

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY SCOPE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

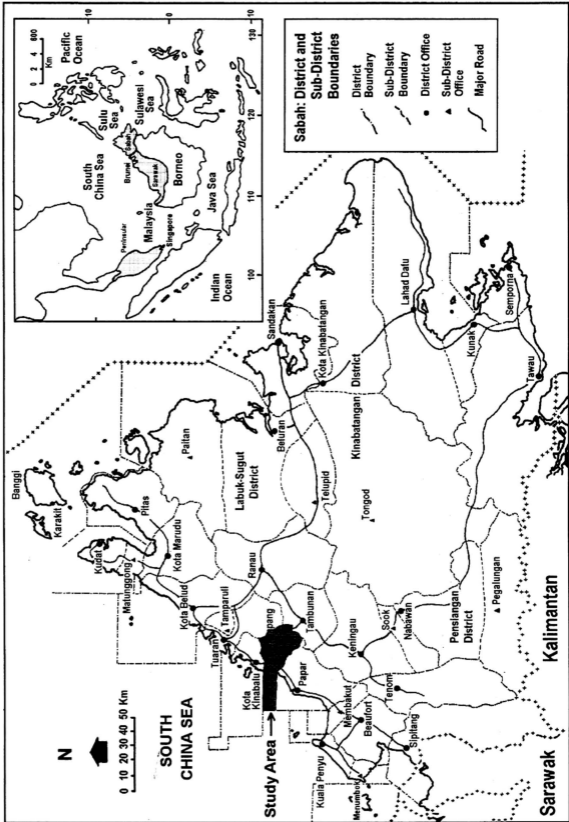
Background of Sabah

The state of Sabah, often referred to as “the land below the wind” since it lies just below the typhoon belt of the South China Sea, is located in the north-eastern part of the Island of Borneo. Sabah covers a land area of 73,711 sq. km and is the second largest state of Malaysia. Its immediate neighbours are Sarawak and Brunei to the southwest and Kalimantan to the south. Sabah has a coastline of 1,440 km. and together with Sarawak, makes up East Malaysia, which is separated from Peninsular Malaysia by 1,932 km of the South China Sea (see Map 1.1).

Sabah's topography consists of rugged terrain with dense tropical forests, alluvial and swampy coastal plains. Several mountain ranges of 4,000 to 6,000 feet rise from lowlands in the West Coast and culminate in Mount Kinabalu (5,102 meters), one of the highest peaks in Southeast Asia. It has an extensive system of rivers which is an important source of communication through the forested interiors especially in the eastern and central parts of the state. The major rivers include the Kinabatangan, Segama, Sugut, Paitan and the Labuk.

The political background

Sabah used to be part of the Sultanates of Brunei and Sulu before being governed by the Chartered Company and then Britain. British intervention and eventual acquisition of Sabah, or North Borneo as it was then commonly known, was to secure colonies in the region to provide the raw materials and markets for capital expansion in Europe.



North Borneo was leased to the first European powers, entrepreneurs Baron Overbeck and Alfred Dent Esquire by the Sultans of Brunei and Sulu in 1877-78. Overbeck and Dent formed the North Borneo Chartered Company when it was granted a protective Royal Charter by Queen Victoria in 1881. The Charter laid down the political and administrative bases upon which the Company managed North Borneo. The Chartered Company's control over North Borneo was interrupted by Japanese troops who occupied the state on 6 January 1942 during the Second World War.

When the Japanese surrendered in September 1945, the British Military Administration took over for a brief period. After the War, the penniless Chartered Company was unable to undertake its post-war reconstruction of North Borneo and the territory was sold to the British Crown. With the transfer of control to the British Crown, North Borneo became a Crown Colony of Britain on 15 July 1946. British colonial rule came to an end on 31 August 1963 and North Borneo officially adopted its present name of Sabah (Sullivan and Leong 1981: 3-4 and 123). However, Sabah enjoyed a very short period of only 16 days of "self-rule" before it was incorporated into the Federation of Malaya to form Malaysia on 16 September 1963 together with Sarawak and Singapore (which eventually left the federation in 1965).¹

