



ALL HANDS ON DECK

Promoting Hand Hygiene Through
Peer-to-Peer Learning



About this report

The aftermath of the pandemic has placed health as a priority. In Southeast Asia, we have seen restrictions slowly lift and whilst this has allowed us greater freedom, our attitudes towards health have fundamentally changed. It has forced us to rethink everything, including vital and straightforward steps such as handwashing.

The last two years have constantly reminded us that cleanliness and personal hygiene are effective ways of preventing the spread of infection. As life settles back to normalcy, there is a high chance that people will not be as diligent as they once were in keeping these habits and practices. We all know that handwashing reduces infections and kills germs. The caveat is that people do not wash their hands as frequently or as thoroughly as they should. Yet, the importance of cleaning hands and following good hygiene practices remains fundamental. The challenge is finding strategies that reinforce good personal hygiene particularly with kids, as habits often form at childhood¹. One of the ways to overcome this barrier is to look at the key persons that children trust beyond their parents and family.

Interestingly, habits such as handwashing are associated with a social aspect. We tend to be influenced and follow what others around us are doing, particularly our peers. These social cues can be more powerful than knowing about the risks of not washing your hands. This report includes numerous social initiatives and behavioural interventions that suggest that kids (not adults) have significant power to influence each other when forming fundamental hygiene habits.

About Lifebuoy

Lifebuoy is the world's number one hygiene soap brand, sold in over 100 countries². Through the Lifebuoy brand, we aim to make a difference by creating quality, affordable products and promoting healthy hygiene habits amongst children and parents.

Since the launch of the Lifebuoy brand in 1894, we have supported people in their quest for better personal hygiene. The classic red bar of soap and its distinctive medicated carbolic scent was synonymous with cleanliness throughout the twentieth century. Today, the brand is so much more. Through Lifebuoy's Social Mission programmes and communications, we've helped more than 1 billion people develop good handwashing habits.

This report provides a unique opportunity to understand current influence, opportunities to tackle hygiene habits via the school curriculum and how we can shape future campaigns on handwashing and hygiene.



This report has provided a unique opportunity to understand current influence, opportunities to tackle hygiene habits via the curriculum and how we can shape future handwashing campaigns.

¹ https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01926187.2014.935684?cookieSet=1#_VO=XOXzF_Td
² Calculation based on Nielsen unit sales information for the total markets (approx. 40 countries). Latest 12 months available.

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FOREWORD

by Gwen Hines,
CEO, Save The Children UK



It may seem like a simple act, but handwashing is a critical way to save lives by stopping the spread of disease. However, for many people living in the world's poorest countries or caught up in crises, access to soap and clean water is not something they can take for granted. Over 800 million children attend schools that lack the right basics in place to look after their hygiene. 462 million children attend schools with no hygiene services at all.

Statistics like this make for stark reading. This is why we need to explore innovative approaches that will give everyone access to reliable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, as well as to build understanding and shift behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic has focused much needed attention on hygiene as the first line of defence, but much more needs to be done. It is vitally important to work with children and communities on the importance of handwashing with soap, so that it becomes a routine part of their daily lives.

// Children are the experts of their own lives and should be recognised as credible agents of change. From the earliest age, children can be effective communicators of essential health messages in their families and communities. Teaching these children what matters, in a relevant, fun and compelling way delivers immediate and lasting benefits in disease prevention and treatment in their communities."

Save the Children and Lifebuoy's mutual purpose of improving lives has created a trusted partnership which continues to go from strength to strength. Together, we have always celebrated Global Handwashing Day, to increase global awareness of the importance of handwashing with soap. This year, we again partnered with Lifebuoy to continue the mission and drive greater impact by helping redefine how children learn. When children learn their 'ABCs' at school, we want to make sure that 'H' stands for handwashing.

This White Paper focuses on the potential of peer-to-peer learning amongst children, leading to positive hygiene behaviours such as handwashing. It explores how children learn from behaviours of other children in day-to-day life as they interact and play, and their role in teaching other children. I know from my own experience as CEO at Save the Children UK, the enormous power of strengthening and amplifying children's networks to drive change. Children have brilliantly creative ideas and a better understanding of what other children feel, experience, and want.



The Power of Peer-to-Peer

A wide body of research already demonstrates that peer-to-peer learning improves learning outcomes. It is a system of positive learning reinforcement which is far more effective than top-down approaches. It improves students' attitudes towards learning, fosters a more personalised learning experience and can lead to higher retention of information.

