Readme for Hands-Free Hand Washing Technologies

This document is intended to advise Engineers Without Borders USA (EWB-USA) chapters on distribution of materials that can support communities’ Covid-19 responses. To date, EWB-USA has produced a “Hands-Free Hand Washing Technologies” handbook in 4 different languages (click on links to access):

- English (ENG)
- French (FR)
- Spanish (ESP) with an additional design
- Swahili (SWA)

In addition, we have been given permission to share some simple Covid-19 infographics that are available here.

These materials are intended for distribution to communities primarily through fairly well-resourced, non-EWB NGOs.

When distributing these materials, keep the following in mind:

- If you work in a community where EWB-USA has an in-country office, the in-country office is handling communication with individual communities.
- We as EWB-USA volunteers work with communities and the people in them—this means that your first contact with your in-country partners should not be about the handbook, or even “Are people washing their hands?” Start by checking in on how people are doing, keeping in mind that responses may be delayed from normal.
- Once you have established communication with your partner community, then you may begin asking questions about community health and WASH if and when it is culturally appropriate to do so. The goal of these questions is to determine the situation on the ground and what support your chapter can or should offer the community at this time.
- Remember to ask open-ended questions, without a clear yes/no answer - people may reply “yes” to anything offered in hopes of being polite, even if it is not what is needed.
  - Example: What are some new challenges your community is experiencing? What do you see as potential things we could work on together to address these challenges?
- Avoid using terminology like “social distancing”—such terms are not universal, and depending on your community’s context Western-style shutdowns may not be possible.
- Consider if a handbook is appropriate for your community. The handwashing handbooks are designed primarily for non-EWB NGOs with the resources (funds, tools, Internet) and access to technicians to broadly implement designs. It is not expected that the handbooks will be sent to every community, “just in case”—make sure you are taking into consideration local capacity and only sharing what will be appropriate and useful for your community’s context.

Also remember to be explicit what you can and cannot do when you share this document with well-resourced NGOs:

- Chapters can provide engineering support for existing projects and engage in remote implementation
- Chapters can provide educational resources and recommendations for small-scale solutions for WASH and other urgent needs
- Chapters cannot provide funds to communities outside of approved projects
- Chapters cannot provide advice outside volunteers’ areas of expertise

In short, please communicate with your in-country partners and provide resources in a way that is respectful of their culture and situation. It’s important to note that many of the difficulties experienced in the West (health system overload, supply chain breakages, “essential” workers getting sick, etc.) will only be magnified in the countries in which EWB-USA works. Similarly, people everywhere have many of the same needs—it is important to handle the relationship and check in on welfare before starting business.