

# Gold Mining Conflict in Degeuwo, Paniai Regency, Papua Province

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**Abstract**— Degeuwo River Bogobaida District, Paniai Regency is filled with a wealth of natural resources, such as gold and the vast protected forest that holds natural wealth there. However, the management is not effective, as expected by the people who own the customary rights of this area, namely the Wolani, Mee and Moni tribes. That is, the results of gold mining to date, the three tribes as owners of customary rights have not received anything. Even though the promise from entrepreneurs or businessmen is sky-level to the community as customary owners. Indigenous tribal communities such as Wolani, Mee and Moni in Paniai Regency, these communities are under serious threat from outsiders. Mining entrepreneurs who enter the area, are not prospering the local community, but actually harming the local community. Gold miners came there from 2004 until now 9 years running. Mining didn't last too long, but the conflict was quite busy and resulted in many casualties. Not only that, the miners also damage the environment and even pollute a number of rivers that exist there. Even though the river has economic value for residents, but now it is polluted. With this condition, the community urges those concerned, both the executive and legislative regional governments, the Papuan People's Representative Council, the Papuan People's Assembly and soon.

**Keywords**— Conflict and gold mining.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Degeuwo is the name of a river located in Bogobaida District, Paniai Regency. The name of this river in the Mee language is called the Degeuwo river, while in the Moni language it is called the Kemabu river. This river is located in a remote area far from the city of Paniai. But this area is filled with extraordinary natural wealth, namely gold, so that businessmen or gold miners come in droves or in groups in this area.

In terms of geography, this area is rather difficult to reach for transportation, both land and air, if connecting the city with this area, because of the ups and downs of the mountains and hills. This area is covered with protected forest. Along the Degeuwo river it is part of the Bogobaida District. The original inhabitants of this area are the Wolani, Mee and Moni tribes. These tribes are the owners of ulayat land rights in Paniai Regency. With so much gold in the area, businessmen or gold miners as well as people who want to go to the mining site must use a helicopter, because there is no road connecting the city to the mining site.

At first, the Degeuwo River was only the local people who lived or the ulayat owners of the area, so it was not so crowded in Degeuwo. But now there are many people in this area, both people from outside Paniai Regency and people from outside Papua. Especially gold miners and companies who come in droves in the area along the Degeuwo river, thus making this area crowded because of the wealth of natural or gold resources that attracts them to come to the Degeuwo area.

In connection with gold mining conflicts that often occur in Degeuwo, Paniai Regency, the local community always complains and urges the authorities, so that mining activities are asked to stop immediately. Because psychologically, the indigenous Papuan people, especially the community with customary rights, experience deep depression and fear, when they see the actions of immigrants, especially gold miners. Because before the miners came to Degeuwo, the people lived comfortably, safely and in harmony. However, after the miners

came there, the community fell victim. Not only that, the natural environment also damages and pollutes the rivers that are there. As a result, it is difficult for the community to get clean water, because the only river that is usually consumed by residents is now polluting due to the gold mining.

The local government is not very serious about the suffering of the local people, especially the Mee, Wolani and Moni tribes. These tribes are the owners of customary rights who always complain and insist to close or revoke the company's license in Degeuwo, Paniai Regency. But the local government is not so serious about what the local community complains about. Although the Regent of Paniai has issued Instruction number 53 of 2009 concerning the temporary closure of the gold mining site in Degeuwo. The Papuan People's Council filed a lawsuit with number 540/512/MRP/2009 regarding the closure of the mine and the Governor of Papua also instructed that the gold mining site be closed and even some members of the Regional House of Representatives came to visit. However, mining activities have not been stopped to this day. Although the local government has been instructed, what is the interest behind this needs to be studied in depth so that it becomes clear. It is hoped that the local government should carry out supervision and act decisively. If allowed to do so, it is very dangerous for the community, especially future generations, especially if the miners use mercury or mercury to separate gold.

