



India



## Learning Through Play

WASH United   

WASH United uses interactive learning techniques to promote sustainable WASH behavior change among children in India.

Launched in 2010, Not-for-profit, Menstrual Hygiene Management, Behavior Change, Women's Empowerment, South Asia: India

Partners: WASH United develops curricula and content and makes this available to their partners, including capacity building if required. Partners are from the WASH and Sport 4 Development sector. There is very strong demand for their unique game-based WASH curricula, including their new menstrual hygiene tools. However, at the moment they focus on partners working at scale (such as WaterAid, Unicef, WfP, SPLASH, partners of streetfootballworld, etc.). They work with smaller partners for research and development of content. They especially are looking to work with partners that have an infrastructure program, where WASH United's behavior change approach can be complementary.

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### Problem Addressed

Diarrhoea caused by dirty water, poor sanitation and bad hygiene kills more children than malaria, measles and HIV/AIDS combined. Building sanitation facilities in schools needs to go along with behavior change interventions to assure proper use and ultimately to achieve sustainable impact. Unfortunately, all too often, school facilities are dirty and neglected, and hand-washing with soap is not practiced at critical times. If WASH education happens in schools, it usually involves a teacher that stands in front of the class and lectures children on health facts.

Such approaches have not been very successful in motivating children to actively engage on the difficult issues of sanitation and hygiene, let alone to trigger attitude and behavior change at a large scale. Thematically, girls' and boys' education about puberty and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) has been missing in most school interventions. Also, the need to carry out intensive trainings of trainers and/or teachers (ToTs) has been a major constraint to implementing trainings at scale.

### Innovative Approach

WASH United is innovative in three aspects of its work:

**SPORT:** WASH United combines the passion for football and cricket with WASH, to make these issues more attractive and work with powerful rolemodels.

**PLAY:** Learning through play is key. All their behavior change trainings use games that create excitement and engagement of students and teachers alike around the issues of sanitation, hygiene and menstrual hygiene.

**BUSINESS MODEL:** WASH United doesn't see itself as an implementing NGO, but rather as developing and testing effective tools that it wants to make available to other organizations and NGOs. Through this approach partners can benefit from a program based on sharing, and together achieve impact at scale.

## Program Solution

WASH United's approach is different: their curricula use fun, physical education games, and sports elements to take trainings out of the classroom. The entire curricula is designed to engage children and teacher/ trainers in an interactive and participatory way. Playing games enables participants to generate their own insights and create positive attitudes, which ultimately result in motivation to act. All WASH and menstrual hygiene games are not only fun and easy to understand, but also able to transfer core messages. In addition, playing and learning together is affirming a sense of solidarity within the group and is very rewarding. Especially around the topic of menstruation which may be seen as shameful, playing together can overcome this resentment and shame. Additional information, education, and communications (IEC) materials with superstar role models from sports (cricket in Asia, and football in Africa) support knowledge transfer and behavior change.

The curriculum includes hugely popular games such as "World Toilet Cup" (motto: "every poo needs a loo"), "Blue Hand Game", "Hand washing Challenge" and the TippyTap competition. For menstrual health they have games such as "knocking down the myths".

Right now they are developing the "Happy Box", a play-based WASH treasure box that contains a combination of their exciting, low-cost action-oriented WASH games. The "Happy Box" will have an exciting overarching story arc and a competitive game plan to ensure that schools stay motivated and continue using the "Happy Box" over time.

Over the past 5 years, WASH United has trained more than 150,000 children and gathered unique expertise on how to use games, play and positive messaging to promote knowledge and behavior change around WASH issues. WASH United's approach has been awarded LEGO & ASHOKA's #reimagine learning Award in 2014.