



CHILD LABOUR and EDUCATION in PAPUAN Communities

The relationship between child labour and education has a specific connotation among indigenous peoples in Papua. The involvement of Papuan children in work is regarded as an important step in transferring traditional skills from generation to generation. As such, it is an integral part of the education of indigenous children. This traditional 'learning-by-doing' must not be confused with non-educative or dangerous child labour, whose incidence, including in its worst forms, is of particular concern in Papua.

The work of indigenous children in traditional occupations can in some cases be classified as educational. Its aim is to equip new generations with the practical competencies necessary for them to make a subsistence living and properly integrate into their community as adults.

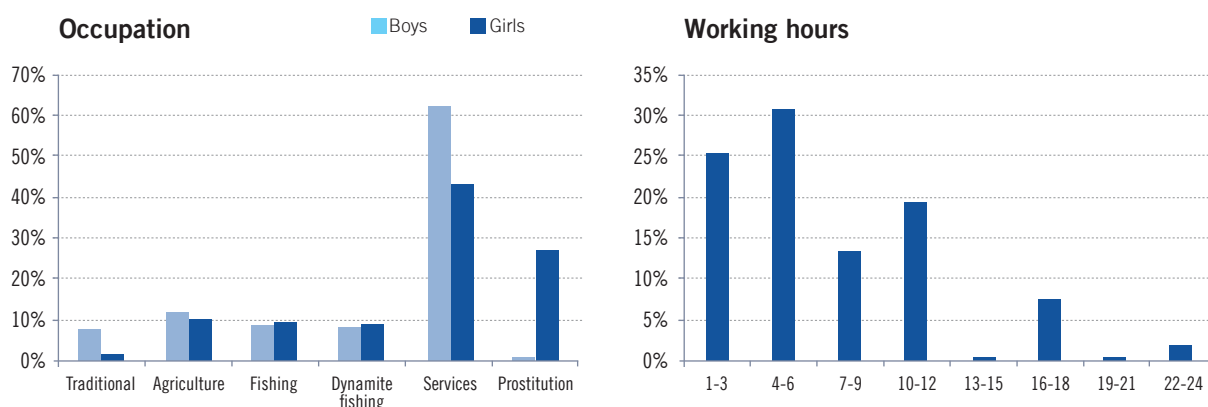
However, the specific activities and the workload it entails need to be carefully scrutinized. They must be appropriate to the age of the child, supervised by adults, compatible with school hours, be balanced

Definitions

According to ILO Convention 169¹, **indigenous peoples** are: *a) Tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; b) Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country [...] at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.*

The Special Autonomy Law for the Province of Papua defines the **Indigenous Peoples of Papua as**: *the peoples of Melanesian descent consisting of the indigenous tribes of Papua Province and/or accepted and acknowledged by the customary peoples of Papua.*

¹ The UN as a whole has not yet adopted an official definition for *indigenous peoples*.

Chart 1: Occupation and working hours among Papuan working children, in %

Source: ILO-EAST, Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour among Indigenous Peoples in Papua, 2009

with opportunities for the child to play and socialize, and lastly, must not be hazardous to the child.

Evidence indicates that this is not always the case among indigenous communities in Papua. In its current country programme, UNICEF has flagged child protection concerns in the province². An ILO-EAST rapid assessment conducted in Jayapura municipality and the districts of Jayawijaya and Merauke addressed the matter more in depth in 2009³. The findings suggested that traditional education modalities in Papua cannot always explain the evidence found of boys and girls in hazardous income-generating activities⁴.

The incidence of child labour in Papua has several causes. Studies drawn from different geographic contexts have found that indigenous children are more likely to be in child labour than their peers⁵. This is partially explained by poverty, one of the major causes of child labour, often associated with indigenous communities. Additional contributing factors are inadequate awareness of the impacts of child labour

among indigenous peoples, and limited knowledge of children's rights.

One important cause of vulnerability to child labour is the lack of opportunities for education. Indigenous boys and girls are often found to be at a disadvantage in this regard. UNESCO points out that even Education for All (EFA) initiatives do not reach a sufficient amount of indigenous children⁶. Papua is no exception.

Education indicators show a substantial disparity between national averages and Papua. The latest available data (2009⁷) indicate that the literacy rate in the province is close to 90 per cent, three percentage points lower than the national rate of 92.9 per cent in the same year. Within Papua, the literacy rate varies across districts, from 97.48 per cent in Biak Numfor to 30.52 per cent in Nduga district. The junior high school dropout rate for the academic year 2008/2009 was 4.2 per cent⁸. In some villages, however, parents have declared that "in the neighbourhood, almost all children have dropped out of school"⁹.

