

Communicating with Farming Communities: Insights from the Nagari Forest Area at Sanlibutan and Aie Dingin in West Sumatra, Indonesia

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Received	Accepted	Published
11.01.2023	28.04.2024	30.04.2024

<https://doi.org/10.61275/ISVSEJ-2024-11-04-11>

Abstract

Indonesia has many vernacular communities dealing with forests and the governments need to constantly communicate with them. This is difficult because the languages used by the state authorities differ significantly from those used by the communities. The Social Forestry Program, a strategic policy issued by the government to regulate forest management aims to improve community welfare through forest sustainability, environmental balance, and socio-cultural dynamics. Of all the forms of social forest in West Sumatra, the most common are village/Nagari forests while the least common are partnership forests and community plantation forests. Effectiveness of institutional communication is significant in improving the farming communities around the Nagari Forests

This study investigates factors that can create such effectiveness of institutional communication in improving the financial situation of farming communities around the Nagari Forests. This paper examines two villages/Nagari in the platinum ranking These include *Nagari Salibutan* with the *Nyarai* Tourism business unit and *Nagari Aie Dingin* with the Solok Rajo Coffee business unit both located in West Sumatra.

It explains the institutional communication patterns in the economic development of the communities around the Nagari forests.

It concludes that existing institutional communication in the management of customary forests relies on downward, upward, and horizontal communication patterns. The findings show that institutional communication allows for social interaction, expressive communication, and instrumental communication. It concludes that to create effective institutional communication, the psychological condition of the state and the farming community, the content of the message, and communication media must be considered.

Keywords: Program effectiveness, institutional communication, communication patterns, farming communities

Introduction

Based on Constitutional Court Decision Number 35/PUU-X/2012, customary forests are forest areas in the territories of customary law communities. To boost regional autonomy and economy, the government initiated a forest classification and management program known as the Social Forestry Program based on a strategic policy on forest management in state forests or private/customary forests that was issued by the government. The implementation of this program is based on the Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia No. 9/2021 on Social Forestry Management. By creating this program, the government intends to achieve two important agendas namely improving the welfare of the community living in/around the forests and creating an effective forest conservation model (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2021).

The forms of social forestry currently implemented are Village Forests, Community Forests, Community Plantation Forests, Customary Forests, and Partnerships Forests. The program aims to create community welfare by considering forest sustainability, environmental balance, and socio-cultural dynamics. It is expected to increase the role of local communities in managing forest resources. According to Kamaluddin and Tamrin (2019), three main principles are used to increase local communities' role in managing forest resources. These include rights, livelihoods, and conservation.

One of the Indonesian provinces that implement the Social Forestry program across 12 districts and four cities in West Sumatra Province. The forms of social forestry found in West Sumatra are Village/Nagari Forests, Community Forests, Forestry Partnerships, Community Plantation Forests, and Customary Forests (Rachman et al., 2019). Each form of social forestry is managed by the Social Forestry Business Group (KUPS). Of all forms of social forestry in West Sumatra, the one with the most KUPSs is village/Nagari forests, and the ones with the fewest SFBGs are forestry partnerships and community plantation forests (West Sumatra Provincial Forestry Service, 2023).

Based on the results of the evaluation carried out by the West Sumatra Provincial Forestry Service, two Nagari are in the platinum ranking, namely *Nagari Salibutan* with the Nyarai Tourism Object business unit and *Nagari Aie Dingin* with the Solok Rajo Coffee business unit. These two Nagari have succeeded in improving the economy of their communities through the government's Nagari forest program. This success is attributed to the excellent development of communication between institutions involved in the program. With good communication, an organization/institution can run smoothly and successfully, and vice versa; lack or absence of organizational communication can stall or fall apart. Effective communication is essential for all organizations. Therefore, organizational leaders and communicators must understand and improve their communication skills. This communication role can be a tool for organizations/institutions to organize their activities (Purnomo, 2022).

