

Empowering an indigenous community through seed supply: a sustainability analysis of the Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre seedlings buyback model

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Keywords: ecosystem restoration, indigenous community, multi-stakeholder approach, native species, seed supply, sustainable livelihoods

This study explores the sustainability for livelihoods of the case study “Engaging Communities for Conservation: Seedlings Programme for Jahai Communities in Royal Belum, Malaysia”, a community-based multi-stakeholder conservation project by the Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre (TRCRC). It explores the role of an indigenous community in supplying seeds to boost ecosystem restoration, and the socio-economical feasibility of these non-timber resources for sustainable alternative livelihoods. This case study collected observational data for evaluation through the Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management. Non-observational data through semi-structured interviews with the target community, the Jahai tribe in Royal Belum, was analysed through thematic analysis, which was then integrated into hierarchical planning with the C&I evaluation result to develop a sustainable multi-stakeholder development strategy for the Seedlings Program. The results show that the development of a seeds buyback program as a supplementary income stream to the seedlings buyback, while focusing on capacity building to acquire ecological data, can improve the sustainability index of the Seedlings Program.