¹ A Commission of Enquiry called the Cobbold Commission was formed to ascertain the views of the peoples of North Borneo and Sarawak on the formation of Malaysia. The Commission was headed by a former Governor of the Bank of England, Lord Cobbold and composed of two members nominated by the British Government and two by the Malayan Government. Over 4,000 "respectable and responsible citizens" from the states of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei were queried. One-third of those questioned were strongly in favour of entering Malaysia, one-third insisted on some sort of safeguarding conditions before they commit themselves, and one-third was opposed to the Plan. But the Commission recommended that a federation of Malaysia was in the best interests of the peoples of Borneo and thus the Sabahans and Sarawakians (Brunei managed to get out of it) were incorporated into the Malaysia concept. Sabah demanded a "Twenty Points" agreement spelling out some constitutional safeguards for state rights against the federal government, and also applicable to Sarawak (Fajar No. 4 May 1980 p.12; Sta Maria 1978, 43-52).

Population and ethnicity of Sabah

The ethnic composition of Sabah's 1.7 million (1991 Census) people is complex and varied, each with its own language, culture, customs, and traditions. It is quite a task to categorise the ethnic communities or determine their population. As Cleary and Eaton (1992: 93) note, 'this diversity makes the question of ethnographic classification for academic and census-taker alike equally problematic'. Yet, ethnic classifications were, and are, politically and socially significant, as the whole notion of establishing ethnic classifications was based on historical experience. For example, the term *Bumiputera*, literally meaning 'son of the soil' was created primarily to facilitate the implementation of Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP 1971-1990).² The special position and privileges as "Bumiputeras" accorded the Malays in Peninsular Malaysia were extended to all native groups in Sabah and Sarawak but many of the indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak view the term *Bumiputera* as objectionable since they were non-Muslims and non-ethnic Malays.

When Harris Salleh became the Chief Minister of Sabah (1976-1985) he introduced a new category, *Pribumi*, to refer to all the indigenous people of Sabah (Tan Chee Beng 1993: 25). Many of the ethnic *Bumiputera* groups were classified simply as *Pribumi* in the 1980 Sabah Census, with no distinction on the basis of language or ethnic group. The Kadazan, as the largest ethnic category in Sabah, and other ethnic groups who want to maintain their separate identities also view the use of *Pribumi* as objectionable and was "to suppress their respective ethnic identities as well as facilitate certain categories of recent immigrants being considered indigenous, and

² The NEP was introduced in 1970 with a two-pronged objective of strengthening unity, namely (1) to reduce and ultimately eradicate poverty by increasing the level of income-expanding opportunities for employment, and (2) to restructure society in order to correct the economic imbalance between the different ethnic groups.

by extension, citizens” (Tan Chee Beng 1993: 26). When the Kadazan-dominated party, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) came to power in April 1985, Chief Minister Pairin J. Kittingan immediately revoked the use of *Pribumi* as the category of classification.

Despite this historical experience of ethnic classification, official censuses tended to identify them by the names given by the British rather than what the communities identify themselves with (Lasimbang 1996: 178). Accurate data on ethnicity in Sabah, as with Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia as a whole is also lacking which makes it difficult to estimate the composition and size of different groups. However, the Kadazan and the Muruts are said to be the earliest settlers of Sabah, although the Kadazan form the overwhelming majority (Bernard Sta Maria 1978: 25).

In fact the name *Dusun* was once used by other people to describe the Kadazan and Muruts since they live in the interior villages of Sabah, and were agricultural people who sold or barter-traded fruits and vegetables from their orchard. But the Kadazan leaders and Native Chiefs rejected the word *Dusun*, which in Malay means ‘an obscure village or an orchard’. They refused to be associated with the word, as they believed that they were being labeled as ‘stupid country men’ (Whelan 1969, quoted in Bernard Sta Maria 1978: 26). Thus they referred to themselves as Kadazans, from the term, Kaazan, meaning true people, or by distinguishing tribal terminologies like Kujiau, Kadazan Bundu, Suang Lotud, or Tindal (*Sabah Times* 1967). Although they perceived it to be derogative, the Kadazan and Dusun leaders in Sabah continue to use the term ‘Dusun’ as a political strategy to strengthen their position as the dominant group, and later decided to merge the two categories and called themselves Kadazandusun.

