

Kabul, Afghanistan 23 March 2011) — Save the Children joined local officials, teachers, and students to celebrate World Water Day on March 22 to promote good health and hygiene at a high school in Mirbachakot District in Kabul Province.

The World Water Day promotion is part of Save the Children's school health and nutrition programs to help children stay healthy so they can stay in school and learn. The programs provide children with access to safe and child-friendly water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and education on subjects like proper hand-washing with soap to prevent diarrhea.

Proper Hygiene, Access to Clean Drinking Water Reduce Diarrhea-Related Illnesses

Speakers at the school event emphasized the importance of clean drinking water, and how access to potable water is linked to declining levels of sickness among children through the elimination of water-borne diseases.

According to the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, about 14,000 children under age 5 die every year within the country from diarrhea. Official statistics confirm that only 43% of urban communities and 18% of rural villages within Afghanistan currently have access to clean drinking water.

All speakers expressed gratitude to the Khalifa Bin Zayed al Nahyan Foundation for supporting the school. Since 2009, the foundation has funded the construction of a water well, water pump, and hand-washing station, and the renovation of the school latrine.

"Without continuing support from the Khalifa Foundation, the construction of these water and sanitation facilities at the school would not have been possible," said School Headmaster Asadullah Khan.

Speaker Mullah Esa Khan said that district health authorities had noticed a marked decline in the number of cases of diarrhea and intestinal infections among local schoolchildren since the installation of the water well and the upgrading of the latrine at the school.

In neighbouring Shamali District, Save the Children through the support of the Khalifa Foundation has also built 17 Eco-San latrines, 19 wells and 43 hand-washing stations.

School Play Emphasizes Safe Sources of Drinking Water

During the celebration, several schoolchildren performed a play in which they encouraged parents only to let their children drink water from safe and trusted water sources. The play also highlighted the role of parental responsibility and in ensuring good hygiene and sound health for their children.

World Water Day messages also were promoted through banners and posters illustrating the importance of clean drinking water and good hygiene, supported by a water and sanitation

infrastructure that can be accessed by all members of the community.

Events were also held in Balkh, Jawzjan, Faryab, and Nangarhar Provinces, where Save the Children through the support of the Khalifa Foundation has water and sanitation programs. Messages about health and hygiene were widely disseminated, reaching thousands of parents and children.

Save the Children is the leading independent organization that creates lasting change for children in need in the United States and around the world. Since 2002, Save the Children has worked to improve the health and well-being of Afghani children and their families. The organization has reached more than 1 million children and adults through its health and education programs.

Source: Reliefweb