

Handwashing in the post-2015 era: the equity case and the measurement challenge

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What is 'hygiene'?

“The science concerned with the maintenance of health”

“Clean or healthy practices or thinking”

British Dictionary

Handwashing

Bathing

Washing dishes

Sweeping the house

Wearing footwear

Disposing feces

Disinfecting drinking water

Commonly applied definitions

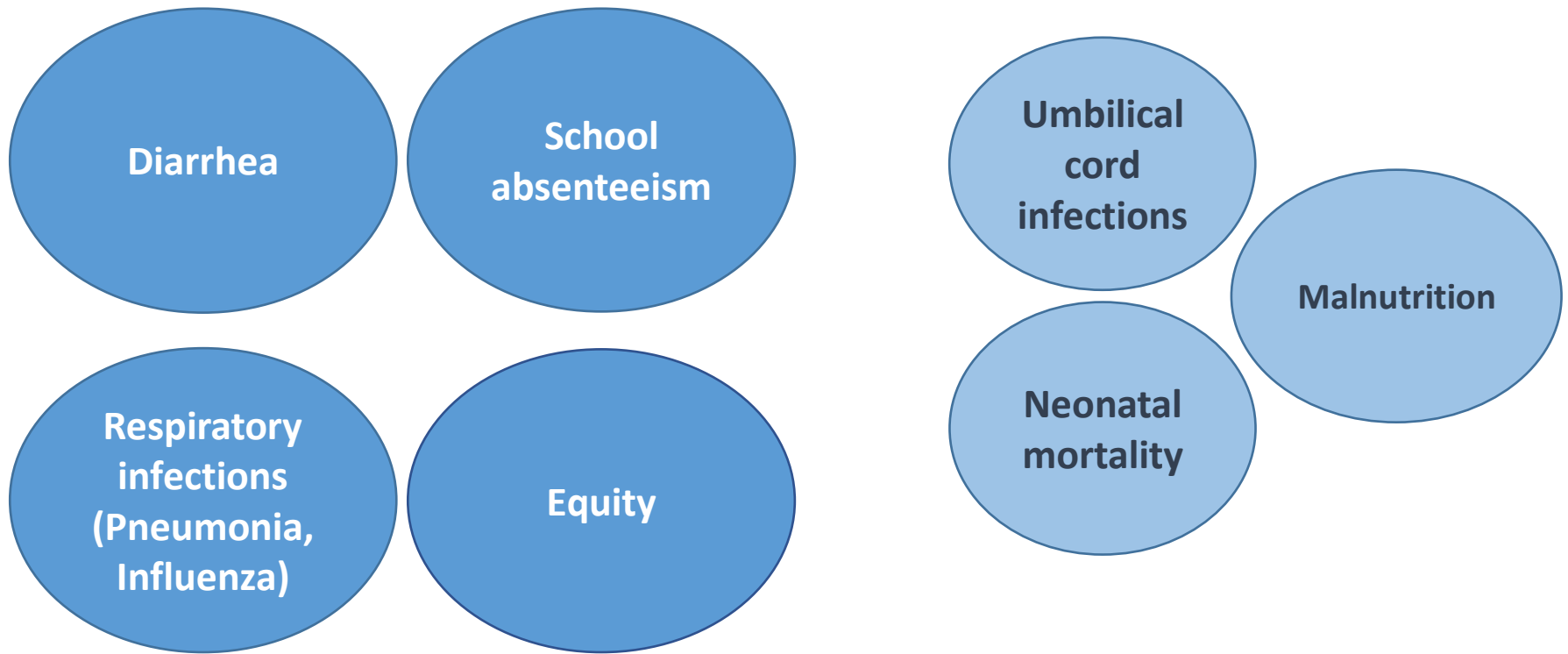
Handwashing with soap

Food hygiene

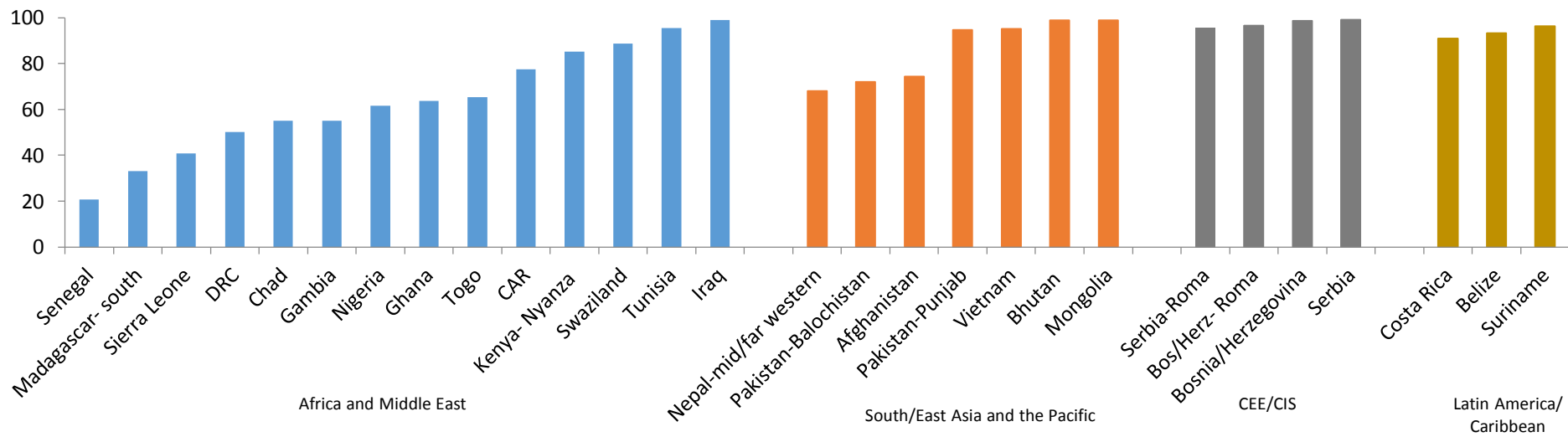
Menstrual hygiene management

JMP Hygiene Working Group

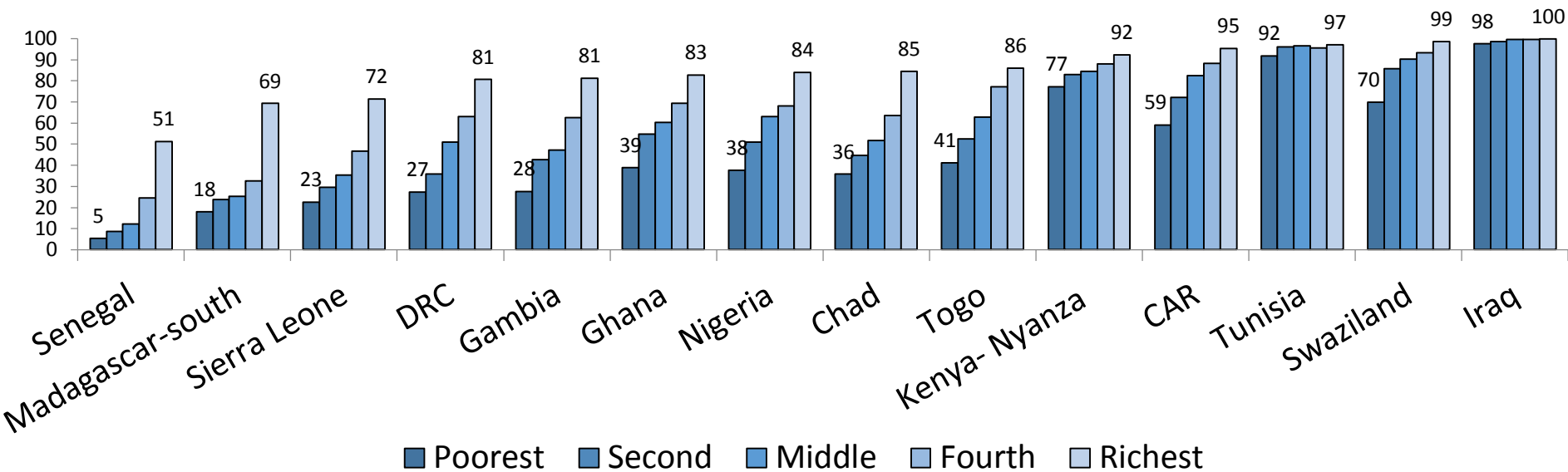
Making a case for handwashing: the child survival, education, and equity agendas



