

## Conference Paper

# Focusing on Forest Administration Systems in Analyzing Joint Forest Management: A Case Study of PHBM in Java, Indonesia

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**Abstract**

The present study analyzes PHBM (*Pengelolaan Sumberdaya Hutan Bersama Masyarakat*), a joint forest management mechanism implemented by the State Forest Corporation (SFC) and village-level committees (LMDHs) in Java, Indonesia, in terms of forest administration systems. SFC had maintained conventional organizational structures and staffing systems, and frontline foresters mostly focused on their conventional tasks, including patrolling and policing, and were not structurally functioning as the interface of or facilitators for PHBM. SFC appears to have separated existing forestry operations and PHBM matters. As a result, PHBM matters such as the use of benefit sharing inside villages were simply entrusted to executive members of LMDHs with room for elite capture. A whole-organizational approach, in which general frontline foresters' tasks are more integrated into participatory approach, would be recommended.

**Keywords:** joint forest management, forest administration, frontline foresters, personnel positioning, Java, Indonesia

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## 1. Introduction

Devolution of state forest management from state authorities (forest administration) to locally established committees has been widely promoted in developing and emerging countries. Devolution is often implemented as joint forest management programs or projects by state authorities and local committees.

Even under devolution arrangements, forests in these countries are continuously under state ownership. Hence, the influence of forest administration is strong in many cases, either negatively or positively, as forest officials are officially involved in the structure and process of joint forest management. In this context, there is increasing attention on forest administration systems as well as the role of frontline foresters in implementing state-community joint forest management.

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As reviewed in the next section, there are controversial views and examples regarding the role and function of frontline foresters. Realities of field implementation of joint forest management programs and effects of frontline foresters on them would vary case by case, and hence it would be fruitful to accumulate more case studies.

The present study aims to analyze Forest Management with Communities or *Pengelolaan Sumberdaya Hutan Bersama Masyarakat* (hereafter “PHBM”) in a major teak plantation area of Java, Indonesia, in terms of forest administration systems. PHBM is a joint forest management mechanism introduced by the State Forestry Corporation or *Perum Perhutani* (hereafter “SFC”), the forest administration for production and protection forests in Java, in 2001, to cope with extensive illegal logging and encroachment triggered by political economic turmoil due to the Asian Financial Crisis and collapse of the Suharto regime. Under PHBM, Forest Village Committees or *Lembaga Masyarakat Desa Hutan* (hereafter “LMDH”) are formed at the village level and SFC and LMDHs collaboratively manage state forests based on formal contracts.

## 2. Literature Review

No reform initiative can be implemented in separation from the existing administrative setting and influence, either positively or negatively. The forest sector in tropical developing countries is no exception.

Previous studies dealing with forest administration could be broadly classified into two directions. One is those criticizing forest administration and frontline foresters for maintaining significant authority and power even under devolution arrangement and for too much intervention in joint forest management processes. Studies about India are highly likely to point out that joint forest management is totally under strong control of state forest departments and everything is fixed by village-level forest guards in a top-down manner (e.g. Saxrna 1997; Sundar et al. 2001). In these case studies, frontline foresters are simply understood as part of the forest administration and those representing it at the village level.

The other line of literature is those positively evaluating the role of frontline foresters as “street-level bureaucrats” who can adjust different interests among stakeholders at the local level (Lipsky 1980). Several studies analyzed frontline foresters in terms of such street-level bureaucracy. Kubo (2008) and Hyakumura (2010) presented cases where frontline foresters’ discretion of not strictly applying forest laws had positively worked to secure local livelihoods in protected area management. Sugimoto et al. (2013) presented a case where frontline foresters worked in a way to coordinate stakeholders

by prioritizing the interests of certain stakeholders in the local context of a community forestry project.

Actual influence of frontline foresters on the process of joint forest management would vary according to formal institutional designs, conventional power relations between forest administration and local communities, or characteristics of local communities. Hence, it would be fruitful to accumulate more case studies.

In the previous literature, less attention has been paid on how personnel positioning of foresters can affect the process of joint forest management. Awareness and behavioral patterns would be greatly determined by organizational cultures and environments in which a person works. The present study particularly analyzes PHBM from this viewpoint.

