

Constraints to community empowerment: A study of communities around forests in Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province

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Abstract

The empowerment of village communities around the forest is called the Plants of Life program by the Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry Number P.12/Menlhk-II/2015 concerning Industrial Plantation Forest Development where the community is entitled to 20% of the HTI area. However, this is very contradictory to the community in Pelalawan Regency where empowerment through plants of life still adopts the pattern of giving cash. The purpose of this study is to analyze and explain the obstacles to empowering communities around the forest in Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province. This research uses a type of qualitative research with a case study approach that the author considers can answer the problems faced, namely related to obstacles to community empowerment around the forest. The type of research used is qualitative research with a case study approach. The data analysis techniques used are interview, observation, and documentation techniques. The informants in this study were the village government, community leaders, and the company. The data used consists of primary and secondary data. The results of the discussion show the lack of community ability to change from consumptive patterns to ideal empowerment patterns. Then existing institutions in the village such as teams/cooperatives are unable to accommodate the welfare of the community, as well as regulations that are unable to accommodate empowerment.

Keywords: Community empowerment, forest, plant of life, industrial forest plantations.

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1. Introduction

Forest policies have been regulated by the government through various regulations because the government is aggressively regulating forests to benefit many people. Therefore, forests as a source of Indonesia's natural wealth are controlled by the State and must be used for the prosperity of the people. (Agusti, Nurjaya, and Kuswahyono 2020).

One form of the government's concern for the people related to forestry is the issuance of the Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No.P.12/Menlhk-II/2015 concerning the Development of Industrial Forest Plantations (Latif, Herman, and Rosmita 2022), Where this regulation is a form of reaction to the welfare of the community on the edge of the Industrial Plantation Forest or called HTI.

The form of the welfare of the community on the edge of the forest is by empowering the community as stated in article 8 which reads:

Article a) The main crop area is at most 70% of the work area. b) The plants of life area is at least 20% of the work area, c) Local protection areas and other protected areas are at least 10% of the work area. Furthermore, Article 10 states that timber forest products, non-timber forest products, or other plant products in plants of life areas are managed by the community in the context of community empowerment. (Herman, Rifai, and Gesmi 2022). From the above regulation, it is clear that every HTI company is obliged to empower communities around the forest through plants of life by distributing 20% of its land to be managed by the community in partnership with the company.

Pelawan Regency, especially for 2 sub-districts, namely Pelawan Sub-district and Teluk Meranti Sub-district, there are 6 HTI companies, namely: 1. PT Riau Andalan Pulp & Paper (RAPP), 2. PT SAU, 3. PT Yos Raya Timber, 4. PT Madukuro, 5. CV Alam Lestari, 6. CV Bhakti Praja. More details can be seen in the figure 1:

