



"I never thought I would farm fish in this river. It was too polluted. Now I make a living from it"



Many of the tightly packed houses that line the bank of the Brantas use the river as a rubbish dump and open sewer.

“What was needed was not just a change in people’s personal habits but a different attitude towards the river”

Suyatno lives in the Indonesian village of Jambangan on the River Brantas in Surabaya, East Java. For many years he has earned a small living selling ornamental fish at the local pet shop. Now, following the clean up of a tributary to this highly polluted river, he has become a full-time fish farmer, earning up to a million rupiahs* (US\$1,000) a year from selling silver catfish to local restaurants.

Suyatno’s change of fortune is not the only change you will find in Jambangan. Thanks to an experimental community regeneration scheme supported by Unilever Indonesia, the lives of thousands of people in four riverside villages are being, in some cases literally, turned around for the better.

The River Brantas rises in Mount Arjuno in East Java’s Malang district, meandering some 320 kilometres across the island before reaching the sea a few kilometres south of Jambangan. As it passes through Surabaya, the river becomes polluted

from local industries, but a far bigger problem is pollution from domestic waste, as the tightly packed houses lining the riverbank use the river as a rubbish dump and open sewer.

Unilever Indonesia has a factory in Surabaya at Rangkut, five kilometres from the river. The factory uses treated water from the Brantas to manufacture soap, toothpaste and shampoo, all of which require clean water to be used, so it is in Unilever’s commercial interest to improve water quality in Indonesia. It is also part of its social and environmental responsibility as a local corporate citizen. In 2001 Unilever Indonesia approached the Indonesian Environment Ministry offering support for its Clean River Programme, an offer that was gladly accepted.

Unilever recognised this wasn’t solely an environmental problem that could be solved simply by organising a clean up of the river. “To have a sustainable impact”, explains Unilever

Indonesia Project Manager Silvi Tirawaty, “a holistic solution was required involving everybody who lived along the river. What was needed was not just a change in people’s personal habits but a wholly different attitude towards the river, otherwise any short term improvements would soon disappear”.

“Owners are being encouraged to reverse the layout of their houses”

In consultation with the local government, Unilever agreed to ‘adopt’ four villages along a four kilometre stretch of the river and to work with the villagers and other stakeholders to come up with a solution that, if successful, could be applied in other communities. Rather than donating money, Unilever offered to provide



From left to right: Unilever Indonesia Project Manager Silvi Tirawaty and Field Project Officer Ristina Aprillia discussing progress with Mrs Winarsih, Head of the Environmental Laboratory at Surabaya University and Mrs Sriswati Abubakar, leader of the Jambangan Housewives’ Association.

management expertise, voluntary help and equipment, to encourage the villagers to develop and sustain a self-help approach.

It was decided to implement a phased approach so the lessons learned in one village could be applied to the others. The village chosen for the first phase is called Jambangan, the smallest of the four villages with a population of nearly 6,000 people. To make sure everyone with a stake in the river was involved and to create a sense of common ownership, a forum was set up in 2001 to develop and coordinate activities. Chaired

*Average GNI per capita in Indonesia is US\$710

by the head of the Jambangan sub-district, the Clean Brantas Forum includes representatives from the Brantas River Authority, the Agriculture Agency, Surabaya University, village leaders, environmental NGOs and Unilever Indonesia.



A small section of the riverbank where trees have been planted and river-facing houses have been built.

The project started with the University conducting a survey to scope out what was required. This highlighted the need to improve basic levels of communal sanitation, create a household waste management process and introduce a 'greening' programme to encourage villagers to take individual responsibility for the health and well-being of their village. Some of these projects had the potential to generate income, providing an added incentive for villagers to get involved.

To discourage the use of the river as a public toilet,



A villager emptying household waste into one of the 200 compost bins Unilever has distributed throughout Jambangan.

communal lavatories have been built or renovated in all four villages and at the local schools, where children are being taught about the importance of sanitary hygiene and keeping their community clean.

To support waste management efforts, Unilever has distributed 77 rubbish carts and nearly 2,000 rubbish bins. Villagers have agreed to



One of the 77 rubbish carts Unilever has donated to support Jambangan's rubbish recycling project.

segregate their rubbish into organic and non-organic waste. A central compost unit, with a shredder and incinerator, has been built, where the University and Unilever give training demonstrations on using organic compost and provide advice on selling non-organic waste that has a high resale value, such as cans, bottles, paper and plastics.

Houses along the river bank typically face away from the river, with their back doors overlooking, and in many cases overhanging, the river. Owners are being encouraged to reverse the layout of their houses so the fronts overlook the Brantas. This has the effect of making the river their front garden, discouraging the use of the river for waste disposal. To illustrate how attractive the riverbank can be made to look, a small section has been created where rubbish has

been cleared, river-facing houses and a riverside path have been built set back from the water front, and trees have been planted.

