



# BRAC WASH LEARNING from WASH EXPERIENCES in BANGLADESH 2015

BRAC Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
26-27 April, 2015

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*This report is best viewed in "two page view" in a pdf reader, allowing pairs of pages to be seen together.*

*On smaller screens use 'single-page view'.*

NB: Internet addresses given in this report are hyperlinks.

Click to go to the nominated pages.

## Acronyms used in this report

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASTRA	Aiding Sustainable Water Technology Realization in Arsenic and Salinity Contaminated Areas
BEP	BRAC Education Programme
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
C3ER	Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research at BRAC University
CBO	Community-based organisation
CEP	Community Empowerment Programme (BRAC)
CTEIP	Coastal Towns Environmental Infrastructure Project
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DGIS	Directorate-General for International Cooperation (Netherlands)
DORP	Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (Bangladesh)
DPHE	Department of Public Health Engineering (Bangladesh)
DSK	Dushtha Shasthya Kendra
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
FO	Field Organiser
GPS	Global Positioning System
GWAPB	Gender and Water Programme Bangladesh
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre (Bangladesh)
ICDDR,B	International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh
IDP	Integrated Development Programme (BRAC)
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ITN-BUET	International Training Network—Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Centre for Water Supply and Waste Management)
JADE Bangladesh	Japan Association of Drainage and Environment
LGD	Local Government Division (Bangladesh)
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department (Bangladesh)
MLGRDC	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (Bangladesh)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
O&M	Operations and maintenance
PA	Programme Assistant (BRAC WASH)
pH	Potential hydrogen, (measure of acidity or alkalinity)
PO	Programme Organiser (BRAC WASH)

## Acronyms (continued)

QIS	Qualitative Information System
RED	Research and Evaluation Division (BRAC)
RSC	Rural Sanitation Centre
SACOSAN	South Asia Conference on Sanitation
SCF	Strategic Climate Fund
TUP	Targeting Ultra Poor (BRAC)
UGIIP	Urban Governance Infrastructure Improvement Project
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UST	Unnayan Shahojogy Team (Bangladesh)
VERC	Village Education Resource Centre (Bangladesh)
VWC	Village WASH Committee
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WASA	Water Supply & Sewerage Authority (Bangladesh)
WATSAN	Water and sanitation
WSUP	Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor
WSP	Water and Sanitation Program (World Bank)

## Executive summary

# BRAC WASH sets global benchmark for reaching the poor and ultra-poor

The BRAC WASH programme is one of the most successful development stories in south Asia over the past decade—and has been highly influential in Bangladesh setting a global standard for sanitation improvements.

A reduction in open defecation in Bangladesh—from more than 30% a decade ago to 3% today—has been described as “astounding”. BRAC WASH has promoted hygiene education in communities and the construction, repair and use of hygienic toilets and hand-washing and community knowledge. BRAC WASH has addressed some of the toughest challenges for delivering safe water in hard-to-reach areas and those affected by arsenic and salinisation.

In April 2015, BRAC convened a learning workshop in Dhaka that brought together donors, other NGOs from Bangladesh and other programmes in the BRAC family, to examine the outcomes of the BRAC WASH second phase and emerging challenges.

The scale and rate of progress is unprecedented. Since 2006, in areas where BRAC WASH has been working, more than 37 million people have gained access to hygienic sanitation and more than two million gained access to safe water. Independent monitoring suggests that the BRAC approach of loans for poor families and grants for ultra-poor families has been especially successful. Subsidies have proved an effective way to encourage and support community efforts. BRAC WASH has also established school WASH Committees and student brigades in more than 5,000 schools, ensuring that girls have safe toilets and menstrual hygiene facilities.



*Household toilet and bathroom inspired by BRAC WASH and built by the householder in 2014 in Derboalia village, Mollarhat, Khulna. Programme assistant PA Rokeya Hossein, left, with owner Rikta Das.*

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The scale and rate of BRAC WASH progress is unprecedented. Since 2006 more than 37 million people have gained access to hygienic sanitation and more than two million to safe water.

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The programme has researched innovative water and latrine technology in the most challenging areas, and is discovering how to turn faecal sludge in pit latrines from a health problem into a valuable, safe resource. With IRC, BRAC developed innovative outcome based monitoring that looks not only at infrastructure but how people use it. BRAC and IRC have also developed tools to assess supply and demand challenges and to assess long-term affordability.

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An independent report commissioned by one of the donors showed results that were even better than those BRAC had reported—showing not only ‘beyond excellent’ achievements but also the integrity of its monitoring

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The BRAC WASH approach has been highly praised by donors. The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, congratulated BRAC on its achievements as “hugely present and effective; an efficient, impressive organisation”. Of 50 million people globally who have achieved hygienic sanitation with Netherlands support, a large proportion have done so through the BRAC WASH Programme.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation which has supported the programme since 2011 described results as “beyond excellent”, exceeding all its expectations for reaching households and achieving 98% sustained use of toilets by all family members. An independent report commissioned by the Foundation has shown results that are even better than those that had been reported by BRAC, demonstrating not only the achievement of the programme

but also the integrity and reliability of its monitoring.

The two-day workshop attracted support from Government officials and many of the most active NGOs working in the WASH sector in Bangladesh. The event was notable for its open nature, the generous way that organisations shared experiences, and the inspiring focus on meeting future need.

Many challenges were identified for future—one is the need to tell the BRAC WASH story. More people need to know about this programme, what it has achieved and how, so that its success can be duplicated.

The emerging strategy sees a stronger focus on urban areas and more WASH issues mainstreamed into other BRAC programmes, including health, nutrition and education. However, the BRAC WASH programme will continue to deliver with its specialist knowledge and approaches.

## See the programme come to life on film—four short movies highlight the BRAC WASH approach

“People are developing a taste for healthy living. They want improvement compared to us and what we are doing, they want better.” One voice in a series of short films about the role played by the BRAC WASH programme in Bangladesh. The films show the impact at individual level—and the sense of achievement when people have a water supply that works, toilets they can be proud of and good hygiene. They are essential viewing to understand the BRAC WASH methodology and why it works. Accessible to both Bengali and English speakers.

### 1. An uphill struggle for water

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvQ\\_ZB6H1TA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvQ_ZB6H1TA)

Three neighbouring villages on top of the hills. One has water, one is getting a new well, one has a daily struggle to collect water. This film shows the difference it makes. (6 minutes)

### 2. WASH goes to school—A lesson in good hygiene

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV5FZoVn7BI>

Everything changed at Mohamuni Anglopali High School when BRAC introduced hygiene education and supported the school to transform its approach. (10 minutes)

### 3. Dangerous waters: challenges of arsenic and salinization in Bangladesh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cELL90oONWU>

Millions of wells are affected by arsenic with a devastating impact on health. In coastal areas traditional ponds have been contaminated with salt water. BRAC shows what can be done – and how far there is to go. (12 minutes)

### 4. From door to door: changing lives through group meetings and home visits

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKowLZrCypY>

BRAC WASH programme staff hold group meetings and make door-to-door visits in dynamic interaction to advance hygienic latrines, safe water and cleanliness. (6 minutes)

## Learning from WASH Experiences in Bangladesh

**BRAC Centre Dhaka, 26-27 April 2015**

### Opening address: Dr Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury

BRAC convened a learning workshop to mark the end of the second phase of its WASH programme and to look ahead to the next phase and to closer integration with other major programmes in BRAC. The workshop was also an opportunity to reflect and to look back on successes and lessons with donors; particularly The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands that has supported the programme since the beginning in 2006 and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and a new donor, Splash, now supporting work in urban schools. Also present were INGOs and NGOs working in Bangladesh who were able to take part in discussion and shows some of their own work during a poster display. The workshop was also an opportunity to look back at some of the partnership work undertaken with IRC.



Dr. Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury, Vice-chairman of BRAC opened the meeting noting the remarkable progress Bangladesh has made in development, seeing life expectancy raised from the 40s to the 70s and seeing women close the lifespan gap with men. The Bangladesh health survey just released showed continuing progress particularly in infant mortality. There was good progress in getting children to school but 30% of children drop out before completing primary education and there are questions about quality.

In 1980, 60% of the population had been poor; this had reduced to 26% “but that means 45 million people are still poor and we have a long way to go”.

Bangladesh had also reached its Millennium Development Goals target for safe water although not yet for hygienic sanitation.

“NGOs have played a very important role in changing Bangladesh and BRAC is very happy to be part of this journey and part of the history.” The vice-chairman recalled that when BRAC started in 1972, they all thought that BRAC would be needed for only a few months and that then the government and others would take over. It had not worked out like that.

The most remarkable figure was the reduction in open defecation to 3%. “Compared with some of our neighbours it is astounding.”

BRAC had worked on water and sanitation from the very beginning, first through a programme working with households and then in the 1980s through the oral rehydration therapy initiative to tackle diarrhoea. Later BRAC promoted the development of water and sanitation through public private partnerships.

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“When BRAC started in 1972 we thought that the need would be for a few months and the Government and others would take over. There is a still a lot to be done.”

**Dr Mustaque Chowdhury**

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The meeting began with a minute's silence to show respect for 8,800 lives lost in the Nepal earthquake that struck the previous day. Many of those present had friends and colleagues in Nepal. One of the donors, Splash, has a major programme in Kathmandu schools, many of them severely damaged in the earthquake. Thankfully, the schools were closed when the earthquake struck.