An excellent example of peer-to-peer learning for hygiene promotion is the Save the Children programme in Myanmar, which is included in this White Paper as a case study. The programme, in Kani Township, trained children as peer leaders in hygiene promotion in schools. It enabled peer-based networks of children to take on the role of mobilisers, building awareness amongst other students and ensuring hygiene practices were followed. The participation of children played an important part in the success of the programme both in schools and within the community and resulted in dramatic improvements in health.

Another impactful example of children's meaningful participation as agents of change comes from Nigeria and India, where children were actively engaged in school health clubs and learned essential health and hygiene information and practices through games, songs, role plays, and stories. **Children practised the activities with their peers in their health clubs, in the wider school, at home with their families,**

neighbours and friends, and in the wider community. School Health clubs contributed to a reduction in under 5 diarrhoeal deaths by 37% in India and 58% in Nigeria.

These are just two of the many examples of how we can harness the ideas, thoughts and experiences of children as agents of behaviour change to achieve an even greater impact.

Through exploring the power of children's meaningful and active participation, and peer-to-peer learning, we can better understand how to engrain the importance of handwashing from an early age and ensure that this vital action becomes a long-term habit, creating healthier communities around the world.

Save The Children is grateful for Lifebuoy's continued commitment to this mission. We know that together we can help children build the future they deserve.



Gwen Hines, CEO, Save the Children UK

HOW IT ALL BEGUN

Handwashing with Soap Saves Lives

In 1894, Unilever's co-founder William Lever started selling soap. His purpose was simple and it was not to get rich. His purpose was to help make cleanliness commonplace and bring hygiene and health to the masses. Today, Lifebuoy's mission remains unchanged. The importance of soap as a tool for public health should not be underestimated.

According to UNICEF, **every 30 seconds,** a child somewhere in the world dies from a preventable disease like pneumonia or diarrhoea. They are two of the top killers of children, with

over 1.2 million
under five dying each year.

Yet, the simple practice of handwashing with soap is the single most cost-effective intervention to prevent child deaths. It is proven to reduce

diarrhoeal disease by up to 45%³ **and pneumonia by 23%**⁴

Goal 6 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also recognises handwashing with soap as crucial to better health. Hands are the principal carriers of disease-causing germs and it is estimated that if handwashing with soap is widely practised, the lives of

over 600,000 children
could be saved each year⁵.

Lifebuoy aims to make a difference by creating accessible hygiene products and promoting healthy hygiene habits. Lifebuoy's guiding passion is to make hygiene as affordable and as accessible as possible.

Pivotal to Lifebuoy's social mission is education that translates into behaviour change. Regardless of how effective the chemistry may be in a bar of Lifebuoy soap, it could not neutralise any germs if it is not used at critical occasions. To have maximum effect, proper handwashing must be done habitually – before meals and at other key moments during the day.

³ CHERG 2010. Sandy Cairncross, Caroline Hunt, Sophie Boisson, Kristof Bostoen, Val Curtis, Isaac CH Fung, and Wolf-Peter Schmidt Water, sanitation and hygiene for the prevention of diarrhoea. Int. J. Epidemiol. 2010 39: i193-i205.

⁴ Rabie, T and Curtis, V. (2006): Handwashing and risk of respiratory infections: a quantitative systematic review. Tropical Medicine and International Health, 11(3), 258-267.

⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/10/453132>

For over a decade, Lifebuoy has been running one of the world's largest handwashing behaviour change programmes, impacting the lives of over 1 billion people globally. Our work is unapologetically undertaken where it is most needed. We run grassroots programmes to promote regular, habitual handwashing with soap. Working with multiple partner organisations on the ground, Lifebuoy focuses its outreach efforts primarily on school children, parents and communities.

To spread the handwashing message even further, Lifebuoy was the co-founder of Global Handwashing Day as a global advocacy day to remind people to wash their hands.

We created H for Handwashing, a movement launched in 2020, to transform the way hygiene practices are being taught to children.

Together with our partners, we want to ensure that good hygiene habits are adopted in every corner of our world. Our intention is to be here for the next 126 years, leading the charge on driving real difference in lives and instil good hygiene behaviours with kids. The challenge is how do we make it fun and relevant for them?

H for
HANDWASHING

The ABCs of education has not changed in over a hundred years. NOW is the right time.

Handwashing has never been more important. Unilever's Lifebuoy wants to make sure handwashing gets the attention it deserves.

Children have been learning the letters of the alphabet for hundreds of years through simple connections with everyday things. The letter H has always stood for common objects like 'Hat', but this is the right moment in the history to permanently change what H stands for. From '**H for Hat**', to '**H for Handwashing**'. As part of our new "**H for Handwashing**" global movement, we seek to transform the letter H into a symbol for handwashing and inspire others to join this movement.

