School Handwashing Program (SHP)

The SHP conducted by WMG India/Grampari has several components. Detailed below is the Awareness Building Event that kicks off the official program at every school. It illustrates some tools that community workers may find useful in hosting a hand washing promotion event. See www.globalhandwashingday.org and www.tippyptap.org for more information.

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 toilet use 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.

WHERE do you usually do this event and with WHOM?
We organize these events in rural and semi urban schools. Most of our events occur in Satara District, Maharashtra, India but we’ve also tested out this program in Burkina Faso, West Africa. We target Standards 3 to 6 and work with 60 to 250 children at a time in teams of 2 to 4 people.

How do you talk about WHY you wash your hands?
We talk 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 use ‘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. The following graphic shows how glitterball works.

Vanita sneezes into her hands and picks up the glitterball. Her sneezy germs are now on the ball.
Vanita throws the ball to Mangal for fun.
Mangal now has germs (glitter) on her hands.
Mangal greets Sangeeta.
And what about WHEN you wash your hands?
4 presenters from our team act out 4 different situations. We ask the children to identify which of the four presenters should wash their hands. Once the children get to the point that all four people need to wash their hands, they determine whether each presenter should wash their hands BEFORE or AFTER the activity.

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<th>Eating</th>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Changing baby’s nappy</th>
<th>Defecating</th>
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And then you illustrate 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 teach 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best friends*</th>
<th>Fighting</th>
<th>Cutie nails*</th>
<th>Snake*</th>
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What do you do after that?
We install 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 talk 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.

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 - this could also go to plants.
How do you know the children really understand how to build a tippy tap?
We have a tippy tap building competition. Each group has to build a tippy tap using tippy tap “kits” that we assemble and bring to the event. Each tippy tap kit has sticks, rope, soap and a container. The holes for the supports are dug prior to the event in order to save time and assist the children. The children typically put the tippy taps together quickly, with minimal instruction looking at the demonstration tippy tap for guidance. It is vital to allow the children to make mistakes in order to truly understand how to build the tap – this makes it easier for them to build ones at home.

How do you close out the event?
After choosing the winners of the tippy tap building competition, each class from the older classes elects a ‘health minister’. Each of these six ministers will be responsible for ensuring the tippy tap container is full on a certain day of the school week. The tippy taps that are built by the children are dismantled for future events, while the demonstration tippy tap is left for the school to use. As we waved good bye to one group of smiling kids, we saw another showing each other how to use the tippy tap.

What next?
This event is part of a larger program that works to increase handwashing with soap in rural primary schools. Using the tippy tap and interactive activities during an intensive followup schedule, we are working to inspire long term behaviour change. Learnings from this program will be disseminated using www.tippytap.org, a website developed as a resource for public health practitioners in this field. Watch our award winning video at http://bit.ly/er12cL to learn more. For further information, please contact grampariteam@gmail.com or sowmya@watershedmg.org