Governance Brief

Blessing or Misfortune?

Locals, Transmigrants and Collective Action

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'For us transmigration can be a hope. We want to progress too. But it must be organized properly; we don't want it to be like the old transmigration, with land bought and sold by people then left neglected.' Datuk Rasyid, Customary Leader, Pedukuh Hamlet

Background

Indonesia's transmigration programme can, on the one hand, provide local communities with opportunities for change and the state with economic benefits. It is seen as a means of achieving prosperity, equitable distribution of regional development and cohesion for national unity. On the other hand, however, its impacts in reality have been reduced private and communal land ownership, conflict between local people and transmigrants, and increased forest degradation due to large-scale clearance of land¹. The reasons most transmigration programmes fail include: First, they are not supported by adequate infrastructure, strong institutions and necessary competencies, sufficient attention to local communities' aspirations or thorough planning. The sites are often located on marginal lands. They often have a relatively low level of economic, social and environmental conditions (see DIY Provincial Government 2006; Anharudin et al. 2006). Second, problems are exacerbated by a great deal of corruption of various types and at various levels.

One rarely articulated issue relating to the transmigration programme is the question of ownership and management of land and natural resources. For local communities, lands and natural resources are not merely assets but the bases for securing economic, social and political power (Yando and Fauzi 2000). Imbalance in access to land greatly affects community characteristics and reflects relationship dynamics within communities. Local elites began to use and control a larger share of local resources, resulting in increased uncertainties about local rights in land and natural resources, and about sustainable production systems that constitute local livelihood sources.

This brief describes how land management and ownership systems are changing as a result of the transmigration programme. It shows how facilitated communities can develop their perceptions through social learning and adapt their local institutional capacity to defend their access to land. The brief draws results and lessons from research conducted in two villages, Baru Pelepat in Pelepat Subdistrict and Sungai Telang in Bathin Tiga Ulu Subdistrict, both in Bungo District, Jambi Province, Sumatra. The villages are located on the upper reaches of the Batang Pelepat and Batang Bungo Rivers; they border production and protection forests and are part of the buffer zone of Kerinci Seblat National Park (KSNP). Making use of unstructured interviews, focus group discussions and observations, the research facilitators worked with *Kelompok Kalbu* groups (groups whose membership is based on lineage) in the first village and *Kelompok Tani* groups (farmer groups) in the second village. They examined three aspects of village society: first, individuals as parts of a village community directly involved in land management; second,

Transmigration site at Bathin Tiga Ulu Subdistrict

villagers as communities living in the same area – looking at community collective response to changes, particularly those related to land; and third, the villages as part of a wider area – relations with surrounding villages and higher levels of government (subdistrict, district, central).

Baru Pelepat, an old and vulnerable village

Baru Pelepat, located approximately 256 km from the provincial town of Jambi, has an area of 7,265 ha and a population of 624 living in 226 households³ distributed throughout its four hamlets. The village was formally established in 1989 though people had lived there for decades. Most of the original inhabitants of Baru Pelepat are descendents of Minang people, who are Islamic and adhere to a matrilineal system. In 1997–1998 the village's ethnic composition changed when a transmigration programme settled 150 families there.

There were two types of transmigrants in this village. The first were those who came from nearby villages such as Sungai Beringin and Rantau Kelayang because these villages were affected by a coal mining project. Like the original villagers they were accustomed to swidden farming and planting rubber. The second were Sundanese and Javanese immigrants from Java. Some were second and third-generation transmigrants from earlier programmes in locations such as Margoyoso, Koamang Kuning and Rimbo Bujang in Tebo District. As is the norm with the transmigration programme, the transmigrants received a house and a 0.25-ha

house lot, 0.75 ha of land for cultivating annual crops and 1 ha of land for planting perennial crops such as rubber.

The villagers' main activities are farming⁴ and harvesting forest products. The villagers' livelihood sources are logging, gathering rattan (*manau*) and agarwood, and hunting. This shows the community's high level of forest dependence. In addition to its economic value, the forest provides the villagers with various species of medicinal plants and foods. Most of the forest is secondary, as part of the village is in a production forest that has been exploited by timber concessions⁵.

