Like many countries around the world (Colfer and Capistrano 2005), Indonesia has initiated a process of decentralization, particularly since the fall of Suharto in 1998. This process has included devolving extensive authority for day-to-day governance to the districts (kabupaten). In the forestry sector, district heads immediately began making use of forest resources as the main source of district income. Concerns over increased uncertainty and adverse impacts on the sustainability of resources, community livelihoods, and stakeholder relations led the central government to reduce the district heads’ authority in 2002 (Barr et al. 2006; Dermawan, Komarudin, and McGrath 2006; Yasmi et al. 2006).

A revised law on decentralization was issued in 2004, aiming to clarify the 1999 law on the roles and responsibilities shared among the government units and open opportunities for central and regional governments to improve their relationship while providing the regional governments with continued freedom to develop their regions. The new arrangements allow local communities to articulate their development needs and participate in policymaking processes. However, despite legal and institutional reforms, challenges remain. Longstanding conflicting laws on natural resources also complicate finding legal solutions to problems, and property rights remain unclear. Decisionmaking processes for land use planning and local communities’ access to resources are also unclear. There are limited mechanisms for meaningful input from communities, particularly from women.

Unclear property rights over forestlands in Indonesia are one of the contentious issues. The country’s forest communities typically have traditional systems of land tenure that bear little resemblance to the land classifications recognized by the government. Although the country’s forestlands are strongly controlled by the central government, much of the official forestland is actually inhabited by indigenous or in-migrating communities, leading to disputes not only between local communities and private companies but also between district and central governments. The district governments’ demand for forest conversion in order to meet development needs also poses challenges. These challenges are put in sharper focus by the increasing national and global attention...
to the potential of forests to mitigate climate change and particularly to the
ability of forest communities to benefit through reduced emissions from de-
forestation and degradation (REDD) mechanisms. The objectives of our study
have been to (1) understand the current policies and issues relating to forest-
lands in a decentralized context and to local people’s access to property rights
and decisionmaking processes and (2) learn how collective action among com-
munity groups and interaction among stakeholders can enhance local people’s
rights over lands, resources, and policy processes for development. The study
has involved facilitating stakeholder interactions within the forestry decentral-
ization setting and catalyzing collective action among villages and district gov-
egments. This chapter presents an approach to supporting a process of self-
empowerment so that poor and marginalized communities can act collectively
to secure their assets and property rights in order to achieve better livelihoods
and maintain their environments.

With regard to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2, this
chapter emphasizes the context, the action arena, and patterns of interactions.
Specifically, the security of property rights to forest resources (natural assets)
for forest-dependent communities remains unresolved even with the implemen-
tation of decentralization reforms (the legal and political structure of the con-
text). Elite capture and conflict portray this insecurity. Facilitated negotiation
(the action arena) through multistakeholder consultations brought together
conflicting actors with varied forms of power and action resources (see Appen-
dix 8A), built trust among them, increased the bargaining power of communi-
ties, and created a mechanism for coordinated action. These facilitated nego-
tiations positively influenced official and private-company decisionmaking
practices, supported clarification and strengthening of local rights, opened up
development planning processes to resource users, and identified and sup-
ported income-generating opportunities for them. In short, facilitated negotia-
tion resulted in patterns of interactions among actors (that is, cooperation) that
have favorable implications for the well-being of resource users.

Beyond spotlighting how collective action by the poor (and related actors)
can help to strengthen their rights and access to resources critical to their well-
being, this chapter also showcases two thematic areas identified in Chapter 1:
natural resource governance processes and the challenge presented by elite
capture of benefits due to power imbalances during reform processes. Through
its contribution to these two thematic areas the chapter speaks to broader con-
cerns in the decentralization literature and suggests that elite capture during the
implementation of decentralization reforms can be effectively countered by a
structured, transparent negotiation process (see Section 5 below) that is bro-
kered by a trusted third party.

The first section of the chapter describes the physical, technical, and socio-
economic as well as policy governance conditions. The following section
describes our research approach and methods, and the next section describes
our findings, exploring the action arena, where we identify stakeholder interaction and action resources and outline the processes of facilitating and catalyzing collective action among district and community stakeholders. Then we analyze these findings and describe research outcomes, concluding in the final section with policy implications and recommendations.

The Context

Jambi, Indonesia

Jambi Province, located in the middle of Sumatra, covers 5.1 million hectares of land, 43 percent of which is categorized as state-owned forestlands (kawasan hutan: Office of the Jambi Governor 1999). The forestlands represent different forest functions, and two categories are of particular interest: nature reserves or protection forests (870,250 hectares) and production forests (1,309,190 hectares). We use the term forestland to refer to kawasan hutan, the formal governmental designation for a type of land tenure. When discussing other forms of tenure, we use other terms, such as forest, land, fields, plots, and so on. Between 1990 and 2000, Jambi forest cover decreased from 2.40 million to 1.40 million hectares (Taher 2005). In 2002, Jambi forests were estimated to cover 1.38 million hectares, or 27 percent of the total province. Jambi’s growing population is highly dependent on natural resources, and an estimated 75 percent of its rural people live below the official poverty line.

Forest cover in Bungo District has also experienced drastic change, declining from 43 percent of the total district area to 31 percent between 1990 and 2002. Unclear, “open-access” status, among other factors (Hadi, Komarudin, and Schangen 2007), contributes to this ongoing degradation. Tanjabbar District’s forest resources have been logged and its forestland converted, and the district’s forest cover has also declined by almost 40 percent in the past 20 years (Sudirman and Herlina 2005; internal data from the Center for International Forestry Research). About half of the remaining forest is within protected areas. Some 22 percent of the district’s population (242,355) lived beneath the poverty line in 2005, compared to 13 percent (234,813) in 2004.

Our two study sites, Sungai Telang in Bungo and Lubuk Kambing in Tanjabbar, have relatively strong kinship ties, medium levels of conflict between villagers and outside actors, and high levels of poverty and are located close to national parks and forestlands (2–10 kilometers). Their differences are presented in Table 8.1 (for greater detail, see Komarudin, Siagian, and Colfer 2007).

Forest Management Policies and Communities’ Access to Resources

Under the New Order government, before 1998, the central government firmly controlled the management of natural resources, including forests. The 2001 decentralization law gave the districts greater autonomy to formulate their own
policies and exert control over their resources. In Bungo and Tanjabbar districts, as in many other forest-rich regions, the district heads issued small-scale timber concessions (forest product utilization permits). Between 2001 and 2003, for instance, the Tanjabbar District Government issued 85 permits for timber extraction for different types or statuses of forests (Sudirman and Herlina 2005) to cooperatives, farmer groups, or foundations.

Due to concerns about environmental degradation, failure to provide benefits to local people, and the creation of an uncertain business climate, the central government withdrew the district heads’ authority to issue small-scale concession permits through a 2002 governmental regulation.1 When our research started in 2005, the two local governments of our study sites were no longer issuing the permits.

Three forestry programs (described by Hadi, Komarudin, and Schangen 2007) were considered to affect property rights and collective action. These included Bantuan Usaha Produktif in Bungo, a program providing community groups with revolving funds to stimulate their productive efforts; Rekonstruksi Tata Batas, a forest gazettement program to clarify forestland–village boundaries; and Rehabilitasi Hutan dan Lahan, a program to replant and reforest critical lands. The last two were implemented in both districts.

In October 2004, the Ministry of Forestry issued a policy on *ijin pemanfaatan kayu* (timber use permits), again granting authority to district heads to issue these permits to cooperatives, individuals, and state-owned and private companies. Although most district governments were enthusiastic about issuing small-scale concessions during the early stages of decentralization, the two

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1. Government Regulation 34/2002, on the forest and the formulation of forest management plans, forest use, and the use of the forest estate (*tata hutan dan penyusunan rencana pengelolaan hutan, pemanfaatan hutan dan penggunaan kawasan hutan*). This regulation has now been replaced by Government Regulation 6/2007 (issued January 8, 2007).

