The Damar Forest Example

The purpose of this document is to find ways to promote peace by fostering community interaction. Indonesian society is filled with examples of people working together to build things, farm, and improve the quality of life. This first page contains one Sumatran example in which community bonds are created through shared labor and shared space. The following pages discuss ways to identify opportunities, find resources, and build community by creating common space.

financial

precedents of common ground: damar forests

In southern Sumatra, Damar forests sustain many villages. The resin from trees is harvested in moderation by all the villagers and supplements school, food and other expenses. The trees are able to survive, and the forests support a healthy amount of biodiversity. They aren't as diverse as virgin forests, but damar forests are more ecologically beneficial than normal crop lands.

The forest is called "hutan marga" by the villagers, which means common property, and is controlled and managed by the nearby communities. This form of farming, or agroforestry, is ecologically sustainable, and depends on the cooperation of people within and in between communities. The function of shared forest land evolved over many generations and continues today.

Consider creating this system of forestry from nothing. If these agroforest industries were to be started from virgin forests by people who had never farmed, a great deal of planning, organizing and resource gathering would be necessary. How would you go about this? Consider this problem as a prototype: The decision making processes used to address it could also be used to address any other problem discussed in this pamphlet.

Damar forests bring together communities to manage and harvest their resin.

Damar is processed by notching trees and collecting their resin. Damar forestskeep many of their ecological functions.

human

social

from concept to completion

Now that you have learned about the potential of one form of community space, consider the steps necessary to instigate a damar forest community. . .

① Identify resource:
available forest land, people who need money and work

② Identify support that can be found locally:
organization by locals, growing damar trees

③ Identify needs to be met by outside assistance:
horticultural assistance, land acquisition, environmental impact

④ Put into action:
community process, implementation plan, implementation

Now consider the benefits of such a farm system to the health and well being of a community: more income, renewed livelihoods, community members working together, improved quality of life.

Is a more fecund, integrated community less prone to violence? Could all these benefits help provide some shelter from the strife and fighting in Aceh and other areas of civil war?

physical

natural
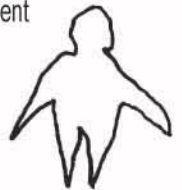
Steps to Finding Common Ground

Thousands have died in the 30-year conflict between GAM and the Indonesian military. The conflict continues, and will no doubt obstruct the tsunami reconstruction process. In this and other conflicts, one way to create peace is to nourish communities from the bottom up. This document outlines ways for Aceh citizens, NGO and aid workers, and government officials to consider paths of peace through grass-roots, community-based processes by creating places, opportunities and metaphors for peace.

financial

four steps to finding common ground in your community

START HERE: Have you seen that social and political conflicts in Aceh are a real problem? Following these steps can help you arrive at decisions that may inform your actions and give you the ability to bring about real change.

(1) Consider challenges and opportunities:
  -Conflict within local communities
  -Conflicts between local people and government
  -Need for community gathering space
  -Need for farm space and equipment
  -Need for drinking water
  -Need for transportation

human

FIND RESOURCES: Once the challenges have been identified, look at what resources might be helpful in the promotion of peace, what elements of existing society can be drawn upon for inspiration and support.

(2) Identify community resources:
  -Spiritual
  -Economic
  -Environmental
  -Spatial
  -Cultural
  -Natural
  -Community
  -Other local resources?
  -Other regional, national
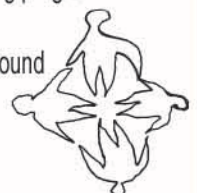   or international resources?

social

GAINING SUPPORT: With goals in mind, begin promoting your idea locally, regionally and nationally. Utilize word-of mouth, inter-net, or whatever resources you have to share ideas and promote your plan.

(3) Identify supporters:
  -Friends and family
  -Community members
  -Local governments
  -NGO's and aid workers
  -International community

physical

REAL SOLUTIONS: Now you can begin looking at how you and your group can utilize needs resources and supporters to organize tangible solutions.

(4) Explore potential solutions
  -Community gardens and resource sharing program
  -Land restoration and reclamation
  -Common space and neutral, peaceful ground
  -Swap shops and market places
  -Inter-community gathering areas
  -Physical metaphor for peace

natural

From Resource to Opportunity

This diagram works from left to right and shows how a specific resource in a community can yield many opportunities for a community. This is a framework for only a handful of ideas; there may be more resources, and there are certainly more opportunities. This can be a starting point for identifying resources in your community and identifying what opportunities for common ground lie ahead. The far right column is describes a "specific opportunity" such as a community garden.

damar forest example+
steps to finding common ground+
common resources, opportunities+
community garden prototype+

linking common resources to community opportunities →

common resources	things found locally	outside assistance	potential benefits	specific opportunity
cultural	knowledge of tradition	tools, marketing, distribution, organization	cultural recognition, education of new generations, profit	producing arts and crafts
community	garden types, plant materials, labor	organization, design, tools	food production, profit, community interaction	community garden
		this community garden prototype continued on the next page . . .		
economic	labor, eventual management	business administration, organization, management	land stewardship, property rights, profit	commercial farming
environmental stewardship	environmental values, organization, labor	land acquisition, political maneuvering restoration and environmental impact	land stewardship, restoration, re-acquisition of property	environmental restoration projects
natural (physical)	management, labor	forestry management, processing	building materials, profit, jobs	timber for houses
religious	knowledge of tradition, new adaptations	construction, community design process	promotion of religious tradition, community gathering	mosques and religious gathering places
social	construction, community process	community design process	social interaction, child interaction, networking	community gathering places

financial

human

social

physical

natural

for more information please visit http://courses.washington.edu/larescue

Community Garden Prototype

This garden began an identified resource: the tradition of community gardening. It then used local abilities to organize and design a plan for a community garden. There are many benefits from a community garden or any community-organized project. One is the benefit of food and profit for the community. Also, the social opportunities here are great: people working together to accomplish something and then enjoying the benefits.

