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Addressing Tenurial Conflict through Forestry Partnership: A Case Study in Jambi Province, Indonesia

(Menangani Konflik Tenurial melalui Kemitraan Kehutanan: Studi Kasus di Provinsi Jambi, Indonesia)

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ABSTRACT

Tenurial conflict remains a persistent challenge in Indonesia's forest governance, particularly where Indigenous communities' customary tenure intersects with formal forest management. Conflicts between local communities and forest companies have increased significantly. These conflicts may be addressed through Forestry Partnerships as a collaborative governance mechanism for negotiating tenure rights, sharing management responsibilities, and improving community welfare. Although Forestry Partnerships are promoted to address such conflicts, previous studies in the PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (REKI) landscape have rarely examined how the distinctive socio-cultural characteristics of the Batin Sembilan shape conflict resolution. This study analyzes how the Batin Sembilan community in Simpang Macan Luar developed capacity, formulated and negotiated resolution options, obtained Forestry Partnership approval, and subsequently engaged with PT REKI. Using a qualitative case-study approach, data were collected through interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The findings show that advocacy and negotiation enabled the community to overcome unequal bargaining positions and establish a formal partnership aligned with Ministerial Regulation No. 83/2016. The partnership strengthened recognition of customary tenure and enabled collaborative ecosystem restoration, while establishing a Forest Farmer Group (KTH), Social Forestry Management Plan (RKPS), and livelihood activities. However, tenure formalization, power asymmetries, and institutional capacity remain challenges. The study demonstrates that tenurial conflict resolution is a gradual social process shaped by community knowledge, capacity, and socio-cultural institutions. Sustained participatory processes, independent facilitation, community capacity building, and long-term institutional support are essential for equitable and durable partnerships.

Kata kunci: Kemitraan kehutanan, konflik tenurial, Masyarakat adat, perhutanan sosial, restorasi ekosistem, tata kelola

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ABSTRAK

Konflik tenurial tetap menjadi tantangan yang terus berlanjut dalam tata kelola hutan di Indonesia, khususnya di wilayah di mana hak tenurial adat masyarakat adat bersinggungan dengan pengelolaan hutan formal. Konflik antara masyarakat setempat dan perusahaan kehutanan telah meningkat secara signifikan. Konflik-konflik ini dapat ditangani melalui skema Kemitraan Kehutanan sebagai mekanisme tata kelola kolaboratif untuk merundingkan hak tenurial, berbagi tanggung jawab pengelolaan, dan meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat. Meskipun Kemitraan Kehutanan didorong sebagai solusi atas konflik semacam itu, studi terdahulu di lanskap PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (REKI) jarang mengkaji bagaimana karakteristik sosial-budaya khas masyarakat Batin Sembilan memengaruhi penyelesaian konflik tersebut. Studi ini menganalisis bagaimana masyarakat Batin Sembilan di Simpang Macan Luar membangun kapasitas, merumuskan dan merundingkan opsi penyelesaian, memperoleh persetujuan Kemitraan Kehutanan, serta menjalin kerja sama dengan PT REKI. Dengan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan studi menunjukkan bahwa advokasi dan negosiasi memungkinkan masyarakat mengatasi ketimpangan posisi tawar dan membentuk kemitraan formal yang selaras dengan

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Kontribusi penulis: **RN**: Konseptualisasi, metodologi, pengambilan dan analisis data, menulis draf awal naskah; **DP**: Konseptualisasi, pengambilan data dan analisis data, review naskah; **H**: Analisis data, review naskah.

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Peraturan Menteri No. 83/2016. Kemitraan ini memperkuat pengakuan atas hak tenurial adat dan memungkinkan restorasi ekosistem secara kolaboratif, sekaligus membentuk Kelompok Tani Hutan (KTH), Rencana Kerja Pengelolaan Perhutanan Sosial (RKPS), dan kegiatan penghidupan. Namun, formalisasi tenurial, ketimpangan kekuasaan, dan kapasitas kelembagaan tetap menjadi tantangan. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa penyelesaian konflik tenurial merupakan proses sosial bertahap yang dibentuk oleh pengetahuan, kapasitas, dan institusi sosial-budaya masyarakat. Proses partisipatif yang berkelanjutan, fasilitasi independen, peningkatan kapasitas masyarakat, dan dukungan kelembagaan jangka panjang sangat penting untuk mewujudkan kemitraan yang adil dan langgeng.

1. Introduction

Indonesia's tropical forests are among the world's most biologically diverse ecosystems, supporting ecological balance, climate regulation, and human livelihoods (Ekawati, Moeliono, & Wulandari, 2019; Kementerian Kehutanan Republik Indonesia, 2011). Covering approximately 125.54 million ha (KLHK, 2025), these forests provide timber, non-timber forest products, clean water, and cultural values that contribute to national development and community well-being (Fauzi, 2004; Soemarwoto, 1983). However, many forest-dependent communities continue to experience poverty and social marginalization. The National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2015–2019 recorded approximately 25,863 settlements within forest areas, with an estimated 10.1 million impoverished people living in and around forests (BPS, 2024). Restricted access to forest resources, insecure tenure, and inequitable benefit-sharing contribute to poverty and recurrent tenurial conflicts (Pasya, 2017). These conflicts are frequently associated with overlapping land claims, contested forest boundaries, and the historical prioritization of corporate concessions over community rights (Buckles, 1999; Silalahi, 2015).

Tenurial conflicts in Indonesia's forestry sector involve interconnected social, ecological, and institutional dimensions. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) recorded 1,051 complaints concerning tenurial conflicts between 2015 and 2022 (Wicaksono, 2023). Sumatra contains approximately 6.5 million ha of forest areas with potential tenurial conflicts, while Riau Province recorded 361 cases between 2015 and 2023, the highest number reported nationally (Putri et al., 2024). In Jambi Province, the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI) documented at least 162 agrarian conflict cases between 2017 and 2022 involving plantation and forestry companies (WALHI, 2022). Underlying causes include inequitable land distribution, uncertain legal status, unilateral forest zoning, environmental degradation, and inadequate consultation (Ekawati et al., 2019). Buckles (1999) identifies four principal sources of conflict: unequal resource access, environmental externalities, competition over increasingly scarce resources, and differing values and identities associated with natural resources. Power asymmetries between communities and corporations can further intensify disputes, undermine social justice, and adversely affect community well-being.

To address these challenges, the Indonesian government introduced the Social Forestry Program in 2015, allocating 12.7 million ha, approximately 10% of the national forest estate, for community-based management. The program seeks to improve livelihoods, promote sustainable forest utilization, and reduce tenure conflicts (KLHK, 2021; Priatna et al., 2022). Its five principal schemes comprise Village Forest (Hutan Desa/HD), Community Forest (Hutan

Kemasyarakatan/HKm), Community Plantation Forest (Hutan Tanaman Rakyat/HTR), Customary Forest (Hutan Adat), and Forestry Partnership (Kemitraan Kehutanan) (KLHK, 2015). Forestry Partnerships are particularly relevant where community or customary territories overlap with concession areas because negotiated agreements can establish community access rights, clarify responsibilities, and facilitate collaborative management and benefit-sharing (Hakim, 2004; KLHK, 2021).

An important case concerns the longstanding tenurial conflict between the Indigenous Batin Sembilan community of Simpang Macan Luar and PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (PT REKI) in Jambi Province. PT REKI received an ecosystem restoration concession covering 46,385 hectares in Batanghari and Sarolangun Regencies under Decree No. 327/Menhut-II/2010. The concession overlapped with Batin Sembilan customary territory, generating disputes over land rights and access to forest resources (Silalahi, 2015). The conflict reflects a longer history of logging concessions during the 1970s and plantation development in the 1980s, which marginalized Indigenous livelihoods and contributed to displacement. By 2010, Indigenous and migrant communities occupied approximately 13,000 ha within the concession (Silalahi, 2015).

