

Nature Sustainability Threatened by Multinational Corporation Cooperation: Land Clearing in Papua in 2020

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ABSTRACT

The wealth of natural resources in Indonesia has become an attraction for industrial actors, both domestically and abroad. Deforestation in Papua is a failure of management by the Korindo company, causing a threat to the preservation of natural resources that can harm Papua people who depend on natural resources, including forests. This paper aims to provide an analysis regarding the consequences caused by deforestation and encourage decisive steps that should be taken by the Indonesian government using the perspective of green politics because it requires the right perspective in carrying out expansion. The perspective of Sustainable Development Goals can also be implemented in this paper because it concerns the sustainable development of Papua forests in the forest. The results of the analysis found by the author show that the Indonesia government has only tried but is not able to provide a solution recommendation for the decisive action on the main issue of deforestation committed by PT Korindo Group, thus resulting in damage in Papua due to the failure of expansion. Based on the results of the study, there is a correlation between the impact of forest land damage in Papua and the inequality of indecisive policy, resulting in social discrimination experienced by the local community so that deforestation receives a direct warning from Green Peace. The role of the Indonesia government in solving this problem really requires further investigation so that it can strengthen the government's steps in establishing appropriate policy for sustainable development of forests in Papua.

Keywords: *Deforestation, SDGs, MNCs, Government Policy.*

INTRODUCTION

Papua is a province located in Indonesia with abundant natural resources, especially in the forestry sector. Papua's forests not only serve as home to various endemic species, but also provide ecosystem services that are very influential for the welfare of human life. Papua, with its abundance of natural resources and biodiversity, is a region that has a major influence on unsustainable land clearing practices. Papua's forest ecosystems are currently under threat due to the conservation of forest land into oil palm plantations (Greenpeace, 2021). Land clearing aims to obtain commercial benefits in oil palm management so that it can have a negative impact that can threaten the sustainability of nature which can affect the ability of forests to absorb carbon which has an impact on global climate change. According to a report by Forest Watch Indonesia, deforestation in Papua during the Joko Widodo administration has seen dryland forest loss reaching more than 43,000 hectares per year, and wetland forest loss

reaching 12,000 hectares per year caused by the dominance of forest land expansion for oil palm plantations followed by forest land closure reaching 28,000 hectares per year.

In this research, the author will conduct a more in-depth analysis of the lack of assertiveness of policy steps taken by the Government of Indonesia in handling land clearing cases in Papua. There are regulations governing land clearing, but to implement regulations there is often inconsistency, so a study of decisive action is needed to protect the sustainability of forest land in Papua. The main focus of the author's research is to describe the threat of natural sustainability caused by the cooperation of Multinational Corporation (MNC) which has a negative impact on the environment in Papua. Thus, through this research it is hoped that it can provide assistance in better interpretation in protecting and maintaining natural sustainability and prioritizing the rights of the Papuan people in sustainable economic development. In November 2020 there was a case of widespread deforestation carried out by PT Korindo which had a negative impact on the people of Papua. PT Korindo is one of the largest companies in Papua and has destroyed 57,000 hectares of forest since 2001. The Indonesian government has full authority to sanction PT Korindo for the forest fires, which are suspected of being deliberate because the fires were organized according to the direction of land clearing. Greenpeace has strongly warned against the negative impacts of deforestation caused by the cooperation of MNCs involved in land clearing in Papua, resulting in a decline in the useful function of forests as the heart of the world.

Deforestation not only destroys forest ecosystems but also severely impacts communities who have depended on forests for their survival. Greenpeace asserts that during the period 2000 to 2020 Papua has threatened to lose about 641,400 hectares of forest land due to industrial expansion (Jubi, 2023). The lack of assertiveness of the Government of Indonesia towards granting licenses to companies that have the aim of deliberately destroying natural resources without estimating the resulting long-term impact on the environment, with government policies that are not firm, companies will continue to practice even though they have violated regulations (Asiapasific, 2023). This threat of environmental damage has great potential to lead to social-ecological crises such as increased natural disasters, namely floods and landslides, which can trigger the sustainability of natural resources. Thus, Greenpeace's direct warning has shown that the urgency of protecting the fragile environment and the rights of the Papuan people must be followed up by the Government of Indonesia in a firm manner, as well as ensuring that cooperation with MNCs will not be at the expense of natural sustainability and fighting for the rights of indigenous peoples.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a descriptive approach to examine the impact of multinational corporation cooperation on nature sustainability, specifically focusing on land clearing in Papua in 2020. The choice of qualitative method is predicated on its capacity to comprehensively explore complex social phenomena within the context of green politics and sustainable development goals. The research utilises secondary data gathered through a comprehensive literature review.

