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HIP HYGIENE IMPROVEMENT
PROJECT

SUCCESS STORY

INNOVATIVE HYGIENE PARTNERSHIPS

Transforming Towns into Cleaner Places One Bloc Sanitaire at a Time



[Photo: Shahbaz Fawbush (HIP)]

The USAID Hygiene Improvement Project (HIP) is helping to transform the Commune (local district) of Mahitsy into a cleaner, healthier place. After receiving the support of the mayor of Mahitsy, HIP introduced several new concepts to help the district improve its level of hygiene and sanitation: WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene)-friendly schools, WASH-friendly community health centers, and the “*Approche Trois P*” (public-private partnership). HIP also held numerous training and orientation workshops for local community health workers about the three main WASH messages: safe storage and treatment of drinking water, safe feces disposal, and hand, washing with soap. The secretary-general of the commune, Niaina, said “HIP taught us things we didn’t know. Now we have the knowledge and means to change, and the follow up from HIP to make it happen.”

The centerpiece and most prominently visible aspect of this transformation is the newly renovated *bloc sanitaire*, a public toilet facility situated at the heart of Mahitsy, between the busy market and regional bus station. For many years Mahitsy residents and the numerous visitors to the regional market had no public toilet facilities. With funds from another donor, the commune built its first bloc sanitaire. Unfortunately the facility was poorly built and poorly managed, resulting in an unsanitary facility that was not heavily used and did not generate any revenue for the commune. HIP intervened and proposed a plan to renovate the bloc and improve its management by using the public-private partnership approach.

The commune agreed to pay 20 percent of the cost to renovate and expand the bloc sanitaire from four to six toilets, add two showers, and one external water tap. The management of the bloc was opened up to community bids. Out of five bids the most attractive came from a local scouts committee, which already had previous WASH training from HIP. As part of the arrangement, the scouts agreed to pay the commune 400,000 Ariary (\$200) per month, perform a long term study of usage, and provide WASH training to the inhabitants of all the fokontany (subdivisions) of the commune. Local scouts Santatra and



[Photos: Shaahbaz Fawbush (HIP)]



Tsilavina now manage the newly renovated bloc. “This is win-win for us. We are students in management, and managing the bloc is an opportunity to serve the community and to do a management project for our studies.”

The sum of 400,000 Ariary represents a considerable income for the commune. With HIP’s assistance the commune decided to create a special hygiene and sanitation fund with this income. The incoming funds are now earmarked for further hygiene and sanitation projects within the commune. This includes the maintenance of the existing bloc sanitaire and within two years the construction of new facilities to serve the needs of the 11,000 people that frequent the one in Mahitsy.

What do users make of the renovated bloc sanitaire? “It is better to have a toilet [than not to have one],” says one user. Fitiavana, a young girl who studies at a private school in Mahitsy, prefers to pay a fee and use the bloc sanitaire rather than use the latrines at her school. “It is cleaner here,” she said.

Inside and out the improvements made to this bloc sanitaire in both appearance and management are making this a heavily used facility and viable business model thanks to HIP support.