

CLIMATE SOLUTION:

Social Forestry Helps Adapt to Climate Change



Type of action

Social Forestry and Agroforestry

Groups and organizations involved

Forest frontier communities throughout Indonesia. This submission is from WARSI, an NGO focused on community conservation in Sumatra and Kalimantan.

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Location

The projects supported by WARSI are in Jambi Province, Sumatra, Indonesia, in villages surrounding Kerinci Seblat National Park.

MORE THAN A THIRD OF INDONESIAN VILLAGERS in forest-frontier areas— at least 38 million households—are highly dependent on the forest resources to support their livelihoods. About 10 million people in forest-frontier areas live under the official poverty line. At the same time, due to intense exploitation of natural resources by private forestry and plantation firms, deforestation rates in Indonesia have remained high.

Social forestry—where local communities hold the rights to manage the forest—is one of the Indonesian government’s strategies for poverty alleviation and improvements in food security. It is also increasing important for resolving forest conflicts while improving the ecological function of the forest. Indonesia has set up “social forestry” as a national priority program, where 12.7 million ha are to be allocated for community management under five different schemes (village forestry, community forestry, community timber plantations, co-management with private partners, and finally customary forests). The first four schemes noted here give access to local communities and the ability to manage lands for 35 years (a period that can be extended). Customary forests on the other hand gives access and control for indigenous groups to manage, and these lands are no longer considered as state forest, but rather as forests under communal ownership.

The realization of social forestry is still far from what has

been targeted. Until recently the government has legalized 2.6 million ha under community management. The most common challenge is the overlapping claims on land, and lack of clarity regarding village administrative areas.

Lubuk Beringin village in Jambi, Sumatera is a success story of social forestry in Indonesia. Communities’ legal rights were recognized in 2009; four other villages followed. Local communities work collaboratively to combat illegal logging and forest fires, by organizing participatory patrols. The communities have also agreed to make zonation of the village forest based on the topography of the forest. The area which is still forested and untouched are considered as a protected zone. No activity is allowed in that area except harvesting non-timber forest product (such as rattan and reeds for weaving—see photo) and ecosystem services. The forest areas that have been opened is benign restored with high economic-value trees, such as fruits like durian (see photo), cocoa, cardamom, ‘dragon blood’ fruit, rubber, etc. Agroforestry enable local commodity to diversify their sources of income instead of being dependent on only one commodity; and it is also good for the ecology of the forest. Since the implementation of management plan of the social forestry there is no deforestation occurred in that area. In adjacent areas, WARSI has identified improvements in forest cover when community area rights are recognized.



Impacts of this action on...

Strengthening the local wisdom for forest conservation

Social forestry ensures the legality of local community actions to manage the forest, and to strengthen the use of local wisdom and indigenous management techniques. Adoption of a "micro spatial plan" based on the topography of the area actually became a means for passing traditional from one generation to the next. Steep-sloping areas are protected as water resources and to prevent natural disaster, while lowlands are used for paddy fields, small scale plantations, and flat areas for community settlement. Bamboo is planted near the banks of the river, which helps provide fish habitat and avoids erosion. Anyone who ignores or violates management rules will come under social sanction, that is even worse than sanction from the formal regulations!

Improving community welfare

Social forestry schemes have also helped grow productive businesses from the bottom up as alternative income generation: harvesting non-timber forest products, and creating eco-tourism opportunities. Sungai Buluah village forest in West Sumatera is quite successful attract tourists to enjoy the beauty of the nature.

Adapting to Climate Change

Climate change impacts local communities who live around the forest. Land right entitlements allow them to manage their environment in order to adapt to climate change, and agroforestry is one of the adaptation strategies. Because the unpredictable climate affects agriculture production, agroforestry enables local community to not rely on one product. People in Simancung village in West Sumatera have adapted by planting paddy fields all at once. It is very effective in combating rice pests because all of the people keep their eyes on the rice field together. In Sinar Wajo, villagers are re-wetting peatlands, by blocking drainage canals (see photo). They lived through the bad experience of fires and devastated forest in 2015. The community has also restored the peatland with endemic tree species adapted to peatlands.

This action is transformational because...

Indonesia has the third largest forest area in the world (120.6 million ha, equal to 63% of Indonesia's total land area). With that big area, the government of Indonesia has limited capacity to manage and control the forest. Empowering community with legal access to manage the forest and support them with technical and support program enables them to manage the forest sustainably. Perhaps most important is the reduction in the risk of 'land-grabbing', and the violence that has come with takeovers of areas claimed by communities.



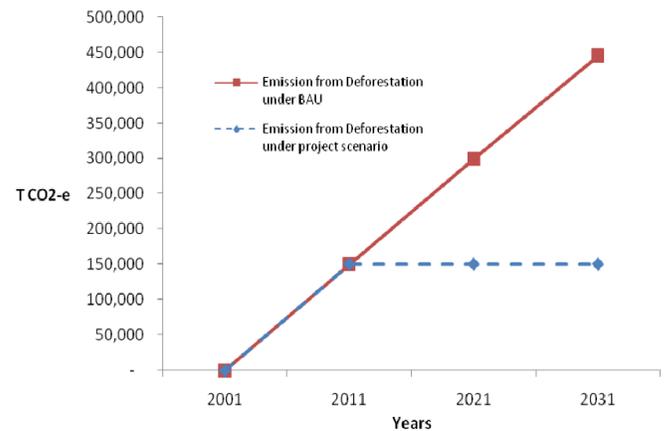
This action could be scaled up through...

The extension of national REDD+ mechanisms to include social forestry!

Social forestry is national strategy, so it needs support not only in the forestry department but also from other ministries and departments.

Social forestry must be accompanied by empowerment programs, including rights education. Local communities still face limitations in accessing information, capital, technology, and training. We hope that the success story of social forestry in parts of Jambi Province can be duplicated in other Indonesian provinces.

The graph shows the condition of forest area under the social forestry scheme versus 'business as usual'. Social forestry has high potential to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. This is only example on small part of the area, the number is even bigger when the target of social forestry 12.7 million ha has been achieved.



The CLARA network includes climate justice advocates, faith groups, conservation groups, land-rights campaigners, agroecologists, and representative of peoples movements around the globe. Our commitment to social justice brought us into the climate debate and informs our approaches to climate solutions. For more information about CLARA, visit climatelandambitionrightsalliance.org.

CLARA
Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance

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