

Conditional Land Tenure: A Pathway to Healthy Landscapes and Enhance Livelihoods

“Today is one of most important days in my life. I just received my community forestry permit. It is not easy and the process takes more than two years, but with assistance from RUPES Sumberjaya team, finally I got permission to stay on the land I have been farming” says Mr. Darmadi, head of farmer group Wana Makmur. In July 2006, Mr. Darmadi joined 500 other farmers, plus many prominent local and national government officials, as Erwin Nizar the head of Indonesia’s West Lampung District awarded the forestry permits to the farmers. The permits granted land rights to the farmers for a 5-year trial period, with possible extensions to beyond 25 years.

The permits represent a major success for these farmers who no longer risk eviction, but the impact of the permits could have much more far reaching effects.



Farmer Group Leader receives his
Community Forestry permit

Between 1991 and 1996 many of the farmers saw their livelihoods destroyed as government troops forcibly evicted them from their fields and burned their coffee just as it ripened for harvest. But now, by awarding these permits, the Indonesian Government officially acknowledges that properly practiced agroforestry can provide the same water conservation benefits as planting conventional forests. The permits guarantee these proper practices by giving the farmers conditional land tenure: if they contribute to watershed health by using good coffee management practices and protect remaining areas of natural forest, they will keep the right use the land for their livelihoods.



With these recent awards, Community forestry permits now cover 70% of Sumberjaya’s protection forest, involve nearly 6,400 farmers and account for 13,000 ha.

Head of West Lampung
District Awarded HKM
Permits

RUPES :
The Program for Developing Mechanisms for Rewarding the Upland Poor in Asia for Environmental Services They Provided is Supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

RUPES Goal:
To enhance the livelihoods and reduce poverty of the upland poor while supporting environmental conservation on biodiversity protection, watershed management, carbon sequestration and landscape beauty at local and global levels.

Coffee agroforestry can work like natural forests

Sumberjaya which means 'source of wealth,' has ironically become emblematic for forest land conflicts. Violence has flared again and again as the government has removed poor, squatter families from government owned "protection forests" with the idea that the evictions will protect watersheds.



Coffee agroforestry in state forest land

Getting the protection of watershed functions right in Sumberjaya may not only solve a local problem, but can set a fine example for approaches that could affect millions of forest squatters in government-owned forests throughout the tropics.

In fact, scientific research suggests that blaming coffee gardens for erosion and degradation of watershed functions results from an incomplete understanding of the underlying issues.

Research by RUPES shows that multistrata coffee farms provide a livelihood to people with few other options and also control erosion similarly to natural forest. The multistrata system provides a complex canopy that protects the soil surface from heavy raindrops that cause erosion. The system creates tree litter on the garden floor that also helps weaken the erosive force of water.

Evicting (PUPES Punishing Upland People for Environmental Services) the coffee farmers does not improve watershed functions, but does increase poverty among these squatter families.

RUPES Project

RUPES has worked in Sumberjaya since 2004. RUPES goal is to explore and develop ways to preserve ecological services by rewarding the upland people who provide them. In Sumberjaya, RUPES has focused on watershed functions. ICRAF leads the project in collaboration with local government officers, local NGO, and farmers groups.



RUPES Activities:

- Policy dialogues and negotiations
- Empowering farmers groups
- Technical assistances
- Capacity building
- Communication strategy
- Supported by technical research from others projects

After working for almost 3 years, RUPES has found two reward mechanisms that can realistically be implemented in Sumberjaya: 1) granting conditional land tenure for forest land stewardship and 2) paying farmers as a reward for reducing sediments. This brief explores granting conditional land tenure for forest land stewardship.



Watershed function survey



Farmers' nursery

Community Forestry: Indonesia's Experience with Community Forestry Permits

In places where the government owns major forest tracts, community forestry permits based on conditional land use tenure can offer a path to both improved livelihoods and protection of forest services. This approach works for both production forests and protection forests recovering from deforestation. RUPES learned that the key to using these permits to achieve real watershed function protection lies in strengthening the capacity of both farmer groups and government institutions.