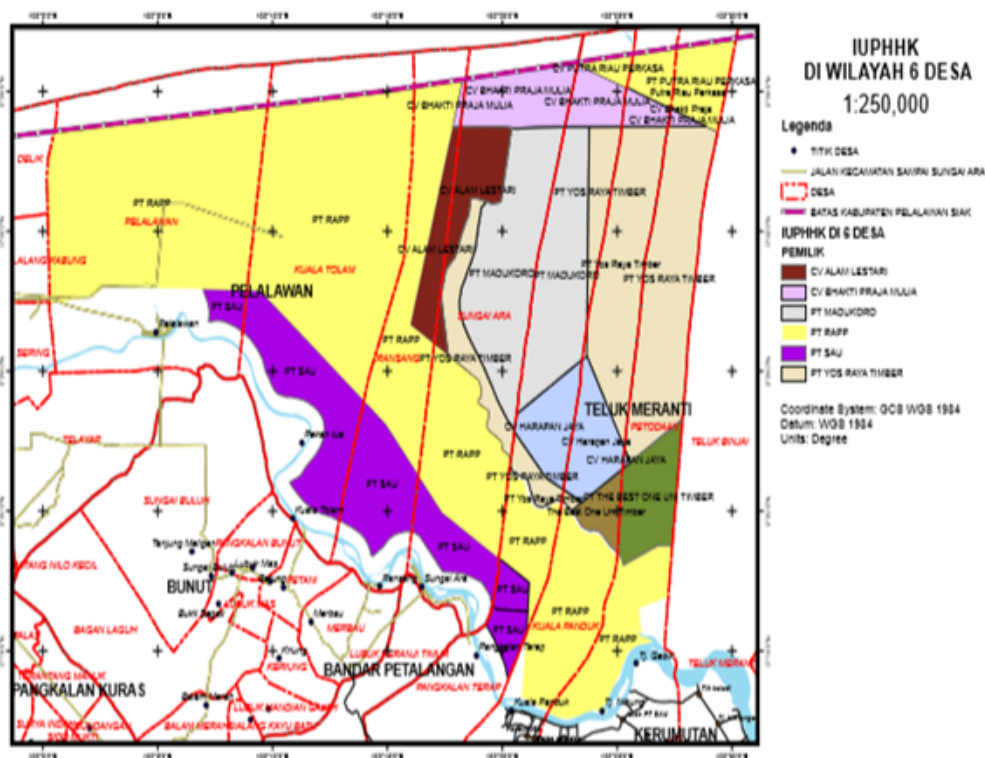


Figure 1. IUPHHK Area Map

Source: Pelawan Regency Government 2022

Table 1. HTI Concession Area

Village Name	Area in Hectares	Company Name
Kuala Tolam	19.440,2525	PT. SAU and PT. RAPP
Rangsang	7.235,8551	PT. SAU, PT. RAPP, CV. Alam Lestari, and CV. Bakti Praja
Sungai Ara	6.195,5881	PT. SAU, PT. RAPP, PT. Yos Raya Timber, PT. Madukuro, CV. Alam Lestari and CV. Bakti Praja.
Pangkalan Terap	2.493,3853	PT. SAU, PT. RAPP, PT. Yos Raya Timber, PT. Madukuro, and CV. Bakti Praja.
Kuala Panduk	5.668,8902	PT. RAPP, PT. Yos Raya Timber, and CV. Bakti Praja.
Petodaan	4.117.0610	PT. RAPP, PT. Yos Raya Timber, and CV. Bakti Praja.

Source: Pelalawan Sub-District Head 2022

From the figure 1, the author can explain that the six companies are companies operating in villages in two sub-districts, all of which are partners, suppliers, and subsidiaries of the parent company, PT RAPP in Pangkalan Kerinci City, Pelalawan Regency. The above HTI companies also operate in 6 villages consisting of Kuala Tolam Village, Rangsang Village, Sungai Ara Village, Pangkalan Terap Village, Pangkalan Terap Village, Kuala Panduk Village, Petodaan Village which the author can detail as table 1.

From the table it can be explained that for Kuala Tolam Village there are 2 HTI companies, Rangsang Village has 5 companies, Sungai Ara Village has 6 companies, Pangkalan Terap Village has 5 companies, Panduk Village has 3 companies and Petodaan Village has 3 companies.

Based on information obtained by the author, the form of empowerment carried out by the 6 HTI companies is by providing cash whereas empowerment with this pattern is only consumptive and consumable. This pattern has been carried out for a long time and there is no effort to change it from the 6 villages, which in the author's view is very detrimental to village communities around the forest.

Literature review of the results of research conducted by Nur Aminah, Lina, Rommy Qurniati, and Wahyu Hidayat (2014) where community empowerment is carried out using self-planting or partnership-based forest management with monoculture, polyculture, and agroforestry

patterns. The study said that the average income of farmers was Rp. 17,619,649 per year with an area of 137.5 hectares of community forest. Therefore, there must be community-based forest management (CBFM), where in this research the community plays a role and participates by forming a forest village community organization (Wahanisa 2015). The pattern carried out by planting itself by the agricultural community in the HTI area is very effective, which is called the community-based forestry (CBF) pattern where the community plays a role in regulating and managing forest resources. (Clare, Ruiz-Jaen, and Hickey 2019). The community forestry (CF) program was introduced to increase local community participation in forest management (Permadi, Dwiko B., Michael Burton, Ram Pandit, Iain Walker, and Digby Race, 2018). Forestry partnerships are developed and provided to families living around forests who rely heavily on forests for livelihoods (Rakatama and Pandit 2020). The partnership scheme not only resolves tenure issues but is also expected to be a solution for communities to improve their welfare (Arowolo et al. 2014), because the community can utilize forest products while still upholding the principles of sustainable forest management (Rukminda, Soekmadi, and Adiwibowo 2020).

