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COLLECTIVE ACTION TO SECURE PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR THE POOR

A Case Study in Jambi Province, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an approach to analyzing decentralized forestry and natural resource management and land property rights issues, and catalyzing collective action among villages and district governments. It focuses on understanding the current policies governing local people's access to property rights and decision making processes, and learning how collective action among community groups and interaction among stakeholders can enhance local people's rights over lands, resources, and policy processes for development. The authors applied participatory action research in two villages, one each in the Bungo and Tanjabbar districts of Jambi province (Sumatra), Indonesia, to facilitate identification of priorities through phases of planning, action, monitoring, and reflecting. This study finds that action research may be an effective strategy for fostering collective action and maintaining the learning process that leads groups to be more organized and cohesive, and district government officials to be more receptive to stakeholders. A higher level of collective action and support may be needed to avoid elite capture more effectively.

Keywords: decentralization, natural resource management, forest, collective action, property rights, action research, Indonesia

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COLLECTIVE ACTION TO SECURE PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR THE POOR

A Case Study in Jambi Province, Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

Background

This case study focuses on two central topics: 1) understanding the current policies governing local people's access to property rights and decision making processes, and 2) learning how collective action among community groups and interaction among stakeholders can enhance local people's rights over lands, resources, and policy processes for development. We hypothesize that strengthening women's and men's collective action can provide a mechanism for balancing the power of elites in villages or beyond.

As in many countries around the world, Indonesia initiated a process of decentralization after the fall of Soeharto in 1998 (Capistrano and Colfer, 2005). This process has included devolving extensive authority for day-to-day governance to districts (*kabupaten*). In the forestry sector district heads immediately began making use of forest resources as the main source of district income. Concerns over increased uncertainty and adverse impacts on the sustainability of resources, community livelihoods, and stakeholder relations led the central government to reduce the district heads' authority in 2002 (Barr et al, 2006; Dermawan et al, 2006, Yasmi et al, 2006).

A revised law on decentralization in 2004 aimed to clarify the 1999 roles and responsibilities shared among the government units to accommodate full participation of stakeholders' aspirations and to benefit local communities. This new space has opened opportunities for central and local governments to improve their relationship while the latter continue with considerable freedom to develop their regions. The new arrangements also enable local communities to freely and collectively articulate their aspirations through policy development processes and to clarify their property rights.

However, despite legal and institutional reforms, challenges remain. Government officials have been upwardly accountable to an unusual degree, with few mechanisms for meaningful input from communities, particularly from women. Longstanding, conflicting laws on natural resources also complicate finding legal solutions to problems, and property rights remain unclear. Decision-making processes for land use planning and local communities' access to resources are

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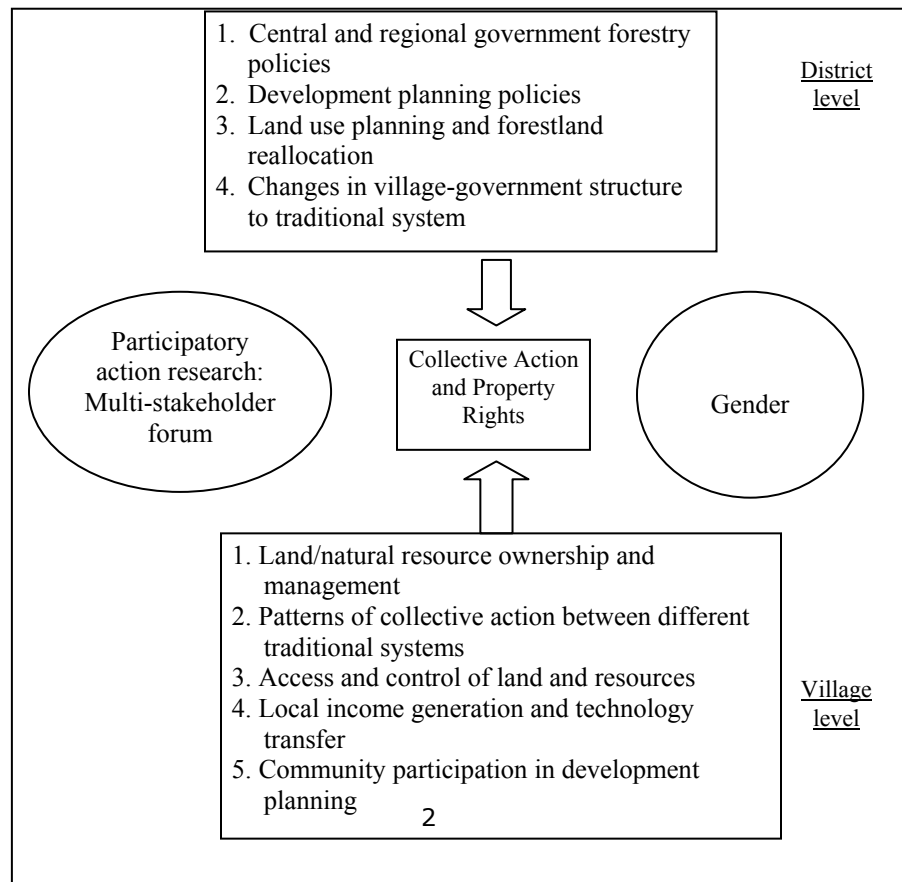
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unclear. Indonesian forest communities typically have traditional systems of land tenure that bear little resemblance to the land classification recognized by the government, and much of the official forestland was actually inhabited by indigenous or in-migrating communities. This has led to disputes not only between local communities and private companies, but also between district and central governments. There is a need to facilitate stakeholder interactions and to support a process of self-empowerment so that poor and marginalized communities can act collectively to secure their assets and property rights in order to achieve better livelihoods.

This case study presents an approach to analyzing decentralized forestry and natural resource management and land property rights issues; and to catalyzing collective action among villages and district governments. Figure 1 provides a schema that illustrates the multiple levels of our analysis, the key research issues at each level, and the mediating role of collective action and property rights. It follows closely the conceptual framework by DiGregorio et al (2008).

In section 2, we describe our research framework, approach and methods, most fundamentally the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Section 3 describes the physical, technical, and socioeconomic as well as policy governance conditions. Section 4 portrays the action arena where we identify stakeholder interaction and action resources, and outline the processes of facilitating and catalyzing collective action among district and community stakeholders. In Section 5, we analyze these findings and describe research outcomes, and we conclude in Section 6 with policy implications and recommendations.

Figure 1. Research issues identified during the inception workshop and subsequent discussions

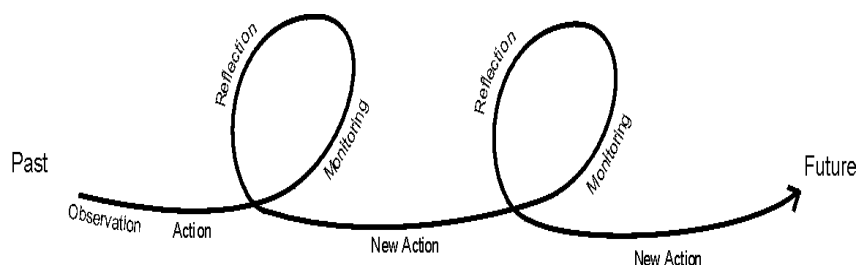


Research approach and methods

a. Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) combines action and research to inform the action and enable participants to learn through critical reflection about what happens when they act. A well-known diagram illustrating this approach is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 2. Participatory action research process



Through this approach, we facilitated bottom-up identification of priorities through phases of planning, action, monitoring and reflecting (see Figure 2), and also facilitated stakeholders together to decide what needs to be assessed, design further steps and collect necessary information. This research stimulates a process of learning that helps participants to continue to learn adaptively together after external facilitation ends.

Another element of this research is its simultaneous efforts at both the village and district levels through facilitated interaction among participants, offering opportunities for linkages and synergies. In this respect, we attempt to corroborate other scholars' (Richie and Haggith 2005); Carlson and Berkes, 2005; Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001) findings that simultaneous pressure at local and higher governmental levels is often effective in bringing about meaningful and beneficial change. In contrast to much of the research reported in the collective action literature (e.g. Kelly and Breinlinger, 1996; Meinen-Dick et al, 2001), the current research was designed to *stimulate* collective action rather than only to understand the conditions under which it occurs.

b. Research Methods

We employed open-ended semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions as methods to collect information, to triangulate, and to observe various people's stances on specific issues as the research developed. Facilitators made individual interviews at interviewees' houses, with family members and neighbors occasionally

participating. We also facilitated shared learning workshops to enable participants to interact with each other, share their knowledge and experience, and disseminate lessons to a wider audience. At district level, the research team, including local officials, analyzed relevant policies and regulations and looked at gaps in implementation.

At the community level, through day-to-day facilitation the research focused on groups of men and women, analyzed the functioning of collective action and catalyzed the groups through repetitive learning processes on different fronts: clarifying the roles and responsibilities in institutional arrangements, seeking participation in government-led programs, taking part in development planning consultations, and securing property rights over lands.

Participant observation combined with PRA tools such as resource mapping, matrix ranking of assets, trends, and stakeholder analysis were employed to work with target groups to help them analyze their assets and power relations. Facilitators worked with the groups to identify issues, plan actions, and reflect on the actions taken. In daily journals, the facilitators noted issues raised by individual members and groups and how processes took place. This documentation was critical for subsequent analysis.

Site selection

Two of ten districts in Jambi were selected as the research sites: Bungo and West Tanjung Jabung (or Tanjabbar; Figure 3). Two villages, one in each district, were selected based on the following criteria:

- Representation of matrilineal, patrilineal, and/or bilateral inheritance systems---to examine the gender-based differences related to inheritance systems.
- Relatively high dependence on forest products and access to forest resources---to provide insights on tenure issues within forestlands.
- Pressures from outsiders on the community and potential conflicts or threats towards community and forest sustainability---to gain insights into how conflicts among stakeholders are and should be dealt with more effectively.
- Opportunities for overlap of interests between the community and existing (or planned) district government development programs---to strengthen the links between communities and government actors.
- Existing research activities or other development agencies/institutions (government, university, or international organization) working in the village area---to gain access to secondary literature and develop links between communities and other outside actors.

The two villages selected, Sungai Telang (Bungo district) and Lumbuk Kambing (Tanjabbar), are also in the poorest subdistricts (*kecamatan*) in both districts.

Group selection

At district level, we worked with six government officials (three each from the two districts) from the District Agency for Development Planning (Bappeda) and District Forestry Services. They were either appointed by their superiors, proposed by CIFOR, or on their own motivation. Three had been trained in participatory action research. The criteria we used in selecting this group included being open-minded and considered a champion within their institution. Some had been involved in cooperative projects with organizations outside the government.

