



PHOTO & CAPTION

Clean Water for Indonesian Families



Photo: USAID/Virginia L. Foley

More than 100 million people in Indonesia lack access to safe drinking water. Contaminated water is a major cause of illnesses such as diarrhea, the second-leading cause of death for children under five in Indonesia. Traditionally, Indonesian women boil available water to make it drinkable, but this requires time and fuel is expensive. Bottled water is an even more expensive alternative.

But now there is an affordable way to make water safe to drink: Air RahMat. It is a sodium hypochlorite water treatment solution packaged in an attractive, easy-to-handle bottle. With a few drops of Air RahMat, water becomes safe to drink.

One bottle can meet the needs of a family of five for a month. The product was developed by the U.S. Center for Disease Control. USAID, in partnership with the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, is supporting the product's production, distribution, promotion, and marketing.

Clinical studies show that water treatment solutions like Air RahMat can reduce the incidence of diarrheal diseases by 85 percent. After consistent use in West Timor, self-reported diarrheal episodes fell by 56 percent. Today, chlorine — a main ingredient in Air RahMat — is the most widely used chemical for water disinfection in the United States and in Europe. In addition, more than two million households worldwide are already using products similar to Air RahMat.

Trial introductions in faith-based women's clubs in Sumatra and West Java went quite well. USAID and its partners demonstrated to a Muslim prayer group how many drops to add to a container of water and how to store the water to keep it safe. A *halal* certificate from the Indonesian Council of Ulama, a group of Muslim leaders, has even certified its official approval for use. "At first it has a strange smell," reports one woman, "but I put it in plastic bottles overnight and it doesn't smell anymore. It is also cheaper than boiling the water."

Ibu LaRaini and her grandchild, Aoka, attended a prayer group meeting in Tanjurg Priok, a northern area of Jakarta, where they learned about a water purifying solution called Air Rahmat. By using the solution, they will be less likely to suffer from water-born illnesses.