

## **Analysis of the Role of the Land Agency in Handling Land Disputes and Social Conflicts Between *PT. Bahruni & Sons* and the Communities in Gampong Krueng Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang, Bireuen Regency**

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**ABSTRACT**

Land disputes involving plantation companies and local communities often develop into complex and prolonged social conflicts. One of the agrarian conflicts that until now has not found a solution occurred between *PT. Bahruni & Sons* with the communities of Gampong Krueng Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang, Bireuen Regency. This conflict is related to the issue of legality and the extension of the Right to Use (HGU) on oil palm plantation land that has been managed by the company since the 1960s. This study aims to analyze the role of the Bireuen Regency Land Office in handling land disputes and accompanying social conflicts. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was obtained through interviews with Land Office officials, documentation studies in the form of official meeting minutes, and review of licensing documents and land tenure chronology. The results of the study show that the Land Office has carried out its role as a facilitator, mediator, and coordinator in the dispute resolution process. However, this role has not been optimally run due to differences in interests between the parties, low public trust, and historical and social complexity of land tenure. This research emphasizes the importance of strengthening the mediation function of local governments and the application of good governance principles in resolving agrarian disputes.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Land problems are one of the crucial issues that continue to develop in the dynamics of development in Indonesia. Land not only serves as an economic asset, but also has social, cultural, and historical value inherent in people's lives. Therefore, every issue related to land often does not stop at the administrative aspect alone, but can develop into a social conflict involving various interests (Khatiri et al., 2024; Loucks & Van Beek, 2017; Wang et al., 2016). Land disputes generally occur due to overlapping ownership, unclear legal status, and weak land administration systems in the past. In the context of economic development, the involvement of private parties such as plantation companies often complicates the situation, especially when there is a difference in perception between companies and the community regarding land rights (Bhatt, 2020; Byerlee & Rueda, 2015; Kainyande et al., 2022). This condition shows that land issues are not only related to legal aspects, but also closely related to social justice and resource distribution (Borras & Franco, 2020; Tramel, 2020).

In Bireuen Regency, the land conflict between *PT. Bahruni & Sons* with the communities of Gampong Krueng, Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang is one of the real examples of agrarian conflicts that have a strong historical and social dimension. The company has been managing oil palm plantation land since the 1960s on the basis of the Right to Use Business (HGU)

(Mustofa et al., 2025). However, after the validity period of the HGU expired in 1993, the renewal process did not run optimally. The conflict situation that has occurred in Aceh has also affected land tenure, so that some areas previously managed by the company have turned into land cultivated by the community (Mustofa et al., 2025; Muthallib, 2025; Zainal et al., 2024). In its development, the land is used by the community for various needs, such as agriculture and settlements. On the other hand, the company continues to strive to maintain and update the legality of some of the land that is still controlled. This difference in interests then triggers disputes that are not only administrative, but also develop into social conflicts that involve the community at large (Ratner et al., 2017; Wals, 2023).

This condition places the local government as a party that has a responsibility in maintaining social stability while ensuring legal certainty (Doing et al., 2024; Tsagae, 2023). In this case, the Bireuen Regency Land Office has an important role in handling land disputes through facilitation, mediation, and coordination functions between parties to the dispute. This role is very important considering that resolving agrarian conflicts requires an approach that is not only legalistic, but also considers social and humanitarian aspects (Grace, 2020; Sudarti et al., 2025). However, in practice, the handling of land disputes does not always run effectively (Mequanent, 2016; Rasyid, 2024). Obstacles such as differences in interests, lack of public trust in the government, and the historical complexity of land tenure are often obstacles in the conflict resolution process (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Kalabamu, 2019). This shows that the role of local governments, especially the Land Office, still needs to be studied more deeply to find out the extent of its effectiveness in handling land disputes and social conflicts.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach to explore the dynamics of land disputes and the role of the Land Office in conflict resolution. The population of this study consists of stakeholders directly involved in the land dispute between *PT. Bahruni & Sons* and the communities of Gampong Krueng Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang in Bireuen Regency. The research sample is determined purposively, including key informants such as officials from the Bireuen Regency Land Office (e.g., head of office, heads of divisions, and technical staff), representatives of *PT. Bahruni & Sons*, village leaders, community figures, and affected residents. The purposive sampling technique is selected to ensure that participants possess relevant knowledge, experience, and involvement in the dispute resolution process, thereby enabling the collection of in-depth and contextually rich data.

