

INDONESIA: WHOSE LAND IS IT ANYWAY?

# Corporate Control over the Motherland



SOLD OUT



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## LIST OF CONTENTS

1. FOREWORD	4
2. METHODOLOGY	5
3. PRESIDENTS CHANGE, CORPORATE CONTROL REMAINS	5
a. Forestry corporations	7
1. Logging corporations	7
2. Timber plantation corporations	7
b. Oil palm corporations	8
1. Corporate enjoyers of forest estate releases for oil palm	8
2. Corporate enjoyers of oil palm HGU permits	9
c. Mining corporations	9
d. Intersectoral corporations	10
5. PARSIMONY TO COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT REGIONS	11
6. RECOMMENDATIONS	12
7. STORIES FROM THE VILLAGES	13

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# 1. FOREWORD

*“The land, the waters and the natural resources within shall be under the powers of the State and shall be used to the greatest benefit of the people”.* So says the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. However, after 77 years of Indonesian independence, this appears more like a paper tiger, because as outlined in the data below, what is actually happening is not peoples’, but corporate sovereignty.

Indonesia has been independent for more than seven decades, but far more natural resource allocation from its governments has been centered on a small group of corporations. Regimes have come and gone, but the model of control over natural resources has remained unchanged, with everything being handed over to corporations.

This report analyzes the control of land by government allocation to the forestry, oil palm plantation, and mining sectors. It is clearly apparent that the government remains addicted to corporations. Allocations, which have been structural in nature – be they through regulatory arrangements, policy determination, license provision, or land allocation – have led to 95% falling under corporate control. Despite this, it is commonplace to hear sweet words from government officials who speak as if they are on the side of the people.

Investigated further, this corporate sovereignty does not end with land control, but also flows to supply chains and commerce. So, “Indonesia at 77: Degrading More Rapidly, Oligarchies Getting Stronger” is no hyperbole.

## Editorial Team

## 2. METHODOLOGY

**CALCULATIONS** in this publication on the extent of land allocated for mining, oil palm and forestry concessions used data from various publicly available sources, such as ministry and state institutions' websites, company annual reports, and other relevant sources. In addition to being used for calculating area, the data was also analyzed for profiling to identify concession or license ownership.

Bearing in mind not all this report's figures use the same sources and methodologies, data sources are listed directly under each figure.

## 3. PRESIDENTS CHANGE, CORPORATE CONTROL REMAINS

**WAVES** of land management/control/business provisions to corporations have been crashing in since the New Order era, particularly with the enactment of the Law on Foreign Capital Investment in 1967 (Law No. 1/1967) and the Law on Domestic Capital Investment in 1968 (Law No. 6/1968). This corporate control has come in many forms: concessions and licenses for mining operations; plantation business licenses and business use rights for oil palm plantations; or concessions for forestry enterprises covering logging licenses, commonly known locally as *Hak Pengusahaan Hutan* (HPH); or timber plantations, known as *Hutan Tanaman Industri* (HTI). The Omnibus Law, also known as the Law on Job Creation, bundles all of these together in the form of Business Licenses. Despite names and terminology varying, one thing remains certain: all of them have been set aside for companies, which hereinafter we shall refer to as corporations.

Soeharto was the major player in presiding over government "generosity" to corporations. Over the 32 years that his regime held power, no less than 79

million hectares (ha) were granted to forestry, oil palm or mining corporations. In terms of expanse, this was followed by the regime of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), who in 10 years in office handed 55 million ha of land over to corporations.

Probably because each only held power for 2-3 years, the Habibie, Gus Dur, and Megawati regimes did not grant control over land to many corporations. Habibie even shut down the Indorayon pulp mill (now Toba Pulp Lestari) due to its environmental pollution and opposition from local communities.

Yet, of these short periods of rule, a special mention must go to Megawati, who in addition to reinstating the Indorayon mill, also allowed certain corporations to mine in protection forest estates. The Forestry Law (Law No. 41/1999), which was prepared and ratified in the Habibie era, had restricted mining inside the forest estate by allowing only limited operations inside production forest and underground mining in protection forest. However, the Megawati regime enacted a government regulation in lieu of law (*Perpu* No. 1/2004) where certain companies were allowed to carry out open pit mining inside areas of protection forest. Based on this *Perpu*, Megawati then issued Presidential Decree No. 41/2004 allowing 13 corporations to conduct mining operations inside 927,648 ha of protection forest estates (of a total licensed area of 6,257,640.49 ha).

Despite pledges to allocate land control to the people throughout his election campaign, and even setting formal targets for such control in the form of social forestry (12.7 million ha) and agrarian reform (5 million ha), Joko Widodo's regime has actually done the opposite. To date, only around two million ha, or 11% of this total pledge, has been fulfilled. Meanwhile, his regime has granted eight million ha of land to corporations. Jokowi has only been in power for eight years, and still has two more years to finalize his presidency. The problem is, these final two years

will be electoral years for both central and regional governments, and such years are normally marked by

an onslaught in license provisions.

**Figure 1. Allocation of land control to corporations by presidential period.** Soeharto, who was in power for 32 years, granted the largest area of land to corporations, followed by SBY who held office for 10 years. Jokowi's regime, the campaigns for which frequently mentioned siding with the people, has in fact given a lot of land to corporations, especially for forestry and mining concessions.

					
<b>Soeharto</b> 1967-1998	<b>BJ Habibie</b> 1998-1999	<b>Abdurrahman Wahid</b> 1999-2001	<b>Megawati Soekarnoputri</b> 2001-2004	<b>Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono</b> 2004-2014	<b>Joko Widodo</b> 2014-Sekarang
<b>Logging</b>					
61,700,000	1,626,568	1,333,936	1,293,611	11,924,500	2,650,345
<b>Timber plantations</b>					
4,245,881	118,665	113,665	417,546	5,955,639	3,112,352
<b>Oil palm</b>					
2,902,751	284,470	107,674	-	2,125,973	598,151
<b>Mining</b>					
9,828,174	5,008	-	927,648	35,049,966	1,614,042
<b>Total</b>					
<b>78,676,806</b>	<b>2,034,710</b>	<b>1,555,276</b>	<b>2,638,805</b>	<b>55,056,078</b>	<b>7,974,889</b>

#### Data sources:

1. Logging: processed PBPH-HA data issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry updated in 2022, accessed at sigap.menlhk in July 2022; processed IUPHHK-HA and HPH data recorded by the Ministry of Forestry in Indonesian Forestry Statistics 2011.
2. Timber plantations: processed PBPH-HT data issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry updated in 2022, accessed at sigap.menlhk in July 2022 and IUPHHK HTI data recorded by the Ministry of Forestry in Indonesian Forestry Statistics 2011.
3. Oil palm: processed data on forest estate releases for non-forestry cultivation updated to 2022, accessed at sigap.menlhk in July 2022, and *Hak Guna Usaha* (HGU) data processed by Auriga Nusantara.
4. Mining: processed data on mining business license regions or *Wilayah Izin Usaha Pertambangan* (WIUP) updated in June 2022 and WIUP 2016, published by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, accessed at geoportal.esdm in July 2022. Processed data on work contracts or *Kontrak Karya* (KK) and coal mining business work agreements or *Perjanjian Karya Pengusahaan Pertambangan Batubara* (PKP2B) 2003 (issued by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources); as well as mining control or *Kuasa Pertambangan* (KP) data for calculating the area of licenses issued during Soeharto's presidency, and the licenses for 13 mining companies in Presidential Decree No. 41/2004 for Megawati's presidency.

\*) The above data revises data published in a press release on Monday, 15 August 2022 with the title: *Indonesia Tanah Air Siapa?*

## 4. AN OVERVIEW OF CORPORATIONS

### a. Forestry corporations

Indonesia's terrestrial area is largely divided into forest estate or *kawasan hutan* (KH) and other land-use areas or *areal penggunaan lain* (APL). Forest estate, which in 2022 covers 119 million ha, is divided by function into conservation forest (22 million ha) for the protection of flora, fauna, and ecosystems; protection forest (29 million ha) for the protection of water sources; and production forest (68 million ha). Though numerous environmental service-based concession licenses, such as for ecotourism, have been granted in conservation forest and/or protection forest estates, most land-based concessions are in areas of production forest.

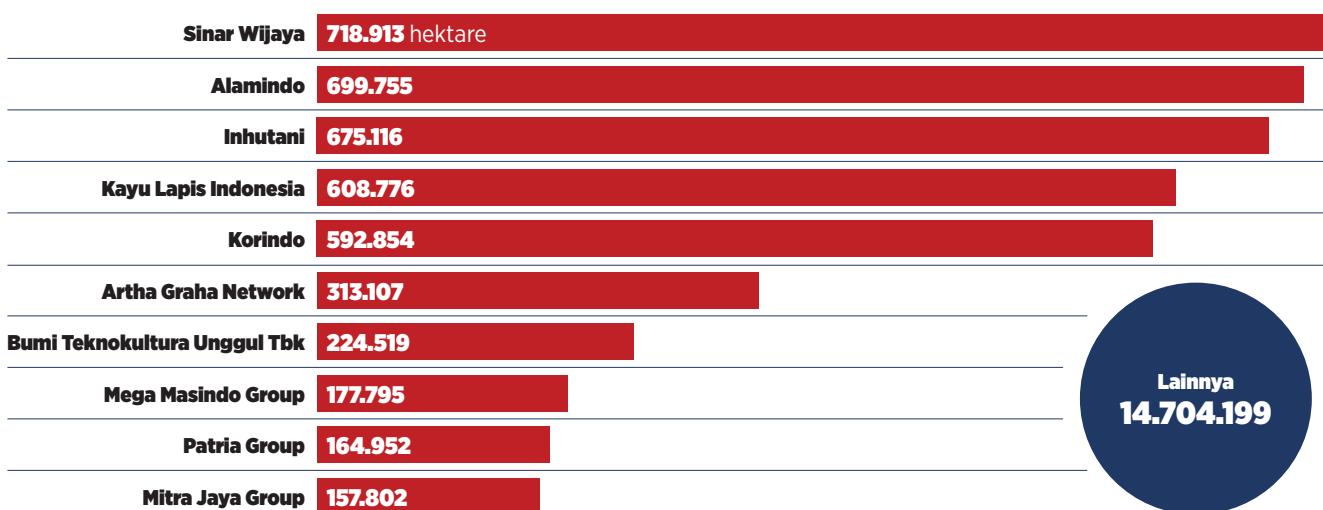
Over the years, the two main types of utilization granted in production forests have been selective logging and timber plantation concessions. During the New Order era, logging concessions were called *Hak Pengusahaan Hutan* (HPH) or forest business rights, while since the 'reformasi' era they were known initially as *Izin Usaha Pemanfaatan Hasil*

*Hutan–Hutan Alam* (IUPHHK–HA) or forest product utilization business permits for natural forest, and more recently under the Omnibus Law regime as *Perizinan Berusaha Pengusahaan Hutan–Hutan Alam* (PBPH–HA) or forest business licenses for natural forest. Timber plantations, which the Ministry of Environment and Forestry prefers to call plantation forests, were referred to during the New Order era as *Hutan Tanaman Industri* (HTI) or industrial plantation forests, later changing to become *Izin Usaha Pemanfaatan Hasil Hutan–Hutan Tanaman* (IUPHHK–HT) or forest product utilization business permits for plantation forest, and then again to become *Perizinan Berusaha Pengusahaan Hutan–Hutan Tanaman* (PBPH–HT) or forest business licenses for plantation forest under the Omnibus Law regime. This publication uses the term 'timber plantations' because in addition to them being monocultures, more than that such areas are allocated for periodic clear cutting every 5–7 years, which makes it inaccurate to refer to them as forest cover or forest ecosystems.

#### 1. Logging corporations

Ordained formally by the Basic Forestry Law

**Figure 2. The top-10 logging corporations:** These ten corporations control 23% of all logging concessions in Indonesia..



**Data source:** Identification of business groups was based on PBPH-HA license data issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry updated in 2022, and downloaded from sigap.menlhk in July 2022.

(Law No. 5/1967) and subsequently regulated further in Government Regulation No. 21/1970 on Forest Business Rights and Forest Product Extraction (Government Regulation No. 21/1970), HPH logging concessions have constituted the most prevalent form of allocation in production forests. The long history of HPHs, which is entering its sixth decade, shows series of transformations occurring, both in allocation on the same land, and control over that land.

In 2022, logging concessions cover an overall area of 19 million ha. Despite 258 corporations being recorded, dominance or concentration

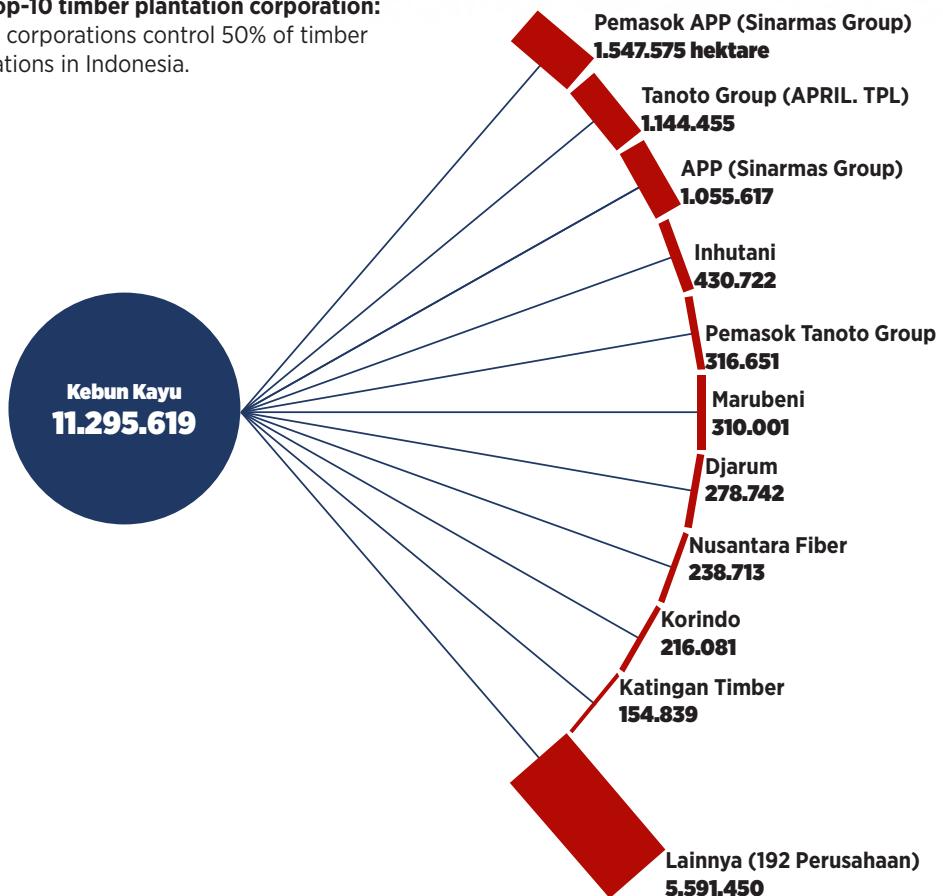
of control over logging concessions is apparent from the top-10 corporations controlling 4.3 million ha (65 times the area of the Jakarta Special Capital Region), or almost a quarter of the total area of all logging concessions.

## 2. Timber plantation corporations

Originally, timber plantations were aimed at meeting timber industry needs, and regreening critical land. But the government later annulled all of this: new pulp and paper mills were constructed without any clarity over raw material sources, which led to extraordinary overcapacity; and even natural forests were allowed to be clear cut to be replaced with

**Figure 3. The top-10 timber plantation corporation:**

These corporations control 50% of timber plantations in Indonesia.



**Data source:** Identification of business groups was based on PBPH-HT license data issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry updated in 2022, and downloaded from sigap.menlhk in July 2022.

timber plantations. The area allocated for timber plantations growing from 30,000 ha in 1990 to 4.4 million ha in 1999, then climbing almost threefold to 11.3 million ha in 2021 is an indication of government inconsistency.

