



**Papuan
Voices**

Study Guide

papuanvoices.net



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How to Use This Guide

Welcome to the Papuan Voices Study Guide.

The purpose of this guide is to help you explore the videos available at www.papuanvoices.net, which tell stories of life in the Indonesian region of West Papua. It provides context to these videos so that you can better understand the stories of the people who made them.

The Papuan Voices DVD includes all nine videos from our second series of video workshops. These are also available at www.papuanvoices.net.

The study guide is appropriate for use in high-school classrooms and can be adapted for undergraduate university students or community group screenings.

We encourage you to watch all of the films, and to curate a screening that best complements your curriculum, audience and allocated time.

The guide contains background on West Papua issues, as well as a detailed analysis of each video in the series.

It is also divided into three sections according to the video themes.

Each section contains an article based on interviews with three Papua community leaders to shed more light on the theme under discussion. We have also provided a number of 'Talking Points' that will help you start discussions about the videos.

Feel free to pick and choose from the materials we have provided to create your own version of Papuan Voices. Don't forget to continue your discussions online by returning to papuanvoices.net!

This guide is intended as a catalyst for action. We hope that it will inspire you to think critically and work towards social change. Please help us to assess its effectiveness by sending feedback to us at contact@engagemedia.org.

About Papuan Voices II

This is the second volume of Papuan Voices, which EngageMedia started as a way to bring the everyday stories of West Papuan people to a wider audience. The first volume was released in 2012 and told the stories behind the conflict that are not often circulated: the struggles for education, healthcare, equality and dignity.

West Papuans direct these documentaries, which are the result of a video workshop series held in Wamena and Sorong in 2013 and 2014. This DVD compilation contains a selection of these videos.

The videos are also available on the website www.papuanvoices.net. The site includes additional resource materials, such as background information, details about our partners' work in Papua, discussion guides, a study guide, a press kit and ways to get involved in these critical issues. These are available in English and Bahasa Indonesia.

Together, the two volumes of Papuan Voices tell a complex story of current situation in West Papua. We hope these stories will inspire others to learn and act, so the voices of West Papua are brought to the forefront.

www.papuanvoices.net

About EngageMedia

EngageMedia is a non-profit media technology and culture organisation. We use the power of video and internet technologies to create social and environmental change.

EngageMedia works with independent filmmakers, video activists, technologists and campaigners to generate wider audiences, demystify new video distribution technologies and create an online archive of independent video production using open content licences.

www.engagemedia.org

Background

Papua and West Papua are the two most easterly provinces of Indonesia, referred to collectively as 'West Papua'. Previously called Irian Jaya, West Papua had a predominantly Christian, Melanesian population (96 per cent in 1971), but the society is now made up of equal numbers of Papuan people and migrants from elsewhere in Indonesia.

Considerable social tension exists between the two groups because migrants dominate business and economic opportunities, and take most of the jobs. Traditional people are also losing their land and receiving little compensation as large companies set up agri-business projects such as plantations. Papuan people are becoming agricultural labourers on land that they once owned, and where they and their ancestors have lived for thousands of years.

West Papua was previously part of the Dutch East Indies Empire, which for 350 years ruled what is now Indonesia. Pushed out by the Japanese during World War II, the Dutch failed to reassert their authority after the war, except in West Papua. In 1949 Holland ceded sovereignty over its former empire to the newly independent state of Indonesia – with the exception of West Papua.

The Indonesians thought they would gain control of this region; however, the Dutch soon announced plans for West Papua to become an independent nation. Military conflict ensued with an attempted invasion by Indonesian forces in 1960. The Dutch rebuffed this attempt, but Indonesian diplomatic maneuvering proved far more successful, gaining the support of the United States.

The US lent its support to counter President Sukarno's moves to build closer ties with the Soviet Union. During this time, Cold War imperatives took precedence in American foreign policy over all other issues, including the Papuans' political rights to self-determination.

In 1962 the Dutch and the Indonesians signed the New York Agreement under US sponsorship. This handed control of West Papua to Indonesia with the condition that a plebiscite be held to obtain the consent of the Papuans for incorporation into Indonesia. Arguing that Papuans were too 'primitive' for a normal – one person, one vote – ballot, 1022 appointed representatives were forced to universally cast their vote for Indonesia.

The curiously named 'Act of Free Choice' was finally conducted in 1969 and the outcome accepted by the United Nations, which duly transferred sovereignty over West Papua to Indonesia. The Act of Free Choice is widely seen as a sham and has never enjoyed legitimacy with the Papuan people, who still feel that their right to independence has been stolen from them.

