



WaterAid/Fabeha Mohir

Boosting business: why investing in water, sanitation and hygiene pays off

Hygiene behaviour
change

Learning brief

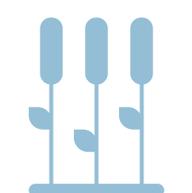


Context

The hygiene behaviour change (HBC) learnings and insights in this brief have been drawn from the *Boosting business* pilot research project, which focused on measuring the return on investment (ROI) and other business benefits of improving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services and hygiene behaviours in the workplace and employees' communities.

In collaboration with Diageo, Gap Inc., HSBC, Twinings and ekaterra (which was part of Unilever when this project started), we aimed to measure the tangible impact of WASH investment in ten workplaces across four countries. These included tea supply chains in India and Kenya, apparel and leather supply chains in Bangladesh and India, and agricultural smallholder farmers in Tanzania. The individual impact reports¹ include more detail on the project interventions, outcomes and impacts.

The main insights on hygiene behaviour change come from the tanneries in India, the ready-made garment factories in Bangladesh and the tea estates in Kenya and India.



1. WaterAid (2022). *Boosting business: why investing in water, sanitation and hygiene pays off*. Available at: washmatters.wateraid.org/boosting-business-why-investing-water-sanitation-hygiene-pays-off (accessed 12 Sep 2022).

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Creating a healthy workplace

When clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene are not a part of everyday life, the impacts on health and wellbeing can be devastating, and this was clearer than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business resilience is underpinned by a strong workforce. WASH interventions in the workplace improve the health and wellbeing of employees, and impact levels of absenteeism, attrition, productivity and punctuality. There are three key principles behind WASH in the workplace:

- **Access** – adequate and inclusive water and sanitation and handwashing facilities.
- **Facilities** – fully functioning WASH facilities (including soap and water) must be in place.
- **Hygiene practice** – management should be engaged in delivering a comprehensive behaviour change intervention with supporting materials that encourage good hygiene behaviours.

Insufficient WASH in the workplace puts employees at risk of diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea and trachoma. Globally, 771 million people still don't have clean water close to home, 1.7 billion lack a toilet of their own, and 30% of people still don't have a handwashing facility with soap and water.²

WASH facilities alone are not sufficient in preventing illness and boosting employee health and wellbeing. It is important for employees to also use the correct behaviours when it comes to handwashing, food hygiene, drinking water, menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) and the management of infectious diseases. This brief will draw on experiences from the *Boosting business* pilot series of how and why hygiene behaviours in the workplace are so important to business resilience.

● Zakia and her family are happy that the new WASH facilities have transformed life in their community. Narayanganj, Bangladesh. October 2021.

1. WaterAid (2022). *Boosting business: why investing in water, sanitation and hygiene pays off*. Available at: washmatters.wateraid.org/boosting-business-why-investing-water-sanitation-hygiene-pays-off (accessed 12 Sep 2022).
2. WHO/JMP/UNICEF (2021). *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (2020-2020). Five years into the SDGs*. Available at: data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/JMP-2021-progress-report.pdf (accessed 12 Sep 2022).



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Why are good hygiene behaviours good for business?

Hygiene behaviour change (HBC) is often a forgotten component of water, sanitation and in health. HBC refers to the behaviours that encourage the widespread adoption of good hygiene practices. Sustained hygiene behaviours ensure dignity, increase productivity, reduce undernutrition, maintain good health, and help prevent the spread of diseases like cholera, Ebola, shigellosis, SARS, hepatitis E, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and COVID-19.

HBC intervention has been crucial in promoting effective behaviours to the employees and communities that were a part of this pilot project. The training was in relation to handwashing, menstrual health and hygiene (MHH), food hygiene, drinking water hygiene and cleanliness. Workplace hygiene campaigns and training sessions have encouraged good hygiene behaviours.

The use of motivational and promotional HBC activities and the placement of visual cues, nudges and prompts in the workplace encouraged employees to practice these key hygiene behaviours – which played a part in the business benefits evidenced in this pilot.

Absenteeism attributed to WASH services and key hygiene behaviours decreased by

29%

Tanneries, India

Medical costs attributed to WASH services and hygiene behaviour change decreased by

30%

Ready-made garment factories, Bangladesh

Productivity attributed to WASH services and hygiene behaviour change increased by

52%

Tea estate, India

100%



of employees across all three ready-made garment factories in Bangladesh agreed WASH services and good hygiene practices had brought positive change and happiness. With 83% agreeing that it had also contributed at a community level.

“We learned how to maintain good hygiene and take care of our menstrual cycle. Our work performance has improved. In some sections of my factory, production has increased. I hardly see girls missing out on workdays.”

Factory employee, Bangladesh



● Reusable sanitary pads handmade from pieces of cloth. Darjeeling, India. May 2022.



