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# Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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## Hygiene Promotion





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A hand-washing station at a UNICEF-supported school in Lobaye Province, Central African Republic.

Improving access to safe water and sanitation facilities leads to healthier families and communities. However, when people are also motivated to practice good hygiene – especially hand-washing with soap – health benefits are significantly increased. Because the evidence on the [importance of hand-washing](#) with soap is clear, UNICEF has made it a programme priority.

UNICEF programmes help to promote hand-washing and hygiene behavioural change by:

- advocating for increased funding for hygiene activities and the inclusion of hygiene in sectoral policies and strategies;
- supporting national and sub-national hand-washing campaigns;
- recruiting high-profile decision makers and celebrities as hand-washing advocates;
- including strong hygiene components within its own WASH programmes in the field
- ensuring that hand-washing and hygiene are components of emergency response programmes;
- developing strategies and tools to encourage hand-washing promotion by community health and outreach workers;
- encouraging hygiene promotion in schools and the empowerment of children as agents of change within their families and communities.



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Hand-washing mural at a hospital in Monrovia, Liberia.

Education and communication are important components of a hygiene promotion programme. All people have a right to know about the relationship between water, sanitation, hygiene and the health of themselves and their families. However, education alone does not necessarily result in improved practices. Knowing about the causes of disease may help, but new hygiene practices may be too unfamiliar, too difficult, or take too much time, especially for poor people. Promoting behavioural change is a gradual process that involves working closely with communities, studying existing beliefs, defining motivation strategies, designing appropriate communication tools and finally encouraging practical steps towards positive practices. Communities should be fully engaged in the process at all stages using participatory processes, and special attention should be given to building on local knowledge and promoting existing positive traditional practices.

Behavioural change is necessary not only at the community level, but among decision makers as well. All stakeholders – from politicians and government officials to field workers and people themselves – must be encouraged to recognize the importance of hygiene.

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[Sanitary napkins in India](#)

[Promoting hygiene amongst earthquake survivors in Pakistan](#)

[Musicians campaign for a clean Ghana](#)

[Making children the change agents in India](#)

Hand-washing resources

[Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing with Soap](#) (from WSP, UNICEF and other partners)

[The Handwashing Handbook](#) (from WSP)

[International Year of Sanitation hygiene promotion page](#)

[Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion: Programming Guidance](#) (from WSSCC, UNICEF and other partners)

Global Handwashing Day

These 9 case studies cover a wide range of experiences from the field related to Global Handwashing Day, documenting successes and challenges in various settings. Find additional resources at the [Global Handwashing Day](#) site.

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