KSNP Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP) Activity Report for Year 2000 showed that forests (in an area of 5,970 ha) are the main land cover in Baru Pelepat. The remainder of the village lands comprised abandoned scrubland (562 ha), community rubber plantations (465 ha), mixed gardens (88 ha), cinnamon bark cultivation (14 ha), logging areas (21 ha), dry rice fields (78 ha), cemeteries (2 ha) and settlements (65 ha). The villagers are currently involved in managing a 780-ha area of customary forest.

There are several tenure systems in the village, which sometimes run in parallel, but not uncommonly overlap. Traditionally, three forms of land and forest control and utilization are (Indriatmoko 2003):

1. *Rimbo* was primary forest that remained intact and had never been subject to exploitation, farming or silvicultural treatment. Prior to regional autonomy, when natural forest concessions (HPHs) were still operating, local people's access to *rimbo* was restricted. Once regional autonomy was introduced and HPHs ceased their operations, it became easier for the villagers and others to access *rimbo*. *Rimbo* can therefore be considered an open-access resource.
2. *Sesap* is forestland that has been cleared for swidden farming and been left for a certain period of time. *Sesap* is locally considered to be private property and is passed down as inherited wealth.
3. *Cacau* is *sesap* that has been cleared and left for a very long time with unclear ownership, finally becoming common property belonging to the village. All community members may use this land without time limitations on the condition that they pay tithes and do not plant tree crops. Although its ownership status is unclear, *cacau* is usually very fertile because of its proximity to the river. Most of this land is used by villagers to plant dryland rice crops.

Changes accelerated in the middle of the 1970s when the HPH companies entered the area. A number of companies operated around the village without involving the local people. The presence of the HPHs and the large-scale clearance of the forest had a huge negative impact on community life.

The national standardization of villages with the enactment of Law No. 5/1979 on Village Governance had a further impact on the people of Baru Pelepat: customary rules and social norms became degraded. The acknowledgement of formal regulations in governing village life brought an end to the village's former autonomy. Customary figures came under the influence of the state and tended to care less about their community⁶.

The next change came with the start of the transmigration project in Baru Pelepat in 1997 and 1998. Transmigration participants comprised local villagers who had relinquished their land for transmigration sites, people from surrounding villages affected by coal mining projects and immigrants from Java. At the time, a certification system was employed, with certificates issued through the transmigration office by the National Land Agency (BPN) for land owned by transmigration programme participants.

According to the BPN, there were two types of land-use status in Baru Pelepat: production forest (HP) controlled by HPH concession holders and areas for other uses (APL), usually used for farming and settlements. Unfortunately, the boundaries between these two areas were unclear to the villagers and other stakeholders. The government, particularly the local forestry office, did not explain the two forms of land use, and still does not consider the boundary issue important as long as farming fields do not encroach upon the production forest.

Sungai Telang, on the edge of the Kerinci Seblat National Park

Sungai Telang with an area of 12,000 ha officially became a village in 1982, though it had been inhabited for decades. Land use in Sungai Telang consists of rice paddies covering 104 ha, settlements on 69 ha, crops/swidden fields on 239 ha, plantations on 2,620 ha, 7,000 ha of production forest, 1,700 ha of protection forest, Kerinci Seblat National Park covering 316 ha, grassland on 25 ha, ponds on 0.25 ha, rivers on 7 ha and roads on 11 ha⁷. The transmigration programme began in 2004,

Transmigration programme results in massive transfers of land ownership

and the village now has two transmigration areas. Data from 2005 showed the village population to be 1,551, made up of indigenous people and newcomers living in 414 households. The indigenous people live in the hamlets, with the newcomers living in the transmigration areas. The villagers' main sources of income are farming, with wetland and dryland rice as the main crops, and rubber. They also cultivate horticultural crops and plant fruit trees.

