

# Frontiers of CLTS: Innovations and Insights



## How to Trigger for Handwashing with Soap

Jolly Ann Maulit for UNICEF Malawi

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CLTS Knowledge Hub at



Institute of  
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[www.communityledtotalsanitation.org](http://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org)

## About the CLTS Knowledge Hub

IDS has been working in support of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) since its beginnings. CLTS has now become an international movement for which IDS is the recognised knowledge hub.

The Knowledge Hub is dedicated to understanding the on-the-ground realities of CLTS practice and to learn about, share and promote good practices, ideas and innovations that lead to sustainability and scale. We seek to keep the CLTS community well connected and informed and to provide space for reflection, continuous learning and knowledge exchange. We work in collaboration with practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and others working in the development, sanitation and related communities.

Ultimately, the Hub's overarching aim is to contribute to the dignity, health and wellbeing of children, women and men in the developing world who currently suffer the consequences of inadequate or no sanitation and poor hygiene.

### Front cover

CLTS facilitators conduct the 'charcoal smearing' tool at a handwashing triggering in Salima district.

PHOTOGRAPHS: UNICEF MALAWI

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## How to Trigger for Handwashing with Soap

The Open Defecation Free (ODF) Malawi 2015 Strategy and National Hand Washing Campaign have been contributing to an increased focus on handwashing with soap (HWWS) in Malawi. This is a very positive development!

Some studies estimate that washing hands with soap can reduce diarrhoeal disease rates by up to 50 per cent and respiratory disease rates by up to 25 per cent. This makes handwashing with soap one of the most cost-effective interventions for reducing illness and preventable deaths among children in Malawi. It is therefore quite worthwhile for us to be working together to increase handwashing practices.

Since Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is our key intervention for sanitation and hygiene promotion in Malawi, it provides an excellent opportunity to facilitate handwashing behaviour change. However, up till now, the 'triggering tools' for achieving HWWS behaviour change from CLTS have not been well known by implementers in Malawi. The purpose of this document is to outline several practical tools which can be used as a part of CLTS in order to trigger realisation among communities of the importance of handwashing with soap, as well as eliminating open defecation.

### The 10 field-tested handwashing triggering tools outlined in this document:

1. Anal cleansing materials
2. Shit & shake
3. Cassava/egg demonstration
4. Charcoal smearing
5. Smelly hands
6. Faeces on baby nappies
7. Scratch & smell
8. Wall contamination
9. Food sharing
10. Dirt under fingernails



## How were these handwashing triggering tools developed?

The tools outlined by this document were developed based on actual field research in testing, done as a collaborative effort between UNICEF and Salima District Council.

Salima was selected for the research and testing of new handwashing triggering tools because they already had experience attempting to incorporate handwashing into their triggering process, and also have data showing high numbers of new handwashing facilities being built after CLTS. It was also selected because they implement CLTS continuously as part of their routine extension staff work.



Nine<sup>1</sup> different tools were tested for how well they instilled a realisation of the importance of handwashing with soap (HWWS). When these tools were used, handwashing practice increased by 69 per cent and soap availability at handwashing facilities increased by 15 per cent, compared to when CLTS didn't include specific tools to trigger HWWS.

However, please take these guidelines with a pinch of salt, as they are based on a small sample size.

**Your own experience and results will likely be your best teacher!**

### Results of the field-testing of 10 potential triggering tools:

New tools were developed to improve the methods of triggering for handwashing and can be used in combination with other tools during CLTS. It is up to the facilitator to decide which ones they need to use and when. It is also possible to combine the tools if necessary. Most tools will be performed during triggering, after the transect walk. Throughout the process, the facilitators can provide guidance through questioning on proper handwashing techniques as the communities demonstrate how to remove the germs from their hands.

Key realisations to trigger/bring the community towards realising with these tools are: (1) there are various sources of hand contamination with faeces and other germs, (2) handwashing with soap is a complete way to remove all contaminants (dirt, smell and germs), and (3) hands that appear clean can still have dirt on them.

