



# Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo

Integrating conservation, economic development  
and well-being of communities  
across the Heart of Borneo Corridor | 2016-21

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# Executive summary

The Heart of Borneo (HoB) is the largest remaining expanse of transboundary tropical forest landscape in Southeast Asia. It is one of the most important conservation areas worldwide. Unsustainable exploitation of the natural capital causes unabated forest loss, habitat fragmentation, species decline and the erosion of ecosystem services.

In 2007, the governments of Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia signed the Heart of Borneo Declaration. This agreement commits the three governments to one shared conservation vision. The vision implies a shift to a green economy (GE) that values and invests in natural capital, supports broader human welfare, and creates resilience to climate change.

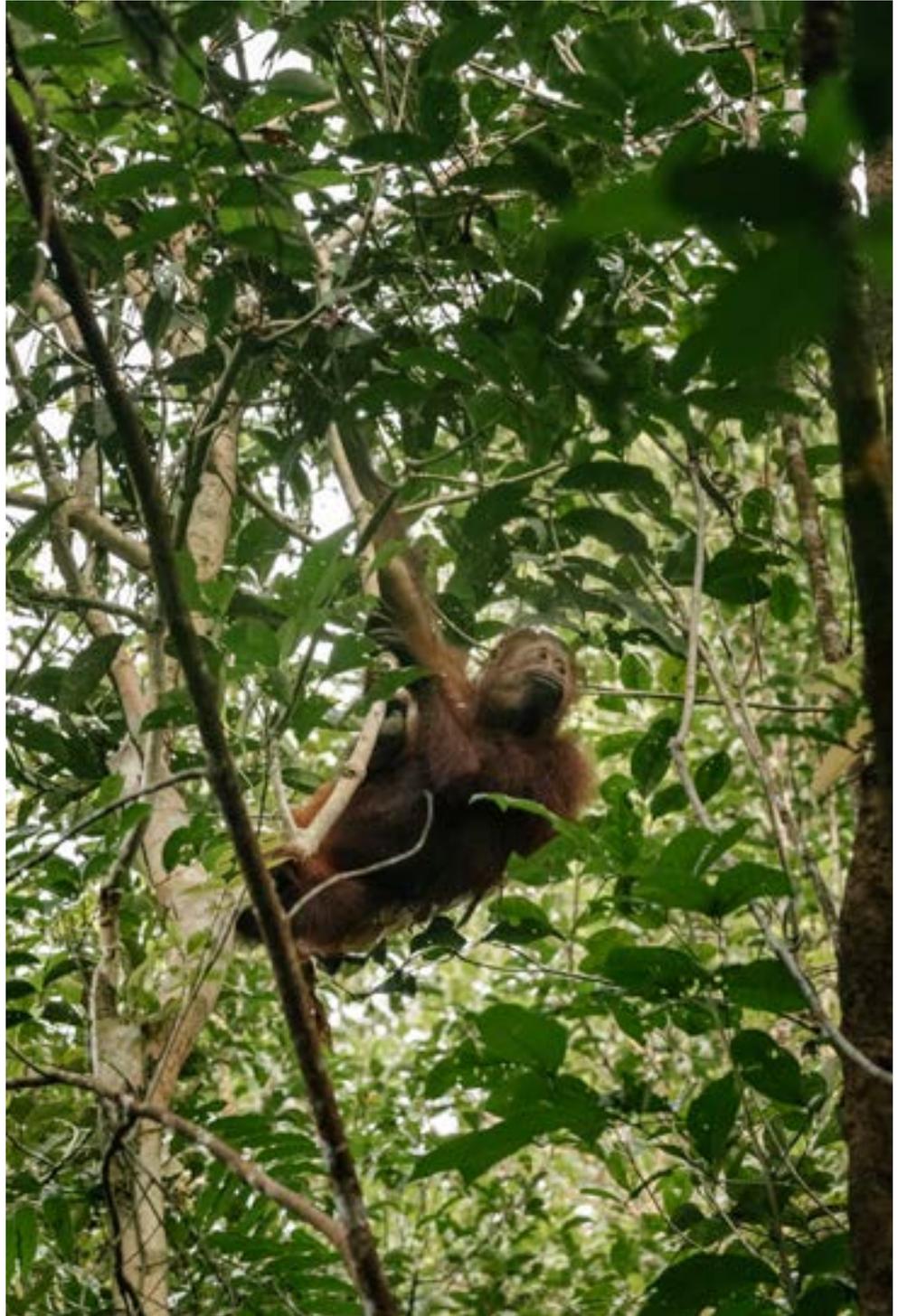
However, a lack of awareness and capacity to implement this vision delayed initial progress. The IKI-funded *Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo-Project* aimed at filling these gaps by supporting governments and other stakeholders to plan regional green economies and create an environment where they could prosper. The project embraced a holistic approach combining top-down and bottom-up strategies, resting on four pillars: 1) policy work based on sound science to anchor GE concepts in the legislative framework, 2) creation of business networks to promote best management practices (BMP), 3) establishment of GE pilot projects on community level and 4) promotion of achievements for replication across the whole HoB. Integrating all stakeholder groups – government institutions, the private sector, local communities as well as indigenous peoples – was seen as a prerequisite to induce change on a sustainable basis.

The project was very successful on district level in Indonesia and state level in Malaysia. GE concepts, including action and land use plans, have been developed in close collaboration with governmental and community stakeholders. Acknowledged by legislative procedures, they will positively shape a greener future. Informal business networks and collaborations have been initiated in order to promote best management practices in the cultivation of e.g rubber, palm oil, pepper and tea. As a result, one major timber company in Malaysia set aside over two thousand hectare (ha) as non-production areas for the conservation of wildlife and orangutan management.

