Synergy of Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Forestry Policy: Efforts to Alleviate Poverty and Sustain Forest Areas Within the Framework of Sustainable Development Goals

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ABSTRACT: The socio-economic disparities experienced by forest village communities in Indonesia represent a major urgency in developing Social Forestry policies. This program aims to provide legal access to sustainable forest management for local communities, serving as both an instrument for poverty alleviation and environmental conservation. This study employs a doctrinal legal method, incorporating a regulatory approach, a conceptual approach, and international comparative studies. The data used consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. The novelty of this study lies in the integrative analysis of Social Forestry policies alongside the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the forestry sector within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The results demonstrate that synergy among the government, corporations, and communities can strengthen the implementation of Social Forestry as a strategic instrument that not only impacts economic aspects but also supports social justice and ecological sustainability. The discussion further highlights the function of law as a social engineering tool, drawing on Roscoe Pound and Talcott Parsons' structural functional theory as a theoretical foundation to explain the role of law in transforming social structures within forest villages. By strengthening regulations and fostering multi-party partnerships, Social Forestry policies have the potential to become a sustainable solution to address poverty and environmental degradation.

KEYWORDS: Social Forestry; Corporate Social Responsibility; Social Engineering; Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

Forests are essential natural resources found in many countries around the world, including Indonesia. As an agrarian country, Indonesia possesses significant forest resource potential, which plays a crucial role in ensuring food security and environmental resilience. Forests contribute to ecological stability by producing oxygen (O_2), which supports the life and well-being of the broader population. Article 33, paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945) states that the earth, water, and natural resources therein are controlled by the state and must be used for the greatest benefit of the people. This implies that the management and use of natural resources must prioritize the welfare of society at large.

The issue of forest management in Indonesia is closely linked to the empowerment of communities living in and around forest areas, especially those who depend on natural resources for their daily livelihoods. A common social phenomenon is the economic disparity faced by local communities living near forest areas, particularly in production forests managed by corporate entities within the forestry sector. In response to these challenges, the Indonesian government—through the state-owned enterprise *Perum Perhutani*—introduced a joint forest management initiative with local communities. This initiative evolved into the **Social Forestry Policy**, a policy innovation aimed at promoting collaborative forest governance. It is legally grounded in **Law No. 6 of 2023**, which ratifies **Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022 on Job Creation**.

This situation reflects a paradox between the vast potential wealth of Indonesia's forests and the persistent socio-economic hardships of communities living around them (Susetyo, 2022). The Social Forestry Policy seeks to resolve this disparity by granting legal access to communities for the sustainable management of forest areas, while simultaneously preserving ecological functions. Beyond its role in poverty alleviation, Social Forestry has become a strategic instrument for environmental conservation and community-based economic development. It represents a shift toward inclusive forest management that balances ecological sustainability with social equity. As such, this policy embodies the government's commitment to sustainable development and long-term environmental stewardship.

The term *Social Forestry* was first introduced in 1968 by Jack Westoby, a forestry economist from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This concept was proposed as a strategy for forestry development that emphasizes generating forest benefits

not only for environmental protection but also for recreation that can be enjoyed by the wider community (Zulkarnain, 2021). Social forestry is intended as a dual-purpose initiative: to conserve forest resources while alleviating poverty among communities living in and around forest areas. Empowering these communities is essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2021 indicate that Indonesia has approximately 25,863 forest villages, with 36.7% of the population living below the poverty line (Widya et al., 2021). A study by LPEM UI (2020) also revealed that forest-dependent communities have the highest poverty rate—reaching up to 20%—compared to other social groups (Zulkarnain, 2021). These findings highlight the urgent need for an integrative approach to forest management that addresses both socio-economic and ecological aspects.

In the Indonesian legal framework, the social forestry scheme is regulated under Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. P.83/2016 on Social Forestry, which was later updated through Government Regulation No. 23/2021 on Forestry Implementation. The revision of the scheme, initiated in 2016, reflects the result of a long process involving the efforts of various stakeholders and an evaluation of previous policy implementations, with the aim of developing a more equitable and effective social forestry system. The updated regulation also incorporates insights from local community experiences in managing social forests (Firdaus, 2018). Several key policies have contributed to this development, including Constitutional Court Decision No. 35/2012, which recognizes *Customary Forests*, and President Joko Widodo's Nawacita program, particularly its mission to resolve agrarian conflicts in forest areas (Abimanyu et al., 2023). Together, these initiatives represent a significant shift toward participatory forest governance that prioritizes social justice and environmental sustainability.

