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Curt Gabrielson, a science teacher and an Institute Fellow, is observing the re-establishment of education in East Timor.

Harsh Reality in West Papua

By Curt Gabrielson

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JAKARTA, Indonesia–My partner Pamela and I spent three weeks in West Papua during the month of October. We visited the north-coast capital, Jayapura, the central-highland town of Wamena, and the small town of Timika on the south coast near the enormous Freeport gold and copper mines. We visited many grassroots groups and talked to dozens of people. We found that West Papuans are living under the heavy heel of the same military forces that ravaged East Timor. They fear for their lives as they work under the shadow of oblique intimidation and unexplained deaths. They are desperate for peace and self-determination. And they made it very clear that we as Americans are key to their hope for a better future.

The island of New Guinea is extraordinary. At a latitude of zero to ten degrees south, this world's second-largest island contains vast mangrove swamps, jungles covering mountains and river flatland, fertile highland valleys and rocky mountains complete with glaciers. The biodiversity of species existing in these environs is staggering: 200 mammal, 725 bird, 5,000 butterfly and moth, and nearly 100,000 other insect species residing in a wide variety of ecosystems make the island an extremely important biological resource. Cultural and linguistic wealth and diversity on the island are also astonishing. It has been estimated that one-sixth of the earth's languages occur on New Guinea, and civilization has been thriving there continuously for around 40,000 years. The wonders of this land have been well recorded in countless travel journals, anthropological documents, and photo collections. Suffice it to say that traveling there was non-stop stimulation for our minds and senses.

The gate to the Indonesian military special forces (Kopassus) compound in Wamena depicts an Indonesian soldier educating a local Papuan, with the message: "Forces of Good Protect the People"

Superimposed on this set of geo-bio-cultural superlatives is a complex and increasingly dangerous political situation. The eastern half of the island is the independent na-

Surrealistically nationalist murals and statues are a common site around the nation of Indonesia. This bronze mural in central Jayapura depicts a military landing of Indonesian forces on Papua, complete with Papuans eagerly waving the Indonesian flag. Pamela is not impressed.

tion of Papua New Guinea. The western half, previously known as Irian Jaya, and currently called Papua or West Papua, is a province of Indonesia. With a land the size of California, Papua's population is slightly over two million, with just under half originating from other areas in Indonesia. Papuans are different from their mostly Javanese rulers in culture, language, religion and history. They generally do not feel an "Indonesian" identity; they have no interest in being Indonesian. The story of how they came to be ruled from Jakarta is one of colonial conquest and post-WWII power grabbing, in which the US played a large role.

For hundreds of years the Dutch occupied the coastal regions of Papua and administered these trade outposts separate from the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). Dutch missionaries made contact with many of the peoples of this Dutch New Guinea, trying to "civilize" and convert them.[1] Japanese soldiers gained control of the north coast of Papua during WWII, and after MacArthur's forces rooted them out, the northern city of Jayapura (then called Hollandia) was used as an important Allied base for the rest of the war. After the war, Sukarno's forces fought for independence on Java, and then tried to gain control of all previous Dutch holdings. Despite Jakarta's rattling saber, throughout the 1950s the Dutch continued to administer Papua and prepare Papuans for their own independence.

This was not to be. The US feared regional instability and various sources within the US pressed President Kennedy to put Papua into Indonesian hands. Under US guidance, the Netherlands and Indonesia came to a settlement at the UN under the New York Agreement of 1962. This agreement put a temporary UN authority in Papua, then handed the half-island over to Indonesia by mid 1963. This was to be a tentative administration, contingent on an additional condition of the New York Agreement, which stated that the Papuan people must be given a chance to choose their own destiny — to be part of Indonesia or to found an independent state — in a popular "consultation."

This consultation took place in 1969, but was hardly popular. By that time Indonesia had gained enough control over Papua to scrap the idea of a general vote in favor of a consultation of "people's delegates." At the "Act of Free Choice" (commonly referred to by Papuans as

[1] While many Papuan people are proud to continue their traditional cultures as they have for millennia, we talked to several locals who expressed gratitude to the Dutch and American missionaries who gradually urged them away from their old state of constant war. In the same breath, these Papuans lamented that their long-time Dutch and America friends had abandoned them in their current hardships.

the "Act of No Choice") 1,025 handpicked Papuan Indonesia supporters voted unanimously for integration within Indonesia. Many were severely intimidated and/or paid for their vote. Fifteen nations, official UN observers to the Act and many Papuan organizations decried the referendum as a sham, but with significant US pressure, the international community accepted the results. All attempts within the UN to revisit or nullify the 1969 act have failed.