The 1970 Population Census gave detailed breakdown of the indigenous groups in Sabah and estimated that the 39 ethnic communities and sub-communities numbered 856,518 (representing some 61.2 per cent of the total population of Sabah).³ The Kadazandusuns are the largest indigenous group forming 28.2 per cent of the population, followed by the Bajaus (11.8 per cent) and Muruts (4.8 per cent). Other indigenous communities include the Brunei Malays, Rungus, Paitan, Suluk, Orang Sungai, Bonggi, Lun Dayeh, Illanun and Sino (Chinese)-Kadazan. Collectively, they constitute 19.2 per cent of the population. Among the non-indigenous communities, the Chinese is the largest group forming 21.4 per cent of the population while 5.7 per cent are Eurasians, Indians, Pakistanis, and Malaysians from other states. The population also consists of Indonesian and Filipinos who are increasing their numbers in Sabah.

The majority of the indigenous peoples still live in the rural areas and are largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, fishing, hunting and gathering of forest resources. Many still practice their traditional way of farming, which is a form of rotational agriculture viz. growing hill rice and/or wet rice combined with tapioca, vegetables and fruits, and sometimes cash crops on small scale. Besides farming and fishing there are some who are engaged in modern sectors such as logging, petroleum, plantation, manufacturing and services industries. These industries provide revenues for the state and also give rise to the growth of urban centres that have most of the modern facilities. In contrast, many of the rural villages are located in remote areas which are still not easily accessible by road and lack basic amenities such as electricity, piped water, pit latrines, schools or clinics.

³ By the 1980 Population Census, however, all the ethnic communities were classified for administrative purposes as *Pribumi* although many of the indigenous groups disapproved of the move.

Profile of the Major Indigenous Groups

Basically the **Kadazandusuns** are agricultural people who usually work on their own land. Many, however, have attained high levels of education and are well represented in the legislature and government service. They predominantly live in the districts of Penampang, Keningau, Tuaran, Ranau, Tambunan, Kudat, Kuala Penyu and parts of the East Coast and are usually known by their place or tribal names. For example, in Penampang they are known as Tengarah; in Keningau as Kwijau; in Tuaran as Lotud; in Tambunan as Tuhawon and Liwan; and in Kuala Penyu as Bundu (KCA 1982: 62). Generally the different tribes call themselves according to the plants or condition of plants surrounding their original settlement after *Nunuk Ragang*. *Nunuk* was actually a species of fig tree that grew in abundance along the Liwagu River in Ranau. In the old days, after a good swim in the river, the children would climb on the branches of the *Nunuk* to sun themselves. The many bodies sitting and sunning themselves on the branches emitted a reddish effect (*ragang*). Consequently, the Kadazandusun ancestors called that place *Nunuk Ragang* (literally 'Red Banyan').

Bajaus comprise about 11.8 per cent of the population. They are concentrated on the West Coast extending to Papar with scattered settlements along the East Coast, especially near Lahad Datu. 'Bajau' is a collective term for a number of tribal groups such as the Illanun, Suluk, Ubian and Binadan. The Bajaus are believed to have come to Sabah around the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the Southern Philippines. Bajaus mostly make their livelihood from fishing.

Muruts live mostly in the southwest region and in remote parts of the interior between Keningau and the borders of Sarawak and Kalimantan. They have a reputation as great hunters skilled in using spears, blowpipes and poisoned darts.

Sabah's Economic Development

This section gives a brief account of Sabah's economic development since Independence. In particular, it assesses the State government's strategies, plans and programmes for rural development.

The objectives of economic development in Sabah after 1963, following the formation of Malaysia, were outlined in the Sabah State Development Plan, later renamed the Sabah Five Year Plan. The development goals, as stipulated in the first Sabah Plan (1966-1970), were:

- 1) To promote economic growth in Sabah;
- 2) To develop Sabah's human resources;
- 3) To provide a wide range of modern economic and social services; and
- 4) To reduce economic and social inequalities especially through improvements in living standards and welfare of the poorest and most backward of Sabah's population.

These goals were abetted by various strategies, among others, the development of land settlement schemes; education; infrastructural facilities such as roads, telephones, air and sea port communications; and social services such as electricity and water, radio, health and medical services.