It is apparent from the figure above that there are two groups of suppliers. However, as reported by Koalisi Anti Mafia Hutan in the publication *Removing the Corporate Mask* (2018) as well as several other reports relating to the Tanoto Group (TPL, APRIL, RGE, etc.), most of these suppliers are alleged to be affiliated with, owned, or controlled by the two groups they supply.

As the government has never cracked down on such practices despite frequently being urged to do so, the timber plantation industry has been fertile ground for vertical and horizontal integration and control. As a result, despite there being 297 timber plantation companies, all of them are highly integrated. Further investigation indicates two groups having control of more than 90% of mills, and in practical terms the industry takes the form of a monopsony or duopoly as it only has two

powers: Sinar Mas and APRIL.

### b. Oil palm corporations

Oil palm monocultures have expanded rapidly in Indonesia, particularly since the year 2000. Where Indonesia's oil palm planted area in 2000 was 7.8 million ha, by 2021 it had reached 16.5 million ha. Though not as conspicuously as in the timber plantation industry, integration has also occurred in the palm oil sector, as illustrated in the figure below.

#### 1. Corporate enjoyers of forest estate releases for oil palm

Legislation makes the conversion of forest estate for non-forestry allocations possible, and refers to it as forest estate release. By June 2022, forest estate releases had reached a total area of 8,514,921 ha for estate crops (oil palm, cacao, rubber, etc.), transmigration, urban expansion, construction of airports, etc.

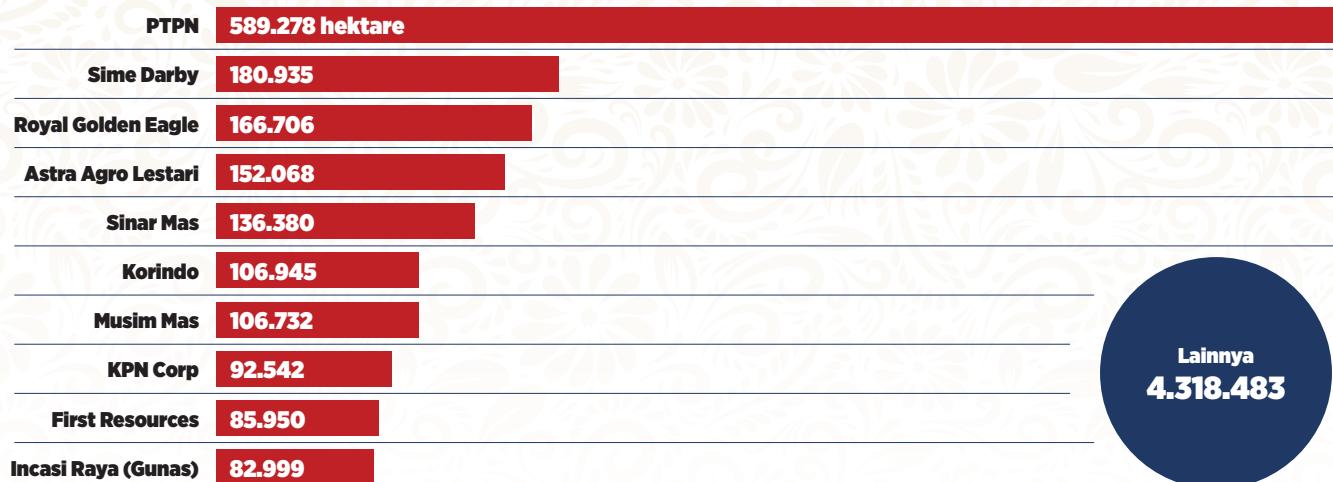
Further investigation shows oil palm development constituting the largest portion of forest estate releases to date, with records showing 6 million ha, or 71% of all forest estate releases designated for plantations.

**Figure 4. Corporate dominance and ownership in the palm oil industry:** This figure, taken in its entirety from trase.earth, shows unequivocally how corporations dominate the palm oil industry vertically from upstream to downstream; from plantations to mills, and then to refineries, all the way to palm oil export trading.

PLANTATION	MILLS	REFINERIES	EXPORTS
16,822,834 HA	84,594,237 CPO-EQ T/YR	45,817,162 CPO T/YR	CPO: 10,584,046 T RPO: 20,290,036 T
38,086 CONCESSIONS	1093 MILLS	85 REFINERIES	61 PORTS
1739 COMPANIES	874 COMPANIES	57 COMPANIES	352 EXPORTERS
187 GROUPS	178 GROUPS	25 GROUPS	55 GROUPS

**Sumber data:** "Corporate Ownership and Dominance of Indonesia's Palm Oil Supply Chains" published on trase.earth in January 2020.

**Figure 5. The top-10 business groups securing forest estate releases to develop oil palm plantations:** These ten corporations have enjoyed 29% of forest estate releases for oil palm development.



**Sumber data:** Identifikasi grup usaha berdasarkan Pelepasan kawasan hutan untuk budidaya non-kehutanan hingga 2022, diakses pada <https://sigap.menlhk.go.id/server/rest/services>.

It should be stressed that all these forest estate releases for oil palm plantations have been to corporations. This emphasis is necessary because until now, the government, particularly the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, seems allergic to community smallholder oil palm estates. This is evidenced from not even one square meter of forest estate being released for smallholder oil palm. At the time of publication, none had been released for oil palm cover in areas already managed by smallholders for generations, but unilaterally classified as forest estate by the government, let alone for the development of new smallholder oil palm plantations.

## 2. Corporate enjoyers of oil palm HGU permits

Business use rights, or *Hak Guna Usaha* (HGU), are one type of right granted by the government over land in Indonesia. For oil palm plantations, an HGU constitutes the final step in the mechanism for gaining control over land. An

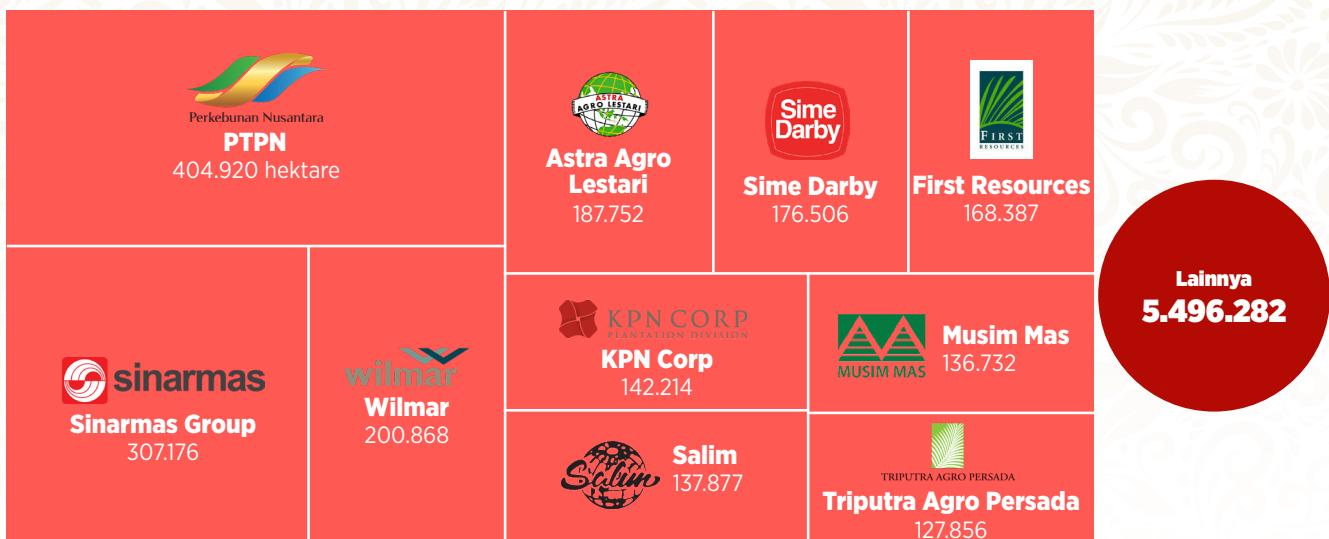
HGU must be preceded, in order, by a location permit or *Izin Lokasi* (IL) and a plantation business license or *Izin Usaha Perkebunan* (IUP). If an oil palm development area is inside the forest estate, then the developer is also obligated to secure a forest estate release permit from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

In the context of oil palm plantations, any grower securing an IUP must own a land area in excess of 25 hectares, as the mechanism for plantations on areas smaller than that is not licensing, but government registration. Until now, there are no individual owners of oil palm IUPs in Indonesia. This means oil palm HGU owners in Indonesia are certain to be corporations.

### c. Mining corporations

In July 2022, 10 million ha of mining concessions were recorded in the government's Minerba One

**Figure 6. The top-10 oil palm HGU owners:** Of a total 7.4 million ha of oil palm HGU licenses in Indonesia, 1.9 million ha, or 26%, are controlled by ten corporations.



**Data source:** HGU license data compiled by Auriga Nusantara

Data Indonesia (MODI) system. As shown in Figure 1, the area of mining concessions grew exponentially during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), who himself was minister of mining and energy during the previous administration under Megawati Soekarnoputri's presidency. Where the number of mining concessions had previously reached 11,000 licenses, after the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) initiated corruption prevention measures through coordination and supervision of the mineral and coal mining sector (*Korsup Minerba*), the number of licenses fell drastically as many were revoked. The number of licenses has remained at 6,500 ever since.

During the New Order era, mining concessions tended to be large in scale and granted based on *Kontrak Karya* (KK) or work contracts for mineral mining, and *Perjanjian Karya Pengusahaan Pertambangan Batubara* (PKP2B) or coal mining business work agreements. During the 'reformasi' era, there was a license "rebellion" where regional

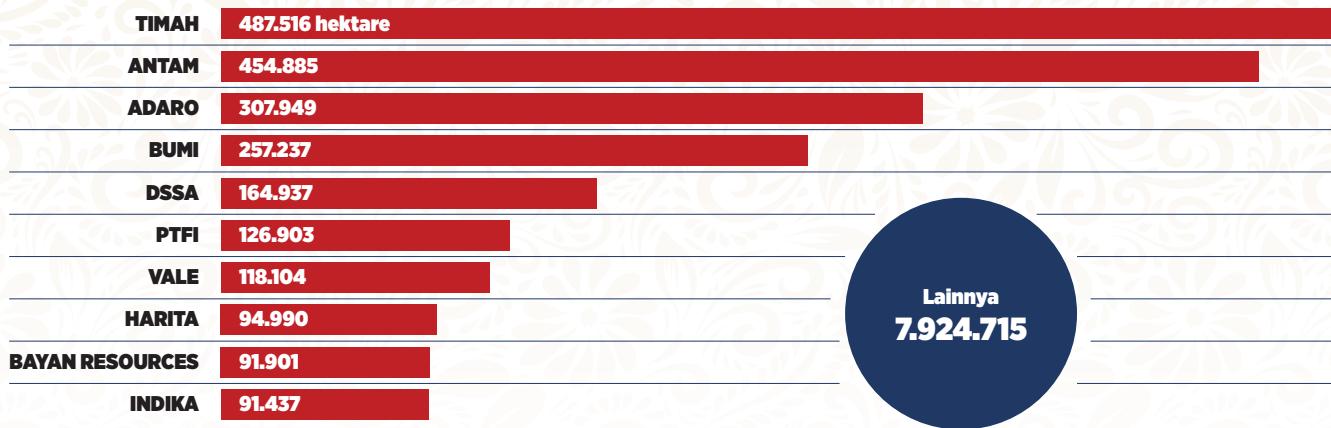
governments issued small- and medium-scale mining permits through *Kuasa Pertambangan* (KP) or mining control licenses. Under Law No. 4/2009 on Mineral and Coal Mining, KK, PKP2B, and KP permits were melded to become *Izin Usaha Pertambangan* (IUP) or mining business licenses. However, this melding process has yet to be fully finalized, and various KK and PKP2B permits remain active until now.

However, as recorded in the MODI system, no community mining business permits have been issued at all to date. This is unsurprising, as until now the government has yet to establish any *Wilayah Usaha Pertambangan Rakyat* (WIPR) or community mining business regions as the basis for issuing community mining permits.

#### d. Intersectoral corporations

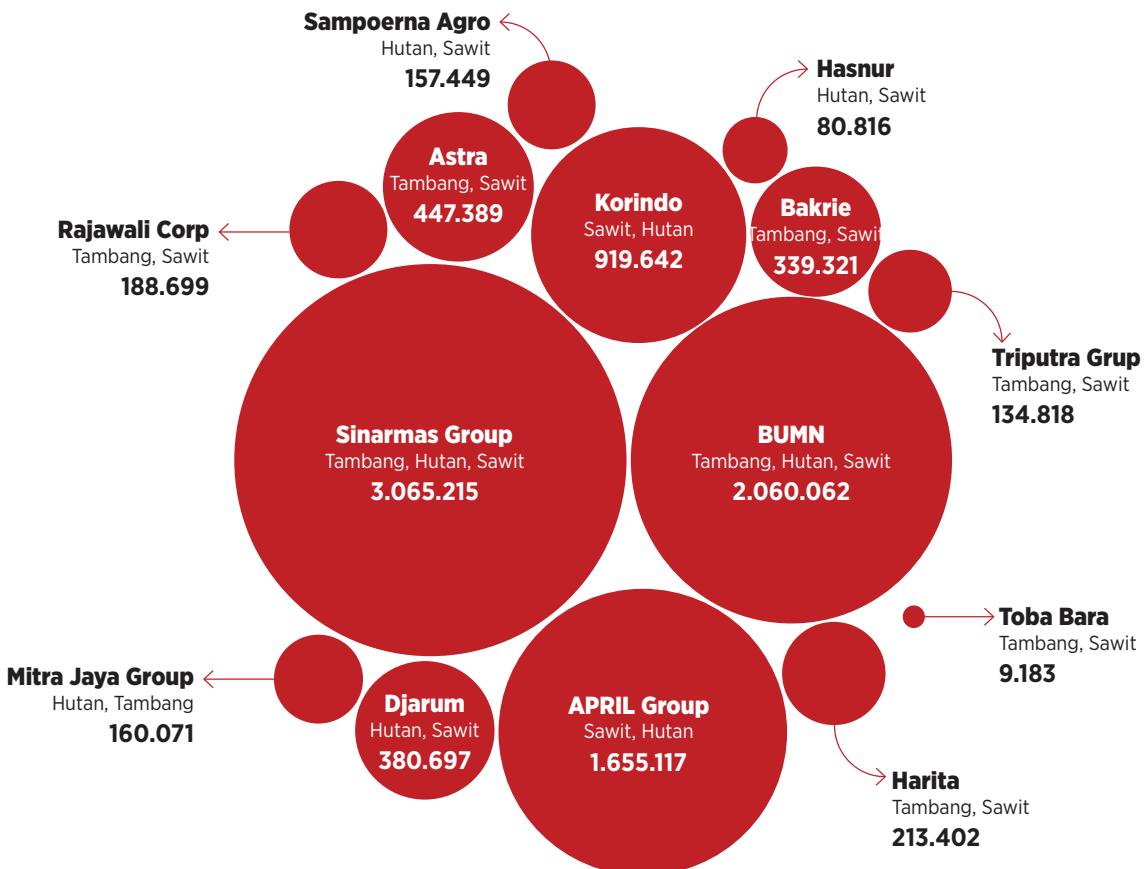
Government "generosity" to corporations turns out to be not only for control of certain sectors, but even across different sectors. As a result, corporate

**Figure 7. The top-10 mining corporations in Indonesia:** One fifth of current mining licenses are owned/controlled by 10 company groups. Two state-owned companies or BUMN: PT Timah and PT Antam, occupy the top positions. These companies control almost one million ha of mining land.