At the village level, pre-existing community groups were selected. Such groups increase the likelihood that members have engaged in collective action, experienced working together in their day to day activities, already had good personal connections with each other, and still continued to work together. Working with them does not require people to develop new communication patterns (at least not initially) and reduces the number of additional meetings people must attend. It represents an acknowledgement of the value of a part of their existing way of life. Such acknowledgement can contribute to strengthening people's self-confidence, also important for bringing about effective collective action.

The groups were selected based on their representation of ethnic diversity (especially Minang, Jambi, Javanese), local vs transmigrant, gender differences, as well as different likely interests as presented in Table 1. In Sungai Telang, we worked with the *Gotong Royong* group, representing women's economic interests. In addition, *Sinar Tani* and *Tunas Harapan* (all male) groups, in Sungai Telang and Lubuk Kambing respectively, tie in well with our activities at the district level on land use planning. We worked primarily at the hamlet (*dusun*) level; village-wide possibilities were rejected because of the distances between hamlets (and the resulting complications and costs entailed), as well as our belief that starting small is more sensible, given the time and money available. We wanted to expand on previous experience (e.g., Kusumanto et al, 2005), focusing on stimulating parts of the community to act, while reducing the role of the facilitators. Village facilitators focused more on straightforward facilitation, training, and networking.

Table 1. Group Characteristics

Groups	Group Characteristics & Functioning	Motivation	Action Plan
<p><i>Sungai Telang</i></p>			
<p>1. Gotong Royong (Women's group)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17 members, all women - Mixed ethnicity (Minang, Malay, and Javanese) - One or two <i>gotong royong</i> groups in each hamlet - Women of all ages, married and unmarried - Membership open to all ages and perceived ability - Member requests group do agricultural work - All members must participate. - Members not participating in group work when requested pay Rp.10,000-15,000/day - Payment can be made immediately or later; all debts are settled before the fasting month (Ramadhan²) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labor sharing in agriculture - Money collected by head of group - Before Ramadhan, money is used to buy cooking oil and sugar, which is distributed to each member equally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selling rattan and bamboo weavings to supplement their income
<p>2. Kelompok Tani Sinar Tani (Men's group)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All-male farmers' organization - 17 members - Minang and Javanese in-migrant - Aims to help small farmers - Receives support from agricultural extension agent (PPL) - Draws members from all Sungai Telang hamlets - Well-organized, members interested in working together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formed when in 1998 when the government providing funds to improve water ducts for irrigated rice. - Continued with group even after government funds ended - In 2001, received government aid (rice seedlings), but few members interested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pursuing land certification and income-generating activities through propagating <i>jernang</i>.

² Ramadhan ends with the biggest holiday for Muslims, and one in which much money is needed for buying new clothes, sacrificing a goat, etc.

Groups	Group Characteristics & Functioning	Motivation	Action Plan
3. Pelhin (Women's group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's group -Ethnically homogenous, Minang women working together on farming activities - All women within a family and their friends - No designated leader, members considered equal - Number of members flexible, depending on women's needs and willingness to join 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Self initiated -Reciprocal work relationship, exchanging work by days worked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective collective action -<i>Pelhin</i> groups have existed throughout living memory -A control group
4. Bukit Lestari Makmur (Men's group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All-male, designed to aid small farmers - 10 young farmer members - Local Minang, Malay, and Javanese in-migrants interested in propagating non-timber forest products (NTFPs) - Frequent meetings to monitor progress -Applied strict group rules and sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initially formed by four members of Sinar Tani disappointed with corruption by elites - Strong enthusiasm to establish alternative income (<i>Jernang</i> wild seedlings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interested in propagation of <i>Jernang</i>, marketing of product
<i>Lubuk Kambing</i>			
1. DasaWisma (Women's group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of formal government Family Welfare Movement (PKK), 1967 program focusing primarily on women in rural areas - Begun in 2005 -20 Malay women in each group, formed in each of the lowest village administrative levels, <i>Rukun Tangga (RT)</i> - Village head's wife automatically leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Formed in response to government program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To generate alternative income opportunities, using program budget

Groups	Group Characteristics & Functioning	Motivation	Action Plan
2. Kelompok Tani Tunas Harapan (Men's group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All-male, designed to aid small farmers - 34 members - In-migrants, of mixed ethnicity (Javanese, Malay, Batak and Palembang), focusing on agricultural crops - Group initially focused on individual agricultural activities - Not active - Meetings rarely conducted, though members shared work (<i>gotong royong</i>) with the hamlet community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initially formed by people with influential positions in community - Activities focused only on daily agricultural labor -Strong enthusiasm to work together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To find alternative generating income activities -To increase agricultural productivity

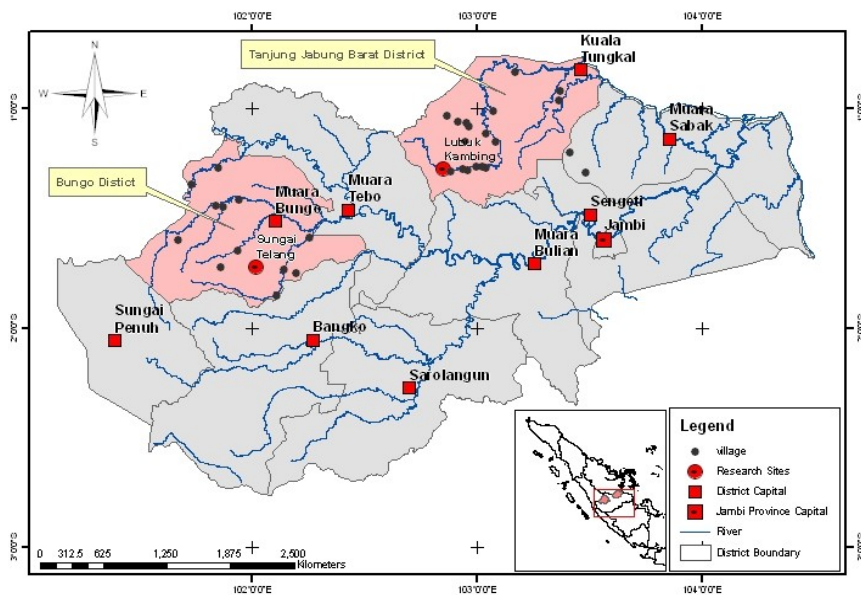
THE CONTEXT

Jambi, Indonesia

Jambi Province is located in the middle of Sumatra. It covers 5.1 million hectares (ha), 43 percent of which is categorized as state-owned forestlands (*kawasan hutan*, Anonymous, 1999). The forestlands represent different forest functions, and two categories are of particular interest: nature reserve and protection forest (870,250 ha) and production forest (1,309,190 ha). We use 'forestland' to refer to '*kawasan hutan*' or the formal governmental designation of a land tenure type. When discussing other forms of tenure, we use other terms, such as forest, land, fields, plots, etc. Between 1990 and 2000 Jambi forest cover decreased by one million ha, 2.4 to 1.4 million ha (Taher, 2005). In 2002, Jambi forest was estimated to be 1.38 million ha or 27.05 percent of the total province.

Jambi's growing population is highly dependent on natural resources and an estimated 75 percent of its rural people live below the official poverty line. The mixture of matrilineal, patrilineal, and bilateral ethnic groups also allows the examination of important ethnographic hypotheses about collective action.

Figure 3. Research sites in Bungo and Tanjabbar districts, Jambi Province



Forest cover in Bungo district has also experienced drastic change, declining from 42.78 percent of total district area to 30.63 percents between 1990 and 2002. Unclear, “open access” status, among other factors (Hadi et al, in prep; Anonymous, 2004), contributes to this ongoing degradation. For the last 20 years, Tanjabbar’s forest resources have been logged, forestland converted, and forest cover has declined by almost 40 percent in the last 20 years (Badan Pusat Statistik 2002; Sudirman et al, 2005; CIFOR, internal data). About half of the remaining forest is within protected areas.

In West Tanjung Jabung, 13 percent of the people (234,813) lived below the poverty line in 2004; our study site, Lubuk Kambing, falls in one of the poorest subdistricts (Merlung). In Bungo, 22.5 percent of the district’s population (242,355) lived beneath the poverty line in 2005. We selected Rantau Pandan, one of Bungo’s ten subdistricts.

Based on the criteria cited above, we selected Sungai Telang in Bungo and Lubuk Kambing in Tanjabbar. These two communities have relatively strong kinship ties, medium levels of conflict between villagers and outside actors, high levels of poverty, and are located close to national park and forestlands (2-10 km). Their differences are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Differing characteristics of village research sites

No	Criteria	Sungai Telang (Bungo District)	Lubuk Kambing (Tanjabbar District)
1	Social capital	Latent conflict between the indigenous community and transmigrants	Relatively good relations between the indigenous community and migrants
2	Formal and informal institutions within the community with the potential for collective action	Village government, village representatives, customary institutions, youth groups (<i>Karang Taruna</i>), men's groups, women's groups	Village government, village representatives, customary institutions, men's groups, loggers' groups, and women's groups

Sungai Telang

Sungai Telang, in Bungo District, is located 53 km from Muara Bungo, the district capital. It occupies a land area of 12,090 ha, around 75 percent of which is covered by forestlands (production forest, protection forest and national park) and 25 percent is agricultural lands and settlements.

The village has 682 households with 1256 people (610 males and 646 females). This includes the indigenous community and recent in-migrants (transmigrants). Most of the indigenous communities are ethnic Minang (Kerinci and Ngaol) from West Sumatra and ethnic Malay from Jambi. They practice a primarily matrilineal system of inheritance. The transmigrants on the other hand came from Java (bilateral inheritance) and other provinces bordering Jambi (patrilineal inheritance). Because of mixed marriage, some social rules in Sungai Telang have been influenced by the patrilineal traditions of Jambi (Quisumbing and Otsuka, 2001). The community of Sungai Telang maintains relatively strong traditional matrilineal customs and institutions where women have the right to inherit and manage some kinds of land. However, male relatives make many decisions about land.

Education levels are low and very few students continue beyond elementary school. Although located close to the district capital, Sungai Telang is relatively isolated. Only village civil servants regularly visit the capital, women less than men. Many women had never been to the district capital and had been to the sub-district capital, only 23 km away, once or twice.

