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FIRST PERSON Babies Delivered in Midwife's Home

A midwife's family residence serves as local delivery room



Photo: USAID/Virginia L. Foley

Indonesian midwife Erna Genasih delivers up to 12 babies each month in this clean, cheerful clinic attached to her home in Barat, Jakarta.

"It's not only the money. I can look at the mother and the happy baby and feel satisfied," said Erna Genasih, a midwife in West Jakarta.

Telling Our Story
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Erna Genasih started as a nurse working in the Indonesian government's primary health care program in 1979, selling home-cooked food on the side to stay financially afloat. After receiving her midwife training in 1990, Erna went house

to house, assisting with the births of neighborhood babies until a client suggested that she establish her own clinic where mothers could give birth in a medically equipped environment near their homes. Erna was later accepted into a USAID-sponsored program that certifies highly qualified midwives who pass extensive examinations. She was the first midwife in West Jakarta to receive this certification.

Following a path that other Indonesian midwives had taken, Erna constructed a clinic as an attachment to her family's residence. Today, Erna works as a government midwife in the morning and as a private midwife at home in the afternoon.

She sees about 20 clients a day for prenatal checkups, baby medication and immunizations, family planning services, and deliveries.

Delivering mothers can expect to stay for two or three days after giving birth in the pleasant room provided for mother and newborn. Fathers are invited to come into the delivery room. If the birth is complicated, hospital backup is close by. Most mothers come back to deliver future children, and Erna teaches them about family planning alternatives, encouraging mothers to wait enough time between births for both health and economic reasons. Prices are reasonable, and patients can choose to pay with a monthly credit if paying up front would be too great a burden. Some patients choose to make advance payments on their deliveries.

When discussing why she loves her job and continues to act as midwife to expecting mothers in her community, Erna said, "It's not only the money. I can look at the mother and the happy baby and feel satisfied."