damar forest example+
steps to finding common ground+
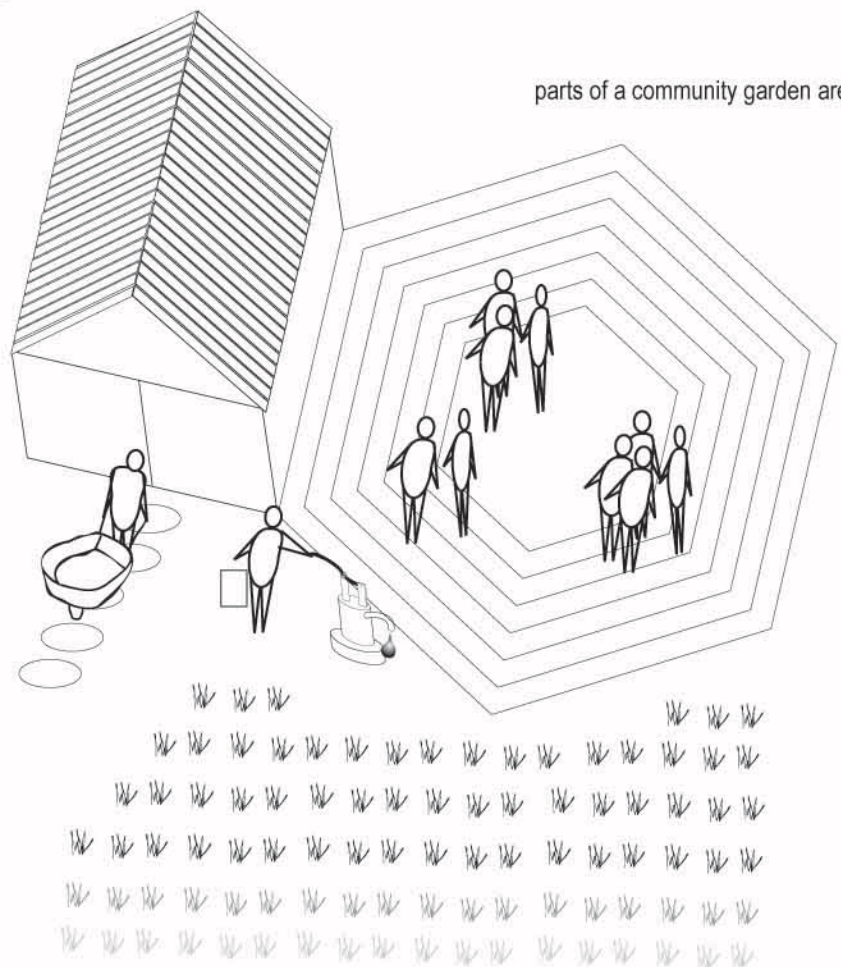common resources, opportunities+
community garden prototype+

financial

common resources	things found locally	outside assistance	potential benefits	specific opportunity
community	garden types, plant materials, labor	organization, design, tools	food production, profit, community interaction	community garden

ideas for a community garden

First, try to place the community garden in the center of the village, or at least provide access for all citizens. Next, place social structures near it, as well as other important infrastructure, like a well, to create a social hub. Some communities plant an area which is communal, and is given to poor or struggling families. Consider ways to share resources in the maintenance and care of your community garden.

It might be worth while to organize a group compost pile or compost tea bucket. Also, tool sharing or a community tool shad could help the garden run more smoothly while also keeping costs down. During harvest season, people will be working hard, and when it's over, a celebration will reward hard work and bring the community together to acknowledge it.
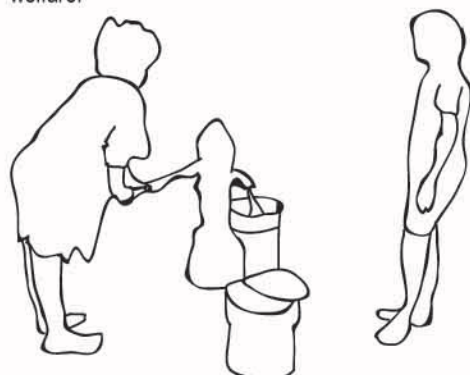
Though seeming small these community-based events and practices strengthen individuals and villages and in some small way foster peace by providing people with sustenance for survival as well as human interaction. Following the examples of this paper can inspire other common places and promote community welfare.
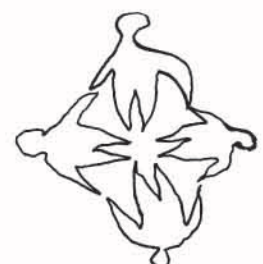
human

parts of a community garden area:

social

physical

Water and other community needs can be oriented around a central, common place.

elements of a community garden

+water source
+gathering space
+tool shed & sharing program
+market space
+community/shared plot
+private plots
+compost area\
+harvest teamwork program

natural

for more information please visit http://courses.washington.edu/larescue