

Open Letter
from Wae Sano Community, Sub District Sano Nggoang, West Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara

Dear respected

1. Fellow residents of the Wae Sano, West Manggarai, Manggarai and East Manggarai communities, as well as fellow residents of the island of Flores.
2. Bishop of Ruteng Diocese in Ruteng, East Nusa Tenggara Province,
3. President of the Republic of Indonesia cq. all related Ministries and Agencies who are fully responsible for the health and safety of citizens, social resilience and welfare-energy, water, food, especially for us Indonesian rural communities.

The people are free, sovereign and responsible for their survival, dignity and quality of life!

Through this open letter, we, Wae Sano community members, convey and express our unanimity on the existence of the Wae Sano Geothermal Project.

1. REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATION LETTER OF THE RUTENG DIOCESE, MAY 29, 2021

On May 29, 2021, Ruteng Diocese has sent a letter addressed to the President of the Republic of Indonesia, containing recommendations for the Wae Sano geothermal project process. Seven months earlier, the Ruteng Diocese signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Director General of New and Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) on finding out an overall solution on problems arose from the project.

This open letter questions the recommendation of Ruteng Diocese. For us, the residents of Wae Sano, the recommendation contains three fundamental problems. The first problem concerns the contents of the recommendation letter; the second problem concerns the modus operandi that have been taken by the project organizers, the apparatus/officers of the central/regional government offices, the parliaments (DPR/DPRD); the third problem concerns the neglect of the risk and real consequences from giving such a recommendation.

- a. Ruteng Diocese's letter dated May 29, 2021 gives the green light for project organizers to continue "the process of the Wae Sano geothermal project to provide electrical energy (point 5 of the letter). We, as residents, who since the onset of the project implementation in 2018 have rejected the project's existence, had given neither approval nor consent to the stakeholders of the project to continue the exploration stage

of the Wae Sano geothermal project. The more fundamental problem is that as residents and the customary custodian of the area where the geothermal is to be extracted, we had never asked for such a project, and we do not need such a humongous amount of electricity, which also poses a big risk to our safety. The same point in the letter also stated four characteristics of the electricity that will be generated from the project, namely, "renewable", "environmentally friendly", "ensuring the safety and welfare of the people of Wae Sano", and lastly, "developing the integrity of creation (ecology) and the inherited local culture". Although generally we might be perceived as not highly educated, in the last three years we have been educating ourselves about how a geothermal power plant operates. Furthermore, we observe and record well how the various parties having interest in the project, including the offices of various government agencies, work.

The four characteristics above do not invalidate the real dangers and clear impacts that will occur should this geothermal mining project continues. The Wae Sano geothermal project is unlikely to be environmentally friendly, other than that the air pollution is likely less than that from coal or oil and gas power generation. How can a geothermal project which during the past three years has been recognized by the community as a project with various disinformation, persuasion and intimidation, is referred to in the letter of recommendation as "ensuring the safety and welfare of the community"? Finally, the legacy of memory, the history of places and the history of human existence in the Wae Sano area, as well as the integrity of God's creations (ecology), can never be "developed" through the implementation of the project. Much more likely, such a project will create and aggravate damages. In light of all that, we are asking for "what" and "on behalf of whom", the Diocese of Ruteng issued such a letter of recommendation, which supports the continuation of the Wae Sano geothermal project?

- b. The search for a "complete solution" for problems that emerged from the Wae Sano geothermal project. In the past year we, Wae Sano residents, have been placed as the OBJECT, not THE SUBJECT of the search for a comprehensive solution. Our overall solution is clear and simple: **CANCEL the Wae Sano geothermal project**. Because we are considered and treated as objects or obstacles that must be "solved/addressed", the "technical solution" that comes out is a detour, literally and figuratively, namely by shifting the access of the the geothermal prospect, as well as relocating the drilling points including Wellpad A.

