

Towards Dynamic Policy Instruments for Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation in National Parks: A Case Study on Bangladesh and Sarawak, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Asia is the most populous region, with a substantial number of global biodiversity hotspots and several megadiverse countries, including Malaysia, with rich cultural and natural heritages. In this region, natural heritages within protected areas is under threat with high tendency of biodiversity losses. Exploitation is widespread but effective conservation is hampered by lack of systematically dynamic policies and instruments. This study attempts to relook at key factors that strengthen policies towards conserving biodiversity at national parks (NPs) in Bangladesh and Sarawak, Malaysia. It focuses on the analysis and review of the present tools (policy, growth of national parks and legal aspects) used to enhance conservation activities within and around these areas through literature review, observations of some of the parks, as well as interviews with relevant staff and indigenous community. The study showed that the growth of NPs maximized for the period of 2010 to 2014 both in Bangladesh and Sarawak, Malaysia reflecting the importance that both countries are placing on the conservation of biodiversity and the ecosystem services they provide. This is indeed a positive sign that both two countries reveal towards achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 for the global protected areas network. Overall, the study suggests that the dynamic policy-based decision-making on sustainable biodiversity protection at NPs in both countries should incorporate development with environmental, economic, social, institutional and administrative domains.

Keywords: Policy Instruments, Biodiversity, Growth of National Parks, Bangladesh and Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

National parks (NPs) are instrumental in supporting biodiversity conservation as well as providing many benefits to the society. Globally, they are on an increase. Their management requires consideration of their multiple functions to enable combination of relevant ecological, economic and social aspects (Liaison Unit Vienna, 2000). The 113,000 NPs and similar protected areas in the world cover approximately 6% of the Earth's land surface, covering some 149 million square kilometres (NPPF, 2016). In the Asian region, there are 10,900 protected areas covering 13.9% of the terrestrial environment and 1.8% of the marine and coastal areas (Juffe *et al.*, 2014). These protected areas, unfortunately, are under threat and losing biodiversity rapidly. The main threats to these protected areas are over-exploitation of biodiversity due to high population density and increasing demands from a globalised markets, as well as habitat loss and

degradation in adjacent areas. Consequently additional problems are now emerging. Among them are excessive invasive alien species, deforestation, poverty, fragmentation and illegal wildlife trade, man-made fire and other interferences that urgently need to be addressed (Juffe *et al.*, 2014).

In Sarawak, majority of people living around protected areas are indigenous groups, who are involved in tourism activities and others, particularly their traditional planting-nursing-harvesting agricrops, fishing, gathering and hunting such as in Batang Ai National Park. Meanwhile, local communities surrounding Lawachara National Park are involved in agricultural activities like agricrops, betel-leaf planting, and working in tea estates, as well as illegal logging and illicit tree-felling.

In NPs management, there are different actors namely local communities, policy-makers, municipalities, union councils and others surrounding the NPs. Policies on NPs