*Platform speakers at the opening of the BRAC Learning from WASH Experiences Workshop in Dhaka, 26 April 2015.*

The BRAC WASH programme began in 2006 in 152 upazilas with the support of the Netherlands Government. A further 98 upazilas were later funded by the Netherlands Government and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with added support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

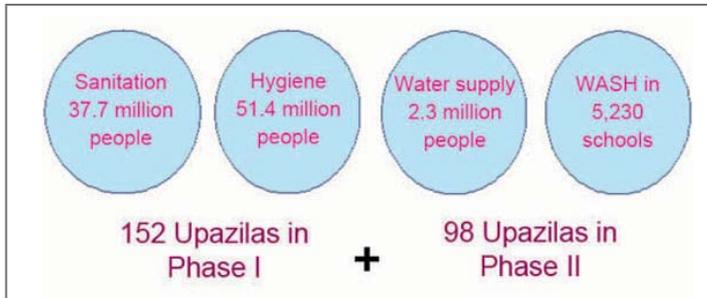
Despite meeting the needs of many millions of people for water, sanitation and hygiene, there are still many unresolved issues for Bangladesh in both water and sanitation to take care off. There was a long way to go with the arsenic problem, which was in danger of becoming a forgotten issue.

The introductory remarks showed the huge progress in water, sanitation and hygiene in Bangladesh over a period when Bangladesh had gone from 30% open defecation in 2006 to only 3% today. BRAC WASH played an important role in making this happen. The Learning from WASH Experiences workshop was held at a pivotal moment in this history—to look back at what had been achieved and forward at what needed to be done. The specific BRAC WASH approach was discussed and, as outlined in the pages of this report, the lessons were drawn out.



*A minute's silence was observed for the victims of the earthquake in Nepal.*

## More than 37 million people have gained hygienic sanitation in BRAC WASH areas



Mahjabeen Ahmed, Manager BRAC WASH Programme and Abu Taleb Biswas, Regional Manager, reported on highlights and achievements

Figure 1 (left): Number of people reached during two phases of the BRAC WASH programme.

Since 2006, more than 37 million people have gained access to hygienic sanitation in areas where the BRAC WASH programme has been working. Hygiene has been the backbone of programme delivered through cluster meetings and other forms of community participation. Over the same period, more than two million people have gained access to safe water from direct support by BRAC WASH in these upazilas.

More than 200,000 poor families have received loans to improve latrines and more than 1.2 million ultra-poor families have received grants to build dual-pit latrines. Sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities have been provided for girls in schools. In addition, two new projects have begun to provide hygienic latrines and safe water for boys and girls in schools.

NB: Ultra-poor households are defined as: *landless, homeless, or reliant on day labour, AND TWO of the following criteria: have less than 10 decimal of agricultural land; have no fixed source of income; are headed by a woman aged 65+ or someone with a disability.* Poor households are defined as those that: *have up to 100 decimal of agricultural and homestead land or are reliant on manual labour.*

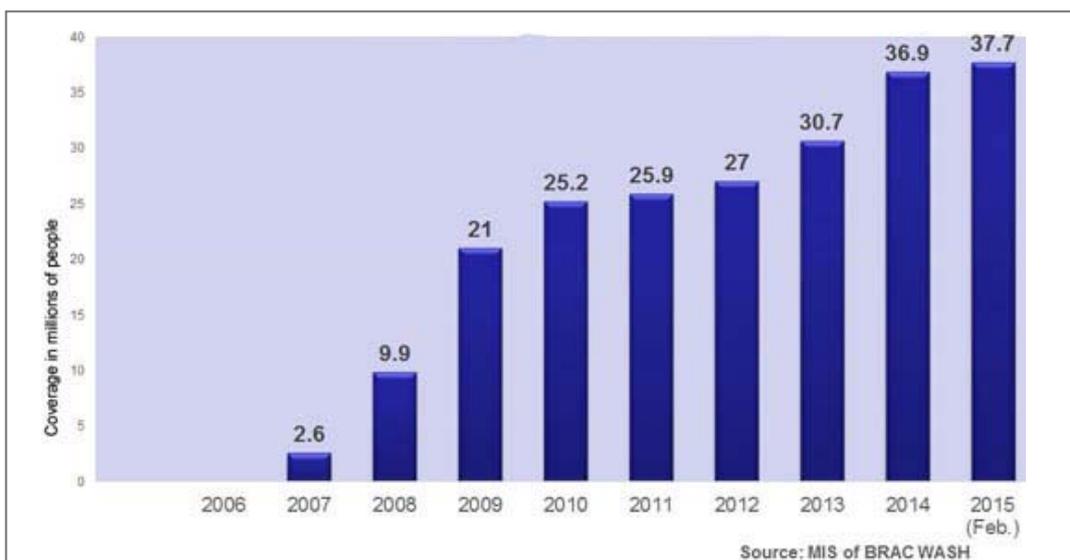
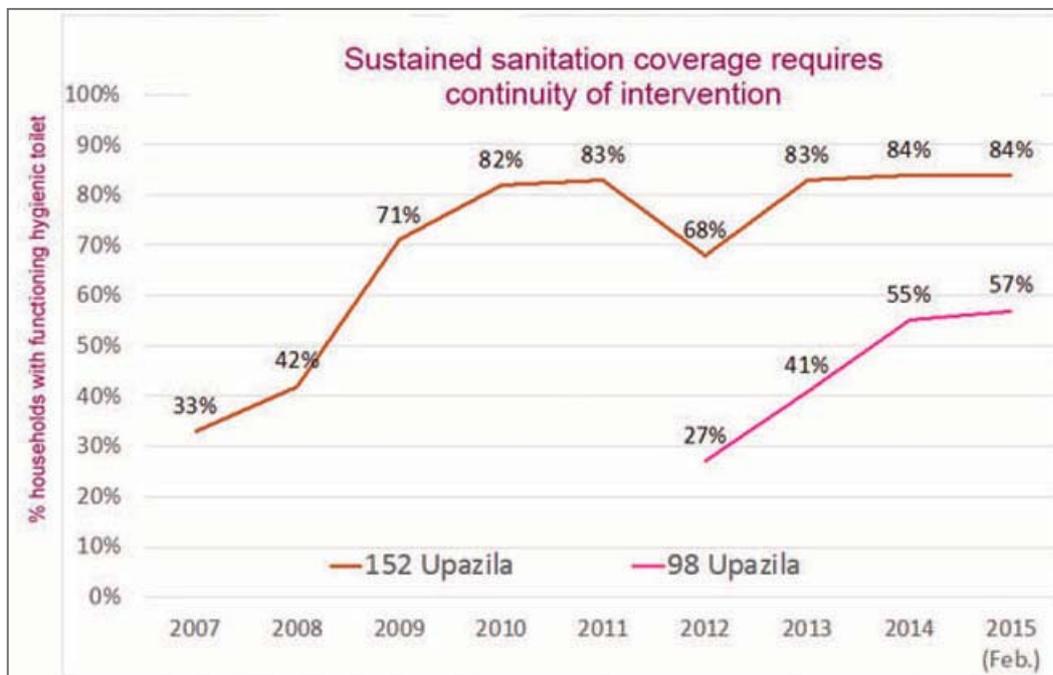


Figure 2: Cumulative increase in access to hygienic latrines in BRAC WASH areas (millions of people).

**Interventions need continuity:** As well as showing the scale of the success, the data also gives a warning that interventions need to be sustained. Figure 3 shows that a gap in the programme can put benefits at risk.

Figure 3: By 2011 sanitation coverage in the first 250 upazilas reached 83%. During a lull in promotion after the first phase came to an end, some people broke the water seals on their latrines in order not to have to use so much water. Coverage slipped back to 68%. After continuity was restored the loss was made up. Meanwhile coverage in the smaller number of hard to reach areas rose from 27% to 57% under Phase II of the programme.

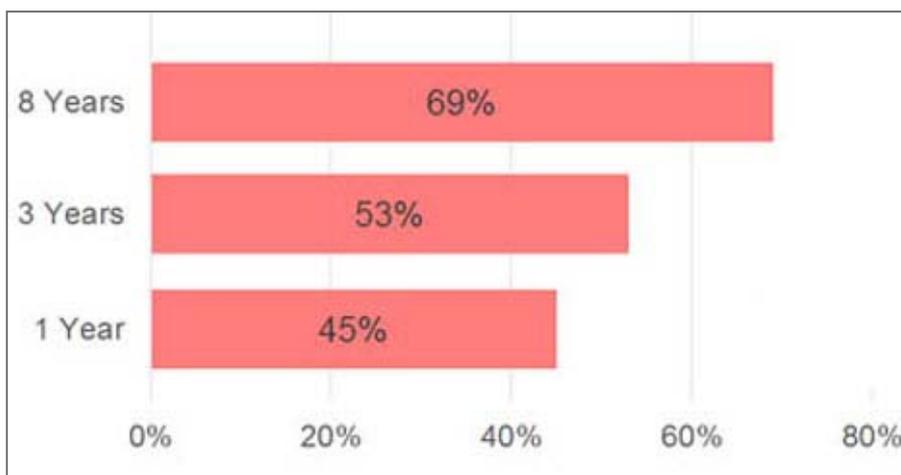
Source: BRAC WASH



**Change takes time:** Monitoring also shows that behaviour change takes time to become embedded in communities. Figure 4 shows how more families have soap and water available for handwashing in or near their latrines, and how the number increases according to how long the programme has been working in that area.

Figure 4: Percentage of households who had soap and water in or near the latrine on inspection during monitoring, after one, three and eight years in the programme.

Source: BRAC WASH



**Change can be sustained:** On inspection, 87% of tubewells that had been repaired as part of the programme were still functional.

Monitoring in schools found that female teachers in almost three quarters (71%) of the schools supported by the BRAC WASH programme were continuing to hold regular menstrual hygiene sessions for girls.

