



## **Collaboration Between Government And Indigenous Peoples For Forest Conservation And Preventing Deforestation: Study On The Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous Forest In Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

This article focuses on the study of collaboration between the government and indigenous peoples in protecting customary forests from deforestation. The collaboration between the government and indigenous peoples has a very big role in protecting customary forests from deforestation and destruction. In addition, this effort is a real action in overcoming environmental problems and climate change. Interviews were conducted with traditional and community leaders in the Datuk Sinaro Putih area, the board of the customary forest management institution, the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary forest mapping team from the Bungo Regency Government, and KKI Warsi (Local NGO). Government - indigenous peoples collaboration in forest conservation to prevent deforestation in the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous forest is manifested in several forms, namely the Bungo Regent as an exemplary and leading figure in protecting customary forests, local governments and communities collaborating with Cifor to legalize customary forest areas, forest guard groups Adat who is persistent in protecting customary forests, strong customary structures as social capital in protecting customary forests, and a bio carbon fund (Bio Cf) program for the protection of customary forests.

**Keywords:** Government, indigenous people, collaboration, forest conservation, deforestation

### **Introduction**

The Datuk Sinaro Putih Customary Law Community is a traditional community that is still related in the form of an association (rehtsgemeenschap) (Dewi, 2014). They have customary forests as local wisdom in protecting forests and the environment. For indigenous peoples forests are part of their culture and lives (Hijjang et al., 2018; Kamal & Lim, 2019; Lawler & Bullock, 2017). Protecting forests collectively in communities such as the indigenous people of Datuk Sinaro Putih is also a specialty of indigenous peoples in various places so that they can protect forests properly and fairly (Sukma Utami & Oue, 2021).

However, currently the existence of customary forests continues to be threatened by the expansion of various plantation companies and cultivators who continue to expand their cultivated areas. The threat of deforestation and forest destruction is a challenge that is present

in front of the eyes of the indigenous people of Datuk Sinaro Putih. Forest destruction and climate change need to be a priority for saving the environment. In industrialized countries climate change and decarbonization have become a priority for industrialized countries (in Felice et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, several companies operating around the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary forest area, namely PT PML, PT Alas Kusuma, PT Rimba Karya Indah have made the cover even more critical. Whereas closed forests make a significant contribution to biomass and carbon stocks for the environment (Leley et al., 2022). As a result of decreasing forest cover various natural disasters were unavoidable by the local community, such as floods that destroyed agricultural land and plantations in several hamlets there. During the dry season, drought disasters and also threaten local residents. Therefore, the government's role in protecting customary forests is very necessary. Government policies in protecting the climate have played a major role in protecting the environment (Kronsell et al., 2019).

The Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous Community continues to struggle to protect the customary forest from destruction. Together with the Bungo Regency Government, the law was finally issued for the protection of their customary forest. The Regent's Decree No. 1249 of 2002 concerning the Inauguration of the Customary Forest of Batu Kerbau Village, Pelepat District, Bungo Regency (Regional Regulation of Bungo Regency No. 3 of 2006 concerning the Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous Community, Pelepat District, Bungo Regency, 2006) is a manifestation of good collaboration between the government. To appreciate the seriousness of the indigenous people of Datuk Sinaro Putih in protecting the forest from deforestation, the Indonesian government has awarded Kalpataru in 2004 to the indigenous people of Datuk Sinaro Putih. The award was immediately handed over by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Megawati Sokearnoputri to Datuk Sinaro Putih (Adnan et al (eds.), 2008). Even though they have succeeded in getting Kalpataru their forest sustainability is still under threat. In recent years, cultivators have continued to expand their cultivation into customary forests.

