Mapping customary Right and Strengthening the Institution for Legal and Sustainable Forests and Land management in Baliem Valley

Introduction:

Timber is the main valuable resource for the community in Baliem Valley, beside for housing and public construction it is also needed for wall in the farm land and fuelwood for daily livelihood needs. High extraction by the community which mostly illegal even though in their customary territories has implicates to the high degradations in the valley, scarcity of commercial woods and social conflict because of forestry law enforcement. So making the timber would sustainably available for the community and development needs under clear rights protection and legal management scheme, the collaboration of Forestry Department of Jayawijaya District, Yayasan Bina Adat Walesi/YBAW (Local NGO Based in Wamena), Lorentz National Park Management Body and Lembaga Study Pembangunan Kampung/LSPK (local NGO based in Jayapura) are facilitating customary community rights recognition, institutional strengthening and land uses planning. The worked was started in 2010 and now has mapped the boundary of 19 customary community groups and 3 which are now having the land uses and forests development plan.

Why: The project was designed to bridge the gaps in the government and the communities about the expected sustainable management of Baliem Valley. For the forestry department and Lorentz National Park Management Units a key problem was the fundamental difference in the way that the national Forestry Department and communities view forest governance: for the forestry department nationally, the lack of proof that communities can manage forests sustainably is reason not to acknowledge customary ownership, whilst for the communities, the question of forest ownership is non-negotiable and is separate from the objectives of quality of the management of forest resources. YBAW also analyzed that the problems of timber management is strongly relates to the economic and social position of the traditional communities of the Baliem. They believe that communities are increasingly marginalized within the economic and political life of the valley, and that the key to asserting influence over the development process is recognition of their land and resource rights and, by association, the traditional leadership and decision making institutions.

What: Livelihood and landscape assessment conducted by IUCN, Samdhana and Partners in 2008 – 2010 identified the steps forward to dealing with the landscape degradation, community rights and economic development problems. Customary boundary mapping, customary community land uses and forests management plan and legal recognition of rights and its management scheme are the sets of activities been recommended and implementing until now. YBAW with their social expertise been working on social customary boundary mapping, while LSPK
then continue it with in-depth social-land-forests data collection until institutional development. Both are backed up with the technical and legal supports from Forestry Department.

**How Much:** Funding from Local Government, IUCN DANIDA, CARGIL Foundation and CLUA are in total contributed in average 80,000 USD per year. Samdhana with it sub-grants program to partners were facilitated the all agreed activities in Balliem. Amount of grant are varying for each partners in between 20,000 to 40,000 USD for 1 year program while the rest are for consultancy supports.

**Results:** 19 customary boundary maps produced. They cover 193,814 ha of forests, land and water body in Belliem Valley or about 65% of total districts areas. The maps had stimulated the discussion at government level to revise the administrative boundary that currently full of conflict. For forestry they helps to appropriately recognize the owner and keys stakeholder they will involving in the forestry program. LSPK with their works in 3 groups of 19 has produced a full sets of basic social-land uses and forests data bases. They have also helps these 3 community in establishing a modified customary institution for effectively manage their resources and socio-communal relation.

Government particularly forestry department of Jayawijaya district believes that current collaboration among government, CSO/NGO in Baliem Valley and customary community groups are a great foundation and momentum to move forward with their legal plan on timber plantation. The new established FMU in Baliem will then found easy ways to develop a plan and partnership arrangement with the community. Timber scarcity will then easily to be solved with the customary community reforestation

**Lesson Learned:** Understanding the right, culture, tradition of community and their interaction to natural resource is the best start to create low conflict, legal and sustainable approaches on natural resources management. Because illegal logging is beyond cutting the tree without legal permission. During the projects implementation in Baliam valley we learned that:

- Community are mostly needs suitable friends to escape from their social-economic and environment problem. With limited capacity and minimum access to any positive information that could inspire them, a friend they expected should able to fill the gaps they had. Having someone or organization that understand local context with enough capacity to works with community was the project main attention when started. But then we found that most of the partner are also need to develop their capacity to handle all the technical-social and environmental issues they will working with community. So building a training of trainer program are one keys recommendation we should take in the next steps of projects.

- Government are mostly don’t brave enough to take a deeply action to solve the community problem but they do have an intent to do that and would provide a financial support when they see the impacts of the issues been pushing at community. So investing resources and human capacity in several pilot sites should be a priority to build field based evidence in which clarification of customary rights, legal recognition, complete land uses plan and strong customary institution will lead to the legal, benefit and sustainable management of natural resources – include timber.

