



Latest News

Updates From Around the World

Check out the most recent blog entries from P&G Children's Safe Drinking Water Program (CSDW) and share your thoughts. Or, browse our archive content for a look back at the global efforts as told by Dr. Greg Allgood, Founder of the CSDW Program.

Dania Ramirez, CoverGirl's Clean Make-up Ambassador Gives Clean Water

February 26, 2010



I wrote this blog in Santo Domingo in September 2009 before the Haiti earthquake. We waited a while to post it since we were keeping this effort a surprise. P&G's CoverGirl brand has decided to contribute to our Children's Safe Drinking Water Program. This is the idea of Vince Hudson, CoverGirl Marketing Director. I've known Vince for years since we both worked in P&G Health Care, and it's great to be working with him again.



About a year ago, Vince and I discussed a potential partnership between CoverGirl Clean Make-up and our efforts to provide clean drinking water through the Children's Safe Drinking Water Program. Then CoverGirl signed their newest CoverGirl Clean Make-up ambassador, Dania Ramirez, and learned that she grew up with unsafe drinking water in the Dominican Republic. It seemed like a great fit and so here we are in the DR.

I first met Dania at the [Clinton Global Initiative](#) in September. She teamed up with Kenna to give the [Live, Learn, and Thrive](#) Partnership Award to [CARE](#) for their efforts to help us reach 1.6 million in



school programs with the PUR packets. I stood beside Dania as we listened to President Clinton talk about the fact that P&G has played an important role in the global water crisis. Just a few days later, and we're in Dania's home country headed to a village in need of safe drinking water.

We're staying in the historic town of Santo Domingo. The Spanish conquistadors and Columbus used Santo Domingo as their headquarters for the New World. I walk through Columbus Plaza (Plaza Colon) while waiting for the team to gather. In the center of the Plaza is a statue of Columbus and it's lined by old colonial buildings with the most impressive being the cathedral that is more than 500 years

old and the longest operating church in North America.



We drive through the crazy traffic trying to avoid a car accident to Yabacao about an hour outside of Santo Domingo. This village is called a "Batey", which is a small village for the people that work on the nearby sugar cane plantation. Our first stop is a school and while we're waiting for the students to gather, I suggest to Dania that we visit a near-by house to learn about their water situation. This is a poor community that uses donkeys and motorcycles as their primary means of transportation.



I quickly learn that it's great to travel with Dania in the DR because she can double as a translator. We poke our head into the open door of a small wood house and meet Rafella Delacruz. She's recovering from a back operation, but rises slowly and takes us for a tour around her yard. Rafella shows us where she gathers rain water during the torrential downpours that occur in the tropics.

And, she has piped water in her yard. But, it's not working now and when it's working the water is typically greenish. Rafella knows that it's not safe to drink. Rafella complains that there are lots of rats that get into the collected rain water so she tries to boil the water to make it safe. They also sometimes buy water from a tanker truck that delivers water but this water isn't safe either.



Rafella agrees that we can borrow drinking water from her rain water collection buckets to provide the nearby school children with some safe drinking water. As we carry the water to the school, Dania and I discuss how complicated the water situation is in the DR and much of the developing world. We've just learned that Rafella relies on 3 different sources of water and all of them are unsafe. In the US, most people take their water for granted.

PSI Dominican Republic is our host for this trip. PSI started working with PUR in the DR three years ago and have provided 4 million PUR packets in the region. I've known the country director, Chuck Szymanski, since before he arrived in the DR and it's good to be spending time with him this week. I'm very thankful to PSI for hosting our visit and particularly grateful that they were able to do it so quickly and efficiently so that we could fit it into Dania's schedule. Chuck was on his annual leave during much of the preparation prior to our trip and German Agudelo of PSI really stepped up to make sure that everything was ready for a successful visit.



I'd shown Dania a quick demonstration of PUR the previous night so that she understood how to use it. Today, we've asked her to help with the education of the students at Escuela Basica and she's agreed. With just a little coaching, Dania remembers all the steps of making PUR treated water. Dania seems just as amazed as the children when the water turns clear. See short video ([Link to video](#)).

PSI's safe drinking water coordinator, Engels Guzman, leads the children in a song and reinforces the proper use of the PUR packets. PSI developed a flip-chart to facilitate these education efforts and show the students pictures of the microbes that are in the water. The pictures of the parasites look particularly evil.



After finishing up at the school, we gather at the main cross-road of Yabacao. There are about 50 wood shacks and a few shops in the town center. About 50 people have gathered to watch us conduct a PUR demonstration. The Cover Girl team has brought a film director and videographers to document our efforts and so we have to wait a bit while everything gets ready.



I wonder around and find a man cooking some crawfish over the fire. Vince, being from New Orleans and quite fond of crawfish, wants to see if we can join for lunch - but right about then we get the call to rejoin the group for the PUR demonstration.

It's a very hot day. I'm sweating so much that my shirt is completely soaked. My shirt is cotton and the evaporation helps cool me off. I notice that one of the film crew is looking a little pale and we give her some water to cool her off. Dania's a great sport and although she's clearly not immune to the heat, she hangs in there with the rest of us. A tough Cover Girl!

Dania does an even better job this time in conducting the demonstration and doesn't need reminders from me on the proper steps. Dania asks for volunteers and has an older lady and a young man agree to come in front of the group and repeat for their fellow community members the steps for proper use of PUR. They ask for a picture of us after their success in repeating the steps. I then ask some questions of the community members. We learn that they have many



problems with gastrointestinal illnesses and they tell us that amoebas are a particular problem in this community.

The water that we're treating has been gathered from the Osama River that runs from the central highlands, through the lowlands around the somewhat swampy Yabacao, and then down to the coast at Santo Domingo. This is a muddy and contaminated river that is the source of water for irrigation and also for livestock. But, I'm surprised when we learn that most of the people in this community gather their drinking water directly from the Osama. It's clear that Dania is also surprised and alarmed that people in her country have to drink this contaminated water.

I tell Dania that there's nothing quite like giving the gift of clean drinking water to communities like this. So, I ask her to give the water out to the community members. She loves doing this and everyone enjoys some clear and pure water. We both have a good time in giving out the water, particularly to the children. We then announce to the community that because of Dania and the Cover Girl program, PSI will provide the PUR packets to everyone in Yabacao for at least the next year.



Later Dania thanks me for the opportunity to give this gift of water and that it means a lot to her to be able to help people in her country. Because of this effort by Dania and Cover Girl, we'll provide more than 50 million liters of clean drinking water to areas where it's needed the most. That's enough to provide more than 1,500 tanker trucks of purified water and will prevent millions of days of potentially deadly diarrhea. So, I tell Dania that it's I'm thankful to her - and to Cover Girl for their donation and for their efforts to raise awareness of the global water crisis.



Today, we've seen PSI's work in villages and efforts to provide PUR on a sustained basis in communities that have unclear water. Our next trip will be to visit an area with the need for safe drinking water because of natural disasters.

Based on our visit, Cover Girl created a short video with Dania announcing the Cover Girl Clean Make-up for Clean Water effort. You can see the video here ([link](#)).