



**4<sup>th</sup> WORLD TOURISM CONFERENCE**  
**"Tourism Delights: Delivering the Unexpected"**

# **Sustainable Tourism and Conservation Initiatives in the Lower Kinabatangan Sabah, Malaysia**

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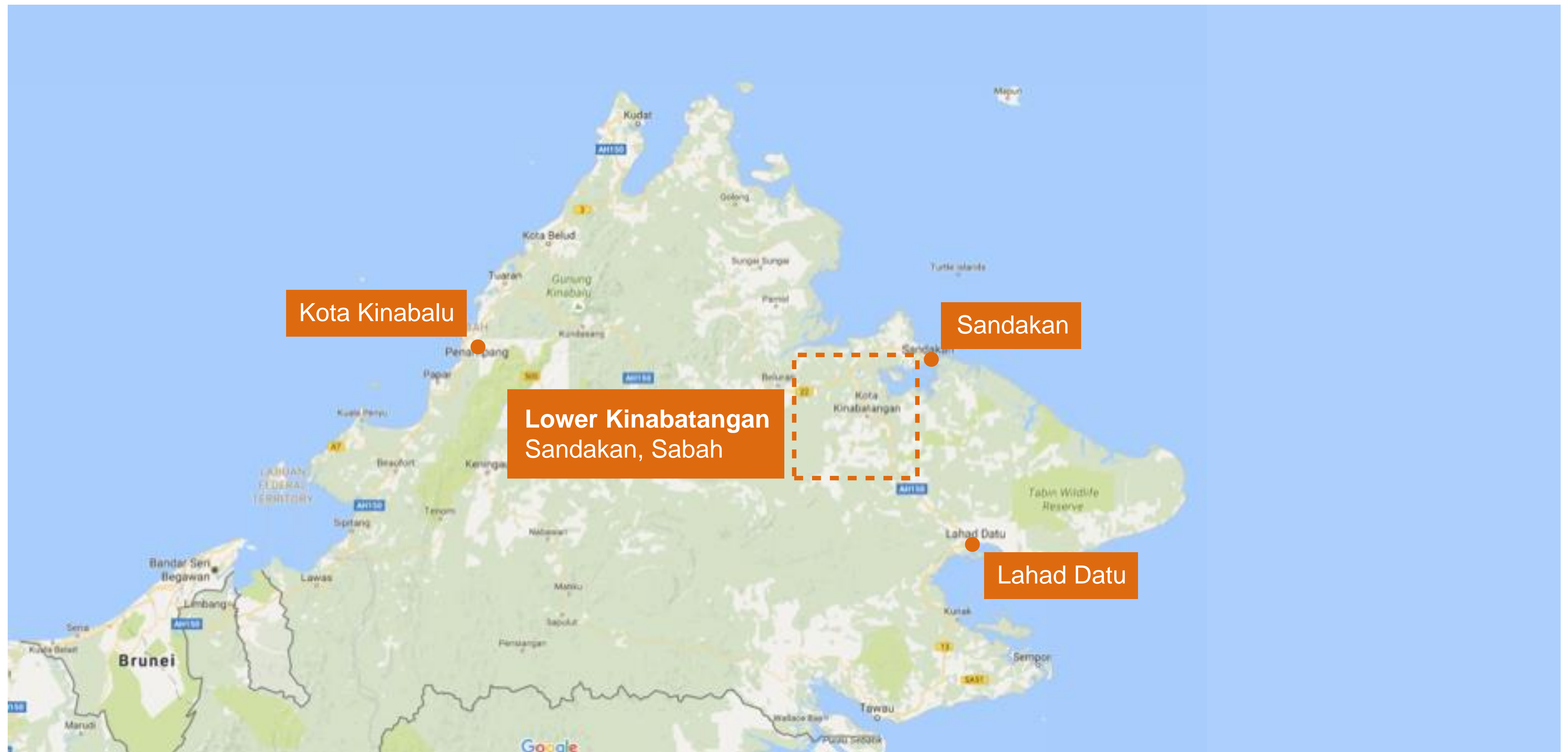
# CONTENTS

- ◆ Background of Lower Kinabatangan
- ◆ From MESCOT to KOPEL
- ◆ Upscaling Community Based Ecotourism at Miso Walai Homestay
- ◆ Synergy between CBET and Conservation
- ◆ Tackling Precarity
- ◆ Strengthening Resilience





