



## PRESS RELEASE

### Clean hands save lives: Global Handwashing Day 2011 celebrated worldwide

On 15 October 2011 people across the globe will celebrate the 4th annual Global Handwashing Day aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of handwashing with soap as an effective and affordable way to prevent disease.

Global Handwashing Day 2010 was hugely successful with 200 million people and 700,000 schools in more than 100 countries celebrating the event. This year promises to be even bigger with more children, teachers, parents, celebrities and government officials planning to motivate millions to lather up to prevent life-threatening diseases such as diarrhea and acute respiratory infections.

Children suffer disproportionately from diarrheal diseases – with more than 2 million children under five dying every year from diarrhea and pneumonia-related illnesses. The simple act of washing hands with soap at critical moments (such as after using the toilet and before handling food) is a key cost-effective and life-saving intervention. Research has shown that handwashing with soap can reduce the incidence of diarrhea among children under five by almost 50 per cent, and respiratory infections by nearly 25 per cent.

In many developing countries, it is not the lack of soap that is usually the barrier – with the vast majority of poor households having soap in the home – rather, the problem is that soap is rarely used for handwashing. Creating lasting behavior change and ensuring handwashing with soap becomes a social norm are key components of hygiene and sanitation programs worldwide.

Governments around the world are taking action to promote handwashing with soap on Global Handwashing Day and throughout the year. For example in 2010, all schools (18 million children) across Bangladesh participated in the celebrations which included mass handwashing demonstrations and nationwide media coverage. The event was used as a platform to launch the Government's National Hygiene Campaign which aims to promote long-term behavior change, particularly handwashing with soap. This year, the PPPHW is releasing *Governments Take Action*, a brief about how governments are taking action to promote handwashing. Read the brief at [www.globalhandwashingday.org](http://www.globalhandwashingday.org)

Global Handwashing Day was initiated in 2008 by the Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing with Soap, and it is endorsed by a wide array of governments, international institutions, civil society organisations, NGOs, private companies and individuals around the globe.

Everyone can get involved in this year's Global Handwashing Day celebrations. For further information, please visit [www.globalhandwashingday.org](http://www.globalhandwashingday.org) and become a fan on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/GlobalHandwashingDay](http://www.facebook.com/GlobalHandwashingDay)