A *gotong royong* (cooperative exchange labour) lifestyle colours village life in Sungai Telang. For example, villagers work the rice fields and gardens belonging to the traditional midwife and the Madrasah Ibtidayah Swasta (religious) teacher without asking to be paid. *Gotong royong* also plays a part when villagers build houses: others feel ashamed if they do not take part.

Sungai Telang villagers' land ownership patterns take two forms: communal and private. Old forest land, including communal land, may be utilized freely by any member of the community as long as he/she has permission from the village customary leaders. Private land ownership relates to villagers' control over land they work in the form of rice paddies, swidden fields or gardens.

The villagers have many ways of obtaining this land: by clearing old secondary or primary forest, by buying it, inheriting it from parents or receiving it as a gift from relatives. The system recognizes two types of inheritance: *harta berat* – in the form of wet land such as rice fields, houses and their contents – is passed down to female heirs; *harta ringan* – in the form of dry land, gardens, *sesap*, floodplain and livestock – is passed down to male heirs.

Misfortune begins

An unrealized dream – lessons from the Pelepat local transmigration programme

Before 1997, on a number of occasions the villagers of Baru Pelepat had submitted requests to Bungo District Government to make their village a transmigration programme destination. Their desire was triggered by the poverty they were experiencing and the isolation of the village from the district capital⁸. They thought that the facilities that accompany a transmigration programme could improve their standard of living.

Their suggestion was rejected and only at the end of 1993, at the time of the third request, was there a response from the Bungo-Tebo District Head, when he appointed a team to conduct a location feasibility study. The feasibility study finally took place in 1997, concurrent with a plan to develop coal mining in the neighbouring village of Sungai Beringin; it was finally agreed that a transmigration programme be implemented in Baru Pelepat.

The transmigration programme was described as local transmigration or a *translok* programme because its participants comprised local villagers who had provided land and villagers from Sungai Beringin evicted as a result of the coal mining operations as well as participants from outside the two villages. The *translok* programme became a part of the transmigration programme that had begun in Jambi in 1980 as an effort to encourage local development through agriculture (food crops and annual crops such as corn, cassava etc.) and plantation (timber, rubber and oil palm) programmes. As it was also funded by the P4HDR (*Pelaksanaan Program Pemukiman Perambah Hutan melalui Dana Reboisasi*) settlement programme for forest dwellers through the reforestation fund, the *translok* programme was also intended to reduce what the government considered forest encroachment by the local communities' shifting cultivation.

Unfortunately this objective was not achieved: numerous problems arose, some of which remain unresolved. The failure of the programme stemmed from the fact that *Lahan Usaha* (LU) I and II agricultural land was not provided to support community livelihoods. The Manpower and Transmigration Office (*Disnakertrans*) did not issue land certificates. Even though *Disnakertrans* made an effort to provide rubber saplings, the LU land was neglected as insufficient agricultural training was given, the land was some distance from the village thereby making it difficult for villagers to tend it, poor quality saplings of unclear origin

were provided, and the saplings were attacked by forest pigs.

With the arrival of transmigration, villagers were introduced to a new form of land ownership involving certification and state recognition. Every transmigrant household received 0.25 ha of land for a house and garden, 0.66 ha of LU I for planting rice and other annual crops, and 1 ha of LU II for planting tree crops such as rubber or oil palm. Despite having ownership and management rights over about 2 ha of land, the transmigrants only fully utilized the land for home and garden lots.

The programme did not run smoothly, with problems relating to access and land status. The distance between the LU I and LU II land and the settlements made it difficult for transmigrants, who had to cross the river to reach their land. Unclear land issues led to land ownership disputes between the villagers and the district *Disnakertrans*. Most of the LU I and LU II land was located on privately-owned and traditionally-recognized *sesap* land. The government's solution was to grant half of the 150 houses to the indigenous community whose land had been used for the LU I and LU II land. This solution, however, was far from satisfactory, resulting in some transmigrants selling their homes and land, and some others simply leaving when a living allowance (*jadup*) granted by *Disnakertrans* came to an end. Those who stayed, the majority of whom came from Java, tried to utilize the house lots by planting annual crops and tree crops, and some of them worked on the rubber gardens belonging to the indigenous people.