Information sources encompassed peer-reviewed scientific publications, official government reports, and documents from non-governmental organisations. The data collection process was conducted via a systematic literature review, wherein the researcher meticulously searched and sorted relevant sources using various keywords pertinent to land clearing, multinational corporations, and environmental sustainability in Papua. Additionally, press releases were scrutinised to capture contemporary developments and public discourse surrounding the issue. The Ecological Modernisation Theory Framework was employed as the primary analytical foundation, aiding in elucidating the intricate relationships between economic development, environmental protection, and corporate responsibility in the context of Papua's ecosystem.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Green Politics

In all areas of life, politics has an important role, especially in the nation and state. Politics is an effort or method used to achieve a good life (Budiardjo, 2007). Politics is used as a tool in bridging all government processes for the prosperity of the people. In implementing work programs, cooperating within the domestic and international spheres, to the management of natural resources, all of this cannot be separated from political practices. In its development, politics entered a new era that developed along with the advancement of human civilization. Many new thinkers have given their views on the development of political science. One of them who was loud enough to voice it was Robert E. Goodin, through his 1992 book *Green Politics Theory*. Goodin has three important arguments about green politics which are the main concepts of his thinking. The first is the core values of the environment (green), with the preservation of the environment. The environment must be preserved for the sake of sustainability. governments and political parties or bodies have an important role. By not only explaining what and how to do to preserve the environment, but they must be able to adapt their programs to the principles of sustainability. Second, the importance of environmentally friendly programs. This is about the sustainability of the next generation so that they can feel the same way and avoid environmental damage. Then third, environmental issues have become an important issue that should be considered in politics and decision making (Goodin, 1992). With what Goodin said, environmental issues should be a concern. There must be a realization that existing resources must be managed in a wise way so they can continue to be sustainable and can still be used properly.

Sustainable Development Goals

After the existence of the United Nations, countries in the world have specific agendas that are always discussed for the common welfare. Economic, social, and environmental are three important issues that are always discussed. From these issues, the idea to create a global framework was born. Starting from the issue of extreme poverty, in 2000, at the UN Headquarters in New York, the United Nations launched the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) which have targets until 2015 in reducing global poverty.

From this agenda, it then has a broader focus by including environmental issues, because environmental sustainability is also an important factor in human life. Then in September 2015, at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, the members of the United Nations issued a global framework with the target of the 2030 agenda by issuing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

According to the United Nations website, the SDG's have 17 goal points, and 169 targets with 248 indicators. With these 17 main goal points, there are important points regarding the environment that have been added which were not previously listed in the MDG's. The environment then becomes an important issue that must be considered by prioritizing sustainable principles. One of the important issues is the ecosystem of the terrestrial environment, which is point 15 of the 17 points of SDG's. Point 15 emphasizes the importance of preserving the terrestrial environment, especially since the terrestrial environment is directly related to human life. This is a concern because with the development of the current era, many developments are carried out but still ignore the sustainability of the surrounding land environment such as deforestation. Point 15 with a total of 12 SDG's targets emphasizes the importance of preserving the land environment, especially forests. This is because it is directly related to the existing ecosystem and will certainly disrupt and even damage the ecosystem if sustainable principles are ignored. With these points and indicators, it is hoped that each member country of the United Nations can work together and have one understanding in continuing to prioritize sustainable development.

Deforestation in Papua: Challenges and Sustainable Solutions

Indonesia, with its abundant natural resources, has long been a magnet for industry. However, irresponsible exploitation of these resources has often resulted in severe environmental damage, as has been the case in Papua. The deforestation case involving the Korindo company in Papua is a clear example of how natural resource management failures can threaten environmental sustainability and harm indigenous communities who depend on forest products (Greenpeace, 2019). The Indonesian government has taken several steps to address this issue, including investigations and sanctions against Korindo. However, these actions have not been effective in stopping deforestation and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Although the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has imposed administrative sanctions on Korindo, the company is still operating in Papua. The green politics perspective emphasizes the importance of a balance between economic development and environmental conservation. In the context of Papua, this means ensuring that industrial expansion does not come at the expense of natural resources and the welfare of local communities. A green politics approach can help in formulating more sustainable and equitable policies in natural resource management. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global framework for sustainable development. SDG 15 specifically addresses "Life on Land", which includes the protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (United Nations, 2024). The implementation of these SDGs in Papua will require concerted efforts from the government, private sector, and civil society.

The correlation between forest destruction in Papua and unequal policies has resulted in social discrimination against local communities. Research shows that the expansion of oil palm plantations in Papua often ignores the rights of indigenous communities and contributes to social conflict (Cisneros, E., Kis-Katos, K., & Nuryartono, N., 2021). This emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in decision-making processes related to natural resource management. To address this issue, a more comprehensive and decisive approach is needed from the Indonesian government, where policies governing agricultural and forestry activities should be developed with the active participation of affected communities. In addition, forest management policies that involve indigenous communities can increase conservation effectiveness and ensure social justice (Miljand, M., Bjärstig, T., Eckerberg, K., Primmer, E., & Sandström, C., 2021).

