

# Australia's Humanitarian Aid

## Build Back Better—Indonesia

With more than 120 active volcanoes, Indonesia is the most volcanically-charged country in the world. Its 240 million people also live in one of the most earthquake-prone regions. On 30 September 2009, an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale devastated Padang in West Sumatra.

More than 1100 people were killed and more than 300,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed, including many health clinics and schools. Losses are estimated at more than \$2.2 billion.

**Globally, the number and scale of disasters is increasing. The Asia-Pacific is the most natural disaster-prone region.**

Australia rallied quickly to support Indonesia's relief and recovery efforts. We committed \$15 million to Indonesia's emergency and reconstruction efforts in Padang. Working with the Indonesian Government, Indonesian non-government organisations, Australian Defence Force and international humanitarian agencies, our assistance reached more than 260,000 people. It included search and rescue, rebuilding eight health centres and 39 schools using earthquake-resistant standards and enabling 6500 children to return to school.

**Australians donate more than \$100 million each year to help those affected by disasters and conflict overseas.**

Some disasters provide opportunities to improve a country's resilience, in preparation for the next one. The Australia—Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction does this important job in such a disaster-prone country. After the Padang earthquake, it mobilised an international engineering team to survey damaged buildings and find out why some had withstood the shaking but others collapsed. It found reinforced masonry buildings were much safer. Houses made from un-reinforced masonry were 10 times more likely to completely collapse—significant findings given more than 80 per cent of people are killed during earthquakes by collapsing buildings.

**We help countries develop the skills needed to manage disasters themselves. These skills also help countries to coordinate aid from other nations.**

The findings led to a Build Back Better campaign, to encourage the 230,000 West Sumatrans to adopt simple, improved building techniques. The campaign aims to change behaviour by convincing householders to make informed decisions on the need for earthquake-resilient housing. It raises awareness through education materials, murals, community events and the media. This has included television and radio commercials, billboard and bus advertising, newspaper articles and talkback shows. Outdoor film nights were held in the worst-affected villages.

The campaign is also online using the internet and social media to spread the information nationally, reaching many more Indonesians in vulnerable regions across the country. They can benefit from lessons learned and better prepare for an earthquake.

**Australia is increasing its humanitarian work. This includes helping countries to be more disaster-resilient, to lessen damage and suffering.**

The Build Back Better campaign targeted the construction industry through local building supply stores; provided training for 750 government community facilitators responsible for monitoring reconstruction; and trained up to 800 construction workers.

Improved masonry housing designs, locally designed and officially adopted by the West Sumatra Public Works Department, are promoted. Technical videos have been produced for community and village builders on how to implement simple design and quality changes to make new homes more resilient. Short

films have been produced on repairing and retrofitting non-engineered houses and building earthquake-resilient wooden homes.

**We work in partnership around the world. Humanitarian action is strongest when everyone works together.**

Anggin, a 45-year-old builder, says he has learnt a lot from the Build Back Better campaign. “For new builders, these guidebooks will be even more important and a useful resource because a lot of builders in West Sumatra don’t understand even the basic principles of correct building techniques.”

It’s also helped him explain the importance to homeowners. “Now that people have seen how devastating an earthquake can be, they understand why this is important. I tell them, if you build properly, you don’t need to worry about your building collapsing without warning. Even if a major earthquake hits, the damage will be less severe. This will save lives and prevent something like the terrible events before from happening again,” Anggin said.

**Preparing for disasters and reducing their potential impact, protects lives and development progress.**

Yonda’s family feels safer now that their home has been rebuilt using earthquake-resilient standards. The left side of Yonda’s house was completely rebuilt, while the right side was repaired using safer retrofitting techniques. “Many homeowners in local housing complexes didn’t know, or really care, about earthquake-safe construction, until after the September 30th earthquake. The earthquake really taught a lot of people lessons. Now people want to build better,” he said. “The campaign has been really useful for educating the public and raising awareness about the danger of unsafe buildings.”

**Disaster response is important.**

**More information about Australia’s humanitarian aid is available online at [www.aisaid.gov.au](http://www.aisaid.gov.au)**

**The Build Back Better campaign is at [www.aifdr.org](http://www.aifdr.org)**