Regarding PHBM, a number of studies have been presented. In particular, Maryudi (2011) indicates that the process of PHBM has been manipulated and captured by powerful stakeholders, i.e. SFC and village elite., and as a result, empowerment of general peasants under PHBM has been hindered. Although his analysis of stakeholder power relations is comprehensive, he pays less attention to positioning of foresters at the local level.

### 3. Methods

The present study focuses on the Randublatung Forest District (equivalent level with the district) of the Central Java Regional Division (equivalent level with the province) (Fig. 1). It is located within the boundaries of the Blora District of the Central Java Province. State forests in the Randublatung Forest District are all categorized as production forests, and all of them are teak plantations. Randublatung has been one of the most important teak production areas for SFC.

The author visited the Central Java Regional Division office and Randublatung Forest District office of SFC in March 2016, August 2016, January 2017, and January 2018 to collect official documents and statistics related to forestry and PHBM. In addition, the authors communicated with several foresters in the Randublatung Forest District and obtained information on their perceptions for PHBM and local peasants.

There were in total 34 LMDHs in Randublatung as of August 2016 (the number had not changed as of January 2018). Out of these, 14 LMDHs were randomly selected and directly visited by the author for a quantitative survey in August 2016 and January 2017. The authors met with the presidents and other executive members of the LMDHs and

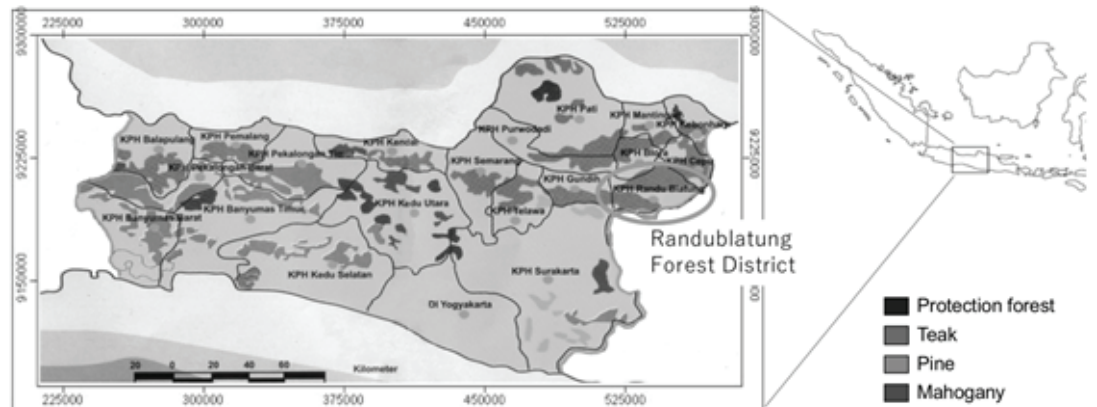


Figure 1: Location of the Randublatung Forest District in Central Java.

confirmed basic characteristics of the LMDHs, uses of shared benefits in the village, and activities conducted by the LMDHs.

#### 4. Results

As SFC had developed substantive forest management systems before the introduction of PHBM (Shiga et al. 2012), forestry operations were continuously administered according to SFC's long-term and short-term management plans even under PHBM. Places and timings of thinning and final harvest were determined by SFC, talking age structures of trees and forest conditions into consideration (Djamhuri 2012). There was little room for LMDHs to reflect their opinions on the system of forestry operations, except for tree plantations established by LMDHs based on PHBM agreements (e.g. Fujiwara et al. 2012). SFC had maintained "scientific forestry" principles (Peluso 1992). Collaborative forestry operations by the corporation and LMDHs were limited; out of the 14 LMDHs visited, only four LMDHs which had received greater amounts of benefit sharing had continued hiring forest watchers.

SFC had also maintained conventional organizational structures and staffing systems. A forest district (KPH) has "head-office" staff, who is basically stationed at the forest district office, and field staff. There are several sections or sub-sections such as planning, production, etc. In the Randublatung Forest District, the Sub-section of Environmental Development (*Sub-seksi Pembinaan Lingkungan*) was in charge of the issues related to PHBM.