This change starts with the young but will be heard by everyone.

H for Handwashing is for children, teachers, parents, mentors, caregivers, siblings, and grandparents. Likewise, through advocacy at the highest levels with ministries, education policymakers and influencers, we can ensure schools and curriculums include changing handwashing behaviour at scale.

Don't take our word for it; check out our work in South Africa and India.

South Africa

In **South Africa**, Lifebuoy through a 5-year partnership with the **Department of Basic Education** has taught over **5 million children**, good handwashing habits in over 60 000 public primary schools. In 2021 under the National Schools Programme, **H for Handwashing** messaging has been successfully included into **curriculum workbooks** reaching additional 8 million learners. In collaboration with African Publishers Association and the Publishers Association more than 65 million copies of the workbooks have been distributed. With immense support from the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, the plan is to make 'H' the universal symbol of handwashing in all schools nationwide.

India

Lifebuoy inked a ground-breaking partnership with Ministry of Education to integrate our first-ever children's **H for Handwashing alphabet book**, authored by award-winning writer **Ruskin Bond** into the **national curriculum**. More than 160000 children across 20,000 schools have been reached and counting! A letter from the Minister of State for Education, Annpurna Devi Yadav has been circulated to states asking them to ensure hand hygiene is included in the school curriculum. The aim is to reach over 3 million kids by 2024 with handwashing material that is specially being designed in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Education.



At Lifebuoy, we have championed handwashing for over a decade, by running the world's largest behaviour-change programme that has reached over 1 billion⁶ people in partnership with +60 NGOs around the world."

says Khim Yin Poh, Global Brand Lead for Lifebuoy.

⁶ Since 2010, we have reached 1.07 billion people (486 million people through on-ground programmes and 587 million through TV reach) through our handwashing programmes. The evidence that TV drives handwashing behaviour change comes from a proof of principles study in India. TV reach is reported for nine key markets using 2017 as a representative year.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

The Three Points of Tension

1. The Current Situation in Singapore

In developed countries like Singapore, constant education is imperative to help kids wash their hands correctly.

2. Emerging Market Challenges

Despite progress, hygiene faces daunting challenges in certain countries.

3. Future Spotting

Generation Alpha in Asia – The rise of a new generation, who are quickly becoming agents of change in their homes.



Poh Khim Yin, Global Brand Lead, Lifebuoy, said:



As a mother myself, I am concerned by the gap between parent's expectations of hand washing hygiene and the reported behaviour of kids. As the peak seasonal flu months are upcoming, the finding that more than 50% of kids surveyed do not use soap every time they wash their hands is especially worrying. This survey reiterates the importance of a consistent approach to educating kids about proper hygiene and for everyone in the community to help make good hygiene a habit."

The Current Situation in Singapore

We have seen that children can be effective educators. To further investigate the situation in Singapore, Lifebuoy commissioned a survey to better understand handwashing behaviours.

The survey is the first time the brand has commissioned independent research into the post-pandemic behaviour of Singaporean families, including children, and it provides a live cultural snapshot into handwashing practices post-pandemic.



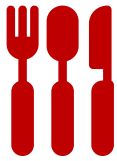
75%

Shockingly, **nearly 75% of kids surveyed are still not washing their hands correctly.**



89%

89% of parents surveyed agreed that their child learns essential life skills such as hygiene practices from their peers.



27%

27% of kids surveyed do not wash their hands before eating, and 1 in 4 **do not wash their hands after using the toilet.**



56%

56% of kids do not use soap every time they wash their hands.



72%

72% of kids do not comply with UNICEF guidelines, which recommends people to wash their hands with soap for 20 to 30 seconds.



81%

Since the pandemic, 81% of parents or guardians said they had increased their expectations of how often their child should wash their hands per day, and 73% have increased the length of time they want their child to wash their hands each time.



1/4

Only one-quarter of parents or guardians teach their children to wash their hands for 20 to 30 seconds, as recommended by UNICEF.

Emerging Market Challenges

Hand hygiene from a broader public health perspective

by Dr. Christian Pitter, Global Health and Population Business Unit Director, FHI 360

The world continues to face multiple public health challenges. These challenges range from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, increasing reports of drug-resistant pathogens, and continued emerging and reemerging **infectious disease threats**.

Communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional conditions still account for

39.8% of the total disease burden

among low- and middle-income countries, with Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia suffering a disproportionate burden due to infectious disease. These statistics coupled with a slew of recent disease outbreaks – most notably Ebola, Zika, Cholera, and COVID-19 – indicate the need to continue focusing public health efforts to maximise health and development outcomes.

1. Respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases rank among the



top five leading causes of global disease burden.

2. Healthcare-associated infections affect an average of



1 in 10 patients every year, while neonatal infections account for nearly 25% of newborn deaths worldwide.

3. Infectious disease outbreaks are also rising at an alarming rate. All these public health issues can and should be prevented through proper WASH measures.

4. Today, **1.6 billion people**



around the world still lack access to soap or water in their homes, with greater disparities across and within regions.

In the Asia-Pacific Region, 32% of India's population are living without basic handwashing facilities.

5. Despite having only 6% of Indonesia's population facing minimal access to handwashing facilities, the disease burden remains acute, which suggests challenges beyond handwashing stations.



Even when facilities are available, handwashing is not practised as consistently and thoroughly as it should be.

A 2020 study in the Philippines reported that 74.3% of primary students wash their hands with water only (no soap), despite soap being available to them. This study, and many others, emphasise the need to look beyond access and address key behavioural determinants for sustainable behaviour change.

For efforts to improve health and development to be most successful, strategies to promote and facilitate proper handwashing with soap must be institutionalised in other public health interventions. Hand hygiene has the potential to avert preventable deaths, improve healthcare outcomes, and bolster progress in education, equity, and the broader WASH sector for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and moving efforts forward post-pandemic.

The impact of hand hygiene on health

Handwashing with soap can drastically reduce the rates of common diseases, including pneumonia and diarrhoea – two of the leading causes of child death. Effective handwashing behaviour change programmes may reduce diarrhoeal diseases among children under 5 and pneumonia. Proper handwashing with soap can also reduce the risks of future disease outbreaks, which pose a threat to progress made toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

Efforts must go beyond emergency response to ensure sustainable behaviour change. As the world looks beyond the pandemic, it will be critical to leverage the lessons learned through COVID-19 to accelerate hand hygiene progress more broadly to impact health.

Strategies to improve hand hygiene

Handwashing with soap is one of the most cost-effective ways to improve health and development outcomes. Some studies suggest it is the most cost-effective strategy to reduce illness globally, presenting a high return on investment and greater value for people around the world.

With the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, practitioners and policymakers should adopt strategies that will lead to cross-cutting benefits. Hygiene matters not only for health – good hand hygiene can remove barriers to education, nutrition, economic opportunity, and equity. Furthermore, it prevents diseases that hinder child development and supports to improve overall education by reducing student absenteeism. Failure to incorporate handwashing into these efforts can dramatically limit the impact of such investments.

Strategies to promote hand hygiene should also focus on key populations to create the most impact. Focusing on young children, for example, can lead to drastic improvements in the health and well-being of not only themselves but to their surrounding communities, thus building a brighter future for all. Research has shown children learn best through repetition and routine. Using fun and interactive activities and encouraging peer-to-peer learning can build handwashing routines, which can then lead to lifelong handwashing habits. While a culture shift around hand hygiene cannot happen overnight, focusing on the youngest generations could be vital to ensuring the future of hand hygiene progress. Overall, it takes more than access to soap and water to deliver the cross-cutting benefits of handwashing. Behaviour-change efforts, especially among key populations like young children, are critical to ensure handwashing with soap becomes habitual and is practised consistently and at crucial times.

Future Spotting: Generation Alpha in Asia



In the next two years (by 2024), there will be more than

2 billion people

around the world classified as Generation Alpha.

When this generation hits peak spending, the largest cohort will come from

India and China.

Today, this generation believes in personal responsibility. Fundamentally, they believe in the ability to

change the world around them.

Generation Alpha includes those born from 2010 onwards and who have therefore grown up in a fully digital world.

In the next two years (by 2024), there will be more than 2 billion people around the world classified as Generation Alpha. They are expected to be the largest generation ever seen in human history. When this generation hits peak spending, the largest cohort will come from India and China. This is also coinciding with an expanding middle class from Asian communities. What does this mean? We are facing a new world order fuelled by the attitudes, beliefs and actions of Generation Alpha.

Today, this generation believes in personal responsibility. Fundamentally, they believe in the ability to change the world around them. This activism is partly inspired by millennial parents, who believe it is essential that children

are encouraged to speak out and stand up for what they believe in.

Today, protests amongst the young in Asia are not uncommon and were unheard of a generation ago. With this new energy emerging in Asia, Lifebuoy wanted to find a way to leverage a common goal with the youth – to create positive societal change.

