



World Agroforestry Centre
TRANSFORMING LIVES AND LANDSCAPES

Management of Sesaot Forest: Quo Vadis?



Highlights

Why should there be Tahura? An effort to strengthen the status and management of Tahura in Sesaot Forest

Why is there opposition to the establishment of Tahura in Sesaot Forest?

What are the plausible solutions to the conflict?

Introduction

Sesaot forest lies within Dodokan catchment, to the west of Rinjani National Park with an area of 5,950 ha. Administratively, the forest belongs to Narmada and Lingsar districts of West Lombok Regency and surrounded by 4 villages of Sesaot, Lebah Sempage, Sedau and Batu Mekar. According to Decree of Agriculture Minister No. 756/Kpts/Um/1982, the status and function of Sesaot forest is Protective Forest. This status is based on the important function of the forest as part of the catchment that provides water for large scale irrigation and drinking water for downstream communities, particularly the citizen of Mataram in West Lombok Regency and some areas in Central Lombok Regency.

Another important and potential function of forest Sesaot is ecotourism. Since the last decade, West Lombok communities have considered Sesaot Forest as recreational destination for hiking, camping and water activities around the scenic waterfall. Biodiversity conservation is also another potential function of Sesaot Forest being a home for gibbons (*Hylobates*), deers (*Dama dama*), monkeys (*Simianus*) and birds (*Aves*), in particular 'Cabe Lombok' bird (*Dicauru maugei*).

In effort to have formal recognition for the ecotourism and biodiversity functions, the Forest Agency of West Nusa Tenggara Province requested that 3,155 ha of Sesaot Forest was designated as Nuraksa Forest Park (*Taman Hutan Raya* = Tahura). In 2009, the request was accepted by the Ministry of Forestry through Minister of Forestry Decree No 224/KPTS-II/1999 and Minister of Forestry Decree No 598/Menhut-II/2009. However, the local government of West Lombok and the communities living around Sesaot Forest were against the decrees. Conflict between those against Tahura (local government and Sesaot community) and pro-Tahura (forestry officials) was inevitable.

Why should there be Tahura? An effort to strengthen the status and management of Tahura in Sesaot Forest

The provincial government of West Nusa Tenggara, in particular the Forest Agency, is very dedicated to establish Tahura Nuraksa. Besides being a home for unique flora and fauna, Sesaot forest also has great potential for ecotourism with its natural and beautiful spots of waterfall, caves, water springs and scenic rivers. That is why the Provincial Government sent a letter recommendation No 660/305/Bapedalda/1998 to the Minister of Forestry for establishing Sesaot Forest as *Taman Hutan Rakyat*. The recommendation was accepted through Minister of Forestry Decree No 244/1999. However, the management of Tahura was halted

to legality issues. Firstly, the establishment of Tahura Nuraksa was not declared in the Minister of Forestry Decree No 418/1999 on designated forest areas in West Nusa Tenggara Province. Secondly, the management of Nuraksa Tahura was altered from the Provincial Government of West Nusa Tenggara to West Lombok Regency based on Decree 579/DJ-V/KK/2001. However, the provincial government still believed that Nuraksa Tahura is under their jurisdiction and insisted to manage the Tahura raising conflict between the two government institutions. Up to now, the legality of Nuraksa Tahura is still uncertain.

The provincial government of West Nusa Tenggara claimed that the status of Sesaot Forest is as *Taman Hutan Raya* basing their argument on Forestry Minister Decree No 53/2008 that stated partial designation has stronger claim (in law) than area designation. In addition to the provincial argument, the fact showed that the Minister of Forestry Decree No 598/2009 that changed the status of Sesaot Forest from Protective Forest to *Taman Hutan Raya* strengthened the establishment of Nuraksa Tahura. This new status was reinforced by Regional Regulation No 3/2010 resulted from an agreement between the Central Government and the Provincial Government. In addition, the Provincial Government also strengthened the legality of the management by issuing Governor Decree No 23/2008 stating that Sesaot Forest was managed by the Technical Unit of *Taman Hutan Raya* Nuraksa under the authority of Provincial Forest Agency.

