

Research into Use Summary

1. **Research Project:** *Hygiene promotion resource 'Choose Soap'*
2. **Lead researcher:** *Dr Val Curtis, LSHTM*
3. **SHARE Partners:** *LSHTM, WaterAid*
4. **Research budget:** *£38,500*
5. **Location:** *India*

Research description:

'Choose Soap' – a SHARE-commissioned tool kit – offers a blueprint of activities, including family pledging, an animated film and village signage, to encourage the practice of handwashing with soap. The activities can be carried out in households, schools, communities and by the mass media. The suggestions are based on many years of research into the drivers of hand hygiene and best current science concerning effective approaches to behaviour change, including the emotive power of disgust, and marketing. The kit is designed to be used to promote handwashing with soap at key times, within a realistic budget and time frame and at village level. The activities can be carried out over a few days, allowing for easy and predictable budgeting. It can also be replicated village by village to build momentum and achieve scale. The kit is modular and can be adapted for different needs. It also contains a short film that can be shown on laptops by Outreach Workers or can be adapted for television. Designed by creative agency Good Pilot with SHARE partners LSHTM and WaterAid, Choose Soap is available online at: www.choosesoap.org.

What is the relevance of the research to national and/or global sector challenges?

Handwashing with soap is one of the most cost-effective ways of improving public health in developing countries as it prevents the spread of diseases, particularly diarrhoeal diseases. It is claimed the practice could save up to one million lives a year worldwide. The physical growth and intellectual development of children is also improved by handwashing with soap because this prevents the undernutrition associated with diarrhoea and other illnesses. The benefits of handwashing with soap extend beyond health too and include major knock-on economic and social benefits, including improved school attendance and productivity. However, handwashing with soap is not common at critical moments, including after going to the toilet and before handling or eating food, and washing hands with water alone does not prevent disease transmission. These realities highlight the global challenge of transforming handwashing with soap from an abstract good idea into an automatic behaviour carried out in homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

Who are the intended users of this research?

The Choose Soap tool kit (available at www.choosesoap.org) is designed for use by practitioners in India. Primarily it is a guide for two change agents carrying out activities in villages over a period of four days, not necessarily consecutive. The activities can also be adapted for use in existing programmes. By the end of each community campaign, the programme should have left behind visible reminders in public places, as well as commitments by most families, to practice this important public health behaviour. This kit is based on best thinking, but has yet to be tested in the field. As organisations experiment with it and adapt the activities, more effective interventions can be developed. Please tell us how you use it at choosesoap@lshtm.ac.uk. Links to the tool kit are available from the SHARE website and the resource has been widely disseminated within the SHARE consortium and to a broad range of users.