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<sup>1</sup> The 10th tool in this guide was developed by EWB Canada.

The table below shows how the different triggering tools compare to one another. Criteria used to rank the tools during the research process included: ease of facilitation, reliability (can't go wrong), effectiveness in terms of actual impact, and psychological trigger.

Ranking	High	Mid	Low
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	HW triggering tools	Objective (realisations which are facilitated)	Ease of facilitation	Reliability (can't go wrong)	Effectiveness in terms of impact	Psychological trigger (instead of actual visualisation)	Notes
3	Cassava/egg demonstration	Even hands that look clean are dirty	High	Mid	High	Low	
5	Smelly hands	Hands are dirty when they smell badly; smell occurs after touching faeces	Mid	Mid	High	High	
4	Charcoal smearing	Soap eliminates all dirt	High	High	High	Low	
6	Faeces on babies nappies	Soap eliminates all dirt	High	High	High	Low	
9	Wall contamination	Hands can be contaminated in the latrine	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	
1	Anal cleansing materials	Faecal matter is transferred to hands	High	High	High	High	
7	Scratch and smell	Germs and dirt are transferred to hands during urination and defecation	Low	Low	High	High	requires brave facilitators
2	Shit and shake (EWB)	Germs are transmitted through handshakes	High	High	High	Low	
8	Food sharing	Hands are contaminated in the toilet and must always be washed, after leaving the toilet and before sharing food	High	Mid	Mid	High	
10	Dirt under fingernails	Dirt is transferred to food and mouth when fingernails are dirty and hand soap is not used	High	High	Mid	Low	

## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #1:

### ANAL CLEANSING MATERIALS

Materials  
needed:

Brick  
Anal cleansing materials

#### OBJECTIVE:

Community realises that faecal matter is left on their hands after cleansing themselves in the toilet.

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. Ask the community how they cleanse themselves after using the toilet.
2. Take the information the community gives on what they usually use for cleaning themselves with (e.g. paper, leaves, etc.).
3. Perform a demonstration using a brick with dent (or a nearby tree with a dent).
4. Take mud mixed with water (to symbolise shit) and apply it on the dent of brick, then ask one volunteer to take their preferred way of anal cleansing (e.g. with paper) to remove the 'shit' on the dent.
5. Have the community observe the demonstration, then ask if there was contact between the hands and the dirt in the process. The community will explain their observations.
6. If there has been contact, ask if this has happened to them. If yes, ask what the community does after they observed shit touching their hands. What dangers do they anticipate, and possible solutions for this?
7. Ask the community if leaves or papers are enough for anal cleansing and getting rid of germs. If they say no, why is it not enough? What is remaining for it to improve?



## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #2:

### SHIT & SHAKE

Materials  
needed:

Charcoal or mud

#### OBJECTIVE:

Communities realise transmission of faecal matter occurs through handshakes.

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. The facilitator pretends to use a pit latrine, using a leaf to wipe their shit after defecating. They demonstrate how easily the leaf can break and shit gets on their hands (using charcoal or clay to symbolise shit is very effective). The facilitator does not wash their hands after leaving the latrine. This provides a visual demonstration of shit being left on the hands.
2. The facilitator then asks questions to the community during this process such as 'What is left on my fingers? Do you use leaves? How many households have both soap and water?'
3. The facilitator proceeds to shake hands with an authority figure in the community, usually the chief, and then asks them to turn and greet their neighbour with the traditional handshake. If there is charcoal or clay on the hands of the facilitator, this symbol of 'shit' will be passed around from person to person during the handshakes.
4. Pass food such as ground nuts to those who shook hands with the facilitator. Encourage them to eat the food while the shit is still on their hands. This sparks the understanding



that shaking a neighbour's hand may lead to you eating their shit, and demonstrates the importance of washing hands with soap.

