

Endline Evaluation Report

Dignifying Lives - Inclusive Approach for Socio-economic Empowerment of Informal Waste and Sanitation Workers



Practical ACTION

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Abbreviation

BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BPFMEA	Bangladesh Pet Flakes Manufacturers & Exporters Association
BPGMEA	Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturer & Exporters Association
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
CBLM	Competency-Based Learning Material
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CMSME	Cottage, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CRN	Corporate Responsibility Network
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DCD	Development Co-operative Directorate
DIFE	Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment
E2E	Empitier to Entrepreneur
EC	European Commission
ER	Expected Result
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSM	Fecal Sludge Management
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GYB	Generate Your Business
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
IGA	Income Generation Activities
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IYB	Improve Your Business
KII	Key Informant Interview
KN	Karmojibi Nari
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation

MAB	Municipal Association of Bangladesh
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
Mol&E	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MolGRD&C	Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperative
MSCC	Multi stakeholders Coordination Committee
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprise
NBFI	Non-Banking Financial Institution
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NTVQF	National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework
NWC	National Working Committee
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSB	Portable Steel Bridge
RMG	Ready Made Garment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIYB	Start and Improve Your Business
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SR	Social Responsibility
SWOT	Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats
ToC	Theory of Change
UDD	Urban Development Directorate
UGIIP	Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project
UN	United Nations
USD	US Dollar
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organising

Executive Summary

The World Bank development indicators reveal that since 2000, Bangladesh's urban population has almost doubled. This rapid urbanisation has made waste and sanitation management a grave problem. Thousands of informal waste and sanitation workers are involved in collecting, transportation and disposal of solid wastes, pit emptying, inorganic waste trading and recycling. Informal waste and sanitation workers remain unsung heroes who largely contribute to managing the urban areas' clean and green environment. They hardly paid off monetarily and did not get recognition for their work and dedication. Informal waste and sanitation workers are commonly neglected while formulating national-level policies. These workers were so used to being overlooked, molested, and exploited by others for so many years that they were not capacitated to be able to raise their voice for basic necessities, let alone rights.

Practical Action, in partnership with Karmojibi Nari (KN) and Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB), has implemented a project funded by European Commission (EC) titled 'Dignifying Lives: Inclusive Approach for Socioeconomic Empowerment of Informal Waste and Sanitation Workers'. The project executed in Faridpur, Bagerhat, and Barguna Municipalities and Gazipur City Corporation from January 2018 to December 2020. This project's main objective was to contribute to participatory, inclusive urban governance, in which informal waste and sanitation workers are socially and economically empowered to deliver equitable and integrated services. This project's primary target group was 2,200 informal waste and sanitation workers under four categories: waste collectors/sweepers, waste pickers, inorganic waste traders, and pit-emptiers. The project envisioned achieving several interrelated expected results to strengthen civil society organisations' capacity, representing informal waste and sanitation workers, municipalities and other key stakeholders such as recycling companies.

Methodology and Implementation

This study adopted a mixed-method approach to meet the set overall objective (impact) and specific objective/s (outcome). Data was primarily collected through a structured questionnaire survey with waste and sanitation workers in the project areas and document review. Upon reviewing the baseline report, in discussion with the project team, this survey collected data adopting the recall method for selected indicators to create a retrospective baseline (two-time points). Qualitative techniques included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and case studies. Besides, an assessment of the Cooperatives and Service Satisfaction took place in the project locations. For selected indicators, data for three-time points (baseline, before COVID-19 lockdown, and evaluation) was collected to assess the impact of COVID-19 lockdown in the project outcomes/impacts.

The survey covered 327 random informal waste and sanitation workers through structured interviews. Key informant interviews were conducted with 34 stakeholders and beneficiaries. The survey also covered eight focus group discussions with waste and sanitation workers, 16 cooperative assessment, and 8 case studies. The impact was assessed through comparative analysis using two-time point data. Content analysis was performed for qualitative information. The findings from qualitative information and quantitative data were synthesised to evaluate the programme activities through OECD-DAC criteria.