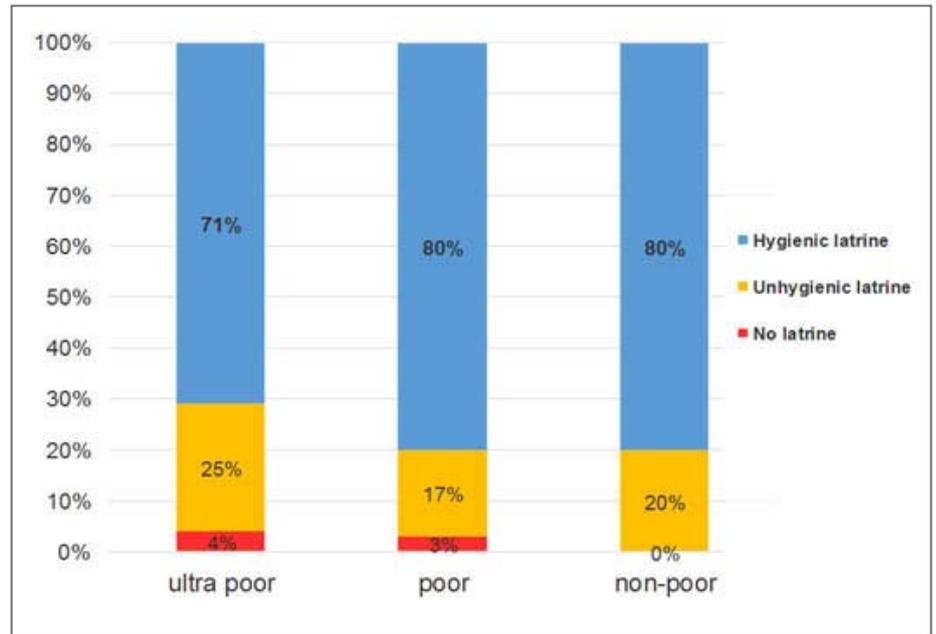
**Equity can be achieved:**

Figure 5 shows that the proportion of ultra-poor households with a hygienic latrine is within 10% of other households. Thanks to the grants they received, seven out of ten ultra-poor households surveyed had a hygienic latrine—compared with eight of ten households categorised as poor or non-poor.

**Challenges**

A number of challenges have been identified through monitoring or because of a growing awareness of issues in areas that have not yet been reached by the BRAC WASH programme. These include:

- Sustaining the gains—sustaining hygiene behaviour is a particular challenge
- Reaching the hard to reach through appropriate technologies for water and sanitation—especially those living in coastal areas, haor (wetlands) and hilly areas
- Ensuring that latrines remain hygienic—‘slippage’ as previously hygienic latrines lose their hygienic status is estimated at around 7%
- Urbanisation and the growing population
- Salinity in coastal areas and arsenic—pumps that were declared safe ten years ago may no longer be safe
- Safe faecal sludge management



*Figure 5: Proportion of families with hygienic household latrines, by poverty status*



*Day 1 of the BRAC WASH learning workshop*



*Ingeborg Krukkert: challenges are about demand creation, strengthening the supply chain, extending access to WASH services in challenging conditions and managing faecal sludge from pit latrines*

## Working in partnership for innovation and learning

BRAC WASH worked with the international NGO, IRC, to introduce innovation and learning techniques that could help the programme learn from its experiences and improve its delivery. The IRC role has been supportive and complementary to help one of the largest implementation programmes globally to unleash its potential as a learning project for the sector.

Ingeborg Krukkert, leader of IRC support for BRAC WASH, explained how the partnership works, what the two parties have learnt and what the sector can take up on the basis of the BRAC WASH delivery model.

### Demand creation

The communication strategy is designed to stimulate demand in communities. BRAC and IRC improved the core of this communication package by working with field staff to focus on seven key behaviours related to water, sanitation, and hygiene, reducing the number of behaviours being promoted from the unwieldy total of 19. Communication training focused on ensuring that social marketing was about, ‘selling not telling’; on dialogue, rather than on repeating and recalling key messages.

There was also a need to reach men who were missing out on cluster meetings by taking hygiene promotion to tea stalls where the men gather. After the approach was piloted it is now in operation in all upazilas where BRAC works.

### Matching supply and demand

A rapid assessment study showed that while two thirds of sanitation producers deliver good quality, one third produced parts below an acceptable standard. BRAC will improve standards through a certification system for rural sanitation centres. The study found that more than half of households (56%) were dissatisfied with their existing toilets. This provides the entrepreneurs who run rural sanitation centres with a huge opportunity to develop an upgrade market.

DEMANDSIDE	SUPPLY SIDE
WHO are the potential customers/ consumers?	WHO are the supply side actors selling sanitation products and services?
PLACE: Where are the customers?	PLACE: Where are the supply side actors?
PRODUCTS: What do they need now and in future?	PRODUCTS: What products and services are made available?
PRICE: How much can they afford?	PRICE: How much does it cost?
	PROMOTION: Do they promote their products?
Do they have the KNOWLEDGE to make an informed decision?	Do they have the KNOWLEDGE about sanitation technology options?

*Figure 6: Questions answered by a study designed to assess the match between sanitation demand and the supply of sanitation parts through rural sanitation centres.*

## Research studies

IRC commissioned studies that linked local partners with research groups from outside Bangladesh to investigate how to overcome problems in meeting demand and to deal with challenges that arise at scale. Reports from the studies can be found online at <http://www.ircwash.org/news/introduction-brac-wash-research>

## High-water table

21% of households in high water table areas lack an appropriate toilet, and most latrines suitable for these areas are expensive. WASTE (Netherlands) and local partners in the SANTE project tested low cost sanitation models.

## Faecal sludge management

The waste from pit latrines is potentially valuable and needs to be managed. However, 84% of households simply dump the waste in another pit.

Research by University of Leeds (UK) showed that composting by small farmers can be profitable if finance is more available. The certification procedure for compost also needs to be simplified.

Faecal sludge management has also been researched on a larger scale: BioSol Energy Europe found that a combination of human and agricultural waste can be profitable if the heat generated can also be

used to run a cold storage unit and this can be sold to businesses. However, this process is more profitable with agricultural waste alone—including human waste reduces the profit. The company is looking for investors to take this further.



## Improving water quality

The ASTRA consortium (PRACTICA Foundation, Delft University of Technology, WASTE and Practical Action Bangladesh) produced a booklet on drinking water options in areas affected by arsenic and salinization. This is being taken up in the sector and translated into Bangla to make it more accessible. The research suggests that experts choose only what they know best, and there is a need for more drinking water options.

## Finance for the poor and ultra-poor

With a focus on reaching the poor, it is critical to know the costs for households, schools and piped water schemes and the feasibility of faecal sludge. Life cycle costing shows that the ultra-poor need subsidies since latrines costs represent more than 5% of their total income.

A report on affordability of sanitation in low income rural households in Bangladesh can be found [online](#) at IRC (Click link)

## What should the sector adopt from BRAC WASH?

What should the sector in and beyond Bangladesh adopt from the work done by BRAC WASH, IRC and other partners.

- Systematic tracking and measuring of fieldwork, of processes and of progress
- Monitoring outcomes and the cost of services rather than just counting what hardware has been provided.
- Use of tools and training materials especially:
  - the range, quality and use of training materials for hygiene promotion;
  - the rapid assessment tool to highlight potential problems in supply and demand;
  - the life-cycle costing methodology and tool
- Testing further promising technologies for:
  - Faecal sludge management
  - Drinking water supply and sanitation technologies

### Outcome-based monitoring indicators

*QIS looks at:*

- Household toilets and hygiene
- Access:
  - Use (who)
  - Use (when)
  - Hand washing

Schools

- Sanitary & hygienic school toilets
- Student brigade
- Menstrual hygiene management
- Performance of school WASH committee

Village WASH Committees (VWCs)

- Safe and protected drinking water supply source
- Performance of VWC
- Women's participation

Rural Sanitation Centres (RSCs)

- Performance of RSC

### Outcome-based monitoring

BRAC WASH has strong monitoring processes to measure outputs but still needed to learn more about what people do with their new facilities and knowledge.

BRAC and IRC introduced outcome-based monitoring, using the Qualitative Information System (QIS) to look at 15 indicators covering households, schools, village WASH committees (VWCs) and rural sanitation centres (RSCs). A further tool (SenseMaker) was used to investigate the stories that drive the figures.

Work is in progress to bring monitoring together on an open source integrated WASH Info platform for analysis and basic reporting.

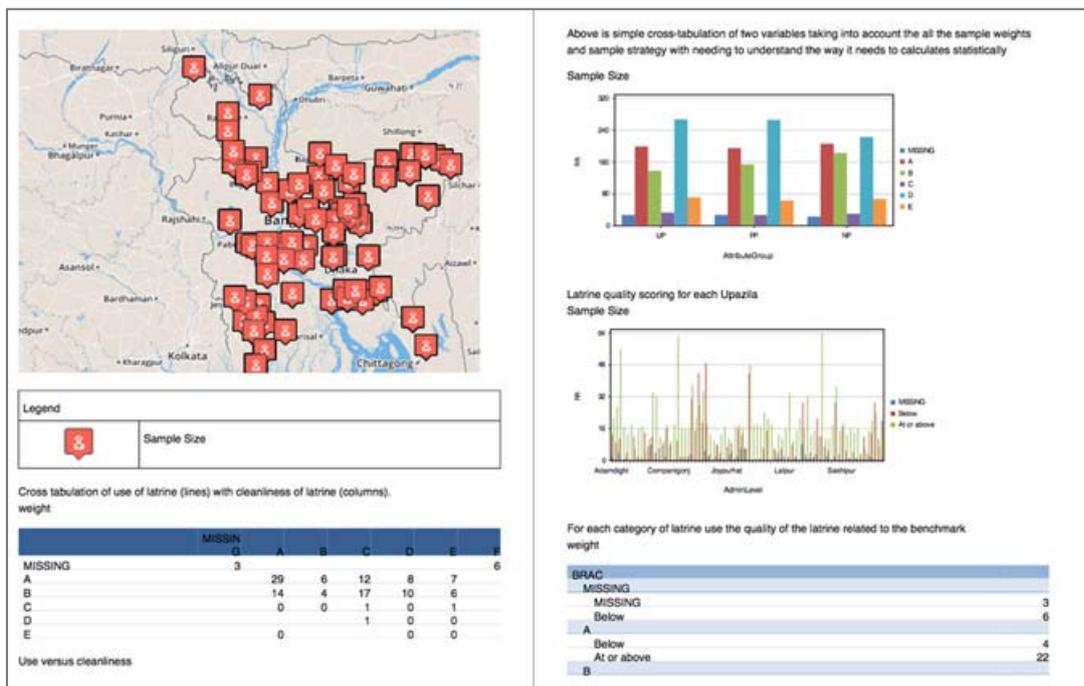
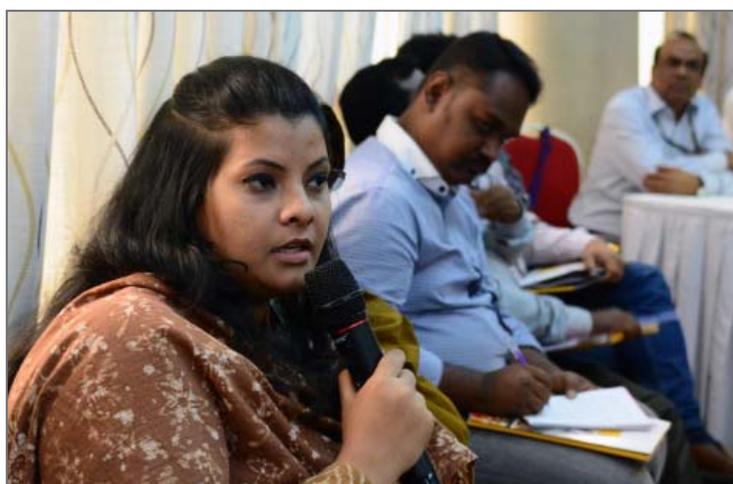


