



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**INDONESIA**

# FIRST PERSON

## Bold Woman Inspires Change in Schools

### Primary schools in Batu thrive thanks to a new pilot program



Photo: USAID/Virginia Foley

Ibu Mistin, now Head of the District Education Office in Batu, East Java persuaded officials to let her nominate her district to be included in an innovative pilot project to rejuvenate schools.

***“I was ‘bonek,’ as we say in the Indonesian language, or determined to convince decision-makers that Batu must become part of this project. Now many visitors from other regions come to interview our model teachers,” says Ibu Mistin, head of the District Education Office in Batu, East Java, Indonesia.***

Telling Our Story  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC 20523-1000  
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Ibu Mistin, a dynamic education administrator, has always had a reputation as an innovator. Acknowledged as one of the best high school teachers in the East Java city of Batu, Mistin was promoted to school principal in 1995. Seven years later, she was appointed head of the section of the district education office responsible for overseeing all the kindergartens, elementary, junior and senior high, and vocational schools in Batu. Recently she was promoted to head up the entire office. Now, she is playing an important role in a pilot program run by Indonesia’s government and USAID to improve the education system.

Ibu Mistin’s leadership in motivating school principals and teachers to apply the best educational methods in their schools has helped transform her educational district into one of the country’s most dynamic — a district that was categorized as “high risk” by project officials when the effort began. Because of this, Mistin had to lobby hard to get her district included in the program.

But the hard work has paid off. Education officials from all over Indonesia now visit the district, seeking to emulate its success. Everyone agrees that there has been a renaissance in Batu’s 84 primary schools, which include seven religious schools or madrassah, and 23 junior highs, which include two madrassas. The program has helped local officials develop transparent accounting systems, find new funding sources, train communities and parents to work together to support their schools, and motivate teachers to equip students with critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. “Now we can depend on our own human resources,” says Ibu Mistin. “We want sustainability.”

In addition to Ibu Mistin’s district, the program is running in an additional 19 districts in East and Central Java, where students have been scoring higher in reading, science, and math.

Thanks to her dedication to improving schools, Ibu Mistin has helped to provide better education to thousands of Indonesian schoolchildren in Batu. Her energy and drive has encouraged other school districts to follow her lead, benefitting students across the region.