Building sustainable networks of non-state actors for improved forest governance and monitoring

insights from the Asia-Pacific forest governance project in Indonesia

This policy brief draws on key insights and lessons from the implementation of the Asia-Pacific forest governance project* by Burung Indonesia (BirdLife's Partner) in Indonesia, highlighting the importance of policy advocacy and learning networks of non-state actors for improved forest governance and monitoring.[1]

Challenges

In Indonesia, forests cover 68.6% of the total land area, 50.6% of which comprises primary forests with limited indications of human activities.[2] Deforestation is in decline in many areas but increasing in forest-rich provinces, especially in Papua-Maluku region. Limited availability and sharing of forest data and policies have hampered efforts to address the problems of forest loss, forest degradation and fragmentation in the country.

Opportunities

In line with the democratisation of natural resource management, the role of non-state actors is important in overseeing and improving governance in various public sectors, including forest management. Burung Indonesia has been actively involved in two such efforts to improve forest governance, Indonesia's Ecosystem Restoration Concession (ERC) and the European Union-led Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade - Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT- VPA) initiatives, through in-country networks, both at the national and local levels.

Activities and outcomes

At the national level, Burung Indonesia has been influential in establishing and maintaining the ERC Working Group as a national learning network for civil society and private actors that hold an ERC license or plan to apply for a licence. At the local level, the project has enabled conservation work in the forested Mbeliling landscape of Flores in the West Manggarai district of East Nusa Tenggara. Project activities there focus on small-scale farmers initiating the Timber Legality Assurance System (SVLK), while at the landscape level, the Mbeliling Committee represents the interests of a wide range of stakeholders across West Manggarai.

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[2] MoEF, 2018, The State of Indonesia's Forests 2018. Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Republic of Indonesia, 157 pp

Key insights and learnings

- Networking platforms are instrumental for better involvement and influence of non-state actors in forest policy-making processes and outcomes. They can facilitate their informed and effective participation, which adds co-ownership and legitimacy to decision-making.
- Learning networks at different levels provide fora for advocacy via improved information sharing, transparency, accountability, benefit sharing and inclusive policies. Such networks can also share experiences, concerns and priorities to other state and non-state actors.
- Networks can also be effective in promoting collaborative working and coherent policy advocacy among non-state actors to influence policy processes and outcomes for forest conservation and monitoring.
- Through networks, there is an opportunity to link to wider forest governance and conservation policies and with efforts to progress the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Networks require time, funds and capacity to sustain. Where necessary, efforts should focus on removing barriers to participation, including investing more time and resources on capacity building of non-state actors and their networks.
- Networks can only be effective if they have a clear and shared interest among participants and are institutionalised. This includes a clear statement of vision, mission and rules, a workplan and mobilisation of resources to support their activities (e.g. ERC Working Group).
- This experience regarding the role of policy and learning networks in Indonesia can also be useful in informing a variety of forest governance initiatives elsewhere.

Timber Legality Assurance System meeting to discuss assessment results on Ministry of Environment and Forestry regulation No. P.48/2017 regarding transportation of timber products on community-owned forests in West Manggarai.