

# HIGH RISKS HIGH IMPACTS

*The first steps to building pandemic resilient cities*



**An experiment in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)  
Initiatives from Odisha, India**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ASHA</b>	Accredited Social Health Activist
<b>BeMC</b>	Berhampur Municipality Corporation
<b>BMC</b>	Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation
<b>CAB</b>	Covid-19 Appropriate Behaviour
<b>CMC</b>	Cuttack Municipal Corporation
<b>Covid-19</b>	Coronavirus disease of 2019
<b>IPC</b>	Infection Prevention and Control
<b>O&amp;M</b>	Operation & Maintenance
<b>RCCE</b>	Risk Communication and Community Engagement
<b>SARS-Cov-2</b>	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
<b>SHG</b>	Self Help Group
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



## PREFACE



WASH is gaining traction more than ever owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused several mortality and morbidity worldwide. COVID-19 has resulted in global lockdown, which led to the governments and different agencies rethink the development discourse and factor in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) as a core component of building pandemic resilient cities.

I am happy to announce this book titled "High Risks High Impacts: the first step towards building pandemic resilient cities". UNICEF Odisha has worked hard to develop this book to highlight the importance of WASH as well as the dedicated services provided by the frontline workers.

This book will be helpful for government, international and national agencies, development organizations and individuals working towards preventing future pandemic focusing on hand washing for all. This book will be a pavement towards the development and planning of the existing and upcoming cities. These cities, with stepped up WASH facilities and services, will be resistant to the future public health emergencies.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Nielsen".

**Monika Oledzka Nielsen**

*Chief of Field Office*

UNICEF, Odisha



# Introduction

**COVID-19**, a disease caused by the virus SARS-Cov-2, was declared a pandemic<sup>1</sup> and has created an unprecedented emergency worldwide.

The disease has caused devastating impacts on lives, livelihoods and wellbeing of billions of people across the world.

Latest<sup>2</sup> estimates from the World Health Organisation (WHO) put the confirmed cases, at the global level, at 116, 166, 652. This includes 2, 582, 528 deaths.

Globally, India saw the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of COVID-19 cases as well as recovered cases. The country ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in COVID-19 deaths<sup>3</sup> as reported by WHO.

The state of Odisha has had 3, 37, 674 cases so far. This is about 3.05% of all cases of the country. Of this 3, 34, 902 cases have recovered. Approximately 1,917 people have died of Covid in the state.<sup>4</sup>

At the onset of the pandemic, UNICEF has worked in close coordination with the Government and other development partners including WHO, primarily focusing efforts towards supporting coordinated actions for the **preparedness, containment and mitigation of the outbreak**. UNICEF with its response has **adopted a multi-sectoral approach** to the issue, ensuring that women and children's rights are protected through a comprehensive approach to policies and programs.

This report is about the preparedness and response measures on WASH in urban areas in 4 cities (Balangir, Berhampur, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack) in Odisha. UNICEF's response here included supplies, promoting infection prevention measures and strengthening capacity of the stakeholders – including most vulnerable community members living in urban slums – for ensuring continuity of WASH services during pandemic.



PHOTO: UNICEF

*Taking hand hygiene lessons to slum children*

<sup>1</sup>World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a 'Pandemic' on March 11, 2020

<sup>2</sup>COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update as of 7 March, 2021.

<sup>3</sup>As on 3 March 2021 3:35pm CET, reported to WHO.

<sup>4</sup>State dash board <https://statedashboard.odisha.gov.in/> as On 6th March 2021 1.00 pm.



*UNICEF's response in the four cities - Balangir, Berhampur, Bhubaneswar & Cuttack - in Odisha included supplies, promoting infection prevention measures and strengthening capacity of the stakeholders - including most vulnerable community members living in urban slums - for ensuring continuity of WASH services during pandemic.*

PHOTO: UNICEF

# COVID-19 response in high risk areas of Four Cities, Odisha

**AT A TIME** when the entire population of the state was locked inside homes, and the state government and city administrations were involved in managing the challenges thrown at them by the pandemic, UNICEF, as part of humanitarian response mandate undertook initiatives on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to strengthen COVID-19 preventive measures. The urban areas, and within them the slums, were high risk zones. UNICEF's intervention covered some such areas of the state.

The intervention worked towards:

- Ensuring critical WASH supplies with focus on handwashing stations and soaps to the poor, slum dwellers, commuters, market goers and other people in four major cities: Balangir, Berhampur, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.
- Training WASH service providers and volunteers on infection prevention & control (IPC) and other Covid appropriate behaviours.
- Spreading awareness to communities in targeted slums on safe WASH practices.

There was an atmosphere of fear everywhere. People were affected as there was fear of stigma, their economic activities were stopped. Despite COVID restrictions the WASH frontline functionaries were holding the fort by moving out and ensuring essential services. General public were also confronted with many socio-

psychological challenges for having to stay indoors.

At such a critical juncture, when people were already facing numerous challenges, it was a daunting task to create awareness on hygiene practices among WASH frontline service providers and vulnerable population in high risk locations. The task was difficult with all the restriction and risk on individuals to promote infection prevention & control (IPC) that required use of masks and other Covid appropriate behaviours such as maintaining safe physical distancing and washing hands frequently with soap and water. This was more so difficult in the slum areas of the cities as they were congested and lacked basic facilities and faced behavioural constraints.

Considering the situation Covid-19 responsive minimal touch hand washing stations were designed and installed under this initiative at critical locations like community toilets, market places, slums and institutions (government offices, health facilities, etc.) to promote frequent hand hygiene with soap. In each city, expert trainers and social mobilisers spread out to train the frontline WASH functionaries and households to motivate the most vulnerable people (see Box: *In numbers*).