Pilot projects on the local level have evolved to models how GE is put into practice, integrating conservation and development. Communities gained technical capacity and were supported in the development of sustainable businesses. More than 500 people directly participated in activities or received direct assistance by the project. Several initiatives became self-propelling with no more external support needed.

During implementation, the project encountered several challenges, such as changing political contexts, high turnover of government personnel, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the project demonstrated overall good progress towards strategy implementation and result achievement. Main factors of success were among other things the dedication of the teams involved, their capacity to adapt to changing contexts and the trustful engagement with local stakeholders.

The project fostered capacities and collaboration of government institutions, the private sector and local communities as well as indigenous peoples. It has contributed significantly to initiate a shift towards the implementation of a Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo that values and invests in natural capital.



*A mother orangutan and her two babies. Located inside the Sebangau National Park, the Punggalas Research Center focuses on conducting a survey of orangutan behavior and the training of locals in wildlife protection. To date, WWF Kalimantan has identified and monitored over 40 orangutans.*

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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BAU	Business As Usual
BMP	Best Management Practice
GE	Green economy
ha	hectare
HoB	Heart of Borneo
ISPO	Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil
MSPO	Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil
SALCRA	Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, Time-bound
IKI	Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (International Climate Initiative)
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature



*A local fruit called “longan”  
(Dimocarpus longan).  
During peak season,  
villagers sell this in Song  
town or Sibu for some  
income.*

*© Mas Sumok / WWF-Malaysia /  
Panda CLICK!*

# A. Introduction

**Background Region** | Not many places like this are left on our planet!

The Heart of Borneo (HoB) is the largest remaining expanse of transboundary tropical forest landscape in Southeast Asia, covering more than 22 million ha across Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. It is a zone of unique natural capital: intact forests harbor an outstanding wealth of biodiversity, store vast amounts of carbon and generate livelihoods for local communities and indigenous peoples. The HoB therefore is one of the **most important conservation areas worldwide**. At the same time, it forms a strong **basis of socio-economic development** for the region.

The Heart of Borneo is one of the most important conservation areas worldwide threatened by forest loss, species decline and the erosion of ecosystem services.

**Threats to the HoB** | Business as usual means irretrievable loss of natural capital!

However, this large conservation landscape faces threats from unsustainable land uses. More than 30% of Borneo's rainforests have been cleared or logged between 1973 and 2010 (Gaveau et al. 2014). Today, timber companies, palm oil plantations, mining operations, hydropower and other infrastructure developments are all key parts of the HoB landscape. Forest loss, habitat fragmentation, species decline and the erosion of ecosystem services are the consequences: it is estimated that the population of orangutans on Borneo for example decreased by more than 100.000 individuals between 1999 and 2015 (Voigt et al. 2018).

**Conservation context** | There is strong commitment to save HoB!

In 2007, the governments of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia signed the Heart of Borneo Declaration. This agreement commits the three governments to **one shared conservation vision**. It ensures the effective management of forest resources and conservation of a network of protected areas, productive forests and other sustainable land uses. The commitment includes participation and strong buy-in from the local administrative units as well as from the private sector. The vision implies a shift to a **Green Economy** that values and invests in **natural capital**, supports broader **human welfare** and creates **resilience to climate change**.

**The project** | Bridging the gap between policy and implementation!

Translating this vision into reality, however, came out as a challenge. The mere existence of declarations and legislative frameworks does not ensure adequate protection and conservation of biodiversity on site. Though the HoB National Working Groups in Indonesia and Malaysia had elaborated generic frameworks for a Green Economy in the transboundary HoB, there was **little operationalization** of these plans before the project started.

Major impediments were the **lack of awareness and capacity** to implement such a vision.

- Albeit clear mandates, government institutions had insufficient technical capacity on land use planning and natural resource management.
- Many players within the plantation sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises in agriculture and forestry, were unaware and underestimated the potential of environmentally-friendly business practices to boost revenues. Thus, there was a general lack of good examples of green industries in the region.
- Local communities and indigenous peoples needed support to organize and to engage in the sustainable co-management of natural resources. They also had grievances about some of the activities of the private sector and the governments which resulted in heavy conflicts on land use and property rights on the local level.



### Project area

In 2012, the 6<sup>th</sup> HoB Trilateral Meeting gave rise to the HoB Corridor Initiative. This project forms part of the corridor, and covers over 1.13 million ha transboundary landscape in Indonesia and Malaysia. The project area was divided in around 384,000 ha in the Indonesian Kapuas Hulu district in the West Kalimantan province and around 750,000 ha in the Sri Aman and Kapit districts in Malaysian Sarawak. It was considered a pilot area for the implementation of a Green Economy concept.

The IKI-funded *Green Economy-Project* aimed at filling these gaps by supporting governments and other stakeholders to plan regional green economies and create an environment where they could prosper.

To address the underlying complexity of such an endeavor, the project had to work on very different levels. It was therefore designed as a holistic approach combining top-down and bottom-up strategies. It mainly rested on four pillars:

**The project supported governments and other stakeholders to plan regional green economies using a holistic approach.**

1. Policy work based on sound science in order to induce systematic change and anchor sustainability as a principle for further development on all constitutional and administrative levels
2. Advice of corporate actors and smallholder cooperatives to implement GE and BMP in their business strategies
3. Establishment of pilots on community level, demonstrating successful integration of conservation and local development
4. Promotion of lessons learned and achievements for replication across the whole HoB

The project was driven by the two guiding key principles of inclusion and empowerment. Integrating all stakeholder groups – government institutions, the private sector and local communities as well as indigenous peoples – was seen as a prerequisite to induce change on a sustainable basis.

