

Indonesia



Article

## Safe Sanitation for Feby

Protecting children from health risks associated with water contamination.

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[English](#) [Bahasa Indonesia](#)

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*"When Feby was ill with diarrhoea AND typhoid fever, I knew we needed to have a latrine ASAP. But we couldn't afford it. The family income was barely enough for our daily needs."*

**Sri, Feby's mother.**

So Sri recounts her family's ordeal while walking through a narrow alley that leads to their home. With her is her 9-year-old daughter, Feby.

Their house is a four-by-four, unpainted, hardly fit for habitation. They have lived there for some time without basic sanitation services. The entire family, including Feby, used to defecate in a nearby ditch, with the waste often ending up in a stream where people went about their daily business: bathing, washing dishes, washing their clothes.

They also relied on the same river and similarly contaminated surface water sources for drinking. According to a recent UNICEF report, 89 per cent of water sources and 67 per cent of household drinking water in Indonesia are faecally contaminated.

## Open defecation in Indonesia

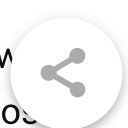
Open defecation is detrimental to public health. Together with poor hygiene practices, it has contributed significantly to child mortality, undernutrition and stunting, and can potentially affect cognitive development.

According to a recent UNICEF report, more than 20 million people in Indonesia still practice open defecation, making it among the top three countries in the world to engage in this practice.

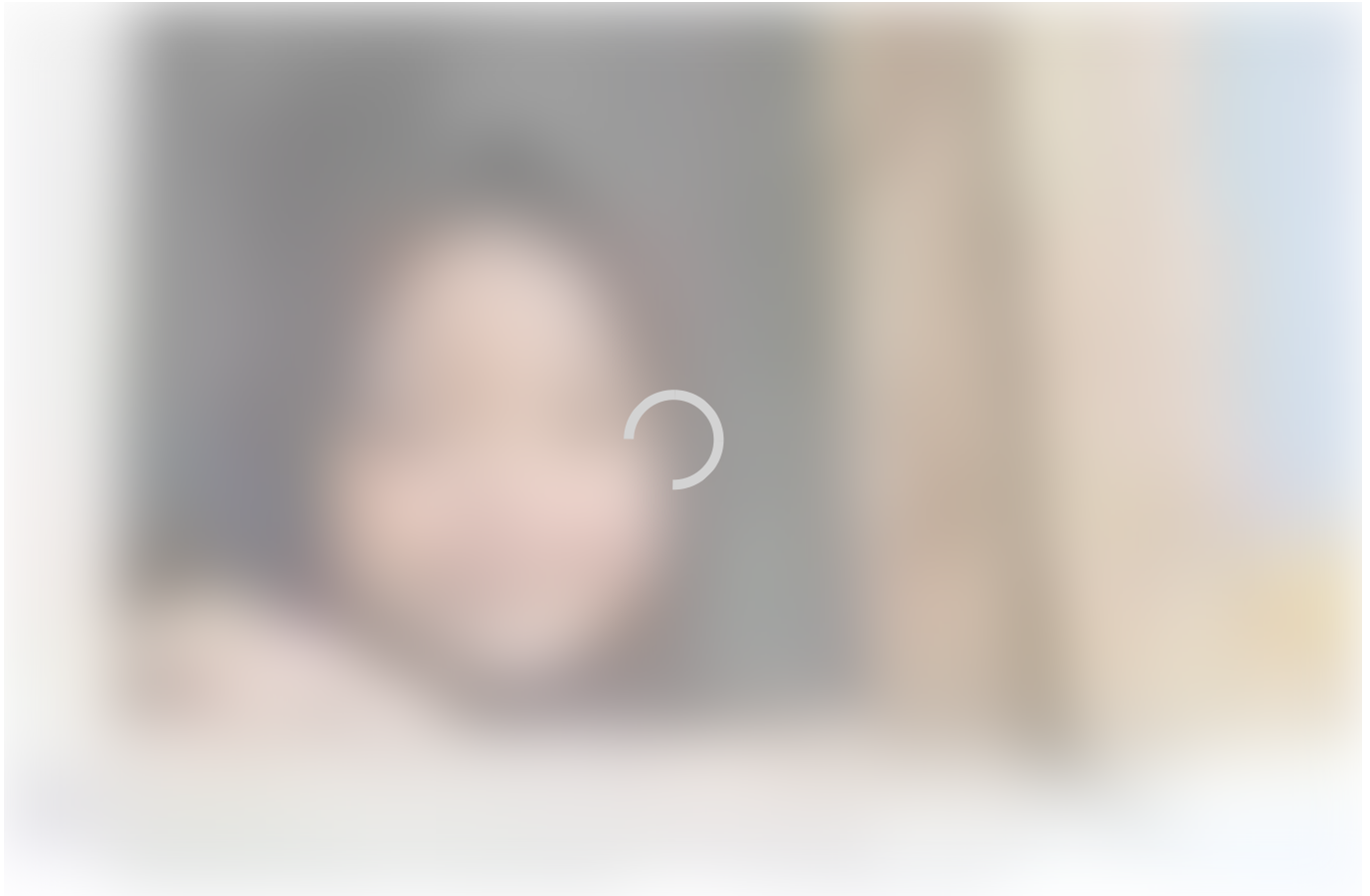
It comes as no surprise that diarrhea, along with typhoid, is still a major cause of death of Indonesian children under five years of age, including in Feby's district.