Even before the 1969 'plebiscite' resistance, violence had already broken out. An armed resistance movement fought the Indonesian military in pitched battles, with the *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM or Free Papua Movement) representing the vast majority of the West Papuan people and their desire for an independent state. These battles left thousands dead.

The OPM, armed mostly with bows and arrows and few modern rifles, were no match for a modern army, and large-scale resistance gave way to small groups of guerillas operating deep in the jungle. This opposition to Indonesian rule continues today, although much of it is now urban based and pursues a non-violent, civil-rights agenda. Papuan leaders, including a new generation who are well educated and technologically savvy, demand their political rights, including the right to self-determination.

While the Papuans were the majority in 1969, migrants from elsewhere in Indonesia now slightly outnumber them. These migrants have moved to the province under massive government-sponsored transmigration programmes, along with migrants searching for their own better life. The majority of town residents are non-Papuans, while large areas of the highlands are still predominantly Papuan.

The ongoing conflict has resulted in large numbers of Indonesia military personnel (TNI) being based throughout the country and effectively engaging in an armed occupation. While Indonesia has made huge democratic gains since the fall of the Suharto dictatorship, these gains have not spread to West Papua, which remains under the TNI's firm grip. As such, corruption is rife and human rights abuses are common.

In 2001 Jakarta introduced a Special Autonomy (Otsus) legislation to address Papuan grievances. It was supposed to give the Papuans a measure of control over their own affairs, as well as greatly increased levels of funding. However, this legislation was only partially implemented, and no real improvements have been made in the critical areas of health and education. Corruption has also increased substantially.

Large-scale economic development is taking place right across West Papua in the form of logging, agricultural plantations, mining and gas extraction. The Papuans enjoy very weak or non-existent land rights, and many are losing vast areas of land, with little compensation. This is creating conflict and hardship for local people everywhere. Although a significant number of Papuans work in the public service, migrants mainly hold senior positions. In the private-sector, most Papuans are employed in low-paid jobs.

Education and health services are very poor in most regions, with few doctors, medical staff and teachers turning up for work. The HIV-AIDs rate in West Papua is around 2 per cent, making it the worst-affected area of Indonesia (although the data is incomplete).

The Papuans are the poorest, least-educated and most unhealthy population group in Indonesia, even though their province is the richest in natural resources. These disadvantages and contradictions are fuelling disaffection with the Jakarta government and strengthening widespread demands over West Papua's political status and calls for independence.

These calls generally fall on the deaf ears of the international community, which is keen to build closer ties with Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation and third biggest democracy.

Facts and Figures

Total Area: 413.407,61 km²
(Papua Province 316.000 km² and West Papua Province 97.407,61 km²)

Government: Comprising of Papua Province (28 Regency and 1 Municipality) and West Papua Province (12 Regency and 1 Municipality)

Language: Indonesian is widely spoken but the mother tongue of most Papuans is their tribal language. There are approximately 312 tribes each with their own language. Migrants from Java, Manado and Sulawesi, as well as elsewhere in Indonesia speak Indonesian and their own mother tongue, such as Javanese.

Peak: Puncak Jaya (4,884 metres above sea level)

Penduduk: 3.860.781 (2013)
(Provinsi Papua: 3.032.488; Provinsi Papua Barat: 760.422)

Percentage of people in poverty: Papua Province 31,13%; West Papua Province 27,14%

Agama: Papua Province: Christian 65,48%; Catholic 17,67%; Muslim 15,89%; Hindu, Buddhist and other 0,96%
West Papua Province: Christian 53,77%; Catholic 7,03%; Muslim 38,40%; Hindu, Buddhist and other 0,8%

Collated from [Wikipedia](#), accessed January, 2015, [Papua Barat dalam Angka \(2014\)](#), [Papua dalam Angka \(2014\)](#), and [Penduduk Menurut Wilayah dan Agama yang dianut \(2010\)](#) from National Statistical Bureau, accessed January 2015

Public Service in Papua

Father John Jonga has devoted his life to Papua, and is a well-known figure there. In fact, while being interviewed for this article, a young man rushed to him gesturing wildly. There was a brawl in the village and Father John was asked to go and pull the men apart.

His organisation *Yayasan Teratai Hati Papua* encourages positive change towards justice, peace and integrity in Papua. Father John Jonga established the foundation to consolidate his work on human rights advocacy and community activism after he received the *Yap Thian Hiem* Award in 2009, an award for outstanding contribution to human rights.

