

**Mobilizing Community Conservation.  
A Community Initiative to Protect its Forest against Logging in Indonesia**

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**Aim of this Paper**

This paper provides a picture of the villagers of Setulang, East Kalimantan, Indonesia, and their rejection of IPPK forest conversion licenses during the decentralization era (2000 – 2002). In contrast to other villages in the region, which invites investors in to clear-fell their forest lands, Setulang's fight to protect its forests resulted in a Kalpataru award<sup>1</sup> from the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

This paper explains how the conservation movement came about in the village.

**Background to Setulang village**

Setulang Village, with a population of 860 (208 households) Dayak Kenyah Oma' Lung people, is situated on the lower reaches of the Malinau River. It is a two-hour ride by long boat from the capital of the Malinau District.

**b. History**

According to verbal historical accounts, the Kenyah Oma Lung people lived in Long Sa'an, a village located on the upper reaches of the Pujungan River at the confluence with the Bahau River, for 13 generations. The place was so remote the people decided to look for somewhere to settle nearer the town. In 1968 the people of Long Sa'an Village in Pujungan Subdistrict moved to the Malinau River and settled in Long Setulang.

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<sup>1</sup> The Kalpataru award is given annually by the Ministry of Environment for those who concern, conserve or protect the environment.

#### b. Status of the Area

In 1963, before moving from Long Sa'an, a group of community figures went to look for a suitable destination in which to settle. The group had a meeting in Langap with Alang Impang, the Malinau River customary chief to ask for his permission. Alang Impang then showed them several places, one of which was Long Setulang. They also had meetings with Aran Irang in Gong Solok, Nyalang Labit in Sentaban, and finally with the Subdistrict Administrator in Malinau. A written decree by the Bulungan Regent in 1974 officially acknowledged Setulang's existence as a village, determining its upstream boundary with Setarap, and downstream boundary with Sentaban. The village area's status is still unclear, with different parties making claims on the forest region with its potential for timber. In this decentralization era timber businessmen come to villages making offers to the local people.

#### c. Community Income

Since settling in Long Setulang, the people have developed crop rotation patterns and tree crops. They use their produce to fulfill their everyday requirements. Some is also sold, particularly their highland rice which is very popular with many people. With sufficient produce from their fields and gardens, the Setulang villagers are having no problems even though they are not receiving IPPK fees like other villages in the Malinau river catchment area.

Many of the young people travel to Malaysia mainly to work in timber companies. Their experiences there make them aware of the impact felling forests has on local people and their environment. The money they earn there is used to buy more expensive goods such as generators or outboard motors, and also to build houses.

#### d. Forest Characteristics

The forest in the upper reaches of the Setulang River, is virgin low-land Dipterocarp forest dominated by large trees, among them *kapur* (*Dryobalanops spp*), *meranti* (*Shorea spp*), *keruing* (*Dipterocarpus spp*), *tengkawang* (*Shorea macrophylla*) and *ulin* (*Eusidroxylon zwageri*). The forests are a vital source of game (forest pigs and deer), frogs, fish, fruits, medicinal plants and building materials for the Setulang villagers who also use the river as a source of clean water for drinking, washing and bathing and as a means of transport to their fields.

#### e. Experiences with Logging Companies

In 1974, two logging companies were operating near Setulang; PT Trang Jaya Nugraha in Setarap and PT Sanjung Makmur in Sentaban. The activities of these two companies caused water in the Setulang River to become murky, damaged forests and meant the villagers had to look further and further afield for their building materials.

Consequently the people of Setulang rejected offers of cooperation from IPPK businessmen, who came promising all sorts of aid.

#### f. Changes in Water Quality

Since settling in Long Setulang, they have experienced many changes. The Malinau River became murkier and they had to go further afield to collect timber for building materials and boats. These changes gave rise to their desire to protect the 5300 hectares of forest in the upstream part of the Setulang River. The forest is protected as a buffer to ensure a clean water source for the village and provide a place for collecting building materials.

#### g. *Tane Olen* Managerial Organization<sup>2</sup>

The villagers felt that *Tane Olen* (protected land) was so important they needed their own organization to handle its management. A meeting was held by the Village Assembly (*Badan Perwakilan Desa* or *BPD*) to discuss a suitable form and function for the organization. Villagers made a decision to found the Setulang Village *Tane Olen* Managerial Body.

This body arranges all activities and enforces customary rules relating to *Tane Olen*.

