

Complete Cultural & Engagement Playbook: Sampang, East Java

For: PETRONAS Upstream Operations

Introduction

This document provides a foundational understanding of the cultural landscape, social structures, and local wisdom of the people in Sampang, Madura. The predominant ethnic group is Madurese, known for their strong character, deep religious piety, and unwavering commitment to honor (*harga diri*). Understanding these core tenets is paramount for any external organization aiming for a harmonious and productive presence. For PETRONAS, engaging respectfully with these cultural norms will be the key to gaining social license, speeding up bureaucratic processes, and mitigating potential friction with the local community.

Part 1: Understanding the Social Landscape

Social Structure & Key Influencers

Decision-making and influence in Sampang do not flow exclusively through formal government channels. Understanding the informal power structure is critical.

- **Formal Leadership:**
 - **Local Government (Pemda):** Includes the *Bupati* (Regent), *Camat* (District Head), and *Kepala Desa* (Village Head). These entities are the official administrative contacts for permits and legal documentation.
 - **Best Practice:** Maintain formal, respectful, and transparent relationships with all levels of government.
- **Informal Leadership (Highly Influential):**
 - **Kyai & Ulama:** These are religious scholars and clerics, often leaders of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). They command immense respect and are the primary moral and spiritual guides for the community. Their word often carries more weight than that of government officials.
 - **Significance:** A *Kyai's* blessing (*restu*) or endorsement is vital for social acceptance of any major project. They are also the most effective mediators in case of disputes.
 - **Blater:** A figure often misunderstood externally. A *blater* is a respected community champion or strongman, known for their courage and willingness to defend the village's honor. They are not gangsters but informal security and enforcers of local norms. Gaining their respect is crucial for operational security on the ground.
 - **Village Elders (Tokoh Masyarakat):** Respected individuals who hold sway due to

their age, wisdom, and lineage.

Actionable Insight: For any significant initiative, engage in parallel with both formal government officials and, crucially, the most respected *Kyai* and local elders in the relevant area. This dual approach is essential for true community buy-in.

Protocols for Engaging Leaders

This is a step-by-step guide on the proper etiquette and approach for meeting with a *Kyai* or other informal leaders.

1. **Never Approach Directly:** Do not show up unannounced or make a cold call. This is considered highly disrespectful.
2. **Use an Intermediary (*Perantara*):** Identify a trusted local individual who has a good relationship with the leader you wish to meet. This could be a local staff member, a respected community figure, or a consultant. This intermediary will make the initial inquiry and schedule the meeting, which shows you understand and respect local protocol.
3. **State Your Purpose Clearly (to the Intermediary):** Be transparent about why you want to meet. The intermediary will convey this, allowing the *Kyai* to be prepared. A common and respectful purpose is "*silaturahmi*"—a friendly visit to build a relationship.
4. **Prepare a Humble Gift (*Oleh-Oleh*):** It is customary to bring a small, thoughtful gift. This is not a bribe, but a token of respect. Appropriate gifts include high-quality fruit, honey, or a contribution for the *pesantren* (boarding school). Avoid overly lavish gifts.
5. **Dress Modestly and Conservatively:**
 - **Men:** Wear a long-sleeved batik or collared shirt and long trousers. Never wear shorts.
 - **Women:** Wear clothing that covers the arms and legs, and a headscarf (*hijab*).
6. **Observe Etiquette During the Meeting:**
 - Remove your shoes before entering the home or meeting space.
 - Greet with "*Assalamualaikum*" and a slight bow, touching your heart.
 - Sit where you are directed. Do not cross your legs or point your feet at your host.
 - Let the host lead the conversation. Begin with pleasantries; do not jump straight to business. Frame your purpose as seeking their wisdom, advice (*nasehat*), and blessing (*restu*).
 - Speak in a low, calm voice.
 - Accept any food or drink offered.
7. **Follow Through:** If you made any promises or commitments, ensure they are fulfilled promptly and visibly. Failure to do so will damage your credibility permanently.

Part 2: Core Values and Daily Conduct

The Madurese Worldview (*Falsafah Hidup*)

The Madurese worldview is built on a few non-negotiable pillars.

