Annual Report 2023

SDI

SARAWAK DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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INTRODUCTION

SDI was established on 2 November 1995. It is registered as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital under the Companies Act, 1965, Malaysia. As an autonomous non-profit research institute, it is entrusted to undertake inter-disciplinary research on pertinent development issues related to the state and nation for policy inputs to the government and private organisations/clients.

VISION

To be a leading research institution in the region.

MISSION

- To offer comprehensive professional research services that provide valuable inputs to planners and policy makers.

- To offer professional management services for conferences/seminars and generate reports and recommendations for public policy input and knowledge oriented publications.

- To contribute to and complement the policy and decision making process in Sarawak.

OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of SDI is to provide independent and objective inputs to complement the policy and decision making process in Sarawak.

Its specific objectives are to :

- Undertake interdisciplinary research for policy inputs to the government and other clients;

- Provide an avenue for professionals and other practitioners to discuss, exchange views and opinions facing the state and nation through conferences, seminars, workshops, dialogues and lectures;

- Disseminate information, knowledge and findings to the public through both formal and informal channels; and

- Network with other institutions with similar interests, in and outside Malaysia to facilitate the flow of information and knowledge.

The priority focus areas are:

- Public Policy

- Development Studies

- Socio-economic Studies

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

2023 has been pivotal for SDI as we work to realign the Institute with Sarawak's development agenda and the dynamic goals set forth in the PCDS 2030. A key activity in this journey was our brainstorming session, where we gathered vital input from our board members and members to kick-start SDI's strategic transformation proposal. The session delved deep into issues and challenges facing the Institute in recent years. We were able to gather feedback, ideas and recommendations for the transformation namely on the vision, mission, objectives, focus areas, human resource, organisational structure, membership, board composition and sustainable funding sources. We believe the strategic transformation plan, once endorsed by the Sarawak Government, will revitalise SDI to be a credible research institute that supports the new development discourse. I wish to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the Board and members who contributed to the session.

As we move forward, our key focus will be on supporting the PCDS 2030 initiatives through research and communication. SDI will focus on impactful and solutions-oriented research and strategic communication activities, to provide the much-needed independent assessments and evaluations, feedback and analyses, and recommendations and solutions to address gaps and challenges in the planning and implementation of government projects and initiatives.

I am pleased to point out our own internal research project on 'Mapping the Digital Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Sarawak and Understanding Its Impact on Rural Micro Entrepreneurs' is a good example of a solution-oriented study. The study highlights the importance of a coordinated digital ecosystem tailored to rural micro-entrepreneurs' needs. We hope the small survey's findings can

provide a better understanding of the realities on the ground and input for better formulation of policies and programs. Other projects like the 'Cultural Resource Mapping in Kuching Division' will gather and document information and data which are essential for cultural heritage preservation, planning and management.

SDI is also providing our socio-economic expertise in the 'Master Plan for Community Development in the Resettlement Areas 2050', which will provide development plans and recommendations to improve the livelihoods and socio-economic environment of the resettled communities. Another notable project is the publication on 'Sarawak Civil Service Administration and Development: Reflections and Reminiscences over 60 Years' which documents experiences and anecdotes of former civil service officers. The publication serves as an appreciation and recognition of the contributions and successes achieved which are important for future reference and posterity.

Strategic communication activities on PCDS 2030 will be another key focus area for the Institute. In 2023, we partnered with the Ministry of Public Health, Housing and Local Government Sarawak to organise a briefing on PCDS 2030 for Councillors to create greater awareness among the grassroots leaders.

For the past year, we are extremely thankful to our members and partners who had shared their expertise and actively supported us in the talks organised. The talks covered topics like artificial technologies, women & leadership, digital inclusion, and updates on the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS). These sessions provided good insights on new developments and emerging issues not only in Sarawak but also globally.

I also commend the support by members for other activities organised by the Institute, namely the festive gatherings held throughout the year. I believe these gatherings are important to strengthen the solidarity within the greater AZAM group.

Last but not least, I wish to convey my deepest appreciation to the Sarawak Government, SDI Board of Directors, SDI members and corporate members, partners and collaborators, members of the media and the secretariat for their unwavering support to SDI all these years. Let us continue to work together to drive the transformation within SDI.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment.