Those with sufficient capital could buy land from the indigenous people and convert it to farm land. The village's complex matrilineal land ownership system meant they had to be careful when buying land. It was not uncommon for a buyer to be faced with problems when the land they bought was not, in fact, owned by one person but linked to a system of inheritance. For this reason land transactions usually require the knowledge of local village *ninik mamak* leaders.

Those without money could clear fields by borrowing land from the indigenous people. This process was simplified for people who had close and special relationships with the indigenous people and, not infrequently, they married locals to facilitate access to the village's natural resources.

Another way of acquiring land is by clearing *rimbo* for shifting cultivation⁹ as the land eventually becomes the property of the person who clears the area. Because the area of available land was shrinking, transmigrants cleared *rimbo* located

relatively far from the settlements. One Javanese transmigrant said that after three years in the transmigration programme his gardens were neglected. Subsequently, he submitted a request to the local *ninik mamak* to clear *rimbo*; the request was approved and he cleared the *rimbo* in accordance with customary rules.

To date, the use and management of land in Baru Pelepat has been based on customary rules that govern the clearing of swidden fields, inheritance systems and the bestowing, buying and selling of land. There are no rules limiting area of land ownership. In one interview, a villager acknowledged owning more than 50 ha of land that he had either inherited or secured by clearing the forest. It is important to remember that 15-40 hectares per family are probably required to maintain environmental quality and a minimal subsistence lifestyle (Colfer with Dudley 1993). The tendency to clear larger areas of land is also made possible by customs such as *penghulu* or *muko humo* rules, which state that a person clearing the *rimbo* has the right to clear more land next to the land he has already cleared.

The transmigration programme has reduced the availability of land; the practice of buying and selling transmigration land is causing increased uncertainty over access to community land. Transmigrants from outside the village and the villagers themselves are trading in transmigration land, although the practice is banned. Hidrianto (2004) suggests that some transmigration land has changed hands as often as three times.

'An unending issue' – lessons from the Sungai Telang I transmigration programme

Once the transmigration programme was introduced in Sungai Telang in 2004, the villagers agreed to release areas belonging to them. They were attracted by the reported success of transmigration programmes based on oil palm gardens in other parts of Bungo District. At the time, the villagers released an area of 1,041 ha of land for settlements as well as LU I and LU II agricultural land to support 275 households, 138 of which would be indigenous people and 137 Javanese immigrants.

A village-level team was formed by the village head to facilitate programme implementation and to liaise between the community and the government. This team, called the *Tim Kecil*, was comprised of three people: a chair, a treasurer and a secretary, with the village head himself acting as *patron*. The team was tasked with organizing

Communicating local people's aspirations and building shared concerns

all administrative requirements, surveying land ownership and determining participants. It was also involved in land release.

A village consultation decided which villagers' land would become the location for the Sungai Telang I transmigration programme. The land included *sesap*, rubber gardens and floodplain and would not be subject to compensation because the community would receive oil palms in return. The team's survey revealed that the land designated for the transmigration site belonged to 118 households. These families surrendered their land, with areas varying between 2 and 6 ha per household.

Unfortunately, of the 138 local families allotted land for households, only 118 actually received it. One community leader said that 20 households were villagers from outside Sungai Telang, and suggested that under-the-table transactions had taken place between the participants, the team and the village government. Ironically, some villagers who had already paid registration fees did not become participants in the transmigration programme, and even lost their rights over the land they owned. They could not voice this injustice because of their weak economic and bargaining position.

Numerous issues arose when the building of infrastructure and settlement facilities commenced, with the lack of written agreements between local communities and the government, the team's lack of transparency, and poor communications between those involved all complicating the situation. All the processes – from land release to the positioning of settlement and farm land locations – were fraught with problems¹⁰, with overlapping and conflicting claims being rife.

