

# SOCIAL FORESTRY AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES: IN NORTH BENGKULU- SOUTH SUMATERA

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## Abstracts

This article discusses about the positive correlation between social forestry and the empowerment of local people and ecology. This study highlights that this program which started in 1995 aiming at participating the local people for involving them in forest resources management. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that social forestry programs is able to prevent soil erosion and also create jobs for local people.

## Introduction

Forest resources management in Indonesia today has come under scrutiny. Many observers (Dove, 1985; Tjitradjaja, 1991; Parsudi, 1993, Moniaga, 1993) criticize its management, because that policy benefits the Logging Forest Concession (HPH), Industrial Forest Plantation (HTI), big Estate Plantations (palm oil and rubber) with a huge facilities, comparing with negative consequences for local people. That kind of policy is linked with the idea that most of HPH and HTI contribute lots of "income" for the government. In this case, forestry was second only to the oil industry in earning foreign exchange. Forest industries still maintain a significant role in Indonesia's economy today, generating 16 percent of total export earning and employing about six million people (Sopari & Agus, 1993:115). In contrast, our government does not seriously pay attention to the consequences on ecological and deforestation in many forest areas.

On the other hand, the minor actor of forest destruction such as forest squatters and shifting cultivators happen in Indonesia. Issues of forest squatters in South Sumatera, particularly in Bengkulu province are rapidly increased in searching new areas for their agricultural plantations such as coffee and rubber. According to a report from Transmigration Local Agency in 1996, it was registered 2986 families to be forest squatters and spread out in 63 villages, 20 districts, 13 towns, and 1 municipal, which width of land about 5779 Ha. Based on national figures in 1996, critical land as a result of forest squatters and shifting cultivators were involving 1.725.439 families. From 654.574 families stayed in the forest areas and occupied 3.606.243 Ha. And the rest, 826.433 families occupied around 3.246.689 Ha-outside forest areas.

In relation to forest destruction, some reports underline (World Bank, 1993; World Resources Institute, 1995; Forestry Department, 1996; Poffenberger, 1990; Dove, 1991, etc.), that forest management in Indonesia in practice has caused a huge damage to rain tropical forest is about 800.000-900.000 Ha every year. As a

consequences "poverty" has occurred among local people who live in and around forest areas increase rapidly (Mubyarto, 1991) and even social conflicts happen as well (Tjitradjaja, 1993). Obviously, the forest management policy has recognized that they give too much advantages for elite bureaucrats and businessmen through "collusion" practices. Thus, this kind of practices bring seriously implication to local people's social welfare as a result of the ecological destruction.

The above description explains us that forest area of Indonesia covers 144 million Ha is under great threat of destruction. Forest in Indonesia is dividing into four categories. (1) protection forest occupy 30,3 million Ha and are designated to preserve water resources, prevent soil erosion, and conserve the overall environment; (2) nature conservation forest, totalling 18,8 million Ha are preserved to protect biodiversity, including wildlife and other genetic resources; (3) conservation forests are the 20,9 million Ha of forest land that can be converted to other land uses; (4) and production forests are the 64,9 million Ha that can be harvested under government approved management plans. Many observers (Parsudi, Tjitradjaja, Dove) state that forest resources are destroying by over exploitation of concessionaires (HPH, HTI, and big estate plantations) and also done by forest squatters, shifting cultivators, a burgeoning population, and forest fires.

Administratively, forest resources is also causing by the lack of forest managers, forestry inventory information to properly monitor timber harvesting. The harvesting process in many forest areas itself must be improved and controlled accurately by forestry bureaucrats. Regulations to prevent misuse of the forests are ineffectively enforced-local people reap few benefits from large scale harvesting and are unable to properly participate in forest protection and maintenance.