- Holistic livelihood and landscape development approaches should be the choice to bridge the gaps between community and government in the Baliem valley. The ongoing partnership among government-CSO/NGO and community that the project has successfully built should be maintained to the further works. But it is necessary for them to seat and talk about a long term target they will achieve in Baliem Vallry though this collaboration.

**Partners:** In Baliem Valley, we are working with:

- Forestry Department of Jayawijaya District
- Yayasan Bina Adat Walesi (YBAW)
- Lembaga Studi Pembangunan Kampung (LSPK)
- Management Units of Lorents National Park (TN Lorenz)
Over the last 20 years, the foundation has mapped 19 of the 27 customary territories here in Jayawijaya district – not easy work given the many peaks in Indonesia’s highest altitude region. Jayawijaya customary lands include Mount Trikora (4,750 meters/15,600 feet above sea level), Mount Mandala (4,700 meters above sea level), Mount Yamin (4,500 meters above sea level) and Lake Habema (3,200 meters above sea level). These magnificent land features sit in Lorenz National Park — the largest national park in Southeast Asia.

The territories the team has mapped range from the enormous (26,000-hectare Inyarek; 22,000-hectare Uelesi; and 18,000-hectare Aluama) to the minute (Tuma, which is wedged alongside the Uelesi region).

“Start advocating for local rights after returning from Jayapura,” Lani explained, referring to the provincial capital. “With technological advances, many locals are choosing to sell their land; our forest and people are beginning to change.” Lani said this trend was not isolated. It is happening in Wamena and other areas of Jayawijaya too.

ASOLOKOBAL, Indonesia—Laurensius Lani’s footsteps can be heard at dawn alongside the traditional honay thatched-roof houses of the Baliem Valley, here in the archipelago country’s easternmost Papua province.

This is a region of biodiversity and riches. Asolokobal sits on the southern end of Indonesia’s sole snow-covered mountain range. Tasmanian tigers (Thylacinus cynocephalus), long thought to be extinct in the wild, were said to be spotted here not long ago. Yet, 125 miles north along the Jayawijaya range is the world’s largest copper and gold mine, operated by U.S. company Freeport-McMoRan.

Since 1996, Lani has worked with the Foundation for the Customary Development of Walesi (YBAW), a local NGO, to map indigenous peoples’ customary lands. He sees such mapping as the first step towards empowering these communities to use their land sustainably. The lack of clearly delineated boundaries is a big problem in Indonesia, one often taken advantage of by large companies trying to acquire community lands for development.

Jayawijayans traditionally regard the earth and forest as their “mother,” entities that feed, contain and nurture. From this perspective, the sale of the very earth and land seem especially sad to Lani, who is keenly aware that natural resources are finite.

“Mapping is one means to preserve local rights. If we manage our lands, there will be a legacy for our children and grandchildren to inherit. After all, the earth and forest itself does not get longer or wider, or have its own offspring. Man does.”

Government offices in Jayawijaya and Jakarta have supported Lani’s foundation and its mapping initiative, since so much conflict — both interethnic and that pitting communities against companies and the state — is related to disputes over land and forest ownership.

“With territories mapped, people have a clearer idea of boundaries and better sense of areas they are not allowed to enter,” said Yunus Matuan, the head of Jayawijaya’s Forestry Office. “If all the indigenous lands were mapped, we might have zero conflict.”

Once boundaries are delineated, the hope is to gather demographic data such as population size, the age and education levels of the populace, the number of ceremonial locations such as honai and the variety of infrastructure such as health centers. There are also plans to include regional planning details such as zoning for future paddy fields, livestock and agricultural lands, clean water sources, fishery and forestry sources.

Natural and agricultural features are also important to note, according to Cornelis Oagay, from the Center for the Study of Community Empowerment (LSPK), a local mapping and planning institution. “After this process, we will register our maps with the national Ancestral Domain Registration Agency [BRWA],” he said. “We hope this data will enable the government to create and adjust regional regulations in a more informed, collaborative manner.”

At first local communities were suspicious about the idea of mapping their territories. They worried the maps were being made in order to steal their lands. Gradually, though, the communities in different customary areas came to believe in the importance of mapping. They were especially drawn to the idea that mapping could lead to regional management plans on which they would have input.

“Drawing up the customary land maps feels like the building of a strong, sturdy wall for our children and grandchildren, “said Enius Lokobal, an Asolokobal church and community leader. “If you have a fence, a set of rules and legislation, our people will feel protected and secure in our thoughts for future generations. This way, we can develop our ancestral lands in line with our own needs.”

This story was reported by Mongabay’s Indonesia team and was first published on our Indonesian site on Nov. 17, 2016.

Banner image: Local community members discuss review of a map of their area at a church in Asolokobal. Photo by Wahyu Mulyono for Mongabay