the washing machine project

The Global Laundry Divide

Understanding the Burden of Hand Washing Clothes

A Report on The Washing Machine Project's Innovation, Impact, and Theory of Change.

Contents

How do you wash your clothes?

For most of us, or rather, what we assume is most of us, the answer is simple.

We use an electric washing machine.

It might be in our kitchen. It might be in our utility room. It might be at the laundrette down the road. Or maybe we still bring our clothes round to mum and dad's. However we do it, the process is largely invisible; throw it in, press start, walk away.

Job done.

For billions of people, washing clothes is not a background task. It is not something that happens while you get on with your day. Sometimes *it is* your day.

Long hours. Back-breaking work. Bent over buckets. Kneeling on hard surfaces. Washing clothes with your hands, with harsh soap or detergent, using a huge amount of water fetched from far away or bought at a cost.
Scrubbing fabric against stone, skin sore and cracking, bad backs- huge amounts of time slipping away.

In refugee camps, rural communities, informal settlements, and disaster zones around the world where reliable electricity and/or running water aren't available- this is daily reality. And the numbers back it up.

In some places, as The Washing Machine Project has found from its research over the past six years:

People can spend up to 20 hours a week hand washing clothes. [1]

1 Kabarto 1 & Kabarto 2 - Findings Report & Philippines Research Findings

That's time not spent working, learning, earning, or resting. That's time lost - predominantly by women and girls. Indeed, there is an enormous gap between how much time men and women spend washing clothes.

In rural India, for example, women typically spend 80 minutes per day washing clothes, compared to two minutes for men (Walton, McAllister, & Rahael, 2025).

We call this gap, between the convenience of modern laundry in one part of the world, and the physical burden of it in another- combined with the gender disparities world over,
The Global Laundry Divide.

This report is The Washing Machine Project's first annual dive into the real, human cost of washing clothes by hand, what impact a manual washing machine is having and a baseline for how The Washing Machine Project will measure its impact in the coming years.

It explores:

- What is the problem with hand washing clothes?
- What is the current laundry landscape?
- What is the Global Laundry Divide?
- The Washing Machine Project approach,, methodology and what we can do better.
- The Impact of the Divya Washing Machine.
- What The Washing Machine Project's future plans and the road to reaching 1,000,000 people by 2030.

We are The Washing Machine Project

The Washing Machine Project (TWMP) works to end the burden of hand washing clothes- a daily challenge faced by up to 50% of the global population, especially women and girls, in low-income, remote and displaced communities worldwide.

Based in the UK, The Washing Machine Project is a social enterprise working with corporate partnerships and collaborations, local organisations, charities, consultants and in-country partners in 13 countries to design, manufacture and distribute the use of its manual washing machines.

The development of the Divya Washing Machine started in 2018 and since then, hundreds of machines have been distributed to households and communities, impacting 46,840 people as of August 2025. The Washing Machine Project and partners also provide support and advice to manual washing machine users to help them maintain the machines independently, whilst also providing grants and training for income related activities.

Through innovation, collaboration and care we will end the burden of hand washing clothes. One wash at a time.

Navjot Sawhney

Founder, The Washing Machine Project

This project began with a promise to my neighbour.

Back in 2017, I was working in a corporate engineering job. On paper, things looked fine. Good job, good salary, career ladder in front of me. But I felt unfulfilled - so I took a secondment with Engineers Without Borders. It would take me to India to design clean cookstoves for families without clean, reliable energy. It was there that I met Divya, my neighbour, who would go on to change my life.

I often watched Divya's daily routine. She worked tirelessly: foraging for firewood, cooking meals, cleaning, caring for her children. And after all of that, she would sit down to wash clothes by hand. Not once in a while, but every single day; often late at night when her kids were asleep, or early in the morning before the heat set in.

One day, I offered to buy her an electric washing machine. She laughed and said "What am I going to do with that?" Electricity was unreliable, with blackouts almost every day. Water only flowed for 15 minutes in the morning from the municipal taps. A conventional, electric machine wasn't an option.

Instead of buying one, I promised Divya I would make her a manual washing machine she could actually use; one that didn't need electricity or constant water supply. I returned to the UK and The Washing Machine Project was born.

Fast forward to 2024. With the support of the Whirlpool Foundation, I returned to India to finally give Divya her machine. It's called the Divya Washing Machine - not just because of that promise I made her, but because she represents millions of women like her across the world. Women whose time and opportunities are lost to unpaid domestic work.

When I handed Divya her machine, she said something I'll never forget:

"Go and find the millions of other Divyas, and help them too."

That's the mission of The Washing Machine Project. And this report is the first step in sharing that story with you.'

— Navjot Sawhney

Founder, The Washing Machine Project

Chapter 1

The Global Laundry Landscape

Anjali

''Anjali is in her 40s, mother of two, and business owner of a trinket shop and tea shop that turns into a restaurant.

Despite the demands of running her businesses and caring for her family, she tirelessly supports her local community by providing home-cooked style meals and is always open for new opportunities to learn and try new things, such as receiving the very first Divya Washing Machine in India for an initial pilot of three months in 2023, providing valuable feedback to The Washing Machine Project.

Previously Anjali would walk to the local pond and wash clothes every day for two to three hours, carrying heavy, waterlogged-clothes back and forth. Between this, family and business responsibilities there wasn't time to properly rest.

Anjali is now a permanent owner of the Divya Washing Machine - the introduction of the machine has been slowly transformative, easing the burden of daily hand washing and allowing others in the family to take on the laundry responsibilities, even her husband.

She told us that she thinks of the Divya Washing Machine as another son to help with chores - providing her time to rest and opportunities to keep the businesses open for longer.''

The problem of hand washing clothes

Hand washing clothes presents significant burdens across differing modalities, impacting individuals' time, health, economic status and, within humanitarian contexts- agency and dignity.*

*We don't use this word lightly - do you need clean clothes or use a washing machine to be dignified? Of course not. But from our research and partner research in places like CCAC (Closed Controlled Access Centre) Refugee Centre in Greece access to clean clothes and having the ability to clean them in your own time gives agency and does help a displaced person feel more dignified (Mujić,. and Xenakis, 2024).

But when we think about global development or humanitarian response priorities, laundry rarely makes the list. But the act of washing clothes, especially by hand, has a real and often underestimated impact on people's lives.

At The Washing Machine Project, we've seen firsthand how hand washing clothes affects people's lives. As an invisible burden so prevalent that it mostly goes unnoticed- one that's especially heavy for women and girls.

From our conversations with thousands of families, communities and recipients - here's what we know....

Hand washing clothes takes time; a lot of it.

> ***"... [our] family is large, so there was a large amount of clothes to wash. Hand washing took two days to clean all the clothes."*** - Emilie, Republic of Congo (refugee)[2]

It's time that could be used for so much more: going to school, earning an income, looking after family, or just resting.

In Kampala, Uganda people we spoke to spent an average of 147 minutes per load of laundry washed by hand; nearly 13 hours a week (TWMP, Kampala Midline Report 2, 2024).

In the Republic of Congo, in a refugee context, it was 149 minutes per load of laundry washed by hand (RoC Baseline Report, 2024).

In Kabarto camps in Iraq and Kibera in Kenya, people reported spending 3–10 hours per week hand washing clothes (TWMP, Kabarto 1 & 2, 2021 and TWMP, Kenya Report Final, 2021) .

In the Republic of Congo some women reported spending between 20 and 24 hours per week hand washing clothes, with others spending anywhere between 16 and 20 hours on this task (TWMP, 2022).

Across our work in India, Mexico, CCAC (Closed Controlled Access Centre) Refugee Settlement in Greece, Republic of Congo and multiple other countries, a consistent picture emerges: this is not a quick chore. It's an ongoing time drain, especially for women.

The task of washing clothes falls disproportionately on women.

That's not an assumption because the data tells us this in nearly every place we visited. From the people we spoke to...

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In Iraq, 29 out of 30 people responsible for hand washing were women (TWMP, Mamrashan Camp Research Findings, 2021).

In Greece (CCAC Refugee Settlement), 76.9% of primary washers were women (A Drop in the Ocean, 2023).

In Kenya, over half said women did the washing (TWMP, Kenya Report Final, 2021).

Globally, women already carry the weight of unpaid domestic work. Laundry can be one of its heaviest tasks.

Across all contexts, the burden of hand washing clothes is considerably higher for women, between a factor of 3 and 30 times, and these disparities are more common in rural areas (Walton, McAllister, & Rahael, 2025).

Women in high-income countries tend to spend on average 20-30 minutes per day on laundry. This is in comparison to women in low-income countries where women will, on average, spend 80-90 minutes per day on laundry- three to four times the amount spent by women in high-income countries (Ibid).

Hand washing isn't just tiring. It's also painful.

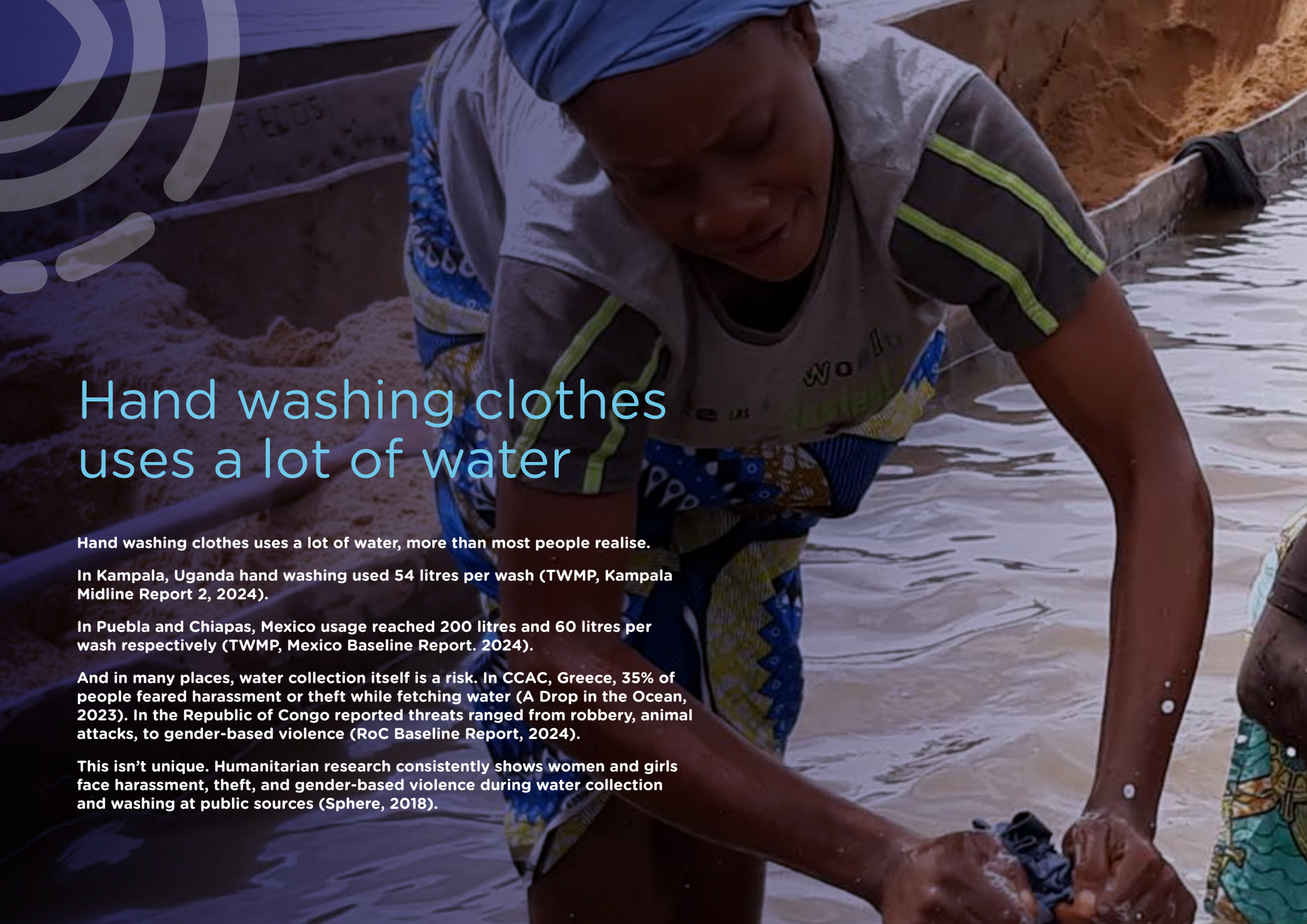
> ***The soap was harsh on the skin and nails. Overall, hand washing clothes caused a lot of pain in the arms, hands, and back.*** - Joseph, Republic of Congo (Refugee) [3]

