



## Collective Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Land Use Planning

### SUPPORTED GOALS:

- Improving natural resource-based livelihood opportunities through strengthened management practices
- Equitable participation and fair representation in decision-making processes
- Political recognition of participatory land use plans and community resource management rights
- Conflict prevention

## ► Overview

Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Sustainable Land Use Planning (SLUP) offer frameworks for supporting livelihoods by utilising land and natural resources in a sustainable way. However, these processes are not inherently inclusive, and often exclude the communities they are meant to serve. Promoting collective forms of management and planning can serve to create sustained livelihood benefits, unify communities, prevent conflict, and strengthen community claims to land.



### TOOL #1

## Spatial and land-use planning

Communities and individuals that depend upon their land and natural resources have often developed traditional methods of managing them. However, it is important to understand that these management practices are dynamic, and people are constantly making decisions based on new developments. Communities are not necessarily completely opposed to external investments, for example, but want to ensure that the terms suit their priorities.

Participatory spatial planning can help communities to autonomously evaluate their current land use and decide on their priorities for the future, including whether or not to engage with external investors and on which terms. Participatory mapping can be a useful tool in providing a foundation for the planning process, so that communities can fully visualise the extent and composition of their territories, resources, rights and interests. Again, it is important that the goals of the process are clear and agreed upon at the beginning, that potential benefits and drawbacks are understood, and that the community is at the heart of the process. CSOs can play a valuable role by bringing diverse actors together, connecting communities to government officials and planning bodies, and providing information on existing spatial plans and planning laws. Training can also be provided on mapping and planning methodologies, as well as how to use the outputs of this process both in community activities as well as for advocacy purposes.

**“Tribal groups have the right to land, but training is needed so people know how to claim and map their own lands. Communities are often not sure how to approach state officials, where to go and what to do, or which documents are needed for land titles.”**

GAYATHRI THAYAPPA (DHAATRI RESOURCE CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, INDIA)

## Highlighting the role of women

Despite often being the main managers of land in practice, women are regularly left out of both customary and state planning processes. This is particularly the case when external investors arrive. Consultation processes tend to focus on men, and community decision-making about whether to accept commercial activities on customary lands, like opening new oil palm plantations, is typically dominated by men. When land is taken over by investors, men are listed as the owners, with women often seen as passive beneficiaries. This places a double-burden on women who not only have to deal with losing their productive spaces, but also displacement of their domestic spaces, like areas for washing, gathering firewood or collecting clean water.

Establishing and empowering women's groups can help to increase leadership capacities of women as well as emphasise the importance of their central role in resource management within the wider community. Focus group discussions can provide a platform for women to come together to identify and discuss the problems they are facing and build solidarity. For example, Kalimantan Women's Alliance provides specific leadership training for women in the provinces of West, Central and East Kalimantan in Indonesia, focusing on improving negotiation and communication skills as well as building a shared commitment to sustainable NRM among potential leaders. The aim is to improve women's capacity to push feminist perspectives within planning or consultation processes, and to lobby for policies that consider gender perspectives and are oriented towards community participation, access and control. Similarly, Dhaatri Resource Centre for Women and Children has sought to develop self-organisation and leadership skills within Adivasi women groups across India, as well as increase awareness of their rights to land<sup>5</sup>. This has enabled Adivasi women to strengthen their own claims to the right to manage land and forest resources according to their traditional knowledge, both within their communities as well as in relation to government institutions.

## Lobbying for community management rights

Recognition of a community's rights to manage their lands and resources is fundamental to allow collective NRM and SLUP to take place. CSOs can play a vital role in advocating for this recognition as well as connecting communities to policy makers and local officials so they can advocate for themselves.



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You have to involve the government because they are the ones who serve as agents of change. It can be effective to appeal to them by positioning them as change-makers.

SUMI RAE  
(KALIMANTAN  
WOMEN'S  
ALLIANCE,  
INDONESIA)

Hosting seminars and workshops on topics such as land use, spatial planning, environmental issues or conservation can be a good platform through which to do this. Inviting officials from local or regional government, forest authorities, or spatial planning bodies to attend or even speak at these events can allow community representatives to express the importance of land to their livelihoods as well as the barriers they face in having their rights recognised. Engaging with local media to get the topic on the agenda is an effective tool to stimulate this engagement. For example, Kalimantan Women's Alliance has facilitated appearances on talk shows by women leaders to make the issues they face visible.