The project was designed in a manner to contribute in three tiers: community-municipality-national. Under the project, knowledge gathered from the community activities used to push targeted municipality offices to play a responsible role in facilitating supporting conditions for informal waste and sanitation workers' dignifying lives. Based on knowledge and best practices harnessed from the community and municipality level, project activities, Practical Action with Karmajibi Nari and Municipal Association of Bangladesh undertook policy advocacy activities with relevant government agencies at the national level. The trio project implementing agencies also went to international

platforms to include informal waste and sanitation workers' all-inclusive welfare, rights and recognition in the national policies.

Contribution at National Level

As a commissioned entity, Social Responsibility Asia (SR Asia) conducted a study and prepared a draft guideline for the inclusion of women, social scheme, health, safety standards of informal and sanitation workers. Representatives of the plastic manufacturers and recycling companies were trained to sensitise and orient for the inclusion of waste and sanitation workers cooperatives in their supply value chain as community suppliers. Guidelines for the joint policy recommendations on informal waste and sanitation workers' decent labour rights were developed and disseminated through online workshops and dialogues. The policy paper stated the possibility of accession the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund of the companies and financial institutions in Bangladesh for dignifying life and socio-economic empowerment of waste and sanitation workers. The paper recommended the inclusion of the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment (DIFE), Workers Association through a National Working Committee (NWC) to promote the CSR funding for establishing a decent work environment and dignifying the lives of informal waste and sanitation workers. Four platforms: FSM Network, National Conference on Urban Resilience, National Congress Association of Waste Pickers of Bangladesh and Urban Dialogue were endorsed to address labour, marginalised rights, urban waste management issues, sensitised to prioritise decent job rights and promotion of inclusive business models of informal workers for their social inclusion). A paper titled "Practical Action ingenious solutions- Social Inclusion, Poverty Reduction and Gender Dimension of Solid Waste Management" was developed and presented in the 10th International Conference on Sustainable Waste Management towards Circular Economy (IConSWM) organised by the International Society of Waste Management, Air and Water (ISWMAW) in the online platform. The paper spotlights how the project contributed to improving the lives of urban poor by working with municipalities to safely manage sanitation and effective solid waste management services to low-income communities and protect livelihoods, health, safety, and dignity of informal waste and sanitation workers. Learnings from the Dignifying Lives Project was shared in the UN-Habitat organised World Urban Forum'2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 8-13 February 2019 and World Urban Forum'2020 in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 8-13 February 2020 as part of SDG-11 related WASH target progress through environmentally friendly and sustainable technological solutions for sanitation and solid waste management. The project findings and learnings contributed to strengthening the national-level advocacy platform on Faecal Sludge Management (FSM). As part of scaling up, Practical Action presented the "Practical experiences formalising the informal in FSM and creating opportunities improved service delivery" at the 5th Faecal Sludge Management Conference (FSM) held in 2019. Practical Action has begun working with the Ministry of Labour and Employment to develop a National Standard for Labourers and Workers in the industry of urban sanitation and waste management. Three policy briefs were produced covering informal waste and sanitation workers' working conditions for health, dignity, opportunity, recognition, decent jobs; and access to financial services and roadmap for consultative policy development to strengthen the access. A national study conducted under the project, titled "Waste and Sanitation Workers' Condition, Occupational Health and Safety, Wages, Livelihood and Exclusion", explored that more than 400,000 waste pickers are working in Bangladesh whose safety working conditions have remained unrecognised for years. A consultation paper prepared from the project, entitled "Strategies for Access to Subsidised Finance by Micro, Small, Medium-Sized Entrepreneurs (MSMEs) involved in Waste Collection, Processing and Recycling", proposed a strategic framework for institutional access to finance by MSMEs involving the waste collection, processing and recycling. A 33-members National Working Committee (NWC) chaired by the Honourable State Minister of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E) was proposed in the "Guidelines for Joint Policy Recommendations on Decent

Labour Rights of Informal Waste and Sanitation Workers.” Besides, The State Minister of the MoL&E has pledged to take initiatives to get the Waste and Sanitation Workers access to fund for hazardous jobs. Policy briefs prepared under the project were submitted to the State Minister of the MoL&E for further actions regarding the informal waste and sanitation workers’ welfare. From the project, Practical Action as a member of the national committee of Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) on Competency-Based Learning Materials (CBLMs) prepared five CBLMs for the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) Level 01.