Both women's and men's community groups voluntarily organize collective action, mostly in religion and agriculture. Latent land conflicts characterize interactions between indigenous community members and transmigrants due to differing agricultural systems, ideas about female modesty, negative inter-ethnic stereotypes about honesty, cultural values on hierarchy and authority, norms of interaction, and more (Colfer et al. 1989b; Colfer, 1991). The presence of the recent in-migrants through the national program on transmigration has put more pressure on the availability of land and forest resources, adding to the conflict between the indigenous community and the in-migrants. Medium levels of conflict also occur between the community and a forest concessionaire. The District

Government development programs play an important role in forest management, articulating the interest of government and private sectors, with inadequate attention to communities. These programs include the reconstruction of forest boundaries, Productive Enterprise Groups (*Kelompok Usaha Produktif*), National Movement for Forest and Land Rehabilitation (*GNRHL*³), and social forestry.

Lubuk Kambing

Lubuk Kambing is a village in Tanjung Jabung district, 195 km from the district capital. Cars and trucks regularly pass through the village, along a back road between this district and its neighbor, Tebo district. Lubuk Kambing comprises 33,640 ha covering part of Bukit Tiga Puluh National Park and its buffer zone. The village is surrounded by the national park, a plantation forest concession, and an oil palm plantation. Forest and old rubber gardens dominate the village landscape, with a former timber concession nearby. A relatively high stakeholder dependency on the land has led to some conflicts.

The village population consists of about 4,000 people, including the indigenous ethnic Malays (Mendaluh, Lingkis, Mawan and Antimong groups) of Jambi; migrants include Minang and Kerinci (West Sumatra), Batak (North Sumatra), Javanese, and people from Palembang, South Sumatra. The dominance of ethnic Malays results in a primarily patrilineal inheritance system. The indigenous community has a relatively good relationship with the migrants. As in Sungai Telang, education levels are low: children typically quit school by sixth grade.

The District Government development programs related to forests and forestry include the *GNRHL*, which has lacked community participation. As the population grows, the community is facing difficulties finding land for swidden fields, particularly for young married couples.

Local economy and natural resource uses

Both villages are located on the border of national parks and production forest areas. Villagers' sources of income derive from small-scale rubber gardens, off-farm labor, timber/logging, and non-timber forest products. Production forest, protection forest, and national park are considered by the local community to be part of their traditional territory. Around 65 percent of adult men in Sungai Telang harvest timber, locally known as *bebalok*. Likewise most men in Lubuk Kambing, especially the young ones, rely on timber harvesting for their livelihoods. Based on our interviews with the local village government as well as observation, everyday there are 4-5 truckloads of logs passing through the village's main road to supply three main sawmills operating in Sungai Telang. These sawmills, located in various hamlets, are owned respectively by an entrepreneur from West Sumatra, Bungo, and someone sub-contracted to build houses and roads for a transmigration program.

³ GNRHL refers to Gerakan Nasional Rehabilitasi Hutan dan Lahan.

Men's and Women's access and control over resources

To better understand the relationship between men's and women's access and control of land and other resources, either privately or commonly owned, we mapped local resources showing who had access to certain resources and who had power to control the resources (see Table 3). We found it necessary to conduct the women's and men's group exercises separately to enable both women and men freely to express their concerns.

Table 3. Access and Control defined by Traditional Lines in Indonesia

Type of Rights	Matrilineal (Minangkabau)		Patrilineal (Jambi)		Bilateral (case of Sungai Telang) (strong Matrilineal influence)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Access:						
a. to manage	W	M	-	M	W	-
b. to use produce	W		W	M	W	-
Control						
a. to transfer	W		-	M	-	M
b. to decide crop type	W		W	M	W	M
c. to harvest	W		W	-	W	-
d. to sell	-	M	-	M	-	M
Ownership						
- Resource titling	W	M	-	M	W	M

Women claimed access to almost all resources surrounding the village, but acknowledged that such access did not imply the same measure of control over resources as men held. Some resources (e.g., water, NTFPs like bamboo) are resources used mostly by women, but women cannot decide when water should be used for irrigation or when bamboo should be planted to ensure sustainable harvesting.

Men emphasized their role as head of the family, and their related right to make decisions about access and control of resources within the family. They also pointed out that, for resources like paddy fields, upland ricefields and tree crops, women have steady access but less control. In the case of lands a wife inherits from her family (*harta berat*), women should have control over it, though these men also felt that women should consult with them before making decisions over such resources. Participant observation findings also confirm the importance of this dual matrilineal and patrilineal system in determining who has access and who controls the resources.

Most village land is obtained through inheritance or sale. Women inherit small amounts of paddy (0.5-1 ha), and men inherit more extensive (but less

valuable per ha) rubber farms. This reflects a local emphasis on the importance of women remaining in the community to care for their aging parents. The felt need to explain this custom to outsiders reflects recent, external influences from other, more dominant Indonesian cultural systems in which the husband is seen as the legitimate household head and nuclear families are seen as the norm (unlike the traditional matrilineal system of the Minangkabau ethnic group from which Sungai Telang's system evolved).

Meanwhile, community effort to collectively obtain land titling through government programs as a way to get recognition of land ownership is underway. However, women, who are often shy and reluctant to speak in public continue to face challenges.

Governmental forest resource management affecting local communities' access to resources

During the New Order government, before 1998 management of natural resources including forestry was characterized by strong control by the central government. The 2001 decentralization law gave districts greater autonomy to formulate their own policies and exert control over resources. In Bungo and Tanjabbar districts, like many other forest rich regions, the district heads issued small-scale timber concessions (IPHH, or forest product utilization permits). The policy was intended to improve local people's management of and access to resources.

Between 2001 and 2003 for instance, the Tanjabbar District Government issued 85 permits for timber extraction for different types/status of forests (Sudirman et al, 2005). These were granted to cooperatives, farmer groups, or foundations. Due to concerns about environmental degradation, failure to provide benefits to local people and the creation of an uncertain business climate, the central government withdrew the district heads' authority to issue small-scale concession permits through a 2002 governmental regulation.⁴ When our research started in 2005, our two local governments were no longer issuing the permits. This new policy reduces one impetus for local people to engage in collective action: the need to obtain a license for such forest resource use.

In October 2004, the Ministry of Forestry issued a policy on *Ijin Pemanfaatan Kayu* (IPK, Timber Utilization Permits) with significant property rights and collective action implications----again granting authority to district heads to issue this permit to cooperatives, individuals, state-owned, and private companies. While most district governments were enthusiastic about issuing small-scale concessions during the early stage of decentralization, the two research districts responded differently. Tanjabbar issued a number of licenses while Bungo issued none.

Bungo's Forest Service launched three programs considered to affect property rights and collective action. They were BUP, *Bantuan Usaha Produktif*, a program providing community groups with revolving funds and other assistance to

⁴ Government Regulation No. 34/2002 on the forest and the formulation of forest management plans, forest use, and the use of the forest estate (*tata hutan dan penyusunan rencana pengelolaan hutan, pemanfaatan hutan dan penggunaan kawasan hutan*). This regulation has now been replaced by Government Regulation No. 6/2007 on the same themes (issued in 8 January 2007).

stimulate and enhance their productive efforts; *Rekonstruksi Tata Batas*, a forest gazettelement program to clarify forestland-village boundaries; and *Rehabilitasi Hutan dan Lahan*, a program to replant and reforest critical lands (Mustafal et al, 2007).

In short, the two communities and districts have seen a dynamic see-saw of forest-related policies, with formal, legal authority shifting back and forth between the central and district governments over the period of our research and immediately preceding it. This has meant a very uncertain policy context for decision-makers at all levels. The longstanding lack of congruity between local people's perceptions of land tenure and use rights, district government's perceptions and preferences, and the central government's views, has further fuelled the uncertainty. These factors, combined with the presence of powerful outsiders (such as conservation projects and timber and oil palm companies, discussed in more detail in the next section), has created serious pressure on both local people and the environment. The lack of certainty about rights to resources has meant a field day of open access in the region, with serious adverse consequences for the resources upon which local people have traditionally depended.

ACTION ARENA: BUILDING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND FACILITATING COLLECTIVE ACTION

This section describes the process of working with district government and the communities, outlining examples of topics addressed and actions taken at both levels. We explain the processes in some detail, given the more action-oriented approach of our research process, compared to many of the other chapters in this book.

Stakeholder relations and action resources

Through an inception workshop and subsequent focus group discussions involving research collaborators and village communities, we identified relevant stakeholders and described their formal missions and the rules they use when making decisions and (sometimes) engaging in collective action. We identified the central actors, their concerns and stances on specific issues, and action resources (power, information, knowledge, social standing, and political network). This analysis helped identify conflicts of interest among parties, formulate suitable strategies for engagement with them, and assess the capacities of community groups (in particular) to take part in policy processes through collective action. Annex 1 lists stakeholders with their responsibilities, concerns, and resources.

District-level facilitation and analysis

Strengthening property rights over land resources through district land use planning

Unclear property rights were considered to be the most important issue to tackle if local communities were to improve their livelihoods. One of the avenues for securing property rights requires looking at how land and forestland uses have been allocated and prepared in district land use plans (RTRWK, *Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah Kabupaten*), and analyzing how such documents are developed. Land use planning can serve as a key to tenure reform even when it is considered to have no direct linkage with land status (Contreras-Hermosilla and Fay, 2006). Some decisions are made on forestland status and function that later have impacts on local communities' access to resources.

In Bungo, the district government revised its district land use plan twice between 2000 and 2005. The first revision took place following the division of Bungo Tebo District into two new districts, Bungo and Tebo. The second was carried out to anticipate regional development dynamics, including large-scale land use by businesses and investors for plantations and coal mining. In Tanjabbar, the district government developed its land use plan in 2001 and is currently revising it.

The two districts share challenges to the preparation of sound and all-inclusive plans. Lack of resources and personnel with either skills or educational background in planning resulted in the RTRWK plans for one district being prepared by inexperienced personnel and for the other by external consultants. However, budgetary constraints made it difficult to accommodate stakeholders' input.

Each district has a committee, *Tim Tata Ruang Daerah* (or District Land Use Planning Committee), responsible for preparing or subcontracting the plan, for overseeing its implementation, and for monitoring the use of allocated lands. This committee also served to mediate land conflicts between local communities and private companies. The committee is comprised of representatives from Bappeda, BPN, the District Forest Office, and the District Secretariat.

