

# State of Water and Sanitation in South West Bangladesh

## Pitfalls and Prospects

### Introduction

It is estimated that more than 70 million people in Bangladesh are affected by climate change, many of whom live in coastal areas. According to a survey in 2017, 31% of children under age 5 were stunted and 9% were severely stunted<sup>1</sup>, which is partially caused by the lack of access to clean water and safe sanitation. Water options are often hard to access, requiring round trips of over 30 minutes. This exacerbates risk for women and adolescent girls, who are typically tasked with the transport, storage and use of water. Empowerment of women with regard to water and sanitation is one catalyst to ensure sustained access to safe drinking water. USAID's Nobo Jatra project, implemented by World Vision Bangladesh, prioritizes

### WORLD VISION'S "CITIZEN VOICE AND ACTION" APPROACH

The recommendations here are drawn largely from the opinions and data gathered by communities themselves in Khulna and Satkhira districts. Across Khulna and Satkhira districts, World Vision equips communities to monitor the provision of basic services using its "Citizen Voice and Action" social accountability approach. The data on community-led monitoring of WASH facilities referenced in this brief has been generated by communities in 40 Union Parishads



<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), and ICF. 2019. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18: Key Indicators. Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: NIPORT, and ICF.

women's leadership in WASH governance to improve water and sanitation in all 40 unions of Dacope, Koyra and Kaliganj, Shyamnagar upazila under Khulna and Satkhira districts in southwest Bangladesh.

Since 2015, the Nobo Jatra project<sup>2</sup> has sought to improve the food security, nutrition and resilience of vulnerable communities, especially children, through a multi sectoral set of interventions, including new investments in water and sanitation. The project is also facilitating World Vision's social accountability approach named Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) in collaboration with Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), community people and civil society with the objective to improve access to government services and inputs. The time for action is now to achieve the commitment to fulfil Sustainable Development Goal #6, and "ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all"<sup>3</sup>.

## Key Recommendations

- Vast areas in the four sub districts do not have access to safe drinking water. The Department of Public Health & Engineering (DPHE) and Union Parishads at the sub district level need to make greater investments for safe drinking water facilities to overcome this challenge.
- Union Parishads need to allocate adequate budget through the open budget process to increase access to sanitary latrines in addition to raising awareness on hygienic practices. Regular Water and Sanitation (WatSan) committee meetings should be ensured at ward and union level. Local government institutions should have concrete plans for enhancing sustainability and ownership of Water Management Committees (WMCs) and WatSan committees.
- Unplanned and commercialized shrimp cultivation in saline water is severely affecting the environment, biodiversity, and particularly sources of safe drinking water. Thus, unplanned expansion and commercialization of shrimp cultivation needs greater regulation and monitoring by the Department of Fisheries, district and sub-district administrations.
- Stronger collective action is needed by community based organizations in light of 'citizen charters' to ensure services by establishing accountability and transparency mechanism between service providers and community people.
- Water Management Committees (WMCs) should take proactive initiatives to excavate ponds to have fresh water bodies, which would be a pathway to improve water conditions at union level. Coordination among government and nongovernment organizations should be increased.
- Training and capacity development of caretakers of the water points is a catalyst for ensuring quality of drinking water. Sustainability of water options is linked to the skills and capacity of Water Management Committees, particularly caretakers, to maintain, repair and mobilize funds (through tariffs and Union Parishad budget allocation). DPHE can train members of WMCs on Water Safety Plans and Water Quality Testing. It is highly recommended to prioritize and

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2 USAID's Nobo Jatra project is a consortium led by World Vision Bangladesh that also includes Winrock International, and The World Food Programme. For detail see, <https://www.wvb-nobojatra.org/2017/01/24/program-overview/>

3 See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

empower women to serve in leadership positions within committees related to WASH as they are directly involved in the transport storage and treatment of water.