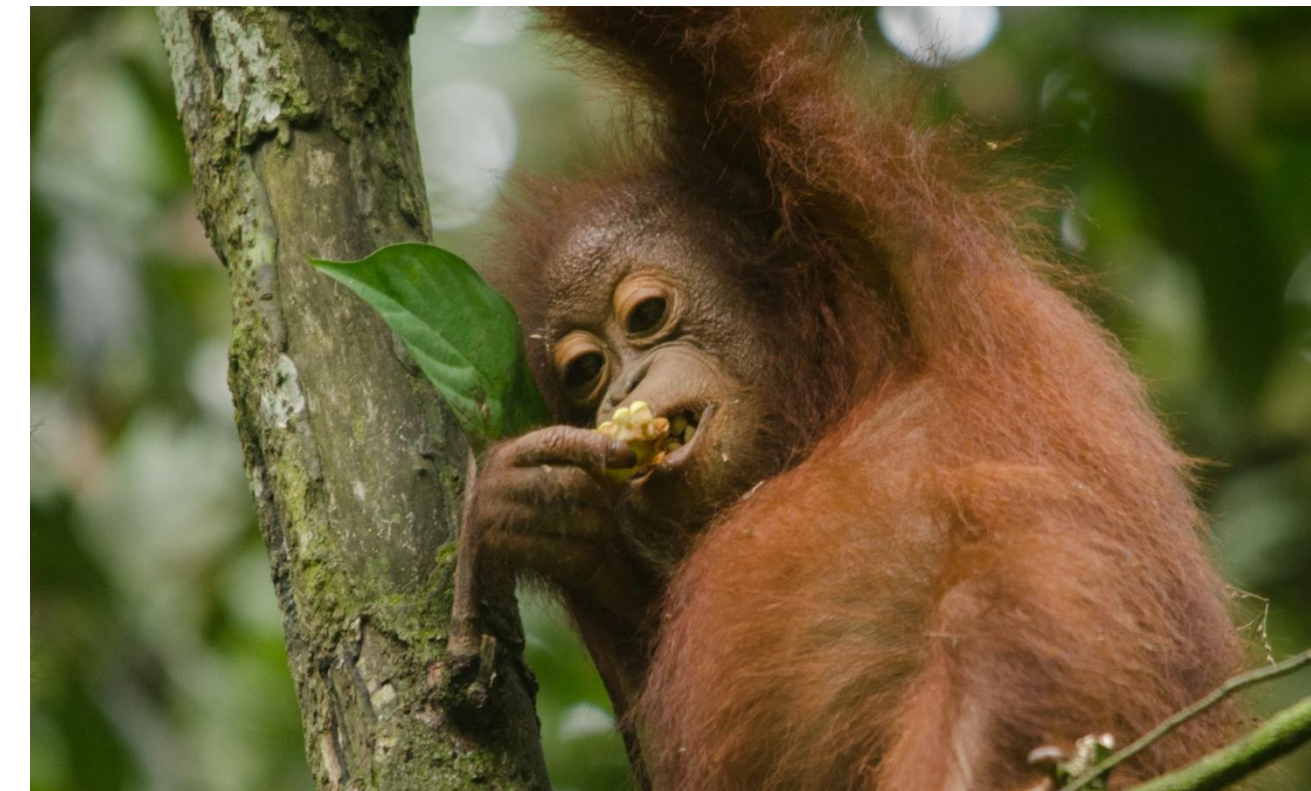
# WHERE IS LOWER KINABATANGAN?





# LOWER KINABATANGAN Biodiversity Hotspot

- ◆ **10 species of primates**  
(including Orang Utan, proboscis monkeys and Bornean gibbons)
- ◆ **50 mammal species** including iconic Pgymy elephants
- ◆ **More than 250 bird species** including hornbills



