



# Governance Brief

## How can communities be included in district land use planning?

### Experience from Malinau District, East Kalimantan

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When the village representatives of Sengayan (Kabupaten Malinau, East Kalimantan) were asked how they envisaged future land use in their village area they gave a clear picture. The village territory should be divided between agricultural use (upland rice and possibly irrigated rice and cash crop development), production forest and community forest and conservation of forest in the form of protected forest and forest for ecotourism. They have an interest in developing oil palm plantations in their territory, although the district government plans oil palm in a different area, the village is concerned about government plans to develop acacia plantation in their village area.

In this policy brief we use the experience with land use planning gained in two locations in the Malinau district (East Kalimantan) to analyze the opportunities and the limitations to inclusion of village land use planning in district land use planning. Including inputs from village land use planning into the larger formal land use planning process faces several difficulties such as time and labor demand and inter-village coordination.

We emphasize the potential benefits that can be achieved both for the local government and the communities from a better understanding of communities existing land use and resource potential and authority for enforcing agreements. By involving communities in planning, a district land use plan is based on a wider consensus supporting acceptance and implementation of the land use plan. We provide suggestions for ways to encourage local government to meaningfully involve communities in land use planning through mapping village land uses.

#### New opportunities for community involvement

Laws and regulations (*Undang-undang No. 24/1992* and *Permendagri No. 9/1998*) concerning land use planning specify mechanisms for community input (see *Warta Kebijakan No. 5 on Tata Ruang dan Proses Penataan Ruang*). In principle during each phase, a public announcement has to be made to solicit input and communities have the right to give a variety of types of input.

Beside the legal requirements, the change in political climate since the fall of the Soeharto regime (known as *Reformasi*) has provided new possibilities for community involvement in public affairs, including land use planning. In addition, regional autonomy aims at increasing responsiveness of local government to local conditions and needs. These conditions should provide ample space for communities to influence the land use planning process.

The district government of the district of Malinau (established in 1999) was keen to revise the existing land use plan to reflect changing conditions and accommodate new development plans. Malinau

is sparsely populated and has limited large-scale logging or mining. The opportunity for rational planning and implementation were therefore high. As the communities still highly depend on a wide variety of natural resources, and can be seriously affected by large scale development activities if not planned appropriately.

