



WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES:
**A YEAR OF IMPACT AND
IMPLEMENTATION**

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROGRAMME
ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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About **BRAC**

The journey began in 1972 in the newly sovereign Bangladesh, and over the course of our evolution, we have been playing the role of recognising and tackling the many different realities of poverty. We have, therefore, developed support services in the areas of human rights and social empowerment, education and health, economic empowerment and enterprise development, livelihood training, environmental sustainability, and disaster preparedness across Asia and Africa.

VISION

A world free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination where everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential.

MISSION

Our mission is to empower people and communities in the situation of poverty, illiteracy, disease and social injustice. Our interventions aim to achieve large scale, positive changes through economic and social programmes that enable women and men to realise their potential.

VALUES

Integrity,
Innovation,
Inclusiveness,
Effectiveness

Message from **Executive Director, BRAC**

Water, sanitation and hygiene is more of a pressing issue than it has ever been. 2.2 billion people across the world still live without access to safely managed drinking water, 80% of them in rural areas - and the climate crisis is rapidly exacerbating the challenge.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in ensuring access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, but a lot is yet to be done. Even today, approximately half of the population in Bangladesh do not have access to safely managed water. The climate crisis is adding new dimensions to this long-standing challenge, with salinity, for example, now encroaching more than 100km inland from the coast, into domestic ponds, groundwater

supplies, and agricultural land. Recent research shows households living in poverty are spending disproportionately more to source clean drinking water, highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of this challenge and its increasing link to poverty. Tackling this will require innovative and locally-led approaches, and stronger partnerships.

2.8 million people have gained access to safe drinking water and 44 million people have gained access to hygienic sanitation through BRAC's WASH programme since 2006. 265,000 people received support this year alone, through activities such as installing water treatment plants, setting up deep tube-wells, and

installing rainwater harvesting systems. These achievements have taken a village, and we are indebted to the tireless dedication of the communities we work with, our frontline staff, and the unwavering support of our partners, including government officials, educational institutions, and religious leaders, for their collective support.

As we move forward, it is clear that the impacts of the climate crisis and pollution on water resources are escalating at an alarming rate necessitating adaptive and innovative solutions. To this end, we will intensify our efforts to strengthen the supply chain for water and sanitation services in climate-vulnerable areas and

chars (river islands), by supporting local entrepreneurs to adopt climate-resilient technologies, and engage in research-focused partnerships to figure out context-specific solutions for water-stressed regions, particularly in the Barind region in northwestern Bangladesh. The collaborative spirit between government, non-government, private sector and civil society organisations that has been instrumental in the achievements made up until now will remain crucial as we navigate these new challenges.

Together, we will continue to advance our mission, standing with communities to strive towards safe water, sanitation, and

hygiene for all. The journey ahead will not be easy, but with our collective effort and commitment, I am confident we can make a significant contribution to the lives of those who need it most.

ASIF SALEH
Executive Director
BRAC



Message from **Director, WASH**

Embarking on its 51st year, BRAC continues with its drive for adopting innovative and evidence-based solutions to transform the lives of the marginalised communities. The WASH Programme, established in 2006, exemplifies BRAC's comprehensive approach to sustainable development by concentrating on providing clean water access, enhancing sanitation facilities, and fostering good hygiene practices both at communities and institutions levels. This year has been marked by significant progress and impactful interventions, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to advancing sustainable WASH services in alignment with both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national priorities.

In 2023, our programme made notable strides in enhancing access to safe drinking water, improving sanitation facilities, and promoting hygienic practices across underserved and climate-affected communities. Our initiatives have been designed to support SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation for all - while also

contributing to SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), and SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

Our alignment with the Government of Bangladesh's priorities, particularly those outlined in the 8th Five-Year Plan, has been instrumental in designing our annual operational plans. By focusing on three critical national priority targets under SDG 6, we have delivered tangible improvements in access to safe drinking water, enhanced sanitation coverage, and heightened awareness of comprehensive hygiene practices.

During the reporting period, the BRAC WASH Programme implemented four major projects: 'Equitable and Sustainable WASH Services in Bangladesh Delta Plan Hotspots 2022 - 2026', 'Increase Access to Improved Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services in Schools Across Bangladesh', 'Safe Water for All:

A New Partnership for Growth', and 'Hand Hygiene Collaboration with Lifebuoy'. These projects have been pivotal in expanding our reach and impact, ensuring that our interventions are both effective and sustainable.

Throughout the year, we installed various water solutions, including water treatment plants, deep tube-wells, and rainwater harvesting systems. We also developed water entrepreneurs and vendors to facilitate the distribution of safe water and provided ongoing support for previously established WASH facilities. One significant component of BRAC WASH programme in the year 2023 entails engaging alternative financing options for WASH in collaboration with microfinance as well as banking channels. In collaboration with BRAC Microfinance Programme we have extended a total loan amount of BDT 797.5 million to 16,652 households for installation of safe drinking water and sanitation options. Along with grant and motivational support for investing in WASH infrastructure a total number of 66,318 individuals were reached – 30,037 with drinking

water and 36,281 with safely managed sanitation. Additionally, we reached 199,009 students with hygiene education, fostering a culture of health and cleanliness among the younger generation.

In 2023, the WASH Programme formulated its Annual Operational Plan for the period of January 2024 to June 2025, ensuring alignment with four of BRAC's strategic pillars: Inclusive Growth, Gender Equality, Building Resilience, and Investing in the Future Generation. By integrating these pillars into the operational framework of the WASH programme, we aim to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of our initiatives, promote gender equality, strengthen community resilience, and invest in the well-being and potential of future generations. This approach ensures that our efforts not only address immediate WASH needs but also contribute to long-term, transformative impacts across the communities we serve.

