



PROJECT MY MAI 2020 - 2021 REPORT

Enabling vulnerable communities to reduce plastic waste
by giving them access to safe drinking water



Summary

Project My Mai was launched by Trashtag Kuwait in partnership with Engie Solutions on September 1st, 2020. Trashtag Kuwait is a nonprofit grassroots organization that focuses on tackling various forms of pollution with a holistic approach, perfectly demonstrated in Project My Mai. The initiative focuses on a community inclusive approach to enabling low income earning households to divert their use of plastic waste by making safe drinking water accessible through the installation and replacement of water filters.

Since its launch Project My Mai has helped over 200 homes in Kuwait gain access to safe drinking water, including over 1,500 individuals, of which consists nearly 400 children. Project My Mai has also saved over one million plastic water bottles in waste and continues to operate today.

Overview

Trashtag Kuwait first responded to the pandemic by mobilizing our network of volunteers into various fields and on-the-ground efforts in offering relief to those affected by the pandemic. Trashtag Kuwait has directly assisted over 500 families in aid by launching Project Community; and in collaboration with other local CSO's, has been able to contribute to the assistance of hundreds more.

On our mission however, we came to a metastatic intersection; our work as environmentalists and our campaign against single use plastic waste was met face to face by the reality that many impoverished communities relied heavily on single use plastic bottled water versus tap water. Many homes we encountered lacked finances to provide for a water filtrate system or had filter candles that had way past their functioning capacity and could not afford to replace them. Some homes in particularly deregulated neighborhoods were financially burdened by having to replace their water filter every 2 weeks due to the extremely poor infrastructures contaminating their tap water.

While Kuwait's tap water quality meets all WHO standards that characterize it as potable, often is the case that the water later becomes contaminated on its route through the household faucet. Due to poor and infrequent maintenance of water tanks and pipes the water no longer can be deemed as 100% safe and free of contaminants, unless there is the presence of a water filtration system and an up to date water filter candle.

Trashtag Kuwait aims to continue to help families gain access to clean drinking water while counteracting the need of plastic water bottles. Families rely on bottled water not only for drinking but also to safely prepare baby formula for newborns and infants. By not having access to clean water this risks the food security of the most vulnerable group, infants and toddlers.

Scope & Analysis

In partnership with our friends at Engie Solutions, Project My Mai launched in September 2020. In February of 2021 The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences joined Project My Mai to fund its further development.

For the first half of the initiative volunteers and plumbers from Engie Solutions installed water filters 3 days a week, 3 hours per day for a total of 9 hours a week. Starting the second half of the initiative till present, the working days increased to 5 days, for a total of 15 hours per week. Each shift being handled by one plumber from Engie Solutions and a trained volunteer from Trashtag Kuwait.

Shifts consist of buying and stocking on supplies needed per the individual needs of the homes previously assessed, driving to various locations of registered cases on the waiting list for installation, door-to-door surveying, the installation or replacement of filters and transporting back to Engie facilities in time for plumbers to make their regular on site working hours.

From September 2020 to present (February 15, 2021 at the date this report was written) Project My Mai has assisted

- **228 homes in gaining access to safe drinking water.**
- **1,525 individuals gaining access to safe drinking water.**
- **Of the 1,525 individuals to benefit from the initiative, 365 are children.**
- **Of the 228 homes, 126 homes received a filter replacement and 102 homes received a complete water filter installation.**

In a survey conducted through door to door assessments and online data collection via volunteers, it was found that **of 228 homes 38% of the beneficiaries relied on plastic bottled water, 14% of beneficiaries said they sometimes relied on plastic bottled water and 22% of beneficiaries indicated that they resorted to drinking water from an unprotected source.** The remaining 26% of beneficiaries neglected to answer this question.

Through the initial projection proposed to Engie Solutions and other interested parties such as The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, it was predicted that should an initiative of this magnitude reach an estimated 500 homes or 2,000 individuals (as it was previously inferred that each home consisted of an average minimum of 4 individuals), Project My Mai would save the environment from 1,800,000 bottles of plastic waste.

Currently the average number of individuals per home that has benefitted from the initiative is nearly 7, which is why in completing 228 homes we came closer to our goal of a minimum of 2,000 individuals. The average individual is supposed to drink 2-3 liters of water a day. If rounded to 2.5 and divided by the average size store bought plastic water bottle then multiplied by the number of days a new filter lasts, which per most filter manufacturers is 6 months, then we have,

5 water bottles a day x 30 days x 6 months = 900 water bottles.

Multiplied by the 1,525 individuals that we have assisted up to date, the projected number of water bottles that Project My Mai has averted in waste is 1,372,500 water bottles.

Project My Mai is still an active initiative that is now transitioning into a much needed program that tackles the systemic way the absence of resources forces low income earning communities to rely on traditional plastics and other practices that are no longer considered sustainable. Through holistic approach and cultural understanding, Project My Mai enables vulnerable communities to gain access to potable water while supporting their inclusion in the growing wave of environmental sustainability.