5. The facilitator also asks the community members to estimate how many hands they have shaken that day, the previous week, the previous month, etc., then asks 'How many people's shit could you have possibly eaten this week?' This is similar to the shit calculation performed during CLTS triggering where people calculate the amount of shit in their village. This calculation can amount to 280 people's shit a week, and sparks the realisation and understanding of handwashing benefits.

**'If there is charcoal or clay on the hands of the facilitator, this symbol of "shit" will be passed around... during the handshakes.'**

## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #3: CASSAVA / EGG DEMONSTRATION

**Materials  
needed:**

Charcoal or mud



### OBJECTIVE:

Bring realisation that even when hands appear clean, there is still dirt on them.

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. Tell the community that you have a present for someone who has clean hands.
2. Ask a volunteer to come forward and give them a cassava or egg (i.e. white foods).
3. Ask him to peel that cassava/egg, during which dirt will leave marks on the food.
4. Ask the group what they've observed (dirt), then get the volunteer to offer the cassava/egg to various members of the community.
5. Ask the community what they see on the cassava/egg. Probe and discuss this further.
6. Ask how they will remove the dirt. By washing hands or washing the cassava/egg? Ask the audience how they think they can ensure that their cassava/egg is not contaminated?
7. Get the volunteer to wash their hands with water only in a white (or clear) basin (ask them to demonstrate whatever the community prompts them to do with handwashing, which is often to mention handwashing but without soap). Get the community to observe the dirt that comes off with using water alone, then compare it to another basin that has clean water (see difference in water colour).
8. Then ask if there is a way to make any further improvements. The community will likely say yes and will encourage the use of soap or ash.
9. Have the volunteer wash their hands with soap and water over a white basin, then get the community to observe how much dirt comes off the hands by looking at the colour of the water.
10. Compare the water colour in all three basins. Show what clear water looks like (without dirt or germs), then show the water used for washing hands with water alone, and then the water that was used for washing hands with soap.
11. Ask for questions from the community to generate a discussion about how much dirt is removed when using water alone versus when using soap. Restate the fact that these dirty water basins came from the hands of someone who they all previously thought had clean hands.
12. When appropriate, also ask the community to compare the differences between using soap to wash hands versus using ash. What are the benefits and disadvantages?

*\*Tip: This tool usually works best at the beginning of a triggering, before the community catches on that you are there to talk about open defecation and handwashing.*

## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #4:

### CHARCOAL SMEARING

Materials  
needed:

Charcoal  
Basin  
Water and soap

#### OBJECTIVE:



Get the community to realise that using soap when washing hands eliminates all dirt, whereas using water alone only eliminates some of the dirt.

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. Get a volunteer from the community to smear their hands with charcoal.
2. Ask them to wash with water alone then see how much dirt is left.
3. Then ask them to wash with soap and water, and see how it eliminates all dirt.
4. Question the community on the differences they see when washing hands with soap versus washing hands with water alone.

## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #5:

### SMELLY HANDS

Materials  
needed:

Faeces / shit  
Leaves / paper  
Gloves  
Water and soap  
Basin

#### OBJECTIVE:

Bring community to realise that having smelly hands through touching faeces (or defecating) leads to having a bad smell on their hands, which symbolises germs or dirt.

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. After the transect walk where shit is found, take the shit to where the group is gathered (or have the group gather around the shit).
2. Ask someone if they would touch the



faeces.

3. If they refuse, tell them you'll give the next person who is willing to touch the faeces gloves (if the community refuses, one of the facilitators should put on the gloves).
4. After they touch the faeces, have them remove the gloves and smell their hands. Then ask them to discuss what they smell. They can also attempt to shake hands with community members (who are likely to refuse).
5. Then ask how they would remove the smell and faecal matter from their hands (the community is likely to respond with handwashing).
6. Ask them to wash their hand the way they normally do (usually with water alone), then to smell their hands again. Is there smell? Discuss this with the community. If possible, ask volunteers from the community to smell and also shake this person's hands.
7. Then ask them how they can improve on this (to which they might say 'use soap').
8. After using the soap, ask the volunteer to smell their hands and discuss (no smell, pleasant smell, etc.) Discuss this with the community.
9. Conclusion is reached that soap is able to remove everything from hands.

