

Analysis of Indonesia - Malaysia Socio-Economic Cooperation (SOSEK MALINDO) in the Management of Border Areas in Riau Islands Province: A Case Study of the Regional Border Management Agency of Riau Islands Province

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Abstract. Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world that has very strategic land and sea boundaries with neighboring countries. The existence of border areas makes Indonesia play an important role in geopolitics and regional security. One of the regions that represents the complexity of the border is the Riau Islands Province (Riau Islands), which borders Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam. The Riau Islands is a strategic point that holds great potential as well as challenges, ranging from security issues, smuggling, to economic diplomacy. The Riau Islands Regional Border Management Agency (BPPD) plays an important role in managing this dynamic, especially in the context of bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia through the Malaysia-Indonesia Socio-Economic Forum (Sosek Malindo). This study aims to analyze the role of the Riau Islands BPPD in implementing Sosek Malindo cooperation, the actors involved, the form of cooperation, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data was obtained through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation studies. The results of the study show that inter-institutional synergy between the Riau Islands BPPD and vertical and horizontal agencies plays a central role in the implementation of cross-border cooperation. The Sosek Malindo Forum is divided into three main Working Papers covering the social, economic, and security fields. However, obstacles such as the lack of budget allocation and the imbalance of profits between Indonesia and Malaysia are the main challenges in optimizing this cooperation. This study recommends increasing budget support and the formulation of mutually beneficial cooperation policies as strategic steps to strengthen the sustainability of border cooperation. These findings are expected to be a contribution to the Riau Islands BPPD in formulating more effective and sustainable policies.

Keywords: Borders, Riau Islands, Riau Islands BPPD, Sosek Malindo, bilateral cooperation, inter-institutional synergy, strategic areas.

1 Introduction

Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic country in the world, has very strategic territorial boundaries, both on land and at sea, with neighboring countries. The existence of this border area makes Indonesia have an important role in geopolitics and regional security. Indonesia's territorial boundaries are regulated in national laws and regulations and international law, such as Law Number 43 of 2008 concerning state territory and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea UNCLOS 1982 which has been ratified by Indonesia through Law Number 17 of 1985. Its strategic geographical position, directly adjacent to neighboring countries, makes the border area not only the vanguard of state sovereignty, but also a window for diplomacy, a center of economic activity, and an arena for various social and security dynamics[6]. Border areas are a dynamic and complex arena, where sovereignty, identity, and cross-border interactions meet.

The Riau Islands Province (Riau Islands), with its strategic position facing directly the Malaysian Peninsula and Singapore, is one of the most representative miniatures of this complexity. The Riau Islands Province (Riau Islands), with its strategic position facing directly the Malaysian Peninsula and Singapore, is one of the most representative miniatures of this complexity. Riau Islands Province (Riau Islands) is one of the provinces in Indonesia that has very prominent border area characteristics. Located on international shipping lanes and directly bordering Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, Riau Islands faces various issues ranging from traditional cross-borders, illegal trade, smuggling, to maritime sovereignty issues [7]. This dynamic places the Riau Islands as a miniature border problem that requires serious attention and multi-sectoral handling. The presence of the Regional Border Management Agency (BPPD) of Riau Islands Province is very relevant in this regard.

Border areas are defined as part of the territory of a country located on the other side of Indonesia's territorial boundaries with other countries. The management of border areas is a shared responsibility between the Central Government and the Regional Government, with the main goal of prospering citizens, maintaining sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national security. Development priorities in border areas include welfare and security approaches. These regions have different social, economic, political, and cultural characteristics [5]. The government also has the authority to determine policies for the management and utilization of state territories and border areas, including maintaining integrity, sovereignty, and security in these areas (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 43 of 2008)

However, the form of cooperation between Sosek Malindo in solving problems and optimizing the potential of border areas in the Riau Islands is still an important question. Who are the actors involved in this cooperation process? What form of cooperation is carried out by the Regional Border Management Agency of the Riau Islands Province? What are the factors faced by the Riau Islands BPPD in coordinating and implementing the agendas of the Sosek Malindo? These questions underscore the importance of conducting an in-depth analysis of the implementation of Sosek Malindo from a regional perspective, with a case study on the role of the Riau Islands BPPD.

