

National Forestry Board (DKN) presidium head Made Subadya Gel Gel said Thursday that REDD-plus project initiators had to carry out the FPIC process in planned project areas before they could receive the necessary permits from relevant REDD-plus institutions.

“We need to carry out such processes to make sure that the implementation of REDD-plus in Indonesia will directly benefit indigenous people and local communities,” he said at the launching of recommendations on FPIC instruments held by the DKN, the Forestry Ministry and the UN-REDD Indonesia.

REDD-plus is part of Indonesia’s efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. REDD-plus should directly contribute to reducing Indonesia’s greenhouse gas emissions by 26 percent before 2020. Emission reportedly could decline by 41 percent, as targeted by the government, with international support.

According to the United Nations’ Commission on Human Rights, the FPIC recognizes the inherent and prior rights of indigenous people to their land and resources.

All REDD-plus projects should follow the FPIC process because indigenous people and local communities dependent on forests will most likely shoulder the heaviest burden from the impacts of development projects.

The FPIC instruments came from a two-day national workshop on the development of the FPIC concept within REDD-plus activities in Indonesia on Jan. 11 to 12 that would involve local communities.

They could give their approval or decide not to approve a REDD-plus project during the FPIC process, Made said.

“They can make decisions without pressure from any entities,” he said, adding that before giving their approval, local communities should have comprehensive information about REDD-plus activities.

Data from the Forestry Ministry from 2009 showed that more than 25,000 villages in Indonesia were located near or inside forests. World Bank data in 2009 reported that at least six million Indonesians depended on forests for their livelihoods.

These figures show that REDD-plus activities will directly affect the livelihoods of millions of people living near or inside forest areas.

Hedar Laujeng, head of the DKN’s society chamber, said that indigenous people and local communities considered the forest ecosystem an important part of their livelihoods due to its highly-valued spiritual and sociocultural attributes.

“It’s more than only about economic benefits,” he told The Jakarta Post.

The FPIC, he said, would help prevent any potential future conflicts between the communities and the initiators of the REDD-plus projects. **(ebf)**