In CCAC, Lesvos, 87.3% of people we spoke to reported pain from washing clothes. All respondents felt it in their hands and backs, 82% in their legs, and 65% in their arms (A Drop in the Ocean, 2023).

People also mentioned skin irritation, cracked nails, blisters, and even injuries from blades or rough tools (Ibid).

There's also the psychological impact.

In the Republic of Congo, almost everyone said they felt some level of anxiety about laundry, often linked to water availability (TWMP, RoC Baseline Report, 2024). And when clothes can't be properly cleaned - either because of water shortages, inadequate facilities, or a lack of privacy it erodes wellbeing. In the context of the Lesvos refugee camp, access to clean clothes is described as more than just a matter of hygiene; it is a "matter of dignity", while in Texas, speaking with homeless individuals- one person described dirty clothes as making them feel "less than human," (TWMP, Texas Wash Day Brief, 2024).



Hand washing clothes uses a lot of water

Hand washing clothes uses a lot of water, more than most people realise.

In Kampala, Uganda hand washing used 54 litres per wash (TWMP, Kampala Midline Report 2, 2024).

In Puebla and Chiapas, Mexico usage reached 200 litres and 60 litres per wash respectively (TWMP, Mexico Baseline Report. 2024).

And in many places, water collection itself is a risk. In CCAC, Greece, 35% of people feared harassment or theft while fetching water (A Drop in the Ocean, 2023). In the Republic of Congo reported threats ranged from robbery, animal attacks, to gender-based violence (RoC Baseline Report, 2024).

This isn't unique. Humanitarian research consistently shows women and girls face harassment, theft, and gender-based violence during water collection and washing at public sources (Sphere, 2018).

Laundry can be expensive,

and this disproportionally affects low income communities.

In Kampala, Uganda, households typically spend around 8100 Ugandan shillings per week ($2.26) on detergent. After switching to the Divya washing machine, that cost drops to about 2600 shillings ($0.73) (TWMP, Kampala Midline Report, 2024) . For families living on an average annual income of just $840, this saving, equivalent to reducing detergent expenses from 14% to 4.5% of yearly income, is hugely significant (World Bank Group, 2022).

Also looking at the larger picture- women globally spend a significant amount of time on unpaid domestic and care work (UDCW), including laundry, which limits their capacity for income-generating activities and formal employment. This contributes to the fact that 42% of women of working age are outside the paid labour force compared to 6% of men globally (Walton, McAllister, & Rahael, 2025).

The estimated value of UCDW carried out by women annually is roughly equivalent to the global size of the tech industry, at $10.8 trillion (Oxfam, 2020). Although washing clothes is a contributing factor to unpaid domestic and care work, it illustrates the point that it's not just expensive in terms of cost of products, but it really has an impact in terms of Gross Domestic Product.

The Global Picture

Although exact figures are unclear due to limited research, estimates suggest that up to 50% of the global population continue to wash clothes by hand (Asian Development Bank, 2025). This estimate is broadly supported by 2023/24 data on population incomes (Our World in Data, 2025) and in an ADB commissioned report on laundry, using figures based on laundry detergent trends rather than income alone (Asian Development Bank, 2025).

This means that out of the world's population of approximately 8 billion in 2025, around 4 billion people continue to wash clothes by hand.

Not the full story

However the global average doesn't necessarily give us an accurate picture when thinking about The Global Laundry Divide. In high income countries, average ownership of electric washing machines is 90%. In low income countries lack of electricity and piped water mean that most countries in this category have an estimated ownership rate below 2% (Walton, McAllister, & Rahael, 2025).

In low and middle* income countries, which is where the majority of our work takes place- 86% of the population hand wash clothes.

The divide is stark, and this is why The Washing Machine Project is targeting low-income and displaced communities first and foremost.

It is important to note that not all those without access to an automatic washing machine rely on manual hand washing, as alternatives such as launderettes or other paid services do exist - and those laundrettes or dry cleaners can often be serviced by women being paid to hand wash clothes.

However, a large proportion of those without access to automatic washing machines do rely on hand washing, particularly in low and low middle-income countries. In some contexts, even in homes with a washing machine, a significant proportion of clothes are still hand washed due to water scarcity and beliefs about machine efficacy; for example, in Kenya, 75% of clothes are hand washed even in homes with a machine (Ibid).

**Low-income countries (LICs): GNI per capita of $1,145 or less; Lower-middle-income countries (LMICs): GNI per capita between $1,146 and $4,515; Upper-middle-income countries (UMICs): GNI per capita between $4,516 and $14,005 (Our World in Data, 2025).*

The Global Laundry Divide

Through each problem associated with hand washing clothes there's a theme;

It impacts low income countries far and above high income countries.

It disproportionately impacts women and girls.

A (Quiet) Revolution

The Household Equipment Revolution transformed everyday life in high-income countries during the 20th century (Adamopoulou, Greenwood & Guner, 2024). At the start of the century, housework (laundry, cooking, cleaning) consumed nearly 60 hours each week. By the 1970s, thanks to affordable appliances like washing machines, dishwashers, and microwaves, and to kitchen designs inspired by industrial efficiency, that figure fell to under 20 hours (Ibid).

Reformers and marketers encouraged families to run their homes with the same efficiency as a factory, applying ideas of planning, workflow, and time-saving design to everyday chores, while advertisers pitched appliances as liberation. The effect was striking: women gained more time for education and paid work, family roles shifted, and technology quietly reshaped society.

Hans Rosling's TED Talk "The Magic Washing Machine" explains how washing machines dramatically improve lives (2010). He argues that technological innovations, like the washing machine, free people- especially women- from the heavy burden of manual labour. By reducing time spent on washing clothes, people gain hours that can be used for education, work, or leisure, which in turn boosts health, income, and overall quality of life. Rosling emphasises that access to such simple technologies is a key driver of social and economic progress and illustrates how even small innovations can have a huge ripple effect on communities.

Engines of Liberation?

But the story isn't completely straightforward. Washing machines were hailed as 'engines of liberation,' yet time saved on laundry often shifted to other unpaid care work (Cowan, 1983). At the same time, cultural norms raised expectations of cleanliness, sometimes increasing workloads rather than reducing them. Laundry also moved from being communal to solitary.

In Japan, where appliances spread quickly, women's labour force participation did not rise as predicted. Instead, appliances were sometimes marketed as tools to make women "better" housewives (Mackie, 2003). This history shows both the potential and the risks: labour-saving devices can free time, but without social change they can reinforce existing inequalities. Millions of women in low-income countries have been excluded from these gains.

As was the case for electric machines - closing this gap requires more than distributing machines. It demands attention to water and energy access, shifting gender norms, and recognising laundry as both a public health and an economic issue. Technology can be a catalyst- but real transformation depends on the systems and social change that surround it.

An ecosystem sized opportunity

An independent evaluation of The Washing Machine Project's intervention in India provided us with invaluable insights: while the Divya Washing Machine successfully reduced laundry time, water consumption, and detergent demand, it did not automatically lead to improved incomes or a rebalancing of gender roles (Quip, 2025). This critical feedback reinforces a core message from academic and policy literature: **technical interventions alone are unlikely to promote gender empowerment without more holistic programming.**

This is a huge opportunity for The Washing Machine Project. True, meaningful change requires combining technology with community awareness activities, training, and direct engagement with stakeholders. This means working closely with local organisations, encouraging men and boys to engage in domestic work, and empowering women's groups to leverage their newly freed time for advocacy, leadership, and income generation. We must learn from historical studies that show 'labour-saving' devices don't automatically reduce women's burdens; they can shift work or increase expectations about cleanliness.

Our focus is on creating an ecosystem where the Divya Washing Machine serves as a catalyst. As we always say. This is just the beginning...

The Washing Machine Project – Theory of Change

We know why hand washing is tough, we know the extent of the issue globally, we know the limitations of technology in achieving social change- so, what is **The Washing Machine Project going to do about it?**

Our Theory of Change below sets out how we address this problem and the long-term change we aim to create.

1. The Problem

For billions of people, doing laundry means hours of manual hand washing each week.

- **Time–** Women can spend up to 20 hours a week on laundry
- **Physical and psychological strain–** Hand washing clothes causes widespread pain in backs, joints and hands. Hand washing clothes can be a cause of anxiety and stress.
- **Water and detergent–** hand washing uses large volumes of water and often more detergent than necessary.
- **Hygiene and dignity–** Poor laundry access spreads disease and can undermine self-esteem - especially within humanitarian contexts.
- **Lost opportunities–** Laundry time takes away from opportunities to work, learn and rest.

2. The Intervention

The Divya washing machine is a manual, non-electric washing machine designed through user-led research. It reduces the time, water, and physical strain of laundry in low income, rural and resource-scarce environments.

3. Outputs

- Machines distributed to families and communities;
- Partnerships formed with NGOs, INGO's and corporates;
- Monitoring and evaluation.

6. Continuous Improvement

Our Theory of Change is dynamic and responsive. We continually adapt based on:

- Field learnings;
- Feedback from users and partners;
- Ongoing data collection.