## The Stop Open Defecation Campaign

Both Sri and her husband, Suryatul Handi, work as farm labourers. Their daily wages are only enough for food, soap, and other basic needs. A toilet facility would cost



them a fortune, let alone one with a drinking water pipe connected to their home.



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*“I used to defecate in the sewer. Then I got diarrhoea and felt weak and dizzy. I don’t want to have diarrhoea ever again.”*

***Feby, 9 years old.***

*It was only recently that Feby’s family received a latrine and access to clean drinking water through the Stop Open Defecation campaign. The campaign, was part of UNICEF’s ongoing initiatives to help poor areas acquire Open Defecation (ODF) status and alleviate the economic burden of disadvantaged families like Feby’s.*



## The challenges of building and maintaining safe sanitation

However, the new latrine facilities only partially address the risk of contracting diarrhea again. Around Feby lurks another threat just as harmful—namely the unsafe disposal of untreated faecal waste.

According to a recent World Bank study, approximately 95 percent of faecal waste in Indonesia is untreated and not disposed into proper treatment plants. Some of the emptied sludge is often unsafely disposed of on land and ends up in drains, rivers and agricultural fields, increasing contamination and its health risks.

Poor citizen understanding of how to build their own toilets and manage waste disposal contributes to the problem.

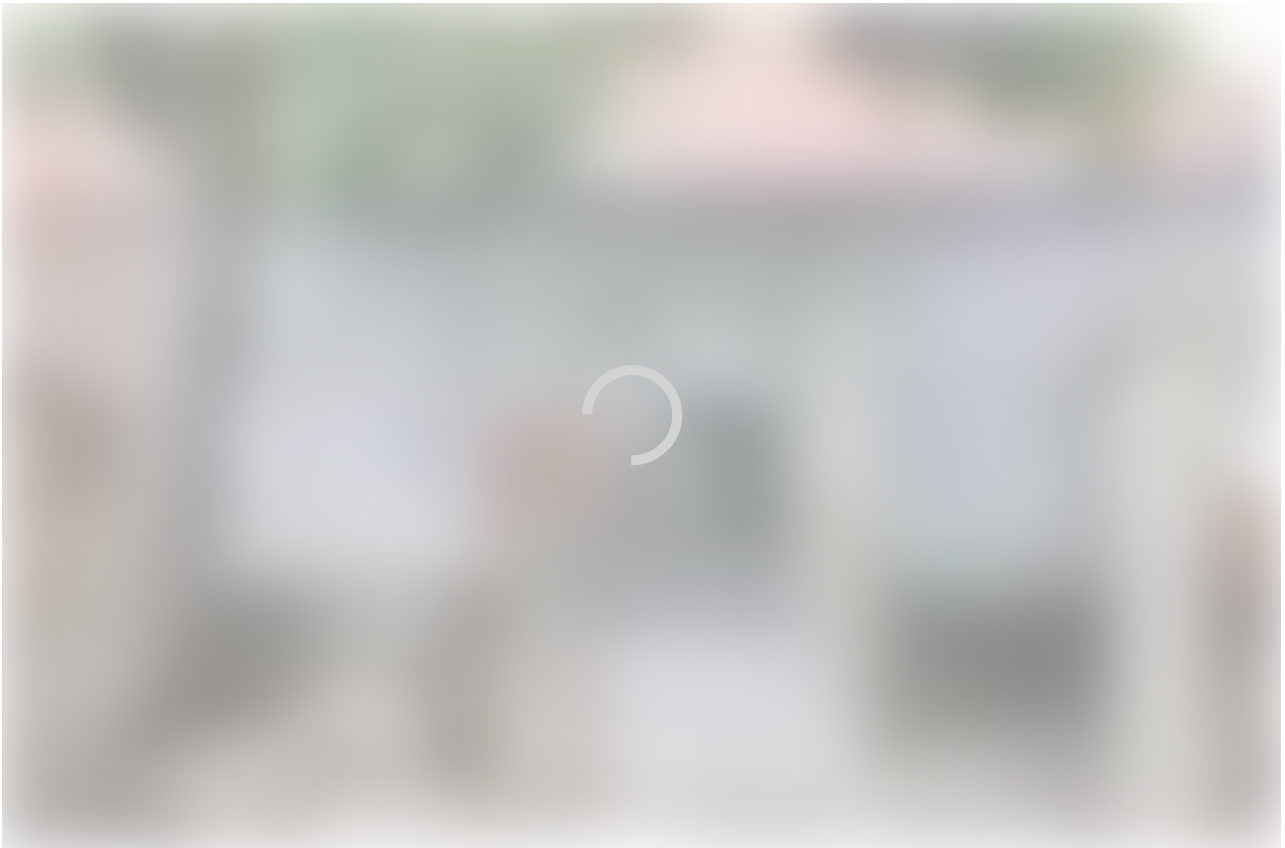
Suryatul is no exception. A plumber from the Sanitation Department notes that Suryatul seems unaware that the air vent of his septic tank was too small, and that the tank needed to be emptied at least once every two years.

However, Suryatul is keen on receiving training in order to protect his children from future illness.

*“If there is a training on how to properly build and maintain septic tanks, of course I’d like to do it.”*

