

9 Global Handwashing Day and beyond

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Context

Global Handwashing Day (GHD) was initiated in 2008 during the International Year of Sanitation. The first GHD was a success around the world – over 80 countries and some 200 million children participated. The aims of the day are to shine a spotlight on the state of handwashing in every country, raise awareness of benefits of handwashing with soap (HWWS) and support a global and local culture of handwashing with soap. Global Handwashing Day was launched by the global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing with Soap, a coalition of international, private and academic organisations.¹

Much of the success of GHD is attributable to the universality of handwashing, and the ability of countries to take on the messages and use them in local contexts and activities. World records were set, with all levels of stakeholders involved and greater attention given to the importance of handwashing with soap. The second Global Handwashing Day, on 15 October 2009, matched the first in

¹ Partners of the PPPHW include Academy for Educational Development, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Colgate-Palmolive, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Procter & Gamble, UNICEF, Unilever, USAID, Water and Sanitation Program, and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

global participation and engagement. Now the challenge is to ensure that planning and activities for GHD can be a springboard for more advanced partnership, policy and planning for improved handwashing practices. This article discusses the successes and challenges of Global Handwashing Day to date with a view to addressing the question of how future GHDs can be fully used to

support improved handwashing communications and programming nationally. In particular, insights from countries are presented and discussed in light of the potential roles of partnership in bringing handwashing with soap into the mainstream. The insights and stories presented are based on UNICEF programming experiences.



Children participate in Global Handwashing Day activities in India

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Sanitation Coverage:		Water Coverage:	
Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
45%	76%	78%	96%

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the collective creativity and enthusiasm of all the countries celebrating Global Handwashing Day in the past few years. Their engagement has been the motor behind the Day and provided insights into partnering effectively toward better handwashing with soap practice. This article is based on the stories and the learnings that have been shared. I would also like to thank colleagues at UNICEF, particularly those in the Partnerships team who have gently guided our interactions with various sectors and the business community globally, allowing us to engage in handwashing with soap programming in new ways. Finally, thanks to Therese Dooley and Bette Scott for reviewing this paper and providing valuable inputs to its development.

Successes and challenges of global handwashing day

Adaptability of the messages and logo

Global Handwashing Day (GHD) has without doubt raised the profile for the business of promoting handwashing with soap through the many media/advocacy activities held on the day. The success of the campaign is due to many factors; but one important element has been the adaptability of centrally produced materials such as the GHD Planners Guide and the logo – the symbol for GHD. These were easily adapted and translated into national handwashing campaigns in over 80 countries.

Events such as staging and setting Guinness World Records for handwashing with soap, announcements in papers, television and radio as well as songs by national/international stars and SMS/internet campaigns have pushed handwashing to centre stage in many countries, if only for a day. Additionally the ability of countries to showcase national talents/celebrities (such as child stars in Mozambique and cricket celebrities in India) while giving the day a local flavour (such as rickshaw campaigns in Nepal and camel parades in Chad) is an added bonus. This is perhaps one of the key factors in the success of the day (see Box 1 for an example from Mali).

Linking with ongoing campaigns

Global Handwashing Day lent itself easily to current work in countries to support ongoing health campaigns. Particularly in 2009, swine flu (H1N1) campaigns and GHD activities had

greater combined power in terms of both outreach and impact. Information from countries such as Bolivia suggest that the heightened public awareness and fear of the swine flu (H1N1) epidemic increased rates of handwashing with soap and had a positive side effect in terms of reducing diarrhoeal disease (see Box 2).

Scale

As handwashing programs struggle with the issue of going to scale, Global Handwashing Day has not only provided a simple entry point for raising national awareness; but perhaps also provided a platform for decision-makers to announce national commitments and action. In many countries, the planning process, and possibly even a sense of global competition, has helped authorities to think big not only in terms of publicity but in terms of meaningful actions. There are excellent examples from South Asia where even small commitments on the national stage can mean huge impact for schools and behavioural norms country-wide (see Box 3). It is hoped this trend leads to greater investments, commitments and action beyond Global Handwashing Day.