#### **How the Villagers Fought for *Tane Olen***

The villagers' realized their decision to protect the forests in the upper reaches of the Setulang River in 2001 when they wrote down relevant customary rules. They were written so they could be used as the basis for making decisions, and most importantly so the young generation would know about customary rules. The rules relate to the removal and use of timber and non-timber forest products found in the protected forest area (*tane olen*).

#### a. Timber Company Offers

In 1995 during Elisar Ipui's time as Village Chief, a timber businessman came to Setulang offering cooperation to fell timber in the upper reaches of the Setulang River (Banjir Kap), but after a village meeting in which the people considered the damage that had been caused, they rejected his offer.

From 2000 until 2002, the local government in Malinau District issued 46 IPPK forest conversion permits to timber businessmen. During this period, eight timber businessmen came to Setulang officially offering joint ventures with the local people to log the upper reaches of the Setulang River. Meetings were held in which only a minority of community figures were in favour of accepting the offers. Fearing any cooperation with these companies would lead to destruction of their forests and water source, the majority rejected all the offers.

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<sup>2</sup> *Tane Olen* is a conservation concept for certain parts of the area around a village, in which use of natural resources is limited and prioritized for the interests of a community. When the people were still living in Long Sa'an they already used the concept of *Tane Olen*. In the Bahau River region every village has a *Tane Olen* area. (SeeYacobus Frans, 2003, Angguk Lamis et al., 2003)

## b. Problems with CV<sup>3</sup> Gading Indah

CV Gading Indah had an IPPK forest conversion permit to operate in the area around Setarap Village, was. Villagers in Setulang found out that timber was being taken over their border with the Punan village Setarap when the water in the Setulang River started to change colour.

At the beginning of August 2002, Abuk Ipui and Yusten Sarun from Setulang visited CV Gading Indah's camp in Kuala Semiling. They saw many large cuts of timber which they suspected could not have been left behind by the company that once operated in the Semiling River area. Their suspicions were reinforced on 7 September 2002 when Krimson Nyepan and Pebing Lihai told the Setulang Village Chief they had found evidence of company timber felling whilst out hunting in the upper reaches of the Setulang River.

On 14 September 2002, following up on the report, the Setulang Village Chief sent five people out to the location to investigate for themselves. Their checks revealed that 720 metres into Setulang Village territory, 33 meranti trees had been felled and their trunks removed.

These findings were discussed in a village meeting on 16 September 2002 in which the villagers decided to put a stop to CV Gading Indah's activities until the situation was solved. On 17 September 2002, 116 Setulang villagers approached the CV Gading Indah camp and seized all the heavy machinery working in the felling block, gathered it all together in the Malinau River branch of the Kuala Sungai Semiling camp and symbolically fenced it all in using tree roots.

Their seizure of heavy machinery brought company operations to a standstill, and the company promised to go to Setulang. Initial discussions were held in Setulang on 20 September 2002. Attending were the Manager of CV Gading Indah, the South Malinau Subdistrict secretary, members of the Malinau police force and Malinau Regional Military Command, and the Chairman of the Malinau District Kenyah Dayak Community.

In the meeting the villagers submitted a demand for Rp. 5 billion, saying they had suffered losses from damage to the forest, and timber had been removed without their permission. The company admitted its wrongdoing saying it was the result of careless workers and was not done intentionally. The company asked for concessions, and by the end of the meeting, no agreement had been reached.

Following the discussions in Setulang, the Manager of CV Gading Indah and the South Malinau Subdistrict secretary sent reports to the Malinau Regent about the problem. On

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<sup>3</sup> CV is from the Dutch meaning 'Commanditaire Vennootschap'. The English translation is 'Limited Partnership'.

the 27 September 2002 a Setulang village representative was called to make a statement to the Regional Secretary in the Regent's office in Malinau. Villagers sent seven people to report what had happened in the forest.

A second discussion was held in Setulang on the 29 September 2002. At the meeting were the Manager of CV Gading Indah, the South Malinau Subdistrict secretary, the Chief of the Malinau Police Force with one of his officers, members of the Malinau Regional Military Command, and the Chairman of the Malinau District Kenyah Dayak Community.

The company offered a sum of Rp. 100 million following which the villagers lowered their demand to 3.5 billion. Then the company offered Rp.150 million and the villagers went lower still to 2.5 billion. Because no agreement was reached in the discussion and the organizers were not willing to make any decision saying there were four other partners to consider, the villagers asked that all the partners attend the next meeting.

