



Gampong's Forest Management: A Case Study of Gampong Institution's Role in Peudada Regency, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to depict the capacity of gampong in forest management. In this research, the design used was qualitative approach. The location of this research was conducted in gampong Pinto Rimba, Peudada district, Bireuen regency, Aceh province, Indonesia. The research time was conducted for 2 (two) months from March to April 2020. Primary and secondary data were used in this study. Primary data were obtained by researchers directly from the source or resource person in the form of words and actions of the people observed or interviewed. The way informant chosen here is by using purposive sampling. Secondary data were obtained from the written reports or other related documents. It can be concluded that gampong government has high commitment in managing village forest. This is done by a group of forest farmer called Batee Lhee. Gampong institution has capacity in guiding the farming community to continue to maintain forest as an economic source and making customary agreements in forest management and animal protection.

Keywords: *Forest Village; Gampong; Forest Management*

Introduction

Gampong, another term for the village which is used in Aceh, is a unity of the legal community under the *mukim* and led by keuchik or other names who have the right to conduct their own household affairs (Ahyat, Badaruddin, Humaizi, & Kusmanto, 2020; Gayatri, 2018; Mukhlis, 2015, 2018). Meanwhile, forest management capacity in *gampong* is an absolute thing to do so that the burden of forest management rights by *gampong* can be utilized for the welfare of *gampong*. Authority in managing forests is contained in article 9 of the regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 Year 2015 (JDIH Kemendesa, 2015) concerning guidelines for authority based on the right of proposal and local authority on village scale in the field of village development. *Gampong* Pinto Rimba is located in Peudada sub-district. It is one of the districts in Bireuen regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. It is the largest sub-district in Bireuen regency with an area of 312.84 km² or 17.42 percent of the area of Bireuen regency. It has a large coastal area, residential area, forest area that is included in the protected forest area and production forest.

Village forest (henceforth VF) is one of the social forestry that becomes the link between community welfare and forest sustainability. It is a state forest located within the territory of a village, utilized by the village and for the welfare of the villagers (explanation of Article 5 paragraph 3 of Law No. 41/1999 on forestry). Then, it is a state forest that has not been burdened with permits or rights managed by the village and for the welfare of village communities (article 1 number 24 government rule number 6 year 2007 on forest management, forest management plan and forest utilization). Forests are renewable natural resources that have ecological, economic, and socio-cultural value, and contribute to human life. The value or function of forests are very important, among others, as a regulator of hydrology, oxygen supply, air pollution filters, maintaining soil fertility, and preserving biodiversity. Although forest has various benefits, if it is not managed properly, it can have an adverse impact with a variety of potential disasters and conflicts for the government and communities around the forest that still rely largely on their livelihoods from forest products. The rights and obligations of the community in managing forests with various social forestry schemes and partnerships show that community participation in forest management is currently quite wide open. When compared to the previous regulations, the current regulations have undergone quite good changes.

Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Government (BPK RI, 2006), which was handed down in detail in Qanun Aceh Number 7 Year 2016 on Aceh forestry, has been trying to achieve a broader development orientation. In Article 149 of the Aceh government law, it is stated that the Aceh government and the district/city government are obliged to: (1) conduct integrated environmental management, (2) protect, maintain, maintain, and conserve national parks and protected areas, (3) manage protected areas to protect biodiversity and ecology, (4) include qualified NGOs in environmental management and protection. Article 156 also affirms that the government of Aceh and the regency/city government manage natural resources in Aceh both on land and at sea in Aceh in accordance with their authority.

The capacity of the community in *gampong's* forest management is not limited to the existence of forestry alone, because the forest is also related to the broader problem, namely the environment. In this case, environmental management is intended as an integrated effort to preserve environmental functions that include the wisdom of structuring, utilization, development, maintenance, recovery, supervision and control of the environment. The mandate means there is a correlation between the state, the form of legal action in the form of policy making and responsible environmental governance system. Forestry development is an important unity in sustainable development goals (SDGs) which is a development process that is principled development to meet current needs without sacrificing the need for future generations by focused on environmental support, achievement of social justice, economic and environmental sustainable. Those can be realized in forestry development related to social forestry.

