Learning from the Tasik Chini Orang Asli Community

From April 7-17 2011, the API community carried out the last of five country site visits among the Tasik Chini community in Malaysia. This is part of a regional project entitled “Community-Based Initiatives toward Human Ecological Balance” to study communities’ responses towards threats to their ecosystem.

The common theme connecting all project sites across Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia is the subject of water. Each community in these project sites experienced different responses towards the degradation of their eco-system. The mission of the API Fellows is to connect these experiences into the national and the regional dimension. By making the connections from local, to national and regional, the API community seeks to understand the common threads that bind the communities in these five countries and to rationalize the trends and policy spaces within which these events were occurring.

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The Music Runs Through It p. 9

Tomoko Momiyama’s collective composition project in Kali Code and the first cultural event in the region that brings traumatized community together.
The Fellows participating in the study were Michi Tomioaka from Japan, Erni Budiwanti and Yon Yonaria from Indonesia, Glecy Atienza and Jose Estuar (Jae) from the Philippines, and Penchom Saetang and Karnt Thassanaphak from Thailand. The Malaysian hosts were Hezri Adnan (RPWG Leader), Henry Chan (Deputy RPWG Leader), Yeoh Seng Guan (Representing the API Regional Committee), Josie Fernandez (core Working Group member), Colin Nicholas, Siti Khadijah, Mohammad Salleh, Chan Chee Khoon, Phua Kai Lit, Zawiah Yahya, Kam Suan Peng, and Fadzilah Cooke. Dorothy Fernandez-Roberts and Noraini Dhiauddin from the API Partner Institution, and Mira Sabri, our research assistant provided logistic and administrative support. An artist and photo-enthusiast, Victor Chin facilitated our photo-clinic sessions.

Community leaders from the Tasik Chini also contributed to our program. They were the headman Batin Awang Alok, Norhayati Abdullah, Baharin Sunda, Ismail Ibrahim and Poleng Duwin. Many individuals also supported our visit.

We participated in three categories of activities to better understand our host Orang Asli community’s response to the degrading lake surroundings. One was through field observations to various sites within the lake area. The other was by interacting with and listening to our hosts through formal and informal dialogues. The third was through self-reflection on our observations and the issues that we have learnt.

**Interaction and Dialogues**

Our first activity was a half-day Orientation Workshop on the study theme and an overview of the 9-day activity with the Tasik Chini Orang Asli community.

On Day 2, on the morning of our first day at Tasik Chini, we participated in presentations made by our resource persons from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia’s Tasik Chini Research Centre namely Professor Mushniah Idris and Dr. Halimaton Saadiah Hashim. The subjects were the issue of lake degradation and efforts by both the Malaysian Federal and Pahang State Governments in restoring the environment through a UNESCO Biosphere initiative. Professor Hood Salleh, an anthropologist and an authority on Orang Asli gave a historical over-view of the community accompanied by Norhayati Abdullah from Tasik Chini who gave her perspective on the community’s eco-tourism and ethnobotanical activities.

On the evening of Day 2, we prepared a communal meal with our hosts. The dinner for the whole community of Kampung Gumum was held in the football field. Our talented Fellows and individuals from the community leavened up the atmosphere with a karaoke session.

On the third night at Tasik Chini, we had dinner with our community resource persons and their families. After dinner, we had a community dialogue entitled “Listening to Local Wisdom.” Our resource persons were the headman Batin Awang Alok and Norhayati Abdullah, and the past and present Chairmen of the Village Development and Security Committee, Ismail Ibrahim and Poleng Duwin.

On the afternoon of the fourth day, Senior Officers from the Federal Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) came from Kuala Lumpur to give us an insight of the problem of the weir—the primary cause of the lake degradation. We learnt that the DID was requested to find solutions only when the problem posed by the weir had become insurmountable. This dialogue helped us comprehend the delicate manner of state-and federal-governments relationship and intergovernmental agencies in dealing with matters that cut across the jurisdictions of multiple government institutions.

On the fourth evening, we visited the community at Kampung Gumum and held separate dialogues with the headman and elders, and with women on gender issues. In the following days, we continued visiting the communities for further discussions and cooking and having meals with our hosts.

**Field observations and Interviews**

We conducted our first observation of Tasik Chini lake by using boats to explore the lake surroundings. Our plan was to catch the sun rise above the horizon. Unfortunately, when we finally got on the lake, the sun was already up—all the effort for waking before dawn gone to waste. However, our patience was rewarded when the sunlight pierced through the thick clouds and lingered for a long while. Everyone was mesmerized and took photos of the sunlight. We then explored the lake and observed signs that indicated the lake degradation.

We then visited Tanjung Puput for breakfast with the community. Tanjung Puput was the original site of the community before the majority of the people resettled at Kampung Gumum, the main village linked by road. After breakfast, we had a dialogue with Baharin Sunta, the leader of Tanjung Puput, who provided us with a deep insight of problems faced by his people. He lamented on the degrading lake environment, problems dealing with traders, competition on using limited resources by the people themselves, and the effects of pollution from the iron mines and surrounding plantations. After that, we traveled downriver to the estuary of the Chini River to look at the weir and navigation-lock to enable boats pass through the obstacle. The weir blocking water flow is undoubtedly the primary cause of the lake degradation (see article by Penchom and Karnt, p. 6 -7).

On the third day, we observed the community’s land and forest-resource use. Group One focused on the community’s land and forest-resource use. Group Two led by Batin Awang tracked further into the forest (see Jose Atanacio L. Estuar’s article, p. 5). Meanwhile, Group Three visited...
New Hope on Tasik Chini’s Horizon

Josie M. Fernandez, MALAYSIA FELLOW YEAR 2006-2007

The Tasik Chini inland lake system, which is the second-largest freshwater lake in Peninsular Malaysia, is facing severe threats due to inappropriate development. It was adopted as the API Regional Project and provided the baseline work for the Forest Governance Integrity (FGI) Programme of Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) to take up the challenge of balancing ecological and human considerations in the area.

During more than two years of community engagement, the Malaysia API Regional Project Workshop Group had many opportunities to understand the issues and challenges confronting the Orang Asli community as well as to identify the stakeholders. The API Regional Project managed with its limited resources and time to achieve some amount of real community engagement. Nevertheless, a number of Malaysian API Fellows have continued to play an advocacy role in bringing the plight of Tasik Chini and its local communities to the attention of civil society groups and the media.

The FGI Programme of TI-M picked up from where API had left off. In October 2011, the TI-M team embarked on a fact-finding trip to assess the conditions at Tasik Chini through the use of geospatial technology (primarily Google Earth) and meetings with representatives from the local community. The situation at Tasik Chini had deteriorated far more than the TI-M team had anticipated. The Google images showed:

- Extensive palm oil plantation expansion
- Sedimentation in the lake area
- Mining operations
- Conversion of water catchment areas into plantations

Discussions were also held with the local communities who highlighted the following:

- Water quality had rapidly deteriorated
- Environmental degradation of Tasik Chini
- Spawning area of fish species like ratten
- Rapid loss of the beautiful sacred lotus (Nelumbo nucifera)
- The diminishing aesthetic value of Tasik Chini

An Orang Asli commented that he would be lucky to sell one blowpipe a week to tourists. Clearly, inappropriate policies and development choices have marginalized the Orang Asli whose lives are dependent on Lake Chini’s wetlands and forests.

Conference

Together with the Orang Asli communities and several Malaysian API fellows, TI-M decided to hold a conference to examine strategies to reverse the decline of Tasik Chini. API Fellows Dr. Henry Chan, Dr. Hedzri Adnan, and Josie Fernandez

Conclusion

The study visit resulted in various products, ranging from banners, and postcards given to the community for their own sales, a pictorial book, an audio-visual documentary on Tasik Chini and follow-up engagement of Fellows with organizations (for example Transparency International Malaysia). It also contributes to a chapter on the API regional book, and a documentary featuring the five country sites.

Henry Chan currently is Head of Conservation Sarawak, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Malaysia)

Josie M. Fernandez is Secretary General of Transparency International, Malaysia.
assisted as resource persons and coordinated the attendance of Orang Asli representatives at the conference.

