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HAITI

CASE STUDY

Purifying Water for Haiti's Flood Victims

Availability of PuR sachets helps Haiti mitigate a post-storm public health crisis



Photo: PSI

A trainer demonstrates how to properly filter water using PuR.

The availability of PuR could help prevent future public health crises and stop Haiti's number one killer of infants and children in its tracks.

Challenge

Tropical Storm Jeanne inundated Gonaïves, Haiti, in September 2004, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to live on rooftops for days while the waters receded, without access to food and potable water. Within days of the flooding, open sewage, stagnant water and the decaying bodies of animals and flood victims had seriously contaminated local water supplies, causing a public health crisis. With roads into Gonaïves seriously damaged, aid workers said they could only supply clean water for a tenth of the people in need.

Initiative

Days after the flooding began, USAID addressed the insufficient supply of clean water by distributing PuR, a water purification product designed for household use where lack of water has become a public health problem. PuR removes all visible particles from water and eliminates all contamination — even lead and arsenic — through a relatively simple process of stirring and filtering. But PuR's effectiveness is dependent on how well consumers follow its simple, but strict, directions, which is why USAID also spent a great deal of time training public health professionals how to correctly administer the product.

Results

Over the course of three visits to Gonaïves, 30 health professionals from five relief organizations were trained and more than 410,000 packets of PuR were distributed. Within two months, 41,000 families had used PuR, which provided each household with 100 liters of safe, clean water.

PuR has now been launched nationally in Haiti, with a sales projection of more than 2.5 million sachets in its first year. For a country with endemic flooding and 96 percent prevalence of diarrhea in children under five, the availability of PuR could help prevent future public health crises and stop Haiti's number one killer of infants and children in its tracks.