Apparently, observing from above description, these problems endanger forest sustainability in the future. Therefore, comprehensive alternative to current forest management practices must be found. One of the participatory models of forest management with the action program is "Social Forestry." This program emphasizes high degree of interdependence between forestry sector and forest communities. This paper focuses on the practices of social forestry programs which encourage empowering communities throughout social and economics and preventing erosion of soil. The method of research was participatory observation and interview among local people and officers of social forestry project. This research was conducted on July 1996 in North Bengkulu, Ketahun district, Limas Jaya village.

### **Geographical condition and its people**

The research area is located in Limas Jaya village. It is mountainous condition. In rainy season, the red road is muddy and slippery. The distance between Ketahun as capital of district and Limas Jaya is about 24 Km, from Bengkulu city approximately 125 Km, and it takes about 3 hours by car. There are two reasons, why this village is chosen to be studied. First, there is a pilot project of social forestry from Local Forestry Agency (Kanwil) since 1995 in north Bengkulu which totally covered 1.500 Ha. Second, to prevent forest squatters in searching new

areas for coffee plantations, that in the long run will endanger soil erosion. Therefore, to substitute coffee plantations, Local Forestry Agency asked local people to work together in planting multi purpose trees system (mpts) such as Mahoni (Swietenia mahagoni), Sungkai (heterophragma macrolobum), Kayu manis (Cinnamomum Burmanni), Kemiri (Aleurites moluccana), Sengon (Albizia chinensis), Pinus Merkusii, Durian (durio zibethinus), and Jenkol (Pithecelobium jiringa). Hoping by mpts could prevent soil erosion and empower economic and social of communities.

This village occupies almost 210 Ha for settlement and 3555 Ha for agricultural fields. The amount of its people totally are 2665 in 1995, divided 653 families, consist of 1.495 men and 1170 women. The ethnics groups are majority from Rejang (from middle Bengkulu), Javanese, Batak, and Mana (south Bengkulu). Comparing the width of field ratio and its amount of people, it seems to me, that population density are very rare. Unfortunately, from its educational perspective, this village just served two elementary schools. Therefore, the biggest amount of people just graduated elementary school about sixty five percent, twenty two percent secondary school, and the rest are high school (interview, July 15, 1996).

### **Social forestry**

Conceptually, social forestry is established in 1995 to invite local people for participating in forest resources management. The goal of social forestry is to give individual or community organizations responsibility for managing the forest in their areas. In this sense, social forestry program is to develop community-level forest management (planting, maintaining, harvesting, processing, marketing, and producing) and are aimed at promoting of community welfare and awareness regarding the importance of forest functions, natural resources, land and forest conservation (Fox, 1993: 116).

Although social forestry program is able to bring a better land management, it depends on the ability foresters to build the capacity of communities to organize themselves and to engage in land management activities. Thus, in the long run, after they produce multi purpose trees, the government ask them to cooperate in a cooperative sector which they manage their own selves for harvesting and marketing). In production forests, social forestry may provide a method to involve forest communities, forest concession holders, and government bureaucrats in managing forest lands. Therefore, in terms of Indonesia, Perhutani (State Forest Corporation) has had an active and successful program in Java since 1986. In the Outer Islands (Kalimantan, Sumatera, etc.), Inhutani (State Forest Conservation) begin their pilot projects of social forestry since 1995 in many forest areas which happened deforestation caused by forest squatters, shifting cultivators, Logging Concessionaires, etc.

### **Legal analysis**

Article 33 of Indonesian Constitution is: "Land, water, and natural resources contained therein should be controlled by the state and be made use of the wel-

fare of the people." It means, our Constitution declares that forest areas should be controlled by the state for the welfare of the people."

The article 33, it inspired the Basic Forestry Law (BFL) No.5, 1967 and encourage Government Regulation No.21/1970 and No.20/1975, can accommodate the implementation of "social forestry" in 1995 for the production of forest areas in Indonesia. Then, various opportunities are available for the local people to gain access to the forest resources, such as use wood and non-wood products, to collect or plant rattan, fruits, or even to buy shares from the concessionaires.

