

# STUDY ON MAINSTREAMING GENDER AND REACHING POOR IN ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENE AND WATER SUPPLY IN RURAL AREAS (ESHWRA) UNICEF-BANGLADESH



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## Executive Summary

### Introduction and objectives

In Bangladesh water-borne diseases are the major causes of morbidity and mortality.<sup>1</sup> Sanitation coverage was only 39% in 2004.<sup>2</sup> Poor households and especially the landless have few options to safe sanitation. Moreover, water and environmental sanitation knowledge, awareness and practice status is still at the level that needs much attention in order to attain the MDG targets. To address these issues the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and UNICEF have jointly developed a 5-year project titled 'Environmental Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Supply in Rural Areas' (ESHWRA), with financial support from DFID. The **development phase** (pilot covering 37 upazilas) is at the verge of completion and the **implementation phase** is about to be rolled off. At this point, UNICEF has undertaken an initiative to explore the extent to which the poorest, including women, have been reached by the project in the development phase, and obtain specific suggestions to ensure better targeting in the future.

The present study had several aims: (i) to show the extent to which the needs of the women and the poor have been addressed, (ii) analyzing the extent to which gender and poverty issues have lead to differences in access to water and sanitation facilities for both men and women, (iii) focusing on solutions that provide affordable and safe water supply and sanitation privacy for women and adolescent girls, (iv) analyzing whether gender and poverty issues are excluding/including people from participating in the decision-making processes around planning and implementation, (v) analyzing whether the project is gathering adequate information from a poverty and gender perspective to monitor progress and impact, and where necessary identify relevant indicators of impact and how these can be used to measure the performance for project partners, including GoB and LGIs, (vi) reviewing the extent to which gender and poverty issues are reflected in the project document, and based on the study propose recommendation for improvements in the future.

### Methodology

The study was designed to analyze distributional impact of the project on water, environment and sanitation related well-being of comparable stakeholder groups: (i) women and men, (ii) poor and non-poor. For attaining the purpose - assessing the level (extent) of gender mainstreaming and reaching the poor - the study used both social and economic analysis tools and methods (quantitative and qualitative). The sample households were selected using appropriate sampling procedure, so that it represents the natural pattern of distribution of households in the project areas. However, during the analysis the households were segregated into poor and non-poor using direct intake method. Ten different types of data collection instruments/tools have been developed and used for generating multidimensional data/information from various categories of respondents/participants.

The project area (geographic location) comprised 94 unions and 846 wards in 11 upazilas of 3 districts (Chuadanga, Rangamati and Rangpur).<sup>3</sup> Twenty percent of the unions (19 unions) from the location frame of 11 upazilas and fifteen percent of all wards (26 wards) under the selected unions have been brought under purview of the survey. Considering the time, cost and the logistics requirement, and taking into account the minimum sample size required to satisfy the various indicators (with 95% confidence interval and 5% precision), the sample size of the households was determined as 403 based on appropriate proxy. A total of 322

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<sup>1</sup> Unicef, State of the World's Children 2006

<sup>2</sup> Unicef, Progress for Children, 5<sup>th</sup> Report Card, 2006. Bangladesh, Updated in June 2006, [www.wssinfo.org](http://www.wssinfo.org)

<sup>3</sup> Scope of Work

women, 162 adolescents (boys and girls in equal proportion) and 81 males were interviewed in the survey. In addition, 5 group discussions, 63 key informant interviews, 5 process and outcome sessions, and 5 process-analysis sessions were held.

