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SUCCESS STORY

A TIPPY TAP REVOLUTION

Hand Washing Devices Save Water and Bring Hygiene within Reach for PLWHA



Photo: R. Berry (AED)

A home-based care worker demonstrates hand washing technique using a tippy tap with built-in soap-on-a-rope.

Peeking through the bushes in the corner of the compound, a water bottle fitted with a straw hangs from a tree next to a latrine. “We use this to wash our hands. When we leave the latrine it reminds us to wash our hands,” said Fantaye Dessie, 36, an HIV-positive resident of the compound. Tippy taps, water saving hand washing devices, were not used in communities in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, a few months ago. But after training from the USAID Hygiene Improvement Project on water, sanitation, and hygiene, outreach workers from three Ethiopian NGOs in the Amhara Region learned how to make tippy taps and shared this knowledge with their clients—people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

During the training, participants coined local Amharic terms for the tippy tap. These included *Woder-Yelesh* (extraordinary), *Asnakech* (cool), *Lakech* (excess), and *Kotabi* (water saver). But the most popular term was *Jog-Lemine* (Why use a jug?).

Now tippy taps are becoming more common. One organization said that since the training, 80 percent of their clients have constructed a tippy tap made of a water bottle and a straw. When the top of the bottle is closed, a vacuum prevents the water from pouring out of the straw, but when the top is opened, the water begins to flow. In addition to teaching tippy tap construction, outreach workers for home-based care demonstrate proper hand washing techniques—rubbing hands vigorously with soap or ash and then rinsing the loosened germs and dirt with water from the tap.

Soap is an inexpensive commodity—approximately 23 cents for a small bar—yet it is beyond the reach of the poorest community members. “In our training we learned that we can use ash or sand instead of soap, and I tell my beneficiaries that they can use ash if they don’t have soap,” noted Fasika, a home-based care worker.

Because these trained home-based care and support organizations regularly visit households with HIV-positive members, some families fear that construction of a tippy tap would identify them as HIV-positive. “We have a plan to overcome this fear of stigma,” said Sr. Almaz Abebe, executive director of NGO Tesfagoh (Dawn of Hope). “When we bring the community together, we will show everyone the benefits of a tippy tap and teach them how to make one. We think this will encourage even more people to adopt this practice.”



[Photo: E. Seumo(AED)]

In Ethiopia, where access to water is limited, a tippy tap allows all family members to practice hand washing at critical times while drawing water from the community tap only once. These critical times for hand washing are after using a latrine or cleaning a child’s bottom, before cooking and before eating or feeding someone. One resident said that her landlord asked her to use less water because he pays the water bill. “Once I got a tippy tap I told my landlord that I was saving water and he was happy. The tippy tap helps us a lot. It saves water and is really simple to construct.”

Home-based care workers encourage their clients to place the easy to build tippy taps near latrines and kitchens to encourage hand washing at critical times.

For additional information: www.hip.watsan.net