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GENDER AND FOREST DEGRADATION
A CASE STUDY IN TWO VILLAGES IN EAST LOMBOK,
WEST NUSA TENGGARA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the impact of forest degradation on the social structure of a community, and especially gender roles. The study was conducted in two *dusun* in East Lombok, Sempur and Timbenuh. Administratively both *dusun* belong to two sub-districts, although physically they are only separated by 15 kilometres. Both share the same forest area, which is the main source of their livelihood. The study was conducted over a period of one year, between 1996 and 1997. The study applied both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches.

For a long period of time, the main source of livelihood for the people of both *dusun* was dry land cultivation and exploitation of the nearby forest. In the early 1970s both *dusun* experienced rapid social change, predominantly due to a decrease in the availability of land for cultivation and forest. This decrease was caused by, among other things: (1) a growing demand for access to resources which were relatively limited; (2) during the mid 1970s the forest, which was used as a main resource, became subject to the government monoculture policy (cinnamon); (3) In 1990 Act No.5 was issued, declaring the forest a protected endangered area.

In 1996 when the study was carried out, the cinnamon plantations were severely damaged and under-managed, after the dispute between the plantation owners (government) and the local people. This tension between the local people and the plantations indicated the frustration of the local community concerning the ever-shrinking access to resources, especially land. There are still available resources such as forest areas, however these

areas are not easily accessible, being a long distance from the *dusun* and at a much higher altitude.

To cope with this situation, people from these two *dusun* have adjusted using different strategies to ensure their livelihood. In comparing the two, the impact of the social changes on *dusun* Sempur was more severe. This can be attributed to the shrinking of access to their resource-base as the forest was severely damaged and then protected by law. Most men decided to migrate to look for alternative sources of income. The remaining men were forced to intensify their exploitation of the forest, although to do so, they were forced to walk long distances, and break the law. Women tended to replace men's roles, for example in agriculture. On the other hand, people in *dusun* Timbenuh still had relatively easy access to their resources; especially because their forest was less severely damaged and within walking distance. This is why the traditional division of labour, where men and women worked together in the forest, and separately in tasks involving the land, changed more in some places than others. This is the process of change and continuity within the paradigm of gender roles.