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## METHODOLOGY

### Structure

This book is an attempt to present indigenous perspectives on sustainable forest management. It is not an extensive study of forest peoples' knowledge and practices in Indonesia, but focuses instead on a limited number of examples. These give some indication of the complexity of indigenous forest management systems and the enormity of the challenges faced by indigenous peoples throughout the archipelago.



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Ugis Suganda, author of Ciptagelar (Chapter 3)

The previous chapter outlines some of the key issues surrounding Indonesia's forests and indigenous peoples. The core of the book is six case studies written by members of indigenous communities themselves. They have been selected from various parts of Indonesia and highlight some successes in community-based forest management. Two observers of Indonesia's indigenous movement – one Indonesian, one English – were invited to present their reflections on these accounts in the two chapters that follow in order to generate some critical thinking. The final section contains some general conclusions which are intended

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to bring important messages from indigenous peoples to international decision-makers, academics, campaigners and individuals concerned with human rights and environmental issues in Indonesia.

### Key questions

Points which have guided all the contributors to this book included:

- How important is *adat* in indigenous peoples' forest management today?
- How is *adat* changing to engage with the ways that the modern world has intruded on indigenous lives?
- What kind of approaches and strategies have been used to defend indigenous livelihoods and natural resources from external threats?
- How are conflicts over forests and land rights addressed and resolved internally and externally?
- How do the communities deal with a political climate that does not favour their interests?
- What lessons can be learned from these cases for the development of new models of forest management, based on community rights and sustainability?

### Method

The process of compiling this report has taken several years and was preceded by a two-year period of collecting examples of 'Good News Stories' about Indonesia's indigenous peoples and their forests. It would have been undoubtedly simpler and quicker to hire a researcher to visit a handful of communities and to write up his/her findings. It may also



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Reflecting on the experiences and the lessons learned

have made the book an easier read for an international audience had we done it that way. However, this would have missed an essential element in AMAN-DTE's work: indigenous peoples are the subjects, not the object, of this book.

In writing their own stories, indigenous people have produced accounts from a unique perspective that no outsider can truly represent. The case studies are all the better for the depth of detail and understanding that the authors have provided. Moreover, the process has encouraged communities to reflect on their experiences and the lessons learned. It has also increased the capacity of indigenous communities to present their perspectives and achievements to outsiders.

The book project started by reviewing a range of cases where indigenous communities appeared to be managing to hold on to their forests and their culture. Staff from AMAN's secretariat and Down to Earth gathered information from visits to indigenous communities; accounts presented by indigenous representatives at local, national and international meetings; conversations with individuals – both community leaders and forest researchers; from news reports; and from research by NGOs and academics.

### **Selection of cases**

It was agreed to showcase a small number of studies which represented different geographical areas, challenges and responses. This was a very difficult process and many other cases could have been chosen. Three different sets of criteria were used. Firstly, there had to be real evidence that communities had protected forests and that *adat* still had some relevance to their everyday lives. A list of characteristics of 'success' was based on work by the Consortium on Community-based Forestry (KPSHK) (see p24). Before this was used as one of the selection tools it was further refined, with advice from indigenous representatives, after testing in a field visit to South Sumatra in 2004.

The second set of criteria comprised practical issues including the following points:

- Geographical distribution;
- Likelihood of community consent;

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- Good contacts through indigenous organisation or local NGO;
  - Accessibility;
  - Amount of readily available existing information;
  - Amount of previous exposure;
  - Overlap with other ongoing projects;
  - Representation of women and the younger generation.

The third and most important criterion was whether the communities wanted to take part and how far they felt able to write their own accounts. AMAN/DTE staff had visited all the short-listed communities. The joint project worker then visited all the selected sites to explain the purpose of the project in detail and provide guidelines for writing. This was also an opportunity to gather secondary data, including population data, documents, maps and photos, and to visit the forests.

### **Writing up**

The six communities submitted their accounts over a period of about a year. These were then edited so that they were of similar format and length. Information collected during the initial assessment was also used to clarify or supplement what the authors had written. Each chapter was translated into English. This was followed by consultation and confirmation of the final text with key people from each community.