Previous studies related to village forest management have been done by some researchers. Rideng, Astara, & Nahak (2018) attempts to see the model of village forest management in Buleleng. They suggests that in managing forest, the development must consider environment-friendly situation. Santika et al. (2017) in their research believe that in managing village forest, the best solution to this matter is community forest management as the way to decrease the deforestation as well as to obtain social and environmental goals. Irawati, Jusuf, & Dassir (2019) conducted a research to depict how village forest is managed and developed in Palopo, Indonesia. They conclude that community members get the benefit from farming and the non-wood forest product. In relation to the the fact stated above, this study aims to find out and analyze the capacity of *gampong* in forest management in Gampong Pinto Rimba District Peudada Bireuen regency, Aceh province, Indonesia.

Literature Review

Gampong

Gampong has been known since the time of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam which was founded by Sultan All Mughayat Syah in 1514 At that time Gampong was the lowest legal entity original

born from the community, because the concept of mukim which is a collection of several Gampong born during the sultanate in the XVI and XVII centuries. The concept of Aceh power is built on two pillars namely religion and customs that reflect the understanding of the people of Aceh (Humaizi, 2018). The balance of world and the hereafter life is believed as the way of life. The use of these two pillars is also inseparable from the long history of the establishment of the Aceh kingdom (Ahyat et al., 2020; Djusfi, 2018).

Elements of leadership in *gampong* institution can be grouped into three forms, namely: 1) Official leader is the leader of the central administration placed in the village with legitimacy from above and is modern, 2) Traditional leader is a leader who was born from the tradition of rural communities but then ratified by the central administration as the bottom line of his power and 3) Unofficial leader that is the leadership that was born community outside the network of power, the tradition can thus be said the effectiveness of *gampong* development in the social and political economic aspect is not only determined by the institution of *gampong* government institutions but also influenced by *supra gampong* government institutions and non-government institutions. In the post-new order period, the government of Indonesia passed a law of a special nature for Aceh namely Law No. 18 of 2001 on Autonomy for Nanggroe Aceh Darusalam Province (NAD) which was followed up with the issuance of Qanun No. 4 2003 on *mukim* (Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia Republik Indonesia, 2003) and Qanun No. 5 Year 2003 on *gampong* revitalizing *gampong* and *mukim* and opening opportunities to return to customs and religions. In qanun of *gampong* (Iskandar, 2019), it has the authority including the authority in the field of governance, implementation of development, community development, and community empowerment *gampong* based on community initiatives, rights of origin, customs and islamic sharia values.

Forest Management

Forest is a collection of land areas that are overgrown (owned) or will be overgrown with tree plants and managed as a whole to achieve the goal of landowners in the form of wood or other related results (the equation of the word for forest is the unity of ownership, unity of management, and unity of planning). While another expert, Bruenig (1996), states that forest is a field of land covered by trees that can form a state of upright climate, including part of the field of former land cutting through cutting down, in a fixed forest area on state land or land owned after harvesting (logging) against the previous forest stands carried out the manufacture and maintenance of natural reserves or re-forestation.

There are many opinions related to forest management. It is also believed as how to trigger the community involvement so that they can get benefit from the forest existence (Nurhaedah & Hapsari, 2014). This also supported by Luswaga & Nuppenau (2020) clarifying that community participation and involvement in forest management. In Indonesia, forest plays vital role in many sectors (Rif'an, Setiawan, & Wisnuaji, 2016). Regarding the type of forest based on its status, in the forestry law no. 41/1999 Article 5 paragraph (1), it is divided into a. state forests, and b. forest rights (BPK RI, 1999; Hadidja, Golar, & Sudhartono, 2016). Then amended based on the Decision of the Constitutional Court No. 35/PUU-X/2012, Article 5 paragraph (1) changed to a). State forests; b). forest rights; c). customary forests. Article 5 paragraph (1) describes customary forests as state forests given to customs. Thus customary forests get strong legal certainty on behalf of the state. The separation of customary forests and state forests based on their ownership status has strong implications for indigenous forests into widespread public recognition. Differences in the status of these forests, too, give the right to control customary forests can be clearly distinguished, the right to control and have clearly two things that are expressly different.

Gampong's Position in Managing Gampong's Forest

Village forest or *gampong* Forest is one of 3 (three) local community empowerment schemes. It is a scheme that is legally given to community to manage forest for 35 years (Batari, Jusuf, & Sahide, 2017)

which has objectives to make fair and eco-friendly forest management (Suwarti, Soeaidy, & Suryadi, 2015). This scheme involves the community members as their contribution to develop forestry sector (Farhaeni & Ardhana, 2018) since there is close relationship between economic life and forest conservation (Mustofa, 2013).