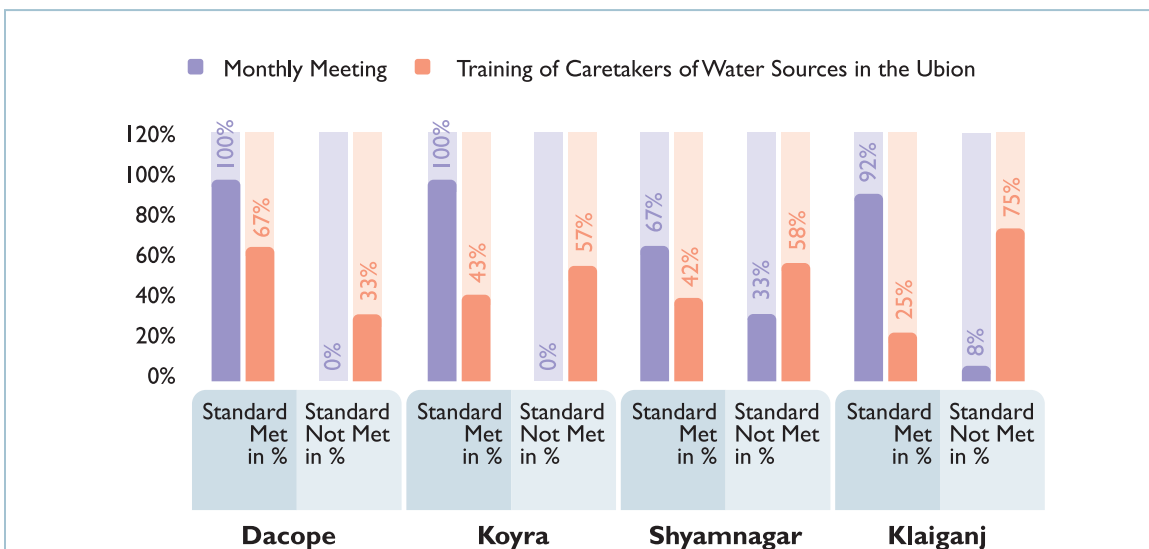
- Private sector engagement is essential for sustained provision of WASH services.
- Communities in the coastal belt are historically dependent on ponds for drinking water. As there is no other reliable source for drinking water, ponds should be conserved. Hence, lease of ponds for commercial purposes should be stopped immediately.

## Citizen Voice and Action process

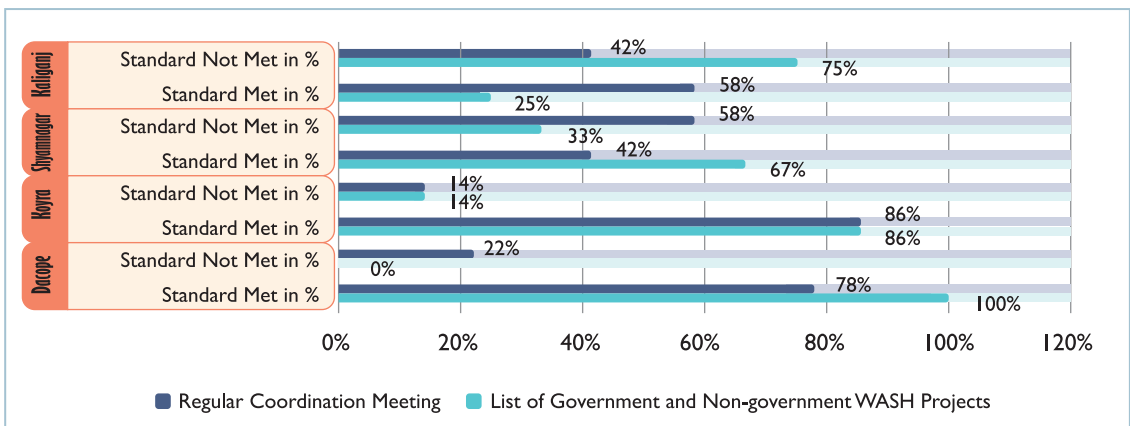
As part of the social accountability process, four formal meetings were arranged in four sub districts. 40 monitoring standard sessions took place in 40 unions since December 2017 to April 2018. Members of Union WatSan Committees including chairmen and members of the Union Parishad were the participants – this is important as Union Parishad are local leaders who are important allies and can help mobilize funds both from Government and from local donations and also ensure communities’ engagement. 478 participants attended monitoring standard sessions - 28% of whom were women.

