

Awin Meke

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.

Issues: markets, gender, tradition, economy, work.

Talking points

- 1 Do you think that it is fair that the Papuan women in this video have to sell their produce on the streets and compete against better organised non-Papuan traders, or is this a case of market efficiency and normal competition?
- 2 How does the produce that the Papuan women are selling differ from the food that you eat and buy in the supermarket? Does it look tasty and healthy? Are there some foods that you have never seen before?
- 3 Do you think that the Papuan women shown in this video are living reasonable lives given that most Indonesians are poor and struggle? Do they appear to you repressed or empowered by their attempts to improve their conditions?

