

Commemorating the Global Handwashing Day in Uganda: Activities in two Urban Poor Schools in Kampala – by Kiyimba James (Communication and Documentation officer WaterAid)



Every pupil present had to learn how to use a tippy taps while washing hand with soap

To the pupils of Old Mulago and St. Bernadette Primary Schools, 15th October 2009 was not like any other ordinary school day- it was Global Handwashing Day. A day designated by the United Nations to raise greater awareness to the fact that washing hands with soap at critical times, particularly after using a toilet or a pit latrine (as is the case in most parts of Uganda) and before eating or feeding a child, has far-reaching positive effects in terms of child survival, development and poverty reduction. Normal school lessons were cut short, and tents erected in Old Mulago Primary School compound served as a meeting point for the event. Early morning pupils

from St. Bernadette Primary School which is located in the middle of the Lower Nsooba Slums of Kawempe Division –Kampala City, trekked the journey of about 1 km jumping over garbage heaps and uncovered drainage channels carrying their musical instruments on their head to reach the venue where the main events of the day were to be staged.

By 9:00am the spirits at the venue were high, pupils from different schools including teachers and community members had filled all the tents ready to be entertained and learn more about the benefits of washing hands with soap through

music, dance and drama to be staged by the school choirs of both schools.

Under the theme “Clean hands save lives,” WaterAid together with the Ministry of Education and Sports and other Partners on the National Handwashing Steering Committee, had organised a series of school-focused events including music, dance and drama, poster drawing competition and construction of tippy taps in a number of schools country wide. This story is limited to activities that took place in Old Mulago and St. Bernadette Primary Schools which are found in informal settlements of Kawempe, an administrative division of Kampala City.

Why in Kawempe Slums and Focus on School Children

Kawempe Division is infamous for poor hygiene and sanitation practices; here many residents suffer from poor garbage management, and have limited access to toilets, which leads them to resort to defecating in nylon bags which are then thrown into rubbish pits, thus generating the phrase ‘flying toilets.’ In such a scenario children are always the losers, finding themselves at the lowest ebb of life due to ill health leading to poor performance in class.

This year the focus is on schools because these are the places where children spend most of their time learning lifelong skills. The practice of handwashing with soap keeps many children in schools by removing deadly germs from their hands. When children learn about

handwashing skills at a tender age, they not only grow up with the habit of washing hands at critical times but they also become agents of change by passing on the message to fellow children, parents and guardians.



Music Dance and Drama

Children through music, dance and drama sensitised fellow pupils and community members present on the benefits of washing hands with soap especially at critical times.

Instead of scheduling speech after speech delivered by health authorities on technical issues which at times have less meaning to local communities, we decided to use music, dance and drama to convey the benefits of handwashing. The school choirs of Old Mulago and St. Bernadette Primary Schools entertained the guests with songs loaded with inspiring messages emphasising the benefits of handwashing with soap especially at the critical times of after using a latrine, before feeding a child or before eating. The music, dance and drama performances from the choirs were not only informative but entertaining making guests laugh endlessly to the extent of reaching

their pockets for money to thank the children for bringing home the handwashing information.

Washing Hands using Tippy Taps Demonstrations



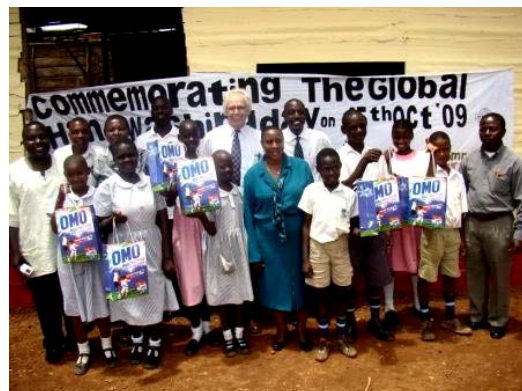
A pupil of Old Mulago Primary School is excited to learn washing hands with soap on the newly constructed tippy



The guest of honour Mrs. Julian Kyomuhangi -the Assistant Commissioner for Environmental Health - Ministry of Health demonstrating how a tippy tap

Members of the school Health Clubs from the two schools were taught how to construct tippy taps as a way of sustaining the efforts on return to their schools and homes. At Old Mulago PS, six tippy taps were constructed, and more than four hundred pupils present each had an opportunity to wash his/her hands with soap using the newly constructed tippy taps. Thereafter every child was given a piece of Lifebuoy soap to take home and practice what she/he has learnt, thereby becoming ambassadors of handwashing in their respective homes.

Healthy Nation Drawing Competition



Above 4 winners of the drawing competition from each school each received a health pack full of Unilever Products including Lifebuoy soap. Below, sample pictures drawn by pupils.



Pupils from both schools participated in a 'Healthy Nation Drawing Competition' in the age category of 6-11 years. It was in Kawempe that the national poster drawing competition was open to all the 13,000 Ugandan primary schools was launched. The drawing competitions are motivated by the fact that children learn better through participation in activities - drawing competitions are a great way of educating children to spread the handwashing messages. The best four entrants from each school received a health pack of soap from Unilever, the manufacturer of Lifebuoy soap. Country wide the best two entries will have an opportunity to travel to the United Nations headquarters in Geneva to wash hands with children from other countries.

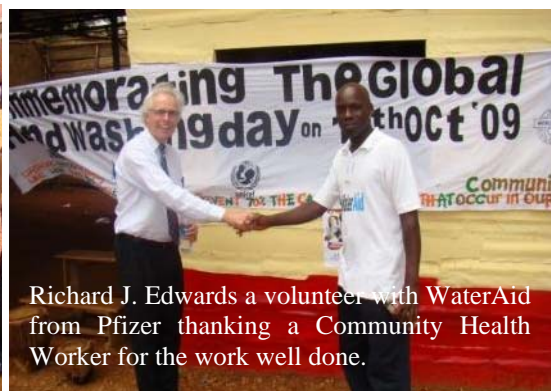
Media Coverage

Both the print and electronic media covered the day's activities thereby creating nationwide awareness that the mere act of washing hands with soap at critical times saves lives. Posters highlighting the importance of the day were printed and circulated to a number of schools country wide, and a press release was also printed in the most popular English-language newspapers in the country (i.e. New Vision and Daily Monitor), and highlights of the day were aired on the local and prime time news bulletin of 8 radio stations and 3 national television channels.

By 2:00pm the Global Handwashing Day programme in the two schools came to an end, ushering in a new beginning for concrete action to stimulate behaviour change in favour of handwashing with soap at critical times in all schools and families as a remedy to ill health leading to poor performance in class and poverty in many households in Uganda.



Media interviewing the guest of honour



Richard J. Edwards a volunteer with WaterAid from Pfizer thanking a Community Health Worker for the work well done.



Joseph Semmanda-Water Aid Urban Program Officer demonstrating how a tippy tap works



All pupils had an opportunity to wash hands with soap using a tippy tap



Community Based Health worker with the guest of honour