Box 1. *Taman Hutan Raya* (Tahura) in Indonesia

According to Government Regulation No 68/1998, Tahura was defined as an area for natural conservation with the objectives to preserve endemic and non-endemic flora and fauna that can be utilized for research, science, education, cultivation, cultural, tourism and recreational purpose. Based on its definition, Tahura area falls under the category of Conservation Forest. Criteria for a Tahura are:

1. An area with unique and distinct characteristics, natural or man-made, within a pristine ecosystems or in ecosystems undergoing changes;
2. It has scenic nature; and
3. It is large enough for establishing and preserve collection of flora and fauna including native or exotic, endemic or non-endemic species.

Although Tahura is established with the objectives to conserve and preserve an ecosystem including its flora and fauna biodiversity, the area is managed by Provincial Government and not Central Government. Until 2010, Indonesian Government has designated 21 Tahuras with a total area of 343,454.41 ha in many provinces. These Tahuras have faced many problems such as encroachment, legality issues and deforestation. For example, Bukit Soeharto located in East Kalimantan was damaged by coal mine owned by several companies which have permits issued by Kutai Kartanegara Regency. Issue of encroachment carried out by local communities or local companies were faced by many Tahuras such Sultan Adam Tahura in South Kalimantan, Raja Lelo Tahura in Bengkulu and Cut Nyak Dien Tahura in Aceh.

Why is there opposition to the establishment of Tahura in Sesaot Forest?

Led by the Forest Agency of West Lombok, the government of West Lombok Regency and the local community were against the establishment of Nuraksa Tahura. Their opposition is largely due to the uncertainty of the form of forest management that were being implemented in Sesaot Forest. They wanted to have a type of forest management that can accommodate management by local people and tenurial access such as *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* (HKm) permit (See Box 2). Around 3,857 ha of Sesaot Forest was already managed by local community through HKm permit (see Box 3). Local community perceived HKm permit as recognition from the government that it is the local community, not Nuraksa Tahura Management that has the right to manage Sesaot Forest. The establishment of Nuraksa Tahura was seen as a threat to the recognition of local community rights. Three events were seen by local community as evidence to the threats: a forced take-over of forest area managed local community for the purpose of in-situ deer breeding in 1999, a gate entrance construction to Nuraksa Tahura and a notice of eviction from Sesaot Forest received by the local community in 2010. The local community feared that the State plan to totally evict the locals



from Sesaot Forest. The eviction will make the locals lose their current income of Rp 12,654 per day derived from HKm area.

Various efforts were carried out to resolve the conflict but to no avail. This involved forming a special task force to change the status of Sesaot forest from Tahura to Protected Forest, including issuing West Nusa Tenggara Regent Decree to end the Tahura status. Current on-going effort includes sending an appeal to revoke the Tahura status to the Governor West Nusa Tenggara Province with copies to the Minister of Forestry, the Director General of Land Rehabilitation and Social Forestry, West Lombok Regent and Head of Provincial and Regency Parliament Members. The Provincial Government responded to this appeal by conducting a dialogue between various Sesaot stakeholders in Lombok.

Box 2. History of Control and Management of Sesaot Forest by Local Community

Local community managed Sesaot Forest since 1957 by planting *Sengon* trees (*Paraserianthes falcataria*) as part of reforestation programme. The farmers also planted fruit trees and were allowed to harvest and managed the trees. During 1968-1969, farmers started to plant coffee under reforestation trees. Local forestry agency and extension supported the coffee cultivation by establishing forester cooperation (*Koperasi Rimbawan*) to assist farmers in coffee management and marketing.

Coffee cultivation continued until 1984-1985 reaching total area of 1,662 ha. The area was declared as buffer zone by Governor Decree No 140 issued on 26 Mei 1986. The decree also documented an agreement for coffee cultivation within Protected Forest area. Farmers managing coffee trees were allowed to earn 50% of harvested yield.

