



WASH Pledge for Access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene at the Workplace



Implementation Case Study Aditya Birla Group

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CASE STUDY TEMPLATE

Introduction

The Aditya Birla Group signed [WBCSD Pledge for Access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) at the workplace](#) in January 2015. The pledge catapulted the Group's efforts that all their businesses provide access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene to their workforce within the boundaries of their premises, across all operations and geographies. This case study highlights the efforts of Aditya Birla Group for implementation of the WASH Pledge in 243 sites across all geographies.

About the WBCSD WASH at the workplace Pledge

The WASH at the workplace Pledge ("WASH Pledge") was launched in September 2013 to address the WBCSD's [Action 2020](#) Water Must-Have of *Significantly Accelerating the progressive realization of the human right to water and sanitation*, relative to the 2012 baseline. This is the societal must-have linked to the WBCSD's [Vision 2050](#) of 9 billion people living well within the boundaries of this planet.

According to estimates, 1.8 billion people currently do not have access to safe drinking water¹, and over 4 billion people do not have access to safe sanitation². In addition, 1 in every 8 people still practices open defecation. This poses an immense cost to society, but also presents an important opportunity. Every US dollar invested in water and sanitation yields a return of USD 4.3 through reduced health care costs for individuals and society³, and hygiene behavior change, specifically hand-washing is one of the most cost-effective health interventions⁴. The WBCSD is leading the business contribution to address this issue. An important first step is to ensure safe and sustainable access to WASH for employees at the workplace.

What does a WASH Pledge signature imply?

Signing the WASH Pledge means guaranteeing the provision of and access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to a company's employees at the workplace within three years

- The WASH Pledge only concerns a company's **direct operations** (extended value chain, employees' homes and contractor premises are not included within the scope of the Pledge, although signatories may consider these).
- Companies have **three years** to demonstrate integration of the Pledge provisions into existing internal processes and adherence to these provisions. This can be done via the WBCSD Self-Assessment tool used for each operation/site.
- There is **no formal reporting requirement** given that the Pledge is a non-legally binding commitment. However, companies are encouraged to communicate about their achievements through both internal and external channels.
- Signatories receive **WBCSD support for implementation** (Helpdesk, tools, Pledge community).
- Non-WBCSD members may follow the lead set by members.

The WASH Pledge also contributes directly to the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). [SDG 6](#) sets out to *Ensure availability & sustainable management of water & sanitation for all*, and

¹ World Health Organization (WHO) 2015 estimates. See here: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs391/en/>

² WHO / UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2015 estimates. See here: http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/JMP-2015-update-press-release-English.pdf

³ WHO & UN-Water (2014), UN-water global analysis and assessment of sanitation and drinking-water (GLAAS) - Investing in water and sanitation: increasing access, reducing inequalities. Available here:

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/glaas_report_2014/en/

⁴ WaterAid (2015). See here: <http://www.wateraid.org/news/blogs/2015/october/handwashing-and-hygiene-measuring-behaviour-change>



targets 6.1 & 6.2⁵ aim to achieve universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene. WASH is also a bedrock for the realization of many other SDGs, notably ending poverty and ensuring healthy lives, among others. To date, 47 multinational / large companies have signed the WASH Pledge, representing over 2.5 million employees with access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene at the workplace. Within the WASH Pledge learning and sharing community, WASH Pledge signatories share their lessons learned and challenges, and collaborate on advancing WASH in specific sectors and in the global agenda. To access the latest list of signatories and implementation materials, please visit: <http://www.wbcd.org/Clusters/Water/WASH-access-to-water-sanitation-and-hygiene/WASH-at-the-workplace-Pledge>.

Background

Aditya Birla Group is a US\$43 billion conglomerate in the League of Fortune 500. The Group is anchored by an extraordinary workforce of over 120,000 employees, belonging to 42 nationalities. Over 50 per cent of the Group's revenue flow from its overseas operations spanning 35 countries.

