



# BUSINESS AND COVID-19

## ACTION TOOLKIT

# HANDWASHING AND OTHER PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

**Myriam Sidibe** | *Handwashing Expert, Senior Fellow, Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, Harvard Kennedy School*



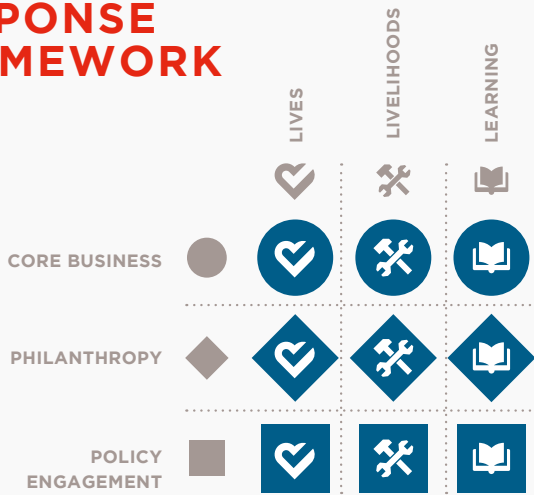
# FOREWORD

## BUSINESS AND COVID-19

The novel coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic is creating the worst humanitarian and economic crisis in a generation, threatening the lives, livelihoods, and learning of people around the world.

*COVID-19 poses risks for everyone and the impacts across all aspects of life will be profound and long-lasting for every segment of society. They are especially serious for those who are most vulnerable.*

### COVID-19 RESPONSE FRAMEWORK



Find the [Framework rationale here](#)

This action toolkit provides guidance on what businesses can do immediately and in the longer term to **raise awareness of and access to handwashing and other preventative measures**. Government leadership is crucial, but companies and civil society organizations also have a vital role in working together to support the most vulnerable people.

COVID-19 poses risks for everyone and the impacts across all aspects of life will be profound and long-lasting for every segment of society. They are especially serious for those who are most vulnerable.

We recently published a COVID-19 Response Framework<sup>1</sup> that sets out guidance for how businesses can support the most vulnerable across three areas of impact: on their **lives** (health and safety), **livelihoods** (jobs

<sup>1</sup> <https://snipbfp.org/C19ResponseFramework>



and incomes) and **learning** (education and skills). The Response Framework set out actions that businesses can take through their **core business** capabilities and activities, **philanthropic donations** and volunteering, and **policy engagement**, advocacy, and support for institution strengthening. This can be visualized as a three-by-three matrix (see figure). We have separately published an online Action Mapping Tool<sup>2</sup> that sets out over 200 examples.

In this Action Toolkit, which is one of a series<sup>3</sup>, we build on the Response Framework to provide guidance on what actions companies can take immediately and in the longer term to raise awareness of and access to handwashing and other preventative measures to tackle the spread of COVID-19.

The Action Toolkit is one part of a wider response that we are convening to crowdsource and share best-practice

<sup>2</sup> <https://snipbfp.org/FightCOVID19>

<sup>3</sup> Current topics include gender-based violence, vulnerable workers, micro and small enterprises, supporting NGO partners, and promoting handwashing and other preventative measures. We will be adding further topics. If you would like to suggest or support another topic, please get in touch with us at [team@businessfightspoverty.org](mailto:team@businessfightspoverty.org).

*We hope that you will find this Action Toolkit useful as you frame both your immediate response and longer-term strategy for rebuilding.*

examples and insights from a variety of companies, industry sectors, and countries. For more information, and to get involved, visit our Business and COVID-19 Response Centre at [https://snipbfp.org/C19\\_ResponseCentre](https://snipbfp.org/C19_ResponseCentre)

This work is being funded with UK aid from the UK government. We are working with an international coalition of partners, businesses and business networks. For this Action Toolkit, we are grateful for the additional support of AB InBev and the expert input of the National Business Compact on Coronavirus.

We hope that you will find this Action Toolkit useful as you frame both your immediate response and longer-term strategy for rebuilding.