Since 1969, the plunder of Papua's rich resources has accelerated, with nearly all profits carried away from the island. Military and police repression has removed any obstacles to these commercial exploitations — often military-owned companies are leading the way. Some church groups estimate that since 1961, 400,000 people have been killed or disappeared. Murder, torture, rape, summary detentions and destruction of villages continue to this day.

In addition, close to one million non-Papuans have been moved from other parts of Indonesia to Papua since

1969, some voluntarily, some under Indonesia's enormous World Bank-supported transmigration program. Great sections of forest have been cleared for transmigrant villages. Since residents of these new colonies have a much different culture than Papuans residing in neighboring villages, and the transmigrants' land was carved directly from areas used by these Papuans, the violence and chaos that have resulted are no surprise.

A banner announcing the peace conference in Jayapura, and listing the participating groups

Violence and chaos are very important for the Indonesian military and police. If all were peaceful, there would be no need for "security." Thus, a well-honed strategy by Indonesian armed forces is to create instability on the sly and then call for more forces to "maintain peace." These increased forces are then used to repress the local population and further military goals, both economic and political.

Most of the Papuan self-determination movement has chosen a militantly nonviolent strategy to combat this trend. In 2000, leaders of the Papuan resistance called for a cease-fire they claim the resistance has honored until today. The same can not be claimed by the Indonesian military. Military officials have repeatedly promised to increase their repression and violent methods if there continues to be a push for self-determination.

Just as we arrived in Jayapura, a peace conference was being held, hosted by the local government, the regional Indonesian police division and ELSHAM, a prominent human-rights group in Papua. The goal was to discuss the establishment of a "Zone of Peace" in Papua.

Several of the Papuans who organized and participated in the conference explained to us that the police and local government were happy to have a part in the conference so that they could build an image of working toward a solution. ELSHAM and other Papuan groups wanted the conference to make public the major issues of violence in Papua and to initiate an open dialogue. Conference participants included rights groups from Jakarta, university representatives, scholars from abroad, Indonesian Navy officials, members of local churches and mosques, and women's development organizations. The Indonesian Army refused to join the conference — one explanation given to a local organization was that the army views peace zones as a pro-independence tool.

The conference was the beginning of a longer dialogue. Participants widely agreed that peace is necessary and plans were made for additional events to promote the Zone of Peace.

We were impressed by the women's groups attending the conference. Participants from these groups are very vocal, and by many accounts, "pure." Both men and women explained to us that men have more connections to the Indonesian government systems and that many men cave in under pressure or payoffs, or are afraid to speak the truth. Women, they explained, are free of this kind of manipulation and will speak clearly about the current situation and what needs to be done. This is good news, because the status of women in many Papuan cultures is very low. Women's groups we talked to were very clear about the fact that the political change Papuans are looking for in their government must be accompanied by social change at home. One women's leader from Wamena even said that if men do not agree to change their treatment of women, she would not assist them in the fight for self-determination. This is significant in that women's organizations in Papua are of high strategic value, just as they were in pre-independence East Timor, because the authorities dismiss them as trivial and overlook their vital contributions to the clandestine struggle.

"Struggle" may seem to us Westerners to be a vague, abstract description of the activities of those seeking freedom in far-away places. For me in Papua, it took on a new meaning of harsh reality. In Wamena we met a member of the Papuan Presidium, a board of Papuans from various regions and groups working for Papuan self-determination. (The Presidium was founded in July 1998 after Indonesian soldiers massacred 100 peaceful pro-independence demonstrators on Biak Island off the north coast of Papua.) David[2] was jailed for six months following a separate incident of violence in Wamena in 2000. When locals raised the Papuan flag, Indonesian soldiers came and chainsawed the flagpole down and shot several Papuans at the site. When outraged Papuans from

[2] The names of all activists in this piece have been changed.

all over the region poured into Wamena armed with bows and arrows, some military personnel hid in houses of the Indonesian civilians. Papuans burned many houses to flush them out and killed around two dozen Indonesians before rain came to calm the scene. David was accused of helping to organize the flag raising and fomenting violence. He is still not free to leave the town, and was thus unable to participate in the peace conference.