In 1982, the community reforested the logged-over forest area within Sesaot Forest. This was an abandoned logging concession area. Farmers planted mahogany, *Paraserianthes* sp., lamtoro (*Leucena leucocephala*) and fruit trees including banana trees between the trees, and practicing daily labour (*banjar harian*) and alley cropping systems. In 1995, Sesaot farmers were given tenurial access to 25 ha of Sesaot Forest through HKm programme. The pilot HKm programme was considered successful on conservation and livelihood perspectives. Thus, the government of West Lombok increases the area of HKm programme to 236 ha. Today, roughly 3,857 ha of Sesaot Forest is managed by Sesaot farmers through HKm programme. Only around 185 ha has received permit *Usaha Pengelolaan* HKm (West Lombok Regent Decree No 2130/65/Dishut/2009) based on designated area for HKm issued by the Minister of Forestry (Kepmenhut No. 445/Menhut-II/2009). West Lombok Regent had requested to the Minister of Forestry (in a formal letter No 522/726/Dishut/2010) for the rest of HKm area to obtain legal permit. So far, HKm area has contributed to West Lombok Regency revenue around 50-100 million rupiah per year.

Box 3. Community Forestry (*Hutan Kemasyarakatan* = HKm) as a form of Control and Management by Local Community

Forestry Minister Decree No. P 37/2007 defines *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* (HKm) as a state forest in which its main function is to empower the local community. The HKm programme is a strategic step to conserve forest and at the same time improving the livelihood of local community adjacent to the forest. The main objective of HKm is to protect and maintain the sustainability of forest functions and environment. Providing access to forest through HKm programme is expected to improve the capability and independence of local people to get the benefits of forest resources in an optimal and fair means through capacity building and provision of access in order to improve the welfare of local communities. Hence, HKm may be able solve economic and social issues that often arise in areas adjacent to forest. HKm can be implemented in any type of forest, including production, protected and conservation forest.

HKm permit legally named as Ijin Usaha Pemegang Hak Kemasyarakatan (IUPHKm). The owner of HKm permit has the rights: (1) to obtain facilitation (for example technical assistance) from local official, (2) to harvest non-timber forest product up to 50m³/year, (3) to have access to environmental services provided by the forest ; (4) to cultivate/use the area; (5) to have access/ to use the area and (6) to harvest timber up to 20 tonne/year. HKm farmers also have obligations to: (1) set up working area boundary, (2) develop a work plan, (3) perform tree planting including maintaining and protecting their growth, (4) pay forest resources provision according to agreement and (5) provide HKm activities report to permit provider.

According to Forest Minister Decree No. P 36/2009, HKm permit owner has the right to request a permit to carry out carbon sequestration activities. This request is only permitted for HKm within Production and Protective forest area and is not permitted for Conservation area.

What are the plausible solutions to the conflict?

The local or central government when producing policy very often only focuses on legality aspect and do not pay attention to the reality in the field. History and experiences showed that community based forest management should be considered in developing policy for Sesaot Forest. Conflict in Sesaot occurred because the current policy has overlooked the interest of local community. Effort to reduce conflict through stakeholders meeting between local community, NGO as well as government officials from West Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province as well as from central government has produced three options. The first option is to maintain Tahura and dismissed HKm programme. Community access to forest will be recognized through a different collaborative scheme. The second option is to allow farmers have access to Sesaot forest using HKm programme with a

total area of 3,155 ha but the location is outside Tahura which is further North to the current location. The third option is to allow HKm to be implemented within Tahura area. However, it is still not clear how it will be implemented. In fact, the third option triggered debate between local community and provincial government on what would be the best way for implementation in the field. The debate has not reached any solutions to accommodate both parties. The central government stayed out from the debate, thus slowing down the negotiation process due to lack of intermediary agent to facilitate the process. Is it a wise decision for the central government to stay out from conflict resolution process and leave the entire negotiation to the provincial government? A wise step would be to involve all stakeholders of Sesaot Forest in the conflict negotiation process, including the central government to untangled the overlapping authorities in managing Sesaot Forest as well as to ensure tenure security for local communities.