PHOTO: RASHMI RANJAN PANIGRAHI

*UNICEF, as part of humanitarian response mandate, undertook initiatives on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to strengthen Covid-19 preventive measures*

Box 1

**In numbers**

- 50** – Demonstration of minimal touch Handwashing Stations, with water and soap facilities, was made at different high risk locations in the four cities.
- 1,00,000** – Soaps were provided to poor slum dwellers and sanitation workers in two cities: Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.
- 11,700** – Frontline WASH foot soldiers and community volunteers were trained on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) to reach out to communities on WASH and IPC measures.
- 50,000** – Community members in targeted slums were made aware on water, sanitation and hygiene with the help of the trained WASH workers and community volunteers.



PHOTO: UNICEF

*Spreading awareness to communities in targeted slums on safe WASH practices*

# Promoting Hand Hygiene at crucial times

- 50 minimal touch handwashing stations installed in high risk areas
- 1,00,000 soaps distributed among sanitary workers and urban poor in selected slums in two cities
- Municipalities and institutions played a supportive role, ensured sustainability of the handwashing stations



PHOTO: UNICEF

*Handwashing stations were located at high risk areas in order to benefit maximum users*

## Hand hygiene for all: Laying the foundation during a public health emergency situation

The initiative realised that talking about handwashing without having adequate facilities in the cities – especially in high risk locations and where the poor live in congested conditions – would not go a long way in promoting hand hygiene for all. At a time, that called for immediate intervention in promoting handwashing with soaps, UNICEF scouted for various innovative technologies that would help people adopt this practice as well as avoid the fear of contacting or spreading the virus.

“UNICEF explored for various designs and settled for the most suitable ones for conditions of the cities and the users,” said Monika Nielsen, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF,

Odisha. “It was declared a pandemic and one had to act fast. As the infection risks were very high we started discussion with government and the local institutions for high risk sites for installation of minimal touch handwashing stations.”

Locations were chosen in a way where people frequent and would need such facilities. Health centres, municipality offices, market places, slums, training institutions, government offices, etc. were areas where there was maximum chance of the spread of infections. Locating the handwashing stations at the high risk areas was to benefit maximum users and positioning the station at government offices and municipality offices was to benefit the essential service providers and also to demonstrate for its replicability.

Water facility was to be ensured and local cooperation in ensuring cleanliness and safety of the stations was also looked as essential criteria for

installing the same. A checklist (see Box: checklist for installing handwashing stations) for the handwashing stations was developed so as to be sure that these are regularly supplied with water, cleaned and maintained by institutions/ authorities/local people. Sustainability of the systems beyond the current implementation

phase of this initiative was also a strong consideration. The water tank and the soap dispenser were vulnerable items and could be stolen by mischievous people and hence thorough discussions with the people of the localities before installing the handwashing stations also formed part of the strategy.

**Box 2**

**Checklist for installing handwashing stations**



The handwashing stations were installed in high risk zones such as hospitals & health facilities, govt. offices, municipality offices, major traffic junctions, market places, community toilets, etc. These were identified as high risk zones because they are public places to which people frequented when the lockdown got eased.

Sr No	Descriptions
<b>A</b>	<b>Installation</b>
1	Availability of water source
2	Running water/ overhead tank is required
3	Water connection facility
4	Average number of users per day
5	Raised place
6	Safe and accident free zone and barrier
7	Approachable by users
8	Proper drainage system (Drainage system main drain/soak pit/ kitchen garden )
9	User friendly (age and height sensitive)
10	Accessible to all including persons with special needs
11	Minimal touch
12	Principle of social distancing ensured in multi sink/tap/station
13	Easy to operate with signages
14	Theft proof
<b>B</b>	<b>Operation &amp; Maintenance (O&amp;M)</b>
1	O&M plan in place
2	Cleaning and disinfection happening daily
3	Consent letter from institution/government /others
<b>C</b>	<b>Availability of work force</b>
1	Mason/Labour/Plumber/Fabricator
<b>D</b>	<b>Availability of Materials</b>

To ensure critical WASH supplies to the high risk and vulnerable populations, operation and maintenance (O&M) which included supplies of soap, brush, cleaning material etc was supported as part of this initiative.

## Bhubaneswar

Handwashing stations installed: **15**

Population served: **7500**

### User Views

Handwashing station near dispensary and a community toilet, Dumduma, Raghunathpur

*Slum dwellers of Dumduma in Raghunathpur opined that they were much benefitted by the minimal touch hand washing station installed outside the community toilet. Following are some of their views on the usefulness of the same.*

- >> We were trained by a team of people including leaders from our own community. They also conducted awareness meetings in our locality and told us about the importance of washing hands frequently with soap and water to stay safe from the pandemic. In this light, the handwashing station came handy for us.
- >> They taught us the right way to wash our hands and asked us to do that when we move out of our house; after completing our work and when required in between; after coming from markets or outside. They also taught us the proper way to wash our hands at critical times.
- >> The handwashing station not only made it easy for us to wash our hands frequently, it also inculcated the habit in us. This station is in our own locality and whenever we see it we tend to wash our hands.
- >> Our children too have developed this habit. Earlier, we had to insist on them to wash their hands before they have their meals, but now we don't have to do this. They do it on their own and the credit goes to the handwashing station.
- >> The handwashing station has been installed outside the community toilet, the most appropriate place in our locality. We find it useful to wash our hands after using the latrine.
- >> We prefer to wash our hands here as it is operated by legs and it is better not to touch the taps after cleaning up ourselves, especially during the time of the pandemic.