Sabah's economy has grown from an estimated Gross Domestic Product of RM 400 million in 1963 to RM 12.1 billion in 1993. Between 1960-1980, Sabah's growth was sustained by a very rapid pace through timber extraction, large-scale oil palm and cocoa plantations and the extraction of crude petroleum. These activities were also encouraged by the booming primary commodity prices in the world market at that time. Take the timber industry, which has been the backbone of the State's economy. Substantial income is derived from forest resources, in particular the logging of timber during the 1970s and 1980s, where forest revenue accounted for more than 50 per cent of the State government's total revenue (Pang 1989: 93). Over the years, however, earnings from forests have begun to drop due to depleting forest resources. Sabah earned RM699 million from forest revenue in 1991, which in 1992, peaked to RM856 million. By 1993, however, the total forest revenue dropped to RM702 million and was further reduced to RM686 million and RM602 million in 1994 and 1995 respectively. Recognising this, the State has to look to other sources of income via alternative activity relating to the land, namely plantation agriculture, industrialisation and tourism.

To be more effective in its economic development especially the industrialization goals, the State is guided by the Outline Perspective Plan Sabah (OPPS) covering the period 1995-2000. The OPPS is formulated based on the Federal Government's economic development plans, namely the Second Perspective Outline Plan (OPP2), Vision 2020 and National Development Policy (NDP). Thus the OPPS is "to steer Sabah into a new development trajectory and an era of rapid economic expansion" which in essence means "the direction and guidelines to turn Sabah into an industrialised and prosperous State producing increasingly higher value-added and

knowledge-intensive products within the context and time frame of Vision 2020” (OPPS 1995-2000, State of Sabah).

Under the OPPS, the private sector is seen by the state government as instrumental for the development of Sabah specifically and Malaysia generally into an industrialised country within the 25-year time span. The private sector is touted as the engine of growth and hence a major investor and player in the privatisation of selected public enterprises and resources. One such privatization project is the Kota Kinabalu Water Supply Privatisation Project (KKWSPP) launched on 9 December 1992 between Jetama Sdn. Bhd. and the State Government of Sabah. Hence Jetama is given exclusive control over the operation, management and supply of drinking water to the State Government of Sabah for a concession period of 20 years, including the building of new water supply facilities such as catchment and reservoir, embankment, spillway and inlet and outlet works. The construction of the Babagon Dam is part of the new production facilities under the KKWSPP.

Statement of the Problem

This study grew out of a concern to understand the experiences of the Kampung Tampasak families who were resettled when their lands were acquired by the Sabah State Government to make way for the Babagon Dam project. The project is a solution by the government to curb water shortage problems in the state capital and other nearby districts. The affected Kampung Tampasak community had been resettled for six years, at the time of writing this thesis, but there were no data collected or reported on how the families were managing in the new environment, what were the follow-up activities of the state and private agencies involved in the resettlement, how were unresolved issues such as compensation for customary lands

and gazettelement of the resettlement site as a *Kampung Simpanan* (Village Reserve) dealt with, among others. Has the resettlement brought about significant changes in the lives of the Kampung Tampasak families? What are these changes? How do macro-level policies influence rural and indigenous communities?

In addition, from my examination of existing reports, studies and documentation on Sabah, the Kampung Tampasak case events have not been documented systematically. During the time when this research was carried out, it was found that only one study mentioned Kampung Tampasak. This 1997 study was conducted by the Community Resource Development Research Group of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in collaboration with the Centre for Borneo Studies in the Sabah Foundation (CBSSF). However, this collaboration was merely a baseline research on the profiles of 10 selected communities in the West Coast Region of Sabah identified as 'marginalised' communities, of which Kampung Tampasak was one of the villages selected.

Data on the social, economic and political impacts of events like resettlement, as gathered from this study, provides vital information for assessing the well-being and quality of life of the affected community after their resettlement. Such data is also required in learning about the impact of development policies such as resettlement on rural and indigenous communities. Using the case of the Babagon Dam project and the Kampung Tampasak resettlement, the implications and gender impacts of resettlement on the Kadazandusun indigenous communities of Sabah were studied. The processes leading to the resettlement, how the people responded to the project and why they responded in such manner were explored. The dynamics of relationships between the affected community and the state government, private

agencies and support groups were also explored to show that there is an underlying conflict between government and private agencies responsible for promoting the scheme on one hand, and the affected community on the other hand.

An urgent task was the recording of events in Kampung Tampasak from the inception of the dam project to the resettlement. This not only provides a chronology of the facts but also provides information relevant to the community members themselves in order to help them understand the consequences of resettlement.