Article 12 of Law No 24/1992⁵ and Government Regulation No. 69/1996⁶, for example, provide ample opportunities for public participation in land use planning. In addition, Article 68 of Law No. 41/1999⁷ stipulates that local people have the right to know what will happen with lands surrounding their villages and can provide inputs to the government, including raising objections to proposed plans. The committees argued that the proposed RTRWK land use plan in the two districts had generally been developed in a participatory way. Technical discussions were held at district and subdistrict levels, and discussions were also held with NGOs possessing substantial data. In the final stage, stakeholders were invited to a

⁵ Law No. 24/1992 regarding Spatial Plan Management

⁶ Government Regulation No. 69: Tahun 1996 tentang Pelaksanaan Hak dan Kewajiban serta Bentuk dan Tata Cara Peran Serta Masyarakat dalam Penataan Ruang (Rights, obligation, forms, and procedures for public participation in land use planning). This regulation is an implementing rule of Law No. 24/1992 Tahun on land use planning

⁷ Forestry Law

seminar where most of the input took the form of corrections to data included in the RTRWK. The Forestry Office, for instance, corrected details on the area and functions of state forestlands. The Agriculture Office submitted data on the area of rice fields, secondary crops, and horticultural crops as well as livestock populations. However, the term "people's participation" was interpreted differently among the stakeholders. To some government officials, sending a proposal to the District House of Representatives (DPRD) and deliberations within the House on the draft are indications of people's 'participation.' Some officials also had difficulties deciding which "*masyarakat*" (community) should be involved. Because of its formal authority, the district government played the dominant role in determining the direction of spatial planning policy.

While Law 24/1992 on Land Use Planning stipulates that land use plans be developed according to the hierarchy of governance levels, accommodating inputs from the lower levels of governance (subdistrict and village spatial plans⁸ developed traditionally by local people) is a challenge. Inputs from the villagers represent a useful strategy to reduce future conflicts over land. Objections to taking account of inputs from the village level cite the need to consider broader ecosystems, the fear that giving power to a village to develop its own plan would risk fragmentation, and difficulty harmonizing the different standards and categories used.

Forestlands solely under the authority of the Ministry of Forestry pose another challenge for the two districts in securing property rights to lands for local communities. Based on their need to expand lands available for development and district revenue sources, the two district governments proposed that the status of forestlands be, in some cases, changed into 'areas for other uses' or *Areal Penggunaan Lain* (APL), normally allocated for the development of large-scale plantations. Local communities already occupy and farm in forestlands. The district argued that bare forestlands would be more productive if managed for agriculture. To some extent, the districts' doubts were related to how forestlands had been designated in the past and whether the mechanisms had been participatory.

State forestlands presented the districts with a dilemma. On the one hand, districts need to maintain forest resources to support their ecosystems. On the other hand, actual land allocation frequently strays from the spatial plan, subject to elite capture by district officials who authorize developments that are to their private advantage but not consistent with the spatial plan. Local communities' agricultural activities also affect state forestlands. Much of the national forestland is on the land the communities claim as part of their traditional territory. Growing populations in need of land, increased investment opportunities potentially important for district revenues, and greater district responsibilities in governance plague district governments throughout the country.

In their proposals, Tanjabbar and Bungo districts proposed changing the status of 46,185 ha and 12,880 ha of state forestlands respectively, most being changes from production forest to 'areas for other uses' (APL).⁹ If the proposals are

⁸ Law No 24/1992 recognized three different types of spatial plans: national, provincial, and district spatial structure plans. Subdistrict and village spatial plans are not recognized in the law.

⁹ There are in total around 98,577 ha of forestland in seven districts of Jambi to be proposed for conversion. During a shared learning workshop on "Spatial Planning and Forestland Allocation towards Strengthening Property Rights and Promoting Good Governance" organized by CIFOR in January 2007,

approved, there will be a decrease in the total area of forestlands from 257,344 ha to 211,259 ha and an increase in agricultural and non-agricultural areas from 241,081 to 287,266 ha. The Tanjabbar government argued that in reality, the state forestlands in these proposed locations are already community lands with rubber, oil palm and other crops, settlements, logged acacia, and shrub.

Bungo district faces similar problems of limited productive land for agriculture. The expansion of community farming into production and protection forests has led to conflicts, for example, between indigenous communities and newcomers, and between villagers in Sungai Telang and the transmigration office over a transmigration site that is on state forestland also claimed by the community. In other places there are land conflicts between communities and plantation companies. Bungo government proposed to convert a total of 12,880 ha of forestland to farm lands, oil and rubber plantations, and to cooperatives.

Besides proposing forestland conversion, the Bungo government also proposed to convert around 14,000 ha from 'areas for other uses' (APL) to protection forests and has already allocated around 2,000 ha for *hutan adat*, or "customary forests," to be managed by traditional communities.

The research team organized and facilitated a workshop for Ministry of Forestry and District Government stakeholders to find out why the District proposals had been ignored and to better understand the Ministry's position on these issues. The Ministry emphasized that proposals must be in accordance with relevant laws and regulations. They argued that the forestland map, used by the two districts, was established through a harmonization process between *Tata Guna Hutan Kesepakatan* (TGHK, or forest land use by consensus---completed in 1994) and the provincial land use plans (RTRWP) of 1999. There had been consultations between the Ministry and provincial and district governments, and the Ministry thought the process had been adequately participatory. The Ministry stressed the need to have a shared understanding of what the "review of spatial plans" meant. Instead of fundamentally changing land allocations---seen to lead to an 'uncertain business and investment climate'--- the "review" should merely update what had happened to the land within the last 5 years. Despite its firm stance on retaining forestlands, the Ministry was fully aware of the increasing need for land for regional development and had issued a decree¹⁰ that tolerated conversions of forestland for strategic purposes without adversely affected ecosystem services and functions. Securing property rights for local communities in land use planning had been overlooked in the Ministry's regulations.

Having catalyzed collective action in two communities, we found, not surprisingly, that secure property rights over lands are important to most

an official from the Jambi Provincial Bappeda presented this figure and shared their arguments for conversion with participants, including those from the Ministry of Forestry's Agency for Forestry Planning (Baplan). The initial extent of changes to state forests proposed by Tanjabbar District Government was only 11,312 ha, but then – as revealed during another workshop---it grew to 46,185 ha. The Jambi provincial Bappeda responsible for handling proposals from all districts throughout Jambi and forwarding them to the Ministry of Forestry used only the initial figure of 11,312 ha of forestlands in their formal proposal.

¹⁰ Minister of Forestry Decree No. 70/2001 amended with Minister of Forestry Decree No. 48/2004 on the designation of forestlands and changes in status and functions of forestlands

community groups. Communities' positions on whether to opt for ownership or use rights (a crucial difference from the perspective of the powerful Ministry of Forestry) depend on the extent to which they historically controlled lands and how they obtained the land : inheritance, purchase, or provided by government.

Communities, particularly those of recent migrants, whose lands were found to be within state forestlands, were predictably more receptive to the idea of use rights.

Although the stakeholders discussed and shared their views through these workshops, no firm approvals on the proposals were forthcoming. Still, participants gained invaluable lessons and learned about each other's views, interests, and expectations. They agreed on some strategies and a priority agenda to deal with the district proposals and resolve conflicts over lands. These included, among others: forming a communication forum, public consultation and participatory assessment of the proposed forestlands, inventory of already occupied lands and socio-economic conditions of surrounding communities, and seeking forestry strategies for people's empowerment, *i.e.* social forestry.

Land conflicts and collective efforts to resolve them

Part of the impetus to hold the previously described workshop was an initiative by a large-scale industrial plantation forest concession in Tanjabbar and Provincial and District Forest Services to conduct an inventory of disputed forestlands¹¹ already occupied by local people, including the villagers of Sukamaju, a Lubuk Kambing hamlet. The central government had allocated the land to this company to expand its plantation, but local people had cleared some of it for perennial and seasonal crops. The latter entered into this area long before the company started its operation, when management rights of the lands---considered variously common property or open access by the villagers, in-migrants, and other non-government people---were being transferred from another natural forest concessionaire to a state-owned company (PT Inhutani). This case is typical of land conflicts that have occurred in many other regions---the results of inappropriate and non-participatory land use plans. The company wants a *clear* and *clean* working area so they can do business smoothly. To do this, they must help clarify property rights for local people. A clear working area would mean they would pay taxes to the government according to the actual lands they are entitled to manage.

In the research team's discussions with the inventory group (comprising company personnel and Provincial and District Forestry staff) we learned about three types of land issues facing the company, termed "overlaps," "overlapping claims," and "occupation". "Overlaps" refer to boundary disputes between the company's working areas and adjacent companies. The company finds this case comparatively easy to resolve with the help of the government who granted them a legal working area. "Overlapping claims" are cases where local communities claim rights to the company's working areas still in secondary forest or shrub, evidence that the land had been cleared by the main traditional means of establishing

¹¹ It is estimated that of 290,000 ha of the company's working area in five districts in Jambi, around 50,000 ha has been occupied by local people.

ownership. The community's claims are normally based on having inherited the land from their ancestors. To the company, this is the most difficult to resolve as people's claims on land are often uncertain in terms of size and location, and different groups within a community (and without) may have claims on the same land. "Occupation" refers to land where there were already settlements and construction when the company entered the area. The company can do nothing about the third type of land issue, leaving these forests untouched.

When the inventory team went to the disputed area to meet the residents of Suka Maju, the communities were antagonistic, partly because they had heard from the village head that the company would flatten their houses and usurp their lands. They also knew of prior experience with PT Inhutani (a state-owned concessionaire), who had evicted other communities (see Box 1). Our research team---with whom the community was familiar---mediated the disagreement, making clear to the community the genuine purpose of the team's visit. The community finally agreed to discussions with them.

The inventory team asked the community to tell the history of the lands they currently cultivate and fill out a detailed form describing themselves, their group, and their livelihoods. The inventory team established options for resolving cases under varied conditions. For areas where trees and crops had been grown for more than five years, with indications that the plants and areas were well and intensively maintained, community groups could continue working in the area. A plan is underway to seek legal rights for these residents to continue managing the area. For areas where trees and crops had not been planted, but where there were indications that the soil was well managed, a similar option is offered. A partnership with the company through, *e.g.* product sharing, was also a possibility. Harsh action would be taken against those who cleared forests but left them untouched. One general condition for all options was that villagers were not allowed to expand their agricultural lands further into the area managed by the company.

One of the inventory team members from the District Forestry Office recognized that community groups living in Suka Maju were highly committed to managing land resources and would likely be good candidates for the district program on social forestry or small-scale forest plantations. Building on this idea, the research team facilitated a focus group discussion on the possibilities for implementing *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* (HKm) or the community forestry program, a Ministry of Forestry's strategy for people's empowerment. Through this strategy community groups or cooperatives can be granted the right to manage forestlands. Local stakeholders considered it timely for the districts to implement the centrally designed HKm program as a kind of compromise or quid pro quo in their struggle to gain the forestland conversion described earlier. In addition, they also each proposed around 10,000 ha of forestlands in Merlung Subdistrict (Tanjabbar) and in Limbur Lubuk Mengkuang Subdistrict (Bungo) to be considered as HKm projects. These locations are in areas of significant ecological value.