Photos by Hashim Hamid and  
Rosli Jukrana



# FROM LOGGING TO GREEN ECONOMY

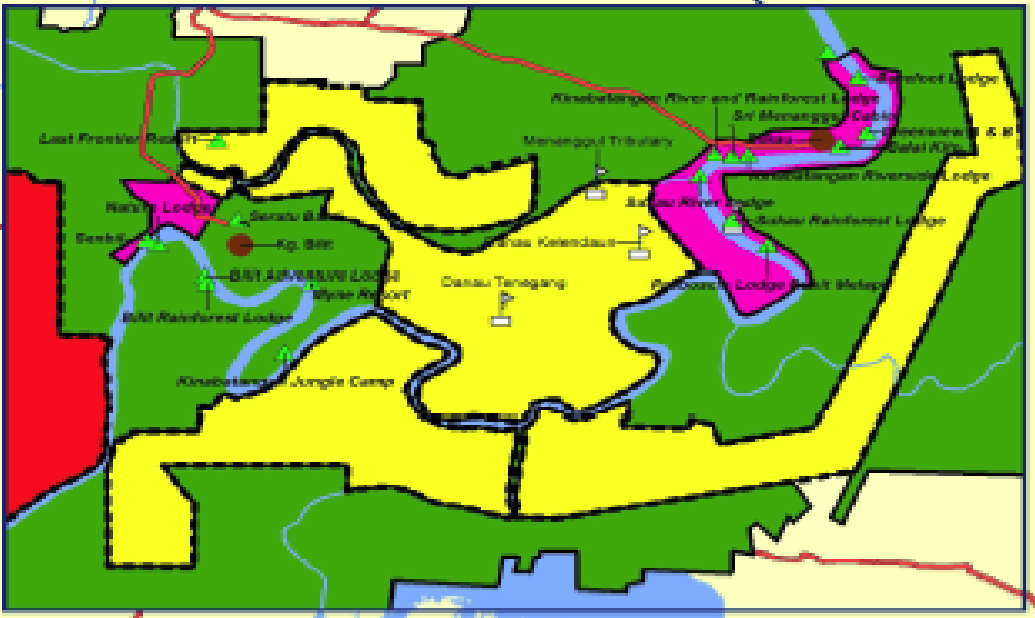
- ◆ Arguably the last forested alluvial floodplain in Asia
- ◆ Heavily logged up to the 1980s
- ◆ Land conversion to agriculture and oil palm from the 1980s until 2000
- ◆ Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary (LKWS)
- ◆ gazetted in 2005
- ◆ Covering an area of 26,000 ha.



Photo by  
Rosli Jukrana



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# THE RIVER PEOPLE (ORANG SUNGAI)

- ◆ Four settlement clusters along the Kinabatangan Corridor of Life
- ◆ Kampung (Kpg.) Batu Puteh, Kpg. Sukau, Kpg. Bilit and Kpg. Abai (Orang Sungai)
- ◆ Kpg. Batu Puteh (Miso Walai Homestay) the most successful in achieving synergy between ecotourism and conservation



Photos: KOPEL archive



# TOUGH TIMES

- ◆ During the commercial logging era locals were employed to cut down trees
- ◆ Also poaching to provide bush meat to restaurants
- ◆ Gazettement of LKWS severely affected income of local community
- ◆ Compounded by drop in global cocoa prices
- ◆ Up to 90% of local community were below the poverty line



Photo by  
Rosli Jukrana



# COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM (CBET) AS A PANACEA

- ◆ CBET at Kpg. Batu Puteh initiated by WWF in 1996
- ◆ Model for Ecologically Sustainable Conservation and Tourism (MESCOT)
- ◆ Given the local name Miso Walai Homestay (My Home)
- ◆ Difficult birth due to lack of local capacity
- ◆ First 3 years spent on planning and capacity building



Photo: KOPEL archive



# TWENTY YEAR JOURNEY

From make shift office in 1996



To modern office in training centre in 2016





# KOPEL REGISTERED IN 2003

- ◆ As a tourism cooperative (Koperasi Pelancongan)
- ◆ Ensured better management
- ◆ Transparency and accountability
- ◆ Financial and technical advice
- ◆ Access to micro credit and revolving fund
- ◆ Annual dividend for shareholders
- ◆ 290 members in 2016 and 80% of income goes back to members





# TOURISM ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Boat cruise
- ◆ Wildlife observation
- ◆ Jungle trekking
- ◆ Nature interpretation walk
- ◆ River safari
- ◆ Camping
- ◆ Homestay & cultural immersion
  - ◆ Cooking classes
  - ◆ Traditional games
  - ◆ Traditional music & dance





# VARIETY OF ACCOMMODATION MIX

Homestay



Ecolodge



Adventure  
Camp



Villagestay





# MOVING UP THE VALUE CHAIN THROUGH THE *DESA LESTARI* PROGRAMME



From wooden  to fibreglass boats



# MOVING UP THE VALUE CHAIN (CONT.)



Old jetty



New jetty



# MANDAA STAY CHALET AND DORMITORY





# TOURIST VANS

- ◆ Currently for picking up guests from airport
- ◆ Soon to ferry guests to tourism attractions in Sabah once KOPEL inbound tour license is approved





