

Deforestation: Community Land Grabs by Major Pulp and Paper Conglomerate in Indonesia

Land dispute resolution processes are failing local communities in Sumatra

By [Forest Peoples Programme](#)

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Communities seeking redress for their lands, grabbed for pulpwood plantations in Sumatra, are let down by resolution process, reveals new report.

A new report reveals unresolved social conflicts over the pulpwood plantation of a major Indonesian company promising 'No Deforestation'. The report, from [Forest Peoples Programme](#) and Indonesian NGO partners, details a flawed conflict resolution process for community lands grabbed for pulpwood plantations by the massive pulp and paper company Asia Pulp and Paper, in Sumatra. APP is owned by the enormous Sinar Mas conglomerate which is incorporated in Jakarta.

Patrick Anderson, Policy Advisor of Forest Peoples Programme, led the survey in Jambi Province, Sumatra:

"Our field investigation shows how weak APP's pilot conflict resolution effort in Jambi has been to date. The deal imposed on Senyerang Village (Kelurahan) is a tough one, and is not in line with APP's policy commitment. The community only gets use rights to plant rubber on one eighth (12.5%) of their customary lands (7,224 hectares), while receiving small payments for the company-grown Acacia on another three eighths (37.5%) of their lands. The community is expected to forfeit rights to the other half of their customary lands."

The report documents in detail the way Senyerang Village, whose lands were recognised as far back as Dutch colonial times, lost lands to APP's subsidiary PT Wira Karya Sakti. Community protests at the land grab were initially met with violence by the company and State security forces. When APP adopted its new Forest Conservation Policy in 2013, it sought to address past land conflicts in line with industry best practice. Senyerang Village was chosen as a pilot case by APP and its advisers, The Forest Trust, which has now been working to resolve the land dispute there since January 2013.

Rudiansyah of the Indonesian NGO, WALHI, noted:

"There are more than a hundred communities in Jambi whose lands and forests have been unfairly taken over for Acacia plantations by APP. The conflict resolution process in Senyerang was meant to pilot how to resolve these conflicts. The weak result of this pilot casts doubt on APP's sincerity to address the legacy of past abuses."

Harry Oktavian, from the Indonesian NGO, Scale Up, concludes

“While we welcomed the adoption of APP’s ‘Forest Conservation Policy’ last year, we judge the company by what we observe on the ground, not by what it says on paper. Our field investigation revealed serious social problems and violations of policy commitments by APP’s subsidiary, WKS. These companies need to do much more to rectify past malpractices before we can say they are ‘sustainable’.”

Syahrul Khairi, a young leader from Senyerang Village commented:

“We are happy that this report has been written, as we want other communities that have lost lands to WKS and APP to be able to learn from our experiences in search of justice. We hope they will be able to obtain recognition of their rights to their customary lands, and fair compensation for use of their lands by others.”

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