

WATER AND SANITATION INITIATIVE FOR URBAN POOR

Presented by

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Background

The total area of Bangladesh is 147,570 square km where 126 million people live. Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The capital city Dhaka has alone a population of around 9 million, 30% of this population live in informal settlements, mainly in slums. According to Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (DWASA) projections, the population of Dhaka city will be approximately 25 million in 2020 and 50% of this population will live in informal settlements.

The Problem

Water supply for poor urban dwellers in Dhaka City is problematic. Much of the land in Dhaka is government owned, and most slum dwellers are illegal squatters on this land. The agency, which provides water supply and sewerage in the city, Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (DWASA), only provides connections to land owners, on presentation of a 'holding number' related to their plot. Slum dwellers therefore find themselves outside the official system. The institutional denial of services to the urban slum has encouraged a parallel growth of an informal market where the consumers pay an unregulated price as decided by the supplier of the services. DWASA is deprived of the revenue and the illegal operators make large profits. The cost of this water is high, either in cash terms, as the people who control the connection usually sell the water, or in terms of time, as to find an operable water source from which to collect water can be a lengthy process. It is not surprising slum dwellers collect water by using a variety of other sources, such as ditches, ponds or factory effluent, despite the poor quality of this water.

This situation means that demand for a reliable, good quality water supply is high. Slum dwellers have the willingness to pay for their water the way wealthier residents of the city do and share the same benefits of reliability and quality. However, the obstacles to this are both institutional and technical.

The institutional obstacle is the lack of official recognition of slum dwellers and therefore the difficulty in providing them with legal, metered DWASA connections. The technical problem is the Dhaka does not have continuous water supply, and households must construct storage tanks to store water collected when water is available in the mains (often at night) for use later. Slum dwellers, who live in extremely poor housing, usually constructed of bamboo and plastic sheeting, cannot afford this infrastructure.

The Solution

Faced with these problems, one of WaterAid's NGO partners developed a community-based solution, which relies on the NGO to play a crucial intermediary role.

DSK approached DWASA for connections to the piped water system, and tried to convince the authorities that provision of community taps to slum residents was an economically viable project. They also offered to mediate as guarantor for the security deposit and regular payment of water bills on behalf of the community. DWASA finally agreed to make an exception and sanctioned two water points to DSK for collective use by the community.

The first water point of DSK was commissioned in October 1992. The responsibility for running the services was delegated to a group of enthusiastic young men from the

community. DSK signed an agreement with this group making them responsible for payment of water bills and weekly repayments of capital costs, operating a bank account and maintaining regular liaison with DSK. Unfortunately, this group very soon became dominated by a local influential mastaan. He appropriated the water point, ignored the agreement with DSK, and stopped paying the weekly instalments.

The second water point was installed in April 1994. Based on the previous experience, intense discussions were held with the community on the modalities of operation and their responsibilities, and a more rigorous procedure was followed to organise a water management group. Two caretakers were also appointed to run the water points. This project was a success. The community was satisfied with the service, DWASA bills were paid regularly and DSK has fully recovered their investment cost. The significant lesson learnt by DSK was that user groups have to be organised, oriented to assume the responsibility, and involved in planning, implementation and management of the water point in order to instil a sense of community ownership and thereby ensure sustainability.

Encouraged by the above experience, the UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Program, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) and later WaterAid collaborated with DSK to further test the approach and develop a replicable model for sustainable water supply for the urban poor. DSK led the project while the donor partners provided guidance, technical support, and strategic supervision.

The solution is to organise the community to build a shared water point and for the NGO to apply to DWASA on the community's behalf to obtain a legal connection. The water points have an underground storage reservoir topped with a concrete platform. Two simple suction hand pumps are mounted in the platform and used to pump water up so it can be collected for household use, or used at the water point for bathing or clothes washing.

DWASA is willing to provide these water point connections if permission to use the site has been obtained from the landowner (usually the City Corporation), if a security deposit is made, and if the intermediary agency is trusted and makes a guarantee that the bills will be paid.

DSK's Present Approach to work

DSK started work to solve the water supply problems in the slums. But later they realized that without addressing the problem of sanitation and hygiene promotion along with water service it is impossible to improve the health status of the poor people in the urban community.



From 1997 DSK has been implementing an integrated program including components like water supply, sanitation service, drainage and footpath development, and hygiene promotion. Through integrated activities it has been learned that the success of the integrated component of the project depends on the active participation of the community;

from planning to implementation and thereby to run the services by the communities themselves.

Operation modality

To ensure community participation in management DSK forms water committees; a management committee with women and a advisory committee with men. Water committees are responsible for management of the water point, minor repairs, regular payment of water bills, the caretaker salary and repayment of instalments.

Design Modification

An expert group of technical people are involved in the design of different water and sanitation options for poor community which are user friendly, affordable and sustainable

Financing

DSK extends a loan on an average amount of Tk 50,000 (approximately \$ 90) for each water point. Loan repayments are done over a thirty-month period including a six-month grace period. A contract between DSK and the community formalizes the terms and conditions of operation of water points. Among other considerations the cost of construction have to be reflected in the contract clearly. Water prices are charged either on monthly basis or on pay and use basis. A twenty-liter of bucket of water usually costs Tk 0.5 and Tk 1.00 for washing bathing etc.

Sustainability

Sustainability of the water point operation has been achieved because of the inbuilt design. Water point operation is seen as a small water business operated and maintained by the community.