The implementation of social forestry from a legal-formal perspective has a positive impact on various aspects, including economic, social, and ecological aspects. Economically, the community obtains a wider area of land to cultivate, so that their economic needs and welfare are more secure. From a social perspective, the level of welfare of the community around the forest increases, supported by legal certainty through a cooperation agreement between the government (through BUMN forest management) and the community, which clearly regulates the rights and obligations of each party, and provides legal access with a relatively long and extendable period. Meanwhile, from an ecological aspect, the forest continues to function as an ecosystem that has a protective, regulatory, and productive role, so that the sustainability of forest resources and the environment can be maintained to support the achievement of people's prosperity (Mahardika & Muyani, 2021).

Social Forestry has great potential as a structural solution to reduce inequality and poverty, especially in rural areas. It is estimated that optimal implementation of this policy can contribute to the eradication of up to one-third of national poverty. Therefore, synergy between the government, communities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector is crucial in accelerating the realization of the benefits of this program. With a collaborative and sustainable approach, community-based forest management will not only create social justice but also ensure the sustainability of natural resources for future generations.

Before the establishment of the formal social forestry program, *Perhutani*, a State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) in the forestry sector, had already implemented a joint forest management program with local communities as part of its corporate social responsibility toward villages surrounding production forest areas under its management authority. This initiative was based on **Law No. 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry** and **Government Regulation No. 72 of 2010**, which regulate *Perhutani's* authority to engage in Joint Forest Management with local communities. The program operates through a partnership system involving Forest Village Community Institutions (Lembaga Masyarakat Desa Hutan, LMDH), which utilize portions of production forest land under a profit-sharing arrangement. Additionally, *Perhutani* provides support in the form of seedlings and capital assistance for livestock to enhance the livelihoods of forest village communities.

The integration of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs with social forestry policies demonstrates a strong synergy in efforts to alleviate poverty and conserve forest areas. Through collaboration between the government, state-owned enterprises, and the private sector, these programs grant communities legal access to sustainably manage forest resources while simultaneously improving their standard of living. This collaborative approach aligns closely with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goals related to poverty reduction (SDG 1), terrestrial ecosystem protection (SDG 15), and multi-stakeholder partnerships (SDG 17). Therefore, *Perhutani's* social responsibility initiatives through Joint Forest Management, alongside CSR adoption by the private sector, play a strategic role in supporting social forestry policies as effective instruments for poverty alleviation and the achievement of sustainable development objectives.

Previous studies related to this research topic include, first, the work of Andi Setyo Pambudi, titled *"Achievements, Challenges of Implementation, and Recommendations for Social Forestry Policy in Indonesia."* This study focuses on the implementation of social forestry in Indonesia, which has shown success in several areas but still faces various challenges. The government has issued policies to recognize community rights and encourage sustainable forest management. However, implementation remains hindered by sectoral regulations, knowledge gaps, mistargeted recipients, and inadequate assistance. Many local communities have not received sufficient access to training, markets, and support, resulting in sustainability goals not being fully achieved (Pambudi, 2022). In contrast, the present study focuses on exploring the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social forestry policies aimed at alleviating poverty among communities living near forest areas, while promoting ecological sustainability.

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The second study is by Rima Gulam Sari (2020), titled *"Implications of the Regulation of the Minister of Environment Number 83 of 2016 concerning Social Forestry on Community Economic Self-Reliance in the Social Forestry Program (A Study of the Farmer Group of Nagari Latang, Sijunjung Regency)."* This research examines how the Social Forestry Program in Nagari Latang has stimulated economic growth by supporting various local businesses such as honey production, sour gelugur tea, sour kandis tea, and sour gelugur coffee. These efforts have not only increased residents' incomes but also created new employment opportunities. The program's effectiveness is evident in the utilization of Community Forest (Hutan Kemasyarakatan, HKm) land, which provides additional income while preserving the environment. According to Ministerial Regulation No. P.88/Menhut-II/2014, farmers are required to plant a minimum of 400 trees per hectare, ensuring forest sustainability and conservation. HKm management maintains the protective function of forests, thereby supporting economic self-reliance alongside ecosystem preservation (Sari, 2020). The current study similarly examines how social forestry policies contribute to economic transformation and environmental protection in forest communities.

