



PHOTO & CAPTION

Fixing a Vital Road in Aceh



Photo: USAID/Caroline Gredler

The road between Banda Aceh, on Sumatra island's northwestern tip, and Meulaboh, located 240 kilometers to the south, is the economic backbone of the western coast of Indonesia's Aceh province. It is the only highway that connects the western part of the province to the rest of Indonesia, and it is vital to transportation and to the local economy. This artery was seriously damaged by the tsunami that struck Southeast Asia in December 2004. USAID is helping Indonesia reconstruct and repair this road as part of a larger \$400 million recovery effort.

Reconstruction begins on the road that stretches through Aceh Province, from Banda Aceh in the north to Meulaboh in the south. The project is injecting much-needed cash into the local economy.

The project's first phase began on August 25, 2005 and is being conducted by P. T. Wijaya Karya, an Indonesian construction firm. Since winning the \$13.5 million contract, the company has been hard at work on the 80-kilometer stretch of road between Banda Aceh and Lamno. The construction firm is providing routine maintenance for the existing road, laying down 20 kilometers of damaged road, and clearing bridge debris from rivers. Already, roads that were not navigable due to thick layers of mud or damaged are filling up with cars, trucks, and scooters.

Everyone in Aceh agrees that rebuilding the road between Banda Aceh and Meulaboh is critical to the region's recovery from the tsunami — both economic and emotional. To ensure that the project met local needs, USAID met with local communities to assess their needs and offer residents a chance to work on rebuilding the road. In fact, the project has hired a large number of Acehnese, providing them and their families with a much-needed source of income. The Banda Aceh-Meulaboh road is bringing economic hope to the region once more and helping life, and traffic, return to normal.