Triggering Handwashing with Soap in CLTS: Insights on What Works from Malawi

INTRODUCTION

The Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach was introduced to Malawi in 2008; since 2011 it has been a key component of a national strategy for making Malawi Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2015. In 2012, all districts in the country were implementing CLTS with promising results on behaviour change for latrine use. Given the widespread adoption of CLTS and its ability to effect behaviour change, it was hypothesized that the approach can be leveraged to also trigger demand for handwashing with soap. This Field Note summarizes the approach taken to pilot the integration of handwashing triggering in the CLTS process and its results.

Masozi Mkandiwire demonstrates handwashing outside her family's latrine in Charles Chinula village.

KEY POINTS

- *Collaboration with experienced facilitators can result in cost-effective and easily scalable innovations in CLTS implementation: in this case, 9 new tools were developed for triggering for handwashing with soap in the CLTS process.*

- *Integrating a combination of the field-tested handwashing triggering tools into the CLTS process has the potential to increase demand for handwashing and the likelihood of communities building facilities for handwashing with soap.*

- *Initial results from field-testing the tools showed a greater rate of increase of handwashing facilities built in triggered communities; also soap was more likely to be found by handwashing facilities in these communities (55% vs 15% in non-triggered communities).*

- *The triggering tools developed can be used either at the CLTS triggering or during a follow-up visit. As follow-ups have been found to be crucial for ODF success and are often continuously conducted, these visits provide an opportunity for facilitators to further promote handwashing.*

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTION

Existing tools used in the CLTS triggering process focus primarily on eliminating Open Defecation (OD), with little attention to handwashing. A review of the CLTS processes worldwide (via documents shared on the CLTS Knowledge Hub at the Institute of Development Studies) shows that a limited number of dedicated tools have been developed to trigger handwashing, although the "Shit and Shake" tool from Engineers Without Borders Canada (EWB) is one exception.

The current practice of triggering for handwashing was observed in two control villages. A district was chosen that had both experienced CLTS facilitators and higher rates of handwashing facilities (HWF) built after CLTS (in comparison to other districts).

The district team and UNICEF consultant then worked together to reflect on what was observed and plan improvements to trigger for handwashing. nine new handwashing triggering tools were then

developed and piloted in another two villages in order to determine which tools were most effective in promoting handwashing with soap in rural communities.

An action research methodology was applied to develop, implement and test the tools. In both sets of villages – the control and pilot villages - baseline measurements were recorded for the presence of HWF by the toilet as well as the presence of soap by the HWF. Follow-ups were conducted in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the current and new tools for triggering. Data were analysed to see the resulting changes in the presence of HWF and soap between the two sets of villages. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were conducted a few weeks after the triggering took place. These provided information on which tools were recalled the most and which ones were perceived as most effective for triggering the demand for handwashing.

NEW HANDWASHING TRIGGERING TOOLS

*These tools were found most effective in the trials.

Ten handwashing triggering tools were field tested, nine of which were newly developed. These tools were created with the rural Malawi context in mind, and are cost-effective and easy to replicate.The new tools facilitated communities towards realizing three key ideas:

1 there are various sources of hand contamination (including faeces and germs),

2 handwashing with soap is a complete way to remove all contaminants (dirt, smell and germs), and

3 hands that appear clean can still have dirt on them.

The tools were ranked for effectiveness against the following criteria: ease of facilitation, 'reliability', effectiveness in terms of actual impact, and ability to psychologically trigger community members. The tools are presented below in order of effectiveness:

Anal cleansing materials*: The community watch a demonstration by a volunteer using anal cleaning materials to try to remove mud (symbolizing shit) from a brick with a dent (or a nearby tree with a dent). The community realises that faecal matter is left on their hands after cleansing themselves in the toilet.

Shit and Shake (developed by Engineers Without Borders)*: A facilitator has clay or charcoal on their hands and then shakes hands with an authority figure in the community, usually the chief, and asks them to turn and greet their neighbour with the traditional handshake. This is a visual demonstration of how shit can be left on the hands and passed around from person to person during the handshakes. Through this tool, communities realise transmission of faecal matter occurs through handshakes.

Cassava/egg demonstration*: A volunteer, who thinks their hands are clean, is asked to peel a cassava or egg. Any dirt on their hands will leave marks on the food. This tool is intended to show that even when hands appear clean, there can still be dirt on them.

Charcoal smearing*: A volunteer is asked to smear their hands with charcoal and then to wash their hands with water alone. The community can then see how much dirt is left. The community realise that using soap when washing hands eliminates all dirt, whereas using water alone only eliminates some of the dirt.

Smelly hands: The tools aims to help the community realise that having smelly hands through touching faeces (or defecating) leads to having a bad smell on their hands.

Faeces on babies' nappies: Charcoal (representing shit) is rubbed on a piece of cloth (symbolising a baby`s nappy). A volunteer is then asked to wash the cloth with water alone. This tool helps the community to realise that water alone is not effective way to wash babies' nappies and that not using soap means faeces can be transmitted to their hands, and can then be transmitted to other objects (including their mouth).

