



CASE STUDY

Getting the Lead Out

A phase-out of leaded gasoline makes Indonesian cities healthier places to live



Photo: Budi Haryanto, University of Indonesia

Tests reveal that children's blood lead levels have significantly decreased since Indonesia began phasing out leaded gasoline.

Getting the lead out of gasoline has been a critical first step in making the air in Indonesia safer for everyone.

Telling Our Story

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Challenge

Indonesia was one of the last countries to widely use leaded gasoline. A 2001 study sponsored by USAID found that 35 percent of children tested in Jakarta had elevated blood lead levels. Children are more vulnerable than adults to lead poisoning, and even low blood lead levels can affect brain development, cause behavioral disorders and reduce learning ability and intelligence. The primary source of exposure is leaded gasoline. Removing that lead, as has been done in India, China and most other Asian countries, will rapidly eliminate childhood lead poisoning. In Indonesia, the phase-out of leaded gasoline was planned but not implemented.

Initiative

USAID has worked for more than five years to promote the phase-out of leaded gasoline in Indonesia, educating the public about the dangers of lead and facilitating cooperation between the government, civil society, and international donors. In 2000, USAID teamed up with local organizations to broker a deadline with the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and the state-owned oil and gas company to phase out leaded gasoline. To encourage the government to follow through on its promise, USAID sponsored policy talks and backed the advocacy and research efforts of a consortium of three local organizations. USAID also helped establish a lead information center and funded the first baseline blood lead study to measure exposure and monitor progress.

Results

Leaded gasoline has been completely phased out in the greater Jakarta area, Cirebon, Bali and Batam — 40 percent of the national market that encompasses 16 million city dwellers. Jakarta's lead pollution has dropped by 90 percent. The city's 5 million children have markedly lower levels of lead in their blood, and thus, a much lesser risk of lead-related illnesses and impaired cognitive ability. With USAID's support, the Indonesian government has also begun to take steps to reduce air pollution, including a recent decree that mandates tighter emission standards for new vehicles. Getting the lead out of gasoline has been a critical first step in making the air in Indonesia safe for everyone to breathe.