**Data source:** Identification of WIUP renewals to July 2022, accessed at <https://geoportal.esdm.go.id/monaresia> in August 2022

**Figure 8. Intersectoral corporate control over land in Indonesia:** This figure shows that the government, whether realizing it or not, works for the greatest benefit of the corporations.



**Data source:** Accumulated data on large corporations' control over land in the oil palm plantation, mining, and forestry sectors

dominance, not only vertically, but even horizontally, is nothing strange in the motherland. Wilmar, for instance, in addition to controlling oil palm plantation land (including processing and trading companies) also owns mining companies.

## 5. PARSIMONY TO COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT REGIONS

Of all current forest estate utilization permits, 19 million ha have been granted for logging concessions, 11.3 million ha for timber plantations, 0.5 million ha of lease-use permits for mining activities, and 6 million ha for oil palm plantations. This means a total of 36.8 million ha has been granted to corporations. Conversely, only 3.1 million ha has been granted to the people. Therefore, corporations have enjoyed 92%

of allocations, and the people only 8%.

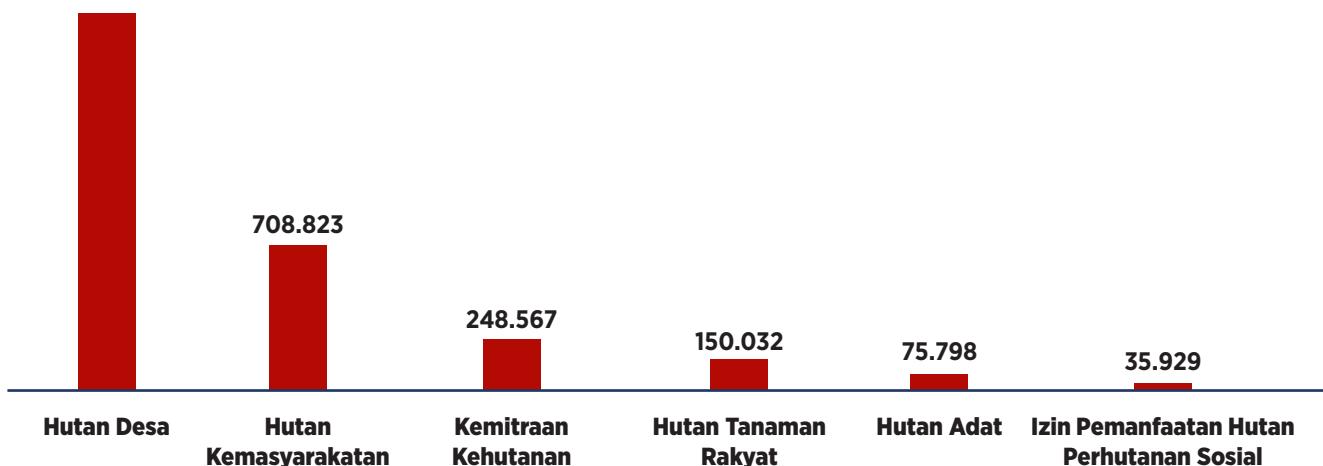
Nevertheless, allocations to the people demand checking in greater depth, as they includes practices that in fact benefit corporations, where room is opened for community plantation forest or *Hutan Tanaman Rakyat* (HTR) permits that in practice are for meeting timber requirements for the pulp and paper industry. Increasing numbers of voices, particularly from Sumatra, indicate that in practice, HTRs advantage mills belonging to Sinar Mas and APRIL.

Allocations to the people, and areas managed empirically by the people are called community management regions or *Wilayah Kelola Rakyat* (WKR). There are six types of allocation to communities under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's

**Figure 9. Allocation of community management regions through social forestry schemes by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry**

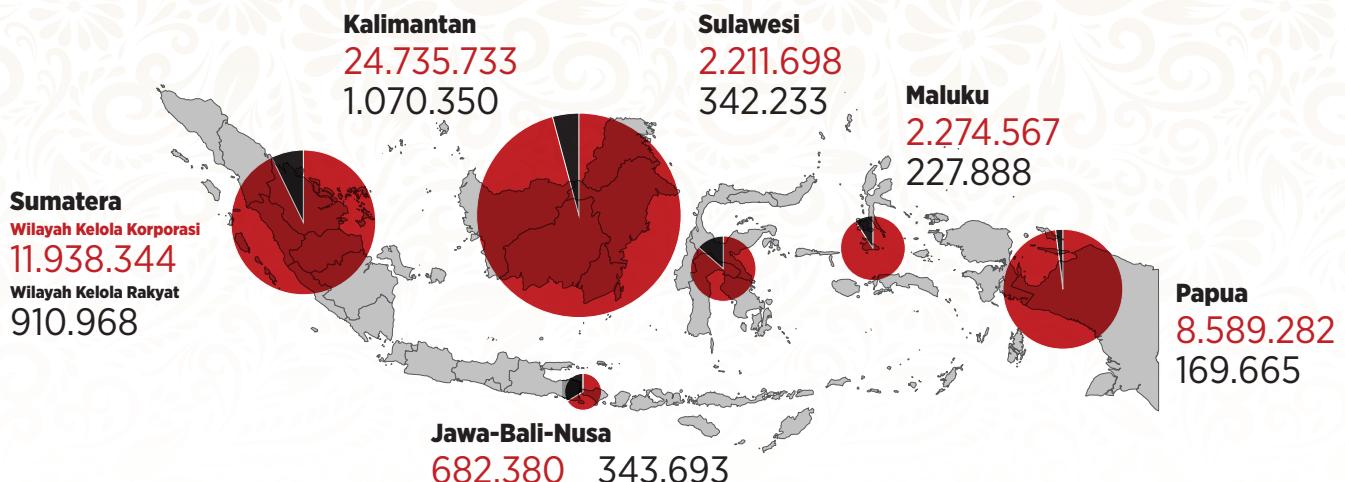
**and Forestry:** At the start of the Jokowi administration, targets were mentioned for 12.7 million ha of social forestry (PS) and the release of 4.1 million ha of convertible production forest estate for agrarian reform land or Tanah Objek Reforma Agraria (TORA). Until now, following eight years of Jokowi holding office, in addition to allocations for corporations being far higher than for the people, only 21% of targets pledged during the election campaign have been met.

**1.845.648 hektare**



**Data source:** Data on Social Forestry (Village Forest, Community Forest, Forestry Partnerships, Community Plantation Forest, Customary, and Social Forestry Forest Utilization Permits) issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) updated in 2022, and downloaded from sigap.menlhk in July 2022.

**Figure 10. Land control accumulation by corporations compared to community management regions:** 93% of land has been allocated to corporations, and only 7% to the people. The greatest area of land allocated to corporations is in Kalimantan at 46% of all land allocations.



#### Sumber data:

1. Logging concession area was obtained by processing data on forest utilization business licenses for natural forest (PBPH-HA) issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) in 2022, and accessed from <https://sigap.menlhk.go.id/server/rest/services>
2. Timber plantation area was obtained by processing data on forest utilization business licenses for plantation forest (PBPH-HT) issued by the KLHK in 2022, and accessed from <https://sigap.menlhk.go.id/server/rest/services>
3. The area of oil palm plantation licenses referencing the area of forest estate releases for non-forestry cultivation to 2022, was accessed from <https://sigap.menlhk.go.id/server/rest/services> and by processing data on business use rights (HGU) gathered by Auriga Nusantara.
4. The area of mining licenses was obtained by processing data on mining area business regions (WIUP) for June 2022 published by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), and accessed at <https://geoportal.esdm.go.id/monaresia>.

licensing administration system: village forest (HD), community forest (HKm), forestry partnerships (KK), community plantation forest (HTR), social forestry utilization permits (IPPS), and customary forest. To date, the total area allocated for all six schemes has reached only 2.7 million ha.

Further, many WKR regions put forward for formal state recognition, such as proposed customary forests, are still being impeded. Customary Land Registration Agency or *Badan Registrasi Wilayah Adat* (BRWA) records show 19.5 million ha of customary forest managed empirically by customary communities

in Indonesia. In addition, there are many instances of ongoing local community management that have yet to be granted permits or allocations by the government.

Reckless and unilateral allocation by government to corporations has led to agrarian conflicts in many regions, and helped undermine the provision of management permits for WKR regions, because the government has already issued licenses for such regions to corporations.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The data presented in brief above should be a footing for the government to return to its constitutional mandate by allocating Indonesia's natural resources for the greatest benefit of the people. The manifestation of this constitutional mandate should ideally be apparent from allocations of far more land and natural resources – than are currently being allocated – to the people, not to corporations.

Reflecting on this, the Indonesian Forum for Environment (WALHI) and Auriga Nusantara recommend:

- **The strengthening and protection of WKR community management regions:** Not only accelerating and granting permits to WKR regions, but also providing guarantees of continuity over permits now being managed by the people.
- **A thorough evaluation of current permits and licenses:** Licenses for areas issued to corporations that are not being properly managed should automatically be revoked and those areas returned to the people. For areas involving conflicts between corporations and customary/local communities, the government should become the arbitrator to protect the safety and well-being of those communities. Also, remedies or compensation must be provided to people that have been robbed of their management rights.
- Affirmative policy that **halts any addition of new licenses for corporations that already control too much land and/or dominate sectoral industries:** Intersectoral corporate control should be restricted or even abolished, and corporations that now control too much land or have intersectoral operations should not be allowed to submit proposals for new licenses, or the government should shut

down space for them to secure any additional management areas.

- **A fundamental and thorough evaluation of the Job Creation Law and/or any derivative legislation that currently favor corporations rather than the people:** The Job Creation Law has not only earned criticism, but has even robbed the people of room for management. The response should be to annul this legislation or improve it to make it more pro-people. The government and the House of Representatives (DPR RI) should read the Constitutional Court Ruling that insists on a pause in the issuing of derivative regulations of the Job Creation Law, and use this pause as a momentum to rethink the narrative in the Job Creation Law and/or any derivative regulations to detect and redress any provisions that do not favor the people.



## 7. STORIES FROM THE VILLAGES

Distributing management access over land by venerating corporations and marginalizing the people not only generates disparities, but such injustice creates ecological, systemic, social, and economic bankruptcies in communities whose forests, minerals, and lands are extracted by corporations.

However, in the midst of such bankruptcies, there are villages where the natural environment is still relatively well maintained and able to support the social systems and economies of the communities living in them. This is due to the roles such communities play in managing and maintaining their living spaces, and resisting the efforts of corporations that want to come in and exploit their management regions.

The stories below illustrate how community bankruptcies can transpire as a result of corporate transgressions, and how community strengths sustain the natural environment. These stories originate from five regions representing large and small islands in Indonesia.

The opening story comes from Mahmud Ici, who discusses the situation for villagers in Kawasi on Obi Island whose lives and natural resources have been destroyed by PT Harita nickel mines. This story, entitled *Kawasi Village: Its nickel mined, its people tormented*, provides an example of what can happen when natural resources are handed over to large corporations.

Nickel is a key material in batteries used for electric vehicles, currently being advocated for as being more friendly to the environment. The story is ironic as the extraction processes in Kawasi are far from environmentally friendly; company activities have destroyed river ecosystems and community access to

water for drinking and irrigation. PT Harita group mining activities have also contaminated waterways and decimated fishers' livelihoods. The villagers' torment will continue, because having succeeded in destroying community life in Kawasi, the company's next move will be to relocate its people, as the village falls inside the PT Harita concession region.

Still from North Maluku comes the story of villagers in Kalaodi. Also written by Mahmud Ici, this story entitled *Kalaodi: Prospering from cloves, nutmeg, and vegetables* stands in stark contrast to the story from Kawasi, because the community in Kalaodi has been granted access to natural resources. This has resulted not only in the environment remaining intact, but has also produced various high-value products sufficient to support the community and workers from around the region for generations.

A success story is also illustrated in a piece by Mira Janna on Rammang-Rammang, where a local community has been granted access to manage and protect its natural resources.

The story from Obi Island is not the only tale of devastation as a similar fate has befallen Sorowako, which has been gutted and its nickel removed by PT Vale Indonesia—formerly PT International Nickel Indonesia. Documented by Muhammad Riszky, this story follows a similar pattern to the one from Obi: mine people's nickel, destroy their lives, then move them away.

Another story of destruction comes from Pemaluan in a piece written by Abdallah Naem entitled *Pemaluan Hamlet: Disaster after disaster in the future state capital*. Again, companies reap benefits while villagers must suffer the consequences.

The sheer scale of environmental degradation following the granting of management rights to large

corporations has not made the government learn. This is clear from the increasing numbers of business licenses it grants to companies. What is its motive if not the economy, but whose economy?

For clarity, let us look at life in the Long Isun community in Mahakam Hulu District, East Kalimantan in a piece written by Yohana Tiko entitled *Long Isun: Forest cared for; village economy empowered*. Protected forest has proved capable of supporting villagers' lives for generations, moreover their economies have become stronger than those of communities whose management regions have been exploited by extractive industries.

Or we could look at Cipang Kanan in Rokan Hulu, Riau, where Kunni Masrohanti, Rezki Andika and Boy Jerry show how sustainable natural resources can be when left in the hands of villagers in their piece entitled *Cipang Kanan: Caring for customs; caring for nature*.

What has happened in Long Isun and Cipang Kanan lies in stark contrast to the experiences of the indigenous Akit people in Kepau Baru, where an extractive company is operating. Their story is told by Boy Jerry Even Sembiring in a piece entitled *Kepau Baru: Indigenous Akit people; tenants on their own land*.

Other examples of negative impacts resulting from company activities are written by Wahyu Eka Setyawan in his piece *Sumberagung Village: Devastated by the Tumpang Pitu gold mine* and Wahyu Agung Prasetyo in a piece entitled *From a speck of gold, Trenggalek could be annihilated*.

There is a vast difference, like day and night, between when natural resources are managed by communities and managed by extractive corporations. The government persists in granting operational licenses to corporations, while ignoring the fact that the devastation they cause can never be rectified. So, whose country is this anyway?



## KAWASI VILLAGE **Its nickel mined; its people tormented**

*Mahmud Ici – CEO KabarPulau.com North Maluku*

**KAWASI** Village is located in Obi Subdistrict, South Halmahera District, North Maluku Province. The village population, made up of 971 individuals in 208 households, is ethnic Galela and Tobelo; the two largest ethnicities in North Maluku. Its villagers claim that Kawasi is the oldest village on Obi Island, and its villagers were the first people to settle the island.

The village is quite remote; reaching it from Ternate involves three changes in mode of transport: firstly by ship to Jikotamo, then by motorcycle taxi to Laiwui, the capital of Obi Subdistrict, then via a one-hour speedboat journey from Laiwui to Kawasi. Even though Laiwui and Kawasi are on the same landmass, using a speedboat is necessary due to the absence of any road access. The journey to Kawasi

Heavy nickel mining machinery moored in waters near Kawasi Village, Obi Island, South Halmahera, North Maluku.

**Photo:** WALHI North Maluku.

passes several small islands, some of which have already been subject to corporate mining.

Kawasi has been surrounded by nickel mines since 2007. Its upland hills, which were previously covered with dense forest foliage, are now barren. Nickel mining production facilities now stand there, including processing plants belonging to two PT Harita subsidiaries: PT Trimegah Bangun Persada (PT TBP) and PT Gane Permai Sentosa (PT GPS). Both secured IUP mining business permits on a total concession area of 5,524 ha during the administration of former South Halmahera District Head, Muhamad Kasuba.

In addition to these two companies, three other PT Harita affiliates are operating on the PT TBP IUP concession to support the nickel ore smelters. These companies are PT Megah Surya Pertiwi (MSP), PT Halmahera Persada Lygend (HPL), and PT Halmahera Jaya Feronikel (HJF).

Before the nickel corporations arrived, Kawasi was a farming and fishing village. Its farmers grew cloves, nutmeg and coconuts. Harvest produce was partly to meet daily needs, while some was sold. The fishers lived by catching fish in good weather. Marine fish and harvests were abundant. Harmony was maintained, both between villagers themselves and with nature.

