



## 8. The compounding impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on the insecurity of indigenous women in Papua and West Papua, Indonesia

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Indigenous Papuans on the western half of the island of New Guinea, have experienced intersecting environmental, social, and political crises, within the context of a movement seeking self-determination. These ongoing crises are exacerbated by longstanding grievances over the Grasberg mine (which contains significant reserves of copper and gold), and environmental degradation caused by the mining and palm oil sectors, as well as the legacy of colonialism on the allocation of land and resources.

These challenges are compounded by the impacts of changing weather patterns, which have put additional stress on the region's rapidly depleting natural resource base, contributing to the loss of livelihoods and food security challenges. This has created a new dependency on imported foods, rapidly replacing traditional subsistence living. Additionally, unusually heavy rainfalls frequently cause floods and landslides. Such disasters have killed many, left entire communities displaced and severely damaged food crops.

Indigenous Papuan women, whose traditional roles include providing food for their families through small plot agriculture and forest management, have been disproportionately affected by the impacts of environmental degradation, exacerbated by a changing climate. This has compounded other vulnerabilities linked to insecurity, including rampant sexual and gender-based violence and marginalization, especially among displaced populations.

While Papuan women play a key role in caring for the community's food gardens and forests, they possess no rights of ownership to the land and

natural resources within traditional structures. When these lands are lost, by force or when they are sold by male family members to extractive industries, whole communities are displaced. This has a profound impact on indigenous women, whose native lands are deeply embedded in their cultural and ethnic identity, and who are dependent on access to land to carry out their prescribed roles. Displacement also puts women at further risk of violence.

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*THE PAPUAN EXPERIENCE SHOWS HOW THE EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES CAN DRIVE VIOLENCE, AND HOW CLIMATE CHANGE CAN COMPOUND INSECURITY, LEADING TO SEVERE LIVELIHOOD IMPACTS ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN THAT HAVE TRICKLE-DOWN IMPACTS ON FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.*

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Despite the emerging recognition of the substantial link between climate change and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework, the intersections of climate change, environmental degradation, resource extraction, conflict and violence against women remain largely absent from the Security Council's agenda. The Papuan experience shows how the exploitation of natural resources can drive violence, and how climate change can compound insecurity, leading to severe livelihood impacts on indigenous women that have trickle-down impacts on families and communities. Twenty years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, it is critical that the gender dimensions of environmental degradation, resource extraction, indigenous land rights and climate change, be fully integrated into the WPS agenda.