

Potential Use of Participatory-Evaluation in Assessing the Success of Social Forestry in Indonesia

Case study of Community Forest (Hutan Kemasyarakatan) Farmer Cooperatives
in Pematang Neba Forest Management Unit, Lampung Province, Indonesia

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1. Introduction

Social Forestry (SF) is an umbrella term to describe various kinds of participatory forest management in Indonesia. Community Forestry (CF), called *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* (HKm) in Indonesian, is one of them. It is distinct from other types of SF due to its high aspiration to balance forest protection with improving the livelihood of forest-dependent communities. Furthermore, there are more CF permits issued than any other SF schemes, indicating a hefty effort that has been exerted to realize this program.

Fast forward to the twenty years post its adoption, very little attention was paid to assessing and evaluating CF. Even in cases where the evaluation was implemented, it was done using government or International NGO predetermined Criteria and Indicators (C&I). This, and other measures which reflect the top-down approach to evaluation such as control over financing, design, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) results created asymmetrical power relations between planners and implementers, hindering the fulfillment of the social dimension of CF. Therefore, far from being apolitical, this study regards such evaluations as ones that have been appropriated to suit the interest of only a handful of actors, neglecting the supposedly central player and benefiter, members of farmer cooperatives.

Therefore, this study focuses on understanding how evaluation has been implemented and how farmers made sense of CF and its evaluation results. In doing the latter, the participatory approach aims to bring farmers' perspectives into the discussion of indicator making, data collection and analysis, as well as in disseminating the end results. Making the evaluation process more reflective and

inclusive would lead to a greater sense of commitment to the program as well as political empowerment.

2. Methodology

(1) Theoretical Framework

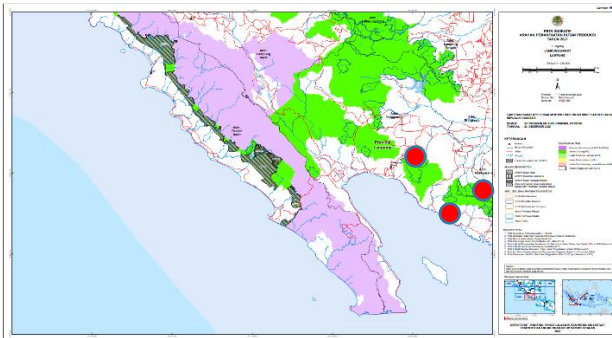
Modified Actor-Power-Accountability Framework (MAPAF)

Participatory forest management can be understood as bringing in the concept of devolution of rights and access, community development, equality, and empowerment; essentially instilling the concept of democracy in forest governance (Ribot, 2001). In understanding how should one better evaluate participatory forest management, this study also dissects it into three building blocks of devolutionized forest governance (Krott et al., 2014): (1) actors involved, (2) decision-making powers they possess, and (3) power to control the said decision making. Understanding how certain actors might devise evaluation as a means to attain their preferred outcome would potentially enrich the evaluation process making it more rigorous and comprehensive. Employing MAPAF and legal text analysis, this study discerns and contrasts the prevailing monitoring and evaluation of CF and observes how different interests and mandates emerged.

(2) Study Site and Research Methods

Lampung is one of the targeted provinces for SF, with CF as its main scheme rolled out since 2000. Pematang Neba Forest Management Unit is located in Tanggamus Regency, Southwest of Lampung Province, overseeing 15 CF cooperatives with a total area of 19,070.49 ha.

This study conducted a workshop-based Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to understand how farmers perceived success. First, three farmer cooperatives were chosen based on three criteria as suggested by key informants: (1) organizational capacity, (2) meaningful participation, and (3) productive aspect. Then, 10 participants for FGD were purposively selected considering their different roles, ages, and gender composition. FGD was done twice at each cooperative, with approximately 2 hours per session.



3. Results

While M&E is imperative to implementing CF, with the latter having a specific time, subject, and methods, only a handful of farmers know about it. Regarding monitoring, they mentioned that FMU personnel and (in some cases) the NGO made periodical checking and observations. However, they claimed never received any feedback or further communications, indicating restricted access to information. This limited disclosure of what is supposed to be public information was confirmed by the statement of FMU and the Provincial Forestry Department.

Table 1. Additional Elements of C&I and Methods for CF Evaluation

		Increasing scale of business →		
		A	B	C
		Household-oriented	Smallholder/ cooperatives-oriented with intensive support from FMU and external stakeholders	Medium-large business unit operating independently
Less focused on forest ecosystem ↓	1	Climate change and biodiversity preservation	Perception of climate change and biodiversity loss (Qualitative survey)	Minimum environmental standards, i.e. zonation, wet-dry period, soil erosion rate, etc (Regulation)
	2	Balancing biodiversity and economic profitability/ Landscape-approach	Inventory of high canopy trees with high economic value (Quantitative survey)	Who initiated/give the help (money, technologies, information) why? What do they expect to receive in return? I.e. Want vs need-based; relationship vs profit optimization (Qualitative survey)
	3	Maximization of forest economic benefits	Comprehensive income and expenditure survey, i.e. investment in education and house (Mixed methods survey)	Survey of perception and adoption of Good Agricultural Practice per commodities (Regulation)

M&E for CF is not only problematic in terms of dissemination of results but also, more fundamentally, the lack of political will to integrate the farmer's

perspective in the official C&I nor in the actual process of conducting M&E. The current C&I did not discriminate the variations of the CF management with different degrees of forest conservation and forest resource utilization. The FGD with three different cooperatives showed that community perceptions of a successful CF differed from one another. It stretches over a continuum: forest conservation – profit maximization nexus and different business/ management levels. Therefore, evaluation should utilize multiple indicators and data sets to better reflect the reality on the ground (Table 1).

4. Discussion & Conclusion

Where multiple stakeholders with different mandates and interests come together and form a complex network (Li, 2007), the challenge has always been how to prevent abuse of power, particularly between planners and implementers (Scott, 1990). The case of Pematang Neba FMU also showed restrictions on access to M&E documents hindered their management performance as they were not aware of the current state of their productive capacity, as well as its subsequent impact on the forest ecosystem, even though the sense of tenurial security has been improved. In this situation, the participatory approach in CF evaluation is one way to have them acknowledge the importance of evaluations and their rights to benefit from their results. Additionally, through active dialogue with the farmers, additional layers of C&I preferred by them would be potentially able to make evaluations better reflect reality.

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