

WORLD TOILET DAY CELEBRATIONS IN SIAYA

On 19th November 2011, Kenya celebrated the World Toilet Day (WTD) at Agulu primary school, in Boro Division, Siaya County. This was the culmination of a week of events where road shows had been conducted by the *Vitimbi* group to create awareness of World Toilet Day and its significance to promoting good health in the community. The event coincided with the Open Defecation Free (ODF) celebration of Koyeyo sub location in Central Alego in the same district. A total of 14 villages in the sub location had earlier on in the month been certified as ODF.



Banner with the theme of the day

The occasion which was sponsored by Plan International, UNICEF, Kenya Red Cross and the Ministry of Public Health, was graced by the Assistant Minister for Public Health, Dr. James Gesami and other dignitaries from the Ministries of Public Health, Water, Education, and NGOs working in the WASH sector such as Plan International, UNICEF, WHO, Kenya Red Cross, AMREF, KWAHO and Aphia. The celebration was also well attended by the community members from Koyeyo and other neighbouring sub locations.

The WTD day celebrations were also being commemorated simultaneously in Homabay, Nyanza province where 19 villages had been declared ODF, and in Mathare slums in Nairobi where a sports event was held.



The audience: fascinated by the performances and presentation

The celebration in Siaya was punctuated with colourful entertainment that kept the audience glued to their seats, as different groups presented songs, dance, drama, and poems sensitizing people to the dangers of open defecation. The highlight was a drama from *Vitimbi*, a popular comedy group in the country. In the drama, a patient came to the hospital to seek medical attention after complaining of stomach upset. She was asked by the doctor, to go to the toilet and bring a sample of her stool and urine for

testing. But instead of going to the toilet to bring a sample of her stool, she instead went to the bush and brought her whole feces! She also filled a bottle of soda with her urine. There was more drama when she returned to the hospital to present her

specimen, as everyone was running away from her due to the awful smell of the shit she was carrying. She had the following conversation with the doctor:

Doctor: Why do you bring this big shit to me? I only asked you for a small sample.

Patient: A small sample cannot reveal the full extent of my problem. You need to test my whole shit to have a comprehensive analysis of my condition.

Doctor: why didn't you follow my instructions of using the hospital toilet to get us your sample?

Patient: Why should I use a small room whereas there is plenty of open space for me to defecate in the bush?

This then provided the doctor with the opportunity to sensitize the patient on the dangers of open defecation, and how this may have caused her ailment.

Plan International staff Philip Otieno, who addressed the meeting on behalf of the NGO fraternity, challenged the local community to transform the practice of open defecation. He lamented that the community was in the forefront of embracing education, and had produced many successful academicians and politicians such as Barrack Obama, the President of USA, the current Prime Minister of Kenya Hon. Raila Odinga, amongst many others, but that they were still lagging behind in sanitation coverage. He congratulated the community of Koyeyo for providing a good example to the others.

The guest of honour Dr. Gesami commended the residents for working hard to attain ODF, saying this will go along way in reducing the disease burden. He said that statistics indicate 30,000 people die every year due to sanitation and hygiene related illnesses in the country. He made it clear that it does not make sense to construct a house before constructing a latrine. “You have no business constructing a house if you have not constructed a latrine”



Assistant Minister awarding certificate to community member

*Philip Vincent Otieno, Plan Kenya
November 2011*