However, an imbalance remains regarding regulations governing social forestry policies, particularly those established in Law No. 3 of 2024 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulations in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022 on Job Creation. Despite these regulations, many local forest communities have yet to achieve prosperity, highlighting a gap that necessitates corporate cooperation through social responsibility initiatives integrated into social forestry programs. Based on the above background, this research addresses two main problem formulations: (1) How relevant is corporate social responsibility in the forestry sector to social forestry policies in alleviating poverty in forest village communities and promoting environmental sustainability?; and (2) What is the role of law as a social engineering tool in transforming social forestry policies toward poverty alleviation and achieving sustainable development goals?

Research Method

This study employs doctrinal legal research by examining legal norms relevant to the topic of the relationship between corporate social responsibility and social forestry policies, particularly in the context of poverty alleviation and sustainable development goals. The research adopts a doctrinal approach utilizing regulatory, conceptual, and comparative legal methods, including an analysis of social forestry systems in other countries. The data used in this study are secondary data, comprising primary legal materials such as Law No. 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry, Law No. 6 of 2023 concerning Job Creation, and various technical regulations related to social forestry.

Secondary legal materials include scientific articles and national or international journals pertinent to the research topic, while tertiary legal materials consist of internet sources such as websites. The collection of secondary data is conducted through literature review of legal materials—primary, secondary, and tertiary—as well as non-legal materials. The search for these materials involves reading, watching, listening, and, increasingly, internet-based research (Fajar & Achmad, 2015). For data analysis, this study follows the interactive model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Miles Huberman, which involves an ongoing cycle of activities: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. It should be noted that the conclusions drawn are not equivalent to generalizations (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Forestry Sector to Social Forestry Policy in Alleviating Poverty in Village Communities, Forests, and Environmental Sustainability

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an important mechanism to enhance the welfare of local communities, especially for companies engaged in natural resource sectors such as forestry. This aligns with the goals of the Indonesian state to improve community welfare, as mandated by Article 28H(1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which guarantees every citizen the right to a good and healthy living environment. The social forestry program is governed by Law No. 6 of 2023 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022 on Job Creation.

The Social Forestry Program is a national strategic initiative designed to promote economic justice by reducing inequality in forest resource use. It aims to alleviate unemployment and poverty, particularly among communities residing near forest areas. Therefore, access to forest management through social forestry must be implemented carefully and targeted effectively, prioritizing beneficiaries who meet specific criteria, such as individuals living in poverty, those with no or limited land ownership, and residents in or around forest zones. The program encompasses five main schemes: Village Forests, Community Forests (Hutan Kemasyarakatan, HKm), People's Plantation Forests (Hutan Tanaman Rakyat, HTR), Forestry Partnerships, and Customary Forests. Each scheme provides specific legal access rights, including Village Forest Management Rights (HPHD), Community Forest Utilization Business Permits (IUPHKm), Community Plantation Forest Timber Product Utilization Business Permits (IUPHHK-HTR), Recognition and Protection of Forestry Partnerships (Kulin-KK), Social Forestry Forest Utilization Permits (IPHPS), and Recognition and Protection of Customary Forests (Mahardika & Muyani, 2021).

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) serves as a mechanism to balance environmental and humanitarian interests, given the significant impact of corporate activities on society. According to Gotea and Roșculeț (2019), CSR is grounded in respect for human rights and can promote the elimination of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes against vulnerable groups. This concept is closely linked to social development, sustainability, and community empowerment. In practice, CSR aligns with the goals of social work, including providing inclusive social services, enhancing individual and collective capacities, and fostering social cohesion and inclusion (Santoso & Raharjo, 2022).

The social forestry program represents a middle ground for the government in encouraging corporations to fulfill their social responsibilities within the environmental sector. Prior to this program, initiatives such as the Joint Forest Management Program with the Community by Perum Perhutani and the Village Community Empowerment Program for Plantations by Perusahaan Terbatas Perkebunan Nusantara had already been implemented. These programs have contributed to the economic advancement of local communities living near forest areas and production plantations, helping to reduce poverty and inequality.

Aligning business strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enables corporate leaders to redirect investments toward optimizing value creation within the framework of sustainable development. This approach also supports risk mitigation, opportunity identification, and the development of long-term innovative solutions that are relevant to achieving the SDGs. Consequently, the integration of business and sustainable development agendas is essential for companies aiming to achieve superior and sustainable financial performance amid global macroeconomic dynamics (El Alfy et al., 2020).

The relationship between corporate social responsibility in the forestry sector and social forestry policies corresponds with key sustainable development goals, particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Fundamentally, the government seeks to prevent environmental degradation and ensure the sustainability of natural resources for the benefit of the broader community.

