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# PROMOTING ORANG ASLI ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT AT TASIK CHINI ECOSYSTEM: A REVIEW

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### *Abstract*

In general, the Orang Asli communities of Tasik Chini were involved in several occupations. They been brought up to be a survivor not only with single job. Many of them worked within natural resources sector and also involve in community's ownership. Orang Asli in Tasik Chini also involve in entrepreneur. They are venturing into handicraft sector. Some of them are capable of attracting a business venture into their village. However, it is revealed that only 1% involved in entrepreneurial sector. The findings indicate, the successful factor for indigenous entrepreneur at Tasik Chini such are support in terms of business knowledge, financial, entrepreneurial training and facilities from the government, besides the continuous support from NGO and higher education institutions (provide a workshop or training that related to entrepreneurial skills.) Other than that, continuous monitoring from government and funding institutions, and having a good channel of networking and platform to market their products and services also contribute to the successful indigenous entrepreneur while the obstacles that are lacking of continuous monitoring from related party. They also facing with on how to market their product.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Discourse on Traditional Ecology Knowledge and the Value of Ecosystem Services

Dei points out that, Indigenous peoples' knowledge refers to the cultural traditions, the values (of the Orang Asli), their beliefs, and the views of the local people selected through reference to knowledge taken from the West. However, some local knowledge is a direct product of the experience of their direct relation to nature and their relation to the social world between themselves and their external treasures. In other words, this traditional knowledge is also comprehensive and an inclusive form of the concept of knowledge in general (Dei, 1993). Through this view, it can be said that knowledge is everything that results from human experience of their relationship to self and what is around them. Included is how humans provide an understanding of nature and also the ecosystems that are in front of them. As also mentioned by Hiebert and Van Rees (1998) as traditions passed down from generation to generation from generation to generation now as part of their (human) effort in maintaining life and harmonizing with the ecosystem. Traditional knowledge is something that is studied and actualized continuously in connecting people with plants, soil, and water (Hiebert & Van Rees, 1998).

A further explanation of traditional ecological knowledge is to refer to an intense relation of man to nature. Traditional knowledge in this regard is something that is cumulative and dynamic. This traditional knowledge, as mentioned above, is the history of how people socially, economically, environmentally, spiritually and politically change interact with themselves as well as with what is beyond them. The quality and quantity of this traditional knowledge go beyond the rules of gender, age, social status, profession, and intellectual ability. Thus, discussing the traditional ecological knowledge, meaning to try to dissect the human relationship with bio-diversity by referring to cultural studies, economic, political and spiritual relations with the land. In addition, traditional ecological knowledge is also built on groups in the community from time to time living in close proximity to the environment as part of a classified system and empirical observation results related to local ecosystems that affect resource use (Beverly-Qamaniruaq Caribou Management Board, 1996). In other words, the relationship between humans and nature then gives impact how they have constructed the value of an ecosystem, built up from generation to generation. Related to the value of the service ecosystem, it can be seen in the view of (De Groot et al., 2002) as a pluralistic assessment. A plural assessment here means that the assessment of the service ecosystem is not only concerned with what is economically valuable.

The concept of value here goes beyond the ecological, social, political, cultural and economic studies themselves. This is closely related to the view of traditional ecological knowledge, which also involves an integral aspect. Even mentioned in the De Groot et al.'s study (2002), these diverse values are also values that are interconnected with each other and then become a unity of service ecosystem values. With regard to the diversity of values of the service ecosystem, it can be drawn into partial sections into economic, political, cultural, and ecological values to gain a clearer understanding. These partial studies can be categorized as referring to the thinkers of the thinkers as follows: Costanza et al. (1998) and Farber et al. (2002) in economic and ecological studies. Norton (1995) who examines from the socio-cultural perspective of the value of the service ecosystem. Then, for other ecological and economic studies, the emphasis on ecological studies is Daily et al. (2000). The studies above all start from whatever (values) can be generated from the existence of an ecosystem. The ecosystem, in this case, is not a study of objects

manifested as a mere material, but more than that is what can be raised from the ecosystem as a service. The economic value of a service ecosystem, for example, refers to something that can be used as a commodity as well as a contribution to an individual that gives rise to a profit value (as implementation appears to be paid for something).

