

GAUNG KMAN II

Tanjung, 21 September 2003

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Main report

Land and Natural Resources: Do we need autonomy for communities?

A participant asked outside the seminar room: why do we always end up talking about forests when we talk about indigenous peoples? It gives the impression that indigenous peoples and forests are the same. And that if we could solve the forest issues, then the problems of indigenous peoples would be solved, too. The workshop on Land and Natural Resources tried to answer this participant's dissatisfaction. The issue at stake is that of "management area". A management area encompasses all kinds of natural resources. Forest is just one of them.

The main concept that emerged from this seminar needs close attention: the important thing for indigenous peoples is not expansion of their management areas, but authority over them. The purpose of this authority is clear: control over all natural resources contained within the area. The forestry sector is the clearest example of this. Forests are a good illustration of the conflict over a management area containing products that are needed or used either directly or indirectly by everyone. Timber is needed by companies and indigenous communities living in or close to the forest. Various non-timber forest products are also needed by all kinds of people, from the village communities to the inhabitants of large cities. It is a measure of the uncontrolled situation now afflicting Indonesia's forests that the current rate of forest destruction in Indonesia is roughly equivalent to six football fields per minute. The rate of forest destruction has rocketed since the start of regional autonomy. As forest management has failed under regional autonomy, a new alternative is needed. Indigenous peoples' autonomy at community level is one option.

This alternative requires a proper understanding of the identity of indigenous peoples' communities. Without this, patterns of behaviour will emerge which lead to people undermining their own communities. Examples of this are happening everyday. A lot of illegal logging is carried out by indigenous peoples in and around forest areas. Many of them protest when termed "*masyarakat terpencil*" [isolated communities, often used in a depreciatory meaning - *trans*]. However, as soon as they wish to interact with the outer world, it is they who ask the

government to build infrastructure like access roads. What is their reason? “We feel isolated”, says one participant from Toraja (Sulawesi).

Not being able to define their identity is a very serious problem for indigenous peoples when claiming authority over a particular management area. “If indigenous peoples themselves cannot answer this question, how can they seek recognition?” asks M. Ridha Saleh, from WALHI (Friends of the Earth Indonesia). As an illustration he describes the challenge the world, including indigenous peoples, currently faces. Each year there is a deficit of 8 billion litres of water on the island of Java. Every 15 minutes a baby dies because of air pollution. This means that there is currently a serious crisis regarding what are called natural resources, land, water and air with all they contain, which is affecting many people’s lives.. There is a main cause behind this crisis.

So far, and who knows for how much longer, the state and all those who hold sway over natural resources regard these resources in terms of cash, as commodities. The question is whether indigenous peoples will be capable of putting forward their own view on all these issues as an alternative? It is a race against time to stop the destruction and extinction of our natural resources.

The first thing that needs to be done is to assert the right to control remaining natural resources. This theme was also discussed in the workshop on “Community Autonomy” in the “Langko” room. The discussion there emphasised that community autonomy is a pre-requisite for capacity to control the natural resources within a management area, as has been put forward by Pak Nazarius from West Kalimantan. To this purpose, indigenous peoples need and must gain political strength because this is about controlling natural resources, not just managing them. (Gaung/eml)

Miscellaneous

Lunch for eleven with wrong cards

The participants from East Nusa Tenggara will have something to remember from lunch time on the second day, Saturday, 20 September 2003. Eleven of them could not get into the area where lunch had been laid out for the participants of the congress. Upon closer investigation it turned out that the cards they had been given were those intended for observers – they were blue cards with the word “Observer” written on them. Now these people were representatives of indigenous peoples’ communities from East Nusa Tenggara and their cards should have been red and with the word “participant” written on them.

