

PRESS RELEASE

Indigenous Leadership School Builds Regeneration System for Raja Ampat Guardians

Sorong, Southwest Papua, July 20, 2026 — Protecting Raja Ampat is not only about preserving its landscapes but also ensuring the emergence of a new generation capable of continuing the leadership of indigenous communities. Based on this belief, USBA Institute together with Terra Papua, Greenpeace, and Conservation International is organizing the Raja Ampat Indigenous Community Cadre School 2026, an initiative designed as the foundation of a cadre development system to strengthen indigenous communities, protect indigenous territories, and promote sustainable natural resource management.

The activity, which takes place on July 20–22, 2026, in Sorong City, is attended by 40 indigenous youth and women from various indigenous territories across Raja Ampat Regency. The Indigenous Cadre School is a follow-up to the 2026 Raja Ampat Senate Forum Coordination Meeting, which emphasized the importance of regenerating indigenous community leadership as part of efforts to safeguard indigenous peoples' rights, indigenous territories, and the future of Raja Ampat.

Head of the USBA Institute, Charlie Imbir, emphasized that strengthening indigenous communities and conserving natural resources are at the core of all USBA Institute's work.

“For us, indigenous communities are not merely beneficiaries, but owners of knowledge, guardians of nature, and key partners in building Papua's future. The USBA Institute exists to bridge scientific knowledge with local wisdom, so that solutions emerge from the communities themselves. The Cadre School is one concrete step to prepare generations of indigenous leaders who can preserve cultural identity, protect indigenous territories, and develop various knowledge-based innovations for community welfare and the sustainability of Raja Ampat's natural resources,” explained Charlie.

According to Charlie, indigenous communities today face increasingly complex challenges, ranging from pressures on indigenous territories, social changes, to the impacts of climate

change. Therefore, leadership regeneration cannot be carried out through short-term training alone but requires a sustainable learning system led by indigenous communities themselves.

Over three days, participants take part in learning sessions on indigenous leadership, indigenous community organizations, indigenous peoples' rights, policy advocacy, natural resource conflict resolution, indigenous territory mapping, indigenous community-based conservation, public communication, and the preparation of follow-up action plans to be implemented in their respective communities.

The Indigenous Cadre School carries four main values as the spirit of its cadre development process: learning, uniting, moving, and safeguarding. These four values serve as the foundation for shaping a generation of indigenous youth who are knowledgeable, have integrity, and are ready to lead the protection of indigenous territories and sustainable natural resource management. Learning strengthens capacity, Uniting builds solidarity, Moving encourages concrete action, and Safeguarding protects indigenous territories, culture, and Raja Ampat's natural wealth.

As part of the cadre development process, participants will also be prepared to take part in organizing the Raja Ampat Indigenous Community Jamboree/Gathering in August 2026. This involvement provides a space for leadership practice, strengthens indigenous community consolidation, and supports leadership regeneration in Raja Ampat.

More than just a training program, the first cohort of this school is projected to become the embryo for the formation of a Raja Ampat indigenous youth and women's forum that will strengthen leadership while developing the implementation of the Cadre School in a more systematic, tiered, and sustainable manner.

Through this forum, cadres are expected not only to become training participants, but also to become drivers of indigenous community organizations, learning facilitators, community companions, and future leaders capable of strengthening the protection of indigenous territories and management of Raja Ampat's natural resources at the village, sub-tribe, tribe, and regency levels.

Head of the Raja Ampat Indigenous Cadre School, Rudi Dimara, said that the Cadre School was developed as part of an effort to build a regeneration process that does not stop at knowledge transfer, but also encourages the emergence of new leadership that grows from experience, dialogue, and the active participation of indigenous youth.

“Indigenous knowledge must not end with today’s generation. The Cadre School becomes a shared learning space so that indigenous values, history, customary law, and ways of protecting land and sea remain alive through the younger generation. We designed this school as a safe space for indigenous youth and women to express their views, concerns, and ideas about the future of Raja Ampat. It is from spaces like this that dialogue, innovation, and new leadership emerge to strengthen indigenous communities,” said Rudi.

As an organizing partner, Terra Papua views strengthening indigenous community capacity as an important foundation for successful conservation and sustainable development in Papua.

Terra Papua Executive Director Meity Mongdong stated that conservation will be more effective when indigenous communities become the main actors in managing their territories.

“Indigenous communities have protected the forests, seas, and natural resources of Raja Ampat for centuries. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of their younger generation means strengthening the future of conservation itself. Terra Papua believes that nature protection will be stronger when indigenous communities become the main actors in every decision-making process and in managing their territories. Supporting the establishment of a sustainable cadre development system is an important part of a long-term investment to protect Raja Ampat forever,” explained Meity.

Meity added that Terra Papua, as an organization focused on strengthening collaboration in natural resource management in Papua, will provide maximum support for all efforts to strengthen Papua’s indigenous communities as drivers of conservation in Papua.

Through this collaboration, the USBA Institute and Terra Papua hope to produce a new generation of indigenous community leaders who are able to bridge indigenous values with scientific knowledge, strengthen indigenous territory governance, and ensure that indigenous communities remain the main actors in protecting Raja Ampat for future generations.

About Terra Papua

Terra Papua is an organization that strengthens multi-stakeholder collaboration to support sustainable natural resource management in Papua. By prioritizing scientific approaches, local wisdom, and indigenous community leadership, Terra Papua bridges the government, communities, local organizations, and development partners in creating inclusive and impactful conservation solutions. Further information: www.terrapapua.org

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About USBA Institute

USBA Institute is an independent organization that works together with indigenous communities to develop knowledge, preserve culture, and promote sustainable environmental management. By integrating science, local wisdom, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, USBA Institute develops solutions for nature conservation, strengthening indigenous communities, and fair and sustainable development in Raja Ampat and Papua. Further information: www.institutusba.org

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