



Nurturing Hope

FOR THE ELDERLY THROUGH PAITUA

NURTURING HOPE FOR THE ELDERLY THROUGH PAITUA

It is a well-known fact that the elderly population in Asia is growing. But who are the elderly? They are our parents and grandparents, our professors and teachers, our former colleagues and managers, our friends. They represent the collective wisdom of our societies, and the lived experiences of millions. And they are who we will be.

Yet, the elderly face complex challenges. In Indonesia, where awareness of the importance of early financial planning is low, many people enter their later years heavily dependent on family, the community and the government. This causes their financial independence and health to decline. Some are even stigmatised as being “burdens” on society. Each year, the number of poor and vulnerable older people increases by around one million. The elderly are, unfortunately, key contributors to poverty rates in Indonesia.

There is therefore a clear need for attention and support that explicitly benefits older people. Elderly care is fast becoming a pressing issue as younger people migrate away, leaving older people to look after themselves without support. Older people from low-income families face additional challenges in their later years as their children face their intergenerational economic struggles.

Take 68-year-old Alex Vadan and his wife, Maria, for example. Even at their age, they continue to work hard for a living. Just as they’ve done their entire lives, harvesting and processing sago. For Alex, this is more than just a job – it’s a family tradition, passed down from his parents. And with the money he earned, Alex was able to put his children through junior high school.

Even in his old age, Alex has no intention of slowing down. He still works from dawn till dusk as a sago farmer, traveling to his land, which is quite a distance from his home, and using a machine he has owned for years.

“I usually start at 6 am and work until the afternoon,” Alex says with a smile, proudly wearing his red boots to protect his feet from sago thorns and the muddy ground.

So, why does Alex keep working in his old age? His answer is simple but firm. Alex believes that if he stops working, he will fall sick more often and he is determined not to rely on his children for support. Though sago farming doesn’t bring in what it once did, his will to keep working reflects his unwavering commitment to being independent.



Alex Vadan dan istri (Photo: SKALA)

A Story from Klain Village

Another inspiring story comes from Klain Village, where 70-year old Alexina Osok continues to lead a full and productive life. Tucked away in the neighbourhood is her small home, and in her front yard you will find a small stall where she sells betel nuts, a local delicacy. Since her husband passed away in 2010, Alexina has kept busy running her small business to support herself.

“I’ve been making sago on my own since my husband passed,” Alexina says, her eyes bright with determination. “I also look after my garden and sell the produce at the market. I’ll do whatever it takes to support my children.”

Through sheer hard work, Alexina has managed to educate all five of her children through to senior high school. Now living with her youngest son, Alexina still values her independence. She grows and sells vegetables to cover her daily needs, and continues to sell betel nuts at 10,000 rupiah per package from her little stall.

“Sometimes I pick the nuts from the trees in my yard, but if there aren’t enough, I buy them from other sellers,” Alexina explains.

Alex and Alexina’s stories are more than just individual narratives—they are reminders of strength and resilience. Their journeys prove that age is no obstacle to remaining active and independent. With their fighting spirit, Alex and Alexina are proving that even in their later years, people can keep contributing meaningfully to family and community.



Alexina Osok (Photo: SKALA)

Government Efforts

As the world’s fourth most populous nation, Indonesia is facing a crucial change in its demographic. According to the Ministry of National Development Planning (PPN/Bappenas), around 11.75% or 32.5 million Indonesians are elderly. This figure is projected to reach over 20% by 2045, representing a demographic shift that requires serious attention.

As a newly formed province, Papua Barat Daya faces unique challenges in regional development and high poverty rates. In March 2024, the poverty rate in Papua Barat Daya stood at 18.13%, compared to the national rate of 9.03%. One way to tackle this challenge is by strengthening social protection for older people. This approach recognises a relatively higher dependency ratio between the working-age and older people population in Papua Barat Daya. On 17 July 2023, the Papua Barat Daya Provincial Government launched the Social Protection for Older People program, known as PAITUA, reflecting its commitment to improving the welfare and independence of senior citizens. This initiative is part of a broader effort to address socio-economic challenges and reduce poverty in the region.

