



Gender dimensions of oil palm investments in East and West Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Background and aims of the research

- Gender and oil palm: an emerging literature with a generally pessimistic appraisal of the gendered impacts of oil palm.
- But wide range of modes of incorporation, production and supply systems with 'highly contingent consequences for rural livelihoods' (Cramb and McCarthy 2016: 2)
- Diverse modes of incorporation, diverse gendered impacts?

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Setting the context

- Three research sites in East and West Kalimantan
- Gendered impacts in three different oil palm modalities:
 - Where local people incorporated into oil palm through company's plasma dividends and wage work
 - Where local smallholders invest in oil palm independently
 - Where migrants acquire frontier land to cultivate oil palm independently.
- Landscapes already marked by extractivist resource politics (logging, mining, timber plantations),.
- A legacy of military, political and business elites benefiting from a concession system providing them access to land via the state at the expense of the rights and needs of local communities
- existing market engagement and portfolio livelihoods

Key finding 1: processes of land acquisition disadvantages communities generally, adds a second layer of disadvantage for women.

- Limited community understanding of implications of land acquisition and benefit-sharing arrangements (plasma dividends)
 - Elite capture
- Women were subject to a second layer of disadvantage:
 - Community norms restricting their active participation in public spaces/political spheres
 - State-company concepts of gender where negotiation is via a 'representative' male head of household: fathers and sons as conduits of information
 - Women lack access to male-dominated networks through which decisions were made
 - Oil palm was framed by companies and by village officials as a "man's business"

My land was said to be under HGU [company concession], I felt like I didn't want to give it up. But everyone else around us had given their land up. I was afraid that if I didn't agree too they [referring to the company] will call us stubborn and send us to jail".

Dayak woman, East Kalimantan, Sept 2016

"My husband didn't ask me, but he informed me when he gave our land to the company for plasma".

Dayak woman, West Kalimantan, Sept 2016

Key finding 2: diverse gendered impacts of oil palm on resource access, labour opportunities and livelihoods



Photo credit: Icaro Cooke Vieira/CIFOR

- Some gains in livelihood and well-being, but reduced access to forest resources, subsistence agriculture and household control over food (rice) security
 - Women disproportionately in non-contract, casualised plantation jobs
 - Women combine wage work, swidden rice cultivation and care responsibilities
 - Swidden fields now distant – reliance on motorbike transport
 - Environmental degradation: polluted water sources
- Erosion of customary authority to determine how land is used
 - Imposition of “plasma”: erases women’s spatially complex current and future entitlements to swidden rice fields
 - Women’s role and knowledge in creating and maintaining tenure boundaries is rendered obsolete
 - Arrival of small-scale migrant investors

“It’s like the company takes our cooking pot; only few parcels of land are left, but still, the company keeps expanding their area” (*Dayak woman, Aug 2016*)

“It is easier to get to my ladang by motorbike. I cannot ride a motorbike. I have to ask my husband to drop me and to pick me up again. I will only go to ladang if he does that. But I cannot always rely on him to pick me up all the time and I have to walk back a long way on my own” (*Dayak woman, Aug 2016*).

Key finding 3: institutions that mediate investor-community dynamics play a strong role in recycling norms, gendered exclusions etc.

- Institutional arrangements that have emerged to link migrant smallholder oil palm investors into oil palm systems open opportunities for local people to also invest
 - Cooperatives: manage plasma, procure seedlings, credit, and monitor harvesting and profit-sharing
 - Evidence of cooperative working for independent migrant oil palm smallholders
- However, opportunities for women to engage are limited by prevailing gender norms that cut across different ethnic groups
 - Gender norms prevent women from being able to nurture relationships with the cooperative, the company and its representatives in the community.
 - Formal business is often conducted in informal, masculine spaces: at night, on the porches of houses.

Entry points for reform and advocacy:

- Attend to resource rights and transparency in the granting of concessions
- Meaningful processes for FPIC and gender-inclusive company-community interface during acquisition process
- For women oil palm workers: decent, secure and safe employment for women
- Benefit-sharing: supporting investment in independent smallholder oil palm
 - Supporting oil palm in context of women's interests and priorities and as part of a portfolio of livelihood opportunities
 - Transparent and just governance of oil palm cooperatives to enable inclusiveness.
- Reforms that focus only on oil palm companies likely to miss a whole layer of oil palm governance at the community-company interface, where gender based exclusions are most pronounced.