

# Water and Sanitation Newsletter

## SPECIAL ISSUE

## HAND WASHING DAY



### THE D DAY

Thousands of children mobilized on October 15 to promote hand washing as the cost-effective strategy to reduce child deaths.

### INVESTING IN WATSAN

Much has been achieved in the water, hygiene and sanitation but more funds are required to increase access to quality services.

### WHAT WE DO

A look into UNICEF priority actions in Water, Hygiene and Sanitation during the past two years in Cote d'Ivoire.

## Hand washing Day mobilized communities to reduce infant deaths in Cote d'Ivoire

The day heightened community support against A Flu H1N1 and water-related diseases

Hand washing day was marked by a series of activities organized by the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene with the support of UNICEF.

This year were mobilized more than 20 thousand children to master the techniques involved in hand washing with soap to prevent illnesses and deaths due to water-related diseases in cost-effective way. The Public Hygiene directorate of the Ministry of Health with the support of

UNICEF trained all actors involved in the education and catering sectors in addition to communication professionals to reinforce their knowledge on the relation between hand washing and water-related diseases and A flu H1 N1. Street caterers were particularly targeted because they sell food to children around schools where there are no facilities for children to wash their hands with soap. Hand washing Day messages including on A flu prevention were disseminated through

special programmes broadcast on community radios. The telephone company MTN supported the hand washing campaign by sending SMS messages on hand washing and A flue to half a million subscribers. UNICEF helped in organizing a public exhibition on hand washing techniques and on new technological devices for hand washing with soap.



## Motivating for change of hand washing practices

More than twenty thousand children who mastered the techniques of hand washing with soap are now replicating the life saving practice in their communities thus preventing more children from dying before they reach the age of five.

UNICEF Representative and Minister of Health during Hand Washing Day.

The Minister of Health set the tone for the celebration this year noting that children, while they are facilitating “vectors” of diseases such as A flu H1N1 and waterborne diseases they are also tremendous health social mobilizers who can properly spread the right prevention messages to their communities and among peers.

However children need help to follow recommended hygiene practices. Major constraints hold back the regular practice of hand washing with soap in Cote d’Ivoire. “ The Government must eliminate these constraints, said Minister of Health, and Public Hygiene. We should devise a rehabilitation plan for the creation of water points in all of Cote d’Ivoire’s schools for this scheme were putting in place becomes a reality throughout the country.”

“When children take up this habit when they are still toddlers we can save more lives than any individual vaccine or medical intervention, added the minister”

In Cote d’Ivoire More than eight million people – 43 percent of the population – lack appropriate sanitation facilities. Over four million people use unsafe drinking water sources, especially in rural areas. The Water and Sanitation sector in Côte d’Ivoire faces two major problems:

- (i) The difficulty for many communities to access safe drinking water in sufficient quantities and (ii) the limited access to sewage infrastructures and latrines, and difficulties in discharging household refuse in urban centres.

The “3.5 million children in the world who die before the age of five could be prevented if all children practiced hand washing with soap” said UNICEF Representative, Maarit Hirvonen. The method is cheap and can also stop the spread of A flu H1N1 when combined with good coughing practices with the proper use of a handkerchief”, she added.

Maarit Hirvonen called upon children to become “powerful change agents at home in schools and in communities to encourage people to wash their hands with soap.”





## Children at the center of the hand washing campaign

More than 20 thousand children mastered the techniques of hand washing with soap are now replicating the life saving practice into their communities and prevent more children from dying before they reach the age of five.

Many techniques were demonstrated during the day to help children understand the proper way of washing hands.

Colombe is a student who goes to primary school at the Cocody East, where the hand washing Day launching ceremony took place. She is very familiar with the hand washing techniques used and knows why it is important to practice this simple behavior. "Today is hand washing Day. They talk to us about hand washing because otherwise we can have many kinds of diseases like cholera, typhoid and fever", she said.

Colombe lives in the Cocody East neighborhood since she was two years old she said that "on Fridays at the end of the day the teacher sometimes asks us to remove the garbage and after which we are given water to wash our hands."

Clarisse Serebe from the same school in Cocody, explained "it is important to wash hands before eating and after defecating.

But while there is water in the school, some children, when they go to the toilet they forget to wash hands."

As for Abdoul Dezousa, his strategy when there is no water in the school is to go to a house in the neighborhood next to the school." There is a woman who lives right next door. She has soap, so before we eat we go and wash our hands. I take the soap and I wash my hands."

Nevertheless "while hand washing is a simple practice, it is still not widely practiced and not always easy to promote," said UNICEF Representative.

The Minister of Education representative at the Hand washing day said "schools are the ideal place to promote behavior change because of the students' young age " and added that he hoped that adults would learn from children." Adults should remember for example, during funerals, not to wash hands in the same bucket. "We can be hundred people, when we come back from the cemetery and we all

wash hands in the same bucket". He said that he observed the same attitude in the restaurants, where water is poured into one bucket and all guests who come to eat at the restaurant wash their hands in the same bucket. I hope we will change our habits," he added





## More investments are needed to improve the availability of water, sanitation and hygiene services in Cote d'Ivoire

Over the last twenty years investments in water and sanitation in Cote d'Ivoire have not followed the increasing trend of the population. Existing water and sanitation infrastructure is inadequate to respond to the needs in drinkable water and sanitation of just over 20 million Ivoirians. No

networks have been extended to new neighborhoods in Abidjan where water shortages are more and more frequent. Most water installations and equipments are old and lack maintenance.