This economic value can also be the marginal cost incurred from the existence of an ecosystem refers to the utilization of services that can be raised. The ecological value of an ecosystem (service) itself refers to matters concerning the existence of the ecosystem itself in relation to ecological processes and direct utilization by humans. In this case, ecological assessment can be physical, biophysical, and chemical rules and everything that can be produced and directly beneficial to humans. The value concept of the last service ecosystem is socially and culturally (as well as a political aspect). Referring to Norton as mentioned above it can be said that the value of the service ecosystem referring to this social, cultural and political aspect relates to the value process compared to the actual entity. In that sense, the processes that exist within interact with the ecosystem itself, are related to the human itself with other communities, as well as with the ecosystems encountered. Also included are assessments of each individual and group as part of a preference for the value contained in a service ecosystem. Findings by Seftyono (2011) indicate that the government should be able to coordinate and undertake a bottom up approach in the formation of eco-tourism policies and programs in protecting and securing Tasik Chini ecosystem. This includes empowering local communities to increase their potential. Meanwhile, findings by Ikävalko et al. (2018) show how IoT ecosystem actors may take the roles of ideator, designer, or intermediary in different IoT design layers, and they recommend this perspective to better understand and describe ecosystem business models.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In general, the communities of Tasik Chini were involved in several occupations. They been brought up to be a survivor not only with single job. Many of them worked within natural resources sector and also involve in community's ownership. For example, in fishing they have their own territory or certain spot in that particular lake. Based on our informal discussion with the secretary of JKKK Kampung Gumum, everybody knew whose areas and who have the rights to fish and collect forest herbs. Orang Asli in Kampung Gumum also involve in entrepreneur. They are venturing into handicraft sector. On average the Orang Asli entrepreneur earned the least by RM500 per month or the most RM2000 monthly. Some of them are capable of attracting a business venture into their Kampung. However, Habibah et al. (2010) reveal that only 1% involved in entrepreneurial sector. The result also indicate that cost of living are worsen than before. From this discussion, it tells that some Orang Asli may has talent in entrepreneurial, but not many are involve. In fact, entrepreneur is one of the effective way in surviving current economic depression. Thus, this study aims to study current entrepreneur development.

## **3. Research Questions**

A series of semi-structured interview questions or open-ended questions were developed with the intention to obtain in-depth and detailed information on the investigated matters related to the attributes that support the success of Orang Asli entrepreneurs reaching the mainstream tourism-related businesses.

These open-ended questions were used to avoid any potentially biased responses and with the idea to discover rather than prescribed. The questions were designed interactively to elicit and develop a relaxing and friendly atmosphere during the interview.

1. What are the success factor of Orang Asli Entrepreneur?
2. What are the obstacles facing potential Orang Asli entrepreneurs?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

From the interview session, it tells that some Orang Asli may has talent in entrepreneurial, but not many are involved. In fact, entrepreneur is one of the effective way in surviving current economic depression. Thus, this project aims to study current entrepreneur development. Following on, two objectives are developed: i) to study success factor of Orang Asli Entrepreneur, and ii) to identify some of the obstacles facing potential Orang Asli entrepreneurs, thus allow better access by Orang Asli wanting to set up their own business.

#### **5. Research Methods**

This review based on the findings from a focus group discussion with Prof. Dato' Sri Dr. Mushrifah Idris, Director of Tasik Chini Research Centre (University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)) and interviewing session with five Tasik Chini indigenous entrepreneurs and observation from field visits at Kg Gumum, Kg Chendahan, Kg Tanjung Puput and Kg Melai . The findings also based on the previous literature review from past researchers.

#### **6. Findings**

For the findings, after a few meetings with Orang Asli entrepreneur, the information that needed to answer the objectives of the study obtained.

##### **6.1. Ecological and Indigenous Issues**

The ecological value that can be enjoyed either directly or indirectly from Tasik Chini is forest and water resources (Kutty et al., 2009). The results of the waters of the fish are enjoyed by themselves if the excess is sold to the Malay people in Kampung Belimbing. Besides the fish, in 1960 - 1970s the water in Tasik Chini is still very clear and many crocodiles in it. By locals, these crocodiles are caught and hulled and then sold to businessman which is usually Malay citizens to then sold out Chini. Another thing that obtained from the existence of ecological Tasik Chini is forest products. Since 1970-1980an forest logging has started to occur by local residents and outsiders but using equipment that is still traditional. The result of this logging usually sold to Tokai (big bosses) who then sell the woods out of Tasik Chini. In addition to the logs taken by thoroughly harvesting, the other richness gained from the presence of forests around Tasik Chini is the presence of herbal plants. These herbs used to be used only by local people for their own purposes, however, they are now beginning to utilize the herbs more economically by way of processing them first. This more economical use is not conducted by the Orang Asli people themselves, but with the help of outsiders.