On November 26, 2011 TI-M organised a Workshop “Care to Action: Multi-Pronged Strategy Needed to Reverse the Decline of Tasik Chini.” The workshop brought together 55 stakeholders from various federal and state government agencies, local community representatives of Tasik Chini, NGOs, academia and media to discuss solutions to the challenges confronting Tasik Chini.

In his opening address, Dr. Azimuddin Bahari of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Malaysia highlighted that “In addition to the environmental conservation strategy there must be multi-pronged strategies based on the principles of sustainability, good governance and recognition of the community, particularly the Jakun community as the guardians of the locality. The aspirations and cultural practices of the local community must be respected in the course of economic development in the Tasik Chini area and this can only be achieved through good governance”.

Various speakers including API Fellows recounted the damage caused by tailings from mining operations and agro-chemical leachate being washed into the lake. Perhaps the most poignant testimony came from the headman of the local community Tok Batin Awang Alok, who spoke simply and feelingly about the effects of the environmental degradation of Tasik Chini on the livelihoods of the local community. Again and again he recounted the differences between the days when Tasik Chini had not been touched by progress and the indigenous communities’ circumstances today. “In the 1960s, we were truly prosperous. There were ample fish and forest products like rattan. Today, tourism has declined. Why? Fish have declined. Why? After the timber was gone came mining. It is difficult for the Orang Asli to make a living.”

Policy makers, representatives of state and federal agencies, the academia and civil society agreed that as a result of mismanagement of its catchment, Lake Chini is choking from pollutants from mining activities, chemical run off from plantations, noxious weeds and oxygen depletion.

Resolutions
The workshop participants therefore drew a number of resolutions and action plans to reverse the decline of Tasik Chini and outlined proposals to preserve the intrinsic values of Tasik Chini’s heritage, adopt sustainable resource management of various resources, halt development around the catchment area and promote equity in development opportunities for its local communities. The participants recognised that restoration of the ecological integrity of the area and the rights of the local communities would require political will.

However, participants concluded that despite the obstacles involved, all efforts to restore the Tasik Chini ecosystem are long overdue. If the damage to Tasik Chini is not reversed, several participants warned that it may lose its status as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Based on the resolutions and action plans, it was agreed that a memorandum to reverse the decline of Tasik Chini would be submitted to the Prime Minister of Malaysia as the Tasik Chini area falls under his parliamentary constituency.

Endorsements by Orang Asli
On March 30, 2012, a draft memorandum was presented to the local communities of Tasik Chini for their review and comments. About 100 representatives from nine villages participated very actively in the meeting on the memorandum held at Kampung Gumum in Tasik Cini. The representatives reiterated that many efforts had been undertaken, including a petition to the state government of Pahang to halt the deteriorating environmental conditions and preserve their ancestral territory and protect their livelihoods. A number of initiatives were introduced to improve the lake’s water quality and community based income generating projects such as handicrafts, but the efforts to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the local community failed.

A senior member of the local community captured her community’s indignation and frustration at their plight when she said “I feel I am boxed in. I am not free as I was to wander through the forest to look for plants or herbs. When I walk to the right, there is a plantation and I am told to turn back. When I walk to the left, the mining operations turn me away. When I go to the lake, the water is too dangerous to be used. I do not know where to go. We feel suffocated and that we have lost our land and our rights. This is our land and we have no place to go!”

The Memorandum was endorsed by nine villages around Tasik Chini as well as six civil society organisations.

Presentation of Memorandum
Eleven representatives of the local community and six civil society officials submitted the Memorandum to Reverse the Decline of Tasik Chini to the Prime Minister, Najib bin Tun Razak on 10 April 2012. The Memorandum was received by Muhammad Ammir Haron, Senior Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. During the 90-minute meeting at the Prime Minister’s office, the local community representatives appealed for immediate intervention by the Prime Minister as their Member of Parliament to take measures to rehabilitate Tasik Chini, improve the socio-economic conditions of the local communities and act on the proposals in the Memorandum.

A Press Conference was held outside the Prime Minister’s office and several members of the media were present. Both senior and younger members of the local community spoke to the media. They were free to speak. After all, they were in the grounds of the office of their Member of Parliament.

Prime Minister Najib Acts
The Prime Minister’s Office has informed TI-M that representatives from the Prime Minister’s Office visited Tasik Chini and met with the local community to assess the situation at Lake Chini and some immediate measures have been taken. The Prime Minister spoke to the Chief Minister of Pahang and has requested him to act on the resolutions in the Memorandum. On the Prime Minister’s instructions, the District Office of Pekan and the Department of Orang Asli Development have provided TI-M with information on actions taken and financial resources provided to improve the Lake Chini ecosystem and livelihoods of the Orang Asli.

Representatives of the local community, TI-M and civil society groups who endorsed the Memorandum have been requested to follow up with the Chief Minister of Pahang on the measures he is taking to reverse the decline of Tasik Chini.

If the combined efforts of the API Regional Project and the follow up action by TI-M, the local community, and civil society groups succeed, Tasik Chini will be restored to its former glory.
Ambition without identity is a discourse that the Jakun must find among themselves in the face of the realities of assimilation.

 BUT I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT THESE ARE NOW STORIES SHARED TO SATISFY THE CURIO USITY OF TOURISTS. PRIOR TO REACHING THE ENTRANCE OF THE FOREST, WE WALKED PAST OIL PALM PLANTATIONS, THE NEAT ARRANGEMENT OF PALMS CONTRASTING SHARPLY WITH THE UNRULY AND HAPHAZARD NATURE OF THE LOWLAND FOREST. TO OUR LEFT WE COULD SEE A PIECE OF LAND, STRIPPED OF VEGETATION, WHERE AN IRON ORE MINE WAS NOW IN OPERATION.

 AS WE ENDED THE TREK, I HOPED TOURISM WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS FOR THE JAKUN*, AND THAT SUPPORT FOR THIS STEMMED FROM THE DESIRE TO REALIZE GENUINE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN THE FACE OF THE DEPLETED PHYSICAL CAPITAL OF THE FOREST. YET, I COULD NOT BRUSH OFF THE FEELING THAT TODAY'S FORESTS WERE SIMPLY REMAINERS AND REMINDERS OF THE PAST, A MEAGER CONSOLATION FOR THE JAKUN.

 FLUID IDENTITIES AND BECOMING: A RESPONSE TO “AMBITION WITHOUT IDENTITY”

 IDENTITIES IN TODAY’S POSTMODERN, NETWORKED SOCIETY ARE POLITICAL AND FLUID. WHILE GEOGRAPHY (MORE SPECIFICALLY PRIDE OF PLACE) AND ETHNICITY ARE MAJOR IDENTIFIERS, THE DYNAMIC SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF AN EVER-EVOLVING IDENTITY IS THE NORM, REPLACING THE NOTION OF SOMETHING FIXED OR PERMANENT.

*Jakun = a sub-ethnic group of Orang Asli

BETEL NUT AND SALES CATALOGUE

The Jakun are no different. As I sat lazily one afternoon chatting with local people to get a feel of village life, I noticed some of the elderly women rolling lime leaves in a way that was similar to the Philippine nganga or betelnut chew. As I looked with curiosity at the container of the chew, a magazine directly beneath it caught my eye; it was a sales catalogue for shoes and women’s apparel. A young girl proudly informed me that some of the women were engaged in the business of buying and selling. They would order from the sales catalogue and deliver the items to their neighbors for a fee.

Two nights earlier there had been a meeting of village leaders on United Nations Development Program (UNDP) livelihood projects. The phrase “ambition without identity” was used in a poem written and presented by one village woman leader in reference to the youth of the community. For whatever was lost in translation, I felt that this was a melancholy and veiled tirade against the new values assimilated by the Jakun in pursuit of material gain.

On the other hand, as I reflect on experiences with indigenous people in the Philippines who have become my friends, I cannot help but wonder whether this is the response to change, whether social activists like it or not.

Ambition without identity is a discourse that the Jakun must find among themselves in the face of the realities of assimilation. What do they retain of their Jakun identity? My friends from a mountain ethnic group in the Philippines are assimilated into the trade networks and livelihoods of lowlanders, but maintain a balance of local notions coinciding (sometimes conflicting) with the mainstream. Traditional rice granaries can be found next to houses with satellite dishes.