“Cooperation and socialization are like a chain because it is a sequence and must be linked to each other. A cooperation will possibly be started after a series of socializations to build trust and get bonding conducted with stakeholders, such as government, communities, private sector, and academia.”

**Maria Theresia**, Smallholder Palm Oil Officer, WWF Indonesia

Collaboration among these stakeholders and the creation of networks were therefore to be fostered. Second, by increasing awareness and capacity, all stakeholders should be empowered to plan and implement a Green Economy in the HoB.

**Integrating all stakeholder groups is a prerequisite to induce change on a sustainable basis.**

Finally, project activities should manifest in the deliverance of comprehensive Green Economy management concepts (including land use- as well as action-plans) being adopted as official documents in the Indonesian and Malaysian project area as well as at transboundary level. On community level, thriving green businesses based on participatory planning and implementation should demonstrate how the approach could work in practice.

Success of the project was meant to inform policy design for the whole HoB Initiative, and in the long-term, have profound impacts on climate change resilience as well as the conservation of biodiversity on the island of Borneo.



*Local community in Kelakar Village practice traditional and semi-mechanical gold mining in Kelakar Village for their livelihood*

© Muksin / WWF Indonesia

## B. Activities and results

The project was intended to work as a catalyst and bridge the gap between policy and implementation. Given the complex context, this was an ambitious goal. So how did the project perform? Did it succeed? What activities have actually been implemented, what milestones have been achieved and what outputs have been delivered?

To operationalize the above mentioned strategic pillars and achieve its goal, the project defined four major outputs, additional work packages for each country and a wealth of different activities within these packages.



*View of the jungle unaffected  
by palm oil plantation  
in Central Kalimantan.*

© Matthieu Paley / WWF

# Output 1

Producing documents in line with official regulations is one of the most important achievements of the project.



## The key: land use management

To generate green economies that simultaneously utilize and protect natural capital, natural capital custodians must find efficient mechanisms to allocate natural capital. This process can begin by developing a natural capital inventory, and then using a landscape approach to develop a land use and management plan for the stakeholders seeking to access natural capital. The growth of green economies may also require investment in incentives, infrastructure, regulation and compliance.

A transboundary Green Economy Management Concept for the pilot region within the HoB Corridor is developed in support of and for acceptance by government authorities, including a transboundary land use plan and a Green Economy action plan.

At first glance, this output has not been achieved: there is neither a transboundary GE Management Concept, nor a transboundary land use or GE action plan. After initial interest at local administrative levels, the transboundary concept remained constrained at the national, resp. subnational level. However, evaluating this as a failure would fall short of the **very important progress** that has been made in both countries.

“Yes, there is no transboundary GE concept, but by starting from small and simple things in each region in Kapuas Hulu and Sarawak, we have initiated important steps that will slowly be connected to each other (...).”

**Syahirsyah Syahirsyah**, Project Field Coordinator, WWF Indonesia

It is worth looking at these small steps and the effects they had on regional land use planning. Teams in both countries carried out **intensive analysis** to identify and close information gaps. The production of **baseline and background studies** laid the basis for informed decision-making not only within the project teams, but also for governmental agencies. In fact, it was one of the most important achievements of the project to produce documents in line with official regulations and thereby **feeding legislative procedures on a tailor-made basis**. This technical support was highly appreciated by local governments in Kapuas Hulu District and Sarawak State. By this means, the project delivered important input to i.a. the Sarawak State Land Use Master Plan, an Integrated Watershed Management Policy Direction

for Sarawak, a Spatial Plan and the medium-term Village Development Plan for the Green Embau Agropolitan Development area, and a Green Economy Management Concept ratified as “*Head of District Regulation*” (Kapuas Hulu).

“We did not really expect this to happen, but the term Green Economy is now adopted into the mainstream policy decision making with greater emphasis on valuing our natural capital.”

**Jason Hon**, Head of Conservation Sarawak, WWF Malaysia

## Adaptive management: Change in legal context

In 2020, the Indonesian government passed the so-called “Job Creation Law”. Several of its articles directly affected the project outputs. Responsibility for spatial planning was shifted from the district to the central government. In order to assure the already achieved results (the Green Economy land use plan and the action plan for Kapuas Hulu), the project team and the District made the joint decision to focus on an area within Kapuas Hulu, called Embau. Documents have been adapted accordingly and finally been submitted for the “Embau Green Agropolitan Area Development Plan”.



**The basis for green economies at local level have been established in Indonesia and Malaysia.**

At the same time, project teams engaged in building technical capacities within the local administrations as well as other key stakeholders on sustainable land management and spatial planning, e.g. by conducting trainings with technical staff. A process of dialogue and intensive discussions with various key government agencies over the years helped to raise awareness and set the benefits of a Green Economy high on the political agenda. As a result, both governments in Kapuas Hulu as well as in Sarawak are strong supporters to implement a Green Economy in their jurisdictions. Pushing the **transboundary character** of the project, however, proved to be a real challenge. Internal and external reasons account for this, e.g. missing cooperative links to some key national governmental organizations in order to lobby for joint development of the transboundary concept, or restrictions due to the global Covid-pandemic. Additionally, a study commissioned by WWF Germany

on transboundary markets found that there was only **minimal transboundary trade** of commodities between Malaysia and Indonesia. Community-based tourism was identified as one potential sector for cooperation, but this would have needed the facilitation by the national governments. The transboundary concept was therefore not pursued as it was beyond the scope of the project to create such links. Still, WWF Malaysia and WWF Indonesia lobbied for specific transnational elements of a Green Economy concept within the HoB initiatives at national level. Unfortunately, they did not reach the trilateral HoB platform of Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia. The influence of WWF at the high political decision level turned out to be limited in this case.