Datuk Amar Jaul Samion
Chairman
Sarawak Development Institute

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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YBhg. Datuk Amar Jaul Samion
Advisor in the Office of the Premier of Sarawak

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YBhg. Datu Sr Zaidi Bin Haji Mahdi

Permanent Secretary Ministry of Natural Resources & Urban Development (General Manager of Land Custody & Development Authority since 2nd May 2024)

YBhg. Datu Ik Pahon Joyik

Special Administrative Officer Greater Kuching Coordinated Development Agency (GKCDA)

YBhg. Datu Antonio Kahti Galis

Member of the Sarawak Public Service Commission (SPANS) (Deputy Chairman of SPANS since 16th June 2024)

Professor Dr. Patrick Then

Director, Centre for Digital Futures Head, School of Information & Communication Technologies Faculty of Engineering, Computer & Science, Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak

SECRETARIAT

Front row from left

Nuridzrienna Jamalludin
Graphic Designer

Rosalind Wong
General Manager

Lelia Sim
Chief Executive Officer

Evelette Robin
Senior Conference/ Events Executive

Patricia Nayoi
Senior Administrative Assistant

Nilka Suria Anak Disun
Intern

Back row from left

Abdul Khalik Putit
Administrative Assistant

Kamaruddin Sajeli
Head, Research Division

Dr. Yuen Kok Leong
Senior Research Officer

Khairul Anam
Accounts & Events Assistant

Alan Teo
Senior Administrative & Finance Officer

Tang Tze Lee
Senior Research Officer

Ralph Balan Langet
Communication Officer, Sarawak Coomunication for Development (SCD) Centre

PROGRAMMES & ACTIVITIES

AI MEETS ART: THE RISE OF TEXT-TO-IMAGE AI PLATFORMS

21st February 2023 | via ZOOM Application

The talk was presented by Associate Professor Dr. Johari Abdullah, a lecturer from the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology at UNIMAS. The first part of the presentation was an introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI), where he explained the various components of AI, such as Machine Learning, Deep Learning, and the three types of AIs, namely Artificial Narrow Intelligence, Artificial General Intelligence, and Artificial Super Intelligence. In the second part of his presentation, Dr. Johari focused on the relationship between AI and art, where AI is used in the arts domain. Following that, he explained and demonstrated several text-to-image AI platforms, namely Dall-E 2, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion, and discussed about Prompt Engineering. The final part of his presentation touched on the emerging issues of AI and artists, namely artwork copyright issues, ethical issues on how AI platforms gather data to generate artwork, loss of jobs for traditional artists, and good-use cases for AI in the art domain.

AI vs ML vs DL

All the three terms AI, ML and DL are often used interchangeably and at times can be confusing.

In summary, AI is a very broad term used to describe any system that can perform tasks that usually require the intelligence of a human. ML is a subset of AI whilst DL is a subset of ML algorithms.
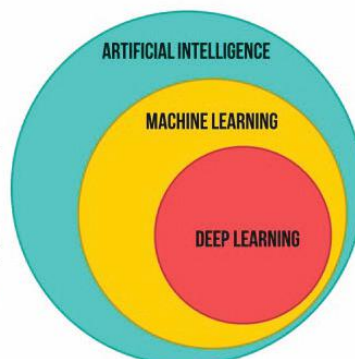
Among the points of discussion raised during the talk were on other aspects of AI, such as the components within it, issues on cyber-security, and the demand for AI in the art domain. In conclusion, Dr. Johari believes this technology will continue to exist and evolve, and current issues surrounding the legal and policy aspects of technology usage are expected to be addressed in the near future.

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP : A CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE

8th March 2023 | via ZOOM Application

The talk was organised in conjunction with International Women's Day and it was presented by Professor Ida Fatimawati Adi Badiozaman, Executive Dean of Research, Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus.

Professor Ida kick-started her presentation by defining leadership. She quoted that a "good" leader is someone who guides, not orders, and respects, not dictates. Leaders are individuals who understand that being a leader doesn't necessarily mean they are the most intelligent or knowledgeable person in the room. She shared the five levels of leadership: position, permission, production, people development, and pinnacle. The first is position, which requires no ability or effort. The second level is based on relationships, where people follow because they want to. The third level is where leaders build influence through their track record. The fourth level is people development, where the goal is to develop as many leaders as possible. The highest level requires longevity and intentionality, where leaders invest their lives in others and develop other leaders.