Additionally, this study aimed at demonstrating that it is critical for policy makers and implementers to pay closer attention to issues of gender, participation and power in the developmental process. This is especially important as studies on resettlement and development usually neglect women's perspectives and perceptions. As such, very little is known about the perspectives and perceptions of the large majority of women affected by resettlement projects. For example, the comprehensive two-volume report on the social and environmental effects of large dams by Goldsmith and Hildyard (1984) provided an overview on this subject and an entire chapter on "Dams and Society - the Problems of Resettlement" but made no reference to gender and had no gender-segregated information in the report. It is also noticeable that even in official reports, there is an almost complete lack of references to the gender dimension of the effects of resettlement. For example, in the World Bank's four impact evaluations on Ghana, Thailand, China and India respectively "to assess the resettlement process of Bank-supported large scale infrastructure projects and to determine the impact on the involuntarily displaced population", women are mentioned only infrequently and inadequately under social impact and family identity.

Yet evidence from numerous studies has shown that women and children suffer most from the hardships of eviction and resettlement (Thukral 1996; McCully 1996; Ferradas 1997). Ferradas, in her case study of “involuntary relocatees” displaced because of the construction of the Yacyreta hydroelectric dam project, built jointly by Argentina and Paraguay, provides an example of women ignored by state development policies and development practitioners. She says that,

Data from the 1979 EBY Census of the population affected by the hydroelectric dam showed that women accounted for 31% of the labour force. While in Misiones province 8% of the households are headed by women, in the areas affected by the dam there were around 20% of such households. Despite the significance of these figures to social planning, women remained invisible for project experts (Ferradas 1997: 456).

Indian researcher Enakshi Ganguly Thukral (1996: 1500) notes that existing information on displacement and rehabilitation tends to focus on the overall impact of this process on communities, and to a lesser extent on the tribals but “there is very little available on the gender dimension of the problem.”

Objectives of Study

This study will:

- Trace the resettlement of Kampung Tampasak, and examine the families and individual responses in the wider political and economic context;
- Analyse the impacts of resettlement on the lives of the affected families and differentially by women and men in Kampung Tampasak; and
- Propose principles for policies and projects on resettlement, development and gender in order to help policy makers and planners design and implement more gender/human-centered resettlement programmes.

Research Questions

The following questions have been useful in guiding the research effort in meeting the objective of the study:

- What are the main socio-cultural characteristics of Kampung Tampasak and to what extent have changes taken place after the resettlement?
- Has the resettlement improved women's position and status vis-à-vis the men in respect of the household and community, economic independence, access to and control over resources, accessibility to services and facilities?
- What are the lessons learned about resettlement, both for the affected community/households/individuals and for the government?

Methodology

The research process during the preliminary stages between June and October 1997 involved literature review, discussion sessions with my supervisors and those knowledgeable on Sabah on issues on gender and rural development, preparation and testing of the questionnaire, and brushing up on my Kadazandusun language in preparation for fieldwork research.

Two field visits were made to Sabah for data collection. The first was between 30 October 1997 and 12 March 1998. This enabled me to establish contacts, familiarise myself with the community involved and carry out the survey in the community. The subsequent visit was between 22 April and 12 June 1998. Besides filling in the gaps of the first phase of fieldwork, I also interviewed representatives of the government and the private agencies involved in the construction of the Babagon Dam and in the resettlement of the Tampasak community.

Data collection involved the use of various instruments, namely the questionnaire survey, field and participation observation, formal and informal interviews; focussed group discussions (FGD) and secondary resource.

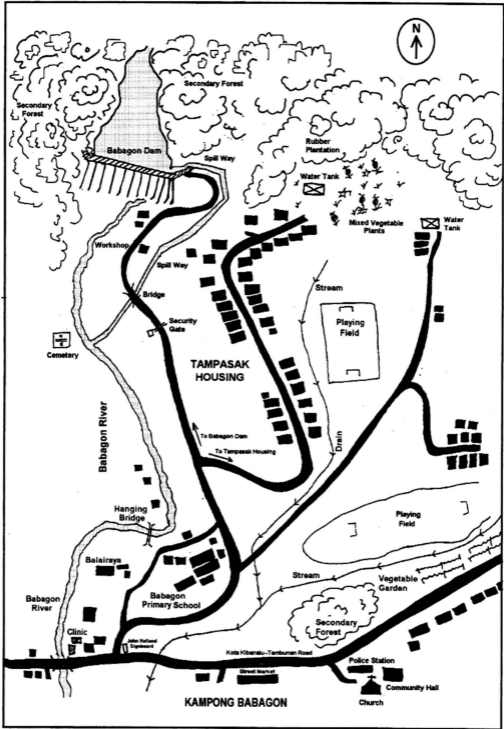
Questionnaire survey: sample design and schedule