Initially, PT REKI relied on litigation and framed community occupation as a violation of formal law. Such approaches, often accompanied by coercive enforcement, intensified tensions and mistrust (Garjitowati, 2009). Conversely, non-litigation approaches emphasizing negotiation, participatory mapping, and community engagement offered opportunities to de-escalate disputes and build mutual understanding (Hakim, 2004). Sustained dialogue eventually enabled PT REKI and Batin Sembilan representatives to negotiate a Forestry Partnership agreement, subsequently recognized by KLHK, establishing community access zones and shared management responsibilities. By 2020, five Batin Sembilan groups had formalized similar agreements with PT REKI. This development illustrates the potential for mediation to transform adversarial relationships into institutional arrangements for collaborative forest management.

Although social forestry is widely promoted as a mechanism for resolving tenurial conflicts (Refani et al., 2024; Rochaedi et al., 2021), empirical evidence concerning its implementation, particularly Forestry Partnerships with private concession holders, remains limited. Previous studies have concentrated largely on Village Forests and Community Forests, leaving partnerships between communities and concession-holding companies comparatively underexplored (Nabela, Rinjani, Agustina, Supriyadi, & Fatma, 2024; Putri & Irfan, 2023). Furthermore, existing studies of tenure conflicts in the PT REKI landscape have examined conflict dynamics and resolution initiatives but have not adequately isolated the experiences of the Batin Sembilan Indigenous community, often considering Indigenous, local, and migrant populations together (Hein et al., 2016; Silalahi, 2015; Weni et al., 2020).

This distinction matters because historical experiences, cultural values, social institutions, and knowledge systems influence how communities understand conflicts, evaluate resolution options, and negotiate collective decisions. Specifically, few studies was examined how Batin Sembilan communities develop the knowledge and institutional capacity to address tenure disputes, reach internal agreement, and navigate the formal procedures for obtaining Forestry Partnership approval from KLHK. Governance after agreement formation also requires further

investigation, particularly the distribution of roles, cooperation mechanisms, and adaptive processes between communities and PT REKI. Batin Sembilan livelihoods and traditional practices, including nugal (traditional planting), honey and rattan gathering, hunting, and the use of plants for food and traditional medicine, further demonstrate the importance of locally embedded knowledge in understanding community resilience and adaptive capacity.

Accordingly, this study conceptualizes tenurial conflict resolution not merely as a policy outcome but as a social process shaped by community knowledge, institutional capacity, cultural values, and historical experience. It examines how the Batin Sembilan community of Simpang Macan Luar pursued peaceful, non-litigation strategies despite limited literacy and a relatively weak bargaining position, ultimately securing formal access rights through the Forestry Partnership scheme. The case highlights Indigenous communities as active agents capable of interpreting and applying policy instruments to advance their tenure interests and participate in negotiated forest governance.

This study aims to analyze the Forestry Partnership between the Batin Sembilan Indigenous community of Simpang Macan Luar and PT REKI in Jambi Province. Specifically, it examines the negotiation processes leading to the partnership agreement, the governance arrangements and roles of facilitators, the company, and community members in partnership implementation, and the enabling and constraining factors affecting implementation and conflict-resolution outcomes. By situating this case within Indonesia's Social Forestry framework, the study contributes empirical insights into the potential and limitations of Forestry Partnerships for resolving tenurial conflicts, recognizing Indigenous access rights, and promoting more inclusive and equitable forest management.

2. Methods

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by three key theoretical perspectives: (1) social forestry and conflict resolution, (2) tenurial rights theory, and (3) ecosystem restoration management (Figure 1). Social forestry provides a participatory framework for forest management by local or customary communities to enhance livelihoods and ensure equitable access to forest resources (Awang, 2003; Suharjito, 2000). Within this framework, conflict resolution is understood as a process of addressing disputes over natural resources through collaborative, non-litigation approaches that emphasize mutual benefit and long-term sustainability (Mitchell et al., 2016; Siscawati, 2017).

The tenurial rights theory conceptualizes forest tenure as a bundle of rights—including access, management, exclusion, and transfer—held by different actors (Fauzi & Bachriadi, 1998; Schlager & Ostrom 1992; Larson, 2013). Finally, the ecosystem restoration approach views forest concessions not solely for timber extraction but for biodiversity conservation and habitat recovery, integrating partnerships with local communities as a critical element (Pareira et al., 2020). These frameworks collectively informed the design of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings in this research.

2.2. Study Area

The study was conducted in the traditional territory of the Batin Sembilan–Simpang Macan Luar community, located in Bungku Village, Bajubang Sub-district, Batanghari Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia (Figure 2). This area lies within the ecosystem restoration concession

managed by PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (PT REKI), which was granted management rights over 46,385 ha of forest through Ministerial Decree No. 327/Menhut-II/2010. The forestry partnership scheme between PT REKI and Batin Sembilan has been in place since 2015, aimed at resolving long-standing tenurial conflicts and providing collaborative forest management opportunities for the community (KLHK, 2019). The area is characterized by lowland tropical rainforest ecosystems and is inhabited by both Indigenous Batin Sembilan groups and migrant communities who have historically depended on forest resources for subsistence and livelihoods.

Bungku Village was selected as the study site because it represents a relevant case of tenurial conflict and negotiated resolution involving the Batin Sembilan indigenous community and PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (REKI). The area forms part of the traditional territory of the Batin Sembilan–Simpang Macan Luar community and has experienced longstanding tenure tensions associated with formal forest management and customary land-use claims. It is also the site where these tensions have been addressed through a Forestry Partnership, providing an opportunity to examine the process from community capacity building, advocacy, and negotiation to partnership implementation. The case further illustrates the interaction between indigenous tenure rights and ecosystem restoration objectives, offering broader lessons for collaborative forest governance and tenure-conflict resolution in Indonesia.

2.3. Research Design

This research employed a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the Forestry Partnership as a conflict management mechanism between PT REKI and the Batin Sembilan community. The case study approach was selected because it allows exploration of complex socio-ecological interactions and negotiation processes in their real-life context (Yin, 2014). The study focused on analyzing the processes of partnership formation, implementation, and perceived outcomes in relation to tenurial conflict resolution.

2.4. Data Collection

Data were collected from July to December 2022 using three complementary methods: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.

2.4.1. *Interviews*

- A total of four key informants were purposively selected to represent different stakeholder perspectives: (a) the head of the Forest Farmer Group (Kelompok Tani Hutan, KTH) *Maju Besamo*; (b) a representative of the Batin Sembilan Simpang Macan Luar community; (c) the director of the CAPPA Keadilan Ekologi Foundation (a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) facilitating community engagement); and (d) the director of PT REKI (Table 1).
- Four key informants were considered sufficient because they possessed high information power, having direct and complementary knowledge of the tenure-conflict resolution process from community, indigenous, civil-society, and company perspectives. Malterud et al. (2016) explain that in qualitative research, sample adequacy is not determined primarily by quantity but by "information power": the more relevant and information-rich the informants are regarding the research question, the fewer informants may be needed. Interview findings were triangulated with field observations and document analysis to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

- Selection criteria included direct involvement in the Forestry Partnership, knowledge of the conflict history, and role in decision-making or facilitation processes.
- Interviews explored topics such as partnership negotiation processes, rights and responsibilities, conflict dynamics, and outcomes for both community and company. Each interview lasted 60–90 minutes and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

2.4.2. *Observation*

- Participant observation was conducted during community meetings and site visits to areas under the Forestry Partnership scheme. Observations focused on interaction patterns among stakeholders, land-use practices, and implementation of partnership agreements.

2.4.3. *Document Analysis*

- Relevant documents were reviewed to triangulate interview and observation data. These included partnership agreements, government regulations on social forestry, PT REKI internal reports, and NGO facilitation notes.

The details of the data collection methods and analysis framework for this study are presented in Table 2.

In addition, to obtain in-depth information from key informants, this study employed semi-structured in-depth interviews with three key stakeholders: elders representing the Batin Sembilan community of Simpang Macan Luar, the Director of PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (PT REKI), and a representative of the CAPPA Keadilan Ekologi Foundation.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an interactive model of qualitative data analysis comprising three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Transcripts and field notes were coded thematically based on the study objectives, guided by theoretical constructs of conflict resolution, tenure rights, and partnership governance. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents was conducted to enhance the credibility of findings. Member checking was performed with key informants to validate interpretations and ensure accuracy. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for customary norms of the Batin Sembilan community.