Talking with activists from Papua made us acutely aware of the danger in their everyday lives. Many times they would look over their shoulders, speak in ultra-low tones and want to meet in special, safe places. Daniel drove us aimlessly around Jayapura as he described the hardships he has encountered investigating the death of Presidium Leader Theys Eluay. One night last October, Theys died by strangulation in his car on an empty stretch of highway. Much cover-up and official propaganda confounded the investigation, but now several members of Kopassus, the Indonesian military's special forces, are being tried for his murder. Daniel's organization, Kontras, which is a national Indonesian organization dedicated to locating missing persons and supporting their families, has received phone threats, and his motorcycle was torn apart one night outside his home.

Arthur, also from Jayapura was investigating the December 2000 "Abepura Incident" in which several students were killed by military forces, when he found his name was on the police's wanted list for being an "enemy of the state."[3] This charge carries with it a jail term of 25 years, but even more frightening, the first person on the list had already disappeared. Arthur was naturally quite worried. Thanks to uncanny good fortune, he had just been accepted in a program to study abroad, so he fled to Jakarta and hid in a friend's house for a month while his visa was processed, then escaped to England for a year.[4] Back again, he continues to work doggedly for the human rights of Papuans.

It is important to realize that jail is not a safe place in Indonesia. Benny Wenda, a man accused of inciting an attack on a police station in Abepura in 2000 has been held in jail in Papua for several months on unclear charges. His supporters claim that police have denied him food and water for up to four days straight, left him in a cell with no toilet and no bed for many days, and not dealt with his ongoing sicknesses. The day we left Papua, the police suddenly reported Benny missing. Papuans fear he has been taken by the armed forces, while authorities claim he has escaped. Human-rights lawyers working on his case published statements to put the responsibility for Wenda's safety firmly with the police since this pattern is frighteningly familiar. Many leaders of the Papuan resistance and even human-rights workers have died or disappeared permanently while being held in prison.

As we visited with these activists in their homes or offices, we often saw pictures hanging on the wall of their friends and fellow resistance members who had been killed or disappeared. These were constant reminders that for these activists the struggle may well result in death.

Stories of these remarkable activists came to us every day. George, a nurse in Wamena, is working on building consensus among local tribal leaders about what they would like to see in Papua's new "Special Autonomy" package. When Indonesian President Suharto was forced from power in 1998, his successors B.J. Habibie and Abdurrachman Wahid (Gus Dur) gave more attention to the difficulties in Papua. Jakarta proposed "Special Autonomy" and then gave the status to the province in 2000. The name was officially changed from Irian Jaya to Papua in accordance with local wishes. More locals were slated to be placed in local government and a scheme was set up to divert more revenue from companies operating in Papua to Papuan communities. Representatives from Jakarta met with groups like the Presidium and appeared to listen, at least more than in the past. President Wahid even gave permission for the Papuan flag to be flown (though often the local military did not honor this permission).

George is not satisfied with "Special Autonomy," but he is trying to work within its laws to gain more freedom. While George's current activities are entirely within the law of Indonesia, he has encountered extreme intimidation and threats on his life from Indonesian armed forces. His office is sometimes "swept" by police, and he showed us a document that he printed out and then erased from his computer because they check that too. The document said nothing about a free Papua or the independence struggle. Rather, it was documentation of long hard discussions among tribal leaders to determine a unified stance on various social and political ideas to be included under the "Special Autonomy." This is what locals are supposed to be doing under the new system. Yet George knew that it was dangerous. He explained to us that "Special Autonomy" is a smoke screen for increased repression, and continued to look over his shoulder every time he heard an unusual noise outside.

A very articulate man we met as we were treking around the mountainous area near Wamena, Matteus, had a different analogy. After some initial small talk, he told us of his work in coordinating resistance. He said "Special Autonomy" is like candy for a whining kid: all sugar but no substance. But Papua is not a whining kid, he said,

[3] The resistance movement has its moles within the police and military structure. Lists similar to this, as well as other sensitive documents, are widely circulated among the resistance community.

[4] While Arthur's trip abroad was just good fortune, there exist several examples from Papua, Aceh and Timor where a local activist was assisted by members of the international solidarity movement and spirited out of their dangerous situations, at least for a while.

Many Papuans are inspired by East Timor's recent independence. This man openly wears his East Timor flag t-shirt.

and Papuans don't want candy. They want the freedom to determine their own lives, to benefit from their own resources and to get out from under the repression that Indonesia has imposed on them.