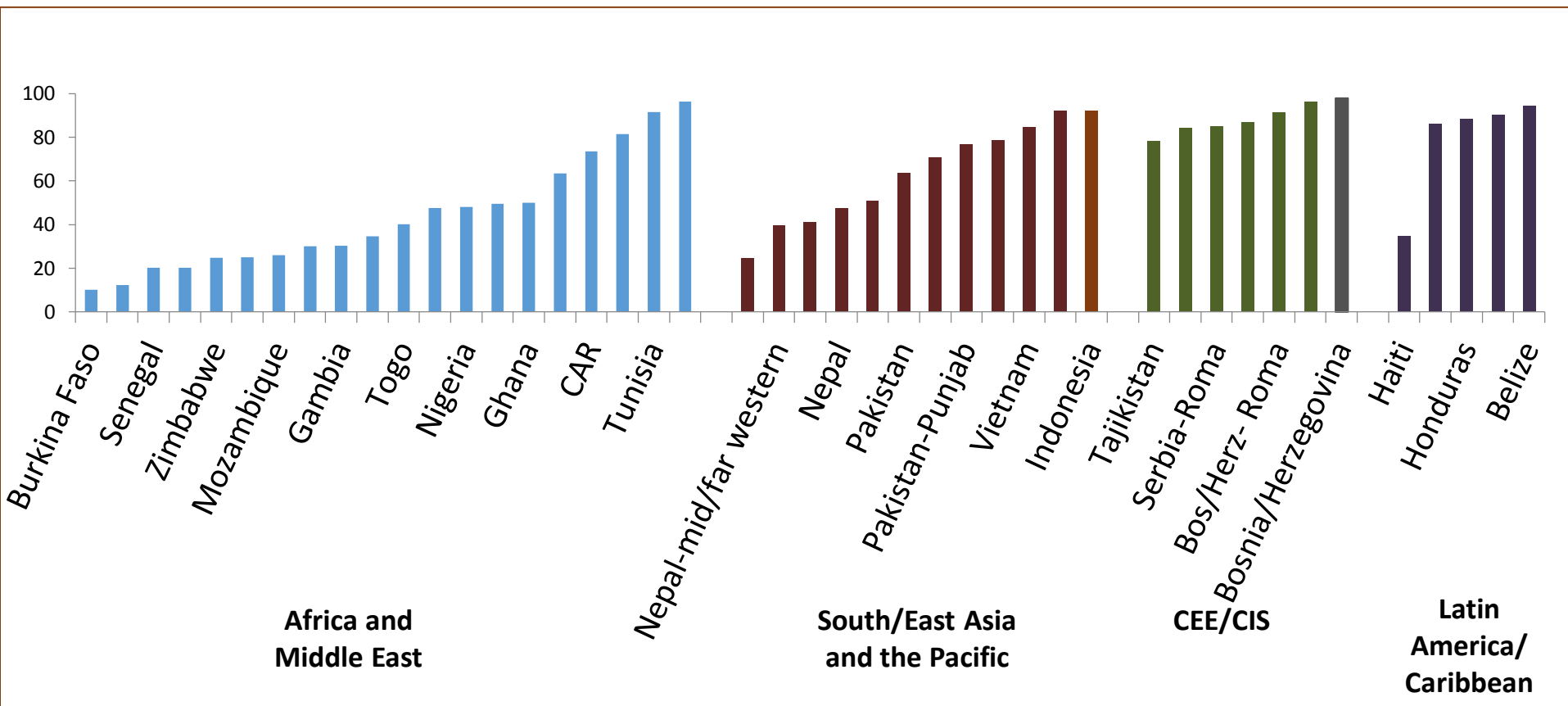
Handwashing: the equity perspective



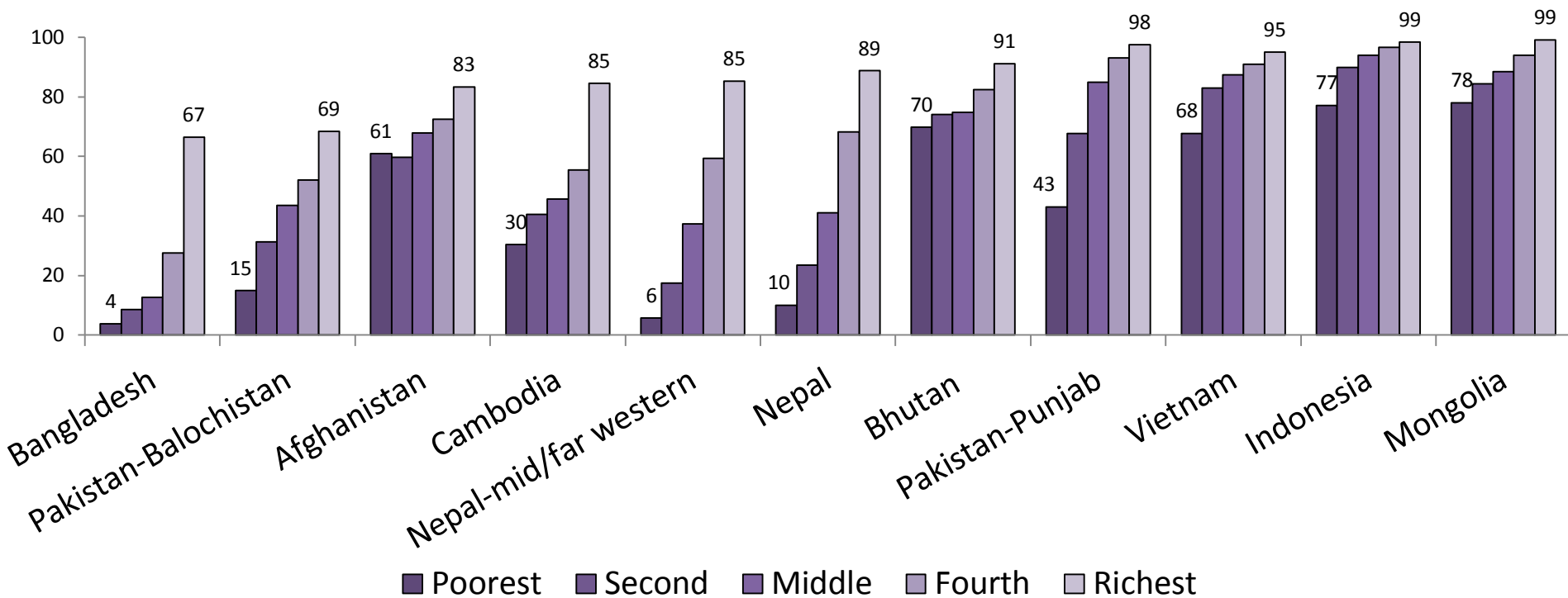
Percentage of households observed to have soap for handwashing anywhere in the dwelling, MICS, 2009-2013



Percentage of households observed to have soap for handwashing anywhere in the dwelling, by wealth quintile, MICS, 2009-2013, Africa and the Middle East



Percentage of households observed to have a handwashing place with soap and water, MICS and DHS, 2009-2013



Percentage of households observed to have a handwashing place with soap and water, by wealth quintile, MICS and DHS, 2009-2013, South/East Asia and the Pacific

Opportunities to improve handwashing do exist worldwide, even where materials are widely available

Region	# studies	Prevalence of handwashing with soap (%) (95% CI)
Africa	13	14 (11,18)
Americas HI	7	49 (33, 65)
Americas LMI	2	16 (7, 33)
Eastern Mediterranean HI	-	44 (34, 57)
Eastern Mediterranean LMI	-	15 (9, 24)
Europe HI	5	44 (29, 56)
Europe LMI	1	15 (6, 30)
South-East Asia	11	17 (7, 36)
Western Pacific HI	2	43 (25, 57)
Western Pacific LMI	2	13 (6, 25)
World	43	19 (8, 39)

Measuring handwashing

Self-report

Structured observation

Video observation

Behavior at recommended times

Handwashing demonstration

Soap consumption

Accelerometer-embedded soap

Use of cleansing agent

Presence of soap anywhere in the home

Soap and water at a handwashing place

Hand microbiology

Observed hand cleanliness

Proxies of handwashing behavior

The future *could* look just a bit 'cleaner'

Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure
availability and sustainable management of
water and sanitation for all.

Target 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

Potential handwashing-related indicators

Percentage of population with basic hand washing facilities in the home

Percentage of pupils enrolled in **early childhood development** programs providing basic drinking water adequate sanitation and adequate **hygiene** services

Percentage of beneficiaries using **hospitals, health facilities, and clinics** providing basic drinking water, adequate sanitation, and adequate **hygiene**

Access to soap and water at hand washing facilities in the home, using WHO-UNICEF JMP definitions

Moving the equity needle for handwashing: P₄ + R

Handwashing-related policies are few and far between. Universal access to handwashing facilities can only be achieved if regulations are enacted and matched by enforcement.

Policy

All stakeholders must uphold the need for improved hygiene as a core public health and well-being function. Unfunded mandates will not do.

Prioritization

Affordable options are needed to facilitate handwashing with soap for all.

Pricing

While infrastructures can be mandated, individual behaviors cannot. Efforts to change behavior must target those at highest risk of hygiene-preventable disease.

Promotion

Changing behavior is difficult. We need to understand better how to foster habits, how to change social norms, and which interventions work.

Research

Acknowledgements

Swapna Kumar

Libbet Loughnan

Rolf Luyendijk

Orlando Hernandez

Fred Arnold

Attila Hancioglu

Therese Dooley