Could working with Generation Alpha as ambassadors be the key to promote much-needed hand hygiene habits to their friends in fun and engaging ways?

7 <https://generationalalpha.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Understanding-Generation-Alpha-McCrindle.pdf>

8 <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/youth-politics-east-and-southeast-asia> and <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/new-generation-young-activists-lead-fight-worsening-repression-asia/>



Many of Generation Alpha already have their own access to technology, which they use not just for entertainment and education, but also to communicate with friends.

Although concerns about falling sick are declining among adults, the opposite is true for Generation Alpha: there has been a 10% rise in those worried about getting ill since 2021.

What is Peer-to-Peer Learning?

Peer learning is a practice where students learn from each other inside and outside the classroom. By teaching kids early and encouraging them to help each other develop best hygiene practices, we help them have a healthy childhood and instil good habits for life. Part of this is modelling healthy behaviour; kids are especially effective at doing that for each other.

Many NGOs and institutions have led the way in engaging kids under 12 as peer-to-peer influencers. Organisations like UNICEF and Save the Children see the potential to change children's handwashing behaviour through their peers.



BRIDGING THE HYGIENE GAP

Kids are the best teachers

Children have experienced tremendous changes and disturbances in the last two years. In many parts of the world, they only returned to school full-time two years after the pandemic began. Some **42 million Indian children** were affected by school closures at the pre-primary level during the pandemic. In Southeast Asia, the Philippines suffered one of the world's most extended school closures for more than two years. **Furthermore**, around 214 million children globally – or 1 in 7 children – have missed more than three-quarters of their in-person learning. Undoubtedly, the prolonged closure of schools in emerging markets worsened an education crisis.

As we move forward, we all acknowledge that some things would not return to pre-COVID times, and this presents an opportunity for us to learn, adapt and help our future generations thrive. We have been struck with admiration and reverence for the resilience of kids worldwide. And we stand at a monumental moment to help shape education and behavioural changes – sharpening our tools to promote healthy habits.

From Dr. Christian Pitter, Global Health and Population Business Unit Director, FHI 360

We know that it takes more than access to soap and water to deliver the cross-cutting benefits of handwashing. Behaviour-change efforts, especially among key populations like young children, are critical to ensure handwashing with soap becomes habitual and is practised consistently and at key times.

We see the signature of early childhood experience literally in people's bodies: as **this study from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child** shows, positive early experiences lead to longer life expectancy, better overall health, and improved ability to manage stress.

As we look to improve hand hygiene progress, action is required at **all levels**. It is well known that raising awareness and building handwashing knowledge is only the first step. The use of available **resources** for spreading the basic understanding of proper hand hygiene techniques or leveraging the **Global Handwashing Day** as a platform for sharing the importance of handwashing is critical to ensure hand hygiene is part of the broader global health conversations and priorities.

Beyond that, there is a real need to ensure evidence-based **behaviour change programming to target key groups, such as young children, and build the future of hand hygiene.**

Peer-to-peer learning has already shown promising results in promoting healthy habits among children. In dental hygiene, selecting and training children aged 8 to 12 to be 'kiddie doctors' enabled them to teach and provide feedback to their peers to improve their tooth-cleaning skills in addition to achieving increased awareness. Repeating the teaching led to better outcomes as the learning was reinforced. Indeed, in one study, peer education among school children was found to be even more effective than traditional teaching methods in communicating the dangers of smoking.¹⁰

Learning Through Laughter, UNICEF

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed the crucial role of children in sharing messages on hygiene in India. UNICEF adopted a strategy called 'Learning Through Laughter', which dealt with real-life situations through playing games and completing activities together as a family to inculcate the importance of health and hygiene in a way that kids could understand.

// Nur Anna, a 12-year-old girl, decides to cook kola toil curry (a local dish with green vegetables), for her family. After failing to wash her hands before preparing the food, her entire family falls ill."

says Bandana Rani Das, Hygiene Promoter with UNICEF partner CARE.

// What could she have done to avoid this misfortune?"

asks Bandana to a handful of Rohingya children during a handwashing awareness session.

UNICEF say that kids were excited about receiving these messages when it came from peers and were told in an engaging way. Their answers spark a broader conversation around handwashing and germs.

Learning From Each Other, Save the Children

Innovative approaches in hygiene promotion involving school-going children have been an integral part of Save the Children's WASH project in Kani Township (Myanmar). They have seen a dramatic improvement in health. Save the Children established a peer-based network of kids who took on the role of 'teachers' and 'prefects' to build awareness amongst other students and ensure hygiene practices were followed and facilities maintained. Once the peer leaders were equipped with the tools and techniques, they were able to adapt and evolve them.