Figure 7: Integrated monitoring platform brings BRAC WASH data together



*Exchanging experiences at the BRAC WASH learning workshop in Dhaka.*

## Questions and comments

*Questions and comments from the floor during an open session were answered by Dr Akram, Dr Chowdhury, Milan and other members of the BRAC WASH team*

### Questions and comments about finance

**Surely business promotion rather than subsidy is the way to get people to improve their latrines?**

**The NGO Forum is signing a MoU with a national cost sharing strategy. We think that subsidies are the wrong strategy as they make the poor dependent.**

**What support is given to people who are better off?**

The model is self-financing for the non-poor, loan support to the poor and subsidies are only for the ultra-poor. BRAC WASH is moving toward cost sharing but the ultra-poor would not have got dual-pit latrines without the grants.

There is also business promotion. Entrepreneurs who run rural sanitation centres have been trained and supported. There is a revolving fund for loans to at least one entrepreneur in each union.

**How will the programme be sustained? Will subsidies continue? Will other stakeholders be included?**

Greater integration is planned with BRAC health, education and microfinance programmes. There are close to 100,000 BRAC health workers. Financial support through financial institutions is being discussed.

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“BRAC WASH covers half of Bangladesh. These achievements could be replicated in the sector over the whole country.”

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**What is the value of life-cycle costing?**

Life-cycle costing ensures that all costs—including recurrent costs such as maintenance costs are taken into account. It helps to identify issues of affordability and to flag up where finance will be needed.

**What mechanism do you adopt to minimise duplication between donors working in the same areas?**

Local government convenes meetings of NGOs for coordination at union and upazila level to try to avoid duplication. However, very few NGOs cover entire upazilas.

### Sustainability of village WASH committees

**What will happen to the BRAC inspired village WASH committee (VWC) after the programme withdraws? What is the relationship with the WATSAN committee at Union level?**

Local government does not have a WATSAN Committee at village level which is why BRAC introduced and built the capacity of 656,000 VWCs for monitoring and supervision. The aim is that they link with local entrepreneurs and the Union WATSAN committee. Although a VWC member is present at WATSAN committee meetings, this connection is important and needs to be looked at that more closely.

### People with disabilities

**Have disabled people been included?**

BRAC WASH has timetabled discussion on disability latrines. More needs to be done.



**We would like to see pressure on the government who are decreasing national provision on WASH and sending a negative message to local government.**

BRAC is a service delivery programme—but we do need to do more to persuade the government to increase its allocation.

**How do you collect data in a gender-disaggregated form?**

Cluster meetings are held (and counted) separately for men and women and QIS and the independent monitoring department also collect data by gender.

**Advocacy for government action**

**Monitoring, acting on results and sharing data**

**It is good to see the numbers with soap and water available increasing but how do you reach people who are not changing their behaviour?**

Reaching the 'last mile' is difficult. Indicators for hygiene promotion are critical so we can tell whether it is put to use. The Bangladesh Health Survey will have more information on water and sanitation.

**How will the wealth of data that BRAC has generated be made available to the sector? Will BRAC guarantee that all data will be available on line by end of the project?**

BRAC agrees its data will be useful for many people and is discussing a policy for availability. Data from monitoring could be put in the cloud. Some RED data is already open access. *From the floor it was said that the Bangladesh government has an information system and is asking others to add their data. Jan Willem Rosenboom from the The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pointed out that their grant conditions require all data collected by programmes they support to be made freely available online.*

**Local governments have been mandated to introduce an arsenic implementation plan. How do you achieve safe water in hard-to-reach areas or those affected by arsenic or salinisation?**

BRAC WASH identified 35 arsenic prone upazilas in the areas where it was working. Five piped water systems and deep tube wells have been installed and pond sand filters have been developed. In coastal areas BRAC WASH is exploring options for water and has been trialling the introduction of elevated latrines. There is no single solution—technology has to be appropriate to the area, and affordable.

**How do you solve maintenance issues with sanitation?**

O&M is indeed a big issue and not just for sanitation but for water as well.

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“We still need to break the silence on menstrual hygiene—menstruation is not a disease or an illness. We need to use the BRAC school experience.”

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**Working in areas affected by arsenic and salinization**

**O&M**

## The donor perspective

### The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Carel de Groot, First Secretary at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), that has supported BRAC WASH from the very beginning of the programme, congratulated BRAC on its achievements as “hugely present and effective; an efficient, impressive organisation”. He was proud that the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Lillianne Ploumen, had been able to tell the Global Citizen Earth Day festival in Washington that the Netherlands had met its commitment to reach 50 million people with sanitation and 30 million for water supply, and to know that a good part of that came from the BRAC WASH Programme.

BRAC was now in the best position to continue to play a huge role in what remained to be done in Bangladesh and the representation from other organisations at the workshop was a visible and positive development in terms of sharing knowledge.

But this was also an opportunity to discuss what could be done better. Integration of WASH with other BRAC programmes was a good step that could have taken place years earlier. BRAC WASH had a tendency to look inwards. “You have tremendous experience and sharing that will automatically make you an advocate in the region. The world is becoming more complex and we need to become more outward looking and braver.”

Dr Chowdhury agreed that BRAC needs to do more to share its experiences – as in the paper in the World Water Forum proceedings\*.

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“Hugely present and effective;  
an efficient, impressive  
organisation.”

**Carel de Groot**

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### Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Jan Willem Rosenboom, senior manager for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation wanted to celebrate BRAC accomplishments. BMGF supported WASH II as a catalytic funder to tackle tough challenges. It was agreed to focus on four areas:

- Reach the hard-core poor
- Ensure that toilets are used by all at all times
- Innovate in ways to deal with faecal sludge
- Explore how the approach can be replicated and adopted by others

Other areas included qualitative monitoring and information—how people experience services— and life-cycle costing.

BMGF adopts an “outcome investing approach”. BMGF and BRAC agree on what counts as a success and the Foundation specifies a minimum level of satisfactory performance. If results are better, there may be extra funding. The 2012-2015 major results were in and BMGF completed an independent verification in December.

A satisfactory level for the grant would be to reach 200,000 families in the 152 upazilas and 45,000 in the additional five upazilas

BRAC WASH reached 734,000 households in original 152 upazilas. “Excellent would have been 600,000 – this was well beyond excellent; super excellent.” In new upazilas BRAC WASH reached 94,000 households with 98% sustained use by all households all the time. That is an absolutely fantastic result in terms of the numbers and results for which we need to thank BRAC, not only the team here in the room but the many others who are not here, for delivery of the programme.

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“This was well beyond  
excellent; super excellent...  
absolutely fantastic in terms  
of the numbers and results”

**Jan Willem  
Rosenboom**

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*Carel de Groot from the Netherlands Embassy with Jan Willem Rosenboom (BMGF) and Aaron Walling (Splash).*

An independent report commissioned by BMGF from Emory University, Portland State University and the Bangladesh research group ICDDR,B reported survey figures even higher than those reported by BRAC. Their ability to reach the ultra-poor stood out: 81% of people reached by BRAC through BMGF belong to ultra-poor, 9% poor and 10% non-poor.

This gave the BMGF confidence in accepting results from BRAC and from QIS developed with IRC. “If we work with BRAC in future, we would not feel we had to pay for independent verification. The work points to increased confidence and self-reliance at community level.”

### **Innovation**

Rosenboom highlighted innovation in BRAC WASH. The SatoPan developed by American Standard uses less water, can be locally produced and does not clog easily. To date 700,000 have been sold in Bangladesh, and it is in use in Timor-Leste and Fiji with plans to introduce it in India. SatoPan received a humanitarian product award from the vice President of the USA. Although BRAC did not develop the SatoPan, it facilitated its development. “It makes a real difference in the life of the poor.” Faecal sludge management remained high on the agenda although not yet resolved.

Subsidies for the ultra-poor should not be easily dismissed. Research by Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak with WaterAid Bangladesh found latrine promotion with subsidies to be more effective than latrine promotion alone. Contrary to what many expected, more people in those communities bought latrines at full price than in other communities.\*

BRAC has shown an ability to develop a model that works at scale that reaches the poorest and has proved it can solve problems and innovate. The big challenge is how to keep this going and include new and urban areas without having to rely on donors.

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“One thing that stood out was BRAC’s ability to reach the ultra-poor.”