**Its application**

The application of social forestry program through model of participatory forest management. Participation means bringing people not only into decision making, but also resource mobilization and management (Wells, 1990). This emphasize the local communities on the state forest land use actively involved in the forest management system. This program is aiming at increasing the welfare of community and sustain the biodiversity, productivity and economic development of the state forest land resources. In terms of practices social forestry in north Bengkulu, Ketahun district, which actively followed 174 families from its total 653. The regulation of social forestry participants must follow the "contract" to obey regulations. Then, the local people will find their rights and keep obligations. One of their rights, they can occupy 2-4 Ha and could take the product of their trees. Concerning their obligations, they have to keep and maintain whole trees and strictly forbidden to cut them.

The social forestry program has two targets:

First, it is to keep soil erosion by planting multi purpose trees (mpts) system.

Since the beginning of social forestry program in 1995, the Local Forestry Agency (Kanwil) through Centre of Land Conservation and rehabilitation required to work together with local communities. Social forestry which total areas are 1.500 Ha divided into three phases: (a) first project in 1995 occupied 500 Ha, with totally covered the budget Rp.500.000.000; (b) second project in 1996 occupied 500 Ha and its budget Rp.630.000.000; (c) third project in 1997 occupied 500 Ha, its budget Rp.780.000.000.

The above figures explain us almost all seeds which had planted in the fields ninety percent are live in the beginning. According to the informen (July 21, 1996), it found two reasons. First, the workers of Inhutani and local people work together on good planting of seeds. Since the seeds

**TABLE 1 SOCIAL FORESTRY PROJECT IN LIMAS JAYA, KETAHUN DISTRICT FOR BUDGET 1995**

Various seeds	Stock of trees	Planted in the field
Mahoni	285,000	92%
Durian	200,000	89%
Kayu Manis	45,000	91%
Pinus Markusii	250,000	94%
Sungkai	50,000	94.5%
Kayu Manis	20,000	92.8%
Sengon	8,000	96.6%
Jengkol	50,000	93.7%
Kemiri	5,000	94.3%

Source: Inhutani V (State Forest Conservation), Limas Jaya, July, 1995.

are planted in the field for a week - two months old-thus, pouring water system continuously done. For example, the plants will be poured twice daily. Second, in rainy season, the multi purpose trees seeds are planned to be planted in the field. This strategy of planting, in order to prevent the seeds from the lack of water and finally will dies by any circumstances.

The response from local people toward social forestry project were positive about sixty two percent. Their reasons, that social forestry program promote a better life for them, particularly in participating forest management and economics. And the rest are still hesitating in following this program. The agreement between State Forest Conservation (Inhutani V) which represent from Local Forestry Agency (Kanwil), that every chief families receive freely 2-4 Ha. There are various of trees to be planted by local people by using multi purpose trees system (mpts) such as: Durian, Jengkol, Kemiri, Kayu Manis-which have an economic values. On the other hand, Pinus Markusii, Sengon, Mahoni, Sungkai- which strong roots to prevent soil erosion must be planted in slope of mountain, it was said by staff of Biology Research Center.

The multi purpose trees system will be planted in two locations: (1) These trees planted in the center among coffee plantations which formerly owned by local people. Comparing the age of coffee and mpts are very different. For coffee the length of the age reach 8 years and after that must be replant. In contrast, most multi purpose trees such as Sengon, Mahoni, Sungkai are until 20-30 years old and usually more-and their roots are very strong to prevent soil erosion. Among eight informen, I interviewed six informen were strongly support this social forestry program to maintain ecological and fertile of soil. And two informen did not support this program (July 22,1996).

Then, the goal of “*mpts*” in the long run are able to prevent from soil erosion and to improve local communities' economics. (2) other trees be planted in the slope of mountain. In this case, a special leading trees such as, Mahoni, Pinus Markusii, Sengon, which strong roots are able to prevent soil erosion. This action program is taken, in order to prevent among forest squatters in searching new areas for coffee plantations as a result of deforestation.