Even more risky, if you look at the impact of mercury, it is very deadly to all types of living things, both plants, animals and humans. Therefore, local people are expected to be wary of illegal miners using mercury. The result is not happening now but in the next 5-10 years, so it is necessary to anticipate, because this is already proven by several research results both abroad and domestically, for example research results from Japan and so on.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the problems that we have raised, this research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. In this study, the

researcher used a descriptive research method, namely trying to find an understanding of meaning based on facts or facts that occurred in Papua Province, related to gold mining along the Degeuwo river in Papua, then conducted a study in order to obtain a clear and systematic picture in order to find a solution or a way out to solve the problem at hand. Then accelerate development and reduce any prolonged conflicts in Papua.

In this paper, the author tries to collect data from various sources, including conducting interviews with indigenous Papuans, participating in live broadcasts in public discussions with Papuan leaders, library books, reports, results of previous research, statements of statements, laws, government regulations, decisions, experiences either seen, heard, or felt, printed or electronic media, and other sources related to gold mining in Papua.

Collecting data through two sources, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. One approach to data collection through primary data sources is to conduct direct interviews with indigenous Papuans, relating to the pros and cons of the discourse on regional expansion in Papua, which took place from 2002 to 2020. Meanwhile, secondary data was not collected directly, but through intermediaries. or existing data. For example, the results of previous research, books, reports, articles, journals, official regulations from the government and so on (Kum, 2015: 14).

### III. DISCUSSION

#### 1. A Brief History of Mining Degeuwo

The Degeuwo River is an unknown area. Isolated areas, sacred lands that are the most frightening for residents outside Degeuwo around Paniai Regency, Nabire Regency, and Dogiyai Regency. However, when a farmer got gold grains while uprooting his peanut crop in 2003, the area changed its face.

In an instant, the entire Degeuwo river was flooded with people. From Sabang to Merauke, everything is pouring out to earn fortune, panning for gold. Long before, people were busy looking for gold in Topo, Uwapa District, Nabire Regency. Four years later, in 2002 in Tagipige, a hamlet that was still isolated suddenly changed. In Nomouwodide Village, Bogobaida District, Paniai Regency, a promising gold deposit was found. Since the discovery of this type of mine, the public's eyes have been on the traditional territory of the Mee and Wolani tribes.

For 1 year (2003-2004), the local people were panning traditionally, without outsiders. Furthermore, since late 2004, news about the gold ore in the sacred land began to spread widely. People from a number of remote areas throughout Indonesia came and started setting up tents in the area (started setting up kiosks, cafes, and karaoke). Degeuwo instantly became a big city.

Most of the traditional mining sites of Degeuwo are included in the administrative area of Bogobaida District, Paniai Regency. This mining location is right on the outskirts of the Degeuwo River, hence the name Degeuwo gold mining. To get to Degeuwo, you have to use a helicopter from Nabire. Now a private airfield has been built there. On foot from Enarotali, Paniai it takes 4-5 days to get to the panning place.

The presence of gold mining entrepreneurs who came to the Degeuwo area, Bogobaida District, Nabire Regency, Papua. Where the Degeuwo River is stored with extraordinary natural wealth, namely gold that is ready to be processed, in fact God has provided for the Papuans, especially the local community. But the community who owns the ulayat rights do not get any benefit, because outsiders who control this area and enjoy all the wealth that exists in the area, not only rob the local people of their wealth, but they destroy the environment. It is as if outsiders are the owners of ulayat rights, while the Papuan people as the owners of ulayat rights are treated as outsiders, as the world has gone back and forth.

#### 2. Bad Degeuwo Gold Mining, People Are Lost

Mining activities began to bloom around March 2005, along with the arrival of entrepreneurs from outside. Some have a permit from the local government, but many do not. Not only panning for gold, many of them have double duty. For example, there are those who open places of business such as gold kiosks, food stalls, and even cafes and billiards.

Since the activity of panning started, the environmental damage started to appear. Forest cleared. The ground was dug like a tunnel. The ecosystem is in danger of being damaged. Degeuwo river water and other springs that were once consumed by indigenous people are now contaminated with chemicals. Not only that, the greatest impact is the moral destruction of the local community is happening in Degeuwo. No one gives permission to gold pans.