Partnership

Another success factor of GHD is the strength of the Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing in terms of the expertise, reach and capacity. The ability of public, private and academic agencies to bring together an ideal mix of marketing, operation and evidence-based knowledge has been a major boost for HWWS efforts globally. Box 4 provides an

Box 1 Mali – Multiple handwashing fronts

On 15 October 2009, at Modibo Keita Sports Stadium in Bamako, a whistle blew, signalling the start of a mass handwashing demonstration – hoping to achieve a new world record. Out on the playing field, 10,000 children began lathering vigorously in unison. On stage, leading the handwashers, was the President of Mali. In the stands were many other government ministers, including the Minister of Health and his Cabinet, as well as other celebrities and dignitaries, and many more children – 15,000 people strong and all cheering the handwashers as they vigorously lathered, washed, rinsed and dried. A concert by a variety of famous artists and groups accompanied the handwashers. Later, another astonishing event took place: an earth-to-space discussion on the importance of handwashing with soap between astronaut Frank de Winne of the European Space Agency and schoolchildren in the town of Gao. Finally, three million text messages were sent out to mobile phone users, spreading the message far into the country.



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Box 2 Bolivia – Handwashing through social unity in a pandemic

Bolivia took handwashing with soap to the people during GHD celebrations, using street fairs, dramas, festivals and marches – even a soccer game between Bolivia and Brazil – to raise awareness of handwashing with soap. Street fairs and dramas highlighted that handwashing was not only an individual behaviour but had an element of social responsibility as well. This message became all the more critical when public concern about the H1N1 (swine flu) disease propelled GHD's significance and momentum. Heightened risk perception is claimed to be a motivator for health behaviour change as is the idea of 'affiliation' – doing what is considered to be the right thing. The combination of both in Bolivia's handwashing with soap campaigns seemed a driving factor in moving people to properly wash their hands and to make sure their neighbours did as well. Anecdotal evidence from Bolivia suggests that diarrhoeal rates dropped as an additional benefit during the H1N1 season due to increased handwashing with soap.



Children practise handwashing together

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example of how the different expertise of the group adds up to a strong group of allies advocating for HWWS globally.

Advocacy, education or behaviour change?

Countries have effectively engaged in activities to promote handwashing with soap and to celebrate GHD. The many activities can be categorised as:

- pure advocacy, for example, setting world records, street fairs;
- education, such as traditional hygiene education in schools; and
- activities on the line between awareness and national behaviour change campaigns, including the H1N1 swine flu campaigns and schools programs for handwashing with soap.

An understanding where advocacy ends and behaviour change programming begins is not required for organising either. However, understanding the difference between advocacy and programs for behavioural change can help in developing appropriate monitoring, setting realistic expectations and making long-term plans for national handwashing programs.

Hindering some of the efforts is a confused understanding of the terms advocacy, education and behaviour change and how they all fit into a long-term strategy for handwashing with soap and WASH in schools. The majority of activities from the past two years fall into the definition of advocacy and education – that is, high profile media events, schools education programs and discussions with decision-makers. Evaluations of GHD 2009 revealed that countries often evaluated advocacy-oriented activities against criteria for behaviour change rather than indicators or achievement in advocacy, awareness creation or policy impacts. This meant that, where the Global Handwashing Day emphasised advocacy, the evaluations did not fully reflect the successes and impact of those advocacy efforts. On the other hand, evaluations of behavioural change in advocacy programs could perhaps show a negative result for behaviour change where, in fact, this was never the planned intervention.

Very few of the activities were actually targeted to change behaviour in the sense of targeting the motivators of behaviours and looking to change behaviour over the long term. Awareness of handwashing is one step down the road to adopting the behaviour.

