

Central American Handwashing Initiative Demonstrates Public-Private Partnership Success

The Central American Handwashing Initiative, which took place from 1996-1999, exemplifies the success of the public-private partnership approach to public health objectives. The effects of the Initiative can be felt threefold: as a direct public health impact; as a leveraging of resources for the objective; and as an instigator of sustainable change among the partners who participated in the program.

These effects are documented in new materials that present the Initiative as a success story of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approach, which was developed by BASICS and EHP for USAID. Many partners are still active in supporting the message of the campaign through new or continuing campaigns. The private and public sector partners' continued commitment proves the sustainability of the approach and serves to further expand the impact of handwashing on cases of diarrheal disease in children under five years.

The Public-Private Partnership Approach

The Central American Handwashing Initiative, conceived and facilitated by BASICS and EHP for USAID, is a perfect example of the PPP approach—public and private partners working together for mutually beneficial and sustainable results. A public-private partnership for health is an approach to addressing public health and social development problems through the combined efforts of public, private, and development organizations. Each partner makes a contribution in its area of special competence, bringing in expertise that is often not available



in development projects. In the Central American Handwashing Initiative for example, marketing directors from multinational soap companies provided valuable insight into the scope and design of the campaign.

Through a PPP, the partners rally around a common cause while simultaneously pursuing their own organizational objectives. Public sector organizations—such as the Ministries of Health, in the case of this Initiative—achieve their objectives in less time, with smaller investments. Private sector organizations—producers of health-related products, for example—are able to expand their markets, develop new marketing techniques, and contribute to the communities in which they do business. Development organizations achieve



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their strategic objectives in collaboration with others groups, leverage new resources for public health, and gain experience with a highly feasible and sustainable approach to public health promotion. Most important, the targeted communities and populations benefit from improved health.

“The unique benefit of partnerships between corporations and non-profit organizations is the ability to focus on a fundamental human need that has societal benefits of importance to both organizations and society as a whole.”

— Diana Grina, Director, Personal Care Products,
Colgate-Palmolive

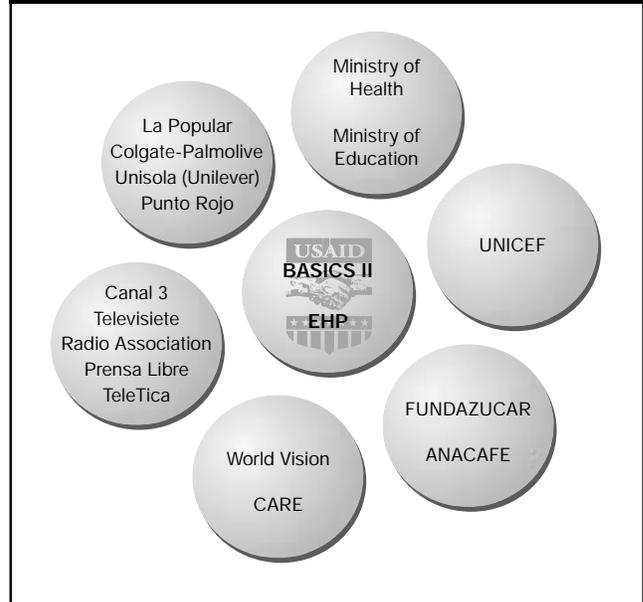
In order to instigate such a partnership, there needs to be a catalyst: one organization that recognizes a need in public health and selects the particular problem to be addressed. In the case of the Central American Handwashing Initiative, the catalyst was USAID through BASICS and EHP, and the problem was the prevalence of diarrheal disease among children under five years in Central America. The partnership, which initially started with the catalyst team and the soap producers, consisted in its full development of the catalyst team, the ministries of health of the participating countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica), four national and international soap companies, and a number of development organizations and NGOs.

The Nautilus Approach

BASICS and EHP developed a strategy to the traditional PPP that has proven to be highly successful. The Central American Handwashing Initiative used the “nautilus” approach of 14 steps, beginning with the selection of the public health need and ending with the incorporation of evaluation results into the strategy of the partnership. This approach was created to be adaptable to specific programs. In the Handwashing Initiative, the public sector joined the effort after the regional advertising campaign was designed.

The nautilus approach is effective because it is a comprehensive strategy that includes four phases: conceptualization and development of the PPP;

Partners in the Central American Handwashing Initiative



planning and development of the campaign; implementation; and assessment and dissemination. These phases entail the creation and participation of a Task Force that guides and develops the work plan and campaign message as marketing information is assessed. The Task Force comprises representatives from the partnering organizations (development, public, private) and the catalyst. This step ensures the sustainability of the program by encouraging input from the public and private participants who will be

The Nautilus Approach



incorporating the campaign's message into their product and program marketing designs. In the Central American Handwashing Initiative, the Task Force comprised marketing directors from the soap companies and the BASICS and EHP team.