Up to June 2002 eleven water points were transferred under community management. Three others are in the pipeline to be transferred. The main criteria taken into consideration were presence of Water Point (WP) management committee, regular monthly meetings, women's attendance, women leadership, male attendance, regular payment of DWASA bill, regular payment of capital loan, cleanliness at the WP, ownership feeling.

Present Status

Approximately 150 water points have been constructed, serving 17500 families, or 110,000 people. WaterAid provided financial support to seven NGOs including DSK to construct 113 water points. Plan International and UNICEF joined with Water Aid to scale up the process. Proshika, a large scale national NGO also has been replicating the model from their own initiative. In addition, the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) began implementing a similar process through the Urban Basic Services project.

Including all this initiatives a dynamic progress/ paradigm shift occurred in the last year. In April 2001 DWASA initiated a dialogue with all the stakeholders to scale up the program to serve a wider group of community. Because the process helps DWASA to increase their revenue and decrease their system loss. Also they identified that the poor people are more regular than the rich in terms of paying the bill.

As an example of their seriousness about the initiative they have reduced the security money for per water connection from Taka 7500 to Taka 1000 only.

Water and Sanitation Initiative for Urban Poor

After 9 months of dialogue, research, joint planning and assessment of DWASA, Plan International, UNICEF, WaterAid and partners, DWASA called publicly for donor support to its "Urban Water and Sanitation Initiative for Dhaka Urban Poor". As of January 2002 there is an agreed budget plan for the initiative via an INGO consortium with local NGO partners. However the initiative is still seeking 80% of the funds. Rest of the 20% of funds committed to date are from the INGO consortium.

After a series of discussion with all the stakeholders including community groups, following the model, DWASA initiated a project for three years for water, sanitation and hygiene promotion in Mirpur zone.

WaterAid, Plan International, UNICEF and DSK are the collaborative partners of that process.

Strategies for Implementation the planned project

- The development partners (DPs) and international agencies will form a consortium.
- DP consortium will commission NGOs in a coordinated way, avoiding any duplication and overlapping, based on agreed upon criteria e.g. working relationship with community, familiarity with the basic features of the project design, proven expertise in the field etc.
- NGOs establish water points according to the basic features of the evolved approach so that at the end of the project period Community Based Organizations (CBOs) become the owner and manager of their water points and local supply system.
- DP consortium will support the NGOs through pool or parallel funding mechanism as appropriate in respective situation. In case of pool funding, DP consortium will select a lead agency from amongst the members.
- DWASA will serve the initiatives of the consortium and communities from the bulk supply perspective and smooth the processes for approval of community water supply connections.



Role of different stakeholders to initiate/ scale up the process

DSK:

- Innovated and piloted a model for urban poor to provide them improved water and sanitation services
- Mobilized and organized the urban poor to gain access to water from public institution.
- Provided training and other support to WATSAN management committee for their capacity building
- Influenced other local NGOs/INGOs/Local govt/ government agencies to replicate the model
- Provided technical support to other organizations for replicating the model.
- Influenced DWASA for a revolutionary decision to give legal connections of water and sanitation services in the informal settlements and further influenced DWASA to take the lead role to scale up the model.
- Influenced DCC to replicate the model for urban poor and give permission to NGOs for constructing water reservoirs in their land
- Built the bridge between INGOs and government institutions.

WaterAid

- WaterAid started supporting the slum water supply model in 1997. Initially, WaterAid supported the NGO who developed the model, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK), to finance ten water points and further develop the approach.
- Provided financial and technical support for capacity building of DSK to advocate the approach to both the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and DWASA.
- To involve more NGOs in the process, WaterAid took on six more NGO partners and provided funds to DSK to give technical support, advice and training to other NGOs so they can replicate the same model.
- Worked jointly with DSK to form a network among the NGOs, that are replicating same model to advocate the issue from a common platform.
- Worked with NGO partners to influence DWASA and DCC.
- Informed international donor community about the process and has been trying to convince them for financial support in the process.
- Under the same umbrella WaterAid has been working with government, non-government and international agencies to have attention about the ignored issue, **“urban crisis”**

DWASA

- DWASA informed and increased awareness of own staff in both central and local level for the dynamic progress of the process.
- DWASA has taken the lead role to influence the donor community for mobilizing the financial resources to scale up the model.

Other International agencies

International agencies, UNICEF and PLAN International joined with WaterAid in the year 2001 and they are playing important role to advocate the issue at the different level and mobilizing funds to scale up the process.

Out come

- Some urban poor gained improved access to water and sanitation service from public water and sanitation authority.
- Established a model to provide water among the urban poor in informal settlements.
- Public water authority has taken a lead role for providing water and sanitation services to the urban poor.
- A formal network has been established among community representatives, NGOs, three INGOs and two government agencies to work for the urban poor regarding water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.
- Government agencies and civil society are more aware about the acute crisis of water and sanitation in the slums
- The right of the urban poor to access safe water and sanitation despite their lack of tenure has been recognized by DWASA.
- WaterAid and partners approach has been enthusiastically adopted by two INGOs

Issues for future advocacy

- The way WaterAid, Plan International and UNICEF recognized the problem and made commitment to support, other international donors still ignore the urban crisis.
- Tenure right of the slum people is a big question for further development of the process. Because with out the tenure right there is always possibility of slum eviction which demoralises and decreases interest for development projects in slums.
- Still DWASA is willing to give the connection to the name of NGOs, not directly to the community, which is a threat for ownership of the project.
- Federation among community-based organizations is needed for effective future movement from the community to establish their rights.