If we are serious about tackling the Global Laundry Divide, ongoing research into laundry habits - like recent studies from MetaMeta- will be vital (Meta Meta Research B.V., 2025). Only by fully understanding the scale and nature of this burden can we design the best possible solutions. **The next step is turning this knowledge into lasting impact, moving closer to our long-term theory of change and advancing progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.**

5. Alignment to Sustainable Development Goals

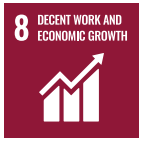
The Washing Machine Project contributes directly to:

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being;

SDG 5: Gender Equality;

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation.

It also supports progress toward:



SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth;

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.

These remain longer-term aspirations that depend on wider systems change and sustained partnerships.

4. Outcomes

Short-term impact (provable, immediate)

- Significant time savings per wash;
- Reduced physical pain and strain;
- Lower water and detergent use;
- Improved hygiene;
- Reduced stress and psychological burden.

Medium-term impact (emerging, evidenced through studies)

- Time reallocated to education, work, childcare, and rest;
- Opportunities for income generation (laundrette models, paid washing);
- Skill-building and empowerment among trained volunteers;
- Shifts in household and community gender roles.

Long-term impact (aspirational)

- Greater gender equality;
- Increased community resilience and self-sufficiency;
- Improved long-term well-being.

Chapter 2

The Divya Washing Machine - Evolution and product development

So, how did we get here?

At the core of The Washing Machine Project is the Divya Washing Machine.

We believe that every innovation, every tweak, and every new iteration of our Divya washing machine should be a direct response to the real-life experiences of the people who use it. Beyond building machines; it's about building solutions that give time and agency back to individuals and communities. Our journey with the Divya Washing Machine shows how we blend human stories and experiences with solid evidence to drive meaningful change.

Let's explore the evolution of the Divya Washing Machine.

Divya

As mentioned in the founder's letter, The Washing Machine Project began with a simple promise. Navjot Sawhney studied Aerospace Engineering at Queen Mary University in London and worked as an engineer at Dyson. He then moved to South India to help design cookstoves with Engineers Without Borders UK. While there, he met his neighbour Divya.

Divya spent many, many hours per week hand washing clothes, amongst other unpaid manual labour. Moved by her struggle, Nav promised to find a solution. When he returned home, Nav and another Dyson Engineer, Alex, built the first washing machine prototype.

From a salad spinner, to the first prototype

Our very first step, the Prototype 0.5, was never intended to be a finished product. Instead, it was a rapid assembly, put together in just 2-3 days, largely from readily available parts sourced from super markets, and inspired by a "Salad Spinner" concept with a drum-in-drum design.

The primary aim was to serve as a catalyst for conversation and learning during our initial trip to Iraqi Kurdistan in March 2019. We knew there was a problem, and we needed to truly understand it on the ground.

This first prototype, built from a blue UN barrel and some borrowed wood, was a physical talking point to help bridge language barriers and extract maximum insight from users. Even if it prompted criticisms like "I couldn't put my socks in that," it opened up vital dialogues about needs and challenges. We wanted users to tell us what the problem was, and this prototype helped draw those critical conversations out.

That prototype became the foundation for The Washing Machine Project, and the machine - and each iteration since - was named after Nav's neighbour, Divya, in her honour.

1.0

Following the invaluable feedback from Iraq, Oxfam funded the development of Prototype 1.0, leading to the production of 50 machines. This phase saw significant design shifts.

We moved from the drum-in-drum concept to a single-drum design, adopted larger 60-litre UN-approved chemical drum as the base, directly addressing user feedback that our initial small barrel couldn't accommodate enough clothes for a week's washing. This increased the capacity to a laundry industry standard of 5-7 kg of clothes per cycle and water usage from 10 to 20 litres.

The reality of trying to rotate the small prototype when full of clothes highlighted the urgent need for mechanical advantage. This led to exploring various drive mechanisms, from "gondola-like" broom poles to sit-down pedals and hand bikes, all aimed at reducing the physical workload.

User feedback also underscored challenges like the size of the opening for loading clothes and the strain from bending over to use the machine.

This phase represented a genuine exercise in resourcefulness, with the team constantly seeking free resources and volunteers to meet the ambitious cost target of under $50 per unit, a stark contrast to the initial $80 of wood alone. It was challenging, but the passion for delivering value to those who had donated to Oxfam was a driving force.

One skill the team honed at this stage of development is extracting the maximum benefit from the tiniest source of funding, which continues to benefit our efforts and supporters today.

1.5 / 1.55

The Divya 1.5 and 1.55 coincided with the first corporate partner of The Washing Machine Project coming onboard, RS Group. With access to their expertise, and their materials, we went back to the drawing board and created a full manual washing machine and rinser.


First prototype (Iraq 2019)


Divya 1.0 (UK 2019)


Divya 1.5 (Uganda 2022)

The Evolution of the Divya Washing Machine

This iteration introduced design features like a plastic drum, a front gearbox (which also enabled a spin cycle), and a stand that facilitated the machine's changing position depending on if the user was loading, washing or spinning. This was a workable design and successful at washing clothes and removing water.

However, real-world deployment quickly brought new challenges to light.

Wooden stands broke down quickly, driving a shift to plastic and eventually metal frames. Thick plastic parts slowed assembly- we were making 30 machines in 30 days.

By listening closely to end users, we identified continued opportunities for improvement.

81% of users reported back pain, leading to taller designs for upright use.

62% said the machine didn't save time due to heavy lids and tub rotation.

54% of users experienced leaks (TWMP, Mamrashan Post Distribution Monitoring Report, 2021).

The Divya 1.5 and 1.55 models acted as crucial baselines, revealing what mattered most to users washing clothes in tough environments.

The biggest learnings came from informative distribution to Uganda. To reach the school location, where we were distributing to, we had to take the machines on a fishing boat across Lake Victoria.

This experience of the remote, difficult-to-access locations where the machines would be used really drove home the challenges around transportation and accessibility.

It reinforced the need for the machines to be as lightweight and durable as possible, since getting replacement parts or performing repairs in these remote areas would be extremely difficult. Also, if a machine was

Divya Washing Machine 1.65

damaged it would just remain unused, and due to the materials used, the machine was completely non-recyclable.

This insight from the Uganda trip was a key factor that pushed the team towards the more simplified, robust metal design, versus the more complex plastic machine.

Intentional and Lean Engineering

Uganda was a turning point and The Divya 1.65 was designed with those lessons at its heart.

Durability and reliability were the first priorities. Wooden stands from earlier models warped and broke, while the heavy plastics were hard to ship and awkward to repair. With Divya 1.65 we introduced a robust metal frame: easier to transport, easier to fix locally with common tools, and much more trusted by users who were sceptical of fragile materials.

We also tackled ergonomics head-on - we increased the height, allowing it to be used comfortably while standing upright or sitting on a stool or chair.

Ease of use became another key focus.

With Divya 1.5 and 1.55, participants often found the process too complicated: removing lids, rotating heavy tubs, and switching between wash and rinse phases. With 1.65, we simplified the entire workflow. The gearbox and spin-dry mechanism- useful in theory, but bulky and unreliable in practice, were removed.

We prioritised washing, rather than drying; this was due to most of the communities that we were targeting having warmer weather for most the year, so drying was not too much of an issue. Clothes could still be wrung and dried in the sun, which mattered far more to families in hot climates than shaving off a few minutes of drying time.

One of the biggest barriers to adoption, however, was leakage. Over half of participants had reported water escaping from gaskets and seams, making indoor washing impossible in colder months. For 1.65, we relocated the door above the waterline and improved sealing throughout, giving families the confidence to use the machine inside their homes, not just outdoors.

All these changes made the Divya 1.65 a genuine step forward: stronger, taller, simpler, and more reliable. It marked the moment when the Divya washing machine started to shift from a rough prototype into an appliance that people could see fitting into their daily lives.

More than just a machine, it represented a dialogue with the communities we serve - listening to their pain points, adapting quickly, and moving closer to something that truly meets their needs.

Whirlpool Corporation know-how

After the multiple earlier iterations of the Divya Washing Machine 1.65, Divya continued to evolve before reaching its latest iteration- the Divya 1.65E. These changes were driven by real-world feedback, engineering reviews, and the opportunities enabled through support from Whirlpool Foundation and the engineering talent of Whirlpool Corporation.

Earlier production fixtures (basically the equipment and tools used to assemble the machines) limited the design changes we could make. By Divya 1.65 E (E for Eagle, in honour of our American partners!), the Whirlpool team had redesigned the fixtures, which allowed us to implement bigger improvements. For instance, the new tap needed a custom plastic piece to suit local fittings. Whirlpool created the injection mold tool in their model shop, which would have been beyond our means to produce independently.

Visits to Whirlpool Corporation's global headquarters in the U.S. also provided hands-on guidance on assembly improvements, including small adjustments to prevent mistakes during building. This collaborative feedback loop helped us make the machine more reliable, easier to use, and simpler to assemble. Access to Whirlpool Corporation's facilities, technical expertise, and specialised equipment gave us capabilities that would have been difficult to achieve independently.

These contributions were essential in taking the Divya from 1.65 to 1.65E.

The iterations show how ongoing refinement and close partnership enabled improvements in usability, durability, and cost that would have been hard to achieve alone.

Divya Washing Machine 1.65E

Coming directly from conversations and co-creation with people who use our machines at home, in community centres, and in refugee settings.

Every change is informed by their experience. Here's a few highlights of changes made from specific feedback:

Built-in Scrubber. The lid now has a textured surface. Users asked for an easier way to clean collars and cuffs. They no longer need a separate tool.

The lid opening is 12% bigger. This makes it easier to wash larger items like duvets, blankets, and towels.

The tap has been redesigned. Drainage time is cut from six minutes to three. Wash cycles are faster and machines can be used by more people. The tap is a standard component. Replacements are easy to get.

The old plastic wheels are replaced with vulcanised rubber and steel trim. The wheels are quieter, stronger, and move better across floors and rough outdoor surfaces.

Every change reflects what users told us and has set the precedent of a user feedback loop, flowing from in-country partners, to the programmes team and to the R&D team taking on feedback and making changes.

What does the future of the Divya Washing Machine look like?

We are looking at ways to take the Divya Washing Machine further. One key area is localised manufacturing. Making and distributing the machines closer to the people who use them could cut import taxes and shipping costs. The Divya is designed to be made using universally common manufacturing processes, so it works well for local production.

We are also considering tailoring the design for different users.

A community version would be stronger, with bigger wheels and parts to handle frequent sharing and movement. A household version would be smaller and lighter, built for home use. This would let us better meet different needs without overcomplicating the machine.

The current 1.65 design is configured to produce only 100 to 200 machines at a time, due to its labour-intensive manufacturing and assembly process.

To reach our goal of reaching 1 million people by 2030, we may need to rethink the Divya from the ground up.

Our research and development team has already begun work on a new generation of machines designed for scale, so that those who need it most can access a Divya Washing Machine as quickly as possible. Early ideation and prototyping is exploring new materials, processes, and approaches that could unlock large-scale production.

