

The Tippy Tap – a simple innovation from India to Zimbabwe

Just down the hill from the Initiatives of Change conference buildings in Panchgani is Grampari, a rural and ecological centre established by Initiatives of Change. As part of his training at Grampari, Victor Nyanhete, an Initiatives of Change / Moral Re-Armament Zimbabwe youth programme coordinator, was introduced to the Tippy Tap.

[The Tippy Tap](#) is a hands-free way to wash hands that is especially appropriate for areas where water is scarce. Made from a plastic water container, three bars of metal, a bar of soap and some string, the hand washing device is operated by putting pressure on the foot lever which is made from wood. This technique reduces the chance of bacteria transmission as the user only touches the soap.

Grampari promoted this simple device along with a cheerful song about hand washing in schools around the area as part of their health and hygiene program. Victor knew this was an idea that was needed in his home country, Zimbabwe.

Clean and safe drinking water and sanitation are essential to our health and well-being. Regrettably, Zimbabwe is facing a water and sanitation crisis as water, sanitation and hygiene services have deteriorated in the last decade due to ageing infrastructure and sewage contaminating water reservoirs. The washing of hands using unhygienic water has been cited as one of the causes of epidemics. In 2008, a deadly cholera outbreak killed at least 4000 Zimbabweans. In 2015, Zimbabwe's Health Ministry reported 2,300 suspected cases of typhoid and 12 people died from the disease in 2016.

As part of their community outreach programme, IofC/MRA Zimbabwe's youth group provides support to Jairos Jiri Naran, a school for deaf and mentally challenged children, located in the Ascot suburb 5km outside Gweru, a city near the centre of Zimbabwe. The school has around 240 students and operates with scarce resources. With excitement and enthusiasm, Victor told his colleagues about the Tippy Tap initiative he came across in India and suggested to build a Tippy Tap hand washing station at the school. They approached the headmaster and he granted them the space and the materials to build the Tippy Taps for the children.

From 10 to 12 January 2017, 15 of IofC/MRA's youth group members built four Tippy Tap stations of different heights for children of various ages at the Jairos Jiri Naran school. The youth used scrap metal and other materials taken from the school, dug holes, poured

concrete in to make the structure stable and then connected the pieces of metal to make the frame for the plastic containers to hang from. It is an ingenious device that is used around the world to promote hand washing, good health and hygiene and most importantly, to save lives.

'I enjoyed building the Tippy Taps and putting a smile on the children's faces. I was also pleased we could help the school. Mr Mashingaidze (the headmaster) told us that getting the children to wash their hands at every meal was a challenge so this is fun way to meet an important need,' commented a lofC/MRA youth member named Blessing.

The group conducted a feasibility study of the Tippy Tap station 8 days later to measure the effectiveness of the initiative and to check if it was well-maintained. Mr Mashingaidze commented how much the students enjoyed washing their hands with the Tippy Taps. The station also looked as it did when it was built, thus showing signs of care. 'We are very grateful for the great work you have done for our school. It is making a significant difference. Thank you and please, let's continue working together,' the headmaster graciously expressed.

The youth team is now making plans to install another row of Tippy Taps and to make the station colourful and inviting by painting the wall behind it with the World Health Organization's step-by-step guide to washing hands hygienically.

lofC/MRA's youth program is gaining momentum, energy and people in Zimbabwe. There is a large committed group that meets regularly and has carried out a number of outreach support initiatives in their local communities. They have their first youth conference coming up in Gweru in early February and with 30 participants are expected. The theme of the conference is 'From Group to Team' as they look to move from informal meetings into a formal program.

'Be the change you want to see in the world' is the key concept behind lofC's programmes and the Zimbabwean lofC youth are leading by example. Find out how to build your very own Tippy Tap station in this [manual](#) and stay updated with the lofC's youth group in Zimbabwe by following them on their [Facebook page](#).

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