## Key Findings

- Monthly meetings are regularly taking place in all unions in Dacope and Koyra; monthly meetings are taking place in 92% of unions in Kaliganj and only 67% unions in Shyamnagar could meet this standard.
- Coordination among government and non-government organizations with regard to water and sanitation related projects is strong in Dacope (100%) and in Koyra (86%) sub districts.



- Data shows that 78% of unions in Dacope and 86% of unions in Koyra had conducted coordination meetings among respective government institutions and NGOs. Only 67% unions in Shyamnagar sub district could coordinate well among government and non-government institutions with regard to water and sanitation related projects
- With regard to preparing list of beneficiaries who need support, 89% unions in Dacope, 71% unions in Koyra, 67% unions in Shyamnagar, and 75% unions in Kaliganj managed to do this.
- Similarly, there is a progressive trend in the unions with regard to documentation. 100% unions in Dacope, 71% unions in Koyra, and 75% unions in Kaliganj have preserved list of beneficiaries who have received support from government and NGOs.
- Eight unions out of nine in Dacope sub district have annual plans for improving water and sanitation conditions; in six unions' water and sanitation related projects are aligned with annual plan. Seven unions out of 12 in Kaliganj have annual plan and five unions have aligned projects with their respective plan.



## Challenges

- In 67% unions in Dacope, a list of caretakers of water sources was developed and Upazila Department of Public Health and Engineering provided training. There is significant lack with regard to achieving this monitoring standard because 75% unions in Kaliganj, 58% in Shyamnagar, and 57% unions in Koyra could not meet the standard.
- 75% unions in Kaliganj could not coordinate well among government and non-government institutions with regard to water and sanitation related projects. It is

*Aleya Begum, a 25-year-old woman who lives at the Sutarkhali Union of Dacope. Waking up before dawn every day, Aleya Begum walks to a water plant about five kilometers away to collect fresh drinking water for her six-member family. It will be midday or even later before she returns home. Without this strenuous journey through an uneven path, and without any path to the plant near Sutarkhali Union Parishad, where pond water is treated, there will be no water for cooking and drinking.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> For detail see, Potable water crisis in Southwest Bangladesh, for detail see, <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/environment/potable-water-crisis-southwest-bangladesh-1512511>



alarming that 58% unions in Shyamnagar could not arrange coordination meetings whereas only 58% unions in Kaliganj could meet this monitoring standard.

- In Shyamnagar, 58% unions could not meet this monitoring standard with regard to preserving list of beneficiaries who have received support from government and NGOs.
- In Koyra data shows only three unions out of seven have annual plans in place. Similarly in Shyamnagar five unions out of 12 have annual plan that means about 42% unions in this sub districts have projects aligned with the annual plan. Much attention is needed in the Koyra and Shyamnagar sub districts to improve this monitoring standard.