The challenge is clear: balance cost, usability, and scale while keeping the Divya simple, durable, and easy to repair.

Just like each iteration of the Divya Washing Machine to date, every decision will continue to be shaped by the people who use it.

Chapter 3

Washing Machine at Work

From refugee camps, and hospitals to schools and women's groups the Divya Washing Machine is being used in contexts where the stakes are highest and resources are most limited.

This chapter explores how our approach adapts across humanitarian, community, hospital, and development settings, showing the many ways clean clothes can restore wellbeing, unlock time, and create new possibilities for people's lives.

Humanitarian

Access to clean laundry should be treated as a fundamental human right. During displacement - potentially the most difficult period in a person's life - having access to laundry services are integral to wellbeing and dignity.

Laundry is routinely overlooked in the humanitarian sector, and we are determined to challenge this, treating it as an essential service in refugee settlements.

The Divya washing machine bridges the gap between immediate humanitarian response and long-term development. It is built for protracted crises, where refugee camps often become semi-permanent settlements, with populations living in these conditions for many years.

A report from a project working Lebedyn, Ukraine describes how access to washers/dryers and the ability to wash and dry clothes in a shelter or dormitory setting gives displaced people "real relief from daily anxieties... It represents a small step towards stability, order, and a feeling of security."

In Kyangwali Refugee Settlement, Uganda and CCAC (Closed Control Access Centre) Refugee Centre in Greece, data collected by The Washing Machine Project and our partners, suggests that laundry provisions are some of the most important services for displaced people (Mujić and Xenakis, 2024).

Most refugee camps will have frequent power cuts, weak electricity, and even with electric washing machines, residents rely on hand washing clothes (A Drop in the Ocean, date needed, TWMP, Kabarto 1 & 2, 2021 and MetaMeta Research B.V, 2025).

Individuals

In humanitarian settings, displaced people often arrive with few clothes or personal items, sometimes after unsafe journeys by boat or on foot. Clean laundry is essential for public health and for helping people maintain their dignity. We focus on integrating the Divya Washing Machine into aid programmes to provide this basic support.

In places like CCAC our manual washing machines serve as a crucial supplement to existing laundry stations run by partners such as A Drop in the Ocean (DiH).

We've seen washing areas evolve into informal social hubs where users connect and support each other, even across language barriers, enhancing community well-being. Crucially, clean clothes directly help mitigate the spread of skin diseases like scabies and other hygiene-related illnesses, a significant concern in crowded camp settings. It's important to note that by having a unified electric and manual solution in places like CCAC there is more capacity to address clothes that may have scabies in electric washing machines- as Divya Washing Machine cannot heat the water to the required temperature of 50°C to help kill the disease.[1]

Our pilot in CCAC highlighted the need for improved accessibility features like ramps and adjustable tap heights, and clearer visual instructions for users. In Iraq, early prototypes faced challenges with weight, noise, and durability, leading to valuable insights that informed our continuous design improvements. We have partnered with organisations like Oxfam and Care International in Iraq, and UNHCR in the Republic of Congo, distributing machines and conducting thorough follow-ups to refine our approach.

1 https://www.cdc.gov/scabies/prevention/

Hospitals

In early 2024, The Washing Machine Project provided four Divya manual washing machines to UK Med for use in field hospitals in Al-Musawi, Gaza. The machines were built in the UK, transported via Jordan, and deployed despite complex logistics. They are used to wash bed linens, medical scrubs, and heavy blankets, helping maintain hygiene, patient comfort, and winter preparedness. Being manual and non-electric, the machines reduce dependence on insecure electricity, supporting hospital operations while easing pressure on limited resources.

Hospital adoption is something The Washing Machine Project is keen to grow in the future. A few Divya Washing Machines can dramatically reduce the work load for hygiene teams - freeing up time for patient care.

Nurse Mandy Blackman, from charity UK-Med, who is in Gaza, told the BBC- in an interview about The Washing Machine Project- that the machines were making a big difference in the prevention and control of infection.[2]

“In Gaza, fuel is rationed so we have to be very careful and monitor our generators. Even down to when we can boil a kettle. We’re treating patients for anything from explosive injuries to hernia repairs ... due to the conditions [there]... having the ability to wash the sheets and wash the uniform is crucial.”

“It makes an incredible difference to know we’re going to get all our linen and scrubs clean, especially when we know we’re going to have a power outage.”

2 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crmn20evwjmo

Development

In low-income communities and households, The Washing Machine Project focus shifts towards long-term empowerment and sustainable change, directly addressing the deep-seated challenges of hand washing that limit opportunities for women and girls.

The Divya washing machine significantly reduces the time spent on laundry, often by as much as 75% compared to hand washing (TWMP, Kampala Midline Report 2, 2024). This saved time can be reallocated to education, income-generating activities, education, childcare, leisure, rest or other household chores.

Aiding education

At Shangilia School, in Kenya, the Divya Washing Machines have transformed daily life. Washing clothes now takes about half the time it once did, freeing up hours for students to study, read, or play football and chess. One student described the machine as a “saviour” that simplifies routines and helps young people focus on their study (TWMP, Shangilia School Midline Report, 2024).

The shift has also saved resources: each wash uses less water, less detergent, and happens less frequently than before. Students and staff report fewer aches, less fatigue, and reduced stress around water access and laundry. With the burden of washing eased, clothes still come out clean and satisfaction is high (Idem).

Salma, 19, from Kampala, Uganda, is using the Divya Washing Machine to support her ambition of becoming a nursery teacher. By washing clothes for neighbors two to three times a week, she earns a small income that she is saving for a one-year vocational course in Early Childhood Development. The machine has turned her daily work into a pathway for education, helping Salma gain financial independence while investing in her future. In July 2025, Salma completed her first semester.[3]

3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Cq7ySSkY3s
4 TWMP Uganda May_June 2023 Report
5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL1OKRvy_DY

Community and child care

ISU, or Inclusion Support Uganda, is a community-based organisation supporting mothers and their children living with disabilities. The group meets twice a week, offering therapy, counselling, and financial support, while also generating income by making soap to sell at markets and door-to-door.

For Kyifuko Ramla and the other mothers, caring for their children involves constant laundry- each child needing a change about once an hour. Over the past five years, this has been a physically and emotionally demanding task.

The introduction of two Divya Washing Machines has transformed the group's daily routine, saving time and reducing the burden of washing clothes. The machines have not only freed up time for other activities but are also being considered for shared use to generate additional income, creating new opportunities for the group while supporting their caregiving responsibilities.[4]

Mebo, in her 40s, lives in the Kampala suburbs and is head of a women's group for mothers of children with disabilities, namely autism.

The group engages in income-generating activities, including making briquettes from banana leaves and charcoal dust. The washing machine is a new addition to the group's activities, meaning that women can bring their washing to be done whilst working.

In between meetings, Mebo will strap the washing machine to her motorcycle and take it to other mothers in the community- ensuring access for everyone.[5]

Income-Generation Activities

There is also the huge potential of providing opportunities for income generation and new livelihoods.

In India, Anjali, a business owner now has more time, enabling her to keep her shop open for longer.

Before receiving the Divya Washing Machine, Anjali spent two to three hours each day washing at the local pond by hand, carrying heavy, waterlogged laundry back and forth. Balancing this with family and

business responsibilities left her little time to rest. Since becoming the permanent owner of the Divya Washing Machine, the impact has been transformative. The machine has eased the daily burden of hand washing, and Anjali's daughter is now able to take on laundry duties, freeing Anjali to dedicate more time to her businesses. [6]

Anjali describes the Divya as "another son" in the household, helping with chores, giving her much-needed rest, and enabling her to keep her businesses running longer. This example highlights how time-saving solutions can directly improve wellbeing, create opportunities for economic activity, and strengthen family support systems.

In July 2025, The Washing Machine Project, in partnership with InPact Uganda, conducted a pre-investment assessment of the Namavundu Women Group, a women-led laundry and tailoring enterprise in Kasangati, Uganda. The visit evaluated the group's operations, infrastructure, and training needs, as well as their readiness for targeted support to enhance business performance and sustainability.

The assessment confirmed that the group had grown its client base from 7–10 to 13–17 households per week, demonstrating increasing local demand. It also identified key challenges, including limited manual washing machine capacity, inadequate workspace, inconsistent water access, and gaps in business management skills such as financial tracking and marketing. [7]

In response, The Washing Machine Project and InPact have supported the group through infrastructure improvements - including a new washing bay, store, and designated drying area - and the rollout of a nine-module business management training program. Technical skills in machine maintenance and tailoring were confirmed, allowing the training to focus on financial management, marketing, record-keeping, and leadership.

These interventions aim to strengthen the Namavundu Women Group's operational efficiency, expand their livelihoods, and increase revenue potential, while laying the groundwork for longer-term community entrepreneurship and sustainable local business growth.

6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slthTu_cDIM
7 Pre Investment Visit Field Activity Report

Rest and Leisure

Sylvia is a single mother of three, supporting her family on the equivalent of $20 per month by selling fish snacks. Living in a small rented two-by-two-metre house with only an underground stream for water, daily chores are a constant challenge. [8]

The introduction of the Divya Washing Machine has been life-changing for Sylvia. She is proud of the machine, often showing it off to visitors and keeping it in her bedroom when not in use. Despite her limited resources, she generously allows her neighbours to use it for free.

With her son preparing to go to boarding school thanks to a family friend, Sylvia now has more time and energy to manage her household and maintain her joyful, resilient spirit. For her, the Divya Washing Machine represents a tangible support that eases daily burdens and creates opportunities for her family's wellbeing.

What is our methodology- how do we work with in-country partners to change lives?

The Washing Machine Project is proud to partner with smaller NGOs, local organisations and charities to facilitate distributions of our machines within a development context.

Being able to work with those on the ground who really understand the local language, religion and culture provides us with the best foundation to make a lasting impact.

Our partners provide not only guidance and expertise, but joint research that enables The Washing Machine Project to best support users in whichever country or context we operate.

Partnering and investing in local organisations allows us to not only tailor machines for specific needs, it allows us to design the best distribution and training experience for users. Moving towards a model whereby The Washing Machine Project core staff won't be needed on the ground- having partners in-country owning monitoring and evaluation, check ups, maintenance and fixes.

8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2O5GFzuhMY

Our core mission is to empower people by reclaiming time that's lost to hand washing clothes.

Partnering with organisations who share the same vision means that we share insights from other parts of the development space, including income generation, community groups for women and other sustainable solutions for low income, displaced or remote communities. More on how we work with our in-country partners below.

Our Implementation Model

Our journey with each community is deeply collaborative, designed to ensure our work is truly fit for purpose and resonates with the people we aim to serve. It's a process built on understanding, partnership, and continuous learning.

