SWASH+ Phase II comes to Rarieda Kaloo

Not many teachers are able to make sanitation and hygiene fun for primary school students, but Maxwell Odhiambo is no ordinary teacher. Maxwell is the health teacher at Rarieda Kaloo, a rural public school in Kisumu, Kenya. Rarieda Kaloo is just one of 120 schools in Kisumu that is a recipient of a SWASH+ Phase II intervention. In its second phase, SWASH+ (School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Plus Community Impact) is a partnership between Kenya’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and Ministry of Health (MoH), CARE Kenya, CARE USA, Georgetown University and Emory University. One goal of the program is to improve the sustainability and effectiveness of school water, sanitation and hygiene by focusing on indicators of good governance.

SWASH+ Phase II has helped emphasize to teachers like Maxwell the importance of sanitation and hygiene education in primary schools. WASH-oriented messages sent to the mobile phones of school Board of Management (BOM) members are just one SWASH+ intervention aimed at building administrative capacity to better sustain WASH services in schools. At Rarieda Kaloo, Maxwell knows the importance of sanitation education but realized that many of his students did not know how to use the school’s latrines properly. Instead of trying to teach these concepts only in the classroom, Maxwell has taken a more innovative approach.

One Health Teacher’s Creative Approach

“In a lecture students get bored, they just sit there and learn less. But if you use practical activities, they love it and learn more,” Maxwell explains. These practical activities include linking hygiene and sanitation concepts to other pastimes that students enjoy, such as sports.

For example, Maxwell teaches his students that using a latrine is like playing football; students should “aim at the goal” when using the toilet just as they aim at a goal when kicking a ball. This helps the latrines stay cleaner. He also teaches the analogy of “dribble the ball and pass” to help students understand how they should...
continuously pick up rubbish they find around them and dispose of it in the proper place.

Maxwell believes students have responded very well to the use of practical activities to make adopting hygiene and sanitation behaviors fun. Fifty students at Rarieda Kaloo have joined his health club and many others are active in playing “football for WASH,” part of the Football for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene program, a Dutch public-private partnership initiative. Rarieda Kaloo’s Football for WASH club conducts activities during the school’s football games to help spread health messages and engage students from competing teams in learning about WASH. Maxwell explains that during these games the club arranges hand-washing demonstrations, recites poems and even sings songs about sanitation.

As the number of children attending the school grows, the latrine-to-student ratio is drastically reduced. Maxwell’s creative work as health teacher is just one way the school is going above and beyond the SWASH+ program to help improve water, sanitation and hygiene resources for young children.

While he is the only health teacher at the school, Maxwell knows he is not alone in his goals. “Health issues are the responsibility of every teacher in this school,” he says. It is clear that he is taking this responsibility very seriously while also making water, sanitation and hygiene more fun for his students.

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For more information, please visit www.swashplus.org

Photos by Sue Gloor/CARE