

## Healthy Lives: Providing Safe Water and Hygiene through Schools

PSI is involved in school-based safe water and hygiene programs in over eight countries including Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Pakistan and Uganda. These programs are designed to mobilize school children to improve sustained behaviors around safe drinking water, hygiene and proper sanitation and include provisions for safe drinking water treatment at school, teacher training sessions, peer educator programs and take-home materials that enable students to encourage their families to treat drinking water at home.

Schools are important environments to initiate and promote healthy behaviors and practices among future generations. Programs largely target pupils around 9 to 4 years of age. At this age, children have the capability to understand information on safe water and basic hygiene related practices. At the same time, children are often care-takers of younger siblings and involved in the daily household chores including handling of drinking water.

PSI complements school-based programs with strong linkages to community and retail outlets as well as other community-based channels of information outside of the school to ensure sustained availability and access to safe water products and health communications around safe drinking water and hygiene messages.

### Uganda

A 2006 study supported by UNICEF, revealed that less than one in five primary schools met the standard of five liters of safe water per day per pupil in Uganda. In order to address this problem, PSI/Uganda provides safe drinking water in schools as a component of its safe water and hygiene program. Through UNICEF and Procter & Gamble (P&G) support, PSI has ensured that over 99 schools and 36,930 students are provided safe drinking water and communications about hygiene and sanitation. To date, 110,790 sachets have been distributed to the children as demonstration samples at the household level. Almost 200 community awareness events were also conducted at trading centers and health units during school holidays and messages were re-enforced through radio talk shows.

### Madagascar

In 2005, PSI/Madagascar, in collaboration with UNICEF, Aide et Action and other local NGOs, launched the Sekoly Sûr'Eau program in schools to provide safe water storage containers and *Sûr'Eau*, in addition to health education regarding the importance of safe water usage and good hygiene at school and at home. This program complemented the UNICEF "School friends of WASH" project which supports the building of infrastructure for improved sanitation and water access. The program has reached more than 120 schools and 4,000 students along with over 6,000 families that have been reached by complementary safe water and hygiene messages.



## :: Kenya

The school program in Kenya targets the priority regions with the highest diarrhea prevalence. In 2007, the program reached 87,767 students in 446 schools. Students are introduced to a safe water treatment, PUR, through a fun and engaging comic booklet and product demonstrations. Involvement by teachers, local school councils and head masters are instrumental to educate students on the linkage between poor hygiene, unsafe water and diarrhea. The programs provide teaching aids to selected teachers as well as educational booklets with free product samples that students can take home to their families. Supporting activities include media activities focused on regional radio programs. PSI also conducts small-scale distribution activities in the wider community to ensure product availability.

## :: Malawi

PSI/Malawi recently launched a school-based program targeting districts of Malawi that are the most prone to flooding, water contamination and diarrheal disease as well as vulnerable schools that do not have access to a protected water source. In Neno District, PSI is working in collaboration with World Vision International, an organization that already has programs in primary schools that promote life skills and other health behaviors to promote safe water and hygiene in 11 schools. A new nationwide initiative was launched in targeted schools that will reach an estimated 200,000 students. After an engaging classroom session, students are given an educational comic book and sample sachets of PUR to use with their families. PSI recently launched a new collaboration with Peace Corps Volunteers to develop "Madzi Masters" Safe Water Clubs in local schools. These clubs will promote point-of-use water treatment using *WaterGuard* safe water solution and *WaterGuard Wa Ufa*, and also good hygiene and proper use of pit latrines in schools.

## :: India

PSI/India undertook an integrated safe water and hygiene campaign which consisted of several components, including sahelis, community based women workers, group meetings, school lessons, public water testing and retail stalls. Each saheli was responsible for 260 households, visited over a period of two months. The saheli was to answer questions and provide information on household sanitation, handwashing and water purification. Further complementing this work were mahila bauthaks, women's group meetings. Twenty to thirty women gathered at a designated home to discuss specific messages related to water and sanitation. School lessons on handwashing and water treatment using *Safewat* were integrated into this program which encouraged children to become change agents in the household and reinforce the message of the local sahelis.

## :: Nepal

PSI/Nepal's WaterGuard Community School Champions Program is one of PSI/Nepal's behavior change strategies in support of the national community-based program being implemented to reach Nepal's rural poor with clean water health messages and products. BCC communicators from community-based organizations were trained to educate school children about safe drinking water and conduct demonstrations on the treatment of drinking water. In many houses in the villages of Nepal, not only did children begin to ask their parents if the water they drink every day is safe, but parents were proud that their children had learned such practical information at school.

## :: Ethiopia

PSI/Ethiopia developed a school based program in partnership with P&G, Save the Children, US and World Food Program to promote hygienic behaviors and home water treatment skills among young children in 55 schools. Initial results from the first 15 schools indicate positive results, including reports of lower absenteeism, higher school attendance rates and improved health among pupils. These programs provide clean water inside the schools while promoting hand washing, use of latrines and regular deworming of school children.