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MADAGASCAR

SUCCESS STORY

THE WASH-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

WASH principles put into practice at schools



Photo: C. Thompson/AED

Students washing hands using a tippy tap device at a WASH-friendly school in Isonora, Madagascar

Students and teachers at the “WASH-friendly” school located in Isonora south-central Madagascar are eager to show visitors the changes they’ve made at their school since learning about the importance of good water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices from USAID’s Hygiene Improvement Project (HIP).

New hand washing stations with tippy taps (a simple device made by hanging a water-filled plastic bottle with holes in the cap to act as a faucet) and soap are set up around the school yard and used regularly. Students have been taught the importance of washing their hands at appropriate times and have taken to this practice enthusiastically. “The students really like cleanliness,” remarks Madame Georgine, the school director.

At the beginning of each week, teachers review with all the students the three practices that make a school WASH-friendly: Using a washable latrine—the school has one; drinking water that has been purified—the school now uses Sur’Eau (chlorine) to treat water the students drink; and washing hands properly with soap. The students recite these three principles to visitors, while their school reflects how they are put into practice.

“Before we had WASH instruction, students were often sick with diarrhea,” comments Madame Brigitte, a teacher at Isonora. “Now the students aren’t sick and can study regularly.” Other teachers agree that absences from school have decreased since the students started washing hands with soap and drinking clean water.

HIP’s “WASH-friendly” goal is for students to practice the same sanitation they learn at school in their homes, helping to change the behavior of their families. HIP and its partners have set up WASH-friendly schools in four regions of Madagascar and are seeing positive results with many of these schools. Some schools report that students will not drink water at home unless it has been boiled, and some families have started treating water using SODIS, a new solar disinfectant method taught by HIP. It is these changes initiated by WASH-friendly schools that will bring better health to their communities.