Field staff organization has a hierarchic structure. One forest district consists of several sub forest district offices (BKPH) headed by forest rangers (*Asper*), and one sub forest district office consists of several resort offices (RPH) headed by forest guards

(*Mantri*). At a resort office, under the forest guard, there are several foremen (*Mandor*). In the Randublatung Forest District, types of foreman were identified as in Table 1. Foremen were named according to conventional forestry operations for artificial forests, starting from nursery, planting, tending and thinning, felling, to patrolling. Foremen for PHBM were not identified, and frontline foresters' work was continuously focused on patrolling.

TABLE 1: Staffing of frontline foresters in the Randublatung Forest District in January 2017.

Unit	Position	Number of personnel
Sub forest district office (BKPH)	Forest Ranger ( <i>Asper</i> )	12
Resort office (RPH)	Forest Guard ( <i>Mantri</i> )	43
	Foreman ( <i>Mandor</i> ) for	
	Seedling ( <i>Semai</i> )	3
	Planting ( <i>Tanam</i> )	27
	Tending ( <i>RKPM</i> )	10
	Felling ( <i>Tebang</i> )	33
	Patrolling ( <i>Polter</i> )	152

To explore how foresters interact with villagers in the context of PHBM, the author focuses on the issue of forestry benefit sharing. Sharing of monetary benefits generated from forestry production by SFC to LMDHs is one of the most significant institutional changes brought about by PHBM.

Firstly, principles of how to use shared benefits were decided every year through official meetings between the Sub-section of Environmental Development at the Randublatung Forest District office and the 34 committee presidents. Benefit sharing as well as other PHBM issues were managed by this sub-section. They were stationed at the head office, and not as interactive with villagers as field staff were. For PHBM issues, the Randublatung forest district office were hiring special staff. These special staff members were not SFC employees, but they were working under the Sub-section of Environmental Development. They basically helped the forest officials at the Sub-section of Environmental Development communicate with the presidents or executive members.

Secondly, it was a general arrangement that forest rangers and forest guards were part of executive members of LMDHs as supervisors and advisors, respectively. However, they basically did not have a say in PHBM as well as benefit sharing issues. Although they attend events related to PHBM or ceremonies of providing benefit sharing, they basically did not care about how the money of shared benefits is used in the villages. During the fieldwork, the author was told by a couple of forest guards in informal conversations that “uses of shared benefits are a matter of the village”. This

implies that they are thinking that as benefit sharing is an issue of the village, it would not be appropriate to advise or say something about the use of shared benefits, as such advice could be a sort of “interventions”.

Lastly, PHBM and benefit sharing appeared to be nothing special for foremen; they basically focused on their own tasks. Forest Guards and Foremen for Patrolling were basically undertaking conventional policing activities, irrespective of PHBM.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

It was confirmed that SFC had continuously administered forestry operations, and collaborative forestry operations by the corporation and LMDHs were limited. SFC had also maintained conventional organizational structures and staffing systems. Although there were various lines of authority and responsibility under PHBM, frontline foresters mostly focused on their conventional tasks and were not structurally functioning as the interface of or facilitators for PHBM.

Unlike other parts of Southeast Asia, SFC had developed rigid forest administration systems and forest management systems (Shiga et al. 2012) by the introduction of PHBM. Hence, in the implementation of PHBM, SFC appears to have separated existing forestry operations and PHBM matters. A sub-section at the forest district office was assigned to oversee PHBM, whereas frontline staff (forest guards and various types of foremen) were not basically involved in PHBM and were continuously structured for conventional operations. As a result, PHBM matters such as the use of benefit sharing inside villages were simply entrusted to executive members of LMDHs, whereas frontline foresters were engaged in conventional activities, including patrolling and policing. Less domination of forest administration in decision making in joint forest management processes would be theoretically good; however, there are a lot of evidence of elite capture in PHBM implementation (e.g. Maryudi 2011; Djamhuri 2012; Fujiwara et al. 2012; Shiga et al. 2012; Ota et al. 2017). In the case of PHBM, this “laissez-faire” approach is likely to create room for elite capture by LMDH executive members or other influential villagers.

SFC should have implemented PHBM involving more substantive collaborative activities and capacity building of LMDH executive members, although such implementation is difficult. For this, a whole-organizational approach or organizational reform, in which general frontline foresters’ tasks are more integrated into this participatory approach, would be recommended.

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