The issuance of the Gold Mining Permit from the Nabire Regency Government through the Mining and Energy Service was accused of being the beginning of the problem. Besides the Gold Mining Permit issued without the procedures stated in the Regional Regulation Number 14 of 2003, the trouble is that it is not followed by strict supervision from the relevant agencies. The Gold Mining Permit also does not state that the location that is permitted to be mined is in the village of Apa in Siriwo District, Nabire Regency. But only mentioned Poronai water head. This is the problem. In fact, the head of the Poronai water is clearly in the Paniai Regency area.

Poronai River itself, the head of which is in Paniai Regency and empties into Nabire Regency and parts of Waropen Regency. According to John, the river has three names. Poronai in Napan (river estuary) in Nabire District; Degeuwo (downstream) in Paniai Regency is the name in the Mee language; and Kemabu (head of water) in Paniai Regency are names in the Moni language. That's why, John considered, the Gold Mining Permit granted by the Nabire Regency Government has no legal force for gold entrepreneurs. The gold panning activity in Degeuwo was without official permission from Paniai. Because of its location in Paniai Regency, even though the businessmen have obtained a Gold Mining Permit, they are still considered as perpetrators of illegal mining. They operate and make profits before and after the Gold Mining Permit is issued in Paniai Regency, not Nabire Regency.

In the management of gold pans by miners or businessmen in Degeuwo, there have been indications of several violations. From an investigation conducted by the Paniai Regional

Customary Council in 2005, it was found that many types of violations were committed by entrepreneurs.

The first, Illegal Gold Mining. The panning activities are carried out by people who are very ignorant of the rules. All regulatory efforts from the local government of Paniai Regency were never heeded. The businessmen also ignored the good intentions of the Regional Customary Council and the Bogobaida District government. Mining is still ongoing without any recommendation from the Regent of Paniai. So it's an illegal gold panning activity that takes place in Paniai Regency.

The second, Environmental Destruction. Large-scale environmental destruction is estimated to have reached thousands of hectares of forest, both above and below ground, by making vertical tunnels 10 to 30 meters long. There has also been pollution of the Degeuwo river which is consumed by tens of thousands of local residents along the river due to the use of chemicals, such as mercury and mercury. According to John, this gold mining activity was not preceded by an Environmental Impact Analysis. Because this does not consider the environmental balance, resulting in this area will be destroyed at some point because it has been damaged by the miners. In addition, the use of heavy equipment at location 58 carried out by entrepreneur Dony Lauwa is also one of the causes of environmental damage. It is alleged that several gold entrepreneurs are also using heavy equipment in mining activities. Other entrepreneurs even intend to bring in heavy equipment that will cause environmental damage around the gold panning location without a permit in Degeuwo. Even the ecosystem is damaged, practically the environmental carrying capacity of the life of the local community is being threatened. Huge environmental damage with the construction of tunnels in the Bayabiru area and soil erosion. And also the use of toxic substances by these entrepreneurs including environmental pollution activities.

The third, Moral Destruction and Development. At the panning location, it is suspected that the HIV/AIDS virus is spreading. This coincided with the entry of dozens of female sex workers who were guerrilla at the panning location.

Description of gold mining conditions in Degeuwo, Papua. Since the beginning of the gold mining community opened in 2003 in Degeuwo, there has been no significant conflict, but there will be conflicts in the future, it has been predicted. This prediction occurred not long after that 2004 was the year many conflicts began. Since that year, many newcomers have entered the traditional mining industry. If the immigrants enter to earn a living from precious stones is the right of every citizen, but these immigrants bring a number of disasters for local residents. Migrants began to open bars, bringing in women entertainers from Java and Sulawesi. Simultaneously, the opening of stalls, cafes or bars, a place to play billiards was scattered in the middle of the forest. Instantly the silence in the middle of the wilderness was transformed into a city of prostitution and sparkling lights scattered.

In addition, the liquor business is also available in the stalls belonging to the immigrants. The glitter of gold makes the price of goods and services a noble price as well. Even more ironic is that one kilo of rice, which is usually Rp. 10,000 at the shop, costs Rp. 50,000 at the panning location. In addition to the

business of selling and selling basic necessities, a number of entrepreneurs have also started a transportation business from Nabire to the gold panning location. Helicopter services became a big seller. One passenger without carrying goods, the ticket price reaches Rp. 1,500,000 not to mention the added goods of course doubled.

