SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND PRODUCTION LINKED TO IMPROVED NUTRITION STATUS, RESILIENCE, AND GENDER EQUITY

WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES

RESEARCH BRIEF

The Sustainable Agriculture and Production Linked to Improved Nutrition Status, Resilience, and Gender Equity (SAPLING), is a six-year USAID-funded Resilience Food Security Activity. It has been implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MOCHTA). The program supported over 57,000 households across five subdistricts (upazilas) in Bandarban District of the remote Chittagong Hill Tracts region of Bangladesh. Activities across the program focused on improving gender-equitable food security, nutrition, and resilience among 10 distinct ethnic groups.

SAPLING developed a multi-sectoral strategy to strengthen and improve water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) outcomes. The strategy involved increasing knowledge, access, and management capacity of WASH services and products to contribute to improved WASH practices.

SAPLING's baseline survey in 2016 found only 4% of households practiced handwashing with soap at five critical opportunities in the 24 hours prior to the survey.

Five critical opportunities for handwashing:

01 After defecation

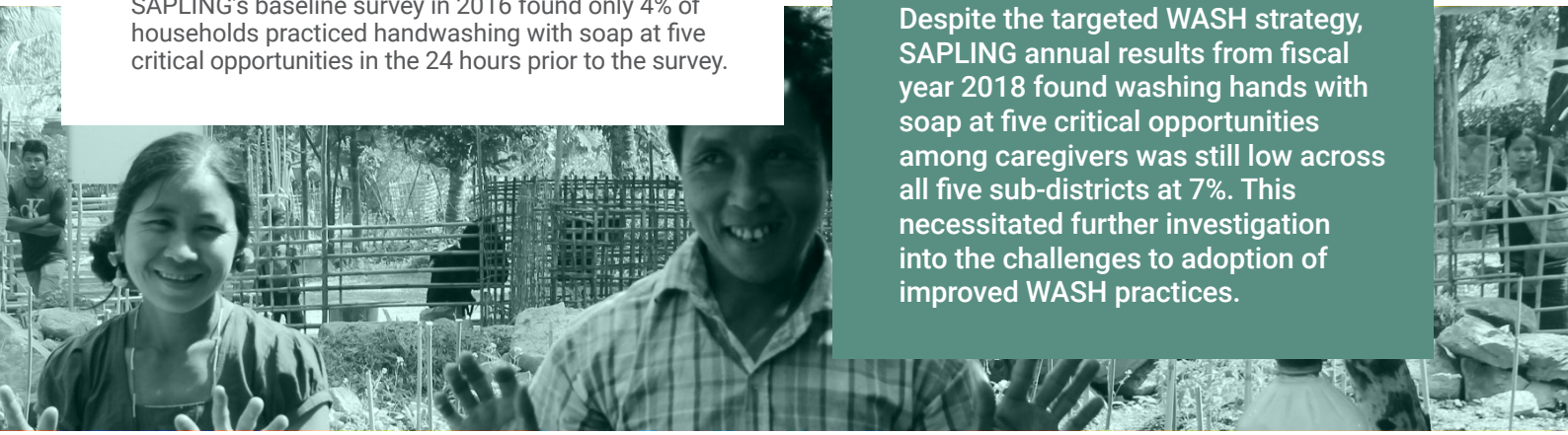
02 Before eating

03 Before feeding a child

04 While handling food

05 After cleaning an infant's feces, an adult's bottom, or cleaning a toilet

Despite the targeted WASH strategy, SAPLING annual results from fiscal year 2018 found washing hands with soap at five critical opportunities among caregivers was still low across all five sub-districts at 7%. This necessitated further investigation into the challenges to adoption of improved WASH practices.