We learned that in remote mountain villages near where Matteus lives, repression is not so ever-present as once was. While not many valuable resources exist to be extracted, Wamena gets 6,000 foreign tourists a year, mostly for trekking around the fantastic mountains. This is a significant resource that could well increase with the right advertising, but not in the face of frightening human-rights problems. This could explain the military's relaxed hold in the past few years. Do Papuans in these areas still want independence? "One hundred percent of them," said George. "Not ninety-nine; one hundred percent." Those who say otherwise are either scared or being paid off.

Matteus pointed out to us one set of villages reputed to be "pro-autonomy." We later learned that they were some of the "people's delegates" paid to vote for Indonesia in 1969, and who continue to receive material benefits from their alliance. Matteus explained that even if the Indonesian government let the Papuan mountain people live in peace according to their traditions, it was too late. There is tight solidarity with tribes in regions that are still being repressed, and every Papuan knows that Indonesia is heisting resources for export the length and breadth of Papua. They will not be satisfied until they achieve self-determination. We were led to believe Matteus' statements when we found information on international-solidarity efforts with Papua in a village a full day's walk from Wamena.

Some Papuan leaders believe "Special Autonomy" can be used constructively to pave a path to self-determination. Many want to ensure a slow, gradual process of change, avoiding the military-led destruction suffered by East Timor.[5] But the current Indonesian president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, and the armed forces that hold perhaps more power than she does, are strongly opposed to any substantive discussions about true self-determination.

John Rumbiak, one of the directors of ELSHAM, says the issue is "recognition, respect and justice," and that Jakarta is just "not willing to have a dialogue." In various places, we viewed leaked documents lending great credibility to this viewpoint. One Indonesian State Department document from 2000 showed a diagram of Papuan society with "dangerous" groups highlighted. These groups included nearly the entire society: churches, mosques, non-governmental organizations, civic leaders, students, women, human-rights workers, etc. A leaked police document we saw warned that human-rights organizations are a front for the independence movement, and must be stopped. The police showed the head of ELSHAM Wamena a list with his name on it, accusing him of being part of a Christian terrorist group of which he knew nothing.

On the surface "Special Autonomy" is presented as a compromise solution to the concerns of the Papuans, but underneath, "Special Autonomy" is a chance to identify any Papuan actively working for self-determination,

A man we met while trekking holding the Papuan flag and a list of scheduled actions to promote self-determination for Papua.

[5] See my newsletter CG-1 from January 2001 for information on the events of 1999 in East Timor.

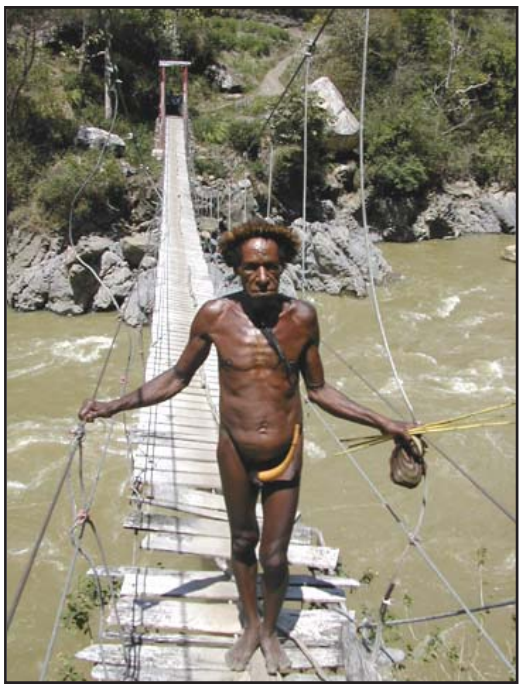
[6] Mao used this technique in the late 50's during the "Hundred Flowers Movement." Intellectuals were encouraged to criticize the state in order to let "a hundred flowers bloom" for China. After a time, the government then rounded up all those flowers that had chosen to bloom and either jailed or killed them. A similar situation occurred in Indonesia after the "Reformasi" movement following the fall of Suharto. Several movement leaders who vocally criticized the state when civil liberties were on an upswing are now in jail or have disappeared.

In June of this year, Yafeth Yelemaken, a Papuan civil servant who had reported human-rights violation by the Indonesian armed forces, returned to Papua after a trip to Jakarta and died a sudden, mysterious death. Most believe he was poisoned by Kopassus. Local sources say 50,000 people attended his funeral in Wamena, and made the occasion into a forum to express their desire for self-determination for Papua. Members of ELSHAM Wamena took these photos.

and then to eliminate them.[6] So many prominent Papuans have disappeared or died under suspect circumstances in the past few years, that it is easy to come to this conclusion.