- **Harga Diri (Honor / Self-Esteem):** This is the most important cultural value. An insult to

one's honor, family, or religion is a grave offense. The concept of *malu* (shame) is the inverse of *harga diri*. Actions by the company that are perceived as arrogant, dismissive, or disrespectful can cause deep offense and create lasting friction.

- **Religious Piety:** The people of Sampang are overwhelmingly devout Muslims (Sunni). Islamic principles govern daily life, ethics, and social interactions. Mosques and *pesantren* are the central hubs of the community.
- **Ethos of Frankness & Hard Work:** Madurese people are often stereotyped as being harsh, but this is more accurately described as a direct and frank communication style. They value honesty and transparency over subtle diplomacy. They are also known as incredibly hard workers.
- **Apek-angghuy (Hierarchy of Respect):** A strong code of respecting elders, *Kyai*, and parents. This is visible in body language (slight bowing) and deferential speech.

Harga Diri in Daily Operations: Do's and Don'ts

Harga Diri is the most critical cultural pillar. Every interaction can either build it or destroy it. Train all staff and contractors on these practical guidelines.

Do's (Actions that Uphold Honor)	Don'ts (Actions that Cause Shame / Malu)
Always use polite, formal greetings. Start with <i>Assalamualaikum</i> .	Never publicly criticize or correct someone. Address issues privately, one-on-one, in a calm manner.
Accept any offer of food or drink, even if you only take a small sip or bite. Declining is seen as a personal rejection.	Never make a promise you cannot 100% fulfill. A broken promise is a deep wound to honor and credibility.
Speak in a calm, measured tone. Raising your voice is perceived as anger and aggression, causing shame to the listener.	Avoid direct refusals. Instead of a hard "No," use softer, respectful phrases like, "We will look into it and see what is possible."
Use your right hand for giving, receiving, eating, or pointing. The left hand is considered unclean.	Never interrupt someone while they are speaking, especially if they are an elder. Listen patiently until they have finished.
Ask for permission before entering a home, a prayer space (<i>musholla</i>), or taking photographs of people.	Do not touch someone's head, which is considered sacred. Also, avoid overly casual physical contact between men and women.
Praise sincerely. Acknowledge good work,	Never treat local staff as just workers.

a clean village, or a well-organized event. This shows you see and value their efforts.	Ask about their families and well-being. Show you care about them as people.
--	---

Part 3: Key Traditions and Meaningful Support

Major Traditions & Ceremonies

Publicly acknowledging and respecting local traditions is a powerful way to build rapport.

- **Rokat Tase' (or Petik Laut - Sea Offering Ceremony):**
 - **What it is:** The single most important tradition for coastal communities in Sampang. It's a large-scale annual ceremony to express gratitude to God for the sea's bounty and to pray for safety for fishermen. It typically involves decorating boats, communal prayers, and releasing offerings into the sea.
 - **Significance:** It reinforces the spiritual and physical connection the community has with the sea. The sea is not just a resource; it's a sacred source of life.
 - **Relevance for PETRONAS:** Your offshore operations are in their sacred space. Ignoring this ceremony would be a major misstep.
- **Life Cycle & Religious Events:**
 - **Maulid Nabi (Prophet Muhammad's Birthday):** Celebrated with great fervor. Sponsoring or contributing to local Maulid events is a highly appreciated gesture.
 - **Weddings & Funerals:** These are major communal events. Acknowledging them demonstrates empathy and solidarity.

Meaningful Support for the Rokat Tase' Ceremony

This is one of the most powerful gestures of goodwill PETRONAS can make.

Phase 1: Planning & Coordination (2-3 months prior)

- Identify the ceremony's organizing committee (*panitia*) and the lead *Kyai*.
- Through your intermediary, schedule a meeting to respectfully ask how PETRONAS can support the event. This is crucial—*ask, don't tell*. Frame the offer as, "We are honored to be part of the Sampang community and wish to contribute to the success of this important tradition. We would be grateful for your guidance on how we can best provide support."

