

SNAPSHOT

WASH Champions Saving Lives with Soap and Water;



Caroline shows a young client how to wash his hands as the mother looks on.

‘Here I personally prepare the solution and give it to the child and monitor them for them for an hour then I show the mother how to give the remaining solutions at home and how to improve hygiene through proper washing and waste disposal’ said Caroline

On a typical day in Kenya, 73 children lose their lives to diarrhea related complications (KDHS 2014) Although, preventable and treatable, diarrhea remains the second lead cause of death for children Under Five in developing countries- accounting for one out of four child deaths-rates higher than AIDs, Measles and Malaria combined. (WHO 2013)

To reverse these negative trends largely contributed by unsafe drinking water and unhygienic household and environmental waste disposal –USAID Kenya and East Africa Afya Jijini program works with the Ministry of Health interventions have focused on revitalizing WASH services at public health facilities.

An outstanding achievement to this support emanates from setting up of Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) corner at various health facilities in Nairobi County. The program trained 28 Facility based WASH advocates –dubbed as WASH Champions-to manage ORT corners at facilities. The WASH champions who were trained on diarrhea management - work together with the Health facility administrators and Community health volunteers (CHVs) to mobilize and educate the community on hand washing, accelerating the County’s goal of reducing under five deaths by preventable illnesses.

Caroline Adhiambo-A WASH Champion stationed at the Mathare Health Center-has witnessed firsthand the lifesaving effects of ORT corners.

‘Parents here assume it is normal for a child to diarrhea because it is a common phenomenon in the informal settlements.’ Said Caroline. ‘But I tell them it’s as a result of their unhygienic lifestyle. Many parents bring in their children when they are severely dehydrated, thinking they have some bad sickness. When they get here the doctors refer them to the ORT corner where I give them Oral rehydration solution and within hours the children feel okay.’

After administering the ORS solution, Caroline then educates the mother on how to give the additional ORS solutions and zinc tablets at home. She then physically demonstrates how to properly wash hands with Soap. All this information from an Afya Jijini sponsored Infection

‘On a typical day, I come in the morning and give health talks on proper sanitation and hand washing to mothers awaiting to be called in for services at the waiting bay.’ Explained Caroline ‘They then go in to see the doctor

who then refers the severely dehydrated cases to the ORT corner. Here I personally prepare the solution and give it to the child and monitor them for them for an hour then I show the mother how to give the solutions and how to improve hygiene through proper washing and waste disposal. One of the many residents who appreciate Caroline's WASH Services is Belinda Anyango. Until three months ago, the mother of two was used to her children aged 3 years and 9 months having regular bouts of diarrhea.

'I never went to hospital to treat the previous infections as most the time it would clear after a few days.' Said Belinda. 'I thought it was a normal thing until last month when the situation with my 3 year old got worse. Fearing he could die I rushed to the health Center for medical attention-there I was introduced to Caroline. She taught me proper hygienic practices including hand washing and my children have not had an attack in three months.'

Caroline also manages the ORT register and links up with WASH community Health Volunteers to mobilize and follow-up on clients in the community. She has also proved to be a resource to Mathare Health Center as she coordinate infection prevention practices through educational job aids and equipment for medical waste disposal. She also eases up the medical personnel shortage at the health Center while assisting in various service points.

Afya Jijini WASH interventions have accelerated implementation of Urban Community Led total sanitation (UCLTS) methodology in communities currently experiencing open defecation and community clean up, Health actions days and extending hand washing practices to Early Child Development centers (ECDs) through community health volunteers.