



PHOTO & CAPTION

Clean Water Saves Lives after Earthquake



A major earthquake in Indonesia's Central Java region in May 2006 left hundreds of thousands homeless and living in tight temporary quarters. In such conditions, diseases spread easily and ordinary activities, like getting clean water to drink, become nearly impossible. In fact, following a natural disaster like this earthquake, water-borne diseases from contaminated sources threaten to kill even more victims than the initial disaster. USAID recognized that providing potable water to the affected population was critical to both short-term survival and to helping the population establish safe and sanitary living conditions.

Men affected by the May 2006 earthquake near Yogyakarta eagerly drink safe water provided by USAID. Contaminated water was a big concern in places where sanitary conditions broke down after the earthquake.

Using a simple technology, USAID and its partners worked to ensure that the 200,000 affected people had access to clean drinking water. With just a few drops of Air RahMat, a water purification solution, contaminated water becomes potable almost instantaneously.

USAID first introduced this inexpensive, yet effective, water treatment following a cyclone that struck West Timor in February 2004. The effort was very effective. In fact, Air RahMat has played a big role in all of USAID's subsequent relief efforts — when a disaster strikes, effective distribution of Air RahMat can guarantee access to safe drinking water to tens of thousands of families for a fraction of the cost of supplying bottled water.

USAID has been distributing Air RahMat to people with no access to safe drinking water for some time. The affordable product has long been popular among Indonesians, who recognize that contaminated water is often the source of illness, especially for young children. Populations affected by the earthquake are grateful that USAID is providing access to clean drinking water — by eliminating one of the major problems they face, they are one step closer to regaining stability and thinking about what it will take to rebuild.