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**TABLE 8.1** Community characteristics of the village research sites, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sungai Telang (Bungo District)</th>
<th>Lubuk Kambing (Tanjabbar District)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict level</td>
<td>Latent conflict between the indigenous community and transmigrants</td>
<td>Relatively good relations between the indigenous community and migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional setting</td>
<td>Village government, village representatives, customary institutions, youth groups, men’s groups, women’s groups</td>
<td>Village government, village representatives, customary institutions, men’s groups, loggers’ groups, women’s groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>~4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Lubuk Kambing Village Government (2005) and Sungai Telang Village Government (2005).
In short, the two communities and districts have seen a dynamic see-saw of forest-related policies, with formal, legal authority shifting back and forth between the central and the district governments over the period of our research and immediately preceding it. This has presented a very uncertain policy context to decisionmakers at all levels. The longstanding lack of congruity among the perceptions of local people, district governments, and the central government on land tenure and use rights has further fueled the uncertainty. These factors, combined with the presence of powerful outsiders (such as conservation projects and timber and oil palm companies, as discussed in the next section), have created serious pressure on both the local people and the environment. The lack of certainty about rights to resources has created an open-access situation, with serious adverse consequences for the resources upon which local people have traditionally depended.

Research Approach and Methods

One catalyst for our research was the perceived need for mechanisms, in particular at the community level, to deal with potential rewards (such as payments for environmental services or, more recently, REDD payments) in an equitable and efficient way that would maintain or improve the environment and human well-being. We believed that accomplishing this goal would require both collective action and local empowerment vis-à-vis local government and other powerful actors. We therefore applied participatory action research (PAR) at both the community and the district levels, with the intention to strengthen potential interests (and resulting links) between the two levels, as a pathway to local empowerment and benign governmental effectiveness. The PAR approach combines action and research to inform action and enables participants to learn through critical reflection about what happens when they act (see Greenwood and Levin 1998 for details on action research methods). We facilitated bottom-up identification of priorities through the phases of needs assessment, planning, action, monitoring, reflecting, and designing further steps and collecting necessary information.

We employed open-ended, semistructured interviews and focus group discussions to collect information, triangulate, and observe people’s stances on specific issues as the research developed. We also facilitated shared learning workshops to enable participants to interact with each other, share their knowledge and experiences, and disseminate lessons to a wider audience. A detailed outline of our study methods is available in Komarudin, Siagian, and Colfer (2007).

Our two study districts in Jambi, Bungo, and West Tanjung Jabung (or Tanjabbar) are shown in Figure 8.1. The villages of Sungai Telang (Bungo District)
and Lubuk Kambing (Tanjabbar District)—both located in the poorest sub-districts of their districts—were selected based on the following criteria and what we hoped to gain from each:

- Representation of matrilineal, patrilineal, or bilateral inheritance systems—to examine the gender-based differences related to inheritance systems.
- Relatively high dependence on forest products and access to forest resources—to gain insights into tenure issues within forestlands.
- Pressures from outsiders on the community and potential conflicts or threats to community and forest sustainability—to understand how conflicts among stakeholders are handled and how they could be dealt with more effectively.
- Opportunities for overlap of interests between the community and existing (or planned) district government development programs—to strengthen the links between communities and government actors.
- Existing research activities or other development agencies or institutions (government, university, or international organizations) working in the village area to gain access to secondary literature and develop links between communities and other outside actors.
**Group Selection**

At the district level, we worked with six government officials (three from each of the two districts) from the district agency for development planning (Bappeda) and district forestry services. The officials had been appointed by their superiors or proposed by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) or had come forward on their own initiative. Three had been trained in PAR. These individuals were recognized champions of community empowerment. Some had been involved in cooperative projects with organizations outside the government.

At the village level, pre-existing community groups were selected. Individuals in such groups worked together in their day-to-day activities and already had good personal connections. We could thus build on and acknowledge existing communication patterns, which reinforced their self-confidence, another important factor in bringing about effective collective action (Colfer 2007).

The groups selected also represented ethnic diversity (especially Minang, Malay, Javanese), local versus transmigrant populations, gender differences, and the interests presented in Table 8.2. We worked primarily at the hamlet (dusun) level in order to reduce transportation and communication costs and to build on previous experience (for example, see Kusumanto et al. 2005).

**Key Research Issues**

Given the goal of local empowerment, the research questions had to be “owned” by local actors. We therefore began with a multistakeholder “inception” workshop in Jambi, at which important local issues were meshed with our own plans. When fieldwork was initiated, we used these broad topics to further “drill down” to more specific levels where actual community- and district-level actions would be taken. Figure 8.2 provides a schema illustrating the two levels of our analysis, the key research issues at each level identified during the inception workshop, and the mediating role of collective action and property rights. It builds on and adapts the schema presented in Chapter 2 of this volume by Di Gregorio et al.

**Findings**

This section describes the process of working with district government and the communities, outlining examples of topics addressed and actions taken at both levels. This makes up the “action arena” part of the Institutional Analysis and Development framework while exploring the responsibilities, interests or concerns, and action resources of relevant actors as listed in the appendix.

Indonesia’s forestlands are under the strong control of the central government. The Forestry Law granted the Ministry of Forestry power to designate the status, boundaries, and functions of the forests. This power remains despite
TABLE 8.2  Group characteristics at the village research sites, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristics and functioning</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Action plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sungai Telang</td>
<td>Has 17 members, all women. Was formed in 2001. Members are of mixed ethnicity (Minang, Malay, and Javanese). Includes women of all ages, married and unmarried.</td>
<td>Members share labor in agriculture. Members not participating in group work when requested pay a fine of Rp.10,000–15,000 per day of absence. Payment schedule is flexible. Members must settle debts before the fasting month (Ramadan*). Cooking oil and sugar are bought with group earnings for each member.</td>
<td>Sells rattan and bamboo weavings to supplement their income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gotong Royong</td>
<td>(women’s group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kelompok Tani</td>
<td>Has 17 members, all male. Is an association of individuals with land in one area. Includes Minang locals and Javanese in-migrants. Aims to help small farmers. Receives support from an agricultural extension agent. Draws members from all Sungai Telang hamlets.</td>
<td>Was formed in 1998 when the government provided funds to improve water canals for irrigated rice. Continued even after government funding ended. In 2001 received government aid (rice seedlings), but few members were interested.</td>
<td>Pursues land certification and income-generating activities through propagation of the nontimber forest product <em>jernang</em> (<em>Daemonorops draco</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinar Tani</td>
<td>(men’s group)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3. Pelhin (women’s group) | Is a women’s group (gender is a longstanding, traditional grouping mechanism).  
Is ethnically homogenous, with Minang women working together in farming activities.  
Includes all women within a family and their friends.  
There is no designated leader; members are considered equal.  
The number of members is flexible, depending on women’s needs and willingness to join. | There is a reciprocal sharing of work among members.  
There is a long history of Pelhin groups. | Serves as a control, continuing to participate in their customary activities, mostly related to agriculture. |
| 4. Bukit Lestari Makmur (men’s group) | Is all male, designed to aid small farmers.  
Was formed in 2006.  
Includes 10 young farmer members.  
Includes Minang and Malay locals and Javanese in-migrants interested in propagating non-timber forest products.  
Holds meetings frequently to monitor progress.  
Applies strict group rules and sanctions. | Was initially formed by four members of Sinar Tani who were disappointed with the corruption of elites.  
Members are enthusiastic about establishing an alternative source of income (wild jernang seedlings). | Propagates and markets jernang. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristics and functioning</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Action plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lubuk Kambing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Dasawisma (women’s group)</td>
<td>Was formed in 2005. There are 20 Malay women in each group, formed at the lowest administrative level of each village. Is automatically led by village head’s wife.</td>
<td>Was formed as part of a formal government program, the Family Welfare Movement, started in 1967 and focusing primarily on women in rural areas.</td>
<td>Generates alternative income opportunities (for example, selling cakes and raising ducks) using the program budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kelompok Tani Tunas Harapan (men’s group)</td>
<td>Had 34 members, all male. Included in-migrants of mixed ethnicity (Javanese, Malay, Batak, and Palembang) focusing on agricultural crops. Initially focused on individual agricultural activities. Conducted meetings rarely, though members shared work (gotong royong) with the hamlet community.</td>
<td>Initially formed by people with influential positions in the community. Focused only on daily agricultural labor. Includes members with great enthusiasm for working together.</td>
<td>Found alternative income-generating activities. Found ways to increase agricultural productivity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Data were generated through authors’ semistructured interviews and group discussions with the respective groups’ leaders and members.