What remains of the Jakun is not the question. What the Jakun will become and the extent to which they are agents of their changing circumstances are the central themes of ambition without identity, or perhaps more appropriately of evolving identity and ambition.

Jose "Joe" Estuar is the founding president of the Eastern Twinstars Foundation (ETSF), a non-profit foundation dedicated to developing community-based savings, social insurance, and enterprise development associations in geographically distant areas that have economically challenged and socially excluded communities.

Stones of the Forest: The Harimau and the Immobile Phone

We traveled through the forest with Batin Awang Alok, stopping to admire beautiful sites, and occasionally removing leeches from our legs along the way. All the while, Batin Awang regaled us with stories of the forest. He told us of how in the old days, when you came face to face with a harimau or tiger in the jungle, you had to say some special words to “freeze” the animal. Next you had to coolly walk backwards, slowly, until there was sufficient distance between you and the animal.

When we passed a tree with a large buttress, Batin Awang explained that hitting the buttress made an echo which could be heard throughout the forest. A demonstration followed and the sound was not only deep and long but the reverberating waves could even be felt on your skin. The echo, he claimed, was used to signal other villages either for meetings or warn them of danger. Our group named the tree the “immobile phone” for its ability to connect with others yet remained rooted to the spot.

Perhaps there was a time when this knowledge was used for survival and living in tune with the forest. Today, life has changed substantially. Tigers are no longer found in the forest remnants we were traversing. This last swath of forest is still used for tourist trekking and provides a livelihood to guides and porters.

But I got the impression that these are now stories shared to satisfy the curiosity of tourists. The unruly and haphazard nature of the lowland forest. To our left we could see a piece of land, stripped of vegetation, where an iron ore mine was now in operation.

As we ended the trek, I hoped tourism would be able to provide alternative livelihoods for the Jakun*, and that support for this stemmed from the desire to realize genuine sustainable livelihoods in the face of the depleted physical capital of the forest. Yet, I could not brush off the feeling that today’s forests were simply remainders and reminders of the past, a meager consolation for the Jakun.

Fluid identities and becoming: a response to “ambition without identity”

Identities in today’s postmodern, networked society are political and fluid. While geography (more specifically pride of place) and ethnicity are major identifiers, the dynamic social construction of an ever-evolving identity is the norm, replacing the notion of something fixed or permanent.

*Jakun = a sub-ethnic group of Orang Asli

Betel nut and sales catalogue

Ambition without identity is a discourse that the Jakun must find among themselves in the face of the realities of assimilation.
"In the past between June and September of every year, the lotus flowers would be in full bloom. It was very attractive and a delight to tourists. Now the same areas are covered with weeds and algae," explained the Orang Asli boat man as he brought us on a tour of the lake. Pointing to the aquatic plants with tiny pink flowers on the surface of water he continued, "It’s called ekor kucing [cat’s tail]. It grows very fast and is now found everywhere. The water in the lake is also no good. Try not to touch it. It will make you itchy!

On the day we visited, Lake Chini was quiet, practically deserted. Very few tourists now come compared to the 1980s and early 1990s when tourism was a regular source of income. We were told of the construction of the weir which was meant to boost tourism but instead inflicted a massive negative impact on the lake’s ecosystem.

The area surrounding the lake is home to the Jakun, a sub-group of the Orang Asli, grouped under the proto-Malays and believed to have originated from Yunnan (southern China) around 2,500 BCE. In common with other indigenous minorities throughout Malaysia, the Jakun people of Lake Chini are closely attached to their traditional territory which encompasses the entire lake ecosystem and its hinterland of forest and farms.

There are six Orang Asli villages around the lake. Most people live in Kampung Gumum (39 families), Ulu Gumum (12 families), Kampung Melai (3 families), and Ulu Melai (6 families). Cendahan (5 families), and Tanjung Puput (5 families). The majority of the local population of almost 500 people is from the Jakun ethnic group and they live alongside Malaysians of Semelai, Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnicities. The Jakun have a spiritual connection with the lake ecosystem and this is reflected in their belief systems and folklore

Although some Jakun have now intermarried with the Malay community and converted to Islam, many still practice animism and live in close communion with nature. They perceive the existence of non-human entities and spirits which inhabit the natural world and observe a complex system of rituals, beliefs, and practices built on a reverence for the spirits which inhabit this area.

The Jakun are mainly horticulturists and forest collectors. Historically, they practiced swidden agriculture in which they would open land in one place for a couple of years and then move on to another location while the original field rested. Returning years later to cultivate the same plot. Today, the Jakun are more settled and swidden is no longer widely practiced. Instead, they work in the rubber and oil palm smallholdings, and plant a combination of subsistence and cash crops. In the recent past, fishing was a significant part of community life and the Jakun used bamboo traps, nets and fishing rods to fish in the lake and streams.

The forest and wetlands of this area are also important sources of food, building materials and forest products which can be sold for a supplementary income. Rasau pandan (Pandanus helicopus) leaves, which are commonly found in the lake and surrounding forest areas, are used to thatch roofs, and woven into mats, baskets or bags for personal use and for sale. Rattan is another wild plant which has been economically significant to Orang Asli households and the harvest of rattan dates back to the colonial period when it was used to trade for other provisions. Traditionally, the Orang Asli hunted game in the nearby forest with blowpipes and spears, and set animal traps. Today, many local people also work as wage earners with logging companies, plantations and factories.

Abdul Razak Ali, chairman of the village committee in Kampung Belimbing, a predominantly Malay village along the Pahang River and opposite of the Chini Estuary, recalls that tourism was previously a small-scale activity. Both Orang Asli and Malay villages participated by providing boating services to visitors while obtaining their livelihoods by catching fish in the lake, collecting forest products, and planting rice and subsistence crops. Members of the Malay and Orang Asli communities have long maintained a mutually supportive relationship despite their different ethnic compositions. Previously, there were as many as 16 small boat operators at Kampung Belimbing who provided sightseeing and transportation services to tourists around the lake and the connecting rivers. In the past, the area was inaccessible by road, so boats were important both for local transportation and sightseeing activities. It was possible in those days for boat operators to provide about 10 to 15 trips a month. The number of boat operators has now dwindled and at Kampung Belimbing only four boat operators remained.
A small weir was built in 1995 to solve the low level of water in dry season. It has created severe impact to the whole ecological system of the lake that caused extensive damages to local tourism and livelihood communities have faced waves of government money nowadays. Many needs can no longer household needs, especially as everything costs stipend for their “participation” in the venture, members of the community are paid a monthly land into oil palm plantations. Although some program for rural development convert some farms, even with little money. The government's the resources of the forests, lake and their small generations as their customary land. They inherited from their ancestors and lived on for generations as their customary land. They remember a time when they could live well off the resources of the forests, lake and their small farms, even with little money. The government's program for rural development convert some land into oil palm plantations. Although some members of the community are paid a monthly stipend for their “participation” in the venture, this amount is barely sufficient to meet their household needs, especially as everything costs money nowadays. Many needs can no longer be met from the natural environment.

In the past few decades, the Lake Chini communities have faced waves of government development policy changes, the latest being the seemingly benign designation of the area as a UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) site (Habibah Ahmad et al., 2011). Although some kinds of sustainable livelihoods are expected to continue in the area, local people question whether declaring the area a biosphere reserve offers a solution to the problems besetting the lake and the surrounding environment.

While an integrated approach towards land use in the lake catchment and conservation is vital for the future recovery of the wetland environment, local people are doubtful that there will be any change to the current situation. After all, they have seen little meaningful change in the two years since the MAB designation. It is hard to imagine that a weir so small can have such a huge impact. The environmental problems at Lake Chini are very serious and were highlighted several years ago. Many people suggested to the government that the easiest way to address the problem was to remove the weir. That would be the best way to bring the nature back. But unfortunately the weir is still there and no solution has comes about until now. Much research has been conducted on Lake Chini but it does not seem to do much to help.