Then, in around 2001, an HPH company arrived and began logging in Kawasi. Once the timber had been taken, the Harita Group owned nickel mining corporations arrived in 2007, and all harmony was destroyed.

Nickel mining operations have given rise to serious environmental problems on land, in the sea, and in the air, with villagers complaining of mining dust causing health problems. Meanwhile, rivers like the Ake Lamo, for instance, that had once been full of life are no longer useable due to contamination from mining materials.

Before, according to Kawasi village priest, Abadan Nomor, the Ake Lamo river was not turbid. "It would (only) be murky in rains and floods, then would become clear again. This river was the main source of drinking water and other needs for people with farmland nearby. Now we can't use the river water anymore," said the Kawasi community figure.

Thanks to the Ake Lamo, villagers used to go to their fields without having to carry water. Now, the turbid water in the Ake Lamo means they have to bear extra weight in carrying water from the village. "We think it's because of the mining materials," he said.

Another river, the Toduku, which is relatively close to the settlement area is facing the same problem. In the past its clear water was a life source for the Kawasi community. “Now, forget people, even animals don’t dare to drink water from the Toduku,” said Abadan.

In addition to the Ake Lamo and Toduku, other bodies of water in mining concessions in Kawasi include Lake Karo, the Loji river and lake, and the Air Cermin and Air Terjun rivers. The Air Terjun river can still be used for villagers’ needs, but there are concerns it too may soon become contaminated. Lake Karo has already been privatized for company mining operations.

Abadan said, “Murky water means damage upstream, and the upper reaches are inside the PT GPS concession area.”

Not only water has been degraded by mining activities, but forest as well. “If we talk about forests here in Kawasi, none are intact as they’ve all been scoured by heavy machinery,” said Abadan, who went on to say that before the mining companies arrived, timber for daily needs was easy to obtain, and villagers would not need to travel far for fuelwood or construction timber.

Abadan is pessimistic about the situation in the village improving, and worries the community will be forced to relocate. He said some want to move the village because it is in the middle of a nickel industry area. “A while ago we were invited to a hospitality meeting at the company. Iswan Hasyim, the South Halmahera Deputy District Head from the previous period, was also there. Suddenly, in the middle of the event they asked me, as a community figure, to sign a paper agreeing to a relocation plan for Kawasi Village,” he said. “I asked to speak, then told them, ‘We don’t need those drawings of houses or some village. Let me make it clear, we won’t ever want to move.’ We refused,” he said.

Nevertheless, he acknowledges that life in Kawasi is becoming increasingly hard. Only a few people are making any money; those that are close to and willing to follow the companies’ wishes. “We get nothing,” he said softly. He also worries about ecological disasters occurring in his village in the future.

“Before, nature provided us with everything we needed. Food and fish were secure, air was clean, and rivers and water were cared for. Now all of those are gone,” said Abadan remembering the way things used to be. Having been born and growing up in Kawasi, he experienced how nature could once provide for all their needs.

Not only the environment has been devastated, but social systems are also in turmoil.

Before the mining companies arrived, villagers' lives were peaceful. Now, living in one's own village has become unsafe. This complaint was voiced by Nurhayati, whose home is close to a plant. When she opens her door, she can clearly see the huge building belonging to PT Harita. "We really feel company activities, from factory noise to dust. In the dry season, dust is everywhere, even in our rooms. In the rainy season it's mosquitoes," she said.

Nurhayati remembers when she was small. Her home and the village were clean; the Toduku river was their playground. "Now it's polluted with mining sediment. Everything changed in an instant when the companies came to our village," she said.

Conditions in the sea are no better than on land. Before the companies arrived, fishing was very easy. "I can compare: one hour's fishing then was like one day's fishing now," said Abadan. "Before, one hour's fishing would produce enough to eat, and to share with neighbors and family. Now, when fishing for the whole day in the sea near Kawasi, it's hard to have any excess catch," he said.

Yekson, a fisher in Kawasi, corroborated Abadan's story, saying, "In the old days, before the companies, you could still catch snapper and grouper nearby. Now, forget about snapper, even small fish are hard to find." Yekson added that before the companies arrived, after one- or two-hours' fishing he could take his catch home with him. Now it is sometimes difficult to get fish, even after a whole day's fishing. He suspects sediments carried to the sea by floods are to blame. "Boats' anchors get trapped in the mud," he said, adding, "I strongly suspect that floods carry mud from mining activities to the sea."

Though villagers are facing many issues and impacts from the nickel industry, there is little they can do about it. "Many problems are threatening us: from environmental issues and social problems in the community's midst, but we can't protest," said Yekson, "Anytime there's a protest, they get the military involved to keep people quiet. The companies are clever," he complained. ●

## KALAODI

### **Prospering from cloves, nutmeg, and vegetables**

*Mahmud Ici – CEO of KabarPulau.com, North Maluku*

**THERE** is a traditional village in the Tagafura forest on the top of a hill on Mount Kie Matubu on Tidore Island in North Maluku. Its villagers have faithfully maintained the traditional wisdom of their ancestors, including their tradition of caring for the natural environment. The village is called Kalaodi and known by the local community as Sekalaodi, which in the local Tidore language means “pointing the way” or “the right path”. Some others dub Kalaodi “the village above the clouds”.

The journey to Kalaodi from Tidore takes around 20 minutes by motor vehicle passing a steep climb from Cobodoi Ward, until finally reaching the village with its four hamlets.

Located at an elevation of 900 meters above sea level, this mountainside village falls under the East Tidore Subdistrict administrative region in Tidore Archipelago Municipality. The road to Kalaodi is fringed on both sides by dense stands of clove and nutmeg as well as bamboo and durian.

Based on government data, Kalaodi has a population of 454 souls or 116 families. Its administrative status was changed from village to ward in 2007.

According to the results of mapping conducted with WALHI North Maluku in 2014, this settlement to the east of Tidore City covers an area of more than 2,000 ha, inclusive of its settlement and plantation areas. Most homes in Kalaodi now have concrete walls and corrugated zinc roofs. Where most villagers’ homes used to have walls made of bamboo, after road access to the area was opened, villagers began building concrete homes. In the past, the only way to approach Kalaodi was along plantation trails, but transport became easier for its villagers after the government constructed a road in around 1992.

Based on a 1982 government designation, Kalaodi is actually inside the Tagafura Protection Forest. This designation unsettles its villagers as they feel it curtails their farming prospects. According to Kalaodi Ward Secretary, Samsudin Ali, “Our village had already been standing for hundreds of years when the government suddenly showed up and said it was a protection forest. At the time we had limited insight, so didn’t oppose the idea,” he explained, adding that they had good reason to do so considering their living space had been passed down from generation to generation.

Villagers sun-dry cloves picked from their plantations in Kalaodi Village, Tidore Archipelago

**Photo:** WALHI North Maluku.

A. Riwayat Hadi, a former head of Kalaodi Ward, had the same opinion. In his view, it was unfair for his village to become a protection forest. "Hundreds of years before them, Kalaodi already existed. Why should our village be a protection forest?" he said.

Before, Kalaodi was a satellite village of Soasio, the capital of Tidore. But after administrative restructuring, the village stood alone. "The question is when these settlements had been around for so long, why were they designated as being in a protection forest?" he asked, adding, "No matter what the status of that estate, villagers would still take care of nature and the environment. It's just that with this current protection forest status, we're constrained. For instance, if we want to clear land for farming."

Based on data from the Tidore Archipelago municipal offices of agriculture, forestry, estate crops, and food security, the Tagafura Protection Forest covers an area of 2,513,08 ha. Its boundaries span the three subdistricts of South Tidore, East Tidore and North Tidore. So, Kalaodi is situated right in the center of the protection forest estate.

The limited land in the region has been clear for a long time, hence some people transmigrating to several villages in Oba Subdistrict, Halmahera since 1960.



### Cloves and nutmeg

Despite managing a limited area of forest due to being located inside the Tagafura Protection Forest, Kalaodi is rich in a variety of productive, high-value crops, from bamboo and cloves to nutmeg, with the latter two being the most prevalent. These important crops provide sources of income for villagers, and decorate their gardens all the way to the hillsides. Villagers intercrop their nutmeg and clove trees by growing almond, cinnamon, durian, and areca nut. “The main earners are nutmeg and cloves. All villagers plant them,” said Hamzah Falilat, a youth figure in Kalaodi.

August to September would normally be the harvest season for cloves. But unfortunately, due to anomalous climate conditions, only a few clove trees were bearing fruit. “There are fruits, but we can’t harvest them because they’re at the ends of branches. Some are left to become pods,” said Hamzah. During the harvest season, the roads in Kalaodi would normally be covered with cloves being dried on the asphalt.

Each harvest season, Kalaodi produces significant volumes of cloves and nutmeg. “We don’t calculate it accurately, but tens or even hundreds of tons can enter Tidore City. Nutmeg and clove trees cover hundreds of hectares,” he explained.

Where cloves and nutmeg are the main crops, bamboo protects the cliffs and steeply sloping land. “Bamboo is for holding back erosion, as well as for buildings and handicrafts,” Hamzah added.

According to Hamzah, bamboo is rarely used as building material these days. Villagers prefer to use it as a raw material for handicrafts, such as *saloi* (a basket women carry to the fields) or *tolu* (a wide-brimmed hat to protect from sun and rain). “Now some women use bamboo for handicrafts to sell at the market,” he said.

Kalaodi is also a center for durian. Sometimes in the durian season, Tidore is flooded with Kalaodi durians, which are not only well known in Tidore, but also sold in Ternate.

### Billions of rupiah

Kalaodi is “showered with money” when the clove harvest arrives. Clove pickers come to the village *en masse* from various places; not only Tidore, but also Halmahera, Ternate, and even from Maluku and North Sulawesi. They come to work because yields are too large for Kalaodi farmers to harvest by themselves. Every household has hundreds of clove trees and needs labor to harvest cloves before they flower on

the trees, a process that people in North Maluku term *cengkik bapolong*.

Each of the 116 households in Kalaodi has around 100 to 150 clove trees as well as nutmeg, and needs five to ten laborers paid on a day rate or profit share basis to help them with their harvests. “It all depends on agreements with clove owners whether they’re paid daily or a share of profits. The terms for these are *harian lepas* and *harian tampung*,” said Samsudin.

Some laborers stay in Kalaodi, while others commute with fares covered by clove owners. With each household employing five to ten laborers, then around 1,000 laborers arrive each harvest season; and if each one is paid IDR 150,000 a day over the course of 10 days, then labor costs alone can be more than IDR 1.5 billion. This is exclusive of the transport costs borne by clove owners.

Meanwhile, each family will get an average of around 500 kilograms to one ton of clove harvest yield. This means that each harvest season, Kalaodi farmers produce from 50 to 100 tons of cloves. At current prices of IDR 120,000 to IDR 125,000 per kilogram, if Kalaodi produces only 50 tons, then each harvest will generate at least IDR 6 billion. Totaled with expenditure for labor, then the amount of money circulating in one harvest season in Kalaodi can reach almost IDR 10 billion. This is yet to include nutmeg, which is harvested three times a year.

Samsudin said it is not possible to calculate nutmeg harvests in real terms as they come under farmers’ daily earnings, both for fruits that are picked and those gathered after falling to the ground. Further, “Nutmeg is hard for us to calculate because sometimes the three harvests have dense fruits, while others are sometimes sparse,” he explained.

Nowadays, in Kalaodi not only nutmeg harvests are uncertain; cloves have not fruited for nearly three years. The last major clove harvest was in 2019, and trees have yet to bear fruit in 2022. The reason, according to Samsudin, is climate change. “The rainy and hot seasons are no longer fixed like they used to be. That’s what causes the cloves not to fruit,” he said.

Nevertheless, farmers in Kalaodi still get money from planting monthly crops like bananas, tomatoes, chilies, and various types of vegetables. Villagers can still pay for education and health costs from the proceeds of nutmeg and monthly crop sales. “Now, if the clove harvest season doesn’t come, we can still harvest nutmeg and horticultural crops,” said Samsudin.

### Forest governance

Villagers have established no new plantations since the area fell inside the protection forest estate. Long before its current designation, they would clear land based on community group categories: youth plantations, village or neighborhood plantations, and mosque and village infrastructure plantations. “These management divisions have been around for years, since the 1970s. Plantations are communally owned based on groups with clove and nutmeg crops,” said Samsudin.

Each plot of management land is planted with two hectares of clove and nutmeg. Youth plantations have 200 clove trees. Most of the yield from these plantations goes towards village development. “Along the road, near the cliff, 200 meters of walls were built as safety barriers. That was the result of several years of harvests from youth clove plantations,” he said.

Similarly, mosque plantations were planted with cloves and nutmeg for the needs of the mosque, while the village or neighborhood plantations are for generating village revenues in each neighborhood.

Kalaodi has four neighborhoods, each about two kilometers apart, and separated by villagers’ plantations. The four neighborhoods are Swom in the east; Dola, the ward government center, on the hilltop; Kola in the east; and Gulili in the north. Each neighborhood has its own management land. “Villagers are only allowed to use it for annual crops. The lands are communal, we only own the crops,” said Darwin Abdurahman, a community figure in Kalaodi. ●



## SOROWAKO 54 years of misery thanks to Vale

*Muhammad Riszky – WALHI South Sulawesi*

**LIKE** the expression “goats have milk, cows have a name”, Sorowako has nickel, corporations reap the benefits. Sorowako feels only misfortune.

PT Vale Indonesia, the company operating in Sorowako, East Luwu District, South Sulawesi, was established in July 1968. Originally called PT International Nickel Indonesia, the company is a major world player in nickel mining, with several media sources saying PT Vale Indonesia supplies 5% of nickel globally.

The water source used by the Koronsi'e Dongi customary community.

**Photo:** WALHI South Sulawesi

In 2014, PT Vale Indonesia’s work contract was amended to cover concessions with a total area of 118,017 ha. Its largest concession is in Sorowako with an area of 70,566 ha. In 2021, its nickel production reached 65,388 metric tons, down from 72,237 metric tons in 2020.

The sheer size of PT Vale Indonesia’s nickel mining operations has far-reaching

impacts on ecological, social, economic, and cultural conditions in Sorowako. Ironically, with PT Vale Indonesia's contribution to state revenues, and its nickel's contribution to an energy source claimed to be clean, this mine is a story of misery in Sorowako.

### **Marginalization of the Karonsi'e Dongi customary community**

The Karonsi'e Dongi community was one of several customary communities that had been living in Sorowako for generations. However, during the Darul Islam/Islamic Armed Forces of Indonesia (DI/TII) rebellion in 1957, villagers were forced to migrate to Central Sulawesi to defend their faith. In 1967, after the DI/TII rebellion had ended, they returned to their ancestral land in Sorowako to find their homes in ruins, so went back to Central Sulawesi. Unluckily, in 1968 with the issuing of a work contract to PT Inco, which in 2011 became PT Vale Indonesia, their original territory had fallen inside the company concession area.

In 1975, the Koronsi'e Dongi customary community returned to and began fighting for the right live on their ancestral homeland. At the time, increasingly large areas of land were being converted; Dongi Hamlet became a golf course and center driving training, and their rice fields became an administration office.