Recent Papuan history amounts to a staccato of decisions and mandates from Jakarta and the scurrying of Papuans to make the most strategic reaction to these new circumstances against an ever-present background of killing and intimidation by the Indonesian armed forces. It is a bizarre, treacherous game. While in Jayapura, we witnessed an enormous protest, composed mostly of students, at the provincial government building compound. We found that Jakarta has recently hatched a plan to divide West Papua into three separate districts. Many hundreds of students occupied the compound, denounced the division plan and refused to leave until leaders gave their word that they would reject the plan. The local provincial leaders gave a favorable response, and the news as I write is that they continued to side with the students. We saw police directing traffic around the protest and facilitating the students' entrance to the compound, but how many Kopassus agents were present, and which student leaders have now been tagged for intimidation or elimination? Papuan activists we talked to remarked that this was very much the recent pattern, but were intent on continued action.

The situation in general is not encouraging. Both the head of police, Made Manku Pastika, and the head of the



Traditional Papuan highlander men wear nothing but the "koteka" or penis gourd. Benny Wenda, currently missing from prison, is a leader of the Penis Gourd Council, a group representing many of the highlander peoples. Many Papuans maintain that his detention and trial are just another attempt to eliminate troublesome local leaders.

This photo shows a pro-Indonesian militia group from around Wamena. The police actively support them, which amounts to impunity for their actions of terror. Groups of similar origin destroyed East Timor and massacred more than 1,000 East Timorese in 1999. Photo by ELSHAM.

military in Papua, Mahidin Simbolon, were involved in East Timor's recent, bitter history. Simbolon is known to have much experience in setting up local pro-Jakarta militias such as those that killed so many and caused so much damage in East Timor. Now he is at work in Papua. ELSHAM reports three different pro-Jakarta militias receiving police support and training in the Wamena area alone. These militias terrorize civic leaders and human-rights activists. ELSHAM reports rape, killing of livestock, destruction and theft of property, and intimidation by militias in several communities around Wamena.

Chaos is the military's friend. Near Timika, three teachers from Freeport's international school were killed in a roadside ambush on August 31, 2002. One was Indonesian, and two were US citizens. A priest in Timika explained how there was no possible way that this was the work of OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka* or Free Papua Movement), the guerilla freedom fighters that the military immediately blamed.[7] First of all, like other Papuans, the guerillas desperately want foreign support. Second, the attack took place only a short distance from a military post — unthinkable strategy for the OPM. Third, the Papuan man killed by Indonesian armed forces on the day of the attack and accused of the crime has a medical condition which enlarged his testicles to the size of softballs so that he could hardly walk across the room. The official autopsy report also showed that he was killed before the attack took place. Fourth, the bullets killing the teachers were from a US-supplied M-16 rifle, which the OPM can only dream of obtaining, but which is standard issue for the Indonesian military. The case has yet to come to trial, but even the local police are now fingering the military.

The previous week, while we were in Jayapura, we met a very scared eyewitness to the attack, who had been hiding out for nearly two months. He was with Kopassus during the hit and saw an Indonesian military officer fire a rifle several times into the car carrying the teachers. He has now defected from the special forces, and is quite rightly fearing for his life. With such brash brutality commonplace, it is easy to understand why Papuans are not interested in discussing reconciliation, but rather driving hard for independence.

(This incident was naturally quite a sore spot in US-Indonesian relations, and made more difficult the efforts of various US government and military officials trying to resume aid to the Indonesian military. The bomb in Bali, which occurred while we were in Papua, may send the pendulum swinging back toward more support for US aid, under the pretext of fighting terrorism, but the nature of the Inodnesian military is difficult to ignore.)

Our biggest question while travelling around Papua was this: What is the next step? For the majority of Papuans who believe Papua can follow East Timor to independence, how would the transition work, and how can Papua avoid the terrible death and destruction wrecked on East Timor in 1999? The answer came back with crystal clarity. Time and time again we received the identical response: Papua needs international support, a third-party mediator. Only an outside force can trump the Indonesian military. Papuans are doing all they can, organizing themselves well, pushing the limits in every possible way, but until a third party enters the conflict, bringing authority and force, the Papuan people are at the mercy of Jakarta and her military.

Students, civic leaders and common people all gave us this response. Possibly because of this, many were glad to see us. It reminded us of our trip to East Timor in 1997, when we were likewise viewed as a source of hope for a future without oppression.

