ZSL
LET'S WORK FOR WILDLIFE

Best-Practice Brief, 2020/7

Optimising Social Forestry for Reducing Social Conflict and Improving Forest Management

Summary

Indonesia's Social Forestry (SF) programme is promoted on the premise that it can provide people with rights to land. This can prove attractive to those who want to claim legal rights over land access and resource use where they have carried out work or wish to manage. Uncertain land tenure can be clarified and social conflicts over land can thereby be eliminated or reduced. SF is also promoted on the premise that in return for such rights, the programme can induce people to manage the lands sustainably, thereby reducing deforestation and improving forest quality.

However, certain gaps prevent successful implementation of the programme. These gaps are barriers to participation (such as communities lacking legal citizenship and a lack of knowledge of SF); limited coordination between different levels of government that prevents a seamless implementation of SF; insufficient assistance and monitoring of activities that prevent SF implementers from achieving goals set out in their forest management plans and the lack of resources at the community level to implement SF.

Two elements are essential in overcoming these gaps. First, target communities must be able to access lands legally without fear of eviction. Second, activities on these lands must be sufficiently monitored by authorised government bodies and sustainably managed so that SF livelihoods do not come at the expense of forest conservation.

Putting in place these two elements becomes even harder in remote forested areas, where a bulk of the population are unregistered migrants. There is little infrastructure and support for remote communities to learn about SF and there is less revenue potential for forest conservation than for clearing them. The governments should prioritise these areas for SF as they present the largest gains for reducing social conflict through land rights' acquisition. Helping such communities develop beneficial sustainable land management plans can also shift livelihoods away from those that exploit or deforest land.

KS has assisted three villages – Muara Medak, Lubuk Bintialo, and Karang Sari – in obtaining SF permits. KS found that obtaining the permits and ensuring success in implementing SF rest on these steps: 1) securing buy-in from stakeholders so that action taken is legitimate and aligned with the needs of all; 2) building capacity of local institutions to simultaneously improve livelihood opportunities and increase conservation efforts; 3) generating market access and/or multiple sector involvement to ensure continuity of SF activities.

This brief details how governments, communities, civil society organisations, and companies can implement the steps successfully. The steps identify which stakeholders to be targeted; what capacities to be improved; and types of SF activities are most likely to generate long-term support. These elements produce a conducive environment for SF that enables communities to legally manage forest areas and to do so in a sustainable manner that reduces conflict and strengthens conservation efforts.

Introduction

SF is a term used to describe models of forest management that enable local communities to derive benefits from forest resources. In Indonesia, there are five types of SF schemes that are open to communities (see Table 1). Communities can apply for a permit from the government, which provides them with a formal and legal access to carry out work in particular forest areas under certain schemes.

Three remote forest villages within KS's area – Muara Medak, Lubuk Bintialo, and Karang Sari – have succeeded in obtaining such permits. One more village, Muara Merang, with a Community Forest (Hutan Kemasyarakatan) scheme has also been assisted by KS to develop their social forestry proposal which is currently being processed. Previously, many of the residents were unregistered migrants who did not possess rights to the land on which they lived. This caused many problems including land and human-wildlife conflicts, illegal encroachment, and high rates of poverty as people could not properly and legally access resources from the land. This is a familiar scenario that is repeated across Indonesia.

The Indonesian government has identified SF as a means for such communities to gain a legal pathway for clarifying their rights to land and deriving benefits from forest resources sustainably. However, progress has been slow and a substantially large number of people are still cut off from such a pathway.

Between 2015-2019, Indonesia allocated SF permits for 3.4 million hectares, or roughly 27% of its target of 12.7 million hectares. This means that less than 1% of Indonesia's forest land is currently under social forestry management even though 48 million people in 41,000 villages live within or bordering forest lands. In contrast, estimates place 40.5 million hectares, or a little over a third of forest lands, under corporate control (Fisher et al 2018; Supriyanto 2018).