Forest management can be implemented in protected forests and production forests that have not been burdened with management rights or utilization permits and within the administrative area of the village concerned. Article 78 of the village law regulates that village development aims to improve the welfare of village communities, improve the quality of human life, and overcome poverty (BPK, 2014). Further achievement of these objectives is held through: (a) fulfillment of basic needs, (b) development of village facilities and infrastructure, (c) development of local economic potential, and (d) sustainable utilization of natural resources and environment.

Gampong has authority in the field of government and community based on customary law in accordance with the laws and regulations to manage forests. Furthermore, the authority of customary villages includes (a) regulating and implementing the system of government based on local customary law; (b) Managing natural resources controlled under customary law, which includes village cash land, customary land, customary forests and other natural resources; (c) Implementing local customary laws; (d) Preserving local socio-cultural values; (e) Managing and conserving natural resources controlled under customary law; and (f) resolving customary disputes based on local customary law within its territory in accordance with human rights principles. *Gampong's* authority based on the origin and local authority of village scale is not the authority handed over by the government, nor the residue assigned by the district / city government as has been regulated in Law number 32/2004 and government rule number. 72/2005 on villages. In accordance with the principle of recognition and subsidy, both types of authority are recognized and determined directly by the Village Law.

Method

In this research, the design used was qualitative approach. The location of this research was conducted in *Gampong Pinto Rimba*, Peudada district, Bireuen regency, Aceh province, Indonesia. The research time was conducted for 2 (two) months from March to April 2020. The reason for this research location is because *Gampong Pinto Rimba* has the potential of forest areas that are still maintained and become a catchment area, the forest becomes a source of water and for the surrounding community as well as for water for agricultural needs. Primary and secondary data were used in this study. Primary data were obtained by researchers directly from the source or resource person in the form of words and actions of the people observed or interviewed. The way informant chosen here was by using purposive sampling based on the subject who masters the problem, has the relevant data and is willing to share the data. Secondary data were obtained from the written reports or other documents such as Qanun Aceh Number 7 year 2016 on Aceh Forestry and Bireuen regency Qanun Number 6 year 2018 concerning *gampong* government.

Result and Discussion

Based on the results of the interview, the role of *gampong* Pinto Rimba institution in managing *gampong* forest is to facilitate and lobby various parties to conduct forest rescue activities. The institution formed a farmer group by recruiting society members and the youth of *gampong* as members to farm as well as aiming to protect the last forest in there. The effort is carried out because of the increasing crisis of forests that become a source of water for *gampong* and several neighboring sub-districts as well as being home to key animals such as tigers, bears and elephants.

The community group of farmers who were given the right to manage forests *Batee Lhee* forest farmers. They are granted the right to manage the remaining forest economic and ecological needs, because the last forest area in *gampong* Pinto Rimba became the last water absorption area also on the banks of the Peudada River. As for other areas that are directly bordered by *gampong* pinto rimba, forest has been converted into community agricultural land and has also become a palm oil plantation owned by companies / individuals. In addition to being the last water and forest absorption area on the banks of Peudada river, many people depend on the the forest product such as rotten, and honey. Those are utilized by the community for home industry as a basic income. This was conveyed by *Petua Seunebok* who was interviewed as follows.

Batee lhee forest condition managed by the farmer group is still very good. The cover and water source is still well maintained. There are still fauna and flora that still exists in the forest area. Batee Lhee farmer group continues to manage the forest that are on the side of the forest and forest boundaries. In the last 10 years, the forest that was once relegated is now springing back and can give benefits to the community without having to cut down trees. This resulted in a lot of threats from oil palm plantation entrepreneurs to own the forest area. The community often gets a high price offer for the forest can be converted into oil palm plantations. But our citizens are vigorously defending forest areas from being transformed, and continue to provide water resources to us and to other general communities. (interview dated on July 20, 2020)

Due to the serious threat in forest management in Pinto Rimba Village, through the management of *Batee Lhee* group, *gampong* government requested to be accompanied by institutions engaged in conservation, so that the forest area management scheme does not violate the provisions per law and regulations that apply formally. Then, in this case, they ask the Aceh Green Conservation (AGC) institution to accompany and facilitate them in forest management. This is done by *gampong* government in accordance with Qanun Aceh number 7 of 2016 article 91 states that in rehabilitating forests, people can ask for assistance, services and support to nongovernmental organizations, the government of Aceh and the central government. The assistance effort was carried out due to the limited knowledge of *gampong* government in *gampong* forest management for the economic needs of *gampong* community and also as *gampong's* asset in biodiversity protection for sustainable development in *gampong* Pinto Rimba, District peudada Bireuen district. This was conveyed by *Geuciek* / Head of *Gampong* Pinto Rimba.

