

# "Be a Handwashing Hero" is the call for this year's International Handwashing Day



Every year on October 15th we mark International Handwashing Day, an event that serves as an opportunity to design, test and replicate creative ways to encourage people to wash their hands with soap to prevent communicable diseases and save lives.

The slogan for this year's event is "**Be a Washing Hero hands**", which reflects the fact that anyone wants to see the benefits of good hand hygiene for health and well-being, whether at work, in schools, in public spaces, at home. Progress depends on our collective responsibility to protect public health, prevent infection, enhance dignity and promote well-being for all.

Regular handwashing with soap can reduce:

- acute diarrheal diseases by 23%- 40%
- school absences by 29% - 57%
- acute respiratory infections with 16%-21%
- healthcare associated infections
- spread of antimicrobial resistance
- neglected tropical diseases, etc.

In order for people to practice hand hygiene, they need access to safe water sources, sanitation, hand hygiene facilities.

Although significant progress has been made in this area over the past decade, hundreds of millions of people around the world lack access to essential water, sanitation and hygiene services, putting them at risk of disease and deepening social exclusion.

***Access to water, sanitation and hygiene is not a privilege, but it is a fundamental right to ensure health and well-being***

According to the latest JMP report of the WHO and UNICEF, regarding the progress on household access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in the period 2000 - 2024, about **1.7 billion people** globally do not have access to sanitation services **basic**

**hygiene at home**, including **611 million** – without access to any facility.

According to the mentioned report, **87% of the population** of the Republic of Moldova has access to basic facilities for washing hands. Interventions aimed at increasing the population's access to appropriate conditions for hand hygiene are carried out in accordance with the National Program for the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2016-2025, approved by HG 1063/2016.

It is necessary to join efforts between the government, institutions, donors, civil society, researchers, business people to promote universal hygiene of hands, by:

- improving access to sustainable sources of water supply and sanitation;
- promoting behavior change regarding hand hygiene;
- providing hygiene products at affordable prices;
- developing the infrastructure of hand hygiene policies in schools, medical institutions, workplaces, etc.
- increasing awareness of the population about the importance of hand hygiene as an essential part of health and sustainable development of society.

### ***Be a handwashing hero***

Whether in hospitals, schools or at home, in everyday life, the practice of handwashing with soap contributes to better health outcomes and a safer world for everyone.