Having witnessed the horrors of 1999 in East Timor,

[7] OPM is composed of a few hundred guerrilla fighters with very few weapons and little outside support. They do enjoy wide support from Papuans, though they have not led any significant initiatives since the call for peace in 2000.

we know that international intervention alone is not the solution to the conflict. Intervention must be carried out in such a way as to tie the hands of the Indonesian armed forces early. The brutality and impunity of the Indonesian armed forces is the key element to be reckoned with in designing a peaceful path for the future of Papua.

Three entities were commonly named when Papuans spoke to us about who they thought could help: the US, the UN, and The Netherlands.

We in the US need to correctly understand this conflict as soon as possible. East Timor was a tragedy for several reasons, but a primary one was that the US was on the wrong side until the last minute. It had been obvious for many years that the overwhelming majority of East Timor's population wanted Indonesia out, and for very legitimate reasons. Only in 1991, after the Indonesian military had killed more than 270 East Timorese and a foreigner in the Santa Cruz Massacre, did the US stop the flow of weapons and training to the Indonesian military. And only in 1999, after the Indonesian military and their militias had destroyed the infrastructure of East Timor, killed over a thousand people and forcibly deported more than 200,000, did the US government begin genuine support the people of East Timor. Will Papuans be forced to endure this sort of horror and inhumanity before they receive full US support?

US citizens, as represented by both houses of congress, played a large role in East Timor's eventual independence by demanding that the US end support for human-rights abuses against East Timor's people.[8] US leaders would do well now to stop ignoring the people of Papua and begin serious dialogue with both Jakarta and the UN to resolve the mounting tragedy. At the very least, the US should end all support for the Indonesian military until significant reforms are evident in Papua and throughout Indonesia.

Currently, though US influence is enormous in Jakarta, and US corporations are making billions by exploiting Papuan resources (see box) the US is doing very little for freedom and democracy in Papua. Two representatives from the US Embassy visited Papua a few weeks before we did. They were said to have gone to great lengths to elaborate and promote the benefits of autonomy under Indonesia. A Papuan woman telling us the story of their visit shook her head and smiled sadly.❑

The Freeport Mines in West Papua

The largest gold deposit on earth, and one of the world's largest copper deposits, both lie about 70 miles inland from West Papua's south coast, at an elevation of 12,000 feet in the mountains. These deposits are being mined by PT Freeport Indonesia, a subsidiary of the US company Freeport McMoRan. This company, which the Council on Economic Priorities awarded its "Worst Polluter in America" prize in 1995 and has a reputation both in the US and abroad for circumventing environmental regulations, came to Papua at the rise of Suharto after the 1965 coup in Indonesia. Working in close cooperation with the corrupt Suharto government, Freeport soon controlled an enormous swath of land from the mountain deposits to the seaport near Timika.

In his 1981 book, "The Conquest of Copper Mountain," Freeport's then-President Forbes Wilson described the original Papua mining operation in a soldier-of-fortune, hell-for-leather style. (Although supported by radios and airdrops, Wilson barely survived the two-week expedition of 1960 to confirm the existence of the deposit.) The book fails to mention that local Papuans routinely hunt and travel in the area of the mine, that they were not consulted on use of their land, and that local Papuans have no connection with Javanese with whom Wilson coordinated his expedition and subsequent extraction of the copper of Copper Mountain. His aptly titled book instead dwells on the details of setting up the world's longest ore-slurry pipeline, bringing in the world's largest trucks and cutting open the forest to construct the world's most expensive road.

A 1996 book entitled "Grasberg" describes in similar detail Freeport's 1988 discovery and opening of an even larger deposit of copper and gold a few kilometers from Copper Mountain. Grasberg Mine's worth is estimated at $80 billion. Another Freeport CEO, George Mealey, wrote this book a bit more diplomatically, like a smooth PR brochure. Great pains are taken to explain the benefits of the mine, both to the nation of Indonesia and to the local Papuan community. One chapter reassures the reader that the local environment is basically unchanged and that the good fortune of a remote location allows the mine to be tapped with little impact on the local community. Freeport's Internet website tells a similar tale, complete with charts and graphs.

Unfortunately, during our short stay in the area, we found no Papuan who could confirm these claims. One major impact of the mine is its "tailings." Tailings are rocks and sand left over from the process of extracting ore. The mine regurgitates these (and other wastes) into a local river, which deposits enormous

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8 See my newsletter CG-20 for more on US solidarity with the East Timorese.