**Jan Willem Rosenboom**

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\* Raymond Guiteras, James Levinsohn, Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak. 2015. Encouraging sanitation investment in the developing world: A cluster-randomized trial. *Science* 22 May 2015.

### IRC — Patrick Moriarty, Chief Executive Officer

It was a privilege to work with one of the largest and most successful WASH programmes in the world. IRC had helped BRAC to develop the QIS methodology at a time when everyone was strongly focused on measuring outcomes. BRAC had demonstrated success at scale and long-term commitment. “Uniquely you have made time to focus on a target which is basically universal coverage, made time to focus on the last mile and to focus on the ultra-poor.”

“Of all the programmes I know, if any deserves continued support of its finances, this is the one.”

**Patrick Moriarty**



He saluted BRAC’s bravery in persisting with subsidies to bring sanitation to the ultra-poor at a time when there was opposition to this concept. IRC believed there was a continuing need for subsidy, for government support, and for long-term support from donors until it was possible to institutionalise the gains. In this respect it was a pity that some of the financing was coming to an end.

“It cannot be the role of external donors to support that for ever—we would argue that is the role of government.

However, of all the programmes I know, if any deserves continued support of its finances this is the one.” He would communicate that strongly with DGIS, the Netherlands Ministry for development cooperation.

### Splash — Aaron Walling, South Asia manager

Aaron Walling described BRAC as “nothing short of phenomenal,” adding “It is something I will tell my grandchildren some day that I witnessed social transformation on such a large scale.” BRAC had been brave and bold in their entry into urban WASH work. They have had incredible success in rural areas and it would be easy to come into urban areas and say we do not need anyone. But BRAC came with the brave and bold approach to learn and to work with others in a true partnership.

Splash has an exclusively urban focus, working in institutions with children: schools, orphanages and beyond. “I believe what BRAC and Splash are doing are complementary and co-learning—two implementing organisations walking side by side, implementing together and learning together.” “In the vast expanse of this urban landscape with buildings as far as the eye can see, our vision is that every single school and every single child supported in every single school will have clean drinking water and a safe place to use the toilet every single time with proper sanitation behaviour change and menstrual hygiene management.”

“BRAC has been very brave and bold in their entry into urban WASH work...BRAC came to learn and work with others in a true partnership.”

**Aaron Walling**



### Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK)— Dibalok Singha, Executive Director

Dibalok Singha said it was important to understand what has been achieved and that the quality of infrastructure brought into poor communities and slums was very important. “If DSK is going to facilitate the construction of a toilet, our challenge is to sustain

that for ten years.” All toilet programmes should also take into account the needs of people with physical disabilities.

He emphasised the needs of women and girls and the role of women’s participation in bringing WASH services to the community. Women want toilets because they need the service and it gives them security and they are willing to pay for that service.

DSK is testing new toilet technologies such as Tiger Toilets that use worms to reduce the solids in faecal waste, and would be publishing the results. Solving the faecal waste problem was critical. Dhaka is surrounded by rivers so polluted it would take decades to clean their waters.

DSK is working alongside BRAC on a Bangladesh national committee to develop a faecal sludge framework. They should all be proud of what Bangladesh had achieved and these experiences should be presented at the South Asia Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) in January 2016.

### Bangladesh Government – Kazi Abdul Noor

Mr Kazi Abdul Noor, Additional Secretary and Project Director at the Policy Support Unit of the Local Government Department was the chief guest. The Government had a strong political commitment to the sector and has been the driving force for progress in the country, reflected in policy reforms. The National Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation was being printed and the Water and Sanitation Regulatory Commission Bill was in preparation.

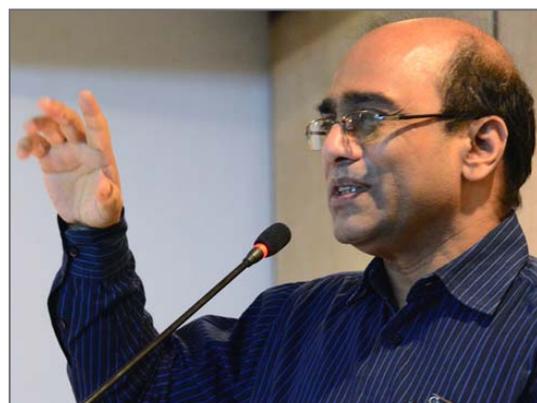
Bangladesh had made remarkable improvements in water and sanitation, meeting the Millennium Development Goal for water and reducing open defecation from more than 50% to 3%. Significant challenges remained in addressing issues of arsenic, the lowering of the water table, climate change and achieving safe and sustainable services for all, including the hard to reach. As well as arsenic there were high levels of iron and magnesium in many tube wells.

Faecal sludge management is becoming an urgent problem since 98% of latrines are pit latrines or septic tanks.

Measures to improve hygiene were needed. Only 40% of households have water and soap near the latrine. As a result of lack of menstrual hygiene 40% of girls miss school three days a month. Finance for sanitation is a crucial factor, as diarrhoea makes the largest single contribution to health-related adverse economic impacts.

The Government is investing 2.22 billion taka, 5.3% of GDP, in tackling sanitation. He expected development partners also to invest more in the WASH sector and to coordinate research. The Government had established a dedicated fund for research and development in the sector.

He hoped they would all learn from what they heard today as information on appropriate technologies had become an essential requirement of a dynamic water policy.



“Women need toilets because it gives them security. They are willing to pay for that service.”

**Dibalok Singha**



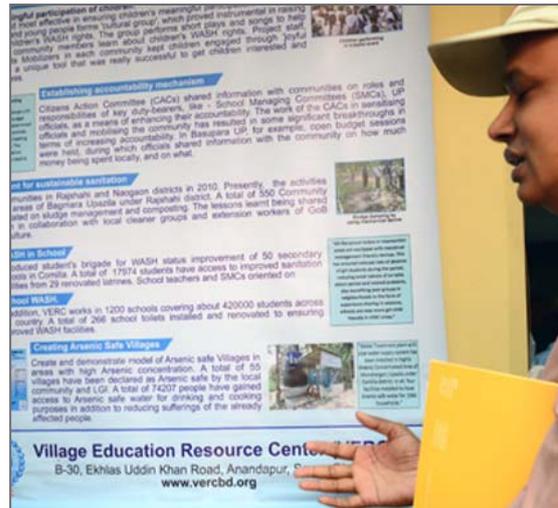
“The Government has a strong political commitment to the WASH sector. We expect development partners also to invest more”

**Kazi Abdul Noor**

## Displays and timelines...

This was a learning workshop—an opportunity to share experiences. NGOs brought their own impressive array of posters showing approaches and projects that demonstrate the vibrancy of the water sector in Bangladesh. These pages display some of the posters — the two pages that follow show the timeline on the walls of a conference room—offering an insight into the history, views of today and hopes and fears for the future.







Participants constructed a timeline showing the status of WASH in BRAC, in communities and in Bangladesh at three time points: before BRAC WASH began in 2006, as it is in 2015 and how it will be in five years. The pages were pasted on the walls (pictured above). The story they tells is summarised in the text boxes below and on the facing page.

## Before BRAC WASH

•BRAC	•COMMUNITY	•BANGLADESH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WASH components integrated in BRAC health interventions</li> <li>No experiments and limited components</li> <li>Funding gaps</li> <li>No WASH capacity but strong institutional capacity and strong commitment to learn</li> <li>Most BRAC staff did not know about handwashing—soap not found at BRAC offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open defecation high Sanitation coverage low</li> <li>Large number of people affected by waterborne diseases</li> <li>Lack of awareness, low education levels and poor access to WASH services</li> <li>People did not understand about pure drinking water</li> <li>No VWCs in the community</li> <li>No Student Brigade activities in schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sanitation coverage 33%</li> <li>Open defecation 32% "very high"</li> <li>Safe water 68%</li> <li>High rate of waterborne diseases</li> <li>Lack of commitment—people's participation was very low</li> <li>Handwashing only happened after taking a meal</li> <li>Few tubewells had concrete platforms</li> <li>Faecal sludge management not discussed</li> <li>No information about menstrual hygiene in textbooks in schools or colleges</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concept of hard to reach areas was not clear</li> <li>Government adopted a national policy for safe water and sanitation in 1998</li> </ul>		

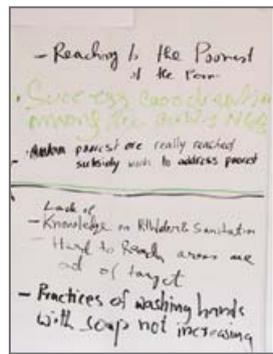
## Now (2015)

•BRAC	•COMMUNITY	•BANGLADESH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing strategy to sustain WASH achievements</li> <li>Leadership is in transition. Donors will come forward for BRAC WASH 4</li> <li>Working on service delivery approach</li> <li>Integration of WASH with other issues</li> <li>No focus yet on urban slums, but moving to urban</li> <li>Reaching out &amp; opening up</li> <li>Subsidies work to address the poorest</li> <li>Started to plan for people with disabilities</li> <li>Sanitation marketing (but low priority for faecal sludge)</li> <li>Successful coordination between government and NGOs</li> <li>Too few know about this largest global WASH programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity development</li> <li>Community members have increased knowledge about WASH particularly about handwashing</li> <li>People know a lot about technology for safe water...</li> <li>...but still lack knowledge on water and sanitation</li> <li>Gap between knowledge and practice—washing hands with soap not increasing</li> <li>BRAC schools provide a good opportunity for WASH services</li> <li>Lack of sanitation linkage</li> <li>Lack of ownership and sense of sector liability</li> <li>Addressing hard-to-reach... but hard-to-reach areas are off target</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model country for best practices in WASH</li> <li>Less than 3% open defecation</li> <li>WASH Programme meets much latrine demand. 58% have improved sanitation</li> <li>WASH sector focused on governance approach</li> <li>More demand for WASH information in urban slum areas</li> <li>Need to engage Governmental authorities on WASH improvements</li> <li>Climate change and natural disasters are big risks/threats</li> </ul>



