

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 which 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.

Issues: Land rights, gender, poverty, palm oil, education, welfare in old age in Papua.

Talking points

- 1 What impact is the development of oil palm plantations having on the lives of Papuans?
- 2 Do you think that the benefits of oil palm plantations in terms of jobs, government revenue and a non-fossil fuel source of energy is worth the destruction of the rainforest and traditional ways of life?
- 3 Would you prefer to live in the cash economy and have access to health and education services or live a traditional subsistence life in a Papuan village? Why?