EngageMedia partnered with *Yayasan Teratai Hati Papua* to produce *Papuan Voices*.

“I arrived in Papua 28 years ago. When I came here, food was abundant. There were not a lot of tribal conflicts. Now the situation is a complete turnaround. Before, people worked in the fields, grew things. Now many people rely on funds from *Otsus* or Special Autonomy. Even though the budget allocation for the Special Autonomy is big, it simply hasn't brought any changes to the people.

The Special Autonomy Fund has allocated hundreds of trillions of Rupiah for health, which has been used to build community health centres. Community health centres do not alone solve the problem when there are no doctors, medics or nurses available. Many health centres are sitting empty.

It would be better to provide health care through places that are closer to the community, such as traditional Honai houses. In Yakuhimo, 62 people died because of the unavailability of health officers. It is hard for people to travel long distances to seek health service. Health officers must come down to the field and visit the communities. It would be better if traditional healers in the village were educated in basic medical science.

Once I assisted a sick man from the district of Assolokobal to Wamena. But what kind of service did the hospital provide? The patient still had to buy medicine, syringe, infusion and even Paracetamol, all of which were supposed to be given free. The government's statement on medical aid turned out to be untrue.

The same applies for education: there are so many schools built with no teachers. Most of the teachers live in the city. They tend to give false marks to fulfill the pass percentage. So, we will find a sixth grade student who can't read. Just as with the health issue, we need to educate teachers from the local community.”

The following three films delve into the availability and access to public services in Papua.

Save the Karon

Hans Mambrasar is the doctor, teacher and spiritual advisor to the people living in the remote area of Tambraw district. He has to walk for three days through jungle wilderness and rivers to help the villages in this area. During 2012-2013, a disease spread through the villages of Jokbijoker and Kosefa, resulting in the death of many residents. Despite the difficulties, Hans Mambrasar brought them to his village for medical treatment. The villages receive little help from the government, and Hans Mambrasar hopes that in the future the government will build health centres and provide adequate health personnel to serve the citizens.

Papuan School

David Womsiwor is an artist and teaches at an elementary school in Sorong. He is concerned about the disappearance of Papua tradition and culture. He incorporates arts into the curriculum so students understand their cultural practices and can use them in their lives. He calls this the true school of Papua in Indonesia.

Doctor Maria Rumateray

The lack of education opportunities for women in Papua means that very few women are able to pursue a university education. Doctor Maria Rumateray is one of the lucky ones. Her parents worked as health officers at the faraway area of Wamena in the 1970s. Her parents used to carry her in a *noken* when they were traveling to remote areas. Today she continues their legacy, although she does it in a helicopter.

Talking Points

- What are the issues that Papuan people face while trying to access public services?
- Do you think building more physical infrastructure like hospitals and schools would alleviate these issues?

If the special autonomy fund has allocated large amount of funds for development in Papua, what are the reasons behind poor public service in Papua?

Patricio Wetipo grew up in a well-respected family from the district of Musattak in Central Wamena. Even in this privileged strata of society, Patricio witnessed events that made him want to fight for the women in Wamena.

“My father used to hit my mother. It got so bad at one point that we had to leave our house and go live with another family,” Patricio says. “People say that a woman’s duty is to give birth, to raise children, and to work for us. I think that is a horrendous burden. Our Mama takes care of us from our birth until we grow up. Even when we die, it’s women who take care of the rituals.”

As a result of this experience, he established an organisation to campaign for women’s rights. Named Humi Inane (Women’s Voice) the organisation assists victims of domestic violence.

“Women’s position is weak in our society. They often succumb to polygamy, which has become part of the culture in Baliem Valley, the heart of West Papua,” says Patricio.

“In the past, polygamy was intended to increase the number of descendants of a tribe. The polygamy custom was strict, and the man was responsible for protecting women’s rights and interest, even to the extent of ensuring their right to property. Violence to women was minimised because of the strong custom. Now they say they can practice polygamy, but they know nothing about the custom. Women are abused,” he says.

Media helps women express their issues they are facing, says Patricio. “Media mostly cover political and military violence. And yet no one looks at the violence that occurs to women,” he says. “There are also numerous everyday problems that particularly mar women’s progress in the society, such as the lack of access to healthcare and education.”

Patricio helped make the film *Let us sell areca nuts!*. “I want to show the world the lives of Papuan women,” he says. “They work so hard and receive no help from their family members. Their husbands don’t even help them carry goods to the market. We hope that people will see these films and be inspired to bring change to their lives.”

