In addition, farmers mentioned that practising agroforestry by combining crops and trees on their farms helps to improve their income. The farmers also revealed challenges and problems faced in the field, such as pest and disease attacks on cocoa and pepper trees and how long droughts often destroyed seedlings.

The discussion with farmers not only gave a chance to hear of progress but simultaneously served as an opportunity to gain valuable feedback that can be used to improve the project.

During the visit, a meeting with Konawe District Planning and Development Agency was also conducted in order to strengthen the collaboration with the local government, ensuring that the AgFor project continues to synchronize effectively with local strategies.

Furthermore, the communication survey sought to recognize farmers’ preferred methods and media for obtaining agricultural and agroecological knowledge. The researchers wanted to better understand the role of ‘farmer-to-farmer’ communication as a method applied in extension work. The farmers-to-farmer method has been widely applied, including in several projects conducted by the World Agroforestry Centre in Indonesia. This method emphasizes interpersonal communication between farmers to transfer information, and is considered by many as a very efficient and effective way of sharing knowledge.

In this discussion, which was also attended by AgFor’s partners, CIFOR, Lepmil and Operation Wallacea, farmers made positive responses, saying that the project had helped them improve their capacity. ‘I’ve been a farmer for years, and getting new knowledge about farming techniques and crops is very useful to help me make the best of my farm’, said Ibrahim from Wonuahua.

In the Agroforestry and Forestry in Sulawesi: Linking Knowledge with Action project, finding out how information spreads is seen as crucial to helping accomplish the project’s mission to enhance farmers’ livelihood by improving access to knowledge. As a result, a communications survey was conducted in 2012 in twelve villages in project areas in South and Southeast Sulawesi.

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Local stakeholders, who include government, NGOs and communities, need to be able to identify vulnerabilities in their natural, food and income resources. Distinguishing the vulnerabilities will allow stakeholders to adapt to fluctuations in weather and markets. AgFor researchers believe that conducting a vulnerability assessment is crucial in order to identify the exposure to risks and find ways to adapt.

The assessment method the researchers developed is known as Capacity Strengthening Approach to Vulnerability Assessment (Casava) that is specifically designed to understand the causal links between hazards, capacities and impacts. Casava will help to reveal vulnerabilities and subsequently help to improve, integrated management of landscapes and ecosystems by local stakeholders through enhanced capacity.

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Compared to other vulnerability assessment methods, Casava is broader in terms of scope. It addresses multiple underlying issues, from land-use and land-cover changes and changing rainfall patterns and landscapes, assessing agrobiodiversity in varying land-use and land-cover types and estimating carbon stock at plot and landscape level. A household survey is also conducted to assess household assets, livelihoods, and capacities to adapt to the fluctuations of water, markets and tree, and farming systems. The researchers wanted to better understand the role of multiscale issues, from landscape and community to government and community stakeholders.

In the second year of the AgFor project, the governance component of the project was formulated. The ideal governance model requires participation, transparency and accountability between government and community members in sustainable management of natural resources. An active learning approach, using games and simulations, was incorporated into the materials in order to make the message easier to understand. And the workshop did succeed in improving participants’ understanding about good governance because they were able to confidently develop a work plan at the end of the event.

In the first training workshop on participatory governance was conducted in June 2012 in Makassar. It was aimed at building the capacity of partners in facilitation methods related to governance participatory processes for making and socializing participation. It also helped build mutual understanding with partners involved in implementation. The first Central for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the AgFor project, directed by the governor of the component of AgFor, organized the activity, which involved two local NGOs: Lembaga Pemuda Masyarakat Lepmil dan Pedulian Tanah (Lepmil/The Institution for Coastal and Hinterland Community Development) and Balang, as well as the World Agroforestry Centre and Hasanuddin University, Forestry Research Centres in Samboja and Konjo, as well as the World Agroforestry Centre and Hasanuddin University. Principles of good governance that linked to the governance aspect of AgFor were discussed, followed by interactive sessions on participatory action research, facilitation and tools to plan sustainable management of natural resources. Each training workshop was conducted in ten clusters in four districts across South and Southeast Sulawesi.

