

Building the new normal in hand hygiene in low-income households

In our Insights Series, TRANSFORM shares successes and learnings from our projects to:

- Help the SME and entrepreneur community gain knowledge and learn from our projects
- Showcase to funders what can be achieved through impact-led initiatives

PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

MAKING HANDWASHING A HABIT THROUGH HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN

HappyTap is a social enterprise transforming hand hygiene practices by distributing portable sinks that require little to no capital investment. By making handwashing more convenient, accessible, and desirable, HappyTap encourages lasting behaviour change in low-income communities. Following its launch in Vietnam, with TRANSFORM's support, HappyTap expanded its solution to households in Bangladesh.

THE CHALLENGE

Handwashing with soap is the simplest and most cost-effective way to prevent diarrhoea and infectious diseases. Despite high awareness, fewer than one in five adults globally wash their hands consistently after defecating.¹ Convenient access to a sink is the strongest predictor of handwashing, yet 40% of households worldwide lack a designated handwashing facility.² Conventional sinks remain expensive and difficult to install, particularly in low-income communities where plumbing is inadequate.

¹ <https://www.wateraid.org/au/articles/4-out-of-5-people-world-wide-do-not-wash-their-hands-after-going-to-the-toilet>

² <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fact-sheet-lack-handwashing-soap-puts-millions-increased-risk-covid-19-and-other>



INNOVATION

With TRANSFORM's support, HappyTap expanded its affordable, portable handwashing solution to Bangladesh, making appropriate handwashing facilities more accessible to low-income households. This included facilitating a partnership with a local manufacturer and recruiting staff to support distribution. TRANSFORM's funding also helped HappyTap conduct market research, refine its solution using human-centred design, launch a multi-channel marketing campaign, and explore further regional expansion.

Find out more

Collaboration is key to scaling impact enterprises. Learn more about the successful programmes that other enterprises and funders have delivered together. [Read more stories here.](#)

www.TRANSFORM.global

THE IMPACT

HappyTap's expansion into Bangladesh has removed key barriers to hand hygiene by making portable sinks more accessible to low-income households. Through local manufacturing partnerships and targeted marketing, the initiative has encouraged lasting behaviour change and so far, enabled more than 600,000 people to wash their hands at home and in local healthcare facilities.

WHAT'S NEXT?

HappyTap will continue to strengthen partnerships to accelerate scale and impact. The team is exploring ways to expand accessibility while maintaining product value, such as potential government subsidies. It is also working with existing partners to drive local investment and ensure long-term sustainability. Building on insights from Bangladesh over the past six years, HappyTap aims to expand regionally and refine its approach for future growth.

INSIGHTS:

ENCOURAGING UPTAKE OF HAND WASHING SOLUTIONS IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

1. UTILISE PARTNERSHIPS TO BUILD TRUST AND REMOVE BARRIERS TO ENTRY

People are hesitant to adopt unfamiliar products, and cost remains a major barrier to entry.

HappyTap partnered with microfinance institutions (MFIs) to make its portable sinks more accessible to lower-income households. MFIs already had trusted relationships within these communities, playing a key role in adoption. Through in-person engagement and microfinancing, they bridged the gap between awareness and action, allowing families to purchase sinks through affordable monthly instalments, reducing financial barriers and increasing adoption.



2. BALANCE AFFORDABILITY AND OWNERSHIP TO DRIVE CONSISTENT USE

People are more likely to maintain and use a product they have invested in, but if it is too expensive, they won't buy it.

HappyTap tested different pricing models to ensure affordability while fostering a sense of ownership and value. Research showed that when households paid for the sinks, they were more likely to maintain them and integrate handwashing into their routines. By refining price points, HappyTap maximised both accessibility and long-term usage.

3. UNDERSTAND YOUR CONSUMERS AND THE BEST ROUTES TO MARKET

Introducing a new product requires understanding how consumers will use, maintain, and integrate it into their daily routines.

HappyTap conducted consumer research to assess whether households would consistently use and maintain the sinks over time. The team experimented with different approaches to engage lower-income households, particularly those without existing handwashing infrastructure. By studying consumer behaviour, HappyTap identified the most effective ways to present the product and determine which stakeholders - whether community leaders, NGOs, or retailers - were best suited to introduce it.



4. TRAIN FIELD STAFF TO DRIVE SALES AND DATA COLLECTION

Scaling a new product requires effective sales strategies and reliable data to inform decision-making.

HappyTap trained its own field staff and MFI teams with the knowledge and tools to sell its portable sinks and collect consumer data. Field staff also tracked usage patterns and consumer feedback, helping refine marketing strategies and improve long-term engagement.

**We
TRANSFORM
Lives**



TRANSFORM is an impact accelerator that unites corporates, donors, investors and academics to support visionary enterprises across Africa, Asia and beyond. Together, we test and scale new solutions that tackle environmental challenges, improve health and wellbeing, and build inclusive economies.

Combining grant funding, business insight and research, TRANSFORM is advancing the development of innovative business models to help solve global challenges. It was established in 2015 and is led by Unilever, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and EY.