

## SPANS GSM Success Story

### Indonesian KIDS Wheelchair, Training and Empowerment Project



**UCPWFH's Social Worker, Sri Lestari, with Sapto at his home**  
*-Photo credited to UCPWFH-*



**Sri Lestari, on a modified motor bike that she uses to visit clients**  
*-Photo credited to UCPWFH-*

When Sapto was rejected by an integrated school on grounds of his disability, his mother was devastated. Sapto wished to overcome his condition of cerebral palsy and learn at the pace of other children who had no disabilities, but it appeared his dreams were shattered.

Then Sapto and his mother met Sri Lestari, the Social Worker for United Cerebral Palsy Wheels for Humanity Indonesia (UCPWFH). Sri counseled Sapto's mother on Sapto's right to attend an integrated school, as well as the opportunities that a mainstream education could afford her son. With Sri's help and a UCPWFH children's wheelchair, Sapto was able to enroll at an integrated school and develop his full potential as a student.

As UCPWFH's Social Worker, Sri is the first point of contact for many recipients of UCPWFH's children's wheelchair project. In the past two and-a-half years of the USAID-funded project, Sri has helped provide nearly 3,000 wheelchairs and other mobility devices to Indonesians with disabilities. Her main tasks include visiting clients to collect information about their mobility needs, as well as visiting training partners and government social workers. However, beyond establishing clients' need for mobility devices, Sri is known for the personal connection she makes with each of the families she meets and the impact she makes in changing their perceptions of what people with disabilities can accomplish. This passion comes from her personal story of hope, rooted from assistance received from UCPWFH.

Fourteen years ago, when Sri was 23, she was injured in a motorcycle accident, resulting in a spinal cord injury. She grew up in a rural farming community, and with the loss of mobility, she spent the next decade mostly within the confines of her family's home, helping family members with basic tasks around the house.

In 2007, everything changed for Sri. She received a wheelchair from UCPWFH and a subsidized modified motorcycle from a local agency, Karina Kas. With her newfound mobility, she was able to get outside the house, volunteer, and eventually join UCPWFH in 2009.

Once very shy, Sri has now become a key part of the success of the program. Arriving at client houses on her own in her modified motorcycle, Sri sets the tone for the service that UCPWFH provides, creating a welcoming environment for families, who may fear the social stigma shown toward the disabled population throughout Indonesia.

Sometimes, Sri can be unorthodox in her approach. She once visited a young man who had suffered a spinal cord accident a year and a half before and had not left his bed since. She notoriously yelled at him to get up and do something with his life.

But her passion is palpable, and her commitment runs deep. Ask her what she does in her spare time, and she'll say she visits 'friends'. If you ask her who these friends are, she will explain that on her weekends she visits people who have recently been injured, to give them the empathy and encouragement that she needed when she went through her initial recovery.

Her old insecurities still surface occasionally, but with each step further from home, Sri continues to push boundaries and to expand her own sense of what she is capable of. Most recently, she made a long journey to the United States for an adaptive sports training sponsored by the US Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. Although she was exposed to a broad array of tools and facilities designed for people with disabilities, what impressed her most on her trip was not the battery-powered devices, but the way she was treated — no one stared.

One of her favorite moments was riding a public bus, which she was surprised to find had a special lift for her and her wheelchair. Rather than having to wait until everyone else had boarded and hope there would still be space for her, when Sri approached the bus she was told that she could take her place at the front of the line.

And she did.