The training focused on analysing the lessons learnt from Casava development while at the same time formulating the indicators of vulnerability. This year, AgFor will conduct similar capacity-strengthening workshops and training activities that target local government and community stakeholders.

In addition to that, we facilitated focus group discussions to understand local perceptions and knowledge of farmers about land-use and land-cover changes, biodiversity, water, markets and tree, and farming systems. At the same time, we tried to comprehend the exposure to, responses to, and impacts of fluctuations of rainfall and market at community level. Sonya Dewi further explained.

The local knowledge assessment was completed between September 2012 and February 2013. Prior to that, the sampling designs, instruments and protocols were tested, reviewed and refined before being applied to ten clusters in four districts across South and Southeast Sulawesi, where all of AgFor’s three components—tree, livelihoods, government, environment—active. The assessment involved a team of multisciplinary scientists, environment facilitators, field staff and local facilitators. The team was also assisted by translators, particularly in South Sulawesi, where a lot of respondents only speak the local Bugis and Javanese languages.

A series of training activities and workshops on vulnerability assessment are planned, leading to strategy development to reduce vulnerability as part of a conservation-agroforestry program. The first training activity was conducted in Bogor in December 2012, attended by representatives from the World Agroforestry Research and Development Agency, Hasanuddin University, Forestry Research Centres in Samboja and Kaping, Operation Wallacea Trust, amongst others. The training focused on analysing the lessons learnt from Casava development while at the same time formulating the indicators of vulnerability. This year, AgFor will conduct similar capacity-strengthening workshops and training activities that target local government and community stakeholders.

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In the second year of the AgFor project, the governance component accomplished notable achievements which can be seen in the series of training workshops that helped to develop new governance models.

The ideal governance model requires participation, transparency and accountability between government and community members in sustainable management of natural resources. An active learning approach using games and simulations was incorporated into the materials in order to make the message easier to understand. And the workshop did succeed in improving participants’ understanding about good governance because they were able to confidently develop a work plan at the end of the event.

A series of training workshops was also conducted from July until October 2012 across theAgFOR project’s sites, including Koyo low, Labnok, Bomongapas, Tanu Teo, Tanah Sungai and Bonto Tappalang (in South Sulawesi), and Tabur Nipa-pipa, Tahura Nipa-nipa, Lengkung, Ani, and Wonuahua, in Southeast Sulawesi. Facilitated by translators, particularly in South Sulawesi, where a lot of respondents only speak the local Bugis and Javanese languages.

Community survey in South and Southeast Sulawesi

Access to information in many cases plays an important role in improving people’s lives. This applies as much to the agriculture and agroindustry sectors as anywhere else, because farmers need information to help them develop innovations and solutions that contribute to the improvement of their livelihoods and the security of food supply.

In the Agroforestry and Forestry in Sulawesi: Linking Knowledge with Action project, finding out how information spreads is seen as crucial to helping accomplish the project’s mission to enhance farmers’ livelihoods by improving access to knowledge. As a result, a communications survey was conducted in 2012 in twelve villages in project sites in South and Southeast Sulawesi.

‘We would like to see how knowledge spreads among farmers and identify the change agents, particularly at village level’, said Endri Martini, one of the researchers behind the study. ‘By understanding this, we can design appropriate extension approaches that are complementary to the existing knowledge transfer systems in the society’, she stated.

The existence of ‘change agents’ in a village is important to keep information flowing. One of these change agents is opinion leaders who are characterized as vocal individuals who typically receive information before other community members. They are also the ones whose people turn to for advice.

‘Generally, these people are highly influential and predominantly serve as role model in the community, making them responsible for accelerating the dispersion of knowledge. However, this may not be the case for Sulawesi’s conditions. We needed to find out’, Martini explained.

Each site has different characteristics, therefore, the government was instructed to develop and implement the key stakeholders, for example, local people including men and women, leaders and community members, elders and youths, and key government officials. The new models will then be implemented and further refined through interactive processes, engaging active collaboration from community members, government agencies and stakeholders.