

Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

CBRM Database

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Case Study Name:	Community-based transboundary ecotourism in the heart of Borneo; A case study of the Kelabit highlands of Malaysia and the Kerayan highlands of Indonesia		
Authors:	Hitchner, S. L., F. L. Apu, L. Tarawe, S. N. Aran, and E. Yesaya		
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Region:	Southeast Asia		
Country:	Malaysia, Indonesia		
Ecosystem Type:	mountain ecosystems		
Social Characteristics:	community inside protected area, indigenous community		
Scale of Study:	protected area		
Resource Type:	tourism/ecotourism		
Type of Initiative:	development initiative/international NGO initiative		
Community-Based Work:	conservation, monitoring		
Keywords:	transboundary ecotourism, community-based ecotourism, Borneo, Malaysia, Indonesia, transboundary		

	conservation, conservation and development, Heart of Borne initiative
Summary:	<p>This article examines the current state of community-based transboundary ecotourism in the Kelabit Highlands of Sarawak, Malaysia, and the Kerayan Highlands of Kalimantan, Indonesia, areas included within the international 'Heart of Borneo' conservation initiative. Ecotourism development is an important element of the Heart of Borneo initiative, which aims to simultaneously promote conservation and sustainable development by linking protected areas with low-impact use zones in a variety of ecosystem types. There is strong local, governmental, and international support for ecotourism development here, as well as an awareness of the possible pitfalls of expanding ecotourism in this region. Research for this case study was conducted primarily in the Kelabit Highlands of Sarawak, and it included interviews with local actors in ecotourism (local guides and homestay owners, as well as urban-based tour operators and tourism promotion centres and agencies), participation in intercommunity dialogues regarding transboundary ecotourism, as well as the analysis of promotional materials on ecotourism in these areas, comments in the visitors' books of lodges, and tourists' websites and travel blogs. This case study represents a stage of introspection by people actively engaged in current ecotourism activities and seeks to chart a course forward that takes into account the specific ecological, social, cultural, and political context of this region. The process of conducting this research project helped to pinpoint some of the specific challenges of transboundary ecotourism in this area, and will form the basis for a more comprehensive ecotourism management plan for local communities on both sides of the border. Gathering, collating, and analysing the findings of this research with local community members revealed that the main issues that need to be addressed include: (1) protection of forests and cultural sites as foci for ecotourism; (2) improved communication between villages, guides, and lodges; (3) increased promotion of transboundary trekking options; (4) village-level preparation for more tourists and more equitable distribution of income generated from ecotourism; (5) careful improvements in tourism infrastructure; (6) the negotiation of legal complications arising from international border crossings by tourists and guides; and (7) the maintenance of local control over ecotourism management and of the trajectory of future tourism development in the Heart of Borneo.</p>