The information obtained from the key informant interviews was documented in field notes and analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. The interview data were initially coded by identifying meanings and significant information related to participants' views, feelings, experiences, narratives, interpretations, and accounts of relevant events. The initial codes were subsequently compared and connected based on conceptual similarities and relationships among the information obtained from different informants. The analysis then proceeded to selective coding, whereby related codes were integrated into broader categories and core themes that captured the main patterns emerging from the interview data. This process enabled the study to identify key themes related to tenurial conflict resolution, Forestry Partnership implementation, governance arrangements, and the roles of the actors involved.

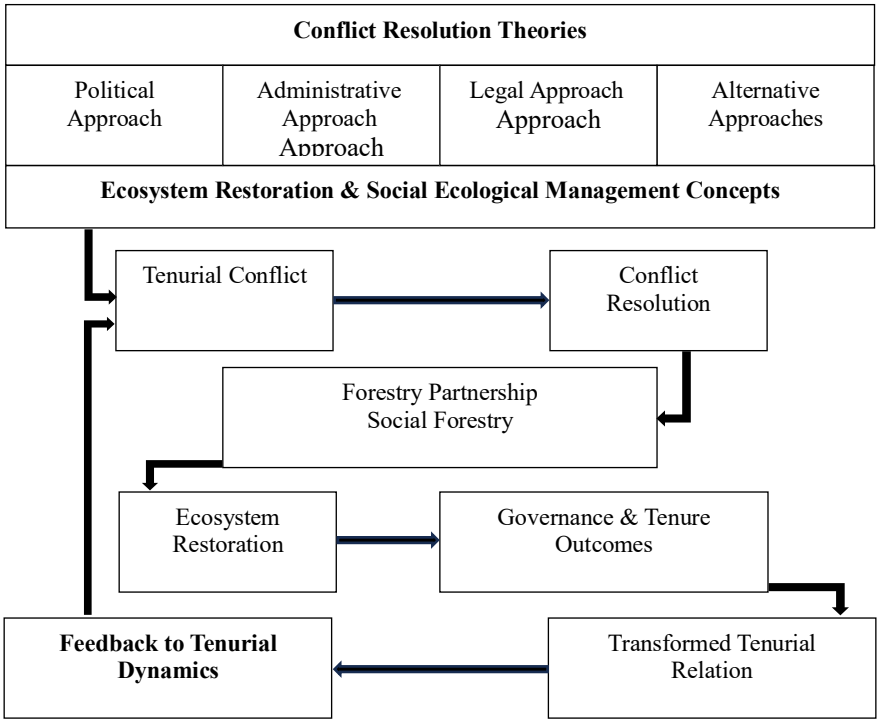


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking social forestry policy (Forestry Partnership scheme) and tenurial conflict resolution, based on conflict resolution theories (political, administrative, legal, and alternative approaches) and ecosystem restoration management concepts.

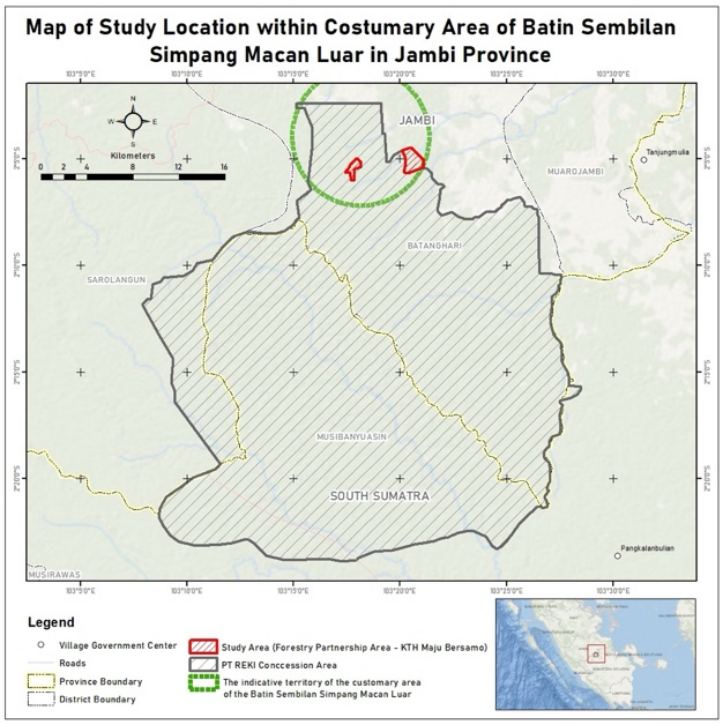


Figure 2. Location of the Batin Sembilan–Simpang Macan Luar customary area within PT. Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (REKI) concession, Batanghari Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia.

Table 1. Informant categories interviewed in the study and the stakeholders perspectives they represent

Informant Code	Informant Category	Specific Informants	Rationale for Selection
INF-1	Indigenous community (Batin Sembilan)	Head of Forest Farmer Group (KTH) Maju Besamo	Represents community leadership and customary authority
INF-2	Indigenous community members	Elders and residents of Simpang Macan Luar	Provide local perspectives on tenure history and partnership experience
INF-3	NGO facilitators	CAPPA Keadilan Ekologi Foundation	Offer insights into facilitation process, mediation efforts, and outcomes
INF-4	Company representatives	Director and staff of PT REKI	Explain company policy, partnership implementation, and conflict resolution strategies

Table 2. Data collection methods and analysis framework

No.	Data Source / Type	Collection Method	Purpose in Study	Analysis Technique
1	Primary data – Indigenous community (Batin Sembilan)	Semi-structured interviews and participant observation	To document historical tenure claims, perceptions of partnership, and conflict dynamics	Thematic coding; triangulation
2	Primary data – PT REKI representatives	Key informant interviews	To understand company policies, partnership strategies, and conflict management approaches	Comparative content analysis
3	Primary data – NGO (CAPPA) facilitators	In-depth interviews and field notes	To capture mediation roles, facilitation strategies, and challenges during negotiation	Narrative analysis
4	Secondary data – Policy and legal documents (e.g., KLHK regulations, partnership agreements)	Document review	To contextualize partnership within national social forestry policies and legal frameworks	Policy analysis; cross-check with interview data
5	Secondary data – Previous research and reports	Literature review	To provide theoretical basis and identify gaps in social forestry and conflict resolution studies	Synthesis and thematic mapping

Table 3. Key interview questions for exploring tenurial conflict processes, Forestry Partnership implementation and management, and the role of the formal concession holder in the PT REKI landscape

Theme	Key Interview Questions	Informants		
		(A)	(B)	(C)
Tenurial Conflict Resolution Process	What is your understanding of tenurial conflict resolution?	✓		
	Why did the community choose negotiation and non-litigation approaches to resolve the conflict with the company?	✓		
	How did the negotiation process develop from the initial engagement to the agreement?	✓		
	Why did the company choose a conflict-resolution approach to address land occupation within the concession area?		✓	

Theme	Key Interview Questions	Informants		
		(A)	(B)	(C)
	What challenges did the company face during the conflict-resolution process?		✓	
	Why did the organization support conflict resolution as an approach to addressing tenurial conflicts?			✓
	What challenges were encountered during the conflict-resolution process?			✓
	How did the organization contribute to building the capacity of the Batin Sembilan community for conflict resolution?			✓
Forestry Partnership Management	What is your understanding of the Forestry Partnership scheme?	✓		
	To what extent can the Forestry Partnership accommodate the tenure rights of Indigenous communities?	✓		
	What benefits has the community gained from the Forestry Partnership scheme?	✓		
	How does the company manage the Forestry Partnership with the Indigenous community?		✓	
	What challenges does the company face in implementing the Forestry Partnership?		✓	
	What benefits does the company perceive from the Forestry Partnership with the Indigenous community?		✓	
	How are customary tenure rights accommodated within the Forestry Partnership?		✓	
	How has the Forestry Partnership developed since its establishment?			✓
	Does the Forestry Partnership accommodate customary tenure rights?			✓
	How does the Forestry Partnership contribute to the recognition of Indigenous community rights?			✓
Roles of PT REKI and Facilitators	Could the community implement the Forestry Partnership independently without external facilitation?	✓		
	How was the community group responsible for managing the Forestry Partnership established and strengthened?	✓		
	What challenges does the community face in implementing the Forestry Partnership?	✓		
	What forms of support does the company provide for implementing the Forestry Partnership?		✓	
	What challenges does the company encounter in providing such support, and how are these challenges addressed?		✓	
	What forms of support do facilitators provide for implementing the Forestry Partnership?			✓
	What challenges do facilitators encounter, and how are these challenges addressed?			✓