Since the signing of the MOU between the Diocese of Ruteng with the responsible agency in charge of the exploration, namely, the Directorate General of EBTKE and PT SMI, the actual work in the field had not addressed properly the hazards, disaster

risks, risk-reduction, and mitigation. How can the government or the project investors made a claim of guaranteeing the environmental safety of the project, even before the project starts, while in various similar project locations, failures and even disasters have been evident? Instead, our objections and rejection got manipulated, with a process that has been dominated by an "elitist/authority-/power-based approach, instead of truly involving the citizens/community.

- c. Consideration of the full range of impacts throughout the geothermal project life-cycle. Applying the status of national strategic project to industrial projects, including the energy industry from geothermal extraction, actually endangers the survival, dignity and quality of life of the nation. The word national in National Strategic Project / Proyek Strategis Nasional (PSN) does not refer to the interests of Indonesian citizens in locations where the area is to be devastated, as in the case of the Wae Sano geothermal project. Is the Wae Sano geothermal project strategic in terms of strengthening the social resilience of the Flores community including the Wae Sano people, as well as maintaining the ecological integrity and stability of the island of Flores, or is it weakening both in the long run?

As a follow-up to the signing of the MOU of Ruteng Diocese with the Government as the interest holder of the exploration phase of the Wae Sano geothermal project, we take note that the recommendation letter dated May 29, 2021 had failed to consider all aspects of the social and ecological risks of the Wae Sano geothermal mining project. The Diocese of Ruteng should understand better the dimensions of the disaster, including by examining cases of failures of and disasters from geothermal projects in Indonesia and abroad.

In Sibanggor Julu Village, Puncak Sorik Marapi, Mandailing Natal, for example, the geothermal extraction resulted in a toxic gas leak at the PT Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) geothermal project, which killed five local farmers. In addition, a dozen of victims were hospitalized on January 25, 2021. Shortly after, another fire broke out in the same project area, requiring most of the residents to self-evacuate for their safety. Two years earlier, on September 29, 2018, in the same project area, two children died from drowning in the pond that was once the company's shelter.

In addition to the Sorik Marapi case, where the geothermal extraction has been proven to endanger life, agricultural crops, smell, respiratory tract, lungs, houses and even causing death, there is also the case of Ijen geothermal project where an explosion that emitted hazardous gases also resulted in casualty. The burst of geothermal liquid in the Rimbo Panti project site in Pasaman, West Sumatra, which then got poured directly

onto the forests of the Rimbo Panti nature reserve, gives another example. Likewise, the burst of hot gases from the Geo Dipa borehole in the Dieng geothermal extraction project has inflicted direct adverse impact on the lives and livelihoods of the local farmers. The same thing also happened in Mataloko, where the uncontrolled burst of gas at the Mataloko geothermal extraction project destroyed agricultural/plantation lands, water sources, as well as the loss of tin roofs of houses, which compromised the health of the local residents.

In addition, the induced seismicity issue, which previously was underestimated due to its relatively low on the scale, is now one of the public focuses around the world regarding the risks of investing in geothermal extraction for power generation, especially after the recently inaugurated South Korean flagship project in Pohang, namely the extraction of geothermal energy using the EGS technology, proved to be the cause of an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.5 Richter in the city on November 17, 2017. At least more than 20 cases of induced earthquakes were recorded in various geothermal extraction projects in various countries apart from the case of the Pohang project. The above-mentioned related problems cannot be ignored in scrutinizing the long-term viability of large investment in geothermal extraction installation projects. Such issues largely fall beyond the progress in techniques, and in the case of corrosion of underground pipelines, for instance, increases the risk of failure.

Should the Wae Sano geothermal project be allowed to proceed by the Ruteng Diocese's "go ahead" recommendation, would the central and regional governments, the Diocese of Ruteng, the implementing companies as well as the financial lenders for the project including the World Bank be capable of addressing the disaster risks involved throughout the life-cycle of the project? The Ruteng Diocese's act of releasing the recommendation letter is tantamount to pawning the safety of us all, the Wae Sano community.