**Note:** Rp. means Indonesian rupiah.

*a*Ramadan ends with the most significant holiday for Muslims, one in which much money is needed to buy new clothes, sacrifice a goat, and so on.
the issuance of Law 22/1999, later revised by Law 32/2004 concerning decentralization, which gave a greater mandate to the regional governments to tackle all affairs, including forestry. Due to an increased need for development, which also occurred across the other regions of the country, Jambi’s district and provincial governments have contested the sole authority of the Ministry of Forestry and proposed forest conversion in a number of areas. Conflicts over lands between local people and private companies are numerous. Attempts have been made to revise the Tata Guna Hutan Kesepakatan (TGHK), or the Forest Land Use by Consensus zoning plans, which categorize different forest functions, including those intended for nonforestry development. The TGHK was issued by the Ministry of Forestry in the 1980s, and some have tried to synchronize it with the Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah Provinsi (RTRWP), or Provincial-Level Land Use Plan; the result has been the RTRWP/TGHK paduserasi (integrated land use scheme). However, demands by regional governments for forest conversion continue, combined with local people’s struggles to clarify their rights over forest resources and lands relative to the district, provincial, and central governments or private companies. It is in this context that the research took place and the facilitation began.
District-Level Facilitation: Can Property Rights over Land Resources Be Strengthened through Regional Land Use Planning?

The regional land use plans—RTRWP, and Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah Kabupaten (RTRWK), or District-Level Land Use Plan—indicate how the uses of land and forestland have been allocated. Land use planning can serve as a key to tenurial reform even when it is considered to have no direct linkage with land status (Contreras-Hermosilla and Fay 2006). Forestland status and function can affect local communities’ access to resources. The plans are dynamic and can change over time. In Bungo, the district government revised its district land use plan twice between 2000 and 2005. The first revision took place following the division of Bungo Tebo District into two new districts, Bungo and Tebo. The second was carried out to anticipate regional development dynamics, including large-scale land use by businesses and investors for plantations and coal mining. In Tanjabbar, the district government developed its land use plan in 2001 and is currently revising it.

The two districts share challenges in preparing sound, all-inclusive plans. Lack of resources and personnel with either skills or educational backgrounds in planning caused the RTRWK plans for one district to be prepared by inexperienced personnel and those for the other district to be prepared by external consultants. Budgetary and time constraints made it difficult to accommodate stakeholders’ input.

Each district has a committee, the Tim Tata Ruang Daerah (District Land Use Planning Committee), that is responsible for preparing or subcontracting the plan, overseeing its implementation, and monitoring the use of allocated lands. This committee, comprised of representatives from Bappeda, the district-level national land agency, the district forest office, and the district secretariat, also served to mediate land conflicts between local communities and private companies.

Law 24/1992 and Government Regulation 69/1996 provide ample opportunities for public participation in land use planning. In addition, Law 41/1999 stipulates that local people have the right to know the fate of lands surrounding their villages and provide input to the government, including raising objections to proposed plans. Because of its formal authority, the district government played the dominant role in determining the direction of spatial planning policy in both districts. The district land use planning committees argued that the proposed RTRWK land use plans in the two districts had been

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2. Law 24/1992, regarding land use planning, has now been revised by Law 26/2007. Government Regulation 69/1996, on the rights, obligations, forms, and procedures related to public participation in land use planning (Pelaksanaan Hak dan Kewajiban serta Bentuk dan Tata Cara Peran Serta Masyarakat dalam Penataan Ruang). This regulation is an implementing rule for Law 24/1992, on land use planning.

3. Law 41/1999 is the Forestry Law.
developed in a participatory way: technical discussions had been held at the district and subdistrict levels and with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Stakeholders had also been invited to a seminar at which their input comprised corrections to data included in the RTRWK. The term “people’s participation” was interpreted differently by different stakeholders. To some government officials, sending a proposal to the district house of representatives and deliberations within the house on the draft are indications of people’s “participation.”

Although Law 24/1992 on land use planning requires plans to be developed according to the hierarchy of governance levels, accommodating inputs from the lower levels of governance (subdistrict and village spatial plans traditionally developed by local people) is a challenge. Although soliciting inputs from the villagers represents a useful strategy to reduce future conflicts over land, some stakeholders objected, citing the need to consider broader ecosystems and to avoid fragmentation, as well as the difficulty of harmonizing the different standards and categories used. Some officials also had difficulties deciding which masyarakat (community) should be involved.

To further meet development needs, the two district governments proposed that the status of forestlands be changed into “areas for other uses,” or areal penggunaan lain (APL), normally allocated for the development of large-scale plantations. Growing populations in need of land, increased investment opportunities potentially important for district revenues, and greater district responsibilities in governance plague district governments throughout the country. Once the status of the lands changes, it is the district governments that will control the lands. The districts argued that forestland with no forest cover would be more productive if managed for agriculture. Much of the national forestlands is land the communities claim as part of their traditional territories.

Tanjabbar and Bungo districts proposed changing the status of 46,185 hectares and 12,880 hectares of state forestlands, respectively, mostly from production forest to APL. If the proposals are approved, there will be a decrease in the total area of forestlands from 257,344 hectares to 211,259 hectares and an increase in agricultural and nonagricultural areas from 241,081 hectares to

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4. Law 24/1992 recognized three different types of spatial plans: national, provincial, and district. Subdistrict and village spatial plans are not recognized in the law.

5. In total, around 98,577 hectares of forestland in seven districts of Jambi were to be proposed for conversion. During a shared learning workshop titled Spatial Planning and Forestland Allocation toward Strengthening Property Rights and Promoting Good Governance, organized by CIFOR in January 2007, a Jambi provincial Bappeda official presented this figure and shared the provincial government’s arguments for conversion with participants, including those from the Ministry of Forestry’s Agency for Forestry Planning (Baplan). The initial extent of the changes to state forests proposed by the Tanjabbar District Government was only 11,312 hectares, but then—as revealed during another workshop—it grew to 46,185 hectares. The Jambi provincial Bappeda responsible for handling proposals from all districts throughout Jambi used only the initial figure of 11,312 hectares in its formal proposal.
287,266 hectares. The Tanjabbar government argued that the state forestlands in these proposed locations are already community lands, with rubber, oil palms, and other crops as well as settlements, logged acacias, and shrub.