This study aims to contribute to the improvement of institutional communication with the farming communities in Indonesia. It addresses the question as to what extent institutional communication contributes to the success of the social forestry program of the Indonesian government. It investigates the form of institutional communication patterns in the economic development program for the communities around the Nagari Forest. The study will also explore factors that can create the effectiveness of institutional communication in improving the economy of farming communities around the Nagari Forest area (Qurniati, et al., 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Institutional communication can be defined as the type of communication carried out in an organized way by an institution and its representatives and is aimed at people and social groups that develop its activity. Its objective is to establish quality relationships between the institution and the public, with which it's affiliated, acquiring social notoriety and an appropriate public image according to its intentions and activities. Institutional communication is related to marketing, publicity, the press, and public relations, but goes beyond the functions carried out by them; it looks to transmit the personality of the institution, the image, and the values that fund it. The Law Insider defines institutional communication as any written

(including electronic) communication that is distributed or made available only to institutional investors but does not include a member's internal communications. Gabriela (2014) claims that all activities inside or outside institutions imply communication. According to Suzan Elkalliny (2017), communication combines internal administrative communication in its three forms and the connection of the institution with the surrounding external community and remains governed by the available circumstances and possibilities surrounding the institution to achieve the objectives of the institution and the desired goals. Kalliny claims that the three forms of institutional communication are:

- a. The upward contact from employees to management,
- b. The downward contact from management to employees,
- c. Horizontal contact between employees and each other or between different departments.

According to Kapur (2018), organizational communication is imperative for the functioning of any type of organization. When an organized collection of individuals work interdependently within a relatively structured, organized, and open system to achieve common goals, get involved in communication and it is known as organizational communication. Organizational communication facilitates the free flow of information and is more adaptable to the changes and transformations that may take place within internal and external environmental conditions. The communication process assists in the generation of resources from the external environment to accomplish the goals of the organization.

Literature Review

The topic of institutional communication, especially communication in agricultural institutions and the economy has been at the center of many studies and heated debates for many decades around the world, especially in Indonesia. This issue has gained momentum in recent years given the fact that a great deal of the Indonesian population lives a pastoral life. However, despite the attention it is receiving, only a few studies explore the role of institutional communication in improving the regional economy through the government social forestry program. Previous studies hardly focus on studying the effectiveness of institutional communication in the Nagari Forest. Of these studies, only a few focus on institutional communication issues involved in the community economic empowerment program.

Among them, Fitria et al. (2021) and Maliki et al., (2021) stand out. They have studied participatory communication for customary forest management. Similarly, Azhari et al. (2022) have investigated farmer leadership communication style in the Solok Rajo coffee cooperative. Maliki et al., argue that in the dialogic indicator, communication efforts between farmers and the village government have not been successful due to differences in understanding and interests. They also claim that there are obstacles in communication due to low participation in dialogue.

Echoing Maliki, Sumiyati Pelu et al., (2024) argue that forest management will fail if various parties do not participate. They claim that community participation is one of the important things to consider in forest management. Anomsari (2013) and Rosada (2021) also observe similar situations when they claim that the deficiency in communication has resulted in the lack of community participation in the community-based forest management program in Karanggayam, Kebumen. They attribute this failure to an 'ineffective stakeholder dialog'. Although Zulelvi et al. (2018) and Zeilifa et al. (2021) claim that community participation in social forest management contributes to the improvement of the regional economy, they hardly provide a clear explanation of the type of participation and the communication involved in the process. Mainly, none of these studies investigate the effectiveness of institutional communication in depth, as is the case in this study.

Research Methods

This research employs qualitative methods to collect data. The purpose of employing this method in the first stage is to explore the phenomenon of institutional communication that occurs in each institution involved in the social forestry program at both the Nagari/village and regional government levels in improving the economy of farming communities in Nagari forest areas. There are two types of data used in this study: primary data obtained directly from the source, namely the results of interviews and observations at the research location, and secondary data derived from scientific articles, magazines, and books.

Data was analyzed using qualitative analysis methods. The analytical tool used to address the research question is descriptive analytics by describing and simultaneously explaining the data obtained from research using the 5W + 1H Technique. Goal 2 uses the interpretation analysis technique. This technique is a step taken by postulating several theoretical views, opinions, and approaches to make communication patterns meaningful. The logic used in interpreting data is that behavior or action X becomes the reason or cause Y can occur.