The accomplishments detailed in this report reflect our dedicated efforts and the invaluable support of our partners, donors, and

community stakeholders. As we move forward, we remain committed to scaling our initiatives, leveraging new technologies, and strengthening our partnerships to further enhance WASH services across Bangladesh. We extend our sincere gratitude for your ongoing support and collaboration. It is through our collective efforts that we can continue to make meaningful contributions to sustainable development and enhance the well-being of communities across the country.

HOSSAIN ISHRATH ADIB

Director
Integrated Development
Programme &
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
BRAC



List of **Acronyms**

BLD
BRAC Learning Division

DPHE
Department of Public Health
Engineering

ETP
Effluent Treatment Plant

IDP
Integrated Development
Programme

MDG
Millenium Development Goals

MF
Microfinance

MHM
Menstrual Hygiene Management

RDC
Radio Content

RWHS
Rainwater Harvesting System

SDG
Sustainable Development Goals

SDP
Skills Development Programme

WTP
Water Treatment Plant



Executive Summary

BRAC's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programme officially commenced in 2006, although WASH interventions were introduced in Bangladesh since the founding of the organisation in 1972 as part of Health Programme. The programme initially targeted rural Bangladesh, achieving remarkable success in transforming water and sanitation context through community-driven approaches, contributing significantly to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Leveraging years of expertise, the programme evolved to address emerging challenges in difficult hydrogeological settings, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure safe access and equitable, universal coverage of WASH services.

Today, the programme focuses on delivering multidimensional WASH solutions, extending services to hard-to-reach and underserved areas, including secondary schools.

In its ongoing mission, BRAC's WASH programme has made substantial progress. It has provided safe drinking water to 2.8 million people, enabled access to hygienic latrines for 44.24 million people, installed WASH facilities in 6,785 secondary schools, distributed sanitation grants to 1,987 ultra-poor individuals, installed approximately 400 water treatment plants and 37 piped water networks and developed around 4,000 WASH entrepreneurs, including water distribution vendors.

In 2023 alone, the programme has facilitated safely-managed sanitation for 36,281 people and safe drinking water for 30,037 people through loans and grant support in addition to reaching 199,009 students with hygiene messages in schools.

Throughout 2023, the BRAC WASH programme successfully implemented four major projects: 'Equitable and Sustainable WASH Services in Bangladesh Delta Plan Hotspots (2022 - 2026)', 'Increased Access to Improved Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services in Schools across Bangladesh', 'Safe Water for All, A New Partnership for Growth' and 'Hand Hygiene Collaboration with Lifebuoy'. The programme's

significant activities included the installation of water treatment plants, deep tube-wells, and rainwater harvesting systems. It also focused on developing water entrepreneurs and vendors to ensure the distribution of safe water, alongside providing follow-up and monitoring support to existing WASH facilities.

In the coming years, the BRAC WASH programme aims to align with national targets for safely managed water, sanitation, and hygiene services, in line with the SDGs. The programme has identified four key strategic objectives: expand alternative financing mechanisms, facilitate an inclusive and healthier learning environment at educational

institutions, advance the application of digital platforms for safe hygiene practices, including menstrual hygiene and explore climate-resilient water solutions in the Barind region to improve water security in Northern Bangladesh.

Through these strategic initiatives, the BRAC WASH programme is poised to make significant strides towards ensuring safe drinking water, hygienic toilets, and good hygiene practices for all, reinforcing its vision of universal WASH access.



CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Although BRAC launched its stand-alone Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programme in 2006, The organisation had vast experience in offering water, sanitation, and hygiene services at the community level from the time of the inception of BRAC. The programme's objectives are to break cycles of contamination, offer sustainable WASH services, and guarantee BRAC WASH's continued existence and growth. It has contributed to societal change, particularly in rural sanitation for the poorest families, and has enabled the country to meet its MDG-era targets for clean latrines, safe water and open defecation free status. Since 2016, the initiative has aligned with and contributed to Sustainable Development Goal 6 by concentrating on underserved, hard-to-reach, and climate-affected communities.

Since inception, BRAC WASH programme has implemented several projects to provide access to safe drinking water, hygienic latrines to communities, and WASH facilities in schools. So far, the programme has

provided safe drinking water to 2.8 million people, access to hygienic latrines to 44.24 million people, and WASH facilities to 6,785 secondary schools. The programme has also provided sanitation grants to 1987 ultra-poor people and installed about 400 water treatment plants, 37 piped water networks, and developed about 4,000 WASH entrepreneurs (including water distribution vendors) in Bangladesh.

In 2023, the BRAC WASH Programme continued its steadfast commitment to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined for 2030, particularly focusing on SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation for all. By strategically aligning its efforts with this crucial goal, BRAC WASH made substantial contributions to enhancing access to safe drinking water, improving sanitation facilities, promoting hygienic practices, and addressing menstrual hygiene management. Through targeted interventions, the programme effectively targeted four key targets under SDGs namely SDG 3 (Ensure healthy

lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning), SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation for all). Out of these 4 goals, BRAC WASH's major contribution is achieved in SDG 6, ensuring sustainable access to water and the proper management of sanitation.

Moreover, BRAC's interventions were not only aligned with the global SDG framework but also with the national priorities set forth by the Government of Bangladesh. Specifically, the programme's initiatives were closely attuned to three critical national priority targets identified under SDG 6. By synergising with the WASH-related targets outlined in the 8th Five-Year Plan, BRAC WASH demonstrated tangible impacts on the ground, particularly in the areas of enhanced access to safe drinking water services, improved sanitation coverage, and heightened awareness of comprehensive hygiene practices.

