



IFEL'S STORY (A Case Study)



(Far left) Ifel with son Razia stares into a daunting future
(Left) All three houses severely damaged

One of the beneficiaries of AMURT & AMURTEL's distribution program is Ifel, 35, of Pasa Dama village in the district of Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra. Nearly all the houses in her village were severely damaged.

As is the tradition with the local Minangkabau culture, Ifel, together with her husband and two small children live in her mother's house with other relatives.

Adjoining their house are the houses of Ifel's grandmother and uncle. All are damaged beyond repair. The 40 plus members of the extended family living in the three houses are now camped out in two temporary shelters in the compound, one for women and children, and the other, for the menfolk.

The 7.6 Richter Scale earthquake occurred at 5.45pm on 30 September 2009. A football match

was going on at that very time, and most of the villagers were in the field to support their team. This probably explains why no deaths occurred despite the severity of building damage.

Nevertheless, the experience of the houses crashing down was a very frightening experience for all. Ifel's four-year-old son, Razia, was so disturbed by the event that he now clings to his mother all the time. For many weeks after the earthquake, he wet his bed at night and suffered recurring nightmares

Ifel is also worried that any aftershocks or new earthquake would send their unsafe houses tumbling down. She is a research assistant with a local NGO in Padang town, but given the precarious situation in the village, she does not have the peace of mind to leave her children in order to go to work in town. This makes an already bad situation even worse because now she is no longer able to earn much needed income.



More than 20 women and children from the extended family (above right) cram into this makeshift sleep area (above left) every night since the earthquake.

The family have no idea where they will find the necessary funds to rebuild their houses. Ifel's traumatized uncle is in denial and insists that his house does not need to be torn down. Despite the heavy damage, he says that all it needs is some repair work. Meanwhile, Ifel's elderly father (right) is in despair at the sight of his house in ruins. He had poured so much money and energy into it. Ifel's mother (below left) keeps busy with the cooking lest she too falls into depression.

Before she is able to attend to the multitude of problems confronting her, Ifel has to attend to the needs of her two young sons first of all. To help them return to some form of normalcy, she started a play session at a nearby clearing. Soon all the kids in the village were gathering there - it was good to hear the sound of children playing and laughing again.

But Ifel is also worried about the village children playing in the rubble of the earthquake all around the neighbourhood (below right), unmindful of the dangers that may appear at any time.

Ifel says there is dire need for a kindergarten and/or child centre in the neighbourhood to cater to the needs of the children. She needs a place where she can leave her young children for a few hours secure in the knowledge that they are in safe hands and happily occupied. Only then will she be able to have the peace of mind to attend to the multitude of urgent tasks at hand in the aftermath of the earthquake that has so devastated the lives of her family and their neighbours.

It is to help folks like Ifel and her sons that AMURTEL has started conducting children programs that will operate from child-friendly spaces in their village neighbourhood.

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Photographs by Christian Jung



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