

Opportunities and Constraints to Community Forestry: Experience from Malinau

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Governance Brief

Opportunities and Constraints to Community Forestry Experience from Malinau

Godwin Limberg, Ramses Iwan, Eva Wollenberg & Moira Moeliono

Introduction

Since the early 1980's, efforts have been made to increase community involvement in forest management and achieve recognition of existing community forestry activities in Indonesia. Recent changes in the political climate (*reformasi*) and implementation of regional autonomy would seem to increase opportunities for development of community forestry. To that end, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) has been working with 27 communities in the Upper Malinau basin in East Kalimantan since 1999 to improve local peoples' access and control over forest benefits. We describe here the opportunities and constraints that exist in community forestry in Malinau.

We define community forestry as forest management systems where local communities have some level of influence over decisions related to forest management or benefits (see also Warta Kebijakan No. 9 regarding *Perhutanan Sosial*). For example the Punan of Long Pada in the upper Tubu River exclude outsiders from collecting gaharu (*Aquilaria* spp) in their territory to try to conserve this valuable nontimber forest product. The Kenyah in Setulang have designated the remaining primary forest in their village area as protected forest (*Tane' Olen*). They have started to monitor the forest condition to restrict encroachment.

If managed properly, community forestry can accommodate a wider range of needs and services derived from forests and increase income generating opportunities for both local government and local people. Community forestry can also support sustainable management of forest resources and maintain environmental services such as watershed protection. But the development of community forestry in Malinau faces some fundamental problems that have to be resolved before community forestry can be applied at any scale. Some of these most likely apply elsewhere in Indonesia. We describe those further below.



Photo by Christian Cossalter



Photo by Christian Cossalter

Experience from the Malinau District

Since 1999 CIFOR has facilitated the villages of Pelancau, Sengayan and Setulang in the Malinau Selatan sub-district to develop and analyze options for community involvement in forest management as part of CIFOR's involvement in this long-term research site. Through the use of participatory mapping, visioning and discussions community members were stimulated to reflect upon the present forest management and land use and discuss needs and options for the future.

Efforts to manage gaharu collection in Pelancau

Gaharu collection in their upriver village territory (approx. 15,000 ha) is the main source of income for the Punan of Pelancau (population about 300 persons). Gaharu is the fragrant resin resulting from fungal infection of *Aquilaria* spp., fetching prices of over \$ 1,000 per kilo for the best quality. Due to unsustainable collection by outside collectors, the gaharu tree population has decreased dramatically. In discussions with CIFOR to assess economic options, some community members were interested to plant gaharu to secure future supply. Others, however, were skeptical about the chances of success, because growing conditions of planted *Aquilaria* spp. are different from wild growing *Aquilaria* spp. and because of a lack of experience with inoculation of the infection. They therefore emphasized the need to protect the existing gaharu in the village territory.

Pelancau's leaders realized that they faced several difficulties with both options. First, they

were not sure about their legal rights to manage gaharu and exclude outsiders from collecting in their village area. Secondly enforcement of rules was not easy as the village area is vast and remote and gaharu is very dispersed. At the same time, a large part of the area with high gaharu potential is officially designated as protected forest (*hutan lindung*), meaning that no logging is allowed. This should provide a good opportunity for developing alternative economic activities, which could include protection and enrichment planting of gaharu.

The district government also realizes that gaharu is an important source of income for the communities that is rapidly disappearing. In an effort to ensure future supplies of gaharu the district government launched a "one million gaharu tree" planting program in 2003. This initiative and a local experiment with gaharu inoculation sponsored by CIFOR and the Center for Forest Research and Development in Samarinda stimulated the people of Pelancau to start planting gaharu trees.

So far, the people of Pelancau have not discussed their ideas for protection of natural gaharu with the district government or tried to obtain management permits, for example Permit for Utilization of Non Timber Forest Products or *Izin Usaha Pemanfaatan Hasil Hutan Non Kayu* for lack of confidence. Yet this would strengthen the peoples' position and at the same time provide a basis for better management of this valuable product. The people of Pelancau and the district government would still have to develop strategies to ensure enforcement of the management to guarantee the sustainability of the resource.