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CARITAS BANGLADESH

CRS CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

HELEN KELLER INTL

Study Design

9 ethnic groups

26 villages

26 discussion groups with women

26 discussion groups with adolescent girls

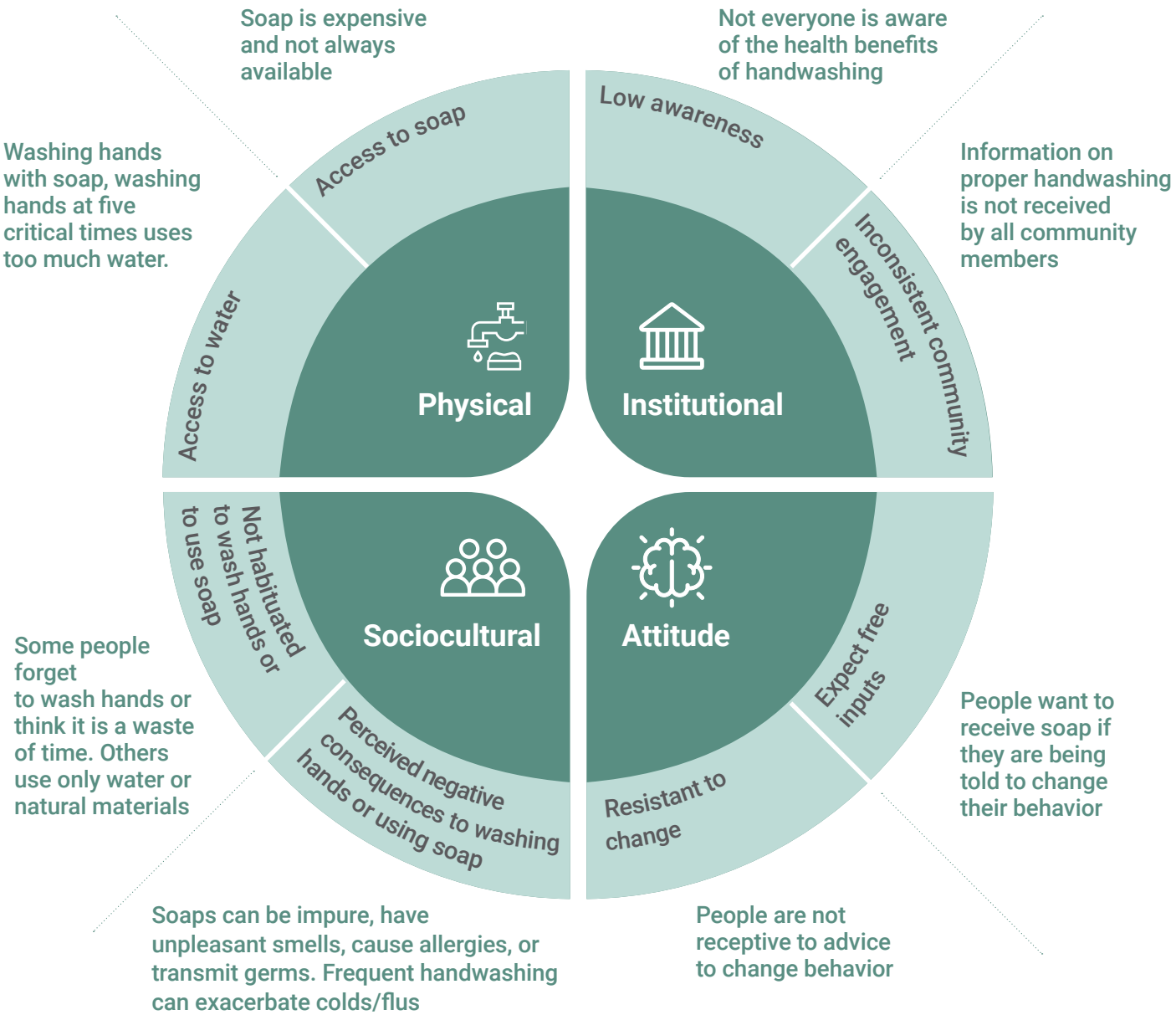
26 discussion groups with men

26 discussion groups with adolescent boys

Research on WASH barriers

In 2018, SAPLING undertook an in-depth analysis of qualitative data collected on WASH as part of a larger qualitative study which was conducted in 2017. Participants in the study were asked questions about the kinds of challenges and barriers to handwashing that exist and their opinions on the solutions to these challenges.

Through inductive analysis of group discussion data, perceived challenges and barriers to handwashing fell under five distinct categories. The analysis also summarized recommended solutions by the participants to the perceived challenges they identified.



> *You need a lot of water to wash your hands. We do not have this.*
>
> — **Bawm-Lushai**
> Adolescent Boys Group Discussion

> *If we don't have soap, but we have to defecate, we clean our hands with sand.*
>
> — **Bengali**
> Women's Group Discussion

> *Money is required to buy soap. When it's used for washing hands, that money is wasted.*
>
> — **Mro**
> Women's Group Discussion

> *There is an opportunity to learn about hand washing with soap properly for all in this village. Those who are lazy and do not want to learn, will not attend. They will not change even if we tell them.*
>
> — **Tripura**
> Women's Group Discussion

KEY RESULTS

Building on these recommendations, SAPLING integrated tailored WASH messaging and opportunities for practice across technical sessions.

Along with the 5 critical opportunities, interventions drew connections between activities such as cleaning the poultry shed, handling livestock, and working in the garden. Community leaders, including government and traditional leaders, teachers, and primary and secondary students were engaged in learning and supporting awareness-raising of the importance of handwashing.

SAPLING revitalized or established Water User Committees in 100 villages and WATSAN committees in 99 wards, 11 unions, and 5 sub-districts to help increase support for WASH. The program also undertook the rehabilitation and installation of water sources.