Professor Ida also highlighted the well-known fact that having gender diversity at the senior management level in leadership in the workplace brings many benefits. Companies with higher rates of gender diversity among senior leaders performed better compared to companies dominated by men by a significant 15% margin. In addition, those with the highest percentages of female board directors enjoy a remarkable 53% higher returns on equity, 42% higher return on sales, and 66% higher return on invested capital as compared to those with the lowest percentages. It has also been found that gender diverse teams consistently outperform teams dominated by men. According to her, the Institute for Corporate Productivity conducted a study and found executives at high-performance organizations are over 1.5 times more likely to indicate the gender diversity of their workforce as a "high" or "very high" priority. She shared that The World Economic Forum predicted that the gender gap will not be closed for another 217 years. She concluded her presentation by sharing several inspiring examples from eight powerful women and two case studies in leadership, highlighting what participants can learn from them.

IMPLICATIONS OF EMERGING AI TECHNOLOGIES

6ᵗʰ April 2023 | via ZOOM Application

The talk was presented by Professor Dr. Narayanan A/L N. Kulathu Ramaiyer, Lecturer, Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, University of Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

Professor Dr. Narayanan explained that ChatGPT is a pre-trained generative model that uses the transformer architecture to produce text. ChatGPT employs deep learning, which is a subset of machine learning, to create humanlike text using transformer neural networks. These transformers predict text, including the following word, sentence, or paragraph, based on the typical sequence of its training data. Professor Narayanan shared that ChatGPT had already amassed over 100 million registered users in just two months and is affecting all aspects of our lives. He explained the operation of generative AI platforms and emphasised that everyone should be prepared and educated on AI. He concluded the talk with the reminder that AI has unlimited possibilities, will bring about a new world order, poses future threats, and may dehumanize societies.

During the presentation, a poll session was conducted covering aspects such as participants' knowledge on ChatGPT, usage and expectation, and concerns and worries on its usage. The first question on whether participants had used ChatGPT showed 46% had never used it. The second question on their concerns and worries about ChatGPT indicated that 76% are worried about its usage making people lazy and less smart. 73% shared that they believe ChatGPT can be useful in their occupation. On the question of the need for a policy for usage of AI platforms to safeguard the State's interest, majority (82%) of the participants indicated it is necessary.

PUBLIC TALK SERIES

A GLOBAL SOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON DIGITAL INCLUSION AND RESILIENCE

24th July 2023 | AZAM Conference Room

The talk was delivered by Professor Heike Winschiers-Theophilus from Namibia University of Technology, Namibia. Professor Heike spoke about her partnership with the Donkerbos San Community, especially the youth on technological innovation and education. She drew attention to how we can guarantee the participation of individuals, particularly marginalised ones, in the creation of technology. She stressed that while designing technology, it is essential to consider the requirements of under-represented groups and actively involve them. Technology innovation in education may fulfil consumer needs and provide inclusiveness, especially for the under-privileged community. Additionally, technological innovation can provide a more stimulating learning environment. Collaboration among local communities can improve their well-being by supporting their physical, psychological, social, emotional, and economic well-being. Furthermore, it creates opportunity recognition where they do marketing by utilising technology to gain profit for the community.

Professor Heike shared various examples of how technology is currently being used to improve learning, including music mirrors, arithmetic games, live streaming through holograms, and the establishment of technology libraries. The goal of bringing technology into the learning environment is to reduce boundary inequality in education. She also addressed how the use of technology in education is being carried out through the inclusion of children from across the world, such as the virtual communication between Namibian and Finnish learners to co-create an interactive map game. She stated that by co-creating an interactive map game, children all over the world can learn about each other's cultures without having to travel to the nation itself. They can learn about animals, local foods, and iconic land-marks that exist in each country around the world.

Professor Heike also discussed technology deployment in rural development in the Namibia University of Science and Technology in collaboration with the San community (Bushmen), an indigenous hunter-gatherer community in a remote settlement in Namibia. The San community underwent training in marketing and online promotion for their community campsite initiatives. The focus of the training session was on how the community can make money through video creation. The training involved co-designing an augmented-reality fridge magnet where the earnings from the initiative were returned to the community. Additionally, the community is being taught how to use technology to build a virtual living museum tour. Professor Heike noted that like the San community, the Penan community of Long Lamai can adopt technology design, such as documenting the Oroo', a Penan's sign language into a digital jungle sign language.