To realise SF's premise of reducing conflicts over land, the government must prioritise raising awareness of SF in areas that show high risk of conflicts; identify who and which organisations in those areas need to be included in managing SF schemes; and ensure their buy-in into the programme. At the same time, these groups will need help to implement sustainable land management plans aimed at creating beneficial livelihoods that are not at the expense of the environment.

The following sections detail how KS has plugged gaps in SF implementation and highlight remaining gaps that need to be addressed for SF to succeed.

Table 1: Features of SF

Indonesia has five SF schemes: *Hutan Kemasyakaratan* (Community Forests), *Hutan Tanaman Rakyat* (Community Plantation Forests), *Hutan Desa* (Village Forests), *Kemitraan Kehutanan* (Partnership Forests)/*Izin Pemanfaatan Hutan Perhutanan Sosial* (Social Forestry Forest Use Permit) and *Hutan Adat* (Customary Forests) (Firdaus 2018). They differ according to how applicants have chosen to group themselves (such as a village organisation, cooperative, or in partnership with government or companies with legal access to lands) and the type of forests – production (*hutan produksi*) or protection (*hutan lindung*) – being managed. All schemes must however follow these rules:

- Applicants can use and manage a forest area for 35 years, subject to approval of forest management plans that the villages must submit. These plans are reviewed every 5 years; inability to carry out the plans as stated can result in revocation of the permit. (Customary Forests are the exception as they can be held by applicants in perpetuity.)
- Applicants' activities in protection forests are restricted to the provision of environmental services and harvesting non-timber forest products. In production forests, applicants can extract timber and plant trees.
- Applicants must ensure 20% of what they plant consists of forest tree species; the other 80% can consist of multi-purpose tree species like fruit trees.
- One important restriction is that applicants cannot use the permit to grow oil palm; only applicants that already have oil palm plantations can continue to maintain them. Even then, applicants must show that the plantations pre-date their permit application; they must have at least 100 oil palm trees per hectare; and they can only cultivate the plantations for a period of 12 years after the trees have been planted.
- Applicants cannot alter the function of licensed forests – this means forests designated as protection forests must remain protected and without the option of harvesting timber.

Key Steps in SF

One aspect of KS's work is to facilitate the development of SF in areas where threats, such as land conflict and illegal land encroachment, are high. KS's three SF villages present opportunities for seeing how SF can be implemented in different environments (peatlands, production forests, and protection forests) with distinct risks and opportunities:

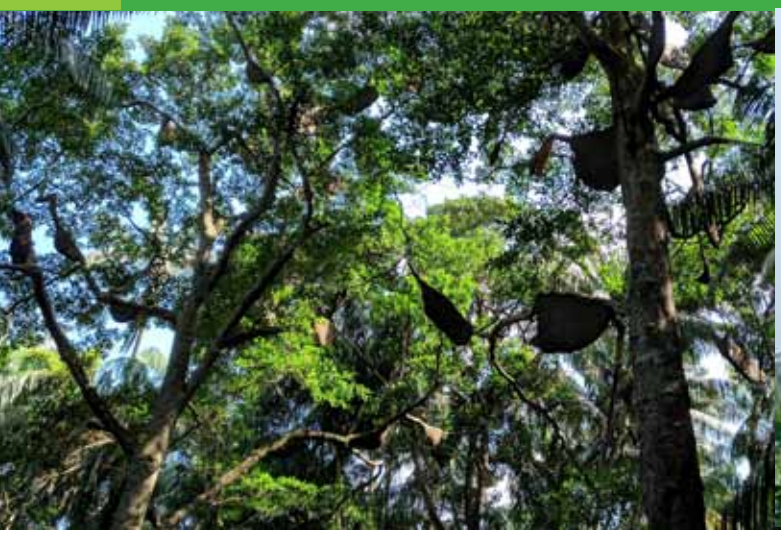

Table 2: Villages with SF Permits in KS		
Muara Medak **Scheme:** Partnership forests covering protection forests. Headed by farmer cooperative Berkah Hijau Lestari and Lalan Mendis Forest Management Unit (FMU). **Risks**: Area is made up of extensive peatlands with large concentration of hotspots. **Mitigation measures**: KS helped develop a long-term fire prevention action plan that included habitat restoration to improve the area's hydrology, training on fire prevention, and fire-fighting infrastructure and equipment. **Opportunities**: KS assisted the village in developing businesses with lucrative incomes that do not jeopardise the environment such as the agroforestry scheme.	**Lubuk Bintialo** **Scheme:** Community forests covering protection and production forests. Headed by farmer cooperative Meranti Wana Makmur (MWM). **Risks**: Protection forests area prone to illegal logging and poaching. **Mitigation measures**: KS helped the village shift livelihood opportunities from wood production to non-wood products such as fruits; developed habitat restoration plans; carried out landscape monitoring for illegal activities. **Opportunities**: MWM aimed to develop the village's fruit production into a large-scale fruit production centre serving nearby areas. KS helped MWM set up a demonstration plot, which now serves as a seeds/ sapling production centre for nearby villages.	**Karang Sari** **Scheme:** Partnership forests covering protection forests. Headed by Sari Usaha cooperative and Lalan Mendis FMU **Risks**: Village serves as a buffer zone for Berbak Sembilang National Park. **Mitigation measures**: KS helped the village designate areas for agro-forestry and habitat restoration. **Opportunities**: Many villagers were already members of cooperatives that oversaw production and sale of agro-forestry products; KS helped develop partnerships between the cooperatives and the private sector, particularly in product development and future market access.

KS also identified 18 other villages that can benefit from improving their forest management. Generally, KS helped them develop appropriate landscape management plans and strengthened local institutions that supported the implementation of such plans. This process can be crystallised into the following steps:

Step 1 – Securing Buy-in

KS focused on the participation of communities and governments in SF schemes as they are the permanent actors in such schemes; CSOs and companies may have more temporary or fluid roles and

their buy-in is contingent on communities' and governments' participation in the schemes. Having government buy-in lends legitimacy to overall social forestry objectives and allows non-government actors to participate without fear of acting against existing or upcoming regulations. Ensuring inclusive engagement, by getting diverse actors (from communities, companies, civil society) to participate, creates enduring stability and legitimacy in the eyes of both internal and external stakeholders.

Possible motivations for why different stakeholders may want to get involved in SF are summarised in Table 3. These motivations suggest there are clear incentives for participating in SF but in many cases, SF schemes fail to take off even when stakeholders stand to benefit. This section details the barriers that prevent two key stakeholders – communities and governments – from getting involved in SF and how to overcome them so that buy-in for SF can be secured.

Table 3: Why actors get involved in SF?
Communities – To clarify rights to access and use selected resources on the designated land; invest in assets (such as ecosystem services, planting fruit trees etc) that will deliver immediate and longer-term livelihood benefits; obtain jobs and income. **Government** – To promote economic development without further deforestation; roll back climate change impacts; clarify land tenure and reduce social conflicts over disputed land. **Civil society** – To encourage long-term forest protection and wildlife conservation; ensure inclusion and empowerment of marginalised stakeholders. **Companies** – To meet industry commitments/demands for deforestation-free products; decrease conflict with communities over disputed land.

- **Communities**

For communities, removing barriers that prevent them from participating in SF is a first step toward inclusive engagement. KS found that some of the residents in its target villages did not possess local identification cards, with some not even having proof of citizenship. This meant that they could not be included in government-sanctioned SF schemes, and yet excluding them could exacerbate conflicts over land and increase the prospect of deforestation.

KS has assisted Lubuk Bintialo residents to obtain a letter of domicile from the village government. Furthermore, to strengthen domicile status, KS also worked with the local government through the Population and Civil Registration Office (known as Disdukcapil) to get the residents registered as legal citizens of their village. Lubuk Bintialo, for instance, had 288 residents apply for legal residence status. This status allowed the residents, previously viewed as illegal, to access government services such as education and health insurance. In addition, their legal status meant they can be included in their village's SF activities such as managing the area's natural resources sustainably and enhancing livelihood opportunities.