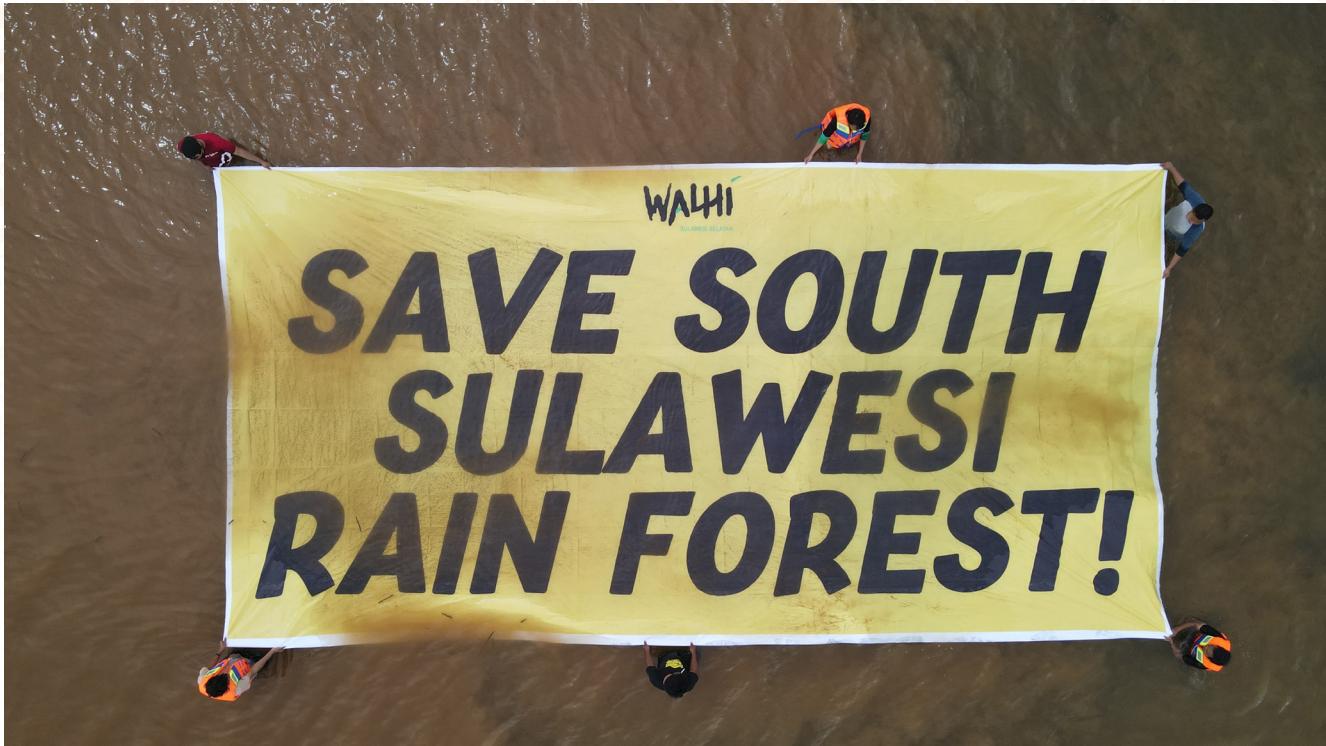
Based on records from the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of Nusantara (AMAN), since 2005, PT Vale has made many attempts to drive the Koronsi'e Dongi customary community from its ancestral land. In 2010, for instance, PT Vale built 57 houses in Dongi Village and another 57 in Ledu-Ledu Village to house customary community members. But the community rejected these attempts as it has no desire to leave its homeland.

The state also failed to meet the Koronsi'e Dongi customary community's basic rights to clean water and energy. Consequently, customary community members had to travel to small nearby rivers to fetch water. The river would turn brown during rains, and almost dry up during the dry season, so some villagers turned to well water.

Villagers would generate electricity independently using transformers. In 2015, the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) came to Dongi Hamlet in an attempt to secure access to the power grid. Six years later the Koronsi'e Dongi customary community was able to access electricity from state provider PLN.

### **Fighting for rights; gifted time behind bars**

In March 2022, for eight days from 2-10 March, the customary community and



several local organizations in East Luwu staged protests to demand their rights. The action was in follow up to earlier action taken in January 2022 as PT Vale Indonesia had rejected their demands.

On the eighth day, 10 March 2022, three human rights activists and customary community defenders: Hamrullah, Renaldy, and Nimrod Sibanti were arrested by the police on charges of incitement, criminal damage, and assault. Until now, all three are being represented by the Legal Aid Coalition for Communities in the PT Vale Indonesia Mining Circle (*Koalisi Bantuan Hukum untuk Masyarakat Lingkar Tambang PT Vale Indonesia*).

Their legal team argued that there was no evidence or grounds for the charges against Hamrullah, Renaldy, and Nimrod Sibanti. During a court session on Tuesday, 19 July 2022, the defence said the evidence presented during the trial could not prove their guilt.

During the following session on Tuesday, 26 July, the legal team said the public prosecutor's rebuttal was not backed up by any valid argument, and did little more than reiterate the original claims. Nevertheless, on Monday, 1 August, the court found Hamrullah and Nimrod Sibanti guilty as charged and sentenced them to six months in prison, whereas Renaldy was found not guilty.

Protest poster by WALHI South Sulawesi demanding protection of Sulawesi's forests, including in East Luwu.

**Photo:** WALHI South Sulawesi

## Forest loss

Based on the results of an investigation and monitoring by WALHI South Sulawesi, deforestation of South Sulawesi's rainforest in the Sorowako Block has reached 4,449.22 ha, with activities on an additional 3.97 ha outside the concession. This shows the lack of oversight over PT Vale Indonesia and its mining activities. One of PT Vale Indonesia's nickel mining sites is in the Sorowako Block (WALHI South Sulawesi).

Looking at its energy sources, 60 percent of the energy PT Vale Indonesia uses is still generated using dirty coal. This stands in stark contrast with a statement from PT Vale Indonesia President Director, Febriany Eddy, saying the company is committed to taking care of the earth.

According to WALHI South Sulawesi, PT Vale Indonesia has also shut down public information access, particularly for indigenous and local communities. Obligatory information that should be made available to the public includes mining work plans, monitoring plans and results, environmental management and restoration, and plans for and outcomes of community empowerment.

PT Vale Indonesia has also failed to publish mineral types and content to the Sumitomo Corporation plant. Methods used for purifying nickel and managing wastewater and air pollution have also not been published transparently.

Further, PT Vale has disregarded the rights of the Koronsi'e Dongi customary community to the extent than even when the community and environmental defenders tried to secure these rights, the authorities applied repressive means avoiding any dialog, leaving three activists behind bars. That is the story of Sorowako's misfortune. ●

## SALENRANG VILLAGE A karst preserving counter economy

*Mira Janna – WALHI South Sulawesi*

Rammang-Rammang in Salenrang Village, Maros District, South Sulawesi is entering its seventh year after being designated an ecotourism region in 2015. This designation was the fruit of a long struggle by villagers under Persatuan Rakyat Salenrang (PRS)<sup>1</sup> who had been fighting against a marble mining company since its license was issued in 2007 and later revoked in 2013.

A conviction that karst ecosystems are a life support formed the foundation for PRS's resistance against the company. In the villagers' view, karst ecosystems are water retainers, that if preserved, will ensure the constant availability of ground water, archaeological riches, geomorphological uniqueness and biodiversity.

Karst ecosystems also have a climate change mitigation function and provide environmental balance against ecological disasters. Karstification processes and photosynthesis in vegetation cover on karsts can absorb carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). During the karstification process, karst can break down calcium carbonate (CaCO<sub>3</sub>). If one ton of CaCO<sub>3</sub> is broken down in karstification, karst can absorb 0.12 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. Consequently, karsts are considered to be climate balancing ecosystems.

### Opposing an extractive economy

Before being known for tourism, Salenrang Village, located in Bontoa Subdistrict, had a history of being an extractive economy. The first marble mining exploration license in Salenrang was issued in 2007 and upgraded to become a production operations license in 2010.

There were three mines in the region: Mount Baraka, Belaka, and Hutan Batu, with an overall area of approximately 100 hectares. According to locals, the mine in the Baraka area became operational, and the concession holder, PT Grasada, constructed a road to facilitate company operations.

However, the Salenrang villagers' greatest hurdle in fighting to preserve their karst was not the company, but controlling their own neighbors who were in favor of

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<sup>1</sup> Persatuan Rakyat Salenrang (PRS) is an action forum for communities in Salenrang Village.



An extractive economy surrounds the Maros karst region, including the Rammang-Rammang ecotourism area

**Photo:** Mongabay  
Indonesia/Cahyo Rahmadi

mining after getting benefits from the company. Pro-mining villagers would frequently intimidate those who rejected the company, even resorting to armed threats, as they worried that rejection by the community could threaten their jobs in the company.

Despite the adversity, the anti-mining villagers persisted with their resistance movement. One way was by establishing PRS, which after gaining public support, succeeded in lobbying the government to revoke the marble mining license in 2013. From that point on, Salenrang villagers built an ecotourism-based counter economy.

### Towards a sustainable economy

Salenrang villagers established ecotourism as a form of counter economy to marble mining, and chose ecotourism as it is closer to nature. Now the fruit of their efforts is known as Rammang-Rammang Tourism. Inaugurated in 2015, now Rammang-Rammang Tourism has even been covered in overseas

broadcasts. The region was formalized as a Tourism Village by Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, on Thursday, 17 June 2021. The minister's visit was also to inspect Salenrang Village's readiness to become a UNESCO Global Geopark. Later, a UNESCO assessor team will evaluate its viability.

Rammang-Rammang Tourism is managed collectively by the community through its Tourism Awareness Group or *Pokdarwis*. For three consecutive years, the *Pokdarwis* has staged the Rammang-Rammang Festival to promote its ecotourism, which not only offers natural beauty, but history and cultural traditions. All rules governing tourism, from apportioning tourists to whose boats will be used, and who does what in maintaining the beauty and ecological functions of the region, are organized collectively.

Now, the villagers have complemented the tourism area with training and education facilities. Other activities include promoting waste management with 'ecobricks', river conservation, developing local cuisine, and building organic farming systems. ●



## PEMALUAN HAMLET **Disaster after disaster in the future state capital**

*Abdallah Naem*

**THIS** is the tale of the many misfortunes befalling villagers in the future state capital.

One upon a time, in the early 1970s, the company International Timber Corporation Indonesia Kartika Utama (PT ITCIKU) secured a concession to exploit primary forest in the Sepaku landscape. As a result of the concession, the Suku Balik community in Pemaluan was severely impacted when most of its resources and living space were suddenly taken by the company. There had been no announcement, let alone talks beforehand about the community's living space.

Part of the area designated as the state capital city in North Penajam Paser, East Kalimantan

**Photo:** Dandy Koswaraputra.

Nevertheless, PT ITCIKU operations continued regardless. Then, when part of the PT ITCIKU concession became an industrial plantation forest (HTI) for the company International Timber Corporation Hutani Manunggal (ITCI HM) in 2006, the Suku Balik community's suffering continued. Later, there was no smoke without fire, in 2019 President Jokowi announced that the national capital city (IKN) would be relocated to the region.

Pemaluan Hamlet is around 10 kilometers away from IKN's 'point zero' or future center point. Part of the village is even inside the core zone of the new city's government administrative center. Pemaluan, one of the oldest Balik and Paser community villages in Sepaku, North Penajam Paser District, East Kalimantan, is located near the intersection of the national Sepaku–Petung road and the main road belonging to PT ITCIKU.

One day, nearing the end of 2019, three months after President Jokowi had announced that the state capital would be moving to their village, Balik Customary Community Secretary, Menyu, visited the home of Customary Chief, Jubain, around 50 meters from the PT ITCIKU company road. A notebook left behind by Jubain's late father, also a customary chief of the Balik community in Pemaluan, was the topic of their conversation. The book contained records of important events in the village's past.

"Where's that book the first people made," asked Menyu.

"Here it is, but it doesn't have a date," Jubain replied.

"No problem. The important thing is the name, as that's an old record."

The conclusion from the documentation was the customary chief in Pemaluan saying ITCI was mistaken in saying it had been there before the villagers. "Villagers didn't enter company land, but the company came and took villagers' land," Jubain, who had been born 56 years ago, confirmed.

The second topic then focused on tracing their village's past. Jubain had grown up with his family in Pemaluan on the banks of the Pemaluan River. The river, which empties into Balikpapan Bay, was an important route for them to transport produce to Balikpapan. Balik and Paser people used to live in leaf-roofed houses along the river at the forest edge and lived from farming. "My parents practiced swidden farming," said Jubain.

Images of the Sepaku forest wilderness filled with trees specific to Kalimantan remained vivid in Jubain's memory. From kapok and meranti to ironwood, "Huge trees like drums, with diameters of a meter or more," said Jubain.

Jubain said villagers would farm to meet their food needs, while to earn cash, they would rely on forest products by gathering resin, rattan, and making roof shingles. To get fruits, said Menyu, they would go to the forest where all forms of fruit growing in Kalimantan, such as lansium, lai, durian, rambutan, mangosteen, and



chempedak, were freely available. "Since the company came, none of those are left. We've become poor," said Menyu, "And if the company made us poor, what about the capital city?"

Recently, Jubain suspects that all the mistakes in granting the concession stemmed from the way investors looked at the villagers. Investors mapped the region for distance without seeing and talking with the locals. "Maybe they made their maps from planes or helicopters," he said.

A toll road bisecting forest in the national capital city (IKN)

**Photo:** Dandy Koswaraputra.

He says his suspicion has good reason. Homes in his parents' time had roofs made of sago palm leaves, so settlements would look like forest when observed using remote sensing. Jubain recalls company people starting to arrive in around 1972. The commotion began with PT ITCIKU people building a road, a base camp, and a harbor 13 km from Pemaluan.

Hard rock in the Sepaku landscape was detonated into fragments, transported and stacked up to form the main road passing through Pemaluan to Senoni in Kutai Kartanegara District, and Perintali, Jambuk, and Bongan in West Kutai. The road was the start of the destruction of the Sepaku landscape's forest ecosystems. Logging trucks were free to enter hamlets. Company people would mobilize workers for *clearing*; the term Sepaku people use for cutting down trees inside forests in the Sepaku landscape.

Jubain still remembers a PT ITCIKU sub-contractor Sendi Jaya under the command of a man named Khalida Bugis. He would look for manpower then go into the forest to fell wood for export using chainsaws. They would cut down trees, which would then be transported using bulldozers, skidders, and timber trucks. "In those days there were no excavators," Jubain explained.

Throughout company operations from 1972 to 2006, Jubain and other villagers were forced to breathe in clouds of dust from the main road, which would only disappear when it rained. "Day and night, around every 10 minutes or so company logging trucks would pass by. Their armada was huge and polluting. We would just see them pass us and cover us in dust," he said.

Company people cut down forest around the village without mercy. The length of the road, both left and right, they would clear cut forest leaving nothing behind. "When the company came, our livelihoods disappeared. There was no forest left, it was all bare, completely cut down," he said.

According to Jubain, this transpired because the company people controlled everything, and the villagers had no power at all. "We couldn't do anything because, you know, it was the Soeharto military era. Guard posts had the army as security, we were scared. In 1985 to 1986 we weren't allowed to cut timber anymore, nobody outside the company was," he said.

Before the company arrived, the local people had more than enough for their needs. "Before the company came our parents here were very rich," said Menyu, "Why do I say that? Because even though they had no spending money, their food and shelter needs were more than met and provided by nature."

"For instance," he said, "If they felt like eating fish, villagers could go 200 meters from home. In half an hour they could get two or three kilograms of fish."

Similarly, if villagers needed meat, all they would have to do is set snare traps behind their homes along the edges of their plantations only around 300-400 meters away.

"If they waited two or three days, they could have enough venison to feed fifteen families," he said.

### **Lost culture**

The company's arrival also caused some community cultural norms to disappear. Examples are healing rituals known as *belian* or *mulung*. Jubain said *belian* was still being practiced until around 1985. Then, as shamans passed away, the tradition gradually disappeared from the community. Jubain remembers that his hamlet used to have a shaman, the late Yusuf, but now there is nobody to continue the tradition.