The SDGs framework plays a crucial role in shaping the impact-oriented interpretation of corporate sustainability by providing clear, measurable goals that emphasize the interconnectedness of sustainable development objectives. It also establishes specific targets that companies can adopt and commit to. The United Nations 2030 Agenda builds upon and replaces the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were in effect from 2000 to 2015. The initial draft of the SDGs was prepared by the Open Working Group of the United Nations General Assembly between January 2013 and September 2014, followed by extensive discussions and revisions before the final version was launched in September 2015 (Fiandrino et al., 2022).

2. **The Role of Legal Functions as a Social Engineering Tool in Transforming Social Forestry Policy: An Effort to Alleviate Poverty and Achieve Sustainable Development Goals**P

Social forestry is designed as an instrument of social change, empowering forest village communities and supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly poverty alleviation (SDG 1) and sustainable ecosystems (SDG 15). The philosophical and constitutional foundations of social forestry policy are robust. Pancasila, particularly Article 5, which mandates "Social justice for all Indonesian people," underpins the spirit of equitable distribution of natural resource benefits to the people, including forest communities. Furthermore, Article 33(3) of the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945) emphasizes that "The land, water, and natural resources contained therein are controlled by the state and used for the greatest prosperity of the people." Forests are regarded as the "basic capital of national development," providing ecological, economic, and socio-cultural benefits for the welfare of the people, in accordance with the mandate of Article 33(3).

Accordingly, the regulation of social forestry aligns closely with the constitutional mandate to manage natural resources for the benefit of the people. The principle of a sustainable living environment, guaranteed by the constitution (Article 28H(1) of UUD 1945 concerning the right to a good environment), further supports granting access to social forestry under the condition of ecological sustainability. The implementation of social forestry must balance village economic development with the preservation of forest functions (e.g., through agroforestry), as envisioned by sustainable development principles.

Normatively, following the enactment of the Job Creation Law, the legal legitimacy of social forestry is no longer merely discretionary but is embedded within primary legislation. This development strengthens the principles of procedural justice and legal certainty. For example, the Job Creation Law not only "recognizes" but also delineates the boundaries of conservation and production forest areas accessible for community management rights. Thus, the legislative framework reinforces a pro-community stance, particularly toward vulnerable forest communities. The principle of non-discrimination is upheld by including customary ownership rights (customary forests) within the legal framework. Additionally, derivative regulations such as Government Regulation No. 23/2021 and Ministry of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. 9/2021 govern technical mechanisms—including permits, assistance, and KUR (People's Business Credit) funding—that ensure effective policy implementation. These norms are further supported by Article 6(c) of the Job Creation Law, which designates the advancement of people's welfare as a key objective in law and regulation formation. Grounded in these legal and constitutional principles, social forestry is expected to serve as a legal tool that "engineers" the socio-economic structure of forest villages toward equitable prosperity.

As an instrument of social engineering, law is designed to promote positive social change and uphold social justice. Roscoe Pound, a leading figure in sociological jurisprudence, argued that law functions as a social engineering tool aimed at "creating a

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better social order" by adapting legal rules to the needs of society (Triana et al., 2024). The relevance of this social forestry program encourages corporations in the forestry sector to undertake social responsibilities to help alleviate poverty among rural forest communities.

According to Roscoe Pound, law operates as a tool of social engineering with the goal of realizing harmony in social life, aligning with the interests and needs of the community. Pound is widely regarded as one of the most influential legal thinkers globally, and his ideas continue to be discussed and acknowledged. He remains a central figure in the school of sociological jurisprudence (Sundari et al., 2024). This social forestry policy has been implemented in several regions in Indonesia, including Tarakan, North Kalimantan. The social forestry program in North Kalimantan Province began in 2018. In Tarakan City alone, a total land area of 323 hectares is managed by four community groups. These groups are listed in the following table:

Table 1. Community Groups Managing Social Forestry in Tarakan City

No	Group Name	Land Area (Ha)	Number of Members
1	Gapoktanhut Lestari Gunung Selatan	105	37
2	Gapoktanhut Gunung Slipi	105	31
3	KTH Slipi Makdekpon	86	26
4	KTH Taka Ngai	27	35

The implementation of this program is expected to improve the living standards of communities around forest areas. With increasing welfare, it is anticipated that local communities will become more aware of and actively involved in preserving the forest's sustainability, which serves as their primary livelihood source. Agusti and colleagues (2019) assert that the long-term goals of the social forestry program are to rehabilitate degraded forests, encourage active community participation, improve local economic conditions, and ensure the availability of basic needs for these communities (Toha & Wihadanto, 2023).