This article focuses on the study of collaboration between the government and indigenous peoples in protecting customary forests from deforestation. The collaboration between the government and indigenous peoples has a very large role in protecting customary forests from deforestation and destruction. In addition, this effort is a real action in overcoming environmental problems and climate change. This research is very important to provide an overview of the protection of customary forests from deforestation and destruction and similar research has never been carried out on the indigenous people of Datuk Sinaro Putih. For the government this research provides an overview of future forest actions, for this study it provides a new perspective on local customary forest management. And for environmental NGO activists, this study provides an overview of the condition of the customary forest of the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous people.

## **Method**

The locations used in this study were in Batu Kerbau Hamlet and Baru Pelepat Hamlet, Pelepat District, Bungo Regency. The two hamlets are the territory of the Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous Peoples where traditional values and wisdom are still firmly embedded in the activities of daily life. The three hamlets are the center of the sustainability of Datuk Sinaro Putih's customs. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive research method. Through this qualitative approach, it is hoped that an overview of the roles, services, quality, social reality and perceptions of research targets will be raised without being polluted by formal measurements (Sugiyono, 2018). With this basis in mind, this research is expected to be able to provide an overview of the struggles of the Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous Peoples in maintaining the traditional forest, supported by written data and interview data.



**Figure 1:** Location Of Research

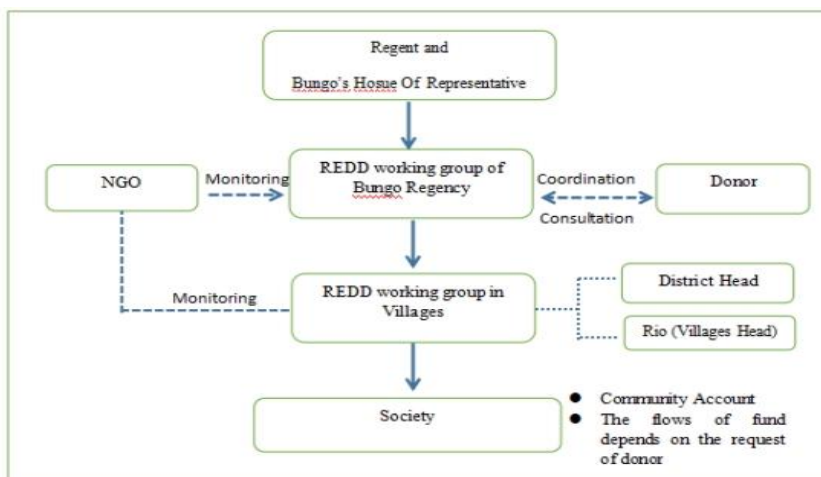
Source: <http://gfbirdingtravels.blogspot.com/2017/07/birding-notes-way-kambas-trip-18-to-21.html> and

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Batu+Kerbau,+Pelepat,+Bungo+Regency,+Jambi/@-1.6829839,101.6548767,177761m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x2e2dcd059fa9ac1b:0xd2d6a3e46a7b9665!8m2!3d-1.8115027!4d101.9119871!5m2!1e2!1e4?hl=en>

**Results and Discussion**

**Bungo Regent: An Exemplary Figure in Preserving Indigenous Forests**

Bungo Regent, Zulfikar Ahmad is a central figure who is actively involved in preserving the customary forest of the Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous People. As an immigrant who has lived in Jakarta for a long time, he really feels the importance of protecting the forest so that the climate is well maintained. The Regent formed a cross-institutional collaboration group in the form of a multi-stakeholder discussion forum and a Forest Governance Learning Group. Members of the discussion forum include indigenous peoples, environmental NGOs, the Bungo District Forestry and Environment Service, the Bungo Branch of the National Land Agency, and the Bungo District Regional Planning Board. Meetings are held once every three months and take place intensely in the early years of the establishment of customary forests. Finally, after listening to the views of various groups and intense meetings chaired directly by the Bungo District Secretary, the Bungo Regent Decree No. SK Bungo Regent No. 1249/2002 concerning the Datuk Sinaro Putih Customary Law Society was issued. As a result of the discussion at the multi-stakeholder forum, the Regent also created a REDD institution for Bungo Regency in order to overcome deforestation in the forests in the Bungo Regency area, including the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary forest. The following is the structure of the Bungo Regency REDD Institution:



