise development, Product development and Marketing

#### Presentation 4: Keo Tai, NTFP EP Cambodia

Keo Tai presented NTFP-EP Cambodia's work on Community Based Ecotourism.

- NTFP-EP Cambodia works with five indigenous communities, assisting them with landscape management, and skills training workshops aimed at developing and sustaining an ecotourism programme
- Coping strategies
  - (i) Ensure the readiness of community and local stakeholders
  - (ii) Avoid turning into mass tourism
  - (iii) Local planning rather than controlled by elite group
  - (iv) Aware with mega development projects like hydropower dams

#### Discussion 2

- How do the various communities cooperate and support the community? Answer: Through common landscape management of their areas
- Is SLT government-linked or independently-run? Answer: It is community-managed and owned. SLT only assists local communities with certain facilities like house building and the provision of funds for the key person. The SLT curriculum is designed based on the village schedule
- What about waste management from eco-tourism? How do they manage it, what is the recommendation and experience? Is this not a concern that needs to be addressed? Yes, it is. We promote recycling and minimum use of non-recyclables.
- How is the intensity of sago compared to paddy farming? Paddy is labour intensive and needed fertilizer, the economic impact of sago is promising but the problem is the farmer focused on sago. Sago is healthier choice compared to paddy.

### **Concluding Session**

NTFP EP Asia ED Femy Pinto thanked all participants for their active participation in the Regional Meeting (RM).

Femy noted that there was a lot of room to take our RM discussions further to develop viable alternatives to monocrops based on the analyses we had developed in our mind-mapping exercise. She hoped that all participants would continue collaboration to strengthen our network and our efforts.

Femy also thanked the RM's organisers, NTFP EP Malaysia for making the RM a success.

## RESULTS OF THE MEETING



The end result of the mindmapping exercise



## Synthesis

Traditional forest-based livelihood systems in India and southeast Asia are going through striking **changes**: decline in natural resources, loss of hunting and foraging grounds, and decrease in areas for shifting cultivation. Homegrown production of traditional products from natural resources go out of business and unable to compete with the production from larger plantations that have more resources and use more efficient technology. The unfavorable loss of livelihoods and income from trade of traditionally harvested or cultivated forest and farm products contribute deeply to the aggravation of impoverishment among local communities.

Such changes are results of larger contextual backdrops: monocrop plantations are drying up lands and exacerbating water shortages; state sanctioned forest and land conversions for hydropower dams, mining and agribusiness. The loss of biodiversity, pollution of air and water are few of the problems, loss of food sources, and the physical displacement from their customary lands and forests.

The **impacts of these changes** range from economic, ecological, social and, political, with direct impacts on communities' identity, livelihoods, and health and well-being, most especially of women and youth.

These changes are **driven by** state laws and policies that are skewed towards the exploitation of natural resources in order to amass foreign currency that will finance national economic progress. Powerful state actors in the region such as China, India, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam play prominent roles. Non-extractive and sustainability-based cultural values and ethics are being eroded through the export of consumerist values that are paved by social media, increased traffic of tourists, and the enticement of a more modern and material-rich lifestyle.

Climate change is a global problem; it is so severe that the remotest of villages face direct observable impacts from changes in rainfall patterns, flowering seasons and bees foraging for food; changes in water levels, in the frequency of floods and/or drought. It is clear that this is not a natural phenomena but largely caused by anthropogenic factors; policy decisions also play a role both in the causes and responses to climate change.

NTFP-EP draws some insights, concerns and oftentimes also inspiration from communities' **coping mechanisms and strategies** to meet the livelihood changes and challenges that communities face. Some examples of coping strategies include increasing or switching to off-farm activities and employment. Many of the youth are migrating out of the villages and rural areas to seek greener pastures. A trial and error approach in farming sometimes with new non-traditional crops have oftentimes led to failures and losses. On another hand, communities with strong traditions and collective governance hold on to traditional and indigenous agricultural systems and practices and natural resources management. Many communities continue to thrive nevertheless. While these are inspirational, these inspiring knowledge systems and practices come under attack and are rendered as backward or obsolete in many instances.

Communities cope either independently or collectively using traditional support mechanisms; on the other hand, external **support** are also available or solicited by communities.

**Support from NTFP-EP, its partners, and its members** typically range from capacity building, livelihood development, research, conservation, alliance building and advocacies. The focus has been about empowering communities, promoting community rights and indigenous knowledge as central to livelihoods and conservation practice.

The Regional Meeting was an opportunity to celebrate the long standing positive community based approaches but we also had an opportunity to learn about more **recent innovations of support across India and southeast Asia**.

Innovative partnerships between local communities, NTFP-EP, and local authorities on development of NTFP value chains such as traditional sago to counter oil palm expansion; establishment of schools of living tradition (SLT) (non-formal models of teaching and learning from cultural masters to youth about traditional livelihoods, dance, music, arts and crafts) as spaces for inter-generational culture and identity building; documentation of wild foods and its link to the slow food movement; and carrying out conservation and health support strategies deserve mention. These innovations may be replicated and spread more widely through knowledge sharing and networking opportunities that NTFP-EP also facilitate well.

Finally, NTFP-EP's grounded policy work is emergent and has strong potential for impact.

The Regional Meeting surfaced niches for NTFP-EP to develop its work further around and within ICCAs, sustainable traditional resource rights (STRR), documenting and sharing good practice around the nexus of traditional livelihoods and conservation, linking culture and NTFP based enterprises to markets with a strong culture, biodiversity and rights perspective.