The problems continued after the LU I and II land began to be used: the transmigrants who were not so successful at working their land sold it to others. Such transactions usually took place after the 1-year living allowance (*jadup*) provided by *Disnakertrans* had come to an end. Some transmigrants succeeded in expanding their land ownership by buying land, either from other transmigrants or from local people. This example shows one way the transmigration programme encouraged the wholesale transfer of land ownership. Those losing most were the indigenous people who received nothing in return for their land.

Customary rules were unable to resolve this problem of buying and selling land, as under customary rules land is still seen not only as private but also as public property. Most of the areas that had previously been communal land became private property.

A traditional proverb says, '*Nenek samo di imbo, puyang samo diseru*', meaning that every villager in Sungai Telang has the right to work communal land. They may plant dryland rice (*bahumo*) but may not plant tree crops, and may not own the land. Usually they planted dryland rice communally for a 1-3 year period before moving on to new land, leaving the old land fallow while they worked in other locations. This old tradition is still being respected but it is increasingly threatened by the transmigration programme and programme-related activities carried out by irresponsible people.

Apart from reducing community access to land, the transmigration programme also threatens communal lands, which are actually owned by the community. The villagers have realized that their rights over land are dwindling and that inviting in transmigrants results in changes in how their land is controlled and owned. In the words of a 50-year-old villager, Marjohan, 'We realize now, the land we gave up for transmigration now belongs to other people. Land is shrinking and our children and grandchildren are growing in number. Where else should we look for land?'

The transmigration programme is not only a threat to communal land but also to the Rantau Bayur

Protection Forest bordering the village. Some villagers have begun clearing land in the forest although they know that production of any kind is forbidden in the area. The Sungai Telang I transmigration programme tends to focus only on housing availability, while paying scant attention to developing productive farming enterprises.

The local villagers need technical farming support and encouragement if they hope to change their extensive farming style to a more intensive approach (though the latter style is more difficult in such poor soils). Farming – one key to the success of the transmigration programme – is not currently developing, and the low yields force farmers to return to shifting cultivation. However, the land available for this is no longer sufficient and the only land available is communal land, whose use is much more limited. This means that the villagers are facing increased livelihoods insecurity.

Strengthening groups to improve their bargaining positions

The research team helped the *Kalbu* and *Sinar Tani* groups through individual as well as group meetings to analyze their problems related to the transmigration programme. The team catalyzed the groups to come up with plans and actions to interact and negotiate with outsiders. Their experience is described below.

Kelompok Kalbu in Baru Pelepat

According to Abunazar, a customary figure from Pedukuh hamlet in Baru Pelepat, the transmigration programme II has actually been underway since 1999, when he was the temporary village head of Baru Pelepat. At that time, the people of Pedukuh hamlet suggested expanding the transmigration I area, which had been built in 1998. The proposal, addressed to the district head and governor, was forwarded to the subdistrict head. The subdistrict head at the time refused to sign the letter attached to the proposal, thus halting the process.

In September 2002, after a new village head had been elected, the community again proposed a 500-ha expansion of the transmigration area to accommodate a further 200 households. The letter was resubmitted to the transmigration office, with a copy sent to the district head. 'We didn't forward a copy to the subdistrict. The village's role has grown with regional autonomy, so we didn't need to,' said Abunazar, explaining why the subdistrict had not been involved.

In December 2002, a team from *Disnakertrans* surveyed the location for the 500-ha expansion. It turned out that the area, which was on the other side of the river from Pedukuh, was less than 500 ha in size. To meet the shortfall the team suggested including an old rubber garden near the hamlet. Abunazar objected to the suggestion but promised to discuss it with the Pedukuh community.