In Bungo District, the expansion of community farming into production and protection forests has led to conflicts between indigenous communities and newcomers and between villagers in Sungai Telang and the transmigration office, which has allocated a transmigration site on state forestland also claimed by the community. In other places there are land conflicts between communities and plantation companies. The Bungo government proposed to convert a total of 12,880 hectares of forestland to farmlands, oil and rubber plantations, and cooperatives. Additionally, the Bungo government proposed to convert around 14,000 hectares from APL to protection forests and has already allocated around 2,000 hectares for hutan adat (customary forests) to be managed by communities.

The series of facilitated workshops and focus group discussions, some of which were primarily for Ministry of Forestry and district government stakeholders, resulted in insight into why the district proposals had been ignored and into the stands of the respective parties. While emphasizing that proposals must be in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, the Ministry argued that the forestland map used by the two districts was established through a harmonization process between TGHK and the RTRWP of 1999. Because there had been consultations between the Ministry and provincial and district governments, the Ministry thought the process had been adequately participatory. The Ministry stressed the need to have a shared understanding of what the “review of spatial plans” meant. Instead of fundamentally changing land allocations—which were seen to lead to an “uncertain business and investment climate”—the “review” should merely update changes in field conditions in the past five years.⁶ Despite its firm stance on retaining forestlands, the Ministry was fully aware of the increasing need for land for regional development and had issued a decree that tolerated conversions of forestlands for strategic purposes if such conversions did not adversely affect ecosystem services and functions.⁷

Land use planning is often seen as one of the avenues for local people to secure their rights.⁸ To reinforce their proposals for forest conversion, the district governments often made use of arguments that the lands were no longer

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⁷ Minister of Forestry Decree 70/2001, which was amended by Minister of Forestry Decree 48/2004, on the designation of forestlands and includes changes in the status and functions of forestlands.

⁸ Most community groups interviewed considered secure property rights over lands, either ownership or use, important, as exemplified in Komarudin, Siagian, and Colfer (2007). This corroborates the findings of other studies (Colchester and MacKay 2004; Colchester et al. 2006; Adnan et al. 2008).
covered with forests and had been occupied by local people to improve their livelihoods. Yet interestingly, in many cases the entire process ended up in lands allocated for large-scale estate crop plantations, giving less benefit to local people who had previously used the lands. When approving forest conversion, the Ministry of Forestry pays little attention to how the converted lands will benefit local people. Instead, in its regulations it specifies the maximum areas in hectares allocated for large-scale plantations (that is, oil palms).9

**Land Conflicts and Collective Efforts to Resolve Them**

Part of the impetus for the previously described workshop was a conflict between a large-scale industrial forest plantation and local people in Tanjabbar. The central government had allocated the land to the company, but local people, resident in the area long before the company’s arrival, had cleared some of the land for crops. The company wanted a clear and clean working area so they could do business smoothly. To do this, they had to help clarify property rights for the local people. A clear working area would mean that they would pay taxes to the government according to the actual lands they were entitled to manage. To resolve the issue, the provincial and district forest services commissioned a team to conduct an inventory of disputed forestlands already occupied by local people, including the villagers of Suka Maju, a Lubuk Kambing hamlet.10

Three types of land issues faced the company, termed “overlaps,” “overlapping claims,” and “occupation.” Overlaps, which are fairly easy to resolve with government help, refer to boundary disputes between a company’s working areas and the adjacent areas of other companies. Overlapping claims are cases in which local communities claim rights to a company’s working areas still in secondary forest, evidence that the land had been cleared (the main traditional means of establishing ownership). The community’s claims are based on people’s having inherited the land from their ancestors. This is the issue most difficult to resolve, because people’s claims to land are often uncertain in terms of size and location, and different groups within a community (and outside) may have claims to the same land. Occupation, about which a company can do nothing, refers to land where there were already settlements and construction when the company entered the area.

When the inventory team went to the disputed area to meet the residents of Suka Maju, the members of the community were antagonistic, partly because they had heard from the village head that the company would flatten their houses and usurp their lands. They also knew of prior experience with PT Inhutani (a state-owned concessionaire), which had evicted other communities (the evic-

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10. It is estimated that of 290,000 hectares of the company’s working area in five districts in Jambi, around 50,000 hectares were already occupied by local people.
tions and women’s dramatic leadership in resisting eviction are elaborated in Komarudin, Siagian, and Colfer 2007). The members of our research team, with whom the community was familiar, mediated the disagreement, making clear to the community the genuine purpose of the team’s visit. The community finally agreed to discussions with them.

The inventory team asked the community to tell the history of the lands they cultivated at the time and fill out a detailed form describing themselves, their group, and their livelihoods. The inventory team also presented options for resolving various cases. For areas where trees and crops had been grown for more than five years and which were well maintained, community groups might continue working in the area. A plan is under way to seek legal rights for these residents to continue managing the area. For areas where trees and crops had not been planted but the soil was well managed, a similar option was offered. A partnership with the company through, for example, product sharing was also a possibility. Harsh action would be taken against anyone who cleared forests but left the land untouched. One general condition for villagers choosing any of the options was that they not expand their agricultural lands further into the area managed by the company.

The inventory team recognized that the community groups living in Suka Maju were highly committed to managing land resources and would likely be good candidates for the district program on social forestry (small-scale forest plantations). Building on this idea, the research team facilitated a focus group discussion on the possibilities for implementing the Ministry of Forestry’s Hutan Kemasyarakatan (HKm), the community forestry program, designed for people’s empowerment. Through this strategy, community groups or cooperatives are granted the right to manage forestlands. Local stakeholders considered it timely for the districts to implement the centrally designed HKm program as a kind of compromise or quid pro quo in their struggle to gain the forestland conversion described earlier. They also proposed that around 10,000 hectares of forestlands with significant ecological value in other Tanjabbar and Bungo subdistricts be considered as HKm projects.

The facilitated engagement through the workshop, focus group discussions, and field facilitation had not produced concrete results as of 2007. Although the stakeholders met and repeatedly discussed the issue of forest conversion, no firm approvals of the proposals were forthcoming from the Ministry of Forestry. However, participants learned about each other’s views, interests, and expectations. The Ministry and provincial and district governments agreed on strategies to deal with the district proposals and resolve conflicts over lands. These included, among others, forming a communication forum, public consultation and participatory assessment of the proposed forestlands, inventory of already occupied lands and the socioeconomic conditions of surrounding communities, and seeking forestry strategies for people’s empowerment through social forestry programs. Local people involved in the dispute gained
knowledge of the need for more formal recognition of their traditional land claims. Those who had obtained their lands by inheritance or purchase tended to fight for ownership rights, whereas those whose lands had been obtained by occupation were typically satisfied with secure use rights.

Community-Level Facilitation

To convey the process of facilitation and collective action, in the following sections we discuss the specific actions that community groups undertook, focusing on group formation and activation, social learning, tenure issues, and voice.

Providing a Spark for Community Collective Action. Table 8.2 describes the characteristics, motivation, and activities of the groups in which we catalyzed collective action in the two villages. Central issues included income-generating activities (selling cakes, raising ducks) and addressing property rights issues through land certification and government-sponsored rubber sapling programs.

In Sungai Telang, we identified two different types of women’s (farmer) groups, Gotong Royong and Pelhin. Gotong Royong, selected and facilitated as our primary group, provides paid labor to help members in their agricultural work. Pelhin, observed without our facilitation, operates on a reciprocal work basis, exchanging work on a days-worked basis. When a woman takes part in a Pelhin work day, she is then owed a day of work by the owner of the farm. This can be paid off when the woman calls a Pelhin day herself. The Pelhin group represents a kind of control, a good example of longstanding collective action among the members of a matrilineal group (described further later). In Lubuk Kambing, we identified and facilitated the Dasawisma group, a women’s group interested in income generation.