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 6.1 and 6.2 aim to achieve universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) by 2030. As mentioned in the Joint Monitoring Programme Report, *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG baselines* developed by WHO and UNICEF, 6.8 billion people lack access to basic drinking water and 2.3 billion people lack basic sanitation services. This was a compelling and clear economic case for the Aditya Birla Group businesses to demonstrate their leadership by helping to address this situation in their own operations. Many businesses have their operations, employees, contractors and customers in countries



Global Footprint of the Aditya Birla Group

providing the worst access to WASH provisions and the impacts of this gap cause illness or death, impair productivity, and restrict markets for some products and services. The Aditya Birla Group recognized the importance of this WBCSD programme and committed to play its part in improving WASH implementation at its workplaces.

The Aditya Birla Group & WASH

The Aditya Birla Group signed the WBCSD Pledge for Access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) at the workplace in January 2015. ABG used the [WASH Pledge Self-assessment](#) to assess the status of their sites and set itself the task of reaching at least a score of 90% compliance with the requirements of the WBCSD WASH Pledge within three years from 2015 and action plans prepared for the remaining non-compliances.

To begin, 201 sites were identified across all geographies of the Group for WASH pledge implementation. Over the last 3 years, 43 sites have been removed from the original list because either they ceased operations or left the Group. At the same time 87 new sites were included for WASH assessment and improvement bringing the total to 243 active sites today.

⁵ The goals specifically spell out to: **6.1** by 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all; **6.2** by 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

⁶ https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_on_Drinking_Water_Sanitation_and_Hygiene_2017.pdf

To facilitate implementation of WASH across the Group, an information technology programme, Enablon was used to map the WASH self-assessment questionnaire and track the progress across all sites. A multi-layer monitoring of progress was designed to ensure implementation process was infallible. Senior personnel were responsible to review the data, evidence uploaded for answering each question and the action plans created. Guidance notes and training modules were developed for the site personnel involved in the WASH Pledge implementation.

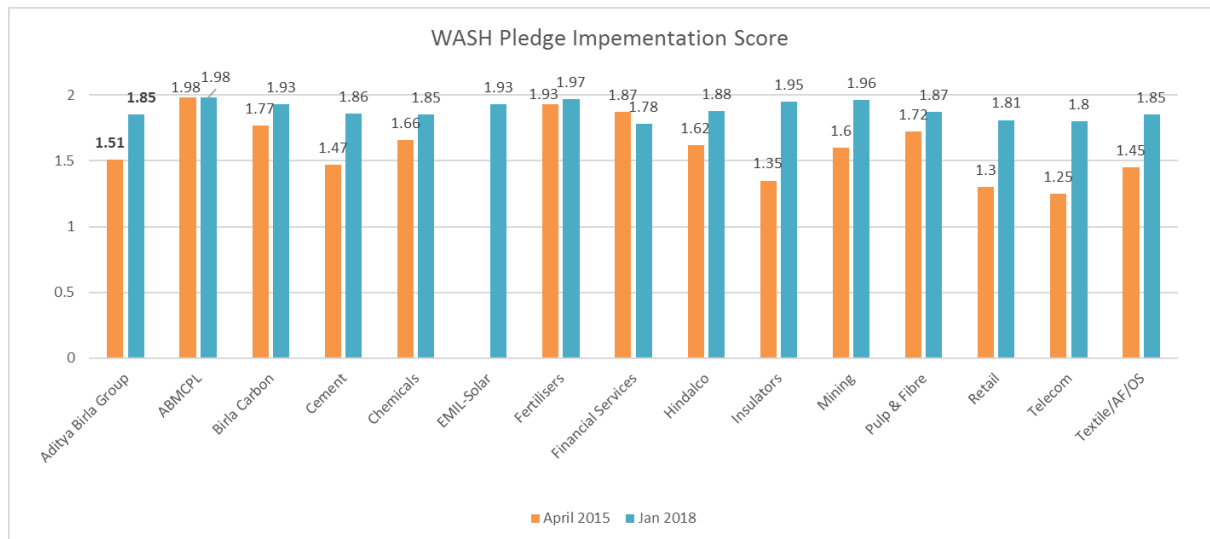
On achieving 90% compliance to the questionnaire, the answers and their supporting evidence were reviewed first on-line and then through a site visit by the group assurance team. Upon demonstrating acceptable levels of validation, an assurance certificate was issued to the sampled sites.

The WASH score reports were shared with the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the respective businesses along with the key focus areas for driving improvements. The respective business and site scores were included in the Business Review Committee (internal board) meetings.

