

**Oral Statement of the 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Geneva 29 February – 24 March 2016
Panel Discussion: Climate Change and Right to Health
3 March 2016
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Franciscans International, supported by International Coalition for Papua (ICP), Westpapua-Netzwerk, TAPOL, VIVAT International and Geneva for Human Rights - Global Training welcome the panel today and endorse the view on the importance of addressing climate change related impact on health.

For this we would like to draw your attention with a recent example in Nguda Regency, West Papua, Indonesia, in which 51 children and 3 adults died to the Pertussis epidemic, mainly caused extreme weather and link to the intense El Nino effects. Extreme cold and dry weather conditions in November 2015 in this region resulted in a severe food shortage, aggravating the existing chronic malnutrition of indigenous communities in the affected areas, and weakening their immune systems. This left many, especially young children under the age of ten, at risk to the disease and resulting infections.

Typically, the Pertussis disease is not fatal, provided that basic medical institutions exist, but those affected did not have access to the necessary medical services. Additionally, vaccination services that provide immunization for the Pertussis bacteria are not widely and consistently available in the Nguda Regency. The local indigenous communities therefore could not effectively prevent nor treat the disease.

The reason that medical services were not readily available was the negligence of the Indonesian government at the local level. The national government allocated more than 1'000'000 US\$ (14.7 billion Rupiah) in 2015 and 2016 to local governments to improve infrastructure, health services and education services¹. Those in charge had the funds to provide health care for its citizens, but did not, due to the misallocation of funds and disregard for the indigenous populations. The government did not follow through on its responsibilities to protect and provide medical services for all citizens preceding, during, and following the epidemic. Worse yet, the local governments did not take further steps after learning the severity of the situation when the Indonesian Ministry of Health declared the outbreak a health emergency. The presence of 25 military personnel of the XVII Cenderawasih military unit further aggravated the issue. The indigenous residing in the Mbua district, where the fully armed personnel were deployed, felt threatened. Some have temporarily sought refuge in nearby forests, leaving them susceptible to a range of other health issues.

It is imperative that the Government of Indonesia considers stabilizing the situation and taking steps to prevent future outbreaks. On a broader scale, the government must tackle the discrimination the indigenous communities face with regards to public services like health care, to ensure that all citizens have equal access.

We recommend that the Indonesian government should:

1. Take immediate and concrete measures to immediately stabilize the situation by providing staple food and food supplements, as well as the appropriate treatment and medical services.
2. Prevent future outbreaks by establishing consistent, widely available vaccination programs and building health service centers (PUSKESMAS) in each district in the Nguda Regency.
3. Launch a contextually appropriate nutritional program to combat the chronic malnutrition that left indigenous populations at risk to the outbreak and establish a nutritional strategy for the indigenous communities that takes climate change and environmental effects into account.
4. Allow the operation of international and humanitarian organizations to operate in Papua.
5. Withdraw the presence of the XVII Cenderawasih armed military personnel without delay.

Thank you.

1 E-document (03.02.2016): <http://news.detik.com/berita/2994198/jokowi-naikkan-dana-otsus-papua-papua-barat-dan-aceh-rp-1-t>, 18.08.2015