Not only are the newcomers satisfied with the service business, now they have used heavy equipment to extract precious metal ores. Even though the Paniai Regional Government has prohibited the use of heavy equipment, the businessmen still continue to operate. At the same time, thousands of tons of gold have been taken out of the Degeuwo location without the businessmen paying taxes as regional income for Paniai Regency. More than that, entrepreneurs can be seen by using mercury and mercury to get gold quickly and easily. Even though it destroys natural resources and other habitats. Gold mining operations using mercury continue.

A number of parties have stated that the government, both the regional and the Papuan provinces, can regulate this mining so that it can become a source of regional income and there is also a profit sharing between the government, the community holding customary rights and investors, but so far this has not happened. The businessmen were also seen when the Regent of Paniai Regency issued the Paniai Regent's Instruction number 53, Year 2009 regarding the temporary closure of the gold panning location in Degeuwo, Bogobaida District, Paniai Regency, but the letter actually sparked the enthusiasm of entrepreneurs to be more active in taking gold.

The mining location is between the boundaries of Paniai Regency, Dogiay Regency, and Intan Jaya Regency so that the letter from the Paniai Regent alone is not strong enough to stop this illegal mining operation. Inevitably there are many conflicts in the mining area. Therefore, the Paniai Regional Police Resort, which administratively still handles three regencies, namely, Paniai Regency, Deiyai Regency and Intan Jaya Regency, has issued a letter for the temporary closure of the Gold Panning Location in Degeuwo, with letter number B/114 /X/2009/Res Pan on October 22, 2009. However, the operation is still going on, even if the entrepreneurs step on the gas to take as much gold as possible.

Because the location of this gold mine is in the north bordering Yapen Waropen district, in the south bordering Intan Jaya Regency, in the east with Intan Jaya Regency and in the west bordering Paniai Regency. who claims that the mining location is in the administrative area of his government so that he makes a gold mining permit without involving the other three local governments.

Gold mining has been going on for 10 years, from 2003-2012, as a result, forests and other associated habitats are now on the verge of extinction because now they are not traditional mining but have turned into semi-permanent mining where their wealth has been scraped off with heavy equipment such as excavators. The Alliance also refers this mining issue to a third party, namely the Provincial Government. However, there has been no response on this matter. We have met with the Head of the Papua Province Mining Service to raise this issue, but there has been no serious response. So for us this is a process of neglecting the Papuans who have customary rights.



According to Tobias, he urges that prior to the replacement of the Governor of Papua because the time period will end in the near future, before the Pilkada is held, this case should be resolved first. In essence, the Governor can issue a new decree before this stubborn company steals gold in the areas of Mount Ngaitaga, Aletaga, Mugindi, Peangelopa, Muniptuguto, Wagaputuguto, Uai and along the mountains of Degeuwo and the Mbeamo River. Tobias also stated explicitly for the Governor of Papua Province to immediately close this gold mining because it was not only the local government that suffered losses but the people who owned customary rights were also continuously massacred by the security forces who guarded the wealth of these entrepreneurs (Pakage, 2012).

**3. Community Urgency to Stop Degeuwo Gold Mining, Local Government is not serious**

Miners who entered Degeuwo since 2003 until today. The attitudes and actions displayed by mining companies in the mining area in Degeuwo, Paniai Regency, are still identical with the Freeport Indonesia Limited Liability Company in Mimika Regency, because the military and security forces are very prominent. Seeing all the actions of these immigrants (miners) made the native people afraid, so that the community then conveyed what the Paniai people complained about as sons of the local area.

Every complaint submitted by the local community, not only among the community itself. But also in front of the government, both legislative and executive and related parties, then the community is urgently asked for the illegal mining to be stopped or closed, because the community assesses and feels the consequences of gold mining, for the community it harms them and takes the victim and then benefits. for immigrants (miners).