## Five years from now

• BRAC	• COMMUNITY	• BANGLADESH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BRAC is a leader, advocate and source of WASH knowledge with an innovative approach</li> <li>WASH is a permanent element of BRAC's strategy. Extended programme (rural and urban) integrated in other BRAC &amp; development programmes</li> <li>Cross-subsidies with microcredit and other business linked with ultra-poor livelihoods</li> <li>Engaged with core Government and NGO providers — linkages with private sector</li> <li>Access to Government safety net funds. Engaged with local government WASH budget allocation</li> <li>Increased advocacy promoting systemic approach to hygiene</li> <li>BRAC WASH lessons widely understood — push to replicate them nationwide</li> <li>Joint data sharing from monitoring and research</li> <li>Working to reach bottom 10% hard-to-reach populations and areas</li> <li>Introducing climate-resilient technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% community awareness. Communities themselves sustain achievements of WASH programme and engage in demand creation</li> <li>BRAC WASH programme covers the whole of Bangladesh</li> <li>Pure drinking water for all people in Bangladesh</li> <li>Increased cooperation with Government</li> <li>Lack of awareness, low education levels and poor access to WASH services</li> <li>Joint collaboration in the sector</li> <li>Less subsidy, more entrepreneurship</li> <li>WASH in schools coalition achieving 100% coverage in Dhaka</li> <li>Menstrual hygiene systems in all institutions</li> <li>WASH linked with nutrition and sexual and reproductive health and rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sanitation 85%-90% including hard to reach areas</li> <li>Safe water 90%-98% including hard to reach areas</li> <li>Open defecation 0%</li> <li>No waterborne disease in Bangladesh</li> <li>Government takes on the BRAC WASH model</li> <li>WASH financed from the 5-year plan</li> <li>Capacity building at institutional level including local government institutions</li> <li>Handwashing practices promoted and reached 100% in schools</li> <li>Appropriate technology for water and sanitation available</li> <li>Sustainable sanitary latrines in hard to reach areas</li> <li>Faecal sludge framework and procedures in place nationally</li> </ul>





# Learning from WASH Experiences in Bangladesh

**Day 2: 27 April 2015 BRAC Centre, Dhaka**

The second day of the BRAC WASH workshop was a focused discussion looking at new areas of work and opportunities and challenges ahead. This day pooled collective wisdom of the BRAC WASH team, development partners, leaders of some of the other BRAC programmes, and NGOs in Bangladesh. Introducing the day, Ingeborg Krukkert (IRC) said it would contribute to mapping the path along which BRAC will progress, how integration with other programmes will happen and what will be done differently.

## Integration and sustainability

Md. Waliullah Bhuiyan introduced a session on how BRAC can integrate with other programmes within BRAC. Demand for sanitation and water services was increasing but there were challenges in reaching the last mile.



*Waliullah Bhuiyan: other BRAC programmes can stimulate demand and help to meet it.*

BRAC WASH will focus on

- Creating demand through hygiene messages and mobilisation
- Providing financial access through loans/subsidies
- Strengthening the supply chain link through rural sanitation centres (RSCs)

The WASH programme will seek integration with other BRAC programmes in BRAC, including Health, Microfinance, Education, Targeting Ultra Poor (TUP), Integrated Development Programme (IDP) and Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) with the following aims:

- Health programme staff will be involved in integrating the WASH activities
- Sustaining village WASH committees
- Integration of hygiene education with health cluster meetings, health education forum, during infant and child feeding, etc.

### Sustaining the gains

Other programmes will support through stimulating demand, for example microfinance organisers can support village organisations, BRAC Education Programme (BEP) can include WASH in schools and the CEP works with village social development community organisation (Polli Somaj) and through popular theatre.

They can also meet demand: especially latrine provision for members of the Targeting Ultra Poor (TUP) and the Integrated Development Programmes (mainly in hard to reach areas). BEP could support the provision of latrines and tubewells in schools.

Support can mean strengthening the supply chain link with RSCs, and bringing sanitation coverage within reach of the poor by providing loans. It should be noted that there will still be a need for grants or subsidies for ultra-poor families.

There will be full scale intervention for the next three years with both integration and service delivery. Even as the WASH programme phases out of some areas there are still high levels of potential BRAC staff support.

In the WASH Phase I areas (152 upazilas) WASH had 2-4 programme organisers per upazila. For WASH Phase II WASH has 2 programme assistants (PAs) and one field organiser (FO) per union, and one programme organiser (PO) and one upazila manager per upazila. However, in each upazila BRAC Health has one health volunteer (Shasthya Shebika), one salaried supervisor (Shasthya Kormi), one nutrition promoter (Pushti Kormi) and a programme organiser.



*Dr Akramul Islam*

### Discussion on integration

WASH director Dr Akramul Islam said that the objective was to mainstream WASH within the overall BRAC strategy. There were discussions at director level about mainstreaming gender, nutrition and WASH within BRAC programmes. Two consultations have been held with health staff and a joint memo on integration has been circulated. A microfinance group is considering whether staff can manage latrine loans and repayments in a revised financial model. Village WASH Committees can also expand their role. However, there will be a continuing need for a specialist WASH programme with the technological knowledge to deliver water facilities. Integration means working closely with other programmes—it does not mean disappearing.

Andrew Jenkins, Coordinator of the BRAC Impact Assessment Unit, believed it was possible to have a strategy of integration and also to continue with a separate WASH programme. For example, WASH could be integrated into all programmes to promote resilience to shocks. WASH also has a big role to play in early childhood nutrition and health. The Research and Evaluation Division (RED) has started to look at research that could potentially measure the effects of an integrated programme on morbidity and nutrition but this is not an easy area. Dr. Md. Raisul Haque also spoke in favour of closer ties, believed that integrating WASH with the BRAC Nutrition Programme would help to reduce stunting and malnutrition.



*Group discussion: the benefits and challenges of integration*

Patrick Moriarty (IRC) said that BRAC WASH was one of the most cost-effective programmes in the world for reaching the ultra-poor. Success was due in part to constant repetition. The message needed to get out that it is not possible to secure permanent change by investing just once in hygiene. Jan Willem Rosenboom (BMGF) agreed that the programme had been proven to work well at scale and there should not be a rush to make changes. BRAC WASH learns from experience and adjusts its programme based on monitoring. A good example was working with the front line workers to bring back the key messages from 19 to 7, an enormous amount of work for BRAC and IRC since the programme covers half the country. In India, it had proved difficult to integrate sanitation promotion with mother and child nutrition promotion using the same front line community workers. It seemed logical and cheaper, but proved difficult to communicate 11 messages. BRAC maybe needed to try integration on a smaller scale before deciding what to do at larger scale.

Carel De Groot (EKN) was happy to hear that BRAC was having internal discussions, which were a sign of real development. However, the strategy, programme and organisations are interwoven and integration would be a benefit. Communicating multiple messages is always a challenge at field level, even if they are being given by different people. BRAC also needed to think about integration outside the organisation.

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“The hall mark of BRAC WASH is that it learns from experiences and changes the programme.”

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## Benefits and challenges of integration with non-WASH programmes

Participants split into groups to consider the benefits and challenges of integration-how to sustain the gains. What should stay the same and what should be done differently? Responses are summarised from the feedback from all the groups.

### Benefits

- **Cost effective use of human resources:** Integration will make more efficient use of staff and increase their capacity through training. It will empower health workers and community members and build capacity for teachers in schools and for children. Integrated programmes would encourage cross-learning between mothers and children and have enormous potential to liberate human resources.
- **Increased sustainability:** An integrated programme will have wider coverage and be more inclusive. It will be more effective in reaching target audiences through multiple channels. Overall this would make it more sustainable.
- **A bridge between programmes:** It will coordinate WASH with agriculture and food security as well as with health and education. There will be common platforms to share experiences—for example a health forum in the community.
- **Strengthened messages:** Multiple sources increase the authority of messages. Everyone in the community gets uniform messages.
- **Monitoring:** Beneficial for effective and comprehensive monitoring.



*Dr. Shayla Islam,  
Senior Programme  
Manager, BRAC  
Tuberculosis  
Programme,  
reporting back from  
group work on  
integration*

### Challenges

- **Quality:** It is a challenge to keep the quality high when providing multiple services.
- **Response time:** Collaboration and coordination is time consuming: Decision making could take longer in integrated services.

- **Workload:** Increased burden on individual staff members who have to cover multiple programmes. Some components might be missed.
- **Accountability and ownership:** Who takes responsibility for programme elements and performance? Who is responsible for doing what?
- **Prioritisation:** Can all staff make a proper assessment of who needs what?
- **Capacity development:** A big task to get all integrated staff up to speed on all areas of the work.
- **Monitoring:** Setting tools for measurement of outcomes and impact can be difficult. How will you monitor to check how other programmes are delivering the WASH content?
- **Disaster response:** Integrated staff may not be able to respond with the same speed and quality as specialist WASH staff.

### Development partners

Development partners formed a separate group and made recommendations about what BRAC could do next.

- **Tell the BRAC WASH story:** Present the story of the past decade clearly and in one place, rather than in the many reports and outputs that currently exist.
- **Create clarity on the 'ask':** Partners are willing but what do you want them to do? In terms of financial resources how much, for what. What are the targets? What internal financing will be provided and what is the gap? What is the role of government finance in sustainability and scaling up?
- **Map the next five years:** Set out the core activities for the new WASH strategy. Is the main strategy to integrate or will maintain a separate WASH programme? What activities will BRAC do irrespective of finance from outside?
- **Engage in policy dialogue:** In Bangladesh and internationally BRAC should be more visible in leading sector policy dialogue. Build on what has been done in this meeting with other WASH actors.
- **Develop the capacity of integrated staff:** If this can be achieved, a wide range of people will understand WASH issues, deliver services and support participatory monitoring. Are front-line health workers capable of doing this?



