

DASCOH project with WIN

DASCOH is implementing “Strengthening Water and Sanitation Integrity for Godagari, Rajshahi, Bangladesh” projects in the Godagari Upazila of Rajshahi District with financial and technical assistance from WIN. Godagari is situated within the Barind Area, a semi-arid region in northern Bangladesh renowned for its distinctive geographical attributes. This area is distinguished by its undulating topography, red soil composition, elevated temperatures, lower precipitation in comparison to other regions of the country, and constrained water resources. Consequently, the area grapples with issues of water scarcity and water governance, with added concern of climate change posing an additional threats.

The most of the institutions working in this area are not practiced public hearing, effective citizens’ complaint mechanism, and clarification of the useful rules and regulations to the citizens. They never share their plan and budget, and the ‘rules of the game’ with the stakeholders; rather, they implement their projects and selects beneficiary by themselves. Rural areas of Bangladesh have lacked of strong civil institutions which are representatives of all stakeholders, and a clear mandate understood by the rural population.

Godagari Upazila, with nine Unions and two Paurashavas, faces with water scarcity, impacting both drinking and household use, and agriculture. Situated in a drought-prone area of Bangladesh, it confronts climate change challenges, including droughts, river erosion, cold waves, and soil degradation. The Barind region's groundwater sustainability is a significant concern, affecting livelihoods. Additionally, issues such as land rights for ethnic minorities and human rights persist, with problems like violence against women, child marriages, and gender-based violence having direct or indirect ties to water integrity. Ethnic minority groups, especially women and girls, face discrimination due to their gender, indigenous identity, and socio-economic status.

In this complex context, DASCOH's implemented projects aim to address water and sanitation integrity issues, contributing to sustainable development, community well-being, and human rights improvements in the Godagari Upazila.

Main stakeholders the project is working with.....

In the implementation of water and sanitation integrity projects, DASCOH is collaborating with a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure the success of the initiatives. The scope of DASCOH's partnerships includes Village WatSan Committee (VWC), local government institutions, government agencies, local NGOs, private sector, media and Civil Society Organizations, all aimed at achieving improve water governance and equitable access to quality water and sanitation services.

DASCOH's deep-rooted engagement with Community, local government institutions (LGIs), NGOs, and government line agencies enhances its ability to drive impactful change. This includes strengthening the capacity of Union Parishads (UPs) and Paurashava through formal memorandums of understanding (MoUs) that outline roles, responsibilities, funding proportions, and quality standards for water and sanitation services. DASCOH's strategic focus on water governance interlinks with the delivery of WASH services, making it adept at navigating these issues on multiple forums.

Additionally, DASCOH's collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government, Local Administration, Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA), and Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and water Resources Planning organization (WARPO) of the Ministry of Water Resources. Collaboration with these key government departments and agencies is essential for the successful implementation of water and sanitation integrity projects, as it leverages their expertise, resources, and authority to ensure comprehensive and sustainable solutions for the benefit of local communities.

DASCOH's approach involves engagement with multiple stakeholders to foster collaboration in implementing relevant policies, strategies, rules, regulations with special focus on the National Policy for Safe Water Supply & Sanitation 1998, The National strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation 2021, Bangladesh Water Act, 2013, Water supply and Sanitation Sector Development Plan 2011-2025, enhancing water governance.

The Local Government Institutions of 9 Unions and 2 Paurashavas of the Godagari Upazila in Rajshahi district is playing a pivotal role in the implementation of water and sanitation integrity projects. DASCOH's office in Rajshahi and liaison office in Dhaka facilitate seamless coordination and collaboration with stakeholders at local, regional and national levels.

DASCOH is trying to facilitate sustainable transformations in water and sanitation services delivery by both government and non-government organizations through improved governance, heightened integrity, reduced corruption, and enhanced inclusion. Utilizing its expertise and strategically engaging with VWCs, DASCOH is committed to catalyzing positive changes that directly benefit communities, ensuring their equitable access to water and sanitation services.

Problems that the project is aiming to address.....

The project aims to address critical issues in the 9 Unions and 2 Paurashavas of Rajshahi district, which fall within the "Hard to Reach Area" classification of Bangladesh's Barind Tract. Despite the OECD's classification of Bangladesh as not fully fragile, political factors and weak institutional frameworks have positioned the country in a marginally fragile state. Political tensions and instability prevail, with potential for widespread unrest and violence. This political backdrop affects all aspects of society, permeating even to the grassroots levels, including Unions and Paurashavas.

In this context, the project endeavors to tackle numerous problems related to water and sanitation within the target area. While Bangladesh has made significant strides in improving water and sanitation coverage, certain pockets continue to face severe challenges due to geographical, socio-cultural, and infrastructural constraints, further exacerbated by extreme poverty and limited state outreach.

Specifically, within the project area, water and sanitation-related issues are pressing needs. Access to safe drinking water in Godagari Upazila is comparatively higher, with 92.9% of households using safe drinking water sources and 57.6% of households with hygienic toilet according to the south Asian anthropologist: A Household Study on Nutritional Status among Mothers and Their School Going Children in Godagari Upazila the statistical analysis survey report published in 2021. Notably, despite the higher access to safe water sources, the challenge lies in maintaining year-round access, particularly due to aquifer depletion attributed to large-scale irrigation and inadequate water management practices.