WASH Pledge implementation in ABG Group

- The ABG Group carried out the WASH Pledge Self – Assessment to understand the status of WASH in their premises. Once the first set of questionnaires were completed across all sites, the Group management was surprised to learn that the overall score was 75.5 % (compared to a compliance level of 90%) and that there was much work to do. Only 3 of the 14 businesses were in compliance and of 201 initial sites only 72 were in compliance.
- All non-compliances were tracked and a total of 989 action plans were created. In a span of 3 years, 805 (81%) plans were closed out of 989 plans.
- A total of 629 new male urinals, 521 new male toilets, 214 new female toilets and 48 new toilets for physically challenged employees and visitors were constructed across the Group.
- An investment of USD 2.87 million was made across the businesses for WASH pledge implementation. Emphasis was given to increasing the number of washrooms especially for female employees and physically challenged. New shower facilities were built, and existing infrastructure was renovated to help meet and promote the requirements of the WASH pledge in the workplace.
- New systems to record cleaning were introduced. Total 106,539 employees benefited from some type of improvement.
- Overall, the ABG compliance level increased to 92.5% in 3 years. All sites are compliant now except 51 (out of 243 total sites) are non-compliant. A number expected to reduce to zero in the coming year.
- Major improvement in compliance is seen in training and promotion of WASH (>90%), availability of showers facilities (72%), accommodation for disabled (89%), sites with water saving technologies (130%), to name a few.
- The chart given below shows the comparative WASH scores of each business in April 2015 and those achieved in January 2018.

Comparison of WASH Scores 2015 to 2018



To facilitate implementation of WASH across the Group, key enabling factors were identified and developed as discussed below:

Documentation

A Guidance Note on General Hygiene, Sanitation & Potable Water Management was developed and included within the Aditya Birla Group Sustainable Business Framework*. The objective of this guidance note was to:

- To establish the Group's expectations with regards to infrastructure and practices related to general hygiene, sanitation and potable water; and
- To enable the implementation of standardized programs and practices across the Group designed to address health issues arising from non-occupational factors at the workplace.

The Guidance Note assisted the management and staff at the Group's Businesses and their Operating Sites in:

- effective management of potable water;
- enhanced awareness of sanitation, hygiene and potable water related issues; and
- implementation of best sanitation and hygiene practices

Information Technology

As a global conglomerate operating in 35 countries, data accuracy, ability to access, update and track data in real time from anywhere is crucial. Enablon - an information technology programme based on the Microsoft cloud was used. The WASH self-assessment questionnaire was mapped into Enablon which allowed tracking the progress across all sites in parallel. The positively answered questions in Enablon system required supporting evidence to be uploaded. Once a score of 90% was achieved, an off-site audit of the data was triggered and on-site audit of the highest scores gave confidence in the results.

* The Aditya Birla Group Sustainable Business Framework contains 16 Policies (<http://sustainability.adityabirla.com/>) 39 Technical and Management Standards, 61 Guidance Notes, over 600 eLearning packages and 49 Self-Assessment Questionnaires)

The three-level approach

Having programmed the questionnaire into Enablon and launched it to the Group sites, a three-level approach (Site, Business and Group level) was used to reduce errors and increase data collection efficiency. This is explained in the following sections.

The first level- Site

Each site assigned a Contributor to answer the WASH questions and a Validator to check the Contributors answers in Enablon. Questions where the site was fully compliant had to be backed with an evidence such as a photograph or a document (a checklist/ training module/ process) relevant to the answer. For questions in the Self- Assessment to which the site was not in compliance or partially compliant, the site was required to develop an action plan with timeline and responsibility also recorded in Enablon. The validator's role was important to generate integrity in the system and to assure good knowledge is applied to the programme. The task of validator was assigned to a function head at each site who checked the authenticity of the answers. Many sites also formed a WASH committee to track the non-compliances, assign responsibility for closing the action plans and allocate a budget as required.

The second level - Business

Sustainability coordinators from each business supported the sites for their training requirements, reviewed the progress of action plan closure and conducted internal audits as needed. They also interacted with the senior management of the respective businesses to make sure adequate resources and facilities for implementation of WASH actions such as additional drinking water facilities, shower rooms, toilets for physically challenged personnel, water testing were available.

