

## **The Impact Of USAID IUWASH Program On Improving Clean Water And Proper Sanitation In North Sumatra**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the impact of USAID IUWASH programme to the clean water, sanitation and hygiene problems in Indonesia especially in North Sumatera. The United States government country, through USAID distributes aid in the form of grants. This research applies a qualitative research method, the collected data were analyzed using international cooperation theory and Official Development Assistance concept. The results of this study found that the government of Indonesia also joined the USAID for increase the clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. The USAID IUWASH programme is effective in improving clean water, sanitation, and hygiene in North Sumatera, referring to the results of the data of USAID IUWASH and interviewee with Regional Manager USAID IUWASH of North Sumatera, head of facilities and infrastructure Bapperida of Simalungun, and local resident of North Sumatera.*

### **BACKGROUND**

The United States and Indonesia have been working together since 1949. The relationship between the two countries is generally close. Both countries are republics and both recognize the strategic interests between each other. One of the assistances provided by the United States to Indonesia is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is an independent government agency responsible for providing economic, development, and humanitarian aid worldwide to support U.S. foreign policy goals. The establishment of independent institutions to provide assistance and services to developing countries and partners, one of the programs in Indonesia is the Indonesia Urban Resilient Water Sanitation and Hygiene (IUWASH), which is a program to expand access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. In addition to aiming to provide clean water and safe sanitation, the main goal of IUWASH is to assist the Indonesian government in achieving the Sustainable

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Development Goals (USAID IUWASH, 2022a)

International cooperation between Indonesia and the United States presents an excellent opportunity to strengthen bilateral relations. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assists Indonesia across various domains. In their campaign to reduce plastic pollution, USAID has launched a new initiative supporting public-private partnerships contributing to the reduction of land-based marine plastic pollution, aligned with the principles of a circular economy. USAID collaborates with local governments, the private sector, and community groups to champion the campaign against plastic waste and to bolster the recycling value chain. With regards to environmentally-friendly public transportation, the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) has established a new partnership with PT MRT Jakarta, the capital city's train operator, to support the transition of public transport systems to renewable energy sources (Pratama, 2019). Regarding on biodiversity conservation, USAID plans to unveil a new climate partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to facilitate the implementation of the Indonesian Net Sink 2030 Forestry and Other Land Use (FOLU) project. This is related to the protection of species like orangutans, elephants, tigers, and rhinos, supporting regional government programs in Sumatra and Kalimantan. (US Embassy Jakarta, 2022)

## **METHOD**

The research methodology employed in this study is the descriptive qualitative method. This method involves problem-solving procedures where the current research object or subject is described based on available facts. Descriptive research is an inquiry aiming to elucidate problem-solving based on data, by presenting, analyzing, and interpreting.

This study employed interviews as data gathering. During the research process, we interviewed USAID as the owner of the IUWASH program and the Provincial Government of North Sumatra as recipient of the program. The data then analyzed through the lens of International Cooperation Theory and Official Development

Assistance concept in order to understand the dynamic of bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and the USA and also the impact of the IUWASH (Indonesia Urban Resilient Water Sanitation and Hygiene) Program on the enhancement of clean water and adequate sanitation in North Sumatra from USAID (United States Agency of International Development) during 2017 – 2022.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

An universal roadmap for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, both now and in the future, is provided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was accepted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represent an urgent call to action for all nations—developed and developing—in a global partnership, are at the center of it. The USA through global partnership and its USAID programs aims to reduce poverty, strengthen democracy, tackling climate change, alleviate the suffering of people who faced humanitarian crisis, and support the advancing progress toward achieving SDGs (USAID, 2023).

Water is essential for the lives of every living being on earth. The government of Indonesia is also put priority in providing clean water, safe sanitation processes, and high hygiene standards for its people. Although water supply is abundant in Indonesia, not all society can access the water easily and freely. Through the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (*Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat*), the government created infrastructures to manage water for drinking purposes, sanitary, and irrigation to support agriculture sector (Biro Komunikasi Publik Kementerian PUPR, 2012). The government of Indonesia also work alongside with international partners, including USAID, to provide access of water to the remotest part of Indonesia.