The project area's unique demographics present another layer of complexity. While predominantly Muslim, the region hosts a substantial number of religious and ethnic minorities (nearly 10.38%) often excluded from mainstream development initiatives. The project aims to address this marginalization by ensuring inclusivity and equal access to water and sanitation services.

Decentralized and effective local government system is essential for ensuring that the development agenda is pro-poor, expanding participation of citizens in decision-making, and ensuring that resources are allocated more effectively, directed to where they are needed the most. The performance of any LGI depends upon its ability to demonstrate good governance and ensuring capacity to provide improved basic services, especially safe, reliable, and quality drinking water, and hygienic sanitation. However, to provide climate resilient basic public services is currently addressed in a very limited way, and the need for it to be addressed nationally at policy level remains. Climate change is not mentioned or included in many Water, Supply and Sanitation (WSS)-related national policies, strategies, or guidelines. This may not be at all surprising as most of the documents were developed more than a decade ago, when knowledge and awareness of WASH related climate change issues were relatively low. Many adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities are being carried out, but in an isolated way. There is a need for a central institution which can gather information and data, and share experiences and best practices in the sector.

The initiative recognizes that the extreme poor are the most vulnerable and aims to uplift their living conditions by providing water and sanitation services. With a total population of 330,924 across 9 Union Parishads and 2 Paurashavas, encompassing 72,280 households as per Bangladesh National Portal, the project seeks to prioritize the extreme poor for services. The project will facilitate LGIs to select beneficiary guided by a participatory process, ensuring community involvement and avoiding potential conflicts.

However DASCOH identified pressing needs and root causes to resolve water and sanitation crisis through improving governance, enhancing integrity, reducing corruption, and ensuring inclusion through participatory approaches. This imperative is channeled through comprehensive water and sanitation integrity projects spanning across the 9 Unions and 2 Paurashavas of Godagari Upazila.

Project activities and update status.....

Objective aiming to achieve:					
No.	Activity	Target group / beneficiaries	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Remarks
1	Organize training to empower Community, Elected representatives of Local Government Institutions and stakeholders with knowledge and skills for promoting integrity in the water and sanitation sector. (3 days training for 6 batches of 9 UP, 2 Paurashavas and 1 Upazila, each with 10 participants)	Government officials, VWCs, Community Volunteers and Journalists	Increased awareness and capacity on integrity issues related to water and sanitation	Enhanced gender inclusion, climate adaptation, improved integrity in water sector	Ongoing activities operated by trained DASCOH staff who received IMT-SWSS training from WIN. Out of 6 batch, 3 rd batch training

Objective aiming to achieve:					
No.	Activity	Target group / beneficiaries	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Remarks
					has started today.
2	<p>Training on Integrity Management Toolbox (IMT-SWSS) for 3 staff member of project and 3 staff of DASCOH and implement the IMT-SWSS in long-standing communities equipped with two pipeline drinking water supply system in rural areas.</p> <p>(The implementation process will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting preparatory work through context analysis, stakeholders mapping, and consultations. • Facilitating workshops with communities to identify issues, assess compliance status, and develop an action plan. • Providing on-site and remote coaching, as well as conducting progress review workshops during the implementation of the action plan. 	DASCOH Project staff	Capacitated to apply IMT-SWSS	Apply IMT-SWSS and reduced corruption risks, improved governance in water entities	Initially DASCOH staff received IMT-SWSS training from WIN in Dhaka and that IMT tools are replicated for community capacity building those who are operating small scale water supply system with two LGI. Participants has made an action plan and that are implemented in their own community.
3	Organize democratic dialogue to empower marginalized voices for promoting transparency and accountability in community engagement, and ensure human rights and gender equality (in total 14 dialogues of which 11 at LGIs, 1 at Upazila, 1 at district and 1 at national level).	CVs, youth, women, media	Robust whistle-blowers protection, engagement in planning	Increased community engagement , transparent and accountable practices	Planned
4	Capacity building of Youth Ambassador to empower male and female youth to promote integrity champions (12 batches training, each with 20 participants from 11 LGIs and 1 Upazila).	Youth groups	Training and empowerment of youth as integrity ambassadors	Amplified youth involvement , advocacy, and awareness	Planned

Envisioned external collaborators.....

DASCOH envisions collaborating with following stakeholders to enhance impact of proposed water and sanitation integrity projects:

1. **Government Institutions:** DASCOH will closely work with LGIs, DPHE, and other relevant government agencies in water and sanitation governance. Their roles include aligning policies, enforcing regulations, and institutionalizing integrity norms for sustained impact.
2. **CSOs:** Collaboration with VWCs, CVs and Local NGOs will foster community engagement, enable budget monitoring, and strengthen advocacy efforts. DASCOH will together with above CSOs promote transparency, accountability, and integrity practices.
3. **Media:** DASCOH will engage local, national print and electronic media to reinforce advocacy campaigns, dialogue, raise awareness about integrity issues, and encourage public disclosure. This collaboration amplifies voices of marginalized communities, advocating for transparency and accountability in water and sanitation interventions.
4. **Academic Institutions:** Collaboration with academic and research institutions to conduct comprehensive studies on gender/sexortion, water governance and to inform evidence-based policy reforms.
5. **Development Partners:** By partnering with international organizations, including WIN, DASCOH will tap into global expertise, share best practices, and facilitates peer-to-peer learning events, enhancing project effectiveness.