Generally, KS found many residents were unaware of how they can apply for legal residence status and also the benefits of being part of a SF scheme. Moving forward, these are gaps that government agencies can fill by sending village facilitators and forest extension workers to reach out to unregistered migrants and raise awareness of social forestry. They can also work in collaboration with CSOs already in touch with underserved communities to ensure those who extract resources unsustainably are persuaded to join SF schemes.

- **Government**

National-level directives, like SF, should ideally be supported by and coordinated with provincial and district governments. When all levels of government – national, provincial, and district – are able to work together seamlessly in implementing policy, there is complete government buy-in. KS sought to ensure this by working with local governments to address coordination gaps in implementing SF schemes. This included putting in place decrees that set out local governments' responsibilities in carrying out SF objectives, assisting villages in accessing public funds for conservation and development activities, and ensuring SF implementers partner rather than compete with local forest management.

Decrees spelling out how and when local governments can assist SF implementers are useful in situations where SF activities require resources that may be out of regular communities' reach. In Muara Medak, for instance, managing peatlands required experience and resources (manpower, equipment, funding etc) that SF implementers did not immediately possess. KS worked with local and district governments to enact legal and permanent ways for villages like Muara Medak to receive planning, budgeting, and manpower assistance for managing peatlands (see Table 4).

Table 4: Peatland regulations in South Sumatra facilitated by KS
Local Government Regulation No. 1 of 2018: Allows for the integration of peat management into provincial planning and budgeting; provides for the creation and strengthening of cross-sectoral local peat teams to manage peatlands. **Governor Regulation No. 68 of 2018**: Provides technical guidelines for local government agencies to organise, plan, and maintain budgets for managing peatlands. **District Regulation Perbup No. 88 of 2019**: As a follow up to the first two regulations, this provides Musi Banyuasin district with technical guidelines on the creation of peat teams for overseeing the protection and management of peatlands.

Even when legal pathways exist that legitimise and fund SF initiatives at all levels of government, there is a need to secure buy-in from field institutions by ensuring their operational functions do not overlap but are instead in partnership with those of social forestry schemes. In South Sumatra, KS found that some operation areas of Forest Management Units (FMUs) overlapped with those of SF schemes, and this could result in the two competing for resources or replicating work. (FMUs are legally established permanent entities with clearly demarcated forest boundaries. They employ forest managers who oversee forest management activities within those boundaries. This work is sanctioned and funded by central, regional, and district authorities.)

KS facilitated partnerships between FMU Lalan Mendis and Muara Medak and Karang Sari, and FMU Meranti with Lubuk Bintialo. This meant they would develop and implement together SF and landscape management plans. Also, this type of partnership would allow for a more permanent collaboration for SF implementers than those with CSOs, whose roles and presence tend to depend on their project aims, length of cycle and funding. In situations where SF applicants initially partnered with CSOs, collaborations with FMUs, especially when CSOs have to exit, can present a way to ensure continuity of SF initiatives with FMUs providing technical assistance to develop and execute management plans.

Step 2 – Building Capacity

The success of SF rests on individuals and organisations obtaining, improving, and retaining skills, knowledge, and resources (such as equipment, manpower, etc) needed to do the work of managing forests effectively and sustainably. But which individuals and organisations should be targeted for optimum results? And which skills, knowledge, and resources should be prioritised?

KS prioritised working with communities that showed a high level of illegal encroachment and escalating disputes over land. Such communities were a priority as KS could offer them the prospect of obtaining land rights through SF in return for adopting sustainable methods of forest management. KS worked with FMUs, which highlighted the high threat areas within their borders, to identify target communities. KS, along with FMUs, carried out outreach campaigns with the target communities to raise awareness of how they can benefit from SF. When the communities agreed to participate in applying for SF schemes, they were then partnered with FMUs to develop long-term forest management plans and implement them. So far, three have received their SF permits (see Table 2).