She shared that one of the challenges faced during collaboration with rural communities is the lack of commitment among young people. Since most of the training and coordination involved working with local youth, their commitment issues can adversely affect the project's effectiveness and progress. In conclusion, Professor Heike emphasized the need for the target population, especially the underprivileged community to be engaged and involved in the design process. The aim is to focus on the 'persona' aka user and not just the technical design to ensure that the project meets the needs of the community.

TECHNOLOGIES, TOOLS, AND TECHNIQUES FOR ONLINE DESIGN BASED ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN

25th July 2023 | Auditorium IPG Batu Lintang

The public talk was held in collaboration with UTS and IPG Batu Lintang on the usage of technologies to facilitate children's learning. Dr. Naska Gaogoses from Carl von Ossietzky from the University of Oldenburg, Germany; Professor Dr. Heike Winschiers-Theopilus from the Namibia University of Technology, Namibia, and Associate Professor Dr. Tariq Zaman from the University of Technology Sarawak are experts in applied technology for children's education, particularly amongst underprivileged children. The speakers shared on their projects and collaborations that revolve around co-designing technology learning platforms with children.

Professor Dr. Heike began by stating the importance of inclusivity and how end-users are not consulted in the creation of the technology that they use especially during the design stage. She emphasised the importance of participatory design with children particularly those from developing South countries. Her presentation included her projects designing interactive maps, book recommendation applications and assigning library spaces for different typologies of library users.

Dr. Naska and Associate Professor Dr. Tariq took turns sharing their collaboration involving children from Namibia, Malaysia, and Finland. The children co-designed an online interactive learning space to interact with their peers from around the world. They used a platform called Ohyay, an online virtual learning space that allows students to share their local perspectives on global challenges, their design process and innovative ideas. The social rooms and features on the platform, helped them interact and build relationships with their peers, and do various fun activities such as reading, cooking, and engaging in leisurely pursuits. Dr. Naska hopes that future educators will embrace and utilize such online platforms to create more interactive and engaging teaching methods.

Participants at the talk had questions on the Ohyay rooms and how they function. The minimal instruments required to join the rooms are a laptop, camera, and internet connection, and the main criteria for participants are: they are English proficient and have an outgoing teacher who can guide them well and share good ideas. The sessions are organized outside of school hours, during extracurricular activities, and with some counterparts having their sessions in the evening due to time differences. The online platform is free and can also be accessed using a smartphone.

In answering queries on using the Ohyay platform offline, the speaker emphasized that the purpose of Ohyay being hosted online is to connect students from different parts of the world. She added that teachers can explore ways to design classes with offline activities, with a smaller part involving online interactions for when and if it is available. She also shared that one of the ways to keep the platform functioning effectively was by allocating specific spaces with specific rules to govern the communication and behaviours of the students. Another was to have two to three sessions to reflect on what has been done, re-watching the video, and engaging in brainstorming to keep students engaged and interested.

AN UPDATE ON KUCHING URBAN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (KUTS)

28ᵗʰ July 2023 | via ZOOM Application

The talk was delivered by Ts. Mazli Bin Mustaffa, Chief Executive Officer of Sarawak Metro on the latest progress and happenings on the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS). Ts. Mazli shared an overview of the KUTS where he explained that the transit system consists of three main routes: the blue line, which runs from Rembus to Hikmah Exchange; the red line, which runs from Kuching Sentral to Pending; and the green line, which runs from Pending to Damai.

Phase 1 of the project was launched in December last year, and community engagement activities, such as promotional and marketing efforts, had been carried out in local universities and schools in Sarawak and West Malaysia. Ts. Mazli mentioned that the hydrogen prototype for the ART (Autonomous Rail Transit) was successful, and their team had travelled to Suzhou, China, with the Ministry of Transport, Sarawak to view the ART prototype. He reported that the construction of the ART Depot at Rembus is currently underway, and that progress was going well. The ART was expected to arrive in Kuching in August 2023, and a tryout period would occur from August to November 2023.

Following the presentation, questions were raised on the operation of the ART system and whether it will run on existing roads or on dedicated roads, rates/charges, areas serviced and the feeder service support, and incentive for people to use the new service.

A poll was conducted at the end of the talk to assess attendees' knowledge and willingness to use the ART in Kuching. Questions covered include attendee's residence, workplace, mode of transportation, knowledge about the ART system, and willingness to spend and use the ART. Majority of the attendees reside in Tabuan, BDC, Petra Jaya, Kota Samarahan, and Matang, and mainly travel by car to work. The following are the poll results.