Box 1: The fight for secure property rights in Sukamaju, Jambi

Based on an interview 29/07/05 with two villagers, a woman and a man

In 1996, people began moving to Sukamaju. Only a few families lived on the left fork of the road, with our family moving in first. We opened our own land, as did the subsequent families who followed, to make rice swiddens, vegetables, and fruit. We had been there for some years when men from P.T. Inhutani, a state-owned forest company, came and spoke to my husband. They told him that our land actually belonged to Inhutani, and they got my husband to sign something he thought might have been a census.

A few months later, we heard that our neighbors who lived down the other fork of the road had been kicked out of their homes by the same men from Inhutani. The men from that hamlet had been asked to sign something too. That something turned out to be a contract agreeing to sign over our land, without compensation, to Inhutani. Inhutani came with members of the police, the military, and Brimob (Mobile Brigade, a notorious paramilitary organization). They ordered the people out of their houses; people were crying and grabbing what they could. Then Brimob entered grabbing everything of value—even the chainsaws used to build our houses. Then the houses were torn apart, destroyed with Inhutani bulldozers. The people were left with nothing on the side of the road.

A few weeks later, Inhutani came with red paint, marking our houses, without telling us why. Then they told us that our neighborhood was also scheduled for demolition. The red paint showed which houses were to be destroyed. The people were terrified, the women crying. We brought everyone together and decided to do something.

The day Inhutani was supposed to come, we assembled at the fork in the road. Everyone was there—men, women, and children. The women stood in front and waited til midday when they finally showed up. The men from Inhutani came in four jeeps, with the military (ABRI), and Brimob. They had brought their bulldozers. The women stood in front, as had been agreed at their meeting.

The police ordered us out of the way. We said that we lived there and that we were not moving. The police officer challenged us to prove it with our identity cards. We had ordered and paid for them, but they had not been delivered—we later learned, on the orders of Inhutani. But everyone there knew we lived there, that we had the right to live there. We women stood in front of the cars and would not let them move. Some of the women climbed up on the bulldozer.

We were crazy. We yelled at the officials. They yelled back: “Kalian tak bisa diatur!”, “You cannot be controlled!”, but they would not hit us or fight because we were women. The people in the back, children, men, and women, were terrified. The police official ordered the car to move—to run us over. We were pushed to our very last resort—we took off our shirts. The policemen were too embarrassed even to look at us, let alone to act. We continued yelling at them. I broke off the car’s hood ornament and threw it at the windshield.

During our fight, someone called for the village head. He spoke with Inhutani and the officials. We quickly put our shirts back on, embarrassed in front of the village head. We were so embarrassed. It was not embarrassing when we were yelling at the policemen. We were crazy with anger. But when the policemen were talking with the village head, we realized our condition and felt ashamed. We put our clothes on and ran into a nearby house. But we were also proud because we had prevented Inhutani from destroying our homes.

Inhutani left after speaking with the village head. We did not hear from them for a long time. The next time, they came about a month later, there were only a few—only one car. I was frightened. They came into the house and, rather than kicking us out, they sat down to talk. They offered to help us with the government assisted “Jaringan Pengaman Sosial”(social safety net) program—to provide us with saplings and fertilizer. We did not know why, but we were really relieved.

The people from the village down the other fork of the road whose houses were destroyed never got any help. But Inhutani never did anything with their land, either. In a couple of months, when Inhutani had not come back, the people started to move back and rebuild their houses. Now their houses are rebuilt, and more people have moved in. Now a lot of people have recognition of land ownership from the village head, proving ownership of their land. But still we are nervous—there is talk that this land is owned by another company. We don’t know about that. But we will wait and see what happens.

Community-level facilitation

Providing a spark for the ember of community collective action

Table 1 describes the characteristics, motivation, and activities of the groups in which we catalyzed collective action in the two villages. Central issues addressed included various income generation activities such as selling cake and raising ducks, and addressing property rights issues through land certification and government-sponsored rubber sapling programs.

In Sungai Telang, we identified two different types of women's (farmer) groups, *Gotong Royong* and *Pelhin*. *Gotong Royong* – selected and facilitated as our primary group – provides paid labor to help members in their agricultural work. *Pelhin* – observed without our facilitation – operates on a reciprocal work basis, exchanging work on a days-worked basis. When a woman takes part in a *Pelhin* work day, she is then owed a day of work from the owner of the farm. This can be paid off when the person calls a *Pelhin* day herself. The *Pelhin* group represents a kind of control, as a good example of longstanding, collective action among a matrilineal group (described further below). In Lubuk Kambing, we identified and facilitated the *Dasawisma* group, a women's group interested in income generation.

Once sufficient rapport had been developed within the communities, we began to lead the groups through the PAR steps of planning, action, monitoring,¹² and reflection. Throughout this process, we worked with the group to ensure that the relevant villagers were present in group planning discussions as a means to assure that all stakeholders would have a share in the action processes. Action, which often meant going to the sub-district (*kecamatan*) or district (*kabupaten*) level for information, involved rotating members of the groups meeting with government officials (e.g., from Bappeda, the Forest Service, and others).

Members of the Minang *Gotong Royong* group expressed their interest in producing a product with good market potential to supplement their cash income. Most of these women were already weaving as a regular part of their activities (Yentirizal, 2007), making mats, baskets, and other household necessities for personal use. They wanted to market their weavings, but were not sure how. They decided that the best course of action would be to invite a women's group from the village of Baru Pelepat (Kusumanto et al., 2005) who had been successful in marketing their own weavings. Three women from Baru Pelepat came to Sungai Telang at the end of July 2005 to help members of the *Gotong royong* group. Members of the other two *Gotong Royong* groups in the village also attended.

Sinar Tani, the Minang men's group in Sungai Telan focused on paddy fields, expressed their interest in pursuing land certification. The reasons they gave included a concern about possible land conflicts, wanting to ensure that their land boundaries are stable and ensuring a legal way for their children to inherit their land. Having reflected on the need for information on the certification process, the group invited government officials from the relevant agencies [Bappeda, the Forest Service, the district level National Land Agency (BPN)] to attend a meeting and

¹² For the initial months of facilitation, the monitoring process was considered part of the reflection process, although we then began to consider it as a separate process.

answer their questions. At the meeting, they learned about PRONA, a government program that provides mass land certification for poor people at low cost. Sinar Tani started to collectively work on proposals and interact with district officials.

The Dasawisma group formed as a result of a top-down government program (PKK) in which the village head's wife is the mandated leader. She selected members from various neighborhoods, appointing two vocal women as leaders, ignoring the considerable distances between their homes and resulting difficulties in meeting. The members were dissatisfied with the way the groups had been formed and the members selected. Two *Dasawisma* groups were interested in focusing on income generation efforts to supplement their cash income from agriculture using their existing skills. Each *Dasawisma* group comprises 20 Malay women. The *Dasawisma Semangka* group decided to sell cakes, while the other group, *Dasawisma Pisang Lilin*, planned to raise ducks and market the eggs. These ideas derived from women in the group who had prior experience in these fields.

A male farmers' group, *Tunas Harapan* in Lubuk Kambing's Suka Maju hamlet, was initially formed, primarily of members new to the area (of mixed ethnicity coming from Java, North Sumatra, Aceh, and Palembang), when the government offered relevant programs to help the farmers. Some village elites persuaded the new group to clear land in preparation for oil palm investors who never materialized. The group later decided to work together to improve their annual crop yields such as soybeans on ex-irrigated rice fields. They estimated that each member could afford to cultivate at least 1 ha, in hopes this would become their main source of income. Most of the tree crops planted by Suka Maju farmers have not yet come into production leaving the community dependant on upland rice fields and other food crops for their main source of income. Having reflected and learned about the lack of information and skills for cultivating soy beans, the *Tunas Harapan* members realized that they would need someone to provide them with information on good agricultural practices.

Building a stronger group through a learning process: The Sinar Tani men's group

In addition to pursuing land certification and improving agricultural products, the men's group, *Sinar Tani* in Sungai Telang was also interested in generating additional income. Initially, the commodity the group wanted to develop was rubber as most villagers in this village have traditionally earned income from small-scale rubber gardens and rice paddies. While considering regenerating their rubber, preparing their own rubber nursery, and developing a collective rubber garden, the group's members realized their limited financial resources.

Through our facilitation some group members began to interact with officials from the District Agriculture Services and Forestry Office, sharing their concerns, hearing officials' perceptions of the group's concerns, and learning about new information including funding possibilities. They learnt about (and shared with their neighbors) the District Forestry's *Bantuan Usaha Produktif* (BUP), a program to help local groups with the necessary skills to develop small enterprises. Through this program, the office allocated US\$1080 in a revolving fund to each selected community group throughout the district once their proposal for funding was accepted.

Although theoretically the farmer groups were allowed to choose their activities, in fact the District Forest Service had a program to encourage duck raising. The group changed its focus from regenerating old rubber gardens to raising ducks in response to this opportunity. However, no sooner had they submitted their proposal than the avian flu epidemic hit Indonesia altering the governmental priorities and rendering their plan unworkable. They developed another plan.

The group then learned about the high value of a species of rattan fruits, *jernang* (*Daemonorops draco*),¹³ internationally known as dragon's blood, which grew abundantly nearby, and about the Forest Service's proposing Sungai Telang to the Ministry of Forestry as a center for *jernang* seedlings.¹⁴ Stimulated by the potential market value and the district's endorsement, the group members prepared and submitted another proposal on *jernang* cultivation. Their proposal was accepted, and they were granted US\$1087. The funds could be used to purchase polybags and seedlings or for capacity-building of their members, but not to pay for labor or buy standard farming tools.

Once the first advance of US\$760 was received, three members of the group (head and secretary of the village and a member of the village consultative board, BPD) misused the money. A forestry extension agent was also reported to be involved. The District Forestry Office postponed disbursement of the second payment.

After reflection, members agreed that a lack of transparency in spending, lack of internal rules to sanction abuses in the use of funds, shortcomings in group decision making, and lack of guidance and monitoring from the district forestry office had contributed to the failure of their collective action. They formed a new group of ten people, with only four members coming from the previous group. None were members of the local elite.

The men called their new group "*Bukit Lestari Makmur*" and agreed to form a set of rules (see Box 2) reflecting their commitment not to repeat past mistakes. The District Forest Service has not decided whether the rest of the funds will be allocated to this new group. The group developed a schedule for collecting wild seedlings and agreed to gather them once a week in small groups. Each member has also started to pay the group US\$0.30 each month, which is used to buy nails, polybags, and a lock for a small nursery. They have raised more than 200 seedlings.

