

TAA AWARD FUND

Joana Coutinho - Case Study Update 2013-14

It has been a while since I got the TAAF grant, so I thought I had better let you all know what has happened since.

As I wrote in the case study below, I gained some consultancy contracts out of my work in Madagascar and I was being quite successful at starting a freelance career as a consultant working in natural resource management, mostly at the interface between conservation and development efforts in rural areas (wearing a few different hats, ranging from project management to social research and also some training and extension work, mostly with NGOs but also local governments and academic institutions).



Preparing to plant rice with smallholders in East Borneo

We found out we were expecting our first child in the Summer 2008, and I decided it was time to slow down a bit, and so took up teaching jobs for a while. Then, for the last 3 or so years, I have embarked on PhD looking at how global environmental policies shape local access and rights among communities living in and around tropical forests - a topic I grew interested in through the work I did during my MSc and the time I went back to Madagascar with the TAAF grant.

For this research, I have used a case study from Indonesian Borneo, where I explore the implementation



A forest hillside, cleared for rubber.

of the REDD+ mechanism on the ground and what it means to locals (typically rubber smallholders). So the family went off to Borneo, the data got collected, I have since had a second child, and am now at my desk writing up my thesis, which I hope to complete during the Summer of 2014. Beyond that, we haven't yet made plans, but I am confident I will be able to continue doing what I enjoy, either through further research or by returning to more hands-on work with consultancies. I feel the practical experience I have had (in no small part due to the TAAF) has given me the right tools to continue developing my career doing what I enjoy and believe in.