

# Mother Africa

## Safer Healthy Homes Project

2021



The mission of Mother Africa is to support African refugee and immigrant women and their families to reach their highest potential. We are committed to leadership building, advocacy, and community action to reduce barriers to healthcare, education, safety, and economic independence while fostering a comfortable space to celebrate our cultures, our families, and our growth.

The Hazardous Waste Management Program (Haz Waste Program) offers education, assistance, and incentives to businesses and residents of King County to reduce hazardous material exposure. Guided by our Racial Equity Strategic Plan, the Haz Waste Program partners collaboratively with communities to ensure that our outreach and engagement is racially equitable and informed by community priorities.

### OVERVIEW

The success of the 2020 Safer Healthy Homes (SHH) Pilot brought us together for a second year of teaching families how to reduce their exposure to hazardous materials at home. Our objectives continue to be raising awareness and encouraging behavior change as community members learn how to identify hazardous household cleaners and safer alternatives, proper disposal, mold safer cleaning and lead exposure prevention. We speak and teach in the languages of the communities we serve: Arabic, French and Mai Mai (spoken in Somalia.)



# Feedback Means Improvement

## How did the SHH team make the virtual educational visit better?

- The team listened to SHH Promoter's feedback and spread the content over two educational visits to allow more time for interaction and hands-on practice.
- We made the virtual visits more interactive and engaging which made the visit more fun and impactful. We encouraged participants to practice cleaning recipes at home.
- We changed a survey question about reading labels so we could better measure our impact.
- We saw a need in the Mai Mai community and expanded our resources to a third language.

## How did the SHH team make the virtual workshops better?

- The team realized the water workshop was important to the communities we serve, so we kept the workshop explaining drinking water, rainwater and wastewater and connections with hazardous household products.
- SHH Promoters developed interpretation skills and implemented best practices as we simultaneously interpreted in Arabic, French and Mai Mai.



(SHH Promoters - Mother Africa)

# Educational Visits

## PROCESS

Educational visits continued to be virtual, because of pandemic restrictions. SHH Promoters from Mother Africa recruited **24 Mai Mai** speakers, **31 Arabic** speakers, and **31 French** speakers for a total of **86** participants representing **367 family members**.

After conducting a pre-educational visit survey, SHH Promoters delivered a safer cleaning kit to each family. SHH promoters coached participants on how to use the Safer Cleaning Kit to identify safer products and make their own cleaners using baking soda and vinegar. In the second visit, participants learned that mold is hazardous and learned practices to prevent, reduce and clean mold. Participants learned about lead, where it might be inside their homes, possible health effects, and ways to reduce lead exposure.



(Safer Cleaning Kit given to each participant)

Do you think houses are built differently in your country than here? How does that affect the way you clean?



Promoters began the educational visit honoring participants' backgrounds by asking questions about cleaning habits in their home country and how they are different from how they clean now. Promoters introduced the concept of "hazard" by asking if the participant had ever experienced harm while cleaning. Then participants gathered products from around their homes, reading labels and learning which are hazardous.

(PowerPoint images, viewed on mobile phones, were used to guide the content of the educational visits.)

