



# A YOUNG TEENAGER TAKES HEALTHY HYGIENE INTO HER OWN HANDS

A SCHOOL HANDWASHING AND HYGIENE PROGRAM REACHES 125,000 STUDENTS AND CONTRIBUTES TO PAKISTAN'S COVID-19 RESPONSE IN KHYBER-PAKHTUNKHWA PROVINCE

Thirteen year-old Swera Naz attends a government primary school in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, where she is an active member of the school's handwashing and hygiene club. Swera and her classmates joined the club after they learned about handwashing and hygiene in a learning session offered by the USAID Integrated Health Systems Strengthening and Service Delivery Activity. The sessions took place in February 2020 and were more timely than anyone could have known.

About a month later, all schools in KP were closed to help curb the spread of COVID-19, and Swera had to stay home. But she didn't let this stop her from talking about good handwashing practices with her friends and family.

"The handwashing and hygiene sessions taught me more about contagious diseases. I never knew that handwashing has steps to be followed. I was lucky to attend these sessions because they helped me protect myself against infection during the pandemic. Now handwashing has become my habit. I am also trying to keep my home and street clean and I want to educate more people on handwashing to protect them from COVID-19," said Swera.

Swera lives with ten members of her family and many of them didn't previously know how handwashing can help prevent infectious diseases. After Swera shared what she'd learned at school, her four sisters and two brothers teamed up with her to teach other kids and adults in their community about good handwashing and hygiene practices.



“Swera is always explaining the benefits of good hand hygiene and its importance for everyone. I am so proud of her as she is seeking to educate people with this purpose,” said Swera’s father.

When the schools reopened in January 2021, Swera and her friends continued leading the handwashing club, including helping to raise funds for a wash station at their school. The wash station was constructed based on a model included in a booklet distributed at handwashing and hygiene sessions.

“It is the best example that our coming generations are quite aware of their roles in society to lead best social practices,” said Swera’s teacher after seeing how Swera and her classmates continue to practice and advocate for good handwashing and hygiene practices.

The USAID Integrated Health Strengthening and Service Delivery Activity conducted handwashing and hygiene awareness sessions for more than 125,000 students at more than 500 schools in KP. The sessions have contributed positively to Pakistan’s COVID-19 response.