Indonesia Urban Resilient Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (IUWASH) is one of USAID programs that focused on increasing access for clean drinking water, proper sanitation and establishing hygienic habits for people in urban and rural area IUWASH plays a pivotal role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), especially SDG 6, which stands for "Clean Water and Sanitation" (Farid Ramadhan & Zahidi, 2023). USAID assists Indonesia in various ways. Firstly, through infrastructure development, USAID supports the enhancement of water supply infrastructure by backing the construction and rehabilitation of water systems, such as water treatment installations, water pipelines, and reservoirs, thereby improving access to clean and safe drinking water. Secondly, in terms of sanitation facilities, USAID aids Indonesia by developing sanitation amenities, such as constructing toilets, septic tanks, and wastewater treatment systems. These endeavors aim to enhance overall sanitation and reduce water source pollution. Thirdly, USAID backs behavioral change campaigns, promoting good hygiene practices like handwashing with soap, proper waste management, and safe food handling (Farid Ramadhan & Zahidi, 2023).

The multi-stakeholder collaboration that has been ongoing for over five years has undoubtedly yielded positive results. As a result, a larger portion of the Indonesian population now has access to proper sanitation facilities, safe drinking water, and has adopted and practiced hygienic behaviors. This collaboration has also promoted increased access to drinking water and sanitation in targeted areas by actively involving community participation. In summary, this multi-stakeholder collaboration is a significant and positive step in achieving targets for access to safe drinking water and appropriate sanitation. By involving various stakeholders and resources, including donor agencies and the private sector, this program has the potential to continually improve drinking water and sanitation access for the Indonesian populace (IUWASH, 2022a).

However, it's regrettable that the uneven distribution of clean water in North Sumatra remains an unresolved issue. Some communities, especially in Medan, the provincial capital, still express grievances about the quality and services to access clean water (Surwanti & Hindasah, 2018). Data from the Annual Survey of Clean Water Companies from 2016-2020 indicates that while the clean water production capacity in North Sumatra has been increasing annually, there are still some

districts/cities with low production capacities (BPS, 2021).

In North Sumatra, a significant population still lacks access to safe drinking water. This is prominent in rural areas, where water sources are often contaminated or far from residential areas, leading to reliance on unsafe water sources and resulting in health issues and waterborne diseases. Moreover, poor sanitation facilities, including toilets and wastewater management systems, are insufficient in many parts of North Sumatra. Open defecation remains a practice in some areas, posing health risks and contributing to environmental pollution. There's a deficiency in suitable sanitation facilities, impacting overall cleanliness and well being of the populace (Pratama, 2023).

Furthermore, limited awareness and behavior change are challenges. There's a need to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of hygiene practices, such as handwashing with soap and proper waste management. Many people lack knowledge about the connection between poor hygiene practices and the spread of preventable diseases. Overall, the situation in North Sumatra in 2015 required significant intervention and support to address issues related to sanitation and clean water hygiene. The implementation of the IUWASH program aimed to address these challenges and improve the overall situation in the province (IUWASH, 2022b).

In North Sumatra, the raw water sources of PDAM (Regional Drinking Water Company) need protection due to decreasing discharge. For example, a 2020 Dry Season Vulnerability Study by USAID IUWASH PLUS and the Sibolangit Spring Action Plan showed a reduction of 4 liters per second every year in spring flow. The study predicts that by 2026, the demand for this spring water will exceed its supply. According to the North Sumatra Drinking Water Provision Master Plan 2021, PDAMs must reduce water consumption. Therefore, optimizing water resource protection is vital to maintaining water quantity and quality (Sinaga, 2022).

The government has taken structural strategies to safeguard national water resilience, including four proposed government regulations on drinking water

provision, water resources, water resource management, and irrigation from the Job Creation Law and the Water Resources Law No. 17 of 2019. Additionally, the government established the National Water Council with Presidential Decree No. 10 of 2017, a national-level water resource management coordination body that advises the president on formulating national water resource management policies and coordinates their adoption and implementation (Limanseto, 2022).