### **Positive and negative aspects**

One positive outcome of the joint AMAN-DTE work is that both the preliminary research and the process of writing the book have generated a large amount of information, mostly in Bahasa Indonesia. This will be useful to the communities themselves and to AMAN in its role of supporting indigenous communities throughout the archipelago. In addition, both phases of the project have generated a number of examples of good practice for other forest communities to explore and potentially use or adapt. It is hoped that a Bahasa Indonesia version of this book can be produced.

On the other hand, we are well aware of the limitations of the selection procedure. No single example fulfilled all the criteria so it was necessary to make somewhat subjective decisions, based on advice from AMAN's secretariat, so that together the cases studies addressed all the criteria. Limitations on budgets and staff time were also very real considerations.



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Drying the paddy at Ciptagelar Kasepuhan

For that reason, it was not possible to include any studies from Maluku or Papua. This lack of representation of good practice in forest management by indigenous peoples in eastern Indonesia is a regrettable weakness of this book.

Another shortcoming is that more time should have been spent with the communities to help them to present information about their current situation and expectations, but budgets did not allow this. The indigenous authors' pride in their culture and traditions shines through the case studies and reflects their oral tradition. Some of these stories have never been written down before. However, it is noticeable that they are much more accustomed to relating the stories of their origin, history and traditional governance structures than they are to talking about their present day land use systems and beliefs. The sections about *adat* beliefs and systems are much longer and more detailed than those explaining how *adat* is being used in the present context to help indigenous communities to build sustainable livelihoods.

Hopefully, the comments made by the two observers will identify dilemmas that need to be addressed and their analysis will support the indigenous peoples in their struggle for their rights to access, manage and control their natural resources. They are also intended to provide inputs to and motivation for forest policy reforms based on community-based forest management and recognition of indigenous rights.

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## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 'GOOD NEWS STORIES'

### **1. Land tenure recognition**

There is recognition from surrounding/other communities of customary land/forest with agreed and clear borders. There is also an existing common/agreed mechanism to resolve possible conflict regarding land issues over collective or individual land within the customary domain.

### **2. Conflict resolution mechanisms on land issues**

Mechanisms of conflict resolution exist which relate to internal (horizontal) conflict as well as conflicts with the state (vertical). There is evidence of experiences where the community has resolved conflicts over land within the community or with neighbouring communities.

### **3. Remaining forest meets the ecological, social and economic needs of the community**

This includes some estimate of the extent to which this forest area contributes to the ecological, social and economic needs of the broader community e.g. a district, province or even a bioregion.

### **4. Sustainability**

Not only whether natural resources are available now, but some indication of practices that will protect and maintain these resources in future.

### **5. Decision-making structures which are capable of change**

The traditional/*adat* governance system is still strong or has been revived, and is flexible enough to deal with challenges from the outside world.

### **6. Clear land ownership status and system**

There are common/agreed (customary) rules of land ownership - individual or collective - which are acknowledged and protected as village or customary regulations.

### **7. Egalitarian systems of decision-making**

Inclusive and democratic structures of decision-making within which women and the younger generation can participate on an equal basis, specifically related to managing natural resources including planning.

**8. Community understanding on the ecological functions of the forest and its benefit to people**

There is a common understanding of the ecological function of customary forests, expressed through customary regulations or practices intended to maintain the sustainability of forest functions and the benefits to their livelihoods.

**9. Integration of forest management functions between customary and government governance**

A close relationship between the *adat* organisation and village government, or integration of these functions under a common and agreed governance system which strengthens *adat* institutions in their role in managing natural resources through enforcement of *adat* regulation/norms/values and their roles in social relationships/interactions.

**10. Local government recognition of customary territory and practices**

The existence of customary land/forest and traditional practices is recognised, protected and supported by local government, at least at the subdistrict or district level, even though there is no formal legal protection.



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Remaining forest meets the ecological, social and economic needs of the community