As another aspect of transboundary collaboration, the project initiated a series of bilateral visits and platforms for mutual learning: communities, local government agencies and companies were able to exchange on multi-stakeholder cooperation and the implementation of the Green Economy concept. Cultural proximity facilitated the establishment of networks on this level.

**In conclusion, the project was very successful in establishing the basis for green economies on the local level in both countries. On the one hand by having decisive input to the drafting of respective regulations, on the other hand by anchoring the GE concept in the minds of key stakeholders on different levels. Impacts of this kind are difficult to measure but might prove as one of the most important legacies of the project in the long term.**

## Publications produced by the project (Selection)

### Malaysia

- Report on Orangutan Nests Recce Survey in Nanga Chemanong, Ulu Katibas, 2017
- Report on Orangutan Nest Recce Survey in Upper Reaches of Katibas River, 2018
- Report on Natural Capital Valuation Using Primary Data Research Methods in Baleh, Sarawak Heart of Borneo Project Area, 2018
- Social Impact Assessment of Implementing Green Economy Concepts at Logging and Oil Palm Operations within the Song-Katibas Area, 2018
- Natural Capital Valuation in the Heart of Borneo: Song-Katibas Technical Report, 2018
- Report on Orangutan Population Study at Upper Reaches of Katibas River, 2019.
- Assessment of Potential Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Options and Implementation Mechanisms: for Retaining Natural Forest in the IKI Project Landscape, Sarawak, 2021
- A Green Economy Action Plan: Roadmap to a Sustainable Future for Sarawak in the Heart of Borneo, 2021
- A Sustainable Land Use Plan for Sarawak: Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo: Integrating Conservation, Economic Development and Well-Being of Communities Across the Heart of Borneo Corridor, 2021
- The Value of Nature: Balancing Conservation, Development, and People in the Heart of Borneo, 2021
- Colours of Borneo: Panda CLICK! With Communities in Kapuas Hulu, West Kalimantan and Kapit, Sarawak, 2021
- BorGE (Borneo Green Economy) Newsletter, 3 issues 2017–19, together with WWF Indonesia

### Indonesia

- Fact sheet “Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo”, 2017
- Document “Green Economy Concept in the Agropolitan Strategic Area in Kapuas Hulu” (in bahasa Indonesia only), 2017
- Spatial plan of the Agropolitan Strategic Area in Kapuas Hulu (in bahasa Indonesia only), 2017
- Analysis of the implementation of Good Management Practices for the Agropolitan Strategic Area in Kapuas Hulu (in bahasa Indonesia only), 2018
- Report on the Sociocultural Dimension in the Green Economy Action Plan (in bahasa Indonesia only), 2020
- Report: Palm Oil Supply Chain Mapping (in bahasa Indonesia only), 2020
- Emission Reduction Scenario in Low Carbon Development in the Green Agropolitan Embau Area (in bahasa Indonesia only), 2020
- Policy Recommendations on Sustainable Palm Oil Management to Support the Agropolitan Strategic Area in Kapuas Hulu, (in collaboration with the Agriculture Faculty of the Tanjungpura University) (in bahasa Indonesia only), 2020

## Output 2

**Awareness for green business practices is increased among wood and palm oil producers in the project area by networking with customers and investors interested in sustainability. Small farmers have improved technical skills to implement sustainable business practices.**

**Building up informal networks and bringing together different stakeholders turned out to be a successful path.**

Embracing the holistic approach, the project put another focus on the **sustainable production of key commodities**, palm oil and timber. Initially it was planned to establish a cross-border economy business network in order to promote deforestation-free production. During the course of the project, however, this goal had to be adapted. The establishment of several other initiatives in the meantime as well as changes in the legal context (e.g. compulsory certification for palm oil plantations according to ISPO, resp. MSPO standards) shifted focus to the commitment of palm oil and wood producers to **join already existing regional and national business networks** for more sustainable production. The upscaling of successful results and leveraging of existing business initiatives seemed to be a more promising approach rather than building up new and parallel structures.

The main emphasis of Output 2 related work packages was the **promotion of best management practices** (BMP) for the cultivation of rubber, palm oil, pepper or tea among smallholder cooperatives and independent farmers. For these stakeholders it is still a long way before actively taking part in business networks or meeting internationally acknowledged sustainability standards. Building stronger capacities is therefore a prerequisite.

In order to leverage its impact, WWF Malaysia has initiated engagement with the *Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority* (SALCRA), which coordinates the largest group of oil palm smallholders in Sarawak. Capacity building on sustainability and BMP can thus reach a large number of farmers via this platform.