Once sufficient rapport had been developed within the communities, we began to lead the groups through the PAR steps of planning, action, monitoring, and reflection. Throughout this process we worked with the group to ensure that the relevant villagers were present at group planning discussions to ensure that all stakeholders would have a share in the action processes. Action, which often meant going to officials at the subdistrict (kecamatan) or district (kabupaten) level for information, involved rotating the members of the groups meeting with government officials.

Members of the Minang Gotong Royong group expressed their interest in producing a product with good market potential to supplement their cash income. Most of these women were already weaving mats and baskets for home use as a regular part of their activities (Yentirizal 2007). They wanted to market their weavings but were not sure how to do so. They decided that the best course of action would be to invite representatives of a women’s group from the village of Baru Pelepat (Kusumanto et al. 2005), who had been successful in marketing their own weavings, to give them advice. Three women from Baru Pelepat came to Sungai Telang at the end of July 2005 to help members of the Gotong Royong
group. Members of the other two Gotong Royong groups in the village also attended.

The members of Sinar Tani, the Minang men’s group in Sungai Telang, expressed their interest in pursuing land certification. They were concerned about possible land conflicts, wanting to clarify their land boundaries and ensure a legal way for their children to inherit their land. Having reflected on the need for information on the certification process, the group invited government officials from Bappeda, the forest service, and the district-level national land agency (BPN) to attend a meeting and answer their questions. At the meeting they learned about Program Nasional Agraria (PRONA), a national agrarian program that provides mass land certification for poor people at low cost. Sinar Tani started to collectively work on proposals and interact with district officials.

The Dasawisma group was formed as a result of Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga, a top-down government program for empowerment of family welfare, of which the village head’s wife is the mandated leader. She selected members from various neighborhoods, appointing two vocal women as leaders, ignoring the considerable distances between their homes and the resulting difficulties in meeting. The members were dissatisfied with the way the group had been formed and the members selected. Two Dasawisma groups were interested in supplementing their cash income from agriculture using their existing skills. Each Dasawisma group comprises 20 Malay women. The Dasawisma Semangka group decided to sell cakes, while the Dasawisma Pisang Lilin planned to raise ducks and market the eggs. These ideas derived from women in the group who had prior experience in these fields.

A male farmers’ group, Tunas Harapan in Lubuk Kambing’s Suka Maju hamlet, was initially formed when the government offered relevant programs to help the farmers. The group was primarily made up of members new to the area and of mixed ethnicity, coming from Java, North Sumatra, Aceh, and Palembang. Some village elites persuaded the new group to clear land in preparation for oil palm investors who never materialized. The group later decided to work together to improve their annual crop yields, such as soybeans raised on land previously used for irrigated rice fields. They estimated that each member could afford to cultivate at least 1 hectare, hoping that this would become their main source of income. Tree crops planted by Suka Maju farmers had not yet come into production, leaving the community dependent on upland rice fields and other food crops as their main source of income. Having reflected and learned about the lack of information and skills for cultivating soybeans, the Tunas Harapan members realized that they would need someone to provide them with information on good agricultural practices. The group’s first step was to approach the district agriculture service and persuade an agricultural extension agent to provide the group with information on agricultural technology and possibilities for funding support, expanding the network, and creating a better relationship with district and subdistrict authorities.
BUILDING A STRONGER GROUP THROUGH A LEARNING PROCESS. In addition to pursuing land certification and improving agricultural products, the men’s group Sinar Tani in Sungai Telang was also interested in generating additional income. Initially the group wanted to develop rubber but was limited by its financial resources.

Through our facilitation some group members began to interact with officials from the district agriculture services and forestry office, sharing their concerns and learning new information, including about funding possibilities. They learned about the District Forestry Office’s Bantuan Usaha Produktif, a program to help local groups with the necessary skills to develop small enterprises. Through this program the office allocated US$1,080, in a revolving fund, to each selected community group throughout the district once its proposal for funding was accepted.

Although the farmer groups were theoretically allowed to choose their activities, the district forestry service had a program to encourage duck-raising, and the group changed its focus in response to this opportunity. However, the onset of the avian flu epidemic hit Indonesia, altering government priorities and rendering their plan unworkable. They then developed another plan.

The group learned about the high value of the abundant rattan fruit jernang (*Daemonorops draco*), internationally known as dragon’s blood. They also learned that the Forest Service was proposing Sungai Telang as a center for jernang seedlings. Stimulated by the potential market value of the fruit and the district’s endorsement, the group members prepared and submitted a successful proposal on jernang cultivation (Komarudin, Siagian, and Oka 2007). They were granted US$1,087 to be used to purchase polybags and seedlings or for the capacity-building of their members.

Once the first advance of US$760 was received, three group leaders misused the money, and a forestry extension agent was also reportedly involved. The District Forestry Office postponed disbursement of the second payment.

On reflection, the group members agreed that a lack of transparency in spending, lack of internal sanctions against abuses in the use of funds, shortcomings in group decisionmaking, and lack of guidance and monitoring from the District Forestry Office had contributed to their failure. They formed a new group of ten people, with only four members coming from the previous group. None were elite.

The men called their new group Bukit Lestari Makmur and formed a set of rules (see Box 8.1) reflecting their commitment not to repeat past mistakes. Even though by 2007 the District Forest Service had not decided whether the rest of the funds will be allocated to this new group, the group developed a weekly schedule for collecting wild seedlings, finally raising more than 200 seedlings. Each member has also started to pay the group US$0.30 each month, which has been used to buy nails, polybags, and a lock for a small nursery.

SEARCHING FOR PROOF OF TENURE SECURITY AND RECOGNITION. In Sungai Telang, land inheritances are transmitted verbally to men and women by ninik
mamak (community elders). Unclear land rules and boundaries, including lack of clarity between the local and formal government systems, have resulted in considerable legal uncertainty about land. Most villagers emphasized their desire for guaranteed access to the land and natural resources they had always managed. Ownership was actually not an issue when the Sinar Tani group was initially formed in response to a previous 1998 government program that required communities to organize into a formal group in order to receive assistance from the government. The issue of uncertain rights over natural resources became more pronounced when the group realized that the owners of neighboring fields had moved boundary markers to expand their fields and that they were unable to provide legal proof of the boundaries.11 As in the case of inheritance, when land is bought or sold in the village, there is no proof of ownership or transaction letters, and the size and borders of the land remain unclear.12

Village women’s desire for a new high school building sparked collective action among the group to seek secure lands. A government extension agent

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11. Hereditary Minang customs are still employed when dividing inherited land in Sungai Telang, with ninik mamak elders sharing out inheritances verbally to women (rice paddy fields) and men (rubber farms and upland rice fields), witnessed by community leaders but with no proof of ownership or inheritance letters conferred.

12. Recognition of land ownership has been based only on trust. The arrival of newcomers (transmigrants) complicates this issue.
Role of Collective Action in Securing Property Rights

had told them about a program offering government support to build a school but only on certified land. The follow-up action taken by the men’s group was to plan for the new school buildings and to seek support from the District Education Office.

The group members also became interested in certifying their own land when they heard about the land conflicts that had resulted from improperly allocated transmigration sites (see Adnan and Yentirizal 2007). In addition, the village land available for the next generation is diminishing. Despite their strong desires, the group members realized that there was lack of knowledge regarding land certificates among the villagers and between village men and women.

In search of more information, the group members then interacted with Bappeda and BPN officials, who then gave a talk at a village meeting on land certification. These officials responded positively to the group’s concerns and to a proposal that they have their lands certified collectively. Through a facilitated workshop, the village people discussed such issues as the nature of certification, relevant land regulations, and the procedures, tax fees, and cost of land certification.

