World Agroforestry Centre

Community-Based Forest Management: who is benefiting?

Community-based forest management, coffee and migration patterns in Ciamis Regency, West Java, Indonesia

photo: Sébastien de Royer

These findings are from a study conducted by the World Agroforestry Centre in partnership with Balai Penelitian Teknologi Agroforestry (Agroforestry Technology Research Centre), Government of Indonesia.

Highlights	Key findings
• Migration and knowledge-transfer in relation to coffee cultivation • Transfer of use-rights over state-owned land for coffee production • Limiting factors to participation in the Community-based Forest Management (Pengelolaan Hutan Bersama Masyarakat/PHBM) program • Winners and losers in community-based forest management	• Not all rural community members are enjoying the benefits of collaborative forest management. Those involved in PHBM are the wealthiest community members, returned migrants who have access to knowledge and capital and who possess strong ties and networks. They have acquired entrepreneurial skills. • The poorest famers are not able to enjoy the benefits of the program owing to a lack of initial capital and knowledge to engage in coffee production at an early stage. • Many farmers lease their use-rights to wealthier community members. • The reasons behind the transfer of management rights are a combination of capital limitation, lack of knowledge of coffee cultivation and lack of interest from poor farmers, who prefer to work in other sectors.

Research location

Mount Sawal is located in Ciamis Regency, West Java Province, with an average elevation of 1291 masl. Our research focused on two villages—Kertamandala and Purwaraja—in the sub-districts of Panjalu and Rajadesa. The land was mainly cultivated as community forests, tree-based dryland agricultural systems, home gardens and paddy fields. Little natural vegetation remained. The sloping areas were designated as 'protection forest', controlled by the local forestry agency, and 'production forest', managed by the state-owned company, Perum Perhutani. Most of the farmers owned small plots of land that were not productive or large enough from which to make an income and were thus mainly practising subsistence farming. Consequently, many villagers sought other sources of income and were driven to migrate to other areas.

Criteria for participation in the Pengelolaan Hutan Bersama Masyarakat program

More than two-thirds of Java's forests are managed by the state-owned company, Perum Perhutani (Perhutani). Poor rural communities surrounding forests have limited access to this land. In 2001, Perhutani developed a joint forest-management system with such communities, called Pengelolaan Hutan Bersama Masyarakat (PHBM). PHBM was an advance on Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa Hutan, or PMDH (Forest Village Community Development program initiated by Perum Perhutani in 1992). PHBM was intended to guide forest-resource management in a way that improved a community's livelihoods, their quality of life and economic and social capacities. It was also supposed to increase the quality of a forest's resources, productivity and security and to be an adjustable form of forest-resource management that suited the social dynamics of local communities surrounding a forest.

In 2008, Perhutani approached villagers surrounding Mt Sawal to become involved in a PHBM program. The aim of the program was to convert to coffee cultivation more than 400 ha of degraded, yet fertile, forest land that was dominated by pine trees. The right-of-use agreement was for 35 years, granted to individual farmers ('hak guna').

In the past, the forest suffered from encroachment and illegal logging. Members of the program were required to assist with forest management and not to destroy, tamper or steal trees or seedlings on Perhutani land. They were required to participate in rehabilitating river banks with seedlings provided by Perhutani. Pine trees were also being replanted near the coffee plantations. Targeted villages for this program were initially the ones located closest to the area, such as Kertamandala. However, few farmers originating from this village are nowadays involved in, or benefiting from, the joint work in the uplands. Instead, the land allocated by Perhutani is being cultivated mainly by villagers from the neighbouring district, Rajadesa, located some 17 km away.

Migration patterns, capital and knowledge transfer

During the early phase of the program, villages in the neighbouring district of Rajadesa, such as Purwaraja, experienced a substantial return of migrants who had been working as coffee growers in Lampung Province on the island of Sumatra. During the 1970s and the 1980s, many people from Rajadesa migrated to Lampung motivated by the lack of jobs and scarcity of land. However, in the early 2000s many of these migrants returned to their village of origin.

The reasons for return that were mentioned during our field survey related to a productivity decline in Lampung and the distance from their original village. Returned migrants had accumulated financial capital, knowledge and skills about coffee cultivation and came back to invest in their village of origin. Some people sold their land in Lampung while others still owned land but left it under the management of someone else and received an annual share of 50% from production. Some were still seasonally migrating to Lampung, especially for the harvest.

When people returned to their villages in Rajadesa they bought land, built houses and joined the PHBM program. From our field surveys, we found that the majority of farmers involved in the PHBM program in Panjalu used to be engaged, or were still, in Lampung. Most of the farmers interviewed had made their money in Lampung while others were involved in businesses outside their village.

Transfer or 'renting ' of user-rights

The majority of the farmers interviewed in Purwaraja who were active in the PHBM scheme were renting their use-rights from villagers in Panjalu, including Kertamandala. In the early stage of the program, many of the rights were transferred from villagers in Panjalu to wealthier returned migrants in Rajadesa. Around 60% of the farmers interviewed in Purwaraja and engaged in the program admitted to leasing their use-rights from somebody else in one of the villages in Panjalu. They usually paid the right-holder a certain amount of money once they had agreed upon the terms of the contract. The money received was perceived as compensation for what had already been invested by the previous user in the coffee system. Although the PHBM rules do not allow the transfer of use-rights, control is weak and Perhutani prefers to have the land under coffee rather than leaving it unexploited and degraded.

Limiting factors to participation in the program

What became a success in one village has appeared to be a failure in the other. The program that initially was designed to involve poor villagers from Panjalu has ended benefiting returned skilled coffee farmers from Rajadesa who had accumulated capital and knowledge. The few farmers from Kertamandala who joined the program had strong ties with returned migrants in Rajadesa who introduced them to coffee-growing techniques. They also had access to capital and were not involved in labouring but rather were already running businesses and had acquired entrepreneurial skills.

