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## The role of multi-stakeholder forums in subnational jurisdictions

# The Adaptive Collaborative Management Multi-Stakeholder Forum

## Jambi, Indonesia

### Key messages

- Allocating time and financial resources to develop the capacities of local communities and encourage their participation resulted in their positive perception of the equity and effectiveness of the Adaptive Collaborative Management Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF).
- The MSF was accompanied by strong and consistent advocacy for the government to recognize the rights of forest-dependent communities, making the effort more effective.
- The existence of previous, informal multi-stakeholder networks helped make the MSF more effective and equitable, allowing for meaningful knowledge exchange between the involved actors and for less powerful actors to build sufficient confidence to voice their thoughts in the MSF.


### MSF at a glance

<b>Participants</b>	   
<b>Organizers</b>	 
<b>Year started</b>	2000
<b>Funding</b>	
<b>Forum Type</b>	Knowledge sharing and decision-making
<b>Outcome</b>	Recommendations, coordination and legally binding

 NGO

 Academia

 Government

 Local community

## Summary

In 2018, Indonesia experienced the third greatest forest loss in the world (339,888 ha), mainly due to land clearing for agricultural activities (estate crops), illegal logging, forest fires and forest clearing for building settlements. Indonesia holds an important part of the global oil palm industry, which, with Malaysia, accounts for 85–90% of the total volume of global oil palm production. This is Indonesia's most important industry, contributing to 1.5–2.5% of its gross domestic product. However, the oil palm industry is receiving criticism from various global actors for its negative impacts on forests.

The forests of Sumatra illustrate this context. In the past 30 years, these forests have largely been replaced by oil palm and acacia plantations. In Jambi province, massive land clearing for timber extraction and forest conversion for agriculture have driven deforestation and forest degradation. This process has been facilitated by the lack of government enforcement on land-use allocation. Prior to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's regulation no. 21, of 2019, all of Indonesia's customary forests – a type of forest that has been traditionally managed by local communities for generations —had been categorized as state forests, meaning that the state did not recognize the customary communities' rights. As a result, the government issued concessions to the private sector on these lands, increasing the potential for conflict between communities and the private sector.

Reflecting a global trend, there is current interest in Indonesia to use MSFs to address deforestation and overlapping land-rights issues. One example is the MSF established in Jambi's Bungo district, which was created as part of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) research project. The project was set up in collaboration with the Jambi University's Center for Regional Autonomy, Law and Policy Studies and a local non-governmental organization (NGO), Gita Buana. The project focused on strengthening institutional and resource management at the village level through capacity development. A second objective was to reinforce villagers' knowledge of natural resources regulation and policy, emphasizing group-reflection processes for every plan and activity to be carried out during the ACM project. To encourage the local community's participation, the project implemented a participatory action research approach, which encouraged participants to identify environmental problems in the area, develop plans to address them and evaluate the implementation of the plans to develop further steps to tackle persistent issues. In this way, community-based workshops and meetings were carried out in combination with conservation-related activities in the field, such as reforestation projects.

To explore the potential of MSFs in this context, we examined the MSF set up through the ACM project

in Baru Pelepat village in Bungo district (Figure 1) **to raise awareness about the implications of the adverse impacts resulting from conversion of the community's forest and loss of its natural resources, and to formulate a solution for customary forest management and conservation together with the local community.** For this research, in-depth interviews were carried out with 28 MSF participants and 10 nonparticipants, 6 MSF organizers and 5 key context informants from different sectors with firsthand knowledge and experience of land use and land-use changes in Jambi. The study aims to:

1. identify the processes and outcomes that influence the MSF's effectiveness in achieving sustainable land use
2. examine how the MSF addresses issues of power and inequity in decision-making processes.

## How effective was this MSF?

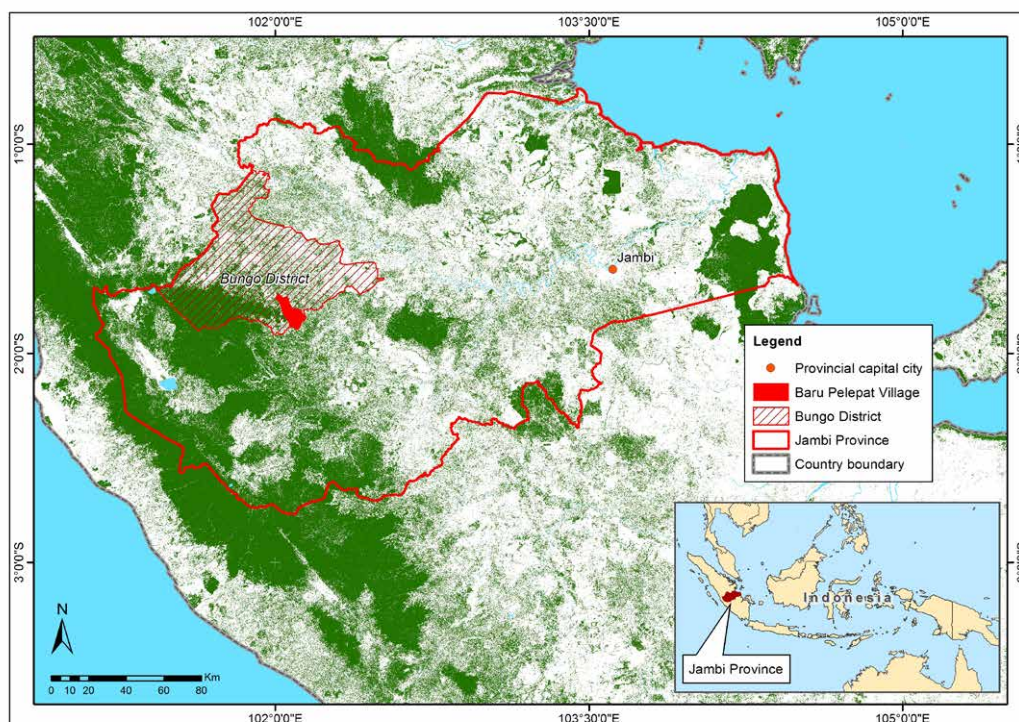
During the late 1990s and early 2000s, actors concerned with conservation and sustainable forest and land-use management focused their activities on Bungo district. This included local NGOs, a university, the district's forestry agency and international research institutions. These stakeholders had frequent meetings with local communities to increase the latter's awareness about the importance of conserving forests. According to an interview with government participants, actors in these discussions saw an opportunity for collaboration, given that some of their programs in Bungo district had similar objectives or beneficiaries and thus could become more effective if they collaborated and generated synergies. Three interviewees from a research institution and government agency noted that this early, informal forum strengthened the relationships between stakeholders who would later take part in the ACM MSF, establishing goodwill and collaboration as a basis for its future effectiveness.