**Zahid Torres-Rahman**, CEO, Business Fights Poverty

**Jane Nelson**, Director, Corporate Responsibility Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School.

## CONTEXT

# HANDWASHING AND OTHER PREVENTATIVE MEASURES



*“Handwashing with soap is one of the most important things we can do to help to protect ourselves and our loved ones from infection. In the current pandemic business has a vital role to play in the promotion of hand hygiene. It’s great to see businesses stepping up to this challenge, for example, the national business compact which brings together multiple companies to support hand hygiene in Kenya. Businesses know how to sell soap and they know how to communicate to consumers, this gives them unparalleled resources and expertise to deploy to support country efforts to make hand hygiene an essential component in the fight against COVID-19”*

**Val Curtis**, Professor of Hygiene at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Coronavirus is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks.<sup>4</sup> Until a vaccine is developed and comprehensive testing systems are in place, personal behaviors and hygiene will be essential to stop the spread of the virus.





Individuals in every country and walk of life need to protect themselves and others by adopting the following preventative measures:

- maintain hand hygiene, mainly through frequent washing hands with soap;
- maintain physical distancing of six feet (two meters) outside the home when in public or workplaces;
- practice respiratory hygiene etiquette, such as sneezing into an elbow or tissue and safely disposing this;
- stay home if possible, especially if unwell;
- clean and disinfect surfaces around the home and work environment.

Wearing cloth face coverings is also advised in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

These preventative measures and

*“Handwashing is the first line of defence against coronavirus. As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, millions do not have access to soap and water for handwashing.”*

**WaterAid**

changes in behaviour are challenging to achieve for most people, but can be especially difficult for low-income households and communities where there is a lack of clean water and sanitation. According to UNICEF/WHO figures, one in three people globally do not have access to safe drinking water, and 3 billion people lack basic handwashing facilities with water and soap at home.<sup>5</sup> Combined with this, large numbers of people live in confined and poorly ventilated spaces, and millions of people cannot afford to stay at home without daily work due to lack of savings and social safety nets.<sup>6</sup>

Businesses can play a vital role in raising awareness of these preventative measures and in helping to enable people to comply with them – especially their employees, customers and workers in their supply chain, but also local communities. For certain companies with marketing and digital platforms or hygiene-focused products, they can also partner with governments and NGOs to raise awareness among the public more broadly. Maintaining the health of their own workforce is of primary importance

<sup>5</sup> “1 in 3 People Globally Do Not Have Access to Safe Drinking Water – UNICEF, WHO,” accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/18-06-2019-1-in-3-people-globally-do-not-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water-unicef-who>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/18-06-2019-1-in-3-people-globally-do-not-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water-unicef-who> <https://washem-guides.s3.eu-west->

*To ensure good hygiene practices are adopted, businesses need to both educate their employees and other relevant stakeholders about best practice and provide appropriate infrastructure in the appropriate places to drive behaviour change.*



as this will help to ensure the well-being of their core business. Leveraging the company's communication, infrastructure and collaboration capabilities will all be key elements to deliver the appropriate response.

To ensure good hygiene practices are adopted, businesses need to both educate their employees and other relevant stakeholders about best practice and provide appropriate infrastructure in the appropriate places to drive behaviour change. Decades of work in handwashing behaviour change have shown that it is not easy to get everyone to practice handwashing with soap and that we have to work hard at enabling its practice.<sup>7,8</sup> Handwashing facilities need to be made visible and accessible, and communications need to be dynamic, engaging and surprising.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, businesses must adapt working practices to enable employees

to maintain physical distancing and hand hygiene in the workplace, enabling working from home where possible or putting distance between workers (or workers and suppliers/customers) and providing hygiene facilities where this is not possible. Employees must also be encouraged to stay home from work if unwell, and appropriate sick pay compensation packages made available.

Further using brand marketing budgets and channels, businesses can work with messaging approved by Ministries of Health to share public health communications more widely to counter the dissemination of mis-information and fake news.<sup>10</sup> Whenever programs on WASH exist, it is possible to build on existing channels and trust already created by adding other hygiene practices related to COVID-19 spread.

7 Valerie A Curtis, "Dirt, Disgust and Disease: A Natural History of Hygiene," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 61, no. 8 (2007): 660–64.

8 Matthew C Freeman et al., "Systematic Review: Hygiene and Health: Systematic Review of Handwashing Practices Worldwide and Update of Health Effects," *Tropical Medicine & International Health* 19, no. 8 (2014): 906–16.