The third level - Group

The Group Sustainability Cell's own Assurance team developed a two-stage approach for verification of data provided by the site, for the questionnaire in Enablon. In the first stage, sites that scored 1.8 and above were selected for off-site validation. The answers and evidence uploaded by the site was verified by the assurance team and if found to be unacceptable, feedback was provided to the site for further improvement. During the second stage certain selected sites which achieved acceptable levels of validation during the offsite review were scheduled for an onsite visit by the assurance team to physically check the evidence provided in Enablon often for a single location applied across the site. At the end of this stage, a validation certificate was issued to the site for passing the 90% pledge requirement mark.

Capacity Building and Training Modules

Numerous onsite training courses were carried out at various site locations in order to provide more insights on the questions and the standards expected. Online webinars were also conducted periodically to train the contributors and validators. Regular updates and feedback on progress on the WASH implementation were provided to business sustainability co-ordinators either through mails or meetings.

To help site personnel make improvements and report, the Group Sustainability Team prepared training modules on the following:

- a. A simplified explanation of the requirements of the WASH Pledge Self-Assessment Questionnaire including images & examples of best practices,
- b. A course called 'Navigation in Enablon' that included a step by step access to the WASH Questionnaires, how to add comments, upload evidence, create action plans, retrieve previous campaigns and report progress and
- c. Creating/ Modifying Action Plans in Enablon.

To ensure the site teams were trained and that the quality of the data was accurate, the Group Sustainability team along with the business sustainability co-ordinator supported the sites by answering specific queries related to the WASH pledge.

Review by Senior Management

Each quarter, the WASH score reports were shared with the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the respective businesses along with the key focus areas for driving improvements. The respective business and site scores were included in the Business Review Committee (internal board) meetings.

Impact of rolling out the WASH Pledge

The ABG Group achieved a compliance of 92.5% within a span of 3 years. Across the Group, a substantial increase in awareness and importance of safe drinking water was witnessed. Concrete actions were undertaken to increase the availability and usage of sanitation facilities as well as hygiene practices in all businesses. Many sites took this opportunity to renovate their existing toilets infrastructure and improve overall hygiene conditions. Although each site had their own share of positive experiences, a few examples from various businesses are listed below:

- In ABG Pulp & Fibre business, one of the site reported a reduction in open urination by contract employees due to introduction of additional toilets. This business also experienced overall improvement in hygiene practices before taking meals.
- The Hindalco site was very happy about the water saving due to introduction of push taps which close automatically. At another site, improvement in female hygiene due to introduction of additional female toilets and sanitary disposal units, increased the morale.
- At one of the UltraTech cement sites, toilets were built for drivers in the driver room which increased the turnaround time in the yard. New toilets were constructed for contract employees at appropriate locations, which increased the manpower availability at workplace and stopped traditional movement outside the gate. Another site of UltraTech has seen 6% increase in their Labour Satisfaction Survey results due to implementation of WASH pledge requirements.
- The Essel Mining business saw considerable behavioural change in cleanliness, hygiene and working conditions after introducing mobile bio-toilets. The introductions of reusable drinking water bottles also helped in reducing the turnaround time for trucks when drivers normally stopped for a drink at the tap.
- Across the Idea cellular, the telecommunications business of the Group, a change in approach to hygiene was witnessed as employees began to follow simple activities on hand washing after the procedure was demonstrated on posters across the business. Employees also applauded the installation of toilets for physically challenged personnel.
- The Textile business has considerably increased the number of female toilets across its sites globally, a precursor to greater female employment.



New Urinals Installed with Water Saving Technology



WASH Pledge Model Area – Drinking Water and Hand Wash Station



New Hand Wash Station for Transporters Crew



Renovated Drinking Water and Hand Wash Station for Contractor Workmen in their Work Area

Challenges faced & lessons learned

The success of the WASH Pledge Implementation by ABG was mainly due to:

- ABGs commitment to a global goal and connections between numerous businesses across WBCSD with the same aim
- A focused approach of self-assessment questionnaire along with gap identification and action plans in a web-based software
- Usage of practical tool like ABGs IT system to track and report results, across all geographies and bring improvements across the Group
- Status check by business CEOs and senior management for legal compliance and conformance to the Group standards including the WASH Pledge in real time.

ABG is now planning to use Supply Chain mapping software and Source Map to spread the WASH Pledge questionnaire within their supply chains.