The various patterns of empowerment of village communities around the forest have shown various positive sides of the research results that the author reveals. From the literature

review above, the author can conclude that community empowerment around the forest is carried out in partnership with the company so that the community around the forest can be independent and of course productive in the economic field. It is very different from the empowerment carried out by the 6 companies to 6 villages in Pelalawan and Teluk Meranti Districts where empowerment is carried out by providing cash. (Latif et al. 2022), this empowerment is very detrimental to the community where the results they receive are much smaller when compared to forest management by partnering or joint forest management between the community and the company holding the forest product utilization permit. (Utami 2015).

The empowerment of village communities around the forest is called the Plants of Life program by the Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry Number P.12/Menlhk-II/2015 concerning Industrial Plantation Forest Development where the community is entitled to 20% of the HTI area. However, this is very contradictory to the community in Pelalawan Regency where empowerment through plants of life still adopts the pattern of giving cash. The author sees that there are still obstacles or barriers from the community, companies and the government to change consumptive patterns into productive patterns. These constraints are in the form of the ability of the community itself to change because empowerment will not go well if the empowered object, namely the community around the forest, does not have the desire to change and is comfortable with the cash pattern that is detrimental to them. Then there are no existing institutions in the community such as farmer groups that can be empowered by the Company. As is known, the requirement for partnerships is the existence of institutions or farmer groups so that empowerment activities can be well organized. The most crucial thing in this problem is that there is no specific regulation to regulate the empowerment of communities around the forest through this Plants of Life program so the company does not optimally empower them.

This research is expected to contribute ideas so that village communities around the forest can rise from adversity and can adopt productive patterns by managing forests in partnership with companies in the 6 villages. So it is hoped that the community empowerment program through plants of life can be maximally realized. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze and explain the constraints of empowering communities around the forest in Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province.

2. Literature Review

Plants of Life and Industrial Forest Plantation

Plants of Life are staple crops that produce timber and non-timber products that are beneficial to the community and managed in partnership between the community and the Industrial Plantation Forest business license holder to improve the welfare of the community. (Latif et al. 2022). Industrial Plantation Forest abbreviated as HTI is an artificial forest with a stand structure that forms a lifelong or long-term forest (D Youlla, Ellyta, Hery Medianto K 2020). Furthermore, HTI is a plantation forest that is built to increase the potential and quality of production forests by applying intensive silviculture which is used to meet the needs of industrial raw materials (Suwondo, Darmadi, and Yunus 2018). The development of Industrial Forest Plantations aims to increase land and forest productivity, foreign exchange from the forest sector, absorb labor to overcome unemployment, and meet the need for paper raw materials (pulp). (Prabawa Widiatma 2019). HTI is a policy that is considered quite controversial because of its benefits, on the other hand, it is considered to reduce emissions and environmental protection and on the other hand, it has an impact on social policies that tend to harm the community (Hidayat and Safitri 2021). In addition, another negative impact is the limited value or benefits accruing to local landowners (indigenous peoples), which has largely led to conflict (Pirard et al. 2016).

Community Empowerment

Empowerment comes from the word empowerment which means strength, so overall empowerment can be interpreted as giving power or strength to weak individuals or groups who do not yet have the power to live properly and independently in meeting their basic needs for clothing, housing, food, health and so on- (Hamid 2018; Muluk, 2021). Mas'oeed (1990) says that empowerment is defined as an effort to provide empowerment or strength to the community. (Shamadiyah 2017). In addition, empowerment is also defined as gaining power and access to available resources to fulfill needs such as earning a living. (Rohman and Astuti 2019 and Radiansyah, dkk., (2021). Empowerment according to Suharto (2010) refers to the ability of people or groups, namely vulnerable and weak groups: a) Have the strength and ability to fulfill their basic needs so that they have freedom, b) The desire for productive resources that enable weaker groups to increase their income and obtain the goods and services they need, c) Participate in the development, decision-making that can affect weaker groups (Nadzir 2015). Furthermore, Suharto (2010) also said that the definition of empowerment can be seen from the aspects of goals, processes, and ways of empowerment which consist of: (1) Empowerment aims to improve the capabilities of weak and disadvantaged people; (2) An empowerment process where people become powerful by participating in empowerment emphasizes that people will gain enough skills, knowledge, and power to influence their lives; (3) It refers to the delegation of power through social structures or institutions that exist in society; (4) A way in which people, groups, and community institutions are directed to be able to master their lives (Darwis 2016).

