

# Women's Representation on Forest Transfer Policy in Siak Regency

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**Abstract.** The recurrence of cases of forest and land fires in Siak regency indicates that the policies have not been solve completely by the local governments. Although there are numerous policies on forest fire prevention, there have been little studies that systematically focus the women representation on this issue. This article analyses an involvement of women on forest transfer (Take) policy in Siak Regency. This policy has one of best practices to protect the environment through budget policy innovations in line with the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) agendas. In that sense, we explore how women involve in the Take policy through qualitative methods especially in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Based on our research, there were limits of women in the Take policy. It argues that the women have chance to participate in the Take policy. However, the women have not played an active role in the Take policy. The women tended to be alienated in the implementation of Take policy due to cultural and political barriers. As a result, the women who sit in power should be able to supervise the Take policy.

**Keywords:** forest fire, transfer policy, women, Siak regency

## 1 Introduction

The repeated cases of forest and land fires (karhutla) in Indonesia indicate that the policies taken by the government to date are not optimal. This is very worrying considering that the issue of forest and land fires has negative implications for health, the economy, and the environment. Based on a research study conducted by Harvard University, more than 100,000 people died in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore due to smoke exposure in 2015 (World Bank, 2016). Another study conducted by Glauber and Gunawan (2016) describes the 2015 forest and land fires in Indonesia caused economic losses of US\$16.1 billion. These various implications call for serious response from the regions to tackle the issue of forest and land fires.

One of the regions in Indonesia that responds seriously to the issue of forest and land fires is Siak Regency. Siak Regency is one of the areas in Riau Province that experiences forest and land fires every year considering that 53.22% of its area is peatland that is easily burned (Riau Daily, 2017). In addition, based on the Government Performance Report (Lakip) of Siak Regency in 2014, the area of forest that is still categorized as natural is only 9.23% of the existing 855,603 hectares. With the small availability of natural forests, the threat of forest and land fires always appears every year. This is shown by the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) report in October 2016, which indicates that 70% of hotspots in Riau Province came from Siak Regency.

Attention can be directed to the Siak Regency Government, which is trying to innovate through regional financing mechanisms for tackling forest and land fires. This is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) agenda. It is based on a common practice in many countries, where programs for preventing and controlling forest ecosystem damage are carried out through a special financing mechanism or better known as the National Forest Funds (NFF). Studies conducted by Matta (2015) show that several countries have initiated steps to provide finance in the forestry sector such as the United States through the Knutson-Vandenberg Fund in 1930 and Spain through the Patrimonio Forestal del Estado in 1939.

This step was adopted gradually in many countries in the late 1970s. Later, provisions for forest funds were included in at least ten Latin American countries' law and were followed by the establishment of NFFs in several countries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and Europe (Rosenbaum & Lindsay, 2001). Unfortunately, in the Indonesian context, only four regions have tried to adopt a special financing mechanism for dealing with forest problems in the APBD policy and one of these areas is Siak Regency.

In 2021, the Siak Regency Local Government took the initiative to innovate a more pro-environmental budgeting policy called the forest Transfer Policy (Take). In short, the Take policy is a local government-funding scheme by carrying out ecological fiscal transfers. In practice, in Siak Regency, take policy is carried out through reformulation of the fiscal transfer scheme from the district to the village which initially fiscal transfer in Siak Regency used three variables namely basic, proportional, and sakinah allocations into four basic allocation variables, proportional, sakinah, and village performance. The inclusion of village performance as the basis for determining the amount of Village Fund Allocation in Siak Regency makes every village must have measurable performance that in this case is based on the performance standards set in the Green Village Index. In terms of policy capacity, take policy is very realistic.

Haryanto (2015) describes the opening of opportunities ecological fiscal transfers to be adopted in the transfer policy to the region emanating from the General Allocation Fund (DAU) by inserting a form of comprehensive ecological indicators of forest closure. Through this approach, the impetus to implement ecological fiscal transfer becomes stronger and more realistic considering that the environmental conservation mission requires large funds from the government (Mumbunan et al, 2012).

However, in its implementation, studies related to ecological fiscal transfer are still limited. Several new studies analyze the obstacles faced by most local governments to implement ecological-based budgeting where these constraints are caused by the lack of government capability (Meiwanda, 2016), and the occurrence of budget policy alienation (Kabullah et al, 2020). The breakthrough made with the Take policy by the Siak Regency Government certainly calls for further research. Based on previous studies, the issue of forest and land fires budget policies in Siak Regency and Riau Province focuses more on the government capability approach (Meiwanda, 2016), actor networks (Purnomo et al, 2017), institutional effectiveness

(Putra et al, 2019), collaborative governance (Wicaksono, 2019), and budget policy alienation (Kabullah et al, 2020).