PHOTO: RASHMI RANJAN PANIGRAHI

*Awareness & training initiatives have made large number of women in the slums take to safe handwashing practices*

## Cuttack

Handwashing stations installed: **10**

Population served: **5000**

### User Views

Handwashing station outside the community toilet, Deer Park slum; and at the Imampada slum

- >> It has been so beneficial to keep the pandemic at bay. We practiced proper hand hygiene when Covid-19 was at its peak, thanks to this handwashing station.
- >> Here we get the liquid hand wash and water handy. Earlier, we hardly used soap while washing hands. We also didn't wash our hands frequently due to lack of water.
- >> The hand washing station installed in our slum is very beneficial. After its installation, we have been maintaining proper hand hygiene.
- >> Now, hand washing with soap and water has become a practice after touching others, interacting with others and after returning home from market or outside. Besides, wearing of masks and maintaining physical distance have become a practice in the community. None of us has been affected by Covid-19 due to all these practices.



**Pic top:** Even elderly people in slums now understand the importance of handwashing with soap.  
**Pic bottom:** Handwashing facilities in schools & other institutions play a big role in the fight against Covid and such pandemics

PHOTOS: UNICEF

## Berhampur

Handwashing stations installed: **10**

Population served: **5000**

### User Views

Handwashing station inside Berhampur Municipality Corporation (BeMC) complex; and Children's Park, Pandavnagar slum

- >> During the lockdown we had to come to the office for several works and this handwashing station was very helpful.
- >> The handwashing station installed inside the BeMC office has been very beneficial for the visitors. At the time when Covid-19 was at its peak, people used to wash their hands after entering the premises as there used to be strict instructions for the people to clean their hands before entering different departments. It was a part of the routine process that includes thermal testing and application of hand sanitiser.
- >> The posters on the handwashing station that depict the various steps of handwashing have been very useful for the users.
- >> After our play in the park is over, we make it sure to wash our hands here. Water and soap are handy and we do not have to touch it with our hands but use our legs to get water and liquid soap. Thus, we can check germ transmission through hands.
- >> It has become a habit to frequently wash our hands with soap and water after we got the training and facility. We wash our hands with soap and water before and after having food; after using toilet; after interacting with people; after playing and whenever we feel necessary to wash our hands.



PHOTOS: RASHMI RANJAN PANIGRAHI



Such minimal touch stations have played a very important role in promoting the habit of frequent washing of hands, a practice considered as the best defence against the deadly virus. The passers-by are greatly benefitted by this service. The one inside our premises has been very helpful for people who visited the office. While there are 10 such stations provided by this initiative in the city, the BeMC has also installed such facilities in several places – mainly outside the community toilets. People, after using toilet, wash their hands in the handwashing stations.

– Ramanchala Khamari, Deputy Commissioner, Sanitation, BeMC.

**Pic top:** The minimal touch hand-washing facility offers better protection against germs and it is very timely when Covid is at its peak.

**Pic bottom:** The posters on the handwashing station that depict the various steps of handwashing have been very useful for the users

“The five handwashing stations – one each at Palace line petrol pump, Patna Chhak and College Chhak; and two at Thikardarpd Chhak – installed by this initiative not only prompted hundreds of passers-by, commuters and denizens to maintain proper hand hygiene, but also generated awareness on the importance of washing hands frequently with soap and water as a defence against Covid-19 and a number of other infectious diseases.”

– Bipin Bihari Deep, Executive Officer, Balangir Municipality



## Balangir

Handwashing stations installed: **5**

Population served: **2500**

### User Views

Handwashing station at Patna Chhak, an important business hub and bus & auto rickshaw junction

**We urge our passengers to clean their hands in the handwashing station before boarding the vehicle and wear masks. The hand washing station set up here has been very beneficial for us**

The handwashing station installed at the main square of this city has been beneficial for hundreds of commuters and those who visit the market. Views of some users – from a cross section of the society – are as follows:

- >> We wash our hands with soap and water as soon as we join the duty and after our duty gets over. In between also we wash our hands 5-6 times every day, said a traffic constable.
- >> We have been listening announcements from TVs, radios and getting to know from different media that washing hands frequently is extremely crucial to stay safe from Covid-19. When movement restrictions were lifted up and we started our business, we have been very careful to follow all the Covid-19 protocols, said a local shop owner.
- >> We urge our passengers to clean their hands in the handwashing station before boarding the vehicle and wear masks. The hand washing station set up here has been very beneficial for us. We also wash our hands before starting and after ending the journey and in intervals with soap and water, said an auto driver.
- >> The handwashing station has been extremely beneficial for the owners and staff of the shops near it. While we wash our hands in intervals using soap and water in the station, we also ask our customers to wash their hands before they enter our shop. They also wash their hands after they go out of the shop, said a shop keeper.
- >> As the virus transmits through touch by hands, the simple formula of using legs to draw water and liquid soap is of great benefit to check the spread of the pandemic. The minimal touch mechanism is very useful, said a commuter.

The handwashing station at the city station has been very beneficial for shopkeepers, commuters, auto drivers, passengers and traffic police



PHOTO: RASHMI RANJAN PANIGRAHI



PHOTO: RASHIMI RANJAN PANIGRAHI

## Taking it forward

The minimal touch handwashing stations with soap dispensers have been a hit in all the places they have been installed. There is an interest among municipalities and other stakeholders to spread this initiative further. Challenges remain, but these can be overcome through strategic interventions.

Ramanchala Khamari, Deputy Commissioner of the BeMC says, "As there has been growing demand in the city for these minimal touch handwashing units, there is a need of installing more of these units at high risk places having running water facility or with water storage with a system to refill." Market complexes – Bada Bazaar, Sana Bazaar, Annapurna Market Complex, Gate Bazaar, V2 complex and Ganesh Market – which are generally crowded by people may be given priority if the proponents plan to install more such stations. However, agreements should be made with respective market associations to operate and maintain these units. He also suggested installing these units in schools and colleges. The BeMC, he said, will definitely think about supporting these in whichever ways possible to ensure sustainable use and management.

Bipin Bihari Deep, Executive Officer, Balangir Municipality, said that many offices have replicated the minimal touch mechanism. Taking a cue from this, the Municipality has also installed two handwashing stations

on its campus to ensure that the visitors maintain proper hand-hygiene on the campus, he said. He suggested that the facilitators of this initiative may come up with installation of more handwashing stations. "If the municipality is approached, it is keen to take up the responsibility of filling water and providing soap in the existing handwashing stations installed, he assured.