This herbal plant itself, as well as 'benefited' results, is also used as part of the tour. In relation to tourism, the use of these herbs is to mark the plants in the forest, so that when travellers come, they will know what is in the woods around Chini. Furthermore, in addition to producing timber that can be sold and also herbs, Tasik Chini forest also produces materials to make homes around, as well as materials for handicrafts. This handicraft which then gives also social-political value to the local community, especially now is Encik Baharin so as to be able to interact with the government. In addition to the government, through this handicraft also local people began to interact with NGOs who have attention to the issue orang Asli and surrounding natural issues. With good interaction with NGOs and also this government then Encik Baharin started promoting his products internationally. In this case, the one that has been done is to follow Malaysia Week 2008 in London. Lake Chini (especially Mount Chini is actually a hill) it also has ecological value as a facilitator of water circulation process from mountain to lake. This is possible because Mount Chini has several tributaries flowing into Chini. The existence of 'anak sungai' is important considering the large flow that usually comes from the Pahang river hampered by a dam made by the government (Idris et al., 2009).

## **6.2. Ecological Issues and Ecological Degradation in Chini Lake**

Tasik Chini ecology that in the 1970s was able to attract local and foreign tourists turned out in the range of the 1990s began to decline in quality. Water pollution of Lake Chini is caused by a dam that makes the water not circulate properly. The formation of the dam was carried out by the Malaysian government in 1994, which originally had a uniform height, but due to severe ecosystem problems (such as dead trees) then the dam was modified up to four times including cutting in parts. This dam is the cause of the flow of water becomes not smooth, because if the rainy season comes, water and mud from the Pahang River can enter the lake but that can flow back into the river is just water. In addition, the flow of water from the Pahang River also brings the garbage that flows into Tasik Chini but cannot get out again. This dam can be said to have a significant influence on the changing conditions of Tasik Chini (Mohamad & Toriman, 2007; Murugadas et al, 1999).

In addition to dam problems, water quality decline in Tasik Chini is also caused by the mining of iron ore, both legal and illegal. Legal mining that has this license is outside Tasik Chini and some distance away from the lake. However, illegal iron ore mining is located in the forest around Lake Chini. Illegal iron ore mining on the banks of the Chini lake, which closed in 2009, caused the water to be indicated containing iron ore and other metal content (Ebrahimpour & Mushrifah, 2008). This is the cause of some time ago, according to one health worker in Felda Chini 2, some Orang Asli people are experiencing itching. Another cause of contamination is related to the activity of the oil palm fields on the edge of Lake Chini. This is due to the use of modern equipment and also drugs to inhibit the growth of weeds around palm tree trees. These drugs are also poisonous when the rainy season comes to soak into the soil and flow into the lake. Solutions put forward for ecological problems are actually quite diverse. For example, the tributaries that descend from Mount Chini through the assistance of the JPS (Jabatan Pengairan dan Saliran) began to be opened from some damage due to garbage trash etc. However, based on the explanation of Encik Baharin besides waiting for the policy of JPS, there are times when the streams are cleaned up by an initiative by the local community and also foreigners who visit Tasik Chini. This is because the problems in Tasik Chini are

usually delivered through the PPTC (Pusat Penyelidikan Tasik Chini, UKM) and JKKK have been actively submitted to the government, but they do not really know the extent of the follow-up. Here then comes the political problem too, which can actually be utilized as the development of the political value of society with the government.

### **6.3. Political and Social Issues With regard to Chini Lake**

With regard to the resources available in Tasik Chini, the Orang Asli people politically acquired the JKKK structure in 2004, which was first chaired by Encik Ismail. However, according to the description of Encik Baharin and himself, the strength of JKKK Kampung Gumum is not strong, one of the signs in the absence of government intervention. Thus, in order to strengthen the community organization, it is still related to the resources available in Tasik Chini, the local community and there are also Felda Chini residents with assistance from NGO SUSDEN (The Sustainable Development Network Malaysia) to create one own institution namely PPTC. This PPTC is one of the institutions filled with the majority by Orang Asli in an attempt to save Tasik Chini. This PPTC idea was raised in 2002, established in 2004 and annexed in 2007 with its chairman Encik Baharin. In addition to the above political values, there is also the social value of the existence of Tasik Chini for Orang Asli. One of the social values of this is the existence of a good interaction between the people of the lake with Kampung Belimbing and other communities outside Chini. The form of social interaction is with the potential of Tasik Chini, causing some members of the community outside Tasik Chini to come to Tasik Chini and try to find a source of livelihood there. Interestingly, in some ways, local people are not bothered by these foreigners. One of the foreigners is a citizen of Bangladeshi descent who live not far from Chini. Although, there is a concern if there is an outside community who want to live in Gumum area, moreover master the property in Kampung Gumum. This means that the villagers of Gumum want to have a proportional profit from every resource utilization in Tasik Chini. Examples of the utilization of resources such as the construction of resorts or jam around the Chini River.

