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Inaugurating a New CSDW Program with World Vision Kenya

June 4, 2010



I'm in coastal Kenya about an hour drive from Mombasa to help kick-off a program with World Vision to provide safe drinking water to people in the Kaloleni District. This is an area with very unsafe drinking water sources. We're kicking off the program today and then a few days from now I'll return with Chris Hassall, P&G External Relations Officer, and Jenni Pustinger of the P&G Brand and Global Sustainability.



I'm traveling with Keith Kall of World Vision and Nick Wassuna of World Vision. Keith has accompanied me on trips to Zimbabwe and Chile and has been instrumental in helping us scale-up our efforts with World Vision. Nick is a native Kenyan and has an easy going nature that helps speed us through the needed government permission for our two visits. We're very welcomed by the District Health Officer who has heard of the work with PUR and tells us that there's great need in the area.

Nick's mother is British and father is Kenyan. In fact, Nick's father was from the same area of Kenya as President Obama's father. Nick jokes that he used to consider himself half black and half white, but since President Obama is always called black, Nick now understands that he's actually black. Kenyans have a great love for President Obama and it's an easy way to start a conversation to refer to President Obama's roots in Kenya. Our visit today focuses on the area around Gandini Primary School. This is one of 10 schools in which World Vision will provide PUR, hand washing stations, and latrines. It's part of an integrated approach to help keep children in school in an area where there's high absenteeism from waterborne illness. In total, this program will reach more than 100,000 people and provide 20 million liters of safe drinking water using the

PUR packets.



The headmaster, Charles Tsuma, welcomes us. The school isn't formally back in session until a few days from now, but some of the older students have returned to get some extra study time as this is their year for qualification exams. These older students will help lead the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) groups that will make PUR-treated water for the schools.



We walk with the children to collect the water. It's a pleasant walk of about 45 minutes round trip. As the children are not used to having treated water, they drink the filthy untreated water directly from a small pond. It's disgusting and I'm not surprised there's a high rate of absenteeism. Starting today, these students will be able to stop this unhealthy habit.



I start a conversation with one of the girls named Ruth. She tells me that she wants to be a police woman someday. She walks to collect water 3 or 4 times a day and she has frequently missed school because of being sick with diarrhea. Its children like Ruth that we'll be able to help with this program.

Back at the school, I see that the training by World Vision of these students has worked well. The students quickly form an assembly line to process enough PUR-treated water for the entire school. They sing some songs to make the work go quickly.



Part of my task today is to open the new latrines and hand washing stations. The program in Kenya reapplies our success in school programs in Malawi where World Vision measured a 50% reduction in school absenteeism through this integrated approach of safe water, hand washing

stations, and latrines.



I'm asked to officially open both the boy and girl latrines. To the delight of the children, I also inaugurate the boy's latrine by using it, and then use the hand washing station.



I walk past several large water tanks and wonder why the school isn't using these tanks instead of the pond water. Two of the tanks have leaks and the third only has water for a few days after rains. The school simply can't store enough rain water to meet their needs for any significant length of time. With the PUR packets, the school will have year long access to safe drinking water.

We're accompanied by Innocent Odhiambo from the district education office and she addresses the children before we enjoy some clean water. She holds up one of the buckets that contain the settled residue following the PUR process. She tells the students that now they can see the dirt and worms that they used to be drinking. This is why they

squirm in their seats and can't concentrate.



And, she guarantees them that if they start drinking PUR water, then they'll be able to concentrate and do better in their exams. She tells them that they're learning an important lesson that will stay with them the rest of their lives so that they can be better adults. She makes a strong case.

As part of the visit in a few days with Chris and Jenni, I want them to be able to speak with someone who has HIV/AIDS and is using PUR. People with HIV/AIDS are particularly prone to waterborne infections because of their reduced immune response and PUR is having a life-saving impact on many of these people. For this reason, providing PUR to people living with HIV/AIDS is an important part of this World Vision program in Kaoleni. Since the program with World Vision is just starting today, we visit the home of Margaret Ruwa and I ask her if we can show her a new way to make her water safe. We go with her to collect water from a stagnant stream. She collects water from this stream, a nearby rice paddy, or when these sources are dry she walks a long distance to a pond.



Margaret is very engaged as I show her how to use PUR. We use her buckets and spoon to make the PUR-treated water and leave her with her first allotment of PUR. She'll be resupplied at the local clinic. She repeats the process for us, and it's clear that she's understood how to use PUR. She and her children like the taste of the PUR-treated water. She asks us about our efforts in the community and is very thankful to P&G and World Vision.



Thanks to World Vision for hosting me. I'm eager to return in a few days to see how Margaret is getting along and to have Chris Hassall, P&G External Relations Officer, and Jenni Pustinger, P&G Brand and Global Sustainability, experience CSDW first-hand.