# Safer Cleaning Participants

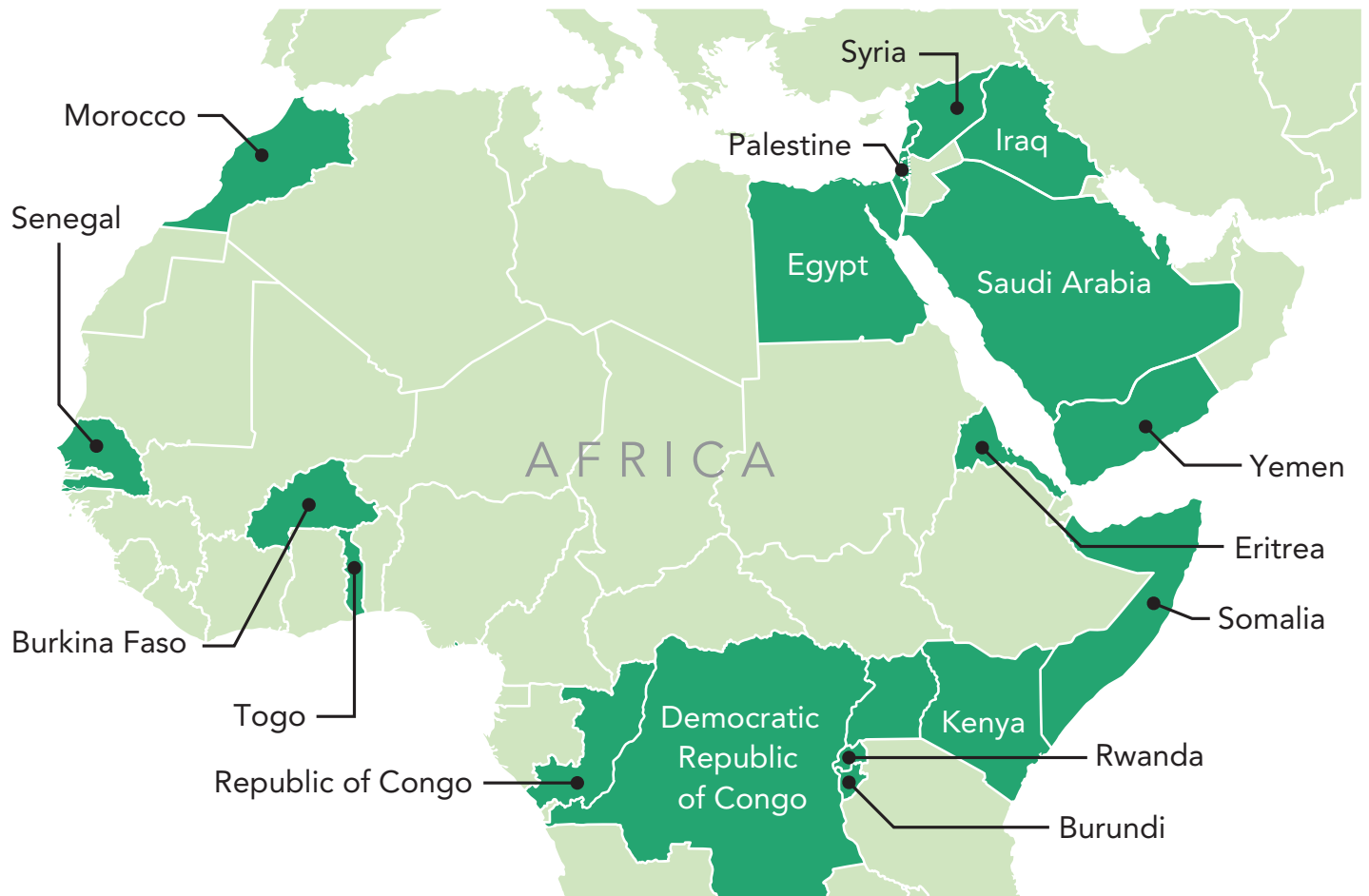
## PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTED 12 KING COUNTY CITIES AND 16 COUNTRIES

A total of 86 Arabic, French, and Mai Mai-speaking families participated in the safer cleaning trainings.

### Participants' Location in King County



### Participants' Country of Origin



# Safer Cleaning Participants

## WHAT PEOPLE LEARNED

For the educational visits, the SHH Promoters conducted a pre- and post- survey with all 86 participants. This allowed us to record changes in participant awareness and behavior change. The Mother Africa team worked with the participants over a period of nine months, with multiple contacts with each participant, so we were able to maintain contact and survey all 86 participants at the beginning and end of the educational visits.



"We don't have breathing problems anymore..."



"My allergies have stopped."

Survey responses from 86 participants before and after the educational visit

| BEFORE   | QUESTIONS  | AFTER |
|--|--|-------|
| 12%  | Do you make cleaning products using recipe?                  | 99%   |
| 33%  | Do you look for a safety sign or words on cleaning products? | 99%   |
| <b>How do you get rid of hazardous products?</b>               |  |       |
| 2%   | Take to a hazardous collection site                          | 97%   |
| 51%  | Put in the trash   | 1%    |
| 27%  | Pour down toilet   | 0%    |
| <b>How do you prevent mold from growing?</b>                   |  |       |
| 24%  | Open windows   | 97%   |
| 14%  | Clean with soap and water                                    | 50%   |
| 20%  | Clean with bleach  | 1%    |
| <b>Do you know how to protect yourself from lead exposure?</b> |  |       |
| 86%  | I don't know   | 0%    |
| 1%   | Wash your hands  | 78%   |
| 0%   | Leave shoes outside  | 57%   |
| 1%   | Eat a good diet  | 55%   |



"I feel better since I stopped using bleach."



"I have more energy."

# Awareness Improved from 2020 to 2021

Reading product labels at time of purchase can help people choose safer products and have less exposure to hazardous household materials.