9 "Washem\_quicktip\_coronavirus.Pdf," accessed April 20, 2020, [https://washem-guides.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/washem\\_quicktip\\_coronavirus.pdf](https://washem-guides.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/washem_quicktip_coronavirus.pdf)

10 Unilever, "Helping People Get into Healthy Hygiene Habits," Unilever global company website, accessed January 4, 2020, <https://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/improving-health-and-well-being/health-and-hygiene/healthy-handwashing-habits-for-life/helping-people-get-into-healthy-hygiene-habits/>

# IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

## CORE BUSINESS

Harness policies, processes, products, services, technologies, financing mechanisms or business models.

## LIVES



### HEALTH & SAFETY

- Provide simple, clear messaging about the importance of hygiene and physical distancing for employees, and other people that employees interact with (suppliers etc), enabling working from home where possible.
- Encourage end-user behaviour through reminders, incentives, dynamic messaging and sustained access to essential hygiene products (soap, sanitizers, masks).
- Use brands (and agencies) to create and spread public health messages that promote consumer awareness of preventative measures, such as handwashing and social distancing. (avoiding panic and fear through spread of rumours and fake news).
- Provide visible handwashing stations, soap and sanitizers within business locations for workers and visitors.
- Increase production or where feasible (eg in alcohol, certain consumer goods, apparel and chemical manufacturing plants), repurpose selected equipment and processes to produce essential consumer products such as sanitisers and face masks

## LIVELIHOODS



### JOB & INCOMES

- Provide enhanced employee medical advice and assistance.
- Extend access to paid sick leave
- Enable flexible working where possible, investing in infrastructure as required (eg broadband connections, unlimited 4G, borrowing office workstation equipment etc)

## LEARNING



### EDUCATION & SKILLS

- Make handwashing education resources available
- Provide education on effective agile working
- Give access to mental health and wellbeing tools

# PHILANTHROPY

Explore ways to leverage corporate philanthropy, employee engagement and social investment.

## LIVES



### HEALTH & SAFETY

- ◆ Donate products/ services where possible. Consider how you can help provide access to clean water, soap and food to those in need, as well as how to support frontline workers.
- ◆ Where access to water and sanitation facilities are an issue, support NGOs and local initiatives providing temporary facilities.
- ◆ Use mobile technology, such as e-commerce platforms to share health and hygiene information to low income populations, as well as information to help continue to generate income or receive food or medical help.

- ◆ Support organisations such as UNICEF, WaterAid, and Oxfam who are supporting low-income communities with hygiene products and providing infrastructure to enable access to these resources and the adoption of preventative behaviours.
- ◆ Create communities (within and outside company), encouraging employees to be active, innovate, and volunteer their time to contribute to both overcoming the pandemic and the future recovery, and building community resilience.

## LIVELIHOODS



### JOB & INCOMES

- ◆ Provide grants or product donations to community-level social entrepreneurs that have already developed or are developing innovative business models and community-led initiatives focused on community health, water and hygiene

# POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Engage in policy dialogue, awareness raising and institution strengthening partnerships.

## LIVES



### HEALTH & SAFETY

- Lobby for changes in manufacturing/ trading rules to enable different processes to be adopted/products to be made that, in turn, will enable and encourage adoption of

- preventative behaviours. E.g. sanitizers made using alcohol and other chemical manufacturing facilities in both consumer goods and chemical companies
- Look for opportunities to form country-level coalitions promoting handwashing, combining government,

manufacturers and influencers. Handwashing is the best line of defence against the spread of COVID-19. What gets handwashing to stick is powerful, coordinated and consistent communications and coalitions.



## LIVELIHOODS



### JOBS & INCOMES

- Encourage financial and government institutions to waive water bills, to encourage handwashing.
- Encourage government to support better workers' protection, including sick pay.

## LEARNING



### EDUCATION & SKILLS

- Work with governments to include handwashing education as part of school curriculum eg Lifebuoy School of 5

## EXAMPLES:

Almost all large corporations that are still operating, from farms and mines, to manufacturing plants, distribution networks and retail outlets, have started to implement preventative measures in their workplaces and with their major suppliers. While the challenges are ongoing, effort is also shifting to support the public and essential workers more broadly.

