

Protecting Forest, Empowering Communities: Development of Community Forestry Policy in Decentralizing Indonesia

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Forest in Indonesia has been seriously depleted, and social conflicts over the forest resources have occurred in many places because of the state-based centralized policies that neglected the role of local people living in and around “forest area.” Community forestry policy introduced by the central government in 1998 is a breakthrough to such a situation. The policy clearly stipulates that local people should be a principle actor in forest management. In order to make local people as a capable and responsible actor in this policy implementation, it is necessary for government officials concerned to facilitate local people to establish their own rules and strategies for managing forest in accordance with social context and ecological settings.

This presentation takes the case of Sumber Agung Village, Lampung Province, Sumatra, a pioneering village that obtained five-year permission of community forestry in 1998, which recognized the villagers’ use of the forest area. The research was conducted in order to examine the impacts of policy implementation by focusing on the aspects of community empowerment and forest protection. The case of Sumber Agung Village shows that both the development of effective local institutions and the legal recognition of their access to the forest are inevitable for realizing successful and sustainable community-based forest management.