## HOW CAN I BUY A HOUSEHOLD PRODUCT THAT IS SAFER FOR MY FAMILY?

| Safest    | Safe enough    | Somewhat harmful    | Most harmful – avoid    |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Find a product with these logos on the front or back.</p>  | <p>Read the product label. Product that does NOT have the words CAUTION, WARNING, DANGER or POISON.</p>  | <p>Read the product label. Product with the words CAUTION or WARNING.</p>  | <p>Read the product label. Product with the words DANGER &amp; POISON. It is the most harmful for you and your family.</p>  |

Please note: EPA Safer Choice products are the safest in their class, even if it says CAUTION on the label. Questions? Call the HazLine at 206-296-4692 or visit [HazWasteHelp.org](http://HazWasteHelp.org)  
Available in alternative formats. Please call 206-296-4692 or TTY: 711

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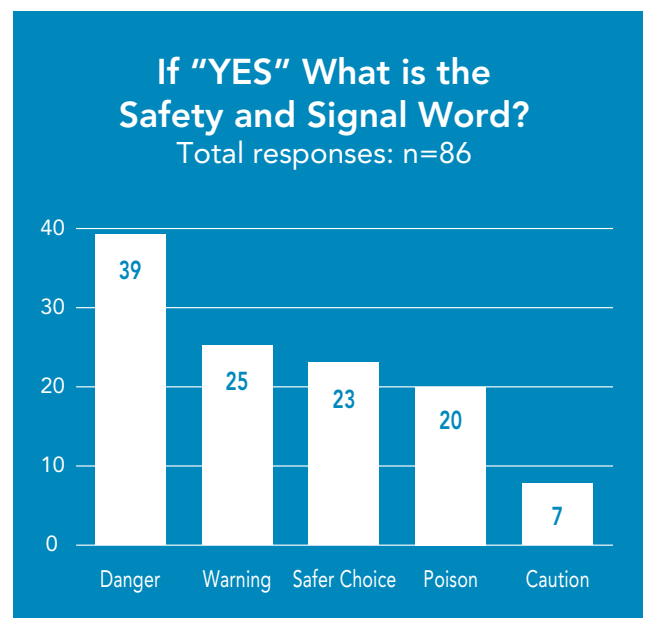


## 2020

In our 2020 post-educational visit survey, 53% of participants responded “yes” when asked, “Can you tell if a cleaning product you buy in the store can harm you or your family?” However, of the 53 comments to the question, “How can you tell?” only one mentioned a signal word and only one mentioned “safer products.” We were concerned by this result because it seem to show that after the educational visit, most participants did not know how to identify hazardous products and safer alternatives by using the simplest method available to consumers – reading product labels.

## 2021

For 2021 we modified the survey question to read, “When you go to the store, is there a safety sign or word you look for on a cleaning product that tells you it could harm you or your family?” Our 2021 post-survey results showed significant improvement from 2020, with 99% answering, “Yes.” Even more significant were the comments in response to the question, “If yes, what is that safety sign or signal word?” These results suggest that in 2021, most participants could name signal words and an eco-logo, which we hope will better prepare them to shop for less hazardous products.



# Workshops

Two workshop topics were chosen based on participants' interest from the 2020 pilot year. In 2021, both workshops had an English-speaking presenter, with live interpretation by SHH Promoters speaking Arabic, French and Mai Mai. We used best practices for interpretation, including have a script available for translation ahead of time, English spoken in two sentence chunks, and practice sessions.

## VITRUAL WATER WORKSHOP

91 participants

Attendees defined and made the connection between drinking water, rainwater, and wastewater. Community members asked many questions, mostly on the origin and safety of drinking water.

"Thank you, it was so great."



## VITRUAL LEAD WORKSHOP

86 participants

Attendees learned about lead, its health effects, and ways to reduce exposure. Most questions were about the health effects of lead exposure.

"This is powerful information."



## THE BROADER REACH OF THE SAFER HEALTHY HOMES PROJECT

The Safer Healthy Homes Project served more than just the 86 families who had the virtual educational visits. Others in the Mother Africa community came to the virtual workshops. And 200 families received hygiene bags (sanitizers, face masks, cleaning products). And for some, the Safer Healthy Homes project was an introduction to other services and support provided by Mother Africa: an important first step to becoming part of the Mother Africa family.

"This program is about changing cleaning behaviors. We teach participants to stop using toxic products and we support the whole family living in a safer, healthier home."

~ Kholoud Naser Aldeen, Program Manager, Mother Africa



## THANK YOU!

The Hazardous Waste Management Program wants to thank the Mother Africa team for your hard work and dedication to the families served by the Safer Healthy Homes Project.

This project was lead by Program Manger, Kholoud Naser Aldeen and former Program Coordinator, Nimo Mohamed Abdi. We also want to recognize Health Promoters, Rasha Elshaarawi, Jeanne d'Arc Musabyimana, and Sahar Alarasi.

Mother Africa would like to extend their appreciation to Julia Presar, the Hazardous Waste Project Manager.

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