



PRESS RELEASE

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Stakeholders Discuss Future of 20 Community Forestry Initiatives

Miri, Sarawak, 15 December 2006 – Some 100 representatives from the government, private sector and non-governmental organisations gathered in Miri, Sarawak to discuss the future of 20 local community forestry projects at a national workshop .

The 20 community projects involved are grantees of the Small Grants Programme for Promotion of Tropical Forests (SGP PTF) Malaysia.

A total of eight projects are located in Sarawak, seven in Sabah and five in Peninsular Malaysia. Approximately RM4.5 million was awarded since the project was launched in September 2004.

The workshop was officially closed by Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, Federal Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities.

In his speech, Datuk Peter Chin expressed his support for programmes like SGP PTF, stating that “sustainable forest management is of utmost importance to the economy of the state and the nation.”

He said that the strategies showcased by SGP PTF projects show that poverty eradication in small pockets of settlement can occur in creative ways that are suitable to the local areas.

“It is gratifying to know that these creative strategies are developed by the local people themselves.”

Datuk Chin also commended state agencies such as the Sarawak Forestry Corporation, the Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism and the Sarawak Craft Council, for assisting the communities in implementing SGP PTF projects.

Head of the European Commission Delegation to Malaysia, His Excellency Mr Thierry Rommel said “By placing the communities at the core of forest management, the projects demonstrate to the reluctant or hesitant policymakers that community forest management can successfully slow forest depletion.”

“Local communities are no obstacle to economic growth, rather they can help ensure growth is sustainable,” he said.

Rommel called for greater support from all levels of Malaysian society, including the government and private sectors, to help sustain and strengthen project activities after the programme ends in June 2007.

While Malaysia has made great strides in poverty reduction since independence, pockets of poverty still exist in Malaysian society, particularly among the poor population living on the margins of the forests of Sabah and Sarawak, said Resident Representative of UNDP Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam Dr Richard Leete .

“SGP PTF is very specifically designed to target these pockets of poverty,” said Leete.

"Today's workshop is proof that these participants, most of whom are first time grantees, are able to grow from being project recipients to being full participants in the process of sustainable development," he said.

SGP PTF is an eight-country regional initiative funded by the European Commission (EC), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed through the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA).

One of SGP PTF's main objectives is to alleviate poverty among forest-dependent communities, particularly the indigenous people.

SGP PTF also aims to promote the concept of community forestry as a means of achieving sustainable forest management that is supportive of community livelihood and empowerment.

The 20 communities who received SGP PTF grants, planned, designed and implemented activities to improve their socio-economic conditions, while conserving the surrounding forest areas that provide for valuable resources.

These activities, which are unique to each project, include eco-tourism, agro-forestry, reforestation and others, as well as various initiatives to revitalise and document indigenous and traditional culture and knowledge.

As all 20 projects will end by June next year, during the workshop, representatives from each project presented their ideas and aspirations for sustaining their projects. They also shared and exchanged experiences with each other.

SGP PTF has been operating in Malaysia since 2004, assisting organisations throughout Malaysia in local initiatives towards sustainable forest management and promoting the link between economic enterprise and sustainable forest use and management.

SGP-PTF in Malaysia is governed by a steering committee that includes representatives from government, private and civil society.

NOTE TO EDITOR

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners. Its current priority is to help all countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

To read more about the work of UNDP in Malaysia, please visit our website at www.undp.org.my

For a complete list of SGP PTF projects in Malaysia, visit http://www.sgptf.org/projects_list.asp?Country=Malaysia

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