Logging in community forest of Sengayan

Since decentralisation and forestry laws enabled small-scale logging on village territory in 1999, the people of Sengayan (about 350 persons) have been eager to cooperate with logging companies to exploit part of their forest. In 2000 a logging company obtained a timber harvesting license (*Izin Pemungutan dan Pemanfaatan kayu, IPPK*) based on an agreement with the villagers of Sengayan to exploit 2,000 hectares within the village territory of about 10,000 hectares. These operations ended in 2003 when the license expired and became illegal.

The main benefit for community members was additional cash income through fee payments (Rp. 20,000 per m³) and opportunities to have better access to sawn timber as company

vehicles would transport it for free to the village. Village leaders appreciated the system where district government could issue licenses because the district government was relatively easy to contact (only two hours drive from Sengayan). Although they experienced relatively few problems with the company compared to other villages, village officials acknowledged that district government control was weak. Based on this positive experience the village leaders of Sengayan pursued continued logging in the Sengayan village area under new forestry regulations. They would, however, not allocate all their land to logging.

Through on-going discussions with CIFOR the villagers have gradually developed their ideas for village land use and forest management. They considered factors such as accessibility, timber and other potential and various functions of forest such as subsistence use, watershed protection and commercial exploitation. More recently, in 2004, they envisaged four forest categories: production forest for commercial exploitation either by company or community members (approx. 3,000 ha); and approximately similarly sized areas under *Hutan Kas Desa* (village forest) for non-commercial exploitation by community members (including timber); Protected forest and tourism/recreational forest where no timber may be cut. They also allocated some forested areas for expansion of agricultural land, e.g. to establish rubber plantations.

The people of Sengayan also considered the option to run a small sawmill. This idea arose when the IPPK was still active. They anticipated that the logging company would assist in providing timber that could be processed in the sawmill. This plan has not yet materialized, as the logging company terminated its operations and the villagers have not tried to establish a sawmill independently.

Presently the community is considering selling sawn timber to Malinau town. The villagers anticipate that, due to the changes in forestry and decentralization laws, it will take some time before a logging company can operate in their territory. A temporary alternative would be to saw timber using chainsaws and supply the timber demands of the rapidly expanding district capital. However they are hesitant to start these activities as it might be difficult to obtain the necessary papers to sell the sawn timber.

The case of Sengayan illustrates the high interest on the side of the community to

be involved in timber extraction. They have considered several alternatives that could provide them with a substantial source of new income. Logging companies would manage harvesting, while the community would monitor logging practices. Community members could make use of timber resources in other parts of the village area. The main obstacle they face is the uncertainty in policy and official's decision making, the lack of transparency and changes in forestry laws and regulations. Cooperation between the community and a logging company will need facilitation by the government to ensure transparency, accountability and adherence to forest regulation.

Community conservation of forest in Setulang

At the time IPPK became a popular way in some villages to obtain benefits from forest exploitation, the people of Setulang (about 900 persons) preferred to conserve their forest. They set aside the remaining primary forest in their village area, which was about 5,000 hectares, or 50 percent of the total area.

They defined the purpose of the forest conservation as protecting their source of clean water, their hunting area and the availability of forest products. After designating the protected forest they developed customary rules to regulate management and use of the protect forest. They also established a management body to coordinate and control management. The community built a post at the edge of the protected forest to support regular surveillance trips to the forest and they have started putting up signs to increase awareness about existing regulations.



Photo by Yami Saloh

During the IPPK boom (2000 - 2003) two incidents of encroachment by logging companies into the protected forest occurred. The community stopped the encroachment by confiscating heavy equipment, but the subsequent negotiations between the community, company and the district government to solve the conflict were not successful. In one case the company was fined, however only 50 percent of the total fine was paid. In the second case although the encroachment stopped no sanctions were taken against the logging company.

The district government has verbally supported Setulang's conservation initiative and adjusted development plans to avoid negative impact on the protected forest. The local government also started to mediate between Setulang and a neighboring community to try to resolve an outstanding boundary dispute in 2003.

The case of Setulang illustrates a strong commitment by the community to protect and manage the forest. They have started to take action to achieve their management goals. But it is still in its early days and needs support from local government and neighbors, coordination with neighboring communities and official recognition for continued success.

