

Improving Rural Effective Total Sanitation through Empowered Female Local Government Members

Institution: Environment and Population Research Centre

Researcher: Dr. Bilqis Hoque

Partner: Jagoroni Chakra Foundation (JCF)

Location: Bangladesh (Comilla and Dinajpur Upazilas)

Dates: May 2012 – Apr 2015

Information:

Bilqis Hoque

bilqisdhaka@yahoo.com eprchq@yahoo.com

Website: www.eprcbd.org

Environment and Population Research Centre of Bangladesh (EPRC)

Research Focus:

The importance of institutions in addressing long-term development challenges is well accepted, though there is a lack of empirical evidence on their effectiveness. In particular, there is little information available regarding the roles played by female leadership in bringing about societal changes such as sanitation and hygiene improvement.

Although Bangladesh has made great strides since 1990 in latrine coverage, nearly 45% of the rural population still lack access to sanitary latrines. Lack of local leadership has been shown to be an important factor influencing the adoption and sustained use of latrines and related behavior change.¹³ EPRC is studying whether female Local Government members (FLGMs), working together with Cluster Women's Groups (CWGs), can effectively promote sanitation, including ownership and use of improved latrines and related hygiene practices. The FLGMs are members of the Union Parishad¹⁴ (Council); each UP has three elected female representatives that serve on the 12-member body. Government policy stipulates that FLGMs should chair at least one third of the Council's standing committees which in turn make recommendations for UP Council approval.

The knowledge gained hopefully will serve other rural populations in Bangladesh as well as other developing countries. Many if not most countries have also been promoting a greater role for local government in sanitation campaigns. Attention to gender and poverty issues is often acknowledged as a necessary component, but empirical evidence and practical guidance on how to do this effectively has been lacking.

Methodology:

The study involves a RCT in 32 intervention and 32 control Union Parishads. The implementation aspect of the study involves supporting FLGMs to work with CWGs in order to carry out sanitation and hygiene education interventions, as well as to promote hygiene and sanitation within the context of the UP itself.

Key Findings to Date:

Monitoring of intervention communities indicates that FLGM and CWG-led hygiene promotion efforts have resulted in significant changes over baseline conditions. These changes include:

- Rates of access to sanitary latrines increased to nearly 97% from a baseline of around 80% (over a 2-year span). This exceeded the project target to increase access by 10 percentage points.
- Observed presence of hand washing agents improved significantly.
- About 40% of FLGMs showed good potential for coordinating sanitation at the UP level
- Three out of 10 "Best Practice" fact sheets recently developed for Local Government were prepared by intervention FLGMs and their UP Chairmen.
- The National Institute of Local Government agreed to recommend FLGMs be considered as Chairs of the UP WASH Standing Committees.

Discussion of Findings:

Results so far suggest that working with FLGMs improved their overall capacity as UP members and they played important roles in promoting sanitation in their Union Parishads, including both schools and communities. With CWG assistance, FLGMs demonstrated the potential to lead the drive to achieve total sanitation at the local level, in line with national sanitation policy.



A community gathering in Bangladesh

There have been challenges to the project which are worth considering. One hinged around incentives—as this project offered no financial or other incentives for community members (e.g., latrine subsidies; meeting attendance costs) which differed from some other major national projects. This resulted in constraints to a number of FLGMs who faced difficulties in building community participation. In addition, national elections were followed by a prolonged period of unrest which influenced UP budgets and the ability to carry out project work; the project timeline had to be extended to accommodate this.

Though most communities readily accepted FLGMs in their role as promoters of improved sanitation, this stronger leadership by FLGMs led to occasional tensions between

male and female UP members regarding their roles and responsibilities. As female members' capacity and confidence increased, they sought greater and more equitable participation in the governance process. Overall this trend is positive, though further evolution will likely need to take place regarding the roles and responsibilities of FLGMs and CWGs in the context of UP governance.

Finally, the lack of affordable pit de-sludging services and treatment/disposal options are of increasing concern, especially as latrine use rises. Pit wastes continue to be disposed untreated into water bodies.

Networking and Action Learning to Support CLTS (CLTS Knowledge Hub)

Institution: Institute of Development Studies

Researcher: Prof. Robert Chambers

Location: Global

Dates: Feb 2012 – Sept 2014

Information:

Robert Chambers

R.Chambers@ids.ac.uk

Petra Bongartz

P.Bongartz@ids.ac.uk

www.communityledtotalsanitation.org

Institute for Development Studies (IDS)

Focus and Objectives:

Promote learning and management of knowledge about the CLTS approach; expand and strengthen its application, quality and scale.

Key activities:

Convened learning workshops with practitioners, documented and published lessons learned, maintained the CLTS website, published a periodic newsletter with programmatic updates, and engaged in action learning and networking with CLTS practitioners.

From a technical perspective, the Knowledge Hub also promoted equity and inclusion in sanitation programs, sustainability of the approach, and enhanced monitoring and verification. The Hub also carried out important policy and advocacy work with leading organizations and key government bodies.

Next Steps:

The Foundation's project is now completed, but IDS has secured new sources of funding and continues to expand its services to the CLTS practitioner community in order to broaden, improve and strengthen CLTS at scale. A recent innovation was the establishment of a new publication series called "Frontiers of CLTS: Innovations and Insights". The Knowledge Hub continues to focus on policy engagement in India, recognizing that India's sanitation situation is a major challenge in the sector. IDS will continue to engage with the Government of India in an attempt to understand and constructively influence policy and practice there. For example, IDS has taken part in initiatives and discussions leading to new national guidelines for the Swachh Bharat Mission (India's national sanitation program), and is tracking developments regarding the proposed guidelines for Rapid Action Learning Units.

A particular focus for the Hub are the second and third generation challenges that have arisen now that CLTS is being implemented at scale, and in many cases by Government. Sustainability is one of the central challenges that encompasses many other issues such as equity and inclusion; integration of sanitation technology design and marketing; post ODF follow up; monitoring; and ODF verification. In 2015, the Hub will host a write-shop on sustainability which will result in a publication. The Hub is also engaged in learning more about adaptations of CLTS in urban settings, and plans to conduct research, hold thematic workshops, and prepare papers on this topic during 2015-16.