REDD Working Group Of Bungo Regency  
Source: Akiefnawati & Budisetiawan, 2020

Not only that, the local government continues to approach the Bungo Regency Regional House of Representatives to make a stronger legal basis in the form of a Regional Regulation (Perda). In the hierarchical structure of the rule of law, Perda is the highest legal rule in the Regency/City area in Indonesia. After five years and a long process, the Bungo Regency Government and the Bungo Regency Regional Representative Council decided on Bungo Regency Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2006 concerning the Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous Law Community.

The issuance of Bungo Regency Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2006 concerning the Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous Peoples became a new milestone in protecting customary forests from the threat of logging and deforestation. With such a strong legal basis, those who try to disturb the customary forest will face legal sanctions for violating the Bungo Regency regional regulations. With good management of Datuk Sinaro Putih's customary forest, it is hoped that sustainable forest management will be born according to global targets through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2020). Several studies have also found that government policies are the dominant factor in reducing deforestation in various countries (Furumo & Lambin, 2021) (Mohebalian et al., 2022). In addition, the government also plays a role as a central actor in forest maintenance with companies operating around the forest (Hamdani & Pasummah, 2022).

### **Indigenous Forest Guard Group: Persistent Forest Ranger**

It is undeniable that the role of the village through the Traditional Forest Guard Group in the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous community is very large in protecting every inch of customary forest from various disturbances. With the spirit of protecting their ancestral lands, the indigenous forest guard groups carry out their duties well and persistently. They patrol the forest to make sure that the trees in the customary forest are not cut down by the community around the forest or people from neighboring villages who want to take the forest products. Collective action in protecting is also a specialty of indigenous peoples in various places so that they can protect forests properly and fairly (Sukma Utami & Oue, 2021) (Hamdani & Pasummah, 2022). In patrols guarding the customary forest, the customary forest guard group has found several violations by the local community. For example, some people take wood from customary forests to build buildings. This was reported to the village government and the perpetrators were finally given strict sanctions.

The village government budgets the operational funds for monitoring customary forests every year from the Village Fund. On average, about 12 million rupiah is budgeted by the local village government to pay the staff of the customary forest guard group to conduct patrols around the customary forest. All their operational costs are borne by the village with the OH (person per day) scheme. The village government pays 100,000 rupiah per person on patrol per day. In one patrol followed by 4-6 members of the customary forest guard group that has been formed by the hamlet government. Even with a small fee, the spirit of the customary forest guard group in maintaining the customary forest is still high.

Patrols are carried out once a month to ensure that customary forest areas are not disturbed by various parties, including the local community, the Anak Dalam Tribe (Kubu) who live nomadic lives in the forest (nomadic) or from companies around the customary forest. The last patrol of the customary forest guard group found that the production forest area bordering the customary forest had been cleared by cultivators from neighboring hamlets such as Aur Cino hamlet, Rantau Keloyang hamlet and several other hamlets in Pelepat District. These cultivators plant oil palm trees in production forest areas bordering customary forests.

The customary forest guard group also found that around 2-4 hectares of customary forest area had been planted by PT. CSH (Fragrant Palm Image). PT. CSH reasoned that they made a mistake in determining the boundaries of the customary forest area with their working area. Since then PT. CSH no longer cultivates the area and the planted palm oil is left to become customary forest again. This is also an illustration of the persistence of the customary forest guard group in protecting every inch of the customary forest area from encroachment, destruction, timber extraction, and other prohibited activities in the customary forest area.