## **Findings**

01. The study reveals that the project documents have made considerable focus on poverty-related considerations. The relationship between poverty and hygiene practice is analyzed, several arguments in favor of focusing on the poor are developed and poverty indicators and determinants are addressed with due significance in project design and implementation plan.
02. There are “missing links” of poverty’ and gender between the written project guidelines and their implementation practices. Project documents put considerable focus on poverty-related realities on ground, that 47% of the rural population who live below the poverty line lack hygienic sanitation. Project designs and implementation plans develop poverty indicators and determinants quite aptly. Gender analysis in the project documents appears much weaker, key issues are inadequately recognized, disjoint, dispersed, scattered and not presented in a well-integrated manner. Despite acknowledging facts of women’s overwhelming involvement in water fetching, collection, washing, cleaning and cooking project implementation plan remains inadequately women-focused. As well, gender-sensitiveness is somewhat reduced through provisions of “women-only” courtyard meetings, whereby both men and women’s common group meetings could be practiced for greater gender-interaction.
03. The study reveals that overall less than half of the respondents have participated in courtyard sessions while the rates of participation are 39 percent among poor households and 44 percent among non-poor households. About 95 percent of the courtyard session participating respondents have reported of learning at least one knowledge-issue from the sessions.
04. Participation rate in the tea stall sessions is not encouraging. Males from less than one in four poor households and one in three non-poor households have participated in such sessions. About 83% of participating respondents reportedly have learnt at least one thing from the tea stall sessions.
05. Around 75% females and 60% males have reported that CHPs’ have visited their households. However, the visits were not regular. About 74% poor female respondents have reported that CHP’s home visits have been useful to them.
06. Most respondents, especially the females, have reported that they have learned many things from electronic and printing IEC/BCC materials prepared on WES issues. About 66% respondents of the poor and 74% of the non-poor households have reported that they learnt about personal hygiene by watching television program.
07. The overall “knowledge coefficient” for all respondents is estimated to be 0.83 (assuming the maximum as 1). The coefficients for poor and non-poor are 0.81 and 0.84 respectively, while those for male and female 0.77 and 0.85. ESHWRA project (including SocMob-AB and SSHE) reportedly is the prime source of knowledge on sanitation and hygiene for around three-fifths of the respondents. As for the sources of knowledge about WES, the poor reported ESHWRA activities seven percentage-points less as compared to the non-poor. The male female differential on the same is 22 percentage-points.
08. Tubewell in the project area is the main source of drinking water for more than three-fourths (78-79%), irrespective of their poverty status. However, about 15% of the

households use Unicef installed water points, and interestingly, the poor use them about twice less (10%) than the non-poor (19%).

09. ESHWRA supported water points have mostly been installed in non-poor households except in Rangamati, where they are installed in locations that are commonly accessible. In Rangpur, the poor and the women were not involved much in selection of the water points. In Chuadanga, it has been reported that the poor cannot provide the required land for the dug-wells. Therefore, they had to be installed in non-poor households. However, most of the water-user group members, especially the poor, reportedly have participated in the selection process.
10. A large number of water points (Tara pumps and dug-wells) are non-functioning during the dry season because they were hurriedly installed during the rainy season. Some water points in the study area have been reported as non-functional round the year.
11. The Tara pump technology is not user-friendly, especially for the women. The merits and demerits of the installed technologies are not adequately consulted with users. About only one-third respondents, mostly the non-poor have reported of being consulted.
12. Financial participation of members of the water-user groups is low. It is the owners of the households where the water points are installed have mostly paid the amount fixed by the project as members' contribution.
13. Schoolboys and schoolgirls are not adequately aware of the project except SSHE component (83%) and frontline project workers CHP (82%). Around 90% school children attended health and hygiene education classes.
14. For one in four students the arrangement of separate latrine for boys and girls in schools is still absent, and about one in five students reported that the design of the latrine as inconvenient.
15. Less than half of the students (46%) reportedly participated in school brigade activities. The average composite knowledge score related to sanitation and hygiene for boys and girls constitute 0.89 points (out of 1.00). At the practice level the average composite score constitute 0.76, and at the dissemination level the same is 0.65. On menstrual hygiene, the similar knowledge score of school girls is low (0.44) and practice score is even lower (0.38), which implies that majority of the girls are yet to be aware of the appropriate management of menstrual hygiene issues.
16. Almost 80% poor and 90% non-poor households reportedly have access to safe/clean and arsenic free water. Over the project development period, the poor have seemingly attained a net gain of about 56 percentage-points, while for non-poor households it has been estimated as about 71 percentage-points. Similarly, 69% poor and 87% non-poor households have reported access to sanitary/ hygienic latrine; and 87% of poor and 96% have access to water and environmental sanitation related information.
17. Any and/or all members in 28% poor and 9% non-poor households reportedly defecate in open spaces, while it was 73% and 80% respectively before the project. The current poor and non-poor difference lies between 8 percentage-points and 19 percentage-points. Before, the same was between 2 percentage-points and 7 percentage-points.