¹³ Jernang was traditionally marketed from this area (including by the orang rimba, a local hunter-gatherer group). A buyer from France visited their village during our research as she had heard about small-scale jernang collection in the village in the past. She had taken some samples from the community, tested the quality of jernang, and found it of a high degree of purity. The quality of the product was excellent. The price of jernang continues to rise. The 2006 price was US\$65- US\$76 per kg if the collectors sold the product to village traders (tauke). If they sold it directly to the district market, they got from US\$97.8 to US\$130.4 per kg. Income is also possible from sale of seedlings. Though uncommon, the farmers had also heard of the price of jernang seedlings ranging from US\$2.7 to US\$3.2.

¹⁴ The District Forestry officials argued that there was a large quantity of *jernang* and *jelutung* (*Dyera costulata*) species grown in forest areas surrounding the village. They submitted this proposal to the Ministry of Forestry's Directorate General of Land Rehabilitation and Social Forestry (RLPS) in 2006.

Box 2. Ten rules developed by Bukit Lestari Makmur group

1. If the members and the board fail to join group activities three successive times, they will be excluded from the group.
2. If the members and the board are found to break the rules, a warning will be issued.
3. The board is not allowed to use the funds without consultation with the group's members.
4. A commonly agreed decision cannot be contested.
5. Members should be responsible for the nursery.
6. Those wishing to join the group should obey the group rules, (7) All members have rights to express their opinion for the interest of the group.
7. The group's cash funds are not for loan.
8. The chair, secretary, and treasurer should be fully committed to fulfilling their duties.
9. Each group member is obliged to adhere to the agreed rules.
10. Each group member is obliged to adhere to the agreed rules.

Their initial collective action seems to have been successful in raising *jernang* seedlings, even without the government's assistance. They have also been trained on *jernang* cultivation, management, processing, and marketing.

In search of proof of ownership and recognition: Experiences of Sinar Tani and Tunas Harapan groups' collective action

In Sungai Telang, land inheritances are transmitted verbally to men and women by *ninik mamak* (community elders). Unclear land rules and boundaries, including lack of clarity between the local and formal government systems, have resulted in considerable legal uncertainty about land. When we asked villagers about the status of their land, they emphasized their desire for guaranteed access to the natural resources they had always managed. Ownership was actually not an issue when the *Sinar Tani* group¹⁵ was initially formed in response to a previous 1998 government program requiring a group. The issue of uncertain rights over natural resources became more pronounced when the group realized that owners of neighboring fields had moved boundary markers to expand their fields, and when they were unable to provide legal proof of these boundaries.¹⁶ As with inheritance, when land

¹⁵ The group is an association of individuals with land in one area.

¹⁶ Minang hereditary customs are still employed when dividing inherited land in Sungai Telang with *ninik mamak* elders sharing out inheritances verbally to women (rice paddy field) and men (rubber farm and upland rice field), witnessed by community leaders, but with no proof of ownership or inheritance letters.

is bought or sold in the village, there is no proof of ownership or transaction letters; the size and borders of land remain unclear.¹⁷

Village women's desire for a new high school building sparked collective action among the group to seek secure lands. A government extension agent had told them about a program for government support to build a school, but certified land on which to build the school was required. The follow up action taken by the men's group was to collectively and concretely plan for the new school buildings. Various facilitated meetings were held to ensure the representation of women and to broaden opportunities for women in the discussion.

The attempt to build the school, including seeking support from the district Education Office, prompted group members to question the procedures for land certification and think about obtaining certification for their own land. Their interest was also stimulated when Sungai Telang's transmigration program improperly allocated lands, stimulating new local level land conflicts (see Adnan and Yentirizal, 2007). The land available for the next generation in the village is diminishing. Opinions, perceptions, and knowledge regarding land certificates among the villagers and between village men and women varied widely. There was a general call for more information on land certificates.

The group's members interacted with government officials (Bappeda and the National Land Agency, BPN) who gave a talk on land certification and responded positively to the group's concerns over insecure tenure and to a proposal for having their lands certified collectively. Through a facilitated workshop, people discussed and raised questions ranging from very basic issues like the nature of certification, relevant land, and regulations, to more complicated ones such as the procedures, tax fees, and cost of land certification.

Group members agreed to jointly seek land certification as proof of their land ownership. The group decided to get their land certified through PRONA, a land certification program funded from the national APBN budget. The group members' delegation of roles accelerated the necessary data collection, and they submitted the request to BPN. Although BPN received the request, the district's PRONA quota of 250 certificates for 2005 had been used up, and Sinar Tani members had to wait for land certification the following year.

Attempts to seek recognition of property rights over resources were also made by the Tunas Harapan group of Sukamaju. The residents of this hamlet were migrants coming from North Sumatra, South Sumatra, Aceh, Java, and neighboring areas. Some had purchased land from local inhabitants; some had opened new lands in 1996.

The group sought government recognition of their claims by trying to secure government agricultural support. Tunas Harapan developed a proposal through a programme on Estate Crops in Specific Areas (P2WK). However, the village head refused to sign the proposal letter, claiming that the villagers submitting the proposal were not registered as inhabitants of Lubuk Kambing. After numerous attempts to persuade the man to sign the letter, eventually the group bypassed him

¹⁷Recognition of land ownership has been based only on trust. The arrival of newcomers (transmigrants) complicates this issue.

and communicated with Merlung Sub District, which then forwarded it to the relevant district authorities (Siagian and Neldysavrino, 2007).

Meanwhile, a large-scale forest plantation planned to start operating in the nearby forestlands, some of which had already been planted by villagers; another company planned to establish an oil palm plantation. These threats encouraged villagers to work together to seek letters of Land Status Notification (SKT) and to apply for letters of land recognition (sporadik) for their land¹⁸ to strengthen their claims.

Compared to Sungai Telang, villagers in Sukamaju are less optimistic about securing land rights through PRONA. They have continued to seek government development aid in the belief that development aid provided by the government would be a clear sign of acknowledgement of their existence and ownership.¹⁹

Making people's voices heard through collective action in Lubuk Kambing

The bottom-up and participatory planning approach of Law No. 25/2004²⁰ took the form of development planning consultations (*Musyawah Perencanaan Pembangunan – musrenbang* or DPC), taking place in stages from village level through to subdistrict and district levels.²¹ The process is designed to plan annual development programs and budgets, and to provide communities with opportunities to voice their aspirations and participate in producing development programs that suit their needs. Through these *DPCs*, we catalyzed collective action among the community groups, particularly in Lubuk Kambing, and encouraged the village head to ensure participation of all parties.

Through processes of debate, planning, action, and monitoring in all the groups, the villagers learned to identify problems, prepare activity plans, and understand the reasons some groups succeed and others fail to achieve their objectives. Although villagers were uncertain whether or not they should participate in the *DPCs*, the facilitation process and the visits by district government officials boosted their self confidence and encouraged them to act collectively and express their hopes. The interaction between group members and outsiders, particularly district government officers, when asking for information and advice about development aid increased the villagers' confidence in their ability to express their wishes through the village *DPCs*.

¹⁸*Sporadic* registration of land is part of land registration or land titling where lands are registered on a case-by-case basis, usually as a result of a specific trigger such as the sale of the property, and proposed by concerned individuals or groups of people. Another type of registration is more systematic and may be more costly but takes less time to achieve complete coverage of all titles within the jurisdiction. There is a third, even more systematic, version of land titling that is more costly and takes more time.

¹⁹A man from Sukamaju said 'The district head gave us a corrugated tin roof for the primary school building in our hamlet. That showed he already acknowledged the community in this hamlet'. Another man said 'If the government has opened the road, it means our hamlet is recognized as a part of West Tanjung Jabung District.'

²⁰Regarding Sistem Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional or National Development Planning System

²¹DPC procedures and mechanisms are further described in Syamsuddin et al (2007).

A desire among the villagers to achieve shared objectives (securing land certificates, donated seedlings, and other development aid) through group activities, the facilitators' assistance, and the reactivation of community groups all pushed the village head into mobilizing the village authorities and BPD to prepare a village DPC. The village head also became more active in passing on information to the community. He finally opened the door to participation in the village DPCs not only to the village authorities, village consultative board, and farmer groups, but also to the women's group. One of three women that attended the village DPC was appointed to the subdistrict DPC.

The women's group also showed positive developments: they had rarely or never been involved in DPCs or similar meetings. The courage to speak in mixed public forums by practicing in small all-women groups is one indicator of the success of group facilitation. The words of the village head's wife, 'I wanted to take part in subdistrict meetings, but the village head wouldn't allow me to; he never invites me to meetings in the subdistrict,' reflect how women's wishes to express their hopes and access information may be obstructed by those closest to them. In addition, while most male community members suggested development priorities related to physical infrastructure development women's representatives prioritized capacity building, skill enhancement, and education.

ANALYSIS AND OUTCOMES

In this section, we look again at what happened in the districts and communities, and analyze what factors contributed to success. We are particularly interested in the issues of rights in land, local men's and women's participation in forest-related decision-making, improvements in collective action, reduction in elite capture, and income generation efforts. We conclude this section with a discussion of the outcomes of our efforts and the problems we had to address.

Decentralized forest policies, property rights and collective action

There are no marked differences between the two districts in their response to the Ministry of Forestry's policies and how they deal with property rights and collective action. Officials from the two district forestry offices, for example, recognized their lack of power to make significant decisions on forests (such as granting use rights to local communities) and their current implementation-only role, decided by the central government. The two districts shared concerns over growing needs for more lands for development and clarifying property rights for local people, encouraging them to propose forestlands conversions to the Ministry.

Non-governmental organizations and individuals who continuously monitor and engage government partners in discourse on forest and natural issues have contributed to shaping local policies. In Bungo, a longstanding interaction among NGOs, research institutes, community groups, and government has contributed to internalizing principles of transparency, openness, and participation in government circle. An improved district land use plan and the district forestry officer's initiative to implement revolving fund projects for local groups were also linked to this

network. The absence of such intensive outside intervention in Tanjabbar explains the lesser encouraging developments there in forest and other development programs.

Local forest people feel a strong need to secure their traditional farmlands and rubber gardens, whether outside or inside forestlands. For lands outside forestlands, local people can readily secure their land, though they may need to pay dearly and wait for some time before finally obtaining such rights (e.g., PRONA case). The central government has delegated to district offices affairs related to management and administration of lands outside forestlands and to educating people about the importance of legal security over lands. In contrast, people's efforts to secure lands that overlap with state-claimed forestlands (most land) face a complicated procedure. There are various options (like HKm) that could potentially provide local people with more security over lands they have considered their own, but there remain significant fears within the central government about local people's possibly disturbing the functions of forests and uncertainties whether local people really benefit from granted rights --- ironically, even in areas no longer forested.