Local villagers and Unilever volunteers have helped to clear the bank and plant morinda fruit trees, or java noni trees as they are known locally. Unilever has donated 2,000 of these trees for planting in streets and

gardens throughout the village, as well as for greening the riverbank. The fruit from these trees are a popular ingredient in food and medicine and can be ground into a powder and sold for 5,000 rupiahs (US\$5) per 100 grams. (For comparison a 1kg bag of rice costs 3,000 rupiahs). The trees will take around four years to mature, at which time



Fruit from the java noni tree, which is prized for its culinary and medicinal properties, will provide a valuable source of income when the 2,000 trees donated by Unilever start to mature in a few years' time.

they will start to bear fruit all year round, providing a valuable source of income. Mrs Winarsih, Head of the Environmental Laboratory at Surabaya University, is the University's representative on the Brantas River Forum and an active member of the village housewives association, one of several community groups that coordinate non-organic rubbish collection and the planting of java noni trees. "Any revenues earned from this are shared among the housewives", says Mrs Winarsih. "At the moment people are making more money selling their rubbish but when the trees mature, this will provide a useful additional source of income".

One of the most dramatic early successes has been the restoration of the river canals that run through the village. Once a month the community turns out to desilt the water and clear away rubbish which, along with a donation from Unilever of fish nets, fish food and thousands of freshly spawned silver catfish, has enabled the introduction of fish farming on a commercial scale.

Suyatno is one of ten fish farmers in Jambangan and their unofficial leader. "The Clean Brantas project has made a big difference" he

says, "not just to me and the other farmers but to the whole village. If people can see fish growing in the fish nets they don't throw in their rubbish and the more fishermen there are, the more people there are with an interest in keeping the river clean."

These are still early days but already the benefits of this holistic approach are starting to show. Villagers are taking more care and more pride in their surroundings, the greening, waste management and income generating initiatives are starting to gather a life and momentum of their own, and there is a new sense of vitality and common purpose that was not there before.

The University is monitoring progress across a range of criteria, including water quality, air quality and public health. One of the key tests is the extent to which other companies can be persuaded to back similar partnership schemes in other villages. Early signs are promising. Already two other companies have decided to adopt villages and Unilever and the Indonesian government are talking to several more. But

"there is a new sense of vitality and common purpose"

the real test will come in a few years time when the villagers assume full responsibility for sustaining the momentum Unilever has helped to set in progress. Suyatno has no doubt the approach Unilever and its partners have taken is the right one. "People in the village are changing their minds about the river. They are taking more care not to throw rubbish away. All our lives have improved. And", he says, with only the slightest hint of self-interest, "people are eating a lot more fresh fish!"



Unilever Indonesia Field Officer Nural Fitriah Habibah, one of three full-time Unilever staff working on the Clean Brantas River project, with Mr Suharminto, Head of Technical Services at Surabaya Agriculture Agency's nursery in Jambangan. The nursery recently grew 2,000 java noni trees from seeds donated by Unilever that have been distributed to villagers. The nursery is now growing jasmine, a flower that is popular in Indonesia for weddings and funerals. The Agency plans to distribute these plants to villagers as the next phase in the greening process and to provide them with a new source of income.

Unilever believes that one of the most effective ways it can help to support sustainable development is by doing business in a socially aware and responsible manner, helping to create and share wealth, invest in local economies, develop people's skills and spread expertise across borders.

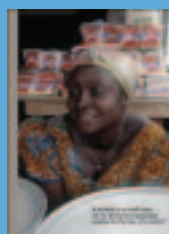
This is the second in a series of occasional articles that looks at how Unilever companies around the world are tackling global social and environmental concerns with local actions and by working in partnership with local, national and international agencies, governments and NGOs.

Unilever's partners in the Clean Brantas River Project are:

- East Java Regional Authority
- East Java Environmental Impact Management Agency (East Java BAPEDAL)
- East Java Regional Authority
- East Java Settlement Agency (Settlement Improvement Project)
- Ecoton (Wetland Conservation NGO)
- Jambangan Local Authority
- Jasa Tirta I (the authority responsible for the Brantas River)
- Local Community Coordination Bureau (Badan Koordinasi Masyarakat BKM)
- Local Security Committee (Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa LKMD)
- Ministry of Environment, Government of Indonesia
- Navy of Indonesia

- Sahabat Lingkungan (Friend of the Environment NGO)
- Surabaya Agriculture Agency
- Surabaya Environment Agency
- Surabaya Local Authority
- Surabaya State University (Unesa)
- The people of Jambangan, Karah, Kebonsari and Pagesangan villages
- Unilever Indonesia

The Clean Brantas River project has been developed in line with Unilever's Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM) principles, a set of principles developed in partnership with environmental charity Forum for the Future to help Unilever companies ensure that the water catchment projects they engage in are effective. The sustainable use of water is one of Unilever's three sustainability initiatives, alongside agriculture and fisheries.



If you would like to know more about Unilever's SWIM principles or our approach to social and environmental responsibility, please visit our website. Copies of previous articles in this series, our latest Social Review and Environmental Performance

Report and an overview of our approach, called *Global Challenges Local Actions*, can be read online or downloaded at www.unilever.com/enviromentsociety

We would like to hear from you. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about this publication or any other aspect of Unilever's environmental and social policies, please contact: csrcomment@unilever.com

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