Biar Kami Saja Jual Pinang (Let us Sell Areca Nuts!)

Chewing areca nuts is a traditional pastime for the people of Wamena despite the fact that there are no areca trees in the town. Many women vendors sell areca, which are transported from Jayapura. These vendors are now experiencing tough competition from new vendors who have moved to Wamena. The Wamena vendors sell their goods outdoors while the new vendors display areca in shops, where the nuts seem cleaner and fresher.

Mama Mariode

Mariode Malak and Kefas Gisim own the last standing block between the forest and a plantation corporation that is expanding operations on the banks of the Klasafet river. Their neighbours have sold their land to the corporation, but Mariode does not want to sell her land. She has put up signposts all over her land, and is trying to protect the remaining forest around her land by demarcating their customary rights to the forests. The forest is their life, Mariode says, and she wants to save it for the next generation, just as her ancestors did for her.

Talking Points

- Based on the films, can you describe how women's lives are in Papuan society? Are they different than what you see in your life?
- What kind of leadership roles are women taking in Papua? How are these affecting the development of their society?
- Natural resources are at the core of people's lives in Papua. What is the role of women in the maintenance and preservation of natural resources in Papua?

Culture and Resistance

One of Max Binur's earlier memories is of a journey he took with his father from his village to Biak. At the strait of Sorendiweri, Free Papua Movement fighters, who were active in West Biak, shot at them.

"We survived by sailing further out in the sea. Later I asked my Father why they wanted to shoot us." He replied, "One day you will know the answer."

Over time he learned the answers, but he was frustrated by the injustice and human rights abuses that ordinary Papuans suffered. He decided to devote his life to fighting against them.

Today Max works on human rights and justice issues by using arts and culture as a tool for resistance.

"While there are many organisations working on the issue in Papua, they ignore cultural space as a basis for struggle," he says. "I am a Biak man, it will be easier for me to go to Biak communities, and understand the language, art and cultural aspects of their life."

Together with friends, he established Belantara Papua. Their approach was inspired by the cultural movement led by Arnold AP, a musician from Mambesak, who was renowned in Papua for using music as a tool for unity and struggle.

"Our house was often a meeting point for young people. They built instruments, wrote songs, painted and made sculptures. After a year, we thought of officially creating it as a hub for these young people," Max says.

"The name 'belantara' refers to the culture of Papua, which is inseparable from its natural environment. The Papuans are born in and learn to live from the nature. In the forest people learn about soil fertility, trees and seasons. It is no surprise that all basic Papuan dance moves are inspired by the movements of birds, hunters and fishermen, all of which merge to make something beautiful," he says.

There are no training programs in Belantara Papua. Instead, they spend time in villages learning skills from local elders and documenting these various art forms so young people can use the knowledge. "Every one who has learnt in Belantara Papua can develop their own cultural centre in their village," he says.

The method is particularly important given the limited space and opportunities for artistic expression in Papua. Government-organised art festivals are the only available opportunities, and artists have to seek permission to host such events. "When we host our own events, we are often considered subversive, disturbing security," he complains.

We need to be bold, Max says. "Natural resources of Papua are being depleted every day, being usurped by giant industries. All we have are our art traditions passed down by our elders. If that is gone too, what else do we have left?"

Wam-ena

The Wamena culture regards pigs highly. The name Wamena itself comes from the word '*Wam*', which means pig, and '*Ena*', which means to tame. Every rite of passage is symbolised by the presenting of pigs, and a family's wealth is measured by the number of pigs they own. Pigs are also the symbol of peace among the tribes in the central highlands. An epidemic of pig deaths would therefore present a serious economic setback for the people of Wamena.

Honai

The traditional Honai house is the centre of community life in the central highlands. It is in the Honai that all cultural rituals take place, from clan gatherings to peace making. As time has progressed, the people of Wamena have lived in a new type of abode, which they call *Rumah Sehat* (healthy houses). Although the young generation have settled in these houses, they still believe that Honai resembles the centre of their ethnic groups, which need preservation.

Masters of our Land

Matias owns a homestay in Yandebabo, a family-owned island in the majestic Raja Ampat area of West Papua. From his savings as a sensor operator, he built four cabins with nine rooms. External investors have made lucrative offers to invest in Matias's property. He has refused those offers as they would only mean more profit for the investors rather than for the owner.