### **Research Questions**

The emergence of Siak regency in promotes forest fire prevention agenda through Take policy still leaves problems. The Take policy, which was initiated by the local government, should support by all actors. In that sense, did the Take policy have an impact on female representation? Thus, this article will explore to what extent women's involvement in initiating the Take policy in Siak Regency.

## **2 Methodology**

The analysis is carried out through qualitative research methods with data collection techniques, namely in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with people who have the capacity and are involved in Take's policy. The informants in this study came from DPRD, Regional Development Planning Agency, Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency, Environment and Forestry Service, Agriculture and Plantation Service, Regional Disaster Management Agency, and the lowest government apparatus, namely the village.

For triangulation, in-depth interviews were also conducted with academics. The other data collection technique is observation by focusing on the Take policy budgeting planning process, which invites all actors in the government agencies into one forum called forum OPD. The observation has explored how female efforts in the Take policy during the government agencies forum in June 2021. The other data collection technique, namely documentation, is carried out through collecting data related to the Take policy in the form of budget documents, regulations and other relevant data that serves to strengthen the findings.

## **3 Result and Discussion**

The low representation of women in public policies seems to have been a long-standing problem. According to the gender gap index released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2020, Indonesia rank 85 of 149 countries in the inequality of women in access to opportunities and economic participation, followed by the inequality of women to participate in political system. The failure of women to fight for gender interests in public policy is actually inseparable from the direction of legislation at the national level. The study conducted by the KODE Initiative on Prolegnas 2020 to 2024 shows interesting facts. Among the 50 draft laws (RUU) in the 2020 Priority National Legislation Program, the majority of the proposed bills are related to the business economy and natural resources (Kabullah, 2021).

Seeing the orientation of the DPR's legislation that directs the bills to the two sectors above, women are actually the most vulnerable group to be affected by the bills because many women's rights will be eliminated in the context of investment interests. At the same time, there is still a lack of gender spirit in the content of legislation. According to Komnas Perempuan's records, several laws are still considered highly discriminatory against the position of women, such as Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, and Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation. In

addition, several bills such as the Bill on Family Resilience and the Bill on the Elimination of Sexual Violence have been slow to be discussed. The lack of commitment to strengthening gender-based policies also has an impact on the regions.

In Siak Regency, the involvement of women in initiating the Take policy can actually be carried out to the maximum. Two women who had the opportunity to be involved in Take's policy were recorded, with details of one senior officer in the government office, and one member of the Siak Regency House of Representatives (DPRD). The two women can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1.** List of Women Involved in Take Policy in Siak District

No	Name	Position
1	Gustimar	Member of Siak Regency House of Representatives
2	Febri Yenni	Secretary of the Department of Community and Village Empowerment

Table 1 shows that women can play a bigger role in the decision making of Take policy, given the authority attached to the office to two women. Moreover, the influence exerted can be exercised on all lines, including politics, bureaucracy, and civil society. Gustimar has been a member of the Siak Regency DPRD for three terms. She has sat on the council representing the National Mandate Party (PAN) since 2009 until now in the Siak Regency DPRD. Currently, Gustimar sits as a member of Commission 3 of the Siak Regency DPRD, which is in charge of infrastructure and the environment.

Based on this position, Gustimar should be able to play the role of representing the group of women in ensuring the availability of the budget for policy given the right budget of Take inherent in the institution of Parliament. Moreover, the support for Gustimar is quite strong because of the constituent support.

Meanwhile, Febriyenni is a bureaucrat with a career of more than a decade in the Siak Regency Government. She currently serves as the Secretary of the Department of Community and Village Empowerment. The placement of Febriyenni in the Community and Village Empowerment Service has an important meaning considering that the agency is the leading sector in the Take policy.

In addition, Febriyenni's involvement can be carried out through her position as Secretary of the Service through coordination between stakeholders and budget support for programs / activities that are relevant to the Take policy. In practice, the role of the two women in Take's policy in Siak Regency is very minimal. Even though the two women have a desire to support Take's policy, the advocacy movement that has been built so far is still running partially between them. One of the informants stated:

“Although Siak has echoed its vision as a Green Siak Regency, the support from women in the government is still minimal. They are not only difficult to communicate with, but also do not have a vision to support the gender agenda that can be accommodated in the Siak Hijau vision” (Interview S, 29/6/2021)

From this statement, it can be seen that there are still ideological differences and interests among the women in fighting for the Take policy. They tend to build partial agendas with different motives. This makes it very difficult for the internal consolidation of the women's movement to materialize, resulting in a lack of public support. Even if there is public support for the mission of some of these women, the support that appears is more spontaneous and does not last long.