Sukantha Panda, a trainer associated with the initiative at Berhampur, said, "We are getting a lot of requests from different areas to install these units. The traders at the food junction are keen to install a unit in their complex. We have asked them to pick a place where we can install a hand-washing station. If this initiative expands further, we will give first priority to provide these units in government schools. Some big schools in the city have requested us to install these facilities on their premises. Residents also demand that a handwashing station be installed outside the Sureswari temple in the city," he added.

The staff associated with this initiative have initiated dialogues with local traders and other organisations to extend their support for operation and maintenance of these handwashing stations. Local merchant associations have agreed to supply water, liquid soap and provide security to these stations at some places in Cuttack, Balangir and Berhampur. Talks are on in other places and there has been positive response so far.

*There has been growing demand in the city for minimal touch handwashing units*

***"We are getting a lot of requests from different areas to install these units. The traders at the food junction are keen to install a unit in their complex. We have asked them to pick a place where we can install a hand-washing station."***

*—Sukantha Panda, a trainer associated with the initiative at Berhampur*



HBCC  
UK Government Unilever  
Supports unicef for every child  
**TRAINING OF SANITARY WORKERS**  
Promotion of Preventive Behaviour and Improved Access to WASH to Reduce COVID-19  
"Sajag Swachh Aur Garam" (Sajag Swachh Aur Garam)  
Courtesy: Berhampur Municipality (Berhampur CE)  
CORE (COOP)

*Training of sanitary workers on safety measures went a long way in keeping the city clean when Covid was at its peak*

# Training Trainers & Community Volunteers for Infection Prevention and Control

- 11, 700 frontline WASH actors and community volunteers were trained on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)
- Training of trainers resulted in skilling on infection prevention and control (IPC)
- Trainings helped fight stigma and promote hygienic habits

## Force multiplier

Sanitation workers, rag-pickers, plumbers, masons, service providers, residential welfare workers who were part of essential services were severely affected due to the movement restrictions during and post lockdown. UNICEF along with its partner initiated an awareness drive by reaching out to them where they were. They motivated them to shed fears related to Covid-19 and to work with proper care

Training of trainers was conducted of the frontline WASH workers and Community Volunteers. They then reached out to other stakeholders. Two modules of training were used for the same. The trainers reached out to

the frontline WASH soldiers such as Jal Sathis and Swaccha Sathis. The community level volunteers were trained to reach out to the community members in the slums.

The trainings prepared the trainers to augment their inter-personal skills and spread awareness on Covid-19 appropriate behaviours such as using masks, maintaining respiratory hygiene, community hygiene, hand hygiene and other aspects of IPC.

The sanitation workers and other front force were demonstrated with the personal protection equipment, health and safety measures, utility of handwashing stations and steps of handwashing. The trainings were



PHOTO: UNICEF

*Trained community volunteers and frontline WASH workers created awareness in slums on sanitation measures and Covid appropriate behaviours*

***“As part of our awareness generation programme, we first took initiatives to train community volunteers and frontline WASH workers such as Jal Sathis and Swachha Sathis on Covid-19 appropriate behaviours.”***

—Snigdha Mohanty,  
facilitator who worked in  
Bhubaneswar and Cuttack

*Training of field forces resulted in spread of awareness messages to the communities with clarity*

done by aligning with government circulars on Covid-19 prevention and dealing with stigma and appropriate infection prevention & control measures.

The community volunteers reached out to the slums, almost about 50,000 people, and made them aware on safe physical distancing, use of community toilets and keeping them clean, use of handwashing stations, relevance of frequently washing hands with soaps, using mask, etc.

The Jal Sathis, Swachha Sathis, Self Help Groups helped in going to the wards and followed up with the households on the IPC.

Plumbers and masons were also provided with trainings on IPC and, along with that, training to install and retrofit handwashing stations with Covid-19 responsive minimal touch operated designs. Along with training on IPC, they were also oriented on the skills to retrofit the existing handwashing stations to make them Covid-19 responsive. They were able to help in operation and maintenance of the handwashing units.

## Multiple benefits of the trainings

The mission was to reach to all the vulnerable sections of the slums as fast as possible with messages of Covid-19-appropriate behaviours and the precautions they needed to take to stay safe from the virus. As it was not possible for trainers and facilitators to reach all these people directly, the frontline community volunteers

and Jal Sathis, Swachha Sathis, SHG members and other community leaders were skilled to spread and promote the messages.

The training helped these field forces to take the messages with clarity and that has helped in influencing hand hygiene behaviour among the target communities. In fact, the initiative could reach to over 50,000 people in slums of 4 municipalities. People of almost all the areas covered by the initiative have adopted Covid-19-appropriate behaviours. The cooperation and response of the community members to stem the spread of the virus has been remarkable.

“As part of our awareness generation programme, we first took initiatives to train community volunteers and frontline WASH workers such as Jal Sathis and Swachha Sathis on Covid-19 appropriate behaviours. They were asked to generate awareness and educate people in their respective wards on maintaining hygiene and other safe practices to keep the disease at bay. Each ward has two Swachha Sathis who visited people at their doorsteps and conducted the awareness programmes,” said Snigdha Mohanty, facilitator who worked in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Besides, the sanitation workers and rag-pickers were also trained on preventive behavioural practices against Covid-19. Rag-pickers, initially reluctant to go out to work, resumed their work after training and motivation.

These trainings complemented the efforts of the Municipal Corporations. “During our training, we had given utmost importance to ensure that they maintain proper hand hygiene, adding to what the Cuttack Municipal Corporation had been doing,” said Krushna Chandra Samantray, a trainer associated with the activities at Cuttack.

Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation’s (BMC) sanitation workers – as frontline force – continued working during the lockdown, but were afraid of getting exposed to wastes and outsiders. To provide psychological support to them a counselling service by the trained frontline forces went a long way in eradicating their fear and made them work with passion – as a contribution to the cleanliness of the city.

Awareness generation through posters and banners, miking and digital platform were



PHOTO: RASHMI RANJAN PANIGRAHI



PHOTO: RASHMI RANJAN PANIGRAHI

*The sanitation workers were very particular about following the handwashing steps before starting the work and completing it*

the other means to educate people, who were considered to be the most vulnerable.

Training the frontline workers benefited the initiative in another way. The Swachha Sathis, after receiving the trainings, realised that they could take up the great task of spreading awareness on hand hygiene in the localities they covered during their daily rounds.

## Getting them habituated to handwashing and the mask

Even though a lot of messaging had already happened in the cities, not many people were using masks when the programme intervened. It was also observed that the Jal Sathis, Swachha Sathis, SHG members and other community leaders were not using masks on a regular basis. The first task therefore was to get them used to masks.

“Our training to the frontline WASH forces and others emphasised on the importance of hand washing, wearing masks and maintaining personal hygiene. We were very particular about following the handwashing steps and taught people on the six steps of handwashing,” said Amarendra Sethi, a trainer associated with the initiative in Balangir. During monitoring, it was observed that the sanitation workers, masons, plumbers and other frontline workers were keeping a piece of soap with them and washing their hands as and when required. They were

also following the handwashing steps properly. Though they easily agreed on and adopted hand-washing practices, they were very reluctant to wear masks. However, the staff associated with the initiative took extensive measures to generate awareness on the benefits of wearing masks and gradually they adopted the practice when at work.

According to Champa Kumbhar, a sanitation worker in Ward No-12 of Balangir town, wearing a mask all the time while at work was a daunting task. She felt uncomfortable inside a mask while sweeping. “I felt suffocated because, it is the time when breathing is faster and it becomes harder to inhale the quantity of air needed,” said she.

But this was not only the case of sanitation workers. Almost everybody the initiative reached and worked with were reluctant to wear a mask initially.

The rag-pickers and sanitation workers used to fear a lot to move out as they believed that the virus was in the air. They were encouraged to come out to work taking all precautions. Initially, they were very reluctant to wear masks but used it only in fear of police. But after training and a lot of motivation, they have started using masks on their own. They also started drinking warm water besides taking other steps to boost immunity.

“Being uncomfortable inside the mask was a psychological issue, I realised later after the training. Now I am fine with the masks,” says Champa.

**“During monitoring, it was observed that the sanitation workers, masons, plumbers and other frontline workers were keeping a piece of soap with them and washing their hands as and when required.”**

—Amarendra Sethi, a trainer associated with the initiative in Balangir

## From hand hygiene to menstrual hygiene: Jal Sathis & Swachha Sathis take the charge

**“People will continue with this practice even after eradication of this pandemic. This practice will certainly prevent a lot of water-borne diseases.”**

—Sabitri Reddy, a Jal Sathi and a resident of Sukhabihar slum in Dumduma

The initiative depended heavily on the Jal Sathis, Swachha Sathis and other frontline WASH forces to reach out to the slum dwellers with messages on Covid-19 appropriate behaviours. They responded instantly and positively despite of several challenges (see Box: *No cakewalk*). The trainings helped them take up the initiatives with the communities.

For Sabitri Reddy, a Jal Sathi and a resident of Sukhabihar slum in Dumduma area of Bhubneswar, the training was helpful in convincing people to wash hands and wear masks. She has been an active member of the local SHG named ‘Jamuna’ and has been an active social worker of the locality.

“The government has entrusted me with the task of ensuring assured supply of clean and safe drinking water through piped water connections. When the lockdown started, slum dwellers feared to move out of homes to fetch water from the stand posts and do other works. I was worried how to convince the people to continue their daily routine but with precautions. The training helped in this,” said Sabitri.

She visited people in the area and made them aware of the necessity of maintaining proper sanitation and hygiene, wearing masks and

gloves, washing hands frequently with soap and water, etc. One of the direct impacts of the training has been the increase in the use of boiled and filtered water by the communities served by Sabitri.

Hand washing with soap and water frequently has become a practice of almost all the people of my area. Inculcation of this practice in their lifestyle has been a major thing achieved due to constant counselling.

Sabitri is confident that people will continue with this practice even after eradication of this pandemic. This practice will certainly prevent a lot of water-borne diseases.

Namita Reddy, another Jal Sathi from the Raghunathpur slum in the city, faced serious financial crisis due to lockdown. However, this did not stop her from taking the lead in motivating the community members.

“Though the owner, in whose house I work as a domestic help, used to pay me every month without work, my husband who works as a tailor did not get any job at that time. Our neighbours, who too work as domestic help, suffered similar crisis,” said Namita. After receiving training from this initiative on Covid-19 safety measures, she started disseminating the learning among the people of her area.

The awareness measures taken by her resulted in adoption of good practices by the slum people. People are now taking all measures to stay safe from the virus. The best side of these awareness measures is that people are

### Box 2

#### No cakewalk

While everybody has been home, the Swachha Sathis, sanitation workers and their supervisors were at work. The responsibility of ensuring cleanliness in their respective wards has been on the Swachha Sathis, said Subhadra Sahu, a Swachha Supervisor from the Balangir city. After receiving the trainings, we made it a mission to spread the word among all, she said further.

Bijeswari Sahu, a Swachha Sathi from the same city, says, “It was no cakewalk to visit people at their doorsteps, teach them on personal hygiene and sanitation and insist on them to practice Covid-19 protocols during home quarantine.” People did not take it kindly.