II. WHO OWN THE WAE SANO GEOTHERMAL PROJECT? AND WHO ARE THE MAIN BENEFICIARIES AND PROFIT TAKERS OF THE ELECTRICITY TO BE GENERATED?

This question should actually be the basic, moral foundation of Ruteng Diocese's defense of the people and its adherence to justice and the integrity of God's creations. Likewise, it is not difficult to reach the conclusion that from the outset, this project is not intended to address the Wae Sano residents' state of existence and living conditions; rather, it is a derivative of large-scale power generation plans that were arbitrarily decided and even encouraged by the creditors, in particular—but not limited to—the World Bank.

Our historical existence as the host of our own homeland had even been ignored by the failure to put us as one of the addressees of the Ruteng Diocese's Recommendation Letter No. 154/II.1/V/2021. Ironically, such a letter is addressed instead to the World Bank as a multilateral financial company. There is no mention, whether the Wae Sano geothermal project were actually a response to the power demand of large-scale projects including the Labuan Bajo/Komodo tourism project, or other industrial investments in the island of Flores. The electricity to be generated from the Wae Sano geothermal project is claimed to serve the public interest. How about the financial flows of the project and the consumption of the generated electricity? Such important and fundamental questions had not been addressed by the green-light recommendation from the Ruteng Diocese.

III. CONCLUSION AND AFFIRMATION OF OUR STANCE

Based on the three considerations in points I and II above, we reaffirm our stance, namely, we reject entirely the existence of the Wae Sano geothermal project. Such a rejection can only mean one thing, that is, the Wae Sano geothermal project must get cancelled, for the sake of the security of all life in the waterscape of Lake Sano Nggoang including all life in its vicinity, which we must safeguard, and defend all our life. If the government and the Church are responsible to serve humanity, then both should recognize and respect our rejection, in the name of justice, peace and the integrity of creations.

First, let us testify, that should the Government—at all levels and branches— and the Ruteng Diocese insist in ignoring or denying our decision, it means that both parties, together with the web of industrial and financial companies that support the project, have to be held accountable for all possible project impact on the wellbeing of Flores island, particularly in the area designated as geothermal mining site.

Secondly, let us testify, that both parties, together with the web of industrial and financial companies that support the project, should be held accountable, if due to our firm rejection of the project, we were subject to harm, be it through legal prosecution, physical violence, incitation of infight among community members, or other methods. Over the past three years we keenly observe, that the feedback we provide and our position as the residents of the homeland to be converted into an energy factory have been responded by various efforts to weaken our strength and unity, including through the divide-and-rule campaign, intimidation, as well as the mobilisation of various personnel who are affiliated with various agencies in Jakarta.

We the Wae Sano people have been living peacefully amidst the blessing of mother nature that homes us. Now our orderly rhythm of life gets confronted with and is about to get jeopardised by the want to run a project that must take place, must proceed immediately, must be accepted regardless the risks. We appeal for attention to all parties including the Diocese of Ruteng. We the people of Wae Sano will continue to protect the peaceful and stable life that we inherited. We cannot get separated from the lake, the whole waterscape, and the surrounding hills and forests. Now or anytime later.

Wae Sano, June 15, 2021

Representation of Wae Sano Community

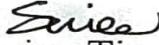

Herman Hemat


Valentinus Emang


Stefanus Juma


Mateldis Felni


Maria Y. Haul


Regina Tin

Cc.

1. Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Republic of Indonesia
2. The House of Representatives of The Republic of Indonesia
3. Ministry of Finance Republic of Indonesia
4. The House of Representatives of The Republic of Indonesia
5. PT. Sarana Multi Infrastruktur in Labuan Bajo (Persero)
6. PT. Sarana Multi Infrastruktur (Persero)
7. The World Bank in Indonesia
8. The World Bank in Washington, DC
9. Asian Development Bank (ADB)
10. International Finance Corporation (IFC)
11. PT. Geo Dipa Energi (Persero)
12. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in Abu Dhabi
13. Bishop's Conference of Indonesia
14. Apostolic Nunciature of Indonesia