

“Silent Voices of Women in Local Struggle, INDONESIA

Overview

Indonesia is endowed with land and other natural resources. Local resource tenure arrangements have many dimensions, because of its tropical rainforest ecosystems as well as the social and cultural diversity of over 300 ethnic groups.

To promote development, the Government has adopted policies driven by international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), through 12 sectoral regulations. This so-called “development” has treated natural resources as mere economic commodities, therefore subject to logging and mining concessions, and large-scale commercial monocultures like palm plantations. This has led to ecosystem destruction.

More importantly, it has brought a change in the control over and access to land and other natural resources. Post 1998, in the aftermath of decentralisation and regional autonomy processes), land-related conflicts have increased tenfold. Each year, there are some 15,000 land-related conflicts that have yet to be resolved by

the Government¹. KPA’s records show about 2,889 conflicts.

In terms of land regulations, over the past two decades, a dual system of land administration has emerged where: approximately 39% of lands are within the jurisdiction of the Land Agency (BPN), while an estimated 61% of lands are administered by the Department of Forestry.

Governing land issues has met with challenges, foremost among them: a complex and weak legal framework to secure land rights for people; and poor institutional capacity among government bodies to handle land issues. In 2010, the Government of Indonesia implemented its land policy reforms through a number of initiatives. The Draft Government Regulation of Agrarian Reform and Stewardship of Land has not been validated and is still being discussed. The Bill of Land Acquisition for Development for Public Interest has been discussed at the Legislative Assembly. However, the Bill was criticised for prioritizing market over people’s interests, and pushing for a greater role of the private sector. Koalisi Anti Penggusuran is a network of NGOs calling for an immediate stop to discussion of the bill, which they claim would only legalise seizure of

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¹ Royat – BAPPENAS 2004

communities' lands. They are urging the government to immediately conduct a reshuffling of ownership, control and utilisation of land and natural resources in accordance with the Basic Agrarian Law No. 5/1960 on Basic Regulation of Agrarian Affairs. This push continues in effect until the 50th anniversary of the National Agrarian Day last 21 October 2010. President Susilo Bambang Yudoyono conveyed the important message that BPN should still help resolve land conflicts in the country. Unfortunately, no messages specifically referred to women peasants. At present, policies over land and natural resources are far from having a gender perspective.

Through the Government Regulation (PP) No. 11/2010 on Control and Efficiency of Land Abandoned as a revision of the Government Regulation No. 36/1998, about 7.3 million hectares of abandoned land have been identified as areas for land reform.

Women, land and natural resources

Land and food are inextricably linked. With regard to land tenure and natural resource management, women and men have a pattern of power relations, where the division of roles and positions are equal and clear, and complementary contributions of each of these actors is necessary. In many places, women's contribution to overall family well-being is greater than that of men. One small example is the division of labour between men and women

in the paddy fields and ladang or field for dry rice cultivation. The results of the research of Prof. Dr. Nurhayati Judge (1991) show that for all field occupations, ranging from cultivating the land to selling the products in the market, the average contribution of women was 21 points, while the male contribution was only 12 points².

Hidayati³ mentions that natural resources become the centre of political and economic interests, which often leave local communities, especially indigenous women, at the losing end. In the event of changes caused by global and national development processes - which still rely on resource exploitation - and the intervention of outside parties, sometimes the pattern of power relations, and the division of roles and positions, are unable to maintain conditions of equality and justice among women and men. The case below illustrates the challenges presented by development on women, and describes their responses.

The Halimun Ecosystem Area

The Halimun Ecosystem Area functions as a water catchment area and supports many living organisms. Rich ecosystems interact with the social, cultural and economic systems. But the ecosystems are increasingly being disturbed. The indigenous group,

² Dewi, K inside Terompet, Edition No. 12 years of 11/1994

³ Paper presented in Lokakarya Community-Based Land Rehabilitation and Management Project, Cipanas 25 - 27 August 2003, organized by Directorate General of Community and Village Empowerment, Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.



Kasepuhan Banten Kidul, classify forest management into three types. Leuweung Titipan refers to protected forest areas; Leuweung Tutupan are conservation forest areas maintained by the Kasepuhan community. Various communities in the area utilise forest resources for firewood, to cultivate paddy fields, harvest food (tubers, vegetables and fruits) and traditional medicine. Leuweung Garapan are areas the community can manage to meet such daily needs. Because of government policy, most of the Halimun Ecosystem Area is now for the UPT (Technical Service Unit) National Park of Halimun Salak (TNGHS), state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private companies have hindered the access of communities to forest resources. All three types are being placed under the management of UPT TNGHS, and PT Perhutani, an SOE.

RMI – the Indonesian Institute for Forest and Environment – works for the establishment of conservation or protected areas.

Each household in the community manages an average of only 0.64 hectare, per household, while the rest is in the control of the government, state owned enterprises, and the private sector⁴.