In his view, the *belian* tradition of the Balik people was greatly affected by the company taking over their living space, namely the forest and all its ecosystems. "Since 1972, the ITCIKU timber company came and destroyed the forest around our village," said Jubain. He named dozens of specific timber root and plant species that were used during *belian* ceremonies held for safety and well-being and to heal villagers. All these species were available in the forest. "For instance," said Jubain, "there was one known as *paru* wood, and there was a kind of galangal plant, but bigger. At least 44 types of wood and plants were commonly used in *belian* ceremonies," he said.

Those species are hard to find these days. Now, the rich forest ecosystems have disappeared and been replaced by only two species. "Now we only find acacia and eucalyptus trees," he said.

These two timber species are managed by the company PT ITCI HM, which controls an area of 162,513 ha, using a five-year harvest rotation. PT ITCI HM belongs to the tycoon Sukanto Tanoto and supplies pulp wood to Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP) or Asia Pacific Resources International Holdings Ltd. (APRIL). Before that, the PT ITCI HM concession was the PT ITCIKU area, which was controlled by Hashim Djojohadikusumo, younger brother of Prabowo Subianto, Minister of Defense in the current *Indonesia Maju* cabinet.

### **Villagers bear the brunt of disasters**

Pemaluan Hamlet, which is home to around 67 ethnic Balik families, now has to endure frequent floods. The rivers and land managed by villagers are located in the Pemaluan river ecosystem along with its tributaries.

Jubain said the Balik and Paser community management regions on the plains of the Liwang, Raya, Benieng, Sabut, Lulop, and Buka rivers can no longer be relied upon

because they are controlled by the company, and also because the water quality is worsening. According to Jubain, this is caused by the company's exploitation of the forest.

Jubain recognized that in the past they were never short of water because the river would meet their clean water needs. Disruptions to their drinking water needs started to emerge in the 1990s. Now, villagers must buy water for IDR 5,000 for each 12-liter jerrycan. For bathing and washing, they draw water from a well in front of their homes. During the dry season, people in the hamlet are forced to buy water from a reservoir in the PT ITCI HM company concession. At a time when the living space of the indigenous Balik people in Pemaluan Hamlet is becoming increasingly constrained, it seems the capital city development will marginalize them further still.





## LONG ISUN **Forest cared for; village economy empowered**

*Yohana Tiko*

Children setting off for school in Long Isun. Scenes like this will disappear if the government chooses to issue licenses for extractive forestry practices.

**Photo:** Zonautara.com/  
Ronny A. Buol

**LET ME INTRODUCE** Lung Isun: These are names of tributaries of the Melaseh River in Mahakam Hulu District, East Kalimantan, but some people also believe Long Isun to be the name of the first person who settled in the hamlet of the same name. Whatever the origins of their hamlet's name, its people like to call the region Lung Isung.

Lung Isun is a Bahau Busang Umaq Suling customary community settlement that has its origins in a mother hamlet named Balui in Sarawak, Malaysia. Based on stories from several community figures in the hamlet, Bahau Umaaq Suling Dayak people are descendants of ethnic Apo Kayan Dayaks.

In administrative terms, Long Isun Hamlet is in Long Pahangai Subdistrict, Mahakam Hulu District, East Kalimantan. The hamlet is dominated by pristine tropical rainforest. For the Bahau customary community, the forest is their life support.

The ecology of the landscape in Lung Isun comprises natural forest, swidden farmland, plantations, hills, rivers, and caves. River ecosystems in the region are formed by the Malaseh and Danum Buaq rivers. The Melaseh has many tributaries, while the Danum Buaq has only six.

It is this landscape ecology that later influenced Bahau customary community's economic system. Almost all villagers in Long Isun Hamlet practice swidden and fixed farming. Swidden fields are still planted with the local rice varieties: *parai telun lasaq*, *parai beteng a'a*, *parai murung/pekaaq apau*, and *parai tavaan*.

From farming, money circulating in the Long Isun community can reach IDR 9 billion a year. Other equally valuable economic activities include hunting, animal husbandry, and fish farming, from which the hamlet generates around IDR 900 million a year. Villagers also work processing timber for building materials, which can generate an estimated IDR 195 million annually. Meanwhile, handicrafts such as beads and so on can generate around IDR 10 million a year.

In the context of land ownership, the community is divided into three categories. The first comprises 43 families, each owning 0.5–1 hectare of farming land; the second has 18 families, each owning less than 0.5 hectares; and the last is made up of 34 families, each owning land of more than 1–8 hectares.

In addition to individually owned land, all indigenous inhabitants are involved in managing customary land. Such management is carried out communally, and is based on applicable customary laws.

Seventeen other households do not practice farming land management activities as they are migrants and have no farmland. Most earn their living as traders or tradespersons, and from gathering agarwood resin. Despite not owning land, they are lent land to build homes and conduct rudimentary farming activities.

### **Lung Isun's resistance**

One day, the state unilaterally declared the customary forest belonging to the Bahau customary community as state forest estate. Following which, in 2008, the state granted an IUPHHK-HA natural forest product utilization business permit to PT

Kemakmuran Berkah Timber (PT KBT). Through Minister of Forestry Decree No. 217/MENHUT-II/2008, on 9 June 2008 the company secured a concession of 82,810 ha. Some of this land was inside the Long Pahangai Subdistrict region (12,395 ha), while the remainder was inside the Lung Isun customary region. Once the concession license had been issued, various pernicious scenarios emerged to facilitate PT KBT's activities.

The anger of the Bahau customary community came to a head in 2014, triggered by the company's wholesale exploitation of the forest, with 2,000 ha logged in a ruthless fashion.

In May 2014, villagers decided to take action by halting the company's heavy machinery. The incident caused several villagers to be processed by the West Kutai District Police, with one customary community defender, Theodorus Tekwan, being declared a suspect and detained for 110 days. Things did not stop there; on the contrary, the community's resolve to defend its sovereignty over its customary territory grew in magnitude.

The logging had a bad impact on life in the Lung Isun customary community. Places where villagers catch fish in the Besangaq River became turbid and muddy as a result of PT KBT activities. "At that time there were no fish. Perhaps they had moved from Besangaq to Melaseh because their eyes couldn't stand the murky water," said Lusang Arang, Customary Chief of Long Isun Hamlet, "But now the fish have returned, the water is clearing and pigs are starting to appear, just wandering around the location."

But getting the Lung Isun forest back was no easy task. After Tekwan's arrest, villagers continued to strengthen their resistance. They consolidated and thought how to resolve the conflict and return their lives to the golden years of the 1970s.

One of the most necessary needs for the Bahau customary community was a regional regulation to form the legal basis for recognition and protection of the people of Lung Isun as a customary community. Preparation efforts were undertaken, one of which was preparing various pieces of necessary documentation.

This process lasted for nine months until 19 September 2018, when the community submitted an official request to the Mahakam Ulu District Government. During the process, Mahakam Ulu District Legislative Assembly Chair, Novita Bulan stood steadfastly with the community. In accordance with Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 52/2014, the request was passed to the Chair of the Customary Law Community Recognition and Protection Committee, a position held by the District Regional Secretary. After that, a copy of the request was handed directly to the district head.



The government issued a large-scale logging license to PT Berkah Kemakmuran Timber (BKT) in Long Isun. Logging has taken away the local community's management region and livelihood source

**Photo:** Perkumpulan Nurani Perempuan

The advocacy process went on for almost six years, during which the Lung Isun community treated everyone involved as an honorary "Dayak". They were welcomed with traditional ceremonies, embraced and given Dayak names. The people of Long Isun believe such rituals can strengthen ties, as eventually everyone becomes family and a member of the Bahau Umaaq Suling community.

Of course, the expectation from this process was victory, and the Lung Isun community was indeed able to regain its sovereignty and care for its territory. For that reason, regional regulations on recognition and protection of customary law communities can be a strong platform, including becoming the basis for shrinking the concessions of companies that destroy the environment. This long process also became a lesson to keep submitting to virtue. Not only for the people of Long Isun, but also for everyone else involved. ●

## KEPAU BARU

### **Indigenous Akit people; tenants on their own land**

*Boy Jerry Even Sembiring*

**KEPAU BARU** is a village in East Tebing Tinggi Subdistrict, Meranti Archipelago District, Riau. One hundred percent of Kepau Baru's land area constitutes peatland ecosystems. In administrative terms, Kepau Baru covers an area of 24,898 ha—approximately 89% of which is forest estate. Around 36.2% of Kepau Baru is controlled by investors.<sup>2</sup> PT Nasional Sago Prima, holder of a non-timber forest product utilization permit (IUPHHK-BK), controls 9,053 ha of forest estate in the region. In addition, most productive land is controlled by local landowners from Selat Panjang, the capital of Meranti Archipelago District.

The journey from Selat Panjang to Kepau Baru takes from six to nine hours and involves two transit points: first at the Tanjung Buton port in Siak District, and then overnight in the village of Sungai Tohor. From Sungai Tohor, the journey to Kepau passes a wooden walkway fringing the PT Nasional Sago Prima canal.

The name Kepau Baru comes from the time the first settlement was established. Indigenous Akit people named the settlement Teluk Kepau after the many kepau trees growing in the estuary and along the coast. This village has now become the capital of Kepau Baru following its administrative breakaway from Teluk Buntal Village. According to testimonies from a villager named Akiat and his mother in February 2014, the indigenous Akit people in Kepau Baru are mixed with ethnic Chinese. In around the mid-1800s, sailors and traders from Hong Kong would come ashore in Kepau Baru, and several stayed and married with the indigenous inhabitants. With the passing of time, the population in Kepau has become increasingly heterogenous with interethnic marriages becoming more and more frequent.

### **Outsiders on their own land**

The indigenous Akit people used to live from hunting in the forest, fishing, and gathering forest products. They began farming at the end of the 1980s by cultivating sago, some of which they sold and some they kept for their own food needs. That notwithstanding, from 1974 Akit people's activities were disrupted by a forestry sector concession when the government granted HPH logging rights to PT National

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<sup>2</sup> Spatial data processed from various sources



Timber Forest Product (PT NTFP) through Minister of Agriculture Decree No. 135/KPTS/UM/3/1974 dated 14 March 1974 for a concession area of 100,000 ha inside the Akit customary region.

At first, disruption to the Akit community was not particularly significant as the company allowed villagers to continue hunting and gathering inside the concession as long as they did not disturb logging activities in the natural forest. PT NTFP even actively helped the community. However, when concession rights were transferred from PT NTFP to PT National Sago Prima (NSP), land grabs began afflicting the Akit community.

In fact, PT NTFP's implementation of its concession rights had been problematic as the company had failed to carry out reforestation activities in its work area, but planted sago by involving villagers in order to appear participatory. This was reinforced with the issuing of Minister of Forestry Decree No. 1083/MENHUT-IV/1995 on a Pure Sago Industrial Plantation Forest Concession in Teluk Kepau Forest, Tebing Tinggi Subdistrict, Bengkalis District, Riau Province of 19,900 ha for 20 years. The legality of the PT NTFP work area in forest estate was stipulated based on Minister of Forestry Decree No. 353/MENHUT-II/2008 dated 24 September 2008 on Provision of a Non-Timber Forest Product Utilization Business Permit for an Industrial Sago Plantation Forest of 21,620 ha.

Illegal logging in the Kepau Baru Lestari community forest location in April 2022

**Photo:** WALHI Riau

The work area was then transferred to PT National Sago Prima (PT NSP) based on Minister of Forestry Decree No. 380/Menhut-II/2009 dated 25 June 2009 on Amendments to Minister of Forestry Decree No. SK.353/Menhut-II/2008 dated 24 September 2008.<sup>3</sup> Following a boundary demarcation meeting in 2011, the definitive area of the PT NSP concession was set at 21,418 ha through Minister of Forestry Decree No. 77/Menhut-II/2013, dated 4 February 2013.

The permit transfer process did not involve the community in any way, shape or form, and villagers only found out about PT NSP after the ownership transfer had already taken place. At the time, the Teluk Buntal Village Head carried out so called '*sosialisasi*' with the aim of forcing villagers to hand over their land. In the name of the state, the takeover process of communal land belonging to the Akit community began. Akiat and several other villagers said that in a village meeting land was taken without compensation.

It was not only the company that grabbed communal land belonging to the Akit community. Local landowners or *tokeh*, and financiers from the district capital also grabbed land by buying harvest yield in advance – a practice known as '*ijon*' – and purchasing villagers' land at low prices. This resulted in many villagers being left with only small plots of land.

Conditions worsened with the catastrophic fires in 2014. Fire from the PT NSP work area spread to community plantations leaving villagers unable to pay their debts as the produce they had sold in advance was destroyed by fire. There were no payments, but only small amounts of aid, which were far lower than the value of the villagers' sago burned in the fire. As a consequence, debt payments were replaced by land ownership handovers.

Disparities in land control between villagers, the corporation, and *tokeh* caused the majority of villagers, who had previously been farmers, to become day-rate laborers with the company. The grandeur and wealth of Sampoerna Group subsidiary PT NSP contrasted starkly with the reality of the social situation. It is this that caused Kepau Baru to become one of the most disadvantaged villages in East Tebing Tinggi Subdistrict. Many of its young people dropped out of school, and many villagers moved to cities to become household helpers or workers in other informal sectors.

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<sup>3</sup> Agung Maulana, Pengelolaan Perkebunan Sagu (*Metroxylon spp*) di PT National Sago Prima, Selat Panjang, Riau: Seleksi Bibit Sagu Berdasarkan Jenis, Tinggi Pohon Induk and Bobot Bibit Sagu terhadap Pertumbuhan Bibit Sagu di Persemaian. 2011. Dissertation, IPB University, Bogor, pp. 12-13.

### The 2014 catastrophe

On 31 January 2014, Cik Manan's cell phone rang. Immediately he seemed involved in a serious conversation. Ending the call, he cried, "Pik, come with me to Kepau. The Sampoerna sago plantation's been burning since yesterday. They say the fire's spreading and people are busy evacuating. Let's help them put out fires spreading to their fields."<sup>4</sup>

The above passage was the start of the WALHI Riau team in Sungai Tohor finding out about the devastating fires in the PT NSP work area around Kepau Baru Village. The event was terrible, not only damaging for PT NSP, but also causing huge losses for villagers, and exacerbating poverty in Kepau Baru. Numbers of victims of the *ijon* practice grew significantly, with villagers' land being transferred to landowners. Villagers were unable to harvest sago, or even become harvest laborers, as there was no longer any sago in landowners' plantations to harvest. Some village smallholders fell into debt, and finally had to pay off debts by handing over their land.

Initially, the Sampoerna subsidiary provided compensation to the community, but later failed to keep its promises. Villagers were only given pocket money, corn seedlings, and rudimentary foods. This aid came with the obligation to sign statements annulling PT NSP's obligation to replace villagers' burned sago plantations. WALHI Riau was unable to hold villagers back from accepting the aid as they were desperate for cash and food. The situation was different for landowners from the district capital, who rejected the unfair compensation scheme, and finally secured higher compensation through a more long-winded process.

Finally, increasing numbers of indigenous Akit people ended up working as day-rate laborers left to lodge on the PT NSP concession and on land now belonging to landowners, the majority of whom come from the district capital, Selat Panjang. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of young people have left to become low-paid informal workers in cities and towns.

### Efforts to bounce back

The 2014 catastrophe, and a visit from President Joko Widodo had the effect of consolidating the struggle of the Kepau Baru community with those of other villages in East Tebing Tinggi Subdistrict. Kepau Baru villagers joined with the Sungai Tohor community to reject an investment by PT Lestari Unggul Makmur (PT LUM), which had secured a 10,390-ha concession in the region, on the grounds that hundreds of hectares of forest estate in Kepau Baru were inside the PT LUM concession area.

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<sup>4</sup> Footnote missing here.

