

UNICEF Innovation Initiative: Promote hand washing with soap through design of water storage containers



Description of the end-user problem:

The lack of appropriate household devices for hand washing with soap impedes the world-wide uptake of this cost-effective public health measure.

Current user problem and where it is taking place:

Water is a requisite for hand washing with soap. Many people collect their water from distant sources, carry it home and store it in the house. It is often difficult to use this stored water for hand washing. The challenge is to get small quantities of water out of the containers for hygienic hand washing. Convenient low-cost storage and hand washing devices that make it easy to wash one's hands, conserve water and form a strategically-placed cue reminding people to wash their hands, are likely to facilitate the behaviour change, encouraging hand washing with soap at critical times (particularly after toilet use and before preparing or eating food).

Explain how solving this problem will improve life and for whom?

Hand washing with soap is one of the most effective and inexpensive ways to prevent diarrheal disease and pneumonia, which together are responsible for approximately 3.5 million child deaths every year. Yet, rates of hand washing throughout the developing world are low. Observed rates of hand washing with soap at critical moments – i.e., before handling food and after using the toilet – range from 0–34 percent.

Are there any possible drawbacks or considerations to take into account?

Numerous hand washing stations that conform to the three conditions described above have been developed. An example is the [TippyTap](#), which can be made from local materials, is very cheap, saves water and can be placed strategically/conveniently. After hygiene improvements projects initiate an interactive process of change, every single household in a community might develop, create and install their own type of TippyTap. It is not uncommon, however, to find that in time hardly anybody uses them.

Is something wrong with the technology? Do we lack an understanding on how to establish behaviour change? The development of a technology like this should involve a promotion strategy.

References

<http://www.irc.nl/page/13215>

At this time UNICEF does not yet have a website for submissions but you may contact Innovation Officer Diana Velasco with any questions or solutions:

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