The *Kelompok Kalbu* group held a meeting. Most of the group members were heirs to land in Pedukuh, and because of their lineage the group members were convinced of their ownership of the land. At the meeting, they appointed Abunazar as group spokesperson with the role of bringing the villagers together to discuss the transmigration issue. During the meeting, the owners of the old rubber garden voiced their objections to their land becoming a transmigration area, saying they did not want to end up like the people of Baru Tuo hamlet, who had lost their livelihood source when their fields were turned into a transmigration area. The villagers' meeting led to a consensus, and an objection to the use of the old rubber plantation was then submitted to *Disnakertrans*. The villagers also submitted a proposal suggesting an area in another location along with conditions to prevent a similar occurrence.

In mid 2004, a plan was revealed to build the new transmigration area – Pelepat transmigration area II – for approximately 200 households, with the settlement area near Pedukuh hamlet and the farm land on the opposite side of the Batang Pelepat River. In response to the plan, the *Kelompok Kalbu* met: they agreed on the settlement location and joined the program, being compensated for the release of their land. The group's conditions were 1) that anyone could release land, but priority should be given to those who had not had the opportunity to do so during the first transmigration programme, and 2) that those involved really were the owners of the land in the transmigration site location. However, the group refused to allow the old rubber gardens to become part of the transmigration location, and requested that the LU I and II locations be decided at a later date.

Abunazar conveyed the outcomes of these deliberations through the Baru Pelepat village head to Bungo *Disnakertrans*. In January 2005, the office responded by sending a team to the village to determine the location for the new transmigration area and to consult with *Kelompok Kalbu*. During its consultations with the government team, the group reiterated its conditions for accepting the transmigration programme: rejection of the old rubber garden site and the necessity for strict adherence to the rules for selecting the transmigration participants. The community, the

Kelompok Kalbu group discussing land use plans

village government and *Disnakertrans* also agreed that land would not be bought and sold at a later date. Furthermore, if within three months of the programme commencing the houses had no owner or remained uninhabited the land would be returned to the hamlet and the village.

These demands and conditions were conveyed to *Disnakertrans* as an attachment to a letter expressing Pedukuh hamlet's willingness to accept the transmigration programme. Following this agreement, the transmigration II programme began in Pedukuh.

***Sinar Tani* farmer group in Sungai Telang**

Community collective action to defend land access is illustrated by the Sinar Tani farmer group. Through its activities the group has a better understanding of issues and greater ability to analyze problems; through the processes they have learned the villagers know how to seek solutions to problems; and through the collective action they have undertaken all group members are involved and learn and are motivated to utilize natural resources more wisely. The guarantee of access to a written agreement with the government is a strong incentive for bringing about sustainable management of natural resources.

The Sinar Tani group comprises people with land in the same rice block. The group's members come from various elements of the community and include members of the village government, the BPD, community figures and ordinary villagers. When the group members began to look at

Transmigration programme has encouraged massive land clearing

the issues they were facing, they realized that there was a problem with the distribution of inheritances: inheritances are distributed verbally by *ninik mamak* leaders and this is witnessed by community figures, but there are no authentic wills clearly showing land area and boundaries. There are no deeds accompanying the buying and selling of inherited land, and transactions in the village are usually marked only by a handshake.

The villagers expressed a desire to secure recognition and authentic proof of their land ownership. Information provided by the BPN had made them reflect on the legal significance of land recognition and strengthened their desire to secure land certification. As national land certification programme funds are extremely limited, the villagers submit independent proposals to secure letters of land recognition (*Surat pernyataan penguasaan fisik bidang tanah, or Sporadik*).

Such letters contain information on the owner's statement of land ownership. To support evidence of ownership, letters are accompanied by location maps and information on how the land was obtained: whether by purchase, inheritance or by clearing the forest. These letters also contain witness statements on the history of previous ownership of the land and from owners of neighbouring plots of land, and are ratified by the village head. Although these letters do not have the legal weight of land certificates issued by the BPN, the villagers were happy to receive them because they at least demonstrated recognition at the community level. It is also worth noting that despite the mainly matrilineal system, where women inherit and own important lands, it is common that men dominate decision making processes.

