



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

HIP HYGIENE IMPROVEMENT
PROJECT

SUCCESS STORY

CHANGING THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

Overcoming Cost Concerns, Communities Adopt HIP-Promoted Improved Sanitation Choices and Reap Health Benefits



Photo: Shahbaz Fawbush (HIP)

Happy to show off his new improved latrine, this boy from Ambohibary does not remember a time when most local children were sick regularly with diarrhea.

“I don’t remember ever being ill [with diarrhea],” says young Nandrianina, a child in the village of Ambohibary. This sentiment was echoed by many other children in the village.

In sharp contrast to this, Mr. Eme, local resident and mason, says that in the past, “We used to take our kids to the hospital every day because they were sick all the time.”

What has led to such a change in the fortunes of the children and people of Ambohibary?

Travelling through rural Madagascar it is easy to identify which communities do or do not have latrines. Those that do can be easily identified by the small structures built near the iconic Malagasy homes. Unfortunately, many communities around Madagascar are still marked by the conspicuous absence of latrines. A lack of education and a lack of exposure (people may have never seen a latrine before) are two principle barriers to rural people building and using latrines.

In communities where the USAID Hygiene Improvement Project (HIP) has been active—either through participation in the 2008 Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) to build latrines or implementation of Community-Led Total Sanitation, a grassroots approach to sanitation—one can see a significant increase in the adoption of latrines, indicated by the small but quite visible structures popping up adjacent to village homes.

Some communities initially balked at the idea of building latrines for themselves. The *fokontany* (a rural subdistrict) of Ambohibary is one such case. Despite participating in the RRI, the villagers were reluctant to build because they were concerned with cost. HIP organized a special focus group meeting with the participation of the locals to explore the barriers in the community. Dr. Michele Odile, program director for HIP in Madagascar, drew on her experience to challenge the community members saying, “How long will you remain in these dirty conditions? What will you do for the health and future of your children?”

Photo: Shahbaz Fawbush (HIP)



"Thanks to the latrines the air is cleaner and we don't get sick so often," says Mr. Daniel, seen using a tippy tap outside of his new latrine in the Hamlet of Sahalava, Amoron'i Mania Region.

HIP helped win over the support of the fokontany president who became instrumental in organizing the community of Ambohibary to build improved latrines. All of the houses now have one, and the community's commitment to improved sanitation opened the doors to additional funding from another organization for new clean water infrastructure.

Building the latrines was expensive for the villagers. They sold livestock or did extra work to raise the money needed for the materials. Some further economized on the cost of construction by using local materials such as mud and straw. However, the benefits to the villagers for their initial investment have been more than repaid over time. Now the people of Ambohibary have a clean community and also safe

water to drink. As a result, when you ask the children of this village when was the last time they had diarrhea, they can't remember. "I remember having a headache," was the most one child could recall.

Four other communities with full latrine coverage thanks to HIP's intervention were visited for this story, and none of the children interviewed could remember having diarrhea. A reduction in sickness has been the main outcome, but other benefits were cited as well: "Now we can eat the fruits that grow around our homes without fear of getting sick," says Mr. Daniel of the hamlet of Sahalava.

"We used to have to buy a lot of medicines before [to treat diarrhea] and pay for the hospital. With the money we save we can now buy better food for ourselves," said Mr. Justin of the village of Andranomiadiloaha.



Photo: Shahbaz Fawbush (HIP)

In front of this Malagasy house stands a latrine, an increasingly familiar site in the rural areas of Madagascar because of HIP promotion efforts.