Findings

A. Understanding of the Social Forestry Program and How It Works

Social Forestry is a national forest management program that aims to achieve economic equality through three pillars, namely: land, business opportunities, and human resources (KKI-RI, 2017). Social Forestry is also a legal object for communities around forest areas to manage state forest areas, and the government has 2 main agendas on forest management, namely improving the welfare of the community, especially around forests, and creating an effective forest conservation model. Seeing this goal, the government has now prepared a program that ensures that the means of alleviating poverty in communities, especially those around forests, can be carried out using a model that creates harmony between increasing welfare with equality and preserving the environment. This program is a Social Forestry Program. The Social Forestry Program itself aims to improve community welfare through empowerment patterns while still being guided by sustainability aspects (KLHK-RI, 2021).

It is expected that this program will create opportunities for communities around forests to apply for forest area management rights to the government. Once approved, the community can cultivate and benefit from the forest in environmentally friendly ways. With this, the community will receive various incentives in the form of technical support from the government in managing plantations in the areas they apply for. The harvest from this plantation can then be sold by the community to meet their daily economic needs. To date, 3 categories of forest rights can be applied for, namely rights to Community Forests, Village Forests, and Community Plantation Forests. Rights to forest management can be applied for by communities in areas identified in the Indicative Social Forest Management Access Map.

The government has targeted a social forestry allocation of 12.7 million hectares of forest area. In its implementation, regional working groups will be formed to assist and guide farmers who want to apply for the program. Through Social Forestry, communities can have equal and broad access to forest and land management. With a form of forest product utilization that is in accordance with environmentally friendly sustainability principles, the goals of environmental conservation can be in line with efforts to improve community welfare. Another additional benefit is the involvement of local communities as the main and closest parties who maintain forest sustainability (Budi Hidayat, 2023).

B. Institutional Communication Patterns

Economic improvement activities of farming communities around the Nagari Forest Area are part of the social forestry program implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia (Rahayu et al., 2021). In its implementation, the target objects and subjects of the beneficiaries of this program are communities living around social forestry areas, including communities around Nagari forests (Ramadhanty, 2014). People who live around the Nagari forest area work as farmers (Romadona & Setiawan, 2020). Therefore, the stakeholders and institutions involved in this activity are quite diverse. This is so that the

economic improvement program of the community around the Nagari forest can be realized by expectations (Rosalina, 2019).

Therefore, the synergy between agencies/institutions/organizations is important in this program (Salatalohy et al, 2022). According to Saputra, (2019), the agencies/institutions/organizations involved in economic improvement activities of farming communities around the Nagari forest area consist of government agencies and non-governmental institutions. The two groups of institutions above can be described as their relationship and hierarchy in the activities of improving the economy of farmers around the Nagari forest area, as seen in Figure 1 below:

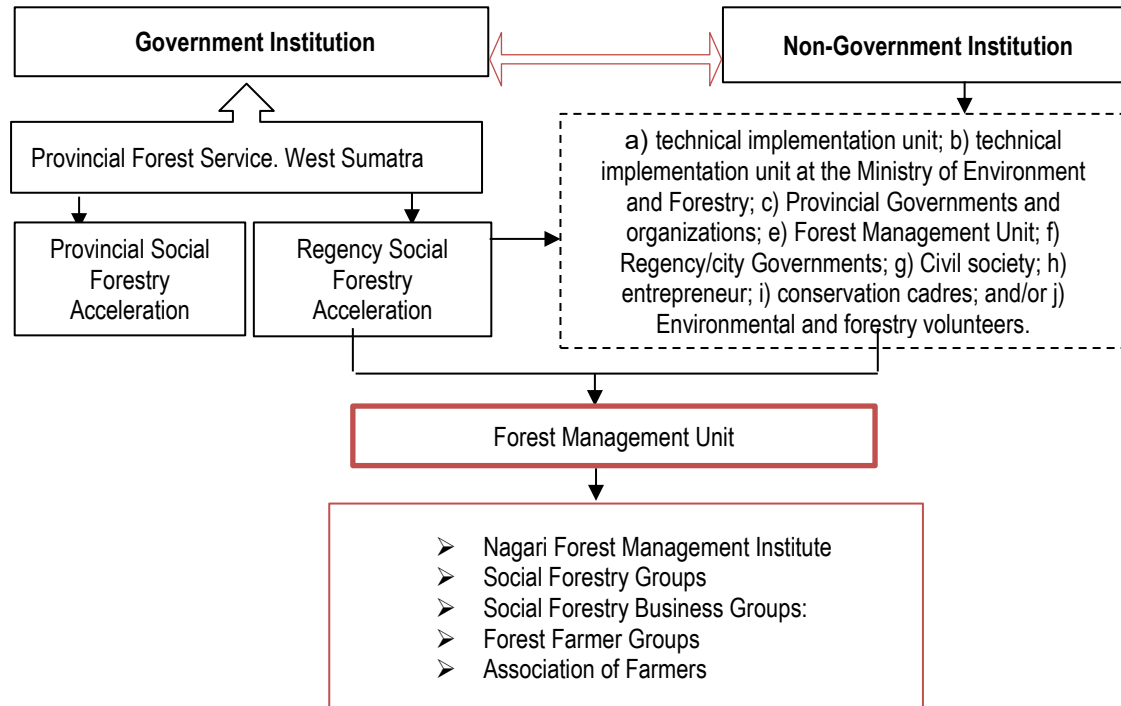


Fig 1: Structure of Institutions Involved in Farmers' Economic Improvement Activities Around the Nagari Forest Area.

Source: Author

In the Figure 1 above, it can be seen that there are many institutions involved in the economic improvement activities of farming communities in the Nagari forest area. The hierarchy of institutions starts from the central government, provincial government, district government, and institutions at the Nagari level. In addition to institutions originating from the government, there are also non-governmental institutions involved in these activities. Because this research is focused on the Nagari administrative area, the communication pattern is discussed only in the institutions involved from the district government level to the Nagari level. To be able to determine the pattern of institutional communication built in the economic improvement activities of farmers in the Nagari forest area, the elements discussed are a) Communication elements; b) Communication approach; c) Communication function; d) Communication flow; and e) Communication flow patterns. The following table shows the elements used in institutional communication in farmer economic improvement activities in the Nagari forests.

Table 1: Elements of Institutional Communication

Source: Author

No	Components of Institutional Communication	Summary of Informants' Statement
1.	Communicator	Institutional management leaders dominate the message sender in inter-institutional work coordination. Institutional

		communication activities are professionalization. In general, the communicator's attitude in institutional communication is receptive, namely, the communicator's willingness to accept ideas from other people (Kurnia, 2023).
2.	Communicants	In inter-agency work coordination, the recipient of the message is usually the head or family of the institution under the institution giving the message.
3.	Message	The characteristics of the messages used are origin messages, namely original messages obtained from primary sources, and messages in the form of organizations, namely messages that contain ideas or opinions (Budiman, 2023).
4.	Media	Institutional communication carried out so far uses cellphone media, WhatsApp, and e-mail to convey information.
5.	Communication barriers	The communication barriers so far are mechanical barriers, namely limitations of communication networks such as telephone and internet networks.
6.	Feedback	There are two types of feedback in institutional communication: positive and negative. These two types of feedback are influenced by the situation and conditions of the communicant in receiving messages from the communicator (Feri, 2023).

All the above communication elements are found in communication activities between institutions involved in economic improvement activities of farming communities active around the Nagari forest area (Sari, 2018). Furthermore, it is also necessary to know the communication approach used by the management of the institution in carrying out institutional communication. Table 2 below shows the form of communication used by institutions involved in the economic improvement activities of farming communities around Nagari forests.