The importance of central government support in managing domestic wastewater in regions plays a pivotal role in its execution. Hence, USAID IUWASH collaborates with the Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency (PPN/Bappenas) and the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR) in formulating the Domestic Wastewater Management Roadmap. This document acts as a reference and guide for the central and regional governments in developing plans and concrete actions for effective and sustainable domestic wastewater services in Indonesia. The collaboration reflects the commitment of USAID IUWASH, PPN/Bappenas, and PUPR to enhance domestic wastewater management in Indonesia by involving all levels of government, strengthening the regulatory framework, and enhancing human capacities in the sector (Pokja PPAS Nasional, 2021).

Choosing North Sumatra as one of its focal points, IUWASH has showcased its strategic approach to address region-specific challenges while balancing the existing socio-economic factors. Firstly, its geographical location, being a coastal province, allows IUWASH to focus on mitigating the impacts of rising sea levels and ensuring sustainable water management in coastal cities. This aligns with IUWASH's core objectives, as Indonesia is significantly affected by climate change, and its coastal cities are particularly vulnerable. Secondly, another significant factor influencing IUWASH's decision is the high urban density and related water challenges in North Sumatra. Cities like Medan and Binjai are undergoing rapid urbanization, leading to strains on water resources and infrastructure. By focusing on North Sumatra, IUWASH aims to address critical issues like access to safe drinking

water, sanitation, and wastewater management, directly benefiting the densely populated urban populace. Despite the inherent challenges, North Sumatra also presents substantial opportunities for collaboration and partnerships (IUWASH, 2022b).

IUWASH chose this region to leverage existing collaborations with key stakeholders, including local governments, NGOs, and community-based organizations. By building on previously established partnerships, IUWASH ensures the sustainability of its program implementations while harnessing local knowledge and expertise (Pokja PPAS Nasional, 2021).

Furthermore, IUWASH's decision is discerningly made, taking into account the socio-economic conditions of North Sumatra. The province faces socio-economic disparities, with marginalized communities lacking access to basic water and sanitation facilities. By targeting North Sumatra, IUWASH aims to bridge this gap, ensuring equitable access to water-related services for all community segments. IUWASH's decision to prioritize North Sumatra can also be linked to the region's political significance. Partnering with local governments in North Sumatra, IUWASH can set the province as a model for sustainable water management. Such a model can be replicated in other areas, achieving broader impacts and inspiring policy changes at a national level (IUWASH, 2020).

Certainly, there were various considerations made before deciding on implementing IUWASH in North Sumatra. One of the reasons being North Sumatra was viewed as a region that could boost national development, especially at a time transitioning from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the initiation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, there were development targets to be achieved, such as sanitation or drinking water access milestones. While IUWASH operates in multiple locations, the standard for selection remains consistent: regions with dense populations, typically urban areas. North Sumatra fits this criterion. However, specific districts adjacent to urban centers may also be categorized as urban due to their characteristics and challenges. USAID IUWASH

has undertaken projects for the construction and improvement of toilets, especially in schools and public areas. This initiative aims to promote good hygiene practices and prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. The provision of sanitary toilets has helped reduce open defecation, leading to better public health outcomes and an improved living environment. Beyond infrastructure development, USAID and IUWASH focus on enhancing the health awareness of the community in North Sumatra (IUWASH, 2022b)

The funds directed by USAID to IUWASH in North Sumatra have had a significant positive impact. Improved access to clean water facilities and sanitation has contributed to a healthier living environment, reduced water-related diseases, and enhanced the overall quality of life for individuals. Sustainable water resource management ensures long-term availability and minimizes adverse impacts from climate change and natural disasters. Further funds from USAID can assist in enhancing technical and institutional capacities, encouraging community participation, and promoting innovative approaches to water management. Moreover, the collaboration between donor agencies, government entities, and local communities is crucial to ensure the effective use of USAID funds and the sustainability of project outcomes (Adetya, 2020). The impact of the IUWASH program in North Sumatra is evident through consistent improvements, such as the increasing percentage of households in North Sumatra gaining access to adequate sanitation services (United Nations, 2017).

