

## **Innovation of Langkawi Geopark: embracing past, present and future challenges**

AZMIL MUNIF MOHD BUKHARI<sup>1</sup> AND MOHD FAIZ HILMI<sup>2</sup> - 1. *Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), 07000 Langkawi, Kedah, Malaysia*  
<azmil@lada.gov.my> ¶2. *Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia*

The tourism industry played an important role in the economic well being of the Langkawi Island's community. One of the major tourist attractions in Langkawi is the geopark that serves as a tool for heritage conservation as well as income generation for the local community. Langkawi Geopark is positioned as an archipelago of 99 islands. In 2007, it was awarded the Global Geopark status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for its geological history dating back some 550 million years. Langkawi Geopark has been providing benefits and opportunities related to socio-economic, resource and knowledge. In addition, the establishment of Langkawi Geopark has generated new job opportunities, new economic activities and additional sources of income, especially in rural Langkawi. The paper will focus on investigating the past, present and future challenges faced by Langkawi Geopark; and explore how Langkawi Geopark innovatively responded to those challenges. Reflecting on the past, this study provides a brief account of the geopark development covering the geopark concept, heritage conservation and role of Langkawi Geopark in the local community socioeconomic development activities. Present challenges include addressing the issue of whether geopark status positively enhances livelihoods and the sustainability of island communities, tourist expectation and satisfaction. Anticipating future challenges, uncontrolled land development such as development may threaten natural environment and might harm the future of Langkawi as a tourist destination. Given the economic importance of Langkawi Geopark to the country, effective and innovative mechanisms are crucial to ensure a sustainable development programs. On the whole, innovative socio-economic activities need to be designed and created with the intention of enhancing the capacity of Langkawi Geopark to generate benefits for local community without neglecting the conservation efforts and sustainable economic development of Langkawi Island. All stakeholders must realize that Langkawi Geopark will no longer hold much charm for visitors if its natural beauty is gone.

Presented in Theme 5