Local people's insecurity of tenure over land and forests is due to governmental frameworks that ignore the needs of forest-dependent people. Some regulations and ministerial decrees, for example, favor large-scale investment, continuing to issue licenses to current or expired large-scale concessions. Some national level regulations gave local groups or cooperatives the right to manage or use limited amounts of forest,²² but their implementation has been riddled with problems. Districts, for instance, misinterpreted the "right to manage" community forests (the HKm program), and higher levels of government failed to support local efforts. The Ministry of Forestry directorate responsible for the Hkm program could not develop it since the directorate responsible for forestlands allocation for HKm did not support them.

Community access and control of resources can be clearly seen in forest legislation allowing local people to use non-timber products harvested from forestlands. Another example is the rights issued by districts to communities to manage areas, normally less than 1,000 ha in size, of traditional or customary forests (e.g. *Hutan Adat*, or customary forests, in Baru Pelepat (Surma and Adnan 2005; Sari, 2007).

In contrast to earlier patterns, the government is currently embarking on two policies that promote mass property rights for local communities and the poor. The first is a Ministry of Forestry plan to develop extensive community-based plantations called *Hutan Tanaman Rakyat* (HTR) for about 5.4 million ha of forestlands. The program aims to provide secure use rights for forest-dependent communities and supply timber for forest industries. The second is the National Land Agency's plan to distribute 8 million ha of non-forestlands to poor

²² Ministry of Forestry's Decree No. 6886/2002 concerning guidelines and mechanisms for granting forest product harvesting licenses in production forest areas; Ministry of Forestry's Decree No. 382/2004 concerning timber utilization licenses; and Ministry of Forestry's Decree No. 31/2001 concerning community forests.

households.²³ While the two programs offer ample opportunities for communities to engage in collective action and improve their wellbeing, big questions remain as to whether their implementation – in such a targeted and massive manner – will truly secure property rights and promote genuine collective action or benefit poor communities. The absence of reliable data on the areas proposed has also raised skepticism about the program's probable success.

Factors that strengthen collaborative management of resources and collective action among local groups

Two of the most important factors we observed leading to effective collaboration among groups managing natural resources (in particular, among district officials from different agencies and between district and central government) are trust and clearly delineated authority. In our cases, trust developed through the creation of a mechanism wherein people could share their respective concerns and desires openly and regularly. Such trust-building resulted in improved understanding of local problems and willingness to work towards resolving land use planning issues. Government officials became more likely to abide by what was written in laws when a clear division of authority was laid out in the legislation. Such legal clarity encouraged government people to work together more effectively. However, centrally designed legislation was only effective when developed and agreed by the various levels together. Legislation that came to districts as a surprise in many cases caused resistance.

More collaboration was deemed important from the beginning of this research, and it became clear that involving a broader array of non-governmental stakeholders (research institutions, NGOs, villagers) would require greater trust. Research institutions and NGOs have played an important role in developing and maintaining trust---dynamic in nature---between themselves and the government, but also among government officials. We observed increasing appreciation among district officials of external actors' inputs and suggestions to district government. NGOs, previously disdained by the government, are now more welcome. Changes in NGO approaches to the government from very obvious attacks to a more appreciative attitude have helped to build effective collaboration with government institutions (Yuliani et al, 2006).

As revealed in one of our workshops, government and non-governmental participants agreed that if collaboration were to occur effectively, there should be a clear platform (medium, rules, and sanctions) for interaction and a clarity of roles among the parties involved. Non-governmental members argued that an equal position among the stakeholders, or at least attempts to empower the disadvantaged, should exist. Governmental members, fearing the rigidity of their system, proposed

²³ Apa yang Akan Terjadi? 8,15 Juta Lahan akan Dibagikan: Tahap Awal 5,000 Keluarga Miskin akan Diberi Lahan Bersertifikat (What will happen? 8.15 million ha of lands will be distributed. The first step is 5,000 poor households will be given land certificates) Kompas Daily (2006).

that there should be flexibility in the collaborative process in terms of time and resources.

Factors affecting collective action within groups

In an attempt to get a handle on the most significant factors affecting collective action, we asked 112 people from Sungai Telang and Lubuk Kambing through semi-structured interviews and group discussions to list the factors they considered most critical in their own collective action. One hundred respondents (54 women and 46 men) were members of the *Gotong Royong*, *Pelhin*, *Sinar Tani*, and *Bukit Lestari Makmur* groups (in Sungai Telang) and *Dasawisma* and *Tunas Harapan* groups (in Lubuk Kambing); 12 others were migrants (see results in Table 4).

Table 4. Local people’s perceptions of the important factors in effective collective action in Sungai Telang and Lubuk Kambing (results from community group exercises, 2005-2006)

Important factors to make CA effective; Being	Women N = 54+(4)	Men N = 46 +(8)	N = 100+(12) = 112
Motivated	11	15	26
Trustworthy, honest	10	5+(3)	18
Respectful of others’ opinions	7	8+(1)	16
Willing to share opinions	7	6+(1)	14
Hard-working and responsible	10	3+(2)	15
Clear or transparent	2	7	9
Having frequent meetings	3+(4)	1+(1)	9
Confident	3	1	4
A good leader	1	-	1
Total	58	54	112

Remarks: Numbers in parentheses refer to migrants (Javanese specifically)

Most agreed that individual members of a group should have strong motivation to work together as a base for collective action. Eighteen thought that group members should be trustworthy and honest as well as respectful of others’ opinions when working together. The women’s groups emphasized trust as an important element before deciding to join a group. They considered trust and honesty crucial for a group to be strong and to effectively reach common goals, functioning to build effective leadership and sustain group cohesion. Several members of the female *Gotong Royong* group felt that they had been able to reach their common goals because they acted collectively and selected group members based on friendship and familial ties. A sense of trust was already built within the group and made members more optimistic about reaching their common goals.

Leadership stood at the lowest ranking, and the group members considered it far less critical than other issues. There was a strong indication that the Minang *Pelhin* women (Sungai Telang) tend to believe that every individual has a sense of leadership to be built within the group. They considered the first three factors in Table 4 to be requisites for a good leader. However, others, particularly the men's groups from Sungai Telang and Lubuk Kambing, argued that not everyone could be a leader, that leadership carries certain criteria; for example, one should be able to speak freely, be powerful, and have courage to deal with government officials. In fact, the ways these groups selected their leaders showed their commitments to this idea: *Sinar Tani* and *Tunas Harapan* elected a village head and a hamlet head as their group leaders. The leader of *Sinar Tani* failed the group, using the power he had to misappropriate the group's money, reinforcing the group's distrust of formal leaders. Unlike the *Sinar Tani* case, the *Tunas Harapan* leader provided an effective leadership model by challenging the village head who misused his power---such as in the Lubuk Kambing incident (see Box 1), in which the village head refused to sign the letter *Tunas Harapan* needed for a government aid application. But the village head's behavior again reinforced people's perceptions of the problems with formal leadership.

It became clear to us that the respondents' negative attitudes about leadership were primarily emphasizing formal leadership *positions*, rather than the *functions* of a leader (being pro-active, persuasive, enthusiastic, and effective). The examples given above, for the men's groups, reflect the latter type of leadership. On a more positive note, in Sungai Telang, the community's traditional *Pelhin* groups practiced a model of collective action with rotating informal leadership. Each individual had the opportunity to become a leader. This model of informal leadership not only provided an opportunity for a member to take responsibility to lead in collective action, but also created equal roles among group members. The group members were able to make decisions democratically, and each member was able to speak freely. The rules and sanctions are respected and equally applied for all members of *Pelhin*, making it more effective for collective action and to achieve the group's goals. This is clear from the longstanding institutional nature of *Pelhin*.

Although the *Gotong Royong* group did not apply the same system of revolving leadership, this Malay and Minang women's group elected their leader in a democratic way. The group seemed able to act collectively and achieve their goals effectively, shown by the continuity of their activities. Similarly with the *Bukit Lestari Makmur* men's group, the strong motivation, clear rules and responsibilities, as well as the incentives to work together made this collective action useful in their efforts to overcome their problems and provide more secure access to resources.

In Lubuk Kambing, based on their unfortunate experiences with their formal leader, the community tended to discount the role of leadership in successful collective action. The village head played a dominant role in taking decisions and actions, but his tendency to misuse power and take advantage of the *Tunas Harapan* group's presence, achievements, and interests caused local groups to distrust formal leaders generally and lose respect for them. Similarly, with the Malay women's group *Dasawisma*, the village head's wife misused her power to mobilize women in Lubuk Kambing also causing distrust and disrespect among members towards the formal leader. In Sungai Telang, on the other hand, the

village head's passive attitude encouraged community members to take action themselves.

Another factor that weakens a community's sense of the importance of formal leadership roles is a common government policy that allows officials to create groups, select community leaders, and requires groups to follow an inflexible, pre-determined organizational structure.

Different levels of power among group members affected group dynamics in decision-making. Groups that included elites such as *Sinar Tani* in Sungai Telang tended to let people with power, confidence, and the ability to speak publicly dominate the group's discussion, leaving others discouraged to actively participate and tending to follow the decisions made by the leader. On the contrary, informality of leadership tended to create more equal opportunities for members to play their roles and responsibilities as well as granting freedom to participate in decision making. Such conditions proved to be important for effective and sustainable collective action as shown by *Pelhin*, *Gotong Royong*, and *Bukit Lestari Makmur* groups in Sungai Telang. Self-initiated groups such as the Minang women's group *Pelhin* and the men's group *Bukit Lestari Makmur* in Sungai Telang tend to be characterized by informality in their setting whereas government-initiated groups such as the mixed ethnic men's group *Sinar Tani* and the in-migrants' men's group *Tunas Harapan* applied more hierarchical roles and responsibilities.

CIFOR facilitation has contributed to the flowering of these various models of collective action; those involved have gained more opportunities and have benefited from wider networks of resources. By creating space to build stronger relations with various stakeholders (i.e. government officials, research institutions, and NGOs), the group members felt that they became more confident and ready for negotiation. The Minang women's groups overcame their shyness and began to participate actively in training and meetings. The intensive facilitated interaction with government officials helped these women gain self-confidence. Eight of 17 members of *Gotong Royong* acknowledged feeling more confident with their collective action. This was particularly evident from their proposal for government aid to support income generating activities, attendance at multi-stakeholder workshops (i.e. on spatial plans, gender, village-forest borders), and dealing with government officials in Bungo. In Lubuk Kambing, the women were eager to voice their aspirations through *Musrenbang*. The repetitive steps of planning, action, monitoring, and reflection were the key process of self-learning for these facilitated groups.