Before we even think about distributing machines, we start with a crucial scoping phase to understand if there's a genuine need for a manual washing machine. This means delving into local contexts, checking things like electrification and water availability, because, frankly, the last thing we want is to introduce our machine where an electric one might be cheaper and more efficient.

To truly understand the situation on the ground, we kick things off with a needs assessment. This isn't just a tick-box exercise; it's a way to gain refined knowledge about the local context and the capabilities of our potential partners. These assessments are vital– they help us decide who receives a washing machine, as seen in India where we conducted double the assessments to select recipients.

Once we've identified a need and a potential partner, we move to a pilot phase. This is our opportunity to test the waters: What's the reception to the machines? Do people actually want to use them? Is the chosen modality– be it individual households, large communities, or even hostels– the right fit for that specific environment? It's a practical, on-the-ground test, and it's also a chance for confidence-building, not just us testing partners, but them testing us to see if what we say is true.

We truly believe in working with people, not just for them. That's why our in-country partners are integral to our success, acting as co-creators rather than simply delivery agents.

Our process involves:

We actively seek out local support- a contact person on the ground who can help us meet more people and make vital introductions. Building these in-country networks is paramount. Preethi, Brian and Jose (right) are a few examples of the skilled and dedicated local support that enable TWMP to operate in-country.

We look for local organisations that we believe would work well with us. The initial engagement focuses on understanding their capabilities and capacity, often using needs assessments to gauge their partnership style. This collaborative approach means it's got to work for both sides.

After a successful pilot, we collaborate with partners to design the larger programme. This means integrating our washing machine intervention with their existing thematic work, whether it's gender empowerment, livelihoods, education, or health. For example, if a partner is focused on education, we might tailor our programme to highlight how saving time on laundry can enable women and girls to return to school. This ensures our work is deeply relevant and amplified by their expertise.

We don't just drop off machines and leave. We conduct training sessions for users, which can range from individual household visits to group sessions. This training covers how to assemble and use the machine, as well as basic maintenance. Critically, we also provide more in-depth "super user" or repair training to our partners' staff, so there's always a local contact point for users if a machine needs attention. This ensures sustainable support within the community.

While our current model is effective, we're constantly looking to improve and scale. We recognise that our current approach can be labour-intensive. We're exploring new distribution models, such as "The Hub" concept, which aims for a transformational impact by enabling women to wash clothes for money, thus generating income and creating livelihoods. Hubs could serve as community spaces, offer local assembly, and act as "brand homes" for our machines, moving us towards more community-based programming rather than solely individual distributions. This strategic shift aims to create enabling environments for women to access other opportunities beyond just clean clothes.

Preethi - TWMP Consultant (Pondicherry, India)

Brian - InPact Uganda (Kampala, Uganda)

Jose - Aquatech (Chiapas, Mexico)

Monitoring and Evaluation Model

Our M&E framework is designed to be standardised yet flexible, adapting to the unique contexts we operate in, from humanitarian crises to long-term development settings. It's a systematic approach to tracking progress, informing our partners and donors like Whirlpool Foundation, and constantly improving the quality and impact of our Divya Washing Machines.

Here's a look at the key stages and components that make up our M&E journey:

Before any machines are introduced, we conduct a crucial needs assessment. This initial phase is about gaining a deep understanding of potential users' washing practices, their current challenges, and the surrounding conditions, like access to water and electricity. It helps us confirm if there's a genuine need for a manual washing machine and informs who would benefit most from receiving one. Sometimes, a baseline survey is complemented by in-depth interviews with users or key informants who understand the local context. This is our initial "stake in the ground" – the baseline against which we measure progress.

Once machines are in use, we conduct midline assessments periodically, often every two months, to track how washing practices are changing. These surveys cover similar topics to the baseline but add specific questions about washing machine performance and user satisfaction.

Typically conducted after a six-month period, the endline assessment provides a comprehensive look at the changes in washing practices and the overall impact of the machine on users and their households. This survey is longer, revisiting baseline questions and adding detailed questions about user experience, such as feelings on machine capacity or height, and suggestions for improvement.

While the formal M&E timeline is often six months, we aim for continued engagement. We're exploring yearly check-ins after the initial six months. This isn't just about data extraction; it's part of our "exit strategy" to ensure ongoing support for users through our partners. This long-term relationship building is crucial for getting richer stories of change that might only emerge over time.

What We Evaluate: Our Key Indicators

Our M&E framework focuses on a few key indicators to measure impact and gather insights:

Time Saved
Compare washing time by hand vs. machine, and how freed time is used.

Water Saved
Measure water use, sources, and access.

Impact Reach
Count how many people benefit per machine.

Demographics
Collect age, gender, household size, and employment data.

Detergent Use
Track type, quantity, and cost of detergent.

Machine Performance
Gather feedback on design, capacity, and cleaning effectiveness.

Health & Wellbeing
Assess physical strain (pain, fatigue) and psychological impacts (stress, safety).

How We Do It: Methods and Relationships

Our data collection is a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods.

- **Quantitative Surveys-** We use tools like KoboToolbox for systematic collection and analysis of numerical data through our baseline, midline, and endline surveys. These surveys include various question types, from multiple-choice to numerical input, and use skip logic to ensure relevance.
- **Qualitative Research-** To add depth and narrative, we complement surveys with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. These conversations allow us to truly understand people's experiences, perspectives, and the nuances of their daily lives, which numbers alone can't capture.
- **Partner Training & Collaboration-** Our local partners are central to this process. We train them on our M&E framework, including how to conduct surveys, maintain ethical standards like obtaining informed consent, and ensure data quality. We work with partners to balance our need for data with their capacity, adapting survey length and frequency as needed.
- **Feedback Loop to R&D-** The insights we gain are not just for reports; they directly feed into our Research and Development (R&D) efforts. Our Divya status form, for example, is heavily used by R&D to identify common issues like leaks or handle failures, leading to improvements in machine design. We also get ad-hoc requests from engineers for specific user insights. This continuous feedback loop ensures our machine evolves to meet user needs even better.

We publish each of our reports from baseline and initial findings, right the way through to 6 months post distributions- they can all be found at www.thewashingmachineproject.org

The power of our M&E really comes alive in the collaboration and relationships we build. While standardised surveys give us required impact numbers, it's the personal connections with people on the ground– individuals like Preethi in India, Brian in Uganda and Jose in Mexico– who provide the rich, invaluable stories that truly illustrate the transformation. These relationships mean our partners become invested in the project, and in turn, The Washing Machine Project invests in the community, and never simply "dumping a machine and walking away".

The Future of M&E: Smarter, More Efficient, and Even More Human

We know M&E can be costly and labor-intensive. As we look ahead, we're dedicated to finding more creative and efficient ways to collect data and understand impact without compromising depth or authenticity. This means exploring exciting possibilities like:

Imagine a "comms corner" within a community hub where people could record videos of their experiences, providing direct, unmediated feedback.

Digital Engagement: Even in rural areas in places like India, high rates of internet access in some areas have prompted us to consider M&E via phones, apps, or even Telegram channels. A QR code on the machine itself could allow users to easily scan for instructions, provide feedback, or even connect with our project.

By embracing these innovations, we can move towards a future where our M&E is not only more cost-effective but also more direct, immediate, and reflective of the lived experiences of the communities we serve. This continuous learning and adaptation are fundamental to our mission of sharing meaningful change and building on our baseline each year

Chapter 4

Partnerships in Practice

Whirlpool Foundation & The Washing Machine Project: Working to close the Global Laundry Divide

The Washing Machine Project and Whirlpool Foundation have forged a mutually beneficial and unique relationship, rooted in a shared belief: access to something as simple as clean clothes should not come at the cost of opportunity.

Whirlpool Corporation's story is rooted in changing lives through laundry. Founded in 1911 by Louis Upton, the company transformed daily life with the electric washing machine, easing the burden of household work for millions of women. More than half a century ago, Louis and Frederick Upton built this legacy by creating the Whirlpool Foundation, with a commitment to reinvest in communities and support nonprofits improving quality of life. That promise continues today through the Foundation's efforts to create a greater impact in their communities through a focus on inclusion and diversity. More than a century on, the company's commitment to innovation and social good remains central to its mission.

Together, we are working to close the Global Laundry Divide.

Launched in 2024, our collective goal is to bring the Divya manual washing machine to **150,000 people worldwide by 2027**, unlocking millions of hours for work, study, and rest.

The collaboration between Whirlpool and The Washing Machine Project has already earned global recognition. In 2025, the partnership won two major awards: Best Employee Engagement Initiative at the Engage for Good Halo Awards and the Manufacturing Leadership Award for Collaborative Ecosystems (Whirlpool Corporation, 2025a; Whirlpool Corporation, 2025b). Together, these honours reflect not only the innovation behind the manual washing machine, but also the way engineers, suppliers, sustainability teams, and employee volunteers have come together across sectors to design, build, and deliver impact at scale.

'From our 100+ year history in the home appliance industry, we understand the incredible value of our products in improving the lives of our consumers. We also recognize the toll the task of manual washing takes on those who have to do this work which is primarily done by women and girls. Not only is it incredibly challenging physically, it also limits their ability to pursue an education or work outside of the home.' **- Pam Klyn, Whirlpool Foundation President.**

Shared Mission, Shared Innovation

Remarkably, long before we met, both organisations had already been working on the same problem. In 2013, Whirlpool engineer Sheila Stafford, along with a team of Whirlpool engineers began developing a prototype of a manual washing machine called Handle with Care, designed to ease the strain of hand washing clothes. Meanwhile, in 2017, Navjot Sawhney founded The Washing Machine Project after his experiences in India.

Unknown to each other, both projects were motivated by the same mission: to find practical, scalable ways of reducing the burden of laundry for underserved communities without access to reliable electricity and/or running water.

When Whirlpool Corporation's philanthropic arm, Whirlpool Foundation, and The Washing Machine Project finally discovered their shared mission, it was clear that each held a piece of the puzzle. The Washing Machine Project brought deep ethnographic research, local partnerships, and distribution expertise. Whirlpool Corporation contributed global reach, engineering capacity, a large base of employee volunteers, decades of manufacturing experience and most importantly manufacturing capacity.

As Rosa Skinner - Sr. Manager Global CSR & Community Relations explains

"This collaboration demonstrates how a large corporation's foundation can provide the necessary resources to scale a smaller organization's impactful work. Together, we are committed to bridging the global laundry divide and paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous future for women and girls around the world.'

Greg Bauman, Lead Engineer, Whirlpool Corporation

'One thing that sets this project apart is knowing these machines are leaving our production facility and going straight to the hands of someone who has never experienced the benefits of machine washing. We're not just building a product, we're giving back time, reducing back-breaking work, and creating opportunities for people to rest, learn, or earn. It's powerful to see lives change from parts we assemble in a factory'

Bringing Expertise to Life

Whirlpool Foundation contributes far more than funding. The corporation's engineers have helped refine the design of the machine, adapted components for replication and maintenance in the field and created a manufacturing line at their global headquarters that has streamlined assembly, with the ability to make one machine every 6 minutes.

