

Chain reaction



Budhari Shashwa, from Aurda village, India, is part of a women's self-help group designed to spread good hygiene messages. Women from different villages come together to receive training and then return to their homes to educate others.

Budhari says, "I passed on what I had learnt to others in my village. The messages have now spread across the villages. The women have not only shared it with their groups, they have shared it with their families and with their neighbours too. Then the neighbours have done the same – so a chain is created."

Clean hands in Uganda



Noy from Nsasa village, Uganda, conducts hygiene workshops promoting the use of devices such as the 'tippy tap', which are compulsory outside all latrines in the village. Built from local materials, these cheap, simple taps encourage hand-washing, reducing the spread of illness.

Noy explains, "A tippy tap consists of a water-filled container suspended on a wooden frame. It is operated by a foot pedal which tips the container, releasing a stream of water onto the hands. It allows the user to wash their hands without touching anything, thus avoiding the risk of passing faecal contamination on to subsequent users."

Messages worth shouting about



Ten year old Rony (centre right, blue collared shirt), from Laloich village, Bangladesh, takes part in a monthly children's rally designed to promote good hygiene practices. The children walk in procession through the village chanting messages, learnt at school, about using clean water and the safe disposal of faeces. Rony and his friends have helped inspire their neighbours to build new household latrines. Now nearly every house in the village has a toilet.

"We shout loudly to make sure all people in the village hear us, even people out working in the fields! This is happening in other villages too, it's very good. Now people are feeling much stronger and healthier, and happier, me especially!" says Rony.

Improving hygiene



Good hygiene practices, such as hand-washing and safe drinking water storage, are essential for maximising the health benefits of safe water sources and sanitation facilities. Evidence shows that when good hygiene accompanies the provision of water and sanitation the number of deaths caused by diarrhoeal diseases is reduced by an average of 65%.

WaterAid and its partners promote good hygiene practices through a range of activities and strategies, led by communities, which help to ensure sustainable behaviour change.



WaterAid transforms lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities.



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What is improved hygiene?

Hygiene education encourages people to replace their unsafe hygiene practices with simple, safe alternatives. Most people are only too happy to use clean water and safe sanitation facilities once they are readily available, but without knowledge of good hygiene the health benefits will be greatly reduced.

Simple things like hand-washing with soap after going to the toilet and before eating are crucial in preventing water- and sanitation-related diseases, like cholera, dysentery and typhoid, which result in the deaths of around 1.4 million children a year.

A starting point for improving hygiene is initiating a discussion with communities about what they know, do and want in relation to hygiene. Actively involving communities in decision-making ensures projects are sustainable and appropriate to their beliefs.

WaterAid and its partners recognise that people are not just motivated to adopt good hygiene because they understand the health benefits. Improvements in privacy, convenience, environmental cleanliness, self-esteem and social status also help motivate behaviour change.

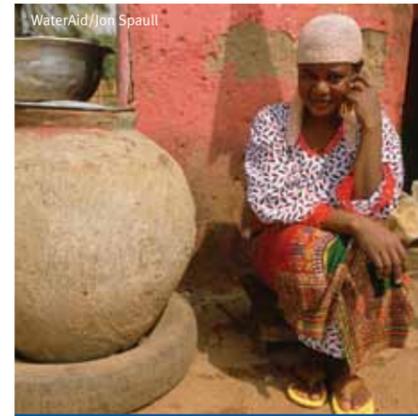
Hygiene activities

The following are examples of activities used to establish a community's needs before hygiene education begins:

- A community sorts pictures of different hygiene practices into categories ranging from very common to uncommon, and bad to good. They then discuss the practices and how community members can change their own behaviour.
- Pictures showing a range of methods of faeces disposal are arranged into a ladder. The community then discuss where on the ladder they are now, where they would like to be and how they can get there.
- Two posters are used, one showing a 'before' scene (a problem within the community) and the other an 'after' scene (an improved situation). The discussion focuses on what the community thinks are feasible steps it can take to change conditions from 'before' to 'after'.
- A community maps their area and marks on important places, water points and latrines to highlight any problems with their water and sanitation facilities.



A village community map.



Candy Yakubu from Ghana uses covered water storage jars to reduce the risk of contamination.

Hygiene strategies

These are examples of the inclusive, practical and appropriate strategies used by WaterAid and our partners to both build on and improve hygiene practices:

Local health motivators

Community members are recruited to promote key hygiene practices to their friends and neighbours. Women are often recruited in these roles as they are most affected by water and sanitation issues. By receiving training and taking on an important role they also strengthen their status within their community.



Ann Sanoubbiti, Uganda, using a 'tippy tap' to wash her hands.

Children and schools

Children are taught good hygiene messages in schools through songs, games and drama. This is done because children are more open to discussing and changing hygiene habits than adults. When children learn the importance of good hygiene they are encouraged to pass these on to their families and friends, extending the benefits long into the future.



Children in Madagascar watch a hygiene promotion puppet show.

Community-wide activities

These can include practical demonstrations of hygiene practices, drama performances, radio and puppet shows, videos, picture books and cards, and health rallies.

Once improvements in hygiene practices have begun it is crucial that they continue. All the methods described here are community-led and designed to bring about sustainable behaviour change.



Mwanahamisi Hamisi from Tanzania storing her clean utensils on a dish rack.

Examples of safe hygiene practices

- Taking drinking water from protected sources like handpumps or protected wells, rather than rivers or ponds.
- Keeping water pots covered when they are not in use.
- Going to the toilet at a safe distance from water sources that are used for drinking, cooking or other household purposes.
- Ensuring animals are kept away from houses, water sources and latrines.
- Using a sanitary latrine instead of going to the toilet in the bush.
- Hand-washing with soap and water after going to the toilet and before eating.
- Making drainage channels or soakpits to take wastewater away from wells and homes.
- Washing fruit and vegetables before cutting and keeping cooked food covered and utensils off the ground.

Simple solutions to global problems

- The simple act of washing hands with soap and water can reduce diarrhoeal diseases by 47%.
- Washing face and hands regularly with clean water can prevent the spread of trachoma, the largest cause of preventable blindness in the developing world.
- Wearing shoes in latrines can stop hookworms penetrating the skin on people's feet.