Top down development policies, poor integrated planning and inter-agency cooperation, and an emphasis on economic development rather than environmental integrity have all exacted a heavy toll on the lake environment and the Orang Asli community. The latest of these initiatives, the Biosphere Reserve program, has the potential to bring balance to Lake Chini. However, in order to achieve this, it is critical that a working framework for public participation and community involvement in decision making is established. This is essential to avoid repeating the many mistakes of the past. Unless founded on a respect for the local community and a commitment to meaningful collaboration, the MAB program could become yet another development imposition which marginalizes the Orang Asli community whose lives are so dependent on Lake Chini's wetlands and forests.

An oil palm factory was operating with large white smoke released from its stacks. In each day there are several trucks with tons of oil palm yield directing toward the factories. Penchom Saetang has spent her career on NGO work for about 20 years. She is currently the director of Ecological Alert and Recovery - Thailand (EARTH). Karnt Thassanaphak is a poet, writer, editor, reporter, musician, song composer, painter, photographer and graphic designer.

“The shallowness of the lake was an obstacle to travel in the dry season. Water transport for tourists was very difficult during the three-month period every year”, explains Abdul Razak. “Generally, when the water levels were high it took only 40 minutes for boats to travel from the Chini Estuary to Lake Chini. But when water dried out, the same route could take well over an hour!” The government authorities told them that the weir would provide a solution. Instead it has brought hardship.

Looking wistfully at the lake, Abdul Razak reminisces nostalgically about how things were different before: “The lake water used to be clean and clear, and as the water levels fluctuated with the seasons, people could enjoy the enchanting pink lotus blossoms and the pleasing greenery of the surrounding forests.”

Baharin Sunta, 57, of Tanjung Puput laments how the state government has appropriated the resources of the lake catchment in accordance with its land use development policies. He has seen the landscape surrounding the lake change dramatically as forests were logged or completely cleared, to be replaced with oil palm and rubber, and hillsides were denuded by mining operations in which jets of water are used to comb the clay soils for iron ore.

The Jakun regard the land which they have inherited from their ancestors and lived on for generations as their customary land. They remember a time when they could live well off the resources of the forests, lake and their small farms, even with little money. The government's program for rural development convert some land into oil palm plantations. Although some members of the community are paid a monthly stipend for their “participation” in the venture, this amount is barely sufficient to meet their household needs, especially as everything costs money nowadays. Many needs can no longer be met from the natural environment.

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Kho Salma has been championing the heritage of her Malaysian hometown since joining the Penang Heritage Trust 22 years ago. Once a regional seaport with a progressive city government, Penang declined when both its free port status and local democracy were undermined by federal hegemony. When she returned from Duke University in the mid-1980s, Penang was already well on the path to export-oriented industrialization and tourism development which pursued modernity but ignored local culture. The city was gradually fragmented by ad hoc high-rise development. Languishing from a capital drain, brain drain and deteriorating urban services, the city lost its cultural confidence.

“IT takes young people to drive social change but our best and brightest had left for better prospects abroad, especially after the Malaysian ethnic riots of 1969. However, I strongly believed that the city’s rich heritage and social capital could attract creative people to realize Penang’s potential. Not wanting to live in cultural exile, and not having the stomach for divisive ethnic politics, I decided to devote myself to community-level urban transformation through cultural literacy and civic engagement.”

“Kho Salma has written or co-written more than a dozen books on heritage and social history. She runs a publishing company Areca Books with her husband, API Fellow Abdur-Razaq Lubis; together they have three children and three co-authored books. Nominated to Malaysian Women’s Weekly list of 18 “Great Women of Our Time” in 2011, in the arts and media category, she was voted overall “Most Inspiring Woman” through a nation-wide SMS poll.

The following is excerpted from the Areca Books website article prepared by John de Silva.
In February of 2011, I had an opportunity to organize and facilitate a music composition workshop with flood survivors in Yogyakarta, as part of Kali Code Site Visit for API Regional Project. Since the volcanic eruptions of Mt. Merapi at the end of 2010, villages along the Code River had been suffering from continuous flood disasters. While local governmental officials, NGOs, and academic researchers worked to develop a master plan for reconstructing the affected region, conflicts between traumatized riverside villages grew. There was an urgent need to empower the local community and give voice to the frustrated and marginalized.

I worked with a group of seven participants who gathered for this project from different villages along the Code River. Ranging from age 12 to 44, the participants came from divergent occupations and backgrounds. Their experiences in music also varied from an amateur band member to a professional percussionist and a recent music university graduate. Following an orientation, a field trip was conducted in Kali Code, where the participants trekked together from upstream to downstream, then to upstream again. We visited one another at their homes and heard their stories. As we traveled with the river and listened to the changing sounds, our paradigms shifted throughout the journey.

Based on this collective experience, we jointly composed a new piece of music entitled “Code Purnama Hatiku” (Code, the full moon of my heart). The final performance, which took place at an outdoor stage by the river, was attended by hundreds of Kali Code residents, representatives from the local government, and TV and newspaper media, as well as the API Fellows from the Regional Project.

What was most important in this workshop was to travel through their land with a goal of composing music together. By visiting one another’s villages, the workshop participants could see the problems in their own villages from fresh points of view. Through intimate encounters and exchanges with their neighbors, they learned about themselves. Knowing that they shared the precious river with each other, they became more conscious of how they wanted to treat it. They understood why they shouldn’t throw trash into the river and grasped the importance of recycling. Despite all the differences and jealousy, despite all the oppression and injustice, despite all the sorrow and anger, everyone wished for peace.

When this hope was presented as a performance of music, the audience could also experience the journey. Because the participants played the music that they themselves composed, the resulting performance was very powerful and convincing. As the audience joined the musicians by singing the children’s song “Padang Bulan” (the field of moon) at the end of the piece, there was a moment of solidarity. Personal stories of connections to the river were woven with universal dreams to form a colorful tapestry of music, from which a multi-layered soundscape of the collective mind emerged. Many people in the audience approached me after the concert and embraced me with tears in their eyes. As the first cultural event in the region since the volcanic eruptions and the flood, the concert was quite successful in bringing the traumatized community together.

As a music composer of contemporary times, I create inter-disciplinary performances and installations by intervening in the relationships between people and their environment. My artistic activities are, ultimately, my attempts at creating a sense of home in today’s society. When a common subject is tackled by a diversity of people, contrasting perspectives merge together and give birth to a multi-tiered narrative that is anonymous and identified, old and new, or universal and original, at the same time. Such music, that is both folk (of people) and contemporary (of now), may reflect where we come from, and inspire us to imagine where we want to go together. Collaborative processes in artistic creation and expression can further understand between varying standpoints and raise a mutual awareness of our environment. Through this project, I once again witnessed how music could promote dialogues beyond conflicts, empower communities without much voice, and touch people across various borders.

When a common subject is tackled by a diversity of people, contrasting perspectives merge together and give birth to a multi-tiered narrative that is anonymous and identified, old and new, or universal and original, at the same time.

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Originally from Japan, Tomoko Momiyama graduated from Stanford University in the U.S. with a B.A. in Music and Human Biology in 2001. Since then, she has been internationally active as a music composer, performer, dramaturg, and producer of multi-disciplinary art events, installations, and performances. Her works, many of which are community-based and site-specific, have been performed throughout Japan, as well as in China, Indonesia, the Netherlands, and the U.S. She approaches the role of a composer as a medium of communication and creator of space, where music can be born organically from relationships between people, cultures, and environments.

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Realizing music with handmade instruments

Sharing the paradigm shifts from the journey to create a collective composition

To the right: Tomoko Momiyama (second from right) visited a village during the field trip
Not many media outlets, especially such a mainstream one as television, present the real voices of people. But Thai Public Broadcasting Service echoes them. “Voice of People, Change for Thailand” was a public forum organized by Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS), the first public media of Thailand, for the four regions of Thailand in June 2011. This public forum aimed to create a public space for reflecting the opinions of Thai people prior to the election on July 3, 2011.

The format of the public forum was such that people asked questions and four representatives of the different political parties replied. In four public forums organized in the North, the Central-East, the Northeast and the South of Thailand, 2,200 participants representing 90 civil society networks asked politicians many important questions.

