World Toilet Day: Tippy taps a toilet hygiene solution for rural populations

Mercy Mitua is 13. She attends primary school at Kakuli Primary School in Kalawa, Makueni County.

Water in her county is a challenge, especially in the remote areas where you can hardly find taps. Mercy was in a dilemma, especially because she wanted to practice good toilet hygiene. They had been taught in school that one must wash their hands every time they use a toilet.

**Improvised taps**

Mercy took a five litre jerrycan and made a small hole on its upper body to allow water to flow through it. With that, she made a tippy tap, a locally improvised tap that allows easy access to water after toilet use. Mercy learnt how to make tippy taps through the Health Club in her school.

**Basic Hygiene**

Washing hands after using the toilet is a basic hygiene practice. If you don’t always do this then you are putting your health at great risk. In most urban areas, water can easily be available, so children can wash their hands all the time. But in rural areas, where water is scarce, it may not always happen.

Placed next to toilets, tippy taps allow families in rural areas to wash hands with soap and minimal water, hence enabling them conserve the little that they have. Mercy has since passed the knowledge to her family and neighbours who are now able to practice good toilet hygiene. “Initially, we had one ordinary water tap with clean running water in the entire school. Now we have four tippy taps that serve the entire school, that is 11 teachers and 200 pupils,” said Mr. Martin Mutinda, the Deputy Patron of the Health Club at Mercy’s school.

The tippy taps are periodically filled with clean water and placed strategically outside the school kitchen and latrines.

**Today is World Toilet Day**

World toilet day is set aside to create awareness on the significance of toilets. People are educated on the need to prevent human waste from polluting the environment and causing deadly diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera or dysentery.

On this day people are also reminded of the significance of adhering to good hygiene practices, especially washing hands with soap after visiting the toilet so as to prevent diseases. “Even if you don’t see it, hands are usually contaminated after every toilet use. They contain germs from faeces and other things that can transmit diseases when you use them to eat food or prepare meals for others,” said Wanjiku Kuria, a technical sanitation and hygiene specialist at World Vision Kenya.

The ministries of education, and health, together with non-governmental organisations like World Vision Kenya and Unicef have been sensitising schoolchildren in rural areas on low-cost technologies that use water efficiently. Tippy taps are examples of such technologies.

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**WHEN NATURE CALLS.....**

1. **At one point or another, we have all experienced the need to go to the toilet. Whether it is the traditional pit latrine or the modern one with bowl and seat, there is always that inexplicable feeling in finding one whose door is open, when nature strikes.**

2. **Implementation of certain hygiene policies and increased access to sanitation such as a well-cleaned toilet help in reducing infections.**

3. **Germs and bacteria cause several diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid.**

4. **For good hygiene and prevention of diseases, always make sure you wash your hands using soap and water.**

   - 1. Wet your hands with clean running water.
   - 2. Apply the soap.
   - 3. Rinse your hands under clean running water.
   - 4. Dry your hands using a clean towel.