

Hand washing in Africa

Hand washing behaviour change campaign designed by evidence and tailored to the target population



Country

Zimbabwe and Global

Partners

Eawag, WASH United, ActionAid International Zimbabwe

Background information

Hand washing with soap can dramatically cut the number of young children and people who get sick.

Project objectives

- To have sustainable hand washing practices and to increase commitment and political will of national decision-makers for hand washing with soap (including national policy changes).
- To disseminate the results and use by global WASH players around the world.

Beneficiaries

- Rural and urban population in Zimbabwe (1,5 million people)
- Decision makers
- Global WASH community

Costs

CHF 1,650,000

Duration

01.2014 – 06.2017

Contact

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Diarrhoea kills around 2,000 children every day, which is more than AIDS, malaria, and measles combined. And yet simply giving your hands a good washing with soap constitutes a very effective way to counter these infectious diseases. In rural and urban Zimbabwe, SDC is active in promoting this practice by means of a large-scale awareness-raising campaign involving all stakeholders from policy makers to care givers and pupils.

For most people, washing their hands with soap is common sense, but for many it is not an everyday habit. Therefore the starting point of these campaigns is a good understanding of what are the criteria that determine the hand washing behaviours of the target populations in Zimbabwe.

To achieve this goal, a unique approach is undertaken based on a scientific model developed by the Environmental and Health Psychology group of Eawag: the "Risk, Attitude, Norms, Abilities & Self-regulation" model (RANAS). In a nutshell, this model allows analysing the risks perceived to contract a disease, the beliefs and feelings of changing the behaviour, the cultural norms to be obeyed and the abilities/commitments to change the behaviour. This process assures that the populations are tackled regarding their unique motivations and not with irrelevant or even counterproductive measures. Meanwhile, policy makers and national players are involved to fine-tune a campaign tailored to the cultural and social context and define strategies to make those new hand washing behaviours durable.



The implementation of the campaigns is assured an implementing agency based in Zimbabwe. The innovative aspects of the campaigns lay upon the extensive use of media, the promotion by local and national champions and the highlight of positive messages of hand washing, showcasing values and symbols that are dear to the targeted population. Finally, an in-depth evaluation by Eawag assesses the effectiveness of such evidence-based campaign.

A series of innovative hand washing campaigns to exert a global influence

In 2013, SDC organized a first innovative hand washing campaign in India: this campaign was implemented on an unprecedented scale (more than 80 million people reached) and used both positive messages and innovative communication channels, including Bollywood actors and cricket stars as champions.

In order to develop a global product relevant in different contexts, SDC launches two additional campaigns in Zimbabwe, one in a rural context (Districts Zaka and Bikita), where little has been made so far with respect to hand washing awareness raising, and one in an urban context (Harare).

Additional information

www.eawag.ch/forschung/ess/gruppen/ehpsy/index_EN
www.wash-united.org
www.actionaid.org/zimbabwe