

Water and Health for Deou

Deou is a poor and isolated region in Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries. The area suffers a severe water shortage in the dry season as wells dry up, cattle and crops die and women and children travel long distances for enough water to survive. Health is threatened by lack of clean water and improper sanitation and hygiene practices, and diarrhoeal disease is rampant.

The Tucson based non profit, the Watershed Management Group (WMG), worked with Deou and a local partner NGO to teach farmers how to capture rainwater and recharge their aquifer to provide water during the dry season. WMG also put on a sanitation and hygiene campaign with special emphasis on children. The overall goal of the project was to increase water availability and to reduce health issues related to water borne diseases and improper sanitation practices, with special emphasis on increasing hand washing with soap. This report summarizes the sanitation campaign.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

With about 15,000 people, the semi-nomadic community of Deou has few toilets and practices open defecation. Though hand washing is practised, it is rarely done with soap and not always at the appropriate times such as after defecation. Water quality is poor and this is exasperated by poor water handling with cattle often sharing human drinking water containers. WMG worked to address this situation through the following interventions:

SCHOOL SANITATION CAMPAIGN

Working with teachers, WMG developed a daily sanitation program that included the use of posters, discussion groups, contests, role plays, art and craft activities and songs to educate and motivate children 8 to 12 year olds about the link between health and hygiene. Glogerm was used to demonstrate the microscopic nature of germs, their easy transmission and how water alone cannot remove them.

TIPPY TAP AND HAND-WASHING WORKSHOPS



Illustration by
Linda Parker

The tippy tap is a low tech extremely cost effective device that allows for hygienic, low water use hand washing. WMG used the tippy tap to promote hand washing with soap in Deou. This intervention was a very popular one with both children and adults as well as the local partner NGO. The tippy tap will be introduced to 32 adjacent villages through local midwives of their own initiative.

TOILET WORKSHOPS

WMG put on composting toilet workshops demonstrating the health and social benefits of toilet use as well as the economic benefits of the composted manure. The toilets are easy to construct and two toilets were built for demonstration purposes.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE FAIR

WMG held a fete highlighting several sanitation themes including proper water handling techniques, low cost sand filters, tippy taps and hand washing demonstrations for about 250 villagers. Students from the local school brought in their Glogerm coloring sheets to share their learnings with the adults. The event culminated in a hygiene play put on by the local theatre troupe, with actors then using Glogerm to illustrate the importance of hand washing.

CONCLUSIONS

While changing attitudes and behavior towards hygiene is a long term process, this six week trip went a long way to towards starting this process. With partner NGO staff and local health workers now equipped with skills and techniques to conduct their own health campaigns, WMG is confident that this project can benefit public health in Deou. WMG is grateful to Glogerm for the donation of its demonstration kits and for helping to make a difference.



Clockwise from upper left:

A young girl colors in a Glogerm coloring sheet related to hand washing to put up at the health fair;

School children race to build the best tippy tap in the shortest time during a competition;

The newly elected Grade 5 'health minister' checks his classmates' hands to ensure that their nails are short and clean;

Using Glogerm gel with a blacklight to during an awareness activity on germs;

Glogerm gel and powder were useful during the school sanitation campaign.

WMG works on uplifting rural communities through watershed activities such as rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharging and through increasing access to improved water and sanitation services. See www.watershedmg.org for more information.