

The understudied mangrove palm *Nypa fruticans* (Thunb.) Wurmb.: which interactions exist between the *Nypa* forest and the local community in South Sumatra, Indonesia?

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Sumatra has the second largest mangrove areas in Indonesia, *i.e.* 19% of total mangrove and it is mainly located on the eastern side of the island (Giesen *et al.*, 2006), notably in Banyuasin regency – South Sumatra (87.7% of total mangrove in South Sumatra) (Bakorsurtanal, 2009). *Nypa fruticans* (Thunb.) Wurmb. is one of the dominant species of mangroves in South Sumatra (Dennis *et al.*, 2000; Forestry Department, 2006) and has an important role in the livelihood of local fisherfolk (Indriani, 2008). Due to transmigration programmes, plantations and agricultural expansion caused 80% high density swamp forest to become sparse in 1992, amongst others in *Nypa* forest in South Sumatra (Dennis *et al.*, 2000; Ministry of Agriculture, 1982 in Ilman *et al.*, 2011). The rapid mangrove loss and a lack of information on the relationship between local people and mangrove forests could threaten the sustainability of mangrove ecosystems. Therefore, information about the interaction and dependence of local communities on *Nypa* forest need to be prioritised in managing the mangrove ecosystems in South Sumatra in a sustainable way. The aim of this ongoing study is (1) to investigate the knowledge on *Nypa* uses, (2) the *Nypa* part used both for commercial and daily subsistence purposes, (3) the period in a lifetime that *Nypa* is used, and finally, (4) the respondent demography as background data. The study was conducted in twelve areas of four regencies (administrative divisions of the province) where *Nypa* had been reported to be used as traditional and commercial products. Data were collected by using semi-structured interview with questionnaires and visual observation by random sampling and was entered into SPSS v.20 to produce frequency tables. Chi-square tests were used to test the differences among the study areas. The study found out that *Godong*, *Nipah* and *Pucuk* were common local names that are being used based on type of *Nypa* leaf (mature or young) and related to final product. Utilisation as roof cover, food, cigarette wrapper and baskets were the most common local use of *Nypa* and this knowledge was transferred by parents. A majority of 72.6% of respondents was aware that *Nypa* was found in the mangrove ecosystem. Roof and wall filling were two common uses of *Nypa* as a daily use in the study areas. Nearly 60% of respondents used *Nypa* as source of livelihood. There were different commercial products of *Nypa* in different areas, including roof cover, cigarette wrapper and various baskets and sunhats. In addition, there were two main professions involved in *Nypa* harvesting, *i.e.* *Nypa* loggers and *Nypa* leaf craft makers. The interaction and dependence of local people on *Nypa* has been present for at least 83 years. The study showed that there was a strong interaction and dependence among local communities to *Nypa* forest both for daily needs and subsistence livelihood. Further research about the potential threat to *Nypa* as a subsistence product and to the sustainable *Nypa* forest utilisation will help to define sustainable management priorities for the mangrove ecosystem in South Sumatra.

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