In a context of bountiful natural resources, women are forced to deal with two layers of pressure. First, they must face the pressure from outside

parties, which are threatening to take over the living space of communities in some hamlets.

Second, in the cultural life of the community, which is still strongly patriarchal, women have to deal with the domestic injustices. A classic issue is the social construction that women should stay in the households and act as good housewives. Even the *adat* or indigenous peoples subscribe to this “belief.” Even before investors came to the area, violence as well as the additional burdens of productive and reproductive work have taken their toll on women. “... Women never stop working; they stop when they are dead!” says Mrs. Rumnah from Wanasari Village in Lebak District.

Furthermore, the work division pattern between women and men peasants has also changed. The youth and men peasants have been forced to seek off-farm labour in big cities. In effect, those who cannot survive on their small parcel of land, nor find work in cities, have limited options. Often they are left no choice but to engage in socially fragile, destructive and illegal economic activities, ranging from “illegal” cultivation in conservation or protected areas, or forest concession areas; “illegal” mining in mining concession areas; or illegal logging. Some of those who turn to [overseas] migration are trapped into trafficking modus operandi.

⁴ Hanafi, et al.

Women are confronted with numerous conflicts on land and other natural resources. They face increasing difficulties in fulfilling basic needs and the risk of disasters triggered by natural hazards like landslides, floods, and droughts. These challenges have prompted several women peasants' groups to explore opportunities for improving their life situation through various collective actions. These collective actions could be taken to indicate not only awareness and social acceptance of, but more importantly, support for women peasants at the household, community, kampung or hamlet and village levels.

These problems of injustice are a result of the poor access to and control over land and natural resources. Women peasants should challenge the notion that their place is in the home, and engage in collective actions. As it were, women peasants are being increasingly alienated from their gendered local knowledge on natural resource management. Their rights to land, water and natural resources are diminished, both in quality and quantity. Likewise, their participation in democratic processes through environmental politics and grassroots activism is also reduced.

The Dynamics of Struggle: The Response of Women Peasants

In the fight to secure land rights and natural resources, strong collective actions and pressure from women are needed to effect real change.



These must move towards genuine gender justice in tenurial resource management. The first real step is to increase legal understanding among women, local government bodies and other institutions involved in the Indonesian tenurial system.

Another is to protect communal rights, in part by lending support to women's groups and organisations. The Hamlet WithThe Conservation Purpose (KDTK) is based on the community-based forestry management (CBFM) concept of collaborative forest management between farmers and the Halimun Sala National Park. Now, the farmers in Nyungcung Hamlet, Malasari Village, Bogor District has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the national park to manage the conservation area. Other women's movements are gaining ground in campaigns on the right to reproductive health and the environment. In the Halimun Ecosystem Area, these women movements have worked together to get clean water for daily consumption.

Three ways to define “communal”

Conceptual dimension:

How we categorise and think

Up to now, our patterns and systems of thought make gender hierarchy invisible.

Organizational dimension: How we can act

Gender is still rendered invisible primarily by the androcentric focus on what men do.

Normative dimension: How we evaluate

We are still dealing with the common notion that gender differences and hierarchy are natural, are apolitical and bear no moral cost.

Learning from the dynamics of the struggle of women farmers in Halimun Ecosystem Area specifically and in Indonesia in general, it is essential to emphasise women’s rights over basic resources, most especially land) given the intense competition for these resources. In many cases this competition has led to irreversible destruction of the natural resource base.

Not so much due to a growing population, as it is because of the current global economy, many groups are interested in acquiring vast tracts of agricultural land, forest areas, estate lands, and vacant lands. Without compensation of displaced communities, such large-scale land acquisitions often have a negative impact. Consequently, the relative claim of women on land is further weakening, because formal ownership of land is usually only given to men⁵, despite the important role women play in ensuring food availability.

Given that land and other natural resources are a fundamental source of social security and can be a tool towards substantially reducing poverty, women must have rights to land. By providing protection of women’s land rights, natural resource productivity can increase, thereby economically contributing to families and villages. Moreover, when land

rights are protected, gender equality can be achieved, and both sexes can be more empowered. Women’s socio-political role can be recognised better, according them a higher bargaining position. In this situation, women can question and develop the ability to see the position, relationships and roles appropriate to a better life.

It must be emphasised that women need to have critical consciousness and fight for their rights. Therefore, women should be given the opportunity to access information, to be free from the pressures that occur – whether internal (from within the family) or external, and to negotiate with others to make decisions that are fair to women. Women also must have the capability of political lobbying.

A situation wherein mothers, fathers and children in marginalised communities are happy, is one that we hope for, and can be made possible through encouragement, support from various parties and a commitment to fight for women’s rights. ■

⁵ In Mekarsari Village, Lebak District, just 32.4% of the Calculation of Tax Payable Letter are in the name of women. The rest are in the name of men.