1. How much would you be willing to spend on fares to take the ART for daily commuting to and fro for work? (Single Choice)

82/82 (100%) answered

RM2.00 and below per day	(54/82) 66%
RM5.00 and below per day	(23/82) 28%
RM10.00 and below per day	(5/82) 6%
RM10.01 and above per day	(0/82) 0%

1. Would you consider taking the ART when it's completed? (Single Choice)

55/55 (100%) answered

Yes	(42/55) 76%
No	(2/55) 4%
Maybe	(11/55) 20%

1. Do you think hydrogen fuel is the best choice for ART fuel? (Single Choice)

66/66 (100%) answered

Yes	(38/66) 58%
No	(2/66) 3%
Not sure	(26/66) 39%

BRIEFING ON PCDS 2030 FOR COUNCILLORS

25th July 2023 | PCC Demak

The briefing on PCDS 2030 was organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, Housing, and Local Government (MPHLG), Sarawak. The briefing aimed to provide councillors with an overview and a deeper understanding of the focus areas and initiatives under PCDS 2030. The briefing was attended by 692 councillors from local authorities throughout Sarawak. The closing of the briefing was attended by YB Dato Sri Prof. Dr. Sim Kui Hian, Deputy Premier and Minister for Public Health, Housing and Local Government together with YB Datuk Dr. Penguang Manggil, Deputy Minister for Public Health and Housing, YB Encik Michael Tiang Ming Tee, Deputy Minister for Local Government and Madam Elizabeth Loh, Permanent Secretary of MPHLG.

The briefing featured three speakers, namely, Ms. Mildred Voon Hian Ya, Head of Division, Social Development and Performance Management Division, Economic Planning Unit, Sarawak, who presented 'An Overview of the PCDS 2030'; Dr. Kho Lip Khoon, Head of Corporate Development and Economy, Ministry of Energy and Environmental Sustainability (MEESty) Sarawak, who spoke on 'Environmental Sustainability Pillar of PCDS 2030'; and Dr. Zufar Yadi Brendan Bin Abdullah, Executive Secretary, Sarawak Social Development Council, Ministry of Women, Early Childhood and Community Development, who gave an 'Overview on the Social Inclusivity Pillar'.

In her speeches, Madam Elizabeth Loh empahsised the councillors' essential role in understanding and sharing on the Sarawak government's agenda and policies as encapsulated in the PCDS 2030. The PCDS 2030 is a key strategy plan that demonstrates priorities in infrastructure development, digital transformation, tourism and economic revitalization, sustainable development, and social welfare enhancement, which are key development areas relevant to the local authorities. Madam Loh pointed out that the briefing had covered all of the important pillars, which are economics, environmental, and social inclusivity, which are important for the local authorities to chart and align their development strategies. She urged the council members to take ownership of the action plans and targets related to PBTs, and work closely with all the stakeholders to drive the implementation of PCDS 2030 at the grassroots level.

YB Dato Sri Professor Dr. Sim Kui Hian, in his closing speech, highlighted the role of councillors in supporting and helping the government machinery at the grassroots level. He reminded the councillors to serve as a bridge between the local community and the state government. He expressed his hope that all the local authorities will work together to make Sarawak's aspirations outlined in the PCDS 2030 a reality.
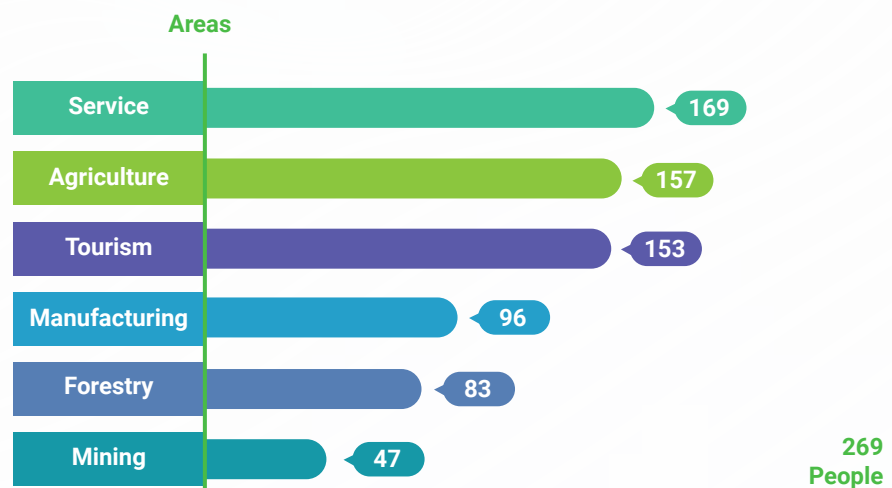
A quick survey conducted during the briefing to assess awareness and understanding on the PCDS 2030 received response from 269 councillors. The survey results are reflected below.