Approximately 300 persons were forced to move due to the inundation of the Babagon Dam.⁴ Initially, official data assumed that there were only 30 families and therefore built 30 houses in the resettlement site. However, between late 1997 and mid 1998, when the field survey was undertaken, another 15 units of houses were constructed to house 'additional' families. These were mainly the married children who were living under one roof at their parents' dwellings before the resettlement and who now found that the houses at the resettlement site were too small for extended families. Thus, they had to be provided with separate houses under Phase II of the resettlement project. The 15 houses under Phase II were excluded from the survey as they were under construction during my two field visits and the families have not moved in yet. (See Map 1.2 for the location of the resettlement site).

A listing of all the families in the Phase 1 resettlement was obtained from the leader of the village organisation *Koisaan Manampasi Pitabangan Gula-Gula*, or KMPGG,⁵ to provide the universe of the survey and also the sampling frame.

⁴ See Map 1.1 for the location of the study site.

⁵ KMPGG is the acronym of the village organisation *Koisaan Manampasi Pitabangan Gulu-Gulu*, or the Tampusak-based Association to Reassert Traditional Collectivity. Though set up in 1993, it was only officially registered on 11 July 1994. KMPGG has its roots in the Action Committee set up in 1990 to campaign against the Babagon Dam, which later expanded into the 'Alliance of 12 Villages Against The Babagon Dam' in 1992. But geographical distance between the villages made co-ordination difficult, so Kampung Tampusak went ahead to form the KMPGG. KMPGG was instrumental in helping the people affected to cope with the resettlement, especially before the appointment of the JKKK, or Village Development and Security Committee.



Map 1.2 Location of Kampung Tampasak resettlement site, 13/1/97
 (Based on a sketch map by Jubin Malon, one of the villagers)

There were only 30 households in Phase 1, and I had considered all 30 households since it is a small population. The aim was to select one respondent per household. The different techniques that are used to collect data are discussed later in this section.

The questionnaire survey consisted of interviews that lasted minimally 1½ hours and at most three households were visited in one day. The interviews included filling in the questionnaire survey and general discussion on the respondent's opinion about resettlement and other village issues. In some cases it was necessary to make a second trip, for example, in the case of vacant premises during the interview period or when none of the adult occupants were in at the time of visit.

If there were occupants in the house, the respondent chosen to participate in the questionnaire depended mainly on the particular situation. In many circumstances one of the women in the household would express an interest to participate and came forward volunteering herself. In other cases, only one person would be present to answer the questionnaire. When there was more than one person who contributed to the discussion, only the responses of the first and primary respondent were included. In a situation where two persons wanted to speak, the respondent who showed the most interest would be considered. The only exception was that children below 15 years of age were not interviewed.

If the occupants were out in the farm or at work in the dam site, for instance, I would conduct the interview at night or during weekend when they took the day off. Sometimes I extended the questionnaire for more than one session.

There could be possible biases arriving from this method of survey. However, causes of possible biases based on language, age, and education level were consciously avoided. For example, there were also households where the males tended to be more dominant and traditionally seen as head of households, they would come forward to be the respondent. This being so, I would divert my attention to the women. If I had more time and resources available, one woman and one man would have been chosen per household.

The unit of analysis was the household, and in all, 20 women and 10 men were interviewed from the 30 households. More women than men responded to the interview because, being a woman myself, this encouraged the women to come out of their traditional roles of housewives to be active participants in the study. The increased involvement of women in the study also enriched my findings since my emphasis is on women's position and gender issues vis-à-vis resettlement.

Nevertheless, the information provided by the respondents included feedback of both women and men, or related to the households and community, as the questionnaire was formulated in such a way to allow the respondent, irrespective of gender, to address the needs of both women and men. Thus general data (such as household size, occupation, incomes) did not rely on the gender of the respondent.

However, unlike a questionnaire that is directed at a male respondent as the head of the household or representative of the household, the questionnaire used in this study was gender-sensitive. The aim was to gather gender-disaggregated data irrespective of the gender of the respondent.

In addition to information from these interviews, supplementary information was gathered by observation and conversation with the villagers. I also accompanied women and men skilled in gathering products from the nearby jungle fringes to observe the process of gathering, to see the products gathered, and to examine the type of land available for the villagers to work on in the resettlement site.

