

Recommendations from 2021 CF&N, PRO-WASH and WASHPaLS Discussion Series

Programming Guidance/Implementation

- Because the sources and pathways of pathogen exposure are multiple, there is likely no single solution for improving hygienic environments to improve growth and development. Programs should be encouraged to address multiple pathways of exposure and measure a broad spectrum of indicators to see changes in intermediate outcomes along the way to improved growth and development.
- Programming guidance is much needed to facilitate multisectoral integration and coordination given there are few existing resources for best practice. Guidance must be crafted using each sector lens, offering options for integration of various magnitudes.
- ‘Architectural change’ that reshapes the environment and therefore guides behavioral improvement without intensive promotion or communication (such as improved flooring) offer great promise for ‘transformational change’ at both household and institutional level. Architectural change can also be designed to nudge behavioral improvements and engage principles of habit formation¹ like creating a cue ecosystem and eliminating friction to performing the behavior (such as infant feeding on a brightly colored playmat).
- As part of complex, time-bound programming, year 1 should create an enabling environment for integration through joint sector planning, formative research, and collaboration on assessments. This will help avoid the pitfalls of being overly ambitious in start-up of a project, while providing the atmosphere for meaningful joint programming between sectors.

Behavior Change Communication

- Integrated programming should focus on building habits for young children and include SBC programming built around emotional drivers and social opportunity to make them more attractive for caretakers to perform. For instance, child-handwashing can be positioned as not only health protective but also as a great way to bond with one’s infant. Likewise, sweeping and collecting of animal feces is more likely to occur if the economic benefits of using animal feces as fertilizer is paired with the health protective messages of keeping children from ingesting animal feces. Where a particular behavior may not be considered feasible by a household, small doable actions² should be prioritized to move people closer to the ideal behavior.
- Where time, budget, and circumstances allow, in-person visits should be prioritized to tailor information directly to individuals, answer any questions that may arise, and ensure the highest likelihood that a new behavior will be attempted.
- Messages sent through mobile technology (i.e. through SMS, voice messages³, etc) is an emerging area of research that can be utilized cautiously (although face-to-face interaction is preferable). However, the number of total messages to project participants should be monitored so households don’t get bombarded, resulting in all messages becoming noise and losing impact. Tailoring messages to reflect the personal benefit of an action will improve the likelihood the action will be performed by an individual. Programs must be mindful of gendered

¹ <https://globalhandwashing.org/learn/key-topics/behavior-change/>

² washplus.org/sites/default/files/sda-learning_brief2015.pdf

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6670164/>

aspects of technology access, and build this into any technology initiative (e.g. a message might need to be positioned as ‘discuss this with you wife and other family members’)

Advocacy

- The results of the SHINE and WASH Benefits trials and ensuing commentaries have brought the idea of “transformational WASH” to the fore. However, to truly get multi-sectoral investment, focus should be on “Transformational Growth and Development” with WASH, Nutrition and ECD all as key components. Advocacy messages should begin to integrate this Transformational Growth and Development language.
- Success stories dealing with ‘architectural change’ interventions should be targeted at funders and researchers, as these types of intervention have yet to receive wide acceptance, to include these interventions in programming and to expand the evidence base through rigorous impact measurement.
- Transformative growth and development include attending to elements of gender and inclusion. Because multi-sectoral, multi-layered programming has the tendency to increase the already overburdened primary caregiver, usually the mother, caregiver needs and rights must be put at the center of decision making and program implementation.
- Enhanced sharing of key findings and resources amongst various global and national coalitions (i.e. The Africa Early Childhood Network, the Thrive Coalition, CORE Group, etc) will escalate learning and move forward integration best practice and funding.
- Households cannot be expected to make transformational infrastructure changes on their own. Governments and partners must be pushed to invest more in household/ community level infrastructure for the improved health of children.

Monitoring/ Research

- Age-cohort-specific guidance, checklists and minimum standards for home, daycare and early learning centers must be created that include standards for WASH infrastructure, checklists for safety and security, and teaching and learning guidelines. Progress against these standards should be tracked in a public way, such as in an accessible dashboard.
- Relative risk rankings for different types of animal feces and their likeliest exposure pathways for children should be researched so interventions can be planned accordingly.
- While stunting is an important indicator for the nutrition sector, it is only one piece of what should be measured when it comes to multi-sectoral programming. A list of indicators that could be measured alongside stunting to illustrate the full impact of multi-sectoral programs should be created, and quick wins should be documented and disseminated.
- Partnerships between researchers and implementers to build the evidence base for intervention options (i.e. playpens, poultry cooping, household flooring, and infant feces disposal) to disrupt the multiple pathways of exposure to harmful pathogens affecting growth and development should be supported.
- The efficacy and feasibility of transformational WASH (reframed as Transformational Growth and Development) must be tested through formative research *even if* those related ‘enabling products’ or architectural changes may be *clearly* out of reach of resource-poor households. Financing and overall access considerations are a separate question that should be explored if/ when an ‘enabling product’ proves to have the potential for more catalytic change than current widely held program models.