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Gender Justice: Forest Tenure and Forest Governance in Indonesia

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June 2012

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Gender Justice: Forest Tenure and Forest Governance in Indonesia

Brief #3 of 4

The Challenges of Securing Women's Tenure and Leadership for Forest Management: The Asian Experience

June 2012

Mia Siscawati¹ and Avi Mahaningtyas²

1. Gender and Forest Tenure: Pre-requisite for Sustainable Forest Management in Nepal
2. Fostering Women-led Natural Resource Management Reform Amidst Conflict
3. Gender Justice: Forest Tenure and Forest Governance in Indonesia
4. Re-envisioning REDD+: Gender, Forest Governance and REDD+ in Asia

Exploration of the dynamics of forest tenure and forest governance in Indonesia has focused mostly on contested processes between the State and forest-dwelling communities, particularly Indigenous Peoples, customary communities and other local communities. Many documents presenting the results of this process view "community" as a homogenous entity. Limited attention has been given to the heterogeneity of "community," in which gender, class, ethnicity, religions, and other socio-cultural aspects provide critical contributions to the formation of sub-groups within a "People" as well as multiple identities of the members of each sub-group. Therefore, gender-based injustices in forest tenure and forest governance, as experienced mostly by women who occupy certain positions within the community, have so far not been adequately addressed.

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In Indonesia, most of the advocacy work on forest tenure and governance reform has focused on how to resolve the conflict between customary forest tenure systems and the "political forests" under state control (with its associated system of territorialization, zonation, and management) established under law. These conflicts and disagreement over who should control and manage forest lands lie in large part in the present definition and classification of the "Forest Zone," which is itself a product of the establishment of "Political Forests" by the previous colonial administration.⁴ While this advocacy work seeks to both change the legal framework and its implementation, as well as address systems of conflict resolution, all too often the question of gender inequity is never considered a part of the issue.

This paper attempts to explore how gender, both as cultural construction and as an analytical concept, as well as its intersection with variables such as socio-economic class, ethnicity and geo-political location, plays a critical role in the practice of forest tenure and governance in Indonesia. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the how gendered relationships create differentiated social and environmental outcomes so that appropriate actions can be taken that lead toward gender justice.

Activists and academics in Indonesia, along with their counterparts in other countries, increasingly employ the term 'gender justice' because of the growing concern that earlier terms like 'gender equality', or 'gender mainstreaming' are inadequate both on conceptual and practical fronts to give "a strong enough sense

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Summary

This paper includes a narration of socio-cultural dynamics of forest tenure and forest governance through case studies. It then discusses lessons on gender injustices in forest tenure and governance stemming from the case studies. In order to understand how gender injustices happen at various levels, it traces the history of structural aspects and political dimensions of gender blindness in

forest tenure and governance in Indonesia.

Authors

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