Peer child to child training events were held in 33 villages and 1,221 children reached through peer child to child hygiene promotion.

The results of this initiative saw better habits from handwashing, frequent use of facilities, and cleaner bathrooms and toilets.

⁹ Maftuchan, M., & Hadi, E. N. (2020). Kiddie Doctors Education Strategy in Improving the Knowledge, Attitude, and Oral Hygiene Status of Elementary School Children. *Journal of International Society of Preventive & Community Dentistry*, 10(5), 549-554. https://doi.org/10.4103/jispcd.JISPCD_116_20

¹⁰ Ayaz, S., & Açil, D. (2015). Comparison of peer education and the classic training method for school aged children regarding smoking and its dangers. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 30(3), e3-e12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2014.11.009>

Success Factors: Peer-to-Peer



Must be rooted in play

Play is a defining feature of human development: impulses are so hardwired into us that we cannot suppress them. Kids are naturally motivated to want to play, and so we must lean into this truth. It is imperative that we realise that while the impulse to play is one thing, knowing the specifics of the actual game does not always come naturally and may need to be carefully honed.

Under Lifebuoy's H for Handwashing movement, the brand has created an [alphabet book](#), videos, posters, and more to help drive lasting behaviour change.



Games and Gamification

We know that getting kids, especially younger kids, excited is key to engaging them in learning and changing behaviours. Washing hands is challenging because it can seem unnecessary and dull to a child. Games can stimulate intrinsic (happiness and satisfaction) and extrinsic (recognition and reward) motivation when done well.

Our next step is to understand how games can be developed to fit the needs of emerging classes, and we have started this work already with Sesame Workshop with some [heart-warming results](#).



Kids need tools and structure to help share

As such, a shift in educational engagement is occurring for Generation Alpha, with schools switching from structural to engaging, visual, multimodal methods of educating this emerging generation. However, hygiene habits cannot be formed without unilateral understanding from organisations.

The role of governments, teachers and adults should not be discounted and must be used to fill in any gaps in knowledge. Lifebuoy heavily collaborates with government agencies and departments of education to ensure all objectives are aligned.



How Gaming Can Help Strengthen Good Habits, Sesame Workshop in South Africa

Sesame Workshop has a simple yet powerful mission: to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We have a long history of harnessing the power of media to educate young children, particularly those with little access to quality early learning. In more than 150 countries, you can find Sesame on screens, in classrooms, in communities—everywhere families can use a trusted hand to help little ones reach their full potential, and all with a little help from our beloved Sesame Muppet characters.

Playful learning is a key part of our approach. From birth to age 6, young brains develop at their most rapid pace and evidence shows that infants and children are constantly learning, connecting, and engaging with their world and each other through positive, playful experiences.

Playful learning is a powerhouse—boosting cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development and laying the foundation for children to become creative and engaged learners for life.

Playful learning also helps children engage in deeper learning and can reinforce important lessons. That approach is at the heart of our partnership with Lifebuoy on their H for Handwashing campaign. Together, we wanted to see if digital play and games could help drive home good handwashing habits for young children and make the lessons stick.

Can the digital medium help promote good behaviours?

The internet and gaming are growing parts of the lives of children and families, and access is rapidly increasing as digital divides around the world are narrowed. We wanted to determine if digital play in a child's early years can promote good behaviour and drive positive habits like handwashing – a critical behaviour to prevent illness amongst children.

In partnership with Lifebuoy, we developed fun, interactive digital games starring Muppet friends like Elmo and Cookie Monster as part of Lifebuoy's H for Handwashing campaign. The aim was to develop games that felt natural and intuitive, regardless of a child's geography or experience playing digital games.

Activity: Sesame Workshop designed an interactive, four-module digital game experience with four mini-games starring the beloved Sesame characters. The games provided children with an engaging, innovative platform to learn about key handwashing with soap topics, including the importance of soap, key moments to wash hands, understanding germs, and identifying where germs may be.

To understand the appeal and impact of the four games, Sesame Workshop conducted research with 115 families with children ages 3–8 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study was designed to understand appeal, relevance, and comprehension of the games with families who had internet access. Families were given access to the four digital games and children were encouraged to play each game at least once over a period of two weeks. While families were asked to play each game at least one time, all families reported playing the games multiple times. During the two-week period, caregivers recorded their child's experiences and behaviours related to handwashing in a diary.

