

Regional Training of Trainers Programme for Peatland Assessment and Management and *the Celebration of World Wetlands Day 2011 at Raja Musa Forest Reserve, Malaysia*

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There are approximately 30 million ha of peatland in Southeast Asia (SEA) representing 60% of the tropical peatland resource.

The largest area of peatlands is found in Indonesia, which has an estimated 21 million ha, followed by Malaysia with ca 2.5 million ha. Land clearing, timber extraction and the rapid development of large-scale agriculture and forest plantations have caused significant peatland destruction in this region. Human resource capacity building for peatland management in the respective countries plays a

very crucial role to promote the sustainable management of the peatland forest in Southeast Asia.

As part of the regional capacity building activities to support the implementation of the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (2006-2020), a Regional Training of Trainers (TOT) Programme was organised from 22-25 February 2011 under the IFAD-GEF funded ASEAN Peatland Forests Project (APFP).

It was organised by the ASEAN Secretariat and the Global Environment Centre (GEC) as the Regional Project Executing Agency, in partnership with the Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia and the Selangor Forestry

Department. The training was also jointly supported by the European Commission under the SEApeat project.

A total of thirty-five participants from eight countries in Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos PDR, Vietnam, Thailand, Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia) were brought to Kuala Selangor, a town located next to the estuary of Selangor River in the northern area of Selangor State, Malaysia for the TOT. The three and a half days training programme included theoretical lectures and hands-on practical visits to two peatland sites in Selangor. In conjunction with this Training, the European Commission Ambassador, H.E. Vincent Piket

World Wetlands Day 2011 celebration at Raja Musa Forest Reserve. Photo: Global Environment Centre



launched the European Commission funded SEApeat Project on 25 February 2011, in the presence of the Director General of the Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia, Dato' Razani Ujang, the Director of Global Environment Centre, Mr. Faizal Parish, and all the representatives from ASEAN countries participating in the Training.

The TOT session has built the capacity of senior technical personnel at regional level on sustainable peatland management and conservation. They were trained on the areas of peatland assessment and management. Modules of the Training Programme were 1) Introduction to Peat, 2) Values of Peatlands, 3) Threats to Peatlands and Consequences of Disturbance, 4) Management of Peat, and 5) Training on Peat Assessment. To complement the training programme, selected case studies were shared by the participants, particularly the practical experience from Kalimantan and Sumatra, Indonesia, Malaysia and Southern Thailand in canal blocking and reforestation in peatlands.

As part of their training, the participants were brought for field visits to Raja Musa Forest Reserve to demonstrate issues such as drainage of peatlands, fire and subsidence, possibilities of reforestation and to Kuala Langat South Virgin Jungle Reserve for field assessment. The site visits exposed the participants to a range of issues such as surrounding land uses which may have negative impacts on intact peatlands in forest reserves, ideas about buffer zones, pressures on forest reserves for other land uses; and the different stages in peatland degradation.

Most of the participants benefited from the TOT. Some of them are now able to give training themselves upon returning to their own countries which will boost the promotion of sustainable peatland management

and improve awareness of key stakeholders. As currently there appear to be limited peatland information, especially in the Mekong region, such trainings will recruit more members to the "Peat Family" in the Southeast Asian region.

The TOT culminated with the World Wetlands Day 2011 celebration on 26 February 2011, where the participants representing the eight participating countries planted 50 trees as a symbol of the launch of the SEApeat Project. The celebration was jointly organised by GEC, Selangor State Government, Selangor Forestry Department and Kuala Selangor District Council at the Raja Musa Forest Reserve.

The planting supported the great effort of the Selangor Forestry Department and various stakeholders in the rehabilitation programme of the forest reserve. The event was wrapped up with a series of post-workshop ecotours including the Mangroves walk in Kuala Selangor Nature Park, visit to Fresh Water Fish



Fifty seedlings were planted by TOT participants at Raja Musa FR in conjunction of WWD 2011 celebration. Photo: Julia Lo, GEC

Park, Bukit Melawati and followed by firefly watching at Kampung Kuantan. Peatlands, let's treasure them together!

For further information about the APFP and the SEApeat project, please visit www.aseanpeat.net or contact us via outreach@gec.org.my.

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Participants from Southeast Asia. Photo: Chin Sing Yun, GEC