MSF organizers noted that legal recognition of the customary community would improve its tenure security and limit future potential threats to their territories and resources. Thus, toward the end of the project, they brought these needs to the Ministry of Forestry. Twelve interviewed participants from the local community considered the MSF to have been effective in supporting the legal recognition of the customary community, which resulted in the enactment of two regulations:

1. Village regulation no. 2 of 2005 on customary forest management and utilization
2. District regulation no. 32 of 2006, which legally recognizes the customary community

These regulations are important in establishing the legal basis for the customary community. Most of the forested land in Jambi is state-owned, despite the historical use of land and forests by people and their customary tenure rights over them. Nevertheless, at that time, there was no umbrella regulation at the national





**Figure 1. Location of study area: Baru Pelepat village in Bungo district**

level for the recognition of customary forests and communities, which automatically categorized all lands without clear ownership as state forests and limited the effectiveness of the ACM's recommendations. The ACM team, however, was able to provide the time and funds needed to fulfill the requirements for obtaining the state's legal recognition for the customary forests.

All of the Interviewed participants thought the MSF was effective or very effective, but their reasons varied, and some also raised concerns. More than half of the participants – dominated by the local community and local NGO actors – agreed that the ACM project succeeded in increasing the local community's ability to actively participate in the MSF process through capacity-building events. Thirty percent of the interviewed MSF participants, mainly from the local community, believed that the regulations passed as part of the MSF's work had been key to protecting the forest. However, 50% of the interviewed MSF participants – also dominated by the local community – expressed concerns about the lack of economic benefits derived from their customary forests, as the village and district forest regulations protect Baru Pelepat's customary forest by limiting such activities. Furthermore, five respondents from the local community mentioned that the necessity of meeting their daily needs has led some community members to ignore the conservation goals, resulting in individual plots of land surrounding the customary forest being converted into oil palm or rubber plantations. Therefore, further efforts are needed to reduce deforestation in areas beyond the customary forest.

## Was this MSF able to address inequity?

The MSF made efforts to increase the active participation of underrepresented actors through capacity-building events. The project did more than just tell participants what activities should be carried out and how; 60% of the interviewed participants noted that the MSF developed local people's capacities to participate more effectively. The MSF facilitator trained women in small groups to increase their confidence before they were involved in discussions with men. Field visits were carried out to promote knowledge exchange among peers, and community members were encouraged by facilitators to speak up in the MSF meetings. According to 10 interviewed participants from local communities and NGOs, the community – together with other participant groups such as NGOs and the local government – also learned several nontechnical skills, such as the ability to listen to and understand the perspectives of other actors in the MSF.

Interviews with MSF participants and organizers showed that those who designed the ACM project were very aware of power inequalities among participants. To avoid actors with developed technical capacities or more resources from dominating the MSF discussions, the organizers limited these actors' involvement and gave more opportunities for the local community to actively participate in the sessions. Furthermore, important discussions that involved all stakeholders – the government, community and the NGOs – were



### Equity

The MSF was perceived to be equitable or very equitable by 94.7% of its participants.

94.7%



### Effectiveness

The MSF was perceived to be effective or very effective by 100% of its participants

100%

postponed if the community representatives were not yet ready to voice their thoughts at meetings. One interviewed participant from academia noticed that the MSF process was slow, as experts were not allowed to intervene in the discussions. Experts were welcomed in the MSF, but meetings were moderated by a facilitator to prevent the more powerful actors from controlling processes and outcomes. In addition, an interviewed participant, a university professor, believed that the ACM project had been successful to such a degree that he adopted its approach in his classroom to ensure that his teachings were well understood by all of his students.

## Recommendations

- *Developing alternative livelihood options:* If conservation is to extend beyond communal forests, the MSF needs to formulate a policy recommendation for the regional government to provide new incentives or facilitate support through extension services for the community.
- *Maintaining stakeholder representation:* Maintaining the representation of the local communities and women in the MSF is crucial to achieve equity in its decision-making processes and its perceived legitimacy.
- *Recognizing capacity gaps and budget:* For more effective participation, all participants should have equal understanding of the MSF's objectives and technical aspects. Capacity building should continue to be a part of the MSF's process, especially for actors who require further information and capacities to participate effectively. Allocating time and money for this is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the program.

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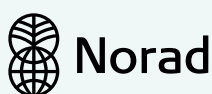
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