Furthermore, BRAC WASH's collaborative approach extended beyond its programmatic activities. Through regular engagement with government agencies such as the Department of Public Health Engineering, the Directorate General of Health Services, and the local government engineering department, the programme aimed at strengthening systems and fostering sustainable solutions. For instance, in 2023, the WASH in School project facilitated inception meetings with representatives from local government bodies, secondary education officers, and engineering officials, fostering closer collaboration and informed decision-making for effective project implementation.

In 2023, the BRAC WASH programme implemented four major projects, including 'Equitable and sustainable WASH services in Bangladesh Delta Plan Hotspots 2022 - 2026', 'Increase access to improved water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools across Bangladesh', 'Safe Water for All, A New Partnership for Growth,' and 'Hand Hygiene Collaboration with Lifebuoy'. During the year,

the programme installed different water options, including water treatment plants, deep tube-wells, and rainwater harvesting systems. The programme also developed water entrepreneurs and vendors to distribute safe water and provided follow-up and monitoring support to previously established WASH facilities. The programme provided loan through MF and grant support to offer access to safely-managed sanitation for 36,281 people and safely managed drinking water for 30,037 people. The programme reached 199,009 students with hygiene messages in schools.



CHAPTER 2

**WASH PROGRAMME
APPROACHES AND STRATEGY**

2.1 Approaches

In order to address water, sanitation, and hygiene needs for people living in poverty and those living in extreme poverty, BRAC water, sanitation, and hygiene programme focuses on providing community-based, integrated, and affordable services. In Bangladesh,

providing WASH services has become more difficult due to the adverse climatic conditions in some parts of the country and water pollution, particularly in the coastal, barind, chars (river islands), floodplain, and haor (wetland) regions. The initiative

has taken into consideration an approach with four pillars to promote inclusive, affordable, and sustainable WASH services in climate-vulnerable and difficult-to-reach locations.



CREATING DEMAND

Creating demand is the first pillar where community participation is ensured for awareness creation on safely managed water and sanitation services



ENSURE SUPPLY

The second pillar supports the WASH entrepreneurs to ensure supply at the doorstep of the community



APPROPRIATE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The third pillar entails appropriate financial arrangements which are delivered in the intervention areas in collaboration with Microfinance (MF) programme establishment and expansion of water businesses and installation of water and sanitation facilities at the household level



STRENGTHENING OF THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The fourth pillar includes the strengthening of the enabling environment through engagement of local government and other stakeholders by increasing advocacy and collaboration for smooth service delivery and resource mobilisation.



2.2 Strategy

Promoting climate resilient and sustainable WASH services:

The programme promotes climate resilience and sustainability in WASH services by offering alternative services for areas that are vulnerable to climate change as well as hard-to reach. These alternatives include raised latrine platforms, deep tube wells with raised platforms, rainwater harvesting systems, as well as water technologies such as piped water networks and reverse osmosis water treatment plants.

Ensuring equitable access to safe water and sanitation for all project interventions:

By installing context-specific water and sanitation technologies that are accessible to all, the programme promotes not only safely managed water and sanitation, but also equity in access to these essential resources; regardless of socioeconomic status, geographic location, or any other factors.

Capacitating local governments in promoting inclusive WASH facilities:

The programme advocates for a green environment through the implementation of safely-managed water, safely-managed sanitation in collaboration with local government institutions.

Nurturing a positive learning environment in educational institutions and investing in the future:

BRAC WASH conducts hygiene education at secondary schools and catchments, constructs gender-specific and disabled-friendly latrines for students including menstrual hygiene management facilities for girls, separate hand washing and drinking water stations, water treatment facilities, and waste management mechanism to ensure a positive learning environment at schools.

Promoting social business models through the development of WASH entrepreneurs:

One of the most important strategies of the programme is to develop local entrepreneurs for the purpose of providing efficient and cost-effective WASH services at the doorstep of the community. The programme facilitates financial assistance to such entrepreneurs in addition to providing technical support for the operation and maintenance of water treatment plants (WTP) and rural sanitation centres.

Mainstreaming gender and inclusion in WASH programme interventions:

The programme gives a special emphasis on ensuring gender and disability inclusion in the delivery of all services, as well as monitoring activities via a gender-inclusive lens. It also designs and installs gender sensitive and disabled-friendly WASH facilities at communities and schools.

Ensuring and conducting water quality monitoring and surveillance at all water points:

The programme conducts water quality testing during the installation of each water point to ensure the quality of the supplied water. Additionally, monitoring of water quality to guard against the presence of E.Coli (TC, FC), arsenic, iron, salinity, manganese, etc. is also carried out on a regular basis.

Creating partnerships for advocating at different levels:

The programme actively engages in various WASH forums and platforms, as well as collaborates with local government (union/upazila Parishad, pourashava, city corporation), government departments, and ministries to advocate for GoB policy implementation and replicate best practices.

Delivering emergency WASH response:

Considering its deltaic formation and geographical location, Bangladesh is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. Every year, the country is hit by natural disasters. That is why, in collaboration with government agencies and local government institutions, the programme has explored WASH responses in disaster situations and offers WASH services to affected people.



