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Local Residents' Awareness towards the Issue of Mangrove Degradation in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia

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Abstract

Mangroves in Malaysia reside coastlines and the largest areas of mangrove are in the Northern Sabah. They sheltered at the shores of the west coast. Over four decades since 1980, mangroves are recorded to be declining due to various causes. Aquaculture practices implemented in the first decade; in Peninsular Malaysia was the key reason of mangrove depleting during the years. Public participation and their awareness are considered as important components in conserving the mangrove areas. Thus, the research was conducted to discover local residents awareness towards the issue of mangrove degradation in Kuala Selangor. A questionnaire survey was employed to a total of 103 respondents in Kuala Selangor. The findings suggest that lack of local residents' awareness due to several reasons. In this regards, this research is to study the local residents' awareness on the importance of mangrove areas.

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Keywords: Mangrove forest; degradation; awareness; Kuala Selangor

1. Introduction

This study is to emphasise the awareness level of the residents in the management of mangrove forest in Kuala Selangor. Irrespective of the fact that on that point are many profound researchers conducted several studies on the

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management of mangrove forest, there are nonetheless a bunch of doubts and inquiries on that topic. Such as; how far do the local resident's actions and awareness make a difference in mangrove rehabilitation? Several researchers have come to an agreement on the idea of mangrove depletion all around the world; in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and many other countries. The reasons for these happenings resulted from human activities; for example, conversion to agriculture and salt production, coastal industrialization, conversion to aquaculture and others. For instance, in Thailand, mangrove forests are lost to shrimp ponds and coastal developments (Macintosh, Ashton & Havanon, 2002). Moreover, difficulties in implementations, budget shortage and lack of experts in the matter make it harder for the authority to manage mangrove forests in Kuala Selangor.

The mangrove forests are seen as dump land and were not worth of looking and taking care of it. They are smelly, muddy and carry no beauty to the eye of a beholder. However, few studies have been conducted and together they come to a conclusion saying that mangroves are one of the great wonders of the environment. It has several criteria, making it a nature's defence against the harshness of the environment. Mangrove forests are a protection belt to the coastlines. With the mangrove gone, tsunami, waves and wind easily penetrated into the coastal and causing damage to nearby residents. A disaster that hits Aceh should be a lesson and guidance for us to keep the belt safe and sound so that in the future, it will protect us from the harsh waves and tsunami per se.

In essence, this study provides a better understanding of the residents on their awareness and acceptance regarding this issue. Furthermore, the economy of Kuala Selangor plays an important part in the development of Selangor per se. With that, the resident's awareness is crucial and significant in planning a better head for Kuala Selangor at par with the increasing number of residents and the environment.

Thus, the residents' awareness and involvement in this pertaining matter is important and crucial in helping the authority or planning department to plan ahead for the development of Kuala Selangor. Knowledge of the residents determines the effectiveness of rehabilitation program done by either the Government body or the Non-Government body. A good and successful environment management depends on the awareness that depicted entirely in accommodating the issues and problem while rehabilitation programs are well implemented and enforced. Therefore, it is the argument of this research that there is not enough awareness in some of the residents, and the lack of this awareness might just be the reason for poor participation in mangrove rehabilitation programs.

2. Methodology

This study has two components where first a collection of several literature reviews with as many keywords related to the topic such as community involvement, managed mangrove, mangrove depletion, public awareness and wetland management was conducted. The research study was carried out to form the theoretical foundation of the study and to aid the analysis of the outcome. The second component of the study is the research questions, objective and questionnaire formulated by the researcher.

The aim of this study is to acknowledge, the awareness level and education spread of the residents in Kuala Selangor concerning on the issue of mangrove depletion. Based on the literature review, field works and questionnaire survey (sampling size is 103) were deployed to provide a better understanding of the awareness from the local community on the participation at the local level.

3. Literature review

Studies on mangroves and its' ecosystem are massive in number and worldwide in the division. They provide an overview of the mangrove ecosystem and its' biodiversity, management aspects, status and trends, values and depleting causes (Field, 1998; Kamaruzaman & Dahlan, 2008; Food & Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2007; Macintosh, Ashton, and Havanon, 2002; and Kathiresan, n.d.). Mangrove lands are always described as an 'eyesore' (Kamaruzaman & Dahlan, 2008) and 'wasteland' (Choudhury, n.d.) that carries meaningless existence of it. However, awareness of mangrove loss has opened the eyes of many profound researchers and other stakeholders worldwide.

As a matter of fact, knowledge on this issue has been increasing recently and has led more efforts and actions in protecting the ecosystem. Rehabilitation and restoration programs are initiated and increasingly organized by either local authorities or international commitment organizations. Rehabilitation is defined as an act of getting the

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