Workplace learnings on good hygiene behaviours

Adequate WASH facilities in factory and field workplace settings are crucial to the performance and wellbeing of employees. This should be coupled with the hygiene training, education and awareness to help drive the change in behaviours in the workforce and in the communities where employees live.

Field insights

Open defecation in remote areas was a challenge across the tea estates due to the vast acres of land and lack of appropriate options to implement WASH facilities. In the Darjeeling tea estates, hygiene training was coupled with sex-segregated, inclusive and accessible community toilets. As a result, health risks were lowered due to a decrease in open defecation in remote areas.

Before the intervention, the tea estate in Kenya had limited access to handwashing facilities in the field, so employees had to bring water and soap with them to work. Due to the altitude, the water was freezing cold, so this acted as a further deterrent to handwashing. As part of the intervention, the **'Tuko Clean' campaign** was launched to promote **hygiene behaviours** to employees and their communities. Hygiene promotion as visual aids, paintings and pictures were posted on walls at key areas where people lived, worked and socialised, with a specific focus on providing cues and messages at handwashing points and around toilets.

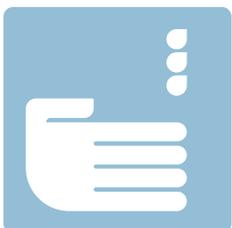
Water quality training at the Darjeeling tea estate educated employees and trained young people in the local community on how to test their drinking water, and the post-testing precaution measures that should be put in place if any contamination was found.

Factory insights

In the ready-made garment factories and leather tanneries, there was a lack of **operational maintenance** of the WASH facilities. This meant that the ongoing functionality and cleanliness of the workplace toilets was a challenge. Hygiene training was implemented, and a cleaning rota was designed for employees to take turns in cleaning the toilets. Protective cleaning garments, safety equipment and cleaning products, such as a pressure washer, was also provided to ensure staff safety.

Before the intervention, **handwashing** with soap during key moments was not practised routinely in the leather tanneries, particularly after using the toilet and before eating food. Hand hygiene training was provided to tannery employees, and the significance of the dangerous chemicals used in the processing of leather was highlighted. As part of the intervention, handwashing facilities were renovated, an audio system with pre-recorded hygiene messaging was put in place near the toilets, and a television installed in the common area showed training sessions by the WaterAid team on sanitation and menstrual hygiene. As a result, **99%** of tannery employees reported that the hygiene session had an influence on their knowledge and behaviours, with **83%** noting a change in their handwashing behaviours, and **79%** acknowledging a change in their sanitation habits.

At the tea estate factory in Kenya, there were handwashing promotional materials and stations to motivate the employees to wash their hands. 'Hygiene champions' were also trained and became peer educators, and every Monday became a dedicated 'hygiene day', with focused training sessions and activities.



Knowing your workplace

The chemicals used in the leather tannery factory setting makes keeping things clean a challenge. The tannery overcame this issue by incorporating slippers in the workplace. Employees changed into these slippers when accessing the toilets to help keep them clean.

After the intervention, the level of cleanliness in the tannery toilets had improved by **46%** compared to the start of the project, and **100%** of employees now wear these slippers when using the toilet. This practice is also being used in the employees' homes and communities, and in turn, the frequency of illnesses has reduced.

“The hygiene sessions proved to be very beneficial. Little things, like changing one’s slippers before going to the toilet so that one does not bring back germs into the working or living area, started making sense and employees started following it. This also ensured the toilets remained clean.”

Amir Ausaf, Tannery Manager, India

● Amir Ausaf, Manager at the Kings International Ltd tannery. Unnao, India. April 2022.



WaterAid/Anindito Mukherjee



● Shamima Khatun, Factory employee at Fakir Fashion. Narayanganj, Bangladesh. October 2021.

● Handwashing facilities at the Fakir Fashion factory. Narayanganj, Bangladesh. October 2021.



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“In the past, we were not able to go to the factory due to sickness. I have seen women colleagues lose their jobs because of their uncountable days of absence.

Unfortunately, the reason was inadequate toilet facilities and no access to clean water.”

Shamima Khatun, Factory employee, Bangladesh

Workplace culture

It is important for employees to feel they can leave their workstations to access water, go to the toilet and wash their hands with soap before they eat. For example, water trollies were introduced in the leather tanneries to encourage employees to drink regularly and training was also provided around the importance of drinking water to improve health and to help decrease the frequency of headaches at work.

As a result of these measures, there was a **30%** average increase in access to drinking water for employees across all three tanneries.

