

Reckitt
Global Hygiene
Institute

Advancing Hygiene: From the Margins to the Mainstream

The next phase of the Reckitt Global Hygiene Institute





“I am honoured to chair the RGHI Board to achieve our mission to fund transformative, evidence-based research, strengthen global research capacity and foster collaboration to advance hygiene equity. This unique organisation helps fill the evidence gaps in this critical arena.”

LISA ACKERLEY, RGHI BOARD CHAIR

Hygiene: Foundational, yet chronically overlooked

Hygiene is one of the most essential determinants of global health.

It underpins child survival, education, gender equity, and protection from infectious disease. Yet for decades, it has remained at the margins of global health attention as one of its most neglected and underfunded areas.

While progress has been made in water and sanitation (the two other components of the WASH sector), hygiene has too often been treated as an assumed state rather than a distinct domain requiring evidence, leadership, and sustained policy attention. As a result, the field has been fragmented and solutions have lagged.

Critical questions have gone unanswered. Decisionmakers have frequently been forced to extrapolate from incomplete or non-hygiene-specific evidence.

As climate pressures intensify, antimicrobial resistance accelerates, and infectious disease risks evolve, the cost of this neglect is growing. Hygiene can no longer be treated as a peripheral issue. It is central to health resilience and equity. But addressing it effectively requires more than awareness; it requires scientific rigour, coordination, and credible leadership.

Why RGHI was established

The Reckitt Global Hygiene Institute [RGHI] was established in 2020 as a registered 501(c)(3) to fill a critical gap in global health: the absence of an independent, scientifically credible institute dedicated to advancing hygiene evidence and translating it into policy and practice.

RGHI was established at a moment when very few global actors were investing in hygiene research. Before we existed, there was no single institution capable of uniting researchers, policymakers, and practitioners around a shared hygiene agenda. The field lacked coordinated leadership, sustained investment in evidence, and a neutral platform through which insights could shape decisions.

From the outset, RGHI was designed as an institute with the independence, credibility, and long-term vision required to address systemic gaps in the field.

That independence has become one of RGHI's defining strengths. It allows the Institute to convene across sectors, build equitable partnerships, and fund research free from commercial or political influence.

From this foundation, we set out not to fund isolated projects, but to build an ecosystem that allows hygiene evidence to influence policy and practice.

What has been built

Over our first five years, we have focused deliberately on building a platform with enduring value. One that secures hygiene's place within the mainstream of global health study, discourse and solutions.

We have advanced rigorous, policy-relevant research addressing long-standing blind spots in hygiene science—spanning behaviour, environmental exposure, climate-related risks, antimicrobial resistance, gender, health systems, and economics. In parallel, we have strengthened global research capacity, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where hygiene burdens are highest and leadership has historically been under-resourced.

Crucially, we have invested in people and institutions, not only outputs. Our fellowships and partnerships have helped build lasting national expertise, equitable collaborations, and a diverse cohort of researchers who are

now shaping agendas, mentoring others, and influencing policy conversations.

At the same time, we have established RGHI as a trusted, independent convener. Through sustained engagement and targeted convening, the Institute has created spaces where researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and funders can engage around hygiene in ways that had not previously existed.

This combination of evidence generation, leadership development, and convening has positioned RGHI as the definitive global connector between hygiene research, policy, and practice, and as a credible voice within the global health ecosystem. Now, in our next phase and with the support of aligned philanthropic partners, we can scale our influence and impact, accelerating global progress towards broad-based hygiene solutions.

From evidence to influence

RGHI's role has evolved as the platform has matured. Today, the Institute sits at key global tables where hygiene evidence can inform norms, guidance, and priorities. Our work is shaping how hygiene is framed within global health discourse and how it is integrated into policy and programme design.

What distinguishes RGHI is not our volume of activity, but the way our portfolio functions as an integrated whole. Evidence generation, leadership development and convening

reinforce one another, creating momentum that is far greater than the sum of individual studies or grants.

RGHI's independence remains central to this influence. Because we operate without commercial or political agendas, we can align actors across governments, academia, NGOs, multilaterals, and the private sector—enabling shared understanding, surfacing insights, and advancing coordinated action in a historically fragmented field.