At the third discussion held in Setulang on the 4 October 2002, with the South Malinau Subdistrict administrator, the South Malinau Subdistrict secretary, members of the Malinau police force and Malinau Regional Military Command, the Chairman of the Malinau District Kenyah Dayak Community, and five people from CV Gading Indah, the company made an offer of Rp. 200 million. Villagers stuck to their demand for 2.5 billion. Because the two parties could not reach an agreement, the South Malinau Subdistrict administrator suggested they take the problem to the Regency level.

A meeting was then held, on the 15 October 2002, in the meeting room of the Malinau Regent's Office. The meeting, led by the Secretary of the Malinau District, was attended by the Head of the Forestry Office, The Chief of Police, the District Military Commander, two staff members from the Prosecutor's Office, one from the Government Administration, one Legal Staff member, the Manager of CV Gading Indah and 15 representatives from Setulang Village. The meeting got underway at 14.00, but because no agreement had been reached after two hours, it was adjourned for 15 minutes to allow each party the opportunity to speak in private. During the negotiation the villagers left it in hands of the government to find a good solution.

When they reconvened, the Regent suggested the Head of General Affairs and the Head of Program Planning take part because he was worried something undesirable might happen and both of them were from Setulang. The meeting ended at 20.30 with an agreement that the company should pay Rp. 400 million damages to the people of Setulang.

The company could not manage this amount saying their permit would expire on 3 December 2002. So the Regional Government gave CV Gading Indah until January 2003 to work on four logging blocks that had not yet been felled, and to pay their dues.

Finally, on the 16 October 2002 a ceremony took place in which the agreement was signed, and Rp 200 million in cash was handed over to the people of Setulang with the company to pay the remaining amount in installments.

c. Problems with PT Inhutani II

Setulang villagers went to the PT Inhutani II production camp on the 13 May 2003, because the company had ordered villagers, who were working fields in the area, to leave. The company said they were working with the Tanjung Lapang Village farmer group, who had laid claim to an area that included the Setulang villagers' fields.

There has been no follow up to the problem as Setulang villagers are still awaiting a response from the Malinau Barat Subdistrict Administrator.

d. Problems with PT Lestari Timur Indonusa (LTI)

When heavy rains in September 2002 caused the Setulang River to flood, villagers became suspicious when they noticed the river water was cloudier than usual. They believed the changes were the result of company operations in the neighbouring village's area.

From 2 –to 6 December 2002, several villagers from Setulang were sent out to investigate. It turned out that PT Lestari Timur Indonusa which was operating in the Paking Village Area had encroached on Setulang Village territory and removed export quality timber from 117 trees.

On 7 December 2002, Setulang villagers descended on the PT LTI camp in Paking and seized the heavy machinery operating in the camp logging block. The villagers then sealed the area and took the ignition keys home with them. A letter was made on the spot and signed by the PT LTI manager acknowledging the confiscation.

On the 10 December 2002 a meeting was held in Setulang between the villagers there and PT LTI. Staff from the Mentarang Subdistrict Administrator's office also attended, but nothing was solved because PT LTI refused to believe the Setulang villagers' findings. An agreement was reached to conduct another field check.

This recheck took place on the 13 and 14 December 2002. Taking part were a staff member from the Mentarang Subdistrict Administrator's office, one member of staff from the Malinau District Forestry and Plantations Office and villagers from both Paking and Setulang. The villagers, feeling upset that their findings had not been believed, conducted a stricter count the second time round, including all stumps over 10 cm in diameter. They also counted damage to non-timber forest products and the number of landslides. They counted 709 timber tree stumps >10 cm, 78 fruit and palm trees, landslides in 14 places with a combined length of 1400 meters, 3 junctions with logging trails totaling 400 meters in length, and a logging road 4720 meters long and 25 meters wide leading into the Setulang Village area.

Results of the recheck were discussed at a further meeting held on the 19 December 2002 in the Mentarang Subdistrict Administrator's Office. Taking part were PT. LTI, the Mentarang Subdistrict Administrator, local police, the Mentarang Subdistrict Military Commander, Malinau District Forestry and Plantations Office staff, and villagers from Paking, Semolon, Sentaban and Setulang. Discussions focused on village borders, the company saying they were unclear. No agreement was reached, so the Mentarang Subdistrict Administrator ended the meeting suggesting another one be held at a later date.