**Connecting local communities and companies can bring benefits to all.**

WWF Indonesia and WWF Malaysia were also successful in building up **informal networks**, bringing together different stakeholders that were interested in building up green industries. The project i.a. facilitated a mutually beneficial cooperation between local rubber farmer groups and the rubber company PT Kirana Megatara in Indonesia. By directly selling their products to the company, participating farmers gained much better market access. A pilot initiative in Miau Merah (Kapuas Hulu) established and strengthened the institutional and organizational setting of an independent palm oil farmer group. Furthermore, it helped to establish a partnership for sustainable plantation management with the company Riau Agro Plantation. WWF Indonesia initiated collaboration with the local company PT SAM/Multi Prima Entakai and encouraged them to act as facilitators for capacity building and BMP implementation. A respective framework including the company, smallholder farmers, and the Kapuas Hulu District government has been worked on. The collaboration considered aspects of production as well as sales.

In Malaysia, **BMP recommendations** developed by WWF have been integrated into the management plan of Ta Ann, one of the major timber and logging companies in the region. They were based on intensive wildlife surveys and resulted in Ta Ann setting aside 2,269 ha as non-production areas for the conservation of wildlife and orangutan management.

WWF teams also **provided governmental actors with recommendations** on how to promote environmentally friendly commodity production in Kapuas Hulu, respectively two subdivisions of Sarawak (Sri Aman and Kapit). Driven by this project activity, the Kapuas Hulu District government included e.g. the promotion of sustainable palm oil in the Rural Development Plan.

**Connecting local communities and companies can be a win-win situation: smallholders get better market access and potentially better terms of sale, while companies can rely on fair and green production. The project established several of such linkages and laid a foundation for further networks of this kind.**



*Gaharu tea from Rumah Manggat.*

© Melyen Manggat / WWF Malaysia

## Output 3

Several local communities are empowered to co-manage natural resources in a sustainable manner and according to the concept of a green economy.

“In order to up-scale our achievements, we have to ensure that the pilots are able to show that green economy goes from initiation to production, to examples of Return-On-Investment (ROI), supported by government policy and frameworks as well as a robust socialization of the project with all stakeholders involved from start to end.”

**Cynthia Chin**, Project Coordinator, WWF Malaysia

Conceptually, the work with local communities evolved as one of the most important and successful aspects of the project. **Making Green Economy work** and produce tangible results has been the ultimate goal of these pilot initiatives. Ideally, they would function as positive showcases for replication across the HoB region and potentially beyond.

The project therefore provided intensive technical support to communities and producer groups. At first, baseline reports on social impact and vulnerability analysis were produced for the target areas. **Development-, work- and business plans** were then developed in an integrative manner and guided further implementation. All these activities were accompanied by **trainings** on stewardship and co-management arrangements of natural resources (incl. financial and administrative management, establishment of village-owned enterprises), as well as the formation of community organizations and platforms.

“The community work we did was developed in a participative manner. The activities always involved communities (farmer group representatives, village figures/elders), both village and district government, and the private sector. This was to ensure the activities are well acknowledged and accepted by these parties.”

**Maria Theresia**, Smallholder Palm Oil Officer, WWF Indonesia

**Making Green Economy work in collaboration with local communities.**



*A pepper farm in  
Ulu Katibas.*

© Minggu Serit / WWF Malaysia /  
Panda CLICK!

In Malaysia, three community-based projects on co-management and livelihood have been initiated. They directly engaged 300 people in three local communities in Sarawak with regard to ecosystem conservation:

- *Tagang* has been initiated by one community in Sungai Kain, Baleh. *Tagang* is a traditional in-situ fish conservation approach, with sustainable fish off-take bringing benefits back to the communities. It involved zonation of a natural river into no-go zones, fish breeding zones and off-take zones on a seasonal rotation. The *Tagang* system has shown signs of improved fish population. During the Covid 19-lockdown period, when movements were restricted, the community strongly benefitted from this approach.
- A sustainable pepper farming initiative has been started with two communities in the Song-Katibas region. The objectives were to improve the sustainability of pepper farming practices with pilot explorations towards deforestation- and pesticide-free approaches. The project maintained close contact to the Malaysia Pepper Board and helped to improve market and trade links from farm to buyer. The long-term goal is to produce organic pepper.
- In Ulu Sungai Menyang and Batang Ai, *Gaharu* trees were planted in a degraded area adjacent to orangutan habitat. The *Gaharu* leaves are harvested to be processed into tea. A buy-back program was established with a buyer, who processes the leaves and sells the final product. This project added extra forest cover adjacent to orangutan habitat. It also delivers additional income to the community through the sale of the leaves and also through 'voluntourism', where visitors pay for homestay and meals to volunteer at the *Gaharu* farms.

## Pilot projects in Malaysia: pepper, Gaharu tea and traditional fishing.

*A villager from  
Rumah Peter, Ulu Katibas  
mending his fishing net.  
This activity can make  
the difference between a  
scrumptious dinner  
or nothing. © Claudia Mutek /  
WWF Malaysia / Panda CLICK!*



## Pilot projects in Indonesia: rubber, palm oil, tourism and agroforestry.

In Indonesia the project initiated and intensively supported seven farmer groups, concentrating on rubber, palm oil, tourism and agroforestry. Additionally, a rubber farmer group entailing 13 villages in Hulu Gurung was established and trained on issues like plantation management and the use of organic fertilizers. Today, these farmers are able to improve their rubber quality and productivity by implementing the quality assurance approach (Internal Control System) and run a joint village-owned enterprise in Hulu Gurung sub-district. In Kelakar village, a 10 ha demonstration plot for integrated organic farming functions has been established as a learning center for local farmers on agroforestry, rubber, oil palm and horticulture. Even after the end of the project, a cooperation between the local communities and the *Faculty of Agriculture/ Tanjungpura University* will carry on with this approach.