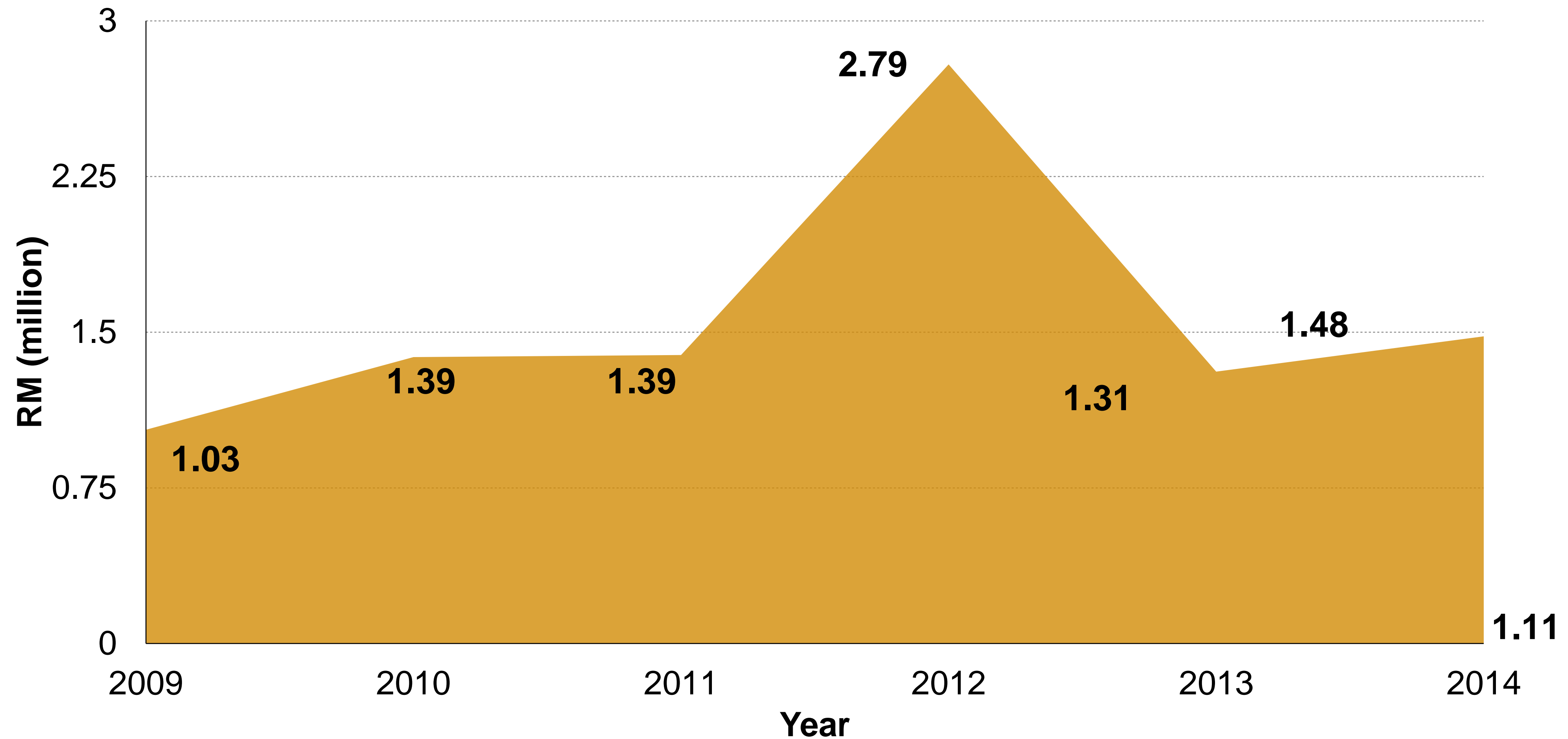
# VISITOR ARRIVALS





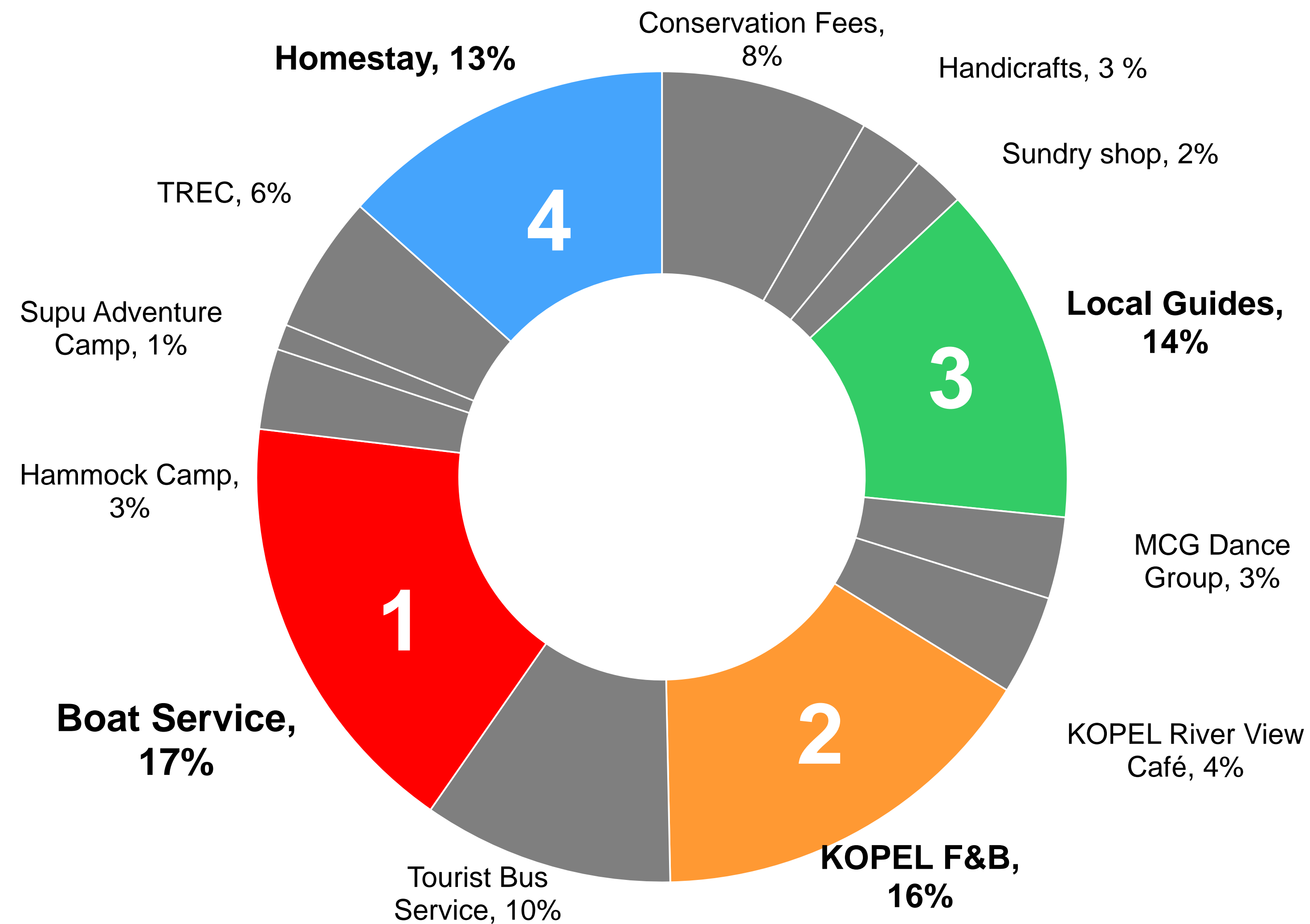
# GROSS TOTAL REVENUE

## Ecotourism & Forest Restoration





# DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME BY CATEGORY





# NUMBER OF EMPLOYED STAFF BY KOPEL

DIVISION	PEOPLE
KOPEL Board of Directors	12
Admin & Management Division	13
Tourist Guides	10
Forest Restoration Team	40
Bus Drivers	8
Homestay Families	35
Boatman	8
Cultural Performers	20
Tungog Eco Camp Staff	6
Supu Adventure Camp Staff	4
F&B	12
Laundry Service	2
Handicraft Shop	2
Landscape Services	2
KOPEL Tree Nursery	4
Lake Restoration Team	2
Cave Restoration Team	4
Total	184





# CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES

- ◆ Forest Restoration Project
- ◆ Lake Restoration Project
- ◆ Orang Utan Bridge
- ◆ Cave Restoration Programme
- ◆ Water Quality Monitoring
- ◆ Wildlife Monitoring





# KOPEL TREE PLANTING PROGRAMME

KOPEL TREE PLANTING DATA 1999 - 2004	TOTAL TREE PLANTED	TOTAL SPECIES
International NGOs	147,931	99
Local NGOs	48,000	8
International Schools	70,000	18
Government Agencies	66,240	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>332,171</b>	<b>167</b>





# SYSTEMATIC REFORESTATION PROGRAMME





# BEYOND ENVIRONMENTAL TOKENISM

Before (2008)