The next meeting was held in Setulang on 19 March 2003, but talk was no longer of PT. LTI taking timber, but of village borders. At the meeting were the South Malinau Subdistrict administrator and his staff, the Malinau Barat Subdistrict Administrator, Staff from the Forestry and Plantations Office, The Head of Legal Affairs, Officers from the Regional Police and the Regional Military Command, and villagers from Sentaban and Setulang. In this meeting, staff from the Forestry and Plantations Office said the forests in the upper reaches of the Setulang River were in a protected forest area as determined in the 1971 *RTRWP* (Provincial Landuse Plan) for East Kalimantan.

The Setulang villagers were disappointed with the announcement. To them conservation areas meant government owned areas where villagers had no rights to make demands on a company working in the area. They questioned why they had not been told before. The situation began to get out of hand so the meeting was brought to a close.

Villagers returning from a hunting trip in the upper reaches of the Setulang River said they had heard the sound of tractor engines working in the area. So on 2 May 2003, several youths from Setulang went to the PT LTI work site. It turned out the company was still logging despite the ignition keys from its heavy machinery being seized. The youths called all the heavy machinery operators, pulled out the dynamo starters from five machines and took them home to Setulang.

Not long after the dynamo starters were seized, operations had begun again, so on the 20 May 2003, ten villagers with experience as operators and mechanics were sent to remove the heavy machinery. They took two tractors back with them to Setulang.

PT LTI reported the seizure of equipment to the Malinau Deputy Chief of Police saying the Setulang villagers had been abusive and made threats. So on the 26 May 2003, the Deputy Chief of Police called the Setulang Village Chief and customary chief to make statements about these actions.

After taking a statement from the Village Chief, the police called two youths who were involved when the heavy machinery was seized.

When a letter arrived from the Deputy Chief of Police calling the two as witnesses, a village meeting was held in which a statement was made that all the Setulang villagers felt responsible and those who had seized the heavy machinery had done so in the interests of all the people in the village.

At that time the villagers hoped they would get an opportunity to meet with the Regent who was planning a visit to Setulang on the 29 May 2003. However, he did not come, so on the 2 June 2003, 112 villagers decided to go to the Malinau police station, to give statements to the police.

The chief of the Civilian Police Force said the problem would be handed over to the Malinau Regional Government, but there has yet to be any follow up.

### **Support from Other Parties**

Being different and more visible than people from other villages around them, the efforts of Setulang villagers in protecting their forest have attracted the attention of other parties. This attention has manifested itself in a number of ways:

#### **a. Awards**

The people of Setulang Village have received two awards since they began managing their *Tane Olen* protected land.

#### **World Water Forum 2003**

The World Water Forum Committee held a water contest on World Water Day in 2003. Because a function of the *Tane Olen* area is to provide clean water to Setulang, the village was chosen as one of three to represent Indonesia. Of the 870 organizations and individuals selected, the Committee invited 150 to go to Kyoto, Japan on the 20 to 24 March 2003.

#### **Kalpataru 2003**

Through CIFOR, Setulang Village was nominated for the Kalpataru award. Having received the proposal, the Committee sent a team from the National Ministry of the Environment to Setulang to see the situation in the field and check the information offered in the proposal. Following selection, the villagers received an invitation to attend the Kalpataru award ceremony.

On 26 May 2003, the Village Chief and one of his staff met with the Malinau Regent on behalf of the Setulang villagers to report their planned departure for Jakarta to accept the 2003 Kalpataru award for the Environmental Saviour category given to Setulang by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia.

On World Environment Day, the Village Chief and customary staff were invited to Jakarta by the National Ministry of the Environment. The 2003 Kalpataru award ceremony was held on the 5 June 2003 where the award was presented by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Megawati Soekarno Putri, to the people of Setulang



Village, for protecting the forest area that is the source of the water in the Setulang River, keeping it clear and fulfilling community needs.

To celebrate their pleasure in receiving the 2003 Kalpataru award, the Setulang villagers held a ceremony on the 19 July 2003 inviting the Malinau Regent to attend. It was originally planned for the 28 June 2003, but postponed due to the Regent's busy schedule.

The Regent came with the Deputy Regent, the Regional Secretary, the Chairman and two members of the Regional House of Representatives, Second Assistant, the Heads of government *BKD*, *Bawasda*, *Diknas* and *PMD* offices, Sahat Manulang, Head of Legal Affairs, the Head of Program Planning, expert environmental staff, community relations staff, TVRI and a number of representatives from neighbouring villages.

