

**Domain:** Water supply

**Age group:** 8-14 years

**Subjects:** Water use, water-borne diseases, schistosomiasis

## 3.8 Bill Harzia

### Learning goals:

#### Knowledge:

- The children understand the risks of remaining too long in surface water which contains schistosomes.
- Older children know the source of infection, transmission, symptoms, prevention and treatment of urinary schistosomiasis and other water-borne diseases.

#### Attitude:

- They want to avoid risky water uses by themselves and by others.

#### Practical skills:

- They stop swimming or standing in schistosome-infested water while bathing and washing clothes.

#### Psychosocial life skills:

- They practise skills required for active listening and for giving feedback, critical and creative thinking, cooperation and teamwork, and can understand different practices and underlying factors.

### Participatory methods:

Role-play, short skit (little drama)

### Materials:

No materials required. Optional: one or two pieces of rope, chalk or some coloured powder to mark the water source; white or grey paper (e.g. toilet paper) for wrapping. The floor should be clean enough for children to crawl on.

### Activities:

'Bill Harzia' is a role-play with six to ten volunteers to act in the following parts:

- A boy who herds cattle, chases birds from crops or does other work that is common locally
- A group of boys who go swimming
- A group of girls who go to wash clothes
- One or two children who go to take a bath
- A child acting a snail
- Bill Harzia, the egg that hatches in a snail and becomes a worm. (Bilharzia is another name for the disease schistosomiasis.)

The role-play is set in a village with a pond, an irrigation canal or any other water source with stagnant water in which Bill Harzia can grow into a dangerous worm. The play starts with the snail crawling into the source and enjoying him/herself in the water. After a short while it gets tired and hides itself in a corner of the pond.

A boy arrives herding his goats or cattle. He relieves himself in the water. He complains of pain in his stomach and notices that his urine is slightly red.

While he is urinating, Bill Harzia appears, bent into the shape of an egg. (If paper or cloth is available the worm may wrap itself up.) Bill jumps into the water and starts looking for the snail. When Bill finds the snail, it links up with the snail, still in its shape of an egg. Together they lurk in a corner of the water source. Meanwhile, the herdsboy returns to his animals and continues to suffer from stomach pains.

Other water users now come to the water source. They talk, make fun and pretend to swim, wash themselves and wash some clothes. Suddenly, Bill Harzia stretches out, loosens himself from the snail, throws off his paper or cloth and attacks the other children in the water. They fly, but alas, they are too late. Bill Harzia has already touched them. Soon they are all suffering from stomach ache and complaining about passing blood in their urine.

- After the play, facilitate a discussion asking, for example:
  - What was the herdsboy doing?
  - Why did the other children become ill?
  - How did this happen?
  - What could they have done differently?
- Use the play to facilitate a discussion on gender and poverty. Ask the children to comment upon the ways in which the different groups of children used the water. When the discussion focuses on how some children play while others must work, facilitate a discussion about what this may mean for the children and what can be done.

### **Application:**

- Ask the children to lay out the contours of a water source using the rope, chalk, coloured powder or any other local materials such as small pebbles or sand.
- Choose one child, making sure that socially disadvantaged children get a fair chance to be Bill. Bill stands in the source, the other children divide themselves around the edge.
- When you call out, "In the lake!" (or whatever the local source) all children must jump in.
- When you call, "Out of the lake!", they jump out. While the students are in the water, Bill Harzia touches as many children as s/he can. These children drop out of the game. The game goes on until one child remains, who is the winner.

The game is a good entry for asking refresher questions about what schistosomiasis is, how it is caused, how it spreads and how it can be avoided, recognised, and treated. The drama and game also lend themselves well for a parents' day or for older students to act out with the more junior classes.

### **Learning indicators:**

- The children understand the risks of staying in bilharzia-infested water.
- They can give local names of the disease and explain how it is passed on and how it can be prevented.
- Older children can give the official name and describe the cycle of transmission, symptoms, prevention and treatment.
- They can give at least three examples of risky practices and explain that the longer you stay in the water, the greater the risk that you become infected.
- They can mention at least three ways in which they avoid infection.
- They can explain how the disease is related to gender and poverty.

### **Competence:**

## **Safe use of surface water**



*Boys in the classroom* (Photo: Mariëlle Snel)

