

Safe Water, Healthy Workers

The Cost of Contaminated Water

Contaminated water is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in developing countries. Unsafe drinking water leads to increased rates of enteric disease and higher mortality rates in children and adults. For persons infected with HIV, safe water becomes indispensable in the effort to avoid opportunistic infections.

Safe drinking water is an essential element in maintaining good health. Despite its obvious importance and inexpensive remedy, more than one billion people live without access to clean water. Contaminated water leads to 3-5 billion diarrhea episodes and more than one million deaths every year. In young children, the elderly and immuno-compromised, diarrhea episodes can lead to severe dehydration and death. In extreme cases, as with cholera, death from dehydration can occur within just eight hours.

The heavy burden of unsafe water on business often goes unnoticed. Workers exposed to high rates of malaria and HIV infection are most at-risk. Unsafe water makes each of these illnesses more severe and more resistant to effective treatment. Frequent and severe bouts of diarrhea also lead to reduced productivity, declining efficiency and increased insurance and benefits costs. Employers may not understand the role contaminated water plays in worker morbidity and absenteeism.

Without a consistently safe source of water, it is impossible to gain the full benefits of an

anti-HIV treatment regimen or Pre-Packaged Therapy (PPT) for malaria, or to safeguard the health of the very young, the very old and the immuno-compromised.

How PSI Promotes Water Treatment

Providing access to safe water is remarkably effective and cost-efficient. Recent WHO research findings indicate that the return-on-investment for point-of-use water purification programs is between 500 and 6,000 percent.

PSI markets two water treatment products under four brand names. In addition to marketing water treatment solution, PSI also undertakes mass communications campaigns

to encourage safe water storage practices, proper sanitation and improved hygiene techniques, including hand-washing with soap.

To reach low-income population groups, PSI markets a point-of-use sodium hypochlorite

solution developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PSI promotes and distributes this solution under the brand names *Clorin*, *Sûr'Eau* and *Waterguard*. This sodium hypochlorite solution disinfects water immediately, rendering it safe for human consumption. *Clorin*, *Sûr'Eau* and *Waterguard* reduce incidence of diarrhea between 30-50 percent when used correctly, protecting a family of six for about a penny a day. PSI also distributes *PŪR* water treatment powder (a product developed by Procter & Gamble) in Uganda. *PŪR* not only disinfects water, but also causes sediment, heavy metals and other



A man holds a bottle of Sûr'Eau, one of three brands of water treatment solution marketed by PSI.



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contaminants to clot. The water is then strained, and the consumer is left with safe water that is also visibly clear of pollutants.

Since 1980, PSI has also promoted and distributed oral re-hydration salts to restore the natural balance of electrolytes, sugar and water during and after diarrhea outbreaks.

In its workplace program for corporate clients, PSI peer educators instruct groups of workers on adequate sanitation and hygiene, distribute water treatment products or distribute employer-paid vouchers that enable the employee to purchase water treatment products from local distributors. PSI water treatment campaigns in the workplace can be either one-time events or more comprehensive behavior change programs. PSI can train corporate employees to serve as peer educators. PSI can help support such programs with water treatment products, refresher training and communications materials.

Employers contemplating or implementing HIV/AIDS and malaria prevention and treatment activities are encouraged to add a safe water component. The incremental cost of including a safe water education program is modest, while proper hygiene and safe water supplies are critical to safeguarding worker health.

Where Does PSI Market Water Treatment Products?

PSI promotes and distributes *Clorin*, *Sûr'Eau* and *Waterguard* in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Haiti, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Zambia. PSI markets and distributes Procter & Gamble's *PUR* safe water powder in Uganda. PSI distributes oral re-hydration salts in Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, India, Haiti and Malawi under the brand names *Orasel*, *Thanzi*, *Neotral*, *Neotral Orange* and *Sel Lavi*.

PSI HEALTHworks

PSI's **HEALTHworks** programs offer corporate partners comprehensive approaches to the risks that HIV, malaria and unsafe water impose on their workers and communities. Drawing on the talents and wide program experience of our staff, **HEALTHworks** projects are custom designed to suit business environments in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Population Services International (PSI) is a nonprofit organization established in 1970. It is one of the largest distributors of lifesaving health products, services and information in the world, with affiliates and programs in more than 65 countries that manage and promote 178 brands of health products and services. More than 95

percent of PSI's 6,000 employees are nationals of the countries in which they work and deeply committed to protecting the health and well-being of low-income people through malaria control, water treatment, HIV/AIDS prevention, family planning and maternal and child health initiatives.

Case Study: PSI and Procter & Gamble

PSI is collaborating with Procter & Gamble to provide sachets of *PUR* water purification powder to at-risk populations in Uganda. Using existing PSI distribution systems and a network of local non-profits, PSI is distributing *PUR* in both urban and rural regions. For the Ugandan market, *PUR* has several advantages. Uganda has a sophisticated consumer economy with a wide selection of water treatment products. *PUR*'s ability to remove sediment has added appeal for consumers. *PUR* is lighter and costs less to ship than conventional liquid water purifiers and also has a longer shelf life. PSI's commercial business model will enable *PUR* to become self-sustaining over time, thus promoting its long-term availability in the market.