Sadistic violence and intimidation carried out by the army and security forces in the gold mining or mining area in Degeuwo, Bogobaida District, Paniai Regency, which resulted in the people of Paniai, especially those who were closer to gold mining sites, such as the Wolani, Mee and Moni tribes. fatalities. Not only that, the environment has also polluted and damaged due to illegal mining activities. The river which is the only one consumed by local people is now no longer consumed, because it has been polluted by the mining activity.

The local community also admitted that the miners who first came there had made agreements with tribal chiefs, traditional leaders, youth shops and others. The miners say that when we become entrepreneurs here, we will pay attention to everything from building local communities (building houses for residents), constructing school buildings, building dormitories both in Papua and outside Papua, sending or sending children to school. regions, both Indonesia and abroad. However, miners get so much gold but take it out of the gold mining area, so far there has been no realization in accordance with their promises.

The community has suffered huge losses, because there has been no compensation as the owner of customary rights, even though mining activities have been running for more than 10 years. These things have become potential conflicts, because they have lost future generations, lost cultural values, lost their homes, lost nature as an economic value, victims of local

communities and even lost other natural resources. Moreover, the miners use mercury to separate gold from sand. Because mercury is very deadly to humans, people have found that miners use mercury to speed up the separation process. Seeing these conditions, the community asked the local government to immediately stop gold mining activities along the Degeuwo river. This request was conveyed either through traditional institutions, tribal chiefs, intellectuals, church leaders, traditional leaders and all elements of society asking the local government to stop the gold mining activity, but the regional government was not very serious about hearing the community's call.

Local governments have great authority to look into this issue, starting from issuing or issuing permits through the mining service, issuing regional regulations related to mining, conducting monthly supervision, cooperating with companies properly, so that the community, local government and companies carry out industrial and social relations effectively and efficiently.

The local government should not look at the value of the Regional Original Revenue funds that have been donated by the company, then ignore or not be serious about the problems that are being experienced by the local community, related to mining activities in the area. Therefore, the contribution of Regional Original Revenue is the obligation of the company to contribute to the region, it has nothing to do with solving problems. Problem solving is the responsibility of the local government, because the community expects it from the local government.

Gold mining companies donate as a result of mining activities in the Degeuwo River, Bogobaida District, Paniai Regency, which has been going on since 2003. The gold mining company Degeuwo, has donated to the government as Paniai Regency's Original Regional Revenue. The donations were from 6 companies during the management of the gold mine. Details of the contribution for Regional Original Revenue can be seen in the table below.

TABLE 1. Gold Mining Company Contribution for PAD Paniai Regency 2009-2012

No	Year	Big Donation
1	2009	9 m
2	2010	11 m
3	2011	15 m
4	2012	19 m
	Total	54 m

Source: Data processed <http://www.umaginews.com> Year 2012

Based on the data above, it shows that the contributions made by 6 gold mining companies are for the Regional Original Opinion of Paniai Regency. Starting from 2009 to 2012, with different values, in other words, a significant increase. The most recent in 2012 reached 19 billion then the total achievement in 2009 until 2012 reached 54 billion. This means that the gold mining company in Degeuwo is the biggest contributor to Paniai Regency's Original Revenue.

The local government will move to suppress the company if the victim also pressures the company or gold miner as well as the regional government. But the company or gold miners did not take it seriously, the local people were confused about

whether it was possible because the company had military/police power or the company and the local government were working together to continue mining. Although most gold mining companies do not yet have Gold Panning without Permits, because the local government was asked to stop gold companies through several instructions from the Paniai Regent and the Governor, they did not follow through. So then various elements of the community also asked to be closed or temporarily stopped, because the local community felt aggrieved. However, more than that, people are afraid because it is not only detrimental to the material but also detrimental to the lives of the local community, being shot from state equipment. The reason for the shooting and killing of civilians is not clear.

The community considers that the local government does not pay serious attention to the suffering of the people at the Degeuwo gold mining site, the 19 billion Original Regional Revenue for Paniai Regency. they have no profit, only on behalf of the local community. As a result, the people become victims of their own land. Even more strange is that the Degeuwo area opened the location of about 5 cafes in that place, without the permission of the government, traditional leaders, church leaders and others as owners of ulayat rights.