Table 2: Communication Approach Between Institutions in Improving the Economy of Farmers Around the Nagari Forest Area

Source: Primary data collected by authors, 2023

No	Type of Communication Approaches	Informant responses		Resume of Important Statements from Informants
		Used	Unused	
1.	subject approach	√	-	Carried out by the leader or chairman to coordinate work between institutions
2.	Object approach	√	-	The speaker or messenger usually pays attention to the background of the person he is talking to in terms of age and level of education.
3.	Emotional approach	√	-	In communicating, communicators usually choose words and attitudes adapted to the communication conditions.
4.	Explicit approach	-	√	This approach cannot be identified because it relates to the communicator's communication knowledge.

Based on the table above, three communication approaches are used by personnel carrying out communication activities between institutions involved in economic improvement activities for farming communities around the Nagari Forest. These three approaches are used together in carrying out institutional communication activities. The desired goal in implementing this communication approach is that the communicant can well receive the message conveyed. The institutional communication function proves to be effective for social activities and serves as a tool for teaching, informing, and motivating every institution to carry

out its operations (Sari, 2022; Setiawan, et al., 2022; Setiawati, et al., 2021). In addition, understanding the communication channels used by each organization to coordinate activity is essential. The institutional communication flow is shown in Figure 2 below.

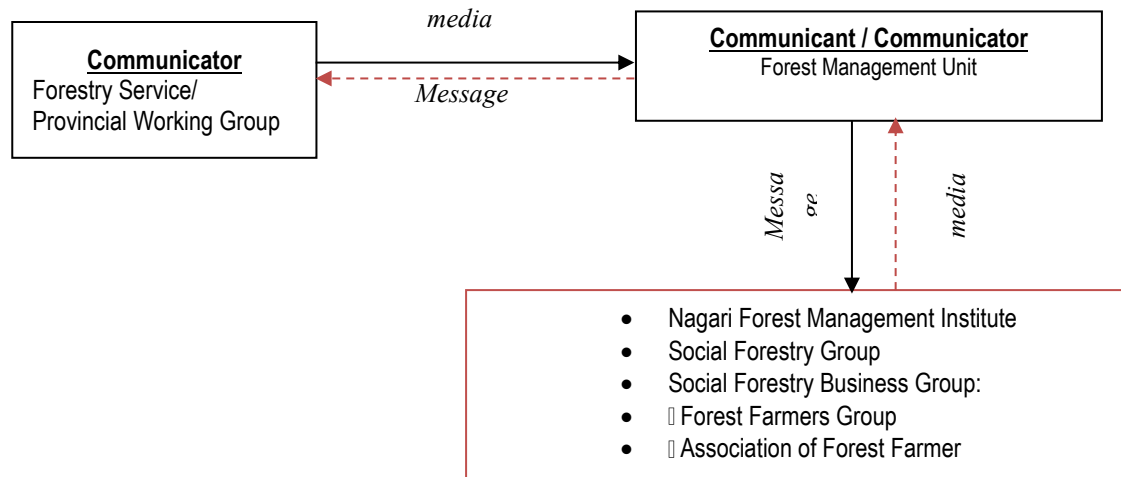


Fig 2: Pattern of Institutional Communication Flow for Farmers' Economic Development in the Nagari Forest Area.

Source: Author

Based on the above, there are several communication channels found in institutional communication activities (Gabriela, 2014), including:

1. Downward communication, which is found when institutions at the highest level, convey messages to institutions below them at the district level.
2. Upward communication, is a feedback communication carried out by the highest institution.
3. Horizontal communication, found within the institution, is communication between personnel of the institute in coordinating work.

The entire communication flow above becomes a pattern of institutional communication carried out by each institution involved in farmers' economic development activities around the Nagari forest area.

C. Factors Creating Effective Institutional Communication

In carrying out communication activities between institutions, some factors can create communication effectiveness (Suhardi, 2015; Sunarto, 2015). The intended effectiveness of communication is transmitting ideas, thoughts, or information from the sender of the message (communicator) to the recipient of the message (communicant), which results in a positive relationship or reciprocity for both parties (Suwarno et al., 2022). Effective communication is characterized by achieving goals through the communication process carried out (Syam, 2020). Moreover, understanding the information received and feedback is essential to effective communication. Creating effective communication between institutions to improve the economy of farmers in the Nagari forest area is influenced by several factors (Syaroh et al., 2020). Based on the results of interviews with research informants, several factors can contribute to the effectiveness of institutional communication, as seen in Table 4 below.