- Unilever has joined forces with the UK government's Department for International Development to target a billion people worldwide with a COVID-19 handwashing campaign, with a £100million fund. Unilever's contribution includes product donations, communications collateral and support to hygiene behaviour change across a range of partners.<sup>11</sup>
- P&G have donated more than \$15million worth of products from 30 brands in more than 20 countries. It is partnering with some of the world's leading relief organisations, providing support including hygiene education and medical equipment and supplies. P&G is also adapting production lines to produce sanitiser and face masks.<sup>12</sup>
- SC Johnson and Save the Children have joined forces to educate and enable children worldwide to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of SC Johnson's US\$10million commitment to COVID-19 relief.<sup>13</sup>
- Avon has stepped up its 16-year partnership with Feed the Children in response to COVID-19 crisis with \$2million worth of personal care products.<sup>14</sup>
- Chemical and energy companies, including Dow, BASF, Ineos and Shell, are shifting production in plants to meet the global demand for hand sanitisers and disinfectants, with regulators enabling the process by easing manufacturing restrictions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unilever.com/news/news-and-features/Feature-article/2020/covid-19-handwashing-campaign-to-target-a-billion-people-worldwide.html>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.happi.com/contents/view\\_Content-micro-site/2020-04-09/pg-expands-covid-19-aid/](https://www.happi.com/contents/view_Content-micro-site/2020-04-09/pg-expands-covid-19-aid/); <https://us.pg.com/blogs/Hand-Sanitizer/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/sc-johnson-and-save-children-join-forces-equip-generation-life-skills-battle-covid-19>

<sup>14</sup> <https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/avon-steps-up-its-16-year-partnership-with-feed-the-children-in-reponse-to-covid-19-crisis-1029048628>

<sup>15</sup> <https://chemicalwatch.com/104936/covid-19-mass-shift-to-disinfectant-production-across-the-world#overlay-strip>; <https://www.shell.com/covid19.html>

## EXAMPLES: (CONTINUED)

- Companies including AB InBev<sup>16</sup>, Kenyan and other national Breweries<sup>17</sup>, Heineken<sup>18</sup>, LVMH<sup>19</sup>, Burberry<sup>20</sup>, Dow<sup>21</sup> and ExxonMobil<sup>22</sup>, among a growing number of others, are repurposing production to supply products to help the fight against COVID-19. In the case of AB InBev and LVMH, they are switching alcohol production and perfume production, respectively, to make hand sanitizers, and Burberry is switching production to supply surgical masks and non-surgical gowns and masks.
- Lifebuoy is also highlighting the value of the products of competitors in posts and slashing the prices of hygiene products in markets like India. In Vietnam the brand launched a public awareness campaign about the importance of stepping up good hygiene practices with a dancing mother and her two children.<sup>23</sup>
- The National Business Compact on COVID-19 in Kenya, will accelerate a WHO-validated national handwashing campaign and other preventative solutions, with immediate roll-out over other countries, working with local partners, with in-kind/financial support from a range of multiple companies and funders.<sup>24</sup> This business compact provides a model to extend to other countries. It is part of overarching UN Business Compact - #UnitingBusiness to Respond to COVID-19.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ab-inbev.com/news-media/news-stories/ab-in-bev-is-manufacturing-over-1-million-bottles-of-hand-sanitizer-to-donate-to-hospitals-and-frontline.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://newsroom.amref.org/press-releases/2020/03/kbl-partners-with-kenya-red-cross-society-and-amref-health-africa-to-distribute-sanitizers-to-communities-in-nairobi-and-kisumu/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.theheinekencompany.com/our-response-covid-19>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkestenbaum/2020/03/15/lvmh-converting-its-perfume-factories-to-make-hand-sanitizer/#5b7c784b4a9a>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.burberryplc.com/en/news/news/corporate/2020/burberry-contributes-to-fight-against-covid-19.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://corporate.dow.com/en-us/seek-together/industry-and-coronavirus.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://corporate.exxonmobil.com/News/COVID-19-Exxon-Mobils-response/Operations>

<sup>23</sup> <https://brandinginasia.com/lifebuoy-launches-the-six-step-hand-washing-dance/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.covid19businessresponse.ke>; <https://businessfightspoverty.org/articles/three-priorities-for-business-on-the-coronavirus/>

# FUTURE REBUILDING

## CORE BUSINESS

Harness policies, processes, products, services, technologies, financing mechanisms or business models.