Group members agreed to jointly seek land certification as proof of their land ownership and decided to get their land certified through PRONA. The group submitted the request to BPN. Unfortunately, although BPN received the request, the district’s PRONA quota of 250 certificates for 2005 had been used up, and the Sinar Tani members had to wait for land certification the following year.

Attempts to seek recognition of property rights over resources were also made by the Tunas Harapan group of Suka Maju hamlet, Lubuk Kambing. As mentioned earlier, the residents of this hamlet were migrants. Some had purchased land from local inhabitants, while some had opened new lands in 1996. Tunas Harapan members sought government recognition of their claims by trying to secure government agricultural support. They developed a proposal through a program called Development of Estate Crops in Specific Areas. However, the village head refused to sign the proposal letter, claiming that the villagers submitting the proposal were not registered as inhabitants of Lubuk Kambing. After numerous attempts to persuade the man to sign the letter, eventually the group bypassed him and communicated with Merlung Subdistrict, which then forwarded the proposal to the relevant district authorities (Siagian and Neldysavrino 2007)—a clear case of successful coping with an attempt at elite capture.

Meanwhile, several threats (plans to establish large-scale forest and palm oil plantations) encouraged villagers to work together to seek letters of land status notification and to apply for letters of land recognition (sporadik) for their land to strengthen their claims.13

13. Sporadic registration of land is part of land registration or land titling where lands are registered on a case-by-case basis, usually as the result of a specific trigger such as the sale of the
Compared to the villagers in Sungai Telang, those in Lubuk Kambing are less optimistic about securing land rights through PRONA. They have continued to seek government development aid in the belief that development aid provided by the government would be a clear sign of acknowledgment of their existence and ownership.\textsuperscript{14}

Making people’s voices heard through collective action. The bottom-up and participatory planning approach of Law 25/2004 took the form of Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Musrenbang; development planning consultations or DPCs), which were conducted in stages from the village level through the subdistrict and district levels.\textsuperscript{15} The process is designed to plan annual development programs and budgets and to provide communities with opportunities to voice their aspirations and participate in producing development programs that suit their needs. Through these DPCs we catalyzed collective action among the community groups, particularly in Lubuk Kambing, and encouraged the village head to ensure the participation of all parties.

Throughout the facilitation process, the villagers learned to identify problems, prepare activity plans, and understand the reasons some groups succeed and others fail to achieve their objectives. Although the villagers were uncertain whether they should participate in the DPCs, the facilitation process and the interaction with district government officials boosted their self-confidence and encouraged them to act collectively and express their hopes. Through group activities, villagers have played a major role in pushing the village head into mobilizing the village authorities and BPD to prepare a village DPC. The village head also became more active in passing on information to the community. He finally opened the door to participation in the village DPCs not only to the village authorities, village consultative board, and farmer groups but also to the women’s group.

The women’s group also showed positive developments: they had rarely or never been involved in DPC or similar meetings. Three women who attended the village DPC meetings were appointed to the subdistrict DPC, partly due to their courage to speak in mixed public forums after practicing in small women-only groups. The words of the village head’s wife—“I wanted to take part in subdistrict meetings but the village head wouldn’t allow me to; he never invites

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\textsuperscript{14} A man from Sukamaju said, “The district head gave us a corrugated tin roof for the primary school building in our hamlet. That showed he already acknowledged the community in this hamlet.” Another man said, “If the government has opened the road, it means our hamlet is recognized as a part of West Tanjung Jabung District.”

\textsuperscript{15} Law 25/2004 had to do with the Sistem Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional, the National Development Planning System. DPC procedures and mechanisms are further described by Syamsuddin, Komarudin, and Siagian (2007).
me to meetings in the subdistrict”—reflect how women’s wishes to express their hopes and access information may be obstructed by those closest to them.

In addition, although most male community members suggested development priorities related to physical infrastructure development, women’s representatives prioritized capacity-building, skill enhancement, and education.

**Analysis and Outcomes**

Here we look again at what happened in the districts and communities and analyze what factors contributed to success. We are particularly interested in the issues of rights to land, local men’s and women’s participation in forest-related decisionmaking, improvements in collective action, reduction of elite capture, and income generation efforts. We conclude this section with a discussion of the outcomes of our efforts and the problems we had to address.

**Decentralized Forest Policies, Property Rights, and Collective Action**

There have been no marked differences between the two districts in their response to the Ministry of Forestry’s policies and how they have dealt with property rights and collective action. Officials from the two District Forestry Offices, for example, recognized their lack of power vis-à-vis the central government to make significant decisions on forests, such as granting use rights to local communities. The two districts shared concerns over growing needs for more land for development and clarifying property rights for local people, factors that encouraged them to propose forestland conversions to the Ministry.

Local forest people feel a strong need to secure their traditional farmlands and rubber gardens, whether outside or inside forestlands. There are various options (such as HKm) that could potentially provide them with more security regarding their lands, but there remain significant fears within the central government about local people’s ability to sustainably manage and derive benefits from the forest.

The insecurity of local people’s tenure over lands and forest products is due to governmental frameworks that ignore the needs of forest-dependent people. Some regulations and ministerial decrees, for example, favor large-scale investment and continuing to issue licenses to current or expired large-scale concessions. Although some regulations gave local groups or cooperatives the right to manage or use forests, their implementation has been riddled with problems. There are conflicting sectoral rules or priorities and values, a chronic tug-of-war over forest authority between different levels of governments, and a lack of checks and balances in policy implementation. In certain cases, districts misinterpreted the “right to manage” community forests, and higher levels of government failed to support local efforts.

However, other parties that have continually monitored and engaged government partners in discourse on forest and natural resource issues have contributed to shaping local policies. In Bungo, longstanding interaction among
NGOs, research institutes, community groups, and government agencies have contributed to local stakeholders’ beginning to internalize principles of transparency, openness, and participation in government circles. An improved district land use plan and the District Forestry Office’s initiative to implement revolving fund projects for local groups were also linked to this network. Through collective action civil society can apply healthy pressure to government to improve its performance.

Factors Driving Collaboration

Two of the most important factors leading to effective collaboration among groups managing natural resources (in particular, among district officials from different agencies and between the district and central governments) are trust and clearly delineated authority. In the groups we studied, trust developed through the creation of a mechanism whereby people could share their concerns and desires openly and regularly. Such trust-building resulted in improved understanding of local problems and willingness to work toward resolving land use and forest management issues.

Government officials also became more likely to abide by what was written in laws when a clear division of authority was laid out in the legislation. Such legal clarity encouraged government people to work together more effectively. However, centrally designed legislation was effective only when developed and agreed to by the various levels together. Legislation that came to districts as surprises caused resistance in many cases.

More collaboration was deemed important from the beginning of this research, and it became clear that involving a broader array of nongovernmental stakeholders would require greater trust. Research institutions and NGOs have played an important role in developing and maintaining trust among stakeholders, in particular with government officials. Among district officials we observed increasing appreciation of external actors’ inputs and suggestions. Changes in NGOs’ approaches to governments—from very obvious attacks to a more appreciative attitude—have also helped to build effective collaboration with government institutions (Yuliani et al. 2006).

At one of our workshops governmental and nongovernmental participants agreed that for effective collaboration there should be a clear platform (in terms of medium, rules, and sanctions) for interaction and clarity of roles among the parties. Nongovernmental members argued that there should be equality among the stakeholders or at least attempts to empower the disadvantaged. Government members, fearing the rigidity of their system, proposed that there be flexibility in the collaborative process in terms of time and resources.

Factors Motivating Groups’ Collective Action

Through semistructured interviews and group discussions we asked 112 people from Sungai Telang and Lubuk Kambing to list the factors they considered most
critical to their own collective action. One hundred respondents (54 women and 46 men) were members of the groups listed in Table 8.2; 12 others were migrants. For the results, see Table 8.3. Analysis of the results follows.