18. On the whole the incidences of diseases associated with the stated indicators (Diarrhoea, Typhoid, Jaundice, Dysentery, Worm, Blood-dysentery, Scabies, etc.) among both poor and non-poor over the reference period have declined remarkably (approximately reduced over 8 folds).
19. Composite gender mainstreaming score estimated using five major indicators (i. membership in committees, ii. planning and management, iii. SocMob-AB, iv. safe water supply and v. SSHE) depicts that, on the whole, women are lagging nearly twice (1.76 times) behind compared to men (score: 2.8 vs. 4.9). The highly pronounced gender gap areas are in the spheres of field level management, planning and implementation of ESHWRA project.
20. Estimates of reaching the poor composite index based on twenty-five pertinent indicators show for the poor it constitutes 0.31 and for non-poor 0.53; while for all (poor and non-poor taken together) the index is 0.44. It implies that ESHWRA was able to reach about 44% of all households in the project area. Less poor households compared to non-poor households have been reached (31% vs. 53%).
21. The existing monitoring system - be it by internal or external monitoring agency - emphasizes primarily on the performance evaluation based on physical and time-bound indicators. Adequate attention has not been paid to measure the extent of effectiveness of ESHWSRA project in providing sustainable services to women and poor people. Appropriate and adequate indicators to protect the interests of poor and destitute women are missing in the M&E system. Project encouraged community participation in the form of community/Para action plan, but relevant M&E indicators are missing which would trace communities' interest over time.
22. While judged through a poverty-gender 'input-output' lens (how much involved, how much benefited), the nature, type, frequency and magnitude of participation of the poor and the women (including socially excluded groups) in ESHWRA project's planning and implementation appear 'uneven'. Except in water-user group formation and care taking of latrines and water-points, women's participatory input is minimal in areas like community WatSan committee formation, implementation of CAP, poor beneficiary identification, site selection for tube-wells and water-point installation and CAP monitoring practices (activity guidelines of IR2001: 240-247).
23. The pronounced **strength** of the project in both gender and poverty respects are: a) poor people's role in decision-making, b) services are accessible for poor and women, c) non-political policy safeguards the project beneficiaries from split and divide, and d) service delivery provisions benefit a large section of people (infants, centenarians, etc.). The **weaknesses** by degree are: a) confusion and complexity, multi-layering and enormity of the project stakeholders (officers, CHPs, caretakers, supervisors, monitors, researchers, evaluators, interviewers, different committees etc.), b) time-constraint of committee chairs, c) lack of fund at the grassroots tier: meeting refreshment and suitable meeting venues (courtyards), d) project's non-consideration of rainy-season woes of women and girls in using distant latrines, and e) lesser attention to sanitation needs of the elderly and disabled women and poor people in practice.

## Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations having policy and programmatic implications are made on the basis of a comprehensive 'fact-finding' on linkages and compliance between the documented project intents and actual practices. UNICEF may consider reviewing and appraising these policy prescriptions to overcome persistent flaws in the rest part of the project.

01. **Formation of a gender task force** at ESHWRA project to meet women's special needs, as well as involving them comprehensively in the whole process. Training the implementers on field-specific gender needs, conducting gender-sensitive and gender-specific progress monitoring, etc. should get priority.
02. **Revision of the guiding principle:** The guiding principle of the project should be specific "empowerment of women and poor" under "poverty and gender focus" title. There exists a generic guiding principle -"empowering the voiceless" (IR 2001:11). "The Stakeholder Analysis guideline (IR 2001:65) and project logframe (IR 2001: 60-61) require incorporation of objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) related with gender needs.
03. **Gender-sensitization trainings** need to be introduced for men, because men too, need to be targeted to reach women effectively. It also implies that there should be specific motivation programs for men so that they become gender-sensitive. Steps that may become effective in raising gender-sensitiveness of men are: (i) video-documentary shows, trainings, discussions, motivational poster-leaflet-view cards and tea-stall sessions; (ii) special series of motivational gender-trainings for imams and priests; and (iii) men and women should be brought into same courtyard meetings and joint meetings (obviously wherever contexts permit) than separate meetings.
04. **Gender Policy Workshop:** It is learnt that women want to share and exchange with other women their (menstrual hygiene, sanitation) problems and special needs—some of which may be intensely private. In line with their preference, a women-focused and women-only 'fact-finding' workshop can be arranged before stepping into the implementation of the concluding phase of the ESHWRA project.
05. **Inception of reciprocation (incentive) policy:** For outstanding performance in hygiene and sanitation issues - women and poor people can be acknowledged and their contribution recognized with token gifts, prizes and certification. With non-cash reciprocation policy, women traveling from relatively distant areas for attending courtyard meetings and other tasks can be reciprocated with light snacks and token gift provisions.
06. **Formation of cultural troops:** Reaching hygiene message to all could be accomplished through formation of community-based WatSan cultural troops composed of local talents. (UNICEF may review experience regarding WatSan message dissemination through local cultural troupes.) It is suggested that SocMob-AB activities like special day/month observation activities, organizing fairs, etc. could be more people-centered with encouraging local talents (singers, *bauls*, *palakars*, dramatists), and employing locally based jubilatory competitions (like stick-fighting, Kabadi, wrestling, bull-fight, cockfight football match etc.).
07. **Emphasis "social exclusion":** Sanitation and hygiene needs of the socially excluded groups seem to have received little attention in the ESHWRA project documents. These groups include disabled, physically and mentally impaired, seniors (octogenarians/centenarians) on wheel chairs or of bedridden conditions, elderly widows without care-taking kinsfolk, arsenicosis victims, HIV/Aids positives, leprosy patients, hermaphrodites, disdained sects such as cremation-workers, sewage and sweeping workers, sex-workers, cobblers, and other scheduled caste

(by religion). Although not readily apparent in the present regional coverage areas, there are possibilities that some excluded groups may remain hidden and unexposed. A more careful consideration of the socially excluded should be made and targeted policy-decisions/programs designed.