CHAPTER 3
PROGRAMME ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1 Equitable & Sustainable WASH Services in Bangladesh Delta Plan Hotspots 2022-2026

In 2023, the WASH programme undertook several initiatives under its 4 (four) projects to promote safely managed water, sanitation, and hygiene services in climate vulnerable, hard-to-reach areas. These projects varied in scale

based on financial allocation, population, modality and geographical coverage. The following section summarises the actions and accomplishments of these projects.

Bangladesh, with its low-lying deltaic geography and proximity to the Bay of Bengal, faces significant vulnerability to climate change impacts. This poses a critical barrier to the country's vision of sustained socioeconomic growth. Bangladesh experiences frequent extreme climatic events including erratic rainfall, flooding, drought, sea-level rise, cyclones,

and salinity intrusion. Climate change exacerbates these issues, with projections indicating more erratic rainfall patterns, increased drought risk in western regions, intensified flooding from cyclonic storm surges, and heightened coastal flooding and salinity intrusion. These factors threaten food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable

development in Bangladesh. Hence, the goal of this project is to provide safe and climate resilient water and sanitation services and an ecosystem to ensure the sustainability of these services in four climate hotspots in Bangladesh, especially for marginalised communities. It will do so by following three pathways:



1. **Alternative financing meaning grants for ultra-poor and repayable finance for other households and WASH entrepreneurs,** reaching schools in the project areas with safe WASH services
2. Capacity development of entrepreneurs for strengthening Operation and maintenance system and building an **ecosystem for climate resilient WASH technologies and services**
3. **Collaboration with NILG for strengthening the capacity of local government institutions** to ensure sustainability of the efforts as per pro-poor and other govt. policy

Planned activities:

- Installation of new latrine and repair of latrines by providing loan
- Develop sanitation entrepreneurs, water transport vendor through loan
- Installation of water options through loan
- Installation of latrines and water options through grant support
- Capacity development and raising awareness of WASH staff, entrepreneurs, and LGIs
- Repair latrine, water points and hand washing stations in secondary schools
- Conduct water quality test

Key achievements:

Sanitation:

- The project has installed and repaired 6,492 latrines through loan and developed 103 sanitation entrepreneurs.
- 1890 latrines have been installed through grant support.
- 68 sanitation entrepreneurs received training for capacity development and awareness raising.
- Latrines have been repaired in 90 schools.

Water:

- 16 water entrepreneurs and 23 water vendors developed through loan support.
- 505 deep tube wells have been installed by providing loan and 2 have been installed via grant support.
- 583 shallow tube wells and 71 rainwater harvesting systems installed through loan.
- 25 water entrepreneurs received training for capacity development and awareness raising.

Challenges:

- The linkage-building with the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) for partnership in its Local Government Institutions (LGIs) capacity building activities was delayed due to political unrest, since the Bangladesh National Elections were scheduled in early 2024.
- Installation of WASH loan options (latrine, tubewell, rainwater harvesting) are challenging because participants often tend to use the loan for other purposes instead of utilising it to install or repair existing latrines.

Lessons learned:

- Water scarcity is a more acute crisis than documented in the Barind area. Water resources management issue is directly linked with drinking water and sanitation issues there. So, any standalone solution for drinking water or sanitation may not work. Proposed solution should be integrated into the overall eco system of the Barind area.
- According to the baseline assessment, access to at least basic drinking water services is close to 100%. However, access to safely managed water service is still poor and many households have no information about the quality of drinking water they are consuming. So along with construction of new water points and technologies, promoting water tests would be a priority of the project. Hence, it can contribute to upgrading the basic services into safely managed ones.

3.2 Increase access to **improved water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools across Bangladesh**

The *Increase access to improved water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools across Bangladesh* project aims to promote universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation in secondary schools. The project is funded by charity: water, and the project phases are renewed each year. BRAC WASH and charity: water is in the process of developing

a Multi-Year Plan. The project applies four approaches: safe drinking water provision and hand-washing stations, gender sensitive and disability-inclusive latrines, menstrual hygiene management, and hygiene education. In 2023, the school project provided gender sensitive and disability inclusive WASH support to 375 secondary schools following comprehensive selection criteria such as MPO

(monthly pay order) listed girls' and co-education secondary schools, inadequate WASH facilities (latrine to student ratio is high, no running water supply, etc.), willingness to share the cost of improving infrastructure and committed to ensuring proper O&M (operation & maintenance) of installed WASH facilities.



Planned activities of the project:

Water Output

- Install 25 iron removal plants, 10 arsenic-iron removal plants and 5 rainwater harvesting plants
- Serve 225,000 unique water users daily and complete 375 water points
- 375 piped systems will be followed-up and re-checked for usability

Sanitation Output:

- Construct 60 1-block school latrine with 3 stalls including one disability-friendly stall
- Create access for 36,000 students to the latrines constructed
- Organise napkin drives in 375 schools, equip them with menstrual products and ensure waste bins

Hygiene Output:

- Install 750 units of hand-washing stations (at least 2 handwashing stations in each school, 1 for boys and another 1 for girls) in accessible locations
- Train 5,250 members of WASH committee in 375 schools
- Train 9,000 students (4,500 girls and 4,500 boys) as student brigade for hygiene promotion
- Celebrate soap drive, napkin drive and clean up drive in schools
- Organise hygiene sessions in schools

Key achievements of the project:

Water Output:

- 159,883 (Girls-88,866 and Boys-71,017) students served with drinking water
- 25 iron removal plants and 5 rainwater harvesting systems have been installed
- Water points have been installed in 375 schools

Sanitation Output:

- 60 1-block school latrines with 3 stalls including one disability-friendly stall constructed, benefitting 15,203 students (Boys-6,698 and Girls-8,505)
- 375 schools provided with waste bins for disposing of menstrual products inside the girls' latrines