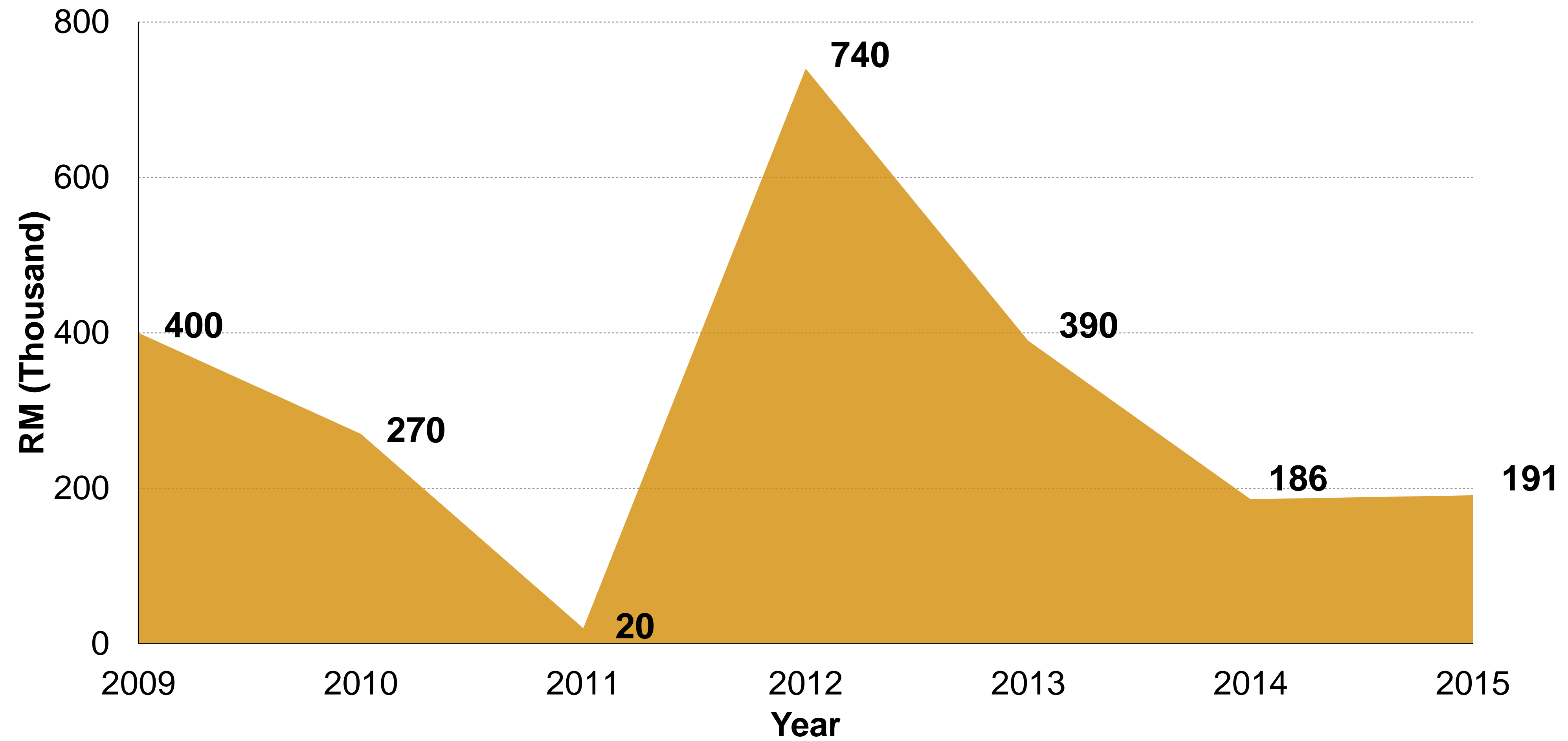


After (2010)





# INCOME FROM FOREST RESTORATION





# FMU CERTIFIED FOREST





# FOSTERING SENSE OF OWNERSHIP

## From Cutting Down Trees To Committed Custodians





# WILDLIFE MONITORING

- ◆ Since 2012 KOPEL has installed **10 wildlife cameras**
- ◆ To determine where wildlife is **most active.**
- ◆ Assist in designing **wildlife watching trails and hides**



Photo by  
Rosli Jukrana



# TACKLING PRECARITY

A precarious existence that is unpredictable, lacking in job security and material or psychological welfare. As a result, youths migrate to cities living elderly couples to remain in rural areas





# REVITALISATION OF VIBRANT RURAL COMMUNITY

- ◆ Talented youths enticed to return and help run KOPEL and earn stable income
- ◆ Children of KOPEL members returning to village upon completing tertiary education in the city
- ◆ Revitalising vibrant rural community and reduce precarity (spirit of Desa Lestari)