At the beginning of 2022, several people from the Anak Dalam Tribe (an isolated tribe in Jambi) cut down about 10 hectares of customary forest area to become oil palm plantations. They cut wood and burn wood that has been cut to clear the land. The customary forest monitoring team in the Batu Kerbau and Baru Pelepat hamlets knew about this. Immediately the team through the hamlet reported the matter to the local government and the Bungo Resort Police to follow up on the customary forest encroachment. Not long after, a team from the Resort Police (Polres Bungo) came to the location and expelled the Anak Dalam Tribe from the customary forest location. Since then the isolated community of the Anak Dalam Tribe (SAD or Kubu) no longer dared to disturb the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary forest area. The following are some types of violations against customary forests that have been successfully handled by customary forest guard institutions:

No	Type of violation	Year	Sannctions
1.	Timber harvesting for buildings by the people of Dusun Batu Kerbau	2004	Customary sanctions
2.	Logging of the edge of customary forest by the Anak Dalam Tribe (Kubu: Nomaden community)	2022	The Anak Dalam Tribe (Kubu) evicted from the customary forest area by the Bungo Resort Police
3.	Planting customary forest areas with oil palm by PT. Citra SAWit Harum (CSH)	2002	PT. CSH leaves customary forest areas that have been planted with oil palm
4.	Swiping (picking up wood) by the Dusun Baru community	2004	Customary sanctions
5.	Dusun Baru people take wood for Eid activities	2004	Customary sanctions

Source: Field Data 2022, processed

### Collaboration with Cifor to Legalize Customary Forest Areas

The Bogor-based Center for International Forestry Research (Cifor) and the Bungo District Forestry and Environment Service have been in offices for several weeks at the local village office. Cifor trains communities in forest management as well as conducts community advocacy on any issues related to customary forests. Then the community is also equipped with various skills in the cultivation of rubber, rattan and jernang to improve the economic quality of the community around the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary forest. In many places, environmental-based NGOs are at the forefront of advocating for community forest management based on the concept of power sharing in forest management (Šimunović et al., 2018). NGOs also make a significant contribution in fighting for customary forests at the national level in Indonesia (Harada et al., 2022).

Cifor implemented a Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) project for the indigenous people of Datuk Sinaro Putih. Community forest management programs have emerged as a popular strategy, with many developing nations at various stages of developing and implementing policies and trial projects (Rasolofoson et al., 2015) (Rasolofoson, 2016). The project, which was implemented in 2002-2005, was more focused on empowering the local community's economy. For this economic empowerment, the community is assisted with rubber, rattan and jernang seeds. In addition, it is also aimed at recognizing and legalizing customary forest areas, Cifor invites the group of customary forest managers, Datuk Sinaro Putih, to visit Guguk, Merangin, Jambi, Lampung and Palembang, where customary forest management is good (Adnan et al (eds.), 2008).

Specifically to accelerate the legalization of the Cifor customary forest, the indigenous peoples together with the Bungo Regional Government lobbied the Ministry of Forestry and Environment of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta. Many times representatives of indigenous peoples together with local government and Cifor staff came to the Ministry of Forestry and the Environment to obtain a Decree from the Minister of Forestry regarding Datuk Sinaro Putih's customary forest. The tiring and long struggle finally paid off. In 2017 the Minister of Environment and Forestry Decree No. 5254/MENLHK-PSKL/PKTHA/PSL.1/10/2017 was issued regarding the Datuk Sinaro Putih Indigenous forest. NGOs play an important role in assisting the government and communities in protecting forests and indigenous peoples (Halis et al., 2020).

