

When WASH 1,000 Came to Piyaligo

A Village Chief Leads His People to Better Sanitation in Ghana

By SPRING/Ghana



A latrine constructed in a community in the Upper East region of Ghana after SPRING/Ghana's WASH intervention.

“As chief of the community, I no longer feel embarrassed when we have visitors because my community is now clean and free from the stench of feces.”

- Naabalssifu, chief of Piyaligo village

The chief of Piyaligo village has a unique way of introducing himself:

“NaabaIssifu is my name. I have engaged in open defecation for the past 42 years.”

Until recently, most of the 98 homes in his village in the Upper East Region of Ghana lacked latrines, forcing the community of over 600 people to defecate in the open.

“My family and I could not plant beans and other vegetables like *alefu* and *berra* around my house or on the farm because the children, my wife, and myself eased ourselves there...only three houses [in the community] had latrines. Handwashing with soap or ash with clean running water was not a practice in this community,” Naaba said.

These practices began changing after the Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project staff and Government of Ghana environmental health officers began conducting weekly visits to the village in May 2015. Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), SPRING/Ghana works to promote the four key behaviors of the WASH 1,000 agenda: safe disposal of feces, handwashing with soap, boiled or treated water for consumption by children aged 6-24 months, and clean play spaces for children.

Today almost all of the houses in Piyaligo community have latrines and many also boast tippy taps. Naaba said a stigma is now associated with open defecation and that the community is aware of its negative consequences. This year his family is able to enjoy bean leaf soup from their

garden and they can sell extra produce at the market. "Handwashing after visiting the latrine, before eating, before feeding our children, and covering our food is now like a competition in my home and the community at large," he said.

As the village chief, Naaba and other elders worked with SPRING to develop a community action plan, which they will continue to carry out. They are also in the process of creating community by-laws to cement the villagers' commitment to sustaining cleanliness and sanitation efforts in Piyaligo.

"Through the intervention of SPRING, my house and my community are now clean, free from feces all over. I now also enjoy a variety of soup because I can now plant vegetables on my farm which my wife uses to prepare soup for the family. As chief of the community, I no longer feel embarrassed when we have visitors because my community is now clean and free from the stench of feces."

SPRING/Ghana is working to achieve and sustain similar results in each of the 15 districts in Northern Ghana where it is active.

SPRING/Ghana aims to reduce stunting by 20 percent in the Ghana's northern and upper east regions. Working in up to 15 districts within these two regions, SPRING/Ghana's activities include anemia reduction, improvements to infant and young child nutrition; strengthened water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices; aflatoxin reduction; and support to the LEAP 1000 cash transfers.

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