In connection with the suspension or temporary closure of gold mining activities in Degeuwo, the Regent of Paniai issued an Instruction number 53 of 2009 concerning the temporary closure of gold panning in Degeuwo. The Papuan People's Council has filed a lawsuit against the Degeuwo gold mine under number 540/512/MRP/2009. Then there are also instructions from the Governor of Papua Province, regarding the termination of mining sites. However, mining activities are getting busier.

According to Josef Rinta, Head of the Papua Provincial Health Office, Tuesday, February 14, 2012 this has made the number of indigenous people there increase, so that the population of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome/Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV/AIDS) specifically for the Mee Paniai Wolani tribe is increasing, based on data as of December 2011, there were 10,785 people living with HIV/AIDS out of a total population of 2.8 million people in Papua Province (2010 census data). An increase of about 3 thousand from March of the same year, which was still around 7,355 people. Papua has 250 tribes within these tribes, the data received from each regional hospital and health center in each district in all of the largest numbers of the Mee Paniai tribe. Degeuwo Gold Panning is used as a business. Cooperation with the Indonesian military is facilitated by military force. If the owner of customary land rights is asked to divide their rights, they are faced with gun stock, it is very sadistic again that the people's plants there become dry, barren. For that reason, the last solution to save Papuans, especially the Mee and Wolani Paniai tribes and the nature of Papua around the waters of the mountainous Degeuwo river:

- a. Stop the Illegal Gold Panning activities around the Degeuwo river
- b. Stop on behalf of the community to make a business
- c. Completely stop taking gold for both individuals and companies

- d. Refuse to plan to make people's mining
- e. Stop opening military posts in Degeuwo

The above demands are often said by people who live around the riverbanks of the village where Degeuwo is located and the young students and intellectuals of Paniai. Another source also stated that one of the residents of Degeuwo, Johanes Kobepa, firmly said that Degeuwo had to close, because there were so many negative impacts that occurred due to illegal mining in the area.

Every day, tens of tons are produced from the illegal panning. Many non-Papuans mine using sophisticated tools, so that local people who are still very traditional are automatically excluded. The Indonesian National Armed Forces/Police of the Republic of Indonesia always support the presence of non-Papuan miners, in recent years many local civilians have also been victims of being shot by the security forces.

#### IV. CLOSING

Mining conflicts often occur in Papua and West Papua, regarding the mining of gold, nickel, coal, natural gas and other natural resources. Military business interests are getting sharper, especially in corporate areas. The giant company Limited Liability Company Freeport Indonesia uses military and police force to get rid of the ulayat owners. Sometimes people are accused of being the Free Papua Organization, so that there are prolonged conflicts in mining areas.

There is an unresolved mining conflict in Papua. One of the main causes is: First, without a clear permit for mining exploration. Mining conflicts occur in every area, on average there is no official permit from the local government, let alone the local community as the owner of ulayat land rights. This is called illegal mining. Mining gold in the Degeuwo Bogobaida river, Paniai Regency, the community sees that the mining company in this area does not yet have an official permit from the local government. This company does not only have an entry permit, so as a substitute for a mining permit the company contributes Regional Original Revenue to the local government which is quite large, and there is an increase every year. Freeport's mining license is not yet clear. At that time Freeport just entered, because with the permission of President Soeharto, but there has been no permission from the community as the owner of customary land rights. However, what happened was that in 1983 the Amungme-Kamoro tribal chiefs and Freeport agreed on a customary agreement under the pretext of a permit. However, neither the official permit from the local government nor the permit from the central government is clear.

Second, the people's rights are not fulfilled. Local community dissatisfaction with the company often occurs in mining areas. Because they do not fulfill the initial agreement or agreement, the ulayat owners lose their land/residence, nature, cultural places, economic values. Where in Law Number 11 of 1967 concerning general mining and the Special Regional Regulation of Papua Province Number 23 of 2008 concerning the customary rights of customary law communities to land, article 2 letter (a) loses land (land land, forest access and other natural resources), loss of rights to use natural resources). The point is that the obligation to indemnify and the right to receive it.

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