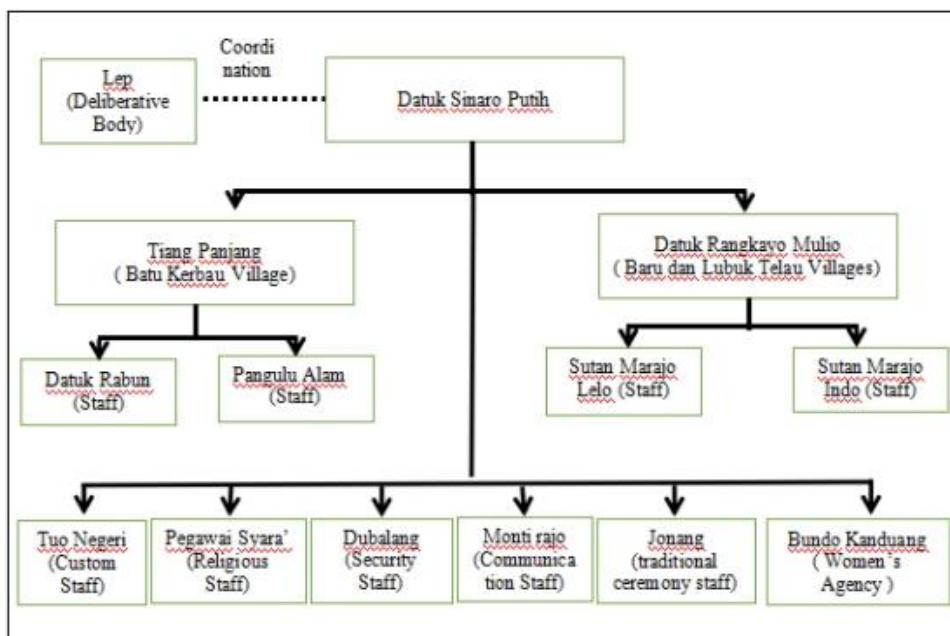


**Strong Customary Structure: Social Capital in the Maintenance of Customary Forests**

The success of the collaboration between the Bungo Regency Government and indigenous peoples is inseparable from the strong customary structure of the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous people. Without a strong customary structure, it is not certain that all the obstacles faced can be overcome properly. Datuk Sinaro as the highest point of the indigenous community, Datuk Sinaro Putih is truly a person who is respected, obeyed, and followed by every decision by the local community. This social capital is the strength in protecting Datuk Sinaro Putih's customary forest from various threats and disturbances. After all, successful forest management always respects the traditional rights of indigenous peoples (Lawler & Bullock, 2017).

Datuk Sinaro Putih as the highest leader in the indigenous community Datuk Sinaro Putih is a hereditary heritage that has been there for hundreds of years. For the local community this position is recognized and highly respected because he was the one who built the village and was the head of the traditional government for centuries. This is a strong social capital for Datuk Sinaro Putih in doing bargaining in every Government policy regarding their customary forest. In many places customary values have a major role to play in protecting forests from deforestation (Sinthumule & Mashau, 2020).

In the traditional power structure, Datuk Sinaro Putih has assistants called Parabakalo Adat (Adnan et al (eds.), 2008). This traditional parabakalo consists of Datuk Rangkayo Mulio as his representative. Then Tiang Panjang as the holder of power in the field of custom in Batu Buffalo. He was assisted by two employees, namely Datuk Rabun and Pangulu Alam. In Dusun Baru and Lubuk Telau, Datuk Rangkayo Mulio was assisted by two staff, namely Sutan Marajo Lelo and Sutan Marajo Indo. Furthermore, there is Tuo Negeri as a legal institution to solve everyday problems in society. Besides that, there is Lep as a deliberative institution that decides things that are not permanent in nature. Syara' employees are in charge of implementing religious rules. For public information matters there is Monti Rajo, while for public security matters there is Dubalang. Jonang is a traditional institution in charge of managing traditional ceremonial events while Bundo Kandang is a traditional institution as a representation of women (Irnawati, et al., 2016). The following is the structure of the traditional Parabakalo in the Datuk Sinapo Putih Indigenous Community.



Source: Field Data 2022, processed

In the management of Datuk Sinaro Putih's customary forest, the role of a strong and deeply rooted customary structure in the community plays an important role at the grass root level for the maintenance of customary forests. Traditional values in forest protection are the guidelines that are adhered to in the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous community. These values, such as "going to the forest with the wood" have been practiced for generations by the local community,

this is what causes the success of customary forest management in the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous community. Therefore, forest resources have been successfully managed by the community through traditional knowledge and customary laws that have been passed down from generation to generation (Riccioli et al., 2020). In addition, it can also effectively address deforestation and land tenure conflicts (Leo et al., 2022).

