

# Stimmen aus Papua



## Sanggeng and the Dream of Affordable but Decent Housing

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When the Dutch started to seriously develop their colonial government in what was then called Nederlands Nieuw Guinea (now Papua), they divided the region into six administrative areas. One of these was the Manokwari District, which was further split into six subdistricts: Sorong, Raja Ampat, Manokwari, Ransiki, Teminabuan, and Bintuni.

In the Manokwari area, the Dutch built housing complexes to support government and industrial activities. For example:

- In what's now called Kampung Ambon, houses were built for government and police staff.
- In Sanggeng, houses were built for workers at the shipyard (now the Navy's repair facility) and for employees of timber companies.
- In Amban, housing was provided for staff of the Agricultural Research Institute (which later became part of Cenderawasih University and eventually the University of Papua).
- In Reremi and Upper Kampung Ambon, houses were built for higher-level officials.

At first, life in Sanggeng was quite good for those working in the shipyard and timber companies, thanks to steady income from their jobs. This continued even after West Irian returned to Indonesia, right up to the 1980s. But then, things started to change — many of those workers retired, and the shipyard and timber businesses stopped operating.

Today, their homes are still occupied, but now by multiple generations — often several families living in one house. Many of the children and grandchildren of the original workers haven't found decent jobs, especially with the industries that once supported them now gone.

Meanwhile, the Sanggeng area has become busier — there's a market, shops, gas stations, and more. But unfortunately, only a few locals have been able to get jobs in these new businesses.

This has created a sense of disappointment and exclusion among residents who used to be an important part of the local economy. The younger generation is often not trained to be farmers or fishermen and lacks access to the tools or land needed to start. So, they survive by doing odd jobs, selling areca nuts or breadfruit, and other informal work — which doesn't pay much.

Compare this to residents of Amban, who mostly work in agriculture. Many of them have gardens and small farms that still support their families today, even after retirement.

All of this shows how badly we need local government programs that create jobs and housing for young families and unmarried youth who are still living in their parents' homes in Sanggeng.

In my view, if we can solve two big issues — (1) jobs and (2) decent housing — then we could see a huge drop in crime in Sanggeng.

In 2007, I visited Palembang with Papua's governor at the time, Barnabas Suebu. We learned from South Sumatra's governor, Alex Nurdin, how he helped provide low-cost housing for the poor. That model could work here too. Here's how it was done:

1. The local government secured land for low-cost housing projects.
2. They prepared the land with basic infrastructure — roads, drainage, clean water, and electricity — and then built very simple houses. Just 28 m<sup>2</sup>: a small living room, a bedroom, a tiny kitchen, and a bathroom with a squat toilet. Walls could be left unpainted outside, and the inside only lightly plastered. Floors were just unfinished cement — no need for ceiling tiles. But importantly, each house had a large plot of land, like 20x20 or 20x15 meters.
3. Residents only had to pay Rp 10,000 per day (less than \$1) to slowly pay off the house. That's an amount most families could earn daily from small-scale work like selling snacks, doing labor, or riding motorcycle taxis. That's Rp 3.65 million per year, and in 10 years the house would be fully paid off.

I believe families wouldn't just be able to pay this off — they'd also improve and expand the house over time, turning it into a proper home within 10–20 years.

Solving the issues in Sanggeng — and in similar areas across Papua — will need teamwork. But the government doesn't have to do it all. With the community contributing through these small daily payments, the government just needs to provide the land and basic infrastructure.

And honestly, if local governments can give 2 hectares of land to poor families from outside Papua — complete with roads, schools, clinics, mosques, and churches — then surely, they can do the same for indigenous Papuans who have lived here their whole lives.



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