Thus, empowerment implies improvements to the quality of life and welfare, including: (1) Economic improvement; (2) Improvement of social welfare; (3) Freedom from all oppression; (4) Security that is guaranteed; (5) The upholding of human rights and freedom from fear (Margayaningih 2016).

Community empowerment is a way that is done as a strategy in the concept of development whose subject is the community in the context of development. According to Sumarjo (2003), community empowerment is a process of developing opportunities, willingness or motivation, and the ability of the community to be able to access available resources to increase their ability to determine their future by participating to realize the quality of life of themselves and their groups (Endah 2020). Community empowerment is an effort made to develop the potential that exists in the community to overcome various kinds of problems faced (Winoto and Sukaesih 2019; Maman, dkk., 2023).

For community empowerment to be carried out as expected, it must have principles, including: (1) The principle of *ukhuwah* is the principle of brotherhood or humanity; (2) The principle of *Palawan* is the principle of mutual assistance; (3) The principle of equality is the principle that human beings are the same and there is no discrimination (Sany 2019).

No matter how good the implementation of empowerment is, it does not escape the obstacles or obstacles in its implementation, according to Adamson (2010) the obstacles or obstacles in empowerment are: (1) Community Capacity; (2) Institutional Capacity; (3) Organizational Culture; (4) Regulatory Framework (Indardi 2019).

3. Research Method

This research uses a *ski-native* research approach with a case study approach which is considered by the author to be able to answer the problems faced, namely those related to the constraints of community empowerment through plants of life where the community is difficult to rise from the downturn that only receives consumptive empowerment. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative research is research that begins with the interpretation of theories, assumptions, and the study of the problem of how individuals or groups interpret the problems they face. (Andry, Herman; and Rahmah 2023). The data

analysis technique used is to prioritize interview, observation, and documentation techniques as the basis for obtaining information at the research location. The informants in this research are the village government consisting of 6 villages, namely Kuala Tolam Village, Rangsang Village, Sungai Ara Village, Pangkalan Terap Village, Kuala Panduk Village, and Petodaan Village. In addition to the village government, the author also includes informants from community leaders and companies that hold HTI business license rights. Data sources consist of primary and secondary data. After the data is collected, the author separates the primary data and secondary data, then compiles a research report and analyzes the results of interviews and documentation so that the report can be accurate and scientific.

4. Results and Discussion

Community empowerment is an activity carried out by the government and the private sector to support development so that people are free from poverty. However, a community empowerment program does not escape the obstacles in its implementation, both from the government, the private sector, and the community itself. In the case of this research, the author's focus lies on empowering communities on the edge of the forest in Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province. This empowerment has been regulated through regulations, namely the Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry Number P.12 / Menlhk-II / 2015 concerning Industrial Plantation Forest Development where the community is entitled to 20% of the HTI area called the Plants of Life program.

As the author discussed earlier in the background of the problem above, the Plants of Life program in the context of empowering communities around the forest is carried out by distributing cash (cash) which is very detrimental to the community because the ideal pattern in community empowerment through this plants of life is by planting itself or community-based forestry

(CBF). (Clare et al. 2019), or what is called community-based forest management (Wahanisa 2015), where this empowerment is carried out by partnering with the company. As explained in the discussion above, if you adopt a partnership pattern by planting yourself, the annual income of farmers reaches Rp. 17,619,649 per year with a community forest area of 137.5 hectares (Nur Aminah et al. 2014). In contrast, villagers only receive around 1.3 -1.5 million per five years (Latif et al. 2022).

After the author made observations at the research location by seeking various information from informants, it was difficult to change the consumptive pattern of the community (cash) to a productive pattern (planting yourself). Then the author matches the problem with the theory that the author understands according to Adamson's opinion (2010) which consists of: 1. community capacity, 2. institutional capacity, 3. organizational culture, 4. regulatory framework (Indardi 2019). More details about the discussion of the theory can be seen in the explanation below.

