

Title: Multi-stakeholders Participation in Strategic Environmental Assessment SEA: Interaction that Shapes Landscape

Abstract:

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been mandatory for every Policy, Plan and Program in Indonesia, since 2009. The analysis has to be undertaken by the local, provincial or national government. *Sawit Watch* is an Indonesian CSO that has been encouraging more participative SEA processes, first in the in the district of Berau, and recently in Bulungan.

In the SEA for the spatial plan for Bulungan district, we tried to look beyond spatial or physical aspects of the environment. We recognized the human -environment interactions that create the landscape. This broader perspective emphasises the importance of the engagement of stakeholders. We need to acknowledge the interactions that affect the environment beyond administrative borders. One of the key areas in Bulungan is the Kayan Watershed, which is spread across two administrative borders. The upstream part of the Kayan river is in one district, but the land use and activities there will affect the rest of watershed and the delta of the river.

In order to create a broader perspective in the SEA process in Bulungan, we undertook several steps. These included improving the strategy as a follow up of previous experience in Berau, facilitating public participation by using an online platform, conducting several discussions with communities in the affected area and using visual material to help the discussion. Besides, we also tried to improve participation and joint learning among other stakeholders. Along with previous efforts, we also tried to get a commitment from the highest decision-makers in Bulungan and invited the local academics to strengthen the SEA process and created a more holistic perspective.

Summary: Lessons learned from Indonesia on understanding the interaction between humans and the landscape in SEA for spatial planning, interrelations across administrative borders and multi-stakeholder participation.

Introduction

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been mandatory in Indonesia for every level of government, as stated in Law No. 32/2009 on Environmental Protection and Management. All policies, plans and programs implemented at the district, provincial or national level, such as the Regional Spatial Plan and the Medium-Term Development Plan, must undergo an SEA. Otherwise, the policy documents, plans and programs are considered invalid.

Nonetheless, there are still many flaws in the execution of SEA in the regions. SEA is often seen only as a formality, and consequently the participatory process and quality of the SEA documents suffer. This has become one of the concerns of *Sawit Watch* and is the reason why *Sawit Watch* designed and implemented a program to improve SEA application.

One of the processes that *Sawit Watch* was involved in concerned the SEA for the Bulungan district, in the North Kalimantan Province of Indonesia. North Kalimantan is on record as the youngest province in Indonesian administrative records. A key feature of this Bulungan district is the Kayan river. The upstream part of the watershed of this river is in the Malinau Regency area, but the majority of the watershed is located in the Bulungan Regency. Along the watershed, there are oil palm plantations and *Industrial Plantation Forests (HTI)*. In addition, the upstream area is also used for other land use practices that can affect the watershed and the Kayan Delta River. The Kayan watershed and delta landscapes are very important for the Bulungan community and were the focus in the study of the SEA for the District Spatial Plan (RTRW) for Bulungan District. Based on SEA for the mentioned target area, the watershed and Kayan Delta River was designated as Strategic Area of Environmental Carrying Capacity based on ecosystem services. In short, it is an important area for the Bulungan district community in terms of its environmental carrying capacity.

The SEA was intended to support a revision of the Spatial Plan and was undertaken alongside the plan revision. The SEA work was done by a team made up of district governmental representatives, academics, and CSOs. *Sawit Watch*, in this case, took part in the SEA working team. The working team undertook the SEA from the very beginning to the final step. SEA was unfamiliar to many regional institutions and organizations in Bulungan District. Therefore, we tried to raise awareness and outreach for the authorities and communities since 2017. Long before the SEA process started in 2018.

Before the Bulungan SEA, *Sawit Watch* has been involved in the SEA process for the Berau District. We tried to apply the experience we had gained there. In particular, we worked to engage a range of stakeholders. Below we describe the ways in which we achieved this.

Using an Online Platform

We provided a platform to accommodate aspiration of the community. The online platform was created in Google sites, and was used to collect the suggestions and opinions regarding the SEA and spatial planning in Bulungan District. It also provided updates of the process and documentation of the SEA and spatial planning to public. The platform is free and could be accessed by all the

communities. We raised awareness on the platform using *Facebook* and *WhatsApp*. It also provide more transparent and accountable process of SEA and spatial planning.

Discussion with Communities

We organized community discussions with the most affected communities in the spatial planning process as to ensure the involvement and information collection of SEA. We involved the local headman in the discussions and gathered the community in the sub-district office. The gatherings started with an explanation of the SEA and Spatial Plan and on the spatial planning. Then we moved on to a question-and-answer section as to accommodate concerns.

Visual Material to help the discussion

We used visual materials, such as maps, to achieves specific goals. These were to ensure that the communities understood and were able to visually describe spatial developments. On this basis they could provide better inputs into the SEA and plan. A large-scale printed map was used in Focus Group Discussions. The map showed the direction and regional development plan for each region. The Focus Group participants could indicate and document issues of concern on the map. This way the map also functioned as a record of the input.

Commitment from the Highest Decision-Makers

Commitment from the highest decision-makers was an important part of the SEA in Bulungan District. We approached the Regent and the head of Development Planning Agency at district level as the highest decision-makers in Bulungan, before running the SEA. Raising awareness on the importance of SEA amongst the highest decision-makers is one of the keyways to protect the environment. This process was once done in 2017 long before the SEA was initiated. The involvement of highest decision makers became an role model for other regional administrators in Bulungan to be actively involved in SEA events done by the working team.

Integration between SEA and Spatial planning team

From the very beginning, the SEA working team and Spatial Planning team started communicating to support each other's work. In addition, we agreed that the process, data, and input for the revision of the policy, plan and program of the spatial plan would be communicated and discussed among both the SEA and Spatial Planning working team in the whole paralell process. Therefore the recommendation and analysis of SEA team can be accomodated and integrated in the spatial planning.

During this process we are communicating closely with the spatial planning team, the local government apparatus, and other CSO that provided data to create the SEA analysis.

Local Academics

During the SEA process in Bulungan Regency, we invited local academics who had received training on SEA from the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The participation of local academics as part of the SEA working group team is particularly important because they represent local perspectives and local knowledge. This is also to create a group of experts at the local level so that future SEAs are not dependent solely on imported knowledge from outside the island. The local academics were part of the working group and involved from the beginning so they experienced the whole SEA process, from the introduction to the validation.

Conclusion

The steps above were carried out by the working group to increase the participation of stakeholders, from communities, to local government officials, and local academics. We are hoping that this kind of participation of multiple stakeholders in SEA will guide future practice in Indonesia.

The SEA has provided the opportunity for non government stakeholders especially civil society organization and local communities to be actively involved in the process of spatial planning in Bulungan. The involvement of stakeholders in the SEA process is crucial to ensure the integration of the input and analysis into spatial planning. There are many challenges to ensure the participation of stakeholders especially to raise awareness of the importance of this participation in the SEA process. By using the experiences of the Berau case we be able to come up with several strategies including using an online platform, local academics, discussion in local communities, visual material and ensuring integration of the SEA into the spatial plan.

The SEA greatly contributed to our goal to protect the Kayan watershed and delta and to integrate community forest areas in spatial planning process. This goal was achieved by continuously integrating the SEA and spatial planning process, through communication with the spatial planning team. This way the recommendation and the analysis of SEA team could be integrated and accomodate in spatial planning.