### The experience of Pelancau, Sengayan and Setulang

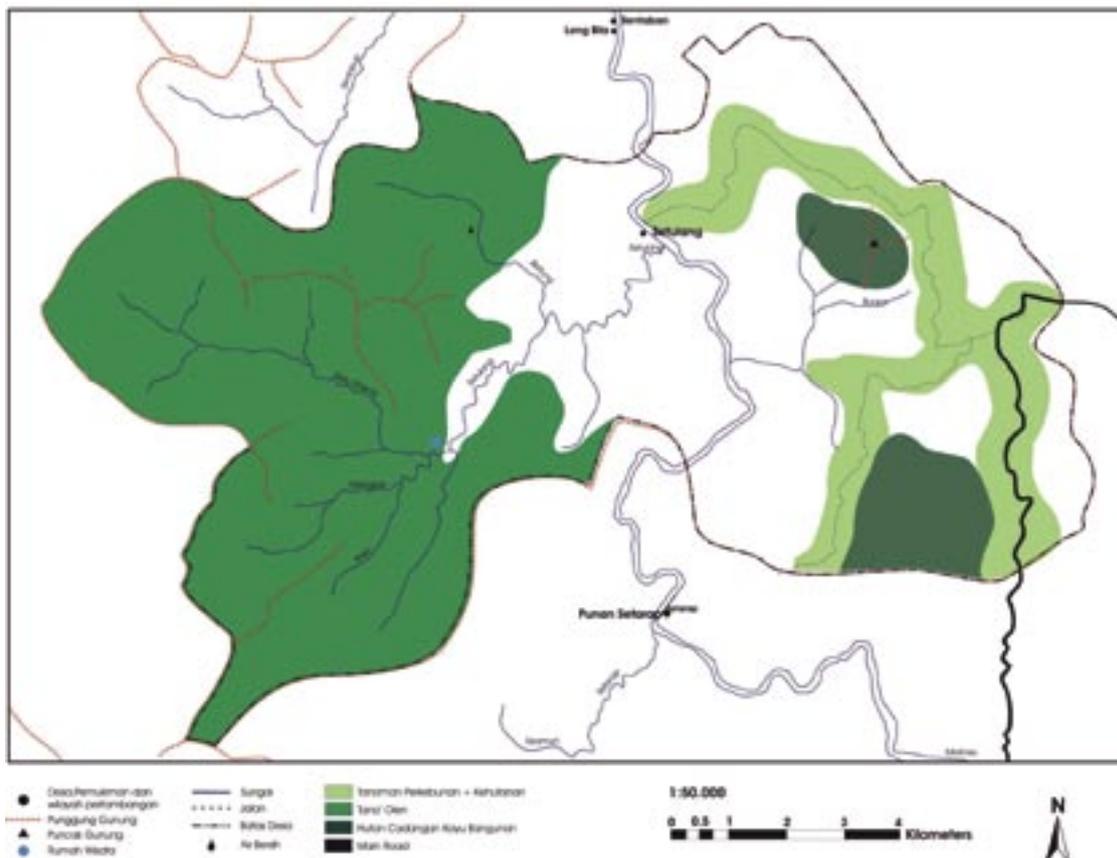
Recent changes in the political climate (*reformasi*) and implementation of regional autonomy would seem to increase opportunities for community involvement in decision making over land use and forest management. To that end, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) has been working with 27 communities in the Upper Malinau basin in East Kalimantan since 1999 to improve local peoples' access and control over forest benefits. As part of this action research, CIFOR facilitated the villages of Pelancau, Sengayan and Setulang to develop village land use plans.

Initially we used participatory mapping to try to clarify boundaries and resolve conflicts.

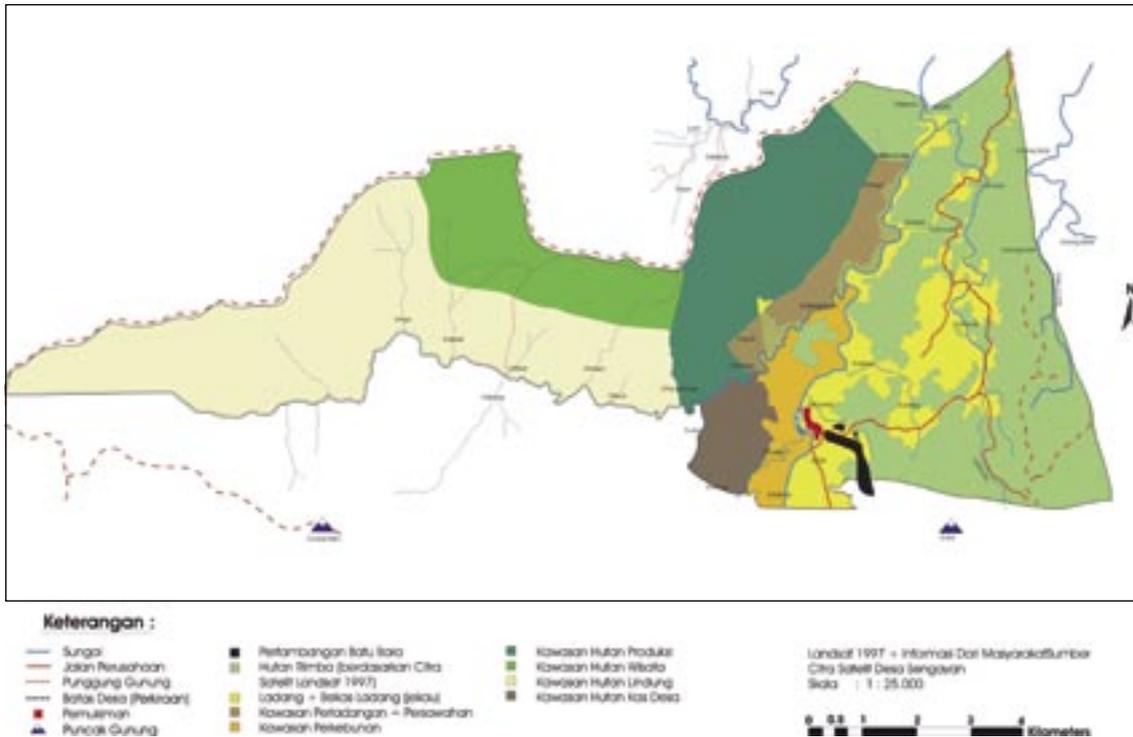
Thereafter, through visioning and small group discussions, community members were stimulated to reflect upon the present resource and land use and discuss needs and options for the future. Additionally, in the case of Pelancau and Sengayan two community members participated in a cross-visit to enrich ideas for potential economic activities and related future land use. Discussions on future land use, both formal and informal, were conducted over a one-year period. Hereafter a small village committee finalized the land use planning and produced a land use map in Setulang and Sengayan. Pelancau was reluctant to produce a map because of land tenure conflict with the surrounding villagers.

