



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

HIP HYGIENE IMPROVEMENT
PROJECT

SUCCESS STORY

CHURCHES EXPAND HYGIENE UPTAKE

Churches earn WASH-friendly label by adopting improved hygiene practices and educating parishioners



Photo: Shahbaz Fawbush (HIP)

A tippy-tap station with soap sits behind new improved latrines at a local church. A local scout (left) explains how to use the hand washing station and keeps the taps filled.

When a political crisis hit in early 2009, the U.S. Government stopped providing direct foreign assistance to the Madagascar government. As a result, the USAID-funded Hygiene Improvement Project (HIP) shifted its WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) promotion efforts away from government-run institutions such as schools and health clinics. Among the newest targets of its WASH-friendly initiative were churches.

To qualify as WASH-friendly, a church is required to have basic sanitation infrastructure—toilets/latrines, the means for washing hands with soap, and available clean drinking water—and to carry out WASH education for church members and for the surrounding community.

HIP staff members have been spearheading this approach by introducing the WASH-friendly concept to their own respective churches. WASH training is also being offered to various religious entities such as the Dorcas, an association of church-going women, the scouts, and Sunday school teachers. These HIP trainees are then encouraged to introduce WASH-friendly practices to their own churches.

Mr. Sombiniaina is in charge of water and sanitation marketing at HIP. He is also a deacon at his local church. With his help his church has agreed to become WASH-friendly and is now well on its ways to meeting the criteria.

His church has built new improved latrines to replace its old ones. A hand-washing station with tippy taps and soap was installed as were two treated drinking water stations. Local scouts established a station near the latrines and tippy taps where they often talk to users of the latrines and remind them to wash their hands with soap. They also distribute WASH literature.

These improvements stand in sharp contrast to the past; the church's old latrines were smelly, and there was only one hand washing tap for the whole church. Mrs. Vohangy, a deaconess and Sunday school teacher at this church, says, "Before people used to touch the tap to wash their hands and it was dirty; the tippy taps are better because you don't touch them and they

Photo: Shahbaz Fawbush (HIP)



Scouts staff a table in front of newly built improved latrines with tippy taps (right), and remind people to wash hands and distribute out WASH literature at a local church.

are clean. Also the new latrines are ventilated so they are dry and they don't smell."

Mr. Haja, pastor in training at the church, notes a change in people's behavior. "Prior to this people didn't have the habit of washing their hands after going to the toilet. Now everyone washes their hands," he says with visible relief.

In March 2010 Mr. Sombiniaina's church hosted a regional meeting for over 1,000 representatives of 63 churches. The visitors experienced firsthand the hygiene improvements at the church and asked for information on

starting a similar program at their own churches.

Mr. Jose, a regional coordinator for HIP, says, "No one has ever involved churches in this manner in Madagascar. This is a first." Religion plays a great role in the social fabric of life in Madagascar, and as the approach of integrating WASH messages into religious institutions continues to evolve and mature it has the potential to play a considerable role in helping Madagascar achieve its WASH objectives.



Photo: Shahbaz Fawbush (HIP)

Deacon Valihery introduces hand washing principles to Sunday school children with the help of a puppet.