

**B**ackground: The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect communities around the world impacting not only public health but also impeding economic growth and development. Although the pandemic is said to affect all segments of the population, it has been particularly hard on the vulnerable and marginalized communities who were already living in fragile situations prior to the start of the pandemic. India has been witnessing a staggering number of corona cases, making it the third most corona-affected country in the world. For vast majority of India's urban poor, many of these recommended non-pharmaceutical norms for keeping the virus at bay are impossible to follow. With over 50,000 slums in India, the urban poor are among the most vulnerable and underserved communities in the country.



A man selling masks in the streets of Varanasi during Pandemic  
(Pic Courtesy: Shubhangee Vyas)

They live in crowded dwellings in densely populated settlements, with grossly inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, inadequate attention to personal hygiene, and lack of access to quality healthcare, among other issues. Social distancing and frequent handwashing are the preventive measures that India's poor are unable to adopt (despite holistic awareness generations programs launched and precautionary measures taken by Government of India and the State Governments from time to time), making them more susceptible to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The risk of this pandemic is spreading like wildfire and it is very high among the urban poor and underserved communities. Therefore, in the current situation, there is an urgent need to amplify the importance of hand hygiene as one of the

two most effective preventive measures (along with mask-wearing) and enable its practice through adequate access to hand-wash facilities for the vulnerable and at-risk urban poor in India's slums. Available research and review of hand wash interventions clearly indicate a reduction in contamination/spread of infection by washing hands with soap. Further, this would contribute to Sustainable Development Goal - 6 of ensuring access to 'adequate and equitable' hygiene for all by 2030.

## The Hand Hygiene Campaign: Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

Along with social distancing, hand washing is the key to keep millions safe from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. India Water Partnership joined hands with one of its partner organisations – PRAGYA, to create awareness on the importance of hand hygiene by supporting communities in establishing and strengthening hand hygiene practices by ensuring the minimum necessary infrastructure (equipment and supplies). IWP sponsored installation of cost friendly and accessible hand wash stations at two locations – Ghasola and Wazirabad, in Gurugram, Haryana, (India) keeping in mind the fact that our target areas i.e., the slums, have either low or no access to running water.

**Scope:** The intervention was implemented to cover an estimated 1000+ underserved people residing in the two slum colonies located in Gurugram, Haryana, which currently lack access to basic health & hygiene facilities.

**Inauguration of the Handwash Station:** On 16th December 2020, two handwash stations were inaugurated, one at Ghasola and the other in Wazirabad along with the promotion of hygiene awareness, hand hygiene training and

कोविड-19 और अन्य संक्रमणों से सुरक्षित रहें

नियमित रूप से अपने हाथ धोएँ



gradual mobilization of active members forming Nigrani Samiti (Vigilance Committee) for managing the infrastructure. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Dr. Veena Khanduri, Executive Secretary -cum- Country Coordinator (IWP), Mr. Rahul Naithani, Communication Officer (IWP), and Mr. Bhushan Shah (PRAGYA) along with representatives from the office of Additional Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Gurugram. At the ceremony, the teams educated the residents at Ghasola about the right way to wash hands as well as how to best use and maintain the handwash stations. Some of the children and women were also asked to display healthy handwash techniques that they had learnt from the day's exercise. At end of theceremony, a pledge on hygiene was taken by all the attendees.



**Handwash facilities:** Given the mode of transmission of the coronavirus, the handwash station installed will enable touch-free operation to ensure zero physical contact and cross-contamination between hand washers. They are portable and foot-operated (for both water and liquid soap) and equipped with 250-litre water tanks. The hand wash stations are installed at sites near water sources and at adequate distance from the community toilets. Cemented platforms have been constructed for the base of the hand wash stations and proper drainage systems (soak-pits) are also being created. For sites located at a distance from the water source, pipes have been provided for filling the tanks of the hand wash stations.



A resident of Ghasola slum demonstrating healthy handwash techniques



Mr. Bhushan Shah (PRAGYA) and Dr Veena Khanduri (Exec. Sec.-IWP) showing a poster demonstrating hand hygiene practices to kids in Ghasola



IWP and PRAGYA Teams with slum dwellers taking Pledge on Hygiene at the site

**Outcome:** The initiative will improve adherence to hand hygiene in slum communities and thus help in reducing transmission which would potentially help reduce the Reproduction Number of the novel coronavirus and contribute to flattening the epidemiological curve; in turn, reducing morbidity and mortality, and the economic shock. The practice of repeated hand hygiene can become part of the routine of everyday life of the beneficiaries/community members resulting in a behavioural change with regards to preventive, and conducive health care in the long-run.

### गुरुग्राम की बस्तियों को प्रज्ञा और आईडब्ल्यूपी द्वारा मिली हाथ धोने की मशीन

भारत, गुरुग्राम जिला  
गुरुग्राम, 12 नवंबर, 2020 में आईडब्ल्यूपी के सहयोग में एक अतिरिक्त प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम के अंतर्गत, गुरुग्राम की बस्तियों और शहर के बाजारों में दो हाथ धोने वाली मशीनें का उद्घाटन समारोह हुआ।

हाथ धोने की इन मशीनों को बनाने और रखरखाव के लिए आईडब्ल्यूपी-19 के सदस्यों ने सहयोग किया।

गुरुग्राम, दिल्ली, हरियाणा और उत्तराखण्ड के शहरों में 100 से अधिक हाथ धोने की मशीनें का उद्घाटन किया गया।

आईडब्ल्यूपी-19 के सदस्यों ने इन मशीनों का उपयोग करने के लिए लोगों को प्रशिक्षित किया।

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### पहल : हाथों की सफाई के लिए झुगियों में हैंड वॉश स्टेशन लगाए

भारत में, जहां घरेलू और सामूहिक व्यवस्था को मां है। प्रज्ञा संस्था ने आईडब्ल्यूपी के साथ मिलकर ये संयुक्त प्रयास किया है। इन हैंड वॉश स्टेशनों को इन स्थानों में लगाया गया है, कि लोग हाथों को सफाई कर सकें। ये पहल हीट स्टेशन है। इन स्थानों पर हाथों को सफाई करने के लिए मशीनें हैं।

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