Notes: (A) Batin Sembilan–Simpang Macan Luar; (B) PT REKI; (C) CAPPA Keadilan Ekologi Foundation

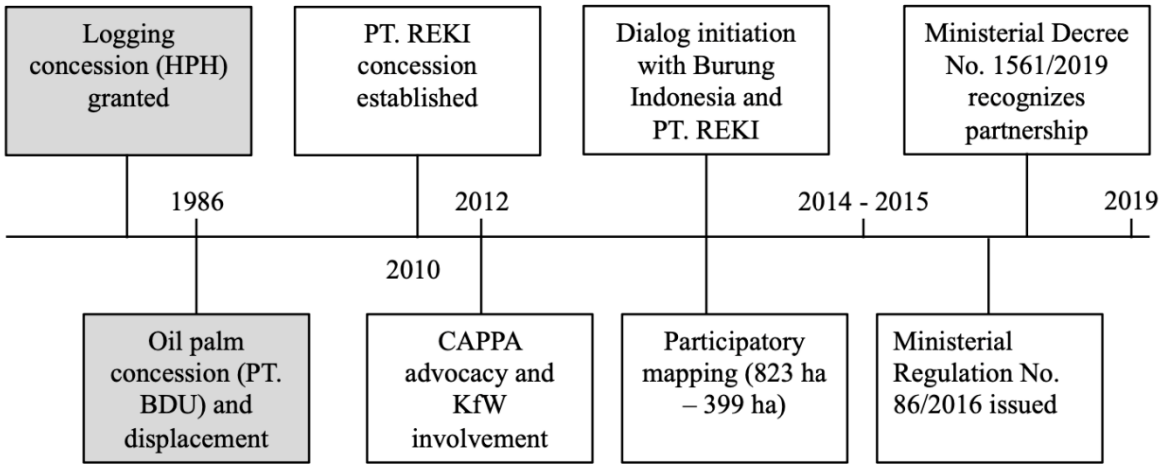


Figure 3. Timeline of tenurial conflict and resolution between Batin Sembilan Simpang Macan Luar customary land and PT REKI concession until pursuing formal partnership recognition.

Table 4. Enabling and constraining factors of the Forestry Partnership.

Factor Type	Community (Batin Sembilan-SML)	Company (PT REKI)	External (Policy/NGOs)
Enabling factors	Strong customary attachment to land; willingness to engage in dialogue; adaptive learning to formal governance	Commitment to ecosystem restoration; openness to multi-stakeholder facilitation	National social forestry policies; facilitation by CAPPA and KLHK; international support (KfW)
Constraining factors	Limited administrative skills; generational transition; internal mistrust	Pressure to enforce concession boundaries; limited resources for facilitation	Migrant encroachment; bureaucratic delays; overlapping legal frameworks

To ensure that the interpretation remained consistent with the intended meanings of the informants and to minimize potential researcher bias, member checking was conducted. The member-checking process involved the following steps:

1. The interview findings and interpretations were presented to the respective informants for review, comments, and correction.
2. The researcher documented all comments, corrections, clarifications, and additional information provided by the informants and incorporated relevant feedback into the analysis.
3. The researcher discussed and refined the resulting interpretations and conclusions with the informants and sought their confirmation of the accuracy of the findings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Negotiation Processes and the Formation of the Forestry Partnership Agreement

The Indigenous People of Batin Sembilan-Simpang Macan Luar (hereafter Batin Sembilan-SML) have experienced continuous displacement from their ancestral territory due to successive forest and plantation concessions since the 1970s. Initially, Forest Concession Rights (Hak Pengusahaan Hutan/HPH) were granted to a logging company, followed by the allocation of a plantation concession to PT Bangun Desa Utama (PT BDU) in

1986 without meaningful community consultation. This resulted in forced relocation to several villages, including Markanding, Tanjung Lebar, and Penyerokan (Silalahi, personal communication, 12 September 2022). This historical trajectory is important for understanding the subsequent negotiation process because the conflict was not simply a dispute over access to forest resources, but was rooted in competing claims of legitimacy, tenure, and authority over customary territory. As emphasized by Schlager & Ostrom, (1992), tenure arrangements involve bundles of rights—including access, withdrawal, management, exclusion, and alienation—and conflicts may arise when these rights are allocated to different actors or when the legitimacy of existing rights is not recognized by formal institutions.

The situation escalated in 2010 when the Ministry of Forestry revoked PT Asialog's license and issued a restoration concession to PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (PT REKI) covering 46,385 ha in Batanghari and Sarolangun Regencies (Minister of Forestry Decree No. 327/Menhut-II/2010). The inclusion of Batin Sembilan-SML's customary land within the PT REKI concession reignited tensions. Enforcement actions, including patrols and prohibition letters, further marginalized the community, prompting renewed displacement and resistance (Aini, personal communication, 25 August 2022). This phase illustrates how the designation of a conservation-oriented concession does not automatically resolve pre-existing tenure disputes. Rather, conservation interventions may reproduce conflict when local claims and customary institutions are not adequately incorporated into decision-making. Similar observations have been made in studies of forest governance in Indonesia, where formal allocation of forest rights may overlap with customary claims and generate persistent tenure insecurity when recognition of local rights remains institutionally weak (Nasution et al., 2025; Siscawati, 2017).

Conflict transformation began in 2012, facilitated by the CAPPA Keadilan Ekologi Foundation and supported by civil society and international stakeholders, including KfW. This stage represented an important transition from confrontation toward negotiation. Rather than immediately attempting to determine which party was legally "right", the process created an intermediary space in which the parties could begin communicating, clarifying their respective claims, and identifying possibilities for coexistence. This is consistent with the argument of Fisher et al. (2011) that durable negotiation is facilitated when parties move beyond positional bargaining and begin to identify underlying interests. In the Batin Sembilan-SML case, the community’s interest was not merely to obtain access to land, but to secure recognition of its relationship with customary territory and maintain access to livelihood resources, while PT REKI had an institutional interest in maintaining the ecological integrity of the restoration concession. The emergence of dialogue therefore created the possibility of reconciling previously competing interests rather than treating them as mutually exclusive claims.

A major breakthrough occurred in 2013, when Burung Indonesia and PT REKI initiated a dialogic process with Batin Sembilan-SML and CAPPA, resulting in participatory mapping of customary claims. The participatory mapping undertaken during 2014–2015 became a critical negotiation instrument because it transformed an otherwise contested and partly intangible claim over customary territory into a spatially explicit object that could be discussed, verified, and negotiated by the parties. The claimed area was subsequently

refined from 828 ha to an agreed 399 ha. This process demonstrates that mapping can function not merely as a technical exercise but also as a social and institutional process through which different understandings of territory are brought into negotiation. Participatory mapping has been widely recognized as an important mechanism for strengthening community representation in forest governance because it can make local knowledge and customary claims more visible within formal decision-making processes (Myers et al., 2017; Peluso, 1995; Wainwright & Bryan, 2009).

Importantly, the reduction of the claimed area from 828 ha to 399 ha should not be interpreted simply as a technical adjustment of boundaries. It indicates a process of claim clarification, verification, and mutual accommodation. In negotiation terms, the mapping process provided a shared factual basis upon which the parties could distinguish areas of overlapping claims from areas that could be mutually accepted. This is particularly significant in tenurial conflicts, where disagreement may persist because parties operate with different spatial representations and different understandings of historical rights. Participatory mapping can therefore contribute to conflict transformation by creating a common reference point for dialogue and reducing ambiguity regarding the spatial dimension of competing claims.

The negotiation process also illustrates the importance of intermediary actors in overcoming asymmetries of power and information. Batin Sembilan-SML entered the negotiation with substantially fewer legal, technical, financial, and institutional resources than the concession holder and government agencies. The involvement of CAPPA, Burung Indonesia, and subsequently the Directorate of Tenurial Conflict Management (PKTHA) helped provide institutional and technical support that enabled the community to participate more effectively. This finding is consistent with collaborative governance literature, which emphasizes that meaningful participation requires more than the formal presence of stakeholders; actors with unequal resources may require facilitation and institutional support to participate on more balanced terms (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). In this respect, the role of civil society organizations was not simply that of an external mediator, but also of an intermediary that helped translate community claims into forms that could be recognized within formal administrative and negotiation processes.

