



Papuan
Voices

PRESS KIT
papuanvoices.net



Press Contacts:

Enrico Aditjondro
enrico@engagemedia.org
or
contact@engagemedia.org

Tel / Voice mail: +61 (0) 3 9015 9744, Australia
Skype: EngageMedia
Australia office:

6/225 Bourke Street
Melbourne, 3000, Vic
Australia
Indonesia office:

Jalan Cikatomas no. 27
Kebayoran Baru Jakarta Selatan, 12180
Indonesia

Papuan Voices includes:

Nine videos which all tell stories of life in the contested region of West Papua, Indonesia. These are subtitled in English as well as a range of other languages. You can view and download them at papuanvoices.net

A Study Guide that provides information designed to give context to these videos for use in school and university classrooms. (English and Indonesian)

A Screening Guide that provides information for community groups and activist organisations to host screenings. (English and Indonesian)

A bilingual DVD pack that includes screening quality versions of all nine videos with English subtitles and a limited edition colour booklet.

The pack is available for purchase at papuanvoices.net

**EngageMedia.org****FORDFOUNDATION**

PRESS RELEASE: PAPUAN VOICES

Untold stories of the Papuan conflict

<http://www.papuanvoices.net>

<http://www.engagemedia.org/papuanvoices>

EngageMedia has launched its Papuan Voices series, which includes nine short videos and a range of information resources.

Many of us know that West Papua is fighting for independence – but what else goes on there? How often do we hear directly from the Papuans themselves about life in Indonesia's most secretive province?

EngageMedia's Papuan Voices project is a combination of empowerment and production. We collaborate with advocacy groups in Jayapura and Merauke to teach Papuan activists new video production and distribution skills so that they have the means to tell their own stories to the world.

The videos include 'Love Letter To A Soldier' - a moving missive from a Papuan woman to an Indonesian soldier who was once based in her village on the PNG-Indonesian border. Theirs was a controversial relationship but she begs him to return to meet their three-year-old daughter: "I will continue to wait for you, Samsul. I don't care what people say."

Project partners: Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), MSC (Jakarta) and the Secretariat for Justice and Peace (SKP KC Jayapura).

ABOUT PAPUAN VOICES

EngageMedia's Papuan Voices project is a combination of empowerment and production. We collaborate with local organisations in Jayapura and Merauke to teach Papuan activists new video production and distribution skills so that they have the means to tell their own stories to the world.

The conflict between West Papua and Indonesia remains largely hidden from the world. Despite decades of hostility and violence demands for justice have received little global attention. Papuan Voices aims to bring the everyday stories of West Papuans to a wider audience. These are not the stories of conflict that are often circulated. Rather, they are the stories behind the conflict: the struggles for education, the environment, equality and dignity.

Importantly, the stories we tell are not only framed around West Papua's political struggle for independence. A range of injustices occur daily in Papua and a lack of understanding about the issues affecting Indonesia's poorest citizens works to entrench the problem.

The Papuan Voices project overcomes political and geographical barriers - as well as lack of technology - to bring important Papuan stories to the world. In doing so, it shines light on the injustices that regularly occur behind the closed doors of this resource-rich and restive province.

About EngageMedia

EngageMedia is a non-profit media, technology and culture organisation, based in Australia and Indonesia. 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 for their work, demystify new video distribution technologies, and create an online video archive of socially engaged video that is free to share and redistribute.



AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- 2012 'Love Letter to the Soldier' wins best documentary at the South to South Film Festival
www.engagemedia.org/Members/ricoloco/news/engagemedia-video-wins-stos-festival-2012-best-documentary
- 2012 Alexandra Crosby wins the UTS Creative Media Social Justice Award for her role in Papuan Voices. <http://www.equity.uts.edu.au/uts/awards/human-rights/index.html>
- 2012 FX Making and Nico Tunjanaan of Papuan Voices Jayapura win 1st and 2nd prize in 'Yuk Awasi!' Short Video Competition. <http://www.engagemedia.org/blog/two-papuan-voices-videomakers-won-awards>

SELECTED SCREENINGS

Indonesia:

- 2011 Food Security Conference in Palangkaraya (Central Kalimantan)
- 2012 Kedai Kebun, Yogyakarta

Malaysia:

- 2012 Freedom Art Festival

USA:

- 2011 Yale University's Southeast Asia Program & the International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School

Australia:

- 2011 United Nations Association of the Northern Territory, Australia

VIDEO SYNOPSES

The Hope of the Cendrawasih Children

Primary school children in Arso on the Indonesia-PNG border are keen to study – but teachers rarely come to the local school. The one teacher who does come is only on a short-term contract and gets paid once every six months. When school is out, the kids end up doing hard labour for the local palm plantation to earn money and kill time. The school buildings themselves are rough and dirty. There is no modern equipment.