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The long-term forest management plans consisted of SF plans designed to create livelihood opportunities (see **Opportunities** in Table 2) and land management plans aimed at rolling back deforested areas and climate change impacts (see **Mitigation measures** in Table 2).

In order to be able to carry out the opportunities and mitigation measures detailed in those plans, KS focused on different types of capacity development activities (see Table 5) that promoted learning by experience. This meant that communities worked in close cooperation with KS and/or FMU staff to adapt new technologies and good practices to local conditions, and worked out solutions to problems based on lessons learnt from past experiences and other places with similar conditions.

Table 5: Capacity building in KS

Skills	**Knowledge**	**Resources**
• Sustainable agricultural practices: KS trained villages to implement environmentally-friendly agricultural practices such as the cultivation of sellable commodities that do not degrade lands • Shifting to alternative livelihoods: KS developed a business proposal for scaling up forest honey production. • Fire mitigation and/or suppression: KS provided villages identified as fire-prone with water management skills, fire prevention training and fire-fighting infrastructure and equipment support.	• Land use planning: KS assisted communities with participatory mapping to determine the boundaries of the forest area. KS then provided support in preparing social forestry applications, which included zoning of areas and creating landscape management plans. • Habitat restoration: KS trained villages with extensive peatland and fire hotspots on how to improve the hydrology of the area. This included mapping canal networks and measuring peat depths.	• Landscape monitoring: KS introduced a spatial monitoring and reporting tool (known as SMART) for FMU Meranti and Lalan-Mendis, as well as the social forestry schemes within the FMU area. They can now use SMART to records events and analyse areas for fires, illegal logging, encroachment, poaching, and human-wildlife conflicts. SMART use is expected to result in increased detections of illegal activity which will lead to more arrests and a downtrend in forest threats as well as pin-point areas with high risk of fire.

The types of capacity development activities listed in Table 5 are also indicative of a need to ensure an integrated landscape approach, where processes in different sectors (such as livelihood, conservation, etc.) complement each other to balance competing demands on land. For example, a community could receive training on how to increase crop yields but if this is not paired with land use planning, proper monitoring, and incentives for forest conservation, higher yields could encourage expansion into forested lands to increase profits, especially when demand for the commodity is strong.

Step 3 – Ensuring Continuity

Long-term capacity building of SF schemes requires financing – ongoing activities (for example, investing in improved seeds, fertiliser, infrastructure) will require continuous capital; positive conservation results will require monetary rewards; and scaling up early successes will require investment. Market access/private sector involvement can reduce dependence on public sector support, and also make it economically and/or politically disadvantageous for the government to to work with local non-governmental bodies and businesses. In situations where market access/private sector involvement are harder to engineer (or should be avoided), greater public sector support (from government agencies and CSOs) would provide continuity of SF activities.

In Indonesia, SF schemes tend to decline or taper off when communities fail to receive adequate assistance to carry out their plans. To generate market access and get the private sector involved in SF activities, KS found that SF plans must show economic sense and impact. KS encouraged recipients of its "good agricultural practices" training to organise themselves into cooperatives. This would make it easier for companies to buy from them than if they were acting as separate and individual sellers. Also, by organising themselves into a cooperative, the communities can increase efficiency, produce on a scale more desirable to buyers, and market directly to buyers a more sellable product by getting all cooperative members to meet recognised quality standards.

In Muara Medak, one of the SF villages, KS helped the community scale up their production of honey. They now harvest two types of honey. Sialang honey, which is harvested regularly from high up in the tree canopy instead of just harvesting when honeycombs are spotted and stingless bee honey which is sustainably farmed in hives. This has increased the volume they can sell making their production more suitable for companies looking for a large and consistent supply. On average, KS estimated a villager can harvest 100 kg of Sialang honey a month and 250 ml per Stingless beehive, fetching around IDR6 million, or double the national minimum wage. Such high returns can encourage villagers to invest in conserving and growing forest trees as the Sialang bee colonies thrive only in forested areas.