By late 2015, with mediation by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's Directorate of Tenurial Conflict Management (PKTHA), a Cooperation Agreement was formalized, marking an important milestone in the non-litigation settlement between PT REKI and Batin Sembilan-SML. The sequence of dialogue, participatory mapping, claim verification, facilitation, and formal agreement suggests that the partnership was not the result of a single negotiation event. Rather, it emerged through a cumulative process in which trust, shared information, institutional recognition, and negotiated boundaries were gradually developed. This finding supports Ansell & Gash (2008) observation that collaborative governance typically develops through iterative dialogue, trust building, commitment, and the gradual development of shared understanding. The Batin Sembilan-SML case similarly demonstrates that formal agreements are more likely to emerge after the parties have undergone a process of relationship building and problem clarification.

The subsequent enactment of Ministerial Regulation No. 83/2016 further institutionalized Forestry Partnerships as a formal mechanism for resolving tenure-related conflicts. The

regulation required permit holders to submit partnership applications, conduct field verification, and establish Forest Farmer Groups (Kelompok Tani Hutan/KTH) (KLHK, 2016). The recognition of the partnership under Ministerial Decree No. 1561/2019 therefore represented the institutionalization of a negotiation process that had initially developed through local dialogue and civil-society facilitation. The process can be understood as a movement across three interconnected levels: first, social negotiation, through dialogue between the community and PT REKI; second, spatial negotiation, through participatory mapping and verification of customary claims; and third, institutional negotiation, through government mediation and formal recognition of the partnership. This multi-level process is important because tenurial conflicts cannot generally be resolved solely through interpersonal negotiation when the underlying dispute is embedded in formal property and concession systems.

The case also illustrates a shift from a predominantly exclusionary model of forest governance toward a more negotiated model of social forestry and community participation. The evolution from forced displacement to formal recognition reflects broader changes in Indonesian forest governance, in which the legitimacy of local communities and their role in forest management have increasingly entered policy debates and institutional arrangements (Nasution et al., 2025; Siscawati, 2017). However, the case should not be interpreted as evidence that the partnership automatically resolved all dimensions of historical injustice. Rather, the agreement created an institutional mechanism through which competing claims could be accommodated without resorting to litigation or continued confrontation. This distinction is important because social Forestry Partnerships may provide an avenue for negotiated access and co-management while not necessarily constituting full recognition of customary ownership.

The negotiation process can therefore be conceptualized as a gradual transformation from contestation to communication, communication to shared knowledge, shared knowledge to negotiated spatial boundaries, and negotiated boundaries to institutional recognition (Figure 3). This sequence complements Mitchell et al. (2016) perspective on conflict transformation, in which sustainable conflict management involves addressing relationships, structures, and underlying interests rather than merely settling an immediate dispute. In the Batin Sembilan-SML case, the participatory process changed not only the spatial definition of the disputed area but also the relationship between the community, PT REKI, civil society organizations, and government institutions.

Overall, the case demonstrates that the Forestry Partnership emerged through a multi-stage, non-litigation negotiation process rather than through a single administrative decision. The key steps comprised: (1) the opening of dialogue after prolonged confrontation; (2) facilitation by civil society organizations and other intermediaries; (3) participatory identification and mapping of customary claims; (4) verification and negotiation of the claimed area; (5) government-mediated dialogue and formulation of a cooperation agreement; and (6) subsequent institutionalization and formal recognition of the partnership. This sequence provides empirical support for the proposition that tenurial conflict resolution in complex forest landscapes requires not only legal instruments but also processes that build communication, generate shared evidence, accommodate different interests, and address asymmetries in negotiating capacity. The Batin Sembilan-SML–PT REKI

experience therefore provides an illustrative case of how a contested tenure relationship can gradually be transformed into a negotiated partnership through the combination of community participation, intermediary support, participatory mapping, and state facilitation.

These findings have several practical implications for future Forestry Partnerships in areas characterized by overlapping tenure claims. First, participatory processes should be maintained throughout the entire partnership cycle rather than being limited to the initial negotiation stage. Participatory mapping should be complemented by joint monitoring of agreed boundaries and resource use, as well as periodic reviews involving community representatives, concession holders, government agencies, and facilitators. Such continuous participation can help maintain a shared understanding of territorial boundaries and reduce the likelihood of renewed disputes.

Second, facilitation by neutral or trusted third parties remains important where substantial differences in bargaining power exist between Indigenous communities and concession holders. In such contexts, facilitators can help reduce information and negotiation asymmetries, ensure that community interests are adequately represented, and support communication among parties. Establishing a clear and accessible grievance mechanism within the partnership arrangement would further enable emerging disagreements to be addressed before they escalate into renewed conflict.

Finally, future partnership agreements should explicitly recognize relevant customary norms and land-use practices where these are compatible with applicable legal frameworks. Integrating customary knowledge and locally recognized rules into negotiated spatial arrangements and subsequent management planning can strengthen community ownership of the agreement and improve its legitimacy at the local level.

3.2. Governance Arrangements and Stakeholder Roles in Forestry Partnership Implementation

After the agreement, Batin Sembilan-SML experienced significant improvements in tenure security and livelihoods. The recognized 399 ha area enabled subsistence cultivation, sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as honey and rattan, and improved relations with PT REKI. The formation of KTH Maju Besamo introduced formal organizational structures, complementing customary leadership systems (Rajo, Depati, Pasirah) with new roles and responsibilities (Zuhdi, 2018).

However, challenges remain in balancing customary norms with bureaucratic requirements (e.g., documentation for partnership approval) and managing expectations regarding resource benefits. These dynamics echo broader tensions in Indonesia's social forestry implementation, where formalization often necessitates adaptation to state administrative frameworks (Nasution et al., 2025).

The governance of the Forestry Partnership is shaped by the interaction between Batin Sembilan customary institutions and the formal forest-governance system. The Batin Sembilan Indigenous community identifies, defines, and manages its customary territory through customary law and locally embedded knowledge known as Seloko Adat, which is transmitted orally through traditional leaders (Indrayani & Syuhada, 2020). Seloko Adat provides guidance on territorial boundaries based on locally recognized natural features, including rivers and mountains, as well as particular environmental signs such as distinctive sounds. It also provides principles for resource management and

land use according to climatic and ecological conditions, social relationships and status, and the characteristics of different plant species. Transmitted across generations, Seloko Adat is not merely a cultural tradition but a living body of knowledge and customary rules that continues to guide everyday relationships between the Batin Sembilan community, its territory, and forest resources.

This arrangement is consistent with the broader transformation of Indonesian social forestry from a predominantly state-controlled model toward more participatory forms of forest governance. In contemporary social forestry, communities are not simply beneficiaries of government programs but are increasingly constituted as actors responsible for forest management. However, this transfer of responsibilities is accompanied by administrative requirements, institutional rules, and expectations regarding conservation and livelihood outcomes. Fisher et al. (2019) describe this process as the "responsibilization" of communities, whereby new user groups receive specific management responsibilities through a combination of administrative procedures, bureaucratic actors, and institutional arrangements. In the Batin Sembilan-SML case, the establishment of KTH Maju Besamo illustrates this institutional transition: customary community members became organized within a formal institutional structure through which they could participate in managing the partnership area.

The formation of KTH Maju Besamo was particularly important because it created an organizational interface between customary governance and the formal administrative requirements of the partnership. The KTH introduced new organizational roles, membership structures, responsibilities, and documentation procedures while customary leadership structures—such as Rajo, Depati, and Pasirah—continued to provide social legitimacy within the community (Zuhdi, 2018). Rather than completely replacing customary institutions, the partnership therefore produced an institutional arrangement in which formal and customary governance operated alongside each other. This finding is important because community-based forest governance does not necessarily require the disappearance of existing customary institutions; instead, formal organizations may function more effectively when they are connected to locally legitimate institutions and social relationships.