Not only are these letters of land recognition a relatively easy and cheap way of obtaining certification but villagers could also be directly involved in drawing up their own proposals. During this stage, the villagers became aware that they could resolve their problems together. This awareness also fostered communication between them and built inter-stakeholder relationships.

It is quite interesting to note the group's interaction with others from outside the village in relation to land claims. After a while, problems arose with transmigration programme II: around 300 ha of the transmigration area was inside the production forest. On discovering the problem, the district forestry office wrote to *Disnakertrans* requesting that development be stopped until the status of the area was determined. The villagers, through their representatives, urged both parties to resolve the dispute promptly as the conflict was affecting villagers who were trying to farm their land.

The problem has yet to be resolved fully. However, a compromise was reached and villagers could continue to utilize the land, but only to plant annual crops such as corn, cassava and vegetables. Despite not providing long-term security, these efforts provided a solution. In several meetings, forestry officers promised to provide future help for villagers if they would tend the land.

Defending land access through collective action

In defending land access, the community developed institutional capacity to strengthen its bargaining position in negotiations with the government. The two villages have strengthened their institutions by developing social capital in managing their land, even though many consider the land to be traditionally private property. Lubis (1999) states that the existence of social capital is apparent from the ability of a community to build institutions that become references for taking action.

There were two different ways in which the communities in the two villages developed social capital. In Baru Pelepat, the villagers built social capital by reactivating their traditional institutions based on heredity and associated with systems of family inheritance and land ownership. This choice has turned out to be quite strategic, bearing in mind there are actually fewer than 45 households in Pedukuh hamlet. Through

the *Kelompok Kalbu* group, they can commit family members not residing in Pedukuh to join in the programme. 'It is better for our land to be taken by our own family than by others,' is the common reason put forward by the community.

In Sungai Telang, group strengthening took place by forming new groups based on land-use patterns. Farmer groups were formed from groups of farmers who were not related but who worked together in one land block. Working together in a block is a practice used in community farming as the villagers say it reduces the risk of their crops being attacked by pigs, monkeys and deer.

Putnam (1993), as cited in Lubis (1999), said that social capital consists of trust, norms and networks. With such forms of capital, coordinated community action can improve efficiency levels. Collaboration occurs more easily in a community that has inherited social capital in the form of rules, information exchange and networks among villagers.

In essence, all community groups have social capital linked to their cultural systems. Social capital is extremely important when related to development processes demanding participation and the ability to create new values and rules to fulfil new requirements. Key aspects of social capital include the ability to craft institutions and norms, to develop equitable participation; and to develop trust among members of a social group. High levels of social capital encourage community collective action to achieve shared objectives. The shared objective in the consolidation of the *Kelompok Kalbu* and *Kelompok Tani* groups was to defend land access. Collective action took the form of community groups formed either voluntarily or instigated by outside institutions such as the government or other stakeholders, either formally or informally. As an external motivating factor, transmigration inadvertently has played a major role in encouraging collective action whether based on kinship ties (in the case of Baru Pelepat) or for economic reasons (in the case of Sungai Telang). What is interesting is that both villages have implemented informal institutional mechanisms with a clear division of tasks and roles for each group member.

Through collective action, the two community groups were able to identify, analyze and comprehend issues more completely. They learned more about mechanisms and processes for defending land access, at both the village and district levels. Collective action enabled the groups to experience a process of social learning and helped them in decision-making processes. Community interests were accommodated

Regular interactions with government officials result in improved networks and confidence among communities

more effectively in negotiations with the government, particularly in relation to the case of transmigration land overlapping production forest.

It is still too early to assess how successful the villagers have been in defending their access to land. Nevertheless, some lessons have been learned. *First*, social learning processes play an important role and become the foundation for collective action in defending community land access. Lessons learned from the failure of the transmigration programme not only made the communities aware of the importance of land but also of the need to defend their access to it. *Second*, through learning, the communities realized the need to consolidate, share information and knowledge, build networks and organize themselves into groups. They also realized the need for strategies and mechanisms to defend their access to land. *Third*, trusted and recognized local leaders strengthens collective action. In the two villages studied, the villagers learned from earlier cases about how mistakes in choosing leaders had brought about greater loss of land and led to corruption. *Fourth*, strong groups strengthen community collective action and improve a community's bargaining position in negotiations with regional government.

