



SUCCESS STORY

Providing Clean Water for the Poor

Community partnerships have increased access to water for 3,500 households in Indonesia



Photo: Alex Zvinakis/ECO-Asia

A staff member from a local NGO explains to Medan residents how they would benefit from piped water connections.

An impoverished Indonesian community hooks into its city's grid after USAID pairs water operators to build their technical expertise.

A USAID-sponsored survey in Medan, Indonesia, found that 78% of poor residents do not have land titles, live in temporary houses, and lack connections to piped water.

An innovative approach led by USAID demonstrated that Medan's water operator, PDAM Tirtanadi, and Medan's municipal government could serve these households by having community-based organizations establish water distribution networks. Encouraged by the pilot project, Tirtanadi and the Medan Municipality have now developed a plan to expand connections to 17,500 low-income households from 2009-2013.

To build Tirtanadi's and the municipality's capacity to work with the urban poor, USAID's Environmental Cooperation-Asia (ECO-Asia) Water and Sanitation Program brokered a partnership between Tirtanadi and Philippines' Maynilad Water Services, Inc. under the WaterLinks network.

Maynilad has successfully connected over 180,000 households through community partnerships with non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, and community leaders. In 2009, Maynilad helped Tirtanadi select service options based on community preferences. That resulted in increased water access for additional 3,500 households.

Maynilad also demonstrated how it encourages community-based organizations to use a portion of the water charges they collect for community livelihood activities. This builds community ownership, something that Medan groups feel is important.

Since the twinning partnership began, 25 community-based organizations have joined the program, helping the utility to quickly expand household connections.

Moreover, Medan authorities now have an appreciation of the balance between business objectives and social responsibilities. This is encouraging the Indonesian city to further replicate its successful initiative.