

Establishing Handwashing as the World's New Normal

Handwashing has gained new appreciation as the first step towards preventing infection. A Japanese manufacturer of cleansers and disinfectants is engaged in sharing the country's handwashing habits with the world, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.



Children enthusiastically washing their hands at a washstand. Schools that have successfully implemented handwashing habits have seen a remarkable drop in problems caused by infectious disease, such as diarrhea.

In the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a renewed awareness of the importance of handwashing practices. Not only as a countermeasure against infection, but also in relation to providing health care and managing sanitation in hospitals, handwashing is one of the basic hygiene practices. At the same time, it is also a key to achieving “good health and well-being for all,” which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Japanese society, where there are many opportunities to learn the value of handwashing during childhood, the practice has become a deeply rooted custom. Saraya Co., Ltd. has been making efforts for many years to disseminate the Japanese approach to handwashing to the world. Following an outbreak of dysentery after World War II, the firm developed Japan's first liquid medicinal soap and dispenser, and also promoted handwashing throughout Japan. Then, it developed

a quick-drying alcohol disinfectant that became widely used, notably in medical facilities.

Saraya, aiming to improve the world's hygiene, has been active in Asia and Africa for many years. One remarkable example is the “Wash A Million Hands!” project that has been implemented in Uganda since 2010. In this project, Saraya supports the UNICEF initiative to promote handwashing via donations from a part of its sales. The project's activities include promoting a simple



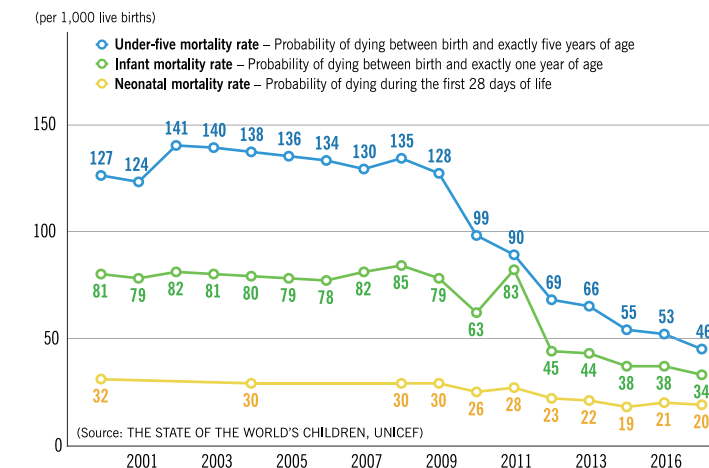
“We still have a lot of work ahead of us for Japanese standards of handwashing to become normal everywhere,” President Saraya emphasizes. He himself has traveled to Uganda to raise awareness there of handwashing.

handwashing device called “Tippy Tap,” as well as training people in proper handwashing with the use of soap.

SARAYA Yusuke, the firm's president, says, “In order for handwashing to be truly effective, it must become a firmly established custom in a society. For that to happen, persistence is absolutely necessary. That's why we have continued our support activities for many years.” In Uganda, the number of people who wash their hands with soap after using the toilet has nearly tripled compared with the period before the project started, and the mortality rate of children under the age of five has also decreased by 60%.

Since 2012, the company has been working together with communities in East Africa to promote the wider use of alcohol disinfectant, as well as guiding medical personnel to become more conscientious about disinfecting their hands. That has resulted in a dramatic reduction of healthcare-associated infections, particularly among expectant and nursing mothers, as well as infants. To ensure a stable supply, the firm has initiated local

Changes in infant mortality in Uganda



Reducing neonatal mortality and under-five mortality is an SDG target. Uganda is showing an improvement in both rates, and Saraya's activities have definitely played a role.

production and sales of its alcohol disinfectant, which is now being utilized for various programs to prevent infections including Ebola hemorrhagic fever and COVID-19.

“Over the decades, the Japanese people have become keenly conscious of personal hygiene. I feel that this experience and knowledge can contribute to the hygiene and health of people around the world,” says President Saraya. The company has incorporated the SDGs into its corporate activity

goals, and continues to engage in various programs in the areas of environment and health, in addition to hygiene. Those programs include activities such as preserving tropical rainforests in regions that produce palm oil—a raw material for soap and cleanser—and raising consumer awareness of ethical consumption. This momentum, generated by parallel efforts on both the personal and entrepreneurial level, will make it possible to successfully achieve the SDGs on a global scale. *



Understanding the importance of thoroughly disinfecting hands and fingers leads to a change in behavior, which is linked to a measurable reduction of healthcare-associated infections. To bring that about, Saraya works energetically to raise awareness about hygiene management among medical personnel.