Strengthening law enforcement and supervision of companies operating in Papua's forests is essential to address deforestation. Improving the capacity of government agencies to monitor and evaluate the environmental impacts of company operations in the forestry and plantation sectors is also needed. A more assertive and inclusive approach from the government is urgently needed. Policies governing agricultural and industrial activities should involve affected local communities, ensuring that they have a voice in the decision-making process. The implementation of green politics and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) perspectives can help create a sustainable framework for forest management in Papua. These measures are not only important to preserve the environment, but also to ensure the welfare of local communities who depend on forests. Thus, strengthening law enforcement, increasing the capacity of government agencies, and involving local communities in decision-making are crucial steps that must be taken to address deforestation in Papua. The implementation of green politics perspective and SDGs will provide the right guidance in conducting sustainable industrial expansion, so as to preserve natural resources and improve welfare without having to sacrifice local communities.

The Impact of Land Clearing by PT Korindo on Nature Conservation in the Land of Papua

Over the years, tropical forests in Indonesia have experienced a decline in development as areas have been converted into oil palm plantations, especially in the Land of Papua, where the government has been paying less and less attention and oversight. One of the most notable observations regarding natural resources in Papua is the sudden cessation of forest areas in the last two years. This is clearly getting worse as Papua New Guinea's forests are among the three largest forest areas in the world, with Papua bordering the Amazon and Congo (Sucahyo, 2022). The loss of forests has a negative impact on the local population living around the fires. For example, pollution and the loss of all substances, such as medicine, herbal supplements, and so on. Therefore, in Papuan society, forests are referred to as "health centers" or places where people live to obtain food and medicine. Forests are a part that is difficult to separate from the Papuan people who are now expanding the business area of oil palm companies, such

as the sago plant which is the staple food of the Papuan people who grow in the forest wildy and can be taken at any time. In addition, there are also other food plants with carbohydrate sources such as tubers, gembili, uwi, taro, barley, and sweet potatoes. Papua's forests are recorded to have around 13,634 species of flora ranging from mangrove forests, to tropical alpine grass forests (Cámara-Leret, R., Frodin, D.G., Adema, F. et al., 2020). However, it is now slowly being replaced by oil palm plantations. Based on several investigations conducted by Greenpeace together with Forensic Architecture, there were violations against the environment, namely burning land to open up oil palm plantations (Irham, 2020). Forest burning has a negative impact on the fertility of Tanah Papua such as decreased soil quality, decreased water capacity in the soil, soil erosion and loss of humus content that affects tree growth. This is also reinforced based on research from Riau University which explains that oil palm plants can cause damage to nutrients and water elements in the soil (Wiranata, 2019).

In addition, forest fires also affect the habitat of animals that may die during the forest burning event. Especially habitats for unique biodiversity such as the red bird of paradise or Cendrawasih Rubra and the endangered Papuan Tree Kangaroo due to habitat loss. However, oil palm plantations will open up new habitats for animals that are considered pests such as pigs, snakes and rats. Deforestation in Tanah Papua due to land conversion contributes to the increasing amount of carbon emissions in Tanah Papua. Based on the Reference Emission Level (REL), Papua Province along with Central Kalimantan Province will store more than 1000 mega tons of carbon stocks in 2020 and more carbon emission levels if the level of deforestation and forest degradation in Papua cannot be controlled. It is evident that the role of forests in controlling the world's climate has not received special attention by some parties. Deforestation also has an impact on the local Papuan economy. Communities around oil palm forests have begun to express concern about the decline in the Papuan economy. Due to the conversion of oil palm plantations, timber production has declined, while their income from sawdust and wood for shelter and raw materials has decreased. Due to pests that have developed from the presence of oil palm plantations, local farmers have also reported crop failures. Declining ecosystem services also impact populations, including air and water pollution that can cause health and economic problems.

Steps to Take and Suggestions for the Government

To facing and overcoming the case of land acquisition by PT Korindo Group, there are several steps or efforts that have been taken by government agencies and also non-government agencies involved. In this case, the first step that has been taken is an investigation. This investigation was conducted by Greenpeace and also FSC (The Forest Stewardship Council). Both conducted investigations at different times. However, from the two investigations, it can be concluded that PT Korindo Group has carried out land acquisition by illegally burning forests with an area of around 11,300 hectares in the period 2015-2019. In addition to these two institutions or organizations, government agencies also conducted investigations with similar results to the two investigations

mentioned above. Investigations by government agencies were conducted by the Merauke Forestry and Plantation Service (Arumingtyas, L., Saturi, S., 2020).

