

BANGGA Papua: Empowering Papuan Women

On one Tuesday morning, dozens of women sat on the porch of a church, not far from the dock in Nakai Village, Asmat District. Many were there with their children, who are between the age of several months to four years old. Every one of those women had a plastic folder with them, containing their civil documents: ID card, family card, and birth certificate. Some included their passbook from Bank Papua. The occasion of the day was BANGGA Papua's first day of disbursement service and the church was one of the designated locations for the fund disbursement for 396 benefactors from seven villages in the district.

The BANGGA Papua program acknowledges how crucial the role of mothers is: they are considered the ones who know best regarding their children's health and nutritional needs. Hence, they are trusted to receive the funds from BANGGA Papua. This empowers Papuan women to manage the family's finances and have a greater role in household decisions, especially in making sure their children's health and nutritional requirements are met.

With the BANGGA Papua program, women are considered equal to men as head of the family and in their greater role in managing their family's well-being. During the disbursement, the mothers were also provided education on the importance of a balanced and healthy diet for their children to help them use the money they get to provide for their children's nutritional requirements.

Asmat's general secretary (Sekber Asmat) – who is the executor of the cross-sector and multi-party programs in the regency – worked together with the local community's health center to enable health workers to educate the mothers. The mothers were also taught how to manage the funds for unexpected and urgent needs, such as medications for their children.

Providing funds to mothers is a new thing for Papua's people. Relief funds are usually given to village heads or males as the head of the family. Since the beginning of the program, Sekber Asmat collaborated with traditional leaders and the church, educating men to support this approach. Now, mothers in Papua have the knowledge and opportunity to help better determine the future of their children. This is in line with the vision of the Government of Papua, which is building the Golden Generation of Papua and supporting one of the national visions to improve Indonesia's human resources. (By: *Syaifullah & Desy Mutialim, Yayasan BaKTI*)