As it turned out, they felt hesitant and embarrassed about using the blue cards. So how could they manage to get some lunch without showing their cards? They

went to look for a member of the steering committee who happened to be from East Nusa Tenggara. This friend went to explain this problem to Pak Raden who was in charge of coordinating lunch that day. He accompanied the group to the kitchen. Problem solved? Not yet. The kitchen was full of people having lunch. Luckily there was an empty tent and they only needed a piece of canvas to sit on. So that is where the “wrong-carded eleven” had their lunch with... with the committee member who by now had got rid of his card. (eml)

unite for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights

Article 1

Strengthening the political role of women

In Tanjung, on 20 September 2003, there was a workshop to discuss the role of women in politics. The workshop was attended by several elders, leaders and female members of indigenous peoples' communities. During the meeting, the participants stated that dirty politics is a reality that cannot be avoided, and therefore, in order to fight it and to strengthen the political rights of the people, it is important to begin from the smallest arena, the household. Political problems are personal problems that we need to fight in order to gain or strengthen our bargaining position within the government administration. This is important because it concerns decision-making and policy-making, in which, so far, women only play a very small part.

At present, it is estimated that only 10% of those involved in making decisions are women and of these 10%, not all concentrate on women's problems. Apart from that, the injustice of women's problems is deep-rooted and culturally entrenched. This makes it very difficult for women to gain a bargaining position in politics.

Women are often marginalized by the government's policies, e.g. women living near forested areas suffer due to forest conversion and due to mining. Also, cultural values prevail that do not allow women to attain the highest positions. “The only differences between women and men are those bestowed by nature. The only inherent female powers are giving birth and breastfeeding, everything else is to be agreed by social contract so that all responsibilities can be shared”, says Emmy Hafild.

This is why everything needs to change, especially the problem of corruption. Out of 102 countries, Indonesia ranks number 96 and, whereas Indonesia is a country quite rich in natural resources such as oil and gold, our nation remains poor after 37 years of independence. That is why corruption must be eliminated

on all fronts and women must be given the greatest possible opportunity to make decisions and policies in each sector. Of course this is not an easy thing to do, it is a difficult struggle. (Gaung/hnp)

Interview

Our lives are at a cross-roads

After attending the discussion on Regional Autonomy, Pak H. Djailani Hasan was chatting with some journalists. He then went on to tell them about his experience as an *adat* leader in Aceh, an area torn by continuous conflict. Gaung and a journalist from the Kompas newspaper met him outside the main meeting room for a joint interview.

Gaung : Is it true that you managed to stop 21 HPH [timber concessions] in Aceh?

DH : This was a joint struggle with the communities. We did this after AMAN's first congress in 1999; we pressured the Governor of NAD (Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam) to freeze the operations of 21 HPH dan HTI [timber plantations].

How did you do that?

We only used legal means, we did nothing illegal. We wrote letters to the Governor, and to the local government at province and district level to inform them that those HPH have destroyed 152,000 ha of forest in Aceh. We also engaged in political dialogue with the government.

Have you achieved your aim?

Not yet, what we want the government to do is to withdraw the permits of these HPH and to give back the right to manage the forest to the people. All that's happened so far is that their operations have been suspended.

So, what do you plan to do?

We will keep fighting to stop forest destruction because it damages our livelihoods, bringing floods during the rainy season and hunger in the dry season because there's no harvest.

Does the status as a Military Operations Area (Daerah Operasi Militer, or DOM) and martial law (Darurat Militer) affect your struggle?

Of course, we live at a cross-roads, for us both DOM and martial law are equally bad, it's calling the same thing by a different name.

What can you do in such a situation?

We are in a dilemma. What we want is law enforcement. But... in the end we keep quiet, we want to survive, we want to live. What we really want is enforcement of the law so that there are no more civilian victims.

What are your expectations in joining this congress?

We from Aceh will recommend to the coordinating minister for people's welfare to immediately suspend the status of martial law. The important thing is law enforcement, and nothing else is necessary. (Gaung/hnp)

Voices:

“So far, only the voices of indigenous peoples can be heard, but they still cannot be seen.” (Sulaiman, KMAN II participant from Jambi)

“If you want things to change, then indigenous peoples must become part of the government system, otherwise nothing will ever change”. (KMAN II participant from Maluku)

Announcements:

1. local travel cost refunds can be claimed from the consolidators in charge as follows:
 - a. Regions of Sumatera, Papua, and Maluku: Monday, 22/09/03 from 10:00 to 19:00 at the Media Centre
 - b. Regions Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Java on Tuesday 23/09/03 from 10:00 to 19:00 at the Media Centre
 2. Confirmation of plane tickets on Sunday 21/09/03 at 21:00 at the Media Centre
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(Translated from the Indonesian by Eva Castaner for DTE)