The research instruments consist of semi-structured interview guidelines, observation checklists, and documentation review formats. To ensure data validity, this study applies triangulation techniques, including source triangulation (comparing information from different informants), method triangulation (interviews, observations, and document analysis), and time triangulation. Reliability is strengthened through consistency in data collection procedures and the use of clear interview protocols. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews with selected informants, direct field observations in the disputed areas, and documentation studies involving official records such as meeting minutes, land ownership documents, HGU permits, and government reports. The research procedure begins with

preliminary field identification, followed by obtaining research permits, conducting data collection, organizing and transcribing data, and verifying findings through member checking.

Data analysis is carried out using an interactive qualitative analysis model, following the framework of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involves selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from the field. Data display is conducted through narrative descriptions, matrices, and thematic categorizations to facilitate interpretation. Conclusion drawing is performed by identifying patterns, relationships, and key findings related to the role of the Land Office and challenges in dispute resolution. The analysis process is supported by qualitative data management software such as NVivo to organize coding, categorize themes, and ensure systematic data interpretation. Through this analytical approach, the study aims to produce valid, reliable, and comprehensive findings regarding agrarian conflict management at the local level.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Chronology of Land Disputes of *PT. Bahruni & Sons* with the Community**

The land dispute between *PT. Bahruni & Sons* with the communities of Krueng Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang Villages, July District, Bireuen Regency, is an agrarian conflict that has long and complex historical roots. This problem is not only related to the aspect of land legality, but is also influenced by the social dynamics and political conditions that have occurred in the Aceh region. Historically, *PT. Bahruni & Sons* has been controlling and managing land in the region since the early 1960s. This control was then strengthened through government policy with the issuance of the Decree of the Deputy Minister Head of the Department of Agrarian Affairs Number 16/HGU/66 on July 7, 1966. Furthermore, the company obtained Business Use Rights (HGU) Number 1 on May 28, 1973 with an area of about 253 hectares and a validity period of 20 years, which ended in 1993.

Towards the end of the HGU period, the company had applied for an extension on February 12, 1987. However, the extension process did not run as it should. This condition was influenced by the conflict situation that occurred in Aceh at that time, which had an impact on the disruption of the government administration system and land control in various regions. As a result of these conditions, some of the land that was previously under the company's control was transferred to the community. Of the total area of 253 hectares, currently only about 129.43 hectares can still be controlled by *PT. Bahruni & Sons*, while the remaining 123.57 hectares have been used by the community for various purposes, such as agriculture and settlements. This change in land ownership is one of the main sources of disputes between the two parties.

In an effort to regain the legality of the land that is still controlled, *PT. Bahruni & Sons* applied for a site permit recommendation as part of the HGU renewal or renewal process. However, this process faced various obstacles, especially from the local community represented by the gampong apparatus. The rejection was shown through objections to land measurement activities carried out in the field, thereby hindering the land administration process. From 2017 to 2022, various settlement efforts have been made through meetings between the company, gampong officials, community leaders, and local governments. One of the important moments occurred on October 2, 2022, when a meeting was held between the parties which was then followed up with a joint location survey on October 20, 2022. During

the meeting, the community proposed a demand that the company release some of the land that is still controlled, especially around 25.97 hectares for public facilities, as well as an additional land of about 4,000 square meters for parking areas.

In response to the request, the company expressed its willingness to release an area of 4,000 square meters that will be used as supporting facilities. However, the company rejected the request to release 25.97 hectares of land with several considerations. First, the area of land that is still controlled by the company has been significantly reduced from the initial area, so the release of additional land is feared to have an impact on business sustainability. Second, some of the land has historical value for the company. Third, the requested land is a productive area that is the main source of the company's income and supports the absorption of local labor.

Alternatively, the company offered a replacement land of approximately 5 hectares outside the area requested by the community. However, the offer was not accepted. In fact, in some conditions, the company has difficulty conducting direct socialization to the public regarding the offer. On the other hand, the company also stated that it has carried out its obligations as a business entity, such as the payment of Land and Building Tax (PBB) on the entire land area and the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs to the community around the operational area. This is part of the company's argument in defending the rights to land that is still controlled.

This condition shows that the disputes that occur are not only related to formal legal aspects, but also concern the economic, social, and perception of justice of each party. The sharp difference in interests, coupled with the lack of understanding between the company and the community, causes the conflict resolution process to be protracted.

### **The Role of the Land Office in Handling Disputes**

The role of the Land Office in handling land disputes between *PT Bahruni & Sons* and the community in Krueng Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang villages can be analyzed as a form of implementing local government functions in the land sector, especially in resolving agrarian conflicts of a social nature. The Land Office not only functions as an administrative institution, but also as a mediator, facilitator, and regulator in an effort to resolve disputes involving the interests of the community and the company.