Table 3: Factors for Creating Effective Institutional Communication in Farmers' Economic Improvement Activities Around the Nagari Forest Area

Source: Primary data collected by authors, 2023

No	Institutional Communication Effectiveness Factors	Elements	Resume of Important Statements of Research Informants
1.		Respect	Both parties communicating must create conditions of mutual respect. Even

	Psychological Conditions of Communicators and Communicants		though there are differences in structure within the Institution, both parties must not position their interlocutors below them.
		Empathy of parties	Communicants and communicators must be able to understand their respective conditions in carrying out institutional communication.
		Humbleness of parties	Communication will be effective if the parties involved are humble.
2.	Message Contents	Clarity of message	The message conveyed must be clear to avoid misinterpretation.
		Audible Message	The message conveyed can be read, heard, and properly understood by the communicant.
3.	Communication media	Social media	The accuracy of selecting communication media tailored to the characteristics of the message to be conveyed can influence the effectiveness of institutional communication.
		Telephone/WhatsApp	
		E-mail	

The three factors above according to informants can create the effectiveness of institutional communication. Institutional communication in practice is carried out by individuals who manage institutions involved in the economic development activities of farming communities around the Nagari forest area. Usually, those who communicate between institutions are leaders or chairmen in each institution who interact with each other. Therefore, the first factor that can create the effectiveness of communication is the psychological state of the communicator and communicant. Both parties are involved in communicating, as much as possible to create mutual respect. Although the communicator's position as a representative of the institution is above the institution led by the communicant, the act of appreciating the communicant becomes something that can create comfort in communicating.

Furthermore, the communicator should be able to understand the conditions experienced and felt by the communicant when carrying out communication activities. This action can create communicant comfort when getting work instruction messages from the communicator. This action is called empathy given by both parties who are communicating.

Effective communication can also be created when communicators and communicants have a humble attitude (Tanjung, 2022). In communicating, no one feels they have the top position or feel like they are work leaders (Terida, 2022). This is because programs and activities to improve the economy of farming communities are a shared responsibility that can be achieved jointly by the institutions involved (Wahed et al., 2020).

The second factor is the content of the message. To create effective institutional communication the message conveyed by the communicator must be clear, audible, seen, and felt by the communicant. Clear message substance can make it easier for communicants to digest and give feedback on the messages they receive (Wartini, 2016). When the communicator conveys the message through communication media, clarity and conciseness as well as the right choice of words can make the communicant receive the message well (Zulkarnain, 2013).

The third factor is the accuracy of choosing communication media can create effectiveness in communicating. If the message to be conveyed is formal, then the media that can be used is in the form of e-mail or WhatsApp. Meanwhile, informal messages can use social media. The accuracy of choosing communication media can also create a sense of mutual respect between communicators and communicants.

Conclusion

The Social Forestry Program, a forest exploitation and management program initiated by the Indonesian government aims to improve community welfare through empowerment patterns and sustainability.

This paper concludes that the institutional communication patterns found are in the form of downward, upward, and horizontal communication. This pattern comprises communicator, communicant, message, media, communication barriers, and feedback. The communication approaches used are actor, object, emotional, and explicit.

It is important to note that institutional communication carries out functions for social interaction, expressive communication, and instrumental communication.

The study found that

- Every institution involved in the government social forestry program faces communication problems.
- This has led to the ineffectiveness of the program.
- To create effective institutional communication, several factors need to be considered including the psychological condition of the state and the communities, the content of the message, and the communication media.
- These three factors can influence each other in creating effective institutional communication.

It is thus concluded that, to create effective institutional communication, attention must be given to the psychological condition of everyone involved in the program. This factor determines comfort in carrying out communication activities.

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