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## Sustainable Social Services: Human and Nature in Harmony

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### Abstract

Borneo is famous among nature lovers for its rainforest. Its rainforest is the largest forested land-area in Asia. The island's forested landscapes are adorned with marvelous green mountains and valleys, and interlaced with windy rivers. Borneo's rainforest also has always generated a lot of international interest, especially in respect of its continuous destruction and other conservation-related threats. Large lands particularly in the sub-urban and interior area of Borneo are idle lands. Most of the time, the natives occupied these lands with agricultural activities. Sabah is one of the states in Malaysia well known for its nature's beauty. In fact one of the native tribes in Sabah creatively used their lands to generate extra earnings while most deforest their lands for oil palm plantation purposes. The Dusun, one of the tribes in Sabah, work in harmony with the nature. Other than utilizing their lands for agricultural purposes but at some point, the lands are left unattended. The Dusun had used their lands for social services initiatives that pay them off. They run various ecological-friendly recreational programs and activities on a hundred acre naturally beautiful riverside idle land in a rural area near Kota Kinabalu, the capital city of Sabah. This provides source of extra income for its host community. By partnering with a venture, the local community had converted their idle lands into a privately owned natural park. The partnership had created legal groups and ventures to sustain the land and areas surrounding it. Natural resource conservation, sustainable tourism and development of society were among the approaches employed by the partnership to manage their social services initiatives. Thus, this paper focuses on the usage of idle land by the host community for social services purposes. The initiatives for sustainable social services adopted by the Dusun will be further discussed in this paper.

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## 1. Introduction

Borneo is a huge island located in South-East Asia, in between the Indian and Pacific oceans. It is the third largest island in the world, after Greenland and New Guinea. Borneo is famous among nature lovers for its rainforest. Borneo rainforest is the largest forested land-area in Asia. The island's forested landscapes are adorned with marvellous green mountains and valleys, and interlaced with windy rivers. Borneo's rainforest also has always generated a lot of international interest, especially in respect of its continuous destruction and other conservation-related threats. Large lands particularly in the sub-urban and interior area of Borneo are idle lands.

Sabah is one of thirteen States in the federation of Malaysia. It is well known for its nature's beauty. Sabah is located in the Northeast of Borneo, bordering the Indonesian state of Kalimantan, the Southern Philippines, and the Malaysian state of Sarawak. The surface of Sabah is 73,619 square kilometres. Most of its population live in or near the coastal regions, as the interior areas are quite inhospitable with mountains and dense rainforests. The state capital of Sabah is Kota Kinabalu, located on the west coast. The largest ethnic group in Sabah is the Kadazandusun.

The kadazandusun most of the time occupied the lands with agricultural activities. They in fact creatively use their lands to generate extra earnings while most deforest their lands for oil palm plantation purposes. The tribes known as the Dusun, the residents of a rural area in Sabah work in harmony with the nature. Other than utilizing their lands for agricultural purposes and at some point the lands are left unattended, the Dusun had pooled and used their lands for social services initiatives that pay them off. As claim by Wich, Gaveau, Abram, Ancrenaz, Baccini & Brend (2012) local tribes have lived in harmony with nature for thousands of years and they know how to tend to the land and look after their precious rainforests. Although at present, land use planning is more driven by vested interests of which directly and immediately meant for economic gains, rather than by approaches that take into consideration social equity and environmental sustainability (Ellis & Pontius 2007).

Thus, this paper focuses on the usage of idle land by the Dusun who is the host community of a village along the Crocker Range for social services purposes and to discuss whether their customary practices has contributed to sustainability initiatives in their village.

### 1.1. *The Dusun*

The term "Kadazandusun" is created to include all indigenous people of Dusunic origin. It is the largest indigenous group in Sabah. The various Dusun groups of the north (such as the Rungus of the Kudat area), the interior (Tambunan area) and around the foothills of Mount Kinabalu were only 'discovered' much later when the British North Borneo Chartered Company was well established. Most dwelling areas of the Dusun were somehow made accessible by roads during the log boom of the 70's and 80's. Yet there are still villages of the Dusun especially those along the Crocker Range are so remote that one to two days jungle trekking is required to join them. Many of the more remote Dusun villages are surrounded by rubber, banana, tobacco and coconut plantations. They are still very much marked by rice planting and hunting, the work in orchards and plantations. The Dusun are traditionally farmers. They are paddy cultivators and primarily grow rice as a food crop (Kurus, Tangau & Tuaran, n.d). The Dusun societies are defined by close kinship, with the family being the most important unit, followed by the village. For the purpose of this paper, the Dusun community residing along Crocker Range in a village name Natai and their customary practices for sustainability purposes is observed.

## 2. The partnership between the Dusun and a venture

The partnership between the Dusun and a venture name Adventure Cultural Village (ACV) had turned naturally beautiful idle lands in a village name Natai into source of extra income for its host community. Natai is located near Kota Kinabalu, the capital city of Sabah. The partnership is currently operating on a hundred acres riverside property of the Dusun, where they had converted the land into a privately owned natural park. Thus, for the purpose of the partnership initiatives, they name the property as Kasalagan Park. They run varies ecological-friendly recreational programs and activities in the park. The partnership also had created legal groups and venture to sustain Kasalagan Park and areas surrounding it from unattended or further damaged by creating an environment of opportunity though interactive and profitable but yet still conserving natural resources and promoting sustainable tourism and at the

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