The role of the facilitators was central in connecting these two institutional systems. Civil society organizations and other facilitators helped the community understand formal partnership procedures, articulate community interests, participate in mapping and negotiation, and establish the organizational capacity required for partnership implementation. Their role therefore extended beyond mediation during the initial conflict-resolution phase. They also functioned as institutional brokers who translated between community knowledge and bureaucratic requirements. This is consistent with Wulandari & Kurniasih (2019)), who found that social forestry communities in Lampung considered facilitation important not only for community groups but also for individual members and external stakeholders. Their findings further suggest that facilitation needs evolve according to the maturity and needs of social forestry groups, indicating that facilitation should not end when a legal agreement or permit has been obtained.

The importance of sustained facilitation is also supported by more recent evidence from Indonesia. A 2025 study applying the Institutional Analysis and Development framework to social forestry found that facilitators were

critical actors in institutional management, although their effectiveness was constrained when adequate institutional support was lacking. Similarly, research on social forestry in Pagaralam found that inadequate institutional capacity building could leave forest farmer groups in a relatively subordinate partnership position and limit their ability to perform their intended governance functions. These findings provide a useful comparative perspective for the Batin Sembilan-SML case: the presence of a KTH alone does not guarantee effective community governance; its capacity to participate in decision-making, manage resources, document activities, and negotiate with external actors is equally important.

PT REKI's role also changed substantially after the agreement. Before the partnership, the relationship was characterized by restrictions on community access and enforcement of concession boundaries. After the agreement, PT REKI became a partner and institutional counterpart in managing activities within the recognized partnership area. This transformation is significant because it demonstrates that the concession holder was no longer positioned solely as an enforcer of exclusionary rules but also as an actor responsible for maintaining communication, coordinating forest management activities, and accommodating negotiated community access within the restoration landscape. Such an arrangement reflects the broader principle that sustainable forest governance depends on coordination among actors with different interests and sources of authority rather than on the unilateral control of a single institution.

The governance arrangement can therefore be characterized as multi-actor and multi-institutional, involving at least four interconnected roles: (1) Batin Sembilan-SML, as rights-bearing community members and resource users; (2) KTH Maju Besamo, as the formal organizational vehicle for collective community participation; (3) PT REKI, as the restoration concession holder and institutional partner; and (4) facilitators and government institutions, as actors supporting mediation, capacity building, verification, and regulatory compliance. This corresponds with stakeholder-oriented research on Indonesian social forestry, which shows that the actual contribution of stakeholders depends on their respective interests, influence, institutional mandates, and capacity to support community groups.

Nevertheless, the coexistence of customary and formal institutions also creates governance tensions. Batin Sembilan-SML's customary leadership system is based on locally embedded social relations, historical knowledge, and customary authority, whereas the formal partnership requires written documentation, organizational structures, reporting, and compliance with government procedures. Consequently, community participation may require adaptation to administrative practices that were not originally part of customary governance. This reflects a broader challenge in Indonesian social forestry: formal recognition can improve the legal and institutional position of communities while simultaneously imposing bureaucratic forms of organization and accountability. Fisher et al. (2019)similarly show that social forestry involves the transfer of management responsibilities through extensive administrative processes, potentially creating tensions between community objectives and state-defined management responsibilities.

These tensions should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of institutional failure. Rather, they demonstrate that the partnership constitutes an ongoing process of institutional negotiation. The community must maintain customary legitimacy

while also developing the organizational capacity required by the formal partnership; PT REKI must reconcile restoration objectives with negotiated community access; and facilitators must continuously bridge differences in knowledge, institutional language, and bargaining capacity. In this sense, governance effectiveness depends not only on the existence of a formal agreement but also on the quality of interaction among the actors responsible for implementing it.

The experience also highlights the importance of community agency. The formation of KTH Maju Besamo should not be viewed merely as compliance with a government requirement. It provides an institutional platform through which community members can collectively articulate interests, organize resource use, communicate with PT REKI, and participate in decisions concerning the partnership area. Research on forest farmer groups in Indonesia demonstrates that these groups can become important institutional intermediaries in determining participation, access, and management arrangements within social forestry programs. However, the same literature also cautions that farmer groups can develop internal inequalities or become dominated by particular actors. Consequently, effective governance requires attention not only to the formal existence of KTH but also to internal participation, transparency, accountability, and equitable distribution of benefits.

The livelihood dimension further reinforces the need for adaptive governance. Access to honey, rattan, cultivation areas, and other forest resources provides tangible benefits that can strengthen community support for the partnership. However, the sustainability of these benefits depends on agreed rules regarding resource access, harvesting practices, benefit sharing, and conservation responsibilities. Wulandari & Kurniasih (2019) found that social forestry communities may increasingly prioritize facilitation related to entrepreneurship and livelihood development as their institutions mature. Thus, facilitation in the Batin Sembilan-SML partnership may need to evolve from conflict mediation and institutional formation toward strengthening sustainable NTFP enterprises, organizational management, market access, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

An additional challenge concerns bureaucratic complexity. Although formalization provides greater institutional certainty, social forestry implementation in Indonesia has been affected by fragmented bureaucratic mandates and complex administrative arrangements. Maryudi et al. (2022), for example, show that competing bureaucratic interests can obstruct the implementation of social forestry policies and contribute to institutional bottlenecks. For Batin Sembilan-SML, this suggests that the sustainability of the partnership cannot depend solely on the community and PT REKI; continued institutional support from government agencies and facilitators may be necessary to prevent administrative requirements from becoming barriers to effective participation.

Overall, the Batin Sembilan-SML–PT REKI partnership demonstrates that post-conflict governance involves more than the formal recognition of an agreed area. It requires an institutional arrangement in which different actors perform complementary functions. Batin Sembilan-SML provides local knowledge, customary legitimacy, labour, and direct stewardship of the partnership area; KTH Maju Besamo provides an organizational interface for collective action; PT REKI provides the concession-based institutional framework and restoration mandate; while facilitators and government institutions provide mediation, technical assistance, capacity building, and regulatory support. The

effectiveness of the partnership therefore depends on how well these roles are coordinated and whether the arrangement enables meaningful participation rather than merely transferring administrative responsibilities to the community.

The case suggests that the governance of Forestry Partnerships should be understood as an ongoing process of institutional bridging and negotiated co-management, rather than as a one-time legal settlement. The coexistence of customary leadership and formal KTH structures, the continuing role of facilitators, and the transformation of PT REKI's relationship with the community indicate that conflict resolution is sustained through repeated interaction, adaptive rules, capacity building, and negotiated responsibilities. This provides an important empirical contribution to the social forestry literature because it shows how a partnership emerging from a historical tenurial conflict can create a hybrid governance arrangement that connects customary institutions, community organization, private restoration management, civil society facilitation, and state regulation.

The governance arrangements identified in this case also suggest several practical measures for strengthening partnership implementation. Capacity building should be treated as an ongoing component of the partnership rather than a one-time intervention. Forest Farmer Groups (KTH) require continuing support in organizational management, financial administration, sustainable resource use, record keeping, and collective decision-making. Strengthening these capacities can improve the ability of community institutions to manage partnership areas and reduce risks associated with weak internal accountability, elite capture, or mismanagement.

At the same time, formal organizational structures should not displace existing customary institutions. A more adaptive governance arrangement can be developed by clarifying the complementary roles of KTH and customary leaders in decision-making, resource management, and conflict resolution. Where appropriate, customary norms and locally recognized resource-use practices should be reflected in the Social Forestry Management Plan (RKPS) and other partnership instruments. Such institutional integration can strengthen the legitimacy of formal arrangements while maintaining community ownership of the partnership.

Long-term government support is also necessary beyond the formal recognition of the partnership. Government agencies should provide continued technical assistance, facilitate access to markets and value chains for non-timber forest products, and provide guidance on administrative and regulatory requirements. Sustained institutional support would reduce the risk that communities are left to manage increasingly complex administrative responsibilities after the initial partnership agreement has been established.

3.3. Enabling and Constraining Factors Affecting Partnership Implementation and Tenurial Conflict Resolution

The implementation of the Forestry Partnership between Batin Sembilan-SML and PT REKI was shaped by a combination of community-level, institutional, policy, and external factors (Table 4). The findings indicate that conflict resolution was not determined by the existence of a formal partnership agreement alone. Rather, the outcome depended on whether the actors possessed the capacity, institutional support, and willingness to translate the agreement into workable arrangements on the ground. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that social forestry outcomes are shaped by

the interaction between local institutional capacity, government support, facilitation, market and livelihood conditions, and the broader policy environment (Ekawati et al., 2019; Fisher et al., 2019; Wulandari & Kurniasih, 2019).