Onwards, our multi-stakeholder, multidimensional programs on diversified, people, forest and traditional farm based livelihoods (i.e. through continued practice and protection of shifting cultivation / rotational farming systems) should be further developed. Resources and networks ought to be mobilized for this effort. Lastly, NTFP-EP could invest further and tap the networks and relationships it has built over the years not only among communities and NGOs or support organizations but likewise with people and forest champions from among unlikely allies in government and the private sector.

**ATTACHMENT 1: Meeting PROGRAMME**

<b>DAY 1</b> Mon- day, 22 October 2018		<b>Natural Resources Extraction and impacts on forest-based livelihood systems: pitfalls and challenges</b>
	<p>Discussion/guide questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is the current state of natural resources extraction, from small to large-scale extraction, in your country and in the (sub)region?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the impacts of this to women, indigenous communities, to traditional livelihood systems, on NTFPs and on forested landscapes?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is your assessment of the drivers of these changes and who are the actors accountable for these changes?</i></li> <li>• <i>How are the NTFP-EP community constituency and partners coping (or not) with these changes? What are their challenges as they face these issues?</i></li> </ul>	
8:30AM – 9:00AM	<p>Welcome &amp; Introductions</p> <p>Overview of the Regional Meeting</p> <p>Overview of Day 1</p>	Andrew/Femy
9:00AM – 11:00AM	<p>Monocultures (supply chain, labor, impacts)</p>	<p>Madhu (India)</p> <p>Andrew/Amanda (Malaysia)</p> <p>Riko (Indonesia)</p>
	<p>Mining /Extractives</p> <p>Impacts on women and environment</p>	<p>Kate (Philippines)</p> <p>Mayna (Regional)</p>
	<p>Hydropower</p>	<p>Dung (Vietnam)</p> <p>Jeremy (Laos/Mekong)</p> <p>Lorang (Cambodia)</p>
11:00AM – 12:00AM	<p>Sharing from other countries &amp; participants</p>	<p>Moderators:</p> <p>JT and Tai</p>
12:00 NN – 1:00PM	<p>Lunch break</p>	
1:00PM – 2:30PM	<p>Reflections/Discussion</p>	Paul & Pandu
2:30PM – 4:00PM	<p>Mind mapping</p>	Dazzle & Earl
	<p>Synthesis</p>	Femy

Time	<b>DAY 2</b> Tues- day 23 October 2018	<b>Field Visit to a commercial oil palm planta- tion AND smallholder plantations (c/o NTFP- EP Malaysia)</b>
7:30AM (Departure time from the hotel lobby) – 4:00PM	<p>Guide Questions for the visit and discussion and areas of observation:</p> <p>Commercial plantation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Conditions of community, laborers and, forests and natural resources / NTFPs</i></li> <li>• <i>Resource Management practices</i></li> <li>• <i>Economic returns and other benefits to communities and laborers</i></li> <li>• <i>Involvement of the company in community affairs and concerns</i></li> <li>• <i>Others</i></li> </ul> <p>Smallholder plantation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Background about the plantation and decision to establish the planta- tion</i></li> <li>• <i>Management practices</i></li> <li>• <i>Socio-condition of community/household, forests and natural resourc- es / NTFPs</i></li> <li>• <i>Economic returns and other benefits</i></li> <li>• <i>Others</i></li> </ul>	
4:00PM – 5:00PM	Mindmapping Session (1 hour) after the Field Visit	
6:00PM -	<p><b>Solidarity Dinner and Cultural Evening</b></p> <p>A celebration of NTFP-EP's 20<sup>th</sup> year; please prepare cultural performances; collective singing and dancing)</p>	

Time	<b>DAY 3</b> Wednesday, 24 October 2018	<b>Alternative community based strategies, lessons and good practices: Ways forward for NTFP-EP</b>
	Discussion/guide questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the innovative ways we are tackling the current dynamics and trends of natural resources extraction in the communities where we work</i></li> <li>• <i>How are we supporting community strategies for conservation, protection and preservation of traditional ecological knowledge/indigenous knowledge systems and practices?</i></li> <li>• <i>Share what you think are emerging good practices and what are the lessons we can glean from these – either to replicate, adapt or be inspired about.</i></li> </ul>	
8:00AM – 8:30AM	Introduction/Overview of Day 3	Femy
8:30AM – 9:00AM	Wild foods (pre-launch of Coming Home to the Forests for Food)	Madhu
9:00AM – 11:00AM	Rotational food, agriculture, biodiversity and livelihood of Karen people in Thailand	Dr. Prasert Trakansuphakon PASD/ IMPECT/Network of Indigenous Peoples of Thailand (NIPT)
	ICCAs – defending identity, culture and territories	Tanya (Regional)
	Sago in Indonesia	JT & Crissy
	Schools of Living Tradition in the Philippines	Beng
	Ecotourism in the Mekong Landscape (Cambodia)	Tai
11:00AM – 12:00NN	Sharing from other countries & participants	Moderator: Andrew & Edna
12:00NN – 1:00PM	Lunch break	
1:00PM – 3:00PM	Reflections /Discussion	Sneh & Crissy
3:00PM – 4:30PM	Mind mapping	Dazzle & Earl
4:30PM – 5:00PM	Synthesis and Way Forward	Femy

End of the Regional Meeting