



October 15th 2010 * Chikali, Maharashtra

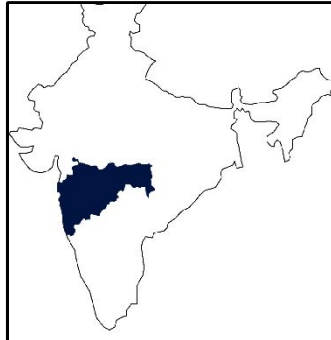
This report summarizes the activities of Grampari/WMG India on Global Handwashing Day 2010. It also illustrates some tools that community workers may find useful in hosting a hand washing promotion event.

Why is there a day for handwashing?

Hand washing with soap is the most effective and inexpensive way to prevent diarrheal and acute respiratory infections, which take the lives of millions of children in developing countries every year. Together, they are responsible for the majority of all child deaths. Yet, despite its lifesaving potential, hand washing with soap is seldom practiced and difficult to promote. Turning handwashing with soap before eating and after using the toilet into an ingrained habit could save more lives than any single vaccine or medical intervention – it could cut deaths from diarrhea by almost half and deaths from acute respiratory infections by one-quarter. Global Handwashing Day was initiated in 2008 to transform handwashing with soap from an abstract good idea into an automatic behavior performed in homes, schools and communities worldwide.

WHO did you celebrate with and WHERE?

We organized a handwashing program in a government school in Chikali, a village of 5000 people. Our target was the 100 school children ranging from Standards 1 to 7. Also there were the teachers, school administrators at the district level, the Sarpanch and other members of the local Gram Panchayat.



Chikali lies on the western side of Maharashtra



A few of our participants

How did you talk about WHY you wash your hands?

We talked about germs, how they make you sick and germ transfer. Since germs cannot be seen, this is often an abstract concept, especially for children. To help make this easier to understand, we used Glitterball, a plastic ball that is coated in petroleum jelly and then glitter. The glitter, representing germs is transferred by person to person both by throwing the ball around and by activities such as shaking hands or by touching food that is prepared by someone with 'glitter hands'. The glitter is transferred to the whole group in a matter of minutes. The glitter is similar to germs because it does not come off just by washing your hands with water – soap must be used. This really emphasizes that hands must be washed with soap.



Vanita sneezes into her hands and picks up the glitterball. Her sneezy germs are now on to the ball.

Vanita throws the ball to Mangal.

Mangal now has germs (glitter) on her hands.

Mangal greets Sangeeta.



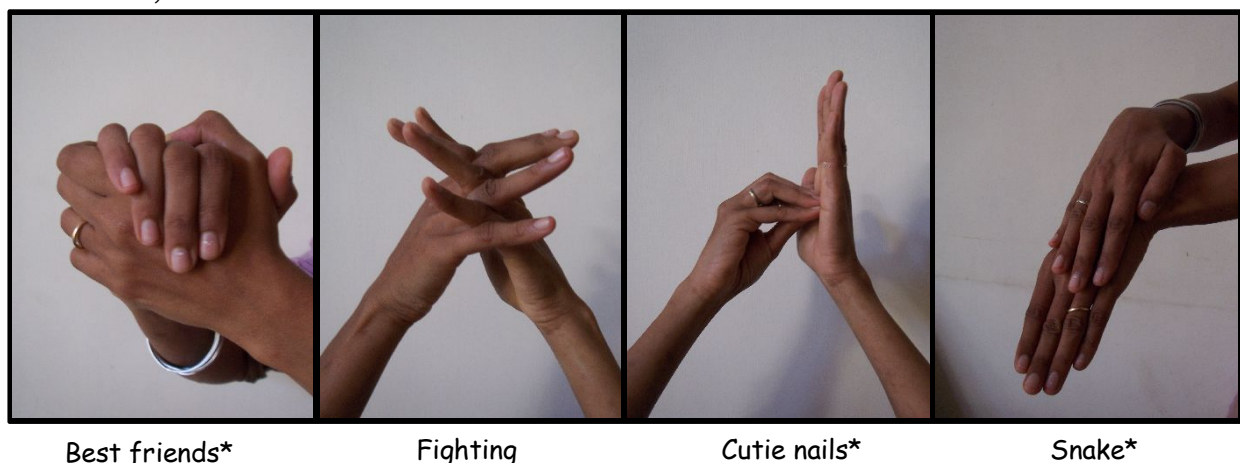
And what about WHEN you wash your hands?

