

We will return to Buyat

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Minahasa – “There life was so hard. Steep escarpments. Difficult to go to the sea. When we went to the sea to fish, there was no kembung fish. We finally returned to Buyat Pante.” Sarpa, 28, said honestly. The mother of 3 children and wife of Respi Bawole shared a long story on Saturday (September 2, 2006). What is meant by “there” is Dominango of Bolaang Mongondow Regency of North Sulawesi, a place where the Buyat Pante villagers relocated to, 100 km away from Buyat Pante.

Respi Bawole along with other Buyat Pante villagers in June 2005 abandoned their village. Respi along with his wife [Sarpa] and their three children moved out to Dominango. In the new place, according to Sarpa, each head of family lived in a barrack of 3m by 3m.

At the beginning, according to Sarpa, they, Buyat Pante villagers, received life assistance for a period of 3 months. “We worked as chilly pickers,” said Sarpa. We picked chilly 3 times a week and received a daily wage of Rp. 15 – 20 thousand. “We lived a hard life,” she said. Promises that they will get a house remain promises.

According to Sarpa, it was difficult for them to go to the sea. If they managed to catch the fish, they found it difficult to sell them. “My husband then decided to return to Buyat Pante,” said Sarpa while carrying her son.

Sarpa and her family arrived back at Buyat Pante on June 17, 2005. Respi, Sarpa’s husband, now works as a fisherman and a labor in a traditional mining at Ratatotok. “He can earn Rp. 30.000 at least from selling fish,” she said. “Here we can live better,” she added.

“Many of our relatives there want to return to Buyat,” said Sarpa. Chief of Buyat Pante village, Robert Sasuwahe, confirmed Sarpa’s story. “We have started being in contact with our relatives again. They have stated their intension to return to Buyat,” said Robert. “But, the government still prohibits them from returning”, said Robert.

“In fact, we really want to get together again with our relatives in Buyat Pante. Please, get our relatives back,” requested Robert again.

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