The maps showed general land use categories that could easily correspond to official categories at the district or national level, such as protected forest and production forest. There is a need however for designating which forests can be used for swidden at the district level. The designation of areas is left purposely at a broad scale, as too much detail would be burdensome to district officials and beyond the planning needs of the community at this stage.

Setulang village landuse plan



## Sengayan village landuse plan



## What have we learned?

The experience in Pelancau, Sengayan and Setulang demonstrates that communities can develop clear land use plans for sustainable use for their village area that can provide local input to district land use planners. Village maps of land use plans are an essential means for communities to communicate to officials their needs and should help district planners to organize district land use priorities spatially across villages. The district needs to communicate to the villagers what is feasible according to the district's aims.

Useful techniques in the early stage to assist communities to develop their vision are participatory boundary and resource use mapping and ranking methods for importance of resources or areas to the communities. These methods captured people's knowledge of the resource base and existing uses. Such information provides the basis to start discussion about future land use, development priorities, expectations and needs. To stimulate development of these topics, small group discussions are useful to articulate the different interests and priorities within the community. Combining the various views and priorities can be done in a small committee. However care should be taken that this committee considers and accommodates these differences.

While going through the above mentioned steps it is important to consider the time allocated to each step. A quick process may utilize the momentum of a community's initial interest. However, the risk exists that not all options or information are considered in the process. By allocating more time, information will be more complete and allow for more careful consideration of options. By using an iterative process, shortcomings in the first phase can be addressed in the next phase. However community members may also lose interest if the process is too slow. We found that iterative discussion over a four-year period was too long. It would have been better for us to have had an initial high involvement in the first year to achieve immediate tangible products and then use the following years to refine them.

In developing their land use plan the communities considered the present conditions and the potential of various parts of their village area. Information on and awareness of resource potential was increased through surveys in the field. In discussions community members were stimulated to consider several options for future developments. Community members combined opportunities known (e.g. plan to develop oil palm plantations) with previous experiences (e.g. work in Malaysia) and estimates of best future choices to guide the development of their land use plan. After defining their priorities communities linked their vision to a map.



Photo by Eva Wollenberg

Once use categories were assigned communities tend to stick to them, but continue discussion about management of various categories or possible opportunities for development activities. Both in Sengayan and Setulang villagers continued to discuss which tree crops should be planted in the area assigned for cash crops. These discussions included experiences of individuals within the community as well as their assessment of government programs such as gaharu and teak planting under the district reforestation program and oil palm, acacia and rubber that is planned for plantation development.

