

THE CONVERSATION

Disiplin ilmiah, gaya jurnalistik

'Helicopter research': who benefits from international studies in Indonesia?

Agustus 29, 2018 4.53pm WIB

Bajau tribe village. www.shutterstock.com

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In April 2018, research on Indonesia's Bajau people made the headlines. These "sea nomads" were found to have a genetic adaptation that results in large spleens that can supply extra oxygenated red blood cells.

But a month later the article attracted critiques from Indonesian scientists. An article in Science questioned the ethics of scientists from Denmark and the US who took and analysed DNA samples of the Bajau people.

While their argument relates to ethics and research permit, the story highlights a more important issue of the widespread nature of "helicopter research" conducted in Indonesia.

Helicopter research

Helicopter research has nothing to do with aircraft; it typically describes when researchers from wealthier countries fly to a developing country like Indonesia, take samples, fly out, analyse the samples elsewhere, and publish the results with little involvement of local scientists. At best, local scientists are used to provide logistics.

Helicopter research is dishonoured in genomics research. African scientists have called for more control of their continent's genomic data by issuing guidelines. However, it is rampant in many fields of research.

One of us, Dian Fiantis, who is based at Universitas Andalas in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia, has had many experiences in research collaboration with overseas researchers. She have been working with soil scientists from Belgium, Malaysia, US, Canada and Australia since 1993.

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Alih bahasa

- Bahasa Indonesia
- English