Atirah  
KOPEL Admin.  
Manager



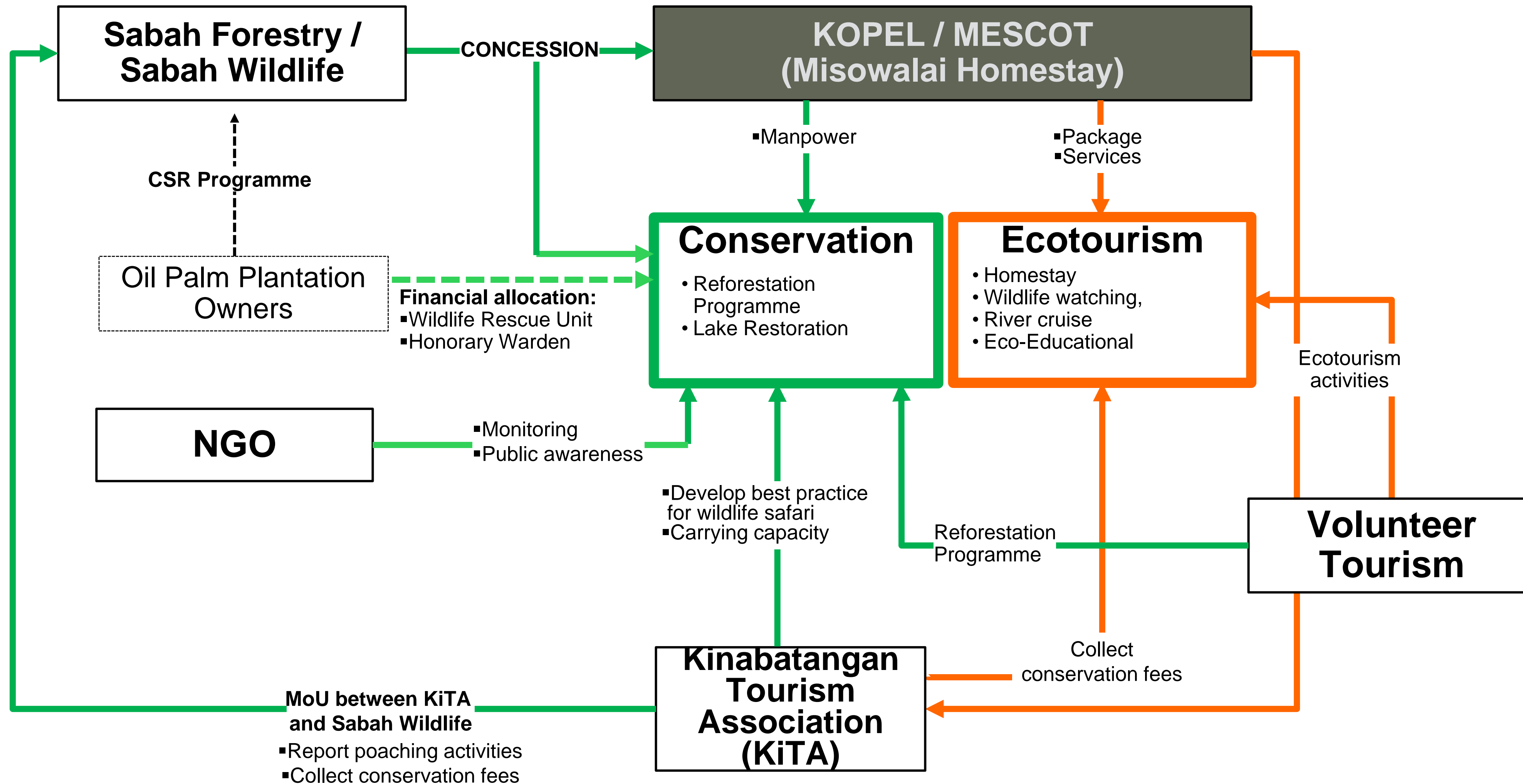
# RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS

YEAR	RECOGNITION/AWARD
2002	Winner of Sabah Level - Village Idea Competition organized by INFRA
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Winner of Sabah “Gerakan Daya Wawasan”</li><li>• Winner of National Level “Gerakan Daya Wawasan”</li></ul>
2004	Selected as Best 20 CBT Projects UNDP Equator Prize
2005	Finalist of National Level “Gerakan Daya Wawasan”
2007	The Best Cooperative in Sabah (Tourism Sector)
2008	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place SDSI National Level (Homestay)
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sabah Tourism Award – Best Homestay</li><li>• “TOP 10” out of 168 Countries in GVI Volunteer Program</li><li>• Finalist Sabah Environment Awards</li></ul>
2011	National Cooperatives Awards (Tourism Services)
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Malaysia Tourism Award (Special Awards)</li><li>• Best Contribution To Malaysia’s Rural Economy</li><li>• UNDP Equator Prize- Equator Initiative Case Study: Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature and resilient communities.</li></ul>
2013	National Cooperatives Awards (Tourism Services)
2015	Program Desa Lestari Terbaik Seluruh Malaysia
2016	ASEAN Homestay Standard Awards