*Development partners discuss the next moves for BRAC WASH*

## WASH in urban areas

Anamika Debnath, senior sector specialist for BRAC WASH, reported on the proposed BRAC WASH approach to support the Coastal Towns Environmental Infrastructure Project (CTEIP), an integrated project for urban development and environmental improvement in vulnerable coastal towns, at risk from the impact of climate change. The project runs from June 2014 to May 2020 and is managed by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) and funded by ADB, Strategic Climate Fund (SCF), BMGF and Government of Bangladesh.

This is not about service delivery but focuses on collaboration, facilitation and advocacy. BRAC WASH will collaborate with Local Government in eight coastal towns (Pourashava) in Barisal Division\*, to strengthen institutional capacity, governance and awareness for water supply, drainage and sanitation and for solid waste management.

The work includes awareness raising such as ensuring that everyone at local level knows about the alarm system, hygiene education in schools, advocacy and coordination with local government and training and facilitation.

Digbijoy Dey, senior sector specialist for WASH reported on BRAC's work in 30 towns with the third phase of an urban governance infrastructure improvement project (UGIIP-III), managed by LGED and funded by ADB. Each town has a population of up to 100,000 people, and the infrastructure development plan includes roads, drainage, water supply, sanitation and waste management.

BRAC's role is community engagement to connect residents to WASH services, for example services for emptying pit latrines and dealing with the faecal sludge. BRAC will also support sanitation in schools and towns and community deep tube wells in urban slums.

BRAC WASH will form urban WASH Committees, which have a role in mobilising resources, student brigades and bazaar committees. BRAC will use multiple channels including local cable operators, schools, and khutba sessions in mosques to show citizens how to access municipal WASH services. There is a need to coordinate timing raising awareness will be counter-productive if there is no service.

Dibalok Singha, executive director of DSK, said that many of the towns where BRAC will be working have acute slums where services may not be easy for the local authority to provide as land owners will attempt to charge for the sanitation or water services. There are no treatment plants in those towns: "Your intervention will need to be adjusted?"

CTEIP project director Md. Abul Bashar, said that his department had expertise in developing the physical structure but not in the motivational software, which is why they needed BRAC. They are weak in managing faecal sludge and solid waste and how it should be treated. However, there will be a pilot model treatment plant in at least one town. The municipality would provide subsidy to motivate the private sector.



*Anamika Debnath:  
Can BRAC help  
local government to  
strengthen urban  
centres.*



*Digbijoy Dey: Urban  
areas pose challenges  
for community  
engagement.*

\* This has since expanded to 12 coastal towns in Barisal and Khulna Divisions. Paurashava centres have populations of at least 50,000 people, three quarters of whom are employed in something other than agriculture.



Above: Groups address the way forward for work on WASH in urban areas.

### Challenges and way forward in urban areas

The workshop split into groups to consider the way forward for BRAC on urban WASH issues. Challenges are related to physical constraints, lack of services, lack of security and the fact that local government is generally not well connected with the population. Participants also felt there were opportunities if BRAC WASH planned carefully. The groups also came up with some specific suggestions for BRAC interventions. ♦

#### Physical constraints and lack of services

WASH services are not there or of high price and poor quality. Many homes are not permanent and lack of tenure leads to lack of interest in establishing infrastructure. Land acquisition is needed to install a drainage system or toilets and evictions may be necessary to clear the land needed for infrastructure. The water board is likely to resist plans to build toilets close to embankments, which is where many people live.

Below: Challenges in urban areas and what BRAC might do to meet them.



#### Coordination with local government and stakeholders

It is vital to communicate, plan and integrate with the local authority, to ensure that services are available as people's demand rises. BRAC can work to build capacity to make local government more responsive to the needs of the urban people. There is also a need to monitor who is doing what. Some CBOs and private entrepreneurs are providing water points and toilets – but who is monitoring and coordinating their activities?

♦ Suggestions in this report reflect the discussions at the workshop, that have been fed into BRAC discussions internally and with partners. They do not currently represent BRAC commitments.

## Awareness raising and advocacy

Advocacy is required to change the thinking of local government officials, WASH technicians and local politicians. There is also a need to raise awareness amongst the urban population—of the services available and to develop a willingness to pay. Although many already pay a high price to get services of poor quality, there was concern that people would not pay for ‘official’ water since any landowner can install a pump, and many people think services should be free. Mayors are reluctant to charge because they have to be elected. In addition BRAC can:

- Focus on advocacy, communication and coordination with local government.
- Identify gaps in services and advocate for services to fill them.
- Work with urban populations to ensure that they know their rights to services and how to access them
- Make house owners and landowners in slums aware of the benefits to them of improvements in the provision of toilets and water points.
- Establish cluster based toilets and mobile toilets in slums, with a minimum service charge to cover O&M. Introduce solid waste management.
- Form CBOs to distribute and sell safe water in slum areas and to look after O&M. The Water Supply & Sewerage Authority (WASA) can supply water to a central, metered point from where NGOs can sell it. BRAC can ensure that only well-performing and well-motivated NGOs and CBOs are selected.



*Tahmina Haque,  
Technical Manager  
for CARE:  
Poor people in urban  
centres are paying  
high prices for poor  
quality.*

## Donor partners

Donor partners had their own guidance about the BRAC urban role:

- Learn the lessons about what made other small town projects succeed or fail.
- Look at what services people already have—is there a gap that can be easily filled, like fixing toilets?
- Work on improving options, choices and demand in the community.
- Define a clear role and stick to it—beware of jumping into the breach if the government does not deliver.
- Clarity about funding: if there is demand for BRAC to provide services or link communities to services, someone should be willing to pay for that.

## Climate change resilience:

Moniruzzaman Khan, Research Coordinator at the Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research at BRAC University, (C3ER), is working with BRAC on a project to identify the most suitable latrine technologies for areas affected by cyclones and floods. There is urgent work to be done on finding the best and most resilient.



*Below: Ratnajit  
Saha (Research and  
Evaluation Division)  
outlined advocacy  
and capacity building  
opportunities for  
BRAC in urban areas.*

## BRAC pilot in coastal areas—Tala upazila

About 40 million people in coastal Bangladesh rely on ponds, rivers, rain water and groundwater for drinking. Widespread arsenic contamination of groundwater was discovered in the 1990s, and since then saline intrusion has increasingly affected groundwater sources, leading to further scarcity and linked to negative impacts on health of pregnant women as well as kidney stones and rheumatism



Nameerah Khan, BRAC WASH Manager of Innovation and Knowledge Management Unit, presented a pilot project in Tala upazila, in the south-western coastal area. The Tala pilot aims to provide safe water and to recover the costs of testing and installation.



*Nameerah Khan:  
Salinization is  
affecting people's  
health.*

The key aspects are:

- Cost recovery to cover the costs associated with testing and installation, including the costs of borehole drilling that fails to find water of sufficient quantity and quality.
- Understanding the local context and community perspective
- Team effort from BRAC WASH, BRAC Research and Evaluation Division (RED), and BRAC University's Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER).

The 1.5 year project (started Nov 2014) is identifying the quantity and quality of existing water options, promoting a water safety plan and installing a range of water technologies. By the date of the meeting four deep tube wells and two pond sand filters had been installed. Of four further test bores, only one had found water than met standards for arsenic, manganese, iron, salinity and pH.

BRAC will develop a business model to create demand at household level and connect households to water vendors. This will also promote sustainable use of water sources. The business case is a challenge since there is a strong feeling amongst people that water should be free. However there are private pond sand filters charging for water. The charge is not for the water but the service.

RED is testing 700 water points. C3ER has produced maps showing for each union:

- Water availability (red is low, green is high)
- Community perception of water quality
- Types of water source
- Number of people dependent on each water source
- Willingness to pay

The maps show that areas with good water availability tend to have low quality. In the centre of the upazila both quantity and quality are low.

Water management committees are made up of user groups in the community, who will put money aside for operation and maintenance. A focus group discussion

in every village asks about their understanding of ‘safe water’, from where they collect water, whether they make any payments and what problems they face. A lot of people are already willing to pay to have water delivered to the household.

Moniruzzaman Khan who is the project lead from C3ER said that Tala is one of the most problematic upazilas in the southern belt and drinking water is one of the greatest challenges. “Local people say they can survive cyclones and food and security issues but cannot survive without drinking water.”

During the pilot they are using GPS to map 50,000 water points. He said that the team is taking great care to involve local people in the planning process and the best location for water points, proposing seven pond sand filters and one water treatment plant for each union. The mapping data includes the name and phone number of the owner of every water source, so keeping the maps up to date will not be expensive or time consuming.

There is a great variation in the ponds used for drinking water in the coastal belt: some have been working for 20 years; one has been in use for 300 years. Protected ponds are often the best option for the village and are reserved for drinking water.

BRAC is looking at other upazilas to identify places with the greatest access problems and to avoid duplicating services. There are many gaps but at the same time BRAC has seen that a lot of NGOs are duplicating services. However, it is sometimes difficult for NGOs to say no when people are having trouble and politicians demand work in their areas.

## Closing reflections on the workshop

There was an enthusiastic response to the workshop and discussions about BRAC’s future work from other BRAC programmes and other NGOs in Bangladesh.

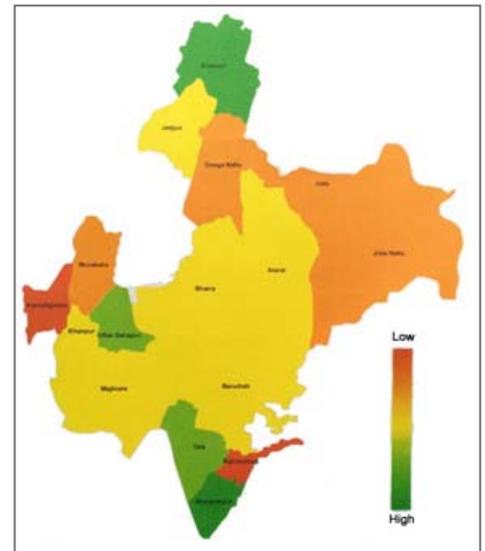
Kazi N. Fattah Programme Head at BRAC’s Urban Development Programme said that WASH in urban areas is an important part of ensuring affordable services for poor slums, and very much in line with the overall BRAC urban strategy.