Based on the results of field observations at the Regional Border Management Agency (BPPD) of Riau Islands Province, it is a valuable opportunity to observe firsthand how the Sosek Malindo cooperation process is going. Initial observations show that the Riau Islands BPPD does not work alone, but actively interacts with various vertical and horizontal agencies. The Riau Islands BPPD is an extension of the local government that is tasked with coordinating various agencies and stakeholders in maintaining sovereignty, facilitating economic development, and maintaining social stability in border areas (Presidential Regulation No. 44 of 2017 concerning State Borders)[2]. BPPD is responsible for translating national and

bilateral policies, including the results of the SOSEK MALINDO forum, into concrete work programs that can be directly felt by communities at the border.

Thus, the results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to a better understanding of cross-border cooperation in border areas. This research is expected to be an input from the Riau Islands Provincial BPPD, in formulating more effective and strategic policies in the management of border areas. The resulting recommendations can help strengthen the SOSEK MALINDO framework, optimize the utilization of resources, and ultimately, encourage sustainable development in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area.

To explain various problems related to the implementation of Sosek Malindo cooperation in the border area of the Riau Islands (Riau Islands), the theory used is synergy. Synergy, simply put, is working together to achieve a result greater than the sum of each party's contributions separately[1]. According to Hampden-Turner (1990), synergy activity is a process that involves various activities, which run together to create something new. Synergy is the result of a dialogical relationship between various different sources of knowledge, and is a process that accumulates various kinds of knowledge.

2 Research Methods

The research approach used is a qualitative descriptive approach because this research will describe or explain facts or circumstances or symptoms that are in accordance with Inter-Institutional Synergy in the Management of Border Areas in Riau Islands Province. According to Sugiyono [4], qualitative research methods are research methods based on the philosophy of *postpositivism* (phenomenology to be precise), which is used to research on scientific conditions where the researcher himself is the instrument, data collection techniques and qualitative analysis emphasizes more on meaning. Qualitative research methodology aims to analyze and describe phenomena or research objects through social activities, attitudes and perceptions of people individually or in groups.

The research location is focused on the Regional Border Management Agency (BPPD) of Riau Islands Province. The selection of this location is based on the role of the BPPD as the main coordinator in border governance at the provincial level, as well as its relevance to the researcher's internship experience. The data of this study is sourced from primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with informants from the Riau Islands Province BPPD, in addition to interviews, observations were also carried out to directly observe cooperation activities. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected through documentation studies, including internal BPPD reports, coordination meeting minutes, as well as laws and regulations and policies related to border management in the Riau Islands.

3 Result and Discussion

Riau Islands Province as an island-based province that has an ocean area of 241,215 km² or 96% and a land area of 10,595 km² or 4% with a total area of 251,810 km² with a topography consisting of several islands separated by the ocean. The author presents the results of research on Sosek Malindo Cooperation in the management of border areas in Riau Islands Province, especially from the perspective of the Regional Border Management Agency (BPPD). The discussion will be divided into three main

focuses: identification of the actors involved, the form of cooperation, and the supporting and inhibiting factors of the Malindo sosek cooperation.