There were several restricting factors for villagers in Kertamandala to become involved in the scheme.

- **Access to capital**

  Coffee can only be harvested after a minimum of three years, during which the land needs to be maintained, which requires investment. To clear, weed, maintain, plant and fertilize 1 ha of upland coffee-growing land cost approximately IDR 5 million (± USD 427) a year.

  The interval between initial investment and the first harvest was considered too long and people in Kertamandala were more interested in gaining regular wages.

  The main reason for people in Panjalu to lease their use-rights also related to their lack of financial capital to maintain productivity and the cash they received from selling the right.

- **Lack of knowledge**

  The lack of knowledge about coffee-growing practices also contributed to the low motivation to join the program. Coffee was not part of their traditional agricultural practice. Farmers in Kertamandala did not trust this newly imported cash crop. They preferred to plant vegetables or fast-growing timber or bamboo, which brought more regular revenue. However, these practices go against Perhutani's rules that require permanent cultivation that reduces erosion and protects the water catchment.

- **Time restriction**

  Another restricting factor was the time needed to clear land and maintain it. Since many villagers were involved in off-farm activities they often had no time to focus on preparing land for coffee.

- **Gender biased 'socialization'**

  Another factor that contributed to the poor uptake of the program in Kertamandala was that at the time of 'socialization', or promotion, in 2008, many men were not in the village but working for wages in cities. The women who stayed in the villages were neither informed of the program nor involved in initial discussions. The majority of villagers from Kertamandala interviewed also felt that there was not enough information during the initial socialization, especially training in coffee-growing techniques.

- **Networks and access to information**

  What makes access easier are strong ties within farmers' groups. When land is made available by Perhutani, those who receive the information first are usually the farmers groups' leaders who then spread the information to their members. It remains a closed circle where information about land availability is not disseminated to everyone. If a member of a farmers' group wants to exploit a new piece of land he can count on the other members who will support him in clearing the land. During field research we realized that in some hamlets in Purwaraja almost everyone was involved in the scheme while in some others people barely knew about it and were not engaged because they were not connected to any farmers' group.

Coffee: a valuable crop for everyone?

Witnessing the success of productive coffee, many farmers had started to convert their private timber-based systems into small coffee units. Those who hadn't migrated to Lampung and returned had learned from those who had.

The relative success of the PHBM experience had generated some jealousies and those who initially refused to participate in the program were regretting their early choice and had started to invest in coffee on their private land since Perhutani's land was no longer available.

Coffee was seen by those growing it as a valuable crop, especially in comparison to traditional timber-based systems. Prices for coffee over the last few years had been stable (around IDR 20 000/kg or around USD 1.70/kg) and generated annual income. Timber was often not perceived as attractive enough owing to the time required to reach maturity for harvest. However, for those who were not involved and reluctant to do so, coffee was not seen as attractive enough because it could only be harvested once a year and they were looking for more frequent income. Coffee with its shorter investment-return horizon compared to timber was still perceived as too long-term an investment for those who lacked assets and depended on return to labour.

Who was really benefiting from the program?

Besides enhanced forest productivity, Perhutani also benefited from the coffee harvest through financial revenues. Farmers were required to return a share of 25% of their annual harvest. Twenty percent (20%) was meant to return to Perhutani while the other 5% was supposed to be distributed among farmers' groups and village administrations.

However, interviews revealed that the official benefit-sharing mechanism was not strictly followed and Perhutani wasn't monitoring it. People often complained that they needed to pay a range of fees along the way, including to extra-village institutions and individuals.

Furthermore, the interviewees also complained that the amount they had to pay to Perhutani was too high and was profiting others, not the farmers themselves. From the 75% of production income that the farmers kept, they needed to reinvest at least 50% to maintain the system, including buying fertilizers. As a result, they were not declaring the full amount of their yields even though they usually agreed that it was appropriate that they paid rent for the land.

While the farmers were often asked to join meetings organized by Perhutani, the discussions were usually only related to benefit-sharing and bookkeeping issues and how to manage the pine trees. The mature trees were the property of Perhutani and could only be harvested by the company. Any rule-breaking was punishable by a fine.

The biggest losers were the villagers of Kertamandala who had not engaged from the beginning or who had sold their use-rights. According to them, they were not profiting at all from the program. At best, they sometimes worked during harvests as hired labourers for farmers in Rajadesa.

Mere access to state land is not enough to ensure benefits, as this case study shows. Access to financial and social capital, as well as good germplasm and entrepreneurial skills, have been shown to be necessary for farmers to really benefit from this scheme. The benefit-sharing arrangement has provided less space for further investment in coffee production. Multiple survival and livelihoods' strategies have been adopted by many local households with continuing links to Lampung. Perhutani would need to ensure that all intended beneficiaries are familiar with the scheme, its management and benefit-sharing mechanism and provide adequate access to capital, quality seedlings, and training in marketing and entrepreneurial skills. This would reduce the risks of engagement and increase benefits from the scheme, especially if poor households are the target group. Greater interaction and familiarization of the scheme to heads of households, both female and male, especially in the context of high out-migration, would assist in the proper uptake of the scheme.

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Correct citation

De Royer S, Pradhan U, Fauziyah E, Sulistyati T. 2014. *Community-based Forest Management: who is benefiting? Community-based forest management, coffee and migration patterns in Ciamis Regency, West Java, Indonesia*. Brief 44. Bogor, Indonesia: World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) Southeast Asia Regional Program.

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Layout: Sadewa