² UNICEF, Country programme document 2011-2015, 2011

³ A total of 664 respondents were involved in the Rapid Assessment Survey, of whom 495 were children and youths aged 7 to 21.

⁴ ILO-EAST, Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua, Jakarta, 2009

⁵ ILO-IPEC & INDISCO-COOP, Indigenous and tribal children: assessing child labour and education challenges, Geneva, 2003

⁶ UNESCO, Global Monitoring Report on Education for All, 2010

⁷ BPS – Statistics Indonesia, Papua in Figures, 2009

⁸ Ministry of National Education, Education Statistics, 2008/2009

⁹ IRD for USAID, Papua and Irian Jaya Barat: Basic Education Needs Assessment, 2007

Child labour cases in Papua are the second highest in Indonesia, according to the 2008 Very Poor Household Survey (Survey RTSM - *Rumah Tangga Sangat Miskin*) conducted by Indonesia's Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA). A total of 130,000 child labourers were said to be registered in Papua (75,000 boys and 55,000 girls), of whom 80,000 were 15 years old or younger. Indonesia's commitments to the provision of EFA without discrimination¹⁰, and to the elimination of child labour¹¹, require a review of the barriers to education in Papua. Based on the ILO-EAST rapid assessment study's findings, this policy brief is an attempt to delineate the issues at play and recommend priority actions.

Some of the major barriers to education in Papua include difficult access to schools, due to both physical and non-physical factors.

The characteristics of Papua territory severely constrain the chances for indigenous children to acquire an education. A USAID report ranks distance from school as the primary reason for dropping out in the province²³.

- **Schools are primarily found in urban areas**, particularly at the junior secondary level. The

Box 1: The context of Papua province

- **Area and population density.** Papua covers 756,881 square kilometres¹², with a population density of 2.7 per square kilometre. In 2010, its population was 2.8 million (1.5 million male and 1.3 million female), making Papua one of the least densely populated provinces of Indonesia¹³.
- **Demographics.** More than 31 per cent of Papua's population is below 15 years of age, and only 10 per cent is older than 50¹⁴. Papua is ethnically very diverse, with more than 200 spoken languages, 44 main tribes, and 177 sub-tribes¹⁵. Half of the population in the province is composed of people from other areas of Indonesia¹⁶.
- **Economy.** Due to an abundance of minerals, rainforests and marine resources, Papua has the highest Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) in Indonesia. Substantial income comes from mining and quarrying (62.76 per cent of regional income) and from forestry (5.3 per cent)¹⁷. Yet Papua's population works mainly in agriculture, fishing and hunting.
- **Poverty, human and infrastructure development.** Despite a high GRDP, Papua suffers from one of the highest poverty rates in Indonesia, with more than 80 per cent of households living below the poverty line¹⁸. In 2009, the Human Development Index (HDI) of Papua was 64.3, the lowest in the country, versus a national HDI of 73.4 that year¹⁹. The average distance of a household from the nearest public health facility is 32 km. Only around 20 per cent of the population have access to clean water²⁰ and of the poorest quintile only 9 per cent have access to clean water²¹. Half of the rural villages are accessible only by unpaved roads, and access to communication facilities such as telephones is limited to 10 per cent of the rural poor²².

¹⁰ In 1967 Indonesia ratified UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960).

¹¹ Indonesia has ratified the ILO Convention on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973 (No.138) by Law no. 22 year 1999 and the ILO Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No.182) by Law no. 1 year 2000

¹² Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Papua in Figures 2010, 2010.

¹³ Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Papua in Figures 2010, 2010.

¹⁴ Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Papua in Figures 2010, 2010.

¹⁵ ILO- EAST, Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua, Jakarta, 2009

¹⁶ Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Papua in Figures 2010, 2010.

¹⁷ ILO, Infrastructure, Poverty and Jobs: Introducing Local Resource-based Strategies to Eastern Indonesia, Jakarta, 2008

¹⁸ ILO, Infrastructure, Poverty and Jobs: Introducing Local Resource based Strategies to Eastern Indonesia, Jakarta - 2008.

¹⁹ ILO- EAST, Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua, Jakarta, 2009

²⁰ Bintang Papua, 19 April 2011; see http://bintangpapua.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10299:baru-20-persen-masyarakat-papua-nikmati-sumber-air-yang-baik&catid=1:port-numbay&Itemid=86.