1. Identification of Actors Involved in Border Management Synergy Based on the results of observations, the synergy of border management in Riau Islands Province involves various actors, both from vertical and horizontal agencies. Key actors identified in collaboration with BPPD include:

Vertical Agencies: includes central government agencies that have representatives in the region and have direct authority regarding border management. Examples are 1) Consul General of the Republic of Indonesia Johor Bahru; 2) the Head of the Riau Islands Regional Police; 3) Kazona Bakamla RI Western Region; 4) Head of the Riau Islands Customs and Excise Regional Office; 5) Head of the Batam Type B Customs Main Service Office; 6) Head of the Tanjungpinang Class 1 Immigration Office; 7) Head of the Tanjungpinang Class 2 Port Health Office; 8) Head of the Syahbandar Office and Tanjungpinang Class 2 Port Authority; 9) Head of the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Center for the Riau Islands; 10) Branch Manager of PT. Pelindo Multi Terminal Branch Tanjungpinang. The involvement of these vertical agencies is very crucial, especially in terms of security, supervision of the traffic of people and goods, and law enforcement in border areas [8].

Riau Islands Provincial Government:

- 1) Regional Secretariat
 - 1.2. Head of the Bureau of Economy and Development of the Regional Secretariat of Riau Islands Province
 - 1.3. Acting Head of the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy of the Regional Secretariat of the Riau Islands Province
- 2) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Education Office;
- 3) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Health Office;
- 4) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Social Service;
- 5) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Women's Empowerment Office for Child Protection and Family Planning;
- 6) Acting Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Manpower and Transmigration Office;
- 7) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Transportation Office;
- 8) Head of the Communication and Information Service of Riau Islands Province;
- 9) Head of the Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises Office of Riau Islands Province;
- 10) Head of the Riau Islands Province Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Office;
- 11) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Youth and Sports Office;
- 12) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Marine and Fisheries Service;
- 13) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Tourism Office;
- 14) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Cultural Office;
- 15) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Food Security, Agriculture and Animal Health Service;

- 16) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Industry and Trade Office;
- 17) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Planning, Research and Development Agency
- 18) Head of the Riau Islands Provincial Regional Border Management Agency;
 - 18.1 Secretary of the Regional Border Management Agency
 - 18.2 Head of Coordination of Planning and Cooperation Facilitation
 - 18.3 Head of Implementation Coordination
 - 18.4 Head of Monitoring and Evaluation
 - 18.5 Associate Expert Planner
- 19) Director of Raja Ahmad Tabib Hospital, Riau Islands Province.

2. Forms of Cooperation Built

The forms of cooperation carried out by the Riau Islands Provincial Regional Border Management Agency are Socio-Economic Cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia, known as SOSEK MALINDO. Sosek Malindo is a form of cooperation between two countries that is very well established with the aim of maintaining no tension between the two countries and having the same culture, customs and customs as the Indonesian state, which is also explained in the legal basis contained in Legislation Number 37 of 1999 concerning Foreign Relations. As explained, foreign relations is any activity that concerns regional and international aspects carried out by the Government at the central and regional levels, or its institutions, state institutions, business entities, political organizations, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, or Indonesian citizens.

This cooperation is a forum for Indonesia and Malaysia to discuss, formulate policies, and implement various programs in the social and economic sectors. Sosek Malindo operates through a series of regular meetings that result in agreements and action plans, which are then regulated in the Working Paper that guides the implementation. In general, the discussion in Sosek Malindo is grouped into three main Working Papers, each of which covers a specific field. This grouping aims to ensure a structured and focused discussion on issues in the border area.

Table 1. Sosek Malindo Working Paper

Yes	Working Papers	Key Focus	Areas covered
1	K.I	Social aspects and human resource development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health 2. Education 3. Arts and Culture 4. Youth and Sports

2	K.II	Economic development and sectors that drive growth and prosperity in border areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Industry and Trade Sector 2. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry 3. Smelting and Industrial/Investment Fields 4. Tourism / Tourism 5. Transportation 6. Employment
3	K.III	Security and border governance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Security and Management/Borders 2. Immigration and Customs

*Source: in Processing from Researcher Data

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Implementation in the field, especially in border management, cannot be separated from the influence of various factors, both supportive and inhibiting. Thus, efforts to improve performance and achieve common goals can be carried out in a more targeted and optimal manner.

