

Voices from Papua



Dignified Living: An Affordable Housing Model for Indigenous Papuans in Urban Areas

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Introduction

One of the most fundamental social problems in many cities across West Papua is the lack of decent housing for the urban poor, especially Indigenous Papuans (OAP). Behind government buildings, modern markets, shopping centers, and visible urban economic growth, many OAP families still live in cramped, overcrowded, unhealthy homes — often shared by several families at once. This is not merely a housing issue. It is about dignity, health, safety, and the future of the next generation.

This problem has deep historical roots. Many indigenous families are the original inhabitants of urban areas and have lived in city centers for generations, from the colonial era through the early years of Papua's integration into Indonesia. Yet as cities expanded, many of them were pushed aside economically, left without stable jobs, and unable to access increasingly expensive formal housing.

For that reason, a new people-centered policy is urgently needed: an affordable housing program based on small daily installments, where low-income OAP families can obtain homes through their own effort, while the government provides land and basic infrastructure. This is not a charity program — it is a program of social justice.

A Historical Inequality That Must Be Addressed

In Indonesia's development history, the government once ran transmigration programs that provided generous support to migrants from outside Papua: two hectares of land, housing, several months of living support, and agricultural production facilities. These programs were built on the belief that transmigrants need help to stand on their own feet.

Ironically, many Indigenous Papuans living in cities never received similar support. They live on their ancestral land yet struggle to own a decent home. They live in cities yet are not fully included in the urban economy. They witness development yet often do not enjoy its benefits.

This condition calls for bold and meaningful policy correction.

Core Principles of an Affordable OAP Housing Program

The proposed program rests on one simple idea: homes should not be handed out for free but owned through realistic and affordable small installments.

1. Land Provided Free by Government

Provincial and district/city governments should allocate adequate land within urban areas. Poor families should not be burdened with land costs. This follows the principle of social justice: if the state once provided large areas of land for transmigrants, then OAP communities deserve equal support.

2. Infrastructure Comes First

Before houses are built, the areas must be properly prepared with:

- high-quality roads
- clean water
- electricity
- drainage systems
- household waste treatment
- green open spaces
- basic health clinics
- neighborhood markets
- places of worship and other social facilities

This means poor families should not be relocated into new slums, but into healthy and humane communities.

3. Simple but Functional Homes

Starter homes can be modest houses, including:

- one living room
- two small bedrooms
- a simple kitchen
- bathroom/toilet
- strong and safe structure

This concept is important to keep prices as low as possible. The first home is a foundation for life, not the final product.

4. Spacious Plots of Land

Each home should sit on a reasonably sized lot, for example:

20 x 20 meters, or

25 x 25 meters

With enough land, families can expand their house, grow food crops, raise small livestock, open a kiosk, or start other home-based businesses.

5. Light Daily Installments

Payments should be made daily, for example Rp10,000 per day.

A simple breakdown:

- per day: Rp10,000

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- per month: ± Rp300,000
- per year: ± Rp3,600,000
- over 10 years: ± Rp36,000,000

This amount is relatively affordable even for informal workers: betel nut sellers, day laborers, motorcycle taxi drivers, small traders, or freelance workers.

Why Daily Installments Make Sense

Many poor urban families do not receive monthly salaries. Their income is daily, irregular, and earned in small amounts. For that reason, conventional bank loans often fail to reach them.

Daily installments fit the economic rhythm of ordinary people. If someone sells one bundle of betel nut, earns a day's wage as a laborer, or completes several motorcycle taxi rides, a small part of that income can immediately be set aside for housing.

In this way, a house does not feel like a heavy burden — it becomes a daily investment in the future.

The Role of a Foundation or Social Management Institution

This program requires a professional and trusted management body, such as a social foundation or a special service agency.

Its responsibilities would include:

- collecting daily installments in an orderly way
- recording payments transparently
- assisting families facing difficulties
- strengthening the social environment
- mediating conflicts between residents
- connecting residents with job training and small business opportunities

Such an institution would not merely collect money—it would guide social transformation.

Housing Must Be Located Inside the City

This principle is critical. Many poor OAP families have long been urban communities. Their livelihoods depend on access to markets, ports, shops, and the informal urban economy.

Therefore, housing must not be built far on the outskirts — let alone outside the city. If relocated too far away, families may lose access to their livelihoods.

They have the right to remain urban citizens, but under better and more productive conditions.

Expected Social and Economic Impact

If implemented seriously, this program could have major benefits:

1. Lower Crime Rates

Overcrowding, unemployment, social frustration, and lack of opportunity often contribute to crime. Decent housing and healthy neighborhoods can reduce social pressure.

2. Stronger Families

Young families can live independently instead of crowding into their parents' homes.

3. Growth of Small Businesses

With adequate land, residents can open kiosks, repair shops, food stalls, or home gardens.

4. Greater Self-Respect

Owning a home through one's own payments builds pride, discipline, and optimism.

5. A Fairer City

Cities should not belong only to migrants, civil servants, big traders, and investors. They must also belong to the original Papuan people.

6. A Gradual Implementation Strategy

The program can begin with pilot projects:

- Phase 1: 100 homes in one city
- Phase 2: evaluate the payment model and building quality
- Phase 3: expand to other cities such as Jayapura, Manokwari, Sorong, Timika, Nabire, Merauke, Wamena, Biak, Fakfak, and others

Funding can come from:

- regional government budgets (APBD)
- Special Autonomy Funds
- corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs
- grants from social institutions
- support from the housing ministry

Conclusion

Indigenous Papuans do not need charity. They need fair opportunities. They need systems that understand their way of life and economic realities. They need homes they can own through their own effort.

An affordable housing program based on daily installments offers a dignified middle path: the state provides land and infrastructure, while the people contribute through hard work and commitment to pay.

If carried out seriously, thousands of poor Papuan families in urban areas could gain a new future. Children would grow up in healthy homes. Parents would live with peace of mind. Young men and women would have hope.

And from these modest houses, fairer Papuan cities can be built.

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