Remaining Natural Forest Areas

In Indonesia, forestry law combined with a decree from the Ministry of Forestry has authorized community forestry permits since 2000. However, in 2004 when RUPES first started work in Sumberjaya, only 5 farmer groups had been awarded such permits and these for only 5 years. Covering only 7% of the protection forest, the area with conditional land use permits was too small to bring measurable improvements to watershed functions.

The RUPES project started working in Sumberjaya in 2004 with 18 farmer groups of about 40 farmers each in their quest obtain community forestry permits. ICRAF ensured that all required partners had a full voice, creating essential goodwill among change agents in local and national governments as well as assisting the farmer groups. ICRAF research shows that without a trusted partner, local people have great difficulty in forming relationships with government essential for dialogue that creates needed policy change.

On the technical side, ICRAF analyses on river flows and land use cover change kept the technical experts and powerful interests from disregarding farmer perspectives. Also, RUPES empowered farmers groups and local collaborators through participatory mapping, developing working plans and nursery techniques,

strengthening farmer groups and communicating the emerging reward mechanisms to members of farmers groups.

At the July 2006 award ceremony, all 18 farmer groups received community forestry permits. This increased the area covered by them from 1,367 ha to 11,633 ha. Nearly 6,400 farmers now have permits.

With 70% of the protection forest now covered by conditional land use permits, Sumberjaya should start to see measurable improvements in watershed functions. While verification of these improvements awaits future measurement, conditional forestry permits have already demonstrated improvements for the farmers.

Recently, RUPES completed a study of the impact in Sumberjaya of land tenure with researchers from Michigan State University and the International Food Policy Research Institute. The study found that the community forestry permits

- increased land tenure security,
- doubled the local land value,
- reduced corruption,
- increased income by about 30%, mostly due to reduction of bribes,
- increased equity, relative to the in-village resources farmers have,
- promoted tree planting/agroforestry,
- promoted soil and water conservation, and
- gave farmers good reasons to protect remaining natural forest



Coffee agroforestry, Sediment pits, Honeybee, Mature Coffee, Coffee Processing, Coffee Harvesting

Future Challenges and Opportunities

Conditional land tenure is working in Sumberjaya to both improve livelihoods and provide watershed functions because the head of the district and the head of the Forestry Office for Lampung Barat strongly support this approach. Also, a strong research underpinning showing that multi-strata coffee provides watershed functions justifies making land use tenure conditional on farmers providing this kind of management. However, sites exist throughout Asia where exclusion of local people from forest livelihoods condemns them to poverty. RUPES project partners are eager to find stronger conditional mechanisms that ties land tenure not just to activities, but to actual success in achieving environmental outcomes. With such mechanisms, RUPES has the opportunity to convince government officials in other areas to embrace conditional land tenure and give a chance for improved livelihoods to millions of squatter families.



Healthy Landscape for Future Generation



Study Site

Sumberjaya is a sub-district in the Bukit Barisan mountain range. These mountains span the west coast of Sumatra and form the upper watersheds of all major rivers on the island. The 55,000 ha sub-district almost coincides with the Way Besay upper watershed at between 720 and 1900 m. The population was about 87,350 people in 2004, with a density of about 161 people/km². About 40% of the sub-district is classified as "protection forest" and about 10% as National Park. Nevertheless, coffee gardens, also known as multi-strata coffee, now cover about 70% of the total area.

The Way Besay watershed feeds the Tulang Bawang River (one of Lampung Province's three major rivers, along with the Way Sekampung and Way Seputih). The Way Besay also supplies a hydroelectric run-off dam owned by PLTA Way Besay. Electricity generation started in 2001 with a maximum capacity of 90 MW. In 2002 a landslide near the turbines interrupted service. The landslide was linked to a poorly designed and built road, but was generally blamed on 'deforestation'.



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