Phase 2: Forms of Support (Choose what is most appropriate)

- **Financial Contribution:** Provide a direct donation to the organizing committee. Present this as a humble contribution (*sumbangan*).
- **In-Kind Donations:** Often more appreciated than cash.
 - Contribute livestock (a cow or several goats) for the communal feast.
 - Provide staples like rice, cooking oil, and sugar.
 - Offer fuel vouchers for the fishermen's boats.
- **Logistical Support:** Offer the use of company resources if appropriate, such as tents,

sound systems, or transportation for elders.

Phase 3: Participation & Operations

- **Respectful Attendance:** If invited, company representatives (ideally senior leaders) **must** attend. Dress in modest, neat attire (a clean batik shirt is perfect).
- **Operational Quiet Zone:** As a profound sign of respect, coordinate with the committee to identify the peak hours of the ceremony. During this window, voluntarily suspend all non-essential offshore activities in the immediate vicinity.
- **Humble Participation:** During the event, mingle, partake in the feast if offered, and engage in light conversation. The goal is to be seen as a humble guest, not a sponsor seeking attention.

Part 4: High-Impact Community Partnership Programs

Move beyond simple donations. The best Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs are collaborative partnerships that align with core Madurese values.

1. The *Pesantren* Empowerment Program

- **Concept:** Partner with local Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to introduce vocational skills training that complements their religious studies.
- **Examples:** Certified welding workshops, computer literacy courses, or English language classes focused on the energy sector.
- **Why it Resonates:** It respects the central role of the *Kyai* and provides long-term benefits that empower youth and honor the value of hard work.

2. Maritime Partnership Initiative

- **Concept:** Position PETRONAS as a partner in ensuring the safety and sustainability of the sea.
- **Examples:**
 - **Safety at Sea:** Provide modern safety equipment (GPS units, life vests) to local fishing cooperatives.
 - **Sustainable Fishing:** Co-sponsor workshops on sustainable practices.
 - **"Waste to Value":** Launch a program to help manage coastal waste.
- **Why it Resonates:** This directly addresses the community's most immediate needs and concerns.

3. Local Enterprise Development (*Wirausaha Lokal*)

- **Concept:** Actively foster the growth of local small businesses that can support your operations.
- **Examples:** Provide mentorship for a local catering service, help certify a local maintenance workshop, or contract with local artisans for corporate gifts.
- **Why it Resonates:** This creates a direct link between PETRONAS's success and the community's economic prosperity.

Part 5: Deeper Cultural Context

Local Wisdom (*Kearifan Lokal*)

- **Maritime Knowledge:** Local fishermen possess a deep, inherited understanding of winds, currents, and fishing seasons (*pranata mangsa*). Engaging with them can provide practical operational insights.
- **Proverbs Reflecting Values:**
 - **“Abhântal ombâ’ asapo’ angèn”** (Using the waves as a pillow and the wind as a blanket). Signifies resilience and toughness.
 - **“Lebbi’ bagus potè tolang etèmbhâng potè mata”** (It is better to have white bones than white eyes). Means it is better to die with honor than to live in shame.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Disputes are preferably settled through mediation by a *Kyai* or village elder to restore harmony and honor.

Arts & Cultural Expressions

- **Musik Daul:** Energetic percussion music, often played during festivals.
- **Batik Madura:** Known for its bold colors and coastal-inspired motifs.
- **Karapan Sapi (Bull Racing):** The most iconic symbol of Madurese culture, representing prestige, competition, and hard work.

Part 6: Summary of Recommendations for Engagement

1. **Acknowledge Dual Leadership:** Always engage with both formal government and informal community/religious leaders. The *Kyai* is your key to social acceptance.
2. **Honor is Paramount:** Train all staff on the concept of *harga diri*. All interactions must be framed with humility and respect.
3. **Become a Patron of the Sea:** Actively and visibly support the *Rokat Tase’* ceremony.
4. **Communicate Simply and Directly:** Be transparent and honest. Use a trusted local intermediary to help bridge communication gaps.
5. **Align CSR with Local Needs:** Focus community investment on what they value: support for mosques, *pesantren*, and local traditions.
6. **Mediate, Don’t Litigate:** For minor issues, show a preference for local, informal mediation to resolve disputes.