

IT'S LIFE

Health and Sanitation

Keeping diseases at bay with leaky tins



Global Handwashing Day

The third annual Global Handwashing Day will be held globally on October 15. Handwashing with soap is the most effective and inexpensive way to prevent diarrheal and acute respiratory infections, which kills millions of children in developing countries every year. Despite its lifesaving potential, handwashing with soap is seldom practised and difficult to promote. Initiated in 2008 by the Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing with Soap, Global Handwashing Day is endorsed by a wide array of governments, international institutions, civil society organizations, NGOs, private companies and individuals around the globe.



According to the 2009 census about nine million Kenyans relieve themselves in the bush; a fertile field for diseases

By KIUNDU WAWERU

It is break time at Enkare Ngiro Primary School in Narok South and pupils are running in the playground.

As they chase each other around the field, they raise clouds of dirt since the grass has long died from the scorching sun. Their feet are dry and dusty, but occasionally they rush to curious looking containers in the compound to wash their hands.

The five-litre containers prove the adage necessity is the mother of invention. The handle runs through a horizontal stick, which is in turn supported by two vertical sticks with pegs. A wire is tied to the handle of the container and onto another stick. This stick is

placed in the ground and it is used as a lever such that when you step on it, it tilts the container and water trickles from a small hole in the lid like a good old tap.

The head teacher Paul Kilayo says the leaky tins, as they are called, have been a feature at the school since last term.

"The leaky tins are an initiative of the teachers who have been trained by Netwas International and are in turn training the pupils on importance of washing hands after visiting the toilet and before meals," says Kilayo.

Kilayo says in the region 70 per cent of diseases are related to water and sanitation.

The gospel of hand washing is spreading like bush fire and leaky tins have become a permanent feature in most schools. Some of

the pupils have introduced the leaky tins concept in their villages, a commendable move given that most people around are nomadic, and few have toilets.

The just released Kenya Census Results 2009 shows that about nine million Kenyans, two per cent of this in urban areas, relieve themselves in the bush; a fertile field for diseases.

The Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation says Kenya loses close to 30,000 lives through diarrhoea annually.

And walking around the sparsely populated Ewaso Ngiro area, *The Standard* on Saturday found only a few homes had toi-

lets. The thickets around the man-yattas act like the toilets. Tap water is a pipe dream and women and girls were fetching water from Ewaso Ngiro River, which muddy yet they drink the water without boiling.

ERRATIC SUPPLY

It is against this backdrop that Unilever and World Food Programme conducted a knowledge, attitude and practice survey in July 2008 in selected schools. The study also gathered information on the challenges experienced by the target audience to adopt the desired behaviour and general school health situation, with em-

phasis on health and nutrition education initiatives.

Findings of the study revealed that students were knowledgeable about health and hygiene but the sanitation infrastructures were over-stretched in most of the schools; water supply erratic and safe drinking water lacking. This is partly due to the Government and WFP School Meals Programme (SMP) and free primary education that has seen increased enrolments.

In view of these findings, WFP and several donors, including Unilever and Drew Barrymore, in collaboration with the Government and Netwas International

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Many get it wrong while washing their hands

By KIUNDU WAWERU

Most of you probably pride yourselves that you wash your hands after visiting the toilet, or before meals. You also have passed the gospel to your children. But do you wash your hands the right way?

Well, most people gathered at Enkare Ng'iro Primary School, South Narok on Wednesday during the launch of Tegua Siri ya Afya Tele na Sungura Sam were baffled to realise that they wash their hands the wrong way.

Narok South Public Health Officer Joseph Maitoyo demonstrated the correct steps of washing hands.

"First, there are five areas that germs hang in our hands, mostly the moist areas," said Maitoyo.

