

# A Genuine Partnership for Forest Conservation

## Experiences from Lambusango, Southeast Sulawesi

### Presenter

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*How can local communities guard and manage their forests by themselves? Are there really other natural resources besides timber products that can bring prosperity to the people living near the forests?*

**T**hese questions are most often thrown out, both seriously and cynically, by nearly all institutions that try to integrate forest conservation to increase community prosperity for those who live in close proximity to the forests. These questions can now be definitively answered by the Lambusango Forest Conservation Program.

### Labusango Community Forest Forum

The initial design of the Lambusango Forest Conservation Program referred to the principal of community based forest resource management. Therefore a Lambusango Forest Community Forum was established to utilize the forest resources and establish responsibility for conservation. After long debate, the initial idea was not implemented because of the vulnerability of the ecosystem, the constantly changing community based forest management regulations, and the opportunity to lead to resource based conflict among community groups. As a substitute, development of village businesses was undertaken outside the forest region and demanded the beneficiaries of the business had to protect the forest resources.

The change in the concept of community based forest resource management described above changed the role of the Forum, which was initially designed as an organization of forest resource utilization beneficiaries. The Forum became a government partner in controlling forest management policy, becoming an agent of attitude and behavior change within the community regarding forest resources, and facilitating community based forest security. In reality, this role is the most appropriate for a forest community Forum.

A number of Forum actions have had positive effects in forest conservation, including rejecting plans to develop a palm oil plantation in the sub-districts of Lasalimu and Lasalimi Selatan as big as 5,000 hectares which had the potential to threaten forest conservation. In the end, the plan was not realized.

The Lambusango Community Forest Forum has approached a number of asphalt companies in order to get work for surrounding communities. As of today, PT Buton Asphalt Indonesia and PT Putindo employ 700 local community members. The Forum also sent a letter to the President (copied to the Minister of Forestry) to shed light on plans

to for tin mining with the potential to damage the Lambusango forest and the Kapontori Bay ecosystem. The group's request received a response from the Minister of Forestry and the Forestry Planning Body.

### **Multistakeholder Collaboration**

As part of multistakeholder collaboration to conserve Lambusango forest, the program facilitated the formation of a number of other forums, including the Geographic Information System Forum and the Lambusango Forest Crime Unit. The GIS Forum attracted investment from the Government for GIS instruments to produce digital land coverage maps for use in spatial planning for conservation. The program also facilitated the creation of a Village Regulation (Perdes) on Forest Conservation, development of Village Economy Institutions and the realization of a number of business models and market development.

In terms of forest security, the stakeholders involved are the Forestry Department, the Conservation Office for Forest Resources in Southeast Sulawesi, police and journalists. The collaboration emphasizes regular patrols to prevent illegal logging and clearing. The Lambusango Forest Crime Unit has an Investigation Unit which examines those who violate the regulations with help from the network of the Lambusango Forest Community Forum at the village level, and a Response Unit which conducts patrols, collects evidence, and produces reports for the police.

An important benefit of this collaboration is proving the effectiveness of the forestry laws to the community with the hope it will prevent future violations. In the beginning of 2008, the collaboration successfully took a case of forest clearing in Kapontori sub-district to the courts and 13 forests clearers were sentenced, eleven to jail time of eight months and the other two people to six months.

### **Wildlife Conservation Products**

Wildlife Conservation Products are an effort to guarantee the market for farmers' products with a high biodiversity factor or important ecological value. The farmers had to make an agreement with all the village inhabitants to protect the forest by not undertaking illegal logging, forest conversion or hunt protected animals. The village conservation agreement is not just limited to the product owners with market guarantees, but applies to all village inhabitants. To evaluate the level of discipline in the community in relation to the village conservation agreement, the program periodically monitors the damage to the forest.

The program has been successful in facilitating the Matanauwe Cashew Farmer Association (Asosiasi Petani Jambu Mete Matanauwe/ APJMM) to receive fair-trade certification from FLO, Germany. This is the first cashew producer in the world to receive FLO certification, which enables to link its product to the international market. The project has facilitated international market for local agricultural products, especially cashews and coffee. OWT together with Operation Wallacea Ltd have linked Lambusango products to international markets under the scheme of Wildlife Conservation Products

The program provides an interesting and balanced model of building mutual trust and respect among different stakeholders, as well as balancing conservation and economic development, and building collective ownership for the protection of Hutan Lambusango.

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