



PHOTO & CAPTION

Women Turn Trash into Fashion



Photo: USAID/Virginia L. Foley

Whether demonstrating and encouraging hand-washing, teaching the secrets of kitchen composts, or making purses from throwaway plastic materials, Ms. Titik is always thinking outside of the box. She is part of a group of women from Surabaya, northeastern Java, that is taking part in a USAID program to improve health and the environment in Indonesia through community education, involvement, and action.

Full of fun and encouragement, Ms. Titik demonstrates how to persuade children to wash up regularly and effectively. Studies show that only 2 percent of Indonesians report washing their hands before

preparing food and only 6 percent after using the bathroom. Regular hand-washing with soap will reduce childhood diseases, the women learn. Ms. Agus demonstrates how to make a box for collecting scraps in the kitchen that will contain odors and produce compost to use on plants. Awareness of waste management has reduced solid waste in some communities by 30 percent.

Concern for the environment was really lacking before, the women say. In the beginning everyone was asking: "Why bother?" But when results became evident, they realized the importance of better hygiene and waste management practices. Later the men joined in too. Now people know that organic waste can be useful.

These women are also inventive: one day, a member of the group picked up several pieces of colorful, plastic packaging that people often throw out into the street. She found they could be folded into strips that could be woven together to make purses and placemats. Attention-grabbing and unlike anything else, they aren't just a smart way to recycle waste — they also provide an additional source of income. How much will each purse cost? The women haven't decided yet, but they will most likely fetch a pretty penny!

Health conscious and environmentally aware women in the city of Surabaya encourage better waste management and hygiene practices, and discover a new way to make a profit.