# MISO WALAI HOMESTAY

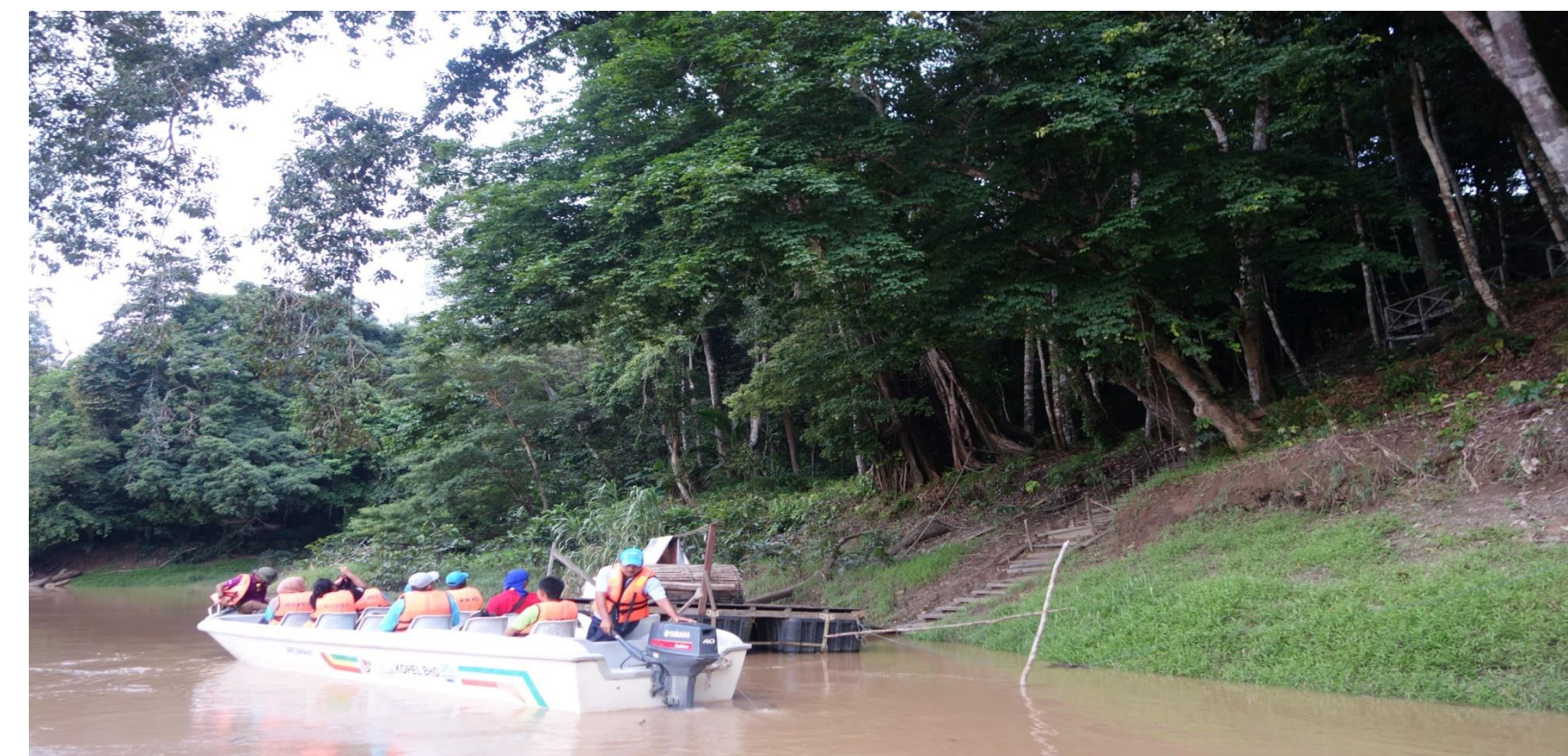
## Systemic Relationship Between Ecotourism and Conservation





# NEW FOCUS AREA

## Mentor-Mentee Training for CBT Cooperatives





# CONCLUSIONS

- ◆ KOPEL currently involved in 'community to community' training
- ◆ Miso Walai Homestay becoming a training centre for CBET
- ◆ Also as an 'outdoor laboratory'
- ◆ Partnership with UTM
- ◆ As a way of strengthening resilience and growing the market