This discussion focuses on the steps taken by the Government of Indonesia and its agencies. The Papua Provincial Government is one of the government agencies involved in the land acquisition case by PT Korindo Group. In facing and overcoming this case, the Papua Provincial Government has made several efforts in the form of evaluations to improve licensing governance and optimize state revenue regarding land acquisition. However, the Papuan people are dissatisfied with the efforts made by the Papua Provincial Government. This is because the community considers the Papua Provincial Government to be less assertive in following up on the cases (Pusaka, 2023). In addition, there is also a Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations. This coalition was formed to fight for rights regarding the illegal land acquisition that occurred. The coalition urged the Papua Provincial Government to hold open discussions as an effort to resolve the land acquisition issue. The efforts made are aimed at preventing conflicts between communities that occur due to illegal forest clearance by burning forests that harm the Papuan people (Pusaka, 2023). The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) is one of the government institutions that is also involved in efforts to face and overcome land acquisition problems carried out by PT Korindo Group. In its efforts, KLHK did not do much to confront and overcome the problem. KLHK only focuses on investigating the origin of the video evidence of forest fires (Arumingtyas, L., Saturi, S., 2020).

Of the several steps or efforts that have been taken by both government and non-government institutions, until now the efforts that have been made are still considered insufficient. This is because there is still no bright spot regarding the resolution of the problem that occurred. From this problem, the Papuan people feel very disadvantaged by the forest burning carried out by PT Korindo Group. This is very unfortunate for the Papuan people because it causes negative impacts that affect the environment and the lives of the Papuan people. Until now, the Papuan people still feel worried about companies that commit illegal actions that are detrimental. Therefore, in handling this case, the local government or even the central government should be more assertive in making decisions or even imposing sanctions on the perpetrators who caused this problem. This can be done by strengthening the applicable laws and regulations. The local government and the central government can coordinate on handling this problem and find solutions that do not harm either party. The government must also reinforce the decisions made so that similar actions do not occur again. This can prevent other conflicts that may occur in the future. In addition, PT Korindo Group must also take full responsibility for the environmental damage caused by illegal forest burning that caused many losses to the surrounding community. The people of Papua hope for the rehabilitation of the environment that has been damaged due to land acquisition by illegal forest burning.

CONCLUSION

Despite Papua’s abundant natural resources and biodiversity, unsustainable practices have led to significant forest destruction, threatening both ecosystems and the livelihoods of indigenous communities. The collaboration between MNCs and local authorities has exacerbated the deforestation problem, as the primary goal often remains economic gain at the expense of environmental sustainability and indigenous rights. Papua’s forests play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and supporting local communities. However, rampant deforestation for palm oil plantations has severely damaged these ecosystems. The destruction of forests has also displaced indigenous people, who depend on these lands for their food, medicine, and cultural practices. Moreover, the loss of forests contributes to global climate change, which further destabilizes the environment. PT Korindo, one of the major contributors to deforestation in Papua, has cleared thousands of hectares of forestland, yet the Indonesian government’s response has been insufficient. Although some sanctions have been imposed, the company continues its operations, showcasing the lack of serious enforcement. According to Goodin, environmental preservation should be a priority for governments and political entities, but this is often overlooked in favor of short-term economic development. This neglect has serious long-term consequences for both the environment and society. In the case of Papua, the Indonesian government’s focus on industrial expansion, driven by MNC interests, directly contradicts principles of sustainable development. Although the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for balancing environmental conservation with economic progress, these ideals have not been fully realized in Papua.

The social impacts of deforestation, including the marginalization of indigenous communities and the loss of traditional knowledge, the communities are often excluded from decision-making processes regarding land use, despite being the primary stakeholders. The expansion of oil palm plantations, driven by industrial interests, has also led to social conflicts, as local populations are displaced or forced to abandon their traditional ways of life. This reflects a broader pattern of social injustice, where the voices of marginalized groups are ignored in favor of corporate profits. To address these challenges, they need for stronger government action, including stricter enforcement of environmental regulations and greater involvement of indigenous communities in policymaking. The government must prioritize long-term environmental sustainability over short-term economic gain and hold corporations accountable for their environmental damage. Additionally, the implementation of sustainable development practices, in line with the SDGs, is essential for preserving Papua's forests and ensuring the well-being of its inhabitants. We need to underscores the urgency of addressing deforestation in Papua through a combination of stronger government policies, corporate accountability, and community engagement. Protecting Papua’s forests is not only crucial for environmental conservation but also for safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Through the integration of Green Politics and the SDGs, a more sustainable and equitable future for Papua can be achieved.

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