Development of a village land use plan assists in linking this detailed knowledge to maps, enabling inclusion of this information in the district land use planning. This information is also valuable to the district government to recognize resource use and opportunities so far only known to community members. Such information may increase the appropriateness of government development activities.

As mentioned above, facilitation of village land use planning is time consuming and labor intensive. One possibility to address these problems is to develop local capacity, starting from the appropriate agencies in the district government and gradually including the sub-district administration and the communities. Over time development of local capacity will make the process less time and labor demanding.

Input from government agencies about existing or planned development programs are needed in the process. Timing of this input is important but also problematic: If government

input is provided too early, it can limit the exploration of interests and priorities of the community. If the input is too late, the results of community discussions might be redundant since they do not match government planning or might be difficult to accommodate in the government planning process. We suggest that communities produce a first draft relatively quickly and request feedback immediately.

Based on arguments like size of the district and limited human and financial resources, the district government tends to focus on large-scale planning and development. Illustrative for this problem is a quote from the consultant involved in the development of the Malinau district land use plan: "Village land use planning is too micro, we have to focus on the big picture." In his opinion including village land use planning in district land use planning was impractical. Yet the "big picture" requires an understanding of villager's needs and visions. A more bottom-up planning process is required that makes use of these smaller units.

To accommodate a more bottom-up land use planning process the district government faces several constraints: lack of experience with bottom-up processes and genuine public consultation; few staff members with appropriate training in the technical aspects of land use planning; or the skills to facilitate communities to express their needs and interests to feed into the land use planning process. The situation is aggravated by a lack of reliable maps and good quality data.

## Some aspects requiring special attention

One problematic aspect is that land and resource tenure for communities is still uncertain. This results in communities being hesitant about planning detailed use categories or planning too far a head. By designating general categories such as area for cash crop or community forest with some general management rules, communities maintain the flexibility to adjust to opportunities as they occur such as government programs or cooperation with the private sector. Boundary disputes and overlapping resource use are issues complicating inter-village cooperation. So simultaneous to developing land use planning, the district and national governments need to address land and resource tenure.

Weaker groups do not dare to put forward strong claims and they give in more quickly to claims made by other groups. Within communities it is difficult to include weaker groups in



Photo by Eva Wollenberg

the process (e.g. women, poorer community members). Attention has to be given to ensure that these weaker groups have channels to provide input in the process if they wish. It should be recognized that the interest within communities to be involved in the planning process differs: some people only want to be informed about existing land use plan, while others want to participate from the information collection phase and in the discussions about land use options.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Including village land use planning in district land use planning faces serious problems: lack of data, maps, experience and time pressure for district government, and different scales of interest at the village and district level. However the potential benefits are significant: detailed additional information on land use and resource potential, land use plan and development activities better known, linked to local priorities and more acceptable to communities. This process would also support village boundary definition and inter-village coordination and cooperation, which are much needed for coordinated forest management in Malinau.

### *How can it be done?*

Villagers can provide input to district land use planning through village area maps. The maps should show the types of existing and desired forest management, and translate their local

land use categories into terms that can match with designated land functions at the district level, such as protected forests and production forests (for commercial timber harvesting). Districts should consider creating a land use category of forests for shifting cultivation.

Villagers should discuss their initial plans with government officials, realizing that they may need to be strategic in the types of information they share with different individuals. Likewise, government officials or the consultants producing the land use plan should solicit village input and plans early in the district process. District officials should present general principals, targets and land use categories in open village meetings. Both sides should be given ample opportunities to reflect and revise their plans.

It will be necessary in the beginning to facilitate the village planning processes and the links between districts and communities. District should be able to locate consultants to assist them who would at the same time be building local capacity.

It is essential that the districts provide communities copies of the district map to show how their input has been taken account of and to guide the community in their own local land use planning. Only with this sort of coordination between communities and the district, will there be hope of creating forest management systems that meet local people's needs in a coordinated way.



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