²¹ UNICEF, Country programme document 2011-2015, 2011

²² ILO- EAST, Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua, Jakarta, 2009

²³ IRD for USAID, Papua and Irian Jaya Barat: Basic Education Needs Assessment, 2007

Box 2: Barriers to education among indigenous children in Papua

1. Accessibility

- Physical: reaching school facilities
- Non-physical: discrimination

3. Quality

- Limited preparation to meet needs of indigenous students
- Insufficient deployment of teachers
- Lack of teachers' motivation

2. Affordability

- Direct cost: school fee
- Indirect cost: school supplies
- Opportunity cost of children's time

4. Relevance

- Inadequate integration of indigenous subjects
- Mono-lingual

Based on an ILO-IPEC framework of analysis as illustrated in Combating child labour through education (Geneva, 2004).

majority of students, however, live in remote villages. According to the ILO-EAST rapid assessment, in surveyed areas, 70 per cent of the children go to school 'far from home', while 8 per cent of children stated that 'there is no school' accessible anywhere.

- **Transport systems and communication infrastructure are scarcely developed.** While schools can be far (40 per cent of children live between 4 and 11 km away from the nearest facilities²⁴), the conditions of roads and availability of transport magnify distances. Students from villages travel mainly on foot, by canoe or bicycle.

The journey to school can take two hours each way in coastal areas. It can also require a one-week walk in very remote regions²⁵.

While physical barriers are a critical factor affecting accessibility, non-physical ones, such as various forms of discrimination, can also contribute to the dropout rate.

- **Parents reported discriminatory behaviours of teachers towards indigenous students.** Forms of discrimination include stereotyping, verbal remarks, and subjective grading. The ILO-EAST rapid assessment found that perceived

²⁴ ILO-EAST, *Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua*, Jakarta, 2009

²⁵ Ibid.

discrimination affected 40 per cent of the 495 children surveyed (221 girls and 274 boys)²⁶.

- **Performance gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous students might exacerbate unequal treatment.** Indigenous children often struggle to match their peers' schools results. This suggests a failure of the formal education system to meet the specific needs of indigenous students²⁷.
- **Despite the positive impact of government subsidies, the affordability of education in Papua remains a concern, particularly due to its direct impact on child labour.** The direct and indirect costs of formal education require the poorest families to sometimes pay beyond their means. When necessary, children themselves are asked to provide for the income gap. The ILO-EAST rapid assessment found that in 16 per cent of cases²⁸ the reason for entering child labour is the need to pay for school costs. In particular, children from remote areas that have moved to the city in order to get better access to education get engaged in child labour to pay for school costs.

The central and local governments of Indonesia have been subsidizing formal education since 2005 through the *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (BOS, School Operational Assistance). The BOS scheme covers up to 70 per cent of students' fees²⁹ for primary and secondary education. Families in the poorest quintile are entitled to full coverage. While the BOS has made a great contribution to improving enrolment rates³⁰, affording other school costs such as textbooks, uniform and transport is still a challenge in Papua.

- Public subsidies to the poorest households **do not always end up covering the full school fees**, as

fees are ultimately determined by the individual school committees on the ground. When the 60 or 70 per cent coverage applies, some families find it difficult to cover the rest³¹.

- Public subsidies within the *Biaya Operasional Pendidikan* (BOP-Education Operational Fund, similar to the BOS but targeted at operational costs) subsidize examination fees. **There were delays in delivery**³², however, leaving families needing to pay for such costs in advance.
- **Entry regulations for formal schools require that parents declare a regular monthly income.** Poor families, however, are not likely to have one, and the very notion of regular income might not apply to traditional indigenous activities.
- **Indirect costs such as school supplies or transportation can be unaffordable**, compromising the regular attendance of students, and leading to their eventual expulsion.
- The opportunity cost of children's time spent at school rather than in contributing to the family income is likely to affect the affordability of education. The Rapid Assessment found that poor **families choose to allocate their children's time to work rather than to education**, although they might not be fully conscious of the trade-off. More than one-third of working children take up work because they need to contribute to their family's income³³. Work interferes with school hours, and leaves children exhausted and unable to do their homework. For these reasons, it is one of the most frequent causes of dropping out in the province.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ World Indigenous People Conference on Education (WIPCE), Hawaii, 1999