Social forestry is an approach applied in various countries to involve local communities in sustainable forest management. The following outlines social forestry concepts from several countries worldwide: Brazil implements a robust social forestry program by granting local communities the rights to manage and utilize forest resources. Communities are granted access to harvest both timber and non-timber forest products, as well as to practice sustainable agriculture within forest areas. In Mexico, the concept of "ejidos" refers to collectively owned forest lands. This system recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples and farmers to manage forests sustainably while receiving economic benefits as compensation for their stewardship. India adopts the "Community Forest Rights" approach under the Forest Rights Act, which grants indigenous peoples and local communities rights to ownership and management of forest areas (Pambudi, 2022).

These examples from three countries illustrate that social forestry policies aim to conserve forest areas while improving the welfare of rural communities living nearby. This aligns with Roscoe Pound's theory that law functions both as a tool of social control and social engineering. In the context of social forestry policy and corporate social responsibility (CSR), the law functions as social control by preventing and mitigating excessive environmental damage caused by corporate exploitation in production forest areas. Concurrently, law as a tool of social engineering is manifested in the implementation of this program through partnerships among the government, corporations, and local communities to manage forest areas for food security and ecological sustainability.

The government's attention to reforming the forestry sector aligns with global non-binding commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), known in Indonesia as *Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan*. This document outlines 17 critical issues that are collective responsibilities of the international community, including Indonesia, which ranks fourth globally in population. The national development policy aligns with the core principles of the SDGs. First, the principle of universality emphasizes that sustainable development must be implemented comprehensively throughout Indonesia. Second, the principle of integration requires development to harmonize the three main dimensions—social, economic, and environmental—in an integrated manner. Third, the principle of "no one left behind" signifies that development must be inclusive, reaching all segments of society without excluding or neglecting any group (Rahman et al., 2021).

The social forestry policy provided by the government for corporations represents a form of social transformation. This can be analyzed through Talcott Parsons' Cybernetic Law Theory, which correlates with the implications of the social forestry program. According to Parsons, the paradigm of social change theory focuses on how societies evolve and the processes that drive such transformation. The research issue centers on understanding social realities through the perspective of structural functionalism.

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Parsons' Structural Functionalism Theory outlines four essential functions of action, commonly known as the "AGIL" framework. This model emphasizes stability and order while largely overlooking conflict and social change. The theory is grounded in key concepts such as function, dysfunction, latent functions, manifest functions, and equilibrium. From the viewpoint of structural functionalism, society is seen as a social system consisting of interrelated components functioning together harmoniously (Chotim, 2022).

Parsons argued that social change is influenced by several subsystems. According to Talcott Parsons' Cybernetic Law Theory, four subsystems affect societal changes: the economic, political, social, and cultural subsystems. Among these, the economic subsystem wields the greatest energy, while the cultural subsystem exerts the least. This can be related to the phenomenon of rapid economic development driven by extensive natural resource exploitation, which has contributed to the establishment of social forestry policies under the Job Creation Law. This policy functions as a tool to engineer corporate and community behavior in alleviating poverty among forest village populations, while preventing environmental degradation and ensuring the ecological sustainability of forests.

CONCLUSSION

The Social Forestry Program is a strategic policy initiated by the Indonesian government to address socio-economic inequality in forest-adjacent communities while simultaneously preserving the environment. This program grants legal access to communities for the sustainable management of forests, contributing to poverty alleviation, job creation, and the overall welfare of forest village populations. Corporate involvement through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a vital role in supporting the success of this program. CSR initiatives can provide technical assistance, resources, and capital to empower local communities. This collaboration between the state, communities, and the private sector aligns with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly in reducing poverty (SDG 1), ensuring healthy lives and preserving ecosystems (SDGs 3 and 15), and fostering partnerships to achieve development goals (SDG 17).

From a legal theory perspective, especially drawing from Roscoe Pound's concept of law as a tool of social engineering, the Social Forestry policy represents a concrete example of how law can reshape social structures and influence the economic behavior of forest-dependent communities through inclusive and equitable legal mechanisms. Additionally, Talcott Parsons' structural-functionalism theory illustrates how legal, economic, social, and cultural systems interact and support one another in processes of social transformation. The strengthening of regulatory frameworks—such as through the Job Creation Law and its implementing regulations—has enhanced legal certainty and encouraged greater public participation. Consequently, Social Forestry should not be viewed merely as a sectoral policy but as a powerful instrument for sustainable social transformation, aimed at improving community welfare and preserving Indonesia's forest ecosystems.

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