269 out of 629 councillors attended **took the survey**

54%
said they had never heard of the PCDS 2030

83% of 269 councillors need more detailed session on the following areas

17% were uninterested in detailed session

Areas

Area	People
Service	169
Agriculture	157
Tourism	153
Manufacturing	96
Forestry	83
Mining	47

269 People

SARAWAK COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT(SCD) CENTRE

COMMUNICATION WORK FOR PCDS 2030

Playing its role to support the Sarawak Government in communicating the Post Covid-19 Development Strategy (PCDS) 2030, the Institute organised a number of meetings with senior officers of relevant ministries and agencies.

A meeting was held with the Ministry of Energy and Environmental Sustainability (MEESty) Sarawak in April to discuss the need to communicate and build capacity on understanding the concepts of carbon economy and other new energy sources that the Government is exploring.

This is necessary largely due to the lack of understanding of not only the general public, but even members of the SCS on the processes of the carbon economy and other new energy sources. Two other follow-up meetings were held with the senior officers and Permanent Secretary in July and September to explore how SDI could assist in the content development of the communication materials.

A courtesy visit to the Ministry of Public Health, Housing, and Local Government (MPHLG) Sarawak was done in July to explore how SDI could assist the ministry in the initiatives undertaken under PCDS 2030 such as affordable housing projects, smart city projects, waste management and others. The meeting also highlighted the need to involve councillors of local authorities to help communicate initiatives of PCDS 2030 to residents within their respective zones and thus the need to engage with them. This resulted in the organisation of the Briefing on PCDS 2030 for Councillors in September in collaboration with the ministry.

RESEARCH

## MASTER PLAN FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE RESETTLEMENT AREAS 2050: BATANG AI, BAKUN, MURUM AND BENGOH

The research team started collecting primary data in January 2023. The first step involved conducting face-to-face interviews with the targeted population samples from the study areas of Batang Ai and Bengoh Resettlement Schemes. Local enumerators conducted the interviews using a questionnaire form and these were coordinated by the Chemsain Konsultant Sdn. Bhd team. The second part of the data collection involved focus group discussions and field observations. During this nearly 2-months data collection period, the research team interviewed and discussed various issues related to the study objectives with the settlers, including heads of households, women's groups, headmen, community associations, local administrators (district offices), and government departments and agencies. Data analysis on the collected information was completed in the second quarter of 2023.

The first Interim Report was submitted in March 2023, while the second Interim Report was submitted in September 2023 to the Economic Planning Unit, Sarawak. Presentations were made to the study's Steering and Technical committees, where comments were received, and revisions made to the two reports by the consultant for re-submission. The consultant was also requested to discuss and seek inputs from the ADUN (assemblymen) and parliamentarians from the respective study areas. The study deadline was extended to mid-2024 due to delays in obtaining data and information from relevant stakeholders.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MAPPING : EXPLORATORY PROJECT IN KUCHING DIVISION
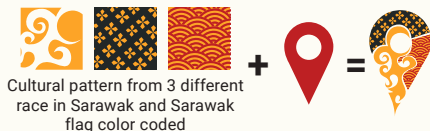
The "Cultural Resource Mapping: Exploratory Project in Kuching Division" is a project that aims to collect and catalogue as widely as possible, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage present in Kuching Division. It is a crowd-sourced project, using a digital platform named CHAMPS (Cultural Heritage Automation Mapping Platform for Sarawak). Entries into CHAMPS will include information such as pictures, videos, description/history, location and others.