At the community level, the resilience of Batin Sembilan-SML and its willingness to engage with formal governance institutions were important enabling factors. After experiencing prolonged displacement and marginalization, community members did not rely solely on resistance but gradually developed a strategy of engagement through dialogue, participatory mapping, and institutional participation. This adaptive response enabled the community to transform historical claims over customary territory into claims that could be communicated and negotiated within the formal governance system. Such adaptive capacity is particularly important in tenurial conflicts because local communities often have to navigate institutions whose legal and administrative frameworks differ substantially from customary systems. Schlager & Ostrom (1992) demonstrate that conflicts over land and natural resources frequently involve competing bundles of rights rather than simply disputes over physical space. In this context, the ability of Batin Sembilan-SML to articulate and negotiate its claims was an important condition for moving from confrontation toward institutional accommodation.

A second enabling factor was the willingness of community members to establish and participate in formal organizational structures. The establishment of KTH Maju Besamo provided an institutional vehicle through which community members could interact with PT REKI and government agencies. This was important because the formalization of community participation in social forestry generally requires organizational structures capable of fulfilling administrative, management, and reporting responsibilities. Fisher et al. (2019) note that social forestry in Indonesia involves a process of transferring management responsibilities to community groups, accompanied by new administrative and institutional obligations. Thus, the willingness of Batin Sembilan-SML to engage with the KTH structure helped convert customary claims into a form that could be accommodated within the formal partnership framework.

However, this institutional adaptation also constituted a potential constraint. The community's limited administrative and organizational capacity made it difficult to fully navigate bureaucratic procedures associated with the partnership. Requirements for documentation, reporting, organizational management, and compliance with formal regulations may impose disproportionate burdens on communities whose customary institutions have historically relied more on oral traditions and socially embedded authority. This reflects a broader challenge in Indonesian social forestry, where formal recognition can simultaneously provide greater tenure security and introduce bureaucratic requirements that communities must learn to manage. Fisher et al. (2019) describe this process as the increasing "responsibilization" of communities, whereby communities acquire new management responsibilities while also becoming subject to administrative expectations established by the state.

The capacity of facilitators was therefore another major enabling factor. CAPPA and other civil society actors played an important role in supporting the community during the transition from conflict to negotiation and subsequently toward institutionalized partnership. Their contribution included facilitating communication, strengthening community representation, supporting

participatory mapping, helping interpret administrative procedures, and connecting the community with government institutions and other stakeholders. Previous research has similarly demonstrated that facilitation is an important determinant of social forestry outcomes because communities often require assistance not only in obtaining formal recognition but also in developing organizational and managerial capacity after recognition (Wulandari & Kurniasih, 2019). Facilitation can therefore be understood as a form of institutional support that helps reduce disparities in knowledge, information, and negotiating capacity between local communities and more powerful institutional actors.

The role of government institutions was another important enabling factor. The involvement of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, particularly through the Directorate of Tenurial Conflict Management (PKTHA), provided an institutional pathway through which a locally negotiated arrangement could obtain formal recognition. This is significant because community-based negotiation alone may not be sufficient to resolve conflicts when the underlying dispute is embedded in state-issued concessions and statutory land administration. Government involvement provided legal and administrative legitimacy to the negotiated arrangement and helped connect local-level conflict resolution with national policy instruments. Ekawati et al. (2019) similarly emphasize that tenurial conflict resolution in Indonesia requires not only appropriate legal instruments but also institutional coordination and facilitation capable of translating policy into locally workable arrangements.

The evolution of Indonesia's social forestry policy also created an enabling institutional environment. The emergence of Forestry Partnership as a formal mechanism provided a policy pathway through which the negotiated relationship between Batin Sembilan-SML and PT REKI could be institutionalized. In this respect, national policy did not independently resolve the conflict; rather, it provided a formal institutional framework within which locally negotiated solutions could be recognized and implemented. This distinction is important because policy reform may create opportunities for conflict resolution, but its effectiveness depends on the capacity of local actors and implementing institutions to translate policy provisions into practice.

Trust-building and improved inter-actor relationships were additional enabling conditions. The transition from a relationship characterized by enforcement and contested access toward dialogue and cooperation required gradual rebuilding of confidence between Batin Sembilan-SML and PT REKI. This is consistent with the collaborative governance literature, which identifies face-to-face dialogue, trust building, commitment, and shared understanding as critical elements in collaborative processes (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In the present case, the partnership provided an institutional setting in which previously antagonistic actors could interact through agreed procedures rather than relying exclusively on unilateral enforcement or resistance. Trust should therefore be understood not as a precondition that existed at the beginning of the partnership, but as something gradually constructed through repeated interaction and negotiated practice.

Nevertheless, several constraining factors continued to affect implementation. One important external constraint was the existence of overlapping claims involving migrant communities and other local actors. Although the partnership clarified the relationship between Batin Sembilan-SML and PT REKI, it did not necessarily eliminate competing claims from other

community groups. This demonstrates that tenurial conflicts are often multi-actor rather than simply bilateral. Resolving the dispute between a concession holder and one community may therefore leave unresolved claims involving other users or rights holders. From a governance perspective, this creates a risk that a bilateral partnership can reproduce or relocate conflict if other stakeholders are excluded from the negotiation process.

Another constraint was the limited administrative capacity of the community. The ability to participate in formal governance does not automatically imply the ability to manage all administrative responsibilities associated with partnership implementation. Documentation, financial administration, organizational reporting, activity planning, and compliance with government requirements may become substantial burdens for community organizations. Previous studies of social forestry in Indonesia have similarly identified institutional capacity as a major determinant of implementation performance, particularly where community groups have limited experience with formal organizational and administrative systems. Wulandari & Kurniasih (2019) further show that facilitation needs may change as community institutions mature, indicating that support should continue beyond the initial establishment of the partnership.

Generational transition also emerged as an internal constraint. The younger generation may have different livelihood aspirations, levels of attachment to customary institutions, and expectations concerning forest-based livelihoods than older community members who experienced the historical stages of displacement and conflict. Such changes can influence the continuity of collective action and the transmission of customary knowledge. The sustainability of the partnership therefore depends partly on whether community institutions can accommodate changing aspirations while maintaining collective commitments to the partnership. This suggests that intergenerational institutional continuity should be considered an important but often overlooked dimension of social forestry governance.

Bureaucratic delays in formal recognition constituted another external constraint. The time required to move from local agreement to formal administrative recognition may create uncertainty for communities and weaken confidence in the process. This is consistent with broader findings that Indonesian social forestry implementation can be constrained by complex bureaucratic procedures, fragmented institutional responsibilities, and differences between policy design and implementation at the local level (Maryudi et al., 2022). Such delays are particularly problematic in conflict settings because communities may perceive the absence of timely recognition as a continuation of institutional uncertainty, while concession holders may face uncertainty regarding the scope and responsibilities of the partnership.

The findings also suggest that the enabling and constraining factors are interconnected rather than independent. For example, the establishment of KTH Maju Besamo was simultaneously an enabling factor and a potential source of constraint. It provided the community with a formal organizational platform, but it also introduced administrative responsibilities that required new capacities. Similarly, government regulation created an enabling legal framework while bureaucratic procedures associated with that framework could delay implementation. Facilitators reduced information and capacity gaps, but continued dependence on external facilitation may raise questions about the

long-term self-sufficiency of the community institution. These dual effects indicate that institutional reforms can generate both opportunities and new forms of dependency or administrative burden.