²⁸ ILO-EAST, *Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua*, Jakarta, 2009

²⁹ Fees include: entrance fee for new students, registration fee for older students, uniform fee, tuition fee, book fee, student worksheets, computer fee, cooperative fee, extracurricular courses/lessons, scout fee, student farewell fee, study tour, and others. (World Bank, *Making BOS effective under decentralization*, 2010)

³⁰ World Bank, *Making BOS effective under decentralization*, 2010

³¹ Ibid

³² IRD for USAID, *Papua and Irian Jaya Barat: Basic Education Needs Assessment*, 2007

³³ Ibid., and ILO-EAST, *Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua*, Jakarta, 2009

The quality of formal education in Papua is constrained by insufficient teacher training, and further challenged by remoteness and lack of infrastructure.

The World Bank has summarized the greatest challenges for rural education as "producing qualified teachers, deploying them to rural schools, and giving them professional and sometimes moral support"³⁴. They all apply to the context of Papua.

- **Teachers' preparation, particularly on multicultural learning, is weak.** Evidence from the ILO-EAST rapid assessment shows that the inability of teachers to handle a multicultural environment with professionalism and equity is perceived as contributing to indigenous children's dropout rate in 40 per cent of the cases assessed³⁵.
- **The availability of teachers in rural vis-à-vis urban areas is not balanced**³⁶, with rural areas being significantly disadvantaged. There is a higher concentration of schools in the cities. In addition, teachers show a lack of willingness and motivation to work in remote districts. The system of compensation for harsh duty-stations works slowly, and benefits are rarely distributed on time, if at all. The payment of salaries is also delayed, due to the lack of banks and an underdeveloped transport network.
- Inadequate benefits and the late payment of salaries make **teachers feel undervalued and unmotivated**. Their consequent lack of commitment translates into a lack of professionalism. The impact on the quality of teaching is critical, particularly

as supervision is limited in isolated areas. Parents often report the systematic and prolonged absence of teachers from school³⁷.

The school curriculum is not relevant to the indigenous contexts, and results in a lack of coherence of education goals. As school subjects are standardized across Indonesia, they ill-fit the needs and abilities of students in Papua.

- **Indigenous knowledge and traditional livelihoods are still left out of the formal school curriculum in Papua.** Papuan families may therefore find the curriculum irrelevant, as it does not equip children with the skills they need to integrate into adult indigenous life. The mainstream curriculum often ignores traditional values, sometimes due to the difficulty of translating those values into school subjects. Consequently, educational content is drawn from a reality of infrastructure, enterprises and lifestyle not found in rural Papua³⁸.
- **The language of formal education, Indonesian, represents both an advantage and a disadvantage.** On the one hand, children become fluent in the national language by attending school. This is indeed necessary to extend their future job and social opportunities beyond their homes. On the other hand, Papuan students progressively lose proficiency in their native language. Together with the language, they also lose the ability to "navigate in local environments, communicate with and re-write the surrounding landscape to serve their own well-being and future"³⁹. While they integrate better into the Indonesian society, their indigenous identity becomes weaker.

³⁴ World Bank, *Improving education in rural areas: guidance for rural development specialists*, 2001

³⁵ ILO-EAST, *Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua*, Jakarta, 2009

³⁶ ILO-EAST, *Rapid Assessment Survey of Child Labour Among Indigenous Peoples in Papua*, Jakarta, 2009

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ ILO-IPEC & INDISCO-COOP, *Indigenous and tribal children: assessing child labour and education challenges*, Geneva, 2003

³⁹ ILO-IPEC & INDISCO-COOP, *Indigenous and tribal children: assessing child labour and education challenges*, Geneva, 2003

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Provincial Government of Papua have been developing progressive initiatives to increase access to quality education for children in Papua. These initiatives include the commitment to (a) build dormitory one-roof schools⁴⁰ and (b) increase the deployment of teachers to remote areas/districts in Papua.

