

# SALCRA

The Empirical Details of its  
Contribution to the  
Socio-Economic Development of  
Rural Sarawak



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Nwanesi Peter Karubi and Dayangku Norasyikin Pengiran Tejuddin

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## Preface

The attack on the oil palm industry and plantation has intensified in the last 8 years by many western governments, media, NGOs and many environmental activists. These attacks were orchestrated through documentaries, social networks, videos, ads, talks, and seminars on how oil palm plantation has decimated the forest and natural habitats of numerous species of Borneo Island. Some of these documentaries goes as far as to portray Borneo as a land that has lost about 95% of its natural forest and environment to oil palm plantations. In spite of this, these attacks are often directed at oil palm plantations in Malaysia and Indonesia. Borneo-Kalimantan and Sarawak appeared to be targeted. Therefore, in recent months, the Lembaga Minyak Sawit Malaysia (MPOB) of Sarawak has been busy organizing seminars, workshops, and visitation to oil palm smallholders of Sarawak to monitor and educate them on the Western countries' requirements.

Unfortunately, the academic community of Borneo-Kalimantan has so far failed to evaluate these claims against the positive socio-economic contributions of oil palm to the people, community, and the government of Sarawak or even that of Borneo-Kalimantan. This could be attributed to various factors, but more importantly due to the lack of in-depth empirical data on the roles and activities of institutions like SALCRA. Thus, in the absence of these data to counter the massive negative assertions by Western Media/Governments, NGOs, and environmental activities, the oil palm industry in Sarawak and Malaysia in general, could be pushed into financial privation and dwindling. Essentially, the western economy and society have more to benefit from in such a situation, especially in relation to their vegetable and olive oil industry. Therefore, through empirical research, this study examined the socio-economic contributions of SALCRA

to the people and government of Sarawak. In addition, it explored the eco-environmental strategies employed by the institution. Data from SALCRA archives, personnel, and communities that house SALCRA projects greatly provided vital details. These empirical details or information will be used to educate both the local and foreign communities on the importance of the oil palm industry (especially on the role of SALCRA) to the people of Sarawak.

This study employed qualitative research methods to probe issues relating to SALCRA activities in rural Sarawak. This study revealed that SALCRA is no doubt a catalyst for rural development in Sarawak. The institution's contribution to rural development is underreported and often overshadowed by an unreliable and over-generalization conclusion that paints the agency as an inhibitor. Often, such arguments are built around NCR land and dividends. Unfortunately, such arguments lack concrete facts and rely on hearsay. However, this study's findings indicate that SALCRA and the communities they work with are intertwined and interdependent too. We discovered that the relationship between SALCRA and the communities is more of a partnership based on mutual respect and trust. Indeed, this partnership has created wealth, knowledge, employment, and development. This report is divided into six chapters.

## Acknowledgment

This book would not be possible without the financial and social support of SALCRA management. We thank the institution for the confidence and trust it has in our ability to carry out this project. Accordingly, we express gratitude to Mr. Joseph Blandoi SALCRA's GM for giving his approval for the project to go ahead. Also, we wish to sincerely thank Ms. Marcella Shareen Mos, Mr. Ben Emang Jok, and Mr. Cyril Bodile Albert for their assistance in and outside fieldwork.

There are amazing people I would like to express my gratitude for their help throughout the writing of this book. I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have had the greatest impact on the success of this book. Thank you, Mom, Dad, Rayyan Adam, and Azman. Without your unconditional support, this book never would have come to be, and of course special gratitude to whom I treat as a mentor, Dr. Peter himself. Many thanks to SALCRA. Thank you so much (Dayangku Norasyikin).

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## Chapter One

# History and Background of SALCRA Activities in Sarawak: In the Beginning



SALCRA is not all about Oil Palm plantation or Estates. SALCRA is working hard to create environmentally friendly and at the same time feeding the state. It is a commitment to development and empowerment

# SALCRA

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SALCRA as an institution or organization is synonymous with oil palm production and plantation. Yet, this organization's agro-economic activities transcend beyond oil palm production and plantation. It is an institution created as a catalyst for rural development and growth. SALCRA's socio-economic contribution to the communities it serves has often been criticized by some quarters and acknowledged by others. Hence, this book presents an empirical side to the above divide. Thus, this book critically examines the place of SALCRA in Sarawak's search for rural development and growth.

As academicians we undertake the task of understanding the working ethos and roles of SALCRA in Sarawak. As researchers we embark on this journey of discovery bearing in mind that social sciences are bound to 'agree and disagree'. It is often these 'agrees and disagrees' that lead to empirical discovery. In this book we have explored different views or opinions regarding the working ethos and role of SALCRA as a catalyst for rural development in Sarawak. But more importantly, we have allowed data from the field to guide our conclusions and understanding of SALCRA's role in rural development in Sarawak.



Dayangku Norasyikin Pengiran Tejuddin is a lecturer in International Relations at the University Malaysia Sarawak. Prior to her career, she is currently pursuing her Ph.D. studies on Food Security and National Security Matters at the Department of International Relations Studies. She is interested in non-traditional security issues that focus on threats to human existence other than those that can be addressed through military force. She enjoys traveling and discovering new places, taking sporadic photos, and engaging in other ironic and subtle approaches to activities in her free time.



Dr Nwanesi Peter Karubi is a passionate social science researcher. His drive for empirical understanding of the social world is one of the key factors that inspired the publication of this book.

  
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