As a result, by fiscal year 2020, handwashing with soap by caregivers at five critical junctures had increased to 33%. This was a 26% point increase in two years.

The increase is despite persistent lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic which had severely limited access to markets and incomes.

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SOLUTIONS RECOMMENDED BY PARTICIPANTS

01 Make handwashing accessible and convenient

02 Increase access to safe water

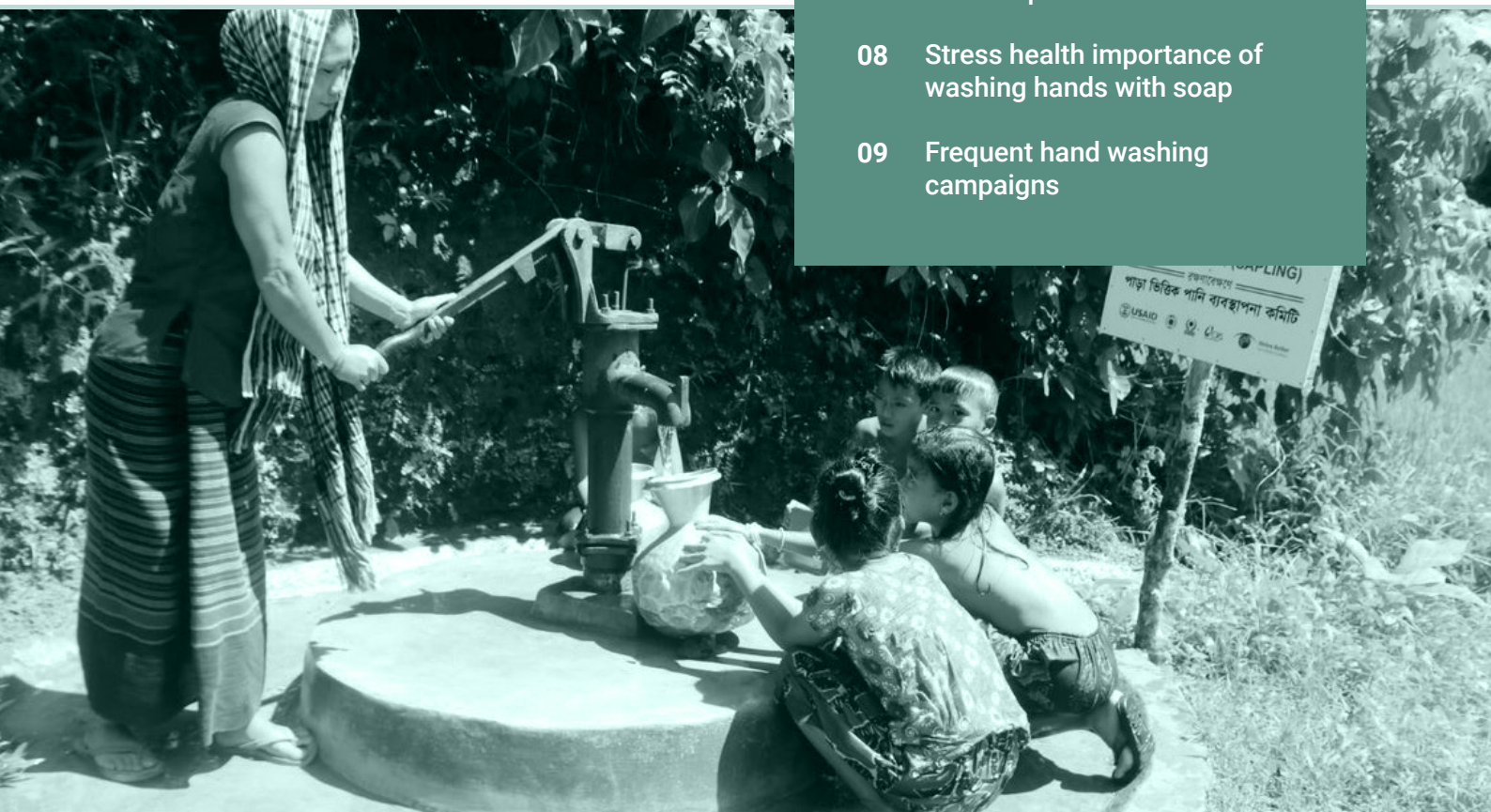
03 Increase easy-to-use water access points, like Tippy Taps and piped water with taps

04 Increase access to affordable soap

05 Encourage use of soap alternatives to transform perception of ability to wash hands

06 Engage community leaders, teachers, youth organizations, and others to disseminate messages on health benefits, address misinformation, and encourage proper handwashing

07 Educate men about the importance of handwashing with soap

08 Stress health importance of washing hands with soap

09 Frequent hand washing campaigns