Hygiene Output:

- 9,000 students (4,500 girls and 4,500 boys) trained as student brigade for hygiene promotion
- 159,883 (Girls-88,866 and Boys-71,017) students (both boys and girls) washed hands with soap at critical times
- 1,805 hygiene sessions conducted in 375 schools

Other Output:

- 3,116 follow-up visits done in 1,561 schools of past projects to increase sustainability

3.3 Safe water for all: **A new partnership for growth**

BRAC has formed partnerships with commercial entities like Grundfos to address issues concerning access to safe drinking water, industrial waste pollution, and barriers to financing sustainable business models focusing on Water Treatment Plants (WTPs) and Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs). This partnership aims to address the safe water crisis in industrial

areas of Bangladesh and mitigate environmental pollution caused by industrial effluents. The project has dual objectives: development and business. The development objective seeks to foster sustainable economic growth, create income opportunities for 445 individuals, and generate 224 new jobs in water treatment and distribution. Additionally, it targets providing safe and affordable

drinking water to 204,000 people in Bangladesh, aiding in economic recovery post-Covid-19. The business objective aims to establish a commercially viable partnership model to manage industrial effluent, mitigate its adverse effects on people and the environment, and ensure access to safe drinking water through commercial intervention.



Planned activities/ output and their relevant achievements

- **Output 1:** 10 water treatment plants (WTPs) (with appropriate Grundfos technology solutions) and 200 water distribution entrepreneurs are set up
- **Output 2:** industrial effluent treatment plants (ETPs) (with appropriate Grundfos technology solutions) are set up
- **Output 3:** Servicing and supply chains for 19 water treatment plants (WTPs and ETPs) are set up
- **Output 4:** Impact debt and equity mobilised through BRAC bank and other alternate funding routes
- **Output 5:** Advocacy, communications learning generation and dissemination

Key Achievements:

- Two meetings were arranged in Dacope Municipality and Atra Gilatola Union Parishad with the participation of representatives of relevant local government departments, community leaders, and potential WTP entrepreneurs in March 2023. Furthermore, BRAC conducted three workshops on market assessment to determine the community's willingness to pay for clean and safe drinking water in Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat during September 2023. The presence of important marketplace stakeholders at these workshops allowed BRAC to gather valuable insights into the community's needs and willingness to pay for clean water. Furthermore, the workshops helped BRAC to build relationships with key marketplace stakeholders.
- A MoU has been signed between BRAC WASH and BRAC Bank on 12 November 2023 with the presence of BRAC and BRAC Bank's Senior management. The partnership between the two entities aims to jointly work on water entrepreneurs and RMG factories of selected areas in Bangladesh to create access to finance by providing loan facilities whereby BRAC, through its WASH Programme will cooperate to assist the bank in identifying suitable entrepreneurs or businesses.
- The BRAC WASH programme has also begun working in conjunction with the "Progoti" programme lending window of the BRAC Microfinance (MF) programme to advance WTP finance in the project locations. The BRAC MF Progoti team will give loan to the qualifying entrepreneurs after they have completed their due diligence, while the BRAC WASH team will identify potential water entrepreneurs interested in establishing high-quality WTPs as part of this collaborative endeavor.

Challenges:

- The current procedure of assembling WTP machines in India results in the need to ship the machine setup, which drives up the cost of the machines. In order to hire professionals to build the machine in Bangladesh, the commercial partner might evaluate the marketplaces. Because of the lower shipping costs, this would result in a large price decrease. The machines' shipment time to Bangladesh would be shortened with this modification to the assembly point. Finding qualified business owners to establish Water Treatment Plants (WTPs) in coastal areas is difficult since Grundfos Smart Reverse Osmosis technology is expensive—nearly twice as expensive as traditional RO with similar capacity that is currently on the market. This cost barrier makes it difficult to find individuals or businesses who can afford the initial investment expenses associated with the installation of WTPs in this region.

Lessons learned:

- The project team has learned a crucial lesson about the necessity of a license from the Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI) for enterprises that sell water out of jars or bottles. Even though obtaining a license is a prerequisite for banks to finance WTPs, only a small number of successful business owners have done so thus far. These owners have reported that the application process is difficult and frequently prohibitive because of all the requirements and costs involved. Beginning in 2024, BRAC has made the decision to address this issue on both a local and central level. Involving entrepreneurs, local BSTI authorities, and other stakeholders like users/citizens and financing institutions, a number of consultation and orientation workshops are planned.

3.4 Hand Hygiene Collaboration with Lifebuoy

BRAC and Unilever Bangladesh have identified a significant challenge in promoting hygiene practices, given the slow national progress rate, which falls far below the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of achieving 100% coverage by 2030. According to the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) report (2021), only 39% of households in Bangladesh have functional handwashing facilities with water and soap. Recently,

the Government of Bangladesh has launched the 100% Hand Hygiene for all (HH4A) Bangladesh Road Map, aiming for universal hand-hygiene coverage across the population. However, schools are still struggling to provide safe water for students, with low rates of water quality testing and poor maintenance of existing WASH facilities. Meeting the national standard of one latrine per 50 students seems challenging with

current progress. Addressing issues such as safe drinking water, handwashing stations, separate latrines for boys and girls, and menstrual hygiene management are vital components of WASH interventions in schools.