For the questionnaire survey, a total of four schedules were used to capture data from the village and households. Appendix 1 contains a sample of the questionnaire.

The four schedules, written in Malay, were as follows:

- *Borang 1: Jadual Soal Selidik Isirumah, Kampung Tampasak* (Household Schedule List)

This is a listing of all the 30 households as provided by the Chairperson of the KMPGG. This list contains information on the number of families and names of family members. It is the control checklist for all the households in the area and the estimated population.

- *Borang 2: Jadual Ciri-Ciri Kampung* (Characteristics of resettlement site)

This listing carries information on the availability of basic amenities (toilets, electricity, water supply), public facilities (transportation, schools, sundry shops) and conditions of houses and the village, gathered from the KMPGG and personal observation.

- *Borang 3: Maklumat Demografi Isirumah* (Demographic characteristic of households)

This listing details personal information on all members of the households such as age, sex, marital status, education level, occupation, place of

residence, place of work and income. This questionnaire was administered to an adult available in the house at the time of visit.

- *Borang 4: Soal Selidik Kajian* (Survey questionnaire)

This questionnaire contains the following sections, namely:

- A. Movement of family
- B. The resettlement process
- C. Land, traditional property and assets ownership
- D. Access to and control over resources
- E. Reproductive and productive activities by women and men, including village/community responsibilities and decision making
- F. Perception on future in the resettlement site

Field and participation observation

During field research I stayed with JJ and her family.⁶ JJ was a woman leader in Kampung Tampasak at the time when the residents were organising themselves to stop the state from acquiring their land for the Babagon Dam Project. Besides JJ and her family, I also spent time with other families, especially the women and children.

As an adopted member of JJ's family in particular and the Tampasak community in general, I was involved in many everyday affairs of the village such as helping out at the funeral of the 70-year-old Victoria, or at the wedding of Philip and Linda. I also followed what the others did when a drinking commotion suddenly occurred in the early hours, that is, peep from behind the curtains to find out which house the brawl

⁶ To protect the identity of my key informants, and at their request, synonyms or their initials only are used in this study to identify them.

happened and who intervened to pacify the situation. On hindsight, it was good to stay detached during drinking brawls for it gave me the chance later to stay impartial and seek information on the incident and problems related to drinking.⁷

Village discussions on land and compensation issues, meetings with government representatives, and KMPGG committee meetings were avenues for me to gain further insights into the community's lives. I participated in several of such meetings during my stay at the resettlement site. My tool kit during observation comprised a diary-cum-notebook, a tape recorder, maps and a camera. I kept a record of daily events according to the time the event happened, the setting and the people involved. Field notes of all observations were jotted down, be it the physical setting of the resettlement site, activities in the home, in the farm or in town, the children's diet, relations between husband and wife, or questions an individual asked me. However, the tape recorder was used on only two occasions to record the discussion fully: during an in-depth interview with an elderly man on the historical background of old Kampung Tampasak and during the focussed group discussion with the women.

A basic map of the study area was used to plot sets of information such as position of the houses, roads, facilities, school, and the dam site. In addition, photographs of people, location site, activities and social situations were taken to accompany my writings. Most of the time the Malay language was used in communication, but when there was a language barrier between my informants and I, there was always a pool of reliable translators to assist me.

⁷ My mind-set then that drinking brawls among family members would invariably get somebody – in particular the women or children – beaten up was obviously inaccurate and prejudiced. Many of the brawls that took place were in fact over money, which exposed the influence of the monetised economy over the community and families. The influence of money on the community, families and individuals will be elaborated in latter chapters.

The daily activities of walking, talking, eating, and meetings were important aspects of my fieldwork research. This direct contact and interaction with the families gave me a better insight into the behaviour and moods of the people and to understand individual and gender relations. Conversely, I learned from the people many indigenous forms of social etiquette, customs, traditions, religious worldview, food, and traditional medicine.⁸

During my fieldwork period, my conversations with JJ and the other women were most enjoyable. Especially after I had become “one of them” it was easier to initiate discussions and frank exchanges on sexual behaviour, social taboos, reproductive practices, and excessive drinking habit. Being among the women who had participated in KMPGG and PACOS activities, which included leadership and gender training, they were aware of society’s negative portrayal of women and need for gender equality.