This combined effort paid off.<sup>5</sup> On 14 June 2016, the Minister of Environment and Forestry issued Minister of Environment and Forestry Decree No. 444/Menlhk/Setjen/HPL.1/6/2016 on Annulment of Minister of Forestry Decree on Provision of an IUPHHK-HT to PT Lestari Unggul Makmur for 10,390 ha. The whole concession area was then handed over to the community. Through a Village Forest Managers Institution (LPHD) the Kepau Baru community gained access to a social forestry Village Forest scheme for an area of 844 ha.<sup>6</sup>

Not stopping there, the Kepau Baru Lestari Farmer Group led by Akiat then submitted a request for a Community Forest (HKm) permit on 10 December 2017. They succeeded, and of the proposed 3,054 ha of HKm, 1,505 ha was granted a permit through Minister of Environment and Forestry Decree No. 7443/MENLHK-PSKL/PSL.0/12/2020.

Unfortunately, the community has yet to be able to manage either of the significantly large legally designated areas due to problems of accessibility and limited capital. The village forest location takes 30 minutes to an hour to reach, while the HKm location is much further and takes around seven to nine hours by road, or a more expensive one-hour journey by sea.

The situation in the two locations has become risk prone as they both still have relatively intact forest cover, particularly the HKm location. This means they still have abundant timber, and are frequently subject to logging by villagers from outside Kepau backed by certain unscrupulous individuals. ●

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.walhi.or.id/10-tahun-berjuang-7-desa-kecamatan-tebing-tinggi-timur-rebut-daulat-penuh-atas-wilayah-kelola> accessed on 1 August 2022

<sup>6</sup> Legal documentation was surrendered in early 2017, but the decree was passed in December 2016

## CIPANG KANAN

### **Caring for customs; caring for nature**

*Kunni Masrohanti, Rezki Andika, Boy Jerry Even Sembiring*

**CIPANG** Kanan is one of a number of villages in Rokan IV Koto Subdistrict, Rokan Hulu District, Riau Province known for maintaining its customs and traditions from generation to generation. From the community narrative, the people of Cipang Kanan originated from Pagaruyung.<sup>7</sup> Their identity and origins are the same as those in three other villages in the same landscape, namely Cipang Kiri, Tibawan, and Cipang Kiri Hulu. These four villages are known as the Cipang Raya Customary Community.

“Cipang Kanan can be called the Kedatuan Badaro Sati region,” said Abadi, the village head of Cipang Kanan, when he and a community figures from Cipang Kanan visited the WALHI Riau office in December 2021.

The existence of the Kedatuan Badaro Sati as a customary community has yet to be fully acknowledged by the state. However, the Cipang Kanan village region has been recognized as a customary village, in accordance with Article 3 of Rokan Hulu District Regulation No. 1/2015 on Determination of Villages and Customary Villages

#### **Cipang's victory in Rokan Kiri**

Members of the customary community in Cipang had long believed that caring for nature is identical to preserving culture. Then, in 2017, Cipang came under threat from a planned Strategic National Project with the development of the Rokan Kiri Reservoir.

As is the case with many development plans by the state, villagers in Cipang Kanan were never once involved in discussing the Rokan Kiri Reservoir development plan. The reservoir, which was not a necessity for the community, became a Strategic National Project (PSN) through Presidential Regulation No. 58/2017 on Amendments to Presidential Regulation No. 3/2016 on Accelerating the Implementation of Strategic National Projects.

The claimed objectives of the project were to meet water needs for irrigation, clean water, and hydroelectric power. The fact is the project could potentially inundate

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<sup>7</sup> Kunni Masrohanti. 2020. Cipang Kanan, Inherited Traditions. <https://riaupos.jawapos.com/seni-budaya/21/06/2020/233619/cipang-kanan-tradisi-yang-diwariskan.html> Accessed on 30 July 2022



four villages, take away the livelihood sources of around 15,000 people, and upset the balance of pristine ecosystems in the Bukit Barisan mountain range. Further, traditions that had been maintained for hundreds of years would be threatened with extinction. Clearly, the Rokan Kiri Reservoir development threatened Cipang Kanan environmentally, economically, and culturally.

These threats became grounds for the Cipang Kanan community associated under the Cipang Raya Customary Community to reject the proposed Rokan Kiri Reservoir development. They had drawn lessons from the Koto Panjang Hydroelectric Power Station (PLTA) development that had caused deep wounds with 200 families left without compensation, 26,444 families left without a homeland, and the loss of livelihood sources in the form 8,899 ha of rice fields and plantations.<sup>8</sup>

The Rokan Hulu District Head responded to the Cipang Raya Customary Community's rejection by sending a letter to the Minister of Public Works and Housing (PUPR) on objections to the dam development. Then, on 9 May 2018, 1,500 villagers staged a demonstration in the provincial capital, Pekanbaru. The action rejecting the reservoir development, which was also supported by students and other civil society groups, succeeded in prompting Riau Province Regional Secretary, Ahmad Hijani on behalf of the Acting Riau Governor, to send a letter of rejection concerning the reservoir development.

A Cipang Kanan community traditional ritual opening a Lubuk Larangan restricted fishing area in May 2022.

**Photo:** WALHI Riau

<sup>8</sup> WALHI. 2018. Strategic National Project Threatens Civilization in Rokan Hulu, Riau Province.

The months-long efforts of the community finally paid off with the President committing to evaluate the reservoir project, and remove the planned development from the list of strategic national projects through the passing of Presidential Regulation No. 109/2020 on 20 November 2020.

### Living in balance

Cipang Kanan community members believe that preserving nature can ensure the survival and continuity of future generations. This belief is apparent from Cipang Kanan customary community culture being intertwined with nature. Like the tradition of *Lubuk Larangan*, a community conservation activity carried out to protect river fishing grounds in Cipang Kanan. This is a real manifestation of the customary community's belief that rivers are life sources that must be cared for and preserved. Then there is the tradition known as *Turun Mandi* of bathing newborn babies in rivers, the aim of which is to introduce them to the natural environment. These are strong grounds for the Cipang Kanan community to continue striving to care for nature conservation.

To meet economic needs, in addition to being rubber farmers, Cipang Kanan villagers also secure income from *sialang* honey. Produced by wild honeybees that nest in *sialang* trees, this honey is always safeguarded by Cipang Kanan villagers to grow the community economy. The Rokan River with its clean water and fish is another livelihood source for meeting community needs. The forest also plays a role in meeting community needs for herbs and spices, various fruits, and fuelwood.

Sociocultural aspects are always linked to the Cipang Kanan community. Cultural activities are passed on at birth with the tradition of *Turun Mandi*. The community also upholds conservation in the village through customary rules prohibiting the felling of forest trees except for household needs. Timber cannot be extracted arbitrarily as villagers wishing to extract timber must request permission from and relay their need to a customary leader, which they refer to as *Datuk*.<sup>9</sup>

Caring for nature is an imperative that the Cipang Kanan community has practiced for generations. Primary needs in the form of food and shelter provided free of charge by nature are strong reasons for caring for the environment. Equally, Cipang Kanan customary community cultural activities associated directly with nature are also an imperative for the preservation of nature and traditions.

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<sup>9</sup> Kunni Masrohanti. 2018. Cipang, Real Ancestral Heritage Lost.

### **Oil palm threat**

Oil palm plantation business developments pose a potential land use conversion threat in Riau, and in Cipang Kanan. High prices and short harvest rotations are attractions in their own right for clearing land for oil palm; something some villagers have already done by converting their rubber plantations.

Another important task the Cipang Kanan community continues to perform is patrolling the forest. Villagers have to protect 3,994.81 ha<sup>10</sup> of natural forest from financiers (*cukong*) that want to convert forest cover in Cipang to oil palm.

### **Striving for customary forest legality**

Currently, Cipang Kanan villagers associated under the Cipang Raya Customary Community are trying to secure a *hutan adat* customary forest license. This aligns with local cultural values, and accords with the commitment of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), Riau Provincial Government, and Rokan Hulu District Government to fast-track social forestry in Riau.

Based on provisions in legislation, the Cipang Raya Customary Community must be legally recognized as a customary community as a precondition for submitting a proposal for a customary forest license. This is what the Cipang Raya community and other customary communities in Riau are striving for. Through the institution Lembaga Adat Melayu (LAM) Riau, they are advocating for a provincial regulation on customary communities in Riau. In fact, LAM Riau and the Riau Provincial Government have already prepared a draft regulation, but until now the province has yet to pass the regulation into law. This demonstrates the lack of attention from the Riau Provincial Government towards customary communities in the province.

Though Cipang Kanan has yet to secure legal recognition as a customary community, its villagers continue to prepare the community to do so by asking for help in building capacity to request a *hutan adat* customary forest license. Evidence of this was the customary community and Cipang Kanan Village Government's visit to the WALHI office in Riau to ask for help in proposing Cipang Raya community forest as a *hutan adat*. ●

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<sup>10</sup> Jikalahari NFC map, 2019



## SUMBERAGUNG VILLAGE **Devastated by the Tumpang Pitu gold mine**

*Wahyu Eka Styawan – WALHI East Java*

**SUMBERAGUNG** Village, Pesanggaran Subdistrict, Banyuwangi District, is currently under threat from gold mining by PT Bumi Sukses Indo (PT BSI), a subsidiary of Merdeka Copper Gold Tbk. In addition to PT BSI securing a concession of 4,998 ha, Merdeka Copper Gold has secured a second license on behalf of PT Damai Suksesindo (PT DSI) for a concession area of 6,623 ha.<sup>11</sup> Both concessions are in the Sumberagung village region. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources has designated the area around Tumpang Pitu slated for mining as a Vital National Object or Objek Vital Nasional (Obvitnas).<sup>12</sup>

Local fishing boats moored in Sumberagung Village, Banyuwangi where gold mining is threatening traditional fishing

The gold mining was born out of permission to change a protection forest estate to production forest in 2013, with the issuing of Minister of Forestry Decree No. 826/Menhut-II/2013 on Changing Protection Forest Function to Production Forest.

<sup>11</sup> Banyuwangi District Head Decrees No. 188/547/KEP/429.011/2012 and No. 188/930/KEP/429.011/2012.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) through Decree No. 651 K/30/MEM/2016 on 16 February 2016.

Shareholders in Merdeka Copper Gold include Garibaldi Thohir (8.083%), PT Saratoga Investama Sedaya (16.888%), PT Suwarna Artha Mandiri (5.588%), PT Mitra Daya Mustika (12.058%),<sup>13</sup> and Hongkong Brunc and Catl. Co. limited (5%).

Not only gold mining has constricted Sumberagung. Earlier, 4,612.4 ha of the Sumberagung village region was designated as the South Banyuwangi Forest Administration Unit (KPH) Red Island region. In one of its hamlets, Sungai Lembu, around 2,600 ha was designated to become a concession belonging to state-owned plantation company Sungai Lembu PTPN XII.<sup>14</sup>

The situation is the root of poverty and ecological crises in Sumberagung, with decades of agrarian disparities. Now, of a population of around 13,264 in Sumberagung, 5,606 people have become plantation laborers, only 3,066 are still farmers, 775 are fishers, and the rest have become migrant workers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Middle East or Malaysia.<sup>15</sup>

### **Gold mine impacts**

Slowly but surely, mining impacts have begun to affect villagers in Sumberagung, particularly those living in Pancer Hamlet and working as fishers or farmers. The mining concession in Tumpang Pitu is only three kilometers away from the settlement, while the distance from Tumpang Pitu to the local fish auction (TPI) site is only around 8.3 kilometers. Also, the distance between a planned mining effluent retention pond and Pancer TPI is roughly 6.7 kilometers.

Villagers say they are always worried and anxious about the mining companies, as since mining began, disasters, including floods, have started to become a more frequent occurrence. Though flooding had occurred before the mining arrived, the frequency, intensity, and destruction were not as devastating as they became after mining operations got underway.

Budi Pego, a local villager, said mining has exacerbated flood disasters. Budi, who was once criminalized by the company on accusation of spreading communist doctrines for opposing mining operations, said the worst flooding in the region occurred in 2016, when mudflows inundated Red Island Beach and community farmland. Some of his neighbors' harvests failed as a result of the floods.

<sup>13</sup> PT Suwarna and PT Mitra Daya are entities also controlled by Provident Capital Indonesia (PCI).

<sup>14</sup> Saputra, Rico Amdan; Handayani, Baiq Lily. 2018. Women's Participation in Mining Rejection Movement in Tumpangpitu Mountain (An Analysis of Ecofeminism). [S.I.], v. 7, n. 1, p. 27-48, ENTITAS SOSIOLOGI journal.

<sup>15</sup> Sumberagung Village Demographic Data, 2018

“There were floods again in 2019 and 2020, they swamped people’s dragon fruit plantations and rice fields. The water came from Mount Tumpang Pitu, which has been cut bare and mined, while the 2016 flood was probably caused by a mine waste processing levee bursting. Though we couldn’t confirm that as nobody’s allowed to go in,” said Budi, who also farms dragon fruit.

Not only do they cause floods and harvest failures, but the mines also disrupt dragon fruit and citrus fruit cultivation. Villagers have had to endure falling production. The mines have also affected tourism on Red Island by wrecking the panorama, especially since the 2016 mudflows.

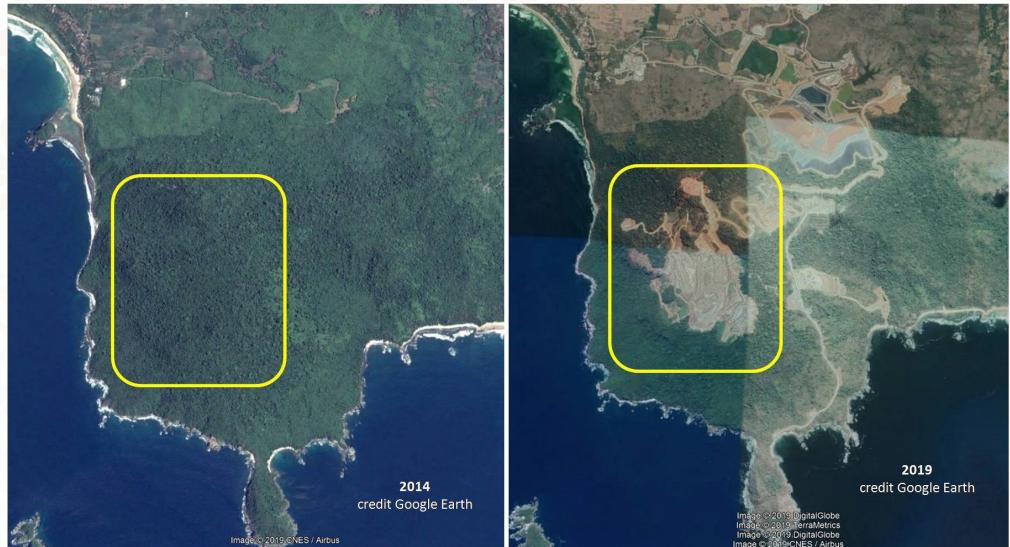
“We were already prosperous from agriculture, why must there be mining? It will impact us in the future. We’re already being impacted now, though not everyone is feeling its direct impacts,” said a villager who wished to remain anonymous. “Now land rights are still controlled by (state-owned company) Perhutani, add the mines to that, and our lives are not at all independent. Also, tourism that was already good has become quiet since the mines started, and the burden was added to during the pandemic.”

Ahmad, a fisher from the region, said the same thing. They now have to go further offshore to find fish. Before, one to three miles was enough, now they have to sail more than five miles out to sea. Production costs have risen as a result and reduced their turnover. In addition, mining impacts like the 2016 mudflows have caused fish to migrate away from Red Island.

“Ya, before the mines we didn’t have to wait long before getting fish. But now it can take three hours, and there’s no guarantee we’ll catch many. You should know, the coral around the coast in Tumpang Pitu is damaged since the mud disaster in August 2016. Us fishers suspect it came from the mining activities on Mount Tumpang Pitu. Around 2010, before the gold mines, fishers’ catches could reach 10,280 tons. But in 2016, after the mines, our catches have fallen to only 8,106 tons,” Ahmad explained.