Aside from economic sense, impact is another factor that can contribute to the continuity of SF activities either by attracting private sector involvement or through extended government support such as funding for technical support like training, buying machinery and tools, seeds or plants. In Lubuk Bintialo, another SF village, the community developed a business producing and distributing seeds of species that can be used to restore degraded forests. Companies around Lubuk Bintialo's SF area have already indicated their willingness to purchase the seeds for rehabilitating degraded parts of their concessions, a requirement the government attaches to companies running concessions. In Muara Medak, the REPAIR (*Regu Peduli Air* or Indonesian Water Management Squad), that was involved in the community's fire suppression/ fighting team in 2019, has partnered with pulp and paper supplier PT. Rimba Hutani Mas to manage water levels and conduct fire monitoring in the area's peatlands. This partnership was forged after both fought side-by-side to put out fires that broke out in their neighbouring areas. In addition, Muara Medak's dedication to its peatland management work has been rewarded with a IDR 200 million boost from the Peatland Restoration Agency (BRG), a government body tasked with improving peatland care.

KS found that social forestry implementers need to be able to articulate their needs to a wide and extensive network to secure continued support for their activities. Not doing so could result in their activities slowing down or stalling, and implementers will see very little income for their efforts. So KS formed the Banyuasin District Green Development Working Group, which consists of SF implementers and other concerned district members, to lobby for financial support and expertise in carrying out green development activities.

The Group (which includes members from Karang Sari's SF scheme) has successfully lobbied the Banyuasin District Government to pledge IDR 1 billion in aid of ecotourism and forest education activities for developing the buffer zone of the Berbak Sembilang National Park. This is also an example where SF activities may be better partnered with public agencies, rather than profit-oriented entities, due to the sensitivity of conducting activities near conservation areas.

Conclusion

Through SF, Indonesia has set a mandate which allows communities to access and useselected natural resources in the land sustainably. This mandate can pave the way for ending conflicts over land as more and more people obtain secure and defined tenure. However, with enhanced land rights comes the risk of inappropriate forest conversion. SF prevents this, in theory, by requiring implementers to sustainably manage lands under their care.

Low community capacity (in terms of expertise and funding) to carry out sustainable land management and poor monitoring of SF activities can derail efforts to improve forest management and undermine SF's environmental goals. Government targets for SF, which currently focus on the number of hectares/permits distributed, should also include appropriate indicators for measuring implementation success.

The steps identified in this brief describe some of the ways of resolving a few of the legal, capacity, and coordination gaps that have arisen in SF implementation. They also point to indicators that can be used to measure implementation success such as which types of stakeholders need to participate in SF; what capacities are being developed and whether they are being improved upon; and if implementers are able to generate long-term support for their activities.

If such indicators form part of government targets, channelling more funds and manpower toward improving those elements can be justified. This will also provide a more comprehensive and accurate analysis of how much should be budgeted for SF schemes and what more needs to be done to improve forest management. Underspending on SF efforts could limit forest conservation activities and/or shift costs and responsibilities to SF implementers. Both will make SF unsustainable in the long term.



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What is KELOLA Sendang?

KS is a partnership of government, business, communities, and civil society aligned around common interests in conservation, supply chain sustainability, and sustainable economic development. The advantage of such a partnership, also known as a sustainable landscape management approach, is that it is focused at the political level, where land use decisions get made and enforced. It is also concerned with bringing together as many actors as possible rooted in or operating from a defined geographic area since any effort to meaningfully address sustainable land-use and climate change mitigation must first address the needs of local actors. By advancing careful land use planning of production and protection areas with geographically tailored interventions, the partnership can simultaneously address challenges like the conservation of endangered species, deforestation and rural poverty. The ultimate goal of this multi-stakeholder project is to create a government led blueprint for sustainable landscape management which can be upscaled and continued into the future, paving the way for the Government of South Sumatra to achieve its low emissions target and Green Growth Vision.

KS operates in the Sembilang-Dangku landscape of Musi Banyuasin and Banyuasin Districts in South Sumatra, an area that covers around 1.6 million hectares.

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