Box 3 India – HWWS at scale

In terms of sheer numbers, India leads the way in organising handwashing events at scale: last year reaching out to over 80 million people in 533,500 schools and community centres. India's strategy extends GHD beyond a single day, both to boost visibility and to move beyond a one-day focus on behaviour change into a campaign to create a social norm. India's Global Handwashing Day focused on two elements: the midday school meal and the proper way to wash hands, dealing with the fact that many people wash their hands, but not necessarily at the proper times or in the correct manner. Cricket sensation Sachin Tendulkar, a.k.a. the 'Master Blaster', told Indian children through the media that "clean hands are strong hands".

Part of the challenge for countries will be in collecting information on existing behaviours and developing the evidence on existing practice to galvanise national efforts into a national program aimed at long-term change. Effective monitoring will be an area of focus in upcoming campaigns.

This year, support to countries will look at strengthening the links between the various activities and setting outcomes and improving monitoring. The role of children in

each of these steps will be important. Furthermore, knowing specific outcomes that are desired, countries will be able to effectively plan appropriate partnerships, monitoring and activities to achieve these outcomes.

Looking forward

Rumours for contenders for this year's World Record challengers (Guinness World Record for the largest number of children washing hands) are already circulating and the work leading up

to this year's GHD events has begun. Following on from last year's activities, the questions for this year include: how can the momentum – the power and excitement – of Global Handwashing Day be converted into political will, better school handwashing programs, and greater attention to programming for behaviour change?

Partnering effectively

UNICEF has a rich history of partnership in public health sectors such as immunisation, HIV/AIDS and WASH to increase impact and reach of activities. Global Handwashing Day has provided yet another platform on which to develop joint campaigns with messages which can then be implemented by various partners. As in other sectors, partnership with the private sector is not new territory. What perhaps distinguishes GHD are the wide-



Children at Modibo Keita Sports Stadium, Mali, get ready to wash their hands at the handwashing stations

ranging partnerships that have either been proposed or developed and have quickly led to new opportunities and questions.

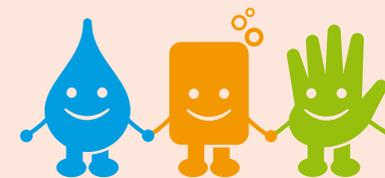
In the past two Global Handwashing Days, UNICEF at the global level has worked very effectively with the global PPPHW to promote GHD and improved HWWS. However at the country level, UNICEF tends to work most closely with Ministries of Health for GHD activities and there are few examples of partnering directly with the soap industry at country level for GHD. Partnership with soap companies has not consistently resulted in win-win situations given the inherent conflict of interest for UNICEF of promoting a behaviour (HWWS) and promoting a particular soap brand. Where partnerships often do succeed is when those partnerships are with industry partners outside of the soap sector, such as mobile phone providers where the issue of the service or product (that is, cell phone service) and the message (handwashing with soap) are not conflicting. For this reason, most partnerships with soap companies need to be 'unbranded', which has little appeal for country level soap brand managers thereby dissolving the partnership.

At the global level the branding issue is less problematic given that the partnership is with the parent companies (such as P&G, Unilever) as opposed to particular soap brands (for example, SafeGuard, Lifebuoy). Globally, these companies share a longer-term perspective on the overall value of GHD as a marketing/image vehicle and are less concerned with the more immediate concern of selling a particular brand.

From a governmental perspective, partnership with the private sector, while more frequent in the last few decades, still raises fears about

Box 4 Marketing support from Procter and Gamble

Procter and Gamble (P&G) understands the value of effective marketing in promoting distinctive brands. In collaboration with its partner brand design agency, Landor, the P&G team applied its considerable marketing knowledge to develop and test the GHD logo. Landor offered its services *pro bono* and received over 200 designs from its in-house team of designers. The designs were judged against three key criteria: 1) the logo had to appeal to children; 2) it had to efficiently convey the key elements of HWWS; and 3) it had to be easily recognisable globally. A selection of the most promising designs was presented to the Partnership for voting and discussion. The top designs were then field tested in approximately ten countries. The resulting logo consisting of a hand, a water droplet and a bar of soap was broadly translated into a series of posters, videos, etc. The support of the P&G and Landor teams is a great example of a partnership where unique expertise was leveraged in support of the Partnership's common goal.