Gender equality

Women should have access to WASH facilities that meet their needs and enable them to manage their periods with the privacy, safety and dignity they deserve, both at work and home.ⁱ

Sex-segregated toilets with sanitary products and a safe disposal method reduces absenteeism and promotes MHH. The incorporation of MHH workshops within the workplace also helps spread awareness on the importance of hygiene when menstruating – and reduces menstrual-related illnesses.

i. For guidance on how to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into community WASH projects, see our comprehensive guide available at: washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/integrating-gender-equality-into-community-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-projects

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Hygiene behaviour change practices – tools for success

Hygiene package and promotional sessions

A tailor-made hygiene package and plan with assets relevant to the objectives, business and context is the key to success. This should consist of engaging, attractive and motivational activities, together with visual cues and nudges that facilitate behaviours to happen and encourage behaviours to be practiced. People should be exposed multiple times with hygiene sessions, using different activities – but reinforcing the same behaviours.

Handwashing facilities and practice

A handwashing facility with water and soap is essential for good hygiene practices in the workplace. The water temperature does not affect the effectiveness of the handwashing, but may influence behaviour by making it a more pleasant experience for employees to use. Prompts and queues can be used in the workplace as reminders of when and how long to wash hands – the WASH4Work Hand Hygiene Protocol advises that each handwash should last at least 20 seconds.³

“Our lives have definitely improved. We have a toilet in our house and can now ensure that we drink good quality water so we don’t fall ill. I have been told to test the water quality twice, during the monsoons, because that is when there is a high chance of contamination.”

Nausheen, Tannery employee, India

3. WASH4Work (2020). *Hand hygiene protocol for the workplace*. Available at: wash4work.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/11/WASH4WORK_Hand-Hygiene-Protocol-1.pdf (accessed 12 Sep 2022).

Menstrual health and hygiene

Women are an integral part of a workforce, therefore MHH awareness and training, alongside female-friendly facilities – such as sex-segregated toilets and sanitary products – is central for a successful business model. The MHH sessions will ensure women are more aware of hygiene and sanitation practices to keep them safe and well.

Operational maintenance of facilities

All employees should understand the importance of cleanliness and hygiene in their WASH facilities. Cleaning rotas should be encouraged to keep toilets clean, with cleaning supplies and protective garments provided to keep employees safe. Management should support this to ensure functionality of facilities through a regular supply of services, hygiene products (such as soap and water), and ongoing operational maintenance and repairs.

● Nausheen conducts a water quality test as part of a demonstration for her neighbours. Unnao, India. April 2022.



WaterAid/Amindito Mukherjee

● Shri Ram works at the Superhouse tannery and says after getting handwashing facilities and drinking water his health has improved. Unnao, India. April 2022.



Hygiene change agents

Members of staff who have gone through the hygiene capacity building training can become representatives for HBC in the workplace. Their role is to organise and engage employees with the hygiene session, offer advice and remind staff of good hygiene practices, whilst monitoring the outcomes.

Key date celebrations

Recognition and celebration of key dates such as Global Handwashing Day, World Water Day, World Toilet Day, Menstrual Hygiene Day, and also monthly or weekly 'cleaning days', helps boost morale, motivate ongoing awareness and encourage behaviours.

Community hygiene

For ongoing and sustainable change, hygiene promotion and behaviour change needs to continue outside of the working environment and in the communities where employees live. This pilot project has proven the importance of community involvement, for example, **100%** of all households in the leather tannery employees' communities said they washed their hands with soap at critical times after the project.

"I know my work well, but a bout of illnesses in the past few years had started interfering with it.

After attending the hygiene sessions, I started washing my hands with soap and drank water from the taps meant for that purpose.

For me, washing my hands with soap after work, before eating food, and after using the toilet, and drinking water from the dedicated [tap], has improved my health."

Shri Ram, Tannery employee, India

Conclusion

Investment in hygiene behaviour change, and the accompanying facilities that help facilitate those sustained behaviours in the workplace, can often be some of the best money spent by a company or business to support employee wellbeing and health.

The hygiene behaviour change package, training and assets must be tailor-made and context-specific to be successful and sustainable. But when accompanied with ongoing operational maintenance and cleaning, the outcomes associated with employee wellbeing, health, increased productivity and decreased absence, as well as the clear return on investment for businesses, should be seen as a sound investment with a ripple effect far beyond the bottom line.

● Kesang Lama washes her clothes at the Barnesbeg tea estate. Darjeeling district, India. November 2022.



WaterAid/Ranita Roy



● Front cover image: Textile employees Roksana and Renu Akter use the new community WASH facilities. Narayanganj, Bangladesh. October 2021.

WaterAid is an international not-for-profit, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Only by tackling these three essentials in ways that last can people change their lives for good.

● Employees of the Superhouse tannery wash their hands at a handwashing facility inside the factory. Unnao, India. April 2022.

Everyone, everywhere has a human right to water, sanitation and hygiene – at home, in the community and at work.

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