



Leuser International Foundation
Jl. Bioteknologi No.2, Komplek USU
Medan 20155, Indonesia
Phone: +62 61 8216800
Fax: +62 61 8216808

Leuser International Foundation
10 January 2008

Rotary International's Aquabox Saving Lives in Indonesia

Life in Indonesia is unpredictable at the best of times, a developing nation of over 220 million inhabitants, spanning three time zones and comprising of approximately 18,000 islands is bound to have its difficulties but recently Indonesia seems to have got more than its fair share of trouble. Disasters are a part of life for many Indonesians, the will of god, there are however several factors that that help to explain the recent (and not so recent) series of disasters that have rocked the archipelago. Located as it is, along the area of intense volcanic activity known as the 'ring of fire', Indonesia experiences a high level of volcanic activity. Having many active volcanoes and several major fault lines in over-populated areas and the proximity of the recently very active Java Trench ensures that large-scale disasters such as the tragic Asian tsunami of 2004 will occur again. The continuing degradation of the natural environment combined with poor governance (planning, infrastructure etc.) and the natural fragility of the landscape (steep mountains, large rivers, and swamps) is the cause of the floods and landslides that occur with monotonous regularity every time the rains come. In such an environment it is wise to be prepared.

The generous members of Rotary International's Wirksworth club, through their 'Aquabox' program, are not only helping current Indonesian disaster victims to survive, but also to prepare for the next disaster, by keeping an emergency stock of Aquaboxes at the Leuser International Foundation's (LIF) Medan office. With the help of the LIF - a local NGO with over 10 years of disaster management experience in Indonesia - 7550 Aquaboxes have been distributed since June 2005. This partnership proved to be extremely effective when responding to the recent Java tsunami (17 July 2006) where Aquaboxes were on the ground within five days (a quick response considering the considerable distance between Medan (Sumatra) and Pangadaran (Java). The LIF was the first NGO to provide relief on the ground



Aquabox in use - Banda Aceh

following landslides in Aceh Tenggara province (18 October 2005), where Aquaboxes were being distributed to victims within 48 hours of the disaster occurring.

Considering that disasters occur with such regularity in the region, only a solid, long-term commitment, such as that given by Rotary International's Wirksworth club, can ensure that future disaster victims will receive quick and effective relief. The Aquaboxes are extremely suitable for use in disaster response situations; being light, relatively small (requires only one person to carry one unit) and stackable, they are easily transported. Apart from the logistical advantages they are also extremely effective in that they are simple to use and do the job efficiently. It is an especially important job considering that contaminated water supplies are often the main cause of death and disease following large-scale disasters such as floods and tsunamis.

It should provide a great deal of satisfaction to the members of the Wirksworth Rotary club to know that Aquaboxes, by providing a simple low-tech and proven method of treating contaminated water, are saving lives in Indonesia. To date the LIF has distributed Aquaboxes to the victims of 7 separate disasters on the islands of Sumatra, Nias and Java:

- 3700 units to Aceh - all affected areas (tsunami – 26 December 2004)
- 3580 units to Nias and Simelue islands (tsunami – 26 December 2004 & earthquake – 28 March 2005)
- 130 units to Southeast Aceh (landslide/floods – 18 October 2005)
- 140 units to Pangadaran, Java (tsunami – 17 July 2006)
- 30 units to Aras Napal, North Sumatra (floods – 23 December 2006)
- 50 units to East Aceh and Langsa (floods – 05 December 2007 & coastal abrasion – 10 December 2007)



Aquaboxes being delivered to tsunami victims in Java

Thanks to the Aquabox program thousands of Indonesian disaster victims have been able to get quick and simple access to safe drinking water. Many parts of Indonesia will always be a disaster waiting to happen but fortunately, due to the dedication of Rotary International's Wirksworth club and the rapid response capabilities of the LIF, relief for some is at hand.