PHOTO: UNICEF

*The trainings not only helped the sanitation workers understand Covid appropriate behaviours, but also boosted their morale to discharge their responsibilities during the pandemic*

consuming safe drinking water and that they have become very strict on maintaining proper hand hygiene.

Jal Sathis have been asking women from the slum to use sanitary napkins during periods. However, there are many women who still have to manage with old clothes due to financial crunch. Namita and other frontline WASH workers, who were trained by the initiative, told such women to wash the soiled clothes with clean water and soap and dry these under sun.

Smitarani Maharana, a Swachha Sathi from Berhampur, says, "During our door to door campaign, apart from teaching people on Covid-19 appropriate behaviours such as hand washing and maintaining cleanliness, we educated women on how to maintain hygiene during menstruation." "Though it is not our job, we thought it to be our responsibility. Thanks to the trainings," she added.

The WASH frontline cadre had much more to do than just spreading awareness. "Our main responsibility has been generating awareness among people on segregation of garbage and dumping them properly. However, during Covid-19, after we got training, we started a door-to-door campaign and made people aware about Covid-19 safety measures, which include maintaining hand hygiene, safe physical distancing and use of masks, disinfection/disposal of masks. We also trained them on other personal hygiene and sanitation measures," said Aswini Maharana, a Swachha Sathi supervisor from Berhampur.

## Frontline of defence: sanitation workers emerged as the real life heroes

The sanitation workers not only had to fight with their inner fears but also several other challenges thrown upon by a locked down society, to work as the frontline of defense. They did not take a single day's off, took extra precautionary measures, adopted healthy habits and tried their best to keep the city streets and drains clean.

The trainings not only helped them understand the Covid-19 appropriate behaviors but also boosted their morale at this period when gloom writ large among all of them.

"They gathered both knowledge and courage, thanks to the trainings," said Sukantha Panda from Berhampur.

B. Jagannath, a sanitation worker from Cuttack city, said, "When the lockdown was initiated and everyone was advised to stay home, our families were reluctant to allow us to go out. However it was our duty to support for the sanitation and cleanliness of wards. The trainings we were provided with helped us gather moral strength and encouraged us to work fearlessly taking all precautions." "They taught us how to maintain hand hygiene, safe physical distance, wear masks, use gloves and maintain cleanliness after completion of the work. That convinced

*"During our door to door campaign, apart from teaching people on Covid-19 appropriate behaviours such as hand washing and maintaining cleanliness, we educated women on how to maintain hygiene during menstruation."*

— Smitarani Maharana, a Swachha Sathi from Berhampur

our family members as well," added he.

Radha Sagar, a sanitation worker from Balangir, narrated, "When the lockdown started, we were in fear and were not sure if we could go out to do our duty. My husband, a mason, and my two sons, one of them studying engineering and the other a sanitation worker, were against my coming to work as they thought exposure to waste materials and garbage may get me infected with Covid-19. Notwithstanding their pressure, I continued to work and thanks to municipal corporation and team for organizing the orientations on personal safety during Covid-19."

***"They taught us how to maintain hand hygiene, safe physical distance, wear masks, use gloves and maintain cleanliness after completion of the work. That convinced our family members as well."***

*—B Jagannath,  
a sanitation worker  
from Cuttack city*

"They taught me on how to stay safe from the virus by taking precautions. This helped me convince my family members. Their fear also subsided," she said, adding, "I also passed on the learning to my neighbours who were initially very fearful of Covid-19."

Radha Dei of Cuttack, who works as sanitation worker in ward no 33, faced similar challenges from her family members. She had to earn a living and fight her own fears. The trainings helped her as well.

"All my family members were unwilling to leave me for work. But, I had to come out as we were needed to keep the city clean and if not done, there is danger of fallout of other diseases like diarrhea etc. I took all possible measures as trained by the staff to stay safe from the disease," she said. Earlier, after completion of work she used to wash hands in plain water before entering her home.

But, now-a-days, she says, she washes hands properly using soap after completion of work and after interacting with people from outside. "Besides, I take bath properly with soap before getting into the house, claims Radha."

Maintaining hand hygiene has become a regular feature for other sanitation workers as well, thanks to the trainings conducted by this initiative.

The trainers emphasized upon the regular use of gloves and masks for the sanitation workers to protect ourselves first before serving others.

The sanitation workers, who are happy to be recognized as Covid-19 warriors, have now made it a habit to wash hands and bath

properly with soaps after completion of their duty, before they enter their homes. They have also made it a habit to wash clothes with soap or detergent powder after completion of the day's duty.

Omkar Ray and Raj Kumar Bag, both in their 20s, help keep the streets of Balangir clean. At this young age they had many questions and lot of fears about Covid-19. The trainings helped them douse the fears and bring the courage back in them.

"Both of us are sanitation workers in Beherapali area and we clean the drains and sweep the roads. Initially, when the lockdown was imposed and everyone was in fear of getting infected by the virus, we were confused and fearful. But our fear ended when we learnt that by taking a few precautionary measures, we can keep the disease at bay even when we come out to work. The training taught us to stay safe and end our fears," they said. They also feel proud that they have contributed to cleanliness of the city during the lockdown.

## Not a day's off

One of the best outcomes of this initiative has been that not a single sanitation worker has refused to come to work since when they received the training, says Nagara Kalet, Jamadar of Ward No 10, Balangir city.

Initially they refused to come to work and were all in fears. However, it subsided gradually after a series of motivational sessions conducted by the government and the staff from this initiative, said Kalet, who was infected by the virus and stayed in isolation for around 18 days.

Kabir Bag, sanitation worker of Ward No 13, says, "We have not taken a day's off even when everyone was staying home. We are proud to say that we are 'Covid-19 warriors' and are contributing to the cleanliness of the city. "It was difficult to reach out to people in this difficult time as pandemic was looming large on them. However, it was important to reach out with important infection prevention & control measures and simultaneously address the psycho-social fear.