Suryakusuma's research (2011) clearly describes how the ruling regime succeeded in marginalizing the role of women in political life. A woman is constructed in a position as someone who only dwells on private activities or what he termed domestication. Domestication makes it taboo for women to work in the public sphere, including practical politics. In the case of Siak Regency, this can be seen from the number of women's representation in the Siak Regency DPRD for the 2019-2024 period where out of 40 seats, only 1 seat is filled by women, namely Gustimar from PAN.

The figure of Gustimar himself is a PAN cadre who has been around for a long time. In the structure of the DPD PAN Siak Regency, Gustimar is trusted to be the secretary. However, Gustimar's presence in the DPRD still has not penetrated the patriarchal culture inherent in the political culture in Siak Regency. She also does not have a strong vision related to gender rights in the Take policy in Siak Regency.

The story experienced by Febriyenni as the Secretary of the Village and Community Empowerment Service of Siak Regency also shows a position of inferiority. Although most of her work experience is involved in village affairs, she has not yet had the opportunity to assume the position of head of service. Her position as office secretary is considered more appropriate because she has the capacity and responsibility in managing the financial administration of the office. Febriyenni's bargaining position to get a promotion in the bureaucracy is also not supported by political support that tends to be masculine.

Both of these stories show the lack of women representation in the Take policy. This phenomenon is often seen in the electoral campaign and the political process (Kabullah, 2019). However, the less participation of women in Take policy also comes from the different positions of gender in the social landscapes. This can be seen from the background of the two women who are not very accommodated in the power structure even though they have strong competence and experience in their respective positions. In the construction of "neo-ibuisim", women who are successful in sitting in the power structure can only be so if they can act actively and competitively (Kabullah & Fajri, 2021).

Without this, women have no power against the domination of power. At the same time, the involvement of women is limited given the still strong oligarchic practice in Siak Regency. Based on experience, Siak Regency shows that kinship politics plays an important role in the birth of a policy. The case of Yan Prana, the Head of Bappeda of Siak Regency who was promoted to Senior Secretary of Riau Province shows how greedy political behavior is by prioritizing the family as the successor of the line of power.

The obstacle to strengthening the role of women in Take's policy is also caused by the patriarchal culture that grows in the community, including in political life. It is common due to the weak gender view is intertwined in the political process and the policies (Kittilson, 2019). Women are socially constructed to be unfit to be leaders, and to take care of household life is considered enough. Suryakusuma (2011) clearly describes how the ruling regime succeeded in defining the role of women only as wives to serve the family and mothers to take care of the children. At the same time, women do not dare to pursue dreams not associated with womanhood, including pursuing higher political and bureaucratic positions.

In the case of Siak District, since the district was founded in 1999, there has not been a single woman sitting as regent/deputy regent. This is quite contrary to the phenomenon in the 2020 Pilkada in Riau Province where women who won and occupied the position of regent, namely in Bengkalis Regency and Indragiri Hulu Regency. Thus, fighting for women's interests in Take's policy actually has its own unique challenges.

The weak bargaining position of women in the Take policy cannot be separated from the domestication of women. In the legislative function, the expectation to accommodate gender

interests in Gustimar is not easy to realize given the very minimal representation of the number of women in the Siak Regency DPRD. Moreover, Gustimar's experience in advocating for environmental issues is still weak. As a legislator, Gustimar should be able to act tactically and Take policy advocacy should be integrated into issues that are more inclusive and receive public attention.

Instead of doing this, Gustimar was actually involved in the contestation in the DPRD and parties. As for Febriyenni, it is better for her to be more open by expanding networks with civil society groups. This is coming from the reality that the government is no longer the sole actor in policy. Collaboration with civil society must be carried out to the maximum, including in the success of the Take policy, which is a program of the Community and Village Empowerment Service of Siak Regency. Without these fundamental changes, encouraging women's involvement in policy would be just utopian.

#### 4 Conclusion

This article has explored a female actor's involvement in the Take policy. In the case of the Take policy in Siak Regency, the participation of women in the policy process is very minimal. The women failed to promote an idea of "women empowerment" during policymaking process. This is exacerbated by the culture of patriarchy and masculine politics in government. Consequently, policies are not gender friendly. In the future, women who sit in political power should be able to consolidate the movement more neatly. The campaign for a policy must be based on inclusive issues. The women must also believe that public support is always behind them. Empathy is what must be instilled in every woman who sits in power and true empathy can be awakened instinctively in every woman. Without it, efforts to strengthen gender-based policies will continue to experience alienation.

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