

*Air dan Terang: Providing Clean Water and Sanitation Solutions in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia*

Indonesia

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<https://instagram.com/airdanterang>

## **Goals**

The aim of this project was to provide clean water and safe sanitation solutions to rural communities in Indonesia. Through building jet pump wells and filtration systems, Air dan Terang's vision was providing rural communities with sustainable infrastructure that would have a lasting impact beyond the span of the summer, as well as to empower young women in rural Indonesia, allowing them to pursue their education, while providing clean water to their homes.

## **Section 1**

The inspiration for Air dan Terang came out of a personal struggle due to lack of water in my hometown. In spite of this common occurrence, it is not often talked about because of how normalised it is. During the summer months, because of Indonesia's location and temperature, there are often droughts and water shortages in many communities, especially in rural areas. Indonesia suffers from a large disparity in development, with urban areas, such as Jakarta and Yogyakarta, having better access to clean water and safe sanitation than rural areas. I attended a United World College (UWC) in Mahindra, India where we learned the value of clean water and its impact on individual and national health. I realised my vision to provide clean water and sanitation solutions to communities in my country that need it the most.

In my initial Davis Projects for Peace application, I focused on the villages of Taehue and Tliu, in East Nusa Tenggara. However, this plan fell through when one of the most critical partner NGOs, Yayasan Tangan Pengharapan, decided that their vision was not in alignment to Air dan Terang's goals any longer. This was probably one of the most terrifying times during the project. I worried that the whole project would fail. I realised that I had depended too much on this one NGO, and now that they had pulled out of the agreement. I felt completely lost and confused. It was my first time handling a project at this scale.

Despite this setback, I was determined to make this project a success. In conversation with my project advisors on site, I decided to work in an area that I was familiar with: my hometown of Purwakarta. Despite its urbanisation, remote communities in Purwakarta, which I identified to be Gandasoli, Cibinong, Mekargalih and Cipaisan still suffer acute water shortages, especially in the summer months. While some families are privileged enough to get their water from facilities that purify water from the Citarum river, many families are unable to do so, often paying more than they could afford for one jerry can of water or resorting to the unfiltered water from nearby resources such as the Jatiluhur reservoir or the Citarum river itself. These water sources are about 3km from their homes, and this responsibility often falls on the shoulders of young girls. The act of providing clean water to these communities therefore goes hand in hand with the empowerment of women in these communities. Young girls often sacrifice their education in order to provide necessities such as clean water for their families.

Working in Purwakarta proved to be a blessing in disguise, as many of my originally planned expenses that were allocated for in-country flights and special vaccines were able to be given to the community and to the project. The communities were extremely welcoming and hospitable, and they were very grateful. They enlightened us about so many of the issues that prevail in the communities. What struck me the most was the account of the Gandasoli village chief. He explained that hundreds of students struggle to find clean water every day, and that they cannot finish their school days because of the need to find

water for their families. Through discussions with him, we decided that our best course of action in Gandasoli village was to build the well on school grounds so none of the students would go thirsty. The biggest challenge that I found while communicating with the people of these rural communities was to establish the fact that we are on even ground and that there should not be any power dynamic between my team and the community. I wanted them to know that I was not there to save them from their condition, but to support them.

Through this project I learned that peace is not limited to the cessation of war or violence. Meeting one's basic needs of food, water and shelter are the cornerstones for a peaceful life, and living without these basic needs would result in resource conflicts, which would be a deterrent to peace.

In the short-term, this project has brought about peace by successfully piloting a scalable and sustainable project that will provide clean water to four villages in rural Indonesia: Gandasoli, Cibinong, Mekargalih and Cipaisan. Through the use of generous funds from the Davis Foundation and local resources, basic infrastructure for jet-pump wells have been placed to provide clean water to schools and houses. Local governments and community partners have supported and encouraged the project. Students have received training about how underground water can be conserved through tree-planting and educational workshops. Along with this, the community members are now trained to maintain and repair the wells, as most of them were involved heavily in the construction of the wells. Care for the wells has been completely handed over to the community, with the village chiefs allocating some of their community's budget to repairs as needed. Without a doubt, the long-term sustainability of the project will be ensured as local communities and governments are heavily engaged in the initiative. Furthermore, the choice of high-quality materials used in building these wells will ensure that the structures last for the next few years, in drought or in rain.

This project has been influential in helping me realize the impact of industrialization and globalization in rural communities. Despite initially believing that industrialization helps a community develop due to its provision of job security to citizens, increased living standards through easy access to products and transportation, I have now come to understand that industrialization and globalization come with a cost. For instance, while working in the village of Mekargalih, various members of the village came to speak to us about how the construction of factories have reduced the amount of clean water they receive in their pipes daily and were immensely grateful to the Air dan Terang initiative for having a place they could go to in order to attain their daily amount of clean water. Fishermen discussed the reduced amount of water cleanliness and thus, the reduction in the health of their fisheries. Children reminisced about the moments they played in clean water streams in the past. Environmental justice was absent for the individuals who needed it the most.

In today's fast paced generation, one often believes that rural communities are falling behind in their development when 70 percent of the population are living in cities. This fundamental realization transformed me into an individual who is passionate about advocating for the cause of clean water and sanitation solutions, especially in remote areas, where it is needed the most.

*"Privilege is never needing to sacrifice something important in order to survive. Clean water is a privilege we often take for granted, and this project came out of a reality no one is supposed to face." – Geraldine Santoso*

SECTION B