Some Orang Asli elders want their citizens to earn income there. In other words, they not only have the area to be used by others but cannot use it alone. Although it is admitted by one of the citizens, that the land they own is a land with no private license. The consequence of this situation is the use by others who have the permission of the government then it is legally justifiable. On the other hand, there are also Malay residents who have also existed and lived near Tasik Chini, as mentioned earlier is a resident of Kampung Belimbing which also has been interacting with Orang Asli people since long. Based on the narrative of Encik Baharin, there are two teachers from Kampung Belimbing who once taught in Kampung Gumum. Despite having a very mutualistic relationship in the past, the relationship between Kampung Gumum and Kampung Belimbing communities began to stretch when it started to build roads to Tasik Chini. The result of this development is that Orang Asli people no longer directly 'need' the people of Kampung Belimbing to interact, but they have other alternatives in Felda Chini, Pekan, this social phenomenon leads to segregation in society, which should not arise only because of government policies related to development. Because both of them have a political and cultural identity that must still exist and connect with each other, especially both can be the entrance to Tasik Chini. This identity is necessary as a manifestation of the values believed (Preston, 1997) in other words the relationship between Melayu people in Kampung Belimbing

with Orang Asli should also be built, within the framework of cooperation to increase tourism in Tasik Chini. Orang Asli directly faced with the lake and the Malays who have access through the Pahang River. Unlike the other border community that is Felda Chini 2, which although there on the edge of Tasik Chini but not directly take benefits, except their palm plantations on the edge of the lake.

#### **6.4. Cultural and Ecological Issues**

The discussion on cultural issues related to the existence of Tasik Chini is something quite interesting also to be studied. This begins with how the people around Tasik Chini, both Orang Asli and the people of Kampung Belimbing in the lonely region of Tasik Chini have some interaction with Tasik Chini in the context of beliefs about the visible and invisible. For the Malay itself, as the elders and heads of JKKK Kampung said, that some of the villagers had interactions with forest dwellers around Lake Chini a few years ago. Regardless of the true context or not in a religious perspective, this shows that they in some ways believe that what they do to Tasik Chini will have an effect on other 'natural' reactions around Lake Chini. Although for now, the habit has begun to disappear in the daily life of Kampung Belimbing residents. The above is slightly different from what is in the Orang Asli people. As well as having certain beliefs about the 'other worlds' that keep Tasik Chini and the surrounding forests, it turns out that cultural diversity also extends to the formation of cultural richness in the form of traditional dances. This is in line with what is meant by the cultural value of ecosystem in the form of adoption of human learning outcomes on the ecosystem faced (Holden, 2004). Though not typical of the Chuy Native Orang Asli, the Labi-Labi Dance is a dance adopted from their understanding of the living Labi-Labi animals underwater. This traditional dance itself is now gone, but according to one of the Orang Asli elders in the region, the existence of the dance is about to be raised again, as part of restoring cultural wealth as well as attracting tourists. The source of the tourism problem itself has at least been read by some Orang Asli people. One of the problems facing the Orang Asli in Tasik Chini is an attempt to revive the potential possessions of local people.

The Orang Asli Tasik Chini in some of the views of its community members seem to have awareness for the improvement of the condition of the lake is still weak. Even to develop local potential most of them still have a pragmatic paradigm and followers. One of these initiative and visionary attitudes is owned by Encik Baharin. Encik Baharin is one of the elder people who participate in various training and projects undertaken by both government and NGOs. The relationship between the 'marginalized' and the policymaker is one of the supporting aspects of development (Robb, 1998). This is why the NGO, the Campus, and the government often provide facilities for him to run projects related to Orang Asli or Tasik Chini. Figure 01 shows the picture of researchers with one of the Orang Asli entrepreneur.



**Figure 01.** Researchers with 'akar kayu' entrepreneur (Pak Awang) at Kg. Chendahan, Tasik Chini

## 7. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the successful factor for indigenous entrepreneur at Tasik Chini such are support in terms of business knowledge, financial, entrepreneurial training and facilities from the government, besides the continuous support from NGO and higher education institutions (provide a workshop or training that related to entrepreneurial skills.) Other than that, continuous monitoring from government and funding institutions, and having a good channel of networking and platform to market their products and services also contribute to the successful indigenous entrepreneur. Currently, the indigenous entrepreneur at Tasik Chini, facing with the obstacles that are lacking of continuous monitoring from related party. They also facing with on how to market their product

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