The BRAC WASH programme has established a longstanding collaboration with Unilever, spanning various national and field-level initiatives. Both

organisations have celebrated Global Handwashing Day and conducted numerous joint hygiene campaigns aimed at improving hygiene practices in Bangladesh. Given the successful track record of their collaborative projects and the strong relationship between the two organisations, Unilever proposed an initiative to enhance hand hygiene among school students. Hence, *The Hand Hygiene Collaboration with Lifebuoy* project has been implemented by the BRAC WASH Programme in partnership with Unilever, aimed to improve hand hygiene practices among school students in Bangladesh.

The project implementation approach was divided under 4 steps:

Awareness:

- Sensitising school management committees (SMC) and teachers on WASH and handwashing issues through orientation sessions.
- Re/formation of student brigades in each school comprising of active students who will receive orientation on hand hygiene and maintenance of WASH facilities.
- Demonstrations of proper handwashing techniques by BRAC staff and inclusion of hygiene sessions in the school's co-curricular activities.

Reinforcement:

- Continuation of hand hygiene messaging and reinforcement of practices among targeted students.
- Active involvement of implementing staff, school authorities, and student brigades in ensuring reinforcement.

Reward:

- Recognition and rewards for targeted students based on achievements in practicing hand hygiene during the project period.

Commitment:

- Development of an action plan by participants (SMC, teachers, and students) to promote hygiene practices within the school community.
- Celebration of Global Handwashing Day to increase awareness and understanding of handwashing with soap.



Planned activities and their relevant achievements

Awareness

▶ **Staff training:** In order to create a seamless awareness mechanism, 76 BRAC employees were trained and deployed around the country. They visited the schools and scheduled orientations. For the project to be successful, the training covered both operational (implementation) and technical (hygiene) understanding.

▶ **SMC Orientation & Student Brigade Formation:** Throughout the course of the project, staff members visited various schools within the scope area and had discussions with the School

Management Committee (SMC). However, the main goal of the initial visits was to organise the Student Brigade, a group of 24 kids who will band together to become the voice for hygiene in the school and educate other students about the need of washing their hands. The student brigade consisted of 41,040 kids overall from all schools.

▶ **Number of Hygiene Sessions & Action Plans:** There was a hygiene session in every classroom. The goal of the hygiene session was to teach students the value of hygiene and to model good

handwashing and hygiene practices. At least one hygiene session was held in every school, for a total of 1,710 sessions among the schools in the coverage region.

Every school actively created an action plan for the upcoming school days after orientation. The action plan calls for maintaining the student brigade, holding hygiene sessions on a regular basis, and incorporating informal hygiene knowledge into the classroom training module.

76

BRAC Employees Trained

41,040

Student Brigade Members

1,710

Hygiene Sessions Conducted

Commitment:

- The project focuses on encouraging dedication within the school community in order to ensure a long-term impact. An action plan is created by teachers, students, and school management committees to support and uphold hand hygiene practices. The commemoration of Global Handwashing Day, a forum for handwashing promotion and awareness-raising, serves to further reaffirm this commitment. 80% of the schools conducted soap drives in accordance with the BRAC implementation team's instructions, providing handwashing supplies to a total of 730,000 kids. Every single one of the 1,710 schools participated in GHD celebrations.

Reinforcements:

- The project acknowledges that developing hand hygiene practices requires constant reinforcement. Targeted students receive ongoing messaging and activities aimed at reinforcing handwashing habits. Student brigades, school authority, and implementation staff all actively contributed to the continuation of these efforts.

Rewards:

- A rewards system based on hand hygiene achievement is part of the project to help kids stay motivated and encouraged. Acknowledging and rewarding students for their dedication to and compliance with handwashing procedures contributes to the development of a positive reinforcement cycle and promotes a hygienic culture within the school community.

The project's goal for rewards has been effectively surpassed in terms of sticker distribution. The goal was to distribute thirty thousand stickers. The distribution of stickers surpassed the goal by 25%, but the distribution of comic books fell short by 23%.

Key numbers of the project:



752,941

Students



414,609

Girls



338,332

Boys



1,752

Schools

The project intended to reach 1,710 schools, however it was able to reach 42 more than that number. With a total reach of 752,941 students, the student reach number has thus surpassed the goal by 22,941 students. Girls made up 55% of the students contacted, with boys making up the remaining 45%.

Geographically, the division with the greatest reach was Mymensingh, which accounted for 37% of the entire reach. Khulna, on the other hand, accounted for 34% of the total student reach.

Number of Students Reached - by Division

17%

Barisal

34%

Khulna

37%

Mymensingh

9%

Rajshahi

4%

Rangpur

3.5 Cross – cutting components

3.5.1 Climate change:

In line with the organisational and programmatic strategies, the WASH programme has been operating in climate-vulnerable areas, delivering resilient WASH services. Its objective is to advance suitable technologies that can catalyse positive change among vulnerable populations by 2025. The programme advocates

for environmentally friendly technologies, considering the local context within the WASH sector by replacing traditional methods. It consistently prioritises the optimal utilisation of accessible natural resources, including the promotion of rainwater harvesting systems, surface water usage, twin-pit latrines, etc.



3.5.2 Gender:

To incorporate gender mainstreaming and make sure that its actions are effective, the WASH programme entails that a minimum of 45% of participants should be female. To emphasise women's active participation and empowerment, the initiative considers their suggestions and preferences for the place where the facilities should be created (within household premises).

Furthermore, they are given guidance on hygiene behaviour, particularly good menstrual hygiene management. The WASH in school project prioritised MHM-friendly latrines in schools, separate latrines for boys and girls, and hygiene education among school students and beyond. It also prioritises active engagement while creating the village WASH committee and student brigade

at the school level. In the year 2023, BRAC WASH equipped 375 schools with latrines for girls with menstrual hygiene management facilities, celebrated a soap drive and a napkin drive, along with ensuring separate drinking water points for girls and boys in those 375 schools, as appropriate.