Community Capacity

Community capacity is an effort to strengthen the capabilities of individuals, groups, institutions, and network systems in organizational groups and other parties outside the community system (Sururi and Mulyasih 2017). Community capacity is the ability of the community to take action to reduce threats to individuals and groups (Nugraha, Nugraheni, and Kurniawan 2016). In terms of community capacity, the author assesses two aspects, namely community awareness and participation.

Community empowerment around the forest through a plants of life program carried out by 6 HTI companies in Teluk Meranti District and Pelalawan District and consisting of 6 villages namely Kuala Tolam Village, Rangsang Village, Sungai Ara Village, Pangkalan Terap Village, Panduk Village and Petodaan Village. Based on information obtained by the author in the field, there are several patterns carried out to empower

communities around the forest through this plants of life program, The first is through self-planting or community involvement in forest management, the second is through selling all the community's land to the HTI holding company, and the third is through giving cash for the fee for using the village community's land. Of the three empowerments above, the empowerment pattern that was chosen by 6 village communities was giving cash.

The provision of cash has become the preferred alternative to long-term contracts that are detrimental to the community. The contracts between the 6 villages and the companies holding HTI licenses vary, ranging from 35 years to 42 years. The cash given by way of tonnage calculation is Rp. 16,000 rupiah per ton (1,000kg) of acacia wood price. This tonnage shows the calculation that 1 hectare of land is averaged at 80,000 kg. So, according to the author's calculation, 1 hectare of land leased by the company only gets Rp. 1,280,000 (one million two hundred eighty thousand rupiah) per harvest for 5 years. The author gives an example of one village, Sungai Ara, where the HTI permit area is 6,195.58 hectares, if rationalized by 20% for plants of life, the area of plants of life becomes 1,239.166 hectares. So, the total fee received is Rp. $1.280.000 \times 1.239.166 =$ Rp. 1.586.068.480 for five years. According to the data obtained by the author at the time of the last disbursement of the Plants of Life, the number of residents who received this cash was 842 residents. Then if it is rationalized again, namely Rp. $1.586.068.480 / 842$ people = Rp. 1.883.691 (one million eight hundred eighty-three thousand six hundred ninety-one thousand rupiahs) for five years. In addition to the above, based on sources the author obtained from (Panca, 2022), the price of acacia wood per ton is Rp.2-3 million rupiah. However, the price of acacia wood per ton issued by the HTI holding company is only Rp. 16,000 per ton, which is very detrimental to the people of 6 villages around the forest. The community's ignorance of the formal price causes problems between the company and the community, because the community does

not have much information to access the price (Scudder et al. 2019). Based on the author's observations and studies from various research literature such as research conducted by Aminah in 2014, it was stated that the community forest area of only 137.5 hectares produced Rp. 17,619,649 per family head for 1 year with a pattern of community empowerment by planting themselves in partnership with the company.

From the various information above, the author considers that the people in the 6 villages must fully realize that the pattern of empowerment that they have received so far is not what should be and is not ideal. Therefore, awareness is needed from various levels of society so as not to be trapped in a consumptive pattern which is very detrimental to the villagers around the forest. The author has confirmed to several village heads and community leaders about the pattern applied so far (cash) which is detrimental to the village community, but it is difficult to change due to the lack of public awareness of this. This problem hopes that there will be community awareness and participation to be free from consumptive empowerment patterns and switch to productive empowerment patterns, namely by being involved in forest management in partnership.

Institutional Capacity

Similar to community capacity, institutional capacity is also an effort or ability of organizations within the community to be able to rise from adversity by maximizing empowerment. As we know institutional capacity is an important part of the implementation and provides a clear goal for communities, individuals, groups, and organizations to improve their abilities (Raharjo 2022). Institutional capacity is the ability to solve problems experienced by increasing the competence of individuals and groups to achieve predetermined goals (Bhimo 2019). In this study, there are several things that the author highlights related to the institutional capacity involved in empowering communities around the forest through this Plants of Life program, namely

team/ cooperative institutions, communities, companies, and governments.

