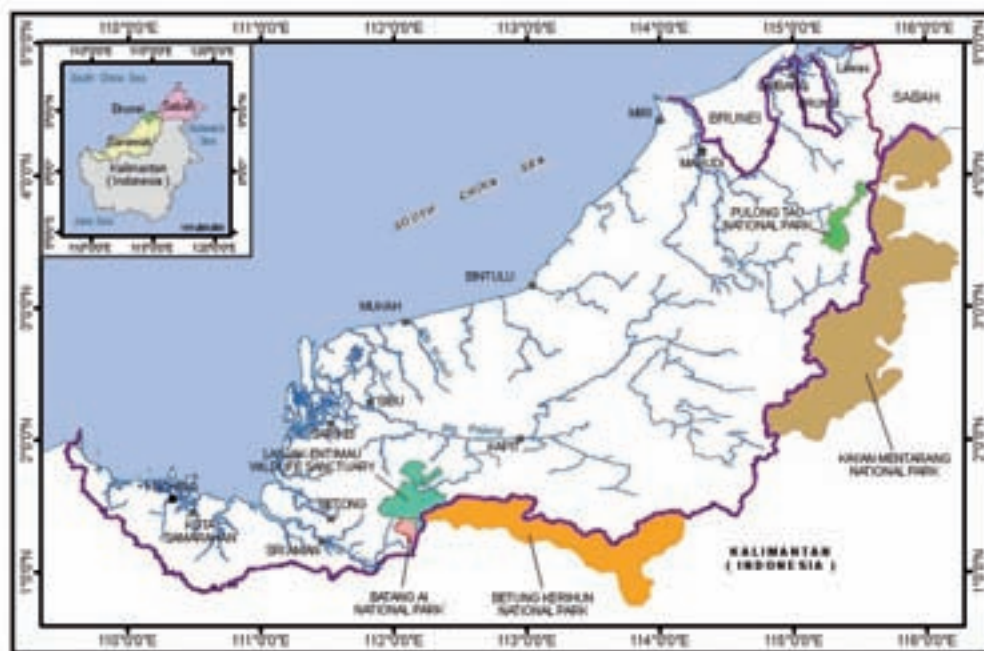


Going the distance

A long-running initiative on the border between Malaysia and Indonesia has improved conservation and assisted community development

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Sarawak, in Borneo, is the largest of the 13 Malaysian states. Over 60% of its total land area (12.4 million hectares) is forested. In 1992, ITTO financed a biodiversity conservation project to assist in the development of the Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary as a totally protected area. In 1994, Sarawak partnered with Indonesia to establish the first TBCA in the wet tropics —comprising the Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary in Sarawak and the Betung Kerihun National Park in West Kalimantan over an area of 1.2 million hectares (see map). ITTO is now also supporting a transboundary biodiversity conservation project in northern Sarawak featuring Sarawak's Pulong Tau National Park and Indonesia's Kayan Mentarang National Park.

Perhaps the most significant conservation aspect of the Lanjak-Entimau/Betung Kerihun TBCA is the presence of about 4000 orang utan (*Pongo pygmaeus*), a highly endangered species. The area faces a number of management issues, including illegal logging, the dependence of local communities on the forests for their livelihoods, plantation development, and the collection and trade of protected species. Management challenges include the difficulty of accessing the area, a lack of infrastructure, and weak management capacity within the local communities.

Nevertheless, as a result of project work over a long period, the communities living near the sanctuary are reducing their dependence on forests as they develop livelihood activities such as fish-farming and the cultivation of local fruits. Increasingly, members of the local communities are volunteering as rangers because the benefits of maintaining a healthy, pristine forest reserve near their villages are becoming more apparent.

Lessons learned

In practice, the Lanjak-Entimau/Betung Kerihun TBCA is managed across the international boundary collaboratively rather than jointly, due to differences in socioeconomic, political, legal and institutional frameworks, priorities, and implementation capacity. Nevertheless, such a long-running project has yielded many lessons that may be helpful for other initiatives, including the following:

- A transboundary approach can help to promote biodiversity conservation, benefit-sharing, livelihood improvement and climate-change mitigation.
- To be effective, transboundary conservation requires a long time frame; continued senior-level political interest and understanding of the process is crucial.
- Implementation capacity determines the work that actually gets done. We need people who understand the problems and needs of the local people and who are passionate, energetic and prepared to go to the field.
- Successful community-based development requires effective leadership and cooperation within the communities.
- Conservation threats can be tackled through stakeholder cooperation and awareness-raising. It is an ongoing process: we are still promoting awareness among local people.
- Continued international support will help promote long-term conservation goals: this is critical, not just for funding but to encourage political leaders to take it seriously.



Concrete action: Longhouse members work with project staff to construct a valley pond. *Photo: S. Lanjang*

Sustainability

The fourth phase of the ITTO project for the development of Lanjak-Entimau is drawing to a close and the question of sustainability is being raised. We will be able to secure our own national funding when a new community development division under the Forest Department is formed in October this year. In Sarawak there are private companies that would like to give money, but there is no mechanism by which this can take place. Another key element in the sustainability of the sanctuary is the maintenance of a reliable and competent management team. We should also promote international research in the area, because the results of the research will help to sustain the management of the area. In my view we should also continue collaboration with international agencies such as ITTO to ensure that we benefit from experiences elsewhere, and to help to maintain a collaborative transboundary approach. Involvement in the Heart of Borneo initiative is also desirable as a venue



Budding horticulturalists: Community members receive training on plant budding. *Photo: M. Jandom*

for promoting conservation within the TBCAS, and greater effort is needed to involve private enterprises, including the timber industry, in such initiatives.

Sustainability depends on the continuing political and financial commitment of host countries and external support from international organizations like ITTO and IUCN. The Government of Sarawak has put in place a strategy for raising the profile of TBCAS and promoting scientific research locally, regionally and internationally. It also needs to develop a mechanism for receiving and managing external financing, and to strengthen its institutional framework for the long-term management of TBCAS.



Deepening relationships: Officers from the adjoining Betung Kerihun National Park in Indonesia visit the Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary to exchange information and view local infrastructure, such as this valley pond. *Photo: W. Cluny*