Tahmina Haque from CARE Bangladesh, said it was vital to pursue advocacy and dialogue at community level for people to understand the importance of WASH services to the health of pregnant women and to develop demand on hygiene related issues.

Dr. Sharmin Zahan, Senior Programme Manager at BRAC International, said that the health programme was incorporating WASH as part of their efforts to combat Ebola internationally. The learning taking place at the workshop was enormously helpful.

Md. Masud Rana, a manager from the BRAC microfinance programme believed it had clarified ways to connect microfinance and the WASH programme. Many microfinance clients run businesses such as restaurants and stalls and have to ensure hygiene outside the home.

The BRAC Research and Evaluation Division would like to see BRAC focus on the difficult issues such as arsenic affected areas and faecal sludge management. BRAC education stressed the need for better water provision, since it was impossible to promote handwashing properly in schools where there is no available water. Increasing collaboration was also welcomed by the BRAC nutrition programme.



*Map showing high (green) and low (red) quantities of water in Tala upazila*



*Tapan Kumar Acharjee, Senior Programme Manager, BRAC Education Programme*



*Mahjabeen Ahmed, BRAC WASH Manager*



*Md. Mahbubur Rahman, Senior Manager CFPR-TUP, BRAC*



*Dr. Sharmin Zahan, SR, Programme Manager, BRAC International*

Donor partners said that the workshop had marked a significant development in BRAC thinking. Jan Willem Rosenboom from BMGF had found this to be the best workshop in terms of bringing together a wider audience across different WASH strategies and with external participation. “We are truly exchanging learning and thinking what next and how we can work better together.” He would welcome the WASH team communicating with those who had attended to update them on integration.

Carel De Groot from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands praised the breadth of the audience and their contributions. His colleague Michiel Slotema said he had been very pleasantly surprised at the progress made over the past year in terms of integration and ‘one BRAC approach’.

Aaron Walling from Splash said that BRAC WASH achievements were spectacular and inspiring and he hoped that donor partners and BRAC would ensure that it continued with new aspects and areas of work.

Patrick Moriarty from IRC welcomed the mix of partners and openness of discussions. He hoped BRAC would keep WASH as a programme with a target. “The IRC mission and vision is that everybody in the world has access to water and sanitation. BRAC is a partner that not only shares that vision but can work in a meaningful way to get there.” His colleague Ingeborg Krukkert, who manages the IRC work with BRAC, said how proud it had made her to be a knowledge partner with BRAC.

There was also an enthusiastic response to the discussions from the WASH team. Milan Kanti Barua, BRAC WASH programme head, said that when the programme started in May 2006 they thought that with commitment they would finish in a few years, but it has been a long road. Sustainability requires six factors: a programmatic approach, service delivery in the community, good management, finance, community advocacy and a supply chain. This has been achieved over time and the team is grateful and satisfied. Mahjabeen Ahmed, BRAC WASH manager, said that the workshop had enriched the team by celebrating achievements and exploring the areas the programme now needed to prioritise.

Closing the meeting, Dr Md Akramul Islam, BRAC WASH Director, said they were right to celebrate successes but there was still a lot more to be done. He looked forward to seeing partners return next year. ❖

## Present at the Learning Workshop — 26 April 2015

### Government Departments

Kazi Abdul Noor	Project Director (Joint Secretary), Policy Support Unit, Local Government Division (LGD), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MLGRDC)
Md. Monwar Ali	Project Director; Additional Chief Engineer (Works), Department of Public Health Engineering, Bangladesh
Md. Abul Bashar	Project Director, Coastal Towns Environmental Infrastructure Project, Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), LGD, MLGRDC
Md. Azizur Rahman	Research Officer, ITN-BUET Centre for Water Supply and Waste Management

### NGOs and International Institutions

Abdul Motaleb	Sr. Water and Sanitation Specialist, WSP World Bank
Nargis Akter, P.Eng	WASH Project Officer, UNICEF
Dr. Amal Krishna Halder	Programme Manager, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research (ICDDR,B)
Zillur Rahman	Water and Sanitation Advisor, Plan International
Tofayel Ahmed	Deputy Country Representative, JADE Bangladesh
Riad Imam Mahmud	Country Director, Max Foundation Bangladesh
Kazal Adihul	Program Manager, Max Foundation Bangladesh
Niels van den Berge	Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation, Max Foundation Bangladesh
Mominul Islam	Project Engineer, Village Education Resource Centre (VERC)
Safina Naznin	Programme Specialist, Gender and Water Programme Bangladesh (GWAPB)
Zobair Hasan	Chief (REM), Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP)
Khandker Zakir Hossain	Director Country Coordination Unit, Plan International
Shah Md Anwar Kamal	Executive Director, Unnayan Shahojogy Team (UST)
Laboni Shabnam	Program Coordinator, Ahsania Mission
Avijit Poddar, Ph.D	Sr. Consultant, Human Development Research Centre (HDRC)
Joep Verhagen	Senior Specialist, WSP, World Bank India
Habibur Rahman	Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP)
Firoz Chowdhury	Head of M&E, Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP)
Tahmina Haque	Technical Manager, CARE Bangladesh
Jobaida Akter	Senior Information Officer, NGO Forum
Salahuddin Ahmmed	Programme Engineer, NGO Forum
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Md. Ekramul Haque	Coordinator WASH, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK)
Chandana Sanyal	Technical Officer, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK)
Alok Majumder	Country Coordinator, Dutch Wash Alliance
Md. Abdul Khaleque	Coordinator, New Initiative, Practical Action
Jessica MacArthur	WASH Technical Advisor, iDE

### Donors

Carel De Groot	First Secretary, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)
Michiel Slotema	Policy Advisor Water, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)
Jan Willem Rosenboom	Senior Program Officer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
Michael Gumbley	Finance Director, Charity: Water
Aaron Walling	Regional Manager–South Asia, Splash

### IRC Knowledge Partners

Dr. Patrick Moriarty	Chief Executive Officer, IRC
Ingeborg Krukkert	IRC Project Director for BRAC WASH Support
Ruchika Shiva	Deputy Manager, Business Development, India Country Programme, IRC

## Present at the Learning Workshop — 26 April 2015

### BRAC

Dr. Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury	Vice Chairperson
Faruque Ahmed	Executive Director, BRAC International
Dr. Kaosar Afsana	Director, Health, Nutrition and Population Programme (HNPP)
Sheepa Hafiza	Director, Gender Justice & Diversity and Migration Programmes
Md. Shahjahan Ali	Integrated Development Programme (IDP)
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Dr. Mahfuzar Rahman	Programme Head, Research and Evaluation Division
Nepal Chandra Dey	Research Fellow, Research and Evaluation Division
Fatema Tuz Jhohura	Research Associate, Research and Evaluation Division
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Monowarul Aziz	Sr. Programme Manager, Health, Nutrition and Population Programme
Dr. Shayla Islam	Programme Manager, Tuberculosis Control, HNPP
Tapan Kumar Acharjee	Programme Manager, BRAC Education Programme
Kazi N. Fattah	Programme Head, Urban Development Programme
Rana Masud	Microfinance Programme
Rashedul Kabir	Deputy Manager, Social Innovation Lab (SIL)
Khaleda Khanom	Gender Justice and Diversity (GJD)
Dr. Moktadir Kabir	Sr. Programme Manager, Malaria, Health Nutrition and Population
Riffat Ara	Health, Nutrition and Population Programme
Dr. Shamsun Naher	Programme Manager, Malaria, Health Nutrition and Population
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Dr. Md Abul Khair Basher	Senior Sector Specialist, Tuberculosis Control, HNPP
Moyen Uddin Ahmmed	Senior Programme Specialist, Disaster, Environment and Climate Change (DECC)
Bithun Tasnuva Mazid	Senior Sector Specialist, Disaster, Environment and Climate Change (DECC)
Nazrul Islam	Senior Manager, BRAC Education Programme
Jahangir Hossain	Deputy Manager, Human Resources Division
Napat Kumar Paul	Senior Officer, Tuberculosis Control, HNPP

### BRAC University

AS Moniruzzaman Khan	Research Coordinator, Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER)
Reaz Uddin Khan	Lecturer/ Research Assistant, Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER)
Hasnaeen Zakir	Research Assistant, Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER)

## Present at the Learning Workshop — 26 April 2015

### BRAC WASH Programme

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Milan Kanti Barua	Programme Head
Md. Moazzem Hossain	Senior Manager
Md. Hasan Ali Mia	Senior Manager
Md. Kamruzzaman Bhuiyan	Regional Manager
Manmatha Sikder	Regional Manager
Arif Md Waliullah Bhuiyan	Manager
Nameerah Khan	Manager
Mahjabeen Ahmed	Manager
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Anamika Debnath	Senior Sector Specialist
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A.F. Ahammed Gazi	Senior Sector Specialist
Md. Rakib Uddin	Senior Sector Specialist
Nafiz Wyzoon	Sector Specialist (Technical)
Md. Rafiqul Islam	Regional Manager
Janir Ahmed	Sector Specialist
Shajeda Khanom Munni	Programme Officer
Md. Shafiqur Rahman	Senior Regional Manager
Md. Faruque Hossian	Regional Manager
Anil Chandra Ray	Senior Sector Specialist
Md. Afsar Ali	Regional Manager
Md. Mamunur Rashid	Regional Manager
Md. Zahidul Islam	Regional Manager
Md. Hussien Ali	Senior Upazila Manager
Md. Jahangir Alam	Senior Sector Specialist
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