The following recommendations aim to complement the policies described above and improve access to quality education for indigenous children vulnerable to child labour:

- I. **Increase child labour awareness, enforce relevant laws and officialise the establishment of the Provincial Action Committee for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL).** The Government of Indonesia (GoI) has ratified the ILO Convention on *Minimum Age for Admission to Employment*, 1973 (No. 138) by Law No. 22 of 1999 and ILO Convention on *the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, 1999 (No. 182) by Law No. 1 of 2000. It has also formulated specific action plans to put these international obligations into practice. However, implementation in Papua has been slow, as the evidence discussed in this policy brief suggests. Given the incidence of child labour and the specific needs of the province, a plan of action should be designed specifically for Papua.
- II. **Institutionalize and replicate the Child Labour Monitoring and Referral System piloted in Jayapura district.** Since 2009, ILO-EAST has been working closely with the Jayapura District

Action Committee for the Elimination of WFCL, to pilot a Child Labour Monitoring and Referral System. This initiative has resulted in 52 child labourers being successfully referred back to education. Budget allocations need to be made to ensure that the system is sustained and scaled up.

- III. **Continue to invest in school infrastructure to expand access to education and increase teachers' deployment to remote areas.** The GoI is already committed to boosting education facilities in the country through (a) the School Operational Fund (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* - BOS), (b) the School-Based Management (SBM) programme, and, specific to Papua, (c) the Accessible and Affordable Education programme (*Program Pendidikan Murah dan Terjangkau*) and (d) the Quality and Equitable Education programme (*Program Pendidikan Bermutu dan Merata*)⁴¹. Furthermore, discussions have also been initiated between the national and provincial governments regarding (a) the development of an integrated vocational school (SMK) model (*DUDI* - Dunia Usaha Dunia Industri), (b) the expansion of dormitory one-roof boarding schools (*SATAP* Berasrama), and (c) distance learning models using information and communication technology.⁴²
- IV. **Continue to strengthen efforts to provide free education.** Government subsidies such as the BOS have been effectively increasing demand for education. Their roll out in Papua requires a specific strategy, taking into account the physical features of the land and its level of infrastructure development. In the rest of Indonesia, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of

⁴⁰ A one-roof school is a school that provides classes for secondary school-aged children in primary school buildings, when no secondary school is located in the area;

⁴¹ Education Achievement Indicator of Papua Province by 2007-2009

⁴² http://www.madina-sk.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9207:pemerintah-akan-perioritaskan-pendidikan-di-provinsi-papua&catid=4:kesejahteraan-rakyat&Itemid=54

children in the poorest quintile has increased by more than seven percentage points since the launch of the BOS⁴³. In Papua, subsidies are much less effective. In practice the delivery of BOS is often delayed, which may affect family decisions to send children to work to pay for education.

- V. **Mainstream traditional learning within the education system.** Neither traditional nor formal education *alone* can provide indigenous children with the preparation they need to grow up as skilled and economically active adults within their community and as part of Indonesian society at large. On one hand, compulsory education needs to be enforced in Papua, and the curriculum needs to be made relevant to the local context. A curriculum review should be approached as an inclusive, child-centred and open-ended process, driven by consultations with indigenous communities and with formal school institutions. On the other hand, traditional education based on ‘learning-by-doing’ should be mainstreamed, as it is essential for skills transfer and monitoring of related hazards.
- VI. **Increase the emphasis on teachers’ preparation and incentives.** Strategies to reduce barriers to education will not succeed unless teachers are prepared to fulfil their role. Their responsibilities require more than mere mastery of their subject matter. They need to be specifically trained on cultural differences and intercultural learning, as their behaviour has an impact on student retention. Appropriate training and improved accountability mechanisms can be an effective incentive to boost teachers’ professionalism.

In this regard, the isolation of Papuan villages is, once again, a challenge. Local governments should therefore consider mechanisms to increase teachers’ accountability to students and their parents.

CONCLUSIONS

Among indigenous communities in rural Papua, the work done by children is often considered as an integral part of customary education modalities. Boys and girls are encouraged by their parents to become involved in light traditional work as part of an inter-generational transfer of indigenous knowledge and skills. However, besides this long-established ‘learning-by-doing’, Papua also shows alarming levels of child labour.

The high incidence of school dropouts in the province increases children’s vulnerability to child labour. It also exacerbates their marginalization from Indonesian society in a broader sense. The reasons for dropping out are manifold and stem from the disproportionate barriers to formal education faced by indigenous children. These include: accessibility, such as distance from school; affordability; quality of teaching; and relevance of formal education, which disregards indigenous subjects and traditional livelihoods.

Reducing barriers to education is of paramount importance in fighting child labour and achieving Indonesia’s commitments to Education For All. This effort will require Papua-specific indigenous-driven strategies and increased accountability in order to have an effect on child labour and contribute to inclusive education in Papua.

⁴³ World Bank, *Making BOS effective under decentralization*, 2010