



**Statement**

**Samling Global Sets Record Straight on Long Benalih Issue**

September 13, 2007 – Samling Global is concerned about recent media reports about our Sela'an-Linau Forest Management Unit Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) certified operations in Sarawak and would like to set the record straight.

The company is committed to responsible forest management practices, which includes the interests of the forest communities living within our operation areas. We have a long track record of working harmoniously with the communities, and have often reached amicable resolutions when disputes arise.

In accordance with the MTCC's requirements for forest management certification, Samling Global engages regularly with the forest communities situated in our MTCC certified area. Regular meetings are organized and attended by Samling and the various communities, so that the villagers can make their needs known and have their concerns addressed. At these meetings, the company is also given the opportunity to explain its operational plans so that the communities are aware of what to expect. These meetings have taken place with communities within the MTCC certified area from 2001.



***Aerial view of Long Benalih (Penan village) with delivered water pipes in the lower centre part of the photo. Top left hand corner is cleared land caused by 'slash and burn' practised by the communities (September 2007). Please click [here](#) to view the enlarged photo.***



Like other communities living within our concession areas, Long Benalih representatives have attended these scheduled meetings and had initially expressed support for Samling's sustainable forestry efforts. As a result, the community had requested for Samling to provide a gravity-fed water system to the settlement, rice fields and fishponds, and help with construction of a new longhouse.

In April 2001, Penan representatives from Long Benalih reported that the majority of the communities were in favour of road construction as it would benefit not only Long Benalih by providing access to the village but through access to the other neighbouring villages as well.

However, in 2002, much to Samling's surprise, a blockade was erected by one group from Long Benalih. The company responded by assuring the community that it will not begin operations in the Long Benalih area and will continue with negotiation efforts.

Three years later in March 2004, at another community meeting, Penan representatives of Long Benalih expressed concern over road construction due to differences between the Kelabit and Penan communities, both of which lived in Long Benalih. There were uncertain boundaries between the different communities creating conflict within the village. Separately, the communities were concerned about disruption to their water supply but said they would have no objection to road construction if the project was isolated to the downstream areas of the river, negating negative impact to the river water.

In 2006, Long Benalih representatives returned to negotiations and agreed in principle that they had no objection to the construction of a road through to Long Lellang (Kelabit village) and Long Main (Penan village) if that was the government mandate, while Samling undertook not to harvest in Long Benalih without their assent.

In exchange, the community requested that Samling provides water pipes, mini-hydro generators and other items that will help them improve their quality of life.

Neighbouring villages, Long Lellang A and Long Lellang B (Kelabit villages), expressed relief at Long Benalih's acceptance as the village heads reiterated the hardship the villagers had faced without road access. Without roads, villages in the vast highland region would have to suffer the harsh realities of living in the forest.



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Unfortunately, despite positive negotiations, a few members from Long Benalih continued erecting blockades to assert their claims over land and forest areas. These blockades were subsequently dismantled by the authorities.

To help encourage better understanding with the community, the government in May 2007 appointed Samling to lead a task force together with the area's District Office and a Penan Volunteer Team to attain cooperation of Long Benalih. To date, road construction is being carried out according to the Sarawak's government mandate, and there are no existing blockades.

In August 2007, Samling acceded to the request of Long Benalih and delivered polypipes to trunk clean water to the village, and cement and other materials for dam construction. In consultation with the community, Samling has identified a possible dam site on the foothill of Gunung Murud Kecil at Long Benalih. The company also leveraged its expertise to assess the area's geographical layout for water and sewage treatments, proper waste disposal, water catchments and potential agricultural projects.



***Samling employees delivering water pipes to Long Benalih (19-20 August 2007)***

Samling believes the latest developments signals a positive step in relationship building between the company and the communities at Long Benalih.



***Polypipes delivered to Long Benalih to trunk fresh water to the village (19-20 August 2007). Please click [here](#) to view the enlarged photo.***



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*Cement porters resting mid-way to Long Benalih (August 2007)*



*Porters carrying cement by foot to Long Benalih (August 2007)*



*Aerial view with forest intact. Top right hand corner is cleared land for agricultural use by the local communities (August 2007). Please click [here](#) to view the enlarged photo.*