Beyond addressing these implementation challenges, this study contributes to the literature on tenurial conflict resolution by demonstrating how the Batin Sembilan-SML Indigenous community, despite limited formal literacy and a relatively weak bargaining position, developed a non-litigation and non-violent pathway to pursue its tenure rights through mediation, negotiation, and the Forestry Partnership scheme. This process illustrates the importance of Indigenous institutional agency: rather than acting merely as recipients of government policy, community members actively learned to interpret, adapt, and apply formal policy instruments and external knowledge to advance their tenure claims and establish an institutional arrangement for collaborative forest-resource governance. The findings therefore suggest that tenurial conflict resolution should be understood not merely as a formal policy outcome, but also as a process of community learning, capacity development, and adaptive institutional change. In the Batin Sembilan-SML case, community agency interacted with external facilitation, government recognition, and the willingness of PT REKI to negotiate, demonstrating that durable conflict transformation depends on the capacity of Indigenous communities to engage with formal institutions while maintaining their collective interests and customary claims.

The relationship between enabling and constraining factors can be understood through an institutional perspective. Effective conflict resolution requires not only rules but also actors who possess sufficient capacity to interpret, negotiate, and implement those rules. Ostrom's institutional analysis emphasizes the importance of clearly defined boundaries, locally appropriate rules, collective-choice arrangements, monitoring, and mechanisms for resolving conflicts. In the Batin Sembilan-SML case, participatory mapping helped clarify the spatial boundary of the negotiated area, while the partnership agreement and KTH provided institutional structures for collective action. However, the continuing presence of overlapping claims and administrative challenges indicates that these institutional arrangements require ongoing adaptation and monitoring rather than one-time establishment.

Importantly, the findings suggest that the outcome of conflict resolution should not be assessed solely in terms of whether the original dispute was formally "resolved." A more appropriate assessment includes whether the partnership reduced the likelihood of renewed confrontation, improved tenure security, enabled negotiated resource access, created functioning channels of communication, and provided mechanisms for addressing future disagreements. In this sense, the Batin Sembilan-SML–PT REKI case represents a process of conflict transformation rather than merely conflict settlement. The transformation involved changes in relationships, institutions, and patterns of interaction, consistent with the broader conflict-transformation perspective described by Mitchell et al. (2016).

Overall, the evidence indicates that four groups of factors were particularly important in enabling the partnership: (1) community resilience and willingness to participate; (2) facilitation and capacity building by civil society organizations; (3) government recognition and mediation; and (4) an evolving social forestry policy framework. Conversely, implementation remained constrained by (1) limited community administrative capacity; (2)

generational transitions; (3) overlapping claims by other community groups; and (4) bureaucratic delays and institutional complexity. These findings demonstrate that formalizing a Forestry Partnership is necessary but insufficient for durable conflict resolution. Its effectiveness depends on the interaction between local agency, institutional capacity, facilitation, government responsiveness, and the ability of the governance arrangement to adapt to changing social and institutional conditions.

The Batin Sembilan-SML case therefore contributes to the understanding of tenurial conflict resolution by demonstrating that successful partnership implementation depends on the capacity to connect customary legitimacy, community agency, facilitation, state recognition, and concession-holder cooperation. The key lesson is not that formal partnership automatically resolves tenurial conflict, but that partnership can provide a platform for conflict transformation when enabling institutions and actors are able to address the structural and administrative constraints that shape implementation. This suggests that future Forestry Partnership programs should place greater emphasis on long-term institutional strengthening, sustained facilitation, inclusive stakeholder engagement, intergenerational capacity building, and simplified administrative procedures alongside formal recognition of community rights.

The interaction between enabling and constraining factors indicates that the sustainability of the Forestry Partnership depends not only on the existence of a formal agreement but also on the capacity of the participating institutions to adapt over time. Continued facilitation may therefore be necessary, particularly during periods of institutional transition, generational change, or emerging disputes over access to resources. However, facilitation should progressively strengthen local institutional capacity rather than create long-term dependency on external actors.

The findings also indicate the need for accessible mechanisms to address disputes that may emerge after the initial agreement. This is particularly relevant where overlapping claims involving other communities remain present. A functioning grievance and conflict-resolution mechanism, supported by regular communication among stakeholders, could provide an institutional pathway for addressing new disputes without returning to confrontational approaches.

At the policy level, the Batin Sembilan-SML case provides lessons that may be relevant to other ecosystem restoration concessions and conservation landscapes experiencing similar tenurial conflicts. However, replication should not rely on transferring the partnership model mechanically. Instead, the underlying principles—including participatory negotiation, recognition of local institutions, neutral facilitation, community capacity building, and sustained government engagement—could be incorporated into broader guidelines for tenurial conflict resolution. Systematic documentation of partnership processes, challenges, adaptations, and outcomes would also support institutional learning and inform the design of similar initiatives in other landscapes.

3.4. Policy Implications

This case demonstrates that Forestry Partnerships can serve as an effective tenurial conflict management tool when coupled with participatory mapping, multi-stakeholder facilitation, and adaptive institutional arrangements. Lessons from Batin Sembilan-SML may inform scaling up similar approaches across Indonesia's 12.7 million ha social forestry target, emphasizing the need for sustained facilitation and integration of customary governance systems into formal mechanisms.

4. Conclusion

The Forestry Partnership between PT Restorasi Ekosistem Indonesia (PT REKI) and the Batin Sembilan Indigenous community of Simpang Macan Luar (Batin Sembilan-SML) emerged through a gradual, multi-stage negotiation process to address longstanding tenurial conflict within an ecosystem restoration concession. The process involved dialogue, civil society facilitation, participatory mapping, verification and negotiation of customary land claims, government mediation, and formal institutional recognition. The refinement of the claimed area from 828 ha to an agreed 399 ha illustrates how participatory mapping provided a shared spatial reference for negotiation and mutual accommodation. However, the agreement should not be interpreted as full legal recognition of customary ownership; rather, it established a formal mechanism for negotiated access and collaborative forest management within the concession. The findings demonstrate that resolving complex tenurial conflicts requires more than formal legal instruments, as it also depends on sustained dialogue, shared information, institutional facilitation, and the capacity to reconcile competing interests.

The implementation of the partnership created a hybrid governance arrangement connecting Batin Sembilan customary institutions, the Forest Farmer Group (Kelompok Tani Hutan/KTH) Maju Besamo, PT REKI, civil society facilitators, and government institutions. Customary leadership and knowledge, including Seloko Adat, continued to provide local legitimacy, while the KTH served as an organizational interface for community participation in the formal partnership framework. Facilitators played an important role in bridging customary practices and bureaucratic requirements, strengthening community representation, and supporting institutional capacity development. Meanwhile, PT REKI's role shifted from primarily enforcing concession boundaries toward participating in a negotiated arrangement for forest management and community access. These findings show that Forestry Partnership governance is an ongoing process of institutional bridging and negotiated co-management rather than a one-time legal settlement. Its effectiveness depends on meaningful community participation, coordination among stakeholders, and the compatibility of formal management requirements with locally legitimate institutions and practices.

The findings further indicate that partnership implementation and conflict-resolution outcomes are shaped by the interaction of enabling and constraining factors. Community resilience and willingness to engage with formal institutions, civil society facilitation, government mediation and recognition, and the evolving social forestry policy framework supported the transition from confrontation toward cooperation. Nevertheless, limited administrative capacity, bureaucratic complexity and delays, overlapping claims involving other community groups, and generational transitions continued to pose challenges to implementation and long-term institutional continuity. The establishment of the KTH and the availability of a formal policy framework therefore created opportunities for collective action while also introducing new administrative responsibilities. The partnership's contribution to conflict resolution should consequently be assessed not only through formal recognition, but also through improvements in communication, negotiated resource access, the capacity to address emerging disputes, and the reduction of risks of renewed confrontation.

Overall, this study demonstrates that a Forestry Partnership can provide an

institutional pathway for transforming tenurial conflict within an ecosystem restoration concession when community agency is supported by facilitation, government recognition, and the willingness of the concession holder to negotiate. Its broader contribution is to show that Indigenous communities are not merely recipients of social forestry policy but can actively interpret and use formal institutional mechanisms to advance their customary claims and participate in forest governance. However, formalizing a partnership does not automatically resolve all dimensions of tenure insecurity or guarantee improved ecological and livelihood outcomes. Sustaining its benefits requires continued capacity building, clearer coordination between customary and formal institutions, inclusive engagement with other affected stakeholders, accessible grievance mechanisms, and responsive government support. These principles may inform similar initiatives in other forest landscapes, although their application should be adapted to the specific tenure histories, institutional arrangements, and social-ecological conditions of each context.

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