

Arsad, Indonesia



Arsad is photographed with his neighbours in Pandeglang District, Indonesia. Photo credit: Laz Harfa

[Watch Arsad's story.](#)

Can you imagine not having a toilet of any kind? For Arsad, an Indonesian farmer, the idea of having a flushing toilet and running water at home was a distant dream. Without toilet facilities at his home, Arsad had to walk into the forest, even at night or in the rain.

With the support of Caritas Australia and its partner agency, Laz Harfa, Arsad took part in hygiene and sanitation training. He then decided to fund the building of a toilet in his house. Now, he is teaching others in his neighbourhood and facilitating them to build toilets. Arsad's family is healthier, his community cleaner...and he's being hailed as a 'neighbourhood hero'.

Arsad, 46, lives in the Pandeglang region of Indonesia's westernmost Banten province. Three families live in his household - including his parents, his wife, Kasniti, his three children, aged 4, 17 and his 20-year-old daughter, her husband and their four-month-old son.

The Pandeglang region has very few employment opportunities, poor roads and infrastructure. Arsad is a rice farmer who also grows vegetables to feed and support his family.

Arsad did not have a toilet in his house and his family had to walk a long distance into the forest to the district's open defecation area. It was worse at night with the danger of snakes.

"We thought it was normal, even though we have to face our fear every time," says Kasniti, Arsad's wife. "When it was raining or we were sick, it became very troublesome."

Around 45 million people in Indonesia practice open defecation – going to the toilet outdoors in fields, forests, and other open spaces¹, with many unaware that it contributes to significant health problems. Open defecation spreads bacterial diseases, and causes diarrhoea, which increases the risk of malnutrition for children.²

Arsad's family was often sick, with digestive problems and colds. His environment lacked basic hygiene and open defecation in the community caused many neighbourhood disputes.

Source: 1. [World Bank](#) 2. [World Bank](#)

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When he heard about hygiene and sanitation training run by Caritas Australia, through local partner, Laz Harfa, he was keen to get involved. The Economic and Community-based Health Development Project encourages community members to save to build their own toilets and to work together to create “open defecation-free” villages. It also aims to boost incomes through sustainable agriculture and other livelihood activities.

Through the training, Arsad gained the confidence to raise awareness about the issue, and was keen to find solutions. He decided to fund and install a toilet and piped water system in his home himself.

He learnt financial management skills and became the leader of his local *Arisan Jamban* group where members save money together to build toilets in their homes. The Caritas-supported project has resulted in the installation of around 280 toilets in the community.

“Most people at first did not understand about health. Now, they’re willing to listen and they have an easy way to build toilets,” Arsad says. “We help each other, the ‘togetherness’ is growing. Our solidarity had increased.”

Nearly 12,000 people have benefitted from the program so far.

Improved hygiene and sanitation practices also helped Arsad’s community during the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed local markets and further reduced the family’s income.

Caritas Australia, with Laz Harfa, shared lifesaving messages on preventing the spread of coronavirus and distributed soap, masks and hygiene kits. They also set up a public rice barn where people could donate rice to share with other community members.

“Arsad was the initiator, the first one to change his way of thinking,” says Imam Hidayat, Laz Harfa’s Program Manager. “He set a good example and then slowly encouraged his neighbours to change for the better.”

Arsad aspired to ‘Be More’ and in doing so, inspired his family and community to follow in his footsteps.

“Thank you so much, Caritas Australia,” Arsad says. “I pray for the best for the Australians who have helped this program so there is progress in my community.”



Arsad (right) cultivates rice in his community in Pandeglang District, Indonesia. Photo credit: Laz Harfa

1. Read and discuss/write your responses:

- a) Identify the key challenges Arsad and his community faced.

- b) Explain how Caritas Australia and their partners in Indonesia are using the [Strength-Based Approach](#) to empower the community to overcome some of these challenges.

- c) What have been some of the long-term changes from Arsad's participation in the Caritas Australia supported program? Present your answer in a flow diagram of your choice.

- d) In Indonesia there are *Arisan Jamban* groups, where members of the group save money together. As part of this program, one household was chosen each month to receive the money for a toilet. The Caritas Australia supported project motivated group members to pool their own resources, resulting in the installation of around 280 toilets. How is the Common Good demonstrated in this story?

2. Toilet Audit

Conduct a toilet audit in your school and at home, collecting the following information:

1. How many toilets do you have in your school/home?
2. How many of those toilets are not in working order?
3. How many have a single flush? How many have a dual flush? (Note: Dual flush toilets aim to save water by giving users an option of half or full flushes depending on what they need!)
4. How far (in metres) is the nearest toilet from:
 - a) Your bedroom
 - b) Your current classroom

3. Stopping the Spread

Arsad and his community were unaware of the dangers of open defecation, and lacked the resources to affectively stop the spread of bacteria and maintain hygiene. This was heightened when the global pandemic began.

Create a video/poster that creatively explains the importance of, and the correct way, to wash your hands to avoid the spread of bacteria. You might want to stick these up within your classroom, the school toilets or in your own toilet at home.

Here are some helpful websites you can use:

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/why-handwashing.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

COUNTRY STUDY: INDONESIA



Engage with the [Country Study Thinglink](#) and do some of your own research to find out the information below. Suggestions for reliable sources are included on the Thinglink and below.

<p>Predict life expectancy in Indonesia. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not? https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy</p>	Prediction:	https://www.britannica.com/place/Indonesia	
	Actual:	https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/tanzania/Pages/indonesia	
		What are the official languages?	
		What is the main religion?	
<p>What is the population of Indonesia? What is the population of Australia? https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth</p>	Indonesia: Australia	What system of government does Indonesia have?	
<p>What is the poverty rate in Indonesia? https://data.worldbank.org/ http://hdr.undp.org/en/data</p>		In what region of the world is Indonesia located? What direction is it from Australia?	
<p>List three major factor/s affecting poverty and wellbeing (E.g. Education)</p>		Describe the ways Australia is connected to Indonesia. E.g. trade that occurs between the two nations, services that are exchanged, immigration, etc.	
<p>Summarise Caritas Australia's support to improve wellbeing.</p> <hr/> <hr/>		<p>Select two relevant Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>Why did you select these? www.globalgoals.org</p>	

“Hope is a path of solidarity ... Do not be afraid of solidarity, service and offering a helping hand, so that no one is excluded from the path.”

- Pope Benedict XVI

Reflection questions:

- How does this quotation relate to Arsad’s story?
- How have Arsad and his neighbours worked to ensure ‘no one is excluded from the path’?
- Explain a time when you have offered a ‘helping hand’ to someone who was in need of assistance?

- How can we continue to raise awareness about the issue of sanitation in our world?

- Arsad became a leader amongst his neighbours in his community. Think about how you can lead by example by getting involved in a clean up project at your school or in your local community. How many others can you encourage to take part?



Pray

Write a prayer of intercession based on what you have learnt from Arsad's story. You may want to share these as a class at an end of the week reflection, or on your online classroom platform.

Here is an example of one:

Loving God, we thank you for the blessing of clean water and sanitation, and pray for those who do not have access to such resources. May we continue to support the work of Caritas and its partners who help to provide our brothers and sisters with basic human needs that we may often take for granted. We pray to the Lord.