MALMÖ UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SARAWAK
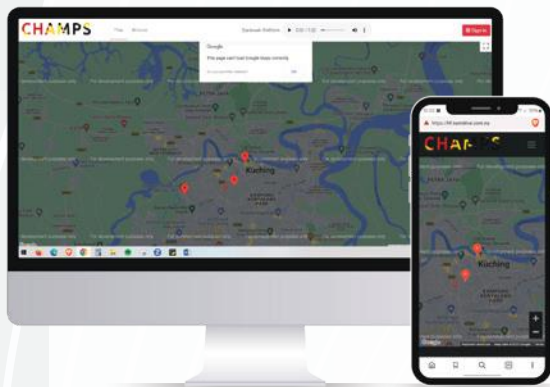
In 2023, more focus group discussions were conducted by the software development teams from Cornell University, Malmö University, Sweden and University of Technology Sarawak. These focus group sessions sought to refine the needs and preferences of users. The insights provided by the focus groups produced recommendations that helped improve the personalisation, user experience, and ways to improve user retention. The platform is browser-based and has app versions on both Apple iOS and Android.

CHAMPS
Crowd-sourced Heritage Automation Mapping Platform for Sarawak

Logo design concept | Cultural pattern from 3 different race in Sarawak and Sarawak flag color coded

Besides that, graphical material, such as the app logo, was also designed with input from previous focus group discussions. Graphical elements were also designed for integration into the CHAMPS platform. The list of heritage experts who will verify entries for accuracy were also finalized, with 22 individuals sourced from various heritage/cultural organisations.
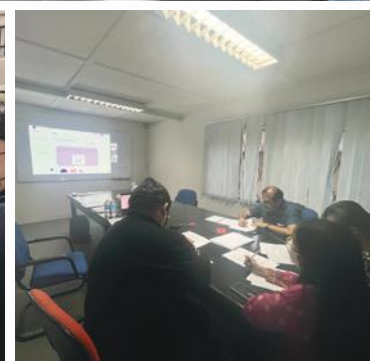
PUBLICATION ON "SARAWAK CIVIL SERVICE - ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: REFLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES OVER 60 YEARS"

The publication tells the story of Sarawak's growth and development through the memories and experiences of former Sarawak civil servants. The project is undertaken by Faradale Media-M Sdn. Bhd., with project coordination by SDI. A total of 21 individuals were researched and interviewed for the publication. It also features three prominent Sarawak civil servants who have since passed on. The publication aims to honour the contributions of past civil servants and to inspire a new generation of those serving in the Sarawak Civil Service. It also contains a historical background of the Sarawak Civil Service, as well as content on contemporary history and achievements. The advisory committee for the project consists of YBhg. Datu Patrick Nyigor (chairman), YBhg. Datu Dr. Hatta Solhi and Dr. Peter Kedit.

The completion of the publication was delayed due to challenges faced in getting appointments for interviews. Some individuals declined due to age and/or ill health, while others had busy schedules which required several rescheduling. The title of the publication was also changed to its current name to better reflect the publication's character, focus and content.

MAPPING THE DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM IN SARAWAK AND UNDERSTANDING ITS IMPACT ON RURAL MICROENTREPRENEURS

In this exploratory study, researchers from the University of Nottingham, University of Technology Sarawak and the Sarawak Development Institute explored the breadth and efficacy of digital entrepreneurship initiatives (DEIs) in Sarawak. This study aimed to map the digital support ecosystem, evaluate performance metrics, and assess the compatibility of these initiatives with a special focus on rural micro entrepreneurs. With the rise of digital transformation efforts in Malaysia, particularly through the national Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint and the Sarawak Digital Economy Blueprint 2030, understanding the reach and impact of DEIs is crucial for ensuring that no groups, especially those in rural areas, are left behind in the digital economy.

The methodology employed in this study involved a mixed-method approach, incorporating both document reviews and semi-structured interviews. The researchers began with a desk study, reviewing 115 entrepreneurship, digital, and digital entrepreneurship initiatives to identify 50 DEIs for detailed mapping. The framework used for this analysis was based on Isenberg's six entrepreneurship domains: policies, culture, support & infrastructure, market access, human capital, and finance & investment. These domains were cross-tabulated with target groups and governance levels (state versus federal) to understand the coverage and reach of these initiatives.

The research team performed both physical and online interviews. A total of 14 interviews with both initiative implementers and beneficiaries had already been conducted. The SDI team travelled to Sri Aman and Betong for primary data collection which enable them not only to interview DEI beneficiaries, but to observe first-hand how rural entrepreneurs incorporate digital communication to their entrepreneurship. Early observations revealed that digital adoption among rural businesses is still low and its use is limited only for advertising purpose short of completing transactions.