As Simple as "1, 2 y 3"

At the launching of the Handwashing campaign in March 1998, the promotional materials were used in a variety of settings by the partners. Generic campaign materials were either used outright by some of the soap companies who imprinted their label on the posters and advertisements, or the key messages were integrated into the promotional material designed for specific brands.

The message focused on motivating consumers—particularly low-income mothers—to wash their hands at appropriate times, using the correct technique. All materials, from radio and TV spots to brochures and health fair banners, contained the generic concept developed for the Initiative: "One, two, and three." This symbolized the three critical times and the three crucial aspects of handwashing technique, which were illustrated in the materials. The slogan of "I wash my hands for health" was also created by the Initiative and often incorporated into the promotional material.

Many local radio and television stations donated airtime and newspapers offered free space to run the sponsored advertisements. Public school systems distributed posters and handwashing kits that included coloring books and games developed by the soap companies. Development partners, such as World Vision and CARE, distributed posters, banners, brochures and tapes throughout the targeted regions. The partners also made appearances at community activities, such as market fairs.

PPP Impact on Public Health

In the year before the Initiative (1995), diarrheal disease was the cause of 19 percent of under-five mortality in Honduras, 23 percent in Nicaragua, 20



percent in El Salvador, and 45 percent in Guatemala. Handwashing is among the four top measures to prevent diarrheal disease in children under five years. Looking at the impact of the Initiative on public health in these participating countries, there was a 4.5 percent overall reduction in diarrheal prevalence in children under five years over the course of the intervention. Surveyors also found that 10 percent of all women surveyed from an "inadequate handwashing group" improved their handwashing behavior, and the percentage of mothers using the correct technique at all three critical times more than doubled.

Considering that one-fifth of all under-five mortality is attributable to diarrhea and that handwashing is not well recognized as a means to prevent diarrhea in many parts of the world, the

Times and Technique for Correct Handwashing Behavior

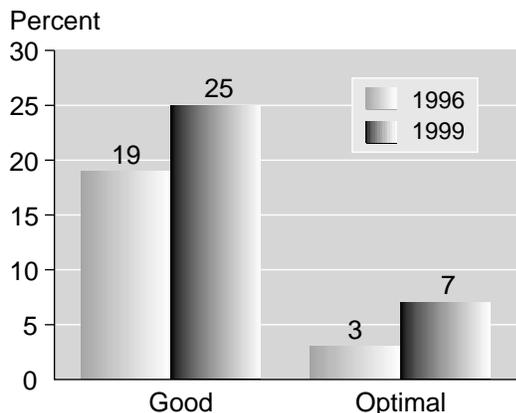
Three components of correct technique:

- Wash both hands with water and soap.
- Rub hands together at least three times.
- Dry hands hygienically.

Three critical times:

- Before cooking or preparing food.
- Before eating or before feeding children.
- After defecating and after changing or cleaning babies.

Improvements in Handwashing Practice



Changes in mothers' handwashing practices after the 12-month campaign in Guatemala (n=1500). The number of mothers with "good" handwashing practices increased by over 30 percent from 1996 to 1999. The number of mothers using "optimal" handwashing practices more than doubled in that period.

results of the Initiative are more than promising. The continued support of the program by the participating partners will ensure that the Initiative's impact will be sustained in the region.

Tapping Resources and Sustaining Change

Just in the first year of the Central American Handwashing Initiative, the private sector investments to the campaign totaled nearly \$615,000, while the total initial investment from the catalysts over the four years of the Initiative was \$389,000. The private contributions prove that the PPP approach leverages resources to a level that the public and donor organizations otherwise may never see. Conversely, if it had not been for the catalysts' original investment, the private sector resources would never have been spent on a handwashing promotion.

Another vital effect of the PPP approach is a change in the perceptions of private and public partners on the value of public health objectives. The soap producers in Central America learned that while promoting their products, they could promote beneficial health behaviors, thereby also improving their image in targeted communities. Private companies also gain experience in working with

government bodies, such as Ministries of Health and Education, and build lasting relationships within those bodies. Due to its experience in the Handwashing Initiative, in 2000-2001 Colgate-Palmolive launched a school program targeting 450,000 children in Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama. The regional campaign used appropriated material to reach school children under the form of a friendly octopus cartoon character. The copy of the message used the same diarrhea prevention message of the "Lavos mis manos por salud" campaign.

Due to their positive experience in the Central American Handwashing Initiative, the public sector and other development partners have sustained their interest in the campaign and have launched and planned new programs. UNICEF/Guatemala incorporated the elements of the handwashing campaign into its ongoing community-level hygiene programs, and the Salvadoran MOH is collaborating with Unisola/Unilever and BASICS II/El Salvador to address child health problems in its country.