The success of this manufacturing line opens the door to replicating it in other regions. There is potential to adapt the approach both in places where Whirlpool already operates and in new areas where we aim to expand our impact.

The collaboration extends beyond technical expertise. Together, The Washing Machine Project and Whirlpool have engaged audiences on global stages, from the United Nations Action Day, speaking at US Chamber of Commerce Foundation and having our story shared with millions of people through global features in reputable media outlets such as Forbes and the BBC.

Powered by People: Employee Engagement

Perhaps the most powerful dimension of this partnership is the passion, excitement and willingness to help from Whirlpool employees. In just the first year:

- Global employees took part in on-site activities that helped them experience the burden of hand washing clothes and connect with our shared mission.
- 341 volunteers contributed 3,792 hours of their time to assemble machines
- Together, they assembled 645 Divya machines ready for distribution
- Engineers joined in-country distributions to see their work in action.

“One thing that sets this project apart is knowing these machines are leaving our production facility and going straight to the hands of someone who has never experienced the benefits of machine washing. We’re not just building a product, we’re giving back time, reducing back-breaking work, and creating opportunities for people to rest, learn, or earn. It’s powerful to see lives change from parts we assemble in a factory.” — Greg Bauman, Lead Engineer, Whirlpool Corporation

More Than the Sum of Our Parts

The Washing Machine Project’s field knowledge and grassroots distribution, combined with Whirlpool Corporation’s technical expertise and scale, has created something greater than either organisation could achieve alone. It is two halves of a problem becoming a solution; a collaboration where one plus one equals three.

Together, we are not only working to close the global laundry divide, but also showing innovation, purpose, and how social enterprises and corporations can come together to change lives.

A Model for Corporate–Humanitarian Collaboration

The Washing Machine Project, supported by Whirlpool Foundation proves what is possible when global business aligns with grassroots innovation. It is not charity at arm’s length, but shared action bringing design, production, and people power together to restore time, dignity, and opportunity.

In doing so, it sets a new benchmark for what corporate–humanitarian partnerships can achieve.

Because when people are freed from the burden of hand washing clothes, they are freed to do so much more.

A new partnership model?

The Washing Machine Project’s partnership approach is agile, impact-focused, and uniquely collaborative. We work across the full journey of our machines, from design and manufacture to distribution, logistics, monitoring and evaluation, and storytelling.

Together with our partners, we aim to:

Integrate skills, products, or infrastructure directly into humanitarian and development solutions;

Engage employees in tangible, life-changing activities;

Align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality, water and sanitation, and innovation;

Co-design mutually beneficial partnerships that deliver measurable impact for communities and value for partners;

Target positive change in regions that align with partner focus areas or operations;

Evidence contributions through rigorous reporting and real stories of change.

Jaguar Land Rover

Through Jaguar Land Rover's (JLR's) Creativity for Good partnership, The Washing Machine Project has been able to harness the skills and expertise of a large, engineering-focused organisation operating worldwide in the service of the global issue of hand washing clothes.

JLR engineers, supply chain and tax experts, to name just a few, have volunteered their time to help The Washing Machine Project develop the next generation Divya washing machine.

Bringing together diverse skills from across the company, JLR have enabled their employees to engage in a unique opportunity to use their skills for good, and have allowed The Washing Machine Project to approach scaling up operations and impact in a way that would not have been possible alone.

Facilitating connections within JLR and wider, JLR's teams embody the principle of collaboration, something The Washing Machine Project feels passionately about as we seek to continue strengthening our coalition of partners joining us on our mission of alleviating the burden of hand washing clothes.

RS Group

The Washing Machine Project's four year partnership with RS Group showed what was possible when an organisation trusts their charity partner to direct resources to where they are needed most.

When The Washing Machine Project was a fledgling organisation, RS employees flocked to Wales to volunteer to build the first ever Divya machines.. As we grew. RS employees continued to support us where we needed it most, through building machines in office kitchens from Corby, UK to Johannesburg, South Africa. As our needs changed over this time, RS stepped up to support these

changing needs, getting stuck in as one team, to help us to help those who need it.

Our partnership design thus changed over the years, with The Washing Machine Project supporting RS Group to provide more opportunities for staff from Distribution Centres, marketing or customer service teams to volunteer their time and skills in service of positive global change.

Further Examples

The Washing Machine Project is extremely grateful for all the support we have received from corporate supporters and individuals- be it through donations, through knowledge sharing, through connecting us with their network or through formal partnerships.

We've received incredible support by partnering with companies whose products and services we couldn't operate without; OnShape and Elesa are two examples here of companies who've gone above and beyond to allow The Washing Machine Project to make more positive change with the resources that we have.

Similarly, being part of a community like 1% for the Planet has inducted The Washing Machine Project into a network of organisations changing the game for the planet, and those willing to financially commit to enable this.

"Two years before I started as The Washing Machine Project's first Partnerships Manager I was given a sort of slip of advice, a little like those you'd get in a fortune cookie, when buying bubble tea (unusual, I know). It told me that 'Alone, you'll go faster, but together, you'll go farther.' I've since learnt that this is an African proverb. This piece of advice has felt particularly apt when working with The Washing Machine Project's incredible partners. Companies who have taken a chance on a small, but mighty, organisation tackling a problem that some humanitarians and business leaders have laughed at. I always tell the team that patience is the key ingredient to a good partnership, built on mutual trust and a belief in building lasting societal change, that won't come overnight. However, when we see incredible stories of success and quiet empowerment, like Shamim and Doreen or Salma in Uganda, the results of our patience and belief are evident. Together, we are serving communities around the world with the skills, resources and teams we're blessed enough to have. It's evident that we can go farther together than we ever thought possible when standing alone." -
Flora Edmiston - Partnerships Manager, The Washing Machine Project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Chapter 5

The Impact of The Divya Washing Machine

Since 2019, The Washing Machine Project has directly improved the lives of over 46,000 people through hundreds of Divya washing machines distributed across more than 40 programmes globally (TWMP, 2025).

Our work spans multiple countries including Iraq, Poland*, Uganda, the United States, South Africa, Mexico, Kenya, Kiribati, India, Republic of Congo, Greece, Gaza, and Ghana, and we partner with a wide range of organisations, from INGOs, NGOs such as Oxfam, Care International, A Drop in the Ocean, UNHCR and UK Med as well as local charities and organisations such as Alternativas, Aqua, Alight, Tech Ground, AC, Collectivo Tomate, Concern, TASS, Techo, InPact Uganda, Medical Teams International, OFI, Sharana and Kynarou.

*electric washing machines provided to Ukrainian refugees in Poland

In this chapter, we explore the real-world impact of the Divya washing machine through these lenses:

- Time, Water and Effort
- Income Generation
- Community, Rest and Leisure
- Supporting Education
- Gender Roles

Time, Water, and Effort

As laid out in our theory of change, The Washing Machine Project's short-, mid-, and long-term focus begins with three core goals:

- Reducing the time spent washing clothes;
- Reducing the water needed for washing;
- Reducing the physical and psychological burden of laundry.

This report provides a baseline. As data continues to come in from our focus countries, we will refine our approach and strengthen our monitoring and evaluation. The early signs are promising, with both encouraging results and valuable lessons.

Although TWMP has a presence in 13 countries, our most significant impact has been measured in Uganda, Mexico, and India, alongside dedicated programmes in refugee camps in the Republic of Congo (RoC) and the Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) in Lesvos, Greece as well as supporting schools Kenya.

Across these contexts, time saved has emerged as the most important change. It is the factor that moves the dial towards our longer-term Theory of Change of empowering women by creating the space for opportunity to rest, receive education and generate income.

In Uganda, households reported that a single wash cycle took nearly two and a half hours, with laundry completed on average 18 times a month (TWMP, Kampala Baseline Report, 2024). After the introduction of the Divya washing machine, average wash time fell to just 29 minutes- **a reduction of around 80 percent.** Washing frequency also dropped from 18 times per month to 3.7, a reduction of 79 percent. In total, households went from spending 13 hours on laundry every month to just over an hour (TWMP, Kampala Midline Report 2, 2024).

In India, baseline results showed an average of 53 minutes per hand wash (TWMP, Pondicherry Baseline Report, 2024). At midline, this unexpectedly increased to 68 minutes. Women still described the machine as saving them time, reporting that it required less hands-on effort and gave them a greater sense of freedom for self-care, leisure, education, or other chores (TWMP, Pondicherry Midline Report, 2024). Further investigation revealed the increase was due to overuse of detergent, which required more rinses and also more water- increasing time. TWMP responded by distributing measuring cups with recommended detergent amounts, and by endline, average wash times had dropped to 38 minutes (TWMP, India Endline Report, 2025). This highlighted the importance of training and ongoing user feedback in maximising the benefits of the machine.

In humanitarian contexts such as the Republic of Congo, the baseline was even more severe. Wash cycles took an average of 149 minutes, which dropped to 111 minutes with the machine a 25 percent reduction (TWMP, RoC Baseline Report, 2024, TWMP, RoC Midline Report, 2024). These figures do not account for the additional hours spent walking to water sources, a task 35 percent of families described as unsafe or dangerous, citing robbery, assault, and even risk of rape. Because the Divya Washing Machine is portable and uses up to 50 percent less water than hand washing clothes, families can now wash clothes within camp boundaries. This not only saves time and water but also reduces dangerous journeys, particularly for women and girls.

The impact in RoC extends well beyond time. Hand washing was consistently described as “extremely burdensome” or even “tortuous,” with women reporting pain in their backs, necks, muscles, and hands. In camps, more than half reported injuries to nails and fingers from scrubbing clothes by hand (TWMP, RoC Baseline Report, 2024). After the Divya Washing Machine was introduced, reports of pain and fatigue dropped dramatically. In RoC, hospital staff even described turning the handle as “like a good sport,” (TWMP, RoC Midline Report, 2024)

Our way of measuring physical impact includes some very specific questions. Machine users are asked to rate the level of pain they experienced in their hands, neck, back and other parts of the body while washing clothes by hand and then again at a later date once the Divya washing machine is in use. We also looked at reports of injuries such as cracked skin, nail damage and muscle or joint pain that people linked directly to the strain of hand washing.

These physical effort metrics aren’t as easy to pin down as time or water savings, and there is room for subjectivity- one person’s idea of “extremely burdensome” might be different from another’s. But across contexts, the feedback was consistent; people described a dramatic drop in the physical strain they face.

When talking about water savings, it’s not just a good thing that water itself is being saved - what does that mean for our users?

The reduced volume of water used also has implications for wastewater. Several reports note that users often reuse wastewater from laundry for other purposes, such as mopping floors, flushing toilets, or even farming. By using less water to begin with, the machine makes managing and reusing this greywater more feasible (TWMP, RoC Baseline Report, 2024).