As indicated in Table 8.3, most participants agreed that individual members of a group should have strong motivation to work together as a base for collective action. Some thought that group members should be trustworthy and honest as well as respectful of others’ opinions when working together. The women’s groups considered trust and honesty crucial for group effectiveness, for building effective leadership, and for sustaining group cohesion. Several members of the female Gotong Royong group felt that friendship and familial ties have enhanced group effectiveness, building a sense of trust and making members more optimistic about reaching their common goals.

Leadership received the lowest ranking in terms of importance in collective action. The Minang Pelhin women tend to believe that every individual has a sense of leadership and that honesty, trustworthiness, and respect are requisites for a good leader. The men’s groups from both villages argued that to be a good leader one should be able to speak freely, be powerful, and have courage to deal with government officials. This explains why Sinar Tani and Tunas Harapan elected a village head and a hamlet head—formal leaders—as their group leaders.

However, most men and women emphasized the drawbacks of a formal leader, among others the way he or she is selected and established. Some government programs, for example, allow of officials to create groups and select community leaders and require groups to follow an inflexible, predetermined organizational structure. The village head’s bad behavior reinforced people’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important factors in making CA effective</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness, honesty</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5+3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being respectful of others’ opinions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8+1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to share opinions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6+1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being hardworking and responsible</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3+2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being clear or transparent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding frequent meetings</td>
<td>3+4</td>
<td>1+1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a good leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 8.3** Local people’s perceptions of the important factors in effective collective action (CA) in Sungai Telang and Lubuk Kambing, 2005–06

**SOURCE:** Data were generated through authors’ semistructured interviews and group discussions with 112 people from Sungai Telang and Lubuk Kambing villages.

**NOTES:** Numbers in parentheses refer to Javanese migrants; — means no respondents provided answers.
perceptions of the problems with formal leadership. In our research groups, the group leaders who were also formal heads or had ties to holders of formal positions misused their power.

One of the leaders, for instance, used his power to misappropriate the group’s money. Another leader, of the Malay women’s group, who is also the wife of the local village head, misused her power to mobilize women for her own interest. In another case the village head exploited group members by making them pay a land fee and made unwarranted unilateral decisions. These cases reinforced the group’s distrust of and disrespect for formal leaders.

The traditional Pelhin groups rotate their leaders, and each member has the opportunity to lead the group. The group members make decisions democratically. Each member can speak freely and is equally respected and committed to the group’s rules and sanctions. These factors have all contributed to the longstanding institutional nature of Pelhin.

The Gotong Royong group also elected its leader in a democratic (though not rotating) way. This group also appears likely to continue after facilitation ends. Similarly, the members of the Bukit Lestari Makmur men’s group, though still at an early stage of its development, tended to show group cohesion, as indicated by its success in establishing jernang seedlings without external help. A democratically elected leader and group decisionmaking, along with clear rules and sanctions, are factors that have sustained this group.

Different levels of power among group members affected group dynamics in decisionmaking. Groups that included elites, such as Sinar Tani, tended to let people with power, confidence, and the ability to speak publicly dominate the group’s discussion, which discouraged others from participating. Other groups—Pelhin, Gotong Royong, and Bukit Lestari Makmur, with members who had equal positions and leaders without ties to formal position holders—tended to perform collective efforts well. In these groups, members had equal opportunities to participate in decisionmaking.

Self-initiated groups such as the Minang women’s group Pelhin and the men’s group Bukit Lestari Makmur tended to be characterized by informality in their setting, whereas government-initiated groups such as the men’s group Sinar Tani, of mixed ethnicity, and the in-migrant men’s group Tunas Harapan applied more hierarchical roles and responsibilities.

The repetitive steps of planning, action, monitoring, and reflection were key to the learning process for these facilitated groups. Those involved have gained more opportunities and have benefited from wider networks of resources than have nonparticipants. By building stronger relations with government officials, research institutions, and NGOs, the group members increased their confidence and bargaining power. The Minang women’s groups overcame their shyness and began to participate actively in training and meetings and to gain self-confidence. Eight of 17 members of Gotong Royong acknowledged feeling more confident about their collective action. This was particularly evident from
their proposal for government aid; attendance at workshops on spatial plans, gender issues, and village–forest borders; and dealing with government officials in Bungo. In Lubuk Kambing, the women were eager to voice their aspirations through musrenbang.

**Elite Capture: Can Collective Action Contribute to Avoiding It?**

There were several examples of elite capture in this study. At higher levels of governance, for example, some agencies applied pressure in the district development planning process to prioritize their own programs, to the exclusion of more urgent needs. Some village development projects ignored suggestions from the DPCs and instead implemented proposals from district parliamentarians who prioritized development in their home areas. At the village level, elite capture was demonstrated by village heads who took advantage of their positions to extort fees from villagers, misuse public funds, or even block villagers’ access to government grants.

At the district level, an effective strategy for avoiding elite capture has been the convening of facilitated forums wherein all concerned parties come together to disclose and discuss the implications of policies for resources and livelihoods, as well as the potential winners and losers from policy implementation. Although the forums initially involved only “government champions” and their non-governmental partners, these forums gained influence with time. Stakeholders increasingly involved in policy- and decisionmaking processes have helped government actors to be more transparent and accountable. For example, the amount of leftover development funds, which are often misused, was reduced.

Village groups avoided elite capture in three ways. First, group members united, agreed on shared desires and risks, and stuck to their commitment not to sell land to the oil palm company individually, and they also collectively refused to pay fees to the village head. Second, with regard to the village head who attempted to block access to a government grant, the group simply nagged him, then complained to the subdistrict, and one of the selected members eventually met directly with the district head. By building relations with outsiders and drawing attention to misconduct, villagers forced the elites concerned to stop their actions. Third, the members of this same group built a new group that excluded the elites who misused funds and also imposed stricter rules to constrain their own behavior.

But collective action alone as described earlier may not be enough. A higher level of collective action and support may be needed to avoid elite capture more effectively.

**Is Collective Action a Viable Route to Property Rights?**

In our planning for this case study, we took the position that improvements in both people’s and forests’ well-being will depend on (1) clarification of land ownership and use rights for both men and women, (2) clearly defined authority
shared among national and local governments equipped with clear mechanisms for accountability, and (3) a stronger civil society to contribute to the development of locally appropriate policies and legislation and to monitor government. We have hypothesized in this research that collective action is a viable route to accomplishing these goals.

We have engaged with actors at the community, district, and, to a lesser extent, national levels to realize these hypothesized requirements. We have seen progress at the local and district levels toward clarifying land ownership and use rights as groups in both communities have sought such clarification and as district level officials have worked together with powerful industry actors and the central government to gain similar clarity on a broader scale. Progress has been made; we are not where we want to be yet, but at the district level we have worked with officials from several agencies to clarify areas of expertise and resource management options and to improve both transparency and accountability, especially in land use planning and participatory policy development. To a lesser extent, we have also worked with central government officials to clarify the shared division of authority and roles in land allocation and natural resource management. Whereas we have made significant progress in raising awareness, particularly at the district level, about the implications of the different perceptions of land tenure and management issues, the actual changes in policy are modest—primarily in the form of an increased willingness of central officials to work together with their district partners to resolve outstanding issues (for instance, forestlands’ reallocation). New attitudes emerged among the district officials about involving more local people who are directly affected by land use changes in the deliberation of land allocation.