#### TOOL #4

## Grasping legal opportunities

Sometimes laws already exist that facilitate the rights of communities to map, manage or plan their land use, but they are not being implemented in practice. These may not always be explicit in the sense that they address community land rights directly, but opportunities can exist where decision-making power is decentralised to regional and local authorities. CSOs can play a role by monitoring existing laws and pressing the relevant authorities on their implementation, as well as any new developments for opportunities to engage with decision-makers. Indonesia's Village Law of 2014 is one such example; it grants greater autonomy to villages in controlling their territories. Gemawan has worked with communities in West Kalimantan to help them approach local district officials with proposals for village mapping and spatial planning as part of wider village development plans.

**“Many government officials still have not figured out how to implement new regulations, and there is a lack of information for communities. We try to facilitate two-way information sharing.”**

LAILY KHAIRNUR (LEMBAGA GEMAWA, INDONESIA)

## Things to consider and anticipate

- **COMMUNITY AUTONOMY.** For communities to invest time and energy, they must have confidence in and ownership of the process. Any training activities should be focused on how to ensure that participants can operate autonomously now and in the future.
- **GENDER IMBALANCES.** It is important to recognise that any community will have its own internal power dynamics, which can affect inclusivity in the planning process. Women are often excluded from decision-making despite their central role in land management, so strengthening their capacity to engage and facilitating gender-sensitive opportunities to participate is key to truly participatory land-use planning.
- **POLITICAL MOMENTUM.** National or local political contexts can make it difficult to get community land-use plans formalised. Corruption, local government development agendas, or the need to raise funds can see district or regional governments prioritise large land concessions. Seizing on moments of potential political change or instability can also provide opportunities for pushing community-based natural resource management and development issues into the political debate and public awareness. This should be done carefully, as political debates can quickly become divisive and adversarial.

### CASE STUDY // LEMBAGA GEMAWAN, WEST KALIMANTAN-INDONESIA

## Participatory Village-level Spatial Planning

### Participatory formulation of village spatial plans to be submitted to district governments.

In many parts of Indonesia, the expansion of industrial commodity plantations, such as palm oil, poses a significant threat to community lands and livelihoods. Part of the problem is that district government maps often do not recognise local community lands or land use areas, displaying only concession areas and government land-use zones.

Indonesia's Village Law of 2014, which grants greater autonomy to villages in controlling their territories, is seen as one opportunity for communities to define their own land use plans and practices<sup>6</sup>. Lembaga Gemawan is working with communities and their CSO network in West Kalimantan to promote village-level spatial planning, with the aim of strengthening the negotiating power of local communities.

In response to uncertainty over their lands, village representatives from the Sambas district approached Gemawan to assist them with mapping and spatial planning activities<sup>7</sup>. Several meetings were held in order to define the objectives for the process and plan relevant mapping activities. Gemawan's role was to facilitate and provide guidance, for example through workshops or information on village law and

governance as well as the importance of the meaningful involvement of women. However, it was important that the communities were in control of the process themselves.

They eventually formed designated mapping teams, with the village head providing formal authorisation for their activities. Village borders were mapped using GPS trackers and maps were created through the use of high-resolution photography taken by drones. Neighbouring villages were consulted first in order to obtain their blessing for the use of the drones.

The data generated was then used to formulate village-level spatial plans. Specific land-use zones were identified, such as rubber groves, rice fields, mixed-crop gardens and residential areas.

Depending on the priorities and vision of the communities themselves, other land uses could also be proposed, such as conservation, social forestry or peatland restoration. These spatial plans were then taken to the district government for approval, and if approved, they could be enforced through official village regulations. Once formalised, these land use zones cannot be used for other purposes without prior consultation with the communities. This serves as a deterrent for oil palm companies, or at least pushes them into a consultation process in which the community is already well informed about the spatial characteristics of their land. This gives communities a foundation from which to negotiate, as well as providing a process through which to collectively define and plan their own natural resource management.

- 5 Harvard University South Asia Institute (2016). Interrogating the norm: innovative interventions to promote gender justice and safety in India. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.dhaatri.org/dhaatrinew/womenpub/Gender%20Based%20Violence.pdf>
- 6 De Vos, R., Khairnur, L. & Iskandar, H.J. (2016). Drones put land rights back on the map. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.newmandala.org/drones-put-land-rights-back-map/>
- 7 ETRFN & Tropenbos International (2019). Exploring inclusive palm oil production. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.etfrn.org/publications/exploring+inclusive+palm+oil+production>