



A Step Towards Engaging Local Communities in Managing Marine Resources

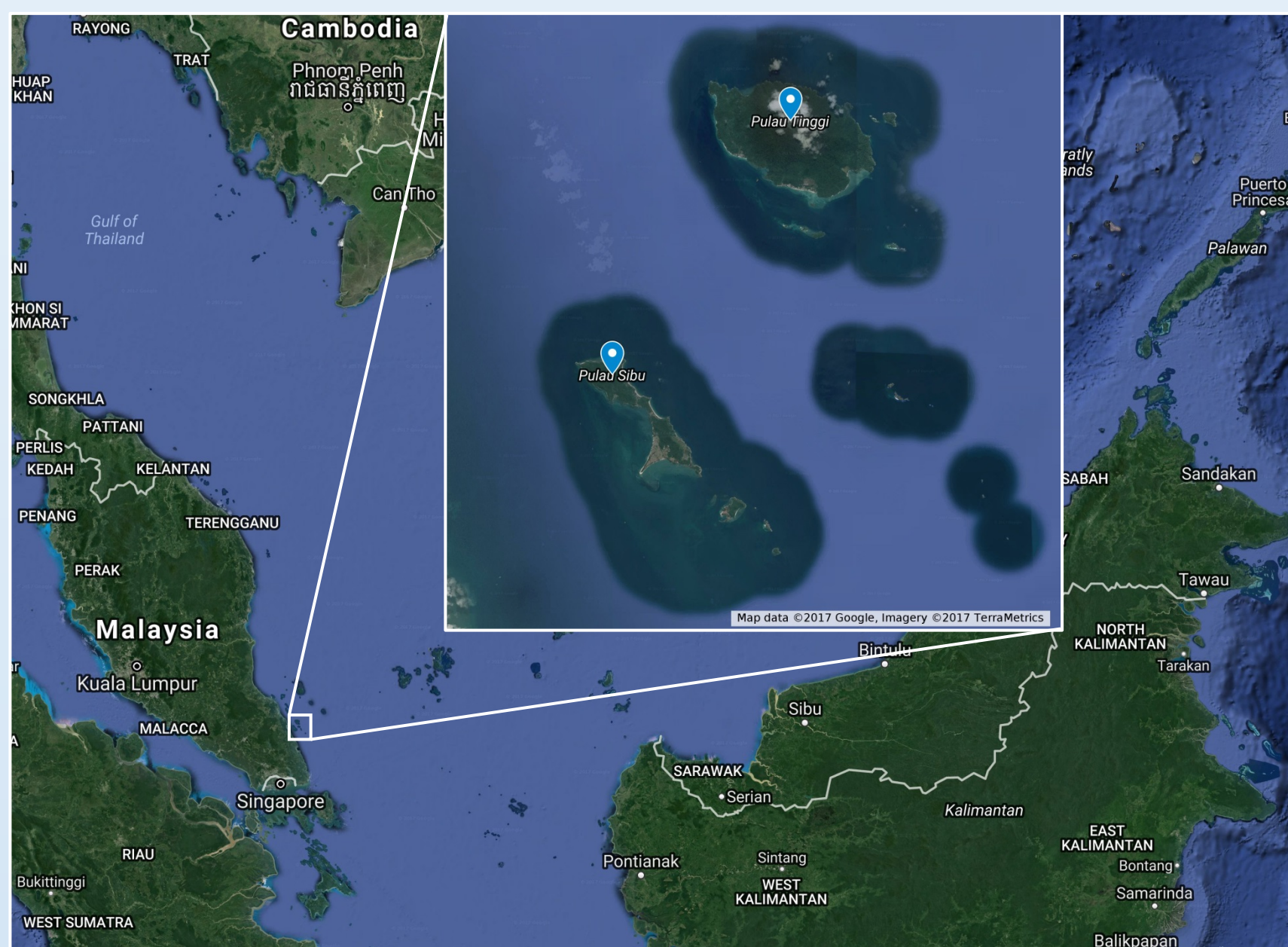


Project Summary

The project is part of a national effort to conserve dugongs and their habitat, seagrass beds. The objective is to operationalize the Malaysian National Plan of Action for Dugongs by creating a dugong sanctuary around two islands, Sibu and Tinggi, in Johor, Malaysia. The project has two expected outputs:

- 1) Improve governance structures and opportunities for local stakeholders to participate in management
- 2) Provide recommendations on policy and regulations for conservation of dugongs and seagrass ecosystems.

The project will provide an opportunity to demonstrate new approaches to managing marine resources, including co-management.



Results

We have established a good rapport with villagers on the island and have a good understanding of their perspective towards dugong conservation. The lack, or inadequacy, of basic amenities on the island appear to be of priority concern to the local islanders. Power and water outages, aquifer pollution and inefficient transport systems affect their livelihoods and greatly impair the local economy. They are aware of the presence of dugongs around the island and have proven to be highly knowledgeable about the species. Although they have a positive attitude towards conservation, they are reluctant to support new initiatives, fearing tighter regulations. This situation is exacerbated by lack of clarity of geographical boundaries, acting authority and existing marine park regulations. Further, they feel that there is a lack of platform for them to be more involved.



Our island-based colleague, Yun (right) having conversation with local islander



Group photo of the mid-term review process with dugong skeleton



Yun and Maya with the local community

Next Steps & Lessons Learned

Insufficient understanding and misconceptions about conservation activities seems to be the main issue, resulting in locals being sceptical towards the value and the benefits of conservation in contrast with their currently unsatisfactory livelihood.

There is also a need to improve two-way communications between local community and governmental agencies to clear the confusion of the geographical boundaries, developing amenity and economy that are in line with conservation efforts.



Briefing about the project to DMPM Johor staff



A seascape view of Pulau Tinggi

About Our Organization

Department of Marine Park Malaysia (DMPM) is a governmental department under the Ministry of Natural Resources responsible in conservation and management of marine resources within the gazetted Marine Parks area.

Reef Check Malaysia (RCM) is the implementing partner for this project. RCM is a non-profit organisation registered in Malaysia working to conserve coral reefs. RCM is part of an international network with its headquarters in the United States, and one of 82 country offices worldwide. RCM focuses on promoting coral reef conservation and management in Malaysia.