Saving water is also a high priority for users themselves. In a focus group in Vanuatu, participants ranked “use less water” as their second most important feature in a washing solution, just after “save money” (TWMP, Vanuatu Focus Group Discussion Summary Report, 2020).

In Uganda, midline reports noted that people felt “less stressed about… water availability for washing clothes and fabrics” after receiving the machine. A six-month follow-up confirmed the same, with users reporting “reduced stress levels when washing with the washing machine,” (TWMP, Uganda 6-month Follow-up Survey Report, 2023).

In Pondicherry, India, users shared a similar experience, saying they felt “less stressed about the availability of water needed to wash clothes and fabrics” in the midline assessment (TWMP, Pondicherry Midline Report, 2024)

Alamelu (Tamil Nadu, India)

Alamelu, Divya's mother, is in her 60s and grew up in a village a few hours from Pondicherry. She was the oldest of eight siblings, and much of the housework fell to her. One of her main jobs was washing clothes. Her family valued education, but she never got to go to school. She stayed home to help out with household chores.

Back then, she didn't mind the washing. She would walk 30 to 40 minutes to the local pond, where people bathed, cleaned clothes, and looked after their animals. She washed for eight to ten people every couple of days. It felt normal and even fun. She'd play, swim, and hang out with others while waiting for the clothes to dry on the grass. Now that she's older, it's different. Washing is tiring. Her back hurts from years of strain, and she can't sit for long.

Getting the Divya machine has massively helped Alamelu. She no longer has to scrub by hand. She can sit and spin the clothes from a seated position. If she's unwell, someone else in the family can manage it. That was never the case before.

She's proud to see her daughter use a machine and go to school- things she never had. Most of her life, she thought washing by hand at the pond was the only way. Now she sees things changing. She sees that rural women have more choices and the washing machine is part of that change (TWMP, 2025).

Let's take a look at what impact we're having once users are saving time, using less water and physically and psychologically reduced burden.

Direct Income-Generating Opportunities

Income Generation

The Divya washing machine demonstrates a clear opportunity to support income generation by reducing the domestic burden of laundry, freeing up time and energy for individuals and groups to pursue revenue-generating activities.

Uganda – Namavundu Laundrette

The Namavundu Laundrette, operated by the Namavundu Women Group, uses manual washing machines as a core part of its laundry and tailoring business. Since February 2025, weekly clients have grown from 7–10 to 13–17, a clear sign of income growth (InPact Uganda, Pre-Investment Visit Field Activity Report, 2025). The machine enables them to process more laundry efficiently, reducing reliance on handwashing for lighter items and freeing up capacity to attract more customers. The group now aims to establish a permanent washing bay, add ironing services, and reach a daily revenue target of UGX 50,000 (USD 14.28).

For individual users, such as Salma in Kampala, the machine has unlocked small but meaningful income streams. She washes clothes for neighbours two to three times a week, using the earnings to support her vocational studies in Early Childhood Development (TWMP, 2025b). It's important to note that stories like Salma's don't happen automatically. While the Divya machine created the opportunity, our in-country team also had to step in with extra support and training. It requires intentional effort and resources to help users make the transition. This underlines the need for a more holistic approach, where the machines are part of a wider support system rather than a stand-alone intervention.

Across contexts, similar patterns emerge. In Iraq's Kabarto camps, women reported using their saved time for paid work, with households saving 4–5 hours per week that could be reallocated to productive activities (TWMP, Kabarto 1 & 2 Initial Findings, 2021). In Mexico, orphanage staff noted that reduced laundry time allowed them to better support children with homework, creating indirect economic benefits for future livelihoods (TWMP, Mexico Baseline Report, 2024).

Indirect Income-Generating Opportunities

The most widespread economic impact of the Divya machine is indirect. By reducing time and physical strain, it opens up space for other productive activities.

Time Reallocation

Across multiple contexts — Mexico, Republic of Congo, and Iraq — "paid work" consistently emerged as a top activity users wanted to pursue with the time saved. In the Republic of Congo, users directly reported shifting time from laundry to farming and income-generating activities. A refugee household member summed it up simply: *"Washing machine reduces workload and time"* (TWMP, RoC Midline Report, 2024).

Household Efficiency as a Prerequisite for Work

For many women, paid work is only possible once household responsibilities are met. Users in Uganda and the Republic of Congo reported reinvesting time into childcare and elder care. In India, Congo, and Lesvos, users mentioned cooking, cleaning, and water collection as areas where saved time was redirected. By making laundry more efficient, the machine clears the way for economic participation.

Agriculture and Farming

In rural contexts, agriculture is a primary livelihood. Users in Mexico and the Republic of Congo both ranked farming as one of the main priorities for their saved time, while India's endline survey included "farming" as a specific category for reallocation.

Community, Rest, and Leisure

The Washing Station as a Social Hub

In group or camp settings, washing machines often become gathering points where people meet and support each other. In Lesvos refugee camp, the washing station developed into an 'informal hub for interaction and socialisation.' Residents were seen chatting while waiting for laundry, helping each other, and sharing tips- building a more supportive, cohesive community (Mujić, and Xenakis, 2024). In Mexico, one user explained how using the machine changed his mindset about laundry being "only women do laundry," showing how it can challenge stereotypes and encourage more cooperation at home (TWMP, 2025c).

Making Time for Rest, Leisure, and Personal Growth

Less time spent scrubbing means more time for rest, self-care, and activities people enjoy. In Lesvos, when asked how they'd use freed-up time, most residents said they would "rest," (Mujić, and Xenakis, 2024). In India, users reported turning to leisure or self-care (TWMP, Pondicherry Midline Report, 2024). Reducing physical strain is also key. On Lesvos, 87% of residents said handwashing caused pain (Mujić, and Xenakis, 2024). After using the Divya, users in Uganda, the Republic of the Congo, and India consistently reported less or no pain in their backs, necks, and hands, alongside reduced fatigue and stress. As one user in India explained: "I feel the hand and leg pain reduced since I switched to this machine. I'm happy to continue using it," (TWMP, Pondicherry Midline Report, 2024).

At Shangilia School in Kenya, saved time gave students space to study and play. One matron said:

"Saving time helps a lot of students in studying and perfecting talents," (TWMP, Shangilia School Midline Report, 2024).

This freed-up time creates new opportunities for personal growth that were not possible before.

Strengthening Family and Community

Extra time also feeds into family and community life. In Uganda and the Republic of the Congo, users reported using saved time for childcare and elder care (TWMP, Kampala Midline Report, 2024; TWMP, RoC Midline Report, 2024). One woman in Kampala shared: “My kids are so happy to have the hand washing machine because I can spend more time with them.” Staff in Lesvos and RoC observed men beginning to take part in laundry, shifting traditional household roles. One woman in RoC said: “Thanks to this machine, my husband also does the laundry.”

At Ocuilapa Orphanage, the time saved allowed older girls to help younger ones with homework while another group did laundry, strengthening their community bonds (TWMP, 2025d).

Helping restoring Dignity and Confidence

Clean clothes are more than practical- they are tied to dignity, confidence, and belonging. In Lesvos, staff described laundry access as a “matter of dignity” that provides “control and self-respect, even in a difficult and transient environment.” Dirty clothes can create “feelings of shame” that stop people from joining community life (Mujić, and Xenakis, 2024).

A survey of homeless people in Texas echoed this: not being able to wash clothes created feelings of “shame, not a part of society,” while clean clothes made people feel “human,” (TWMP, Texas Wash Day Brief, 2024). By breaking down this barrier, the Divya Washing Machine helps people participate more fully in their communities and restores confidence in daily life.

A Challenge: Sharing and Maintenance

While the machines bring clear social benefits, there are also lessons to note. In India, endline surveys showed some users were reluctant to share their machines. This wasn’t framed as open conflict, but as protective anxiety. One user worried others might break the machine, another doubted others would maintain it properly, and a third explicitly said she did not want to share because “people might damage or cause issues in how they use it.” These responses highlight a potential source of tension over shared assets and underscore the importance of ongoing community support and maintenance planning.

Emilie (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (UNHCR, 2024)

Emilie, in her 50s, lives in Moungougui, a village on the outskirts of Impfondo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She shares her home with a large family of 14, and for years, one of her heaviest responsibilities was washing clothes. Hand washing was grueling. The soap used for cleaning cracked her skin and irritated her nails, and with so many clothes to manage, it would take two full days to finish the laundry. It left her exhausted and with little time for her other daily responsibilities, like processing cassava or caring for the children.

Since receiving the Divya washing machine, Emilie's life has changed dramatically. Laundry that once took days can now be done in just a few hours, and she no longer suffers from hand pain or skin irritation. The machine allows her to wash large loads at once, saving time, energy, and even money- using less water and soap than before. Tasks that were once impossible to fit into a single day are now manageable, giving her more space to focus on income-generating work and household duties.

The introduction of the machine has also shifted household roles. Where Emilie and her co-wife once handled all the washing, her husband now helps, turning a traditionally female task into a shared responsibility. Emilie values this change, seeing it as a step toward greater equality within the home.

Looking ahead, Emilie believes the Divya machine will continue to transform her family's daily life. She is proud of the time, energy, and money it saves, and the dignity it restores to what was once an exhausting chore. The machine has given her family choices they didn't have before, allowing them to invest more in their children's needs and feel more control over their daily lives. Emilie is grateful for the donation and hopes to learn how to maintain the machine herself, ensuring it continues to support her family in the years to come.

Sylvia (Kampala, Uganda) (TWMP, 2024)

Sylvia is a single mother of three, supporting her family on the equivalent of $20 per month by selling fish snacks. Living in a small rented two-by-two-metre house with only an underground stream for water, daily chores are a constant challenge.

The introduction of the Divya Washing Machine has been life-changing for Sylvia. She is proud of the machine, often showing it off to visitors and keeping it in her bedroom when not in use. Despite her limited resources, she generously allows her neighbours to use it for free.

With her son preparing to go to boarding school thanks to a family friend, Sylvia now has more time and energy to manage her household and maintain her joyful, resilient spirit. For her, the Divya Washing Machine represents a tangible support that eases daily burdens and creates opportunities for her family's wellbeing.

Supporting Education

While education has not been a primary focus of our impact work to date, the Divya washing machine illustrates how reducing the domestic burden of laundry can unlock valuable opportunities for learning and personal development. By freeing up time and energy, it enables students, caregivers, and community members to engage more fully in school, extracurricular activities, and skill development, alongside other household and income-generating tasks.

Before the Divya machine, laundry imposed significant time constraints. At Shangilia School in Kenya, students spent 69 minutes per wash, which often meant "less time for other activities" and required extra evening study to make up for laundry time. One staff member noted that on washing days, students had "less time to play and mingle" and had to "balance everything and use extra time in evening for studies" (TWMP, Shangilia School Baseline Report, 2024). In many contexts, children, particularly girls, were responsible for laundry or water collection, leading to "lost educational opportunities" and limiting school participation (MetaMeta Research B.V, 2025). Prioritising chores over schooling created a barrier to girls' education and empowerment (Walton, McAllister, & Rahael, 2025). Caregivers also faced heavy burdens, balancing household chores, water collection, and childcare, which reduced their capacity to support children's learning or pursue their own education.