Elite capture: can collective action contribute to avoiding it?

Though discussion of irregularities remains delicate, this action research found indications of elite capture in districts and villages. At higher levels of governance, some agencies applied pressure to assure accommodation of their proposed programs in district development plans, resulting in fewer chances for funds to be allocated to other needier parties. Some village development projects were not based on suggestions from the village consultation forum, but originated from district parliamentary members concerned with their own districts or villages.

In one village, farmers were interested to sell their land to an oil palm company. The village head, whose role should have been to mediate between the parties, took advantage of his position by asking the group to pay a fee to him in the sale of their lands. The same village head disregarded actual community aspirations by not holding a required village consultation forum and by refusing to sign a letter applying for a government grant. In another village, elites misused revolving funds allocated to farmer groups. Actors were able to misuse their power because of limited public access to information flowing from district to the village head and lack of district monitoring and supervision of use of resources.

At district level, an effective strategy for avoiding elite capture has been through facilitated forums wherein all concerned parties come together to disclose and discuss at length any major issues, implications of policies for resources and livelihoods, and potential winners and losers. Although the forums may involve, at least in the beginning, only "government champions" and their non-governmental partners, these forums can gain in influence. Consistently bringing cases to be discussed collectively and openly through the district's multi-stakeholder forums has been effective in reducing elite capture. In one of the districts, the district head and parliament members reduced the amount of "savings" or left-over development funds (often misused) due to their increased appreciation of the development initiatives proposed through participatory and collectively monitored musrenbang forums.

We found at least three ways that village groups used to successfully avoid or moderate elite capture. First, the group members united and agreed on shared desires and risks. The group members stuck to their commitment not to sell land to the oil palm company individually and collectively refused to pay the fee to the village head. Second, the group used various means to overcome the village head's inappropriate behaviors, from simple nagging (they kept asking him to sign the letter) to sending complaints to the subdistrict and finally meeting directly with the district head. By actively building relations with outsiders, making the misconduct obvious, and thereby forcing the concerned elites to stop their actions, the group was able to avoid elite capture. Third, the group's members built a new group with stricter rules without involving elites.

Collective action alone as described above may not be enough. A higher level of collective action and support may be needed to avoid elite capture more effectively.

Collective Action: A Viable Route for Dealing with Property Rights?

In our planning for this case study, we took the position that improvements in both people's and forests' wellbeing will depend on a) clarification of land ownership and use rights for both men and women; b) clearly-defined shared authority among the national and local governments equipped with clear mechanisms for accountability; and c) a stronger civil society to contribute to the development of locally appropriate policies and legislation and to monitor government. We have hypothesized in this research that collective action is a viable route to accomplishing these goals.

The approach we have taken has been to engage with actors at community, district, and, to a lesser extent, national level to try to realize these hypothesized requirements. We have seen progress at the local and district levels toward clarifying land ownership and use rights, as groups in both communities have sought such clarification, in communication with district level officials, and as district level officials have worked together with powerful industry actors and with the central government to gain similar clarity on a broader scale. Progress has been made, but we are not there yet.

In our work at the district level, we have worked with district level officials from several agencies to clarify areas of expertise and resource management options, and improve both transparency and accountability----especially in the realms of land use planning and participatory policy development. To a lesser extent, we have also worked with central government officials to clarify the shared division of authority and roles in land allocation and natural resource management. Whereas we have made significant progress at raising awareness, particularly at the district level, about the implications of the different perceptions of land tenure and management issues, the actual changes in policy are modest: primarily, increased willingness of central officials to work together with their district partners to resolve the outstanding issue of forestlands reallocation.

The efforts to strengthen civil society as a means to contribute to policy formulation and more seriously monitor government have also been an important avenue for identifying and strengthening mechanisms for accountability. Facilitated community groups have shown their capacity to participate in decision-making processes for development, to build alliances and networks, and to reduce elite capture at the local level (as shown in the previous section); and their interest in doing so is likely also to have affected the thinking of officials with whom they interacted at the district level (cf. the willingness among district agencies to work across sectors through a multi-stakeholder forum and to adopt participatory approaches to preparing the district's mid-term development plans).

Our conclusion about the appropriateness of collective action for accomplishing these goals is that collective action is necessary, but it is also vital to network with more powerful stakeholders to accomplish important goals like more equitable access to land, preventing elite capture, increasing incomes, or improving women's status. Effective collective action in this context requires both bonding and bridging social capital as also shown quantitatively for India by Krishna (Krishna 2002). The experience of trying to foster both kinds of social capital and collective action among officials has convinced us of both the importance and the difficulties of doing so, bearing in mind the hierarchical, inertial, and powerful nature of governmental institutions.

Research outcomes

While we cannot predict whether our action research will result in concrete outcomes, or even impacts likely to occur in years to come, we observed some early positive indications. This action research has contributed to strengthened local capacity through action and learning, fostered coalitions, and intensified debate on sensitive issues (e.g. property rights over forestlands/resources, elite capture, gender); it has also promoted participatory and inclusive forums for deliberation on

important issues (e.g. land use planning, returning the formal village structure to the traditional village structure).

- There is improved understanding and knowledge among stakeholders of the importance and varied definitions of property rights, collective action, shared roles between men and women (gender), and participation in decision-making that can help people to continue productively dealing with these issues in the future. This was clear from discussions in workshops and meetings where stakeholders expressed their views, gradually developing a shared narrative for accomplishing security of access, focused on use, authority, and decision-making, rather than total ownership (a sensitive topic difficult to address directly).
- There are now improved capacities among local groups to plan, take actions, monitor, and reflect on their collective action; to interact with outsiders and to build alliances; and to seek better livelihoods. Some local groups now interact with forestry district officials – without our facilitation – to negotiate their broader involvement in forest and land rehabilitation and boundary establishment, and call for regular meetings – again, after our facilitation ceased - to pursue their objectives.
- There is an improved understanding among concerned government officials of people’s existing access to resources for livelihoods and of local land tenure and forestland problems. This includes improved communication and interaction between regional and central officials (the Ministry of Forestry). This is clear from district and central government commitments to address district land use issues and proposed changes in forestlands case-by-case. Both were also willing to coordinate further steps to resolve these problems.
- New attitudes emerged from sustained learning through workshops and multi-stakeholder forums. These were evident from the application of a more participatory manner in developing the district’s planning documents (e.g. mid-term development plans, village government changes) and considering the need to empower women and promote gender equity.

Potential and challenges of action research

This research has been effective in sparking off and sustaining group actions and maintaining group cohesion, and has enabled a wide range of individuals to take part in the process. Applying this approach with government officials, however, surfaces some difficulties that do not normally appear in such work in villages. One of the issues pertains to power relations. Government officials have more power in interaction with researchers than do villagers, and they are more likely to disappear in the course of the research (they may be transferred or not re-elected).

Officials in the earlier phases of this research were inclined to act as supervisors rather than partners. They tended to consider themselves to be the authorities, adopting a one-way communication style. They also had difficulty

building rapport and trusting other actors, tending to hoard public information. They responded slowly to community needs due to rigid procedures for development programs, limited budgets, and, in some cases, limited authority. Despite these challenges (and the greater facilitator diplomacy required to overcome them), the approach improved officials' willingness to listen to a wider variety of stakeholders, and increased their respect for local community input and the desire to work across governmental sectors.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

Collective action plays an important role in helping local communities (including women's groups) to increase their self-confidence and capacity to interact with external parties and strengthen groups. Collective action in terms of coordinated activities and information sharing among stakeholders also plays a role in making interaction more effective, triggering shared learning among stakeholders, and offering opportunities for addressing delicate issues such as property rights. To make collective action effective in dealing with property rights issues requires support from external agents such as facilitation, sound regulatory instruments, monitoring, and supervision.

Action research is an effective strategy for fostering collective action and maintaining the learning process that leads groups to be more organized and cohesive, and district government officials to be more receptive to other stakeholders' inputs.

Policy Implications

- It is possible to catalyze effective collective action among groups of men and groups of women---in this context, separately---and strengthen local self-confidence and capabilities to interact with more powerful outsiders, negotiate effectively with them, and bring pressure to bear to reduce elite capture of local benefits.
- The differences within and between communities are vast, and participatory action research within comparatively homogenous groups provides one mechanism for incorporating this diversity into planning at village and district levels. By focusing on what local women and men can and want to do (rather than their poverty or ignorance), a climate of confidence is built that should, over time, contribute to successful development/conservation.
- Doing participatory action research with government officials can build some capacities---willingness to listen to a wider variety of stakeholders, increased respect for local community input, greater desire to work across governmental sectors, and, hopefully, a greater willingness and ability to manage adaptively and equitably---that will be important in making decentralization work.

- The approach we have taken, although not specified in Indonesian law, is consistent with recent laws mandating participatory approaches and greater local self-determination. It, therefore, can serve as one reasonably effective model that fits with Indonesian laws and contributes to the goals of decentralization.
- Some groundwork has been laid for strengthening land tenure security and improving incomes, which are longer term goals. But the capacities to analyze situations, develop plans and monitor them together, assess progress, and correct course as needed, communicate effectively when negotiating with outsiders, and bring group pressure to bear on individuals and/or groups working against community interests are all skills that should contribute to making the community's (and its members') assets more secure and gaining access to the benefits from such assets for themselves.
- Good, comparatively neutral---recognizing that no one is truly neutral--- facilitation is important in this process at both levels.

Policy recommendations

Specifically, in order to enhance the effectiveness of collective action in tackling issues of property rights, sustainable use of land/forest resources, poverty alleviation, and people's access to decision making processes in the two research sites, it is recommended that the district governments (in relevant cases, provincial and central government as well):

- Work with strongly motivated and already existing community groups, when implementing development programs.
- Provide local groups with broader access to networks of information and institutions. Local groups should have direct alternative links to government offices without the need always to go through village institutions.
- Invest more resources to support monitoring and supervision activities, and to promote transparent and participatory forums for deliberations. The planning board, Bappeda, for instance, could be strengthened in policy and program evaluation and enforcing performance-based budgeting regulations; attempt to apply participatory and appreciative approaches when conducting programs to enable shared learning processes among communities and districts.
- Build the capacity of local groups, in particular women's groups, to grasp opportunities for improving livelihoods and informing development planning; and to enable them to increase their knowledge and skills in group organization and financial and resource management.
- Enhance coordination and shared learning among government units; apply transparent and participatory processes; and use a case-by-case approach in dealing with land use planning and forest reallocation issues

(including social forestry schemes). Establishing a pilot learning program for community forests or *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* in a district may be one option.

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