08. **Gender-needs incorporation:** There is a policy need to emphasize:
- Separation of toilets for girls in high schools under school sanitation schemes, and equipping these toilets with menstrual disposal facilities.
  - Increase in number of latrines for girls in schools.
  - Appointment of more women and increase of more women paid-staff positions in the project secretariat each year (already prioritized in previous policy documents but was not maintained in practice).
  - Women masons need external support. UNICEF may consider subsidizing and supporting toward women masons' capacity building so that they themselves can accrue greater benefit and market-accessibility in the near future (ideally after one year upon withdrawal of UNICEF support/ subsidy).
  - Introduction of technical training for women such as soil quality testing, water quality testing, arsenic identification technique and specific trainings on operation and maintenance (O&M) needs to be arranged.
  - Menstrual hygiene training for adolescent girls needs to be built as an essential component of future project implementation practices.
  - Women residing in distant places from water points should be encouraged and facilitated with more preservation provisions, such as homestead rain-water harvesting.
  - Poor girls and women users' safety-security concern, especially using distant latrines and water-points at night, is reported as a barrier to attainment of the project goal. It is thus recommended to arrange a policy workshop toward attaining some viable measures to resolve the problem.
09. **Introduction of "potty training for children" in future policy:** Absence of children's' potty training poses one of the big barriers in attainment of hundred percent hygienic sanitation coverage. Children's open defecation and littering practice can be stopped through introducing "potty-training for children" as one of the major activities of the ESHWRA project.
10. **Shifting from community to individual needs:** Shifting from attending communal needs to individual needs is gradually becoming a timely adaptation reality. The project may gradually need to switch towards becoming supportive to individual level sanitation needs. For each impoverished household, the project may need to ensure availability of low-cost sanitation technology in the near future.
11. **Negotiating for appropriate amount of share of resources for the poor and women:** Project funds must be allocated by taking into consideration the special needs of poor and women. Especially a larger share of resources should be allocated to community mobilization and capacity building in order to reach the poor. The share of resources for the poor must be determined at least in proportion to their population size in the area.
12. **More priority to sanitation:** In WATSAN, sanitation is a less prioritized issue, and the service gap is larger (93% using safe water and 55% using sanitary latrine). Since the sanitation infrastructure is more costly, even an equal share of the resources means lower coverage under sanitation. Community toilets with

- maintenance by the community can be provided with to some of the low-income settlements.
13. **Improved institutional arrangements in implementing agencies for meeting targets of reaching the poor:** Existing poverty units in local government system should be strengthened and a senior officer should be put in charge of this. UNICEF should appoint teams for preparing six-monthly report prior to release of funds, selecting NGOs, mobilizing communities and forming community structures. These teams will deliver annual action plans. Training should be provided to all operational departments to develop a deeper understanding of poverty and its facets.
  14. **Establishment of basic common indicators for benchmarking:** A common set of indicators should be set for benchmarking and comparison at different period to measure levels of community involvement and reaching the poor and women.
  15. **Shift to incentive linked fiscal reform process:** Currently there are no incentives for NGOs and local government to successfully implement a project with proper management. This should be enforced to make it 'incentive linked'.
  16. **Grievance redress mechanism for the public:** Grievance redress mechanism should be a part of project design to make providers accountable. The information regarding the project should be shared on public domain for accountability of the contractors. The M&E system is not enough to capture contractor's performance, unless the beneficiaries are involved.
  17. **Proper institutional arrangements for participation at the community level:** The greatest problem currently faced are: (a) less user participation particularly of poor during installment of water points, (b) most of the water points are installed in the land of non-poor, and c) less user participation of poor during water service management and repair of water points. Participation is the corner stone in UNICEF's country WSS strategies. As such, proper institutional arrangements for participation at the community level should be strengthened.
  18. **PRA, CAP and MAP** as assessment, planning and learning tool need to be enhanced and increased and proactive participation of the women and the poor needs to be ensured. The capacities of field level implementation agencies need to be enhanced following well-designed practical strategies. Adequate monitoring and supportive supervision including hands-on training may ensure community participation and ownership of the massive project drive aiming at reaching higher WES related KAP goals of ESHWRA.