After receiving the Divya machine, the impact on educational engagement is clear. At Shangilia School, washing time was halved from 69 minutes to 35 minutes per wash. Students used the freed-up time for "reading and extra-curricular activities (playing chess and football)," and the matron confirmed, "Saving time helps a lot of students in studying and perfecting talents" (TWMP, Shangilia School Midline Report, 2024). Student testimony reinforces this: "Thank you for the washing machine; the time we could be using to wash clothes by hand is now gone, which we are going to use to do more activities like revising, reading, and playing other games." Another student reported they would use the time saved to "read and play." Baseline surveys had already shown that when asked what they would do with saved time, students prioritised "studying or extra-curricular activities."

The effect extends beyond students. In India, respondents reported using saved time for "education/training," including a female user aged 16–18 who specifically mentioned "studies" (India Endline Report, 2025). In Uganda, some users were able to redirect time or money towards school attendance or educational pursuits, even while prioritising leisure, child and elder care, and income-generating activities (TWMP, Kampala Midline Report, 2024).

Caregivers and staff also benefit. In Mexico, an orphanage coordinator explained that the Divya machine "reduces the workload," allowing staff to better manage washing days and dedicate time to assist younger children with homework (TWMP, 2025d). At this orphanage, home to 50 children including some attending university, the structured use of freed-up time ensures educational support is consistent, while other groups handle laundry tasks. Freed-up caregiver time also improves child and elder care, creating a more supportive environment for learning overall.

Gender

Across multiple contexts, the Divya washing machine is creating subtle but meaningful shifts in household labour. In the Republic of Congo, the midline report documented a clear change: one female refugee household member noted, "Thanks to this machine, my husband also does the laundry," (TWMP RoC Midline Report, 2024). High user satisfaction was reflected not only in reduced workload and physical strain but also in these emerging shifts in gender roles, with men increasingly participating in the washing process.

Similar patterns were observed in Lesvos, Greece, where staff monitoring the pilot project noted men often performing the more labour-intensive task of cranking the lever while women sorted clothes. Evaluation findings highlighted that "machine use has the potential to promote greater gender equality," with observation periods showing more equal distribution of labour between men and women (Mujić, and Xenakis, 2024).

In Mexico, follow-up reports documented similar changes. In Zinacantán, one male user, Juan, highlighted how the machine allows him to do laundry in the evenings when it is too cold to wash by hand (TWMP, 2025c). Juan, a steel worker and one of the few men in his village to leave for higher education, experienced some social exclusion when he returned — as studying away was unusual in his community. He embraced the Divya Washing Machine and became a key user and community resource. He contributed to refining the machine's

instructions, recommending guidance on one revolution per second, which R&D incorporated, and was trained as a super user to maintain machines and support new users. Juan reflects a broader shift: using the machine can challenge traditional norms, foster male engagement in domestic tasks, and create leadership opportunities within the community.

Although it's early to draw any clear conclusions, initial observations suggest that access to the Divya washing machine is already encouraging shifts in household roles, fostering male participation in laundry, and creating opportunities for leadership and community support.

Summary

The Divya Washing Machine transforms daily life by cutting the time, effort, and stress of laundry. Users reclaim hours each week for rest, education, income, and family care. Pain and fatigue drop, water and detergent use fall, and households report more equitable sharing of chores. Communities benefit too, with shared laundry spaces creating social connection and support. Across contexts, the machine restores dignity, creates choice, and creates space for opportunities that were previously restricted.

Chapter 6

The Road to 2030 – Impacting 1,000,000 Lives

"By 2030, our goal is to reach one million people with the Divya Washing Machine and we won't get there by distributing machines alone. We're building local manufacturing, training communities, piloting innovative approaches, and creating a global hub to turn every hour saved into education, income, and empowerment. We invite partners, funders, and policymakers to join us: together, we can transform unpaid domestic labour into opportunity and create lasting impact for millions."

— Sean Devane Chief Commercial Officer,
The Washing Machine Project

The Washing Machine Project has shown that the Divya Washing Machine can reduce the burden of hand washing and unlock time for education, income, and care. By 2030, our goal is to reach 1,000,000 people worldwide. Achieving this scale requires more than distributing machines- it demands building local capacity and creating an ecosystem where we're not just saving time for users but making sure that every freed hour translates into opportunity.

Manufacturing Closer to Communities

We are exploring ways to produce the Divya Washing Machine nearer to the communities that need them most. Local manufacturing cuts costs and delays, while creating jobs, building technical skills, and strengthening supply chains. This approach transforms short-term delivery into long-term resilience. This starts in early 2026 with our first in- country manufacturing taking place in India.

Upskilling and Piloting New Approaches

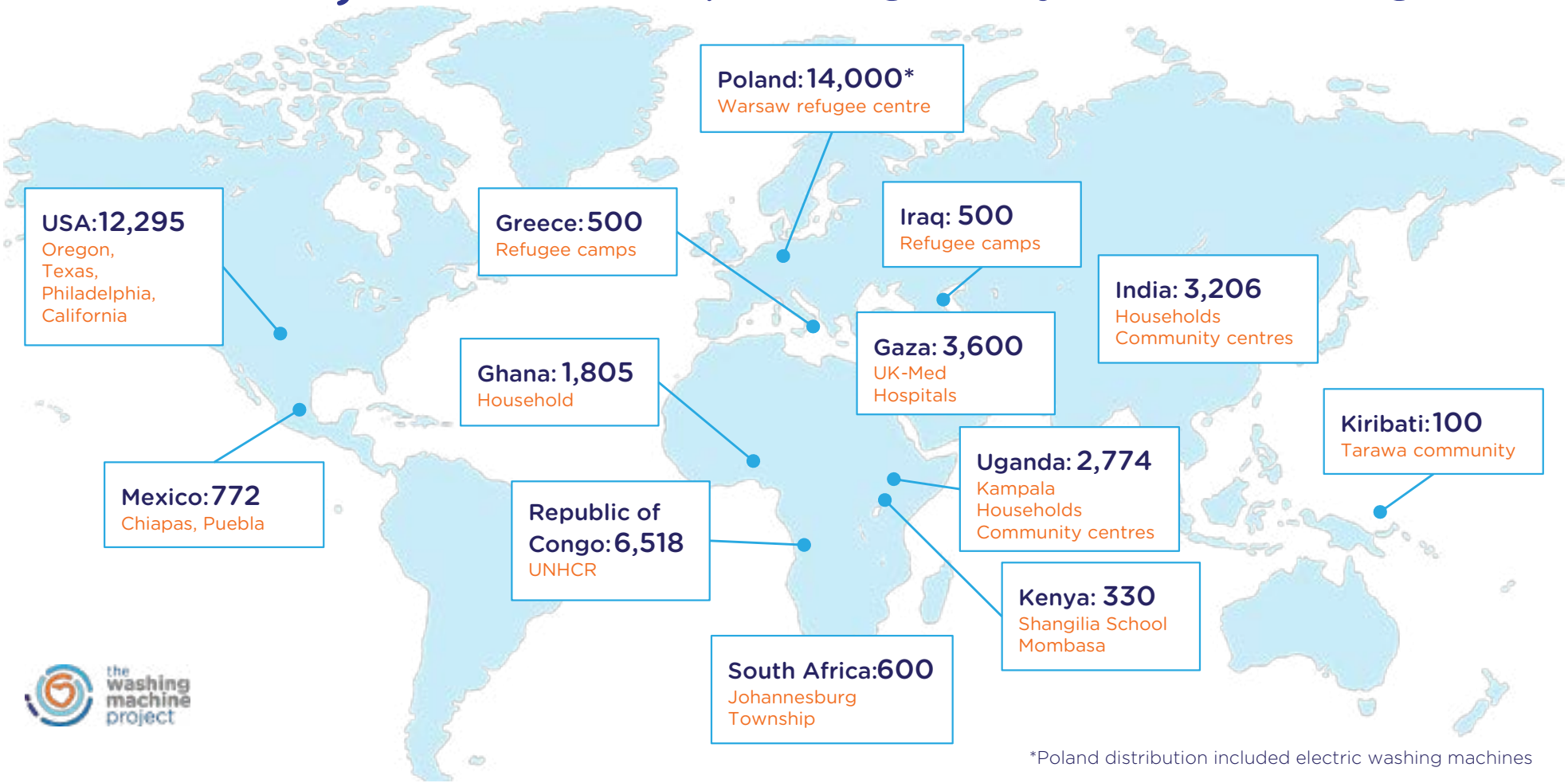
We will keep training community members and partners in assembly, maintenance, and repair, ensuring local ownership and sustainability. Enabling communities to create their own businesses with the Divya Washing Machines such as laundrettes and skilling centres - receiving financial training along the way.

Exploring Distribution Models

Reaching one million people will mean finding new ways to get machines where they are needed most and creating a diversity in approach will lead to more impact. Distribution will need to adapt to different contexts and community needs.

We could explore combining laundry access with other community services to create multi-purpose hubs. For example, a laundrette could also host training programmes, workshops, or educational activities. It might provide space for skills development, business support, or women's and youth groups. These hubs could act as local centres where people not only wash clothes but also gain knowledge, connect with resources, and access opportunities that extend the impact of the time saved.

46,328 lives impacted globally... and counting



the washing machine project

*Poland distribution included electric washing machines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Each of these models offers lessons. They allow us to reach more people, make better use of resources, and build local knowledge and skills along the way.

Creating an Ecosystem Around Innovation

Machines alone do not create lasting change. Our road to 2030 is about building an ecosystem of impact - combining hardware with awareness campaigns, training, research, and partnerships. By engaging NGOs, corporates, governments, and communities, we will ensure that saved time translates into leadership, education, and empowerment.

What We Need to Reach 1,000,000 Lives

Funding to expand production, scale pilots, and sustain training programmes

Research to evidence impact and refine approaches

Standards to guarantee quality, safety, and usability globally

Partnerships with corporates, NGOs and governments

Policy Engagement to embed laundry in wider WASH and gender equality strategies

Long-Term Support to ensure freed time becomes lasting opportunity

By 2030, our vision is for the Divya Washing Machine is not just to be an innovation, but a platform for social change. Through local manufacturing, community-led skills, and a connected ecosystem, we can transform millions of hours of unpaid labour into education, income, and empowerment and reach 1,000,000 people with lasting impact.

We can only do this with your help. Whether you're a supporter, work with a NGO, an ESG Manager or monthly donor we want to hear from you and work together.

Through innovation, collaboration and care we will end the burden of hand washing clothes.

One wash at a time.

Thank you to all of our donors, partners, sponsors, and community. The impact shared in this report is only possible because of your support. Thank you -

The Washing Machine Project Team

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