A Global Approach

The Central American Handwashing Initiative demonstrates that the public-private partnership approach, developed by BASICS and EHP for USAID, is a highly effective model for encouraging private companies to recognize that public health objectives are compatible with business opportunities.

A Compendium of Resources CD-ROM Contents

- **The Story of a Successful Public-Private Partnership in Central America: Handwashing for Diarrheal Disease Prevention** – (English, 99 pp.) — A detailed account of the challenges, critical issues, results, and lessons learned from the Central American Handwashing Initiative.
- **Public-Private Partnerships: Mobilizing Resources to Achieve Public Health Goals. The Central American Handwashing Initiative Points the Way** – (English, Spanish, and French, 16 pp.) — An outline of key elements of PPPs, as illustrated by the Handwashing Initiative, including critical success factors for replication.
- **Generis Latina Final Report: Evaluación del Impacto de la Campaña “Lavo Mis Manos por Salud”** – (Spanish) — Methodology and results of an evaluation and tracking studies showing changes in handwashing behavior in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica.
- **Market Survey** (Spanish) — A post-campaign questionnaire used for characterizing surveyed groups and assessing their handwashing behaviors.
- **Radio Jingle** – (Spanish) — A handwashing jingle set to a popular tune, explaining the correct techniques and critical times of optimal handwashing behavior.
- **Television Spot** – (AVI, MPEG, in Spanish) — A commercial set to the handwashing jingle, featuring a mother incorporating optimal handwashing behavior into her day.
- **Promotional Pamphlet: “Lavo Mis Manos por Salud”** – (Spanish) — A pamphlet used to enlist the participation of key government, media, and private-sector decision-makers.
- **Public Relations Pamphlet: “Lavo Mis Manos por Salud”** – (Spanish) — A pamphlet used to exhibit the results, recognize existing partners, and encourage new partners to join.
- **1, 2, 3 Generic Campaign Poster(s)** – (Spanish, with logos, without logos) — The poster that encapsulates the essence of the campaign’s communication strategy. Correct handwashing techniques are shown across the top, critical handwashing times down the side.
- **Protex Poster** – (Spanish) — A Colgate-Palmolive’s “Protex” soap poster that integrates the Initiative’s key messages into their advertising strategy.
- **Unisola Poster** – (Spanish) — A poster developed by Unisola/Unilever and the MOH in El Salvador to respond to the January 2001 El Salvador earthquake. The poster used the Initiative’s ideas to promote hygiene behavior for diarrheal disease prevention.
- **Manolo Poster 1** – (Spanish) — A poster featuring “Manolo,” a cartoon octopus created by Colgate-Palmolive to interest children in adopting good handwashing behaviors. Posters were distributed in schools across Central America as part of a school hygiene education program.
- **Manolo Poster 2** – (Spanish) — A “Manolo” game board distributed in schools by Colgate-Palmolive along with the Manolo poster.
- **Public Sector Poster** – (Spanish) — An adaptation of the Handwashing Initiative poster produced by the MOH in Honduras as part of a cholera prevention campaign.

“We joined the campaign because it involved the company in a social outreach program, something we had not participated in before, and to decrease the number of children who die due to disease.”

—Arnoldo del Valle, *La Popular, Guatemala*

This model has been successfully implemented to create several partnerships across the globe, including a collaboration between oral rehydration salts producers and MOHs to reduce diarrheal disease in Pakistan, Kenya, Bolivia, etc. In several African countries, a partnership of Ministries of Health, media and communications agencies, and insecticide and mosquito net producers is working together to promote low-cost insecticide-treated materials for the prevention of malaria. Health objectives are not the only field to use PPP to increase overall level of effort and effectiveness: leaders in the areas of education, nutrition, and the environment also employ the PPP approach.

A Partnership in Action

An interactive CD-ROM, entitled *Public-Private Partnerships for Public Health: Promoting Handwashing in Central America—A Compendium of Resources*, presents the complete documentation of the Initiative, including an outline of key elements, samples of collateral materials, and marketing surveys. Produced by a partnership of BASICS II, USAID, EHP, UNICEF, and The World Bank, the *Compendium of Resources* provides all of the components necessary for replicating the public health initiative in other regions. Each organization is disseminating the information to its network in order to maximize the reach of and to promote the replication of the PPP model. Partnerships with multinational soap companies are being discussed at the global level as well as at the country level. Already PPP programs are on-going or planned in India, Ghana, Senegal, Nepal, Peru, and possibly Mexico and China.

For more information and to order the Compendium or other products, please visit the BASICS II Website at www.basics.org.