To manage the usefulness of the plants of life provided by the company to the community, before they are distributed, they must first be managed through teams/cooperatives in their respective villages. This team/cooperative was formed to count and distribute the money given by the company to the community. According to the contract from the company to this team/cooperative, the price is Rp.16,000 per ton of acacia. Then the amount of Rp. 16,000 is distributed as much as Rp. 14,000 to the community, and Rp. 2000 for the management of the cooperative. According to the author's observations of the cooperative and the company, the distribution seems to lack transparency where the team/cooperative and the company rarely publicize to the community how much the acacia harvest is, and how much is given from the company to the team/cooperative. As a result of this, the community questions the credibility of these two institutions, namely the team/cooperative and the company holding HTI rights.

Based on the author's interviews with several Village Heads and Community Leaders, it was stated that it was rare for the community to ask about how much the company and the team/cooperative gave to the community. If seen, it is very ineffective because in addition to the company and the team/cooperative are not openly transparent, The community also lacked the response to simply ask how much had been spent on this plant of life. Meanwhile, the government is also completely unaware because this empowerment program runs according to the contract agreed by both parties, namely the team/cooperative and the company that holds the HTI rights.

Organizational Culture

The pattern of empowerment through plants of life chosen by the 6 villages in Pelalawan and Teluk Meranti sub-districts is the pattern of giving cash distributed to the team/cooperative before falling into the hands of the community. The author names this empowerment pattern as

the "consumptive pattern", This means that the benefit to the amount of money received is only momentary and the amount is very small when compared to the pattern of joint forest management by planting yourself.

One thing that is difficult to change from the community is because the contract given by the company is very long. Based on information that the author gathered from several villages, such as Petodaaan Village where the contract for this plant of life was for 40 years, and Sungai Ara Village for 42 years, which began in 2002. Then the contract will end around 2040, and as long as the contract has not ended then that's how long the community has been harmed by the companies holding HTI rights. In the future, it is hoped that if the contracts of the 6 companies holding HTI rights to 6 villages in Pelalawan and Teluk Meranti Districts expire, the community must review the contracts which are basically in favor of the community.

Based on the author's interview with one of the Village Heads, he said that our wish that needs to be accommodated regarding this contract is that if this long-term contract ends, the most important thing is to change the contract using per harvest (once every 5 years) so that the acacia price can adjust to the market price at that time. Furthermore, based on the author's interviews with millennials, they argue that they are completely unaware of the contents of the contract of the community empowerment program through this plants of life where the contract was carried out by previous people who may not know the consequences of the contract they made for their children, grandchildren, and even future generations. As a result of this contract, community access to forest management is limited (Yiwen, Kant, and Liu 2019).

Regulatory Framework

The regulation that oversees community empowerment around the forest is the Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry Number P.12 / Menlhk-II / 2015 concerning Industrial Plantation Forest Development, which in

one of its articles is to empower the community through 20% of plants of lives. The regulation has not been able to accommodate the welfare of the community around the forest or HTI. Based on the author's observations and several sources of interviews the author concludes that ideal empowerment is not at all well implemented. Based on existing regulations related to forestry regulations, the purpose of HTI is to reforest and empower communities. Based on some research results, it is said that the company should accommodate communities to join the reforestation program by planting acacia under a proportional contract on their private land (Permadi et al. 2017). Forest management with the people should be done with various experiences such as adopting the pattern of community-based forestry (CBF) or better known as Community Based Forestry where the community is involved (Clare and Hickey 2019). None of these research models can accommodate the community's desire to manage the forest together. This can be proven by the absence of regulations at both the provincial and district levels to emphasize the pattern of community empowerment around this forest.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of research in the form of research findings in the field, the author can conclude that the empowerment of communities living around the forest in Pelalawan Regency, Riau Province, has experienced obstacles in its implementation. The actual purpose of empowerment, which is to free the community from adversity, cannot be overcome properly because the empowerment pattern is carried out by giving cash which clearly cannot accommodate the community's desire to prosper. The suggestions that the author can recommend are: 1). There needs to be transparency from various parties, especially from the company and the team/cooperative regarding the management of this plant of life. 2). Public awareness plays an active role in changing from consumptive patterns to productive patterns as desired or at least playing an active role in the management of these plants of life 3). The existence of derivative regulations in the form of local regulations or other regulations at both the provincial and district levels that aim to favor village communities around the forest.

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