Supporting Factors:

Although inter-agency synergy is crucial, its implementation in the field is often faced with various inhibiting factors that can reduce the effectiveness of coordination. A comprehensive understanding of these obstacles is essential so that countermeasures strategies can be formulated appropriately and synergy implementation can run more optimally. One of the main obstacles is the following:

Supporting Regulations and Policies: The existence of a strong legal foundation, such as laws, government regulations, and local regulations, that explicitly mandate inter-agency coordination in border management, is an essential legal foundation. These rules provide legitimacy and clear direction for each agency to be actively involved in synergy efforts.

- a) Commitment of Institutional Leaders: The strong support and commitment of the leaders of each relevant agency plays a vital role in determining the smooth flow of the synergy process. When leaders have a aligned vision and a seriousness to work together, bureaucratic obstacles and differences of interest tend to be minimized or overcome more easily.
- b) Open Communication Channels: The availability of effective, transparent, and sustainable communication forums or media strongly supports the rapid exchange of information and collaborative problem-solving. Good communication channels ensure that each party has access to relevant information and can contribute to decision-making.
- c) Sufficient Resources (within Certain Limitations): Although often facing limitations, the availability of adequate budget, the number of competent personnel, and adequate facilities and infrastructure greatly support the operationalization of synergy activities. Sufficient resources,

while not necessarily plentiful, ensure that synergy plans and programs can be implemented according to the set targets.

Inhibiting Factors:

- a. Lack of Budget: These limitations, which are explicitly regulated in Governor's Regulation Number 1 of 2025 and Governor's Instruction Number B/900:/112.2 BKAD-SET/2025 concerning Regional Revenue in 2025, have a direct impact on the implementation of activities.

This inadequate budget causes the Riau Islands BPPD to often experience obstacles, especially in organizing large-scale activities involving both countries. As a result, many important initiatives or events that should be able to strengthen relationships and implement the Sosek Malindo agreement are limited or even cannot be implemented as planned. This condition significantly hinders efforts to improve welfare in border areas and optimize existing cooperation potential.

- b. It does not provide *benefits* for both parties, based on the results of the author's interview with the Riau Islands BPPD, one of the significant obstacles that hinders the optimal cooperation of Sosek Malindo is the lack of *mutually beneficial benefits* for both parties. Ideally, every form of cooperation should bring balanced benefits. However, in the context of the Malindo Sosek between Indonesia and Malaysia, especially with the Malacca and Johor regions, there is often a unilateral submission of proposals. This condition creates an imbalance, where The interests or priorities of one party are more dominant, thus hindering the creation of a complete and productive synergy. If the benefits obtained are not felt proportionately by both parties, the motivation to continue or develop cooperation will decrease, which can ultimately reduce the effectiveness and sustainability of Sosek Malindo programs in border areas.

4 Conclusion

The author points out that the management of border areas in the Riau Islands is a dynamic and complex arena, involving various actors from both vertical and horizontal agencies. The Riau Islands BPPD plays a central role as the main coordinator, bridging national and bilateral policies, including the results of the Sosek Malindo forum, into concrete work programs in the field. The cooperation between Sosek Malindo is an important forum for Indonesia and Malaysia to discuss, formulate policies, and implement various programs in the social and economic sectors, which are summarized in three main Working Papers.

However, the study also identified some significant inhibitory factors. One of the main obstacles is the lack of budget experienced by the Riau Islands BPPD, as stipulated in Governor's Regulation Number 1 of 2025 and Governor's Instruction Number B/900:/112.2 BKAD-SET/2025 concerning Regional Revenue in 2025. This limited budget has an impact on the limited implementation of major activities between the two countries. In addition, the lack of *mutually beneficial benefits* for both parties is also an obstacle. On several occasions, proposals from Indonesia and Malaysia (especially Malacca and Johor) are one-sided, which hinders the realization of more balanced and productive cooperation.

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