The lack of teachers means that the children are not getting a basic education and are not learning how to read or write properly, but the kids are passing their grades as the teachers are afraid of the parents. The children dream of getting jobs in the future and becoming teachers and policemen, yet how can these dreams become true if they are not receiving a proper education. There do not appear to be many non-Papuan children at this school, they are being educated at other, better run and equipped schools where they are receiving a far better education. This means that the discrimination and under-privilege that Papuans suffer now is becoming entrenched and will be the fate of the next generation.

Papua Calling: Muslims calling for peace

Papuan Muslims discuss how religious and inter-tribal conflict is being created by the rapid and unequal development that is taking place in West Papua. Rather than Islam being a cause for conflict these Papuans are calling on Muslims from all over the world to discuss Papua and its problems and to be aware that the country is facing a humanitarian crisis.

The vision of the Papuan Islamic Council is to protect people and environment and to work for the peace and the dignity of the Papuan people. Sometimes the conflict in Papua is described in terms of a conflict between Islam and Christianity, but here this claim is disputed on the grounds that the majority of Papuans are Christians and that Islam is a force for improving the situation of all Papuans.

This video shows that religion is a complex issue in Papua, and that Islam is not only the religion of migrants. As more Papuans convert to Islam, religion will become an increasingly important issue and a cause for hope. Political action by Muslim people – Papuans and non-Papuans – against human rights abuses, environmental destruction and inequitable development will have great resonance in Indonesia and elsewhere. Claims by Christian churches, organisations and individuals are often not heard in Indonesia – the world's largest Islamic nation – and are sometimes dismissed as 'separatist' propaganda calling for independence. This video shows that people of good intent – whatever their religion – acknowledge the great problems that the Papuans are facing and that concerted action is needed to avoid a growing humanitarian crisis.

What Mama Kasmira Wants

A Papuan cocoa farmer from the Indonesia-PNG border region had to leave her farm to work for a palm plantation when the village elders made a deal with a Rajawali Group company to sell her land. Every day Kasmira works hard under the boiling hot sun, clearing bushes for the plantation. However, she has great hopes for her three children. She now lives in the cash economy, working for money and buying food. The plantation employs many people and is part of the modern economy where large scale developments, like palm oil plantations, attract foreign investment and produce goods for export that earn foreign currency for Indonesia. This also results in revenue for the government which could be used to finance schools and health facilities which might improve peoples' living conditions.

Mama Kasmira's main goal is for the education of her children so that they can become good employees and earn money. One reason for that is so that her children will be able to look after her when she grows old. Another interesting aspect of this video is that it shows how palm oil is produced. Palm oil is being promoted as a ecologically viable alternative to fossil fuels such as petrol in trying to reduce carbon emissions that cause climate change. Yet to produce palm oil means destroying the rainforest and turning traditional village people into agricultural labourers. This is a dilemma that is faced by many people in the developing world, here told through the story of Mama Kasmira.

Awin Mike

Indigenous Papuan women traders struggle to sell their goods in modern Jayapura. In their first fight, the women won themselves a space to set up shop. However, local city administrators backed out of their promise to support them by opening a competing market, run by non-Papuans, which sells the same goods. This video reflects the entrenched discrimination that Papuans face in their struggle for economic survival. Non-Papuan migrants have access to capital, political influence and modern retail technology that leaves the Papuan women severely disadvantaged. It does show the wide range of fresh produce that is sold on the streets of Jayapura, which is mostly grown by the women themselves in small garden plots.

This video captures the lives of the women -- of what they grow, how they try to sell their produce and where they spend a lot of their time; in makeshift market stalls or on the footpath. It also shows their forthright manner in trying to improve their circumstances by political action and lobbying for better facilities. Their failure mirrors the experience of so many Papuan people who face huge obstacles in becoming part of the formal economy as jobs and business opportunities are taken by the better educated and connected migrants from other parts of Indonesia.

Love Letter To The Soldier

A video letter from a Papuan woman to an Indonesian soldier who was once based in her village on the PNG-Indonesian border. Theirs was a controversial relationship but she begs him to return to meet their three-year-old daughter: "I will continue to wait for you, Samsul. I don't care what people say." Samsul had courted Maria Goreti Mekiw, visiting her house every day and giving gifts of biscuits and milk until the two started a relationship. Maria was still a high school student, and she found the TNI soldier 'polite and kind'; she thought that they were to be married. Instead Samsul left when Maria was five months pregnant and has not been in touch since, failing to respond to Maria's letters, hence this 'video letter'.