*\*Tip: If a volunteer or facilitator is brave, they can use anal cleansing materials such as paper or leaves to touch the faeces, so the community can relate the demonstration to their own cleansing practices.*

## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #6:

### FAECES ON BABY NAPPIES

#### Materials needed:

Baby's nappy  
Charcoal  
Water and soap  
Basin

#### OBJECTIVE:

Get community to realise that not using soap when washing babies' nappies means faeces is transmitted to their hands, which can then be transmitted to other things (even the mouth).

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. Go through a questioning process with the community. Ask how they currently clean babies' nappies.
2. If they use water alone, what happens? If they use soap and water, what happens?
3. Tell them to demonstrate how they currently wash babies' nappies. Give them a piece of cloth that will symbolise a baby's nappy, then some charcoal to rub on the cloth to symbolise shit.
4. Have them rub the charcoal on the cloth. Then have them wash the cloth with water alone. Discuss with the community what they see on the cloth. Also have them take a look at their hands to see if any of the 'shit' was transferred there. Discuss this transfer of shit from the nappies to hands and to other objects that are touched by the hands through questioning the community.
5. Afterwards, have them use the same cloth and wash it with soap and water. Discuss with the community what they see, and the differences between using water alone to wash hands and using water and soap.



## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #7:

### SCRATCH & SMELL

**Materials  
needed:**

Water and soap  
Basin

**WARNING: AN AGGRESSIVE TOOL  
FOR TRIGGERING**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Community is disgusted by dirt, germs and smell that comes after touching one's self on their behind or their front (for urinating).

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. The facilitator asks for a community member to volunteer. If a community member is unwilling, the facilitator must perform the demonstration themselves.
2. The performer puts his hand inside his trousers and pretends to scratch his behind, and also pretends to finish urinating.
3. They will then offer their hand to community members to shake. The community members will likely resist.
4. Question the community on why they are refusing and what they think is on the hands of the person.
5. Ask the person to smell his or her hands and discuss what is there. Ask the community to smell the person's hands. If they refuse, ask them the reasons behind their refusal.
6. Ask the community what the person needs to do in order to have them shake and smell their hands. Have the community member demonstrate this. If he uses water alone for hand washing, ask to have the community smell his hands. Question the community on the smell of the hands. Then ask the volunteer to wash their hands with soap and water. Ask the community to smell his hands after using soap and water, and discuss the differences.

*\*A revised version of this tool for urinating can also be performed...*

*Revised Version:*

1. Get a facilitator to enter a nearby toilet briefly so that the community thinks that they have urinated. Alternatively, the facilitator can go behind a nearby tree and pretend to urinate.
2. The facilitator then returns to the gathering while fiddling with his front zipper, showing that he has recently urinated.
3. Then, have him try to shake hands with community members.
4. If they refuse, question the community on what they think is on the hands of the facilitator, and how he can improve this so that they are willing to shake hands with him.

## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #8:

### WALL CONTAMINATION

**Materials  
needed:**

A latrine with dirty walls

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Trigger disgust through realising that the walls of the toilet are contaminated with shit.

[ Key CLTS Factor = Disgust ]

1. During the CLTS transect walk, choose a toilet where the walls have been smeared with shit (as is common practice for anal cleansing or for wiping hands that have touched shit after defecation).

2. Go back and gather with the community.
3. Ask the community to explain methods for anal cleansing. Listen and pick what the community says (e.g. paper, soil, leaves, touching walls, etc.)
4. If they mention cleaning themselves by touching the walls of the toilet, ask: 'Is using the wall a common way to clean the anal area? What are the effects of this practice?'
5. After starting this process of questioning, take them through a demonstration.
6. Ask the community to go to the selected toilet (silently selected by facilitator during the transect walk) and ask a volunteer and a few other community witnesses to enter the toilet.
7. Ask the volunteer to touch the area smeared with shit directly.
8. If the person refuses, ask a witness to explain what happened when the volunteer visited the toilet.
9. Ask why the person refused to touch the wall. Then, ask what the community thinks about the situation and whether they want to continue living like this.



## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #9:

### FOOD SHARING

**Materials needed:**

Water and soap  
Food that can be shared (not nsima)



#### OBJECTIVE:

Communities are disgusted by germs on hands after using a toilet (even if they appear clean).

1. Go to a toilet without a hand washing facility.
2. Ask a community member to use the toilet, then ask them to share food with the community (cassava/egg, mango, or other food aside from nsima as most people already wash hands before eating this).
3. Ask the community members if they can accept the food.
4. After seeing people refuse, ask why are they denying and what should be done after using the toilet and before sharing food.

## HW TRIGGERING TOOL #10:

### DIRT UNDER FINGERNAILS

**Materials needed:**

Nsima  
Materials for handwashing

#### OBJECTIVE:

To have communities realise that mere handwashing is not adequate to prevent infections without clean fingernails and using soap.

1. Ask somebody to deliberately put dirt under their fingernails (e.g. with charcoal or mud).
2. Ask that person to wash their hands as they would normally do it (often without soap).
3. Get them to eat some nsima (this is white so it's easy to see the dirt).
4. See how much of that dirt from their fingernails and hands will remain on the nsima.

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For more information, or to give us feedback on these tips, please feel free to get in touch!

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This is a series of short notes offering practical guidance on new methods and approaches, and thinking on broader issues. We welcome comments, ideas and suggestions, please contact us at [clts@ids.ac.uk](mailto:clts@ids.ac.uk)

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Bongartz, P. and Chambers, R. (2009) 'Beyond Subsidies: Triggering a Revolution in Rural Sanitation', *In Focus* 10, Brighton: IDS

Bongartz, P., Musembi Musyoki, S., Milligan, A. and Ashley, H. (2010) *Tales of Shit: Community-Led Total Sanitation in Africa*, Participatory Learning and Action 61, London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Kar, K. (2010) *Facilitating 'Hands-on' Training Workshops for CLTS: A Trainer's Training Guide*, Geneva: WSSCC

Kar, K. with Chambers, R. (2008) *Handbook on Community-Led Total Sanitation*, Brighton and London: IDS and Plan International

## Other titles in this series

**Issue 1: Cole, B. (2013) 'Participatory Design Development for Sanitation'**  
*Ben Cole, who helped UNICEF to adapt and trial participatory latrine design in Malawi, describes the different stages of participatory latrine design and gives practical guidance based on the experiences in Malawi.*



# How to Trigger for Handwashing with Soap

Handwashing is a vital part of good sanitation and hygiene. When Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and its aim of ODF (open defecation free) communities are fully understood and put into practice it is clear that handwashing is implicit in the approach. Without addressing handwashing and other hygiene practices, communities can never become fully ODF since CLTS aims to cut all faecal-oral contamination routes. However, in practice, the degree to which handwashing is integrated into triggering and follow up, depends on the quality of facilitation. This guide, developed in Malawi, addresses the need for specific tools that help to incorporate handwashing into CLTS.

In Malawi, the Open Defecation Free (ODF) Malawi 2015 Strategy and National Hand Washing Campaign are encouraging an increased focus on handwashing with soap (HWWs). Some studies estimate that washing hands with soap can reduce diarrhoeal disease rates by up to 50% and respiratory disease rates by up to 25%. Since CLTS is the key intervention for sanitation and hygiene promotion in Malawi, it provides an excellent opportunity to facilitate handwashing behaviour change. However, until now, the 'triggering tools' for achieving HWWs behaviour change from CLTS were not well known by implementers. This guide illustrates several practical tools for triggering handwashing during the CLTS process.

## About the author

Jolly Ann Maulit is a WASH and management consultant who enjoys strategy development and utilising participatory approaches in her work with government staff and civil society organisations. She is currently based in Lilongwe, Malawi.



Illustration by Regina Faul-Doyle

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