The **empowerment** of the participating communities was very successful. The participatory approach encouraged **ownership** and a better **responsibility** by the beneficiaries. One of the key factors of success, however, was the **high interest and openness** of communities and governmental stakeholders alike to implement the GE concept. Indeed, some of the collaborating communities care for their projects themselves and there is no more WWF intervention necessary to keep them going. Farmers also started to implement their action plans independently and to spread their approaches to other smallholders in their vicinities. Some villages even allocated matching funds to support the new initiatives, e.g. by building access roads to demonstration plots.

**Communities previously without additional sustainable forms of livelihood now have options which they can grow and sustain for years to come.**

*A demonstration plot was established in 2021 to serve as a learning center for local communities in Kelakar Village and its surroundings, West Kalimantan*

© Syahirsyah / WWF Indonesia



## Output 4

The development and implementation of the Green Economy management concept within the Heart of Borneo Corridor are promoted for replication across the whole Heart of Borneo and in critical conservation areas internationally.

**“Panda Click!” as an innovative approach of communication that involved the local communities.**

It was a major goal of the project to have sustainable and far-reaching impact. **Communication** on the achievements of the project has thus been an integral part of the logical framework right from the start. As early as 2016, project teams from WWF Indonesia, WWF Malaysia and WWF Germany therefore developed a joint communication strategy. In line with this strategy, all project partners produced comprehensive information material, including reports, media releases, social media posts, videos and exhibition materials. Target groups covered a wide spectrum, ranging from administrative staff of governmental agencies, local communities and the general public. **The most important products are made available on the international website [www.globallandusechange.org](http://www.globallandusechange.org).**

Still, disseminating and sharing information within relevant political and business arenas could not be delivered as planned. Many activities had to be delayed, rescheduled and finally skipped due to restrictions imposed by the **Covid-19 pandemic**. This context did not allow a realistic planning of activities and hence limited options to campaign in a targeted way. WWF Malaysia, however, was able to continuously contribute to the Sarawak HoB working group and lobby for endorsement of project findings on the national level. In Indonesia a revoked Memorandum of Understanding with the Environment and Forest Ministry made it much more difficult for the project team to place its messages at their HoB working group.



*Communication material produced by the WWF teams in Sarawak, Malaysia and Kapuas Hulu, Indonesia.*  
© Mark Liao / WWF Malaysia

Therefore, the project introduced an innovative approach of communication that turned out to have several positive effects. **“Panda Click!”** might be described as an empowerment project by the means of photography: the project lent digital pocket cameras to 31 participants from Kapuas Hulu and 19 participants from Sarawak. They took more than 140,000 pictures. Out of that, 300 photos were featured and published in a book called *“Colors of Borneo: Panda CLICK! With communities from Kapuas Hulu, Kalimantan and Kapit, Sarawak”*. The 196-page book showcased pictures taken by the participants of their daily life living close to nature. Participants documented their villages’ current environmental situation and social culture. This method was used as a tool to collect information visually and narratively and so complement data collected in a more scientific way. Furthermore, Panda CLICK! was an important tool to **strengthen the role of communities** and communicate their ideas to others. Indeed, it also served greatly to break the ice between WWF teams and the communities. Unfortunately, a planned exhibition in Berlin and other locations had to be canceled due to Covid 19.

“The Panda CLICK! program may be over, but the knowledge still remains, and I will use it for the benefit of the village.”

**Faturrahman**, a participant from Lubuk Antuk village, Indonesia

The project also produced a series of newsletters called BorGE, short name for Borneo Green Economy. The newsletters contained information on the implementation of activities, some of which were done with external partners and stakeholders. They were shared with all these partners including local communities and so acknowledging their important role in the project. The newsletter has been a good way of keeping the variety of stakeholders informed and actively involved in the project.



*Peter Jabat posing with one of his best photos taken throughout the Panda CLICK! programme*

© Ezen Chan / WWF Malaysia

## C. Beneficiaries, partners and main stakeholders

Both in Indonesia and Malaysia the project was set up to work with **governments at several levels**, the **private sector** as well as **local communities** and **indigenous peoples**. There was also an outreach to the international community (e.g. Convention on Biological Diversity technical working groups), which in part was carried out by WWF Germany.

**The project worked with governments at several levels, the private sector as well as local communities and indigenous peoples in Indonesia and Malaysia.**

Direct as well as indirect beneficiaries of project interventions are difficult to measure. Outputs can have multiple effects on a wide array of stakeholders. People that directly participated in activities or received direct assistance by the project amounted to a total of 230 in Indonesia and 300 in Malaysia. The proportion of women was 50% in Indonesia and 25% in Malaysia. The target value of a total of 200 directly supported people has been exceeded by far.

Beneficiaries in Indonesia were reached through smallholder farmer groups dealing with rubber and oil palm production, agroforestry and ecotourism in the Agropolitan Area of Kapuas Hulu. They included i.a. 20 smallholder farmers for sustainable palm oil in Miau Merah village, 25 members for ecotourism activities in Lubuk Antuk village and around 60 rubber farmers from 11 villages in Hulu Gurung and Pengkadan.

In Malaysia, the *Gaharu* tea, pepper and *Tagang* projects in Sarawak have directly engaged 300 people in three local communities with regard to ecosystem conservation and sustainable development.