In the poor neighborhoods with no water supply system, water is much more expensive as people buy water by bucket. 50 buckets the equivalent of 1 cubic meter, cost 1 500 CFA Francs, while the same amount of tap water costs 300 CFA francs. This is too expensive for the majority of Cote d'Ivoire's population of whom 48 percent live with less than one dollar a day. At the end of the day people return to contaminated water sources including unprotected wells and ponds because they cannot afford it.

Tap water is not widespread either. Only 39 percent of Ivoirians have tap water with the large majority of users living in Abidjan.

Government allocations for water supply are not equally distributed between the North and the South. Investments in water and sanitation represent less than percent 0,1 percent of the national GDP.

Out of 15 thousand hand-pumps, only 10 thousand are functional. There is a need to build eight thousand new water points to increase access to potable water in the rural areas.

To guarantee access to safe drinking water and increase the access to a potable drinking source from 61 percent in 2008 to 82.5 percent in 2015, the Government has to invest more than 645 billion of CFA francs (1 billion 430 USD) in: (i) securing sources for potable water; (2) reinforcing the current distribution of potable water and extension of water supply services in urban areas; (3) reinforcing the current distribution of potable water and extension of water supply services in rural areas and undertake (5) Reform.

Below is a recap of progress being made in hygiene practices

**1. Open defecation**  
Not much progress has been made in this area, as the number of latrines constructed does not follow the population growth. Cultural values such as inability to share toilets with women or children contribute to open defecation.

**2. Improved sanitation facilities**  
In rural areas the population mostly uses unimproved sanitation facilities such as open pits.

**3. Urban versus rural areas**  
34 percent of the population from the rural areas (57 percent) practice open defecation.

**4. Water collection**  
Women, in general are still the ones who collect water in communities.

## ACTIONS 2008-2009

The UNICEF Water and Sanitation programme contributes to the Millennium Development Goal for water and sanitation: to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe water and basic sanitation. The programme focuses on the supply of water and the promotion of hygiene and sanitation in communities, schools and health centres and in peri-urban environment, and the epidemiological surveillance to prevent water-related diseases.

### Access to Drinking water

612 water supply points were built or rehabilitated (improved wells and hand pumps); 717 Water Management Committees (WMC) were revitalized; 407 economic interest groups were identified to financially support the maintenance of water points. 40 water storage reservoirs are constructed in 40 rural health centers.

### Access to Sanitation Facilities

1,084 SANPLAT family latrines and other sanitation facilities were built; 336 masons were trained in construction of latrines using slabs and provided with tools; Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) experimented in 40 localities in the Departments of Tiassale, selected as the pilot Department for the implementation of the MDGs.

### Prevention of Water- and Hygiene-Related Diseases

2089 IEC/BCC sensitization sessions were organized and 1,843 posters were distributed; 8,805 sensitization sessions reached 115,000 individuals in precarious neighborhoods; Community and school mobilization for hand washing with soap; Distribution of hand washing devices for the promotion of hygiene practices.

### Hygiene and Sanitation Education in Schools

145 improved latrines (VIP) and 305 hand washing facilities were built in 101 schools; 25 counselors were trained in hand washing with soap and in turn trained 10,000 students during World Hand Washing Day; Students from 61 schools were sensitized during Hand Washing Days.

## The lack of water points and latrines undermine children's health in Cote d'Ivoire.



Improvements in water, hygiene and sanitation are contributing to the decreasing trend in infant deaths in Cote d'Ivoire. The number of children dying before the age of five has decreased from 150 deaths per 1,000 livebirths in 1990 to 127 deaths per 1,000 livebirths in 2008. This translates into more than 20,000 deaths of children under five averted each year in Cote d'Ivoire.

Poor access to safe drinking water hygiene and sanitation increases children's exposure to diseases such as diarrhea, malnutrition, malaria and even HIV.

Diarrhea is a major child and infant killer disease in Cote d'Ivoire caused by microbes which spread in water, food, on hands, on eating and drinking utensils, by flies and dirt under the fingernails. 88 percent of diarrheal diseases are due to unsafe water supply, inadequate sanitation and hygiene. In Cote d'Ivoire diarrheal deaths around 87 thousand children under five years each year. These deaths can be reduced by 40 percent by ensuring children wash their hands with soap at most critical events during the day.

Diarrhea increases mortality rates from other opportunistic diseases such as malaria, malnutrition and ARI (Acute Respiratory Infections).

Malaria is the main reason for consultations and hospitalization in Cote d'Ivoire.

Children are victims of one to six malaria attacks per year with an average of one attack every three months.

Malaria prevalence is exacerbated by poor sanitation both in urban and rural areas. Open drainage channels in cities flooded with waste are prone to the development of mosquito breeding sites.

High chronic malnutrition rates are also exacerbated by repeated episodes of diarrhea that can physically and mentally stunt children.

Since December 2008 poliomyelitis resurfaced in Cote d'Ivoire with the detection of two cases in the South of the country. In 2009, 25 cases of polio have been reported leading to the organization of mass synchronized immunization campaigns in Cote d'Ivoire and other countries in the West and Central Africa region. Poliomyelitis enters the water through the faeces of infected individuals. Children are infected by drinking or eating contaminated water or food.

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