

# the ENHANDSOR

## Hooked on Handwashing: hand hygiene and habit formation

**MIT Media Lab and Department of Economics**  
*in partnership with*  
**Society for Health and Demographic Surveillance, West Bengal**

Three million children die every year from bacterial and viral contamination. Handwashing with soap is the most cost effective 'vaccine', but campaigns throughout the world fail to produce behavioral change or meaningful health impacts.

We, three PhD candidates at MIT, take a new approach: transform handwashing into a subconscious habit. In partnership with the MIT Media Lab, we develop a noninvasive monitoring technology to measure and incentivize handwashing. We implant a soap bottle with a counter and GSM module. The resulting device delivers real time usage data and prepaid recharges on users' phones to cultivate handwashing through the habit loop. Meal time is the *trigger*, handwashing with soap the *routine*, and money the *reward*. We partner with an organization in India and reach 3000 households below the poverty line. We evaluate the intervention with a randomized control trial, and eventually withdraw all incentives to see if households have developed a handwashing habit.



Unilever Lifebuoy soap is already the soap of choice in our sample region. We employ Lifebuoy liquid soap for our two year study and incentivize subsequent habit formation. We have received grants from MIT, USAID, and the Urban Services Initiative in partnership with the Gates Foundation for pilot work. In order to launch the full RCT, we need to produce 3000 enHandsors at a further cost of \$60K. Unilever will be featured throughout the campaign as the core sponsor and its products promoted and used in developing the habit loop.

With Unilever's help, we can embark on a groundbreaking study in preventative health: one that will not only increase soap use in rural India and transform how academia thinks about public health campaigns, but finally make a substantial dent in the millions of children lost every year due to entirely preventable illnesses.

Help us get India hooked on handwashing.