In this context, the Land Office carries out its role as a facilitator by providing a space for dialogue between parties to the dispute. This process is usually carried out through a mediation forum involving both parties, both from the community and the company. The Land Office strives to create open and constructive communication to find common ground for existing problems. This role is very important because land conflicts generally relate not only to legal aspects, but also to social, economic, and historical aspects of local communities.

In addition, the Land Office also plays a mediator in the conflict resolution process. In this case, the agency tries to be neutral and does not take sides with one party. Mediation is carried out with a deliberation approach to consensus, which aims to produce a mutual agreement that is acceptable to all parties. This mediation process reflects the application of conflict resolution theory that emphasizes the importance of peaceful and sustainable resolution.

Furthermore, the role as a regulator can be seen from the authority of the Land Office in managing land administration, including verifying the status and legality of land rights. In the

case of a dispute between *PT Bahruni & Sons* and the community, the Land Office conducts a document search, re-measurement of the land, and clarification of the disputed land boundaries. This aims to ensure clarity of the legal status of land and minimize overlapping ownership.

The Land Office also carries out the function of coaching and counseling to the community. This effort is carried out by providing an understanding of the importance of land legality, procedures for managing land rights, and dispute resolution mechanisms in accordance with laws and regulations. Through this counseling, it is hoped that the community will have better legal awareness so that it can reduce the potential for future conflicts.

### **Conflict Analysis and Resolution Challenges**

The land conflict between *PT Bahruni & Sons* and the communities in Gampong Krueng Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang can be categorized as agrarian conflicts of a structural and social nature. This conflict is not only triggered by the issue of land ownership and control, but also related to inequality of access to resources, differences in economic interests, and weak clarity of land administration. From the perspective of conflict theory, this condition reflects the conflict between economic power groups (companies) and local communities that depend on land as a source of livelihood.

Chronologically, this conflict is rooted in overlapping claims between the company and the community for the same land. The community considers that the land is customary land or has been managed for generations, while the company has a formal legal basis in the form of a business license or a certificate of business use rights. These fundamental differences in claims are the main source of conflicts that are difficult to resolve, as each side has different legitimacy, both legally formal and social.

In terms of conflict analysis, it can be seen that this conflict has several main dimensions. First, the interest dimension, where the community wants to maintain land as a source of livelihood, while the company has an interest in maintaining its investment and business activities. Second, the value dimension, which is related to the difference in views between people who view land as part of identity and heritage, and companies that see land as an economic asset. Third, the power dimension, where there is an inequality of position between society and companies in terms of access to law, information, and resources.

In the process of resolving, various challenges are faced by the Land Office as a party that plays a role in mediation and conflict facilitation. One of the main challenges is the lack of data clarity and land administration. Inaccurate or incomplete data on the status and boundaries of land often complicates the process of verifying and validating claims from each party. This can lead to a longer settlement process and a more prone to further conflicts.

The next challenge is the low level of public trust in the government. In some cases, the public feels that the government tends to side with the company, thus causing resistance to the mediation efforts carried out. Lack of transparency and effective communication are also factors that exacerbate conflict situations.

In addition, there are also differences in perceptions and interests between parties that are difficult to meet. Societies tend to prioritize aspects of social and historical justice, while companies prefer formal legality. These differences often lead to a stalemate in the negotiation process, as each party maintains its position.

Another factor that is a challenge is the limited authority and resources of the Land Office. In some cases, resolving land conflicts does not only involve administrative aspects, but also requires cross-sectoral intervention, such as local governments, law enforcement officials, and other institutions. The limitation of coordination between these agencies can hinder the effectiveness of conflict resolution.

In addition, social pressure and the potential for horizontal conflict are also challenges. Prolonged conflicts can trigger tensions between community groups, and even have the potential to cause wider open conflicts. Therefore, conflict management must not only focus on legal aspects, but also pay attention to the social and cultural aspects of the local community.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the land dispute between *PT Bahrani & Sons* and the community in Krueng Simpoe and Rantoe Panyang villages shows a discrepancy between formal legality and land tenure conditions on the ground. This conflict is influenced by differences in interests, values, and weak clarity of land data, so that it is not enough to resolve it only through an administrative law approach. The role of the Land Office has been running through mediation and facilitation, but has not been able to produce a final agreement. Therefore, more concrete and participatory steps are needed. Local governments need to strengthen their role as neutral mediators by opening a dialogue space that involves all parties equally, as is the practice of participatory agrarian reform in several regions in Indonesia. The company is advised to take a compromise approach through partnership schemes or the release of part of the land for the benefit of the community, as applied in the core-plasma pattern in the plantation sector. Meanwhile, the community needs to prioritize deliberation and increase legal understanding so that the settlement process runs more constructively. With a collaborative approach that prioritizes justice and openness, conflict resolution is expected to be achieved in a sustainable manner without causing new problems.

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