Contribution at Municipality Level

Four Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committees (MSCCs) were formed in four targeted municipalities converting the existing Municipality Waste Management Committee. There are representations from civil societies, municipality departments, informal waste and sanitation workers and low-income groups. Informal waste and sanitation workers representatives were included in MSCCs and Municipal Steering Committee. Representation of civil society organisation along with municipality representative and informal waste and sanitation workers representatives in the MSCC creates scopes of influencing strategies to dignify informal waste and sanitation workers’ lives. Informal waste and sanitation workers participation, especially women (30 % of representatives are women) in the MSCC and Steering Committee, ensured their voice and active involvement in organising and negotiating with municipalities decision making regarding the worker’s rights, women rights and inclusion in WASH management. The project demonstrated a number of innovative technologies for valuing waste, increasing income opportunity and improving the work environment of informal workers. Induction of the automatic van and other waste management technologies improved productivity and turnover of the municipality and involved informal waste and sanitation workers in the targeted municipal areas. Around 57% of the cooperative members are women, ensuring their inclusion and promotion in the waste and sludge value chain. Total 8 service contracts had been signed between registered informal waste and sanitation workers cooperatives, municipalities, Karmojibi Nari (KN) and Practical Action. Another 28 service contracts going through negotiations between informal waste and sanitation workers cooperatives and municipalities. Budget allocation of the three municipalities related to the wages and social welfares of informal waste and sanitation workers did not increase in 2020-21 compared to 2018-19, whereas the overall budget increased in all municipalities. Informal waste and workers related line items budget only increased at the Gazipur City Corporation (286.7%) in 2020-21, although it is less than the 2018-19 allocation. SR Asia conducted a study on “Operational Context of Corporate Social Responsibility & Value Chain Linkage Opportunities” as part of the drafting a guideline for the inclusion of women, social scheme, health, safety, health, safety standards of informal waste and sanitation workers. SR Asia completed piloting in the Gazipur City Corporation on the implication of draft guideline. Two cooperatives of informal waste and sanitation workers from Gazipur and Barguna emerged as suppliers and aggregators to the waste recycling industry through capacitated and supported by the project.

Contribution at Community-Level

Nearly 90% of the 36 registered cooperatives members received skill development training, including innovative entrepreneurship models (GYB, SIYB, IYB for cooperatives) including market assessment, business planning, and demand generation. The most highlighting feature of the project is that about 93% of the waste and sanitation workers have become aware of labour rights which were only around 5% during baseline. All of them reported cooperatives as the source of knowledge. More than 50% of the informal waste and sanitation workers of the targeted municipalities felt labour rights are upheld in the working situation since the project’s enrollment was less than 5% in the baseline.

Nearly 90% received health and safety gears from the project and training on usages, whereas only about one-third had access to such equipment in the baseline. The regularity of use of health and safety gears also improved more than 66% since the informal waste and sanitation workers received training on occupational health and safety along with demonstrations from the project officials about

usages of such equipment. Nearly 60% of the beneficiaries were oriented to new technology/ technological devices for waste management. Among them, about 85% reported having the ability to work with new technologies/ technological devices. Moreover, their perception regarding using technologies in waste management like automatic emptying, sweeping, and collecting wastes changed on a noticeable scale. Earlier, many had complaints about the weight and using the equipment's difficulty, but now nearly 90 per cent want to use additional safety gears.

As an ultimate contribution of training on occupational health and safety and increased supplies and usages of health and safety gears reduced the health risks and injuries of the beneficiaries that prevent loss of working days. The number of working days lost due to injuries and sickness is reduced by 73% compared to the baseline. The project reportedly contributed to the beneficiaries' regular and standard income by more than 40% if there had been no effect of COVID-19. Though there was an ill effect of COVID-19 in 2020, the waste and sanitation workers' income is 15% higher than the baseline. The average income of informal waste and sanitation workers is BDT 8,600 at the endline (2020), which was only BDT 7,474 during the baseline. The income tended to be BDT 12,876 (72% increase) if the COVID-19 pandemic not arrived on the horizon.

Participation of women in the promotion of waste and sludge value chain has increased. About 57% of the cooperative members are women, and about 51% placed in the executive committee's position. More than 30% of women representatives are in the MSCCs of four municipalities and Municipal Steering Committees. Women's participation in these committees' ensured women's active and influential involvement in promoting the waste and sludge value chain.

