

Kenya's Munyang'anyi Primary: The WASH-Friendly School

BACKGROUND

A Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Program introduced by APHIAplus Western Kenya has considerably reduced diarrheal cases among students at Munyang'anyi Primary School in Kenya's Bungoma County. The student body of 400 children previously suffered more than 50 cases of diarrhea every week, mainly attributed to poor sanitation and hygiene practices. As a result, absenteeism and poor academic performance were far too common. But today, WASH has significantly improved the children's health and school attendance.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WASH ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

The WASH project helped build two blocks of three-door, ventilated-improved pit (VIP) latrines with one specifically dedicated to female pupils. Handwashing facilities near the pit latrines added to the healthy, hygienic approach, along with lessons for both teachers and students on sanitation and hygiene. "We've learned effective methods of teaching pupils hygiene practices, including the proper way to wash their hands and maintain cleanliness after using latrines," said Phoebe Olesi, chairlady of the school's health club. "After the training we provided soap at handwashing points and emphasized on the importance washing hands with the soap after using latrines."

Before construction of the new latrines, students endured long queues, used nearby bushes, or waited until they got home. The situation was even worse for females during their monthly



A pupil at Munyang'anyi Primary School washes his hands at one of the tanks installed by the APHIAplus WASH project. (Photo: PATH/Rael Odengo)

periods; some would miss school for fear of long waits to change their sanitary towels.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Munyang'anyi Primary School is one of 39 schools in Western Kenya able to implement lifesaving WASH facilities and activities through support from the APHIAplus project, working in partnership with the School Management Committees (SMCs), the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health. To create a healthy learning environment, the project has educated more than 3,000 teachers to serve as 'Trainers of Trainers' (ToTs). These ToTs train students, who

become agents of change in promoting positive health practices both in school and at home. They share their WASH lessons not only with their peers, but also with their parents and siblings. WASH activities also are integrated into the schools' life skills education program so that construction of VIP latrines and handwashing facilities are implemented side-by-side with adolescent reproductive health education. In order to create a supportive environment in the community, as well as ownership, the project works with SMCs to mobilize local resources to construct the pit latrines. The local community, parents, and the SMCs provide in-kind support as well as labor, while the WASH project supplies building materials and water tanks.

ENSURING HEALTH TO HELP CHILDREN THRIVE

WASH may even help beyond its important impact on the students' and communities' health, with greater attendance making school officials optimistic about mock examination results later in the year. Mr. Wesangula, head teacher at Munyang'anyi, affirms that the WASH program has led to a spike in school attendance. "There is a drop in absenteeism and enrollment has increased from 181 to 495 students."

APHIAplus is a partnership between PATH, World Vision, Jhpiego, Broad Reach, and the Government of Kenya; funded by the US Agency for International Development.



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