It has been a tough time for Maria, her parents are getting old and she is burdened by having to look after three year old Yani by her self. People discriminate against Maria and Yani because the father is an Indonesian soldier and has abandoned them. Yani is called a 'army brat', and is mixed-race in a village of Melanesian Papuans. Maria is still hopeful that Samsul might return and would welcome him if he does, but to the viewers of this video this looks like a forlorn hope.

Ironical Survival

Alex Mahuze is a Malind tribesman and a sago farmer in Merauke. His clan has for generations lived in harmony with nature. The arrival of the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) program has forced him to earn money through other means, which ironically harms the environment. He lost his lands and his culture is threatened, but Alex fights on. The word 'mahuze' in the Malind language means 'sago tree', the starch which is washed out of its fibre is their staple diet, and Alex has a traditional duty to protect the sago. But his land has been taken without negotiation or compensation and all the sago trees have been cut down. Now Alex is forced to mine sand from the beach, which is causing erosion and environmental damage. The workers on the MIFEE project are brought in and Alex is now worried about going hungry and his future survival after losing his main food source.

One of the aims of MIFEE is to increase Indonesia's food security, but it is actually making the traditional Malind people more hungry. Alex describes himself as one of the 'little' people who are powerless against the thirty six companies that have been given permission to destroy over one million hectares of forest to grow plantations. There are many people like him who are suffering at the hands of Indonesian government policy. There is nothing they can do but, ironically, add to the destruction of their environment by mining sand.

Coconut Trees that Bear Jerry Cans

The Malind tribe in Merauke is proud of its ecological traditions - each clan in the tribe is responsible for protecting a natural element. The Moiwend clan is responsible for the coconut trees and fruit. However, in recent times Malind youth have started using coconuts to make alcohol. The home-made drinks – which are much cheaper to buy than beer and spirits - have added to the town's problems. Now, some Malind elders are calling for the reinstatement of customary laws that would punish those who make use of coconuts in this way in order to save their tradition and their community.

The changes that have come with incorporation into Indonesia have weakened the power and influence of traditional leaders, who fear that their society is breaking down. They are searching for ways to reinforce social order as modern Indonesian laws seem weak and ineffective, while customary law is seen as stronger. Yet there seems to be no way that customary law can be implemented as the people are now subject to contemporary Indonesian rules and regulations. This dilemma is common in developing countries and causes the rapid weakening of traditional cultures and the disempowerment of customary leaders. Society breaks down as the youth refuse to listen to their elders and the intricate web of traditional clan society and creation beliefs are lost. This video shows how the revered tree of life -- the coconut -- becomes the source of violence and disharmony when it is turned into alcohol.

Issues: ecology, environment, alcohol, imperialism, colonisation, coconuts in traditional culture, authority structures, creation beliefs.

IMAGES

*For high resolution images and permissions,
please contact enrico@engagemedia.org*



Chris Mahuse stretches
after an audio production
session in Jayapura



Wenda Tokomonowir
directing 'Love Letter to
The Soldier'





Maria Goreti writes the love letter to the father of her child

Acknowledgements:

Videomakers: Cyntia Warwe, FX. Making, Albert Pu'u, Yuliana Langowuyo, Edy Rosariyanto, Baguma Yarinap, Nico Tunjanan, Bernard Koten, Agus Berek, Peneas Lokbere, Ike Weler, Titus Boi, Wenda Tokomonowir, Leo Moyuend, Urbanus Kiaf, Krisantos Yama, Yuly Kaisma, Carolyn Ngoran, Chris Mahuze, Alex Aldero

Papuan Voices is produced by EngageMedia in partnership with JPIC MSC

Project Manager: Enrico Aditjondro

JPIC MSC Project Manager: Wensi Fatubun

Audience Engagement Manager: Alexandra Crosby

Executive Producer: Andrew Lowenthal

English Writer: James Elmslie

Indonesian Writer: Rani Adityasari

Graphic Design: Toha

This project has been funded by the Ford Foundation.

Special thanks to: Organisation for Visual Progression (OVP) and WITNESS

Partners: Sekertariat Keadilan, Perdamaian dan Keutuhan Ciptaan (SKPKC Fransiskan Papua) and Justice Peace and Integration of Creation (JPIC MSC Jakarta)