Mama Yosefa and colleagues. Her Timika-based group, HAMAK, is a women-led, grassroots organization working to improve the lives of common Papuans. Mama is holding a child that was found in the trash around Timika and is cared for by woman in her group.

quantities of them along its bed and takes some all the way to the ocean. The tailings are visible when arriving and departing Timika's airport: a wide river floodplain that is uniformly brown amid a rich green jungle background. By way of further explanation, Freeport notes that the river was carefully chosen for use as a tailings deposit. Indonesian authorities agreed with the selection and there are all sorts of exciting plans to clean up when the mine goes out of operation. The several thousand locals living in the area of the river were not in on the decision.

Both Mealey's book and the Freeport website declare the tailings safe: though containing naturally high levels of copper, there is "little difference" between the tailings and "the natural sediment of the river". But Janet, a Papuan woman involved in the community activities of the Catholic Church, showed us troubling photos of diseased plants in the area where the mine's tailings are deposited. Locals blamed Freeport's tailings.

As a scientist, I was skeptical at the sight of the photos — plants can get sick for any number of reasons — so I was pleased to find that, in 1999, a formal, independent study had been done by five local groups on various mollusks and shellfish collected in the tailings area. Locals both eat and sell large quantities of these creatures, so any problems with them will have a severe impact on the local community.

The study found that many locals have had to stop eating and using some of the shell fish and mollusks because they often cause sickness, their color has drastically changed or their populations have diminished. The study concluded that these changes were a result of Freeport's mining operation, and urged compensation and attention to this change in the local environment.

When the study was presented to Freeport, the company agreed to pay $200,000 to replace revenues and food income previously realized from collecting these creatures, and also to: 1) return the river to its original health; 2) develop better housing for locals; 3) support local schools; and 4) continue monitoring toxins in the river. Nearly two years have passed since then, but only part of the money has been delivered and few of the promises have been kept.

Significantly, the first section of the agreement between Freeport, local community leaders and the lo-

cal government states very clearly that the unsafe environment around the river was a direct result of the mine. A Freeport vice president signed this agreement, thus giving the lie to contrary information on Freeport's website. Everything is *not* ok, and Freeport has admitted it.

I asked a lawyer at LBH (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum), a legal-aid organization in Timika that took part in the environmental study, about the details of the processes Freeport uses that release the hazardous wastes into the river. He smiled and said, "A thief doesn't explain his methods." He went on to say that the details of Freeport's own environmental tests are extremely secretive, and since the independent study in 1999 it has been difficult to gain access to the company's private property areas in order to continue monitoring the danger. This correlates with Janet's complaint of not being able to do proper testing on the diseased plants.

Plenty of other information indicates that things are not ok. The Goldman Environmental Award went to Mama Yosefa's women's organization a few years back, in part due to its work to stop Freeport's pollution. An environmental group in Indonesia won a 2001 court case accusing Freeport of polluting Wanagon Lake, releasing false information and negligence in allowing the lake to break its dam, flood a village and kill four local workers. [See **http://dte.gn.apc.org/51Frp.htm**]. In 1996 several Papuan tribes brought an environmental suit against Freeport in its home state of Louisiana.

In addition to this environmental case, LBH has dealt with many labor cases involving Freeport and its contracting companies. It seems even Indonesia's weak labor laws are often not upheld. In 2000, a Rome-based human rights group leveled charges against Freeport for violations of human rights, including labor rights, at a university forum in England. In terms of equal opportunity employment, a local priest we talked to said yes, many Papuans had jobs with Freeport but it is also clear that Freeport provides these jobs only because it is required to.

Freeport pays around ten percent of its profits to the Indonesian government in taxes. In addition, Freeport places around one percent of profits in a development fund for the local Papuan community. We talked to several organizations and individuals about this fund, which totals approximately $20 million per year. There seemed to be unending dilemmas: what form it comes in, when it comes, how is it distributed, who decides, etc. One group was organizing a protest because it felt the fund money was not all being distributed to the community.

Most folks we talked to focused on the issue of channeling and using the money, rather than on its remarkably small quantity. It is almost embarrassing to verbalize: "The One Percent Community Development Fund." The math is not difficult — one percent going directly to the community means 99 percent going elsewhere.

Visualizing yourself in the place of Papuans under Freeport is difficult but instructive: Mega Minerals moves into your residential subdivision. It got (bought) permission from your local government, and gets protection from the local police. It soon brings in hundreds of foreign workers, paying them dozens of times the local average salary. M2 encroaches on several families' lots in the process of setting up its operation, and slowly begins extracting billions of dollars of wealth from its operation, while polluting the local neighborhood water and soil. A few locals get work with M2, but only at grunt level. M2 puts up fences and barriers restricting what were once open spaces. The police routinely abuse the human rights of those on or near M2's property. Now, day after day, your family watches M2 hauling away untold riches while you suffer from its pollution. After years of steady protest, you finally gain a concession: one percent of M2's profits.