In his opening speech, the Regent said:

- This Kalpataru award is the first prestigious award to be presented to Malinau District so let us all give our thanks to God.
- This is a historical and unforgettable award for Malinau District.
- Pay no attention to rumours that say this will trigger a break up of our unity and close relations as people of the Malinau District.
- Do not propagate rumours that say the Regional Government gave billions of Rupiah to the people of Setulang in relation to the award.
- Our greatest thanks go out to CIFOR who have helped by providing information to villagers on sustainable forest management.
- Let us work together to foster a conducive and supportive atmosphere for developing Malinau District towards *Gerbang Dema* (*Gerakan Pembangunan Desa Mandiri* (Movement for the Development of Village Self-Sufficiency)).

#### b. Assistance

Several organizations have provided input in support of the villagers' efforts:

##### Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

- Jeff Sayer and Kuswata Kartawinata paid a brief visit from Bogor to Setulang on February 4, 2001. They had a discussion with the Village Chief and several community figures about ideas for sustainable forest management.
- On August 8 – 9, 2001, Jeff Sayer and Ken McDicken from Bogor and Youn Yeo Chang from Korea went to Setulang and held discussions with Setulang villagers about conservation concessions and *tane olen* forest management plans for the upper reaches of the Setulang River.
- Bruce Campbell, Peter Frost, Misa Kishi and Bevelyn Sithole visited on December 1, 2002 to look at the condition of the *Tane Olen* protected forest in the upper reaches of the Setulang River.

- During their visit in April 2003, Bruce Campbell and Sven Wunder held discussions with Setulang villagers on government forest management plans and rules relating to conservation.
- On the 19 July 2003 at the ceremony celebrating receipt of the Kalpataru award, Patrice Levang (CIFOR), Cristina Eghenter (WWF Kayan Mentarang) and Pauline (a student from France) talked with Setulang villagers about their expectations in relation to management of *Tane Olen* forests.

#### Seoul National University (Korea)

Youn Yeo Chang got such a good impression on his first visit to Setulang, that for his second visit he took some students from Seoul National University in Korea to Setulang on the 10 January 2002. With ten people comprising students, the NGO Forest for Life and a businessman, the group held discussions with villagers about Dayak communities' dependence on the forest.

#### The Department of Forestry

Two people from the Department of Forestry City Planning office in Jakarta went to Setulang at the end of November 2002 and held a discussion with the Setulang Village Chief. They said the Department of Forestry City Planning office was planning to conduct research on "Forest Health". They said a field survey was planned for the middle of December 2002 but it never happened.

#### The Indonesian Academy of Sciences (LIPI)

In relation to the management of *Tane Olen*, four people from the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (LIPI) went to Setulang from 28 July – 8 August 2003. They set up a research plot to discover the potential and diversity of plant species in the region. The results will become extra information and a guide for the *Tane Olen* Managerial Body set up by the people of Setulang.

#### c. Publications

Management of *Tane Olen* in Setulang Village has become the subject of several media reports:

#### RCTI News Reporters

With information on *Tane Olen* in Setulang, on the 9 September 2002, RCTI reporters went to cover the Setulang villagers 'daily lives and their activities in the village, the fields and the forest. RCTI also reported the 2003 Kalpataru awards ceremony in Jakarta.

#### TVRI News Reporters

Setulang's receipt of the 2003 Kalpataru Award from the Indonesian government attracted the attention of many people including the media. TVRI reporters came to cover the ceremony attended by the regional government in Malinau District.

#### German News Reporter

A German reporter came on a CIFOR visit to discover what Setulang villagers' wishes actually were in protecting their forests.

#### Conclusion

- The fact that companies / IPPKs remove timber from outside the logging areas determined by the regional government, demonstrates a lack of law enforcement and clear rules.
- Violations committed by companies / IPPKs show there is no supervision from the authorities.
- Challenges facing the villagers in protecting their forest are: offers from timber companies, and outsiders taking timber without telling them.
- There is a strong sense of unity among the people of Setulang, making it easier for them to make decisions and enforce rules relating to their management of *tane olen*.
- With sufficient produce from their fields and gardens, the people of Setulang are having no problems even though they are not receiving IPPK fees like other villages in the Malinau river catchment area.
- Through outsiders' visits, the villagers gained support and insight from discussions on sustainable forest management reinforcing their desire to protect the forest.
- Receiving the Kalpataru award from the Indonesian government has convinced the villagers of Setulang that their forest management system is officially recognized by the government.