



A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services

Toolset 3-C

Facility siting, design and management

TS3-C-2 – Women's WASH Platforms: Bangladesh

Context	<p>The project was implemented in a flood-prone area of a river basin in Jamalpur District and in a cyclone- and saline-affected coastal char, Noakhali District.</p> <p>Water collection takes about half an hour twice a day. In the dry season water is scarce, ponds dry up and handpumps do not all work. Just over 50 per cent have access to a latrine, but in Jamalpur more than half the latrines get inundated with flood waters. Most latrines do not provide privacy for women. There had previously been a lack of women's inclusion in project designs by government or during household-level WASH installation, with limited consultation of women during waterpoint and latrine construction.</p> <p>In Noakhali, married women complained that in the dry season they could not bathe and so regularly felt unclean and shy to sleep with their husbands. This sometimes resulted in distrust and physical or mental abuse by the husbands.</p>
Implementing organisations	<p>Oxfam.</p>
Description of good practices	<p>The project supported self-motivated and proactive groups of women who are addressing women's specific needs for WASH services in flood-prone areas of Bangladesh. Although the activities described in this case study were not focused specifically on violence and WASH, the model of involvement of the Women's WASH Platforms (WWPs) offers opportunities to reduce vulnerabilities to violence related to WASH. This might be through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering a safe space for women to discuss with other women issues related to violence, and also a safe space to discuss and propose strategies to reduce violence; • Increased capacities and confidence of the women involved, which can give them confidence to also discuss such issues in wider forums – including men and community leaders – or to resist violence when it is threatened; • Improving the designs of WASH facilities themselves to make them safer to use; the WWPs then manage the construction such facilities; and • As the WWPs were involved in counselling adolescent girls on menstruation, this opportunity could also be used to counsel them on protecting themselves against violence. <p>Women were actively involved in designing, constructing and managing WASH facilities to meet their needs. They gained confidence to manage the WWP and to negotiate with men, and sometimes older women, and to contribute to decisions about the WASH facilities.</p>



Golam Morshed / Oxfam Bangladesh

“We identified our problem and initiated schemes. we purchased the required materials by ourselves for our projects after verifying prices at several shops in three local markets to ensure lower price and best quality. We ourselves hired masons and carpenters to construct the bathing cubicles as per our agreed design. We did close monitoring during construction to ensure quality and appropriateness.”

(Mohima Begu, Cashier, WWP, Noakhali)



Ruhul Amin / Oxfam Bangladesh

Twenty women's WASH Platforms were formed and 220 women trained. They constructed bathing chambers, including latrine and menstrual management facilities (20 to 30 families per chamber). Latrines were upgraded and new ones built, and three were constructed which were accessible for people with disabilities. Waterpoints were also constructed. In addition, counselling with adolescent girls on menstruation management and personal hygiene in emergencies was undertaken, and menstruation kits were distributed.

Results

The women involved in the project said that in the beginning they were confused, but by the end of the project they were very confident; that they used to bathe on alternate weeks, but now they could bathe every day with dignity and privacy. They said they would continue their platform and had already started a savings group.

The women said:

"We are 11 people moving together. They [who have been resisting us] are afraid of us. Now they invite us to sit. They usually talk to the government representative, but now they talk to us to".



Golam Morshed / Oxfam Bangladesh

After one member's house was destroyed by some 'muscle-men', all WWP members came forward to help her and sought help from the police.

Challenges

- Not all the WWPs performed to the same standard. Four of the 20 WWPs underperformed, mainly due to social conflicts and difficult access to the remote locations.

Lessons

- The involvement and power sharing between husbands, mothers-in-law and/or elder women in different meetings and decision-making processes has created an enabling environment for the younger women.
- It is important to 'go slow and steady' in managing religious and social leaders.
- Women's mobility increased as a result of their involvement, enabling them to use their bargaining power at local markets.
- National-level stakeholders, mainly the government, showed interest in the project at the outset, but did not become particularly involved. In future there needs to be a way of linking WWPs with local authorities.
- There is a need to strengthen the WWPs and promote sustainability through:
 - Addressing user contributions and operation and maintenance;
 - Linking with other organisations that can build women's skills and capacity;
 - Advocating at the national level for recognition, scale-up and replication;
 - Investigating the reasons for underperformance of some WWPs; and
 - Increasing disaster-risk reduction and resilience perspectives in all future capacity building initiatives.



Golam Morshed / Oxfam Bangladesh

References/Link

Morshed, G. (2013) 'Women's WASH Platform (WPP) Empowerment in WASH, Bangladesh', presentation by Oxfam Bangladesh, Emergency Environmental Health Forum (EEHF), January 2013, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. London, UK: EEHF. ([on USB stick](#))

**VIOLENCE
GENDER
& WASH**

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