Assistance and facilitation carried out by AGC institutions is to facilitate technically in obtaining formal legal permission from the ministry of life environmental, so that what is done by the community during the protection and forest management has a permanent legal force. Because what has been done by the community so far is based only on customary law, this becomes our own fear and the community with the presence of companies that enter the area. They can control the forest in a unilateral way that is by proposing a permit for business rights plantations to the relevant ministry. As long as we have the community will deal with the laws of the Republic of Indonesia, it must come out in forest areas even though we have managed for many years. The social forestry scheme that is packed by the minister of life environmental will be a benefit to the community of forest management farmers, because farmers are allowed to cut down trees that produce wood and replace with trees produced. This will benefit the community more if social forestry permits are granted to us. (interview dated July 20, 2020).

The understanding and role of *gampong* government institution in guiding farmer community to continue to maintain forest is a very positive local leadership capacity in protecting forest areas from degradation resulting in ecological disasters. The efforts made by *gampong* government institutions were applied in Aceh culture and Acehnese daily days long before Aceh was hit by a prolonged conflict, because they are in the smallest and organized unit of socio-political organization that can make and legalize their own customary rules for the socio-political needs of their citizens and also for migrants who must comply with the established customary provisions. The result of this study also shows that *gampong*

institutions also do not give permission for outsiders who will cultivate and buy land around the forest and on the riverbank. This is because the majority of the population and also *gampong* institutions already understand the functions and benefits of forests and rivers that are maintained to be sustainable. Considering that, there are also many communities that depend on living from forest products without damaging forests.

The obstacle experienced by *gampong* institutions is the large push to those from outside parties who want to rule over the forest to be used as oil palm plantation land that is accompanied by a momentary economy, *gampong* institutions also actively ask for help from many parties to help them in handling the forest. In this case, *gampong* institutions with the capacity and knowledge they have locally, very important in maintaining and preserving forests, *gampong* institutions in question are *gampong* government institutions that strengthen the ancesing of customary institutions named *Seunebok* in carrying out the execution of *gampong* forest management and for the welfare of people of *gampong*.

Gampong government also facilitates farmers community groups in managing forests that are used as important assets in the development of *gampong* in a sustainable manner, can be seen from the response of the community when there are parties who come directly to the forest area and work on forests with no permits at *seunebok* institutions and farmer groups, then the *Seunebok* institutions directly rebuke and give customary sanctions to the concerned. The interaction between the villagers and the surrounding natural environment has been going on for centuries across generations in the frame of the cosmos balance. The management and utilization of forest resources in each forest village community has its own characteristics (local spesific) in accordance with the cultural characteristics of the people living in and around the forest. Forest resources are defined as natural resources that have economic, religious, political, social and cultural values (Budiono, Nugroho, Hardjanto, & Nurrochmat, 2018).

This can be seen from *Batee Lhee* group that agreed to take part in protecting the forest. They realize that if the forest is damaged, then the disasters such as flash floods, droughts to mud floods will occur in the village and also in the plantation area, because the river at the end of the last forest is a source of water for residents of *gampong* Pinto Rimba. The urge that arises from within the community to do something is there is a need or desire that wants to be fulfilled. The higher the motivation of farmer group members in farming activities, the existence of the group will be maintained. This is because the motivation to obtain good agricultural product. This will encourage someone to continue working in farmer groups.

Customary institutions are important in forest management in *gampong* Pinto Rimba, because with the traditional *lambaga gampong* Pinto Rimba is able to manage forests in a sustainable and independent manner. The customary institutions referred to are *mukim* customary institutions under which *Petua Seunebok* plays a role in the management of plantation areas and the utilization of forest products and *Pawang Glee* that plays a role in forest supervision, but for *gampong* Pinto Rimba this is a more active institution and plays a role in forest management is *Petua Seunebok*. *Seunebok* plays a direct role in the management and utilization of forest areas while *Pawang Glee* plays a more role in monitoring and implementing customary rules.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the results of the above research and discussion, it can be concluded that *gampong* government has high commitment in managing village forest. This is done by a group of forest farmer called *Batee Lhee*. *Gampong* institution has capacity in guiding the farming community to continue to maintain forest as an economic source and making customary agreements in forest management and animal protection. Since this research is only focused on the role of *gampong* in managing village forest, further researcher is suggested to explore the role of Aceh government in maintaining customary forest in Aceh province.

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