

# SURFAID BLOG

## Why our work is needed in the island chains off Sumatra

Anne Wuijts, SurfAid Country Director

Source: [http://www.surfaidinternational.org/\\_blog/News/post/Why\\_our\\_work\\_is\\_needed\\_in\\_the\\_island\\_chains\\_off\\_Sumatra/](http://www.surfaidinternational.org/_blog/News/post/Why_our_work_is_needed_in_the_island_chains_off_Sumatra/)



Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of more than 17,000 islands. **The Indonesian population is the fourth largest in the world, with a total of 240 million inhabitants. About 19 million people try to survive on less than US\$1 a day, while a staggering 120 million people live on less than US\$2 a day.**

The poorest areas of Indonesia are the remote islands where sometimes as many as 95 per cent of people in rural communities are poor. In isolated areas people can't access the public basic services (education, health, work, etc.) that are usually concentrated in the bigger towns on the mainland.

In the isolated Mentawai Islands this has resulted directly in unnecessary deaths, especially among pregnant women and children under five. It also contributes to the unacceptably high levels of malnutrition, diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections in children under five. The accessibility and quality of maternal health are still the major causes of high maternal deaths in Indonesia. Providing health care facilities for pregnant women and children under five in remote areas of Indonesia has been dauntingly challenging.

### But SurfAid is up for that challenge!

“ In 2012 SurfAid will work in the remote islands of the Mentawai, Nias, Telo and Banyak.

Fighting poverty and improving living conditions are tougher than it seems. There are many different and interlinked factors that contribute to the situation. Any solution needs to take into account these different factors and find creative ways of tackling them.

So, SurfAid will provide very practical support such as materials to build water tanks, water taps and toilets for clean water and sanitation, mosquito nets to avoid malaria, and vegetable seeds to help establish nutrition gardens to eradicate malnutrition.

But it is the capacity building of community health volunteers, schoolchildren, community members and relevant government staff that really lies at the heart of what we do.



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Hardware is important but is not enough to address health, sanitation and nutrition issues. We need behaviour change to stop pregnant women and children from dying! Very much in line with the motto “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you will feed him for his life.”

In 2012, SurfAid will work in the remote islands of the Mentawai, Nias, Telo and Banyak. We will further explore the possibilities of working in Sumbawa and the Northern Moluccas.

In the Mentawai Islands, SurfAid will work together with communities and the local government to stop children and pregnant women dying from malaria, malnutrition and acute respiratory infections.

“ Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day: teach a man to fish, and you will feed him for his life.



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We will also provide Long-Term Post Tsunami Recovery for the communities affected by the October 2010 Tsunami. This community-based program is called SeSe Program, which means in Mentawai language: appropriate. SeSe stands for Sejahtera Masyarakat, Sehat Ibu Anak (Prosperous Communities, Healthy Mothers and Children).

SeSe will be implemented in the former internally displaced people (IDP) camps in South Pagai and in one village in South Sipora. The Malaria Free Mentawai project will reach out through the whole of the Mentawai, but will start in South Pagai and South Sipora

In Nias, SurfAid will also together with communities and the local government to work on severe health issues for pregnant women, mothers and children. This community-based program is called Sökhî program, which in Nias language means Healthy! It stands for Stronger Communities, Healthier Children and will concentrate in the Hiliduho subdistrict in Central Nias district.

Isolation contributes directly to the abysmal health and poverty status of the people of the Mentawai and Nias. On top of that, these islands lay on a 'hot zone' in terms of earthquakes. Scientists believe that another great earthquake (greater than 8 Magnitude) is imminent and that it will be centred close to, or under, Siberut Island in the Mentawai. It is very likely that this will lead to another tsunami that will impact the Mentawai Islands, the Telos and the wider surrounding area, including West Sumatra.

That is why SurfAid implements an Emergency Preparedness Program (E-Prep) for remote islands in Western and Northern Sumatra. Communities will work together with the local government and SurfAid to map out risks, prepare and build escape routes, relocate where necessary and prepare young and old on what to do when the disaster strikes (again).



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## NEW SECONDARY GLOBAL EDUCATION RESOURCE

The Global Education Project NSW has written and produced: *Water and the World*, a 21<sup>st</sup>- century resource for secondary school students. Informed by the Australian Curriculum documents it covers important topical issues about national and global water systems and provides a wealth of teaching and learning activities appropriate for the Science and HSIE classroom.

Available from the Professional Teachers' Council NSW

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