Main issues

The above examples illustrate important issues that have to be considered in the development of community forestry. Table 1 summarizes the main advantages and constraints for a range of options that can be developed in Malinau, based on the examples above and CIFOR's observation of land use in the area. It should be noted that intact forest provides significant subsistence benefits to local people.

Table 1. Benefits and constraints to several options for community forestry development

Option	Size of area	Existing tenure	Economic benefits to community	Economic benefits to local government	Management issues
Gaharu protection	Large (> 5,000 ha)	Unclear	Significant cash; intact forest	Possibly through management license	Sustainability Enforcement
Small-scale timber extraction	Small (500 - 5,000 ha)	Unclear	Significant cash, Important loss of intact forest and accompanying goods and services	Possibly through management license	Control
Cooperation with logging company	Flexible	Clear	Some cash, some village development-, loss of intact forest and accompanying goods and services	Important Significant	Control Benefit sharing & transparency
Community conservation	Medium/ arbitrary Flexible	Unclear	No Environmental services, intact forest, no direct cash benefits	No direct cash benefits	Encroachment
Agroforestry	Flexible	Unclear	Food, cash, reduces diverse products reduce vulnerability, environmental services	No direct cash benefits	Sustainability of resources Marketing
Reforestation	Small (25 - 100 ha)	Unclear	Some additional income	Small	Maintenance after establishment

Malinau has the advantage of large areas with intact forest resources and a low population pressure, providing many choices for development of forest management including options for community forestry in addition to other forms of use. In discussions the district head has been positive about suggestions to experiment with new types of community involvement in forest management, the possibility of small-scale timber extraction by community members. However the changes in forestry laws might create difficulties in implementing these innovations.

Experience with IPPKs has resulted in an increased interest of communities to be involved in management of forest resources in their area. In CIFOR-facilitated workshops community representatives stressed the importance of balancing exploitation and conservation. On the other hand livelihood patterns are changing and there is an increased interest in cash income, possibly at the cost of sustainable resource use.

At present, obstacles to community forestry exist at several levels. Strengthening community forestry would require addressing these obstacles. At the village level, communities face:

- Weak village institutions
- Poor models for benefit sharing
- Lack of effective conflict management
- Poor markets, lack of market information and disadvantage of high transport cost
- No access to equipment
- Weak recognition and linking of community rules and regulations to local government framework
- Unclear boundaries and land tenure

At the district government level, the main problems are:

- Limited experience and technical know-how with different models of community forestry
- Development of community forestry is labor and facilitation intensive for the forestry service
- Community forestry is more difficult to scale up
- Uncertainty about legal framework about tenure, forestry and taxes and its implication for access and control over forest land
- Competing land uses that have higher potential for district revenue generation
- Large remote areas that are difficult to survey
- Uncertainty about how to integrate community forestry with current land use designations.



Photo by Eva Wollenberg

At the central government level the main problems are:

- How to develop regulations that ensure sustainability, but are flexible enough to allow local adjustment to varying conditions
- How to develop mechanism for appropriate taxation and benefit sharing for different options
- How to control and monitor the implementation of regulations.

NGOs could provide important assistance but face constraints such as:

- Development of community forestry is labor and facilitation intensive
- How to mediate between communities and district government
- How to translate experiences elsewhere to locally appropriate options
- How to avoid dependency of community on NGO.

How to get started?

Although we have shown that there can be many types of community forestry there are some common features that are generally applicable. We suggest the following steps as important starting points:

- Acknowledge and protect existing users and their priorities, especially for meeting basic food and cash needs
- Start with small-scale experiments
- Communities have to be equal partners in process, or drive the process to ensure ownership and good communication
- Focus on both technical (forest and resource management) aspects and social aspects, such as fair distribution of benefits, participation of community members in decision-making, transparency, check and balances within community and between community and other partners.

- Develop effective conflict management mechanisms
- Secure tenure e.g. through boundary demarcation and land title or management rights

Decentralization has opened the door for small-scale forest management in Indonesia. The question is, what role can communities have in small-scale forest management? The list of

constraints to develop community forestry is substantial, but given the potential advantages it is well worth the effort. Pilot projects supported by networks for shared learning will be important to gain insights and provide examples to other communities. The district governments should support local initiatives to stimulate policy debate at district and central government to develop further opportunities for communities to practice and benefit from forestry.



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