Title: Getting legal recognition of customary forests: case studies from South Sulawesi and Jambi provinces, Indonesia

Livelihoods of the indigenous people in Indonesia are inseparable from the issues of land tenure security, as most of them live and manage natural resources on state claimed land. Unclear tenure and overlapping claims in previous national legislation have resulted in declines in the extent of the indigenous people’s territory, including forest and traditional agriculture land. However, in conventional livelihoods research projects, addressing land rights is often considered beyond the scope of the research. In addition, the lengthy processes to develop required policies often exceed the project’s timeline. This paper presents the successes and challenges of our efforts in facilitating the attempts of the indigenous peoples of Kajang in South Sulawesi and Datuk Sinaro Putih in Jambi to get formal recognition, i.e. the district regulation and the Minister’s decree, of their customary forests. We (CIFOR scientists in collaboration with local NGOs) used Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the umbrella framework to integrate research and facilitation. By using Appreciative Inquiry and Strategic Influence approaches, we facilitated a range of multistakeholder processes in the development of the regulations: conflict resolution, extensive negotiations and meetings with the key stakeholder groups from different levels, and the implementation of good governance principles at all stages. The main challenges included domination by external actors which almost overrode the indigenous people’s agendas as well as hidden agendas and micro-politics of the key actors. After a long and winding road, their rights on customary forests were legally acknowledged. The Minister’s decree was finally granted in December 2016 for the Kajang and December 2017 for the Datuk Sinaro Putih, both were handed to the customary leaders directly by the Indonesian President. In this session, we will share some of the reasons for why we believe these projects were ultimately successful in strengthening local institutions for achieving tenure rights.