

Emergency Distribution of WaterGuard in Liberia



Background

The free distribution of WaterGuard in cholera hot-spot communities has been necessary during high risk periods since the product was launched in 2009 in order to mitigate the risk of cholera outbreak: for example at times of increased risk during the rainy season, and during periods when diarrheal disease surveillance data indicate significant levels of increase. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the mass distribution of free bottles of WaterGuard has suppressed demand for the commercially sold product.

The free distribution of WaterGuard is not planned under this program, however if it is required during the duration of its implementation (during a cholera outbreak for example), PSI will supply free WaterGuard product using a voucher system, with bottles collected by users from sales points, in order to retain the profit incentive for merchants to stock and sell WaterGuard, to reinforce perception of the product's value, and to build awareness of private sector supply channels for future consumer purchase.

Distributing WaterGuard through the Private Sector

PSI will pilot the WaterGuard voucher distribution system in Monrovia for the first year by identifying 40 retail vendors that will stock and sell WaterGuard, and accept the vouchers for in exchange for it. In the event of a Cholera outbreak or during a high-risk period the vouchers can be purchased from PSI by organizations that want to distribute WaterGuard to Cholera prone communities. Because this program is a pilot the vouchers will only be given to organizations that plan to distribute them in the pilot zones of Monrovia.

THE WHITE BOTTLE



When WaterGuard was first introduced in Liberia it came to two forms, the regular blue bottle and the generic equivalent that was in a white bottle. The white bottle has typically been used for distribution in emergency cases and as free samples.

Since the voucher system is only being piloted in Monrovia PSI will still make the white bottle available in locations where vouchers cannot be redeemed. However, the goal is to make the voucher system nationwide.

The vendors will be selected based on their accessibility and ability to continuously stock WaterGuard. Once registered, the WaterGuard vendors will be continuously monitored by PSI supply chain agents to ensure that WaterGuard is always available. Additionally, the vendors will be clearly branded to ensure that potential customers are aware that WaterGuard is sold there.

How the Voucher System Works

Any organization that wishes to distribute WaterGuard in response to a cholera emergency can purchase vouchers from PSI-Liberia. The organization will be required to inform PSI-Liberia where they plan to distribute the vouchers for two reasons.

1. In order for PSI to ensure that the vouchers are being distributed in locations with nearby sales points where they can be redeemed.
2. To be able to track where vouchers are being distributed and where they are being redeemed.

The vouchers will be distributed in booklets of 50 and will be marked with serial numbers and other security features to ensure that they are not easily duplicated. The organization that is distributing the vouchers will be required to give a brief explanation to beneficiaries stating that a voucher can be redeemed at a registered WaterGuard retailer in their community. Once the beneficiary takes the voucher to the registered WaterGuard retailer, he/she will receive 1 bottle of WaterGuard. There is no charge to the beneficiary.

Community Awareness

PSI will conduct community awareness activities on the new vouchers to make beneficiaries aware of how to use them. Community awareness will be carried out through the following channels:

1. **Interpersonal communication:** In areas where the vouchers are being distributed, PSI supply chain agents will go into the communities and inform community members on how to use the vouchers and where they can be redeemed.
2. **Print:** The vouchers will have printed instructions for redemption and there will be leaflets distributed with the names and locations of the WaterGuard Retailers that will accept the vouchers.

Vendor Payment

Vendors who accept vouchers for WaterGuard will be reimbursed by the project (PSI) at the normal retail price. Vendors can redeem their vouchers by bringing them into the PSI/L office or they can be collected by a supply chain agent. Once the vouchers have been confirmed the vendors will be reimbursed through Lonestar Mobile Money Service. The Mobile Money service is an electronic funds transfer (EFT) service that will allow PSI to transfer funds electronically to the vendor. The vendor is able to cash out the reimbursement at any Mobile Money office, which are conveniently located in all major towns and cities in the country. In order for the vendors to receive a voucher reimbursement via EFT all they will need is an active Lonestar phone number. PSI will enroll all registered vendors for the Mobile Money service at no cost to the vendor. It is important to note that the vendor is subject to the Mobile Money transactional fees for usage. The vendor is charged a transaction fee if they wish to cash out the funds they received, which is approximately 50LD for every 4 cases of WaterGuard. If they choose to use the funds as airtime, they will not be charged the fee.