“RGHI has invested in research initiatives and the support of research fellows, demonstrating a commitment to advancing the field. Strengthening further investment into large-scale programmatic evaluation and operational research would enhance the impact and contribute valuable insights to hygiene and public health efforts. Such efforts would enable a broader assessment of hygiene interventions, ensuring that knowledge generated translates into effective and sustainable practices on a larger scale.”

**DR. OM PRASAD GAUTAM, GLOBAL HYGIENE
LEAD, WATERAID**

What we have learned

Over our first five years, we have gained invaluable insights.

First, evidence is essential, but evidence alone does not shift systems. Impact occurs only when research is translated into policy, programmes, and practice through intentional engagement and sustained dialogue.

Second, hygiene will not maintain its place on the global health agenda without a compelling narrative, a strong economic case and related advocacy. Temporary visibility, such as during COVID-19, is not enough. Long-term progress requires coordinated leadership and institutional commitment, aligned with strong and consistent championing.

Third, the greatest impact comes from integrated approaches. Projects that combine research with capacity strengthening, policy engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration consistently outperform those that focus narrowly on a single dimension.

Finally, equity cannot be an add-on. Building leadership and institutional capacity in low- and middle-income countries is not only a matter of fairness—it is essential for producing evidence that is relevant, legitimate, and actionable.

These lessons now define how we approach our next phase.

Phase II: Scaling influence and systems change

We are now entering Phase II with clarity and momentum.

The foundational work has been done. Hygiene now has a dedicated scientific home. A robust evidence base exists where gaps once constrained progress. A diverse cohort of leaders has been cultivated. RGHI is recognised as a trusted, independent actor within the global health ecosystem.

Phase II is about scale—not scale in the sense of delivering programmes, but scale in influence and systems change. We will

deepen our role in strengthening leadership and institutions, enhance the translation of evidence into policy and practice, and continue to convene across sectors to keep hygiene central to global health, equity, and resilience agendas.

This work is increasingly urgent. Climate disruption, antimicrobial resistance, and emerging infectious disease threats are intensifying hygiene risks worldwide.

Without hygiene-specific evidence and coordination, responses will remain partial and inefficient.

“With the support RGHI has offered us to develop a scale to measure people’s hygiene experiences, we are literally changing how the world thinks about and measures cleanliness.”

SERA L. YOUNG, M.A., PH.D., NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY: PROFESSOR, ANTHROPOLOGY & GLOBAL HEALTH STUDIES; MORTON O. SCHAPIRO FACULTY FELLOW, INSTITUTE FOR POLICY RESEARCH; CO-DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR WATER

The opportunity for philanthropic partnership

We now invite aligned philanthropic partners to support our next phase of work.

Over the coming period, we seek to mobilise \$30 million to support Phase II—a phase focused on scaling influence, strengthening systems, translating research and embedding hygiene more firmly within global health and resilience agendas.

As a first step, we are seeking \$5 million in catalytic philanthropic support. This initial support will enable the Institute to consolidate and extend the platform that has been built, protecting the independence of our research, strengthening the translation of evidence into policy and practice, and deepening our convening and leadership roles within the global hygiene ecosystem.

This early Phase II support is critical not because we are starting from scratch, but because we are building from strength. Support provides the stability and momentum required to broaden partnerships, leverage additional funding, and scale impact over the longer term.

RGHI offers partners the opportunity to support a platform that is already working—one that strengthens systems rather than funding isolated interventions.

Partnership with RGHI enables catalytic philanthropy: investment that amplifies influence, aligns agendas, and improves decision-making across the hygiene ecosystem. Rather than prescribing solutions, RGHI creates the conditions in which effective solutions can emerge, scale, and endure.

As we broaden our partnership base beyond our founding support, we seek supporters who share a commitment to evidence, equity, and long-term impact—and who recognise that sustained progress in global health depends on the strength and credibility of the institutions that guide us.

We welcome engagement with philanthropic partners who want to help set the direction for hygiene’s next chapter in global health.

Campaign goal

A first step toward our \$30 million
Phase II goal: **\$5 million**

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