***Suryatul Handi, Feby’s father.***





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*Most homes in East Lombok are still relying on ground water sources for their daily water consumption, and some use hand operated well shown in the picture*

## **Toward a Safely Managed Wastewater Treatment Installation**

Since merely ensuring that more people have toilets in their homes is not enough to address the sustainable safe sanitation agenda, UNICEF has been working closely with Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (BAZNAS) to take the existing programmes to a higher level: this time by creating a detailed work plan for a Safely Managed Wastewater Treatment Installation.

Under this new initiative, not only will physical facilities continue to be provided; capacity-building efforts will also be strengthened. More community-based programmes will be created to educate citizens on the importance of personal hygiene, linking poor wastewater management to serious health risks, and the proper use and management of septic tanks.

Yet, as with any sustainable system, community involvement is key to the effort, especially since the construction of urban wastewater infrastructure is costly and challenging. Since community awareness is so low, the need for alternative financing sources has become more pressing than ever.



**In order to succeed, these initiatives rely on donations from generous supporters like you.**

*There needs to be citizen demand to offset budgetary and political constraints and have their basic rights met: that safe sanitation becomes a way of life for all Indonesian citizens.*

## How You Can Help

Thanks to the generous contributions of individual donors, UNICEF has been able to work with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) experts and workers across Indonesia to make community-based total sanitation (STBM) a reality.

But the path to safe sanitation is a long and complex one, and much still needs to be done. For this we need your support.

To help more children like Feby grow up in a safe and clean environment, **please consider donating to UNICEF**. We very much appreciate your contribution.

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