Ahmad’s story was confirmed by Hidayat, a villager from Sumbermulyo who works as a dragon fruit transporter truck driver and has relatives in Pancer. He said one of the clear impacts of mining has been on village fishers, with reduced earnings causing some Pancer villagers to move away. “I’ve seen and heard of around five people moving to Sumbawa because fish are hard to come by in Pancer,” said Hidayat.

In addition to their economic impacts, the gold mines in the Sumberagung village region have triggered another equally important issue; a rise in social conflicts. Villagers’ opposition to the mines is frequently answered by repression from state



security forces. In a five-year period from 2012 to 2017, on five occasions at least 15 people were arrested by the police. Victims included Budi Pego and three other villagers in 2016, who were accused of spreading communism.

Nur Aini, an opposer of the mine, said that in addition to conflicts between villagers and the companies, instances of inter-villager conflict have also risen. She said there had been a confrontation in 2020 between pro- and anti-mining villagers in Pertigaan Lowi in Sumberagung Village. The conflict led to a summons for villagers opposing the mines as they were deemed to be disturbing the peace and acting violently. On one occasion, when women protested against mine expansion on Mount Salakan in the PT BSI concession, they were treated abusively by mine workers from the village.

“When we held up mining on Mount Salakan in Pancer that time, those mine workers verbally abused us with filthy words. They once became violent too,” said Nur Aini.

In 2022, another fight stemming from opposition to the gold mine broke out between martial arts clubs, one of which the company often used to secure mining operations, while many members of the other stood in opposition to the mine.

### **Increased disaster risk**

Not only causing floods and landslides, but the mining also increases risks resulting from earthquakes and tsunamis, bearing in mind the southern coast of East Java

Satellite imagery from 2014 (left) and 2019 (right) showing the extent of land clearing in Sumberagung Village, Banyuwangi

**Photo:** WALHI East Java

is close to the Indian Ocean and the earthquake prone outer arc of the Alpide belt. National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) data shows around 584 villages with the potential for tsunamis.

A tsunami last occurred in southern Banyuwangi in 1994. Tumpang Pitu bore witness to the historical event, and at the same time shielded Sumberagung Village from the worst impacts of the tsunami.

One villager, Fitri, described the force of the tsunami that struck Banyuwangi in 1994, saying the disaster caused 239 inhabitants of Pancer Hamlet, Sumberagung Village to lose their lives. She said those who escaped death said they were saved by Tumpang Pitu and Goa Macan around Mount Salakan. “If Tumpang Pitu is levelled, no longer jutting out, and seawater is mixed with waste, what would happen if a tsunami came? It’s not that I’m hoping for a tsunami. I’m only thinking of the worst scenario. Without Tumpang Pitu as a natural barrier, what would become of the people who live here?” said Fitri.

Ahmad added that Mount Tumpang Pitu is a natural defence that indirectly protects them from tsunamis. Further, Tumpang Pitu holds important value for people living nearby as a barrier against strong winds coming off the Indian Ocean; as a home for a variety of flora and fauna; as a provider of water for surrounding communities; and as a marker for preventing fishers getting lost at sea.

“If Tumpang Pitu is destroyed by mining, it will affect our sea. The mudflows in 2016 have already made fish scarcer. If it continues, fishers will suffer. Tumpang Pitu is also a marker for fishers. If it is lost, then fishers will also be harmed. Nature is for protecting, not for destroying,” said Ahmad.

When Tumpang Pitu is destroyed, not only mountains and forest will be under threat, but also everything around it, like Red Island and Pancer beaches, and all of their biodiversity. Beautiful coral, fish varieties, even rare wildlife like turtles will be threatened. This shows that Tumpang Pitu has so many relationships with and connections to the life around it. Destruction of Tumpang Pitu will even affect Meru Betiri National Park.

If the mines are allowed to continue operating, villagers who rely on local wisdom and nature will be disrupted. Farmers, fishers, and the tourism sector are vital sectors that will be lost if the gold mining continues. ●

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## TRENGGALEK

### **From a speck of gold, Trenggalek could be annihilated**

*Agung Prasetyo*

**COMMUNITY LIFE** in Trenggalek District is facing a major threat from the PT Sumber Mineral Nusantara (PT SMN) gold mining company. The extractive corporation's activities in Sumberbening, a village in Trenggalek, have the potential to decimate this district lying on the edge of the Indian Ocean.

Villagers have been making efforts to oppose the PT SMN gold mine since 2013, when the company commenced exploration activities in Sumberbening Village, Dongko Subdistrict. From the beginning of 2021 until now, opposition voices have continued to grow louder. Particularly after Trenggalek District Head, Mochamad Nur Arifin, stated his position opposing the PT SMN gold mine in March 2021.

Inhabitants associated under the Trenggalek People's Alliance came out in support of the rejection voiced by the Trenggalek District Head. The alliance supported the opposition movement through a petition at change.org entitled "Dukung Bupati

Protest action from various elements of the community rejecting planned gold mining in Trenggalek

**Photo:** WALHI East Java

*Trenggalek Tolak Tambang Emas di Trenggalek!*" By 30 July 2022, the petition had already gained 19,372 signatures.

According to Karim, a villager from Sumberbening, PT SMN commenced its exploration activities in the Semungklung Mountains region without the permission of the community. Sumberbening villagers opposed the company fearing that mining activities would destroy ecosystems in their village region.

At the time, PT SMN responded to the villagers' opposition by bringing heavy machinery and several machines for the purpose of exploration. This enraged the villagers, who drove out all the PT SMN heavy machinery in July 2013.

The opposition story continued in 2016, with a Mongabay report saying PT SMN was known to be conducting exploration activities in Dukuh Village, Watulimo Subdistrict. This surveying was also being carried out without permission from the community.

In July 2016, villagers from Dukuh staged action in the village hall rejecting the mine. The Dukuh villagers rejected the gold mine because they were worried the environment around their village home would be degraded and its economy disrupted. The villagers installed banners rejecting the gold mine at several locations throughout the village.

Protest action continued. In 2017, villagers from Dukuh also staged a huge demonstration in front of the Trenggalek District Peoples Representative Council (DPRD) offices rejecting exploration in their region.

Unfortunately, the government ignored the villagers' protests, and in 2019, the East Java Provincial Government issued a production license to PT SMN.

Nine subdistricts fall inside the production operations location. These subdistricts are Kampak, Watulimo, Dongko, Munjungan, Gandusari, Tugu, Karangan, Pule, and Suruh. The production operations license is valid from 24 June 2019 until 24 June 2029.

According to data available from the official MODI ESDM website, PT SMN secured an IUP Production Operations license through a letter numbered P2T/57/15.02/VI/2019. PT SMN has a license to exploit 12,813 ha of land, making the PT SMN concession in Trenggalek the largest gold mine on Java.

## Durian for President Jokowi

PT SMN's exploitation license heightened Trenggalek communities' fear for their environment, worrying that if the environment was destroyed, their livelihood sources would disappear. Most people in Trenggalek meet their life needs from the natural environment, through agriculture, fisheries, and ecotourism.

One concerned villager was Marvin, a farmer from Dukuh, whose family is supported by agriculture produce, like banana, avocado, clove, durian, coffee, snake fruit, coconut, stink bean, and mangosteen. Marvin was strongly opposed to gold mining by PT SMN because he realized it would threaten his agricultural land.

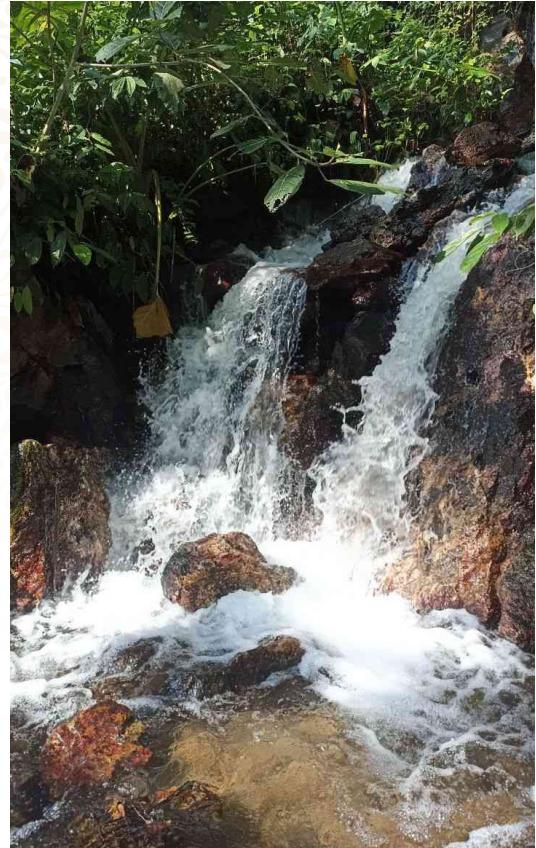
Marvin had proof. When PT SMN carried out exploration in his village in 2016, many villagers' homes were destroyed by a landslide. Crops around the exploration sites would rot. And that was just exploration. "What broke my heart, was the damage done to my great uncle's house. I don't understand geological science, but before the drilling, that land had never shifted. That's just an indication, but if you want to prove it, I'm sure my suspicion has more truth than error," said Marvin during a meeting at his home on 28 April 2022.

"It was clear that when mining went on, loads of agricultural land was destroyed, including trees in the explored forest that became rotten. If they'd only been drilling, they wouldn't have died, would they? Clearly there's something causing plants to rot, beyond the fact that ground water rose to the surface," said Marvin.

One of Dukuh villagers' flagship agricultural commodities under threat from PT SMN gold mining is Durian Ripto, the most famous improved durian variety in Trenggalek.

The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) tried Durian Ripto when he visited Trenggalek on 30 November 2021. In a video uploaded to the Trenggalek District Head's Instagram account (@avinml), when he tasted Durian Ripto, Jokowi said it was delicious, not too sweet, and did not make him feel nauseous.

Durian Ripto is registered with the Ministry of Agriculture through Minister of Agriculture Decree No. 277/Kota/Sr.120/7/2005 on Releasing Improved Varieties. Based on the decree, Durian Ripto is said to have many advantages, including its relatively high productivity, good quality, capacity to fruit more than once a year, and its thick smooth flesh, and sweet taste. Durian Ripto is also not too pungent.



Referring to data in Trenggalek District in Figures 2021 published by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), durian harvest regions cover a total area of 1,015.40 ha. These regions are distributed across 10 subdistricts in Trenggalek District. The most extensive regions are in the subdistricts of Watulimo at 330.30 ha, Dongko at 235.70 ha, and Munjungan at 119.90 ha. Followed by Bendungan at 118 ha, Kampak at 99.20 ha, Panggul at 40.40 ha, Suruh at 30 ha and Pule at 28 ha. Then finally, Trenggalek at 12.50 ha, Gandusari at 1 ha and Tugu at 0.20 ha. The total number of durian trees across these subdistricts is around 99,000, with annual production of 11,362 tons.

Durian prices average IDR 30,000 to IDR 50,000 per kilogram. Whereas Durian Ripto can reach IDR 150,000 per kilogram. So, during harvest season, turnover can reach hundreds of billions of rupiah. Marvin and farmers in Dukuh Village are also developing Durian Ripto varieties.

A clean water source under threat from mining activities

**Photo:** WALHI East Java

According to Marvin, villagers in Dukuh can meet their daily needs from farming. “More than just supporting themselves, the fact is people who only farm have two motorbikes. One for going to the fields, and another to visit family living far away. Farmers farm for life needs like food and drink, right? When farmers are better off,



they look for capital. Most farmers aren't just farming for food anymore, but for other needs as well," said Marvin.

Marvin added that the majority of villagers in Dukuh oppose gold mining because they want to save their agricultural land and preserve the environment. "Villagers can fill their stomachs, survive, and meet other needs from farming, not from mining," he said.

"Without mining, Trenggalek people can live. With mining, Trenggalek people can't live, because there are no prosperous people in mining areas. Maybe business people prosper from loads of mining, but prosperous people in mining regions there aren't any. That's what the people here believe," Marvin insisted.

### **A voice from the coast**

A green expanse of rice fields; a food source under threat of destruction from mining activities in Sumberagung

**Photo:** WALHI East Java

There are many other livelihood sources for communities in Trenggalek besides agriculture. Fishing in Munjungan Subdistrict, for example, where fishers can earn around IDR 100,000 a day from their catches. Khoirur Roziqin, a villager from

Tawing in Munjungan Subdistrict, said fishers usually earn up to IDR 3 million per month, but during fish seasons they can earn around IDR 20 million a month.

With fish catches that can meet their daily needs, people in Munjungan Subdistrict are also concerned about the effects of gold mining if PT SMN commences operations in Trenggalek. They know gold purification uses hazardous toxic substances like mercury and cyanide. They worry about tailings from gold mining flowing into the sea and destroying marine ecosystems, leaving them with smaller catches, or even no catches at all.

The concerns of people in Munjungan Subdistrict are not unfounded. They have already experienced falling fish catches as a result of waste from shrimp farming ponds being discarded straight into the sea. Roziqin said some shrimp ponds in Munjungan Subdistrict throw waste straight into the sea because they have no effluent management installations (IPAL). Roziqin and other villagers associated under the *Perhimpunan Sumbreleng Raya* (PSR) association, are actively advocating against environmental degradation caused by shrimp farms. They have protested repeatedly and undertaken various efforts, but the government has failed to acknowledge them, and the number of shrimp farms without IPAL installations in Munjungan Subdistrict continues to grow.

### **Everything can be impacted**

There are 14 subdistricts in Trenggalek District. Based on the exploitation permit issued by the East Java Provincial Government, the PT SMN gold mining concession covers nine subdistricts in Trenggalek. Bureaucrats are trying to convince communities that it will not destroy the environment.

This kind of thinking is certainly problematic because the environment does not recognize boundaries created by the state. So, when PT SMN mines gold in Kampak, communities in other subdistricts, even outside concessions, will also experience environmental degradation.

The PT SMN concession covers parts of five vital watersheds that pass through various subdistricts in Trenggalek District. These five watersheds are the Brantas, Panggul, Konang, Timpak Nongko, and Ngemplak.

“The Brantas watershed flows north through the southern part of the town to the Niyama River. Then there’s the Panggul watershed with its upper reaches in the concession region (in Kampak). Then there’s the Konang. Then the Timpak Nongko that runs to Munjungan, not to mention the Ngemplak which flows to Prigi,” said

Rere, Mining and Energy Campaign Manager under the WALHI National Executive, during an interview.

If PT SMN undertakes mining activities, one of its environmental impacts outside the concession will be felt in Pandean Village, Dongko Subdistrict. Referencing the PT SMN gold mine concession exploitation license map, Pandean is not inside the concession area. However, the rivers flowing through Pandean have their sources in Salamwates Village in Dongko Subdistrict and Besuki Village in Munjungan Subdistrict, both of which are inside the PT SMN gold mining concession area.

One impact that villagers in Pandean will experience is river water in Watu Kandang Tourism Park being polluted by tailings from PT SMN gold mining. Watu Kandang Tourism Park in Pandean Village was recently the recipient of the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI) for 2022.

There are various ecotourism and culture tourism facilities in Pandean. Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy (*Menparekraf*), Sandiaga Uno, visited Pandean Tourism Village on 30 June 2022, and was impressed by its natural beauty.

The struggle to preserve nature in Pandean Tourism Village was certainly not a fleeting process. Ririn Setyo Widihastuti, a Pandean villager and Chair of the Dewi Arum Pulosari Tourism Awareness Group *Pokdarwis*, transformed the river – into which people used to throw garbage and diapers – making it clean and viable as a tourist attraction.

Not only did Ririn strive to improve the village economy through tourism, but she also started a movement to change villagers' habit of throwing garbage into the river. To date, Watu Kandang Tourism Park remains beautiful and the pride of Pandean. But how about later if PT SMN operations begin? If we do not want community livelihoods and the natural beauty of Trenggalek to be lost, then the only choice is to reject gold mining. ●