According to Kalet, earlier, the sanitation workers used to wash their hands after work, but hardly did they use soap. Now, they are very particular about using soap while washing

**Box 3****Sanitation Workers from Berhampur: From Reluctant Learners to Motivated Campaigners**

These women spread out each morning to different wards of the city to clean up the streets so that the communities can live in a safe and hygienic environment. When the lockdown was imposed, they were in dark about precautions they should take but they had no way out than to come out and do their job sincerely. As we met a group of sanitation workers preparing for their day's job, they narrated stories of their journey through this difficult time and how the trainings helped.

**Narmada Nayak** - We were trained to use masks, wash hands frequently, and use sanitisers where water and soap are not available, and maintain physical distance. During our work break, we wash our hands with soap and water properly up to the elbow before having some snacks and then again get engaged in work. After completion of work, we again wash our hands with soap and water. Before entering our houses, we make

sure that we bath properly and wash our clothes using soap.

**Milli Ghadei** - One of my neighbours would never wash her hands with soap. I was initially reluctant to advise her because she generally shouts at people. However, the trainers helped me gain confidence in myself and one day I told her that she should not be so careless about her health during the pandemic. She first refused to accede to me, but I talked to her for a few days continuously. Finally, she agreed. It gave me immense happiness.

**Rinki Behera** - We did come out to work. However, we used to be in constant fear of getting infected with this disease due to our constant exposure to waste materials which also include things used by ailing people. In such situation, the training instilled hope and confidence in us. We used to work, but after the training we worked happily and without fear. After training, they also provided us with soap.

**Gita Bangari** - After being trained, we educated our family members and neighbours to take precautionary measures and help stop spread of the disease.

Duryodhan Sahu, a former corporator of the Berhampur Municipal Corporation, who has assisted the initiative in conducting the training and reaching out to people through awareness drives, says, "Had the sanitation workers stopped working for even a single day, the number Covid-19 cases would have increased a lot."

Praising the contribution of the sanitation workers in maintaining cleanliness of the city, Sahu said, "Hats off to the sanitation workers, who have not remained off even for a day while everyone was advised to stay home. Credit goes to the fearlessness of the workers and their inclination to contribute to the cause of the society. The training provided by the staff and the government had given a boost to their morale."

hands. They have made it mandatory to take bath and wash their clothes with soap before entering their houses after work. Initially they were reluctant to use masks as they feel suffocated while doing physical work with masks, but now it has become their practice.

**On board: plumbers and masons**

Plumbers and masons have been important stakeholders in this initiative. In each city, they were trained with an objective to help

them serve the population without fear and by maintaining all Covid-19 appropriate behaviour so that WASH services are not impacted.

The training encouraged them to continue the service to the people in need. He knew during this period in lockdown or beyond water supply cannot stop for a day. People were locked inside their homes and plumbers would be needed anytime to fix any issue with the supply.

They were trained to strictly follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour at work place so that their fellow workers as well as the people/clients



PHOTO: UNICEF

*Plumbers and masons were not only trained to maintain safe physical distancing at workplace, they were also trained on retrofitting of handwashing stations*

don't have issues with them. Handwashing became a habit for most of them. Further, they also got habituated with a bath after the work is over. Washing the clothes also became a regular affair, as they decided to maintain complete personal hygiene.

They were also motivated to maintain safe physical distancing at the workplace as much as possible.

The plumbers and masons were also trained on retrofitting of handwashing stations so that they could not only help in operation and maintenance of the facilities installed by this initiative but also in other such facilities. With skills developed, they could also play a supportive role when more and more such facilities are installed by government and other institutions.

# Widespread Awareness among Urban Poor

- Over 50,000 slum dwellers sensitized on water, sanitation and hygiene with the help of the trained WASH work force and community volunteers
- Soaps distributed by the initiative helped the vulnerable population
- Community toilets became the hub of learning

## Targeting the most vulnerable sections of the society: the slums

The trainings, handwashing stations and other initiatives were aimed at reaching out to the most vulnerable sections of the society. They live in the slums. These poor pockets in the cities faced multiple challenges as the Covid-19 lockdown was imposed. Their livelihood options, mostly daily wage earning, got completely chocked. They already live in difficult locations with limited basic amenities. So, they were at high risk as far as maintaining Covid-19 appropriate behaviours are concerned. The interpersonal communication campaign for awareness and motivation was therefore needed to help them fight the fears and prevent infections. The WASH frontline forces along with the community level volunteers spread across the targeted slums to ensure that the people were frequently washing hands with soaps, maintaining safe physical distancing

while using water stand posts, community toilets, etc. and wearing masks at all required situations.

The awareness drive worked but challenges remained. The initiative included to install the minimal touch handwashing stations with soaps in some of the high risk areas with sustainable operation and maintenance mechanism. Further, about 1,00,000 soaps were supplied to the slum dwellers for almost two months in two cities – Cuttack and Bhubaneswar – so that their fallen incomes don't impact the hand hygiene habits as trained by the trainers.

The trainings and motivation efforts worked. During a meeting with the slum dwellers of Raghunathpur, Bhubaneswar, all the slum dwellers said they are so much benefitted by the minimal touch hand washing station installed outside the community toilet.

"As the staff and the community leaders trained us and conducted awareness meetings on the

*Trainers ensured that slum dwellers not only use masks but maintain safe physical distance and basic hygiene*





PHOTO: UNICEF

Handwashing stations installed outside the community toilets were of great help for the slum dwellers

***"They taught us to wash our hands when we interact with people; after completing our work; after coming from markets or outside. They also taught us to wash our hands before eating and after using toilets."***

—Slum dwellers  
of Raghunathpur,  
Bhubaneswar

importance of washing hands frequently with soap and water to stay safe from the pandemic, the handwashing station worked handy for us. They taught us to wash our hands when we interact with people; after completing our work and when required in between; after coming from markets or outside. They also taught us to wash our hands before eating and after using toilets," they said.