Second, empowering communities through economics and social activities. As I explain above, that this project continuously run three phases. It began since 1995 up to 1997 with total area covered 1.500 Ha with a huge of budget. Certainly, this project makes an additional income and creates jobs for local people. Formerly their monthly income are Rp.145.000, and their currently income are Rp.235.000 after they work on social forestry project (interview, July 19, 1996). For example, the Camp Center for seedings plant which occupies four Ha (two places) can absorb officially workers twenty-five persons. Among of them 4 forestry scientists and daily workers eighteen persons, two drivers, and one mechanic. They worked as full time job to prepare seeds, to pour water into seeds with truck pump and maintain whole seeds before to replace in field. Every one hectare of multi purpose trees planted needed 25 persons to work. And the cost of contract Rp.140.000-Rp.150.000 which need seeds about 1200 spices, and it takes

three weeks to finish. We can calculate, if this project one year will plant 500 Ha of “*mpts*”, then man power needed to be absorbed about 12.500 persons and Rp.75.000.000 for cost of planting the seeds. I did interview among ten informants, seven persons confessed that this project social forestry made empowerment of communities' economics and positive step to create jobs for local people. Just three informants were not agree this project continuously run. Thus, every coffee planters who actively engage this program able to receive the land for 2-4 Ha of “*mpts*” system.

There are many constraints for social forestry program:

a. Among coffee planters who enters to be participants of social forestry project not seriously active to maintain multi purpose trees system. They prefer to concentrate on their coffee plantations rather than to keep and maintain social forestry program. Their reasons, because coffee plants can produce much results in short time is about 4 years comparing with multi purpose stress which produce results after 8 years.

b. It is provocational news which heard among coffee planters, that Mahoni, Sengon and Sungkai's roots caused to the coffee plants will be died. Therefore, this news have implication to the farmers behavior not fully active to be participants in social forestry project.

c. In terms of transportation sector in rainy season the road are muddy and slippery. This phenomenon, it makes difficult for social mobilization in transportation system.

d. In political perspective, it is constraints that the whole of local people did not actively support this project. They argued, that social forestry project in the long run will abolish the activities of coffee farmers and effort to substitute them by planting multi purpose trees.

### **Concluding remarks**

Apparently, there is growing concern over the inability of Indonesian Forestry bureaucrats to sustainably manage vast areas of state-controlled forest lands caused by Logging concessionaires, forest squatters and shifting cultivators. Given existing staff constraints, forest agencies need to create the capacity to work with forest communities if sustainable forest management system are to be developed. One of it model that was launched in 1995 was "Social Forestry". This project was giving individual or communities organizations responsibility for managing the forest in their areas and also to prevent soil erosion. In terms of social forestry practice in Ketahun district, north Bengkulu, the response among coffee farmers were positive. This program positively develop to prevent soil erosion and to empower local people of their economics and social. Current policy on sustainable forest management was also launched by Minister of Forestry in Gadjah Mada University on October 10, 1998, that social forestry program confirmed to be model in the future. In this sense, to prevent deforestation and forest degradation, Minister said that forestry sector in Indonesia will be developed on social forestry

program are almost 80 percent of total forest areas in 2020. This policy will include the participation of local people, cooperative sectors, NGO, private business, and State Forest Conservation (Inhutani).

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## Archieves:

Keputusan Menteri Kehutanan No.372/Kpts-II/1996 tentang Penunjukan BUMN Lingkup

Departemen Kehutanan untuk melaksanakan Pekerjaan Proyek Pembangunan "Hutan Kemasyarakatan".

Keputusan Bersama Menteri Trasmigrasi dan Pemukiman Perambah Hutan, Menteri Kehutanan, dan Menteri Pertanian, SKB No. 147/Men/1995, tentang Pembangunan Trasmigrasi Hutan Rakyat.