EHP Brief
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

Improved Hygiene in Kinshasa Markets, Democratic Republic of Congo

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It was a hot, humid morning in Kinshasa. Amid the piles of vegetables and fruit in the market, colorfully clad Congolese were grouped around a health education specialist, whose voice could be heard above the din of daily commerce. This health education session was part of a USAID project to improve sanitation and hygiene in Kinshasa markets. The project is a component of the Urban Environmental Health Strategy implemented by the USAID mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A sanitation unit in a Kinshasa market

The strategy developed by the Environmental Health Project (EHP) in collaboration with USAID's Regional Urban Development Office (RUDO/South Africa), provided a framework for both

Latrines in a Kinshasa market built under the USAID projects to improve market sanitation and hygiene

short-term and long-term interventions. Short-term interventions include the implementation of three urban environmental health pilot projects. One pilot project implemented by Action Against Hunger (Action Contre la Faim ACF-USA) and local authorities, with technical assistance from EHP and the University of Kinshasa School of Public Health, was related to market sanitation. Under the project, "sanitation units" were constructed in seven Kinshasa markets that serve the majority of the city's six

million inhabitants. These units include toilets, showers, water points for washing hands, and water storage tanks equipped to collect rainwater for use in the units. In addition, 11 drinking-water points were established in locations where water was not previously available to the market vendors and customers. Nongovernmental organizations and private businesses maintain these new facilities, generating funds by charging fees for their use. The health education specialists use the water points and sanitation units as sites for teaching the market community about food and market hygiene as well as individual and domestic hygiene. Surveys of market vendors' knowledge of the causes of diarrhea and of behaviors associated with food and market hygiene showed two- to fivefold increases in less than a year under the project.

Health education specialist at a water point

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