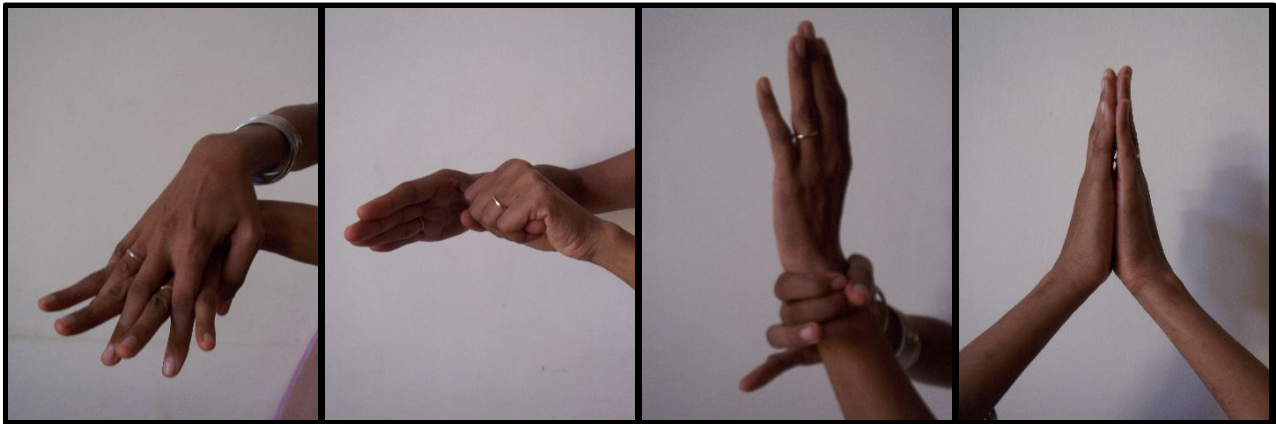
4 presenters from our team acted out 4 different situations. We asked the children to identify which of the four presenters should wash their hands. Once the children got to the point that all four people needed to wash their hands, they determined whether each presenter should wash their hands BEFORE or AFTER (or in some cases, before and after) the activity.



And then you illustrated HOW to wash your hands?

Studies have identified the areas on your hands that are most neglected during handwashing. To ensure that the children remember to wash these parts, we taught them a simple activity to perform while handwashing. Each part of the hand that needs to be washed is associated with a simple action (such as “fighting”) or animal (such as “snake”). Kids have fun performing the routine and end up washing their hands quite thoroughly. This is especially important in India, where most communities eat with their hands, without utensils. Note that actions marked * are performed twice, once for each hand.





Crocodile*

Railway wheel*

Watch (*bangles)

Namaste

What did you do after that?

We had installed a demonstration tippy tap prior to the start of the event. The tippy tap is a hands free way to wash your hands that is especially appropriate for rural areas. It uses only 40 ml of water to wash your hands versus 550ml using a mug; additionally the used "waste" water can go to plants or back into the water table. We talked about the benefits of using the tippy tap and contrasted the water savings between it and washing your hands using a mug and bucket (the way hands are commonly washed in rural India). The tippy tap can save lives - in India, over 1000 children die of diarrhea every day. 400 of them can be saved by handwashing with soap, and the tippy tap is a low cost, low tech, easy to install and convenient device that promotes handwashing.



Credit: Jared Buono/WMG, inset: Linda Parker



A student demonstrating the amount of water required to wash your hands in the traditional manner using a mug and bucket.



A student demonstrating the tippy tap. Note the gravel soak pit below the tap and the "waste" water going to the plants behind the tap.



How do you know the children really understood how to build a tippy tap?

We had a tippy tap building competition. Each group had to build a tippy tap using tippy tap “kits” that we had assembled and brought to the event. Each tippy tap had sticks, rope, soap and a container. The holes for the supports were dug prior to the event in order to save time and assist the younger children. The children put the tippy taps together very quickly, with minimal instruction. All were well built, which made judging difficult. One team had planted some small saplings near the tippy tap in order to capture the used water. They were judged the winner.



Team Ganesh building their tippy tap during the competition

How did you close out the event?

After choosing the winners of the tippy tap building competition, each class from Standard 2 to 7 elected a 'health minister'. Each of these six ministers would be responsible for ensuring the tippy tap container was full on a certain day of the school week. The tippy taps that were built by the children were dismantled for future events, while the demonstration tippy tap was left for the school to use. As we waved good bye to one group of smiling kids, we saw another in queue to wash their hands.



What next?

A villager wondered why we had only done the event in one school. With his help, we will be organizing similar events in the 5 other schools in Chikali. We will also be back to check on this school and see if the tippy tap is still being used and if we can build on this intervention to work on other development issues. This event can be done on any day of the year and can be a stand alone activity or put on as part of a larger school health, water and sanitation program. For further information, please contact grampariteam@gmail.com or sowmya@watershedmg.org