Scratch and smell: A volunteer is asked to put his hand inside his trousers and pretend to scratch his bottom or pretend to finish urinating. The volunteer then offers his hand to community members to shake. The tool aims to make the community disgusted by the dirt, germs and smell that comes after touching one's self after defecation or urination.

Wall contamination: A toilet is chosen where the walls have been smeared with shit (a common practice for anal cleansing or for wiping hands that have touched shit after defecation). A volunteer is asked to touch the area smeared with shit. The tool intends to trigger disgust through realising that the walls of the toilet are contaminated with shit.

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Food sharing: A volunteer is asked to use the toilet without washing their hands afterwards. The volunteer is then asked to share food with the community. The community is disgusted by the germs that people have on their hands after using a toilet (even if they appear clean).

Dirt under fingernails: A volunteer is asked to get some dirt (charcoal or mud) under their fingernails and then to eat some nsima. Because nsima is white, the tool helps communities to realise that handwashing alone doesn't prevent infections without clean fingernails and using soap.
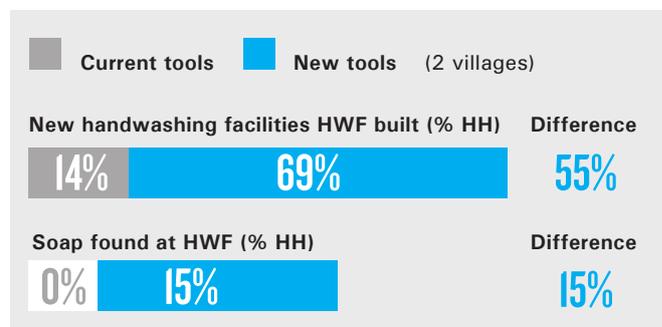
OUTCOME

The pilot resulted in change in three key areas: a new and tested set of tools for triggering for handwashing; significantly more households that had built handwashing facilities by their toilets in comparison to villages triggered with the current tools; and these communities had higher rates of soap found at the handwashing facilities.

Triggering for handwashing with soap has potential to increase both the rates of handwashing facilities built by households as well as the presence of soap by the handwashing facilities. The tools found most effective by both the facilitators and community members were: Tool 1 Anal cleansing materials, Tool 2 Shit and Shake, Tool 3 Cassava/egg demonstration and Tool 4 Charcoal smearing. Although the results measured are proxy indicators of handwashing behaviour, research has shown that these are indicative of handwashing practice (especially

when water is found in the HWF). One key step to reinforcing behaviour change then is to follow-up with communities to ensure that the facilities are maintained and re-built if broken. This pilot also demonstrated that working closely with experienced CLTS facilitators can lead to innovations in triggering that are low-cost, effective and easily replicable.

Average results several weeks after triggering

	Current tools	New tools (2 villages)

New handwashing facilities HWF built (% HH) — Difference
14% | 69% | 55%

Soap found at HWF (% HH) — Difference
0% | 15% | 15%

LESSONS LEARNED

Potential of handwashing with soap triggering: Integrating a combination of the field-tested handwashing triggering tools into the CLTS process has the potential to increase demand for handwashing and the likelihood of communities building facilities for handwashing with soap. Implementers are encouraged to try the tools for themselves and continue to improve upon them.

Integration of handwashing tools in CLTS: The triggering tools developed can be used either at the CLTS triggering or during a follow-up visit. As follow-ups have been found to be crucial for ODF success and are often continuously conducted, these visits provide an opportunity for facilitators to further promote handwashing. The triggering tools provide a sense of excitement and urgency for communities to mobilize themselves for change.

Method for developing CLTS innovations: When looking to improve on CLTS or create new tools for triggering, consider:
● Inviting experienced facilitators from various

sectors into the process. This will not only lead to better results as they know the principles of CLTS and can anticipate the reaction of their communities, but also make them feel rewarded through the recognition of their skills. This can keep them motivated to continue promoting behaviour change for sanitation and hygiene.
● Action research methodology involves trying ideas directly in the field, then reflection for immediate feedback and adjustments.
● Being clear about the guiding principles so facilitators are aware of the constraints to keep in mind when developing their ideas. For example, the three principles used for tool creation in this pilot were:
o   cost-effective
o   easy to replicate and scale; and
o   elicits feelings of shame, fear and disgust in
        communities.

From this experience, **the most effective handwashing triggering tools were: 'Anal cleansing materials', 'Shit and Shake', 'Cassava/egg demonstration' and 'Charcoal smearing'.**

NEXT STEPS

Given the initial results outlined above, the newly developed handwashing triggering tools warrant additional field testing. This will be important to improve them and gather additional evidence on their usefulness in promoting handwashing with soap.

Implementation should be a learning experience and facilitators should feel free to modify or revise the tools based on what they find effective in the field.

It will be equally important to document further trials and implementation, then to disseminate the results to the WASH practitioner community. This will enable the sharing of lessons on the approach and continuous improvement on the methodology.

After this initial phase of learning, it is recommended that the tools be mainstreamed into CLTS facilitator trainings. Experienced facilitators can also be provided with a brief training on the tools.

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