PAITUA aims to empower 13,306 older people by providing cash assistance through bank transfers. Each recipient receives about IDR250k per month, which provides crucial help in paying for essentials such as rice, sugar, cooking oil, and medical needs. The program aims to improve older people's welfare and independence while reducing the financial strain on families by providing them an additional source of income for healthcare and other basic needs.

Alex and Alexina demonstrate that being independent in later years is possible. The support they receive from the government not only helps meet their basic needs but also strengthens their livelihoods and provides better opportunities for themselves and their families.

By selling from a more suitable stall that supports her livelihood better, Alexina can save money and take care of her health without being overly reliant on her children. Every step she takes shows that, with support, everyone can continue to contribute, even in their older years.

PAITUA is also addressing poverty and inspiring the community to see the potential in every older individual. It marks the beginning of a broader change—a step closer towards access to better health care, financial services, and equitable social services for the elderly. The Papua Barat Daya Provincial Government hopes that more older people will benefit from this program, enabling them to live with greater independence and improved welfare. Through PAITUA, Papua Barat Daya is paving the way to a sustainable and inclusive future.

COVERAGE OF PAITUA BENEFICIARIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

PAPUA BARAT DAYA PROVINCE

Number of elderly: **13,306**

PAITUA recipients: **8,254**

RAJA AMPAT

Number of elderly: **1,955**

PAITUA recipients: **1,700**

SORONG

Number of elderly: **1,485**

PAITUA recipients: **1,111**

SORONG SELATAN

Number of elderly: **1,422**

PAITUA recipients: **1,275**

SORONG CITY

Number of elderly: **6,966**

PAITUA recipients: **2,747**

TAMBRAW

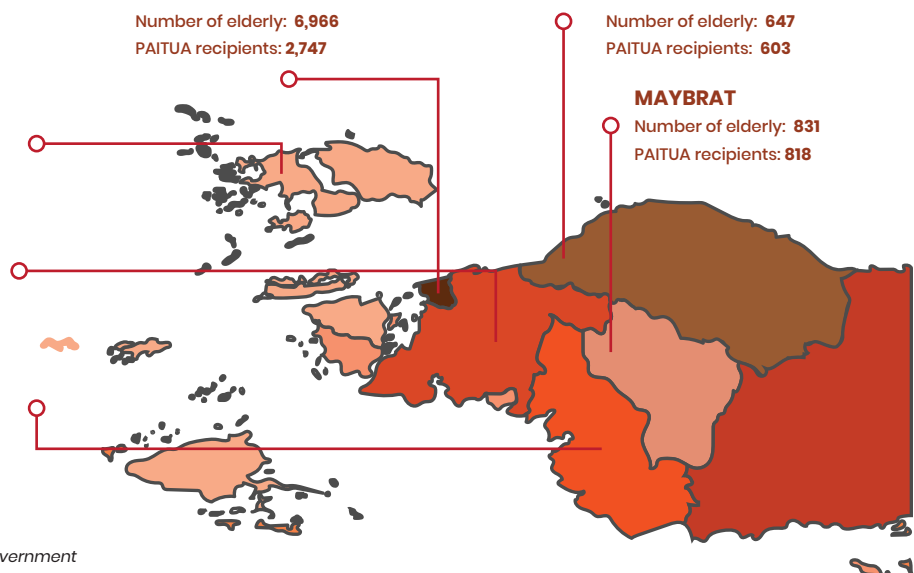
Number of elderly: **647**

PAITUA recipients: **603**

MAYBRAT

Number of elderly: **831**

PAITUA recipients: **818**



**as of September 2024*

Source: Papua Barat Daya Province Government

PAITUA—supported by the SKALA Program—demonstrates how an inter-sectoral multi-stakeholder collaborative approach can foster an environment that supports and empowers older people. It ensures they are no longer seen as a burden but active contributors to society and the economy. After all, a society that cares for its older members is stronger, more compassionate, and genuinely civilised.