### LIVES



#### HEALTH & SAFETY

- Ensure permanent hygiene infrastructure in workplaces, to develop long-term handwashing behaviour change, and minimize fear for employees returning to workplace / interacting with colleagues.
- Continue enhanced cleaning in all facilities, “clean desk day” employee call to action
- Through brands and marketing, contribute to preventing spread of mis-information and fake news.
- Rebuild what social mission for brands mean and that is inclusive for partnerships, systemic change, behaviour change.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> <https://hbr.org/2020/05/marketing-meets-mission>

### LIVELIHOODS



#### JOBS & INCOMES

- Evaluate flexible working experience with employees – to understand how to continue any positives that came out of it, both for employees and businesses.

### LEARNING



#### EDUCATION & SKILLS

- Provide handwashing education resources (ongoing)
- Give access to mental health & wellbeing tools (ongoing)

## PHILANTHROPY

Explore ways to leverage corporate philanthropy, employee engagement and social investment.

### LIVES



#### HEALTH & SAFETY

- ◆ Look for long term strategic partnerships with NGOs / local organisations to support hygiene behaviour change / public health initiatives, which have positive social impact and business growth – with focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (SDG 3 on Good Health and Wellbeing and SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation). Have a particular focus on permanent sanitation infrastructure.
- ◆ Further develop successful community engagement initiatives that promote health – both within the company and wider communities.

### LIVELIHOODS



#### JOBS & INCOMES

- ◆ Continue to identify and fund social entrepreneurs with scalable solutions for supporting community level and household hygiene, water and sanitation solutions

## PHILANTHROPY (CONTINUED)

### LEARNING



- ◆ Look to support grassroots organisations, in particular those focused on women and girls education, as women will be impacted the most by the pandemic.

## POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Engage in policy dialogue, awareness raising and institution strengthening partnerships.

### LIVES



#### HEALTH & SAFETY

- Support government efforts to collect data and disseminate evidence-based information on health, contributing directly or helping to finance essential health R&D. Focus on societal hygiene behaviour change best practice: use of masks, physical distancing, Research/cultural differences and effectiveness.
- Advocate for governments to support SDG3 & 6 - health & wellbeing and providing permanent handwashing infrastructure.

- Lobby for enhanced health care and financial support for the most vulnerable in society.
- Use successful coalitions developed during COVID-19 to continue hygiene promotion, infrastructure development and ensure behaviours stick, with particular focus on the most vulnerable in society.

### LIVELIHOODS



#### JOBS & INCOMES

- Work with governments to review required hygiene and other occupational health and safety measures and procedures in different sectors to enable safe options for return to work.

### LEARNING



#### EDUCATION & SKILLS

- Work with governments to include handwashing education as a permanent part of school curriculum.
- Ensure revised hygiene practices are incorporated permanently into business health & safety practices.

# RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES, TOOLS AND ORGANISATIONS

### THE COVID-19 HYGIENE HUB

Is a broad partnership housed at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). Its aim is to help actors in low- and middle-income countries rapidly **design, adapt** and **share** evidence-based hygiene interventions to combat coronavirus. <https://hygienehub.info>

### GLOBAL HANDWASHING PARTNERSHIP

works to save lives and improve health by promoting handwashing with soap, and provides specific COVID-19 related information and resources. <https://globalhandwashing.org/responding-to-covid-19/>

### WATER AND SANITATION FOR THE URBAN POOR (WSUP)

<https://www.wsup.com/covid19/>

### OXFAM WASH

50 years of WASH Experience. All of Oxfam's WASH resources available for everyone at Oxfam and those Oxfam works with: <https://www.oxfamwash.org/>

### WATERAID

WaterAid COVID-19 response:

<https://washmatters.wateraid.org/blog/how-to-ensure-everyone-can-wash-hands-to-protect-lives-from-covid19>

### World Bank Water Group Response to COVID-19

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/brief/wash-water-sanitation-hygiene-and-covid-19>

### NATIONAL BUSINESS COMPACT ON CORONAVIRUS:

<https://www.covid19businessresponse.ke/>

### MAKE YOUR OWN POSTERS:

<https://about.canva.com/coronavirus-awareness-collection/>

<https://www.postermywall.com/index.php/posters/search?s=coronavirus>