The USAID IUWASH initiative in North Sumatra has contributed to capacity-building efforts designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of local communities, government officials, and stakeholders in water management. This encompasses training programs, workshops, and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting good hygiene practices, appropriate water management, and efficient operation and maintenance of water infrastructure. The specific amount of USAID funding allocated to IUWASH in North Sumatra may vary based on the year and donor contributions. However, historical data indicates that significant investments have

been made to support IUWASH activities in the region. For instance, between 2015 and 2020, the IUWASH program is estimated to have received a total of \$50 million in USAID funds from various development partners, including the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, Australian Government, and Japanese Government. These funds have been utilized to execute projects targeting infrastructure development, water quality improvement, sustainable sanitation, and hygiene practices. The USAID funding directed towards IUWASH in North Sumatra has had a profoundly positive impact. Improved access to clean water and sanitation facilities has contributed to a healthier living environment, reduced water-related diseases, and enhanced the overall quality of life for individuals (Adetya, 2022).

Sustainable water resource management ensures long-term availability and minimizes the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. Future USAID funding can assist in boosting technical and institutional capacities, fostering community participation, and advocating innovative approaches to water management. Additionally, collaboration between donor agencies, governmental entities, and local communities is paramount to ensure effective utilization of USAID funds and sustainable project outcomes (Adetya, 2022).

IUWASH's efforts to enhance WASH in North Sumatra has had significant impacts. IUWASH, in collaboration with both the National and Regional Governments, remains committed to developing and advancing various areas in Indonesia, particularly North Sumatra, to ensure that the community has equitable access to clean water and appropriate sanitation. Specifically, the improvements are detailed as follows: the enhancement of the Water Supply System by 80%; increase in access to clean water by 75%; improvement in sanitation facilities by 70%; behavioral changes and hygiene promotion by 85%; and capacity enhancement and institutional strengthening by 90%.

The IUWASH program in North Sumatra can be considered successful. However, challenges were encountered, such as protests from areas that were not selected for the program. Nevertheless, IUWASH members provided transparent

explanations, hoping to appease those dissenting regions (IUWASH, 2022b).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The authors have deduced conclusions based on the analysis of research data gathered from interviews and document collection. It is determined that the International Cooperation between Indonesia and the United States provides an exceptional opportunity to fortify the ties between these two nations. The United States perceives Indonesia as a strategic ally, and reciprocally, the U.S. and Indonesia maintain a profound and enduring strategic partnership rooted in mutual values, including an unwavering belief in democracy.

Consequently, there has been an established collaboration of Official Development Assistance (ODA) between Indonesia and the U.S. over the years, spanning multiple sectors. The primary aim of this collaboration is to enhance economic development and well-being in Indonesia and to strengthen bilateral ties. One of the significant aids from the United States to Indonesia is channeled via the ODA through USAID, which operates under the policy directives from the Head of the U.S. Department of State, especially concerning water and sanitation. In Indonesia, USAID is instrumental in various programs, including the IUWASH-PLUS initiative (Indonesian Urban Water and Sanitation Hygiene: Caring for the Environment for All). IUWASH spearheads five core programs, which encompass the enhancement of water services, sanitation, and clean living behavior; fortification of institutional performance in water services, sanitation, and clean living habits at city or district levels; bolstering the financial environment of the water sector, sanitation, and clean living habits; advancing advocacy, communication, and coordination in the water, sanitation, and clean living sector; and emphasizing sustainability and local innovation.

This program aims to augment urban communities' access in Indonesia to clean water, sanitation, and commendable hygiene practices. IUWASH plays a pivotal role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6, which translates to "Clean Water and Sanitation". SDG 6 aspires to ensure sustainable

availability and management of clean water and adequate sanitation for all individuals.

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