You wouldn't like it. But you wouldn't have any recourse. This wraps up the situation of the Papuan people living with Freeport. ❑

Other resources:

- Indonesian human-rights organization Tapol's web page: www.tapol.gn.apc.org/st020717.htm
- OPM's page: www.westpapua.net/index.htm
- Mines and Communities page: www.minesandcommunities.org/Company/freeport1.htm
- Julia D. Fox, paper on Freeport: www.efn.org/~maniacs/jimbob.html
- Book by Denise Leith: *The Politics of Power: Freeport in Suharto's Indonesia*
- Amnesty International's Indonesia page (carefully researched information on recent human-rights abuses in Papua): http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/countries/indonesia
- Piece by John Saltford on the UN Act of Self Determination for Papua: http://www.fpcn-global.org/united-nations/wp-68-69.html.)
- John Martinkus, "Quarterly Essay" on West Papua; Issue 7, 2002

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

Fellows and their Activities

Martha Farmelo (April 2001- 2003) • **ARGENTINA**
A Georgetown graduate (major: psychology; minor, Spanish) with a Master's in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, Martha is the Institute's Suzanne Ecke McColl Fellow studying gender issues in Argentina. Married to an Argentine economist and mother of a small son, she will be focusing on both genders, which is immensely important in a land of Italo/Latino machismo. Martha has been involved with Latin America all her professional life, having worked with Catholic Relief Services and the Inter-American Development Bank in Costa Rica, with Human Rights Watch in Ecuador and the Inter-American Foundation in El Salvador, Uruguay and at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Curt Gabrielson (December 2000 - 2002) • **EAST TIMOR**
With a Missouri farm background and an MIT degree in physics, Curt is spending two years in East Timor, watching the new nation create an education system of its own out of the ashes of the Indonesian system. Since finishing MIT in 1993, Curt has focused on delivering inexpensive and culturally relevant hands-on science education to minority and low-income students. Based at the Teacher Institute of the Exploratorium in San Francisco, he has worked with youth and teachers in Beijing, Tibet, and the Mexican agricultural town of Watsonville, California.

Andrew Rice (May 2002 - 2004) • **UGANDA**
A former staff writer for the *New York Observer* and a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the Washington Bureau of *Newsday*, Andrew will be spending two years in Uganda, watching, waiting and reporting the possibility that the much-anticipated "African Renaissance" might begin with the administration of President Yoweri Museveni. Andrew won a B.A. in Government from Georgetown (minor: Theology) in 1997 after having spent a semester at Charles University in Prague, where he served as an intern for *Velvet* magazine and later traveled, experienced and wrote about the conflict in the Balkans.

Matthew Z. Wheeler (October 2002-2004) • **SOUTHEAST ASIA**
A former research assistant for the Rand Corporation specializing in South and Southeast Asia, Matt will spend two years looking into proposals, plans and realities of regional integration (and disintegration) along the Mekong River, from China to the sea at Vietnam. With a B.A. in liberal arts from Sarah Lawrence and an M.A. from Harvard in East Asian studies (as well as a year-long Blakemore Fellowship in Thai language studies) Matt will have to take long- and short-term conflicts in Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia into account as he lives, writes and learns about the region.

James G. Workman (January 2002 - 2004) • **Southern Africa**
A policy strategist on national restoration initiatives for Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt from 1998 to 2000, Jamie is an ICWA Donors' Fellow looking at southern African nations (South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and, maybe, Zimbabwe) through their utilization and conservation of fresh-water supplies. A Yale graduate (History; 1990) who spent his junior year at Oxford, Jamie won a journalism fellowship at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and wrote for the *New Republic* and *Washington Business Journal* before his six years with Babbitt. Since then he has served as a Senior Advisor for the World Commission on Dams in Cape Town, South Africa.

Institute Fellows are chosen on the basis of character, previous experience and promise. They are young professionals funded to spend a minimum of two years carrying out self-designed programs of study and writing outside the United States. The Fellows are required to report their findings and experiences from the field once a month. They can write on any subject, as formally or informally as they wish. The result is a unique form of reporting, analysis and periodic assessment of international events and issues.

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