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PTPN XIII conflict, Kalimantan, Indonesia

▼ Description:

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Oil palm is today the fastest growing monoculture in the tropics. Indonesia is the world's largest producer. The country has witnessed a massive conversion of customary (adat) land to oil palm (and fast-wood) plantations. Between 1967 and 2007, oil palm monocultures have increased about 50 times and the government is planning to expand the area under plantation.

Starting in 1979, PTPN XIII has become a pioneer of oil palm plantations in West Kalimantan. Established with World Bank support, the oil palm plantation in Parindu was designed to complement a transmigration program to which 80–90% of the project's land was allocated. The remaining 10–20% was to be allocated to local communities that would, in return, transfer their land to PTPN XIII. Local communities strongly protested this policy. They could not accept the fact that not only they had to give up their land to the transmigration scheme but that, while the transmigrants would participate directly in the oil palm scheme as smallholders, they could only participate by giving up further land to PTPN XIII under the 3:2 formula*. Although the government tried to overcome community objections by various means, the community continued to voice its sense of injustice, notably through demonstrations, and rejected the scheme. In the face of these persistent objections the government finally changed its policy by carrying out an oil palm plantations project exclusively for local community smallholders but with no transmigrants. Yet the damage had been done and the bad relationship between the government (including PTPN XIII) and local communities persists. As a consequence, any consultations now carried out by PTPN XIII never get a serious response from villagers (Colchester et al., 2008).

Another example of irregularities is the fact that since the handing over of their customary land to PTPN XIII over 20 years ago, there are still families who surrendered their land but have not yet received their promised smallholder plots (White and White, 2011).

In May 2010, three members - two women and one man - Anbera Hamlet were arrested, tried and convicted for theft of 60 kg of palm kernels (worth approximately US\$ 7) - the first court case against palm kernels thieves. Despite the fact that the two women were willing to return the berries they collected, PTPN XIII insisted to have the case tried. The accused villagers obtained legal assistance from a local lawyer and the case caught the attention of West Kalimantan Regional Representatives of National People's Representative Council, with the assistance from one of DPD members. They even sent a Note of Protest to the Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises (as PTPN XIII is a state-owned company). Following this publicity, the three Anbera villagers were released. Despite the fact that, in the formal statement of court verdict the two women were sentenced to 1 month jail with 2 months probation, while the man accused of illegal oil palm trade was sentenced to 20 days jail with 2 months probation. This case was also publicised in both local and national media; judging from the way the news was written, the media were in full support of the three local villagers, especially the two women. White and White (2011) wrote that "The release of the three villagers from the berondol [palm kernel] scavengers was considered a rare example of successful local resistance against the big oil palm plantation as more often the stories are about local communities who were exploited by workers who helped advocate their cases ending up in court. The authors continue by saying that in stark contrast to the case, when PTPN XIII celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2011 at the luxury hotels in Pontianak (March 2011), the Head of the company stated that the company was expecting annual profits of approximately US\$ 100 million by 2014.

* That is: 5 ha of local land becomes 1 ha for the local community and 2 ha for peasant-owned oil palm plantation, and 2 ha for the government plantation.

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Country:

Indonesia (/country/indonesia)

State or province:

West Kalimantan

Location of conflict:

sub-district of Parindu

Accuracy of location

HIGH (Local level)

▼ Source of Conflict

Type of conflict. 1st level:

Biomass and Land Conflicts (Forests, Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Management)

Type of conflict. 2nd level:

Land acquisition conflicts
Plantation conflicts (incl. Pulp)

Specific commodities:

Palm oil (/commodity/palm-oil)

▼ Project Details and Actors

Project details

PT Perkebunan Nusantara (PTPN) XIII is a merger of a number of state plantation companies in Kalimantan including PTP VI, PTP VII, PTP XII, PTP XIII, PTP XVIII, PTP XXVI, PTP XXIV-XXV and PTP XXIX. PTPN XIII has plantations totaling 124,429.66 hectares including oil palm plantations making up 43,988.60

sugarcane plantations 3,448 hectares. PTPN XIII manages estates owned by plasma farmers totaling 87,137.62 hectares. It is also growing oil palm trees over 35,546.68 hectares, rubber over 46,342.94 hectares and sugar cane 5,248 hectares.

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Start of the conflict:

2000

Company names or state enterprises:

PT Perkebunan Nusantara XIII (PTPN XIII) (/company/pt-perkebunan-nusantara-xiii-ptpn-xiii) from Indonesia (/country-of-company/indonesia)

Relevant government actors:

State-owned plantation company

International and Finance Institutions

The World Bank (WB) (/institution/world-bank) from United States of America (/country-of-institution/united-states-of-ameri

Environmental justice organizations (and other supporters) and their websites, if available:

West Kalimantan's Indigenous Peoples' Alliance (AMA Kalbar)

▼ Conflict & Mobilization

Intensity

MEDIUM (street protests, visible mobilization)

Reaction stage

In REACTION to the implementation (during construction or operation)

Groups mobilizing:

Farmers

Forms of mobilization:

Lawsuits, court cases, judicial activism
Official complaint letters and petitions
Street protest/marches

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Socio-economical Impacts

Visible: Land dispossession

Potential: Loss of livelihood, Social problems (alcoholism, prostitution, etc..)

▼ Outcome

Project Status

In operation

Conflict outcome / response:

Criminalization of activists

Court decision (victory for environmental justice)

Negotiated alternative solution

Development of alternatives:

In the face of the persistent protests, the government finally changed its policy by carrying out an oil palm plantations p exclusively for local community smallholders (with no transmigrants). Yet the damage had been done and the bad relati between the government (including PTPN XIII) and local communities persists.

Do you consider this an environmental justice success? Was environmental justice served?:

No

Briefly explain:

The protesters could not prevent the replacement of traditional agro-ecosystems by the industrial oil palm plantation. T court case is a victory for local villagers but does not have a clear environmental content.

▼ Sources & Materials

References to published books, academic articles, movies or published documentaries

Colchester, M., N. Jiwan, Andiko, M. Sirait, A. Yunan Firdaus, A. Surambo and H. Pane, 2006. Promised land – palm oil and acquisition in Indonesia. Moreton-in-Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme; Bogor: SawitWatch.

[click to view] (<http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2010/08/promisedlandeng.pdf>)

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Links to general newspaper articles, blogs or other websites

Profiles of State-owned rubber plantation companies

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Contributor:

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26/05/2014

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