Community interactions in other cities also confirmed the same. The slum dwellers said, they were not only using the masks but were also maintaining basic hygiene. The habit of washing hands with soaps improved. "We also tried to maintain as much distance as possible while fetching water from the public stand post in our locality," said a resident of a slum in Balangir.

## Making community toilets hubs of awareness

Slum dwellers depend heavily on the community toilets and bathing places for their daily needs. Immediately after the Covid-19 lockdown was imposed, the users of such toilets were both fearful and confused. They feared because they thought using a public facility may infect them with the virus; confused, because they were not sure about safety in open defecation as well. However, as the lockdown continued and awareness drives started reaching them, the IPC measures while use of the community toilets was promoted. In some places, the initiative installed minimal touch handwashing stations.

# Conclusion & Recommendations

- **More handwashing stations needed**
- **Repeated IPC efforts should be spread across the spectrum**
- **Hand hygiene road map to cater to present needs and prepare for future**

## Need to rev up

The Covid-19 pandemic has demanded unprecedented response from across the stakeholders. It has been established that frequent and correct hand hygiene is among the most important measures to prevent infections from the virus. WASH response that the initiative by UNICEF facilitated, in four major cities of the state of Odisha, has helped the most vulnerable populations.

While complementing the overall response of the government and urban local bodies, it has worked to establish key WASH support systems with help of important stakeholders: the government, municipalities, civil society, trainers, and facilitators, WASH frontline cadres, masons, plumbers and most importantly the slum dwellers.

The initiative has put in a combination of vital efforts. This includes installation of minimal touch handwashing stations at high risk locations, trainings of trainers and community volunteers, awareness campaigns on infection prevention & control (IPC) through adaptation of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour (CAB), support to frontline WASH cadres and others in fighting stigma, and distribution of soaps. Follow up visits to the communities by community volunteers has been helping the community stay alert on WASH actions through all these months.

These efforts now need to be strengthened with integration into the institutional response systems and scaled up. The success that has been achieved within a short span of time, when the challenges were most daunting and risks were high, has lessons that need to be emulated in WASH interventions in normal times so that we not only respond to the problems at normal times but also stay prepared for future pandemics.

## Handwashing stations

The minimal touch handwashing stations have been quite a hit among the local users. These stations are made up of materials and techniques that can be easily repaired and maintained by local technicians. Their shapes and sizes and theft proof handwashing soap holders have been well appreciated by the users.

Municipalities, merchant establishments and even religious places have shown interest in hosting such handwashing stations. **Efforts should be taken to scale up the production of such handwashing stations and motivate all such establishments and other institutions – including health and educational facilities – to install the same.** Existing ones should be retrofitted to make them Covid-19 responsive.

**Water supply to these handwashing stations should be ensured on a regular basis.** Facilities where 24x7 water supply is available should supply running water to these handwashing stations. Places where such facility is not available, regular supply of water through tankers and other means be ensured.

**More number of masons and plumbers should be brought on board and trained to handle the operation, maintenance and retrofitting works.** The local fabrication units and technicians should also be skilled to join forces with the existing ones and help in spread of the operation and maintenance force.

Corporate houses, with CSR mandates, could also chip in and install and support operation & maintenance of such handwashing stations in high risk zones of the cities.

In fact, urban local bodies and the relevant stakeholders together should now map the high risk zones and other institutional and

public set ups where such installations are needed; and then talk to potential supporters in scaling up the endeavour.

## COVID-19 appropriate behaviour

Even though vaccination has already started in the country, the pandemic is going to stay for quite some time. ***The efforts that have been under way to motivate people to adopt Covid-19 appropriate behaviours and etiquettes need to continue.***

Trainers and facilitators, that have already been trained, are a good force to reckon with. ***More such people should be identified with help of NGOs and others and trained so that a pool of resource persons to train WASH frontline cadres and others is available in each city.***

Community volunteers should be strengthened further. ***In each vulnerable locality – especially in the slum areas – more and more community volunteers should be identified and trained.***

The Jal Sathis, Swachha Sathis, Sanitation Workers and all other frontline WASH force should be continuously trained and followed up.

All those trained and future trainers should be constantly be kept in the loop through a mechanism developed by the cities so that they can be imparted with new learning through both physical and digital mediums from time to time, supported with their efforts to reach out to the communities in need as and when required, and keep spreading the awareness messages.

Infection prevention & control (IPC) should be a regular endeavour in all the urban areas. The urban local bodies may leverage their existing and prospective resources, both financial and human, in this.

Existing community organisations and service providers such as ASHA/USHA, Mahila Arogya

Samities, Self Help Groups, etc. should all be skilled to play a vital role in IPC.

## Hand hygiene road map

Hand hygiene forms part of the wider area of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) that is central to Covid-19 response and recovery efforts. While WASH is fundamental to containing the spread, hand hygiene is critical.

The initiative has made hand hygiene a central point of intervention and the need of promoting it far and wide is now realised by one and all.

***Urban local bodies, along with other stakeholders, may prepare a road map for promoting hand hygiene in their cities. In fact, there is need for advocating to have a state road map and the cities/towns could chip in with their part.***

Hand hygiene is a matter of particular concern for the poor people living in vulnerable localities and conditions. These areas, along with the public places – or hazard zones as would have been mapped by the cities, should be covered under such a road map.

***Hand hygiene facilities should also be strengthened in almost all the institutions including government offices, health and educational institutions, market complexes and all such places where the institutions themselves should be taking care of the installation as well as operation and maintenance.***

***Hand hygiene facilities should be freely and easily accessible to all, including people with disabilities (PwDs), children, aged and other such vulnerable people.***

The urban local bodies may form /strengthen the committees of stakeholders – from all walks of life and experts – to plan, implement and monitor the hand hygiene road map and WASH facilities and services.



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