The first place is the centre of the palm and

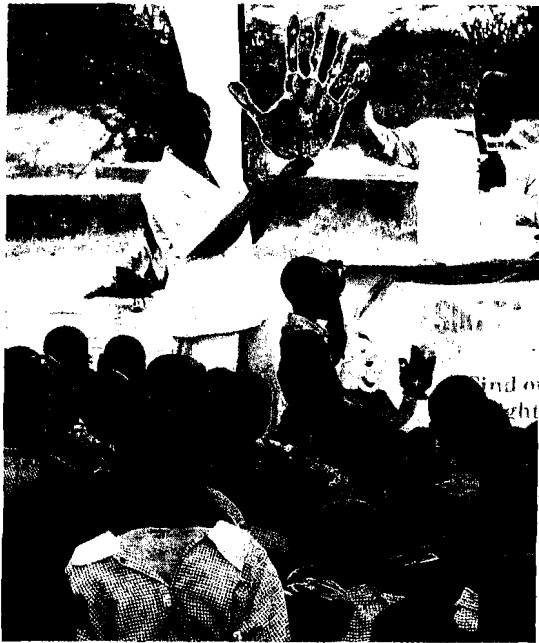
between fingers. The third spot is the nails, which need to be kept short and the fourth is between the thumb and the fourth finger while the last is at the wrist," he added.

Thus, while washing hands, one must systematically follow these spots. The first step is to wet your hands with running water, and then soap them. While soapy, scrub each palm with your fingers, then wash in between the fingers, criss-crossing both hands. Next are the nails, and wash each individually before rubbing between the thumbs.

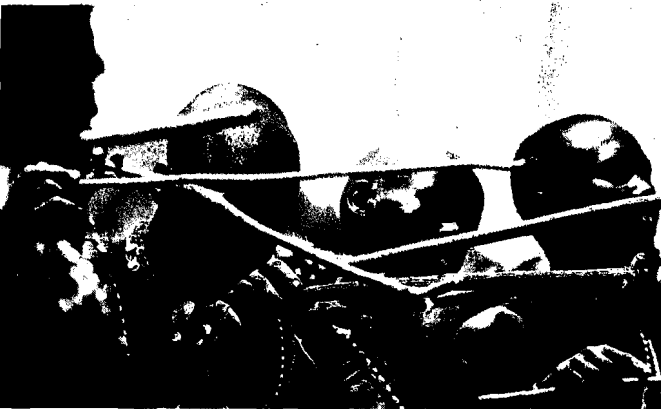
Finally, wash your wrists, rinse your hands and wipe with a towel or napkins. If a towel is not available dribble your hands. While turning off the tap, use the towel.

"You should never share towels," warns Maitoyo, "because the person who preceded you might not have washed his hands properly and may have left some germs."

"The whole process, takes about three minutes but after getting used to it, it takes less time. It is worth it, to keep diseases like typhoid and diarrhea at bay," says Maitoyo.



Pupils of Enkare Ng'iro Primary School wash their hands after visiting the toilet. Inset, trainers teach the pupils on the importance of washing hands.



girls comfortable."

He adds that the distance depends on the size of the compound and also the designs must be relevant.

"The designs promoted by Netwas International are friendly to girls, allowing for space for changing sanitary pads, and also friendly to the physically challenged as they have enough space for wheel-chairs," he says.

In the WFP study, boys said they would prefer the old ways - going to the bush - rather than the school toilets, as they are always dirty and smelly.

To check this, and ensure school children adopt sanitary ways of relieving themselves, the toilets are VIP (ventilated improved pit latrines).

In places where the soils are loose, the latrines are constructed with stones from the bottom and provided with a manhole for exhauster services to remove the waste once the toilet is full.

To complete the hygienic picture, water tanks for harvesting

rainwater are provided, and washing areas erected near the toilets.

Morris Bota, a teacher in Narok South, says due to lack of funds, it was imperative for innovations.

To ensure sustained behaviour change to curb the spread of water and sanitation related diseases, Netwas is training various people, including teachers, school management committees and peer educators (pupils from class five).

And using children as pressure groups, it's hoped hand washing will become an automatic habit, that will 'spill over' to the parents and that they will carry it to adulthood.

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are constructing latrines with hand washing facilities, as well as kitchens and rainwater harvesting in selected schools in Nairobi, Narok and Isiolo districts.

The leaky tins are part of this project, which has seen construction of six toilets in each target school, three for the boys, plus a urinal and three for girls.

"We found that the distance between boys and girls toilets in most schools is not as per prescribed standards," says Robert Njoroge, Executive Director Netwas International.

"The girls and boys' toilets have to be set on opposite sides of the school compounds to make