3.5.3 Disability Inclusion:

Disability inclusion has always been a key element of WASH initiatives, with equity and inclusivity being the two main areas of focus. WASH initiatives in schools guarantee that every water source and sanitation facility is accessible to all pupils and disability-friendly (with ramps, rails, and other amenities). In 2023, latrines were provided

to 244 people with disabilities. Additionally, 501 students with disabilities could access the disability inclusive latrines provided in their schools.





CHAPTER 4
HIGHLIGHTS OF
IMPORTANT EVENTS

Key Learning Workshops and Seminars:

The BRAC WASH programme organised multiple learning workshops and also participated in several international and national seminars in 2023. BRAC WASH participated in UN 2023 Water Conference during March 2023 where as a leading organization working in the frontiers of SDG 6, contributed important insights on the issues related to water for Bangladesh and global context.

In collaboration with climate change programme, it participated

in the 1st national workshop on community resilience to climate change in Bay of Bengal- 2023 during June 2023. The workshop focused on sharing important insights among key national stakeholders such as Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), BRAC, Helvetas, Concern Worldwide, WaterAid, Islamic Relief, United Purpose and Caritas to facilitate a dialogue between Practitioners and policy makers to share their experiences and knowledge on community resilience and

adaptation practices from across the Bay of Bengal region. In association with the Organisational Learning and Accountability (OLA) unit of the BRAC Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) department, BRAC WASH programme conducted a learning exercise to identify and document the lessons learned throughout the 'WASH in School' project during October 2023.

World Water Day:

Every year on World Water Day, the BRAC WASH Programme organises various activities at the field level to increase community engagement. The significance of this day has become even more pronounced, as challenges such as water scarcity, pollution and access are on the rise. Hence, bringing together people, groups, and governments is essential for discussion, innovation, and

action in the direction of a water-secure future. In 2023, rallies and discussion sessions were organised in Barisal, Rajshahi and Khulna Division. These activities aimed to raise awareness in the community about mindful usage of water and the ways that it can be achieved. Government officials, journalists, local elites, students, teachers, parents and local community participated in

these activities. Additionally, 41 Water entrepreneurs were trained on operation & maintenance of the technology, business promotion, and customer service.



World Menstrual Hygiene Management Day:

Every year, the WASH Programme organises rallies and discussion sessions in schools to celebrate Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Day. The rallies increase awareness of the issue and the discussion sessions spark conversations to lessen the stigma associated with periods. The celebrations were held in Barisal and Khulna Divisions where 10,108 students participated in the activities organised by the programme. Napkin drives were also organised in 46 schools, where each student brought a pack of sanitary napkins, which will ensure a year-long supply for all the students. In addition to

these, MHM Day was observed in two factories with support from BKMEA, where Menstrual Hygiene Awareness messages were shared with 60 female workers.

The programme also participated in the National Dialogue on Menstrual Health and Hygiene, organised by the MHM platform. Over 150 delegates from various stakeholder groups attended the event on June 4 in Dhaka in order to further the country's efforts to end menstruation poverty and preserve the rights and dignity of women and girls. The discussion offered a great forum for sharing data, discussing outcomes,

achievements, and obstacles as well as the effect the nation has had over the past ten years with many stakeholders, including the government, development partners, civil society, media, and youth networks. The WASH Programme highlighted its MHM interventions in secondary schools. The programme provided gender segregated latrines for students, which are equipped with MHM facilities. The students also receive hygiene education sessions, where they are also informed about menstrual hygiene management. So far, the programme has reached 237,123 students with hygiene education.



Global Handwashing Day:

In 2023, The BRAC WASH Programme initiated a project titled "Hand Hygiene Collaboration with Lifebuoy" targeting school students with the support of Unilever. WASH programme has a long collaboration with Unilever for various aspects at the national and field level. As a key event of Global Handwashing Day, BRAC and Unilever teamed up and visited Tejgaon Industrial Area Govt. Primary School and featured Lifebuoy's H for Handwashing Games - a series of innovative games that blends the joy of play

with the essential practice of hand hygiene. Mr. Dilip Kumar Banik, Additional Director General, DPHE, Mr. Asif Saleh, Executive Director of BRAC and Mr. Zaved Akhter, Managing Director and Chairman of Unilever Bangladesh, took part in learning and played along with the children.

Additionally, the BRAC WASH Programme marked Global Handwashing Day across about 1700 schools in Bangladesh with a huge celebration. Students took centre stage, demonstrating

how to wash hands properly with great enthusiasm. They also had discussions to understand why and when handwashing is so important. Colourful rallies moved through the schools, spreading awareness about the significance of clean hands. It was a day that mixed learning with fun, emphasising the importance of cleanliness for a healthier future.





CHAPTER 5
KEY LEARNINGS AND
WAY FORWARD

5.1 Key Learnings

I.

Allocating a significant budget for high-quality materials in WASH facilities ensures durability and promotes sustainability. The WASH in School project dedicates substantial funds to building resilient infrastructure, adhering to strict guidelines and standards. The technical team double-checks all materials from sourcing to installation, prioritising quality to extend the lifespan of these facilities and reduce maintenance costs. This process supports sustainable WASH practices, providing reliable access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene. Ultimately, investing in durable infrastructure fosters trust and highlights the long-term benefits for public health and community development.

II.