The Results:

While existing knowledge and behaviours around handwashing were already very high due to COVID-19-related messaging in media, the study showed that playing the online games helped reinforce handwashing behaviours in children. In this context, reinforcing the messages is important to ensure the desired behaviours are sustainable.

**82%**

82% of parents stated their child modelled at least one of the handwashing skills emphasised in the games.

**94%**

94% of the caregivers also reported a positive change in their child's handwashing with soap behaviour after playing the game.

**90%**

Over 90% of parents said their child continued to practice good handwashing hygiene even after the study was over. A majority of parents also mentioned that handwashing hygiene is important for preventing illnesses amongst children.

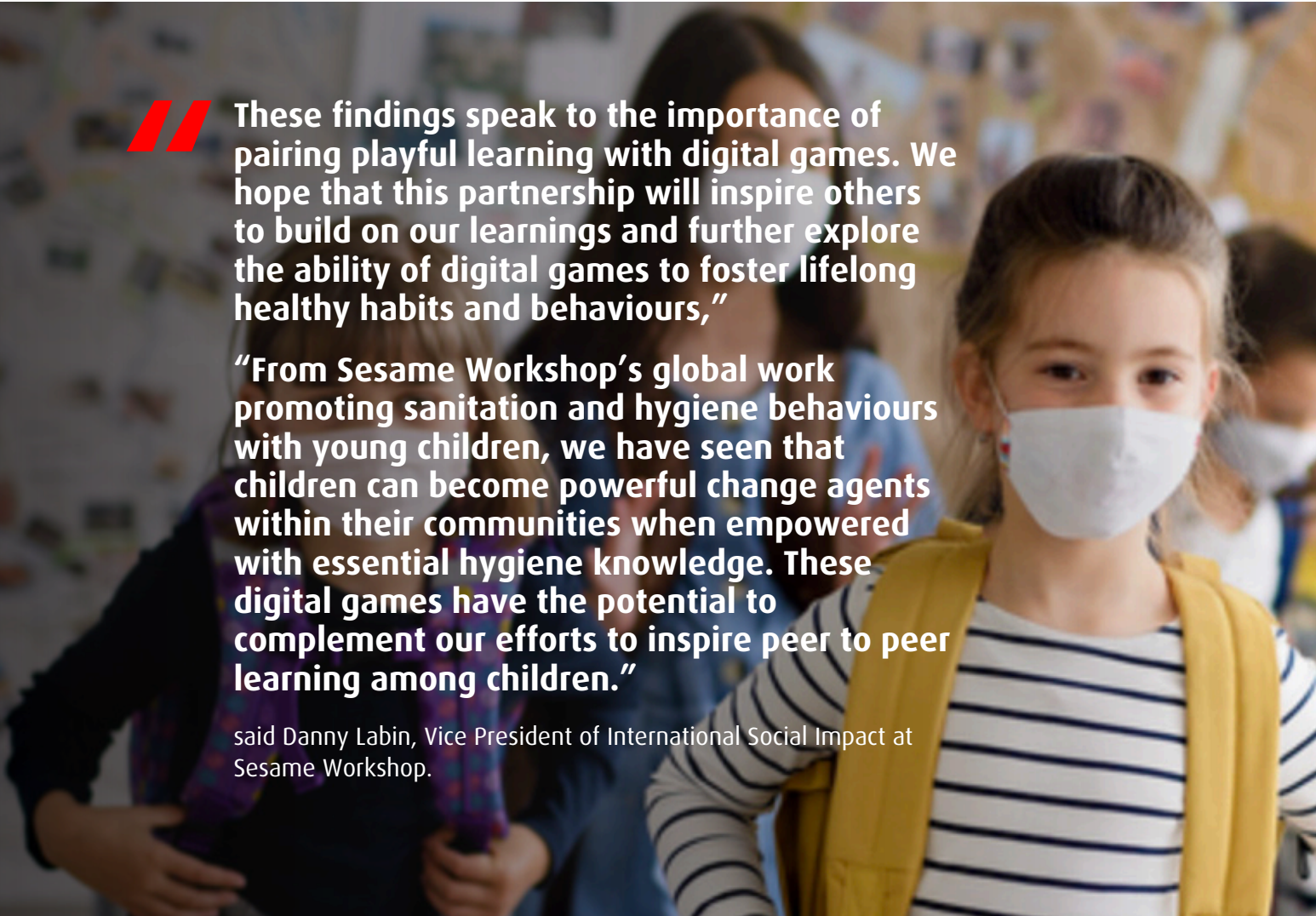
**90%**

These findings demonstrate that using digital games as a platform to reach children is both relevant and appealing. Over 90% of caregivers believed their kids learnt something new from the games. Additionally, they would recommend these games to other parents and caregivers.