The representatives from the North asked if each political party had a decentralization plan and policies for land distribution and the resolution of farmers’ debt. They asked if there were policies for protecting the cultural rights of hill tribe people and in educational reform. People from the Central and East raised issues about coastal resource management (the upper Thai Gulf), labor wages, the environmental impact of industries and the need to reform authority structure. Decentralization and farmers’ debts were also concerns in these regions.

Participants from the Northeast pointed out those problems which the new government had to pay attention to in this region: community educational management, organic farming promotion, justice procedure reforming and the impact of mega projects.

In the last region, representatives from the South highlighted disaster management, the rights of the community in land resource management, coastal resource management, especially of the southern seaboard and decentralization for the three border provinces in the south. The Pattani Municipal model was cited as an example.

After listening to the politicians, participants from all four regions felt that the politicians were unclear. The politicians were afraid of a real engagement.

Mr. Prayuth Verrakitti, a member of the farmers’ organization council of Thailand, said that since the problems of farmers relate to many benefits that politicians enjoy, the government could not resolve farmers’ debt objectively. The politicians still did not reply clearly. This public forum today was a good opportunity through which people could communicate their suffering via TV.

“I’m glad that the media focused on people’s problems,” said Mr. Prue Odochao, an ethnic Karen member.

The public forum organized by ThaiPBS encouraged people from all over Thailand. Each person perceived and shared many problems with people from other areas and networks. Villagers could follow how a policy had or hadn’t worked. It was different from the past when people simply voted the party they liked.

Mr. Komson Saiwan, a representative of the community network for social and political reforming, Ubonratchathani province, commented that the replies of these politicians reflected their campaigns. “Our deputy in the parliament did not act as a real deputy. This forum made citizen politics possible. People must communicate their own problems to society. I am very grateful that ThaiPBS organized this forum for grassroot people.”

The feedback of all participants shows us that political participation in a democracy is not restricted to having a deputy; people can and should participate in politics at all times in order to maintain real power.

Since there are not many choices available for “small people” to speak their mind, ThaiPBS has an important role to serve Thai society as an agent for change.

Varinthra Boonchai is the manager of the social capital network division at Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS). She graduated with a MA in development communication from the Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Her professional experience includes working at the Thai Human Rights in Global Perspective Research Project and the Community Rights Education Research Project at Local Development Institute where she was the regional coordinator and information staff for the past seven years.
Transnational Migration from Thailand to Japan has been a known phenomenon for nearly three decades. In Thai public perception, this issue is almost always associated with the traffic of Thai women for prostitution and their reportedly sad living conditions. This makes for repeated sensational reporting by the media. In fact, Thai migration to Japan is a very complex phenomenon involving multiple patterns, causes, and experiences. Human-trafficking is only one of its aspects.

Existing studies reveal a number of Thai male migrations for employment in Japan and a lot of women working in areas other than the sex industry. In my studies (Ruenkaew 2002, 2009, 2011) I found another pattern of migration quite unknown among Thai public, namely the marriage migration of Thai women to Japan. Thai women have entered Japan as brides since the 1990s and many still undertake such a route of migration.

Migration is a dynamic process that can produce lasting consequences such as the emergence of migrants’ settlements or onward or return migration. Taking this into account and realizing that transnational migration to Japan began a long time ago, one can expect outcomes of these human flows. And so, I came across during my field research the formation of Thai communities in Japan, the development of status from spouse to transnational migrant worker and vice versa, as well as stateless children born to illegal Thai migrants in Japan. My findings also reveal two human flows resulting from Thai migration to Japan, namely the subsequent immigration of children of Thai migrant women, and the repatriation of Thai migrants, both voluntarily or forced, to Thailand.

All these issues deserve public attention and the concern of policy makers so that measures to support immigrants and alleviate the problems they face can be devised. For an independent researcher, the publishing of research findings is an opportunity to raise these issues with the public.

Therefore, in 2008 when Prof. Supang Chantavanich, the Director of the Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute of Asian Studies (ARCM), Chulalongkorn University, invited me to co-edit with her a book on migration from Thailand to Japan, I happily accepted. In the book, we aim to discuss movement between Thailand, the sending country and Japan, the receiving country in the broader context of an international migration. We analyze government policies and different forms of migration. We consider the impact of migration and draw recommendations for devising policy and measures to help migrants and their families as well as to prevent human-trafficking. Altogether the book has nine chapters, written by Japanese and Thai researchers, from academia and NGOs during 2008 to 2010. It begins with the overview and conceptual framework written by Yuko Kato (Chapter 8) examines the re-integration of Thai female returnees with children into Thailand. In the last chapter I summarize the findings of each chapter and conclude with policy recommendations. Mr. Kasit Piromya, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand has kindly written the preface.

The book was officially launched at “The Migration of Thai People” seminar co-hosted by ACIRM and API on March 16, 2011 in light of API 10th Anniversary in Thailand.

In fact, Thai migration to Japan is a very complex phenomenon... Human-trafficking is only one of its aspects.
Defining Health for the Filipino: Lessons from Salzburg

Fe A. delos Reyes, PHILIPPINES FELLOW YEAR 2005-2006

It was a privilege like no other to participate in Session 474, Seminar on Health and Healthcare Systems on November 9-12, 2010 at Schloss Leopoldskron, in Salzburg, Austria. I had the rare opportunity to brush elbows with experts on Health Policies and HealthCare Systems and bring home a promise to do my share in advocating for an equitable health care in the Philippines; health, being a fundamental and inalienable right.

I will always think of the Filipinos as a resilient and hardy people. They may be able to afford only the basic life necessities but will find all means to send their children to school. However, a serious and catastrophic illness, or a disability in the family, can bring even middle class families into a downward spiral of poverty because of a lack of a national safety net for health.

Such concern resonates throughout the 5 day Salzburg Conference on Health and HealthCare Systems: providing equitable health care as a fundamental right, health as being intimately connected with the social, economic and political realities. The changing paradigm in health care policies that is sweeping the world is brought about by the rising awareness of this interconnectedness.

But certain concerns then arise regarding how equitable health care can include the marginalized citizens, the persons with disabilities and the mentally ill.

I have been working for many years in community-based programs for individuals with disabilities and persons disabled by mental illness. My particular interest is advocacy for an equitable health care share in advocating for an equitable health care for persons with disabilities and persons disabled by mental illness. My particular interest is advocacy for an equitable health care for persons with disabilities and persons disabled by mental illness.

Many of the questions arising in our community in Naga City, Camarines Sur, Philippines we have integrated mental health programs with the primary health care in a model that is one of its kind and recognized by the WAPR (World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation), a WHO-recognized international organization.

In this model, the families with affected members have become involved in the care of the mentally ill member in the context of community life. The village people are connected to the patients by familial affinity and are actively engaged in the psychosocial rehabilitation process. There are regular teleconferences with Psychiatry specialists from the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH) via skype in addition to actual site visits by Psychiatry consultants. Quality services are ensured through continuing mentorship. The program has been going on for 3 years, has spread from one village to several contiguous villages and multiplied from one municipality to 5 municipalities. Government physicians of respective municipalities who are delivering primary mental health services have joined hands in sharing their newfound skills and success stories.

The crucial issue is to find the right balance between primary and tertiary care. Primary health care need not be inferior to secondary or tertiary care. It is accessible, available and allows, even mandates patient participation in decisions concerning health. The message is to “adapt rather than adopt” innovative and creative ideas and be open to change and reform when necessary.

In the Salzburg Conference, a brighter future for healthcare systems all over the world is seen through networking technology. Future scenario reform when necessary.

Through networking technology. Future scenario for healthcare systems all over the world is seen through networking technology. Future scenario for healthcare systems all over the world is seen through networking technology. Future scenario for healthcare systems all over the world is seen through networking technology.

Future scenario for healthcare systems all over the world is seen through networking technology.

Fe A. delos Reyes is a Medical Specialist III of Bicol Medical Center, also Founder and Executive Director of HELP Learning Center Foundation Inc. - a Resource Center for Special Education and Rehabilitation of Children and Youth with Disabilities and Persons Disabled by Mental Illness.