### **Bio Carbon Fund Program - Initiative For Sustainable Forest Landscape (BioCF - Isfl)**

The Jambi Regional Government succeeded in convincing the central government to protect the forest areas in Jambi province, including the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary forest. The central government funded by the World Bank finally launched the Bio Carbon Fund (Bio CF) program funded by the World Bank to save the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary forest. Several countries such as Australia have also implemented climate rescue programs through emission reduction funds (ERF) (Geroe, 2022). In Indonesia, these funds are accommodated through the Bio Carbon Fund (Bio CF) program.

The target of the Bio carbon fund program is to protect traditional village forest areas in Indonesia from deforestation and destruction. Climate change, which has had a very severe effect recently, requires quick and targeted action so that forests as a source of oxygen and the world's lungs are well protected. Therefore, the ruling government acts as a potential agent in maintaining the climate with various policies that support it (Kronsell et al., 2019). Through the right policies, forests will be protected from the threat of deforestation so that they play an important role in dealing with climate change.

This Bio Cf program will start in 2023 and has been socialized on July 26, 2022 ago at the Dusun Batu Kerbau and Dusun Baru offices. The activity was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Forestry and Environment of the Republic of Indonesia, the Jambi Province Forestry and Environment Service and the Bungo District Forestry and Environment Service. From the villages represented by Rio (Village Head) and village officials, the Dusun Representative Body, traditional leaders and traditional community leaders Datuk Sinaro Putih.

At the event, a joint commitment from the indigenous people of Datuk Sinaro Putih was signed in protecting the customary forest. In addition to socialization, this activity is also counseling on customary forest management by the Ministry of Forestry and the Environment. The funds provided for the Jambi Province-wide Bio CF program are IDR 1.2 trillion for 250 customary forest areas. For one customary forest area, you will receive 33 billion rupiah each, including Datuk Sinaro Putih's customary forest. Funds will be disbursed based on proposals from indigenous peoples. Forms of activities that are permitted include making trails in customary forest areas, operating customary forest guard institutions, village road infrastructure around forests, other public infrastructure, scholarships for village children around customary forests and even for the health of village children in the area. Around customary forest.

The management of Datuk Sinaro Putih's customary forest in the future requires good collaboration between the community and the government in protecting the customary forest from deforestation and destruction. It is undeniable that without collaboration it will be difficult for the government to restrain indigenous peoples from cultivating their forests without considering the effects on the environment. On the other hand, without good collaboration with the government, it will also be very difficult for indigenous peoples who are weak in position to deal with existing plantation companies. With a solid collaboration between the two, customary forests are protected both legally, formally and socio-culturally, so that forest protection becomes effective and efficient.

### **Conclusion**

Government - indigenous peoples collaboration in forest conservation to prevent deforestation in the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous forest is manifested in several forms, namely the Bungo Regent as an exemplary and leading figure in protecting customary forests, local governments and communities collaborating with Cifor to legalize customary forest areas, forest guard groups Adat who is persistent in protecting customary forests, strong customary structures as social capital in protecting customary forests, and a bio carbon fund (bio Cf) program for the protection

of customary forests.

This research provides recommendations for stakeholders to create pro-indigenous policies and protect their forests from deforestation. This is important for the sustainability of customary forests in the area in the future. The contribution and policy implications of this research are to provide references, and approaches to defending forests in Indonesia from deforestation. Meanwhile, the limitation of this research is limited to the protection of customary forests in the area of the Datuk Sinaro Putih indigenous community, Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. Future studies for the village forests that support the Kerinci Seblat National Park are important because this forest area is vulnerable to destruction and deforestation by irresponsible parties.

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