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Dispensers for Safe Water in Haiti

“Has anyone in your family had cholera in the last 6 months?” the surveyor asks. “Yes. Five. Wait, no, six” the head of the household responds. Another family member sitting on the front step of their straw-thatched hut chimes in, “No, no, it’s seven.”

While cholera in Haiti has received renewed media coverage in the past few days, following the launch of a new vaccination program, the situation itself is no longer really novel. For over a year and a half, humanitarian and development agencies have been struggling to respond to the devastating cholera outbreak that has so far claimed around 7,040 lives, and sickened more than 530,000.

Chlorine is the simplest, most effective water treatment option for killing the cholera bacteria and as such, the Haitian government recommended the chlorination of all drinking water in Haiti shortly following the outbreak.

Against this backdrop, the first IPA-designed chlorine dispensers were installed in the rural foothills in the Ouest district of Haiti in January 2011. To use the dispenser, community members go to the water source, place their bucket under the dispenser, turn the valve to dispense chlorine, and then fill their bucket as they normally would with water from the source. The chlorine dispenser offers a more sustainable solution than the free, usually temporary emergency distribution of chlorine products. Moreover, the innovative point-of-collection treatment approach helps increase adoption by making water treatment convenient and easy, and the bulk supply significantly reduces supply costs.

An early evaluation of the first dispensers installed showed that all surveyed households using the water source had some residual chlorine in their drinking water, whether or not they had been observed using the dispenser technology that morning. However, those who had been observed using the dispenser, more frequently had the accurate dose of free chlorine residual in their household water.

Building on this success, a number of other organizations, including Oxfam America (whose program was covered recently by NPR) began incorporating dispensers into their WASH interventions. To date, IPA has provided dispenser hardware and technical assistance to six organizations on the ground in Haiti. There are currently 100 dispensers up and running, which provide access to safe water for approximately 20,000 people.

Fighting cholera requires a holistic approach and chlorine dispensers provide a

complementary intervention to other WASH and public health programs – such as the cholera vaccine. There is significant interest in dispensers from the government and other large-scale organizations in Haiti already. IPA aims to work with partners to scale-up dispensers to provide access to safe water to one million people in Haiti over the next few years, providing a significant contribution to the ongoing battle against cholera.

[For more information on IPA's chlorine dispensers, click here.](#)

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