*A farmer from Rumah Peter showing her fresh harvest of pepper berries*  
© Zora Chan / WWF Malaysia

Main governmental partners were located at district level in Indonesia and at state level in Malaysia. WWF had the greatest impact there. But whenever necessary and possible, agencies on other levels had been involved. Main partners were:

### **Indonesia**

- Kapuas Hulu District Government (i.a. the Kapuas Hulu Agropolitan Technical Team, Regional Development Planning Agency)
- Faculty of Agriculture, Tanjungpura University
- Bandung Institute of Technology

### **Malaysia**

- Sarawak Ministry of Natural Resources and Urban Development
- Sarawak Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Performing Arts (MCTS)
- State-level government agencies in Sarawak (i.a. Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Forest Department Sarawak (FDS), the District Offices of Song, Bukit Mabung, Lubok Antu, the Resident Offices of Kapit and Sri Aman, Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB), Inland Fisheries Department of Agriculture, Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID))
- Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Agency (SALCRA)
- Malaysian Pepper Board
- Private entities operating within the project area (i.a. Ta Ann Holdings, Sarawak Energy Berhad (SEB))



*The hilly landscape of Hulu Gurung stretches all the way to neighbouring sub-district, Pengkadan*  
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## D. Sustainability

Nature conservation successes are usually short-term, since the natural capital often remains under constant human exploitation pressure. It is therefore vital for projects to increase permanence and long-term impact of their outputs by defining exit strategies.

Risk mitigation strategies as well as approaches to increase sustainability were also part of the Green Economy in the HoB project management. Indeed, these strategies were inherent to the concept itself and involved i.a.:

- A **multi-stakeholder approach**, assured wide acceptance by all stakeholders, putting the topic of Green Economy high on different agendas for the years to come.
- The **anchorage of project output in the institutional, legal and organizational context**, i.e. in strategies, plans and legal texts that outlast project duration. This included e.g. the adoption of spatial plans and GE concepts by governments, or continued advocacy by WWF Malaysia as defined in the *Sarawak Conservation Program Strategy FY21-25*.
- **Empowerment of local communities** assured their future involvement in planning and implementation arenas, and so the ability to voice their concerns.
- **Capacity building** created the technical ability to carry on e.g. BMP after external support has ended.
- **Networks** initiated by the project have the capacity to evolve and develop on a self-reliant basis. They linked local communities directly to relevant governmental and corporate partners.
- **Transferring responsibility** for sub-projects to partners, the *Tagang* project to the Inland Fisheries Department (Malaysia) or the *Center for Integrated Organic Agriculture* in Embau to the village of Kelakar and the *Faculty of Agriculture* at *Tanjungpura University* in Pontianak.

**Follow-up projects initiated by WWF are foreseen to carry on several aspects that have been part of the *Green Economy in the HoB-Project*. Among them are community livelihood and empowerment related projects.**

**Sustainability is ensured through a multi-stakeholder approach, the anchorage of project output in the institutional, legal and organizational context and the empowerment of local communities.**

## E. Challenges, lessons learnt and good practices

The project started in 2016 with a very ambitious goal: to establish the foundations of a Green Economy in the HoB. Good progress has been made, while some aspects of the initial planning could not be realized. After almost six years of project implementation, the individual teams of WWF Germany, Indonesia and Malaysia defined their lessons learnt during an internal evaluation workshop.

### **Lesson #1 | Meet the needs, stick to core principles and be ready to adapt!**

A key to success was the clear identification of factors necessary for the implementation of the Green Economy concept: a) raising awareness and building capacity, b) consistent and inclusive engagement of all stakeholders involved, and c) the design of project activities adapted to the specific situation in both countries. Project members consequently acknowledged these factors and adhered to them as core principles during the whole lifetime of the project. This enabled them to react to changes in context without losing touch to the overall goals. Indeed, adaptive management was one of the major strengths during implementation. It also was a necessity due to delays in the initial timeline, political developments as well as high internal and external turnover of staff. Besides an intensive mid-term review, regular update meetings and a certain extent of flexibility for managing changes granted from the donor, were major tools that enabled adaptations in workplans, budgets and focus areas.

**It is important to capture the context to adapt the design of project activities.**

### **Lesson #2 | Context matters!**

These factors also met an enabling context that has been a fertile ground for project activities. Sustainable resource management was an attractive option to many stakeholders on the local level as environmental impacts of current business activities were widely being felt. Stakeholders were thus linked through common interest. This resulted in an open response and high enthusiasm from the district and village governments, as well as local communities and indigenous peoples.

### Lesson #3 | Policy change is complex and needs high level input!

One strategic pillar of the project was to actively shape the legal context for a Green Economy. The understanding that preparatory documents had to fit the format of legal products, was a crucial element to guarantee the success of these lobbying efforts. Consequently, they were elaborated in accordance with official specifications in both jurisdictions.

Employing multi-stakeholder engagement processes and working with government agencies can be slow but was seen to have stronger uptake and formalization potential. This slow pace of political and administrative processes, on the other hand demanded high and continuous engagement by project managers as they brought about various changes in the legal context, political agendas and personnel of key agencies. Stakeholder engagement thus is a long-term process and has to be planned as such. In effect, the timeframes to achieve policy changes were planned too optimistically. The same holds true for the actual control that WWF had over the output of respective action arenas.

Policy processes, especially those taking place on national and international level, need consistent and subsistent high-level input, backed up by an effective communication strategy. Projects have to identify key players on their behalf and strategically plan their engagement in such arenas. Otherwise, it will be difficult to achieve the desired outcomes and act as an agent of change.

