NEWS

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THE BIG PICTURE

Health in a bar of soap

Alison Shepherd

The BMJ

Chanthou teaches her children, Sovannreach, 7, and Narong, 3, how to wash their hands after receiving soap from Tuol Snoul Health Centre in Cambodia.

The family are part of a project developed by the global health charities WaterAid and PATH aimed at encouraging governments to combine clean water, decent household toilets, and good hygiene with routine childhood vaccinations and nutrition support. Such schemes could save the lives of nearly 700 000 young children a year, research from the charities has found.

The *Coordinate, Integrate, Invest* analysis by WaterAid and PATH's Defeat Diarrheal Disease initiative was published on 8 May.[1] It shows that such measures could prevent billions of harmful bouts of diarrhoeal illness that kill 500 000 under 5s each year. More than half of such deaths are directly related to dirty water, poor sanitation, and poor hygiene. Even those who survive are left weakened and sometimes stunted, their long term development and education compromised.

Margaret Batty, WaterAid's director of global policy and campaigns, said, "If children are to thrive they need clean water, good sanitation and hygiene alongside good healthcare, vaccinations, and good nutrition. As the World Health Assembly in Geneva approaches [20-26 May], we are calling on world leaders to ensure that, whenever they invest in health and nutrition, they also invest in water, sanitation, and hygiene. They can save so many lives by combining these efforts."

1   WaterAid, Defeat DD. Coordinate, integrate, invest: how joint child health and water, sanitation and hygiene interventions can deliver for your country's future. 8 May 2018. https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/coordinate-integrate-invest-how-joint-child-health-and-water-sanitation-and-hygiene.

Figure

[Image: WaterAid]