The project introduced a life insurance scheme in collaboration with Delta Life Insurance Ltd.; a healthcare scheme in association with local hospitals, diagnostic centres, medicine shops; educational support scheme in partnership with educational institutions. Advocacy from the project with the municipalities contributed to increasing wage and allocation of service benefits schemes for the serving informal waste and sanitation workers. Almost 93% of the project beneficiaries have access to essential healthcare services, and nearly 87% of their children have access to educational institutes. More informal waste and sanitation workers are reportedly involved in alternative income-generating activities (IGAs), including business enterprises. Nearly 30% of the informal waste and sanitation workers are thinking about changing their profession, and 17.9% of them considering kick off a small business.

As per the purview of the low-income groups, waste management services have improved due to the launching of automated waste collection van services and public sensitisation on community hygiene and a green environment. Productivity and turnover at least doubled in four municipalities through the induction of an automated waste management mechanism. Most municipal Dwellers confirmed that they find the new waste collection procedure environment-friendly, hygienic and swift. All are satisfied (very satisfied or satisfied) with the waste management and sanitation maintenance services, around 60% and 80%, respectively, during the baseline. The change of economic condition and community awareness from the project changed the social view on waste and sanitation workers as human beings and professionals. Society now starts to recognise the waste and sanitation works as city/municipal service professions. They also began to treat waste and sanitation workers as normal human beings.

Status of Project Activities Completion

Most of the planned output activities were completed to reach the targeted impact and outcome level. There are some deviations in some activities, mainly due to the unanticipated outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect. In 2020, most of the activities were organised in the virtual platforms due to physical movement restricted and risky. Two activities, "4.5. National conventions to realise the labour rights of waste and sanitation workers" and "4.11. Validation workshop for the finalisation and e-distribution of Policy & Consultation Papers", were remained unreported.

OECD-DAC: Assessment of the Project

Relevance: The project is highly relevant considering the informal waste and sanitation workers need, the strategy of Bangladesh's government and its current policies, logical and sequential interventions, and parts of SDG 1, 3, 5 and 8.

Efficiency: Almost all of the 36 activities under 4 outputs of the project were completed and reached their set target; some deviation occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic effect.

Effectiveness: The evaluation confirmed a high level of effectiveness of the project. The project outcome based on specific objective(s) has been achieved to a full or high degree.

Impact & Sustainability: The Evaluation confirmed a high potential for a lasting effect in outcome. The project has succeeded in pushing the ball of impact by sensitising the policymakers through targeted activities- a national study, three policy briefs, consultation papers, and a joint policy paper guideline. Considering the cooperatives required supervisory support to be self-dependent and completely self-operating, a 15-member Cooperative Management Committee (CMC) formed in each of the targeted municipal areas.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Dignifying Lives: Inclusive Approach for Socioeconomic Empowerment of Informal Waste and Sanitation Workers project has been stood out as a model project due to the approach's features and design of the result-chain: output-outcome-impact model. The project could not reach its ultimate targets due to the unanticipated outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations based on evaluation findings:

- Any socio-economic development project should have a contingency fund to address any unanticipated adversity like the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The time span of such a socio-economic development project should be at least five years.
- The project should develop incentives, contractual provisions, and motivations to prevent the drop out of the field and central-level project staff before the project's wrapping up.
- Documentation of the socio-economic development project should be straightforward and orderly instead of rigorous, and Management Information System (MIS) could be installed for documentation.
- The project should advocate with associated government agencies to influence them to issue a letter of commitment to make them liable and ensure their involvement after the project expired.
- Intense nursing of the mobilised community platforms such as waste and sanitation workers group is required for their sustainability.
- Leadership training for the women should be more intense and deeper to enable them to take over and run their own community forum unitedly and smoothly.
- Routine briefing in simple terms about the constitution and financial statement are required to ensure mutual trust between the cooperatives' general members and executive committee.
- In such a project, the cooperative members should be trained on financial services provisions like banking rules regarding the loan policy for the different business types.
- Influencing the cooperatives members' attitude, habituating in practice and knowledge transferring through workshops and training regarding development of life skills, is required to make a sustainable impact.
- A permanent formal channel is required to establish between community and the national level stakeholders- it is not easy but a must for making a sustainable impact.
- A federation of the cooperatives could be formed to take the cooperatives' agendas to the higher authorities and look after their well-being.