## Areas of Improvement

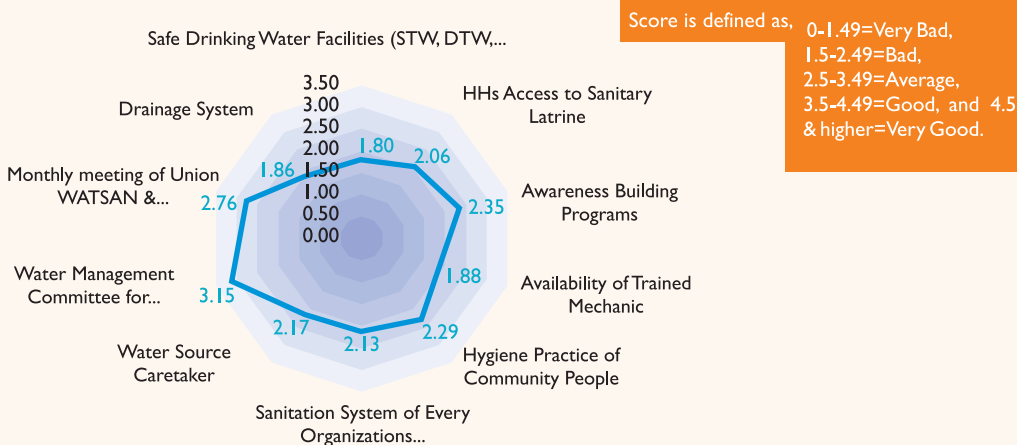
According to respondents, only three unions out of nine have met this standard in Dacope while two unions out of seven in Koyra, two unions out of 12 in Shyamnagar, three unions out of 12 in Kaliganj have met the monitoring standard on 'access to sanitary latrines'. Data reflects that most of the unions in the four sub districts do not have 100% access to sanitary latrines. One shallow tube-well for 50 persons and one deep tube-well for 80 to 100 persons were considered for setting monitoring standard with regard to 'access to safe drinking water'. Only two unions out of nine in Dacope have met this monitoring standard whereas no unions in Koyra, Shyamnagar and Kaliganj could meet this standard. This is an alarming state because according to data of monitoring standard vast areas in these four sub districts do not have access to safe drinking water. One pond per village was a criteria into the monitoring standard. It is found that four out of nine unions in Dacope, two out of seven unions in Koyra, and two out of 12 unions have met this standard. All 12 unions in Kaliganj could not meet the standard. Data shows that there is significant lack of ponds in the villages in all four sub districts.

Services	Dacope	Koyra	Shyamnagar	Kaliganj
Access to sanitary latrines	3 out of 9 UPs	2 out of 7 UPs	2 out of 12 UPs	3 out of 12 UPs
Access to safe drinking water	2 out of 9 UPs	0	0	0
Pond per villages	4 out of 9 UPs	3 out of 7 UPs	2 out of 12 UPs	0



## Scorecard result

Nobo Jatra had facilitated score card exercise among 4402 respondents through 360 FGDs in four sub districts. A series of scorecard exercises took place from February 2017 to June 2018. Performance measuring indicators were agreed through participatory discussions among stakeholders from grassroots to institutional level. Indicators were measured using happy and unhappy emoticons.



Score is defined as, 0-1.49=Very Bad, 1.5-2.49=Bad, 2.5-3.49=Average, 3.5-4.49=Good, and 4.5 & higher=Very Good.

It is apparent from score card exercise that respondents gave average score to water management committee and monthly meetings done by WatSan committees. According to respondents, score is not really good (1.5-2.49) for most of the performance measures. This score card exercise indicates that respondents are not happy about safe drinking water facilities, drainage system, mechanics' skill, sanitary latrines, awareness and hygiene practice and caretakers of water sources.

## Concluding remarks

Major decisions came out in the Divisional Workshop on WASH - "Crises of Potable Water and Safe Sanitation in Coastal Area: Role of different Stakeholders" last year in Khulna. Most of the decisions are communicated to respective local government institutions and necessary implementation is in progress. Union Parishads have development budget but there is a need to prioritize the water and sanitation issues in the annual plans and budget. Each Union Parishad needs to develop five years plan considering these recommendations. Union Parishad Chairmen and Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) at sub district level should take action to make the WatSan committees operational. The Department of Public Health Engineering should also ensure further initiatives for the capacity building of Water Management Committees and caretakers of water sources.

This policy brief has been developed based on the data resulting from monitoring standards and community's participation organized by USAID's Nobo Jatra Project. Research by- **Rubayat Ahsan** and **Nirmal Sarker**, Research assistants - **Mandira Guha Neogi** & **Faima Rahman**, Information collection at field level- **Amos Murmu** and **Stephen Hembrom**, Idea and Editing- **Mohammed Norul Alam Raju** and **Saeqah Kabir**

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