Global Handwashing Day
October 15

the perceptions of the public. These fears include, for example, the possible perception by the public that government might favour one company over another or of conflicting interests (that is, promoting a particular brand and a public health message at the same time). For the most part, the public sector generally chooses unbranded campaigns as the middle road of partnership, meaning that soap companies are not allowed to present a brand in joint messages or activities with the government. For some companies, this has been a deal-breaker, other companies recognise the longer-term advantages of partnership/association and these alliances have worked effectively.

One successful approach for mitigating some of these concerns of PPP is the inclusion of soap manufacturer associations and smaller more local soap companies into the partnership from the start, ensuring transparency of the actions/meetings of the group and that no one group is seen to be given an unfair advantage. The presence of more than one soap company in a partnership has the added benefit of

self-regulating the private sector within the group, as all companies will be interested to see that no one company receives special consideration.

The conflict of interest in promoting a brand and a behaviour has confounded many GHD partnerships within countries. Split campaigns were seen in countries such as India and Bangladesh for GHD 2009. In India, the government held GHD on 27 October, due to the national Diwali celebrations. On 15 October another consortium of partners celebrated GHD in the state of Tamil Nadu in partnership with the state government. In this case, both campaigns were run in schools, supported by government and offered high level advocacy events. The experience here suggests that Global Handwashing Day has sustainability and is being taken on wholeheartedly by the private sector. It also suggests that there may be room for further thought and discussion as to whether stronger government coordination of GHD educational programming and public health messaging will need to play a role in years to come, as more partners take on GHD.

The reality of corporate social responsibility is changing, and with it, rules for partnering with the public sector. Most companies now realise the benefits of positively influencing the environments in which they work. For this, they are looking longer-term in terms of aligning economic, social and environmental goals. Companies involved in Global Handwashing Day often see the benefit of positioning new products around GHD, of using the excitement of the day for entering new markets as well as for supporting new handwashing habits in a new generation of consumers within schools. In this context, partnership makes sense, as the private sector brings marketing expertise and the promise of sustainability through its ongoing objective to drive soap sales.

What perhaps does need to evolve now is the capacity of the public sector to understand the range of partnership opportunities, fully assess the value of GHD in terms of education, advocacy and marketing, the rules for working with companies and how to negotiate effectively for better partnerships that lead to improved handwashing with soap in the long term, without

compromising the quality or integrity of campaigns. Towards this end, more constructive dialogue is needed on the role that private sector may play in public health and on the many different forms that profit can take.

Conclusion

Global Handwashing Day has raised awareness in much of the world. Now that the awareness is there, countries need to think strategically about how to move from good intentions, a great marketing campaign and awareness, toward the longer-term impact of creating behaviour change. Based on the lessons of the past year, some of the recommendations may include:

- Developing a national/local understanding of the state of current handwashing behaviours and existing schools programming on HWWS. This might include the current state of practice of HWWS, the facilities available to children for HWWS (that is, in schools and at home), the current state of knowledge of HWWS, and so on.
- Understanding the various stakeholders interested in improving behaviours which may include public and private sector and bringing all on board for a long-term vision of behaviour change, increasing the amount of handwashers globally and including handwashing with soap in basic school curricula.
- Understanding the various motivations and benefits to all partners and being explicit and firm in what skills/resources are needed, and the opportunities that are available through partnership.

- Taking stock of the advantages of partnering with different agencies in contrast to the benefits derived from the campaign for each. Using this knowledge to effectively negotiate knowledge/ resources exchange for an enhanced campaign.
- Developing a communications strategy for Global Handwashing Day that highlights the various advocacy events, educational activities and longer-term behaviour change, and the roles that different partners can play.
- Developing a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating each of the activities.



Handwashing stations at Modibo Keita Sports Stadium, Mali