Formal and informal interviews

At the resettlement site, interviews were conducted with:

- 1) the KMPGG members on their perception and attitude towards resettlement, their relationship with the JKKK, their role in compensation and housing negotiations, and post-resettlement problems;
- 2) the Village Community Development and Security Committee (JKKK) leader; and

⁸ To cite an example, I contracted an eye viral infection during fieldwork and the clinical gel did not help to improve my vision, causing me to lose valuable fieldwork time. Madam Rosnani Sogundu from neighbouring Kampung Nampasan who is skilled in traditional medicine quickly found the herbal plant to treat my corneal infection. She also explained to me the concept of indigenous healing, based on a harmonious relationship between the living soul and nature. Another woman from Kampung Tampasak also found the sap of a wild frond, which she used to cool my eyes.

- 3) a group of youths on their perception on the traditional way of life and the present life at the resettlement site.

These interviews were targeted at three important categories of respondents in the resettlement site, namely the formal leadership (JKKK), the community-based leadership (KMPGG) and the youths.

At the official level, interviews were conducted with officers from the Land and Survey Department; the Penampang District Office; the People's Development Leader (PKR), who is an appointee of the State Assemblyman; the Land Office in Penampang; the Sabah Foundation; Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS); the Rural Development Corporation, or *Koperasi Pembangunan Desa*;⁹ and the main concessionaire of the Babagon Dam project, Jetama.

Focussed group discussion

A focussed group discussion (FGD) was carried out and all the women were informed beforehand, either personally or through my main informants. The purpose of the FGD was to obtain information on specific issues. Initially 10 women turned up at the set time, but during later stages of the discussion, more women joined the group. The number of children also increased, as was typical of village meetings where children were always present, either hanging on to their mothers or running about oblivious of the main meeting. Two members from the community were recruited to assist me in note taking, tape-recording and translations.

⁹ The Koperasi Pembangunan Desa (KPD) was the main agency appointed to look into the resettlement of the Tampasak community and to build the houses in the resettlement.

Discussions were on the women's response to the development of the Babagon Dam in the early 1990s; their feelings on the loss of land, home and property; and their experiences of resettlement before, during and after the relocation. Discussion was free flowing although guide questions were given to encourage the shy ones to speak up. Later, some of the women added new questions. This process not only enabled the women to share their experiences, but also to validate each other's knowledge and experiences.

Secondary resource

Data was collected through literature search in the University of Malaya libraries, the resource room of PACOS, the Penampang-based NGO and my personal collection on Sabah. During the fieldwork, official documents on the Babagon Dam and the resettlement were obtained from the Penampang District Office and the Land and Survey Department, and supplemented by the JKKK and KMPGG. Some members of the community showed me maps identifying the boundary of their land held under native customary tenure.

Limitation of the Study

The period of survey was the busy months for most families as it coincided with the Christmas-New Year celebrations in December and January and the rice harvesting between January and March. During the rice harvesting time, most families were out in their farms nearby or in another district. For those who came home in the evening from their farms, the survey and discussion with them were conducted at night or during the weekend. For those who stayed away from the resettlement site until after the harvesting was over, the survey period was lengthened but it ensured that every family was interviewed. The fact that someone from the village introduced me

helped me to gain the trust of some families who were still unfamiliar with my presence in the resettlement site.

The end of May was the harvest festival, or *Tadau Kaamatan*. Throughout the entire month of May, and sometimes spilling into June, the Kadazandusuns revelled in the auspicious occasion to thank their god, *Kinoingan*, for good harvests. From village to state level, the indigenous communities would be busy with brewing their traditional rice wine (*tapai* and *lihing*) preparing traditional food and cakes, and hosting cultural events. Many of my interviews with the government and private agencies during this month were postponed until after the merry-making was over.

Since many of the older women and men did not speak Bahasa Malaysia or English, translation was provided by four members of the community who accompanied me, either one at a time or together. I could also understand and speak basic Kadazandusun. The children were always eager to be my teacher, and indeed, many new words were learned from my little friends. There were also difficulties in getting a response from the respondents to a number of questions, or they were reluctant to reveal the information. These questions pertained mainly to income earned by the family and compensation received. When the respondent was hesitant to reveal the information, I assured them that the information and the household identity would be kept confidential and they were forthcoming after that. However, there were two households who were reluctant to respond and they were not considered as valid respondents for the related question.