

Building community-based forest management in protected areas

It has been widely known that the President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo administration has set a target of distributing 12.7 million hectares of state forest areas under production and protection function to indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs) under a community forestry program. Among the various strategies proposed to achieve the target within the limited time period, is one from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) to also include 2.7 million ha of protected areas (PAs) which are highly encroached in a community-based forest management (CBFM) scheme.

The 2.7 million hectares of encroached PAs have been seriously encroached, highly degraded or converted to agricultural land and are hard to restore and even reclaim. Encroachers in PAs involve different actors, operating at different scales and with differentiated access to resources and political power. They can be differentiated in four categories: (a) landless indigenous people, that have inhabited the area before the creation of the areas; (b) local migrants, who are indigenous communities living within the same district or province as the conservation areas and have moved into them after their creation; (c) Javanese immigrants, people from the island of Java who have migrated to Sumatra since the Dutch Colonial period and continued up to now a days; (d) Sly opportunists, who are businessmen, land speculators, well-connected politicians or influential politicians who attract and back up squatters to secure their own business or interests.

Shifting encroached PAs into a CBFM scheme is a strategic attempt to provide legal access to IPLCs to these lands. It is expected that in this way they will be able to settle and the encroachment problems in PAs can be controlled.

Given the different types of encroachers and its associated political power, resources, social capital, motives, access and control of the land within and outside the PAs, a thorough feasibility study is required before the CBFM scheme can be developed and implemented. Otherwise the scheme will only trigger further encroachment. Actions and strategies to solve the chronic land encroachment in the PAs cannot be simplified and generalized, the problems should be clearly mapped and solutions should be tailor-made for each case.

The selection of the people (encroachers) that have the right to benefit of the CBFM scheme should be done through a careful and fair process. The following procedure is proposed:

- a. Identify the squatters by name and the size of his/her encroached area;
- b. Identify the size of accessed/controlled agriculture land by each squatter within and outside the PAs;
- c. Classify encroached areas based on the specific squatter socio-economic condition, especially the existing access and control of agriculture land within and outside the PAs, for instances:
 - i. encroached areas farmed by landless indigenous farmers;
 - ii. encroached areas farmed by landless migrants;
 - iii. encroached areas farmed by large land holder outside the PAs;

- d. The individual needs and realities at local level should be taken into account when developing approaches (including law enforcement). For example:
- Squatter A should be evicted from PAs as he/she has sufficient agriculture land (say more than 3 ha) outside the PAs,
 - Squatter B could benefit from the CBFM scheme as he/she only has less than 0.5 ha outside the PAs etc.

Does the actual management system of PAs have the capacity to map the different actors as a basis for CBFM policy?

In order to give an answer to the above question, first the following questions should be made: is the organizational structure of the PAs (number of divisions, sections, resorts) well designed, trained and adjusted to cope with local challenges?; are the number and quality of PAs managers and technical staff sufficient to deal with those challenges? Is the PA administration, including its regulatory instruments, planning, financial, resource allocations and related systems, functional? Does managers of PAs have the capacity and authorization to take decisions locally (be their own) to deal with such challenges?

So far, the above fundamental management issues have not been defined based on the specific challenges and needs of the conservation areas, but defined at national level based on general assumptions, blanket treatments and equalization of budget distribution. It is understandable if managers of conservation areas are powerless since the resources they receive from the Central Government and for which they are accountable don't match the real challenges they are confronted with.

The needs and challenges PAs managers are confronted with should be the basis for any strategic action and the allocation of resources. In addition, given that most problems lie beyond their management authority, a strong political support from the central government, including the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Agrarian and Spatial Planning, is needed for governance, law enforcement and management of the conservation area. The central government ideally should help in resolving the encroachments sponsored by sly opportunist squatters through an integrated law enforcement and judiciary process involving the Commission for Corruption Eradication (KPK) and the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (PPATK).

Clearly, PAs management empowerment is the *conditio sine qua non* of the efforts to change the highly encroached areas in the PAs into CBFM scheme. If the key requirements are not well fulfilled this strategies will only whitewash encroachments and worsen the conservation deadlock!



This infosheet is part of communication tools for the project of Tropenbos International Indonesia Programme in Productive Landscape, which is aimed, among others, to address landscape based development, landscape conservation planning, sustainable livelihoods for forest community and the enhancement of community based landscape restoration.

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