The efforts to strengthen civil society as a means to contribute to policy formulation and more seriously monitor government have also been an important avenue for identifying and strengthening mechanisms for accountability. Facilitated community groups have shown their capacity to participate in decisionmaking processes for development, build alliances and networks, and reduce elite capture locally, and their interest in doing so is likely to have affected the thinking of officials with whom they have interacted at the district level (cf. the willingness among district agencies to work across sectors through a multistakeholder forum and to adopt participatory approaches to preparing the district’s mid-term development plans). Our study has policy implications as described in the appendix, which also lists the relevant actors and action resources.

**Conclusion and Policy Implications**

Collective action in the form of coordinated activities and information-sharing among stakeholders is necessary to make interaction more effective, triggering shared learning among stakeholders and offering opportunities to address con-
tentious issues related to property rights, such as ensuring equitable access to land, preventing elite capture, increasing incomes, or improving women’s status. Making collective action effective in dealing with property rights issues requires support from external agents in the form of facilitation, sound regulatory instruments, monitoring, and supervision. Collective action also helps local communities (including women’s groups) to increase their self-confidence and capacity to interact with external parties and strengthen groups. Action research is an effective strategy for fostering collective action and maintaining the learning process that leads groups to be more organized and cohesive and district government officials to be more receptive to other stakeholders’ inputs. Our conclusion is that collective action is necessary, if not sufficient. Effective collective action in this context requires both bonding and bridging social capital—as has been demonstrated quantitatively for India by Krishna (2002). The experience of trying to foster both kinds of social capital and collective action among officials has convinced us of both the importance and the difficulties of doing so, bearing in mind the hierarchical, inertial, and powerful nature of governmental institutions.

The findings of the study are relevant for Indonesia’s forest policy, which attempts to get local people more involved in forest use and plantation schemes, HKm, and people’s forest plantations, as well as the current mechanism for bottom-up consultation for development, musrenbang. The forest policies aim to provide opportunities for local people to gain access to forest resources and to improve local livelihoods. However, there is a tendency to put more emphasis on formal institutions such as farmer cooperatives and to create new groups of forest farmers, neglecting the presence of old and informal groups. Although this allows policies to be implemented in a relatively short time, there is a risk that such schemes will not endure and that policy goals will not be achieved. Unless more attention is paid to how groups are formed and how internal systems (that is, regarding the presence of elites and selection of group leaders) within the group are working, the benefits will not be fairly distributed. So governments should provide greater opportunities for existing groups, often unstructured but self-sustaining, to take part in policy implementation. There is also a need to ensure that elite capture is prevented by developing a monitoring system for performance, setting up an effective resolution mechanism for grievances (that is, a special office to hear complaints, radio programs that air complaints, and so on), and developing a system of incentives and disincentives favoring the groups that perform best, regardless of the formal structure.

Although it now has a better arrangement than during the New Order era, the DPCs should take a closer look at the diverse groups within the communities and adopt ways of gathering input that enables women’s groups and other groups often disregarded to effectively and freely convey their messages. Our research shows that women’s groups make concrete proposals for development, ones largely ignored by most men’s groups. Providing opportunities for and building
the capacity of those groups to increase their confidence (that is, when speaking in public forums) are key to ensuring that inputs to development discourse are inclusive. In addition, Bappeda, as a coordinating agency for planning and development at the provincial as well as the district level, needs to be strengthened in applying participatory and appreciative inquiry approaches when conducting programs to enable shared learning among the parties involved. Given the complexity of attempts to resolve outstanding issues concerning pressure to convert forestlands for development and local people’s struggle to clarify their rights over lands, there is a need to employ (third-party) facilitation and support multistakeholder forums. As shown in the case study, these tools are instrumental in enhancing the communication among disputing parties and bringing about changes in perceptions and attitudes toward problem solving. Governments at different levels need to be open and flexible regarding the ways such initiatives can be integrated into their programs and systems. If necessary, they need to issue policies supporting such tools (that is, allocating funds for them in their state or regional budgets).

Appendix 8A: Supplementary Table

See table on pages 265–267.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor/institution</th>
<th>Major mission</th>
<th>Concerns and interests relevant to this research</th>
<th>Action resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Forestry’s Agency for Forestry Planning (Baplan)</td>
<td>Prepare guidelines for use and management of forestry plans; designate and gazette forestlands; supervise and promote decentralized forestry policies</td>
<td>Sustainable forest use and management; retaining control of state-owned forestlands</td>
<td>Authority over forestlands; authority to provide recommendations to the Ministry of Forestry for forestland conversion and forest management; extensive information, knowledge, and political networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Forestry’s Land Rehabilitation and Social Forestry Directorate General</td>
<td>Reforest and regreen degraded forest; provide guidelines for watershed management; implement community-based forestry programs (CBFM)</td>
<td>Empowering communities and strengthening local institutions or farmer groups</td>
<td>Authority over forest rehabilitation, watershed management, and providing recommendations to the Ministry of Forestry for the issuance of CBFM permits or rights; extensive information, knowledge, and political networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Land Agency</td>
<td>Administer land and issue land certificates; provide guidelines for control, ownership, and use of lands outside forestlands</td>
<td>Securing property rights over land, particularly those outside forestlands</td>
<td>Authority to give licenses for ownership and use rights over lands outside forestlands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor/institution</th>
<th>Major mission</th>
<th>Concerns and interests relevant to this research</th>
<th>Action resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial forestry services</td>
<td>Coordinate district and provincial forestry institutions and operations; provide recommendations for large-scale forestry concessions; issue small-scale timber use rights</td>
<td>Sustainable use of resources, community empowerment, and state revenues</td>
<td>Authority to coordinate the province’s forest institutions and provide recommendations to the governor on forestry policies; information, knowledge, and political networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District forest services</td>
<td>Implement delegated forest management tasks; develop forestry and estate crops programs involving local communities</td>
<td>Sustainable use of resources, community empowerment, and state revenues</td>
<td>Authority to recommend that the district head grant small-scale nontimber forest use licenses and develop district forestry programs: information, knowledge, and political networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District and provincial Agency for Development Planning (Bappeda)</td>
<td>Coordinate provincial and district development programs; facilitate development planning consultations (musrenbang) and develop spatial planning and land allocation</td>
<td>Coordinating actions and programs among provincial and district institutions; encouraging the full participation of stakeholders in development planning</td>
<td>Authority to coordinate district sectorwide institutions and to decide on regional programs proposed by other provincial district institutions; information, knowledge, and political networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private companies</td>
<td>Run forestry and oil palm plantations; develop partnerships with local communities</td>
<td>Profits; continued operations</td>
<td>Capital and expertise or knowledge; power and sometimes political networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village head</td>
<td>Provide a link to district government; coordinate with the local community; implement delegated tasks</td>
<td>Social consciousness, prestige, power</td>
<td>Networks, contacts, power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village consultative board</td>
<td>Articulate people’s interests; maintain a power balance with the village head</td>
<td>Making leaders accountable; avoiding elite capture; strengthening civil society</td>
<td>Village-level networks (across/within), informal authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer (male) groups</td>
<td>Seek secure rights over land and resources; look for capacity building and development support</td>
<td>Secure and sustainable income; improvement of income</td>
<td>Land, labor, trust, confidence, traditional knowledge, and ability to work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local communities</td>
<td>Seek improved education facilities; seek legal ways to inherit land through certification</td>
<td>Clarity of ownership of lands and resources; improvement of skills in negotiation and conflict resolution</td>
<td>Land, labor, trust, confidence, local knowledge, and ability to work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s groups (Pelhin)</td>
<td>Seek income-generating activities; provide services in land cultivation to other self-help groups in land cultivation</td>
<td>Improved livelihoods; stronger position in negotiations with other community members and outsiders</td>
<td>Land, labor, trust, confidence, and ability to work together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Role of Collective Action in Securing Property Rights