“These findings speak to the importance of pairing playful learning with digital games. We hope that this partnership will inspire others to build on our learnings and further explore the ability of digital games to foster lifelong healthy habits and behaviours,”

“From Sesame Workshop’s global work promoting sanitation and hygiene behaviours with young children, we have seen that children can become powerful change agents within their communities when empowered with essential hygiene knowledge. These digital games have the potential to complement our efforts to inspire peer to peer learning among children.”

said Danny Labin, Vice President of International Social Impact at Sesame Workshop.



SHAPING OUR H FOR HANDWASHING MOVEMENT FOR THE FUTURE

Amid a generation-defining pandemic, Lifebuoy's powerful H for Handwashing movement equips future generations with the unforgettable lesson that handwashing with soap safeguards their health and well-being.

Kim Yin Poh, Global Brand Lead of Lifebuoy, says,



While 2020 was about awareness and 2021 was about action, 2022's 'H for Handwashing' campaign is all about driving impact. Schools have been Lifebuoy's most impactful touchpoint for decades. Now we're harnessing the power of peer-to-peer learning, inspiring and cultivating a new generation of hand hygiene ambassadors."

Lifebuoy's [H for Handwashing campaign in 2022](#) introduces its new initiative in peer learning through the debut of over 100,000 Chief Education Officers (CEOs) from every corner of the world. These young CEOs from the UK to South Africa have shown their leadership skills through projects of their own and are now joining Lifebuoy to help educate their peers on the importance of handwashing.

Little Doctors

Lifebuoy explored the use of peer learning when it partnered with the global non-profit organisation SNV to create the Little Doctors programme in Indonesia.

Through that programme, students were selected to help teach their friends and family about handwashing using pictures, cards, songs, dances, and discussions.

Since 2011, Lifebuoy has helped improve the handwashing habits of more than 32 million children in Indonesia. Programmes such as Little Doctors have been a part of this.

What's in store

After taking on their CEO roles, Lifebuoy's three new ambassadors will teach thousands of kids about the importance of handwashing and how best to do it using materials provided by Lifebuoy. They will work with community leaders, educators and even politicians to help spread the message about handwashing and proper sanitation.

Meet the Chief Education Officers

In the next evolution of peer learning outreach, Lifebuoy CEOs from over 20 countries will help promote handwashing and sanitation in their communities. Each CEO has contributed to their community through initiatives around science, education or social outreach. And each is eager to do more in partnership with Lifebuoy.



In India, 8-year-old Vishalini NC is among the youngest patent holders in the country. Her Automatic Multi-Functional Life Rescue Flood House helps prevent one or more persons from drowning in floods. The floating contraption with zippered top includes storage for oxygen, water, food and first-aid supplies and is meant to shelter and ensure the safety of kids, pregnant women, elderly people and the physically challenged during a flood.



Prince Mashawana, a 9-year-old from South Africa, is the youngest TEDx speaker in the world and the creator of Super Mash—South Africa's first Black child superhero. Super Mash fights bullies and encourages kids to have confidence in the face of adversity. Prince and Super Mash inspire kids daily through comic book adventures and real-life outreach.



Singapore's Shannon, aged 10, loves performing for the less fortunate, bringing joy to her audiences through her infectious enthusiasm. Her first performance, at the age of 5, was for autistic children and their families in an event organised by a social enterprise. She paid twice-yearly visits to homes for the aged in Indonesia until the pandemic curbed travel, and now volunteers at a local community centre.

TO CONCLUDE

A new kid is on the block, and they are already making tremendous changes to their world. Generation Alpha, born post-2010 to millennial parents, is set to be a collective powerhouse.


Whilst we have reached billions of people through our programmes including H for Handwashing, we are not stopping here. Lifebuoy is in the business of keeping kids safe through hand hygiene, but that should not keep them from living life.



We want them to grow up safe and to love their life. Together, we believe that our focus on peer-to-peer learning will help us protect lives and advance equity and inclusion for all.

We hope you enjoy the findings of this paper, and we are grateful to our partners for their contribution.

We know there will be a period of adjustment for kids, but we remain steadfast in our commitment that we can continue promoting healthy hygiene habits using peer-to-peer learning. Together, we can help children build the future they deserve and continue to help protect families.



At the heart of Lifebuoy's purpose lies our heritage of helping to protect lives. Connect with us for a common purpose.