Talking Points

- What kind of changes are occurring in the Papuan traditional way of living? Do you think these changes are good?
- Why do some Papuans want to preserve their cultural identity? What strategies are they using to preserve their culture in the face of challenges

- Can culture be a tool for resistance in the fight for justice in Papua? How can Papuans use their traditions and cultural practices for such a fight?

Get Involved and Take Action

- **Join the conversation at papuanvoices.net.** Let the filmmakers know what you think of their work. Ask questions, post comments and share your ideas!
- **URGENT ACTION:** Filep Karma is a Papuan political prisoner in need of immediate medical attention. Learn more and join the [Amnesty International](#) campaign.
- Follow the case of two French journalists who were detained by the Indonesian authorities in Papua in [Seapa](#) <http://www.seapa.org/?p=9631>
- Join in and act to end repression in Papuan and call to uphold freedom of expression in Papua. Follow this link <http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/35426/>
- **Write to your local politician to demand that government aid to Indonesia is not helping to fund the destruction of rainforest in West Papua, or support military human abuses.**
- **Start your own West Papua support group to show films (start with Papuan Voices), or raise awareness of the issue amongst your community.** Download our screening guide.
- Become involved in local or national solidarity groups:

Australia – The Australian West Papuan Association

The AWPA consists of supporters of West Papuan self-determination. They lobby politicians, support the goals of West Papuans living in Australia, organise demonstrations in support of West Papuan human rights, and engage in other advocacy activities.

To find out how to join the Australia West Papua Association group, go to [AWPA social media page](#) or join the AWPA-australia@yahoo.com newlist, which sends out daily articles on West Papua.

To liaise with the Secretary of the Sydney-based Australia West Papua Association, contact Joe Collins at bunyip@bigpond.net.au

To liaise with the AWPA South Australia, visit www.awpa-sa.org.au

UK – Free West Papua Campaign UK

www.freewestpapua.org
office@freewestpapua.org

- Download the 'Free West Papua Activist kit'. The UK Free West Papua Campaign has designed these resources to spread awareness about the ongoing human rights abuses being committed in West Papua. Download [the kit](#) that includes print-ready posters and flyers.



Study Guide

- Germany – West Papua Netzwerk
www.westpapuanetz.de
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Learn More

- [West Papua Project](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace_conflict/practice/west_papua_project.shtml)
http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace_conflict/practice/west_papua_project.shtml
- There is a large amount of information and papers on this website and links to many more. The West Papua Project is a University of Sydney-based think tank dedicated to research and advocacy on West Papua
- [Comprehending West Papua Report](#)
- See reports on human rights issues in Papua in Tapol.org
- For further reading on the international legal issues surrounding Papua, and the campaign to get Papua relisted on the UN Decolonisation Agenda, see WPIK.org and [West Papua.info](http://WestPapua.info)
- To stay up to date with the latest independent journalism for West Papua, head over to [West Papua Media](#), a non-profit independent media agency that reports internationally on the latest verifiable news from inside West Papua. News reports are posted by journalists, both on the ground in West Papua and around the world.
- Learn daily news straight from Papua through independent news channel, [Tabloid Jubi](#).
- [Human Rights Watch](#) regularly posts updates as to the situation in West Papua. Check
- [this article](#) for instance.
- Find out about [PACE](#), an online documentation center about indigenous Papuan culture from the Papua Heritage Foundation
- Learn about 'Papua Land of Peace' from the [Faith Based Network on West Papua](#).
- Read 'Narratives of Colonization, Decolonization and Recolonization in Papua' by David Webster, Assistant Professor of International Studies, University of Regina.
- Read this report, '[Papua Road Map: Negotiating the Past, Improving the Present and Securing the Future](#)', by The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), Jakarta, 2008
- [West Papua 2012-Human Rights Report](#) by Kerry B.Collison Asia News \
- "[The Past That Has Not Passed: Human Rights violation in Papua Before and After Reformasi](#)" by International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and ELSHAM

- Download the [West Papua 2012 report](#) produced by the Australia West Papua Association
- Read “Stop Sudah”, the testimonies of Papuan women, a report by the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan). News report can be found in [Komnas Perempuan](#)
- Read this [article](#) by Jim Elmslie at *The Conversation*
- Read this [article](#) by Camellia Webb-Gannon at *The Conversation*
- Read about West Papua in [Inside Indonesia: ‘They are Just Papuans’](#) by Budi Hernawan; [Special Edition from 2008](#); [Special Edition from 2001](#).
http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace_conflict/practice/Comprehending West Papua.pdf