"Defining Health for the Filipino: Lessons from Salzburg"
Globalization: Tensions and Opportunities for Growth in Southeast Asia

Maria Regina M. Hechanova, PHILIPPINES FELLOW YEAR 2009-2010

More than 500 years after Columbus declared that the world was round, Thomas Friedman declared it was flat. Although the description was not meant to be literal, the effects of technology and breaking down of world trade barriers are indeed far reaching. The US and European financial crisis and the growth and stability of China and India are certainly shifting the economic power structures of the world.

However, critics of globalization claim that the playing field is hardly level and that only countries that have more resources and access to technology will reap the benefits of globalization. This was the impetus for my own API fellowship research. Simply, I wanted to know how Southeast Asian organizations are responding to the challenge of globalization. I was particularly interested in locally owned companies who are particularly vulnerable in a globalizing world. In my forays in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, I learned how local companies have been affected by globalization in both positive and negative ways.

Opportunities in a Global World

I learned that globalization has opened up new markets for some local organizations that now operate outside their borders. The rise in Asian multinational companies has also meant that workers today have to learn how to thrive in an increasingly diverse workplace.

Being globally competitive requires companies to continually improve their products and services. Not surprisingly, the terms multi-skilling, flexibility and innovation were constantly cited as imperatives for Asian workers.

One benefit of globalization is that it has opened doors for job seekers whose prospects have expanded to the world rather than just their own countries. Thus, international experience, mobility, cross-cultural sensitivity and adaptability are fast becoming musts for those seeking global careers. On the other hand, local employers also complain that they are having a hard time keeping their talented workers who are being pirated by employers in more affluent economies.

Tensions to Becoming Global

My encounters also showed me the immense pressure and threats that globalization can bring to local companies. Business owners lamented that competition from other countries and the influx of lower cost has caused the collapse of small industries and loss of jobs. Another negative impact is the decrease in regular employment and increase in labor outsourcing. Business leaders also note that these new employment arrangements have created a workforce that is transactional and without loyalty to organizations.

The increased pressure to do more with less has created an increasingly stressful workplace.

Employees are being given greater workloads and are putting in more work hours creating greater work-life conflict.

Globalization has also led to the influx of new technology, which has raised the bar in terms of knowledge and skill requirements. Although beneficial for the tech-savvy members of Generation Z, it has also meant loss of employment opportunities for older workers.

As an organizational psychologist, I worry about the increased marginalization of workers who do not have access to quality education and are ill-equipped for today's workplace.

Global vs. Local Values

At a cultural level, globalization has created pressure for Asian leaders to adopt global (often Western) standards, systems and processes.

Yet local leaders confess that some of these approaches such as performance management meet resistance because they run counter to collectivist values. I saw how in paternalistic and hierarchical culture, the concept of participation and empowerment is not always met with enthusiasm by workers who still expect their leaders to provide direction. In cultures where personal connections, face-to-face communication and relationships are highly valued, the drive towards results and professionalism, the emergence of virtual teams and the increased use of technology to communicate have also widened the gap between leaders and their subordinates.

Yet the good news is that there are local companies who are able to handle both the opportunities and tensions of global companies. They are able to marry global and local values—professional management in a family-like atmosphere; results-orientation but with a sense of caring; performance-orientation but using collective targets and rewards; employee participation but clear directions from leaders, etc. Perhaps my biggest learning is that if Asian leaders are to shepherd their organizations in a global world, they need to not only be able to think global, they need to understand and harness local culture as well.

Maria Regina M. Hechanova is an associate professor at the Department of Psychology and the Executive Director of the Ateneo Center for Organization Research and Development, Ateneo de Manila University. Her major fields of interest are organization development, human resource management, technology, innovation, and leadership. She was named one of the Outstanding Young Scientists in 2005 by the National Academy of Science and Technology and in 2010, was named one of the Ten Outstanding Women in Nation’s Service for her work as an organizational psychologist.

“...At a cultural level, globalization has created pressure for Asian leaders to adopt global (often Western) standards, systems and processes...”
RECOGNITION

Sukran Rojanapaiwong (Thailand Fellow Year 2001-2002) has been serving as a secretary of the commissioner, Office of The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (formerly The National Telecommunications Commission) since October 2011.

Rosalie Arcala Hall (Philippines Fellow Year 2004-2005) was recently named University of the Philippines Scientist 1. Hall is one of two social scientists and the first Political Scientist from her University to be given such distinction.

Colin Nicholas (Malaysia Fellow Year 2001-2002) received an award on behalf of Orang Asli Centre for Concern (COAC) as the United Nations (UN) Malaysia Organization of the Year 2011 for its efforts to promote and defend the rights of the Orang Asli in Malaysia. The award was given in celebration of the United Nations 66th anniversary on October 24, 2011.

Yonariza (second from right) during the appointed ceremony.

Naguib Razak (left) with former FINAS Director General Dato’ Mayhiddin Mustakim.

Thitipol Kanteewong (Thailand Fellow Year 2009-2010) received a Golden Elephant award from Chiang Mai University for being an outstanding researcher of the new generation in Humanities and Sociology. His several studies, including his API project, relate to the new development of humans and culture focusing on traditional Thai and Asian music by using academic and experimental methods.

Iskandar Sharifuddin bin Mohd Said or Dain Said (Malaysia Fellow Year 2006-2007) successfully launched his latest film “Bunohan (Murder)” and was invited to screen the film at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) during September 8-18, 2011. Bunohan also gained a highly complimentary review by Variety Magazine.

Ronnarong Khampha (Thailand Fellow Year 2010-2011) and Thitipol Kanteewong (Thailand Fellow Year 2009-2010) participated in the Asian Arts Theatre Residency Gwangju 2011 as part of The Asian Culture Complex Asian Arts Theatre Project Development Initiative Project held in Soeul, South Korea during August 29-September 4, 2011. They also collaborated with leading Indonesian traditional artists of Mugi Dance such as Mugiyono Kasido, Endah Laras and Dedek Wahyu to present “Ejecting Human” - the concept of industrial development and Asian traditions - in Solo, Indonesia, during August 19-28, 2011.
Motohide Taguchi (Japan Fellow Year 2002-2003)’s sound installation work “Between Shifted Memories” was exhibited at Yuchengco Museum in Makati City, Manila, Philippines in January, 2012. He also organized a workshop on November 24, 2011 at Vargas Museum in the University of the Philippines.

Kavi Chongkittavorn (Thailand Fellow Year 2007-2008) was invited by the Southeast Asian Studies Program Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, to lecture on “ORANG ASEAN: Prospects and Challenges” – the special course on ASEAN Community and citizens (“Orang”), for 15 weeks during December 13, 2011 - March 22, 2012.

Dante G. Simbulan, Jr. (Philippine Fellow Year 2010-2011) was on a Visiting Scientist Fellowship at the Nagoya University’s Research Institute of Environmental Medicine in Nagoya City, Japan, from August 1 to November 15, 2011. His research theme was on “Yoga-based exercises, autonomic functions and chronic pain management.” He also conducted weekly yoga classes for therapists and doctors of the Multi-Disciplinary Pain Center of the Aichi Medical University as part of a training and research collaboration to facilitate the integration of mind-body approaches in pain management.

Rosalie Arcala Hall (Philippines Fellow Year 2004-2005) presented academic papers at the Inter University Seminar in the Philippine Sociological Association conference in Naga City on October 15-16, 2011. She also presented at the Armed Forces and Society conference in Chicago, USA on October 23-25, 2011 and at the Asian International Political and International Studies Association Congress in Taichung, Taiwan on November 24-25, 2011.

She is also a monthly contributor to the University of Venus’ blog about gender and other issues in the US Inside Higher Education website: http://www.insidehighered.com.


Abstract:
“Terengganu air”.

2) API Thailand Fellows collaborated in the publication of “Ngao Tawan-og 2” (A Kaleidoscope: Reflections of Asia by Asians) - the Collections of API Fellows 2001-2010, which was launched in July 2011. The book is part of API 10th Anniversary celebration project by Thailand Fellows.