**Stakeholder engagement, especially to induce policy change, is a long-term process and has to be planned as such.**

### Lesson #4 | Cooperation needs trust

“One of the most important learnings is that when we are successful in building and gaining trust from the government and the community as well as formulating commitments and joint activities that are in line with national and provincial level policies at the beginning, it will be easier to gain respect and support from them when implementing the projects.”

**Syahirsyah Syahirsyah**, Project Field Coordinator, WWF Indonesia

Collaboration has to rely on a strong relationship of trust. As with other actors, building this relationship with communities has to be based on mutual respect and needs time to mature. Planning of projects has to account for this. Such processes often take years and run risk to abruptly terminate after project duration. At this point in time, however, considerable investments have been made in socialization and building of social capital. It is therefore important to think in longer timeframes and capitalize on these investments in follow-up projects. Expectation management has to be part of this process. Often people want to see immediate results or greater impact of activities. This might lead to frustration if expectations remain unmet. Projects have to be very careful and clear about potential outcomes of their intervention. Expectation management of local communities and donors alike hence should be an integral part of the planning process.

### Challenge #1 | The pandemic!

One of the greatest challenges that affected a vast majority of activities since the beginning of 2020 was the Covid pandemic. It not only made direct face-to-face exchange more difficult but triggered a wide scope of negative effects. It led i.a. to delays in implementing planned activities and shifted the focus of political and private sector representatives towards fighting the pandemic. Complex logistics and travel restrictions made it hard to bring communities together and required long and exhausting journeys. Communities themselves had concerns about having outsiders entering their area during the pandemic. Additionally, the pandemic caused a drop in sales and tourism, which in turn led to some of the affected community members losing motivation to further engage in the project. The project tried to cope with these effects by communicating to a greater extent via virtual channels and engage local resource persons and middlemen to carry out at least limited activities.

### Challenge #2 | Internal planning & coordination!

Gaps and inconsistencies in the theory of change were identified during implementation and revised in the mid-term evaluation. A joint understanding and application of project management standards helped to guide activities and adaptive management during the course of implementation.

Another aspect of planning is the definition of goals. They have to be ambitious, but at the same time realistic. Balancing these options is quite difficult especially for results depending on external factors or stakeholders. As reality has shown, the initial planning has been very ambitious and expectations could not be met entirely. The same is likely to apply for similar projects with comparable timeframes.

Additionally, the project was facing challenges that led to underspending according to plan. Main reason was that the project started from scratch and intense socialization was needed with different target groups and stakeholders at different levels. This resulted i.a. in a slow implementation speed especially at the beginning when staff had to be hired. While underspending enabled a no-cost extension of 22 months thanks to the flexibility of the donor, it also induced risk and insecurity to lose funds.

All these factors demonstrate the importance of solid planning and functional backstopping during project implementation.

**Solid and realistic  
planning of the  
project is key.**

## F. Conclusion

The IKI funded *Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo-Project* was implemented between 2016 and 2021. During this period, the project encountered several challenges, such as changing political contexts, high turnover of government personnel, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

**A shift towards the implementation of a Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo has been initiated.**

Nevertheless, the project demonstrated overall good progress towards strategy implementation and result achievement. While not all envisioned outputs were realized, the project fostered capacities and collaboration of government institutions, the private sector and local communities as well as indigenous peoples. It has contributed significantly to initiate a shift towards the implementation of a Green Economy in the Heart of Borneo that values and invests in natural capital. The potential benefits of such a shift include reduced poverty, more rapid sustainable growth, stronger local economies and enhanced resilience to climate change.



*Local communities attending a training in Kelakar village in 2019 on how to manage rubber plantations sustainably © Maria Theresia / WWF Indonesia*

The following **recommendations** can be extracted as a reference for future projects:

- **Plan projects with a participative and impact-oriented approach** (development of a consistent theory of change; identification of SMART impact indicators; stakeholder analysis). That is crucial both to facilitate project implementation and monitoring as well as to increase project impact.
- **Calculate the budget as realistic as possible**, really assessing how many funds can be spent in which timeframes and paying a lot of attention to the yearly allocation of funds within the budget planning phase. Don't allocate too much at the beginning because experience shows that projects need some time to really "kick-off" (i.e., staff needs to be hired etc.). Ensure that staff is allocated with enough time resources. Allocate budget for preliminary assessment and meetings with the stakeholders (inception phase). Allocate budget for emergencies and unforeseen events, if possible.
- Be very clear and realistic right from the beginning about what is achievable and under what conditions, especially for results depending on external factors or stakeholders (for example government commitment, or attendance of very specific conferences). It is also recommended **managing the expectations** of local communities, donors and other stakeholders involved.
- **Plan for sufficient capacities** to manage internal coordination and communication. Take care of cultural differences and how to overcome communication barriers.
- **Adaptive management** has to be an integral part of the project cycle. This requires a certain amount of flexibility, but also regular monitoring and evaluation of strategies and operations. Ensure that a monitoring tool and a monitoring plan is in place from the beginning of the project.
- Plan an **effective and flexible communication strategy** in order to explain project logics and secure high-level engagement. Focus on high-quality and targeted publications. Underpin communication with sufficient budget.

## Endnotes

- 1 Voigt, M., Wich, S. A., Ancrenaz, M., Meijaard, E., Abram, N., Banes, G. L., ... & Kühl, H. S. (2018). Global demand for natural resources eliminated more than 100,000 Bornean orangutans. *Current Biology*, 28(5), 761-769.



*One of the many flowering  
trees found in the forests of  
Ulu Katibas*

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