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to oil palm estates, industrial plantation forest concessions (*Hutan Tanaman Industri*, HTI), natural forest concessions (*Hak Pengusahaan Hutan*, HPH), illegal logging, fires and burning of forests. Data from Jambi Central Bureau of Statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS) showed that community rubber plantations had grown to $\pm 87,674$ ha, transmigration farming areas had grown to 246,133 ha, and the population had increased by $\pm 1.84\%$. These factors encouraged the shrinkage of state forests in Jambi.

² Anharudin *et al.* (2006) went on to state that the transmigration policy should be renewed and brought into line with recent trends, especially changes in governance structures. For the period 2004–2009, transmigration is directed at supporting regional development through the development of production centres, expansion of work opportunities and provision of opportunities for skilled labour, either through the government or self financed. With the enactment of Law No. 32/2004 on Regional Governance, transmigration and its approaches should be tailored to the demands of current developments. Its implementation should embrace democratic principles, encourage community participation, strive for balance and justice and pay attention to regional potential and characteristics.

³ Data based on the 2004 agricultural census.

⁴ Villagers practice shifting cultivation by clearing forest or *sesap*. Forests or areas for clearance are determined in a traditional ceremony known as *Turun Betaun*, which regulates forest clearance according to customary principles, namely *kompak* (together), *sompak* (at one time) and *setumpak* (one block). Apart from planting rice, villagers usually plant peppers, cassava and sweet potato, legumes, corn and other annual crops. Usually, in one planting season villagers derive short, medium and long-term benefits from their farming produce. Soil fertility, increased land ownership, and the ease with which weeds can be controlled all attract villagers to clear forest for farm land.

⁵ Before 2000, natural forest concessions (HPHs) operating in the area were Rimba Kartika Indah (RKI), Gajah Mada, PT. Alas and INHUTANI V, among others. These HPHs ceased operations with the implementation of regional autonomy. The ex HPH areas were subsequently utilized by companies with forest product collection permits (IPHs) like those, for instance, held by PT. MKS, which covers the production forest around Baru Pelepat, but this has yet to affect the village area directly.

⁶ One former village head even said that he did not know why he had been appointed village head. At the time he was the only person with

Endnotes

¹ Mahendra (2005) discovered that in a 10-year period from 1990 to 2000 there had been a 989,466 ha reduction in forest cover (20.3% of the area of Jambi). The causes were conversion

a high school education appointed by the *ninik mamak* and village customary leaders to lead the village. This appointment, in his opinion, had been made in consultation with the subdistrict office.

⁷ Data originating from Bungo District Forestry and Estate Crops Office, 2004.

⁸ According to Abdurrahman (aged 40), a former village head, the community used either to travel along the Batang Pelepat River by raft, or to walk for a whole day to reach the subdistrict town. The main village road was opened only with the start of the transmigration I programme in 1997.

⁹ Transmigrants may only clear farming fields and *rimbo* after becoming closer to the indigenous people.

When the team first arrived there was a great deal of conflict between the two parties; this later subsided, especially after the village legislative assembly (BPD) was formed. The research team's facilitatory role has also resulted in the assembly being comprised of a representative of the newcomers and a woman who represents the village women's group. As time passed, the indigenous community became more accepting of the newcomers.

¹⁰ A community member admitted that at the time a meeting had been held and an agreement had been signed by the villagers who were willing to release their land. However, the meeting was not followed up by a field survey. For the community member, what had happened did not constitute a real agreement.

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CIFOR's Forests and Governance Programme examines how decisions about forests and forest-dependent people are made and implemented in order to promote the participation and empowerment of disadvantaged groups; the accountability and transparency of decision-makers and more powerful groups; and democratic, inclusive processes that support fair representation and decision making among all groups.