Creating separate points for handwashing and drinking water, along with clear instructions, will increase students' water consumption from designated areas. The WASH in School project currently ensures safe water distribution but does not have this separation, leading to misconceptions about water cleanliness. Separate stations with clear guidelines will enhance hygiene, reduce cross-contamination concerns, and make the setup more user-friendly.

III.

Adding heat protection to the water storage tanks increases drinking water use. Water tanks become heated during summer, leading to hot water which is difficult for the students to drink, hence decreasing water consumption of students. Placing the overhead tank under a shade ensures it remains safe and palatable for consumption.

IV.

Flexible school selection criteria will help schools with greater needs access WASH services. By considering sanitation facilities, water accessibility, and hygiene conditions of primary schools and madrasas in addition to the secondary schools, addresses the unique challenges of each institution. Flexibility allows prioritisation of schools with urgent needs, directing resources where they are most needed and maximising the impact of WASH in School interventions.

V.

The lack of detailed guidelines on managing the Operation & Maintenance Fund leaves it vulnerable to misuse. While the WASH in School project outlines the formation and general use of this fund for repairs and maintenance, it falls short on details, especially concerning fund replenishment. Schools often open a bank account for the fund, but once WASH facilities are installed, the money is frequently diverted to other purposes. Additionally, when schools use the fund for repairs, it is not always reimbursed. Effective use of the Operation and Maintenance Fund depends on the project team delivering detailed guidelines to schools. Clear and thorough instructions will help schools make informed decisions about allocating and using funds for maintaining WASH facilities.

VI.

Water scarcity is a more acute crisis than documented in the Barind area. Water resources management issue is directly linked with drinking water and sanitation issues there. So, any standalone solution for drinking water or sanitation may not work. Any proposed solution should be integrated into the overall eco system of the Barind area.

VII.

An important element for water entrepreneurs to access institutional finance is acquiring the Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI) license for businesses selling water. The licence is a mandatory requirement for banks to finance WTPs, despite this only a limited number of entrepreneurs are licenced. This is largely due to high cost and complex administration to acquire the BSTI licence, but without the licence, entrepreneurs cannot receive a loan. BRAC will increase efforts to address this issue both at local and central levels in 2024 through consultation with relevant stakeholders. The consultation will ultimately ease the process of completing the paperwork for BSTI licence by entrepreneurs.

5.2 Way Forward

In 2024, the WASH Programme is committed to contributing to the national targets for safely managed water, sanitation, and basic hygiene services, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WASH program has identified four key strategic objectives to focus on for intervention in the coming year.

Expanding alternative WASH financing mechanism for increasing access to safely managed water and sanitation services for low-income, hard to reach and climate vulnerable communities

Adequate financing for WASH is crucial for achieving SDG 6, yet the declining trend in grants and inefficient delivery mechanisms pose significant challenges- BRAC WASH programme has a proven track record of leveraging WASH financing through loans, thereby increasing access to safe water and sanitation services in hard-to-reach and climate-vulnerable areas. Moving forward, the programme plans to continue and expand this approach by mobilising WASH loans through Microfinance and installing WASH services. In addition to leveraging BRAC Microfinance, the programme is partnering with other financial institutions (MFIs/ Banks) to develop accessible alternative WASH financing mechanisms.

Facilitating an inclusive and healthier learning environment at educational institutions through ensuring access to gender responsive and disable friendly safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities

Establishing safe and inclusive WASH facilities in educational institutions is a crucial investment in the future generation. Waterborne diseases and hygiene-related health issues, including menstrual hygiene, are significant causes of student absenteeism. The WASH programme is committed to ensuring students have access to safe, dignified, and inclusive water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities that are both gender-responsive and tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The WASH programme prioritises the holistic well-being of students and community members in hard-to-reach and climate-vulnerable areas, supporting their educational journey and preparing a future generation capable of thriving and reaching their full potential. These skilled youth can then act as change agents for sustainable community development.

Advancing application of digital platforms for safe hygiene practices, including menstrual hygiene, at educational institutions, communities and workplaces

By utilising digital platforms (customized apps) nationwide, the programme aims to significantly enhance hygiene practices, particularly menstrual hygiene management (MHM) among adolescent girls. Bangladesh is currently behind in achieving the SDG target for basic hygiene practices, with only 62% of the population meeting these standards according to proxy indicators from the UNICEF-WHO JMP report of 2022. There is a gap between knowledge and practice in hand hygiene. The WASH programme is committed to implementing substantial changes in the delivery of sustainable hygiene practices, including MHM, through digital platforms, thus enhancing BRAC's profile in this sector.

Exploring solutions for climate resilient water options in Barind region for improving water security in Northern Bangladesh

The Barind region is recognised as semi-arid and drought-prone, identified as one of the six hotspot areas in the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 and one of the eight climate-stressed areas in the National Adaptation Plan 2022. The water stress situation is expected to worsen due to unusually low rainfall, preventing the underground aquifers from being replenished. To address this and figure out appropriate solutions, the programme will collaborate with other non-governmental organisation and research agencies as well as will establish collaborations and partnerships with suitable government agencies (DPHE, BMDA), NGOs (WaterAid Bangladesh), and local government institutions (LGIs) for piloting, influencing government policy, utilizing resources, and scaling up appropriate technologies.

Moving forward, the WASH Program's comprehensive strategy will propel substantial progress in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector of Bangladesh. By utilising alternative financing, context specific solutions, resilient infrastructure, and strategic partnerships, we aim to tackle the critical challenges faced by climate-vulnerable and underserved communities. Our dedication to inclusivity, sustainability, and collaboration will ensure significant advancements towards achieving SDG 6 and enhancing the quality of life for all.

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