Abstract by Darunee Tantiwiramanond (Thailand Senior Fellow Year 2002-2003): “Ngao Tawan-og” is a compendium of research work done by API Fellows during 2001-2010. “Ngao Tawan-og 2” is the second of the two-volume compendium voluntarily and collectively done on behalf of the Thailand API National Coordinating Committee to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the API initiated in community building of public intellectuals in Asia. It partially translates published knowledge generated during the first decade of the API Program into Thai. It comprises bilingual bibliography where the 264 entries are classified into 6 headings, namely Politics and Conflicts; Economy and Development; Communities and Local Development; Social Policy and Social Justice; Arts and Literature; and Environment and Resource Management. Thai translated abstracts from the Proceedings of Year 1 to Year 8 are included.

3) Dina Zaman (Malaysia Fellow Year 2012-2013) launched her new book entitled “King of The Sea” in March 2012, after having spent about 13 years to complete. The stories began as part of her MA project at Lancaster University in 1998, inspired by her homesickness, and her longing for the “Terengganu air”.

Abstract:
“King of the Sea” is a collection of short stories exploring themes of love, grief, loss and longing, and the magic in our lives. A young boy, grieving for his late father, meets a ghost who tells him that he is the king of the sea. Alia, a missing child, comes back as a chicken when a brash modern city woman decides to live there. A teacher who longs for a more glamorous life, literally, disappears into a movie screen.
Since our last report (Newsletter 23, July 2011), RC representatives discussed in great details the progress, successes and challenges faced by our Fellows in implementing the then on-going or upcoming site-visits. Dicky Sofjan, our RP Manager, made substantial contributions to our discussions. We are now preparing for the conclusion of the Project with the upcoming Culmination Event in Bangkok and of course with the final reporting of the Regional Project. The RC representatives have also been discussing the transformation of the API Program. The RC has suggested that all API Fellows be invited to engage in discussions pertaining to the transformations, either in the annual Country Workshop or existing Fellows’ discussions on the internet. The RC has also proposed to the EXECO a number of ideas that can be developed into post-fellowship opportunities. The proposals are still being examined and reports should follow.

RC Representatives in Motion
Akiko Tashiro (Japan Fellow Year 2002-2003) stepped down after the Jakarta meeting. In the meeting in Kyoto, Rosalie Arcala Hall (Philippines Fellow Year 2004-2005) joined the RC to succeed Danilo Francisco M. Reyes. Tatsuki Kataoka (Japan Fellow Year 2001-2002) succeeded Akiko Tashiro. Motohide Taguchi (Japan Fellow Year 2002-2003) joined from the RC meeting in Manila together with Nguyen Van Chinh (Vietnam Senior Fellow Year 2010-2011) as a special participant representing Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

Since Herry Yogaswara will be stepping down as the Chair and RC representative of Indonesia after the March 2012 Country Workshop; the new chair, Tatsuki Kataoka and vice-chair, Darunee Tantiwiramanond (Thailand Senior Fellow Year 2002-2003), were selected during our meeting in Manila. The liaison officer is now Dias Pradadimara (Indonesia Senior Fellow Year 2007-2008). We wish to extend our gratitude to representatives who left the RC after so much contribution and dedication, and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

Regional Project Updates
Wrapping up
A request by the Council of Working Groups (CWGs) to the Regional Project Management Team (RPMT), postponed the closing of the RP from the initial date of September 30 to November 30, 2011. The decision to extend the RP to November 30 meant that RPWGs could make disbursements for all payables, closed their RP accounts, and transfer all remaining funds to the respective Partner Institutions according to the contract.

API Fellows’ Engagement
During the extension period, the Japan RPWG was able to revisit the local communities in the Biwako area. It successfully produced a bilingual pictorial book (in Japanese and English), which tells the story of the API Fellows’ engagement with the local communities in Mukugawa and Harhata. The Pictorial Book has been handed over to the local communities as a token of the API appreciation for their collaboration.

The Thailand RPWG too revisited Khiriwong twice. The objective of the visit was to assist the local community in data collection on the Suan Som Rom (mixed orchard) and the biodiversity of the local durian varieties. The Thailand RPWG members attended a cultural ceremony in Khiriwong, and produced 500 copies of a book, containing pictures and stories made by API Fellows, who worked with the Khiriwong local community. A wrap up meeting in Khiriwong was postponed due to the flood crisis in Bangkok.

The Philippines RPWG activities included a heritage and cultural mapping workshop aimed at raising community awareness among the Batanes people as well as a teacher-training workshop. The Batanes documentary was previewed at Diura and was well-received.
The Indonesia RPWG focused its attention on assisting the Kali Code community in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the parties during the site visit in February last year. This entailed the signing of another Cooperation Agreement between the Indonesia RPWG and the Pemerti Kali Code. The Cooperation Agreement essentially demands a series of “multi-stakeholders’ dialog” with all parties concerned with the development of the riverbank community. The dialogs were attended by partner universities, local government agencies, non-governmental organizations and Yogyakarta-based API Fellows.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian API fellows returned to Tasik Chini, and convened a workshop with Transparency International-Malaysia. The workshop was funded by the Norwegian Embassy, and examined the issue of environmental governance of the lake and its surrounding areas.

Regional Products

The first edit of the API RP Documentary was completed by the Center for New Cinema (CNC), and previewed in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where the 2011 Regional Workshop was convened. The preview included members of the International Selection Committee members, RP Book development team, RP Manager and Coordinators of the API Fellowships Program. After the preview, the Producers compiled feedback from the stakeholders and relayed it to CNC for further editing.

The CNC re-submitted copies of the second version of the Regional Documentary to the Producers and other stakeholders. During the 2012 Country Workshops, the CNC will conduct test screenings in the five countries to solicit final feedback before the finalization of the both the Regional and Country-level Documentaries.

The Country Workshops will also be utilized for CNC to get clearances from the API Fellows and community representatives as well as to discuss the marketing and distribution of the Documentaries.

A Book development meeting was held prior to the Regional Workshop in Chiang Mai in November 2011. The meeting was led by the Book Editor/Coordinator and attended by Professor Koji Tanaka, the RP Manager, CI representative, and Gareth Richards from Areca Books, a Penang-based publishing house that has agreed in principle to publish the RP Book.

As it turned out, the contributions were insufficient. The call went out and fortunately, a significant number of analytical articles was later submitted, strengthening the overall content of the RP Book. Subsequent to the Chiang Mai meeting, a MoA was signed between the API Fellowships Program and Areca Books. However, despite many calls to submit articles, field notes, pictures, and to participate in discussion boards, there was little interest in the RP website and the plan therefore is to transform it into a more archive-based than an interactive platform for discussion.

RP Assessment

An overall assessment of the API RP is necessary. For that matter, the RC established the Regional Assessment Team, comprising current and former members. Center for Organizational and Research Development (CORD) in Ateneo de Manila University, has been appointed to develop the assessment tools and to assist on the analysis.

After several meetings with CORD-Ateneo, RP documents were compiled and stored in Dropbox, and will be used as one of the datasets essential for the overall assessment. Following the Manila meeting with CORD-Ateneo in early January 2011, a Contract of Services was drafted, and signed between the API Fellowships Program and CORD-Ateneo.

The procedure for the assessment itself will involve documentation analysis, Focused Group Discussions and a validation workshop which will be convened after the mid June 2012 Culminating Event in Bangkok.

Culminating Event

The API RP Culminating Event set on June 13-16, 2012 will bring together API Fellows, local community leaders, stakeholders and new networks for the API Community. An agenda has been put forth, and an Organizing Committee (OC) has been set up to prepare for the Event at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, OC, chaired by CI Director Prof. Surichai Wun’ Gaoe, consists of RP Council of Working Groups leader, RPMT members, RP Manager and CI representative.

During the Culminating Event, a public seminar will be convened, among others, to discuss the API Community’s engagement and development of the five respective sites.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- API Fellowship applications Year 2013-2014 are open during July-August 2012.
  - Interview of short-listed applicants: September-October 2012
  - Award notification: February 2013
  - Commencement of Fellowships: July 1, 2013

- 11th API Regional Workshop will be held in Tagaytay, the Philippines, during November 25-28, 2012.