SDI team is working on the analysis and the writing of the research report.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

GREATER AZAM CHINESE NEW YEAR GATHERING

28th February 2023 | Serapi Hotel

The gathering was attended by more than 40 people comprising YBhg. Datuk Amar Jaul Samion, Chairman of SDI together with YBhg. Datu William Patrick Nyigor, Chairman of AZAM, Mr. Charles Siaw, Chairman of the AZAM Stakeholders Engagement Committee, and board members of AZAM and SDI respectively.

Datuk Amar Jaul highlighted the key role of the Greater AZAM in communicating and engaging the grassroots about the State's development initiatives. He urged continued support for the organizations and appreciated SDI members' loyalty over the past 28 years. He emphasized the importance of understanding opportunities from the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on various sectors and shared that SDI is realigning its strategic direction with Sarawak's Post Covid-19 Development Strategy 2030. The gathering also included cultural performances, a Yee Sang tossing ceremony, lucky draws, and karaoke.

SDI'S NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION BRAINSTORMING SESSION WITH MEMBERS

11th May 2023 | Pullman Kuching

The full-day brainstorming session was held with the aim to discuss and set new directions for SDI in terms of its vision, mission and key priority areas. The session included a sharing on 'Think-Tanks in Malaysia and Current Situational Analysis of SDI' by Madam Lelia Sim, CEO of SDI and a discussion session moderated by Dr. Haji Saudi bin Narani, a member of SDI on the vision, mission and objectives of SDI. The afternoon session, moderated by Dr. Yuen Kok Leong, was on the proposed priority focus areas for the Institute. The report from the session was compiled by the secretariat and reverted to the session attendees for their feedback. There was none and the report was further discussed with YBhg. Datuk Amar Chairman for clarity and focus. The report served as a basis for the secretariat to draft the content of the Strategic Transformation Plan 2025-2030 for the Institute.

GREATER AZAM RAYA-GAWAI GATHERING

13th June 2023 | Dewan Sri Mahligai

The 2nd festive gathering was attended by board members, members and staff from the Greater AZAM group including YBhg. Datu William Nyigor, Chairman of AZAM Sarawak; YBhg. Datu Hii Chang Kee, Deputy State Secretary (Operation) & Board Member of SDI; YBhg. Dato Hajah Norhyati Binti Mohd Ismail, Deputy Chairman of AZAM Sarawak; and Mr. Charles Siaw, Chairman of AZAM Stakeholders Engagement Committee.

During the gathering, Datu William Nyigor emphasized on the need for solidarity, mutual respect and understanding among members of AZAM Sarawak and SDI as well as the staff of the Greater AZAM and its partners. Attendees also participated in activities such as a ketupat-weaving contest, a blowpipe contest, lucky draws, and a karaoke session.

SDI 27ᵗʰ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

4ᵗʰ December 2023 | Pelagus Room, Level 3, Grand Margherita Hotel

The annual general meeting was attended by 9 directors of the Board (4 by proxy) and 27 members (11 by proxy) of the Institute which was a record turnout. During the meeting. YBhg. Datuk Amar Jaul Samion, Chairman of SDI, shared about the progress of the SDI's transformation and strategic plan which is at its final stage. He would later seek the support of the State Secretary for the transformation plan, and if accepted, he expects SDI to play a much bigger role in high impact research and strategic communication to complement the government's efforts in articulating its aspirations for the PCDS 20230. He also touched on enhancing SDI's image and visibility, diversifying the composition of the board of directors, incentivisation for members to harness their expertise, etc. In response to his key thoughts on the transformation, a number of members also shared their views and ideas on enhancing the Institute's visibility, research capability, sources and demand, reviving the Sarawak Development Journal and contribution of articles, and others.

Upcoming activities proposed for members which include visits to Sarawak Metro Sdn Bhd's Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART) Proof-of-Concept (POC) Run along the Kuching-Samarahan Expressway and the Centre for Technology Excellence Sarawak (CENTEXS) Kuching also received interest from members during the meeting.
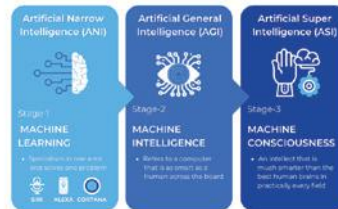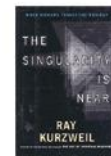
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