



What is the USAID/WASHplus Benin Urban Hygiene Improvement Program?

Benin, like most African countries, is experiencing rapid urban growth, and along with it the burgeoning of unplanned neighborhoods that receive no basic municipal or social services. Although a number of WASH programs operate in Benin's urban areas, few focus on these peri-urban zones where immigrants from the interior or even neighboring countries live in crowded and unsanitary conditions. Children pay the greatest price in health consequences of these conditions. Mindful of these pressing needs, USAID's WASHplus project is carrying out a pilot hygiene improvement program in two of Cotonou's most neglected peri-urban neighborhoods, Agbato and Enagnon. The program focuses primarily on handwashing with soap and safe household drinking water. Poor access to sanitation is being addressed through a trial of community-led total sanitation adapted to peri-urban conditions.

WASH Conditions in Peri-Urban Neighborhoods of Benin

The baseline survey carried out at program inception revealed that:

- Most households understand the importance of handwashing with soap at critical moments, but very few actually practice it.
- Few households have actual handwashing stations.
- While 90 percent of households reported using public tap water for drinking, the transportation and storage of this water compromises its quality.
- Only 6 percent of households treat their drinking water.
- More than 31 percent of inhabitants defecate in inappropriate places (garbage dumps, latrines on stilts over lagoons) because they have no access to toilets.
- Reasons for lack of access to latrines include: high construction costs (67.7 percent), soft/loose soil (37 percent), high water table (26 percent), households rent their property rather than own (24 percent).



Community outreach workers (relais communautaires) from implementing partner ABMS/PSI learn how to make a tippy tap for handwashing at a WASHplus training in Enagnon.

In Benin's peri-urban neighborhoods few households have handwashing stations, proper latrines, or clean water. WASHplus is piloting a hygiene improvement program to reduce household vulnerability to diarrhea and cholera and support municipal agencies responsible for urban WASH to improve health and quality of life in these communities.





Mothers and their children in Agbato learn proper handwashing techniques from community outreach workers trained by WASHplus implementing partner ABMS/PSI.

USAID/WASHplus Program Goal

WASHplus aims to reduce household vulnerability to diarrheal diseases and cholera in two peri-urban zones of Cotonou by carrying out a sustainable and replicable pilot program for hygiene improvement (handwashing) and treatment of drinking water, and by capturing and sharing lessons learned with the municipal agencies responsible for providing basic WASH services to urban residents.

Target Groups and Beneficiaries

WASHplus targets mothers and caretakers of children under 5 to reduce their vulnerability to diarrheal disease and cholera. Schools and health centers are also included. The actions of the WASHplus program are intended to contribute to the reduction in overall morbidity of children under 5 living in these peri-urban zones.

Accomplishments to Date

- Conducting a baseline survey of WASH conditions and current practices in households in Cotonou, Abomey Calavi, and Porto Novo: http://www.washplus.org/sites/default/files/benin_baseline2015.pdf

- Performing a situational analysis of the two target neighborhoods to better understand current WASH-related attitudes, beliefs and practices, needs and aspirations
- Hiring and training a cadre of community outreach workers with local organization ABMS/PSI to conduct interpersonal communication on hygiene themes
- Designing and implementing a social marketing and behavior change communication campaign, including household visits, demonstrations, programs with community groups (e.g., women's cooperatives), sessions for mothers at under-5 clinics, and video-mobile sessions in the two communities
- Encouraging children to be agents of change in their households through school-based programs such as a WASH-Friendly School contest and mural art showing the benefits of improved hygiene and water treatment practices

Planned Activities

WASHplus is engaged in a lessons learned process that will offer guidance to government and NGO WASH sector actors embarking on actions to improve conditions in peri-urban neighborhoods. WASHplus will also conduct a post-implementation study to quantify the effects of the pilot program.

As a finale to the pilot, WASHplus will invite multiple government and NGO stakeholders to share experiences and lessons learned, highlighting the conditions in these peri-urban zones and inspiring possible actions to positively affect the dire WASH conditions and health consequences faced by the residents.



"Good Mama" banners promoting three key hygiene practices are displayed during community mobilization events during Global Handwashing Day.

About WASHplus

The WASHplus project supports healthy households and communities by creating and delivering interventions that lead to improvements in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and household air pollution (HAP). This multi-year project (2010-2016), funded through USAID's Bureau for Global Health and led by FHI 360 in partnership with CARE and Winrock International, uses at-scale programming approaches to reduce diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections, the two top killers of children under age 5 globally.

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