New Position

Fr. Jose M. Cruz S.J.
Fr. Jose M. Cruz S.J., API International Selection Committee (ISC), was appointed as Vice President for University and Global Relations, Ateneo de Manila University, from April 2012. He ended his term as Dean of the School of Social Sciences on March 31, 2012.

Transitions at the API Regional Coordinating Institution (CI)

Rungsinee Chaiyakoon
Rungsinee Chaiyakoon, nicknamed Ann, joined the CI from October 2011 as Project Support Officer. Her responsibilities relate to API project management and all post-fellowship programs and activities. Ann earned a B.A. from Thammasart University and an M.A. from the University of East Anglia, UK. She had been working with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for 12 years in various areas. Her last position was Program Officer, Volunteer Section.

Transition at Thailand Partner Institution (PI)

Banyong Homoab
Banyong Homoab joined the Thailand Partner Institution in January 2012 as Assistant Program Coordinator. Having gained his degree in Linguistics (English), he previously worked in the Education Project Department at The British Council Thailand. He is very excited to work for the API Fellowships Program, and is enthusiastic to be part of the API Intellectual community, with his administrative support role.

Orbituary

Khoo Khay Jin
Khoo Khay Jin, who played many crucial roles during the early years of the API Fellowships Program, passed away on December 22, 2011, at 9:00 p.m. His funeral was held on December 23, 2011 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Pulau Tikus, Penang. API Fellowships Program would like to extend our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

Khoo Khay Jin had been an IKMAS (Malaysia PI) main input since the inception of the API Program, when IKMAS was the CI. His knowledge and experiences were largely applied to the development of the then CI database and several printed media, such as the API Newsletter and brochures. Even though his health declined later on, he continued to play an active role in suggesting API activities, promoting the Fellowships and recommending potential Fellows to API.

Khoo Khay Jin was indeed one of the main architects and supporter of the API Program, and a very good friend. His death is a huge loss for the API Community.
Hello, my name is Aya Fukuda and I joined The Nippon Foundation from April this year, taking over from Shota Nakayasu to work for API. I am really pleased to be able to be a staff member of this significant long-running programme so soon after entering The Nippon Foundation. The number of people on the API team at the Foundation has increased and, in addition to myself, Masato Seko, who has extensive experience and knowledge as a program officer of Sasakawa Peace Foundation and now serves as the leader of the International Network Team of the International Program Department, has also joined.

I would like to briefly introduce myself. The field of my focus is education and information and communication technology (ICT), and I am enrolled on a PhD course in the area of Educational Technology while I am working for The Nippon Foundation. The original motivation to pursue this career came from the experiences I had visiting Palestine and Israel in 2000 when I was a university student. At that time, I deeply recognized the importance of communication and education for these areas after holding several interviews with the local people and felt ICT could be the key to connect people who have geographical barriers and to deliver quality education. After graduating from university, I worked for a private company specializing in ICT for several years as a project coordinator to learn ICT and to acquire project coordination skills. Following this, I took a Master’s degree in the area of Education and Development focusing on distance education and started to work for the university conducting the distance education program in the area of Peace and Conflict Studies. This program connects several Asian universities in order to share local experiences and knowledge of peace and conflict related issues to explore better solutions. This program considers that peace and conflict issues cannot be resolved by only the actors or limited knowledge, but needs collaboration beyond borders for better solutions. There is also a reason for focusing on the collaboration among Asian countries. The current academic field of Peace and Conflict Studies is dominated by the Western theories or models, however there is a definite need for Asian-oriented theories and models to deal with Asian localized issues. Likewise for other issues or problems at local, regional or international levels in the globalizing world, collaboration to tackle those issues beyond boundaries is increasingly needed. Furthermore, Asian values are highly expected to materialize and create Asian specific solutions. Therefore, I am totally for the concept of API to foster public intellectuals for the betterment of Asia based on the cross-boundary collaboration and communication. With this in mind, I started to work for API and to learn about API under the kind and professional guidance of the past and present API staff members at the Foundation.

In this situation, I felt extremely fortunate that I was able to attend the Catalminating Event for the regional project that all the Fellows have worked so hard for over the last four years. This regional project, entitled “Community-Based Initiatives toward Human-Ecological balance”, worked closely with local communities in five locations—Bawako, Japan; Khiwiwong, Thailand; Batanes, Philippines; Kali Code, Indonesia; Tasik Chini, Malaysia—to research in each region the ecological balance between nature and the people living there. In order to give back to the public the accumulated knowledge of API, the Catalminating Event on June 14 and 15 invited the general public too. The keynote speech was delivered by Ajarn Sombath Somphone, who is a recipient of the 2005 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, on the connectivity of people and communities in Asia. Then the presentations of the results of the regional project for each country were given by the Fellows. Following that, the documentary directed by Mr. Nick Deocampo was shown for the first time to the public audience. The images, sounds, and contents of the documentary were beautiful and impressive, and the local wisdom and knowledge of the people in the communities, their attitudes and lifestyles could be seen, all of which greatly moved the viewers.

On the following day, the 15th, the morning session was a public seminar entitled “In Search of New Practices: Common Challenges on Human-Ecological Balance in Asia”. Followed by the opening and welcome speeches, Dr. Dicky Sofjan of the regional project manager gave an overview of the comprehensive community activities and then the site community leaders of each of the five countries gave presentations. In the afternoon, there was the session entitled “Community Engagement: Transforming Knowledge into Action” that was moderated by Prof. Koji Tanaka of Kyoto University and in which a panel of five Fellows representing the five regions presented the results of their field research.

Taking part in this Catalminating Event, I was greatly impressed by the supportive and dedicated staff of the CI in Thailand and the Pis in Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, as well as all of the Fellows’ rich creativity. I could really feel that this was the driving force that forms API. I also felt that API is being supported tremendously by intellectuals from all over the world. This can only be because of the excellent staff and amazing Fellows here. API’s assets are the people that form it. There is no other network like API that has over 300 people who are cross-disciplinary and multi-talented. I believe this group of human resources definitely has the potential to contribute to solve actual issues or problems in a variety of fields in Asian regions as well as worldwide. In the future, I hope people with various problems can consult with the API network and the API can provide help based on their accumulated experiences and knowledge to help those people solve their problems. Additionally, I hope that the network continues to be one where API members can become deeply involved and that it helps to bring about new collaborations between Fellows with the aim of “Building a Better Asia”. To support this, even if just in a small way, I intend to devote myself to being able to contribute to API.

Aya Fukuda

The community-based approach was also manifested in Tomoko Momiyama’s music composing project in Kali Code where she encouraged the local people to use music to reflect their experiences. “Voice of People” by Varinthra Boonchai shows an alternative media channel to raise community’s voices and help maintain their real power. In addition, “Keeping Heritage intact” by Khoo Salma gives us a good example of how the people movement can convince the government to concentrate on cultural tourism that helps Penang to preserve its heritage and local wisdom. Please share with us your viewpoints. We treasure your contribution and feedback. Enjoy reading and let us think of more collaborative efforts at the grassroot levels!

Chadapan Malipan

From the Editorial Desk

Restore the balance from the Grassroot levels

In recent years, the concept of sustainable development focusing on the balance between human activities and environment has increasingly gained support. Yet bringing the concept of sustainability into practice seems difficult mainly because national policy is often authored with little participation from the communities which are directly impacted.

To achieve concrete practices of sustainable development, it is essential to restore the balance by working at the grassroot levels. One of the aims should be adopting community participations in crucial processes, learning from them, and sharing with them in various aspects. Multi-dimensional perspectives from all parties would broaden other views and create more comprehensive solutions in response to key challenges.

Since 2008, API has initiated an engagement with local communities in five countries through its Regional Project (RP) with the “Human-Ecological balance” theme. The RP activities have connected local communities and public intellectuals with various bodies for more collaboration and driven actions that have hopefully benefited the local communities.

Examples are visible in this issue. API’s site visit in Tasik Chini (Lake Chini) brings reports of API Fellow close in the Orang Asli community to learn about their challenges and responses towards the threats to their livelihood. It led to a joint action, the MoU signing which has become the local community’s new hope on Tasik Chini’s environmental improvement.

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